

debbie weil

*How to Write a **Great** Business Blog*

Enhanced and edited transcript
of 60-minute teleconference

by **Debbie Weil**

*Author of **The Corporate Blogging Book***



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Special Offer: Corporate Blogging in a Day

See next page...

Special Offer: Corporate Blogging in a Day

You provide the computers, Internet access and conference or training room. I will train your group (up to 20 people) in one day how to write an engaging, useful blog for your company or organization. It can be an internal or public-facing blog. You will learn:

- ▶ How to write blog-style in a warm, conversational voice and yet still be substantive
- ▶ How to write Google-friendly titles for your blog entries
- ▶ What to write about, what to link to and how to find material for your blog
- ▶ How to publicize your blog (internally or externally)
- ▶ How to handle controversial topics
- ▶ How to keep your blog fresh and topical
- ▶ What the role of a blog editor is and how to designate (or hire) one
- ▶ How to craft a Comments policy
- ▶ How to insert photos and images
- ▶ How to insert video clips
- ▶ Everything you need to know about the technical aspects of running your blog

At the end of the day you and your group will have learned how to blog and will have created a fully-functional, attractive blog filled with enough content to convince your boss or other decision-maker to take the next steps to launch an internal or external blog program.

Included: 10 copies of *The Corporate Blogging Book*, workbook and handouts. Follow-up consulting by phone and email for four months beyond the engagement date.

15% off regular fee of \$10,000 (plus travel expenses). Offer good until Jan. 25, 2008. Engagement must be booked by the deadline but can be scheduled for a later date. Be sure to mention you are a subscriber to WordBiz Report. Reach Debbie at +1 202.364.5705 Eastern or by email at debbie.weil@gmail.comH.

Introduction

Welcome to the Personal Branding Global Telesummit to mark the 10th anniversary of the publication of Tom Peters' now iconic article, "[The Brand Called You](#)." This session is called "How to Write a Great Business Blog."

The global telesummit is brought to you with thanks to our terrific sponsors for helping us reach global leaders in personal branding. [Conference Calls Unlimited](#) provided us collaborative resources, telephone conferencing and online meeting. Thank you also to Zigs, the one-stop resource for creating and merging your personal brands online.

Visit www.PersonalBrandingSummit.com to listen to dozens of other sessions on topics related to personal branding. Speakers include William Arruda, Krishna De, Kirsten Dixon, John Jantsch, David Meerman Scott, Guy Kawasaki, Andy Sernovitz and many others.

This live audio session was recorded on Nov. 8, 2007.

You can download all the audio files free from www.personalbrandingsummit.com

Nina: My name is Nina Burokas. I'm a strategic consultant operating at the intersection of business, brand and innovation.

This morning, it's my pleasure to host a conversation on business blogging with Debbie Weil. Debbie is a corporate and CEO blogging consultant. She is the author of *The Corporate Blogging Book*, which is certainly on my reference shelf.

Debbie, thank you for taking time out from the Blog World Conference to join us this morning.

Debbie: Thank you. It's a huge pleasure for me to be part of this global event.

The Distinction between Business and Personal Blogs

Nina: Let's take it from the top. What's the takeaway there in terms of your focus on business? Is there a distinction between business blogs and everything else in the blogosphere?

Debbie: There truly is. I purposely put the word "business" in there. There is a difference between a business blog and a personal blog. What's similar is there has to be passion behind each. There has to be a passion driving you to do the writing to express yourself and publish online. That is an important similarity.

The difference is that the topics you choose in a business blog are related to, and designed to showcase, your expertise.

Another difference is your interaction with your readers. You may even call it your community. It needs to be more than your mother. It doesn't need to be millions of people, but it does need to be the kinds of people you're trying to reach.

There has to be a passion driving you to do the writing to express yourself and publish online

Nina: One of the things that we talked about prior was conscious branding versus chatting in public. I think that's what you're getting at.

Debbie: That has to do with writing style. There is a little bit of a subterfuge here. You want to have a conversational, informal, friendly style, but you don't want to say nothing. You have to walk a line between figuring out how to talk about important stuff and make points that are worth listening to and doing it in a way that is informal and conversational. That is the hallmark of blog writing style.

Nina: I think that's a great point. It's adding to the conversation. Are there some exceptions to this rule of keeping it professional? Are there times when you might show a little bit more of your personality?

