

Blogged down: What makes a good blog

By Sherrie Bakshi

This article originally appeared on PRSA's ComPREhension blog on Jan. 31.

I recently came across an article via Twitter about why bloggers quit blogging. Many of the former bloggers quit blogging because they found it demanding, and did not see any results from their efforts.

According to the article, many bloggers developed aspirations based on just a few success stories like the Julie/Julia Project (author and blogger Julie Powell's attempt to master Julia Child's recipes from her book, "Mastering the Art of French Cooking").

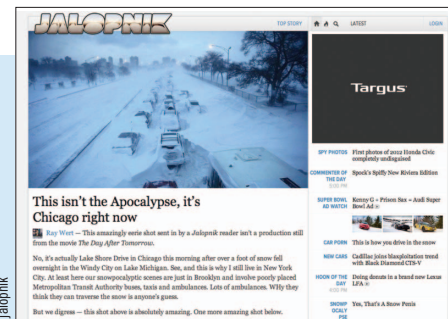
As part of my job at Matrix Group in Arlington, Va., I ghostwrite for some client blogs. I also have a personal one — Sher in the City — where I tell tales about life in the nation's capital. (I do it more for fun than anything else.) I have learned a lot since crafting my first blog post, and I

have seen my style progress with each one that I write. And, I spend time writing each post — marketing them on my Facebook page and my Twitter profile — and commenting on other blogs. Like other PR tools, a blog requires work and patience.

Whether you are starting a blog or looking to improve one, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- **Write about what you love.** It's important to love writing and to write about what you love, or you will find yourself struggling with each post. Also, consider your posts as an opportunity for you to position yourself as an expert in your field. When it comes down to it, blogging is about thought leadership.

- **Prepare an editorial calendar for your blog.** Like any other relationship, you have to be committed to posting an item once a week, especially if it's part



Jalopnik

Gawker Media's redesign, and the end of blogging

In a trends piece in the Feb. 2 *New York Observer*, writer Dan Duray asks if this is the end of blogging and introduces the premise that nobody wants to create or read blogs anymore.

"First it was embarrassing because bloggers were these dirty, horrible people," says The Awl's Chaire Sicha, "and then it was embarrassing because our grandmas have blogs, God bless them."

And Nick Denton, president of Gawker Media, an online publishing group that includes Jalopnik and Jezebel,

adds that he doesn't see a blog business.

"There seems to be universal agreement that the format that made blogs ubiquitous — the reverse-chronological aggregation accompanied by commentary — isn't long for this world, and Denton's scoop-friendly redesign would seem to be the best evidence of that," Duray writes.



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of your business' or organization's outreach — or it's just not worth it. To help ensure consistency in your blog posts, take some time to put together a list of topics that align with your current campaigns.

- **Make sure your headlines are punchy and SEO friendly.** Similar to

Gawker, one of the most highly trafficked gossip and media blogs, relaunched on Feb. 7 with a design that features one major splash story rather than aggregating many items. "Writers will have to ease up on irony in headlines — because they will no longer have the lede to clarify," Denton says. "But that's already been happening — because so much traffic comes from headlines distributed on Facebook and Twitter."

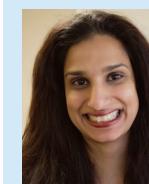
Duray writes, "According to Denton, the 'pendulum has swung,' and it's become more viable to profit from this spate of aggregation ... rather than attempt to compete with it." **T**

your website, you have to have an SEO strategy. Have you heard the line: "Don't expect people to come to your website because you built it?" This is the same for blogs. Instead, determine the top keywords and phrases that you want to help drive to your site. Incorporate them into your headlines and tags.

- **Market your blog.** It's easy to market your blog with Facebook and Twitter. Be sure to always tweet about your posts, and to post links to your Facebook page. Also, consider contributing to blogs that you follow, promoting your blog on your online and print collateral and seeking out opportunities to link your blogs to other websites and blogs.

- **Track your conversions.** Like any other marketing or PR tool, you want to see results. The way to do this is by tracking conversions (i.e., how many people went from the blog to your website, or how many people sent you an e-mail from your blog or called you). You can track conversions with Web tracking tools like Google Analytics, or by asking questions to your potential clients and customers about how they came across your blog — it's as simple as that.

- **Be patient.** Remember the first big article that you placed in a publication for your client? Remember how long the process took? Your blog isn't going to be an overnight sensation. It takes time to build a following. **T**



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