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THOUGHT LEADERS SUMMIT



Blogs for Marketing

A MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit

Panel Leader: Stephan Spencer, President, Netconcepts

marketing know-how from **professionals + professors**

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Participants

Moderator: Roy Young, MarketingProfs.com

Panel Leader: Stephan Spencer, Netconcepts

Panelists: Toby Bloomberg, Bloomberg Marketing
Seth Godin
Shel Israel, Conferenza
B.L. Ochman, whatsnextonline.com
Steve Rubel, CooperKatz & Co.
Robert Scoble, Microsoft
Doc Searls
Debbie Weil, WordBiz

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Roy Young:

It's my real pleasure to welcome you all today to the MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit on the hot subject of blogs and blogging. You are all experts in the field, and I hope to learn a great deal from you today. My job here is to introduce **Stephan Spencer**, our leader and organizer of this event. Stephan Spencer is the founder and President of Netconcepts, a ten-year old multinational web agency specializing in search engine-friendly web design and ecommerce as well as email marketing through Netconcepts' GravityMail division. Stephan is a Senior Contributor at MarketingProfs.com. He's also contributed to Catalog Age, Unlimited, New Zealand Marketing Magazine, and others. He is co-author of the analyst report *The State of Search Engine Marketing 1.0: New Strategies for Successful Cataloging*, published by Catalog Age. He is a sought-after speaker around the globe for organizations such as IIR, IQPC, the DMA, SMEI, and Internet World. Stephan, take it away.

Stephan Spencer:

Thank you Roy. Well, we have an esteemed list of panelists here joining us today. Thank you all for coming.

First of all we have with us **Toby Bloomberg**. She's a marketing consultant and a blogger. As president of Bloomberg Marketing she helps clients create business opportunities by developing integrated marketing plans that utilize interactive tactics, such as blogs, and incorporating traditional initiatives where appropriate. Toby speaks nationally on the Internet and traditional marketing topics. She instructs a management consulting course at the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University and is a teaching artist for the Alliance Theater in Atlanta. Although she now calls Atlanta home, Toby is a Yankee from Boston.

We also, also have with us **Seth Godin**, best selling author, entrepreneur and agent of change. He's the author of 6 books that have been best sellers around the world and changed the way people think about marketing, change and work. These include *Permission Marketing*, *Unleashing the Ideavirus*, *The Big Red Fez*, *Survival is not Enough*, *Purple Cow* and *Free Prize Inside*. Seth is also a renowned speaker and was recently chosen as one of the 21 Speakers for the Next Century by *Successful Meetings*. Seth was founder and CEO of Yoyodine, the industry's leading interactive direct marketing company which Yahoo acquired in late 1998.

Stephan Spencer:

Shel Israel is editor in chief of Conferenza, an insider's e-news letter covering technology executive's conferences. He also describes himself as a recovering publicist and is currently co-authoring a book on why businesses should blog. Shel is creating this work on a blog at redcouch.typepad.com. And his new book will be published by John Wiley and Sons in January.

B.L. Ochman is president of whatsnextonline.com, an Internet marketing and business blog. A strategist and blogger, her Internet marketing clients include Ford Motors and IBM. B.L. is the publisher of What's Next Blog, and the marketing tactics newsletter What's Next Online. She's also author of *What Could Your Business Do with a Blog?*

Steve Rubel is a PR strategist with nearly 15 years of public relations, marketing, journalism and communications experience. He currently serves as vice-president of client services at CooperKatz and Company a mid-size PR firm in mid-town New York City. Widely viewed as an expert on blogging, podcasting and open-source marketing, Steve heads up the agency's new micro-persuasion practice which helps clients launch conversational marketing programs. He widely evangelizes the use of these new technologies via his well-read, Micropersuasion weblog.

Robert Scoble is one of the blogging world's most well known personalities. He works at Microsoft as a technical evangelist for the Longhorn Team. Robert's blog at scoble.weblogs.com is known as the Scobleizer and is recognized as one of the most popular and most linked blogs on the Internet. Robert is co-authoring the book *The Red Couch* along with Shel Israel. Robert and Shel together maintain the Red Couch Blog at redcouch.typepad.com.

Doc Searls is a writer and speaker on topics that arise where technology and business meet. He is the senior editor of Linux Journal, head of the online journal Doc Searls' IT Garage, and co-author of the best-selling book, *The Cluetrain Manifesto – The End of Business as Usual*. A former radio personality, Doc has appeared on TechTV, CNBC, C-Net Radio and is a moderator and panelist at events in the US and abroad. He is also a regular on two on-web radio programs, *The Linux Show* and *The Gilmore Gang*. Doc co-founded Hodskins, Simone & Searls in 1998 which became one of Silicon Valley's leading advertising and public relations agencies.

Stephan Spencer:

And last but not least, **Debbie Weil** is president of WordBiz, a Washington DC based publishing and consulting firm that works with senior marketers to provide strategic consulting on how to incorporate a blog into a company's on-line marketing strategy. Debbie has a unique background as a former journalist with an MBA and corporate marketing experience. She worked for Network Solutions Inc., the original dot com company. She's published *WordBiz Report* – an award winning e-newsletter about e-mail and web content marketing since July 2001, now read by 15,000 subscribers in 87 countries! She is a widely read columnist for ClickZ.com. Writes regularly for MarketingProfs.com and has spoken at a number of Internet and marketing conferences and public workshops on business blogging and RSS. Thank you everyone for joining us this morning.

So let's go ahead and get started with our very first question.

Tell us what should one do to make a solid business case for blogging for marketing? Any statistics for example that folks should know about when guiding their plans? Seth, why don't we start off with you...

Seth Godin:

I love that question because it keeps all the bean counting dweebs off the net! You know, what we know is that every time a new medium comes along – there is no business case! That there was no business case for Yahoo and there was no business case for ABC when they started being on television. And if you're working for an organization that needs you to come back with statistics and proof that it's gonna pay for itself right away, what you're falling into is the trap of doing it for the short-term money. And if you're doing it for the short-term money, your blog's gonna fail. You'll end up sabotaging the entire operation. In my experience, the best blogs are blogs written by human beings, not corporations, that have something to say that people want to hear and if you do that and you've made the conversation happen, I think the numbers will more than make up for it because it only costs \$30 a month.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok! Doc?

Doc Searls:

Actually I, I agree totally with everything that Seth said. It's always been interesting to me that in Silicon Valley and any place that tends to be highly venture funded, we've gotten into the habit of asking everything what its business model is. And it's actually a silly question in most cases! You don't ask the telephone what its business model is, you don't ask your driveway or your front porch. When something new comes along, as Seth said, it becomes infrastructural. It becomes part of the way civilization works. And

Doc Searls:

it creates far more business than it displaces. To some degree, for example, weblogs are displacing the web-site creation business. I mean, we used to think of what you did on the web as real estate. You know you had an address with a location and ah, and it was under construction, and there was this whole real estate metaphor that went along with it. Now there's the journalistic and publishing metaphor that the web was also based on. Why we always had pages that we authored has now moved to the front, and that's created far more business than it has ever displaced and that's gonna be the case. I mean the fact that blogs are in the world. The fact that anybody can set loose an idea and watch it become valuable in the open marketplace is almost incalculably valuable. There's no way really to measure the business that's going to be created because blogs are in the world.

Robert Scoble:

Yep. From my standpoint, if I have one reader, let's say Larry Ellison or Steve Jobs or Bill Gates, what's the business value of that? You know, what's the business value of having a conversation in the hallway with Steven Levy of Newsweek, you know? Why speak in front of conferences if you're going to take that approach, you know? I know a lot of executives who travel around the world to speak to, you know, a few hundred people. What's the business value of that? You know, I have 5,000 to 10,000 people on my blog every day, and a lot of them are the leading industry influencers.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok! Debbie, what do you think?

Debbie Weil:

Well, if you really have to trot out some numbers, you could certainly look at that and the chart and the gross of number of blogs from I think it's roughly 4 million last September to over 8 million, maybe it's 9 or 10 million today, to show that this is not just a sort of passing fad, but the business case is not in the numbers as everyone before me said so, so aptly. It's right now really you could almost say it's a first mover advantage it's all very popular, something that was really popular during the dot com boom. Any big company, Fortune 500 company that undertakes a blog is gonna enjoy this, um, celebrity status – at least for awhile it'll be mentioned in the...blogosphere and get them some buzz and probably also be mentioned in the mainstream media. So I think that's what everyone wants – is mentions in the mainstream media. That there is actually interesting ripple effects of starting a blog and getting mentioned in Fortune or Newsweek or wherever.

