Blogs, comments and marketing

OK, not quite as sexy as Sex, Lies and Videotape…

Lately, I have been reading/hearing a lot about comments on blogs. Most people seem to favor comments. One of the ways we know that people are responding or finding what we write interesting and worthwhile is when we get comments. It is also a way to know what our audience is thinking. Others are not so keen on allowing comments because there might be some negative or disparaging statements, and opening up you/your organization to what the public thinks.

Clearly, some organizations are more likely to want to know how the audience thinks and some are not so inclined. **I would counsel those who want to remain hermetic not to have a blog. A blog, almost by definition, is a forum (it can be internal, but nevertheless it is about exchange of ideas).**

Those who are OK with audience interaction should probably have guidelines to govern the comments. In fact, you don't HAVE to publish each and every comment if you don't want. Right here on Caffeinated we've received some fairly self-serving comments along with some out of left field observations that we have decided to let live in the netherworld.

Courtland Milloy, a columnist at the *Washington Post*, has a piece in today's paper about nasty/ignorant/vicious comments. He wants readers to tone down the invective. I agree with him—I have followed some comment streams on opinion pieces and people give wind to the most disagreeable thoughts. And Milloy argues that even though these commenters are counted as visitors to the site, some advertisers may not want to be associated with them. Is this true? I am not sure that advertisers/marketers look at comments other than as a numbers game. We all know that there are some kooky people out there

who are bored/irritated/deranged and take it out on comments boards. **What we endorse as marketers is the content on the site, not the comments.**

As marcomm folks, what we need to worry about is our policy for comments. I don't think you should discourage comments, but you should make clear that not everything is fair play and that not every utterance will see the light of the blogosphere. You may want to set this out in a terms and conditions somewhere on your blog.

David Griner, in his blog, The Social Path, has had a series of articles on comments. It is worthwhile to read this one, about whether you are LEGALLY liable for comments made on your blog. As I point out above, this type of concern should be part of the policies that govern your site, and something you must consider if you do have a blog.

Your thoughts? Comment, but please no racist, slanderous, sexist remarks!

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