

Eric Butow & Rebecca Bollwitt



"To connect with today's buyer, you need to stop pushing your message out and start pulling your customers in. And there is no better tool for this than the blog! *Blogging to Drive Business* is an essential guide for any business wishing to use a blog to attract a steady stream of inbound opportunities."

—Paul Dunay, Global Managing Director of Services and Social Marketing, Avaya Inc.

# BLOGGING

Create and Maintain Valuable Customer Connections

# TO DRIVE BUSINESS

# Blogging to Drive Business

Create and Maintain Valuable Customer Connections

Copyright © 2010 by Pearson Education, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book shall be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the publisher. No patent liability is assumed with respect to the use of the information contained herein. Although every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this book, the publisher and author assume no responsibility for errors or omissions. Nor is any liability assumed for damages resulting from the use of the information contained herein.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7897-4256-8

ISBN-10: 0-7897-4256-X

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data is on file*

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: January 2010

## Trademarks

All terms mentioned in this book that are known to be trademarks or service marks have been appropriately capitalized. Que Publishing cannot attest to the accuracy of this information. Use of a term in this book should not be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark or service mark.

## Warning and Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to make this book as complete and as accurate as possible, but no warranty or fitness is implied. The information provided is on an “as is” basis. The authors and the publisher shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damages arising from the information contained in this book.

## Bulk Sales

Que Publishing offers excellent discounts on this book when ordered in quantity for bulk purchases or special sales. For more information, please contact

**U.S. Corporate and Government Sales**

**1-800-382-3419**

**corpsales@pearsontechgroup.com**

For sales outside of the U.S., please contact

**International Sales**

**international@pearson.com**

**Associate Publisher**

Greg Wiegand

**Acquisitions Editor**

Michelle Newcomb

**Development Editor**

Ginny Bess Munroe

**Managing Editor**

Kristy Hart

**Project Editor**

Andy Beaster

**Copy Editor**

Keith Cline

**Indexer**

Lisa Stump

**Proofreader**

Seth Kerney

**Technical Editor**

Paul Chaney

**Publishing Coordinator**

Cindy Teeters

**Interior Designer**

Anne Jones

**Cover Designer**

Anne Jones

**Compositor**

Gloria Schurick

# Introduction

*Blogs represent a great opportunity for businesses to get their names out into cyberspace as experts in their line of work. Often, however, businesses don't know where to start or about potential pitfalls (for example, how to attract the most people to their blog, what to say, and perhaps more important, what not to say).*

***Blogging to Drive Business** will help businesses of any size learn more about blogging, from both the technical and strategic perspectives. After all, you need the specific technical instructions to set up your blog and add information to it, and you need to know how to get eyeballs looking at your blogs and how to leverage your blog with your other online (and offline) marketing efforts.*

## How This Book Is Organized

There's a lot of material to cover, but we cover it step by step through nine chapters:

- **Chapter 1, “Why Are Blogs So Important?”** covers blog basics, how blogs can help you serve customers better, and how to use blogs to get more information about your customers.
- **Chapter 2, “Leveraging Your Blog with Marketing Tools,”** shows you how to build an integrated online and offline marketing toolbox that includes blogs. You'll also learn how to push your blog information to your customers, pull customers to your blog, and take care of your readers.
- **Chapter 3, “Creating a Blogging Strategy,”** gets into the nuts and bolts of blogging. You learn about popular blogging platforms, how to find the blogs that are best for your business, and how to combine blogs with other networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.
- **Chapter 4, “Blogging Responsibly,”** explains how you need to listen to your audience to be an effective blogger and how to respond professionally to comments made to your blog posts.
- **Chapter 5, “Finding Topics to Write About,”** answers the question about how to write topics on a regular basis to keep your audience engaged and coming back for more. You also learn about how to create one or more internal blogs for your company.
- **Chapter 6, “Who Will Write the Blog?”** identifies ways to find one or more people within your company to write a blog. Your writer can be someone who is already on your staff, such as the marketing manager (perhaps with a message from the CEO on a regular basis), or you can hire a professional blogger. This chapter also explains how to write effective blog posts.
- **Chapter 7, “Getting Eyeballs to Your Blog,”** tells you how to get your blog noticed. Start by reading blogs so that you can see how other companies in your industry blog successfully. The chapter then examines how to link your blog and make it searchable, how to get crowd-powered content, and how to promote your blog using other marketing techniques such as press releases and your company Web site.
- **Chapter 8, “Getting Interactive with Multimedia Blogging,”** shows how to create podcasts and screencasts, post them on a blog, and how to create multimedia blogs for different audiences.

- **Chapter 9, “Taking Advantage of Web 3.0 Blogs,”** provides an overview of Web 3.0 technologies so that you can be ahead of the curve as we enter the second decade of the twenty-first century. This chapter also explains how to integrate Web 3.0 technologies such as the Semantic Web into your blog.
- **Appendix A, “Important Blogging Sites,”** is a good place to start if you want to see where people go when they want blogging platforms or want their blogs to get noticed. Many of the sites in this appendix are also discussed in this book.

In every chapter of this book, we’ve included at least one example of how companies use blogs effectively (or, in some cases, ineffectively). Our examples give you a good idea of what you can do (and what you shouldn’t do) for your business blogs. At the very least, these examples will get your creative juices flowing.

## Conventions Used in This Book

We hope that this book is easy enough to follow intuitively. As you read through the pages, however, it helps to know precisely how we’ve presented specific types of information.

### Web Pages

Obviously, this book contains a lot of Web page addresses, like this one: [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com). When you see one of these addresses (also known as a URL), you can go to that Web page by entering the URL into the address box in your Web browser. We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the Web addresses presented here. Given the ever-changing nature of the Web, however, don’t be surprised if you run across an address or two that have changed since this book was published.

### Special Elements

As you read through this book you’ll note several special elements, presented in what people in the publishing business call *margin notes*. There are different types of margin notes for different types of information, as you see here.



#### Note

This is a note that presents some interesting information, even if it isn’t wholly relevant to the discussion in the main text.

---

*Tip*

This is a tip that might prove useful for whatever it is you're in the process of doing.

---

## There's More Online

To provide you the most up-to-date information about blogging to supplement (and sometimes correct) what you find in this book, we've set up a Web site at [www.blog2drivebiz.com](http://www.blog2drivebiz.com). This site is... a blog! It's also a great place to get more information from Eric and Rebecca about what's going on in the blogosphere.

