

the business of blogging

**A COLLECTION OF SHORT ESSAYS BY BUSINESS BLOGGERS
EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF BLOGGING FOR BUSINESS**

The Business of Blogging is a co-creation project
by Richard Bailey, Heather Baker, Stuart Bruce, Judy Gombita,
Andrew Grill, Neville Hobson, Chris Lake, Rachel Miller, Mat Morrison,
Lee Odden, Dan Slee, Stephen Waddington, Heather Yaxley, and Philip Young.

Edited by Stephen Waddington

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01 introduction

WELCOME TO THE BUSINESS OF BLOGGING

*This ebook started life as a blog post. It in itself is a testament to the future of blogging, as **Stephen Waddington** explains.*

Blogging is 20 years old. It took off in the late-90s with the development of consumer broadband in Europe and the US.

By now it was predicted to be a dominant form of media, and in Europe at least, it isn't. Why is that?

I sought out the opinion of respected bloggers in my network and asked them about the future of blogging. I also asked them to share the benefits they'd experienced from blogging.

The responses were varied. The business of blogging involves learning, professional and personal development, networking and profile. It is evolving but for those individuals and organisations that are prepared to invest the effort it has a strong future.

I originally envisaged sharing the responses in a blog post. But as you'll see that wouldn't have done the topic, or the responses, justice.

Instead I've compiled them into a series of essays and published them in this ebook.

My thanks to Richard Bailey, Heather Baker, Stuart Bruce, Judy Gombita, Andrew Grill, Neville Hobson, Chris Lake, Rich Leigh, Rachel Miller, Mat Morrison, Lee Odden, Dan Slee, Heather Yaxley and Philip Young.

I recommend that you look up each of the authors online and connect with them via their blogs as I have done over the last 10 years. Their contributions show that the business of blogging is alive and well.

“ *The business of blogging involves learning, professional and personal development, networking and profile. It is evolving but for those individuals and organisations that are prepared to invest the effort it has a strong future.* ”

STEPHEN WADDINGTON

European Digital and Social Media Director at [Ketchum](#) and President of the [CIPR](#). He blogs at [The Two-Way Street](#) and you can connect with him on Twitter [@wadds](#).



02 business

A BUILDING BLOCK FOR BUSINESS

Lee Odden has built a business through blogging, attracting clients including Dell and LinkedIn, and gained an international reputation.

When I started blogging 10 years ago, there were about 1.5 million blogs according to Technorati.

Today, it's hard to say [how many blogs there are globally](#), but WordPress alone hosts 75.3 million blogs in over 120 different languages worldwide with 100,000 new blogs being created every day. WordPress blogs publish 40.5 million posts and attract 50 million comments per month. Over 400 million people view 14.4 billion pages per month.

If you look at [Tumblr as a blog platform](#), there are over 170 million blogs and nearly 76 billion posts published. You can continue this exercise with other blog hosting platforms like Google's Blogger too. I'm not even mentioning the millions of blogs hosted on their own domains.

This exercise could be continued with other blog hosting platforms like Google's Blogger and others to raise the number of blogs even higher. Of course, I'm not even counting the millions of blogs hosted on their own domains like most of the business blogs that are online.

■ Beyond self-expression and content marketing

While many of the personal blogs are about everything from cats to fashion to recipes to long forgotten ramblings from years gone by, blogging is not simply a domain for self-expression.

Business blogging is alive and well. In fact, the [University of Massachusetts Dartmouth annual study of corporate blogs in 2013](#) reports the largest year over year increase of Fortune 500 corporate blogs (34%) since they started tracking them in 2008.

From telecommunications to specialty food retailers, companies have found blogging to be an essential hub for their social media, content marketing, SEO and online public relations efforts.

In fact, blogging is even more ideal now that content and brand publishing has become the price of entry for even the most basic of digital marketing efforts.

What about content shock? Is the economy of content marketing too imbalanced for business blogging to be practical? Mark Schaefer made some interesting arguments about issues around the scalability and sustainability of companies creating more and more quality content.

If the only reason a company creates a blog is for content marketing, then I'd have to agree. But here's the thing: marketing is not the only reason companies can get value from blogging.

■ Building a business through blogging

I started blogging to explore the platform and soon discovered an incredibly useful tool for communicating directly with prospects, the media, potential employees, current clients and our own staff. Any reason a company has to communicate can be supported by a blogging platform.

Being committed to blogging as a means for bringing offline experience online and vice versa in combination with speaking at events, has paid off in numerous ways. For our digital marketing agency, I don't see that changing any time soon.

While we are a boutique marketing agency located in the suburbs of Minneapolis, we are known all over the world because of our blog. We receive thousands of new visitors every day from search that have never heard of TopRank Online Marketing before.

Imagine what we would have to pay in advertising to reach new audiences, day in and day out? Actually, many companies know exactly what that costs because they don't blog or because they blog and don't integrate it very well with social networks and community for amplification.

So far, we've spent very little, if any budget on advertising to market our company and have never had a sales person or employed a public relations firm. What we have invested in, is more than a million words about topics our target audiences care about.