Stephan Spencer:

Yep. There's that great example in that Fortune article about that solar powered backpack that ah, the guy sent it through to the TreeHugger blog, who blogged about it, who then was picked up by another blogger, and next thing you know it's being talked about in Gizmodo and so sales shot through the roof once that happened, very interesting power of blogging. Shel? What do you think?

Shel Israel:

I think I violently agree with everyone who has spoken already. I think it's a very obviously silly question. I've heard it many times as a consultant the last couple of years. Ah, what's the ROI of a blog? And my shoot back usually is what's an ROI on a press release? Blogs are just tools. Asking what the business model for it is the same as asking the hammer what the ROI, or a carpenter what the ROI is on his hammer. Look at anecdotes like Firefox who ah, got 25 million downloads essentially off of word of mouth engines. And those engines were ignited by blogging. And even without a press release they got 25 customers – what's the ROI there? So, I don't know what to add other than ah, it is a silly question.

Robert Scoble:

The other way to look at the ROI is to look at Google. And, you know, let's say you're a plumber in Seattle and you want to be on the first 5 links of Google um, for a search result, you know, like I'm a, like if I have a leaky basement pipe or something and I'm searching Google for plumber needed in Seattle, ah, expert at fixing pipes or something like that...how do you come on that first page of results and a lot of people don't know, but you know Google mostly works off of inbound links so if you have, you know, 20 in-bound links, you're going to be ahead of or on top of somebody who only has 10 in-bound links for the most part. And how do you get inbound links? Well, you have to change your page often right? I'm not going to link to something that's static, that hasn't changed since 1998. I'm gonna link to something that you know gets updated often...with new information, with interesting information, stuff to talk about. And that's why blogging has had the impact that it has had.

Stephan Spencer:

That's a great point Robert. And on other, a very important um, tactic in regards to search engine optimization getting to the top of Google and other engines is the power of the anchor text, that link text, and so if you name your blog for example, ah...B2B Lead Generation Blog, next thing you know you're gonna be number 1 for B2B Lead Generation on Google. So it's a great tactic. Why don't we have Toby join in with her thoughts on this question as well.

Toby Bloomberg:

Thanks Stephan. I agree with most of what you all have said. However, I think that while I, I, I am passionate about the use of blogs as a way to open up conversation, as a way to pull the curtain away from the Wizard of Oz, um, and have, have um, people actually talk to people behind the company walls. I really think that we as marketers and business, people need to take a very long term look at the strategy of blogs. I do believe that it is a business strategy, and because it is a business strategy, I think my point of view might be a little bit different. I think you have to look at the ROI. I think you have to look at the long-term basis of why a company is going to put resources and people and dollars into a new marketing tactic. To say that you can't measure a press release – you can measure it by images, you can measure it by people coming and knocking on your door and buying your product. You can measure blogs by search engine rankings, as Robert said. You can measure those search engine rankings by people again and knocking on your door. So... even though underlying the whole blogosphere, and the concept and the culture of blogs is the talk of people, and there is an ROI in that, that businesses are going to have to address because they're not going to sink funds into a marketing strategy that doesn't produce results. And I believe that blogs will produce those results.

Stephan Spencer:

Thank you Toby. Let's go onto the next question. **Any tips for managing upper management's expectations for the outcome of blogging for marketing?** Debbie, let's start with you.

Debbie Weil:

Well the most important thing is: get them to focus on the fact that this is a long-term strategy. This is not a short term money maker or revenue driver. It's really not so mysterious. I mean, a blog should be put in the same bucket as a content-rich website, a compelling e-newsletter, as Shel said, it's just a tool. It's also a channel, but um, get them to focus on the fact that it's something that you can try, you can add to your marketing mix. It's also part of your PR mix and your branding mix and then you have to keep at it. And you have to say something worth reading, starting a conversation worth engaging in, as Seth said. So again the answer is long-term.

Stephan Spencer:

Sure. Seth?

Seth Godin:

Well, part of our conversation is steering in ways that make me uncomfortable for two reasons. The first is let's do a little math. So Scoble's got 5,000 people a day counting... Bill Gates and Steve Jobs, so there is 5 million - on a very conservative basis - blogs out there not counting computer generated ones. When I do the math, that works out to be about

Seth Godin:

25 billion blog reads a day if people are going to aspire to have 5,000 readers each. And so the problem I've got when we start making big ROI, PR kind of promises is that if it's business as usual of selfish corporations busy talking about themselves in sanitized ways that will get them no push back, it's inconceivable that they're going to have 5,000 readers a day. They're gonna have 12 readers a day and 2 of those people are in-laws of the CEO! And, and so I think that we must instead take a step back and say wait a second...you fell for the hype of the World Wide Web. You built a really expensive needle in a wicked big haystack. And now you're spending all your time hoping that you're gonna get more hits than the search engines. Don't make the same mistake again with your blog. That what a blog is, is just a slight amplification of an individual's or small group of individual's voices. And if you approach this in the same sort of selfish PR way that corporations love to do...consumers who have a choice - and they all do - will unanimously reject you and not show up.

Robert Scoble:

Yep.

Seth Godin:

And instead what I think blogs can do that's really powerful is change the culture of an idea and change the way a corporation sees itself. I think that the real run as we see blogs proliferate, is not how do I get people to tune into the Dyson Vacuum blog and learn all about vacuum innovations every day, but instead it's very, very specific vertical groups listening to a human being within a company so that they can hear the story behind that company. The story that that company needs and wants to tell. And that if they can do that without worrying about putting this in someone's face who doesn't want it, then over time, if the stories are good and the ideas are worth spreading, they'll spread.

Stephan Spencer:

That's great Seth. Toby?

Toby Bloomberg:

Marketers have to manage expectations, and the very first step of that is to strip away some of those expectations and exactly what Seth just said, it's a long-range strategy, it's not a silver bullet. It's not going to lift sales tomorrow. Eventually companies will come to understand what is behind the curtain and build those relationships, but I think the first step is to manage those expectations. I keep going back to the realities of a corporate world. In order to get something filled in so that we can test it and do some innovative work with it, I think you have to base it in some sort of a reality.

Seth Godin:

What makes you think you're going to get innovative work done in an environment where you have to sell in the ROI of a \$30 a month cash expenditure?

Toby Bloomberg:

I'm not saying sell in an ROI of \$30 a month. I'm saying that eventually there has to be some return. And that return doesn't necessarily have to monetize within 30 days or 60 days. But there has to be some value back.

Stephan Spencer:

Robert, why don't you say something about this one.

Robert Scoble:

I look at it differently. At least here at Microsoft I think there was actually a principle involved at the executive level where they wanted better customer relationships. They wanted better product quality, and they knew that the product quality would go up if there was a tighter conversation, and the conversation was dis-intermediated. In other words, if you look at like what, what we're doing with Channel 9, I'm taking a video camera directly into a product manager's office, video taping him talking about the product and then right underneath, a customer can write and say your product sucks, or your product's not there. And here are some things that I'd like to see you do. And that starts a conversation that long-term will greatly increase product quality. I'm already seeing it. You know Kim Cameron who's in charge of our identity system is having conversations on the blog, the Internet Explorer team is out there and taking a lot of heat for the quality of their product and guess what. I bet that turns around, you know within a couple of years because people are getting – the team themselves are getting – such great feedback from the community.

Stephan Spencer:

Debbie, what do you think?

Debbie Weil:

Well, I just wanted to jump back in and say thank you to Seth for sort of pulling me back from engaging in some marketingspeak myself, so forget ROI. But you know before you can manage management's expectations, you need to ask them a couple of questions: Can you be transparent as a company? Can you handle negative feedback? Because that, that's what happens on a good blog. Do you have a story to tell? I was a journalist for many decades. But blogging itself is much more difficult to execute. It has to be a story, there has to be an audience, a vertical as Seth called it. Frankly, you can't measure that in advance, you can't even predict it in advance. It takes some skill as a writer and as a story teller.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok, thank you Debbie. B.L., any thoughts about managing upper management's expectations?

