Blogging Made Easy!

A Quick Start Guide to Profitable Weblogging
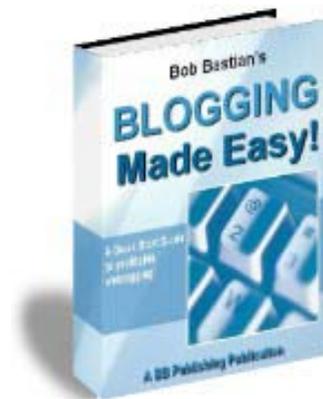
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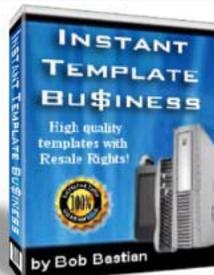
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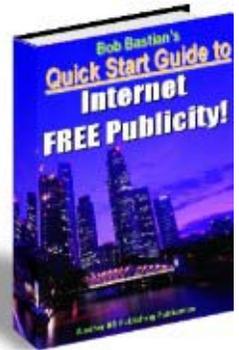
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CHAPTER I
Introduction To
Blogs

A few months back, at the ITEA conference I saw this guy sitting next to me typing constantly into his wireless laptop. He was making notes on what the speakers had to say, was finding relevant links and then hitting the send key - instantly updating his Web site. No sooner the site was updated; he would get responses back from readers around the globe. He was a *Blogger*.

About Blogs

Several years ago, surfers started collecting information and interesting links they encountered in their travels through webspace. As the time passed they started creating logs of the information they collected and soon they started creating their own web logs. The web logs enabled them to update the information and links as often as possible. This was what the guy in the conference was doing. Improvements in Web design tools have certainly made uploading and updating easier for them.

Blogs are more permanent than posts to an online discussion list, more dynamic than older-style home pages. They are more personal than traditional journalism, and definitely more public than diaries. A blog is often a mixture of what is happening in a person's life and what is happening on the Web, a kind of hybrid diary site. So, there are as many unique types of blogs as there are people.

These are a few common characteristics of a blog, but blog types may slightly vary. Some blogs provide succinct description of judiciously selected links. Some others

contain commentary and links to the news of the day. Few are endless stream of blurts about the writer's day. Few others are - political blogs, intellectual blogs, some are hilarious and some topic driven. They are all - *Weblogs*.

More than a list of links and less than a full-blown zine, weblogs may be hard to describe but easy to recognize. A blog can be recognized by its format: a webpage with new entries placed at the top, updated frequently. Often at the side of the page is a list of links pointing to similar sites. Some sites consist only of a weblog. Others include the weblog as a part of a larger site. Even though there are so many different blogs, there is one thing common about all the bloggers: most are noncommercial and are impassioned about their subjects.

Weblogs tend to be personal and immediate but they are more simple and straightforward. People can publish their thoughts, even for the first time, with almost no training. Within these constraints, sites such as advogato.org, blogger.com, livejournal.com and the venerable Slashdot.org each serve a different niche.

Defining Blogs

A frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and Web links.

Blogs are alternatively called Web Logs or Weblogs. However, "blog" is used unanimously because it seems less likely to cause confusion, as "web log" can also mean a server's log files.

Blogs & The Worldwide Web

Both personal sites and lists of links have existed since the web was born. Indeed, the ability to link one document to the other that existed on the global network drew early enthusiasts to the Web. They published pages and eagerly perused the pages

published by others. That was the time when the accessibility to the pages from any computer with a modem and a browser was more important than the content of that page. For a while, webpages became an interesting addition to the cyberspace. Then the space got crowded. As a result the web grew at an exponential rate and search for the required information became difficult and simultaneously more time consuming.

Until, a few of these enthusiasts decided to put the links they collected daily onto a single webpage. These people placed their stuff – descriptive text and link/s, for example: their travel records, on the web. The text enabled the reader to know why they should click the link and wait for the page to download. And so a particular type of website was born.

The New York Times article about a website named 'LemonYellow', published in July 1999, didn't say a word about weblogs, but affirmed the notion that webloggers were onto something.

Most of the early weblog editors designed or maintained websites for a living. Few of these editors just knew HTML - the simple coding language used to create webpages.

With Weblogs becoming popular, the personal websites became extensions of their day-to-day lives. Webloggers started rolling personal journals — ongoing links-laden riffs on a favorite subject. Soon they linked to general interest articles to online games, and often to Web-related news.

CHAPTER II
Blog Creation

Blogs enable interaction and invite others to reward a person's creative effort with feedback. They weave new social networks, introducing people with common passions. Another reason why one should start blogging is dissemination of "micro-opinions" important to a small audience – opinions that would never make it in newspapers.

A widely dispersed audience depends on weblogs for filtered and disseminated information as it plays an important role positioned outside the mainstream of mass media.

Professional bloggers are experts in evaluating the nature of information sources; it is not reasonable to assume that all readers can do the same. Readers depend on the bloggers to provide them with their knowledge share. Weblogs point to, comment on, and spread information according to their own idiosyncratic perspective. Readers accept all information provided to them via blogs – all information – including articles from a source that is a little wacky or has a strong agenda etc, but not an unethical nature of source.

If it is felt that a well-written article can stand on its own only with ethically clear and relevant sources. Readers may cease to trust a blog where disguised or unclear source of an article is discovered. Making the sources clear or providing the readers all the facts is important because it enables the reader to avoid evaluating the facts differently. So, weblog's ethical standards are designed in way that delineates the responsibilities of weblog professionals and provide a clear code of conduct to ensure the integrity of the news.

You can start your own blog. This unit will discuss how to create your own blog.

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Starting Your Own Blog

As we have discussed earlier, blogs are posts that are short, informal and sometimes deeply personal no matter what the topic of discussion is. They can be characterized by their conversational tone. If you think the concept is new and you have not done anything like blogging before, think again.

Whether a professional journalist or a teenage high school student, they all have been doing the same thing: using blog to link to their friends and rivals and comment on what they are doing. So, everybody blogs.

If a person has a web presence but is disappointed with static homepage - if an elegant treatment of posts on a global platform is what they require, then 'blogging' is what they require to do. One may also consider to blog if feedback is required from people you have never heard of.

Weblogs, definitely, are the mavericks of the online world. Two of its greatest strengths are their ability to filter and disseminate information to a widely dispersed audience, and their position outside the mainstream of mass media.

Identifying & Choosing The Right Tools

Bloggers are constantly discovering new ways to express their ideas through new markup. There are bloggers who are using the latest state-of-the-art "visual" web design programs, but few others consider using *HTML code* is not a bad idea altogether.

The XHTML family can accommodate extensions through XHTML modules and techniques to develop new XHTML-conforming modules. These modules permit the combination of existing and new feature sets when developing content and when designing new user agents.

With so many different ways to access the Internet, the XHTML family is designed

keeping in mind the general user agent interoperability. Through document profiling mechanism, servers, proxies, and user agents are able to create best effort content transformation. This language is both RSS and XML conforming. The content can be readily viewed, edited, and validated with standard XML tools. XHTML documents can utilize applications (e.g. scripts and applets) that rely upon either the HTML Document Object Model or the XML Document Object Model.

Bloggers may also use *Movable Type* for the weblog. Movable Type is a powerful, customizable publishing system, which installs on web servers to enable bloggers to manage and update weblogs. This enables a blogger to hand edit the other parts and pages, including the Daily Links, in TextPad. Bloggers may use a date format string for the individual entries, and for monthlies.