The payoff is virtually no cost of sale and bringing multiple Fortune 500 companies on as clients and attracting media coverage from the likes of The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Forbes, Fortune and The Economist.

The current and future benefits of blogging are literally too numerous to list here, but suffice it to say, in all my years as a marketing and PR professional, business blogging is by far the highest yield investment I've ever made for: marketing, public relations, and recruiting.

“ *We have invested in is more than a million words about topics our target audience cares about. The payoff is virtually no cost of sale and bringing major companies in as clients from McKesson to Dell to LinkedIn along with being cited by the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and The Economist.* ”

■ What's the future of blogging for business?

With the importance of content in search, social media and PR, blogging continues to be a viable asset for businesses to produce conversational content outside of the transaction oriented online stores and corporate websites.

Rather than blogs being replaced by social networks, media and apps on mobile devices, successful companies will incorporate blogging into their digital marketing mix. Blog

content can be consumed with any device and for companies that want a destination on the web to curate their own Vines, Instagram images, and other types of mobile-created content, blogs are a great fit.

Blogs that are supported by a solid, customer-focused strategy and that are integrated with social media efforts still have every opportunity to help a brand become and stay “the best answer” for topics that matter most to their customers.

Of course competition for time and attention on blogs will continue to grow and customer preferences for information discovery, consumption and action will change. But that’s why companies keep their fingers on the pulse of the industry and their customers, continually optimizing the quality and performance of their communications.

As a hub for brand publishing for virtually any kind of content, I can think of no better fit than a business blog in 2014 and in the future.

LEE ODDEN

CEO at [TopRank Online Marketing](#) and blogs at [TopRankBlog.com](#). You can connect with him on Twitter [@LeeOdden](#)



03 business

A SHOP WINDOW TO THE WORLD

Stuart Bruce's blog is a shop window into his thinking as an agency founder, trainer and international communications advisor.

I started blogging almost 11 years ago and it has been hugely beneficial to my career. It led to me advising cabinet ministers, starting a PRWeek Top 150 consultancy and now takes me all over the world to provide communications consultancy and training to companies and governments.

It would be nice to be able to claim I was a visionary and that in 2003 I saw that the future was what is now called 'content marketing'. The reality is somewhat more prosaic as my first blog in 2002 was as a local local councillor (the first in the UK) and was simply because a blog was far easier than the website I was struggling to maintain. I tell the story because it illustrates one of the main benefits of blogging - it removes design and technology barriers so that the focus can be on quality content and thinking.

“ *Real blogs that express opinions are the future as they chime with the increased demand from people for increased openness and transparency from companies, organisations and government.* ”

■ Learning and development

However the main reason I blog today at stuartbruce.biz is to challenge myself. Every time I write I'm forced to challenge my beliefs and think about what constitutes best professional public relations practice.

My thoughts are laid bare to scrutiny, criticism and the occasional compliment from my peers around the world. I also blog to give a little something back to the profession that I love and has given me and my family a good living. Just as my membership of the CIPR is about how I can serve, rather than what it gives me.

But the benefit is not just from writing my own blog, but also aso from reading other quality blogs and constantly expose myself to new thinking and ideas that hopefully make me a better public relations professional. It's continuous professional development in the public domain.

Around the world the state of blogging is pretty healthy. According to Alexa Blogspot/ Blogger and WordPress.com both rank in the top 20 most popular websites in the world. And that's before you even add Tumblr, other blogging platforms and self-hosted blogs using WordPress and other content management systems.

In many countries Blogger or WordPress rank in the top 10 (and frequently both in the top 20) most popular websites alongside names like Google, Amazon and Facebook. Some of the countries I've visited recently where this is true include India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and the Philippines. They often rank above Twitter, which many commentators would like us to believe has usurped blogging.

Blogging, in all its myriad forms, certainly has a future and is important for public relations professionals not just for themselves, but as an essential communications channel alongside traditional media relations and social networks.

■ Authentic voices

Perhaps what is dying, and it's a good thing, are search-optimised marketing pseudo-blogs. It's true that good blogs can rank highly on search engines and Google's algorithm changes to increasingly focus on better quality content can actually help this. However, there were too many blogs that weren't about quality content, but were simply platforms for bland marketing copy and written primarily with search in mind.

In all the current hype about native advertising (simply online advertorials) and content marketing it's important to remember that blogging is still as powerful as ever. Think about how you can use corporate blogs to demonstrate your expertise and enthusiasm for your industry or sector by writing about what you know about and care about.

Real blogs that express opinions are the future as they chime with the increased demand from people for increased openness and transparency from companies, organisations and government.

STUART BRUCE

international public relations adviser and trainer who blogs at [A PR Guy's Musings](#).

You can connect with him on Twitter [@stuartbruce](#).



04 business

BUILDING A NETWORK AND A BUSINESS

Rachel Miller's blog is earning her a reputation as an international authority on the impact of new forms of media on internal communications.

Blogging translates thoughts from my head into action in my network, and is the lifeblood of my business.

As a professional communicator, it has allowed me to experiment with style, format and content and connect and collaborate with like-minded people.

I started blogging in March 2009. I've published more than 450 posts to date and it's a fundamental part of the way I communicate.