You can also visit Eric's business Web site ([www.butow.net](http://www.butow.net)) and Rebecca's business Web site ([www.sixty4media.com](http://www.sixty4media.com)) to learn more about books we've written, upcoming speaking engagements, and yes, to read our blogs.

Now that you know how to use this book, it's time to learn why blogs are so important to your business marketing strategy, a subject we cover in the opening chapter.

# Blogging Responsibly

*In the online and offline worlds, people chat and share opinions about businesses, products, and services. Whether it is a word of mouth endorsement, written on a Facebook wall, or a quick chat with a colleague over lunch, chances are, the public is already discussing your company in some form or another.*

*By learning how to engage the talkers through open, online channels, you can truly connect with your customers. With a business blog, you not only get your messaging out to your audience, but you also bring your audience's comments in, making your blog the home base for these online conversations.*

## Listen to Your Audience

Listening to your audience and enabling it to speak builds a trust that can motivate your readers to help you spread the word. When your audience members are ambassadors for your blog (and as a result, your brand), the impact of what you write can extend far beyond your own existing reach. Audience members will carry a message about your blog or brand.

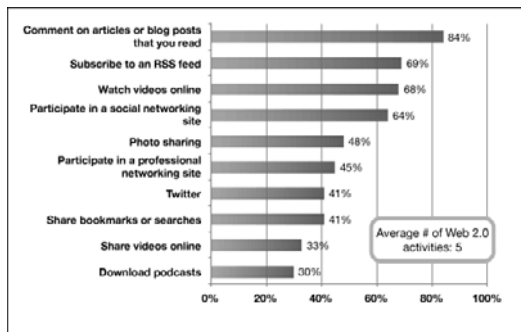
The following sections discuss the importance of “listening,” covering topics such as two-way discussions, listening by sharing, tools to help you listen, and listening to what is being said.

## Two-Way Discussions

Often, news blasts and company updates are one-way transmissions from a business to a recipient list or client base. With blogging, everything becomes more personal, creating more intimate and specialized discussions through content sharing. Opening up your blog to facilitate two-way discussion can help build and maintain your audience through acknowledgment of and encouragement of their input.

A comment form lets your readers know that you value their input, feedback, and commentary. These audiences of readers, clients, and potential customers want to be engaged in discussions and know that their opinions matter to your business.

According to Technorati’s State of the Blogosphere 2008 (see Figure 4.1), when bloggers are online engaging in Web 2.0 activities, 84% comment on articles or blog posts that you read. These bloggers also have commenting enabled on their blogs, which allows readers to add to what they have just read, make suggestions, or answer a question posed in the entry. Bloggers are social beings. Conversational bloggers, whether on their own blog or others, open entire sites to various audiences.



**Figure 4.1** *Technorati’s State of the Blogosphere 2008.*



A blog with a conversational tone, while still being professional, welcomes the audience to become a part of what you are creating and broadcasting. Through comments and feedback, you can get a feel for what makes your audience and customers tick, and you can tailor your posts to meet their needs. By requesting feedback, polling your audience, or asking a question at the end of your blog post, you put out the welcome mat for readers to add their two cents to the discussion you started. By responding to these comments, or even updating your post if they provided new information for your topic, it helps you engage in a blog-hosted conversation with your readers.

In the professional blogging realm, comments are highly regarded. When a reader feels moved enough by your content to write a message, you can use this to measure your blog's success. Comments show that your blog has achieved a valuable bidirectional communications platform.

The purpose of a business blog is to connect with existing or potential clients or customers, so it's important to make sure your blog achieves this open, two-way discussion. Without a two-way communications platform, readers aren't free to elaborate and share information, which is a key element to growing your site's visibility and audience. Two-way discussion lets readers know you are open to hearing their thoughts and opinions, and it lets them know your business values information sharing.

The information you share is not the final word. Instead, it should encourage comments and conversation from your readers. This "dialogue" creates a community feeling that makes readers comfortable with your online space.

## Listening by Sharing

You can also reach your audience through listening by "sharing." The following subsections tell you how.

### Getting Feedback Through Polls and Contests

One way to encourage discussion and feedback is through polls that enable readers to vote for their favorite options or picks.

In a web poll you can give your audience multiple choices or a chance to select their favorite options. Polls could be used for the blog itself, such as "Would you like to see more photos on this blog? Yes, No, Other (please leave a comment)". They can also be used to get product feedback; for example, "Do you like our company's new logo?" or "What color should the logo be?"

Since polls are limited to pre-set responses you'll often find even more feedback or expanded answers in the comments section of your post.

Contests are also a great crowd pleaser. When readers' opinions are considered with regard to a new ad campaign or perhaps a logo for a business, those readers feel a sense of ownership, knowing their opinions truly matter to the company. People love seeing something they've created being used online (when credited appropriately), so hosting a contest is a great way to show your readers that you appreciate their input while showcasing their talents.

For Super Bowl XLIII, Doritos sponsored a contest that solicited audience-submitted commercials that were then added to its Web site, [crashthesuperbowl.com](http://crashthesuperbowl.com). Those ads then went through several rounds of voting before a winner was selected. The ad that ended up running during the Super Bowl, created by ad-making amateur readers of the Doritos site, was hailed by many as the best Super Bowl commercial of 2009. The ad was also the TiVO "stop watch" winner for the first half of the game, meaning more people went back on their TiVOs to view this ad than any other during the broadcast. Doritos was grateful to the two unemployed brothers from Batesville, Indiana, who created the popular commercial.

In 2009, for the upcoming Super Bowl XLIV, Doritos has been using the public video-sharing website Vimeo (<http://www.vimeo.com/user2312887>) to promote the contest using the previous year's winners in the videos. These videos can be embedded and shared on other blogs so that viewers can spread the message or enter the contest for 2010.

## Using Images or Photos

To complement the text on your blog, you should also use images. Many bloggers use popular photo-sharing sites such as Flickr.com to showcase their images or host the photos they then add to their blogs. With Flickr.com, you can create public groups, through which readers can share photos with the group. Companies can create Flickr accounts and start groups (composed of their prospective audiences) to encourage photo sharing.

If your company sells blue jeans, you could set up the group so that anyone with photos of themselves or others in blue jeans can add their images. Your audience is then showcased in your group. Flickr group images can be made into slideshows that can be embedded into your blog. Suddenly your blog content is populated by readers' submitted images. You aren't simply putting your images and your message out but you're showcasing your audience.

