

# 5 easy tips for a more effective blog



By Daniel Casciato

Clients often ask me whether social media can help their business or if it's just a waste of their time.

This past January, the media forecasting company, NielsenWire, published a report indicating that time spent on social networking sites has increased from three hours per month to five and a half hours per month in the last year alone, representing a staggering 82 percent increase in the use of social media. It also reported that users spend the most time on the Internet on social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, and blogs.

As I mentioned in a previous column, while you ponder whether having a social media presence is right for your healthcare organization, portions of your target audience are already online using social media. And if you're not leveraging these platforms, your competitors certainly are.

Blogs, in particular, should be an important component to your outreach and marketing initiatives. It's a highly effective, economical way to communicate with your audience. It's also a good way to start building a body of published work on the web that is keyword rich so that you can start attracting organic search results (search engine results that appear because of the keywords typed in as opposed to an advertisement).

A blog should be the hub of communication to which all the other social media traffic is being driven. So if you're tweeting, your profile page should send visitors back to your blog. If they're interested in your short bursts on Twitter, they may be interested in what you have to say in a blog. The same principle applies to Facebook or LinkedIn. You should drive those people you've connected with on these social media sites back to your hub.

You can get started immediately. When choosing a blog platform, you have several options, most of which offer free templates and are easy to use:

- [www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)
- [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)
- [www.typepad.com](http://www.typepad.com)
- [www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)

However, before you set up your blog, here are five tips to keep in mind.

**1. Know your focus.** Know what you want and keep your ideas clearly focused.



No matter how great your blog looks, if you don't know what you want your blog to say to your visitors or you appear disorganized, they will leave. Determine what the purpose of the blog is and why you're building it. What do you want your users to know?

**2. Provide good content.** Use clear, concise copy to get your intended message across. When you provide your visitors with quality information that informs, you're not only gaining their trust, but you're also building your credibility. For instance, during a really bad flu season one year, an ambulance service provided information on their blog on where local visitors can obtain a flu shot. As a healthcare organization, you are in the business of educating and informing the public. Even though this particular ambulance company didn't administer flu shots, it knew that visitors might come to its blog to find some information about it. Focus on having good content and people will keep coming back.

**3. Keep it simple.** Make sure that your blog is efficient, simple, and practical. It doesn't have to be fancy. You can build the most incredible blog and have the best looking graphics, but it's useless if no one visits it. Every page on your blog should be consistent as far as icons, banners, and layout. To make the pages look more organized, divide copy with lines, bold headers, and, if possible, format some of the copy with bullets to make the information as easy to read as possible.

**4. Maintain your blog.** The greatest liability in setting up a blog is not updating it. This can reflect poorly on your organization. Develop internal procedures for posting the latest information and determine who will be posting content. Is it a team of bloggers or is it one person? Does the content need to be approved? If so, by whom? Also, you need to decide how often you want to write a post and then stick with that timeline. It's fine to write a new blog posting once a week, but be consistent and deliver content on the same day each week.

**5. Check for grammar and other errors.** Finally, once your blog is live, review it periodically for any broken links and missing images, and always check the content for correct spelling and grammar. †

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