All Things IC is not only my home on the web that I enjoy sharing with visitors who stop by, but I've opened the door to others too. I've featured 80 guest writers, which has enabled people without their own platforms to benefit from mine, and for me to learn from them.

I am an avid reader of blogs and enjoy discovering the thoughts of other communicators, many of whom are in this publication.

Globally, we're seeing more internal communicators starting to blog and I continually learn by reading them. For example, two of my favourites are by [Aniisu K Verghese](#) in India and [Csaba Szücs](#) in Hungary. Through them I experience comms in other cultures and aid my own professional development.

The future of blogging is that it's here to stay, particularly as mobile communication and transparency continue to increase.

We'll see more organisations and individuals, from CEOs to frontline workers communicate their view of the world both internally and externally, adding to the rich tapestry of their brand's reputation. Plus their customers will continue to add their voices too via their own blogs.

“ *Blogging translates thoughts from my head into action in my network, and is the lifeblood of my business. As a professional communicator, it has allowed me to experiment with style, format and content and connect and collaborate with like-minded people.* ”

RACHEL MILLER

Internal communication and social media strategist at All Things IC. She blogs at [All Things IC](#) and you can connect with her on Twitter [@AllthingsIC](#)



05 community

THINKING, CONNECTING, AND SHARING

Dan Slee is a public sector communications thinker and doer. He uses his blog as a sandpit to connect with fellow practitioners and share ideas.

There's a loose network of people in the public sector I'm proud to belong to. We've been called 'militant optimists' because despite everything we're still determined to make a difference.

We work in central government - or in my case local government - and we organise through Twitter, we meet-up and we kick around ideas, we learn and we share through blog posts.

“*I've blogged for five years. Why do I blog? Because I can flesh out an idea far easier online than in practice. I can capture or share. It's changed how I think, how I work and I'm finding doors opening that the blog has led me to.*”

■ “In it together”

Why do we bother? Because in the public sector we're all in it together.

We're all facing cuts and we're seeing empty chairs where colleagues used to be.

We're faced with the Internet turning old certainties on its head. We're not in competition against each other so we can collaborate.

I help co-ordinate [Brewcamp meetups in the West Midlands](#) which involve tea, cake and sharing good learning. Anyone can come to and we share ideas afterwards on blog posts that have become the currency for learning in a sector where training budgets have been stripped, where the rule book hasn't been written, and it's never been more important to do a good job.

For us blogging is booming and mobile is simply sharing our ideas on the go.

I've blogged for five years. Why do I blog? Because I can flesh out an idea far easier online than in practice. I can capture or share. It's changed how I think, how I work and I'm finding doors opening that the blog has led me to.

DAN SLEE

Senior Press and Public Relations officer at Walsall Council in the UK, and blogs at [comms2point0](#) and [The Dan Slee Blog](#). You can connect with him on Twitter [@danslee](#).



06 community

BLOGGING WITH A PR-SPECIFIC AND GLOBAL MINDSET

Judy Gombita is a principal and co-content editor for PR Conversation. It is internationally recognised as an important community of theory and practice.

Want to find out more about the power of blogging? If yes, a recommendation to read Scott Berkun's [The Year Without Pants](#) (see my [Journal of Professional Communications contribution](#)) for a backgrounder on [Automattic](#), the umbrella organization that includes WordPress and WordPress.com, the world's most-popular (long-form) blogging platforms.

The mission of Automattic's founder, Matt Mullenweg, is to "democratize publishing."

■ Democratizing communication

The ability to publish information and opinions relatively easily and quickly that can be discovered via search engines or sharing platforms is really what blogging is all about.

This doesn't simply relate to individuals or small organizations; much of Automattic's revenues come from its VIP Premium clients (e.g., CNN, Time magazine, CBS and NBC Sports and likely the majority of major global media outlets), who host their sites on WordPress.com servers.

These clients pay a premium price to get the benefits of one of the best server infrastructures in the world and support from a special team of engineers.

Ergo, what might be perceived as a media website is in truth a blogging platform.

I'm of the mind that blogging in diary format, highly personalized and oriented to niche audiences, has not so much died out as it has lost profile, search prominence and proclivity, to those who have more-defined sector business or industry mindshare goals.

I've been involved with [PR Conversations](#) since Italian public relations practitioner [Toni Muzi Falconi](#) (one of the founders and first chair of the [Global Alliance](#)) launched it in 2007, as a (non-business) global platform and community with participants from various parts of the world and a deliberate focus on public relations-oriented topics and debates.

■ Leading the PR Conversation

I remain a principal (with [Heather Yaxley](#) and [Markus Pirchner](#)) in the [Redux version](#). Before we re-launched PR Conversations, we spent a great deal of time developing our [About](#) page and determining our various categories. These things help us stay on track and, I believe, are rewarded by being on [blog lists](#), recommendations to students by public relations professors, excellent search engine results and/or personal Google profiles.

I can attest that being involved in a global, collective blog that consistently produces high-calibre articles (whether by the principals or guests) has had a significant impact on my professional profile and global network of public relations practitioners and related professionals.