Debbie: There are. Blog writing is a very creative endeavor. It's hard for me to give exact rules on what to do when. People who follow a blog love when you reveal something about yourself.

For example, a year or so ago my daughter ran in the Boston Marathon. I was able to snap a great photo of her running by. I put that on my blog. People just loved it. They left comments, "That's so great!" I revealed something about my family.

Pete Blackshaw has a great blog on branding and other topics. His father died. He wrote a lovely, very heartfelt entry, "My father was very important to me." He wrote some of the things he did. He included links to go read about his father. It was very real and personal. It gave you a glimpse into the kind of guy that Pete is.

The answer is yes. Sometimes you need to be personal. Just don't be too personal all the time.

Nina: You want to be three-dimensional, but keep it professional. Are there any taboos? Are there places you wouldn't go and recommend that people don't go?

Debbie: I usually throw out politics. That is an area to tread cautiously in. For some of us, our politics are part of our personal life. They may not coincide with the political views of our customers. I think you need to be careful.

I live in Washington, DC. People tend to be fairly liberal. That really is of no consequence if I'm dealing with corporate clients who clearly have a more conservative point of view. Try not to offend anyone. Certain topics like politics and religion are very combustible. Tread carefully.

Nina: I agree. I think you need to tread carefully. As you said, it depends on your clients. Your clients are probably more conservative with your CEO/corporate focus.

In your book, specifically Chapter 7 for those who want to take notes and refer back later, you speak about 10 tips for writing an effective blog. Can you go in to a couple of those?

Tips for Writing an Effective Blog

Debbie: Chapter 7 starts on page 98. It is one of my favorite chapters in the book. I don't get a chance to talk about it very much, so this is wonderful. I'll pick out a couple of tips.

These are the tips we promised for today's call. The first is you need to package what you write as much as possible. That doesn't mean every blog post. Packaging means you give your readers "The 7 Tips for _____," or "The 5 Mistakes to Avoid," or "The Top 10 Lessons Learned."

The reason you do that is it makes for good reading. It's the kind of blog entry that other bloggers will link to. You're creating a very defined resource and packaging it in digestible bites that other bloggers will link back to and say, "Hey, over on Debbie's blog, I read the five mistakes to avoid when you're doing X."

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Another tip related to that is to provide a little synopsis of your entry after it's packaged. These are real writing tips. Other bloggers linking back to you can copy your little synopsis and link to your whole post.

Tip 1: Package

Tip 2: Provide a synopsis of your entry

Tip 3: Always link

You should always link. We can talk a little more about always linking.

Nina: Jump right into that if you want. That seems to be something there is a difference of opinion on.

Debbie: Links are the currency of the blogosphere. You can't write a blog entry without having at least one link in it. Otherwise, it looks very static. It looks like you're not linking or connecting to the other conversation.

That said, there is a way to use links very strategically. You can link back to things you wrote previously. You can link to Tom Peters' terrific article, "A Brand Called You." I highly recommend that article to everyone. You can link to an article you've read. You can link to a Wikipedia entry. You want to do it every time.

This is a very purposeful way of writing and thinking about your blog. You want to make each entry like a little resource that is worth reading and coming back to. It will hopefully also be worth the time of other bloggers to link to it.

It's not just being generous. It's not giving link love. It's actually embedding resources into your blog entry.

The question you asked earlier was, "If you have links in your blog, won't people click a link and go away?" The answer is no. If they're reading along and they're interested, they'll hit the back button. I do not buy in to the idea that if you have links on your website or blog people will click, go away and not come back. Everyone knows how to use the back button.

Writing for Search Engines

Nina: I wanted to dive in a little more to your concept of packaging. Can you speak to the keyword factor and the Google ability? Can you give us some techniques for playing with that?

Debbie: I think I talk about this in the book. You need to think like a journalist, particularly when you're writing the title to a blog post. What you're doing is

thinking about both what will attract your readers and what will attract Google. I don't have a specific outlook on exactly how many times you need to embed a certain keyword phrase. I don't do it like that on my blog.

You need to be very specific and colorful. An example is if you scored an interview with Bill Gates. You don't title that blog entry, "Great Interview with the Top Dog." You say, "Exclusive Interview with Bill Gates Reveals Microsoft will not Dominate Forever." Include a nugget of what you learned in the interview.

