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The Good Blogging Guide

Win-Win Strategies for Business and Brands

1. Conversations about your brand are happening now - and the first step towards making blogs a key part of your advocacy network is Listening. There are many social media monitoring tools available to help you listen and engage with bloggers. (They all do some things better than others, so it's not a question of one tool suits all). However, here's a golden rule: use stakeholder mapping techniques at the first phase of listening. You will better define your universe of blogs. It will also ensure you link the goals of the programme to the metrics and ambitions of your brand.
2. Now you're ready to deep dive...that means devoting resources and effort to research your target blogs. Thorough pre-contact research will help you identify three fundamental things: the end user audience of the blog; the interests and passions of the blogger; and the blog's personality/tone of voice. Use a scorecard to rate each element of these against your brand: the higher the score, the closer the fit.
3. Within every category there are prolific bloggers and you'll need to invest time in connecting with them. Therefore, deciding who is an 'influencer' is essential. Some obvious information on a blog will tell you, such as, how frequently the blog is updated. More telling are hard metrics, particularly a high number of commenters and the level of user engagement.
4. Blogs are not traditional media. That means bloggers do not require advertising to support them. They don't have an editor. They don't have to be objective. Bloggers write what they think. Make sure you understand the consequences of this before you start to out-reach.
5. Focus on building a mutually beneficial relationship, not a selling relationship. Value your blogger for their independence, integrity, expertise and their point of view. Get the relationship right, including a little 'thank you' from time, and they'll reward you back.
6. To pay or not to pay. That is a question you may well have to answer. If you want our advice, just say no. Either way set a rule and then stick to it.
7. You've done your homework (you understand the blog's audience, the blogger's motivations and interests and got the engagement criteria fixed for your brand) now is the time to engage. Do it with energy, passion and integrity. This is a conversation, so find your voice and use it well. There is not a right or wrong way, but in our experience clear, concise, personal and direct approaches work best.

8. 'Content is king' is a cliché for a reason – and another top ten could be devoted to messaging and creative expression, so for now let's assume you've everything in place to tell a great story. However, delivering content to bloggers in a way that enables them to easily access it is also vital. Bring all the elements of your story together in social media release format, such as documents, video, images, logos and links, and you will increase coverage by 4:1 over traditional methods. Include as many share functions in your social media release to virally spread the story. Check our Social Media News Room for examples.
9. Blogger relations are a marathon not a sprint, so once you've crossed the line into engaging your blogger with your brand, you must do three things well: monitor, respond, and engage/re-engage. Put an analyst on the top influencer blogs to track the issues and topics that are being covered so that you can enter the conversation cycle. Respond quickly. Keep a blogger workbook (we use excel) to track the engagement cycle. Doing this means we achieve approximately 75% coverage rates for our clients over a three week cycle.
10. Keep listening – we've come back to where we started. In fact, active listening really should be on-going so you can measure and track issues, conversations, coverage and attitudes, as well as focus on the end-user community, not just the blogger relations. For most brands however, it's enough to dip in and out of listening and then listening actively at set periods, such as the mid-point of a campaign or at the end of every programme week. Make sure you use the same methodology to measure impacts otherwise your brand metrics will be flawed. That doesn't mean you must use the same listening tools. It's not atypical to have evolved the listening process on the journey, but the same benchmarks must be applied.