One of my posts [even inspired a column](#) in The Toronto Star (Canada's largest-circulation newspaper), written by senior political correspondent Susan Delacourt. It also garners requests for [interviews](#) and to contribute to [other platforms](#).

Besides contributing my own original and critical-thinking posts, there is equal joy in sourcing, recruiting and helping to edit the writings of other professionals from different parts of the world.

A perfect example is an early 2014 [three-part cross-border PR adventure](#) written by Australian Gen Y practitioner, [Katie Sheppet](#): her narrative involves two prominent global companies, [Edelman](#) and [Allianz](#), and interweaves four countries (Australia, Germany, France and Great Britain).

Another benefit of blogging is that I became one of Katie's international public relations mentors as a result of her initial blogger-outreach initiative, [an interview with Ketchum's John Paluszek](#) (USA), who was speaking at the Global Alliance's 2012 World PR Forum.

I'm also making use of [our blog's biggest "champions" to "curate" information from others](#); plans are in the works to extend this effort (with the objectives of recruiting more post sharers and guest writers, and a complementary goal of extending our global reach).

“ *I can attest that being involved in a global, collective blog that produces consistent, high-calibre articles has had a significant impact on my professional profile and global network.* ”

■ Professional development

I think of blogging as a professional and creative outlet for public relations relevant and new information, critical thinking and opinions. For the most part these things require a platform that lends itself to longer-form reading.

Although mobile devices increase the in-real-time availability of posts to a larger global audience, I would hope the less-optimum-reading (i.e., smaller) screen being embraced by many does not impact the rich (written) content currently available. Has mobile impacted the length of books? Despite being more than 800 pages, [The Luminaries by Eleanor Catton, won The Man Booker Prize for 2013](#).

No, blogging itself is not dying. It's simply necessary for the long-tail strategy and contents to be more sophisticated and mindful in order for a blog to not only survive but thrive.

JUDY GOMBITA

Toronto-based hybrid public relations, communication management and social media strategist, and blogs at [PR Conversations](#). You can connect with her on Twitter [@jgombita](#).



07 community

BUILDING AND SERVING A COMMUNITY BETTER THAN MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Richard Leigh has built a growing blogging community called PRexamples.com that has helped countless practitioners get on and get ahead.

“*PRexamples.com serves a very useful purpose of fostering a community based around quickly-highlighted examples, providing me with a supplemental income stream and delivering more than just eyeballs, something traditional media fails to do half as well.”*

As the media has become more fragmented and readers continue to dictate when, where and how they consume media, blogging has evolved into more than the diary-esque entries of the 90s, taking form as long and short text, image and video updates tailored for increasingly niche audiences.

As a marketer, that excites me, as a niche audience is a potentially engaged, buying audience. Its the reason I developed and launched my current business bloggabase.com, a platform to connect brand marketers with bloggers.

■ **Joining the community**

Starting out as a young, inexperienced and degree-less industry-entrant, I quickly realised that without having to appease the media gatekeepers previous generations have had to in order to build their own profile, I could now do that, learn from the best in the public relations industry and make valuable connections - all by simply becoming part of and driving the conversation through blogging and social media.

I found the way to stand out was to offer readers something they couldn't get elsewhere – and offering [10 Yetis' Good and Bad PR](#) concept to [PR Moment](#) as a weekly round-up feature did just that

A community grew-up around it and the agency and I benefited from the industry's love for having their name up in lights, something I attribute to the fact that professional communications are rarely congratulated; our clients instead lauded for work we've executed on their behalf.

As with award-season, public relations agencies saw it as confirmation of their efforts and I thoroughly enjoyed learning about the best campaigns in marketing at the same time.

■ Building PRexamples.com

After the success of Good and Bad PR and seeing the same dozen or two names highlighting campaigns to me, it made perfect and natural sense to create PRexamples.com - a blog dedicated to the best stunts and campaigns.

I figured that many in the community that had built around Good and Bad PR would like their own chance to use blogging to improve their own profiles too, whilst also providing great content for readers. Essentially guest blogging but a bit more involved and again, with a behind the scenes community element to it.

With more than 230 signed up contributors around the world now, it shows many see and enjoy the benefits.

Contributors have been recruited as a result of posts and agencies have won clients as a result of being featured on the site.

It serves a very useful purpose of fostering a community based around quickly-highlighted examples, providing me with a supplemental income stream and delivering more than just eyeballs, something traditional media fails to do half as well.

RICH LEIGH

Co-founder of blogger outreach service bloggabase and blogs at PRexamples. You can connect with him on Twitter [@RichLeighPR](https://twitter.com/RichLeighPR).



08 personal development

YOUR START WITH BLOGGING

Neville Hobson believes that the discipline of writing and sharing articles via a blog is a powerful form of personal development.

When I first started blogging in 2002, I wasn't sure at all that this was something I really wanted to do. Plus, who'd care what I mused about? Who'd read this stuff? I didn't see what it was worth from a business perspective (who did then, really?)

But I discovered something that has had a massive influence on my own behaviour, thinking, openness and willingness to say what I think and engage in conversation with others, whether they're like minds or not. Twelve years ago, blogging opened doors to experimentation, discoveries and the start of making valuable connections with other connected people.