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I worked as a journalist for many years. That is the way you would write a headline for a newspaper. The reason you do that is when people type in things like "Bill Gates, Microsoft, exclusive interview, Microsoft dominating," your blog entry, which of course has a unique web page, will tend to come at the top.

Titles need to be as specific as possible. If it involves a big-name person like Tom Peters or a concept or idea like global branding, put those actual words into your title.

Nina: That's fabulous. I read an article last night. I loved the title. It was for those who are into second life stages, "Driving Ms. Avatar." Something that like is engaging. When people look at it in their feed reader, they can click through.

Debbie: I didn't say that explicitly enough. That is the other thing. You're writing for Google. You're also writing for people who may be skimming your blog titles in an RSS reader. You want to be as interesting as possible. There are 100 million blogs. People will not read everything.

Not everyone needs to be a blogger. If you don't have the passion and desire to do this, don't do it. If you like to write a little bit or want to express yourself, this is a way to brand yourself. Otherwise, don't do it. There are other things you can do. You can get someone else to write a blog for you on a topic and then embed that on your website.

It's a key question that always comes up, "Do I need to do this? Does everyone need to have a blog?" If you don't want to keep at it consistently over a time period of several years, then don't do it. That is another one of my top tips in the book. You need to blog consistently over a period of a year or two.

Inviting Conversation on Your Blog

Nina: Will you drill down a little bit into the concept of conversation? That is how you might prompt comments.

Debbie: It's an interesting thing. I just spent two weeks in China. Social media, which is blogging, bulletin boards and participating in those online conversations, is exploding in China. Everyone does it. Professionals of all ages do it. It's not a young person's game. It's not just for techie people.

In China, when people leave comments on a blog, they don't leave five comments. They leave 500 comments. It blows your mind.

There was a blog entry written about the Starbucks that was formally located inside the Forbidden City in Beijing. There were almost 3,000 comments left on this blog entry. There was something like half a million page views for that particular entry.

How many times people have looked at your entry is a metric sometimes included on blogs. You may think, "If I don't have a dozen comments on every blog entry, then my blog is a complete failure." Remember, we're not in China. We probably have roughly the same number of internet users.

Yes, you want comments. No, do not judge your every blog entry on whether or not it elicits comments. Mine don't. I have a fairly popular blog. It's in the Technorati Top 10,000 out of 100 million and I don't receive comments every time.

Don't judge your every blog entry on whether or not it elicits comments

If you're a very popular, celebrity blogger like Robert Scoble, you may in fact receive almost 100 comments every time you blog.

How do you elicit comments? Sometimes you can be very specific in the blog entry and say at the bottom, "I'd really like to hear what you have to say about this. Click and leave a comment." Sometimes that works, sometimes it doesn't. There are a few tricks.

You've written something. You've packaged it into your top 10 tips and really want people to look at it. You can take the URL of that blog entry and email it to a few friends or colleagues. You say in a very personal way, "I've written this. I just wondered what you think and if you'd go take a look." You can't beg or force them to leave a comment.

It alerts people through the channel of email that you've written something. You think they might be interested. It is fine to do that, just don't do it twice a day. Don't even do it once a week. Other than that, you need to sit back and let the conversation happen.

It's wonderful when you receive a couple of comments and then they feed on each other. You'll have readers on your blog commenting back and forth to each other. They chime in and disagree with one another. I think, "Wow, I really have traction here."

Nina: You have the hub of conversation going.

Debbie: You have to be realistic. If there are some new blogger wannabes listening, give yourself time. It doesn't happen overnight.

Nina: Sometimes we want to tie things up in a bow. You need to leave it a little bit open. People will come in and tie it up for you. Don't try to close everything up like you've exhausted the topic.

Debbie: That brings up a good point. The purpose of a business blog is to establish yourself as an expert over time. One of the ways to do that is to force yourself to sink through the various issues relating to your industry and services you offer.

Writing is very hard. Making yourself write clearly forces you to think through something and articulate it in a way you couldn't before.

It's okay to sometimes say, "I'm still thinking about this topic. I don't have it quite worked out. I'd love to hear what you think." It's okay to admit, "I'm not the world's foremost expert. I'd like to hear from you, my smart reader. What would you add to this?" Sometimes that really gets a conversation going.

