

Self-monitor or ...

Do you follow yourself? It's not easy to do, but it's essential. You should be monitoring your external communications efforts or else, you just won't know what is going on.

I have followed my own blog (first on Google Reader, and now on Feedly, though that may change) for years. Why? Because I want to see how other people see my blog. I want to make sure it is showing up and how it appears when it does. This is how I knew there was a problem with Feedly and my blog feed (detailed in this post—read the comments please). I subscribe to my blog via email too, to make sure Feedburner is operating as it should.

When I send out email campaigns, I send it to two different emails of mine (one is Gmail and the other I monitor via Outlook). Again, I want to make sure everything looks OK. I try to check them on my smartphone too.

Although you can't monitor for every iteration (for example, I don't own an iPad or Apple anything), you need to know how your communications are showing up in different environments, as best as possible. Perhaps you can recruit some volunteers to check for you (trusted friends or colleagues who don't mind giving you a hand). Imagine that you are not optimizing your email for smartphones, and most of your audience reads it on that platform. If you don't know you aren't optimized, you can't address it.

Too many marketers (agencies included) don't bother to monitor their own communications. There's a rather prominent PR agency whose blog is a disaster, but apparently, no one has thought to check it as an outside reader, or follow it or even try to share it on social media. Then there are the countless email marketing messages that are not only not optimized for mobile

or for social sharing, but that are RIFE with mistakes (grammar, spelling, content).

You must monitor yourself or direct others to monitor on your behalf. If not, you risk not knowing how people actually see you.

Are you monitoring your communications? If so, how do you do it? If not, what are you waiting for?

You may not see this post

Google's decision to kill Google Reader has impacted more than our ability to have all our blog feeds in one easy-to-access place, it has impacted many blogs and their ability to be read at all. You see, Google did not give anybody a real alternative to Reader. Some jumped in, like Feedly, making it easy to transfer your feeds to their readers. For some users of Google Reader, it was hard to decide which of the many alternatives out there to use, so they didn't transfer their feeds, and now, that ability is lost.

In the past few weeks, I started to notice that this blog's feed was taking several days to update on Feedly (which is the alternative I chose). Then, the last two or three posts NEVER updated at all. I wrote to Feedly this morning, and their customer service rep told me that it is a capacity issue on which they are working. In the meantime, people who are looking for this blog on Feedly think I haven't written anything in two weeks. And you may not even see this post.

The demise of Google Reader may turn out to be a disaster for

many smaller blogs like this. Unless Feedly steps up, and all readers out there have the capacity that Google offered, blogs will be affected. Once you aren't present, you disappear from people's minds. With the plethora of blogs and other content available, the competition is intense. To have cut through the clutter and made it on to people's Google Reader only to be demolished by an nonexistent "transition" is not only a real shame but could be a destroyer of business.

I am not sure what to do. I will continue posting my content to Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook as appropriate, and people are free to subscribe via email (and that updates instantly as the post is published).

If you are reading this post, what do you suggest?

Is your blog social?

Today, I presented "Using your Blog as a Centerpiece in your Social Media Strategy" at the PRSA Mid-Atlantic Chesapeake District Conference. It was a great session with lots of great questions.

Here's the PowerPoint presentation on SlideShare

Blog social media strategy prsamd brody slide share from DeborahBrody

Let me know if you have any further questions.

If you'd like to learn more about blogging, sign up for my next How to Blog workshop, taking place on July 18 in Baltimore. Here are the details.

It's only new once

You can't call yesterday's news new. In fact, you probably can't call it news either. And yet, it has become a habit for some marketers, most notably those on Twitter, to use the word "new" or even worse, the word "breaking" to set apart their content. Now, if something is truly new or breaking, then that's fine, but keep in mind that calling something new or breaking is a one-time-only proposition.



News shop by Cyberslayer via Flickr

Once you have called something new or breaking, you can't do it again. Why? Here are three reasons:

1. It is **false advertising**: it is no longer new.
2. It **undermines your credibility**: you are trying to get me to believe something that is not so.
3. It's a **cheap tactic**: is this the only way you can get attention for your product, service or idea?

If I see a Twitter stream replete with the words new or breaking, it better be from a wire service, newspaper or news broadcast. A post that you wrote two weeks ago is not new. An idea that you tweeted out last week certainly is not breaking.

Remember it's only new once, everything else can be classified as gently used or old or even outdated!

One quick fix that will increase your blog's impact

Yes, this is really about making ONE fix, that should not take more than a few minutes, and that will make difference in how many people see your blog. It involves your sharing capabilities.

You must have sharing capabilities. That's not even up for discussion. If you don't, go add it right now. If you have a WordPress.org blog, then go do a search for "sharing buttons" in the plugins. There are several to choose from. My current favorite is ShareThis (and is what I am using, right there at the bottom of this post). If you are on another platform, use your search engine to search for "sharing tools" or "sharing buttons" for your platform.

Most sharing tools are free, and most give you the options to share on the main social networks like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Pinterest. Some let you share to dozens of other networks. Choose the one that best suits your needs (and where your audience is likely to share and read).

If you already have sharing on your blog, I want you to go to your blog and choose a random post and hit your Tweet this/Twitter share button and see what comes up. Ideally, what should come up should be

"Title/ headline of your post" (link to the post) via (your Twitter handle).

