

POST 1 - Intro

- Thanks Samantha. Thanks to the WGA for the opportunity.
- Samantha asked me if I wanted to do a panel discussion like the one in Edmonton. However, I felt it would be easier and less confusing to do a sort of blogging 101 tutorial and then open up the floor to a lot of discussion.
- I have never created an hour long presentation so I will need your assistance. I don't want to talk at you for an hour. This needs to be a conversation.
- The first and most important thing you need to know is that blogging is a communal action and I framed my presentation tonight around the theme of community. What I mean is that in order for this to work really I am going to need your feedback. I have broken the sections of discussions into "posts" and at the end of each there will be time for questions and comments. If I am going to fast or said something you don't understand please stop me and ask. Because there is a certain amount of terminology that will be thrown around.
- Hello, my name is Rhett Soveran. I am here to talk to you about blogging and how it can benefit you. I am a husband to my beautiful wife Leah. I am a writer and poet and have done lots of stuff there. I work as an Editor for Marketwire, a newswire. My blog is called rockstarpoet and it is a personal blog. Usually my posts are fairly silly and generally humorous—I hope. Though I do like to chronicle the different things I go through.
- Why should I, of all people, be giving this presentation? Well, let me give you just a brief history of my time on the internet, both personal and professional.
 - I have spent a lot of time on the web, trying different things and working towards understanding how the web works.
 - I wasn't on the web from the beginning. My family didn't really have a computer until 1995. As a point of reference, I really started to get interested in the net when I signed up for my first hotmail account. Which at the time was just passing it's millionth user.
 - Then I built my first homepage with Angelfire--a free network. In 2000 I first worked for design company called Clickstream Interactive Group.
 - Other than my initial homepage, I have maintained my own personal websites and a few professional ones: KBK and Jade Bell.
 - Over a year ago, started rockstarpoet, my personal site and blog.
 - Most recently, I have been hired as the Online Marketer/blogger for a production company and in the coming months I will be starting a professional blog on blog writing.
 - I spend a lot of time reading blogs and learning about new, different ways to blog and to present blogs.

POST 2 - Definitions

- We will start basic and then move forward.
- Before I begin talking about blogging or what is a web log or blog, we must understand where it fits in. If blogging had a parent that parent would be Web 2.0. So let's start there.
 - Web 2.0 is the... *perceived second generation of web-based communities and hosted services — such as social-networking sites (such as myspace, Facebook, Digg), wikis (Wikipedia) and weblogs (Google's Blogger and WordPress, amongst others)*
 - With Web 2.0 we see the majority of the internet move away from the idea of "home pages" and static sites to dynamic and user-friendly sites. Where content was always changing and the net's community is highly involved in everything going on.
 - For instance, in preparing this presentation I used Wikipedia. Because it is a great source of information, but specifically because it is very web 2.0. It's about a group of people coming together.
- The term blog originates from the word Web log, which is shortened to Blog. They originally started out as journals and a means to have a dynamic site that didn't require constant re-uploads of the site. Easy to update.
- Couple definitions:
 - *'A blog is basically a journal that is available on the web. The activity of updating a blog is "blogging" and someone who keeps a blog is a "blogger." Blogs are typically updated daily using software that allows people with little or no technical background to update and maintain the blog. Postings on a blog are almost always arranged in chronological order with the most recent additions featured most prominently.'*
 - Personal favourite: *'A weblog is kind of a continual tour, with a human guide who you get to know. There are many guides to choose from, each develops an audience, and there's also comraderie and politics between the people who run weblogs, they point to each other, in all kinds of structures, graphs, loops, etc.'* This is how I understand my website to be.
- There are a few things that most blogs have in common:
 - A main content area with articles listed chronologically, newest on top. Often, the articles are organized into categories.

- An archive of older articles.
- A way for people to leave comments about the articles.
- A list of links to other related sites, sometimes called a "blogroll".
- One or more "feeds" like RSS, Atom.
 - RSS/Atom Feeds really make blogs web 2.0. Are you familiar with RSS?
 - RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. It allows you to move content, like a blog post, anywhere on the internet---perhaps to a feed reader---without losing formatting or appearance.
 - It allows sharing on a whole new level. RSS is completely independent. You can't be spammed on an RSS feed. You can turn them on or off and the author will never know.
- The idea of freeing content from it's original place and the ability to share the information is what makes Web 2.0, Web 2.0.
 - It's a move to freeing information from the forms that restricted them in the past. Before the content was tied to the form (formatting: HTML, Java, PHP, etc.) on a homepage.
 - With web 2.0 the content is freed from form and enables all people to use the web without the knowledge of formatting.
 - With web 2.0 text changes to a force that moves without restriction, not just text but audio (podcasts), images (flickr, etc), video (youtube, video blogs). It means that content can go anywhere. Which creates interesting ideas of ownership, authorship, copyright, etc. That's a big idea and not one I will really go further into.
 - Community is something that we will come back to again and again and trusting that community.

Comments

POST 3 - Why blog?

- I have a personal response and a professional response.
- This is a question you will need an answer for because blogging is a responsibility. If you do not commit to it then it will not succeed.
- In regards to why be on the internet in the first place. First, all the negative stories you hear about on the internet are true, but I have not ever experienced any of them. As long as you are smart and only do what you are comfortable with then generally you should be fine. There also seems to be a smear campaign in the media, maybe it's because they are scared all the bloggers are

going to take their jobs—which is probably true.