Again, this is not the kind of thing you'd do in an op-ed in the *New York Times*. You wouldn't admit in the op-ed, "I really don't know what I'm talking about." That is what you do in blogging. You are human. You are real. Sometimes you don't have all of the answers.

Nina: What is your response to people who say they don't want to leave the comments open or accept trackbacks?

Debbie: Let me take trackbacks separately. I think a blog is an easy personal publishing platform. That is what blog software is. If you don't want to use the comments, then you have a nice, easy personal publishing channel. It's really not a blog.

If you want it to be a blog where people have conversations, then you need to allow comments

There are times when you want to use that for different reasons. You may want to incorporate something like that into your website. If you want it to be a blog where people have conversations, then you need to allow comments.

That said, this is very common these days. You can put your comments on a delay. Another phrase is "moderate" your comments. They don't appear immediately. You have a chance to quickly review them. Many people do this. Big companies do it. Popular bloggers do it. Frankly, there are a lot of nutcases out there. You receive spam. Sometimes it's completely off topic. It's not appropriate.

I've written a fair amount on a General Motors blog. It is called "Fast Lane." Every now and then, I'll receive an incredibly long comment submitted by some guy. He is not happy with his General Motors truck. He took it to the dealer. He didn't have it serviced. He's not receiving satisfaction from General Motors.

By the way, do I have the CEO, Rick Wagner's phone number? The answer is no. This is not what my blog is about. I'm not helping General Motors customers.

Nina: You're not customer service for GM.

Debbie: I feel very strongly that you should allow comments. I also feel perfectly comfortable saying that if for whatever reason you want to review your comments, you should.

The third thing is you need to have a clear comment policy. It should be posted on your blog for people to read. It's where you say, "I review comments. If they're off-topic or inappropriate, I will not publish them." "Inappropriate" is a great word. You can throw in offensive, racist or homophobic. You can be as specific as you want.

You can also say, "I reserve the right to edit comments." It's your blog. You're in control of it. You want to be warm and open. You also want to look like you're in charge. You are in charge.

Nina: You have a sample of that on your blog. I believe you moderate comments. Someone could look at your blog for an example.

Debbie: I do. Every now and then, I will un-moderate them. This gets a little technical. There is a thing called "captcha" that is supposed to deter spam. People will enter a comment and then they have to enter in an image word. Then they can post.

It depends on whether I'm traveling or not. Sometimes I do it like that. Other times, I have it moderated. I'm not online right now, so I can't tell you what my exact comments policy is. People can look it up if they want to.

Controversy and the Ripple Effect

Nina: One thing you talked about is that there are often people who are off in left field. To what extent do you recommend using controversy to make your blog stand out?

Debbie: That's a great question. I can think of one person who does that to his advantage, or at least he thinks it's to his advantage. It's Bob Parsons, the founder and CEO of GoDaddy, the domain name company. He's dived into politics and what he thinks about abusive interrogation techniques at Guantanamo Bay. He basically endorsed them.

This was a couple of years ago. He kicked up a firestorm of discussion on his blog. He also told me in an interview for the book that he received dozens of emails, many of which were supportive. That was surprising.

Nina: It's all about building community.

Debbie: I said to him, "Bob, this seems like an awfully hot topic to get into. How do you think this reflects on you and your company's brand?" He said, "It doesn't matter. It gives me more visibility. In fact, domain sales went up." It hadn't detracted from his business.

That's a kind of a Howard Stern, shock jock, "any publicity is better than no publicity" approach. I think it's really up to you.

It comes back to the question of the ripple effect in the blogosphere. What you say can come back to haunt you. It's hard because you also need to put yourself out there and be provocative enough that you're saying something worth listening to.

*What you say
can come back
to haunt you*

Nina: You need to have a point of view.

Debbie: If you become too controversial or stray into areas where you don't know quite enough or make a mistake, you can always explain that later. The problem is that this is the blogosphere. This is the Wild West, or as they call it

in China, "The Wild East." Things can get away from you and spin out of control. People may misinterpret it.

It's like playing the telephone game. Within an hour, you think, "I can't believe people are saying this." They're referring back to something on your blog. You think, "That is really not what I said."

Feel your way. Tread carefully. It depends on your personality. You need to see what kind of voice feels right for you. Again, we're talking about business blogging. This is not personal blogging.