BL Ochman:

Well, I tell my clients that a blog is really only one part of what they need to do, and for my clients, I'm having them use the blog in a number of different ways. I think that that both Robert and Shel and Seth are using blogs right now in a really innovative way and that is to sell books. And I have a client who blogs who is a photographer and an author, and he's in the process of writing a book, and his blog is actually sending people to his website where they are in fact buying photographs and there are metrics. But what I want to say about blogs is that you know they're not, they're a content management system and several of my clients are using blog software for their websites now. And, what blogs do besides give you these confrontational platform and all the other things that we're talking about is they allow executives and people who have no html skills to be able to publish on the Internet. In a corporate setting where you have to have a lawyer tell you it's ok to go to the bathroom it's pretty difficult to do blogs if everything that you say has to go through legal first. Obviously Robert couldn't blog if he had to deal with that at Microsoft so, what I tell my clients is that they have to think about blogs as a website tool that allows them to have feedback. And most of all, what management seems to respond to right now is that blogs are very effective in increasing search engine rankings. And I've seen this again and again in my own blog and in everybody else's blog who is in this conversation that search engines like blogs because they are frequently updated they are full of links, people link to them, we link out, and this is a lot of work for people who blog and people in management don't often have A.) the time or B.) the inclination to do the kinds of things that really do build an audience for blog. I want to coach them on how to blog and help them and advise them, but a blog is something that takes time and effort. So I tell management people that I deal with that they're gonna have to put in time and effort and some of them run screaming out of the room when you tell them that!

Stephan Spencer:

Yes and always leave it to legal to rain on your parade, eh? Doc, do you have any thoughts on managing upper management's expectations?

Doc Searls:

Well first of all I'd say that blogging is not a strategy. I think blogging is a practice. It's for the individual who is doing it...for individuals that are born bloggers like Robert and like myself and probably most people on this call it's almost second nature. It's e-mail to the world. It's like doing cc: world, right? In fact, an awful lot of my own blogging posts are nothing more than public responses to private e-mails. I would say to senior

Doc Searls:

management, what you need are born bloggers on your staff here and there. They don't have to be in marketing – in fact it's better if they're not, because you know you want blogging to be part of the body function of the company. And I, the main thing I tell them is to make sure that the legal department does not stay involved. That it's almost better to look at blogging as a way to prevent lawsuits than a way to, to ah, to avoid them. Then, you know, then, to avoid the lawsuits by preventing blogging. Now that said, I think there are kinds of companies that are probably never going to blog. You know companies whose speech is in fact regulated. Like the pharmaceuticals. Pharmaceutical companies essentially have regulated public speech and that's gonna be a very hard kind of company to see blogging at. There are companies like – I think it's interesting to me that, that there are really relatively few bloggers say at Apple and there are an enormous number of bloggers at Microsoft. There's something inherently different about those two companies, and about the permission system in both of those companies. Which nobody ever really knew, until blogs came along. Here's Scoble who just brilliantly knows where the line is, right?

Robert Scoble:

It's not a line, by the way.

Doc Searls:

And it's not a line – you're right, it's not a line.

Robert Scoble:

It's a membrane that you can pick on.

Doc Searls:

Knowing instinctively almost what to say and what not to say and, and here, here's a really critical thing, I mean we, we talk about writing as content, and blogs resemble a content management system. Content is not what we do. A writer doesn't produce content. A writer says things that he thinks are going to change the world very often. There's a line that I just threw out once about a year ago. Which is that blogging is about making and changing minds. I forgot that I said it, and Jay Rosen, who runs the journalism school at NYU and has a blog called Press Think, picked it up and made an entire post out of it. And that was long and, and very thoughtful and lots of commenters came in and added value to that and by the time it was over, I mean, that by the time the idea um, got chewed on by many different people all of whom added value to it and added nuance to it, it was a much bigger and better idea than when it was mine alone. That's what happened with markets and conversations. When I was a marketer, I had this line that markets were conversations and it wasn't until I got together with 3 or 4 other guys and then we put in the *Cluetrain Manifesto*

Doc Searls:

that the whole notion of conversation took off. And it's not my idea anymore, it's everybody's idea. And blogging is an engine for that and you have so many brilliant people inside every company that can bring ideas to the world and spread them and that's what blogs are good for. Anyway that's what I tell the top guys. So if you're fear based, don't do it. And if you're not fear based, do it.

Stephan Spencer:

That's a great point, Doc, but I think companies who don't blog could actually end up getting in bigger trouble potentially. Look, look at Kryptonite and that big fiasco that cost them many millions of dollars because they just plugged their ears and, and just started humming instead of talking back to the Internet and to all the bloggers who are saying "Hey! I can pick your locks with a Bic pen! What are you gonna do about it?"

Seth Godin:

And then Robert wrote about it, and added to their branding as it were!

Robert Scoble:

Yeah, that's even a bigger issue than just blogging, because a blog would not have saved them right? Or might not have saved them, but the fact is that so many people were writing about them and we were not hearing back from them. I know one of their PR people, and I wrote about it, and I have 5,000 or 10,000 readers! And if I'm not hearing back from it, you know some guy with 3 readers who was bitching about it isn't gonna hear back you know. And that's where, that's where the damage is. If you are a corporation and you are not listening to the blogosphere now, you're gonna get in trouble because people are gonna be talking about you anyways and this is what's sort of funny about "Oh I'm scared of getting ah, you know, hit with, ah, negative, ah, you know, publicity" well go to Feedster and start doing some searches on what your company name is and your product category and I bet you're gonna find that people are already saying nasty stuff about you and it's out there.

Stephan Spencer:

B.L., you want to chime in?

BL Ochman:

I want to go back to something that Seth said before. You know there might be 10 million blogs but there's probably a thousand of them that actually have an audience and, and, and it, what we were just talking about that I don't think every company should blog, but I definitely do agree that every company better be paying attention to what's being said about them in blogs. I think there are companies in which, you know, the CEO or other people in the company would probably rather have root canal than have to deal with daily journalism which is how I view blogging. Its writing and

BL Ochman:

researching and dealing every single day and you know, but they better be paying attention and willing to jump in because right now you can really be creamed in a very short time if you don't pay attention to what's happening in the blogosphere. It's a very reactive space and, and you can put out fires just by responding.

Doc Searls:

Could I add something really quick here?

Stephan Spencer:

Go ahead.

Doc Searls:

I agree with all that, I want to add though that we make a mistake if we think about blogs, bloggers as having an audience. That's, that's, you know, a television and radio and publishing convention. Think, one of the things that got *Cluetrain* started was a line that I shared with Chris Locke, which is that markets are conversations, and conversation is fire. Therefore, marketing is arson. And you only need one match to start a fire. That's a lot of what blogging is about. It's not putting out fires; it's in fact starting fires. But fires in the positive sense; fires in the sense of an idea that can spread quickly.

Female Voice:

But it only happens if somebody is reading your blog.

Doc Searls:

Well, you know, here's the thing. If you write a blog about identity, let's just pick one topic. Let's take "locks." So somebody is subscribed somewhere to a search on Technorati for locks. And somebody who has otherwise an audience of one suddenly sees this blog that has, may only have one reader until now, and now they have a reader who may remark on it. If you see something really interesting about any given topic, and the topic itself is interesting, the chance of your getting hurt is huge. And that's because of RSS. It isn't with the old system, and you didn't know whether you were hurt or not. It was like you were talking into an empty room. But with RSS, which is Really Simple Syndication, people are not just subscribed to your blog. In many cases they're subscribed to searches. And so, if they're subscribed to a search about a topic, all of a sudden, you know, anybody who is interested in that topic can hear your blog if you're writing about it. So, if you're somebody who might otherwise have an audience of one, and write about a topic where you might guess there are 50 or 100 or 1,000 people subscribed, and that's an interesting thing you just said. And also, by the way, if you're linking to particular bloggers, and they're gonna see links from you in their their watch-lists, and they see it, it's so easy to find, and then, all of a sudden, they're gonna wanna reciprocate and want to blog

Doc Searls:

back. There's an ethic about reciprocation in the blogosphere that's really quite large and many bloggers, like myself and I suspect others like Robert and other people on this call, like to link back to people they haven't heard of before.

