
4.2 Blogs

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Synopsis: Social media guidelines for blogs for State of Georgia sites.

4.2.0 Introduction

A **blog** is an easy-to-update website or webpage where one or multiple authors write regular entries in an informal tone and typically focus on a single subject. Blog ?posts? are typically shown in reverse chronological order, with the newest showing first.

4.2.1 Benefits of Blogging

- Spreads the word on hot issues and interesting topics.
- Serves as a direct line of communication between your agency and its audience and thereby allows you to influence messaging about your agency.
- Opens up a conversation.
- Reaches new audiences for government information and service.
- Increases agency page rankings in search engines, like Google or Bing.

4.2.2 When to Blog

Blogs require consistency and strategy to maintain. Before beginning an agency blog, it is important to assess whether the blog will help your agency meet its goals. What problem will the blog solve, or how will it improve agency communications?

Questions to answer prior to starting a blog:

- Who is your audience?
- What is the purpose of launching the blog?
- What is your message?
- What is your content niche? What stories does your audience want? What topics interest them?
- How often do you intend to post? How will you ensure consistency?
- What feedback are you looking for, and how will you manage it?

You should NOT blog:

- When you do not have the resources to maintain a regular blogging schedule
- Solely for the sake of promoting a single short-term initiative

- As a one-way communication strategy
- As a method for repeating the same content to the same audience (e.g. press releases)

4.2.3 Strategies for an Agency Blog

- Give yourself 10 minutes on the clock, and **brainstorm a list of relevant topics** for posts.
- **Set a schedule** for blogging frequency, and stick to it. Depending on your goals, your frequency may vary, but you should plan to post at least once a week.
- **Identify your blogging team.** Who will represent the agency? What topics will those writers address and how frequently?
- With your list of topics and blog schedule in hand and your blogging team onboard, **create an editorial calendar.** The calendar will help make sure all your bloggers meet their deadlines.
- Determine how you will **measure success**, such as increased website hits, customer interaction, etc. Set goals and expectations for constituent engagement and readership.
- **Determine what blogging tool you will use** to post. Does your content management system (CMS) have a blogging feature built-in, or will you need to supplement your existing website with a blog?
- Before you publish any blogs, review your blog's purpose, message and content niche with your blogging team, and **plan to meet with your team** at regular intervals to review what's working and what's not.
- Write blogs that are easy to scan, with section headings, bullet lists of main points, and bolding when appropriate.
- **Focus on link building** within posts to encourage traffic to other areas of your website.
- Prepare some blog posts ahead of time to **stay ahead.**
- Consider converting your agency's existing online newsletter into a blog.
- **Repurpose content**, if you're short on time. A simple "From the Archives" heading will tell your readers that you're re-publishing an older article.
- Plan to **promote new posts** to help build up your audience.

4.2.4 Blog Authors

Consider setting up profiles for each individual blog author, rather than posting as one generic agency voice. Some of the benefits of attributing blogs to individual authors include:

- Allows for a more personal voice in the writings
- Reduces the risk of blog posts taking on the tone of a press release
- Puts a human face on the agency

Whether you choose to post as one voice or as individuals, consider establishing a workflow policy that requires all posts to be proofread and approved by a main point of contact in the communications department prior to publishing.

4.2.5 Managing Comments

Opening a blog for comments carries with it both benefits and risks. To mitigate these risks, it is important to be prepared to handle the following types of comments:

- Irrelevant or off-topic material
- Spam
- Personal attacks or threats
- Obscene, defamatory, profane, or otherwise offensive or inappropriate language
- Product endorsements
- Personal information that identifies the commenter by name, etc.
- Comments that suggest or encourage illegal or dangerous activity

- Repetitive posts copied and pasted by multiple users

Write terms of use to address these inappropriate comments and post those terms on your website; make it clear that you will not approve certain types of comments, such as those listed above.

Additionally, adjust your blog comments settings to show only pre-approved comments. Assign someone from your team to approve comments for publication and delete those considered inappropriate.

You may also want to consider whether you will allow anonymous comments, and how your team will handle customer support questions that come through the blog comments.

4.2.6 Are You Ready?

- Have you prepared a list of relevant topics?
- Do you have an editorial calendar?
- Are your content authors prepared to create new content at the specified frequency?
- How do you plan to promote your blog?
- Have you worked out your strategy for managing comments?

If, after careful analysis and planning, you find that your agency does not have the resources to maintain an active social media strategy, it would be wise to wait and start an agency blog later, when you are better prepared.

4.2.7 References

- [Moderating a Government Blog](#) [1]
- [National Cancer Institute's Comment Policy](#) [2]

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