

Want to learn how to blog?

It's somewhat ironic, but I haven't been blogging much this week because I have been working on the details for a blogging workshop!

If you or someone you know is in the Metro DC area and wants to learn how to more easily write blog posts, find topics and inspiration, make your headline more appealing and get your blog going, you may want to come to my "How to write your blog: A hands-on workshop."

The workshop is taking place on Tuesday, July 31, starting at 9:30 a.m. at the Silver Spring Civic Center (which has plenty of parking nearby and is a few blocks from the Silver Spring Metro stop), in the Colesville Room. The cost is \$75 for the three hour session, (and will include refreshments).

You will leave the session with a ready-to-publish blog post, blog post ideas, lists of keywords and categories for your blog, and lots of other useful information that will make blogging easier for you.

If you have any questions, let me know in the comments.

My marketing must-haves

As a very small business, Deborah Brody Marketing Communications does not have a large marketing budget (seems a bit ironic). For instance, I have never printed a brochure, but I do have a website. Here are the list of things I do have, some of which are free, for marketing purposes:

- **Website** (soon to be upgraded...stay tuned): This is the must-have of all must-haves, for the obvious reasons that you need to know that I exist, and without a website, I may as well not be here.
- **Blog** (you are here on WordPress.com ...soon to be integrated to one site): Keeps you informed on what I am thinking.
- **Business cards:** printed, in color and double-sided. Well worth the investment. Latest ones were ordered from Greenerprinter.com and are made of 100% recycled paper.
- **Twitter:** Have met many people via Twitter not to mention the amount of information and ideas that I have picked up.
- **LinkedIn:** A profile on LinkedIn is like an online resume with feelers.
- **Google alerts:** I track several topics, and my own name. An invaluable source of current information only topped by
- **Google reader** (with a long list of great blogs and feeds): You need to be current in the marketing field...and probably any field. A good way to stay on top of stuff is to have your Google Reader feeding you the latest from the industry's top blogs, etc.

What I have that is not a must-have: a Facebook page for my business. This is in spite of evidence that says Facebook is a good place to be for businesses and brands.

What are your must-haves? Let me know in the comments please!

How to become irrelevant

How many blogs have you stopped reading? How many products

have you stopped buying? How many ads do you ignore?

If you answered just one to any of these questions, the reason is because whatever the blog/ad/product/service has become irrelevant.

Some irrelevancy is by attrition—meaning that you will stop buying a product because you no longer need it (like baby diapers when your child is potty trained). Other irrelevancy is because you just don't care anymore or the information does not ring true.

How do you become irrelevant?

If you are a blogger:

- You write about things that people don't care about or are not interested in.
- You write about the same things over and over.
- You write about you, you and more about you.
- You never update your blog.

If you are an advertisement:

- You advertise the same offer, over and over
- You advertise an offer with tons of small print
- You advertise things that are just not true (we beat any price, for instance).
- What you advertise does not match reality.

If you are a product:

- You don't work as promised.
- You don't fill a need.
- You are not well priced.

If you are a website:

- You have outdated information.
- You look like you were designed in 1999.
- Your visitors can't find the information they need to

make a purchase/visit your location/etc.

Basically, you become irrelevant when you forget what your audience needs or wants.

What makes you tune out marketing? Let me know what makes blogs/ads/websites/brochures irrelevant.

Blog Action Day

Today is Blog Action Day (and I would link to the website but it is down) and the topic is water. I found out about it from Daria Steigman's post "Water is Life" and also from a post on Conversation Agent: "Ten Facts About Water."

The idea is to get bloggers to post on a common topic to get the word out. Just yesterday, I wrote about the death of mass communications and in a sense, Blog Action Day is a way to use social media in our extremely segmented world to inform people and get them to act around a common cause.

When I visited Australia in 2008, there was a lot of talk on the media about bottled water. Tap water in Australia is drinkable and yet people were spending money (and at about \$3 per 1/2 liter, a lot of money) for bottled water. The problem with bottled water of course is waste. The bottle is not always recycled. Australia is mostly desert, and in the summer, it can get very very dry. Australians tend to be active—always running, walking, swimming, surfing. Since it is necessary to keep hydrated, having access to water is a necessity and bottled water can be very convenient. How do you change people's habits?

Another water habit that I encountered in Australia was a

campaign to reduce showering time. In my hotel in Melbourne was a card and a timer inviting me to keep my shower to four minutes. I always wondered why this wasn't done in the US too. Australia was certainly in a drought state. The United States is not there yet, but could be. Again, how do you change people's habits? How do you get people to think about the length of their showers and how this impacts the environment?

Do you think Blog Action Day can help make a difference? What would a mass information campaign look like in our social media age?



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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