Robert Scoble:

Yep.

Doc Searls:

So, so it's not like you know, you slowly accumulate an audience of some kind. There's a guy named Thomas Mayhon who's a tailor in London. He's been blogging for about 3 weeks. As of today he's probably the top tailor in London. It's an amazing thing. If you look him up on Technorati -- he hasn't really made it much on Google yet, but Technorati is really for stuff that's too new for Google. I think he's got 400 or 500 inbound links right now, and he's been in business for maybe 2 weeks on the web. But he's the guy who's writing about what it is to be a tailor in London. And it's amazing, and it's just, he started out with nothing and now he's huge.

Male Voice:

Well, I didn't say that it was nothing. To be fair Doc, he started out with a friend named Hugh, who had built up trust from thousands of people around the web for having good taste and thoughtful commentary. And so that was, that was...

Doc Searls:

And, and he was also the funniest cartoonist on the web too!

Male Voice:

That's true!

Doc Searls:

Yeah.

Stephan Spencer:

Yep. Ok, well let's move on to the next question. This is all great stuff but now we gotta keep to time here. So next question, **what is the definitive list of no-no's that a business blogger must refrain from in order to be an accepted member of the blogosphere?** Robert how about yourself?

Robert Scoble:

Don't take off your clothes and run around naked!

Debbie Weil:

Oh no!

Robert Scoble:

At least not with a web cam on, right! I don't know if there's a no-no because, if you know how to break the rules, you can create conversations that are going to be very interesting. But you better know that the rules are there, and you... getting back to the line and the fan kind of metaphor -- it's

Robert Scoble:

not a line it's a membrane and when...if you want to change a company, or if you want to change the world, or if you want to get people to adopt something new, you can push on this membrane you know and like, when Apple came out with a Macintosh in 1984, they pushed on that membrane. And it snaps back a little bit and if you understand how the world works, you can move things – you can change things. Some things that will get you in trouble though, at least here at Microsoft, is leaking product information before the execs are ready for it to go out. Talking about financial information cause we're a public company and there's a lot of rules about how to disclose financial information. So if I heard in the hallway today that you know what our financial results are going to be in a week, I'm not allowed to share that in public. You gotta understand what your boss is willing to defend, right? If you're working in a big company, you gotta understand what your boss wants to see up there. Maybe he's ok with seeing the F bomb on your blog but...my boss isn't ok with seeing that. So you gotta know where the lines are, and you have to have a lot of conversations with your boss about what kinds of things he wants to see up there. That changes over time as they get more comfortable with having a conversational style of marketing. I link to my competitors because I want to be an authority in the marketplace – a good blog is passionate and authoritative. So you know, if I'm only linking to Microsoft stuff and going, "Microsoft stuff is great, rah, rah, rah," nobody will pay attention to me. But if I talk about Google and Yahoo and Ebay and Amazon, and I link to them and I say nice things about them, that puts me in an authority level above those companies because they probably don't take the risk internally to link out to Microsoft and say nice things about Microsoft. So defacto I'm the greater authority than they are. Um, you know, I don't know!

Stephan Spencer:

Just to chime in here for a second, I should differentiate between authorities and what are called hubs, from a search engine perspective. An authority is a site that gets a lot of authoritative inbound links, where as a hub is a site that links to a lot of useful and great websites. So it pays to actually be an authority and a hub, and what you're talking about is actually being both.

Robert Scoble:

Yep. When I look at the people who have been fired for blogging, their blog did not match the public persona that the company was trying to portray. You look at Mark Jen at Google. He was mouthing off about the company two weeks before all the employees were going to be able to sell their stock. And he was talking about financial results again too, that's what really threw him over the ledge. But, he wasn't good at sticking his finger in air and, and feeling which way the wind was blowing internally. How much that

Robert Scoble:

company would put up with. The Delta flight attendant had a picture of herself in a uniform sort of in a provocative stance and the company was trying to move away from that image and trying to present the flight attendants as more of a professional group and less as a sex object kind of thing, and she didn't recognize that the company was trying to do that. When you're representing a company out in public, you better understand what the company is trying to do in terms of its image and trying to move forward. Of course I break those rules all the time!

Male Voice:

You're making the rules Robert!

Robert Scoble:

Yeah, I break them knowing the relationship network I have here and knowing, you know, how far I can push that membrane without it kicking me out you know. In other words, everything I do is done a little bit strategically. It's done with a little bit of thought and also done knowing I'm taking chances. I'm taking risks here. Sort of like a gold miner that goes into a mine with a stick of dynamite, yeah he's taking a risk but the reward is that you get, you know, some gold out of the quartz. Um, you know you can blow off your hand with these tools and ah, certainly you have to be somewhat skilled at not blowing off your hand!

Stephan Spencer:

You had a very insightful post, Robert, recently on the Red Couch blog about the Technorati issue with, you know, that whole little brew ha ha that, that blew up there; any thoughts around that? Maybe you could share a few insights from that post.

Robert Scoble:

Well, there was an employee who put some corporate imagery out that his boss didn't like.

Male Voice:

But it was another company's corporate image.

Robert Scoble:

That's true too you know! And so now you're playing with your partner's corporate image or your competitor's, and that can get you into trouble. He wasn't smart about it. He didn't think about that – the consequences of doing that. But when you're in public, when you're speaking in public, when you're doing calls like this, when you're even at a party supposedly on your own time, if people know who you work for, you sort of represent that company. And I've had some violent arguments with people who say, "no, my private time is my private time, and the company doesn't get to run that." And I've known executives at other companies who've gotten fired because they wrote a racist remark in a chat room or...I know another guy

Robert Scoble:

– well I don't know the guy – but I was witness to this where he was hitting on my boss at a party, and everybody knew who he worked for, and somebody reported that to his boss, and he was fired. So anytime you're representing...anytime you're identifiable with a corporation, with a company, with a group of people, you're sort of representing them. Not speaking for – I try to make the difference between speaking for because you know I'm not talking about vetted, decided-on stuff you know, I don't go to meetings and for the most part decide hey I'm gonna talk about this tonight and 15 people signed off on it. So I'm not speaking for the company but I certainly have a responsibility to represent the company, you know, in a professional manner. You know I don't go out and run around the South by Southwest conference, you know, naked, or do stuff that would hurt the reputation of the company.

Seth Godin:

I want to amplify something you guys said a few minutes ago because I think we sort of drifted just a bit.

Stephan Spencer:

Sure.

Seth Godin:

There's this idea of the value of being a hub and I think that for most of the people who are listening or reading this transcript that is the single easiest way corporately to start down the road of succeeding in this medium. Which is rather than having to talk about you know the internal machinations or stuff at your company regarding a product or service, you can set yourself out as the source and the expert on what's happening in your little corner of the universe. So, you know if you work for 1 of the 20 yo-yo companies that yo-yo people are really into, and you find yourself writing about yo-yos from you and your competitors every day you become the yo-yo go-to-guy. And it becomes a natural place for the kind of person who wants to hear about new yo-yos to show up because they know that you're keeping your ear to the ground. And so when your company then decides to launch a new yo-yo you've got the same way that Hugh had the power, H-U-G-H, the power to launch the Seville Road tailor. You've got the power to talk with authority about a new yo-yo as long as you don't compromise that by saying something about it that's not true.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok, thanks Seth. Shel, how about yourself? Ah, definitive no-no's for bloggers...

Shel Israel:

I don't think blogging should ever be used as an isolation beam. Um, the same things that are no-no's in business elsewhere are applicable if you live

Shel Israel:

in business and you blog. Really in a corporate blog you're including someone. In other words, don't do anything stupid. People get fired for acts of disloyalty, dishonesty, revealing company secrets. And the same rules that one conducts themselves in business, should be exercised when one is blogging. I think bloggers are a great example of testing boundaries.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok. Doc, how about yourself?