And guess what? In that regard, not much has changed twelve years on even as blogging has evolved into a broad spectrum of media, of tools and channels, that offer amazing scope and scale for anyone with an opinion to articulate and broadcast it.

■ A learning, development and connecting platform

Expressing your opinion online can be a valuable use of your time wherever you sit in your organisation. The time you invest in sharing what you think – a post you write or a comment you leave as you join someone else's conversation – can provide a powerful and credible demonstration of your knowledge and opinion about a topic and your willingness and ability to engage with others in discussing it.

It seems to me that writing and publishing something that sets out what you think about a topic is one of the easiest – and pleasurable – uses of your time that can put you at the heart of discussion, debate and people's attention.

It doesn't matter what you call it (a blog post, a status update) or where you publish it (on a blog, on Facebook or Google+). Whatever and wherever. Just think of what you want to say and who you want to say it to.

Forget about SEO, audience targets, thought leadership, keyword placements and other marketing-related stuff that makes most blogs that start out with those manufactured things in mind utterly sterile. Instead, concentrate entirely on what you want to say, and say it - naturally, informally, as if you're in conversation with just one or two people.

Write with confidence and, above all, with passion.

“*Writing and publishing something that sets out what you think about a topic is one of the easiest – and pleasurable – uses of your time that can put you at the heart of discussion, debate and people's attention.*”

■ How to get started in blogging

So what are you waiting for? Here are six points to guide you as you get started.

1. Blogging is about the content not the platform. The primary point is your content not where it's published.
2. You're telling a story not writing a press release or a sales brochure. Write informally, conversationally, avoiding jargon, and with passion.
3. Be selfless and generous in your references to others. Attribute, cite, link.
4. Disclose any conflict of interest. If in doubt, always disclose.
5. Make your content eminently shareable. Eg, enable sharing buttons, make your headline concise enough that it's simple to tweet it. Make the place your content is published on easy to use: a blog, in other words, not a corporate website.
6. Be clear on your strategy and the measurable goal you wish to achieve. This is all about clear business intent.

■ What's next?

As for what's next with blogging, I think it's future as a means for anyone with an opinion to publish is very rosy. In the future, there will be even more tools and channels that enable your voice to be broadcast. In the future, it will become even easier to share your opinion on any topic.

But as more and more opinion is published online, it's getting harder to find great content amongst all the noise. So making the most of the opportunity to be heard, to write or talk your ideas and opinions in ways that are attuned to the new publishing landscape, requires greater focus on what really matters – your story and who you're telling it to.

There's a big challenge with that to ensure that you keep your authentic voice and your passion. And as ever, blogging is about the content not the platform.

Know your landscape but stay focused.

NEVILLE HOBSON

UK-based communication consultant and a blogger, principally at NevilleHobson.com. He co-founded the [FIR Podcast Network](#) and has co-presented the weekly business show The Hobson and Holtz Report since 2005. You can connect with him on Twitter [@jangles](https://twitter.com/jangles).



09 personal development

OPEN AND TRANSPARENT THINKING

Mat Morrison uses his blog to share his research and new thinking. It's an important part of his professional development.

In the late 90s I used to maintain a personal blog; as much as anything this public journal was an exercise in writing. The sense of an audience helped me live a fuller life

Today, I find blogging helps me put my professional thoughts in order. I work in a complex, ever changing field, and I need to keep my thinking fresh.

Exposing this process to a wider audience (my Facebook friends, LinkedIn contacts, Twitter and Google+ followers) brings in alternative points of view from others involved in the same process.

Moreover, the sense of having an audience, however small, keeps me thinking about new research peripheral to the work that I do from day to day; this keeps me fresh.

I also share tips, tricks and techniques from time to time. I benefit hugely by following others who've trodden new paths in the past and published them where Google can find their answers. I feel it's a duty to do similarly. Only a very few, very specialised searches will ever expose this content, but it's worth doing.

“ Moreover, the sense of having an audience, however small, keeps me thinking about new research peripheral to the work that I do from day to day; this keeps me fresh.”

MAT MORRISON

Head of Social Media Planning at Starcom MediaVest Group in London, UK, and blogs at [The Magic Bean Lab](#). You can connect with him on Twitter [@matmorrison](#).



10 personal development

REASONS TO KEEP BLOGGING

Heather Yaxley suggests blogging provides a means of clear thinking, self-expression and learning in an increasingly noisy social media environment.

The historian, David McCullough stated: "Writing is thinking. To write well is to think clearly. That's why it's so hard."

This alone provides a compelling reason to champion blogging. Those who are committed to learning and career development, particularly with an ethos of kaizen, or continuous development, needs to be able to think clearly and express themselves well.

In an increasingly competitive world for individuals and organisations, it is not enough to simply be able to 'do' things or even to do them well. You need to be able to know why something is the right thing to do – and be able to explain this to others. That requires an ability to think in an articulate way – something that is sadly lacking with most online communications.

Social media has undoubtedly made it easier for everyone and anyone to express an opinion, compared to when the blog paved the way for personal online publishing, and became word of the year in 2004.

