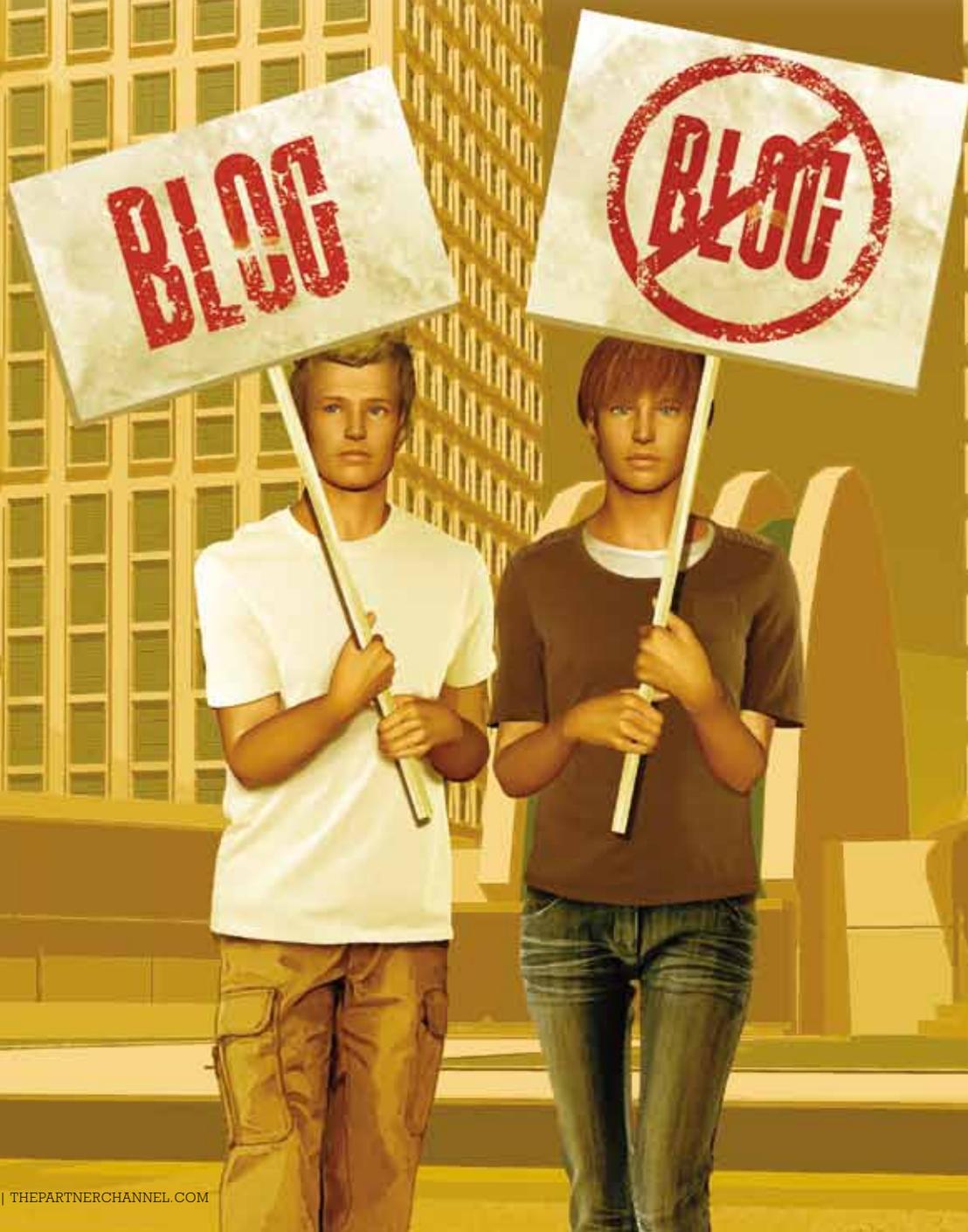


To Blog or Not To Blog

Five Questions to Find Your Answer



I felt like I received many ideas for blogging and it was nice to meet other bloggers. I feel more like we are a part of a virtual team now that we've met.

story by **BETHANY FOYT** | illustration by **DAVE SWANG**

During the blogging panel at this year's The Partner Event (www.thepartnerevent.com), we definitely looked at blogging from several points of view. Our esteemed panel of Partners as well as our bright audience members offered valuable experience and insight about blogging. It seems unfair not to share the information with those of you who were unable to attend the event.