Doc Searls:

A couple of things. First is: Technorati was born during a project that Dave and I worked on. It was a writing project together for Linux Journal. And it was a research project that turned into a company in the long run -- I'm still and I'm on his advisory board and we talked, Dave and I talked a lot about it because, you know, it was a very tough call for him and he is the top guy. Here's an employee he values a great deal, who he wants to mentor. He wants to learn, um... In the meantime, quite honestly a lot of bloggers are beating up on Dave, on the employee, before they know the whole story, if they possibly ever can know the whole story. It was a tough situation and in the long run what you really need here is, is to learn. I mean, what, what the employee did here and maybe Dave did too -- who knows? But is that they, they were flirting -- and flirting is the wrong word -- but they were, they were dealing with this issue...the simple matter of judgment. I used to have a client many years ago named Earl Gilmore who's sadly now gone, but Earl ran a company in North Carolina where he had an employee policy manual that had only 2 pages and 2 rules. And Rule Number 1 was -- Use good judgment. And Rule Number 2 was -- Violate Rule Number 1 and you're in deep trouble, and trouble wasn't the word he used. And that's basically the only rule. You just have to use good judgment. I think Robert said at some point, if you're in doubt -- don't! You know! Blogging is not something where you've gotta certain number of words that you have to get in or can't get in, or some limit. You could blog on forever so...if you, you know, you have a chance to bring up whatever it is perhaps again later. Just use good judgment, that's really what it comes down to. And learn what that judgment needs to be.

Stephan Spencer:

Let's move on to B.L.

BL Ochman:

You have to be careful to do a couple of things. One is don't not give sources. A lot of people just put what other people have said. Say where you got your information from and, and give a link to there. And, and lots of linking within the blog. This is one of the things that distinguishes blog posts is that when you cite something...you know a topic, anytime that you

BL Ochman:

can link to information about it through the blog that, that's blogging and it's a good thing to do. And also I don't think a company should have anybody blog who they wouldn't have represent them anywhere else. And, I do think posts ought to be short. I don't think posts ought to go on forever, but I know people don't always feel they can say what they want to say in a short blog. It's really important that when people do blog, that they stick to the topic that their blog is about. I think your blog should be about something and you should try and stay within that topic. And trying to be everything to everybody with a blog is something to avoid.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok. Debbie?

Debbie Weil:

Ah...definitive list of no-no's...ah, usually these may be pretty obvious to everyone but they're not obvious to some companies, particularly bigger companies that want to get into blogging. Basically they are misunderstanding how to use the tool. So, obvious no-no's: Do not post press releases. Don't write without linking as BL just said. In other words, contribute your sources that's a good journalistic convention but it applies to blogging. Don't write in corporate speak. Don't be boring, but what I'm really saying is don't just use a blog as a place to put stuff you've already got or that's already written or that was prepared a week ago or a month ago um, I've actually been in conversations with clients where they talk about "Oh this is going to be so great! And we'll prewrite the articles and we'll have them all lined up 6 months ahead of time in a cue and then we'll stick them in the blog" and I say, "Oh, no, no you shouldn't do it that way." And what they're misunderstanding is the blog is this tool, it's a way to tell a story with a voice, with an opinion, with context, with links out to other, you know, it's very immediate, very fresh – it's happening now and again since all of us blog we kind of know that. But it's not that obvious to companies just getting into this for the first time.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok. Let's move onto the next question. **So when and why should a marketer use a professional blogger or blogging consultant? And how would he or she go about evaluating potential service providers? Doc?**

Doc Searls:

Boy! First of all, I know more circumstances where companies discover that they have blogs in them than ones where they're going out to get some kind of blogging advice. And, I've known companies where I've given blogging advice which is: "You guys really need to blog." And because there's nobody in the company who is a born blogger, they just simply don't. And I guess the one thing I could say is look for companies whose bloggings are

Doc Searls:

effective. It's very much like it was with advertising. When I used to be in the advertising business I used to say to people: "Well, don't go looking for a bunch of advertising agencies. Look for a company whose advertising you really like and respect and see who did it. And see how they got that way and I think you'll find out more that way than you will from going out and hiring a consultant." It's hard to say – consultants can bring a lot to the table but I'm just not that familiar with that field I guess.

Stephan Spencer:

Steve?

Steve Rubel:

Well, what I would say is that hiring a stand-alone blog practice is probably not a good idea. I mean...the reason I say that is you don't see press release practices these days. You know, it's going to be part...as someone mentioned earlier...it's a tool. And it's a new channel and it will be integrated into other disciplines. So obviously I'm in public relations so I have a vested interest in this. We think here, having a public relations firm has the expertise to bridge both the large media and the small media world with different clients, but that's not to say that there are others who couldn't do that. I think people who are Internet marketers have a lot of skills that could work well with blogging. I think advertising agencies might have some skills. So I think that...I'm concerned about the folks who are hanging up their shingles as standalone blog consultants because I think that it is part of a bigger trend of consumers wanting to have a voice and a say and a role in how companies and products are perceived. And so I think that with that it will eventually get rolled up into other things as it becomes more accepted.

Stephan Spencer:

Steve, what do you think about the trend of ghost blogging? Hiring somebody and then having them write posts for you that, you know, say they're a really good blogger, you contact them and they do some ghost blogging for you under your own name? What do you think of that one?

Steve Rubel:

That is not ideal. We counsel all of our clients to write their own posts. We may guide them on the content, and say you know here's something that you can write about or we'll send them links sort of as eyes and ears. But I think that's ill advised. You know we talked earlier about the laws of the blogosphere and there's only one law of the blogosphere I think and that's common law. That's whatever the people decide at any given moment. And I think transparency is one of those common laws.

Stephan Spencer:

Yep. I agree with you. BL, let's hear your opinion on this.

BL Ochman:

I agree with Steve that people should be doing their own writing. But I consult to my clients...I tell them...I help them to understand what in their company they might be blogging about because sometimes they haven't read enough blogs, they don't quite understand it and I educate them and give them blogs to read. When they start blogging, I help them to craft their posts so that they'll be search-engine friendly and interesting. But ultimately they have to do their own writing and their own research. You can have a consultant to help you get it set up, and you should have somebody help you with the way that it looks. You can't just really take the software out of the box and start running with it and expect it to look very good. I think that in terms of search engine optimization, consultants can be helpful, and let's face it, corporations need to search engine optimize their posts.

Stephan Spencer:

Good point. Toby?

Toby Bloomberg:

I agree with what everyone has said so far, and I especially really agree with what Steve had said where a lot of companies are putting out a shingle as standalone blog consultants that have no experience or expertise at looking at the bigger picture. And I think you're right, they will get rolled up or, as we've seen in the dot com bust, they'll just vaporize away. But I think that people will hire blog consultants for the reason they'll hire any consultant, because they don't have the skills internally to help develop a blog and a writing style. Just as BL has said...especially if you're new to blogs, the writing style is very different.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok. Well, let's move onto the next question. **How does a business blogger go about getting syndicated onto other's websites and getting onto other people's blog rolls? BL?**

BL Ochman:

Well, I think that the first thing you have to do is read other blogs and respond to them and use trackback and comment when somebody says something interesting. And get into conversations with other bloggers and having a blogroll is really an important part of all of this so that people can see, you know, what kinds of things you're looking at and the interaction that it promotes is important. And it's like anything else, you have to post on a frequent basis, you have to be interesting. But when you're gonna promote a blog you really need to get out there and talk to other bloggers. I don't think a press release here or there would hurt too much either.

Stephan Spencer:

A press release?

BL Ochman:

I think every once in awhile, you know, if you're starting a blog, and you have something provocative to say, and you think about doing a quick press release about it I don't think that can hurt anything. Or contacting reporters about what's on your blog.

Male Voice:

Why not do it with e-mail?

BL Ochman:

Well e-mail, yes absolutely.

Stephan Spencer:

Seth, how about you weigh in with your opinion on this?

Seth Godin:

I think that what happened in the blogosphere because it started as seeming unimportant is a lot of folks who didn't have big brand equity and big ad budgets and, and big brands were able to get a head start. And now that a whole bunch of other people are trying to come on – it's a little too late to start at the, you know, the center of the helix. Instead they have the opportunity to say to the outside world, people who aren't necessarily big blog readers, ah, we have a blog. If you are Texaco or um, Saturday Evening Post or somebody and you have another mechanism for reaching people - telling people to stop by your website is foolish because people have been trained that websites are boring. But explaining to people that they can be part of the conversation or hear what's going on by checking in at your blog I can imagine a doctor doing that, I can imagine someone on the radio doing that and thus getting those first thousand readers using media that isn't electronic.