You may also want to consider using submitted photos on your own blog (only with permission, of course). If you do so, remember to link to the original blogger's Web site. Doing so showcases their images and reminds them that you value how your customers use your products. Flickr.com also enables you create slideshows of images currently submitted to the group.

Consider the example of Libre Tea, makers of loof-leaf tea containers (<http://libretea.com>). Libre Tea's Flickr group allows anyone to share what they call "tea moments." They encourage you to take a photo when you are enjoying a cup of tea, whether on the go or at home. They then highlight these photos on their Web site. These pictures show how versatile the Libre Tea containers are, and they also inspire ideas about how to unwind and enjoy the product.

As you can understand from this example, two-way blogging discussions occur not only with text but with other forms of content, too. When you encourage readers to share their content with you (instead of just you sharing your information with them), you create a different level of interaction and engagement for the audience, making your blog a two-way street of information.

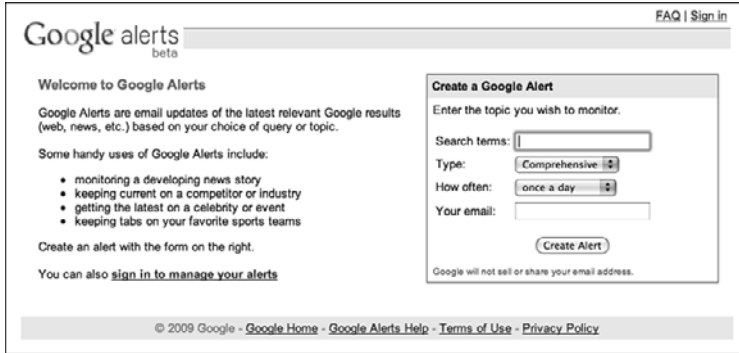
## Tools to Help You Listen

On most platforms, when you open your site to comments, you can request a commenter's URL (for a blog or Web site, for example). This is another way to gauge your audience, such as whether they work in a similar business, write similar blogs, or do not have Web sites of their own. For example, if you discover your readers are predominantly other bloggers or more Internet-savvy, you can formulate specific ways to interact with them on your blog.

Publishers can use standard blog comment forms that come with their platforms or they can use tools to follow conversations about their site across the Web. The following subsections discuss various tools that enable you to listen to what people are saying about your blog.

### Tracking Mentions

Google Alerts is the most basic way to find mentions of your site online. You can create custom alerts so that every time your brand, product, service, or company name is mentioned on the Internet, Google will send you an email alert. Figure 4.2 shows the Google Alerts Setup page.



**Figure 4.2** *Google Alerts Setup page.*

ChatCatcher (<http://chatcatcher.com>) is a service that enables blog publishers to find links from other blogs to their posts and any Twitter updates that include the link to the post. After they are installed, the services crawl the Internet to find mentions of your links; they add them at the bottom of your posts as regular comments, citing sources.

Visit <http://search.twitter.com> to search the Twitter service for instant mentions. The popular microblogging service is used by millions worldwide, and it enables 140-character updates that can include anything from links to favorite sites to comments about what the user had for lunch that afternoon. Twitter's brief character limit enables short conversations to lead to expanded discussions online and offline.

Because the Twitter service is fully searchable, you can use the search function to find any user in the world who is including any word in their updates at any time. All words posted in updates on Twitter are searchable and the Twitter search archive keeps this documented for several weeks.

Often, popular words and phrases are tracked using hash tags (pound signs). This hash tag feature comes in handy when you want to track specific events, such as a conference. For example, if you are an attendee at the 123 Conference, you can include #123Conference in a Twitter update and encourage other attendees to do the same. You can then track all #123Conference updates with ease using the <http://search.twitter.com> page and typing in the keywords in the search box. The search results will then display all mentions of #123Conference, from all Twitter users.

Twitter also lists its top 10 trending topics on the sidebar of all profile pages. These are words or hashtagged topics that have been posted in Twitter updates the most frequently.

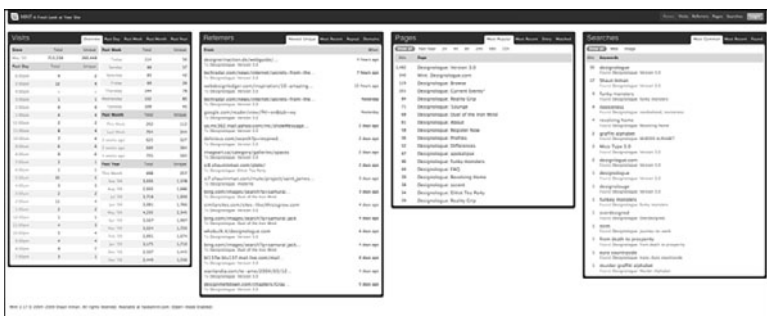
Using this intuitive search feature, you can enter your search terms and find those on Twitter who are currently discussing a topic pertaining to your business.

When I was traveling and looking for a hotel, I wrote the following Twitter update: “Looking for hotel recommendations for San Francisco #WordCamp in the Union Square Area.” Another Twitter user replied with the following: “@Miss604 Check out the Kimpton Hotels [www.kimptonhotels.com](http://www.kimptonhotels.com)”. Within a few hours, Kimpton found the Twitter conversation and replied, “@Miss604 we hope you’ll let us take care of u in SF. We have 9 hotels here. DM if you would like insider info on any.” As you can guess, I ended up staying at a Kimpton hotel because of this attention to my conversation. The person running their Twitter account was searching Twitter for specific keywords, perhaps “hotels” or their company name “Kimpton,” and my conversations appeared.

## Site Statistics

The same type of tracking can be used to find mentions of your specific blog posts. By locating these links, you can get an idea of your reach and your audience. You can see who is listening, who is responding, and who thought your content valuable enough to expand upon or link in their own post. This also creates the opportunity for you to leave comments on other sites. You can thank the author for linking your site, or comment on the content they have written in their post. The simplest way to find incoming links is to use a statistics tracking program. These tools, mostly online, enable you to set up an account after which you can paste specifically generated code into your Web site so that it can begin tracking your statistics.

Google offers Google Analytics, which produces detailed statistical data after 23 hours, or you can use instant trackers such as SiteMeter (<http://sitemeter.com>) or StatCounter (<http://statcounter.com>). There are also platform-specific tracking systems available, such as Mint (<http://haveamint.com>) for WordPress users (see Figure 4.3).