If what comes up does not have the title of your post plus your Twitter handle, you need to either adjust your settings or change your sharing tools. Some sharing plugins allow for

the title of the post, the name of the blog or website, and the Twitter handle. That would be even better.

Many blogs I have seen in the past few days have sharing, but when I click to share I get these types of messages:

- Reading [link]
- [link]
- Title[link] via [your sharing tool's Twitter handle]

Without a title or headline, you are giving no reason for your readers to click on the link. Do you click on links with no subject? Probably not. Without a Twitter handle, you are not letting people know where the link is coming from.

So, go check it right now! This is truly a quick fix that will make it easier and better for your readers to share your posts, and therefore, increase your impact.

Does your blog have a tone of voice?

We use different tones, depending on the audience we are speaking to and our personalities. Tones help define us and the content of what we are saying. For example, the professorial types always sound like they are lecturing, even when they are just discussing the weather.

Whenever we write something, we engage a certain tone. If we are writing an academic paper, we may use an authoritative tone. If we are writing an ad for a baby boutique, we may take on a cheerful tone. And of course, when we are writing blogs,

we should have a definable tone. Some blogs are matter-of-fact. Others are irreverent. Some are angry (and those are generally using the blogosphere to rally against something or someone). What tone does your blog have?

Some tones to use include:

- candid
- casual
- cheerful
- compassionate
- conciliatory
- confident
- curious
- empathetic
- encouraging
- excited
- expectant
- fervent
- formal
- fun
- happy
- humorous
- incisive
- objective
- optimistic
- outspoken
- relaxed
- serious
- skeptical
- sympathetic

Some tones to avoid:

- brusque
- contentious
- cynical

- derogatory
- desperate
- doubtful
- fatalistic
- fearful
- frantic
- gloomy
- grim
- holier-than-thou
- hopeless
- lethargic
- melancholy
- paranoid
- pedantic
- selfish
- unsympathetic

Want to make your blogging better?

Attend my How to Write Your Blog workshop THIS Friday, May 17.
Details and registration [here](#).

10 reasons people don't blog

I have been training people on how to blog for nearly a year now. In that time, I have had the privilege of working with dozens of people who want to blog, but haven't been able to for various reasons. Among the most common reasons given are these:

1. Don't have the time to blog (also phrased as blogging takes up too much time)
2. Don't know what to write about

3. Don't have sufficient ideas or material
4. Don't think anyone wants to read my thoughts
5. I am not a good writer
6. Don't know who is going to read my blog or how people will find it
7. My organization insists on a long chain of approval to publish anything
8. I don't have buy-in from top-level executives at my organization
9. Don't see the point or purpose in blogging
10. Don't know how to set up a blog

Do any of these sound familiar to you?

How to write your blog workshop on May 17

If you struggle with these common blogging issues, check out the three-hour hands-on **How to write your blog workshop** I am offering on Friday, May 17, starting at 9:30 a.m. It takes place at Link Locale in Arlington, VA, near the Clarendon Metro stop. If you sign up by May 1, you get the early registration price of \$70 (regular price is \$79). For more details and to sign up, visit howtowriteyourblog4.eventbrite.com.

Check out my guest post at

Fletcher Prince's blog

Honored to be featured on the Fletcher Prince blog, discussing business cards as a budget marketing tactic.

Have you looked at your business card lately?

Learn how to write your blog

So many people don't ever get their blogs off the ground because of various fears: fear of not knowing what to write, fear of not having enough content, fear of writing itself. Well, you can conquer those fears by attending my **"How to write your blog"** workshop. I cover what you should write about, how to come up with ideas and inspiration and getting the blog post written.

The next **blogging workshop will take place on Friday, May 17 starting at 9:30 a.m.** This time, I am traveling across state lines to Virginia to hold the workshop at Link Locale, a co-working space in Clarendon. Also new this time is that I am offering an discounted price for early registration of \$70 if you register by May 1. After that, the price goes up to \$79.

More details and registration are available at the Eventbrite page.

Hope to see you there!

Blogging: when is it too personal?

Note: The following applies to business or organizational blogs not personal blogs.

What makes so many blogs fun to read is that they are more personal than other forms of communication. Since there are few (or no) editorial layers, most blogs are more frank and more conversational than other types of writing.

But there is a difference between showing your personality and being personal. I am certainly in favor of showing personality. If you like to compare everything to sports or music or movies, then do it. If you talk about your passions for cooking or travel, it makes you look like a well-rounded person.

There is also room for personal stories, as long as you are using them to illustrate a point or explain a position. What there is no room for, in my opinion, is really personal stuff that you would share with family and friends, but not with business acquaintances, such as a discussion of your latest mammogram or romantic break-up or philosophical musing.

Yes, I know you have a right to blog about whatever you like. This is especially true if you, like me, are a solopreneur or head of a very small company. Your business is personal...but your blog can't be. Remember why you are blogging—perhaps it is to help with thought leadership, lead generation and/or SEO. Ask yourself if the very personal post you are writing will advance or detract from that.

What do you think? Is there a line? And if someone crosses that line on his/her blog, are there consequences? I would appreciate if you shared your thoughts in the comments.