A man with short, graying hair and glasses is shown in profile, looking down and to the right. He is resting his chin on his right hand, with his fingers curled. He is wearing a dark, long-sleeved shirt. The background is a light, neutral color. The overall tone is contemplative and professional.

*Blogging is a powerful
business tool. Perhaps
it's the answer to your
growth needs*

To Blog or Not

By IAN GRIFFIN

Fifteen years ago very few NSA members had an e-mail address. Ten years ago many of us were still trying to decide whether to launch our own Web sites. Today, we're contemplating if we should jump on the blog bandwagon. Currently only 10 percent of members blog, but it is estimated there are between 60 to 100 million bloggers worldwide.

Whatever the actual number, it is clear there's a gigantic blogosphere where conversations are happening around the clock on every topic under the sun. Thousands of new blogs are started each day. Just as we all came to see the need for e-mail, and most see the advantages of creating a Web site, perhaps it's time to consider blogging.

to Blog?

The Online Bottom Line

As a speaker, you probably spend time using the Web to keep current in your area of expertise. But if you become a regular reader of leading blogs in your niche, you are guaranteed a fresh source and range of ideas and opinions. To find these blogs, just use the Google option to Search -> More -> Blogs and browse the results. When you find a blog that interests you, look for the 'Subscribe' option via RSS or an e-mail update (See sidebar for recommended blog sites).

If you are not familiar with RSS readers check out www.bloglines.com or the RSS option in the Internet Explorer 7 or Firefox browsers. Also check out the Blogroll, a list of other sources that bloggers like.

Reading blogs is an excellent way to venture in the online world but writing one can be an equally worthwhile investment. Rebecca Morgan, CSP, CMC, aka The Dating Goddess, used her blog Adventures in Delicious Dating After 40 (www.DatingGoddess.com) to position herself as an expert in the dating after 40 field where she'd had no previous exposure. "Within a year a number of radio, TV and print reporters approached me because of my blog," she says. "I'm now pitching a book based on my blog entries."

Jason Kotecki, aka The Champion of Childhood, has been blogging for more than five years, encouraging readers to Escape Adulthood (www.kimandjason.com/blog). "I use the blog to develop tons of great content for my talks," he says. "Regular blog posts are fodder for my next book—inch by inch, writing my book is a cinch! Also, because of all the fresh content and inbound links, the blog is now

my Web site's top traffic generator, which has led to more eyeballs, more product sales and more bookings."

Be a Blogger

- ▶ Join over 80 bloggers and would-be bloggers in the NSA Bloggers Yahoo Group. Check out the Message Board and the Files area for tips and tricks. Send an e-mail to nsa_bloggers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.
- ▶ Meet other NSA bloggers and view sample blogs at the Blogger Affinity Group Meeting on Tuesday, July 10, from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m. at the NSA Convention in San Diego.

Make It a Habit

Your blog is your voice and words on the Web. It's a place to collect and share information. You might already have a newsletter or an e-zine that you send to clients. But a blog is different: it's quicker to write and easier for people to read. Many find publishing an e-zine regularly takes time and effort and requires overcoming writer's block. It takes two minutes to publish a blog post, and it becomes a good habit. Instead of sending one long newsletter once a month, imagine publishing a short paragraph twice a week that is instantly delivered to your subscribers.

A blog is about more than just putting your thoughts into print. It's about connecting with and hearing from anyone who reads your work and cares to respond. It's a two-way conversation. Blogs allow comments that connect you with your readers. You build lasting relationships, and you find out what your customers are saying.

A blog also builds your reputation and establishes your expertise.

If your blog provides cutting-edge analysis and information, your reputation grows in direct proportion. Blogging raises your profile faster than almost anything else on the Web. It's a well-known fact that the search engine "spiders" look for fresh content. Blogs are fresh bread, baked daily. And blogging is a fast track for getting found by people who matter. Journalists increasingly turn to blogs when researching stories—which can be a direct line to blogging speakers with expertise in a niche area.

Plus, as a brand-builder, a blog allows you to directly convey the image you want people to have of your business without having to use costly advertising.

