



# Employee Blogging: What's the Purpose? March 4, 2008; Page B3

Most businesses have heard of employee blogs by now, and a few are even starting to allow their workers to keep blogs. But what is the point of letting them do so in the first place? Chris Baggott, whose Compendium Blogware makes blogging software for businesses, says employee blogs ultimately should have a few very limited purposes, chief of which involves nothing more lofty than making the company come up higher in Google search results.

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*What is the state of business blogging these days?*

It's a little foggy. People who blog tend to be very opinionated. But in a corporation, that doesn't fit very well, since corporations need to control their message. So a lot of companies don't participate in blogging. Or if they do, it's in a very top-down way. For example, the CEO might blog. If you are like many companies, you might not see a return on investment for blogging. For most businesses, if a project don't have a specific objective, it's very hard to allocate resources for it.

*But do you really need to devote resources to employee blogging? Isn't the whole idea that workers did it on their own?*

Two bad things might happen if you have employees blogging on their own. First, you have some liability. At my previous company, an employee posted something about a competitor that was inappropriate, the sort of content we would never have approved.

Second, you might not get any benefit from individuals who are blogging. There are 20 million businesses in the U.S., and they are all trying to compete to essentially get in the top five or 10 search results in Google. You want employees to blog in order to put content out on the Web that will then attract people to your Web site through search engines.

But bloggers often talk about what they do in much loftier terms: that they are engaging in a conversation or a dialogue.

People are tired of dealing with institutions; they want to deal with people. My philosophy is that corporations are made up of people. How, then, do you free them up? If you have 100 people in

customer service, why don't you have 100 people blogging? The people in your company who are smart and passionate, who like the customer and who like their job, who think they are doing important work and who want to talk about it -- free those people up.

*But at a lot of companies these days, employees are worried about getting laid off or outsourced or are otherwise stressed out. Do companies really want them using blogs to talk about what is on their minds?*

That has not been our experience. And obviously, if you've got disgruntled people, that is content that you don't want to get out. But a lot of people like their jobs, and want to contribute.

*As companies allow more blogs, but control the bloggers' messages, won't blog readers catch on to the fact that the information in them is sanitized? Won't they begin to believe that blogs offer the illusion but not the reality of a free exchange of information?*

It depends on what you are looking for. If you are looking for information on presidential candidates, and you get everything from the John McCain Web site, you have to recognize that is going to be one-sided. But if you are looking for the Republican Party's platform, and you happen to find that on a blog at the John McCain site -- well, the platform is the platform, and there is nothing wrong with finding it there.

What we have now in blogging is this free-wheeling anarchist individual blogger on the one side, and on the other side, the corporate blogger who is anonymous and uninteresting. Where we have to get to is the middle. What we are talking about is something in between a real human voice and completely polished corporate speak.

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