**Figure 4.3** *Mint: Statistics for your Web site or blog.*

Most statistic-tracking systems show you who is coming to your site and their origin online, such as a link from another site or a search engine result. You can also see the readers’ IP addresses, and which browser they are using to view your blog. By using these statistic-tracking applications on your site, you can see data such as

the geographical location of your audience and what type of computer they are using to access your content.

Using this statistical data, you can determine whether your audience is using out-dated browsers (an understanding that will come in handy in terms of your blog's design specs), if they are on a Mac or PC, and if they are mostly mobile readers.

## Your Mobile Audience

You want to make sure that your blog is viewable across any platform (browser or computer type).

The popularity of mobile devices is growing, so including tests to make sure your blog is compatible with these tools is beneficial. To test, simply access your blog from a mobile device and see if it displays the same way as when you look at it from a web browser on your computer. Sometimes blogs optimized for larger viewing might not be able to fit all information onto a tiny mobile screen. To help with this, you can use applications or services that will display your blog's post and/or pages in a way that is optimized for mobile viewing.

Some applications, such as Mobify.me (<http://mobify.me>) and plug-ins for blogging platforms such as WordPress, directly target mobile audiences.

WordPress users can download the WPtouch plug-in to convert their blog for reading in mobile devices (see Figure 4.4). After the plug-in has been activated on the blog, it requires a few tweaks to the settings before your site is ready to go mobile.

**BRAVE NEW CODE**

Home Portfolio Services Blog About Contact Downloads

**WPtouch: WordPress on iPhone, iPod & Android**

More than just a plugin, WPtouch is an entire theme package for your WordPress website. Modeled after Apple's app store design specs, WPtouch makes your WordPress website load lightning fast on touch mobile devices, show your content beautifully, all while not interfering with your regular theme.

Find out more below.

**WPtouch: Mobile Plugin + Theme for WordPress**

FAQ & Documentation  
Frequently asked questions and general information about WPtouch.

You should follow us on Twitter here.

If you'd like to be notified whenever we have some WordPress tips, tricks, special offers, updates and more, you should sign up for our newsletter.

WPtouch automatically transforms your WordPress blog into a web-application experience when viewed from an iPhone, iPod touch or Android touch mobile device. It comes complete with all the standard WordPress blog features: search, login, categories, tags, archives, photos & more. WPtouch also offers many customization features through a beautifully designed WordPress admin panel.

Download v1.8.3.3

**Figure 4.4** WPtouch for WordPress by BraveNewCode.

By knowing how your audience is accessing your content and by listening from behind the scenes to their viewing needs, you can optimize their reading experience on your site.

## Listen to What's Being Said

Although your goal is not purely to encourage comments, it's definitely a factor in the success of your blog. You need to post something that readers find worth expanding on, or better yet, that they reference in their own blog posts.

When your work is referenced (with a link) in another's post, that reference is called a *trackback*. A trackback shows up as a comment; however it's simply a message notifying the author that someone has linked to their blog post. Your commenting system should be set up to allow trackbacks. After all, trackbacks notify you when someone has expanded on your thoughts or deemed them worthy of reference, and it enables the conversation you started to be expanded on in other blogs, ultimately expanding your reach. Others will see your openness to the conversation, and through mentions on blogs or sharing on social bookmarking sites, your work will be passed along organically.

People are talking about your company, its services, and its products, and you can't stop that. However, you can make yourself aware of these conversations. By using tools to track links and mentions, you can then engage in these outside discussions to record new feedback, clarify data, or just to show appreciation for the writer's interest in your business. Suppose, for instance, that you run an amusement park and find a blog post online about someone's experience on your roller coaster. That is a prime opportunity to show you are listening. If the roller coaster ride was a positive experience, you can leave a comment and thank them for their patronage, or perhaps encourage them to stop by again in the future. You could even link their post on your own blog, either in a blog post or on your blogroll or link list. In a blog post, you could showcase the positive experience the author had at your establishment and let others know that you truly value the patronage. Suddenly, a blog post becomes a fantastic marketing tool to highlight your business. Should the post have a negative tone, use your discretion to escalate the feedback to client services or drop a comment to let the author know you are looking into the matter (and be sure to follow up).

With negative feedback published online, your goal should not be to control the message by demanding the author remove the content (unless it is defamatory and in need of escalation). Your mission should be to embrace the feedback and handle it with care and tact. Letting authors know you are listening and that you value their opinion can go a long way in terms of a customer's impression of your company.

## Comments and Responding to Them

Having a comments section on your site lets your readers know that their input is just as valued as the information you are presenting. However, you will receive several types of comments. You need to be prepared for whatever might be submitted.

### Comment Forms

Most standard comment forms request the user's name, e-mail, and Web site for authentication, which is a good idea if you want to know about the person leaving the message. If your blogging platform contains these options, you can activate or deactivate them at any time. For an extra measure of protection against spam, you can request that commenters complete a captcha form (either an image or text) before their comment can be submitted. Captcha generators can be found online and pasted into your platform's settings. These scrambled images feature letters and numbers that need to be typed before the message can be sent. This level of authentication ensures that human beings and not spam-generating computer programs are leaving the comment messages. Captcha authentication might seem like overkill, but if you are having problems with spam comments, it's an option you should consider.

With all these fields in place, you can determine who is visiting your site and how best to reply to comments or follow up on an issue. When replying to comments in your own thread, it is courteous to direct your response to the message's original author. Some blog sites use the Twitter "@" reply method to target their replies (for example, "@John Smith, thank you for the feedback!")

### When to Moderate Comments

Comments are an option on most blog platforms, and the commenting tool usually includes the option to moderate. Moderation is when a completed comment form does not get published automatically but sits in a queue awaiting your approval. Learning when and how to moderate enables you to maintain control of all content that is published to your blog. This section describes some of the types of comments you'll receive.

#### Levels of Moderation

There are various levels of moderation available on most blogging platforms. The first, and the simplest, is to allow all comments that are submitted to be published. The next would be to allow all comments from previously approved authors. So for



example, if a reader has already left a comment before on your blog, you can automatically approve the rest of their comments going forward. The next few levels of moderation depend on the author's preference and the settings they would like to put in place.

## Anonymous Comments

Anonymous comments can come from anywhere (for example, from someone who was unable to properly complete a form, a malicious spam attack, or simply someone who does not wish to be identified). Having required fields helps to prevent anonymous comments, but you can also set up your blog so that anonymous comments are held for moderation. This means you will need to approve them before they go public.