There is a business reason for blogging. You want to establish yourself as an expert. You want to be found on Google when people type in keywords related to what you're writing about. Reporters are always doing their research online. You want them to find your blog. Don't forget to put your phone number on your blog. They'll pick up the phone and call you.

There are a lot of dotted lines to go from blogging to increasing sales, revenue and customers. It's loose. There is a business reason. You need to weigh and measure how controversial you can be versus the business result you're looking for.

Blogs vs. Newsletters

Nina: I'd like to incorporate a question about connecting the dots if you already have a newsletter. You're thinking about launching a blog. What goes in the blog versus what's in the e-newsletter? Can you comment on that?

Debbie: It's an interesting dilemma. I've had a newsletter for a number of years. I think it might be five years. I've been blogging almost as long.

You need to look at it from two points of view. You have to look at it from the publisher, editor and content producer's point of view in terms of what's involved. You need to look at it from the reader's point of view. These are the people you're trying to reach.

It is true that most people don't wake up every morning and check out 10 blogs. Many people still don't use RSS readers. They're not signing up for blogs that way. Email is still very effective in terms of reaching your readers.

From the content producer's end, it is frankly a pain in the neck to put together both a newsletter and a blog consistently. One reason is that it is a different kind of writing. I find that you write in a different voice.

A newsletter is much more of a packaged publication. It has an intro, a main article and three tips. A good newsletter is put together like an editorial product. It's a whole. It's something you need to think through. It needs to have a theme.

A blog entry is so much easier. It's a nugget, unless you're doing a series. You may do that sometimes. It's nugget, nugget and a little bit. It's much easier to produce and write.

A newsletter is something you need to think through. A blog entry is much easier to produce and write

One of the questions was, "Can you take your last five blog entries and stick them in an email and send that out as a newsletter?" You can.

You can also subscribe to blogs via email. You usually receive them one entry at a time. It's different without the intro tying it together as a planned editorial product. It's not really an e-newsletter. They are two different animals.

I think a lot of people find it very difficult to put together an e-newsletter. You've written one long, 500 or 750-word article as the anchor of the e-newsletter. You may think, "I can't send out the e-newsletter until I have the article together." With a blog, you can.

You can sit down and in less than an hour put together a little blog entry based on something you read that day in your favorite trade association publication, *Wall Street Journal* or whatever it is you like to read.

Blogging is a lot easier than publishing an e-newsletter. You need to think about what your readers want and how you want to reach them. You may want to occasionally make the effort to put together a coherent list of a table of contents and articles to send out as a newsletter. They are two different things.

Nina: What's coming across very clearly in what you're saying is it's about knowing your audience, what information is relevant and of interest to them and how they want to consume it.

Debbie: I have tried over a period of several years to convert my email newsletter readers to my blog. I say, "Hi, this is Debbie. I'll be busy this summer. Please read my blog for updates." I don't think they do.

I have roughly 20,000 subscribers to my e-newsletter list. My feed list or RSS subscribers is a couple thousand. It's okay. It's not great.

Sometimes you'll see the number on the blog. It will say, "20,000 subscribers." It also means they have a more tech-savvy following. That's the trick.

Many people on the call today are in fields that are not necessarily techy. They're in the branding and consulting field. You're dealing with an audience that may not think to go to your blog. You may not be able to persuade them to follow your blog. Every now and then, you need to communicate with them via email.

What's Next in Blogs?

Nina: There is definitely an adoption curve. What's next in terms of engagement? You talked about video. Is Twitter next? What do you see coming down the pike in terms of engagement on the blog?

Debbie: Video is here. Luckily it's incredibly easy to embed video in your blog.

I recently purchased a small digital camcorder called a "Slip." It's made by Pure Digital. You can find it on Amazon and many places. They have many different models. It's about as big as a thick cell phone. It only does video. It's not a still camera or cell phone.

It's completely idiot-proof. You just point and do it. I did 30-second and one-minute interviews. It has a little USB stick that flips out. You stick it in your computer and it downloads the video file. You can then upload that video file to YouTube. You take the code and put it on your blog and bingo, you have a video on your blog.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't still write some of your blog entries, but people love these little videos because they're very immediate and real. They like to see people's faces and hear their voices.

*People love videos
because they're
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and real*

Nina: They're very visual.