Compare this to 2013's equivalent: 'selfie' and it is evident why blogging remains important. You simply cannot learn, develop, network or engage others on any meaningful level with a 'selfie' or other immediate, disposable form of social media.

“ *In an increasingly competitive world for individuals and organisations, it is not enough to simply be able to 'do' things or even to do them well. You need to be able to know why something is the right thing to do – and be able to explain this to others.* ”

HEATHER YAXLEY

Hybrid public relations educator-practitioner-academic and blogs at [Greenbanana](#) and [PR Conversations](#). You can connect with her on Twitter [@greenbanana](#).



11 personal development

A CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL REPUTATION PLATFORM

Andrew Grill has used blogging to help develop an international career at the highest levels of management working for organisations including IBM and Kred.

I've had a web presence since 1994 when the University I was studying my Master's Degree at provided students with a web server to "do what we wanted with it". I registered andrewgrill.com in 1999 and as the next natural extension, I started blogging in 2004 as an experiment.

I wasn't sure why I should be blogging, or even what I would blog about, but once I started, I couldn't stop.

Ten years and more than 650 blog posts later, I am glad that I started.

The question remains though, why isn't traditional, long-form blogging more popular?

I believe the answer is that with the introduction of platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Google+, it has become possible for short-form, mass-market blogging to flourish.

With these existing platforms, and their fairly rigid formats and styles, pretty much anyone can point, click and post an update.

“ *I am also certain that every new role I have been offered has in some way been helped by my blogging profile and presence. I know that the requests I receive to speak at conferences have been a direct result of my blog presence.* ”

■ Barriers to blogging

Blogging in its purest form is not so simple. A blogger needs to assess the multitude of options - [WordPress](#) or self-hosted, Tumblr, Typepad etc.

Next a prospective blogger needs to personalise their site with templates fonts and domain names, hosting options and plugins.

With these layers of options, it deters the mass market and instead ensures that pure long-form blogging remains the choice of a relatively small number of dedicated and passionate bloggers.

In my opinion it has meant that blogging remains the choice of a dedicated and committed few, and as such the quality of blogging and the writing remains at a different level from what we see on the public platforms.

■ Blogging benefit: career development

The other by product is that I have met many other bloggers around the world, with many of them such as Stephen Waddington becoming firm friends.

I also would not have had the career and speaking opportunities over the last 10 years had I not started blogging.

When I moved to London in 2006, I was able to rapidly establish my credibility and expertise in the mobile space via blogging. As my career moved from mobile to social in 2009, I was able to further establish my credentials directly via my blog.

I am also certain that every new role I have been offered has in some way been helped by my blogging profile and presence. I know that the requests I receive to speak at conferences have been a direct result of my blog presence.

I'm actually glad that blogging has not become a dominant media form, as it means that those long-term bloggers actually stand out, if nothing else for our persistence from all others sharing content online.

ANDREW GRILL

Global partner, Social Business, at IBM and blogs at [London Calling](#).
You can connect with him on Twitter [@AndrewGrill](#).



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BLOGGING REFRAMED

Richard Bailey believes that blogging is an important form of personal and organisational communication that has evolved far beyond its original purpose.

Mobiles have become universal; email is a widely used (and abused) channel of communication. It's remarkable how the novelty quickly wears off and technology soon becomes mainstream.

So why the fuss about blogging? It's an ugly word that implies something geeky and groundbreaking (which it was back in the late 1990s).

Now, since the emergence of faster, quicker social networks, blogging is beginning to look as archaic as the print edition of a newspaper.

What's surprising is that there's a strong case to be made for personal publishing, and a blurred line between the personal and professional. A student blogger using free, open source WordPress is using the same tool as [many professional sites](#) across commerce, media and government.

The criticism of blogging in the early days was of 'dumbing down': too much instant, undigested commentary being published without thought and without the guiding hand of an editor.

Now, compared to the speed of sending a Tweet, creating a blog post seems a substantial literary achievement.

Call it personal publishing, and view it as a step towards a professional communication strategy. Just please stop calling it blogging.

“*There's a strong case to be made for personal publishing, and a blurred line between the personal and professional. A student blogger using free, open source WordPress is using the same tool as many professional sites across commerce, media and government.*”

Postscript: Stuart Bruce alerted me to an error in the first draft of this piece during the review process. That's another benefit of blogging: it's a collaborative environment that encourages learning and sharing.

RICHARD BAILEY

Public relations educator. He blogs at [PR Studies](#) and edits [Behind the Spin](#). You can connect with him on Twitter [@behindthespin](#).



13 future of blogging

CREATION, CURATION AND COMMUNITY

Philip Young believes that blogs may be elitist, they do take time and effort - but that's right and proper.

In the latest edition of Online Public Relations, David Phillips and I place less emphasis on blogging that we did in 2009, but we still believe blogs are important.

The proliferation of channels, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, brings robust competition for attention but blogs provide the most effective platform for sustained thought and discussion.

In many ways there is no great difference between a blog post and a Facebook update but blogs are somehow seen as a purer form of expression, requiring more concentration and effort, and, when successful having greater worth.