Movable Type Installation is followed by *Plugins*. There are many to choose from. MT Plugin Directory and the Movable Type Support Forums are two resources that can be referred to. Most of the plugins make users typographically correct and enables them to properly use curly-quotes, ellipses, em-dashes, and en-dashes. A feature of pluggins combines trackbacks (comments on other articles from other blogs) and comments into one page. Another use is to create author comments and addendums in the comments engine. Few plugins may allow bloggers to add additional fields, example: using keywords field to create additional fields. Few others create a collection of links at the bottom of each individual entry page. Title attributes can be used with all the links. Movable Type includes a default *RSS Feed*. Bloggers may set up individual feeds for each thread and comments feed by following the naming convention of individual archives - changing it to an .xml ending. Bloggers may even add a *Subscription Field*.

Also, bloggers may consider using a *WebDrive* in place of a FTP client. This tool is used to map FTP and WebDAV servers to a network drive letter in Windows using remote files like local ones in any application. Blogger may also consider using validated *HTML 4.01 Transitional code* with a validated *stylesheet*.

Blogs demand more than graphic design and HTML proficiency. They demand extensive interaction with visitors. So, installing a *Discussion Forum* is a must, as it allows communities to exchange ideas and opinions. Tools that could be considered

are database programming, *CGI/Perl scripting, Flash animation* etc.

In addition to this, bloggers may consider having an *Accessory Sideblog* - another blog that stores ancillary information and tools for the existing blog.

Accessory Sideblog allows:

- Easy updation
- Changes in entries/ information from within Movable Type interface
- Availability of comments and trackbacks

Bloggers may consider buying opensource weblogging softwares. These easily installable softwares offer features like: fully-integrated comments, searching, file uploading and image handling, completely customizable output through dozens of templates and variables, multiple author support, etc. For example: few blogs allow bloggers to provide a template of their page that indicates where they want your posts to appear. Clicking the "Publish" button automatically sends their new page to the website where they want their blogs to appear. Similarly, there are sites that enable bloggers to place the RSS feed of their blog onto any html page. For example: bloggers can copy the completed JavaScript and paste it on any web page they would like to distribute.

Bloggers can host their blog on their own as well with any good web-hosting company. They can choose a good web host, buy space on their server and host their blogs with them.

The details of few of the blog creating softwares are mentioned below:

FactoSystem Weblog (ASP based)

http://sourceforge.net/projects/facto/

Facto is a collaborative web publishing system. The system can be used for creating personal or group 'Blog' type sites. It is written entirely in Active Server Pages (ASP) and can use Microsoft Access or SQL Server as a database backend. Its development status is : 4 - Beta, 5 - Production/Stable and environment in which it runs is web

environment, Win32 (MS Windows). The intended audience is defined to be end users/desktop, other audience and system administrators. The software's natural language is English. The operating system that is required is Windows 95/98/2000 and the programming languages used are ASP and JavaScript. It is mostly used for message boards and site management.

Facto can be a customized. One can try coding to "render a blurb in HTML" to be in a separate file. It relies on the BlurbRS recordset having the correct field names with the SQL in some of the other files. Instead of querying the Comments table every time it displays a blurb. The layout can also be changed as some people may not require the left or right columns. A function on the routines page can be created that displays the blurb as required. The searchresults page then needs to be fixed since a different name for the blurb is used to do this.

InstaBlog

http://instablog.hit.bg/

InstaBlog appeared as a result of two things: responding to the simplest possible way to maintain a weblog, and trying out the extremely cool Perl MSN IM client. InstaBlog functions in the following manner: it is run as a background process on a machine with Internet access. With its own Passport identification it is constantly logged into the MSN instant messenger service. When something worthy of note is found in the weblog, chat windows is opened with the InstaBlog and the weblog entry is typed. The software takes it, adds it to a copy of the weblog it maintains, and uploads it via FTP to a webserver. The message should appear on the website specified in config.xml. The InstaBlog bot uploads three files: the actual weblog.xml, the stylesheet to display it (weblog.xsl), and an index.html which redirects to weblog.xml. The software is written in Perl.

OpenJournal

http://www.grohol.com/downloads/oj/

OpenJournal is a completely Web-based interface. The software's features include: automated file creation; automated index updating; editing of all files through a

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Web-based interface; entries with or without titles and time posted; automated archiving based on a weekly or monthly format. All done through ordinary text files and no additional perl modules are needed to run it. Basically, the software allows the users to keep an online journal, customize and configure it. All needed to do after installation is to write in it from time to time. It requires no third-party, external perl libraries or support programs. The program itself is relatively small and simple and takes about 5 minutes to install and another 5 or 10 to customize. The 2.x versions of OpenJournal make use of the auth.pl perl script to handle its authentication routines. Other features of the software include: automatic new file creation, automatic indexing, automatic weekly or monthly archiving without need of cron, no messy backend database to worry about, uses plain text and html files, web-based editing of all files created without using cookies, encrypted user accounts and robust authorization, multiuser support, preview functionality, configuration file separate from main program, templated construction (easy customization), cross-platform date function .

GeekLog - The Ultimate Weblog System

http://sourceforge.net/projects/geeklog

GeekLog is a web content management system suitable for running full-featured community sites. It supports article posting, threaded comments, event scheduling, and link management and is built around a design philosophy that emphasizes ease of use. The development status of the software is 5 - Production/Stable. It requires web environment. The software has been designed keeping in mind the intended audience to be developers, end users/desktop. The software's natural language is English and uses OS Independent as its operating system. The programming language that has been used is PHP and functions mostly to maintain dynamic content.

Other Useful Sites:
For Commenting Systems

aspcomments
http://www.sneaker.org/index.html

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Free ASP-based comment system for use on Blogger-backed and other weblogs.

BlogBack

http://www.tecknik.net/blogback/

Comment system that does not require server installation.

blogKomm

http://blogkomm.com/index.php

PHP-based system to integrate comments directly into a blog

cgiComments

http://www.knurdle.com/commenting.php

Free perl-based comment system for use on Blogger-backed and other weblogs.

dotcomments

http://www.foreword.net/

Free PHP-based comment system for use on Blogger-backed and other weblogs.

Enetation

http://www.enetation.co.uk/index.php?

Free hosted commenting system

SnorComments

http://www.snorland.com/scripts/snorcomments/

Hosted commenting system for Blogger-based blogs

YACCS

http://rateyourmusic.com/yaccs/

"Commenting made simple"

For Posting APIs and Tools

AvantBlog

http://www.dentedreality.com.au/avantblog/

Posting from Palm or Windows CE via AvantGo

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BLog

http://www.iternum.net/developer/webservices/blog/index.jsp

Web services interface to (I think) Blogger.

blogBuddy

http://blogbuddy.sourceforge.net/http://blogbuddy.sourceforge.net/

Windows front-end to Blogger.

Bloggenmoz

http://bloggenmoz.antville.org/topics/download

Blogger API support for Mozilla Composer

Blogger API

http://www.blogger.com/developers/api/

Details of the XML-RPC interface to Blogger

BloggerBot

http://www.fibiger.org/bloggerbot/

AIM client for Blogger.

bloggerCOM

http://www.fibiger.org/bloggerbot/

COM interface to the Blogger API

blogger.el

http://elisp.info/

EMACS module to post using the Blogger API

BlogniX

http://blognix.sourceforge.net/

Blogger client for Linux

BlogScript

http://www.webentourage.com/

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Mac OS X.1 tool for easy posting to Blogger-powered blogs.

Designing Compatible Blogs

As the web is considered to be a fluid medium, it is important for the blog to be viewable under all circumstances - with any browser or on any computer. Also it should look and function as close to the same way as possible. That is why it is advised to design for maximum compatibility.

Inevitably, choices will need to be made between compatibility and design. For example: whether to use or not to use flash animation as splash page. For it to run in all circumstances it is advised to test it extensively with many different browsers and computers. The work should be tested on both Macs and PCs.