Debbie: I've just done that at BlogWorld.com. The way I do it, the camera wobbles around. It's fun. People love it. Video is here. That's what YouTube is all about.

There is a little trick. If you go to a YouTube page for a specific video, there is a lot of stuff on the page. Usually to the right of the video, you'll see a little window. It will have the URL which is the specific page for that video.

There is a window that says "embed code." Don't be put off by that. Simply select it and copy it. It's just a couple of lines of code, like HTML code. Stick it into a blog entry. You have to be in the code view in your blog. That isn't hard to do. Save and publish it.

What appears in your blog is exactly what is in the YouTube page. It's just a little square image with that "click" button in the middle. It's like magic. You run a video that streams off of YouTube's servers in California. It is that easy.

That is the single reason I use YouTube. I want to get my videos up there so I can get the code to put on my blog or send the URL around to someone I interviewed. I want it public to be spread around.

Twitter is sometimes called "microblogging." It's a little hard to describe. You can do it through your computer or cell phone. It is very short, with 140 to 160 character limits. They are little message bites you can send to everyone who is interested in following you on Twitter, which is like subscribing to your blog.

There are people who are just crazed by this. They "tweet" all day long. I follow some of the more active twitterers like Robert Scoble. He's awfully smart. I like what he has to say about tech things. Sometimes I turn them off and don't follow them.

Is it the next new thing? Honestly, I don't know. This gets into the area of privacy. I don't want to tell everyone that many details about what I do and where I move around like, "I just landed at LaGuardia and am on my way to Montreal." I don't want to share that much.

Many people do it very profitably from a business standpoint. They want to be connected all the time. They'll say, "I just landed in Montreal. If you're here, give me a buzz. We'll have a drink or a meeting." It's another connecting tool that can be very effective.

It's very easy to tweet all day long and say, "I'm doing this. I'm getting tired. I'm getting ready for my presentation." I don't want to know. We can talk a little bit more about privacy if you want.

I don't think you need to do Twitter if you don't want to. It's important to know what a lot of these things are.

Kirsten: Make your own value decision.

Debbie: I don't write about all of them on my blog. Other people do that for me. Every now and then, when I feel there is enough interest in something, I'll write about it.

Facebook is an example. Other people use Facebook. It's a fascinating phenomenon. I urge everyone listening today to open a Facebook account and experiment with it. You can follow the conversation in the newspapers. What should Facebook do? What's it worth? Who will use it? What about advertising?

The easiest way to understand all of these things, including blogging, is to try them. Just do it.

Kirsten: It's like anything else that is new. Just jump right in. That is one of the funny things I love about the title to your book, *The Corporate Blogging Book: Absolutely Everything You Need to Know to Get It Right*. Do a little bit of due diligence first and go from there.

How Often Should You Blog?

Kristen: Debbie, let's do a quick reality check. Obviously, writing a great blog requires a time commitment. Can you put this into perspective? You said, "If you don't think you can stick with it for a couple of years, don't do it." How often do you need to blog? Help me understand that.

Debbie: The minimum is once a week.

There are many bloggers who blog much more than that. Ted Leonsis, the former Vice Chairman of AOL, is one of them. I met him when he lived in Washington, D.C. He blogs three times a day. It's very clever. He's no longer with AOL. He's an entrepreneur. He owns sports teams. He just produced a movie. He is out and about. He's branding himself all the time. He writes it himself.

I prefer twice a week. I'm not sure I would go into this asking at the outset, "Can I do this for two years?" That's just way too intimidating. "Let me try this and see where it goes. Let me commit to doing it once or twice a week." Remember what I said about blogs versus e-newsletters.

***You should
blog at least
once a week***

You will give yourself another thing to do.

Think of a little, tiny task. In the course of your reading, talking, being online and normal workday, you will always run across a tidbit. Sometimes I call it a “bloggy” bit. It’s something you read that you want to tell someone about. That’s a blog entry.

Don’t make this more difficult than it needs to be. OF course, every now and then you’ll get up on your high horse and want to pontificate about something. Use the little things you come across. That comes back to links. The link is the basis of the blog entry.

Think in little, tiny bites. It can be short—a couple of sentences, a paragraph or a couple of paragraphs. Then it becomes very doable. The challenge of doing it once or twice a week is not very great.