Stephan Spencer:

Good point. Debbie?

Debbie Weil:

There are two different audiences here when you talk about promoting your blog. And this is something that I find myself increasingly concerned about. One audience is the blogosphere that is all the other bloggers and the other audience is well, I guess we'll call them everybody else! And what are the latest statistics from the Pew Internet Report that I know 27% of Internet users are reading blogs, well that means... 70 plus percent are not reading blogs. So, to me this is really key. So how do you promote your blog? Well, if you have an e-newsletter and you're sending out e-mail which most people still do get, tell them you have a blog. Tell them to go to your blog, give them the link. If you want to try and get them to sign up by RSS, you can try that. That's really hard to explain but, again I find that too much blogging is just bloggers back and forth to each other inside the blogosphere. And when I talk about business blogging, the exciting thing I

Debbie Weil:

see is blogs that talk to a wider audience. Who are not necessarily bloggers themselves who get pulled into this conversation, where it then creates this on-going story in a way for this audience, this non-blogging audience, to get involved with the company. To get intrigued with the company and the voices behind the company.

Female Voice:

But that's the question – how do you do that?

Debbie Weil:

Just all the usual methods. If a press release, I guess it would depend on what it is, or maybe you had a survey on your blog with an interesting result. You know in your signature file, all the usual ways that you do on-line and off-line promotion and of course if you're a big company – Fortune 500 company—right now, it's news! Every time one of these big, big companies starts a blog, all the bloggers start blogging about it. And then the Fortune and Newsweek columnists pick up on it, and then the next thing you know, their blog is publicized as: "Oh, and now Boeing has a blog."

Stephan Spencer:

Yep. And, and that actually it even works if you're just a well-known person not working necessarily with a big corporation. I remember last year I helped convince President Jimmy Carter to blog – it was only for an 8-day period. He was on a trip to West Africa, and blogged during that time. It wasn't even a "real" blog in that it didn't have trackback, it didn't have comments. These are just web pages that were put under the Carter Center website. But the fact that he blogged made big news in the blogosphere. And so next thing you know there are thousands of sites that are linking to this blog. Also the buzz was about, and the PR and so forth happened as well. Carter Center reckons it was one of the most successful, no, actually, the most successful, Internet marketing that they'd ever done – just that 8 days of blogging. It was pretty cool.

Female Voice:

This is how things were in the early days of websites when big companies got into it, and interesting people got into it. I wonder how long that'll last?

Stephan Spencer:

Yep. Ah, Shel, how about yourself? Any tips for promoting a blog?

Shel Israel:

On one hand there are traditional methods and in the case of a blog I think they should be very small and subtle. Put it on your business card, put it in your e-mail signature...but um, I think Toby said do a press release that you're doing a blog...I think that won't be effective. I think the way to be effective is to look at the blogs you like. Look at Doc and Robert, and see why so many people go to them, adapt it to whatever messages you want

Shel Israel:

and just do a really good job. To steal once more from Seth...be remarkable in what you write, write with a passion, write with a knowledge that you spoke to people you want to reach. Debbie mentioned that the numbers are very small, well the blogosphere – and somebody else can quote the Technorati members is growing at a very rapid rate. And the people reading the blog at a blog after just a few years and you reach for the total population on the Internet. So I think promotion should be very, very delicately done. And if I could, I want to go back a little bit to the last question... about professional bloggers and blogging consultants. Because I think there's a huge difference between the two and it applies to this question as well. Professional bloggers are like hired guns, and I don't think that would work because they'd lose credibility. Well, BL and Toby and other people here – they help – and Steve – help companies figure out how to use this new tool and this new channel to get closer to their constituencies. This is a wonderful thing and it's promotional and ah...that's what I have to say!

Stephan Spencer:

Ok. Doc?

Doc Searls:

Oh, yeah! Just link a lot. Link a lot. Make sure you've got an RSS feed. Link a lot. Try to add something to a topic. Follow what other people are writing, and write back about it. That's basically it. I mean, it's very self-promotional. You really don't need any other medium to make a blog happen. All you have to do is write interesting stuff about stuff you care about. If other people care about it and you've got an RSS feed, they'll find it. It'll grow.

Stephan Spencer:

Yep. Having an RSS feed, that is a very important point. In fact, I think a couple of nuances here are important to point out in regards to RSS. One is that you should have multiple RSS feeds, I think. Like by category so that, if there's only a certain category that I'm interested in subscribing to through my my news reader or my web based aggregator, I want to be able to do that. Secondly, from the bloggers point of view, you should be tracking the subscribers and the reads and click-throughs on the RSS feed. So have clicktracking on the URLs and do it as a permanent redirect instead of a temporary redirect so that you still get that "search engine juice," as Robert likes to say. And I love that term, Robert, by the way – "search engine juice"... I use it all the time now! So, I think that RSS is a huge opportunity, and not just for bloggers, but just for websites in general. It's a new distribution channel for your content and definitely use it to it's full potential. Toby, anything to add here?

Toby Bloomberg:

Actually, yes. I agree with Debbie. I think there are two completely different constituencies. One is the blogosphere and the other is the clients that we all are trying to reach within our own particular niches. And, for the most part, those clients are not aware of the blogosphere yet. They're coming along fast, but they're still not aware. So I think the promotional strategies that we put into place have to include both on-line, off-line and the new blogosphere promoting strategy – search engine (organic) optimization, linking, joining conversation, trackbacks – you know, all that drill. But I think it's very important for us to promote it on our websites, within our e-mails. I've been talking around the country the past 3 or 4 months to marketers, and it surprises me how many marketers don't know how to find blogs. They don't know much about RSS. And these are people within our own industry, our own marketing fields, and so if the marketers don't know about it, then certainly the customers don't know about it. We need to take those steps in order to educate our consumers and our customers and our stake holders, as well as our employees and make sure that if we are launching a blog that we let our internal people know as well. Robert, I have an interesting real quick story to tell you about Microsoft. A couple of months ago, I had a glitch in my Powerpoint presentation, and I called Microsoft, and was talking to a customer service person, and she was doing some things for me, and then all of a sudden, it was a long conversation. I said to her "By the way, I've been reading your blogs and I've been reading Robert Scoble's blog and it's great!" And she paused and she said "You're reading what?" I said "I'm reading your blogs! Do you know what a blog is?" "Nope!"

Robert Scoble:

Yep! There are 57,000 people here, and they reflect the population at large!

Toby Bloomberg:

Yeah.

Robert Scoble:

You know.

Toby Bloomberg:

Well then you've made my point entirely!

Robert Scoble:

Yep!

Toby Bloomberg:

I think we really have to promote it.

Robert Scoble:

Yep!

Stephan Spencer:

That feeds in well to the previous point about the Pew Internet study

Stephan Spencer:

finding that 27% of Internet users in America have visited a blog in 2004, yet 68% they found actually didn't know what a blog was. So all these people are visiting blogs without realizing it!

Toby Bloomberg:

But I have to tell you one other little story. I was talking to my 67 year old aunt the other day about blogs, and about what I was doing, and she called me Sunday morning at 10:30 to tell me that she was watching a television program in Boston and one of the newscasters was interviewing a blogger. She was so excited that she understood what was going on!

Female Voice:

My father too and he's pushing 80!

Toby Bloomberg:

Yeah!

Stephan Spencer:

Alright, well let's move onto the next question. **How should a marketer go about influencing other bloggers to blog about his or her products and services?** Let's hear from Shel first.