Achieving a successful design requires inspiration, careful planning, and hard work. Besides this, of course, a few softwares are required. Here is a list of software that can be used for the various phases of the designing project:

Graphic Design

- Photoshop 7
- Adobe Illustrator 10
- Adobe LiveMotion
- Macromedia Flash 5
- Macromedia Fireworks MX
- Macromedia Freehand 10
- Graphic Converter

Web Page Construction

- Macromedia Dreamweaver MX
- BBEdit
- Lots of Trader Joe's coffee

Details Of Other Blogging Tools and Add Ons are mentioned below:

Bloglinker.com

http://www.bloglinker.com/

blogLinker.com is a free tool for managing web links and increasing site traffic. It can be embedded anywhere in the web page and can be easily configured to fit the existing site design. Once a user is registered, a special code is provided to his webpage. The toll allows users to add websites to the list of links. If the site is already member of blogLinker, then its details will be listed. If the website you link to is also a member of blogLinker then user's website will automatically appear in their list of links. This increasing the number of visitors to user's site. One can even hide sites from the list. The sites hidden will be made aware of this and vice versa. Similarly, list entries can be edited or deleted. If a reciprocated link is deleted, the link to user's site is deleted in return. In other words, a bunch of links cannot be added. People can add their site to user's list by clicking a link at the bottom of the list in his webpage. The link will be reciprocated, further promoting the site. The look of the list can be customized. This is very easy to do; once blogLinker code is copied & pasted into your chosen web page, the user is directed to experiment with the look and feel. At the bottom of the 'Format Your List' page, there is a set of 16 drop-down lists. Each list corresponds to a feature of the blogLinker, such as header font color or text size/type etc. Either a value from the drop-down list can be selected or the required value can be entered directly into the input box, just below each drop-down list, allowing for maximum configurability. Click 'Save Changes' when ready. To test the changes done, simply reload the web page. User scan also display different lists with different categories required.

BlogSnob

http://blogsnob.idya.net/

BlogSnob is an experimental service for members of the blogging community. It enables users to tell everyone in the webspace about his or her blog thru simple textbased ads. It requires the users to insert a simple piece of code into their page. Every time someone views the site, a small text ad of another blog shows up on the

page. BlogSnob is basically an ad exchange for Personal Blogs, where the ad is in the form of a Text Ad that blends into the site design. This way, it does not spoil all the hardwork a user has done in beautifying his site, but still serves its purpose. The software also allows a person to read many other beautiful, yet less popular blogs. Plus, a section called SnobJumping talks about sites, in general. User moderation is a way by which the users themselves help to keep the BlogSnob network clean, friendly and nice to surf through. Any member of blogsnob can simply check out sites randomly. If they find a site that interests them, they can talk about the site in the "Cool sites" board in the Forums. If the user's made a really good discovery - that is a yet not popular but wonderful site, the site and the discoverer's site are both rewarded with publicity on Snobjumping.

Reblogger

http://jsoft.ca/reblogger/

Reblogger is a comment system for web logs that is designed to work with Blogger blogs and other systems as well. It can be used as a remote commenting system (for those without cgi capability), or can be installed on any server with CGI capability and perl. Following are specific features of the software: It allows multiple users, i.e., people can add their own reblogger accounts on to user's server. If someone doesn't have a CGI enabled web server, they can host their comments on user's server. If there are extra resources the general public can be allowed to host their comments on server. The template that it uses is like a Blogger template, where special tags can be used to indicate where to put the comments, how should it be formatted and where to put the form to submit a new comment. The software provides the facility of email notification. Reblogger can be set to send an email to user whenever someone leaves a comment on web log. One of its features includes removing unwanted comments/ offensive comment.

It can also help in IP Blocking. If someone is continually harassing the user, then he or she can block their IP address. This will restrict them to from commenting. HTML in comments: it allows usage of , <i></i>, <u></u> and tags in comments. Also, links are created automatically when URLS are typed in a comment. Time Zone can be selected by the user to have the time and date that is displayed adjusted accordingly. Installation of the software:

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Installation can be easy using Linux/Unix or Windows/DOS. The archive run the file called "install" before the installer ask some questions to get an idea about where on server reblogger will reside. The URL of the website is entered where reblogger is installed. Start with http://. In most cases CGI scripts can only be run from the CGI-bin directory. So, here the user needs to specify the path to the CGI-bin. If there is no CGI-bin, then change this to something other than the default (try /reblogger/). Otherwise you probably won't need to change this. This allows the user to specify where important things, for example: password, are to be stored. The software uses sendmail to send any of the emails it needs to send. Once this information is entered the installer will try to figure out what the web address of the reblogger directory is. The installer will then show the information entered. If everything is right enter "y". The installer will now ftp reblogger to user's website. The reblogger is ready to use. Now that reblogger is installed, a user account should be created. Once account is created the user is taken to the comment manager, where he can customize the settings. Reblogger can be used by just one person for one blog, or one person for a few blogs, or by many people for many blogs. Users can allow as many people as they want.

w.bloggar

http://wbloggar.com/

w.bloggar is an application that targets to be an interface between the user and his blog(s). It is considered to be a Post and Template editor, with several features and resources that the browser based blog editors can not offer. w.bloggar a software that runs over Windows GUI and allows the user to edit his posts without being connected to the Internet, saving locally one or more texts to be posted in the future. It can be minimized to the Tray bar as an icon and every time the user wants to publish a new text, he just need a click and has the editor ready to work, finished the text, another click and the post will be published. Another great advantage of w.bloggar is that it is compatible with most of weblog systems available, allowing an advanced user to have one only interface to several accounts hosted on several different sites, under different publishing systems. To communicate with the weblog w.bloggar needs that the blog system has implemented an API, the acronym to Application Programming Interface. Currently w.bloggar is compatible with Blogger API, metaWeblog API, MovableType API and b2 API all based on XML-RPC definition.

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To set up w.bloggar to post to your BlogWorks XML blogs, instructions given below should be followed: download w.bloggar from http://wbloggar.com/ and install the application and open the w.bloggar application. A login window will appear allowing the user to create a New Account. BlogWorks username is to be entered here along with the password. Click OK. It will then direst towards the account connection window, where the address of the host where BlogWorks is installed into Host field. If the webserver runs on a port other than 80, the port setting should also be changed. Click OK to confirm the entered information. Its functions include: post and publish on Blogger, b2, MovableType, Nucleus, BigBlogTool, BlogWorks XML, Blogalia and Drupal blogs, edit posts and templates, save posts locally for further publishing, import text files, add links and images, format text font and alignment, multiple accounts and blogs, post preview, colorized html code, html tags menu, find/replace option, post to many blogs, ping to weblogs.com, title and category fields, spell checking, file and image upload, custom tags menu , toolbar icons skin, supports windows xp, easy account configuration

blogBuddy

http://blogbuddy.sourceforge.net/

blogBuddy is a small Windows 95/NT/ME/2000/XP program written in Delphi that manages Blogger.com and other weblogs which implement the Blogger API. Features include spell checking and post editing. The current features of the application includes: posting of new entries, saving of blogid, username and password in an .INI file, proxy settings, get list of available blogs, system tray icon for quick posting, coming features sourceforge keeps an updated list on coming features in the requested features tracker.

The current version is 0.5. The changes that has been incorporated in version 0.5 are given below:

Following new features were added: installer via nullsoft (superpimp|scriptable) install system, windows XP look where available, improved error messages when remote site returns error, spelling, minimal password encryption, editing of recent

posts, keyboard shortcuts for posting and publishing, posting buttons put back where they were.

Following features were fixed: password prompt is always displayed, size and location is saved (again), two bugs after selecting font fixed: duplicate entries in blog combobox and crash when saving, crashing when updating blogs and then canceling options dialog fixed.

Deciding A Name For The Blog

Save the situation where the whole weblog ready except indecision on the blog name. Bloggers may consider browsing through hundreds of weblogs for ideas. The most common names range from:

The lame - "Pete's Weblog," "JamieJ's Weblog," "Darren S's Blog" to
The inane - "Fumes n' Flames," "My Random Thoughts," "SomePlaceElse", to The sublime but already taken - "Wordridden," "Colossal Waste of Bandwidth", "The Unseen World"

Naming a blog after an individual's name, may be blogger's name, reflects that the weblog might focus on none but himself. It is recommended that personal names should be kept out of the blog title.