Twice a week is better. Once a week for a year is much better than five times the first week, then four times, then three times and then a gap of three months and then a gap of six months. You have to do this over time. Building a brand is a slow process. It takes time to build it.

Kirsten: I always say, “Your brand is like your credit. It’s built or repaired over time. Start now.”

Your ROB, or “Return on Blog”

Kristen: What is the ROB, as you phrased it in your book, the “Return On Blog”?

Debbie: I made that up. I tried to be a little bit clever with “ROB.” It is everything we’re talking about.

Tom Page’s article says, “You have to be an exceptional expert at something that really matters.” There are some great phrases in this article, which is 10 years old.

ROB establishes you as someone who has something to say and might be someone a group would want for a speaking engagement, or a reporter would want to quote. When you talk to a reporter, you can get a quote in a newspaper. These are very tangible ROB.

Sometimes it's someone who followed you for a long time. It could be weeks, months or a year before suddenly they call you, "I read your blog. Now I want to hire you as my consultant." There is definitely a business result. It takes time.

The most immediate thing you look for is to see your blog entries come up very high in Google search results. That comes back to the personal digital branding of yourself.

One of the biggest reasons you want to blog is that if someone types your name into Google, which they will, you want your blog to come up as the first search results. You want to control your digital identity. That is a business result.

The number-one ROB is to be able to control what people see about you when they type your name. That is what people do all day long. They type in your name or the name of your service, product or company because they want to know more.

This is a way to tell them a lot more than they could get through a static website, which will probably not appear at the top of the search results. Google likes fresh content. The algorithm is set up so that Google loves blogs and blog entries.

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Measuring Your Success

Kirsten: Are there any metrics that you tap into or watch on your own blog?

Debbie: I look to see if people leave comments. I have a hunger for that connection. I don't want to be in the cartoon of the dog. One dog says to the other, "I used to blog, but decided to go back to pointless, incessant barking." I hope it isn't useless, incessant barking and that people will respond.

I look at my www.Technorati.com ranking. It gives the rankings of marketing blogs. Mine goes up and down. It's 42 on the Advertising Age list. There is a little bit of vanity there. I want to be able to tell people, "It's a popular blog."

My favorite metrics program is free. It's called Google Analytics. I highly recommend it. It can be installed easily on a www.TypePad.com or www.WordPress.com blog. It is just mesmerizing. It's another free Google thing. It shows you visually with charts where your traffic comes from, what browser they use and which links people come to your blog from.

If you are mentioned in your local newspaper and that article is online, you will see on Google Analytics that people read the article online and clicked on the link to your blog, which would hopefully be in the newspaper.

That is great to watch for trends and see what people are really interested in and which articles they go back to. That's another trick you can have in a blog. In the left or right-hand column, have the most popular entries. You can link to those in your own blog.

Kirsten: You know what they want.

Debbie: Bring them to people's attention.

Google Analytics is my favorite tool. You can see which countries people come from and what time of day they access your blog. If you really do have a global audience, maybe it's time to take a trip to China and see if you can market yourself there.

Blogging for Non-Writers

Kirsten: Let's say you buy into the concept of blogging as a way to raise your profile and get your name and business out, but can't invest the time. Maybe you aren't a particularly good writer. What are your options?

Debbie: No. 1, don't do a blog. No. 2, get this new flip video camera to do videos. You'll probably find that you have to write something anyway to introduce the video. It's just utterly seductive. I'm not a cinematographer.

You can do a podcast, but they are actually a lot of work. There is a fair amount of technical know-how to create the podcast, edit the audio file and get those RSS feeds going. Some people are just crazy about them. They are wonderful, but I've found it more work and more complicated to do a podcast.

There are tricks. If you don't want to write a blog but want to have a newsy section on your website, you can set up a blog and have it pull in newsfeed on the topics you're interested in.

You can use del.icio.us, which is a great tool that will save URLs to anything you're interested in. Some people actually do this and call it a "links blog."

You can set it up so that as you go through your day and notice a couple of articles, you can go to del.icio.us and save those links. You can have del.icio.us automatically publish to your blog every night the links you thought were important during the day. You don't actually write anything. You just offer a running list of resources.

You don't need to be a professional writer, and sometimes it's better if you're not. You come across as more genuine and authentic. That isn't to say you shouldn't check your spelling and grammar and get rid of those run-on sentences.