Are You a Blogger?

The decision to start a blog should not be taken lightly. Writing a blog may be easy but creating a successful one is not. You have to be comfortable expressing yourself in writing. To attract readers, you

Blogging for Dollars

Edith Yeung (www.edithyeung.com) launched her Web site and blog in April 2007 with 811 unique visitors. She believes the best way to drive repeatable traffic to your online communication presence is through simple methods that incur zero costs. Yeung recommends these sites:

Blogcarnival.com is a community that creates online magazines. Each carnival is a collection of blogs and articles focused on a specific topic. You can submit your blog to multiple carnivals. If the carnival organizer likes what you submitted, they will publish your work on their Web site and will link back to your site.

Digg.com is a reader-driven, social-content Web site. Once you become a Digg.com member, you can submit content, read content submitted by other users and "digg" the content if you prefer. The more people digg you, the more popular your blog will become.

Squidoo.com is a collection of business insights where users can talk about specific topics that matter to them, but allows others to comment on the same topics. You can also make money if your readers decide to purchase anything because of your content.

Stumbleupon.com helps readers to discover and share great Web sites. Users download a StumbleUpon toolbar. When the user finds a Web site they like and click the "Stumble!" button the toolbar delivers pages that match the personal preferences of the user. You can also recommend and rate any of your favorite Web sites.

MyLot.com is very similar to Squidoo, but is not only focused on specific topics. Users can participate in online discussions or check the latest blogs. It provides news based on personal preference. You can also submit your blog to myLot.com and it will fetch the latest content from your site.

Linkedin.com is an online network of millions of professionals. Each user creates a profile (similar to a resume) with professional accomplishments. Linkedin uses your profile to match former colleagues, clients and partners. You can add your own connections by asking others to join. It is a free service and a great way to find connections.

Blogtopsites.com is a directory of blogs. Ranking of the sites is done according to the number of unique visits each blog receives every week. You can register your blog on Blog Top Sites and categorize it to specific topics. If your content is great with good traffic, you will be ranked toward the top, which drives even more traffic.

Google Analytics is a great way to determine your top content, number of visitors, where they are from and how long they stay. Google Analytics is user-friendly and easy to understand.


need to develop a distinctive point of view. You need to commit to posting regularly to keep your readers engaged. Anything less than one post a week damages your credibility. The good news is that speakers have volumes of material to blog about.

Use your blog as a platform to share your insights and experiences on your core expertise. You can review books and movies, radio stations and restaurants. You can piggy-back on topics that are in the news. You can make announcements about future speaking events. You can share links and references with your readers. You can report on meetings you attend, speeches you give, comments from the audience and chance encounters from the road. You can use your blog to compile top 10 lists, conduct surveys (asking for comments on a topic), respond to other blogs or invite guest bloggers to post on your blog.

Remember to keep a clear focus. If you have multiple areas of expertise consider creating multiple blogs.

Greasing the Bottom Line

People often ask "Will I make money blogging?" The short answer: it depends. If your income is affected by the public's perception of your reputation, brand and expertise, then yes, blogging will increase your income, indirectly. Once you've built a reputation as a blogger then AdWords, sponsors and links to affiliate programs on your blog can directly add to the bottom line. But don't expect this to happen overnight.

Meanwhile, use your blog to build Google "juice." Place links in every posting. Start a Blogroll. Leave comments on other people's blogs. Forward links to relevant postings you create to meeting planners, fellow speakers and your clients. Join the blogosphere—then put the link to your blog on your business card, right below where you put your e-mail address 15 years ago and your Web site 10 years ago. 



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The Blog Launch

There are a number of popular blogging platforms: www.blogger.com, www.wordpress.com and www.typepad.com. All of them allow you to get a blog up and running in minutes. I personally recommend Typepad.

Step 1: Log in to one of the Web sites above and create an account.

Step 2: Choose a name for your blog, which will be listed as <http://myblogname.typepad.com>.

Step 3: Follow the on-screen instructions to register your blog.

Step 4: Create your first post!

You can further customize your blog and add options as you proceed.