Name, undoubtedly, may bring hundreds, if not thousands, of web denizens to a weblog. A weblog should have name that strikes the right note.

CHAPTER III
Publishing Your Blog

Blogging today has become a popular surrogate venue that offers voice and platform to common people. Uncensored information, unmediated conversation and uncontrolled voice are considered to be its greatest strength. Also, the absence of gatekeepers and the freedom from all consequences compromises their integrity and thus their value.

We have entered an era vibrating with the din of small voices. The newest and most rapidly developing Internet phenomenon is the Weblog. It is hard to differ that Blog are better, faster and cheaper than the "old" media. Today, the blog battle is not just between amateurs and professionals; it is also between entrepreneurs and news organizations.

Weblog's combination of instantaneous comment, links to breaking news stories, and links to other blogs and their sources permits a very rapid and fluid means of following and understanding events. Particularly useful is the ability of bloggers to check and fact-find on articles in the mainstream press, and particularly to pick apart and quickly expose errors by mainstream pundits, broadcast reporters and other sources.

People have been maintaining blogs for long, but it gained momentum with the introduction of automated published systems that simplified and accelerated the publishing process.

Making Your Presence Felt

With so many amateurs and professional writers who write compelling and useful pieces, blogs enable new idea entrepreneurs to explore their conceptual niches. To

make a compelling presence on the web, bloggers should be able to identify what's hot and what's not. They should be able to capture new idea floating in the web-space and should think of ways of its best utility. In other words, bloggers can build their online presence by delivering high in demand information.

Bloggers should ensure that a blog as a diary of events should capture things missed by the computerized information-sorting schema. It should present it as a record of the events as they happened.

To ensure a compelling web presence the design of the website should also be considered, as the look and feel of the site also attracts visitors to the site. The site design of a blog should reflect the tastes of the users rather than the designers. It should be user friendly and should have the context and interactive features.

To have a constant online presence a blogger should not:

- Write entries to just please readers or advertisers
- Post entries for the sake of posting or to get paid
- Ignore checking facts while pushing things in under deadlines
- Create a situation that leads to conflicts of interest
- Disclose who is paying and why

For an effective online presence advertisements can play a major role. Advertisers can reward Bloggers who inspire large or passionate audiences. Advertisements establish a clear space and format on the site. It also enables blog readers to buy goods and services from companies or individuals who appreciate blogs, who support their beliefs. Moreover, ads are themselves interesting to read.

The Strategies For Success

For the last half-century, we are slowly evolving our habits, expectations, businesses, life-styles, needs, social interactions and self-conceptions to catch up with the computer revolution. Society is still learning to express itself within and through the new tools. The "blog" is more than the sum of its conceptual

constituents. It is a tool that enables people with different tastes to come together and explore the creativity within them. Blogs give them voice to their views and expression that craves an outlet. These expressions of free emotions enable a blogger and his or her readers to typically be "early adopters" or "trendsetters" and "opinion leaders".

Blogging has taken off in a remarkable fashion. Weblogs run from single person operation to large communities spread throughout the world. Besides offering a great way for readers to constantly find updated news and information, it also allows authors to connect to thousands of readers in a personal way. The plethora of tools available today has helped the weblog to publish posts to a great extent. These are probably the reasons why they have been widely adopted and maintained - for several years in some cases.

Blogs have never seen so much of growth as it is the case today. The competition is high and the benchmarks aren't what it should be. In such as a scenario, it is important to define and follow strategies that could pave your way to success. This section of the unit will identify and discuss such strategies.

Identify The Target Market

The foremost strategy to success is identifying and adapting to the target market.

Blogs are useful, but it comes with a lot of chaff. This is because there are at least as many opinions as there are participants and focus on a thought-stream is the key. Earlier readers had to sift and choose. If a blogger knows who these readers are, then they could adapt themselves to their needs. For example; these days bloggers mark the dross clearly enough, so that people who want raw, unfiltered opinions about a particular subject can see it. If your blog is in demand and you know the requirement of your readers, then you may open the gates for registered users. These new information gatekeepers help to rewrite the rules to the degree that they complement, supplement and otherwise advance understanding. This has definitely helped the bloggers to attract audience.

Also important is building trust through conversation. Conversations that build trust and awareness deliver information that is timely, relevant, and informative. The content of your blog should create personalized conversation with readers. To do this, it is necessary to know the audience who will be reading the content.

In other words, understanding the target market is the most essential aspect before thinking about any other strategy element. Understanding target market includes: knowing whom to reach and what their informational needs are. Once this is known, bloggers can be prepared to fill those needs.

Another benefit of knowing your target market is that it allows you to plan things ahead of time. For example: even before the blog is officially launched, topics that will start the initial discussion can be planned carefully, considering the group/community it will focus.

So, it pays to work on target audience and it is important to plan, as this would attract only those readers who are directly interested in the services or products.

Summing it all up, effective knowledge of the target market enables to:

- Efficiently segment the audience profile
- Gain valuable marketplace intelligence through data mining
- Know and follow evolving trends and movements
- Cater to the profile characteristics within the planned content categories
- Effectively individualize communications

In the past, people considered that individual blogs don't appeal to a broad audience because they are not serious or objective or edited. They considered it to contain meaningless personal details. A thing that was considered to be its drawback has now been recognized as its appeal.

Most human verbal communication is not rocket science; it's sloppy, looping, incoherent, and prolix. Blogs compare rather well to an older and more widely used communications tool, talking. Advertising in a blog or blogset will enable an advertiser quickly to communicate with a critical mass of thinkers.

Sure, opinion pages, online diaries, Christmas newsletters, commonplace books and blogs are things of past. What is new is the blogosphere, the endless and effortless networking of conversations. The blogosphere is a social fractal, a network that scales up and down with equal facility.

Blogs serve passionate, activist citizens who eat, drink, drive, argue, influence and buy more voraciously than their couch-potato neighbors. Blog readers, wired to value peer knowledge over brand, are a prime audience for new messages. The blogosphere's self-organized networks offer adventurous advertisers the opportunity to target unique and previously unarticulated demographics.

Whether the thousands of people blogging their own personal subjects can be called journalists, or whether they can make a living at it, or whether the wide availability of the free blogging tools makes for a hard time filtering the signal from the noise, are all hot discussion topics; but for the people consuming blogs as their premier news service, the arguments are somewhat irrelevant.

Give The Readers What They Want

Web gives a lot of exposure; weblog stabilizes the exposure with a profound purpose. The purpose of a Weblog is to complement e-newsletters, serving readers in a way that extends a blogger's expertise and leadership in the market.

So, what is it that is expected from a blog? A blog is considered to be a place to inform and to be informed. Straight talk is what readers consider to be an ideal blog message. Straight talk is a four or five sentence of direct, informative content about a specific issue or bit of news.

Blogs consists of human expressions and is expected to have a soulful purpose. Blog posts are expected to be a personal post, as it can convey blogger's emotions. So, these messages are mostly written in first person singular and are rich in emotions. Blogs are also expected to provide details from the writer's life: missed flights, break-ups, rodents under the stove, computer breakdowns, muggings, and tamale

recipes and more.

A blogger should always remember that if there are doubts that readers will discount the article entirely based on its context; they shouldn't consider linking it at all.

Authentication of the message is one important aspect that a blog post is expected to adhere to. Blogs are expected to be clear about its source. This avoids chances where readers may cease to trust the bloggers. These chances may take shape if discovered that the information source has been disguised or the blogger didn't make the source of an article clear. The readers might have evaluated these sources differently had they been given all the facts. Into every aspect of the practice of weblogging, transparency is one of the weblog's distinguishing characteristics and greatest strengths. A writer's goal and priority should always be clarity.