Shel Israel:

The first time I re-met Doc a couple of years ago, we talked for about 4 minutes and he told me: "You should blog." Then I re-met Robert a few months after that, and he ended the conversation with: "You should blog." And then I heard it from Ross Mayfield. I think bloggers are evangelists to the blogosphere, and they show a passion and expertise in what they're doing. The question is how should a marketer go about doing it? I would separate the word marketer from marketing department. I think anybody in a company is a marketer. Is Robert Scoble a marketer? Well, functionally he is an evangelist for a very large company – but I think he's a marketer. I think people should use their heads and their hearts and speak in a clear language that makes sense and avoid corp. speak. As it keeps getting said – the most important thing is you gotta link to other sites. You gotta point to other companies or other bloggers who share an interest in your topics whether they agree with you or not. One of Scoble's secret sauces is – he's the fastest to point out criticism of Scoble, not to mention Microsoft. You have to be brutally honest in blogging because the center of it is to build a new level of trust that the stuff that gets shuffled out that I just dismiss as corp. speak in brochures and press release. It just doesn't work anymore, you know! No one is listening to it anymore! So effective marketing on a blog to me is sort of the anti-marketing marketing. And the marketing department itself needs to look at what it's doing. Start opening up to new ways you know. I keep saying blogging – we all do – but it's really conversational marketing. It's getting closer to your customers by just

Shel Israel:

showing them the real people doing real jobs inside a company and listening closely to what company or the customers and constituencies are thinking about you.

Stephan Spencer:

Let's hear Doc's opinion on this, and then we'll move to Steve.

Doc Searls:

The easiest way if you know their e-mail is to e-mail them. The second easiest way is simply to link to their blogs because they will see it probably in their aggregators, so if it's a worthy post, then they'll point back at it.

Stephan Spencer:

Steve?

Steve Rubel:

Couple of things. One is to treat other bloggers like people, not like press, not like people you market to... in other words treat them conversationally. Like, we're talking now. Bloggers are not people you pitch. You contact and you get to know and you actually develop a relationship with. A lot of that relationship may be out in the open, but it's having a relationship. Another way to influence bloggers is to give them information before anybody else has it. That's a big thing. Bloggers like to break news. They like to be the early identifier of trends. They like to know about things before others do. Another way is to talk about something bigger than yourself. You know, jump into the higher, higher holy calling of the blogosphere – whatever it is that day and find out where that intersects with what you're talking about. So I mean if you know if APIs are hot or something is interesting, and you have something to say about that that day – jump into that conversation, but do it in a relevant way. Don't just do it for the sake of just being part of a conversation, but actually if you have something to say, add to it.

Stephan Spencer:

Now this is one of my favorite questions. **What are some of your top-most effective blogging for marketing tactics?** Let's just try and get to the bare-bones, how-to tactical info. BL?

BL Ochman:

If you've got a product, send it to a blogger. I have a friend who just started baking cookies, and they've got a really wonderful marketing concept related to them. I said send them to bloggers. If they're good, we'll write about them! And, the other is, if you have something to say, e-mail the person, and say you know you might be interested in this and um, you know point them to a post. That's worked incredibly well for me.

Stephan Spencer:

Seth?

Seth Godin:

I think you gotta treat different people differently. And, all viewers are not the same. There's a new freebie mentality that's kicking in in the blogosphere and it's very easy to assemble an audience of people who are happy to send you e-mail, comment all the time and maybe even link. But it may take you down the path to having an audience that you actually don't want to talk to. And if we're getting back to people who are actually...who are doing this for a living as opposed to just spreading ideas, one thing that you have to embrace is that all the people you are talking to aren't the same.

Stephan Spencer:

Doc?

Doc Searls:

I agree with all that stuff and just add link a lot! Write a lot, link a lot!

Stephan Spencer:

I love that! Link a lot! Ok, Toby?

Toby Bloomberg:

In order to speed this up, just one minor tactic. Thank the people that have linked to you and thank the people that have made comments. If you have 5,000 people commenting or linking to you today it's a little difficult, but every once in awhile, it sure is nice to get that little note back. And it creates a relationship, opens some doors.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok. Robert.

Robert Scoble:

The reason I'm reading so many blogs is I'm trying to see trends, and so if somebody just pitches me and they don't pitch anybody else. I disagree that you can't pitch a blogger, but you've got to do it very carefully. I get pitches all the time, and I don't really mind that too much. You know in my mind a pitch is like an e-mail with a paragraph that says, "hey, I think I've got something that's interesting to your readers. Here's a link."

Male Voice:

To point out if I may Robert, I meant long, drawn out pitches.

Robert Scoble:

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, if it's a paragraph on my blog I just wrote about something that I think you'd be interested in and put a link there – I'm all for that and I'll put it in my blog desk folder to look at later. But if they're only pitching me, and I don't see any repetition in the blogosphere that makes me nervous because I'm out there alone! If I see 5 other people writing about something, it dramatically makes me more comfortable that this isn't something that's just lame or that other people haven't seen value in. So, I'm looking for that repetition, particularly in the early stages of a news article. It also gives me stuff to link to right? If there is 5 other people

Robert Scoble:

talking about something, now I have 5 links for my paragraph from when I read about it, so I can say "Hey, go over and check out Steve Rubel and check out Dave Winer and check out this and check out that or check out some new bloggers because..." When something new comes out, I'll do a PubSub feed on it and I'll start watching for reaction. Pitch a lot of people. Don't just pitch one guy... don't just pitch Corey Doctorow at BoingBoing thinking that he's going to be the end-all and be-all of your marketing plan. Pitch 40 to 50 different people who you think your topic or your product would be interesting to.

Female Voice:

But this really comes down to how you would pitch anybody. You know, if you were pitching traditional media – it's the same thing. You've got to read what people write, you've got to speak to their interests.

Male Voice:

Yep.

Female Voice:

And you know, it's the same thing. Pitching is pitching.

Robert Scoble:

Yeah, I get mad when people pitch me without obviously reading me. It's pretty easy to filter through that stuff, if I'm getting pitched on banana peelers or something and I'm writing about technology...it's like why are you sending this to me? It's obviously, you know, just a spam kind of thing. It's nice to know that somebody is reading me: "Hey, I was just reading about you writing about Flickr. Well, we have a photo-sharing tool too and here's 3 reasons that it's better than Flickr..." I'm cool with that, because you're getting involved in the conversation. You're showing me that you have at least taken the time to read. I'm really getting defensive against people who are pitching me stuff that does not have RSS on it. I'm getting madder and madder, so that's something that people who are pitching better be aware of. If you don't have an RSS feed, I'm going to be very defensive. And if you don't have a blog of your own, I'm going to be very defensive. So if you're pitching me a static website, I'm gonna be yelling back at you, and I'm probably gonna even make fun of you on my blog. Like I made fun of internal Microsoft teams here.

Stephan Spencer:

Oh yeah! I love that quote by the way, Robert, on your blog that says: "If you're running a marketing site, and you don't have an RSS feed, you should be fired!"

Robert Scoble:

Yeah!

Stephan Spencer:

I love that! Ok, let's move onto the next question. **Who are your blogging heroes or mentors? It can be an individuals or companies and why? And what about blogging villains?** Robert?

Robert Scoble:

Well one of them is here – Doc Searls. I've been reading him for 5 or 6 years now. Dave Winer certainly. I got a chance to work for him and watch how he blogged and how he bootstrapped. Steve Rubel, I read him every day. Hugh I read every day. I read 1300 people but certainly some people do stand out in my mind... If I only had 5 minutes to read feeds today I'd probably pick a list of people like that to read. But, I like reading like Evelyn Rodriguez who survived the tsunami. I like reading some of the people who aren't supposedly on the A-list. Mike, Mike McBride – he does a one man IT blog, yeah. That's enough.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok. Doc?

Doc Searls:

Ah, there's a lot of the same. Robert is a hero of mine. I think he's a hero of the entire blogosphere as a matter of fact. I think he's a hero of Microsoft. Dave Winer again of course. Dave badgered me into blogging. And, in the fall of 1999 after we had written *Cluetrain*, he told me you missed out on this thing that's going to happen called "blogs," and he was absolutely right. Dave is also in many respects the father of RSS, and many other things that we take for granted including even aspects of Powerpoint.

Robert Scoble:

And weblogs.com and HTML...

Doc Searls:

Dave is one of the fathers of the web in many ways and where it's going. And continues to play that role. After that...there's just an awful lot of people that I love to read, and I actually feel bad that I don't read more often. I hate the term A list and B list. When I was featured as one of the alpha bloggers in one of Steven Levy's pieces in Newsweek and had my picture in Newsweek standing by a pool with a laptop. It actually got me in more trouble, it was far more trouble than it was ever worth. I told Steven that I think an alpha blogger is like an alpha-paramecium where we're all single-celled animals here and it's what we do together. It's the Petri-dish, as it were. It's a terrible metaphor, in a way, but it's really what we do together more than what any of us do alone that matters. That's why we have links, you know, it's what makes the sphere a sphere, and not just a bunch of disconnected pulpits of people standing there pontificating which is what we used to get I think from the major media.

