

How can blogs help communicators?

By Cindy Downes,
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Journalism in Jefferson's day was very similar to what we call blogging today. They called it pamphleteering, according to Chris Daly, journalism professor at Boston University. Pamphleteering involved writing, reading and commenting. Blogging involves writing, reading and commenting, too, only it's done much faster.

Technorati, a blog search engine, is currently tracking 112.8 million blogs, written by people of all ages, interests, languages and motivations. This community of bloggers is called the *blogosphere*. Many of these blogs have readerships larger than the daily papers in our major cities!

Think of bloggers as a community of people who know something, and that "something" just might be worth knowing.

As a communicator, you need be aware of the blogosphere and how it can benefit you and your organization. "Don't make the mistake," warns Larry Weber in his book, *Marketing to the Social Web*, "of assuming that blogs are bloated with half-baked ideas and crackpot opinions." Instead, think of bloggers as a community of people who know something, and that "something" just might be worth knowing.

Bloggers provide this useful information for free! When ABC was looking for a story on women returning to college, they scanned the Internet and found the blog, Empty Nest Mom Goes to College. After two telephone interviews, the blog's author became a feature story on Good Morning America. Because of a blog, the process of finding the right subject for the story became simple, inexpensive and quick.

PR professionals have discovered that blogs provide an easy and inexpensive way to learn what people are saying about their company, products and services. In 2005, when Victoria's Secret introduced the IpeX

bra, hundreds of women began blogging about their experiences with the bra. By monitoring these blogs, Victoria's Secret saved thousands of dollars that would have otherwise been spent on focus group research.

Blogs are easy and inexpensive tools that are perfect for nonprofits with small budgets and staff.

[St. James Church](#), in Tulsa, Okla., uses a blog instead of a web site to promote their services, attract members, raise money, showcase staff and volunteers, and provide information on upcoming events. No expense is involved, and it's easier for volunteers to maintain.

Blogs also enable organizations to quickly communicate new information or correct misinformation in a crisis situation. When Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005, journalists set up blogs to help people connect with displaced relatives. Both the McCain and Obama campaigns are using blogs in the 2008 election to correct misinformation about their candidate and issues.

Whether you represent the news media, a corporation or a nonprofit organization, take some time to explore the blogosphere to find out how it will help you and your organization.

Cindy Downes is a freelance writer from Tulsa, Okla. She currently writes about education, Oklahoma history, nonprofit news and Oklahoma travel. You can contact Cindy at cindy@me.com or visit her [Web site](#).

Resources:

The New Rules of Marketing & PR by David Meerman Scott

The New Influencers by Paul Gillin

The Public Relations Writer's Handbook, The Digital Age by Merry Aronson, Don Spetner, and Carol Ames

Marketing to the Social Web, How Digital Customer Communities Build Your Business by Larry Weber

Wordpress for Dummies by Lisa Sabin-Wilson 

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