## Spam

When it comes to spam, most blogging platforms have ways to prevent these comments from being published automatically (especially if you have moderation settings in place). These comments can include multiple links, or simply unpleasant content you don't want to share with the public on your site, so it is recommended you monitor your comments to find these. Once you have identified comments such as these, you can moderate them (unapprove them for publishing) or delete them entirely.

Overloading sites with links to spam sites is one of the goals of spam marketers. Having more links on your site boosts the spam site's ranking, and you don't want your site to be a vessel for this type of behavior. When moderating comments, use your best judgment to determine whether the comments should be held for approval. Comments can be set up so that any new message is moderated or you can leave them open to be posted automatically (see Figure 4.5). Moderation settings vary based on the platform you're using, but common features include indicators such as IP address tracking, holding a comment if there are links in the body of the text, or giving approval if the author is a returning user.

If you receive a comment that is hateful or simply not publishable because of questionable content, you can use your statistics-tracking program to log the IP address of the user. An IP address is a unique location marker for the user's access point to the Internet. You can then flag this IP address or set up features to automatically hold future comments from this user in the moderation queue. When a comment thread ceases to set a professional and respectful tone, negative messages can be deleted or held in moderation.

**Figure 4.5** *Comment moderation on WordPress (WordPress.org).*

In some circumstances, you can contact the author if he has left an e-mail address. In this contact, you can let him know why you have held his comment (for example, foul language or defamatory content). Doing so lets the author know you are paying attention, and it enables the author to write something more concise and tactful. Commenters might not enjoy seeing their comment being held for moderation; however, this is a way to maintain control of the content on your site while still being approachable and reasonable.

## Negative Feedback Can Help You Grow

If you receive a comment on a blog post that is less than complimentary, the manner in which you respond to the post reflects on your company. Participating in a flame war, or back-and-forth battles with an aggravated commenter, is not the most productive way to address an issue. Negative comments might not necessarily need to be deleted unless they are defamatory, libelous, or anything similarly malicious. However, if comments contain negative but productive feedback, you should respond in a courteous manner.

For example, suppose you are a clothing distributor and you have just published a blog post about a new pair of pants. A complaint is then received in the comments section from a customer who says she recently bought a pair and they already have a tear in them. You can approve the comment and reply directly, saying that it's

unfortunate and you will be happy to have customer service follow up. You can then send the commenter's information to your customer service department; you'll have the customer's name and e-mail from the comment form. You can also link to the appropriate section of your site where customer concerns can be submitted. By dealing with this matter publicly, your audience will know you are attentive and you truly care about your customers.

## Dealing with Negative Feedback

The saying "no news is good news" applies to the blogging world, too. When posts are positive and your readers are pleased and informed, they may not always leave a comment. However, when readers write something congratulatory, be sure to respond promptly and thank them for their participation on the blog.

A large part of blogging for your business is being personal and approachable (for your customers and readers) in your posts and within your comments section. Responses should be professional and respectful. (And so, grammar, punctuation, and common conversational courtesy should be adhered to.) You want to be informative and transparent and never immature in your replies, even if the original comment has set that tone.

Dealing with negative comments is a bit trickier, however, so here are some tips:

- Address negative comments on your own site as soon as possible so that they do not fester in the mind of the author and cause any adverse effects if they do not receive some type of response.
- If the comment is negative yet constructive or is conducive to a productive discussion, by all means feel free to approve it. Publishing negative feedback, and the way a company deals with it, can truly reflect on your brand in a positive way. Your readers come to your site for information and valuable content.
- Should the comment be destructive and critical of the blog post itself, your options are to hold it for moderation, delete it, or to take things offline.
- When a comment is libelous, allowing it to be published and responding publicly is not the best course of action. You can e-mail the commenter privately about sincere concerns (if they provided a valid e-mail address). Although the subject of being responsible for allowing libelous comments made by others to be published on your blog is technically a legal "gray area," it may still be deemed as slander. In severe cases, threats may need to be dealt with on a private/personal level. In most instances, however, the Delete key is all you need.

It is also important to protect other members of the community. Therefore, you should also monitor the discussions in your comments section for attacks between commenters.

In October of 2009, a ruling was made to settle a lawsuit between a group of plaintiffs and 30 people who posted anonymous and derogatory comments about them on an online message board called AutoAdmit. “According to the plaintiffs, the suit was necessary because the discussion board, a site designed for law school graduates, was often monitored by firms looking to hire. Because the comments were associated with their names, the women claimed that it would hurt their chances of being offered a job” (source: ReadWriteWeb [http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/watch\\_out\\_trolls\\_your\\_menacing\\_comments\\_could\\_lead\\_to\\_fines.php](http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/watch_out_trolls_your_menacing_comments_could_lead_to_fines.php)).

## Case Study: Molson Coors Brewing Company

Molson Coors Brewing Company has been brewing since 1786 and produces some of North America’s most popular brands of beer, including Molson Canadian, Coors Light, Molson Export, Molson Dry, and Rickard’s. They are also partnered with worldwide labels such as Heineken, Corona, Miller Genuine Draft, Foster’s Lager, and Tiger.

After Molson’s merger with Coors in 2005, the company went from being purely Canadian to 50% U.S. owned, with headquarters in Montreal and in Denver, Colorado. Being Canada’s oldest brewery and using the slogan “I am Canadian,” suddenly Molson Canadian stopped looking so patriotic in the eyes of the consumers who felt a sense of national pride beaming from each maple-leaf-boasting bottle.

With this new identity crisis, the public and media struggled with their perception of the brand. Molson’s chief public affairs officer, Ferg Devins, said that this became the best time to start telling their company’s story. In 2007, they launched the “Molson in the Community” blog and began covering all aspects relating to the business, the industry, their 3,000 employees, partnerships, and consumers online (see Figure 4.6).

Hosting a blog for a beer company does have its challenges and requires effort in moderating comments and content in a tactful manner. Devins explains the types of comments the company holds for moderation given the nature of the industry: “We need to make sure that there’s no one talking about excessive consumption or under-legal drinking age consumption.”



**Figure 4.6** *The Molson Coors in the Community blog.*

The blog created by Molson made the company approachable to many online, which caused a few problems in terms of customer feedback. They were seeing a trend where consumers were leaving comments when they had a general company inquiry. In these cases, Molson was able to funnel these messages to the appropriate department in the company.