- Every blogger has a different reason for blogging. For myself, the first reason, (at least originally, but this has changed the more I have come to learn) as a writer, was just to write. Instead of journaling or something like that. It gave me an audience to write towards and forced me to be thinking for a new idea each day. Though the more I have learnt about blogging I have seen it as an opportunity for (full time) work in the future. There are a lot of opportunities for you as well.
- Reasons you should blog:
 1. **It will expand your audience** -- Because us artist-types are a small percent of the population the web presents us an opportunity to be in community with other creative people that are not immediate to us.
 2. **A digital meeting place** -- for friends/family, fans and people you have yet to meet.
 3. **Showcase your talents** -- it's a great place to test the waters with your work, no matter what it is.
 4. **Professional** -- Having your own site is professional and is a non-threatening place for people to learn about you.
 5. **Personal** -- A blog can be both personal and professional. You can mix the two together. It can show who you are as a personal while continuing to highlight your professional success.
 6. **Money** -- You can make money. But we will get to that later.
- There are alternatives. You don't have to blog:
 1. **Email:** A great and easy way to stay in touch. Unfortunately the bad people have gotten to email. There is a lot spam. You can only reach people that you know, generally. A blog can give your email address and more people can find you.
 2. **Myspace/Facebook:** You could get a myspace or facebook but those are limited to people within those networks and they aren't professional. Blogs can link to your social networking sites. They are professional and showcase everything you want to share with the world. It is open to everyone.
 3. I suppose I could go through lists but I am not sure there is a better way to approach this than a website with a blog.

Comments

POST 4 - Setting up your blog

The order of this is negotiable, but this is generally a good order of things.

1. Decide your budget and whether or not you want to setup your own hosting and domain (www.yourname.com) or a free service (yourname.blogplatform.com – less options and control).
 - a. I would suggest having your own domain and hosting it yourself. It is more professional and having a lot options is nice. But it also requires a bit more technical knowledge.
2. Decide on a blogging platform. There are a lot. WordPress and Blogger (run by google) are probably amongst the biggest. Others include LiveJournal, Movable Type, Typepad, etc.
 - a. Let's talk about platforms. I am only familiar with WordPress (I use WP) and Blogger so let me break those two down.
 - i. WordPress: It's open source. Open source means... *Open source software is computer software whose source code is available under a license (or arrangement such as the public domain) that permits users to use, change, and improve the software, and to redistribute it in modified or unmodified form.* Which means it was made for free and given for free by a group of programmers--you can't get much more community based than that. WordPress also operates as a business entity and offers the platform with free hosting. WordPress has more options--which is a good and bad thing. It means that there are more options, but that means that there are more balls to juggle. It is also a bit more difficult to update. But with such a large and amazing user base there is so much support. Plus plugins! Which are small programs loaded into the platform to extend the capabilities of your blog. And tons of amazing themes.
 - ii. Blogger, I believe last year, was bought by Google for some gigantic sum of money. Blogger is very stable and you never have to worry about updating. But it is standard and you don't get A/C with it. There aren't a lot of neat options that you get. But it takes about 2 minutes to setup a blog and comes with a limited amount themes which are overused.
3. After that you need to decide on a topic.
 - a. Some people don't like the journal type approach.
 - b. Perhaps, you are into politics. There is a huge community and lots of great places to get exposure for your thoughts.
 - c. Or I know writers that post poems and ask for feedback. Or just write about the different events. For example, a friend got a grant so she went to Austria because she is writing a manuscript on a painter from there.

She catalogued the entire journey through her blog (and other writing adventures).

- d. Or, if you want a place to write, perhaps on gardening or a sports team or anything.
 - e. Writing on a unique topic is arguably the best way to bring in an audience.
4. It might be beneficial to know where you want to start. I say might because it can also be beneficial, in order to get your feet wet, to just start somewhere and then find what it is that you enjoy writing about. Personally, I like to write about myself because I know the most about me.

Comments

POST 5 - Audience

- First you have to take the time to understand your audience. The web doesn't work the same as paper. There are different rules, than paper for instance.
- When a visitor comes to your page you have approximately 2 seconds to capture their attention.
- People read differently on the net. If you don't know it already, you do it to. You don't actually read anything on the net, you scan. Unless you are already engaged by the author. Even then most people still just scan.
- Even though your audience will at least initially only scan what you write your content still needs to be very well written as if they were going to read the entire peice. Strong content will attract the audience and search engines.
 - **SEO** - Search Engine Optimization is writing content and creating a site that are search engine friendly. Friends and family will find you by you telling them. Everyone else is going to find you through a search engine. There is tons of websites that can tell you way more than I can. However, a few types is to use many keywords--descriptive words. Describe everything you do and are doing. Use strong titles. And entries chalk full of links to sites where you are getting information.
- Images are a huge benefit to any webpage. They will help tell your story, plus they help keep the eye on track. If you keep images on the page your readers will more likely stay longer and read more.
- Finding an audience for your blog is like any activity. The more active you are, the more people you will get to know. So, if you are writing topically, find other blogs that are writing on a similar topic and join the conversation on similar blogs

by commenting. Or join forums/message boards on your topic.

- Add features that add value. Flickr pictures, Podcastings, Videos/Youtube.
- **The number one rule: Post regularly.** If you are sporadic blogger, nothing will push away an audience faster. If you hook them with one post then you need to hook them with the next one, the next day and so on. Posting regularly will keep the search engine bots coming back to check your content and your audience keep coming back for more.

Making Money:

- This is an hour's talk by itself. But, once you get setup and have a rhythm going there is a couple of ways to make money. Through ads. Most notably Google's adsense. Text Link Ads. Affiliate programs through places such as Amazon, etc. Or Paid reviews.
 - Making money talks a large audience and patience. Plus there might be certain morals to consider.
- All in all, blogging is a really exciting adventure. There will be opportunities you never expected and meet amazing people. Plus you will learn a lot.

Comments

POST 6 - Questions

- Ask away.

Comments