So, I've taken what we learned from the session and created a five-question quiz to help you answer whether you should blog or not...

- 1. Are You Active On Social Media?** With the success of social networks such as Facebook or LinkedIn, some Partners believe it's more beneficial to focus on social media posts than to spend time creating a longer blog article. Our panel piped up fast that blogs are content that can be used in a variety of ways, and it's much richer than a 140-character post. If you have something to link back to that positions you and your company as an industry expert, then automatic bonus points awarded to you!
- 2. Does Your Company Create Videos?** YouTube and search engines such as Google and Bing rank video highly. So there's no question that you should implement video into your marketing strategy, but does this mean you should totally throw out blogging? A majority of the Partner panel members had actually incorporated video into their blogging strategy. After all, if you already create videos, what better way to share them online than to write a short blurb about a key point? Or better yet, write a series of points that link back to them on your website multiple times.
- 3. Does Upper Management Support Your Blogging Efforts?** Our panel all agreed that it's difficult to make headway with blogging when your CEO isn't there to support you. The trick here is finding a way to track results, even when this seems impossible. First step? Set up Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics/) for your website and blog so you can track the percentage of increased traffic, the number of referral links, the number of leads generated from your website, and the number of closed deals from your website. If you can correlate lead generation from blogging (which when tracked closely is possible!), then your boss can't argue with the results.
- 4. Is Increased Web Traffic Important To You?** From our panel, we found that the #1 reason people blog is to increase traffic to their website. Although other benefits were discussed such as proof of expertise, brand recognition, relationship building, and lead generation, search engine optimization (SEO) ranking ranked #1 amongst our panel. So if this isn't that important to you, then it may be more difficult to create a blogging strategy and most importantly, keep one.
- 5. Do The Benefits Outweigh Your Excuses?** There were two top excuses for why Partners don't blog: 1. Not enough time; and 2. Not enough content. If these excuses sound familiar, you're definitely not alone. When it comes down to it, some companies have the resources and some don't. The difference is, are you a company that takes time – or makes time – out of your day to blog? Lack of content holds many Partners back, but our panel had a few interesting ways to overcome this. The majority of our panel outsources blog writing to help with the occasional writer's block. Another great idea was to leave the office (without your power cord) and go to a coffee shop to write. The change of scenery can really be helpful, and you know you don't have all day to waste since your power is limited. It was also very clear during the panel session that benefits are plentiful when blogging is done right. Steve Dwyer of Appolis recently acquired a new customer from the Distribution Software Blog (www.distributionsoftwareblog.com), and Anya Ciecierski of CAL Business Solutions (www.calszone.com/blog/) has seen a 175 percent increase in website traffic since her company began blogging three years ago.

If you answered "yes" to all five questions above, then you definitely need to be blogging. And if you answered "yes" to only a couple, hopefully the valuable information shared by this year's blogging Partner panel will help you realize that you can be successful at blogging no matter what!

Thank you again to my wonderful 2012 blogging panel: Andree Dolan of Sikich, Anya Ciecierski of CAL Business Solutions, Julie Stankey of Socius, and Steve Dwyer of Appolis had such valuable insights, and it was a pleasure to share this knowledge at The Partner Event as well as within this article. Happy blogging...or not. 🌐

If you passed the quiz, but still don't know where to begin, check out the blogging services provided by The Partner Marketing Group: www.thepartnermarketinggroup.com/blog-writing-subscription-program-and-group-blog-membership.