It is a bloggers responsibility to focus exclusively on producing content that attracts the reader. What determines the right kind of content? This can be determined by reading other blogs and hitting whatever is hot in discussion or high in trend.

The most compelling bloggers are necessarily the ones with the most insightful analyses and the best links; besides this the most successful are those who get the reader interested in their own ongoing story. Because bloggers on similar subjects link to each other, the reader finds it easier to understand opposing points of view. For bloggers, not linking to others is a death sentence for their ratings.

Be At Your Creative Best

Weblogs are, at best, an essential cog in the World Wide Web and at worst, a mindless diversion. In any case, many of them are interesting, thought provoking, and oftentimes downright entertaining.

In fact, the immediacy of the Web and the ability for people to constantly update sites makes Weblogs the perfect forum for individuals to express themselves in a creative manner while providing their readers with links to useful information.

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The demands and maintenance of a successful blog pester bloggers to be at their creative best. The urge to be the best and to be there forever builds a better writer out of a normal blogger.

Weblogs written by an author usually take on a personal tone and offer an almost voyeuristic look into someone's life.

The author constantly writes about the interesting things - types of their little struggles and successes at work or at home, and what world events fascinate them etc.

Writing weblogs offer a refreshing, personal, and non-commercial tone absent from much of the typical content found on the Web. As there are no editors, the writing on most of the weblogs feels honest and real. The community of other weblogs acts as fact checkers to root out any fraudulent claims. So, bloggers are constantly on their toes to bring up the 'real-best'.

Clarity Is The Key

As blogs are a great tool for brainstorming and sharing knowledge, they should be written and thought upon clearly.

Whatever writers write for blogs should make sense. Grammar, spelling, punctuation, rhythm, syntax, and structure do not matter as much as the focus does. It is the clear focus on a particular topic of discussion and the concise nature of the post with which they could move the reader.

Due to these characteristics, news organizations may someday be willing to point to weblogs or weblog entries as serious sources, but only if weblogs have, as a whole, demonstrated integrity in their information gathering and dissemination, and consistency in their online conduct.

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Blog Reputation Counts

The reputation that a blog carries is a vital determinant of its popularity in the market. If a blogger understands the web culture in a manner in which it should be understood, then success might be just about the corner.

It is the "web culture" that is considered to be both cause and effect of a "post-intellectual" society characterized by "rootlessness, mobility, a sense of impermanence, and a loss of orientation. But this isn't a license to publish any unwanted information. A blogger should always remember that the kind of information they publish in a blog is the kind of audience they invite.

The quality and content of a blog post varies wildly, as does their readership. Some are published by experienced writers, others by people who are often as entertaining, informative, and accurate as the experienced writers. But whatever goes on board attract criticisms. So, it is important to check the authenticity of the information that is to be published. Reliability, authenticity and value-adding information are the determinants of a blog's reputation. You should check the facts and the links. If you find any thing that needs to be changed, correct that before anybody else picks it up.

Follow The Standard Rules

Blogs release the voice of the readership by allowing experts in their field to correct others, and be corrected themselves. With so many participants, being dissimilar becomes difficult and it becomes more difficult with a certain set of similar rules.

Let us find out what these rules are and how are these rules important for success:

Time Is Your Ace

Bloggers should take care of the freshness of the content. Publishing the content on time is the mantra. Bloggers may post a link to the original news source and can convey the news hours before established outlets can commit resources to their own

- 30 -

rehash and news top.

Share The Credit

While traditional media avoid reporting anything "not invented", bloggers should reveal the web's vast resources through compulsive linking. Giving credit to the real authors should do this linking to web resources.

Roll On The Blogs

Bloggers should weave new broadcast networks. In other words, bloggers should regularly commend and link to other blogger's posts.

Chronology

To make room for fresh arriving news most of the traditional publishers dump their old product into search enabled database warehouses. But a blog should be like a diary-like stack of events. Its chronological news presentation should fit with innate human story-telling or information-processing habits.

Site Construction

Do not over-engineer and brand-bloat the site. Avoid heavy-handed attempts at graphic branding that may generate more clutter and confusion with poorly placed content. Highlight the urgency and directness of the content. Make it more funny and insight-filled blog.

Reliability

Defeat the notion that Blogs are unreliable. Writing only about the truth can do this. Be accurate. Be consistent. Sometimes, blogs distill a reality too fragmented for a person to comprehend, so avoid breaking links and avoid directing people to sites where they would not like to go.

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Communication

Most human verbal communication is not rocket science; it's sloppy, looping, incoherent, and prolix. Blogs compare rather well to an older and more widely used communications tool, talking. Advertising in a blog will enable an advertiser to communicate with a critical mass of thinkers.

Adhering to Privacy Statement

People who report the news should be aware of the consequences of abuse that is inherent in the system. Handling privacy is not an easy task. A blogger's ethical standards are designed to delineate the journalist's responsibilities and provide a clear code of conduct that ensures the integrity of the news. The only exception to this rule is when inadvertently personal information about someone else is revealed. It is only fair to remove the offending entry altogether, when you discover that you have violated a confidence or made an acquaintance uncomfortable by mentioning his or her name in your write-up. Also important is that you remember that you have made a mistake and try never to repeat that again.

A Touch Of Human Interest

Blogs should provide details from the writer's life: missed flights, break-ups, and rodents under the stove, computer meltdowns, muggings, and tamale recipes. These are the examples of what visitors actually want to read.

Discover The Passion Within

Blogs are mostly written in the first person and can convey a blast of the emotions. This emotional richness may consist of irony, elation, bitterness, tears, laughter, profanity, boredom and compulsiveness. Blogs should be written as human expressions rather than corporate excretions.

Devotion

It should be remembered that readers would reciprocate to all honest efforts. They are equally devoted. If bloggers get to write about what they care about at whatever length and in whatever detail – they will write with far more commitment than the average corporate scribe.

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CHAPTER IV
Conclusion

A widely dispersed audience depends on weblogs for filtered and disseminated information as it plays an important role positioned outside the mainstream of mass media.

Professional bloggers are experts in evaluating the nature of information sources; it is not reasonable to assume that all readers can do the same. Readers depend on the bloggers to provide them with their knowledge share. Weblogs point to, comment on, and spread information according to their own idiosyncratic perspective. Readers accept all information provided to them via blogs – all information – including articles from a source that is a little wacky or has a strong agenda etc, but not an unethical nature of source.

If it is felt that a well-written article can stand on its own only with ethically clear and relevant sources. Readers may cease to trust a blog where disguised or unclear source of an article is discovered. Making the sources clear or providing the readers all the facts is important because it enables the reader to avoid evaluating the facts differently. So, weblog's ethical standards are designed in way that delineates the responsibilities of weblog professionals and provide a clear code of conduct to ensure the integrity of the news.

Blogs And Associated Responsibilities

It is unrealistic to expect every weblogger to present an even-handed picture of the world. It is also unrealistic to expect them to be forthcoming about their sources, biases, and behavior. Any weblogger who expects to be accorded the privileges and protections of a professional journalist will need to have associated responsibilities. It is an individual's professionalism and meticulous observance of recognized ethical

standards that determines his or her status in the eyes of society and the law.

Following standards should always be kept in mind:

- Only fact that is believed to be true should be published
- When you reference, link to the sources if material exists online
- If any incorrect information is published, correct it publicly
- Each entry should be written in a way that could not be changed. Only additions should be made possible, but no rewriting or deletion
- All interest conflict should be disclosed
- Always note questionable and biased sources

Weblogging gives you freedom of expression. At the same time, it has associated responsibilities. It is an individual's professionalism and meticulous observance to recognize these standards.