Tonia Hammer, Molson's community relations coordinator, uses Google Alerts along with Truecast and Radian6 to scan the Internet for mentions of their products or brands. Using these tools to monitor incoming links and mentions online, the company came across some backlash online regarding its nationwide blogger outreach campaign, Brew 2.0.

Brew 2.0 was an event held in various cities across the nation where bloggers were invited to a Molson brewery for an evening of beer education. The event received high praise from participants and throughout the online media sphere. The company's intentions, however, were questioned on several blogs, which truly put Molson's social media practices to the test. Having set up alerts so that they can be notified of mentions online, Molson was able to find the discussions and chime in, officially. In particular, one blogger questioned not only the process Molson used to create their invite list for the Brews 2.0 events, but also their commercial motives.

"What it really came down to in the end was the particular people that were criticizing what we had done [with Brew 2.0]," says Devins. "They had this position that we reached out to the wrong people and that it was too strategic."

Adam Moffat, manager, marketing and brand public relations, explains how Molson addressed these concerns in the blogosphere. “We don’t want to get pulled into an argument—there’s no hope of changing [the author’s] opinion; we just wanted to provide clarity on information that they misunderstood, being transparent about what our goal was for this activity.” Devins adds that public responses should always be deferential. “If it’s opinion, we’ll counter with our opinion, but we’ll also be respectful to people being entitled to their opinion.” However, when it comes down to the straight facts about their company, “if someone’s got information that they’re transmitting wrongfully, or they’re not on the mark, or it’s not fact-based—we will definitely come in hard with facts,” says Devins.

In this case, Moffat noted that one of the most gratifying parts of being transparent and addressing these concerns online is that Brew 2.0 participants can find these discussions and are able to band together, defending the company simply because they believe in the goals of their online community.

Molson believes that the successful Brew 2.0 event helped them bridge a gap between consumer and company and connected online entities. Devins describes it as going beyond blogging and “into a broader scope of business.”

The Molson in the Community blog has also become a tool for employee engagement, and as Devins notes, “It’s reaching out to our people at the field level. From the ground up, not from the corner suite.”

Blog posts nurture the pride and engagement of the employees, sharing what they do in the field and building the corporate community through this online platform. “Employees across the country are able to tell their story and what they’re doing in the community through the blog,” said Moffatt. With this outlet, “We’re just really doing a better job of publicizing the great work that’s being done within our walls, but also out in the community by our employees.”

Sample blog posts include “Eric Molson Retires After 50 Years at Canada’s Brewery,” “The Beer Store Bottle Drive For Leukemia May 23–24,” “Calgary Sales Team Plays Their Part at Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank.” They even offer up their blog to guest posts, such as the entry, “A Post by Marcy Robertson, YMCA Relationship Development Manager.”

Since hosting Brew 2.0, Molson has become involved with the global Twestival event (which raised \$250,000 through Twitter in more than 200 cities), and have signed on to be a part of a social media strategy for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics.

Sharing stories online with the blog goes beyond the walls of the company. “[The blog] has given us more breadth and depth with respect to our philanthropic effort because we’re able to tell and share a story,” says Devins. “It’s humanizing our company and it’s humanizing our brand,” adds Moffatt.

“No longer do consumers want that faceless monolith preaching at them,” says Moffat. They want to feel closer to brands and companies, and certainly given that our company is a social one in its roots and DNA, it certainly just makes a lot of sense that we act in this way.”

## Summary

Now that you know some best practices, you need to determine your own moderation levels through instant feedback. However, before you can get audience reactions, you need to serve up that great content, worth commenting upon. For inspiration, in the next chapter you’ll see some innovative writing concepts from companies across many different industries.

# Index

## A

AddToAny.com, 88  
Adidas Soccer MySpace blog,  
17-21  
The Adventures in  
Organization, Rubbermaid,  
10-11  
advertising, blogs, 167  
Alex King blog, 53  
announcing blog launch to  
other communities, 129  
anonymous comments, 75  
APIs, Web 3.0, 155-156  
Ars Technica, 8  
Arvada, CO, 34-36  
assistants, online marketing, 26  
audiences, 12  
    driving people to blogs, 13  
    feed readers, 13  
    listening to, 66  
        *sharing, 67-69*  
        *tools to help you listen,*  
        69-73  
        *two-way discussions,*  
        66-67  
audio, 140

authentic content, 101-102  
authors, identifying for blogs,  
96-97  
    marketing department,  
    98-99  
    multiple authors, 98  
AutoAdmit, 78

## B

Bavaria's Delicious Days  
blog, 123  
Being Peter Kim Web site, 17  
Berners-Lee, Tim  
    (Web 3.0), 153  
Bleeding Edge TV blog, 49  
Blendtec, 147-150  
blog software, 46-48  
blog-sharing tools, 87  
Blogads, 167  
BlogClicker, 169-170  
BlogExplosion, 169  
Blogger, 44  
blogger outreach, 118-119  
bloggers, hiring, 102  
    creating blogging positions,  
    104-107

    from your industry,  
    103-104  
    tips for, 102-103  
blogging platforms, 40  
Blogger, 44  
LiveJournal, 45  
TypePad, 42-43  
Vox, 44  
WordPress, 40-42  
blogging positions, 104  
    advantages of hiring,  
    106-107  
    fitting in with company  
    dynamic, 105  
    Social Media Director,  
    104-105  
    supplying more than con-  
    tent, 106  
Bloglines, 31-32, 164  
blogrolls, 120-121  
blogs, 6  
    advertising on, 167  
    audiences, 12  
        *driving people to*  
        *blogs, 13*  
        *feed readers, 13*  
    crowdsourcing, 13-15



exposure, 8, 10  
 internal blogs, 90  
     *for communication,*  
     90-91  
     *for project management,*  
     91-92  
 popularity of, 8  
 product blogs, 92-94  
 promoting products and  
 services, 10  
 writing, 84  
     *industry resource blogs,*  
     84-86  
     *online communities,*  
     86-88  
 Boing Boing, 112  
 Bradley, Adam, 124  
 Brew 2.0, 79-80  
 Briggs, Rex, 18  
*BusinessWeek*, 60-61  
 Bustos, Linda, 107

