

7 Tips to Write a **GREAT** Corporate

by **DEBBIE WEIL**



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Debbie Weil's

7 Tips to Write a *Great* Corporate Blog

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“Good blogging is good writing.”

Think of a blog as the 3D version of your expertise. It's the online version of You, Inc. It's a microsite where you can showcase your thinking and writing skills. It's where influencers, decision makers, your customers, potential clients, the media – not to mention your boss – can get to know you better — either because they found your blog through the search engines, or they clicked through to it from a link in your newsletter, email signature or business card.

Here are seven rules for effective blogging:

Tip #1: Start with a topic you're passionate about

This is your theme, the thread that will run through your blog. You better be passionate about it, because you'll be chipping away at it for months!

Yep, that's the bad news. It takes time to build your blog into something worth reading. It's the accumulation of posts, or entries, over a period of months or longer that will set you apart as a real blogger.

The "Dear Mom" Exercise

Don't be too stiff and professional when you write in your blog. You don't want it to sound like you've pasted in a press release. Avoid passive tense and long, tortuous sentences.

Here's an exercise: pretend you're writing an email to your Mom. Now, clean that up a bit so it's not quite so informal. For example, you probably want to avoid multiple exclamation points!!!



Tip #2: Concentrate on shorter, more frequent entries in your blog

Now, the good news. You don't have to write a long essay each time you post to your blog. On the contrary, a short paragraph or two is plenty. Sometimes just a sentence will suffice.

Our goal is to show that you're knowledgeable about your topic. You're reading other blogs or news sources, online or offline, that are related.

In fact, a sentence or two with a link directing readers to a relevant article in *The Wall Street Journal* or other respected periodical is plenty. The fact that you noticed the article and have an opinion about it is what counts.

Tip #3: Let your authentic "voice" emerge

Good blogs have a viewpoint and a voice. They reveal something about the way the blogger thinks — as well as what he or she thinks about.

This is where it gets a bit tricky. You want to be honest and forthright in your writing, but you don't want to cross the line into saying things that are critical or inappropriate about major players in your industry.

"A blog is a way to demonstrate that you can write and think clearly, concisely and concretely."

The best advice I have is to use common sense. Every time you post a new entry, remember that you are creating a *public* Web page, easily searchable by Google. That's a key reason, BTW, that blogs come up high in search engine results.



“The ability to write is in woefully short supply at most companies.”

Tip #4: Use correct grammar and syntax

If you're blogging about topics related to your industry niche, the quality of your writing *does* matter.

As a refugee from the corporate workplace myself, I can tell you that the ability to write is in woefully short supply at most companies. A blog is a way to demonstrate that you can write and think clearly, concisely and concretely. *And yes, you do get extra points for proper grammar and correct spelling!*

Tip #5: Write for the Web: Purposefully organize the content of your blog

A blog provides you with an elegant and easy-to-use writing tool. It is also a mini content management system.

Use it purposefully. Think about the categories you want to cover over time. Are there keywords you should be using that clients and prospects may be searching on? Create a category for that phrase.

In addition, title each of your posts with care. Include as many specifics and keywords as possible. If you're quoting an expert or brand name company in your blog entry, include the name in your title. Your blog entry may show up in search engine results alongside the Web site for a Fortune 500 company.

“Title your posts with care. Include as many specifics and keywords as possible.”



Writing for the Web means writing for scanners.

Best practices are to use:

- sub-heads
- bullets
- short paragraphs
- a graphic, if appropriate

“Chunking and packaging your words makes them easier and more appealing to read.”

In short, chunking and packaging your words makes them easier and more appealing to read. It also gives you an excuse to write less. "Shorter" makes keeping your blog fresh and up to date less intimidating when you've got 100 other things to do.