Though Weblogs started out as merely logs of interesting Web sites, they have evolved into an exchange of communication and information. Professionals, today, are channeling the impulse in such a way that it can actually make some small specific difference in the world.

Professional bloggers are acutely aware of the potential for abuse that their system inherits. They have realized that rights have associated responsibilities; in the end it is an individual's professionalism and meticulous observance of recognized ethical standards that determines status in the eyes of society and the law.

It is considered that the value of blogging for charity offers a more personal connection for donors. Few bloggers have even initiated the practice by adding a donation button to the blog, where people may probably contribute a buck or two. An example of such site is blogathon.org. The list of charities is just as diverse as the bloggers themselves, from the National Film Preservation Foundation to Heifer International, which donates farm animals to hunger-stricken regions. More than a dozen bloggers are backing cancer support group Gilda's Club and several participants have already raised $6,000 toward a new ambulance for Magen David Adom, the Israeli equivalent of the American Red Cross. Another example is

Darwinmag.com, which recently had an article on how the Royal Dutch/Shell Group of Companies' Weblog of "open discussion" provided an example to "companies that want to take their customers seriously as world citizens and not just as potential revenue sources." The article points to The Shell Report, whose tagline is "protecting the environment and managing resources."

Weblog provide many advantages to its readers. It can provide additional information to what corporate media can provide - it can expose the fallacy of an argument or perhaps reveal an inaccurate detail.

Weblogs have been all the rage in online media, but 2003 will be the real breakout year for blogs, as more journalists use them, and more celebrities use them. The weblog network's potential influence is one of the main reasons that mainstream news organizations have begun investigating the phenomenon. Mass media seeks, above all, to gain a wide audience. Advertising revenues, the lifeblood of any professional publication or broadcast, depend on the size of that publication's audience. Content, from a business standpoint, is also a concern. Weblogs fits in all these requirements.

There is every indication that weblogs will gain even greater influence as their numbers grow and awareness of the form becomes more widespread. Someday, news organizations may be willing to point to weblogs or weblog entries as serious sources, but only if weblogs have, as a whole, demonstrated integrity in their information gathering and dissemination, and consistency in their online conduct.

The Essentials Of Blog Etiquettes

Comment sections on blogs are perhaps the most potential medium for misunderstanding. With free expression and the option of anonymity it is unrealistic to expect a weblogger to present an even-handed picture of the world, but it is very reasonable to expect them to cooperate with their sources, biases, and behavior. This section of the unit will assess certain rules or guideline necessary to check web ethics of a blog.

The first principle deals with how to make an assertion. Make an assertion in good faith; state facts only if you are sure about it with the following note – 'to the best of my knowledge'. Never post an article if there are reasons to believe that something is far from factual basis, but there will be times when you will find yourself speculating. Whenever you do that, admit it in your article and always note your reservations.

Before you shoot a quick reply to an uncomplimentary remark or comment, make sure that you understand what it actually meant. Improper placement of words and tone variations sometimes make all the difference in the delivery of a sentence. It is advisable to be respectful, and give others the benefit of the doubt.

When you link to referenced material, you actually allow the readers to judge the accuracy and insightfulness of your statements. This will enable you to preserve transparency and integrity.

Everyone argues differently. Some people do it forcefully and others are more interested in dialoguing. People are rarely persuaded by heavy replies than the humble ones. Humble replies are easily challenged.

If you find that you have linked to a story that was untrue, make a note of it and link to a more accurate report. Ideally, these corrections appear in the most current version of your weblog and as an added note to the original entry.

There is absolutely no need and no good excuse for speaking condescendingly to those with whom you disagree. This rule also applies to those who see fit to broadcast their discord with another individual in public. The comments section of a heavily trafficked weblog is not the correct place to defame the person you hate.

Write each entry as if it could not be changed; add to, but do not rewrite or delete, any entry. If you invest each entry with intent, you will ensure your personal and professional integrity. Example: a weblogger complains about inaccuracies in an online article; the writer corrects those inaccuracies and notes them; the weblogger's entry is now meaningless? Is it? Deleting the entry will remove evidence to the whole incident - but it did. Ideally, bloggers should note beneath the original entry that the

writer has made the corrections and the article is now, to the weblogger's knowledge, accurate.

A serious article may be linked to a highly biased source. It is the blogger's responsibility to clearly note the nature of the site on which it was found. Well-written articles can be found on sites that are maintained by highly biased organizations. Readers need to know whether an article on a particular sensible topic comes from a site that strongly favors/opposes that topic.

Last but not the least, when commenting on someone else's site, always remember that you are a guest there. Be polite, and double-check your words so that nothing you say could be misconstrued.

Blogs and Journalism

The world has seen the emergence of a new style of journalism, based on a 'raw feed' directly from the source. And the common notion that surrounds the emergence of serving 'raw feed' is that the journalists testing the new waters are bound to wreak havoc on institutionalized media. Also a popular notion is that Weblogs changes the nature of 'news' is in the migration of information from the personal to the public.

Unquestionable, a blog is a medium that gives maximum exposure to one's creativity. Just by hitting the 'post' button and any personal writing becomes published writing.

Weblogging is driving a powerful new form of amateur journalism. Today, millions of Net users — young people especially — have taken up the role of columnist, reporter, analyst and publisher while fashioning their own personal broadcasting networks.

For the inexperienced, a blog consists of a running commentary with pointers to other sites. Some, like Librarian.net, Jim Romenesko's Media News or Steve Outing's E-Media Tidbits, cover entire industries by providing quick bursts of news with links

to full stories.

Journalism and blogging together is becoming popular day by day, more than any other form of blogging. Following reasons are considered to extensively contribute to its increasing popularity:

Creative Freedom

Part of a blog's allure is its unmediated quality. For a journalist, there's no luxury like the luxury of publishing unedited essay. The freedom in being able to present yourself precisely as you want to is of enormous joy. It does not matter how sloppily, irrationally or erratically the content is written. The idea is to publish what you think in the way you think.

Instantaneity

To a few writers, even writing for a weekly magazine may seem like taking ages to print. With a Weblog, you hit the send key and it is out.

Interactivity

It is a kick to receive feedback from people who have taken interest to read and criticize your work. These are the people you have never heard of; who stumble on your Weblog and become a part of your thinking process.

Lack Of Marketing Constraints

When blogging it is not necessarily to tailor a work piece for a certain readership or demographic. People interested in a perspective finds its author – the blogger, instead of the blogger finding a publication that reflects people's interests.

Most of the time, the Weblogs tend to be less about actual reporting and more about analysis and punditry and opinionated commentary. The 9/11 terrorist attacks fuelled the public's appetite for information, analysis and news, if only to make sense of the tragedy. Bloggers rose to prominence by feeding this desire.

Blogging has taken off in remarkable fashion; in a way, it has made good where newsgroups have failed. It has kept the promise that the Internet would provide real community to Web surfers. Tuning in to some of the newsgroups devoted to the terror attacks; one may sometimes feel to be in the middle of a verbal war zone with so much noise passing for informed discussion.

Weblogs run from single person operation to large teams and communities, to business organizations spread throughout the world. They offer a great way for readers to find constantly updated news and information. It also allows authors to connect to thousands of readers in a personal way and add the honest, unedited voice of thousands to increasingly commercializing Web.

The plethora of tools that helps managing the weblog capitalizes on the ease of publishing posts to even greater extent.

These are probably the reasons why they have been widely adopted and maintained - for several years in some cases.

CHAPTER V
The Case Studies

Case Study 1 Of Existing Blog – Weblog As A Marketing Tool

Businesspeople have discovered Web logs to be an online and interactive marketing tool. A good example is SherpaBlog, just launched by MarketingSherpa publisher Anne Holland.

MarketingSherpa's Anne Holland has been amazed at the reaction to her blog. She receives around 20 emails in a day in response to her blog.