**C**

C2C (customer-to-  
 customer), 18  
 Camtasia, 146  
 Canucks Fan Zone, 88-90  
 captcha, 74  
 CareerBuilder.com, 104  
 case studies  
     Adidas Soccer MySpace  
     blog, 17-21  
     Arvada, CO, 34-36  
     *BusinessWeek*, 60-61  
     Canucks Fan Zone, 88-90  
     Elastic Path, 107-110  
     Intel Inside Scoop blog,  
     15-17  
     KCBS Radio, 62  
     Molson Coors Brewing  
     Company, 78-81  
     *Sacramento Bee*, 36-38  
     UrbanSpoon.com, 160-161  
     Vancouver Opera, 125-126  
 chambers of commerce, 26  
 Chan, Ling, 125  
 ChatCatcher, tracking  
 mentions, 70  
 Check Out blog, 121  
 checking rankings, 127  
 Chin, Jeff, 115

The Cleanest Line, 124  
 client services, 99-100  
 Coast Hotels, 118  
 colors, 116  
 comment forms, 66  
 commenting, 117  
 comments  
     anonymous comments, 75  
     forms, 74  
     moderating, 74-76  
     negative feedback, 76-78  
     replying to, 74  
     spam, 75  
 communication, internal  
     blogs, 90-91  
 communities, announcing blog  
     launch to, 129  
 companies, writing blogs from  
     within, 96  
     authentic content, 101-102  
     client services and tech  
     support, 99-100  
     identifying authors, 96-99  
 company profiles, 124  
 Connally, Kathleen, 50  
 content  
     authentic, 101-102  
     private, 141-142  
 contests, listening to audi-  
 ences, 67-68  
 conversational tones, 67  
 Creative Commons license,  
     protecting public content,  
     137-139  
 crowdsourcing, 13-15  
 customer-to-customer  
 (C2C), 18  
 customers  
     subscribing to blogs, 33  
     taking care of, 33-34

## D

DERI (Digital Enterprise  
 Research Institute), 159  
 designing effective blogs,  
     116-117  
 Devins, Ferg, 78-80  
 Dickson, Tom, 149  
 Digg, 156, 169  
 Digital Enterprise Research  
 Institute (DERI), 159

Director of Social Media,  
     100, 105  
 Disney Parks Blog, 114  
 doggdot.us, 156-157  
 Doritos, 68  
 Drupal, 48

## E

e-mail marketing, 24  
 Eastman Kodak Company, 93  
 editing podcasts, 144-146  
 effective writing  
     be human, 114-115  
     be readable, 115  
     design, 116-117  
     editing for word count and  
     brevity, 112-114  
 Elastic blog (Bustos, Linda),  
     107-110  
 Elastic Path, 107-110  
 Email Marketing Software  
     Comparison Web site, 25  
 events, 128  
 external blogs, product blogs,  
     92-94

## F

Facebook, 8, 56-57, 88  
 feed readers, 13  
 feedback, negative feedback,  
     73, 76-78  
 FeedBurner, 130, 145  
 Ferox, Zeno, 6  
 Flickr, 68, 113, 119, 133-135  
     protecting public  
     content, 138  
 Flickr Pro, 135  
 following how far a blog has  
     reached, 106  
 fonts, 116  
 forms, comments, 74  
 free trials, online market-  
     ing, 28  
 Frogloop, 30

## G

Google  
 driving people to blogs, 13  
 Open Source initiatives, 115  
 tracking mentions, 69  
 Webmaster tools, 127  
 Google Alerts, 29  
 Google Alerts Setup page, 69  
 Google Analytics, 29  
 Google Maps Mania Blog, 107  
 Grader.com, 127

## H

Halfway There blog, 6  
 Hammer, Tonia, 79  
 hashtags, 118  
 Heald, John, 101  
 highlighting industry players, 122-123  
 Hill & Knowlton, 86  
 hiring bloggers, 102  
 creating blogging positions, 104-107  
 from your industry, 103-104  
 tips for, 102-103  
 Huddle, 173  
 Huffington Post, 9

## I-J

identifying authors for blogs, 96-97  
 marketing department, 98-99  
 multiple authors, 98  
 images, 135  
 keywords and titles, 135-136  
 listening to audiences, 68-69  
 tagging private images, 137  
 tagging public images, 136  
 industry players, highlighting, 122-123  
 industry resource blogs, writing, 84-86  
 InnoCentive, crowd-sourcing, 14

Intel Inside Scoop blog, 15-17  
 internal blogs, 90  
 for communication, 90-91  
 for project management, 91-92  
 iPods, podcasting, 51  
 iTunes, 140  
 podcasts, 146

## K-L

KCBS Radio, 62  
 keywords, 128-129  
 images, 135-136  
 Libre Tea, 69  
 LinkedIn, 57-58, 119  
 linking  
 to incoming links, 119-120  
 to other blog posts, 121-122  
 listening to audiences, 66  
 sharing, 67  
*feedback through polls and contests, 67-68*  
*images or photos, 68-69*  
*tools to help you listen, 69-73*  
 two-way discussions, 66-67  
 LiveJournal, 45-46

## M

marketing  
 e-mail marketing, 24  
 offline marketing, 29-31  
 online marketing  
*e-mail marketing, 24*  
*part-time assistants, 26*  
*pushing information via RSS, 31-34*  
*tools, 27, 29*  
*websites, 24*  
 marketing department, writing blogs, 98-99  
 Marketwire, 130  
 mash up, 156-158  
 agents working for blogs, 159-160  
 integrating semantic technologies, 158-159  
 "Meet the Food Bloggers," 123

members-only content, 141-142  
 mentions, tracking, 69-71  
 message threads, 12  
 microblogs, 53  
 mind share, 40  
 Mobify.me, 72  
 mobile audiences, listening to your audience, 72-73  
 moblogs, 55  
 moderating comments, 74-76  
 Moffat, Adam, 80  
 Molson Coors Brewing Company, 78-81  
 Movable Type, 17, 47  
 multimedia blogging, 133-134  
 audio, 140  
 case studies, Blendtec, 147-150  
 content for all, 134  
 images, 135  
*keywords and titles, 135-136*  
*tagging private images, 137*  
*tagging public images, 136*  
 protecting public content, 137-139  
 slideshows, 141  
 music, podcasting, 144  
 MusicAlley, 144  
 MySpace, 8, 56  
 Adidas Soccer MySpace blog, 17-21

## N

negative feedback, 73, 76-78  
 Newsgator, 164  
 newsletter members, targeting for blog promotion, 130  
 newspaper industry, 6  
 Not Without Salt blog, 123

