

OBSESSIVE BLOGGING DISORDER

DOES IT WORK FOR FITNESS?

Back when I first started training people, all we had was rocks for resistance and we ran from sabre tooth tigers for cardio work. Well...not really, but it sure does seem like a long time ago.

By Andrew Read

Back then there was no way to market your services effectively, nor were there any 'fitness celebrities'. These days it is entirely different, with many cheap and easy ways to get your name out in the public eye – websites, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. are all good methods of communication with your target market.

While these all have advantages, probably the best way to really make a name for yourself is blogging.

HERE'S WHY:

A blog is your "home base". Facebook, Twitter, etc. are not controlled by you. They can be shut down, or have limited access for a variety of reasons with no warning at all. You control your blog all day, every day.

A blog is an insight into what you know about your field. Potential customers can stop by with no hassle or pressure to purchase, yet get to know you and become comfortable with you, your style and credentials.

Blog sites such as Wordpress, Blogger, Blogspot, etc. offer free use and are as easy

to use as Word. If you can type a Word document, you can blog. No special skills are necessary.

If you run a popular blog you can leverage it to sell products, either yours or someone else's. I am able to make an extra few hundred dollars each month this way.

Static websites are dead. They are costly to maintain, require technical expertise to change and unless you offer a retail side (shopping cart) to your business, are largely worthless. Purchasing a domain name (such as Andrew Read Fitness, for example) and a blog will be cheaper to run, faster to make alterations to and can instantly reflect changes in your business, as well as being a great way to announce things to your customer base.

HOW I STARTED BLOGGING:

I started initially with a 'test' blog about eight years ago. I wanted to see how much traffic it would get and how it ranked in the search engines. I ran that for a year with promising results and then started my current blog (www.relentlesspt.wordpress.com).

By writing articles that people are interested in and opinion pieces on the fitness industry (such as the article from last issue "What's wrong with the fitness industry?") I have seen my readership go up to almost 30,000 a month! My blog often gets linked to some of the best known fitness blogs in the world, thus massively boosting my readership and sales. Along with that it gets my name out to a global audience, something that is important for me for my future plans.

HOW TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL BLOG:

Remember, the internet is forever. Don't post anything that you will be embarrassed by in a year or two. No profanity ever.

Remember the saying "It is better to keep your mouth shut and have others think you're a fool than open it and remove all doubt". Just blindly repeating the same nonsense that fills our industry won't get you many fans or earn you new business. **Content must be informative and interesting as well as original.**

Have an opinion. I often

write about why being an RKC is the best thing since sliced bread. I get a few hate emails for my time, but I also get a bunch of people sign up for the RKC through my affiliate link, earning me money. Linking these types of posts to related websites gets me a lot of traffic as well as extra income.

CONCLUSION:

I view blogging as an essential part to my business. It allows me to practice my writing skills, reach my market as well as connect with new potential customers and often gets me noticed by some big players in the fitness world. My blog markets for me while I am busy training clients and while I am asleep. I view it as another element in my overall marketing plan. What more could you ask from something that requires an hour a week to do?

FOOTNOTE:

FOOTNOTE: You can read Andrew's popular blog on the good, bad and great of the fitness industry at www.relentlesspt.wordpress.com. And watch out in the next issue for a feature on his new studio opening!



YES

For a realistic view of the blogging phenomenon, firstly you should loudly repeat the words (of the title of the book by the same name by Robert Bly), *Blog Schmog*. Because in truth that's what it can be...

By Di Mace

NO

Thousands of aspiring bloggers launch new blogs every day, hoping to boost their income or reputation, whether it is in the fitness industry, or another field. However, without solid direction, writing ability and persistence, most will fail.

There are many ways blogging is overrated, but the most obvious is that it's only as good as the content. Hopefully I'll cut through the hype and enable you to get a true and accurate picture of blogging's potential as well as its limitations.

The best blogs from a business' standpoint are "topical blogs." And the businesses that usually benefit are service oriented (as compared to retail oriented). Tick one for fitness. But, there are many blogs out there that are not topical, are not accurate and timely, and don't really say anything worth reading. Those are the blogs that are not worth producing.

Blogs can help increase a marketing-focused website (if they are part of the parent site) to get favourably ranked with search engines. Therefore, indirectly they help in marketing. But blogs are not a marketing tool in and of themselves unless one treats article writing as a marketing tool. You need to have realistic expectations about what blogging can - and cannot - do for your business.

Depending on whom you ask, there are approximately 165 million blogs and over 60,000 new blogs created every

24 hours. It's true though that many people have more than a single blog (which inflates the figures), but clearly there isn't enough time in the day for every blog to have the readership that validates the time it takes to maintain and build a great blog.

So if you are considering starting a blog, then first ask yourself the question, "Do I have something worthwhile to add to the already saturated blogosphere that will benefit my readers and can I keep it reader-focused?" If you think yes, then also think about this:

DO YOU HAVE A PASSIONATE VIEW, UNIQUE POINT OF VIEW?

Unless you have any revelations, news or specific points of view that are worthwhile, different or invaluable to your readers, then blogging is a waste. To be successful and worth your time, you can't just regurgitate the same things that people say all the time in the industry.

GOOD BLOG POSTS ARE NOT QUICK AND EASY TO WRITE WELL.

This is not a tirade against blogging or everybody writing what they want. Instead, it's a clarion call for focused, topic-centred blogging and good writing. If you are going to blog, you need to be able to write clearly and consistently to maintain an audience. If you are a sloppy and careless writer, they will think you are by extension a sloppy, careless

fitness trainer, which is not the impression you want to convey.

PROMOTING A BLOG IS TIME-CONSUMING; DO YOU HAVE THAT TIME?

Do you track how many hours you already spend reading, commenting and linking to blogs, Facebook and Twitter? All of it is a huge time drain. Isn't it financially more lucrative for you to build your clientele one-on-one relationships for your normal hourly rate rather than spend more time online for free?

TWITTER (AKA MICRO-BLOGGING), IS MUCH QUICKER; WOULD THAT BE BETTER?

If you have something relevant to say, you can just write 140 characters on Twitter. And it takes much less time than maintaining a blog.

IS THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI) GOOD ENOUGH?

According to Technorati's 2008 State of the Blogosphere report, only the top 10 per cent of bloggers make real money with their blog. And that's writing 81 monthly posts on average and using revenue producing blog advertising. Blogging is just another small business. Do the math! Aren't you better off with more clients?

CONCLUSION:

Do not miscalculate or overestimate the effect that

your blog will have on your business. Do not live in the fantasy world of blog. Be very clear about what your blog can do for you, in terms of ROI, whether it is financial, advertising, or just broadening your reputation via the web. Your ROI should always be a balance between weekly time invested in your blog versus what do you get in return for giving up that time. **ufm**

"I'll cut through the hype and enable you to get a true and accurate picture of blogging's potential as well as its limitations."

FOOTNOTE:

Despite the seemingly sceptical viewpoint here, Di actually does believe in blogging (just not in the hyped marketing expectations of many in the blogosphere). She has her own blog www.wordswords.com.au/blog/ on which she posts regularly, in her chosen fields of commercial writing and marketing.