

Contact

BEING REASONABLE
BY MARC BABEJ

To Blog or Not to Blog



In the parallel universe of the blogosphere, you'll find ideas and people you'd never encounter in real life — including a few you wish you hadn't.

THE PROSPECT OF BLOGGING CAN SEEM DAUNTING. I hesitated for months before launching the Being Reasonable blog; I wasn't sure the experience would warrant the investment of time. Fortunately, curiosity won out. The marketing blogosphere is a parallel universe where you'll come across ideas and people you'd never encounter in real life. Over the past few months, I've met authors, colleagues from around the globe — and Matt Galloway, a technologist from Tulsa who hasn't worked a day of his life in marketing but whose critiques of advertising on thebasement.com are so on the mark they put many a pro to shame.

The lure of blogging is great. So are the pitfalls. Here are some of the biggest no-nos for marketing blogs:

» **Don't be fake.** The last thing advertising agencies should do is apply their brand of communications skills in the blogosphere. The values of blogging and advertising are diametrically opposed. As Shel Israel, coauthor of *Naked Conversations*, a worthwhile new book on blog marketing, put it to me: "Blogs allow people to have conversations that are candid and natural. They have greater credibility than advertising as it exists today. They are demonstrating that people respond better to quiet, conversational tones than being shouted at." Blogging is about saying it as it is — exactly what many advertising creatives are trained *not* to do.

» **Don't be lame.** Let Proximity Lab (<http://www.proximitylab.com>), BBDO's half-hearted attempt at a blog, be a warning to all who enter the blogosphere just because they feel they have to. Proximity Lab posts only a couple of times a month, and when it does, its posts sound as if they were generated by a computer: "Here we are using this blog openly for exchanging views and learning about how these communications channels can be used. Our blog is branded and clearly states its objectives." Tell it, BBDO!


» **Don't cut yourself off from the outside world.** Links to and from other blogs don't just make for a more interesting read, they also serve a very practical purpose: the more incoming links, the higher a blog's

Google ranking. M&C Saatchi Planner (<http://mcsaatchiblog.blogspot.com/>) has created the blog equivalent of North Korea, allowing *neither* comments nor trackbacks (incoming links from other blogs). By keeping such tight control, the blog has isolated itself in the blogosphere, with links from only nine sites as of this writing (per blog search engine Technorati). By contrast, freshglue.com, the blog of Breukelman Kubista, an agency in Soux Falls, SD, should be much more out of the loop. Not in the blogosphere: Fresh Glue has received links from 12 sites.

» **Don't be blatantly self-promotional.** As you might imagine, the list of offenders on this count is long. Even so, PR man and author Dave Lakhani stands out. Here's an excerpt from the bio on his blog howtopersuade.com: "Dave Lakhani has been described as a 'Marketing Genius,' 'Business Acceleration Strategist,' and

'Multipreneur' by his peers and the media. He has been responsible for developing dynamic strategies driving record breaking [sic] growth and increases in sales, in more than 500 businesses in the past 10 years." You don't say. Less "rounded" stats paint a different picture: 0 comments to his posts and, per Technorati, only 4 links in 39 days — two of which are from his other blog.

» **Try not to make a fool of yourself.** The Origin of Brands blog of Laura Ries (http://ries.typepad.com/ries_blog/), daughter and coauthor of branding consultant Al Ries, seems to serve one purpose only: to push the "divergence" thesis of her latest book (divergence, the opposite of convergence, essentially means single-use devices). On September 20, Laura Ries raved about the iPod Nano: "Apple's iPod is a divergence brand if I ever saw one... A Nano will beat the combo device every time." A few weeks later, Apple launched the indubitably converged, multi-purpose video iPod — to great acclaim. As of this writing, Ries has studiously avoided the subject. Guess how much cred Laura Ries has in the blogosphere at the moment?

The blogosphere is a great equalizer. Fortunately, that means the future belongs not to shills and charlatans but to the likes of Hugh MacLeod (www.gapingvoid.com) and Matt Galloway. Care to join them? 

Marc Babej is president of Reason Inc. (m.babej@reason-inc.com, www.being-reasonable.com)