Tip #6: Post a new entry at least once a week, and preferably two or three times a week

Circling back to Tip #2, you need to write frequently in order to keep your blog fresh. The more you post, the more content you are creating. Since each new post or entry is its own Web page, you are increasing the chances that search engines will find your blog. I can't emphasize frequency and consistency strongly enough.

“Use the draft function of your blogging software to park an interesting tidbit of info or useful URL.”

One way to force yourself to write more often is to use the draft function of your blogging software to park an interesting tidbit of info or useful URL. When you run across something you'd like to write about, open up your blog and create a draft entry. Give it a provisional title. Come back later, when you've got 20 minutes to spare to write up a coherent paragraph.



"Everybody has an online identity whether they know it or not, and a blog is the single best way to control it," Debbie Weil says. "You're going to be Googled. No one hires anyone or buys anything these days without going online first and doing research."

- as quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* (April 10, 2007)

Tip #7: Include your key contact information

You'd be amazed at how many bloggers forget to do this! Never forget that your blog may turn up in a reporter or customer's Google search. By building your contact information into your blog template, you make it easy for them to pick up the phone and call or send an email.

"Never forget that your blog may turn up in a reporter or customer's Google search."

BONUS TIP

Have fun when you blog. Whether you're blogging your way to new customers, to get media exposure or to start a conversation with existing customers and friends, you may find that blogging is truly a creative outlet.

Over time, you might find yourself teasing clarity out of a complex topic or delving into subjects you didn't know you were so interested in.

Keep chipping away with each blog entry. Who knows? Your blog might turn into a book!



To blog is to write for the Web

Let's recap the rules of the road and review how to write for the Web:

- Title your post succinctly, remembering keywords and being specific. Search engines and RSS readers will pick up on your post titles, so they're important.
- Write informally - *but not sloppily*.
- Let a conversational tone with an "opinion" and "point of view" emerge.
- Include lots of links, and be sure to give credit to the other bloggers.
- Use white space and visual markers for easy reading.
 - Bullets
 - Indents
 - Bold
 - Italics
 - Snappy sub-heads for skimmers
 - Add images (clip art, photos, charts)
 - Embed videos (yes, there's an easy way to do this)
- Use the "continue reading" feature, so your post doesn't appear too long. Before you Publish... review for typos and repetitiveness.



At a loss for words? Link, link, link

If you're struggling to find things to write about, you're not alone.

In a recent WordBiz survey, 71% of the marketers who responded said that time was a key concern in managing a corporate blog for their company or organization. Forty-five percent didn't know what to write about. Let's rule out *lack of time* as a barrier to blogging.

Really, you'll never be stuck for something to write about. Link to industry articles or other blog posts, or add an interesting graphic or insert a relevant video from YouTube.

Create a blogging schedule *and stick to it*. Don't wait for a topic to drop from the heavens! Instead, use RSS feeds to scour regular sources that focus on your niche expertise. By publishing that information through your blog, you position yourself as an expert and avoid wasting time searching for information that doesn't benefit your business.

Remember Tips #2 and #6: Don't feel pressured to write an article-sized entry. Keep your blogging concise. Blogs are supposed to be a quick, easy read. Link to an article you've found, make a one or two sentence comment on it, and you're done. Posting short entries a couple of times a week shouldn't lead to blogging burnout.

***"Your blog
doesn't need to
be 'cool'."***

Your blog doesn't need to be "cool." A steady stream of short tips with links to other sites or articles is often all it takes. With a blog, you can parcel it out in digestible bits — *with more impact*.

Blogging bits and pieces is a heck of a lot easier than writing full-length articles.



Basic blogging etiquette

Keep it fresh (and short)

As compelling as your blog may be, if you don't keep it fresh, your audience is going to lose interest. Update your blog several times a week at minimum. This way your audience will know it hasn't been abandoned. Don't try to write an opus. A short entry is fine.