They are also undeniably elitist - only a limited number of people have the skills to create engaging content, whether in terms of writing ability or having something to say.

Of course, it depends what you define as blogging. Is Facebook blogging? In many ways it is – an online diary, posts in reverse chronological order, etc, etc.

Likewise, is a collaborative platform such as [The Conversation](#) considered a blog? It may not be transformative but what a fabulous resource, and one that would have been very hard to deliver 15 years ago.

“*Blogs are undeniably elitist - only a limited number of people have the skills to create engaging content, whether in terms of writing ability or having something to say.*”

The forms are similar, the major difference is curation. If you want to construct a tight, 'pure' definition of blogging - an individual posting considered articles, as a self-conscious, reflective publishing process - it is reasonable to conclude that blogging hasn't delivered as a mainstream channel. But a broader view, which sees platforms constructed on WordPress or Typepad as part of the wider spectrum of user generated, connected content, which might include Instagram, YouTube, Tumblr, Pinterest, etc.

Perhaps they have suffered in that RSS never quite took off, and it takes effort to build a library of useful feeds. Bloggers who don't use Twitter have lost me as a reader.

The developments associated with the emergence of Web 2.0 have been of huge significance. Blogs have been successful in some fields, especially niche interest areas. I read many book blogs, and have learnt to trust certain reviewers, and in terms of insight and influence - encouraging me to buy - I gain at least as much from them traditional media.

It would be hard to argue that blogs have been as disruptive as some other Web 2.0 platforms but they definitely continue to be a significant channel and can reach and engage with specific audiences in a way that would otherwise be very difficult.

Indeed thinking about the blogs - or more accurately the bloggers - who have made a difference to my working life and leisure makes me feel a little guilty about neglecting [Mediations](#). It opened many doors, not least by inspiring the delivering the New PR conferences featuring Neville Hobson, Stuart Bruce and other pioneers, one of which led to my present position as project leader for [NEMO: New Media, Modern Democracy](#) at Lund University, Sweden.

Trouble is, blogging does take work.

PHILIP YOUNG

Began blogging at [Mediations](#) in April 2004. He is project leader for [NEMO: New Media, Modern Democracy](#) at Lund University, Sweden. You can connect with him on Twitter at [@mediations](#).



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EXCELLENCE IS HARD TO FIND

Heather Baker says that most blogs are rubbish but that provides an opportunity for anyone that is prepared to invest the time and effort.

I'm not surprised that blogging hasn't emerged as a dominant form of media. Predictions that blogging would overtake traditional media were based on the assumption that because blogging is accessible to anyone with a PC, millions of people would set up blogs, and those blogs would all be good enough to attract growing follower bases.

The reality is that most blogs are poorly managed, attract dismal readership numbers and are soon abandoned. Does this mean that blogging is dead? Of course not. It just means it's not easy. Like most things in business the blogging market is subject to the basic principles of supply and demand.

Anyone who puts the effort into maintaining a quality blog will reap the rewards in the form of industry recognition ([my public relations blog](#) has more than 5,000 monthly readers, most from within the public relations industry), new business (we have generated hundreds of leads from our blogs), and opportunities to network (my blog has enabled me to network with the leaders in the public relations industry) and learn (we do loads of how-to guides that require us to learn from scratch).

Intelligent blogging is very much alive.

“*The reality is that most blogs are poorly managed, attract dismal readership numbers and are soon abandoned. Does this mean that blogging is dead? Of course not. It just means it's not easy. Like most things in business the blogging market is subject to the basic principles of supply and demand.*”

HEATHER BAKER

CEO of [TopLine Communications](#) and edits [The B2B PR Blog](#) and [Small Business Heroes](#). You can connect with her on Twitter [@TopLineFounder](#).



15 future of blogging

THE EVOLUTION OF BLOGGING

Chris Lake says that *blogging hasn't died but it hasn't lived up to original expectations either. It has become something much bigger.*

Blogging has massively evolved in the past 15 years or so. To begin with, blogs tended to be along the lines of a personal diary and rich bookmarking tool.

Within a few years a lot of niche, subject-specific blogs were launched. The best ones started to generate revenue for their owners, and some became fully-fledged businesses. Some ended up [selling for millions](#).

“ *The blog has hugely surpassed our own expectations in all areas. It now underpins our social media activity, our email and search strategy, and more than a million stories are read on it every month. It also [generates a very healthy profit for our business.](#)”*

■ We're all publishers now

Around 2007 social media properly exploded and pretty much everybody is a publisher nowadays. Short-form character-limited 'status updates' are the norm, whereas perhaps only the truly committed continue to maintain a personal blog. Yet the spirit of blogging – of self-publishing – has not vanished. It has merely atomised, and has become so much bigger.

We still share our thoughts, our bookmarks, our pictures and videos, and much more besides. But we tend to do this across a number of platforms, rather than on just one. Our audiences may be dispersed, but they are also more connected, and more engaged than ever.

There are the business bloggers to consider too. Around a third of Fortune 500 companies have a blog, a statistic I find mystifying. Why wouldn't a company launch a blog, given the low barriers to entry and possible upside?