## O

Odeo, 166  
 offline marketing, 29-31  
 Ofoto.com, 93  
 Ollivier, Jamie, 88  
 OmniDazzle, 147  
 online communities, creating, 86-88  
 online marketing, 24-25  
   e-mail marketing, 24  
   part-time assistants, 26  
   pushing information via RSS, 31-33  
     *getting customers to subscribe*, 33  
     *taking care of your readers*, 33-34  
   tools, 27-29  
   websites, 24  
 online media, 6  
 Operamania blog, 125  
 optimizing search engines, 120

## P

Pacific Crest Trail, 124  
 part-time assistants, online marketing, 26  
 Patagonia, The Cleanest Line, 124  
 PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard), 103  
 Pegg, Mike, 107  
 people, driving to blogs, 13  
 photo-sharing services, Flickr, 133-135  
 photoblogs, 50-51  
 photos, listening to audiences, 68-69  
 ping search engines, 167  
 Ping.fm, 27  
 Pingomatic, 167  
 PodBean, 140-142  
 Podblaze, 144  
 podcasting, 51-52, 142-143  
   creating and promoting, 143  
   editing and publishing, 144-146

  music, 144  
   show notes, 143-144  
 podcasts, 140  
 Podnova, 166  
 PodPress, 145  
 Podsafe Music Network, 144  
 polls, listening to audiences, 67-68  
 popularity of blogging, 8  
 preferred blogs, 118  
 press releases, 130  
 private content, 141-142  
 private images, tagging, 137  
 PRNewswire, 130  
 Problogger, 113  
 product blogs, 92-94  
 products, promoting, 10  
 project management, internal blogs, 91-92  
 promotion, 129  
   announcing blog launch to other communities, 129  
   podcasting, 143  
   press releases, 130  
   products and services, 10  
   screencasts, 147  
   social media networks, 129  
   targeting newsletter members, 130  
 protecting public content, 137-139  
 PRWeb, 130  
 public images, tagging, 136  
 publishing podcasts, 144-146

## Q-R

rankings, checking, 127  
 Readability.info, 114  
 readers, taking care of, 33-34  
 replying to comments, 74  
 RSS (Really Simple Syndication), 13, 31, 94  
   pushing information via, 31-33  
     *getting customers to subscribe*, 33  
     *taking care of your readers*, 33-34  
 RSS feeds, 98  
 Rubbermaid, The Adventures in Organization, 10-11

## S

SAAS (Software as a Service), 171  
 Sacramento Bee, 36-38  
 Sam's Club, Check Out blog, 121  
 Schmidt, Eric, 152  
 screencasts, 146  
   creating and promoting, 147  
 ScreenFlow, 146  
 search engine optimization, 120, 126  
   checking rankings, 127  
   clean URLs, 128  
   keywords, 128-129  
   tags, 128-129  
 search engines, driving people to blogs, 13  
 searchability, 126-127  
   checking rankings, 127  
   clean URLs, 128  
   keywords, 128-129  
   tags, 128-129  
 Semantic Web, mash up, 158-159  
 services, promoting, 10  
 sharing, listening to audiences, 67  
   feedback through polls and contests, 67-68  
   images or photos, 68-69  
   tools to help you listen, 69-73  
 show notes, podcasting, 143-144  
 Sindice, 159-160  
 site statistics, 71-72  
 Slashdot, 169, 171  
 Slideshare, 141  
 smartphones, 55  
 Smith, Thomas, 115  
 Snapz ProX, 147  
 Social Media Director, 104-105  
 social media networks, promotion, 129  
 social networking sites, combining with blogging, 56  
   Facebook, 57  
   LinkedIn, 58

MySpace, 56  
 Twitter, 59  
 Socialcast, 171  
 Socialtext, 171  
 software for blogging, 46-48  
 Software as a Service (SAAS), 171  
 spam, comments, 75  
 Starbucks, crowdsourcing, 14  
 subscribing to blogs, encouraging customers to, 33  
 Success Stories series, LinkedIn, 119  
 Swirl, 154-155

## T

tagging, images  
   private, 137  
   public, 136  
 tags, 128-129  
 targeting newsletter members, 130  
 tech support, 99-100  
 Technorati, 6, 164  
   popularity of blogs, 8  
 Thingamablog, 48  
 thought share, 40  
 Times Online, 123  
 timing, 30  
 titles, images, 135-136  
 tools  
   to help you listen to audiences, 69  
     *mobile audiences*, 72-73  
     *site statistics*, 71-72  
     *trackbacks*, 73  
     *tracking mentions*, 69-71  
   for online marketing, 27-29  
 Tourism Victoria, 118  
 trackbacks, 73  
 tracking mentions, 69-71  
 traditional marketing, 29-31  
 tumblelogs, 52-53  
 Twitter, 59, 100  
   tracking mentions, 70  
 two-way discussions, 66-67  
 TypePad, 42-43

## U-V

Ubercaster, 144  
 UrbanSpoon.com, 160-161  
 URLs, clean URLs, 128  
 Utterli, 140  
 Vancouver Opera, 125-126  
 Vimeo, 68  
 Vimeo.com, 139  
 vlogs, 49-50  
 Vox, 44

## W-Z

Wal-Mart, Check Out blog, 121  
 Warren, Bruce, 88  
 Waterside Productions, 27  
 Web, 6  
 Web 2.0, 151  
 Web 3.0, 152  
   APIs and widgets, 155-156  
   overview, 153  
   Wikipedia, 154-155  
 Web logs. *See* blogs  
 websites, online marketing, 24  
 Whole Foods Markets, Natural and Organic Grocery, 85  
 widgets, Web 3.0, 155-156  
 Wikipedi, 154-155  
 WordPress, 40-42, 72, 97  
   comments, moderation, 75  
 WordPress.com, 40  
 WordPress.org, 41  
 WPTouch plug-in, 72  
 writing  
   blogs, 84  
     *industry resource blogs*, 84-86  
     *online communities*, 86-88  
   effectively, 112  
     *be human*, 114-115  
     *be readable*, 115  
     *design*, 116-117  
     *editing for word count and brevity*, 112-114

writing blogs  
   authentic content, 101-102  
   client services and tech support, 99-100  
   from within a company, 96  
     *identifying authors*, 96-99  
   hiring bloggers, 102  
     *creating blogging positions*, 104-107  
     *from your industry*, 103-104  
     *tips for*, 102-103  
 writing interesting content  
   case studies, Vancouver Opera, 125-126  
   company profiles, 124  
   highlighting industry players, 122-123  
 YouTube, protecting public content, 138