Anne Holland regards her blog as a marketing tool, because she feels it lets readers feel like they can reach out to the writer of a blog. The blog enables her to touch the readers in a way that none of formal e-newsletters can. She writes in an off-the-cuff, casual style, and a typo or two doesn't actually matters.

Many of Anne's blog readers are her newsletter subscribers. And while she is careful not to promote her newsletters or other information products, she is finding that those who respond to her blogging are 10 times more likely to buy from her. This is because people who feel a personal connection to a company are more likely to become a customer.

She promotes her blog in every one of her e-newsletters, simply by adding a prominently placed link.

Case Study 2 Of Existing Blog - The Power of Weblog

Matt Haughey is the founder of community weblog MetaFilter. One day he got a telemarketer call while he was sitting at home. The cold callers were Critical IP, who had gotten his home phone number from the central database of domain name owners. He posted his outrage on his own weblog:

The gang at Critical IP feel the whois database is a virtual goldmine worth cold-calling and bothering you at home (when I asked them if they got my number from the whois database, they admitted that yes, that was how they obtained it). ...

Matt then asked other bloggers to spread the word that Critical IP was coldcalling people while they were eating supper:

If you feel like sharing this message with anyone else, just copy this HTML and post on your site: Critical IP sucks.

The result: over the next few days, it was noticed that dozens of blogs had linked to Matt's post, all with the same message: "*Critical IP sucks*". Even today, you may find over two-dozen weblogs linking to Matt's post.

The thought here was that the collective linking of the weblog community can achieve a sort of mob justice, with Google searchers finding the message "*Critical IP sucks*" whenever they searched for Critical IP.

As collective votes of the weblog community determine what sites you see on Google, Matt's personal site soon became the #1 search result for google searches of "Critical IP".

Its worth noting how frighteningly powerful weblogs are. There's even a name in the weblog community for this phenomenon: Google Bombing. Whether it's done accidentally or more purposefully, the very existence of this phenomenon points to the power of Weblogs to impact the Google search experience.

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Case Study 3 Of Existing Blog – Weblog As A Educational Tool

The Nuffield Foundation started a weblog looking for ideas to support students taking their chemistry courses and raise the participation level of online students. Creating a www.chemistry-react.org was their first experiment with blogs.

www.chemistry-react.org proved to be an incredibly popular online genre. Soon they realized that how easy was it to use - no user names to remember and no complicated tools to learn how to use etc. Chemistry-react like all the best blogs became a web page packed with great links and useful annotations.

Often blogs are used as a topical focal point for online communities, proving to be a success where discussion boards or forums have failed. Because the content is news oriented, it means there is always a reason to return to the site. Because the content is time oriented, it is very easy to catch up with what has happened since your last visit.

A blog was good fit for the students taking the chemistry courses too. Taking a course is something that happens over time. As a student, one week you are looking at polymers, the next at acids. All the students around the world will pretty much be experiencing the same challenges at the same time. The blog could support this process.

Though the blog content created became popular with the students, blog owners realized that the commenting feature wasn't used as much as we all expected.

The story would have ended there, except for the fact that a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section was added to the blog and it was massively successful. Students ask intelligent questions and that in turn became useful content which brought the students back for more. Interestingly, the blog has evolved into a news delivering part of a FAQ site.

Nuffield hit upon a format that is popular, productive and participative. They are now developing tools to help the blog team be more effective at answering questions and improving the usability of the FAQ's themselves, by letting the system "learn" about chemistry questions and answers.

Case Study 4 Of Existing Blog – Starting A Weblog

The Washington State Drowning Prevention Network website was lately launched. The majority site is built using XHTML for structure and CSS for presentation, with a table-free layout. Most of the pages validate XHTML 1.0 Transitional and the site is a great success, as the owner chose to use practical Web standards. The following case study shows how was he able to achieve all the goals laid out for the site with limited time and limited resources.

The Problem

The Drowning Prevention site has been around since around 1998 and it's not been touched, with the exception of yearly content updates, since then. The owner of the site did these updates before and found them particularly time consuming for a number of reasons. The site had originally be built with FrontPage and as the years past had gone through several different iterations, whenever he would update it something would break or he would have to rebuild an entire page just to add a few links.

The site was in much need of an overhaul, both visually and structurally. So, a designer sat down with him and the stakeholders and began to talk about the goals for this site. He asked for ideas about how we wanted it laid out, what kind of visual feel and how we wanted to reorganize the content. It was all fairly straightforward and need to be done quickly because of the time sensitive nature of the content.

The Goals

As with every good project, we started with clear goals. Our main goals for this site were to:

- Update the content of the site
- Update the look and feel
- Make the site more consistent
- Make the site more accessible
- Make the site easier to use

The owner had some of his own goals for the site:

- Make the site easier to update
- Future proof the site

The Solution

Because we needed a new look and feel it was realized that they need to build the site from the ground up. There was just way to much presentational code mixed in with their content. The designer started by creating a simple layout on paper, then later in Photoshop and going over that with the stakeholders. Given the simplicity of the site, this was easily done. Then a template was built. The designer began to migrate content from the old site and mix that in with the new stuff coming from the stakeholders.

This content migration was a bit of a bear. All of the presentational elements from the code which was time consuming were stripped out. There were a few pages in the site that had so much going on. These were left untouched.

The designer tried to clean up the site's exiting content as much as possible. All of the links were reorganized and retitled and did a simple, clear Information Architecture on the site was created.

After a week or so the basic site was all built out and all of the content was migrated and updated. It was then sent to the stakeholder for review.

A Small Wrench in the Work

Having worked out most of the browser bugs and refined the template it was felt like the work was over. It wasn't quite that simple though. The stakeholders wanted to make some pretty big changes to the content as well as quite a bit more updates. At that time it was decided to make some major tweaks to the layout as well.

Blog Tools to the Rescue

These major changes and layout tweaks were done in under an hour because the site was built using one of the blog softwares (name has not been revealed deliberately). This made the work really easy. The actual content changes were a snap because the code was so stripped down and clean and all the layout changes were done within the CSS file. Without that the layout changes alone would have easily taken half a day even using sketchy "find and replace" methods.

The stakeholders were pleased to see the work and the site launched on time.

A Few More Benefits: In addition to the benefits talked about above, by choosing to build the site with Blog Tools and Softwares one is able to:

- Eliminate browser issues with both current and legacy browsers
- Insure forward compatibility with future browsers
- Help in analyzing how to future proof the links
- Achieve instant compatibility with most non-web devices
- Decrease the total file size from 33MB to 14MB
- Drop average page weight from 11KB to around 6KB
- Increase accessibility and usability of the site -- by default
- Radically reduce the learning curve/ training time for distributed authorship

CHAPTER VI

Blog Reviews

InstaPundit.Com

www.instapundit.blogspot.com

Pundit Glenn Reynolds is a law professor from the University of Tennessee. In his blog, he disseminates information about legal and civil liberty issues. The topics he mostly writes about are: American's right to privacy, religious and race relations, cloning, the National Rifle Association, freedom of the press, etc. The blog has links to other popular blogs.

The Corner

www.nationalreview.com/thecorner/corner.asp

The Corner is affiliated with the National Review. The blog mostly consists of news of the day, linked from sources ranging from the Wall Street Journal to Wired magazine to other people's blogs etc. Topics most likely to be found on the blog cannot be firmly categorized; it can be a commentary on politics and current events, patriotic implications of the steel tariff, the final episode of the X-Files etc. Discussions about race and religion get heated up.

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Slashdot

www.slashdot.org

Slashdot showcases the latest developments in technology. Topics of discussions can be the latest hardware and software and conferences, books, sci-fi movie effects and other similar topics. Interactivity is high: readers discuss everything from how to build a computer from scratch to online film piracy. Journals section lets readers create their own blog-within-a-blog.