■ Business blogging for Econsultancy

In 2006 I launched a niche business-to-business blog for Econsultancy. We invested a small amount of budget to hire a writer, and I defined our editorial scope, focusing on articles that would help people to improve their digital marketing and ecommerce skills, rather than 'news'. My goals were, in order, SEO, engagement, and brand metrics.

The blog has hugely surpassed our own expectations in all areas. It now underpins our social media activity, our email and search strategy, and more than a million stories are read on it every month. It also [generates a very healthy profit for our business](#).

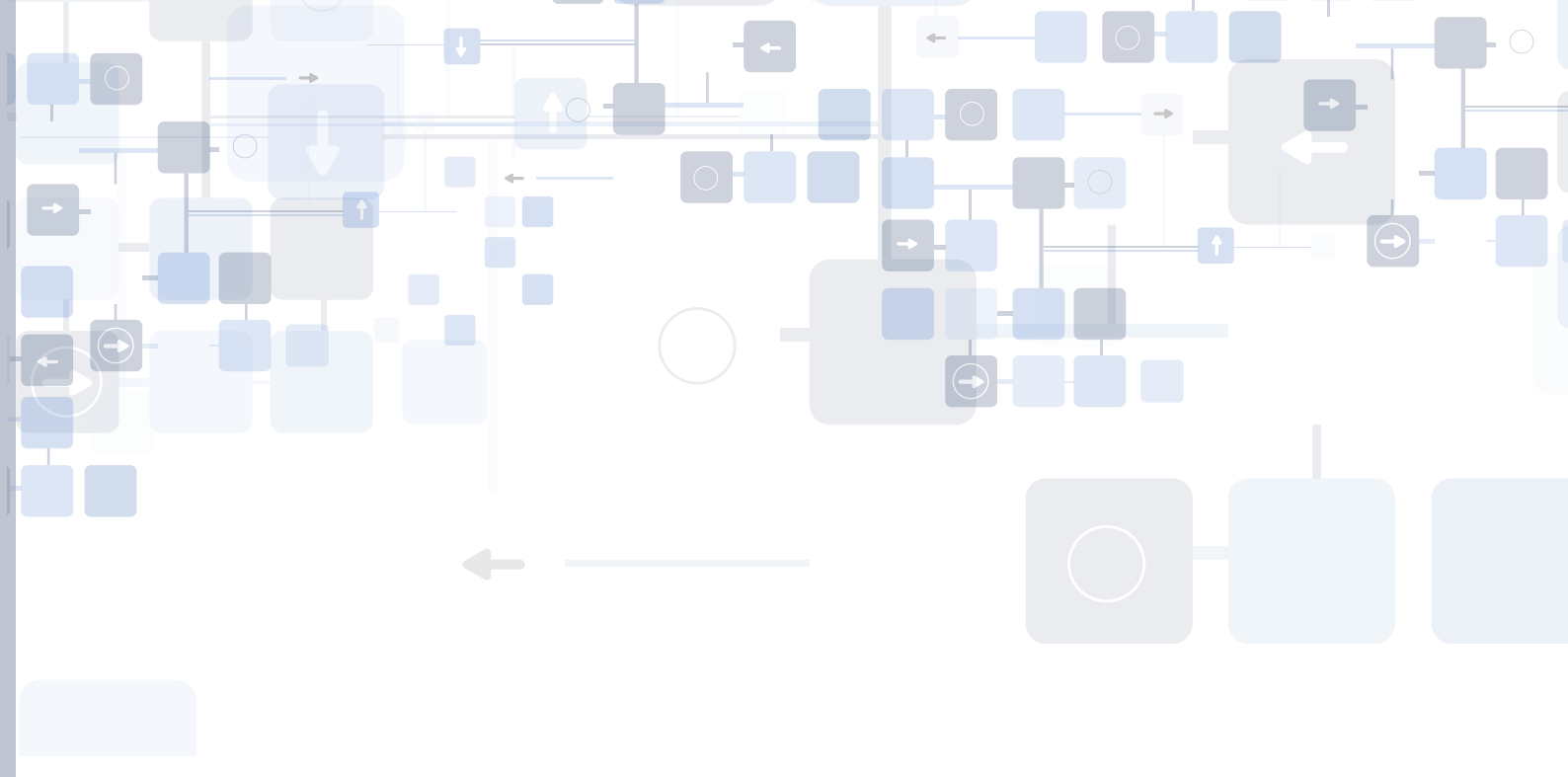
Blogging hasn't died, or lived up to expectations. It has evolved, and will continue to evolve, in both a personal and business capacity.

Long live the blog.

CHRIS LAKE

Director of Content at Econsultancy and blogs at [Econsultancy](#).
You can connect with him on Twitter [@lakey](#).





The Business of Blogging is a co-creation project by Richard Bailey, Heather Baker, Stuart Bruce, Judy Gombita, Andrew Grill, Neville Hobson, Chris Lake, Rich Leigh, Rachel Miller, Mat Morrison, Lee Odden, Dan Slee, Stephen Waddington, Heather Yaxley and Philip Young.



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