

This Blog's For You

BY JAY KRALL, MANAGER OF INTERNET MEDIA RESEARCH AND HEIDI SULLIVAN, DIRECTOR OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA
CISION US, INC.

It is widely known that blogs present huge opportunities for PR and marketing professionals to converse and interact with the public. Below are some tips to help you navigate through these conversations.

Prepare before you leap into the conversation, and you will increase your potential for immediate and long-term success. Choosing the right blog is sometimes more important than the pitch itself. With hundreds of thousands of blogs on the Web, it can be difficult to find the blogs that will be beneficial to you and your campaign. You will need to devote some time to searching for and investigating suitable niche blogs geared directly toward the type of product or service you are pitching. Blogs offer you the opportunity to hone in on an audience that is acutely interested in a very specialized topic, such as a single product or a specific interest. Chris Anderson, editor-in-chief of *Wired* magazine, summed it up best when he said, "I've got blogs whose target audience is 100 people - the right 100 people." [i]


How can you find your niche in the blogosphere and cut through the noise? If you have ever used online search engines to source information on a blog or about a specific topic or service, odds are you quickly felt overwhelmed with the sheer volume of blogs about every topic under the sun. Oftentimes refining your search terms just does not do enough to source qualified blogs or postings, particularly if the product or topic you are searching for is popular or controversial. There are easier ways to navigate the blogosphere including [Cision's media research](#) service which offers blog listings on a variety of niche topics and is a great place to start in determining which blogs to target for a particular PR campaign.

Here are just a few examples of popular blogs that adhere strictly to one topic:

- [MoboDojo](#) - covers mobile phones and smart phones
- [Great Green Shoes](#) - covers environmentally friendly footwear
- [CNET's Kitchen Gadgets](#) - covers kitchen gadgets
- [The Rolling Rains Report](#) - covers travel for people with disabilities

Once you have your list of blogs to pitch, some research is required. Reading recent posts to determine the blog's tone, specific coverage area and type of news that they report on is crucial. While many bloggers do accept press releases, particularly those focused on trade sectors, most are likely to respond to a PR professional who engages them in conversation. Remember, even more than traditional media contacts, bloggers are blogging about topics they are passionate about. Instead of just sending a press release, leave insightful comments or questions about a post you find interesting or send an e-mail discussing larger industry trends. Whenever possible, engage with the blogger well in advance of campaign launch. This will give you time to learn from the blogger, get to know your niche audience better, and ultimately increase the potential that your campaign messaging will be on point with your audiences' needs and expectations.

The other benefit to engaging in these conversations is that the blogosphere offers a more immediate and direct interaction with consumers than traditional media. Consumers not only read blogs, but comment on them and link to them - developing relationships with key communities in your industry will help to increase your clients' or



products' visibility and the reach of future campaigns.

You've discovered a blog has made mention of your product or service. Will anyone see it? How will you know?

A blog's visibility can be measured in many ways beyond traditional web metrics. A few of those benchmarks include:

LINKS. Are other bloggers linking to and discussing the blog's content? While a number of services track statistics on how often a particular blog is cited by others, discovering whether a mention of your product or service on a blog is generating buzz can be done with a simple Web search for key phrases from the post. Depending on your goals, just two or three links to the post can result in successful impressions on the right audience. Keep in mind that only about 50 blogs on the web today average more than 20 citations elsewhere per day.

UNIQUE VISITORS, RSS AND E-MAIL SUBSCRIBERS. Some blogs provide data about how many visitors and subscribers they have on their home page or on an About Us page.

POST FREQUENCY. Once you have determined that a blog is fairly popular, the frequency of new entries is a good indication of how often a blog's readers are visiting the site. Frequency of posts should not be used as a primary parameter since there is always the possibility that a dedicated blogger is just shouting into the void with little or no audience. There is, however, a strong correlation between how frequently a blogger posts and the size of the blog's audience. Among the top 200 blogs on the Web, ranked by Unique Visitors per Month, those that average at least three posts per day have two-and-a-half times as many visitors as less frequently updated blogs.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND BOOKMARKING UTILITIES. Many blogs include links to a variety of social tools for bloggers. Yahoo's [MyBlogLog](#) allows users to join a community of fans of a particular blog. The blog [Lifehacker](#), for example, has more than 6,500 community members on MyBlogLog. Bookmarking utilities such as [Del.icio.us](#) (owned by Yahoo) and [Digg](#) allow users to bookmark blog posts and share their bookmarks with others. These sites then list the blogosphere's most popular posts. A blog post can quickly gain steam this way - the most popular posts on Digg usually receive several thousand bookmarks (or "diggs") within 24 hours of being posted. Searching social networks such as Facebook and MySpace for mentions of a particular blog can also help determine a blog's popularity.

Starting the blog conversation, and measuring its impact once underway, can be confusing. In truth, working with bloggers is fundamentally equivalent to working with traditional media outlets: take the time to read their material and learn the bloggers' interests, respect their schedules, and only contact them if and when they want to be contacted. These tips are sure to find your way through the blogosphere.

[i] Blogging Heroes, Michael A. Banks, Wiley Publishing 2008

CISION US, INC.

332 SOUTH MICHIGAN AVENUE CHICAGO, IL 60604 866.639.5090 US.CISION.COM

CISION CANADA INC.

1100-150 FERRAND DRIVE TORONTO, ON M3C 3E5 877.269.3367 CA.CISION.COM