Obscure Store and Reading Room

www.obscurestore.com

This site dishes strangest realities. The blog contains the most unthinkable news – about finding a fried chicken head in the McNuggets or about the one about the man who beat up his son for making out with the dog. The blog also links to straight news, gossip and an interesting collection of other blogs.

Eatonweb Portal

www.portal.eatonweb.com

A site is linked to more than 4,700 international blogs that are searchable by 52 categories. The vast search field includes searching by country of origin, language, keyword etc. It can get you to an authors' critique of a naive Business Week article on VC funding. It's all there: the good, the bad and the just plain weird.

Baseball News Blog

www.baseballnews.blogspot.com

This blog features a daily dose of baseball-related news from Web sites, newspapers and industry journals summarized and linked from the main page. It also has plenty of outside links to analyses, columnists and some of the blogger's favorite team

sites. The blog is linked to more than 100 baseball-related sites, including other blogs like Futility Infielder and Transaction Oracle.

Nuzee.com

www.nuzee.com

This blog is linked to news sources from all around the world. The site is organized into top stories, business and sports, investment news, science and health news and entertainment news etc. The blog allows reader to search the headlines by keyword.

Sullywatch

http://sullywatch.blogspot.com/

Sullywatch is full of argument and ideas. The blog has posts are long and involved and are well argued and intelligent.

Tokyo Tidbits

http://www.tokyotidbits.com/

'Tokyo Tidbits' is a mobile picture blog. A girl called Mie takes picture from her phone and maintains the blog. She then types the entries before e-mailing them to the Movabletype based blog. The blog has lots of nice pictures from around Tokyo.

Peripatetic

www.peripatetic.com

Peripatetic is a personal blog by a long-time professional technologist. His writing on the music industry especially about their futile attempts to stop people sharing files is worth reading.

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Daring Fireball

http://daringfireball.net/

A mac technology blog, Daring Fireball is simple and well designed. People may it to be rude sometimes, but the posts are usually enlightened. The author builds plugins for Movable Type as well.

WIFI Networking News

http://wifinetnews.com/

WIFI Networking news is a technology blog. It is highly specialized as complete a resource for news on the technology. For example: you can read the blog to find out the latest trend in the world of wireless networking.

Tomalak's Realm

http://www.tomalak.org/

Tomalak's Realm is a daily source of links to strategic Web design stories. Every day there are links to interesting articles with short quotes from the story on the site. These stories provide context and is a helpful resource. Topics mostly covered are: e-commerce, usability, intellectual property, online journalism, consumer electronics/technology, futurism, governance and other related subjects...

Blogrolling

http://www.blogrolling.com/

BlogRolling is a one-stop linklist you can use for your blog. The blog helps you to manage your need for constantly evolving linklist with ease.

Afterhours

http://thejuniverse.org/Afterhours/

"Afterhours in the Juniverse" provides plenty of well written entries in the archived section of the site dated back to April 1, 2002. The blog owner - June - always has something written that is thought out and stimulating to the mind. The majority of the entries made provide links to external sites to provide more information so that the reader can fully grasp the subject that is being touched on. The design for this site is clean, simple and nice to look at. The site is also easy to navigate and is self-explanatory.

Butterfly

http://www.bluetterfly.net/blog

Bluetterfly is a site that gives a true glimpse into the life of the author - Beatriz. Everything from the content to the design grab hold from first glance. Her writing style is outstanding as she writes in a way that brings the reader into her soul and allows the reader to feel exactly what she felt at any given moment. The website fosters a sense of family and community. The layout/color scheme works well with the content. The navigation is very clean and simple, with each set of link categories labeled in obvious yet unobtrusive ways. Greymatter has been used to power the blog, and she utilizes the "more" feature for her extended posts that allows the front page to remain uncluttered and clean.

The Daily Post

http://www.thedailypost.net/

The Daily Post is a group blog - there are two primary people who post but others drop in with their own opinion. The site has a nice mix of interaction between the members about politics, daily life, books being read etc. The design of the site is a simple and has two column designs.

The Gerbilarium

http://www.angelfire.com/ultra/thegerbilarium/

The Gerbilarium is a personal weblog written by someone with a sense of humour. The site design is simple. The side bar is a simple list of links to other areas of the weblog and different websites. The site also include short stories, opinions on different subjects, reviews of mostly hip-hop related stuff and some well written spoof news stories. All of the content has a humorous bent to it and mainly relates to personal things.

The Mad Dater

http://themaddater.blogspot.com/

The blog dedicated to tales of dating experiences, one night stands, and all about relationships. TMD is a woman and her men thrashing blog is definitely entertaining., The writer knows what and how to give what readers want – style is like reading a tabloid. The design is clean and nice.

Urban Scrawl

http://demon.twinflame.org/

The website is called Demonblog. Marcus is the weblog author. White and black are the two colors used in the design scheme. Humor is added using a random quote listed between each weblog entry, from Robin Williams to Denis Leary's perils of wisdom etc. The posts are entertaining. Marcus portrays himself as being quite worldly and intelligent that makes reading his thoughts real. The site has several links to flash games.

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Chewy Goodness

http://steve.redcatstudios.com/

The author of the blog is Steve. The postings on the site confirm that the author has a great sense of humor. He describes everyday observances with a witty and sharp voice that is never too harsh or acerbic. The author doesn't shy away from all of life's particular eccentricities and quirks. The design is simple and is easily navigable.

Indigo Ocean

http://healingwordspress.com/indigo/

The website has posts that are calm and spiritually connected. At the same time the posts are not preachy, but are simple notes. The design complements the writing style: simple, clean, and peaceful.

Johnny America

http://www.johnnyamerica.net/

The site is a group blog. All the authors are skilled writers with each one of them having a distinct voice. The website has something for everyone - reviews of everything from bars to books to movies to restaurants and wonderfully written fiction. Each entry stands on its own. The design is as simple as can be and it perfectly fits the tone of the site. The website has a few amusing extras such as emails having to do with an "Am I Hot Or Not?" experiment, and an odd little Questions and Answers page.

Adversity

http://chaos.gleeb.com/

Adversity is a strong and opinionated blog. It has direct, precise and informative opinions. The blogging style is refreshing and is easily acceptable as the author has

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some writing ability. The blog is centered on the day-to-day proceedings of the author. The sitre design is good. Navigation has been wisely done. There are extra site features like articles etc.

brainrazor

http://www.brainrazor.com/

The tone of the writing style is pompous as it uses big words. The style is occasionally flowery. Once adjusted to the writing style, readers get used to the posts and may find the entries are often funny and insightful. The website has random links and images on the page that helps making reader participation quite cosy.

Sites You Can Refer To For General Help

Free-Conversant

http://www.free-conversant.com/

Online discussion group tool that provides server space. Follow the "support" link for information on their weblog features.

LUSENET

http://www.greenspun.com/bboard/index.tcl

A free threaded-discussion hosting service used by several weblogs for their discussion forums.

Blogger

http://new.blogger.com/home.pyra

Online weblog creation tool that requires you to have a server somewhere that can accept updates via ftp.

Blogging Made Easy!

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BOP

http://sourceforge.net/projects/bop/

BOP Stands for "Blog Oriented Publishing", an open source database-backed system written in perl. Still in early alpha and looking for contributors.

pMachine

http://www.pmachine.com/

PHP/MySQL system with many features beyond weblog maintenance, including mailing lists and dynamic content management.

WikiWeblogPM

http://www.ourpla.net/john/wikiweblogpim.html

A "page of links on research about things relevant to software that would combine the best features of existing wiki, weblog and PIM software."

Blog Rolling Competitions

http://www.webtechniques.com/archives/2001/01/jepson/

Comparative review of Slash, Squishdot, and Thatware.

Weblog

http://www.webreference.com/perl/tutorial/17/index.html

Despite the name, this is software for maintaining RSS channels rather than conventional weblogs, though it does offer HTML output features as well.