***You don't need to
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I had a journalism professor who said, "It isn't quality. It's quantity." If you keep writing, you will get better. It's like going to medical school. If you don't have a driving passion to do this or feel like a very private person, don't do it.

Kirsten: I want to give you time for some key takeaways for those participating.

Debbie: I have a special offer for a great global branding telesummit. If you buy my book on Amazon and send me your receipt, I will send you a one-hour audio

recording on how to write a great corporate blog. It covers a few other issues related to blogs, such as ghost blogging and having a blog editor. That's a US \$47 value. Buy the book on Amazon. It costs nothing, about \$16.

My final thought is to just do it. Just try it.

Keep a lot of these tips in mind, like packaging what you write and writing specific titles. Have fun with it. It's fun to force yourself to think clearly, and it gives you a real sense of achievement. If you connect with your audience, your readers, you'll have an even greater sense of achievement.

I read Tom Peters' article this morning "A Brand Called You." The very last sentence said, "Start today. Just do it."

Nina: I use that in my presentations as a closing slide.
It's fabulous.

***Start Today.
Just do it***

Debbie, thank you so much. Let me wrap it up here.

I really hope that everybody listening found the seminar truly valuable because I know there were great tips in there.

I am sure our listeners have benefited from the information you've shared. Thank you so much for that, and for the terrific offer that you've made, Debbie.

The key now is to take the information you've shared and actually apply it. Both those who don't have a blog and those of us who are actually blogging already can take our blogs and our business and personal brands online to the next level.

This program has been recorded and will be available shortly as a podcast, with thanks to the team at Conference Calls Unlimited, www.ConferenceCallsUnlimited.com.

As you are aware, we have a social calls partner which is being promoted on our website. The event social calls partner is Kiva, a microfinance organization providing loans to entrepreneurs in developing countries, whose goal is to eliminate global poverty.

If you found the information that we shared today of value, remember that all of our speakers are gifting their time. I would encourage you to take a look at Kiva. If you think it's appropriate, click on the link to make a contribution.

Thank you again for joining us today. We wish you continued success in building your personal brand, and specifically building your personal brand online through your blog.

About Debbie Weil

Most companies are terrified of bloggers. There are over 100 million of them, according to Technorati, and you can't control them. But there's a way you can defend your brand in the blogosphere whether you're a Fortune 500 company or an individual entrepreneur: *Start your own blog.*

Through keynotes, workshops and consulting, Debbie trains busy managers, executives and solopreneurs on how to launch and maintain an effective blog. A blog makes you (or your brand, product, service) findable online. A blog can make you come up first in Google search results. A blog is a powerful and cost-effective PR, marketing and communications strategy.

Her practical presentations (no techie jargon) demystify the blogosphere and show you how to get started immediately. She specializes in content strategy – who and how to write your blog, what your topic should be, how to prompt a conversation with your readers. She has parsed the implications of Web 2.0 and social media (blogs, podcasts, wikis, video and RSS) for thousands of executives throughout the US, the UK, Europe and mainland China.



Engage her for:

- **Consulting** ([executive blog coaching](#) and [corporate strategy](#))
- **Keynotes** ([Belgium](#), France, the UK, the US and [China](#))
- **Teleconferences** ([example](#))
- **Webinars** ([example](#) and [example](#))
- **Workshops** ([example](#) and [example](#) and [example](#))

For more information, visit www.debbieweil.com/speaking.



Debbie is the author of [*The Corporate Blogging Book: Absolutely Everything You Need to Know to Get It Right*](#) (Penguin Portfolio). It is also available in a UK edition and in Italian and Mandarin Chinese.

Buy it [on Amazon](#) or find it at Barnes & Noble, Borders and other booksellers.

She writes a Technorati Top 10,000 blog on the topic of CEO and corporate blogging, www.BlogWriteForCEOs.com, and publishes an award-winning e-newsletter, www.WordBizReport.com

Debbie has been quoted on the why, what and how of business and corporate blogging in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *The Washington Times*, *Entrepreneur Magazine* and numerous other newspapers and trade magazines. She has appeared on television on the UK's *Sky News* and on the *Nightly Business Report*.

Debbie previously worked at *Network Solutions, Inc.*, the original dot com company. She was a reporter and editor for two decades with major newspapers including *The Atlanta Constitution* and *Cox Newspapers Washington Bureau*. 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.

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