Link, link, link

No matter what site, article or other blog you refer to, you should embed a link to your source. Not only is it polite, it's what makes the blogosphere tick – the cross-linking and cross-fertilization of hundreds and thousands of blogs. Of course, it's also what draws the search engines to your blog. Be sure to refer to the specific, permanent link – or *permalink* – if you're referencing another blogger's post.

Stick to a niche topic

While it's tempting to sound off on the topic du jour, don't. An effective business blog focuses on a subject that's useful to your audience.

Oh, and have fun!

It's hard not to, once you get into the swing of blogging. Imagine... a business communications vehicle where you can *tell it like it is*, avoid endless rounds of editing and approvals, develop a distinctive writing voice and style... and still generate leads, attract media attention and brand your company or organization as a thought leader.



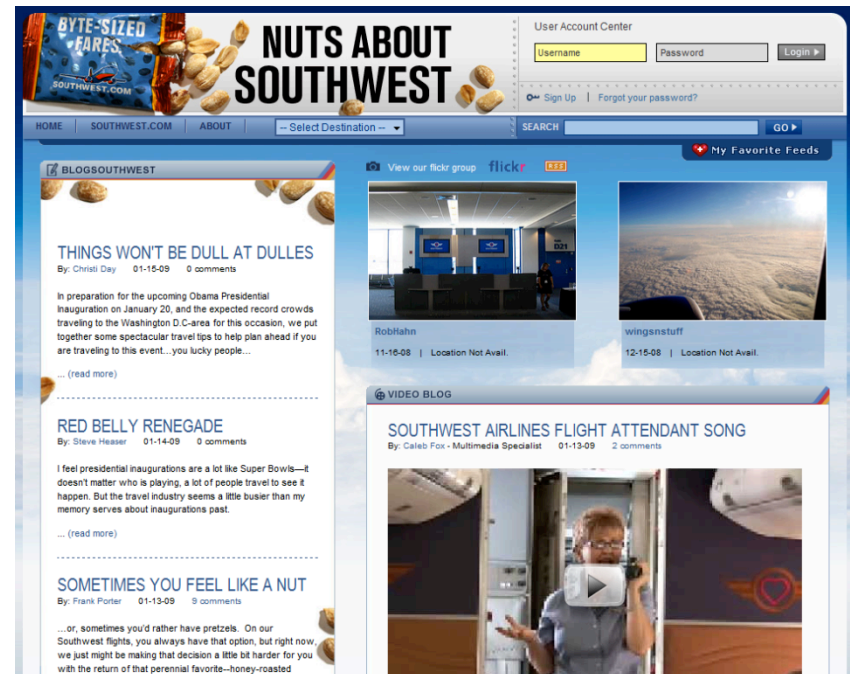
Examples of Big Brand Corporate Blogs

You will find links to over 100 corporate blogs on this page:

www.debbieweil.com/blog/list-of-67-big-brand-corporate-blogs/

A SUPERLIST of companies using social media is here:

www.interactiveinsightsgroup.com/blog1/social-media-examples-superlist-17-lists-and-tons-of-examples/





About Debbie Weil

Named one of the **Most Influential Women in Technology** in 2010, Debbie Weil is a rare species: a baby boomer who is a digital native. She launched her first website in 1995, she started blogging in 2003 and she is an author, speaker and corporate social media consultant who has helped a range of clients, including *GlaxoSmithKline* and the *American Camp Association*, launch a successful corporate blog or unlock the business value of the social Web.

Based in Washington DC, she is a **highly-rated keynote speaker** and workshop leader.

Debbie has keynoted and spoken at conferences in the U.S., Canada, the UK, Europe, the Middle East and China. She has been quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Fortune*, *CNN.com*, *The Guardian* and numerous other publications.

She is a graduate of **Harvard** with an honors degree in English, has a Masters in Journalism from the **University of Wisconsin** and earned an MBA from **Georgetown University**. She is currently at work on a new book, **FRIENDING OVER 50** – about the surprising love affair between baby boomers and social media.

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