Robert Scoble:

By the way, back to the marketing thing...make sure your tool pings weblogs.com or Technorati or both, if not more of the ping sites that are coming up. Cause if you're not pinging those sites, you're not getting into the search engines as fast.

Stephan Spencer:

And that's a great point. Pingomatic is a nice little free service that will ping a bunch of those simultaneously for you. Debbie, how about any villains or heroes from your standpoint?

Debbie Weil:

Well, I'm going to mention a heroine because this is actually something that's come up recently in some discussion that the blogosphere is mostly white males. Or at least – and as much as I love you guys, those of you on the A list and you are wonderful – Robert and actually Steve Rubel – I love the way you blog, combining links and commentary. Seth, I like the way you riff – but Haley Stewart of Haley's Comment is one of my favorite bloggers. She just has the most marvelous writing style, and she's not afraid to reveal that she's a woman. I mean she writes about things that women are, you know... her feelings about men, and about her son and clothes and her shoes and plus she's also very intellectual. But I think we just need to put that word in that this is really important that the blogosphere is a lot of different people and we need to pay a lot more attention frankly to women and other minorities if you want to call them that who are blogging because they're a part of the conversation.

Male Voice:

Ok, I was just talking and would like to add one more thing about that...because I've been looking and following the blogs about this, this subject that Steven Levy brought up in a piece this morning in Newsweek. Chris Noland who does politics from left to right um, I just added her to...a little back and forth on my own blog...and she wrote a brilliant response about women and blogging. And Sheila Lennon who's a blogger and who writes for the Providence Journal in Rhode Island along with Haley.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok, and Steve, any heroes or villains? And by the way I am surprised that nobody has brought up as far as villains are concerned Raging Cow and, and that whole fiasco... but, Steve, any thoughts?

Steve Rubel:

Heroes...well Robert for sure. He's somebody who thankfully came to our firm and talked to us and enlightened us. Buzz Bruggeman is another person who I look up to. Tom Murphy, who was one of the first PR bloggers out there. He actually has been blogging for a couple of years now. Jeff Jarvis and Dan Gilmore. And Mark Rashan who writes the Microsoft

Steve Rubel:

Office web log. Ah villains...the only one that comes to mind although they've been pretty good so far is the US government. And the lawyers.

Stephan Spencer:

Let's move on to our last question. **What do you think the blogosphere is gonna look like in a few years time. What are going to be the big issues with it, what are going to be the big opportunities and big challenges?** Just paint a picture for me. Steve why don't we start off with you since we haven't heard a whole lot from you.

Steve Rubel:

In 5 years I think there will be many more blogs. There will be circles of blogs. So you will see people who are, who are, without leaving their space I think will be very difficult for people to keep up with the number of feeds that they keep up with now. Although hopefully there will be tools that will make that easier. But I think that as there are more and more blogs people will begin to reduce their focus and say ok, I'm going to focus on these 10 or 15 blogs or 30 blogs or for people who have more appetite, 100 blogs. I think, more importantly, you're gonna see a merging of the mainstream media and the conversational media in the sense that they are going to start using the same tools. You're already starting to see this. Some sites are adding trackbacks and comment features. The most interesting development I think is that you may see the end in 5 years, actually that might be premature, but I'm predicting you will see the end of corporate speak and the end of ivory tower writing – we-talk-down-to-you kind of writing. I think that you will see that people will have much more hunger and appetite for things that are written in a human voice and everything that Doc and crew wrote in the *Cluetrain Manifesto*. I think as that becomes more pervasive – the heavy corporate style – you know, "such-and-such a company today announced..." is gonna be very much going out the window because people are gonna see the human voice has more credibility.

Stephan Spencer:

Ok, thank you Steve. BL, what do you think the blogosphere is gonna look like? What are going to be the challenges?

BL Ochman:

I think that the general public is going within 5 years to learn more about their power. With corporations and their ability to get what they have to say into search engines. Was it the Pew study that recently said that 25% of all the content on the Internet right now is generated by consumers and so that if you do a search you're gonna find things like ah...you know... "Microsoft sucks" along with all the wonderful things about Microsoft, because consumers are generating posts on blogs and forums and so on, and I think that as they begin to realize that they can have an impact, the average

BL Ochman:

person is gonna start to have more interaction in the blogging world and in the corporate world. And I think corporations are gonna have to find a way to deal with more of the general public. One of the things that is so annoying about the Internet now is that when you go on an awful lot of web sites, you can't find a human. But in a blogosphere, you find humans, and you know a lot of companies say well what would we do if we had all those phone calls or what are we gonna do when we have all those people responding to our blogs when they realize that what they say can have an impact. I think that that's gonna be one of the bigger changes that companies will have to deal with. And I think it's a very positive, very positive change that's gonna come about because of blogging.

Stephan Spencer:

Shel?

Shel Israel:

I think that in the next 5 years blogging will be an established communications channel in business and corporations that replaces the corp. speak tools as Steve pointed out. I think BL pointed out also that the power of people to reach and access real humans inside the corporation will have a liberating effect. I think in the end, marketing departments as we know them are going to be reconfigured to some degree. One thing that I thought was very interesting while working on this book with Robert was speaking to like Torries up there at Microsoft who say it in the MSN Spaces department since there's been so little on marketing they're able to reallocate money back into product refinements. So I think blogging is going to change the structure of corporations 5 years down the line. Maybe as ubiquitous as web sites are today.

Stephan Spencer:

Doc what's your vision for the future of the blogosphere?

Doc Searls:

I agree with everything everybody has said so far especially with the end of corporate speak. In fact, Chris LockE said in *Cluetrain* that corporate speak will eventually be regarded as the formal language of the French court or something. It'll become useless. I also think that marketing as we know it in general will be useless. In the old system in many companies, the sales and marketing manager was always a salesperson rather than a marketing person. Marketing had less power in the company than sales did, and that's because sales' job was to touch the customer; marketing's job was to stay away from the customer and to be strategic about messages. I think the messages are gonna die. I think that the notion of coming up with a message to send while still having some arcane uses will fall out of favor. Conversation is going to be far more important. I believe that what we

Doc Searls:

understand now is the mainstream media in general are going to be changed radically, in part because there are just so few channels there. I mean we have dish TV, and we've like channels up to 9,999, and you can't begin to surf from one end to the other in less than half an hour and there's a lot of nothing on there. I believe that it's a matter of time especially with the bandwidth issues getting worked out before everybody's ability to feed the new system and to feed the opinion system and to feed the political system and the economic system with fresh information that they can share and improve and all the rest of it is going to be not so much dominated by bloggers but facilitated by blogging. And by whatever blogging becomes or whatever the next thing is that's really descended from blogging, I think that bloggers will inevitably become trusted stringers for local newspapers for example. I think local news radio will be supplemented by people who are seen in podcasting right now. I think podcasting is going to be an enormous phenomenon, and I think that the video equivalent of that is going to be enormous. I think that the music industry is going to be revolutionized by podcasting as well. I mean, I wrote a piece on podcasting in IT Garage in September, and when I searched for podcast there were 24 results on Google. There are now close to a million. And not one big company was involved in that. That was mostly the work of a couple of stand-out guys with Adam Curry and Dave Winer and a lot of other people as well. It's a potentially huge phenomenon, and it's a resource for the old mainstream media rather than a competitor.

Stephan Spencer:

Alright. Great points, and I personally love podcasting. I think it's gonna be huge as well. It's interesting though that podcasting, it's hard to scale from a listeners point of view. I can take in more blogs and just scan them more quickly, but how do I take in more podcasts? There's only so many hours in the day and so much of my time can be spent listening to podcasts. It's hard to scale so that's going to be one of the issues...

Male Voice:

Well, can I answer that real quickly? Cars now come with MP3/CD players. I just dump off a whole bunch of podcasts onto a CD which will hold up to 200 hours of material and when I drive I tend to find whatever. Even if I can't scan all the podcasts – you can't scan all the radio stations either. I'll find generally far more among those podcasts that interest me than I find even for example on public radio. You just punch scan to the next one or fast forward or rewind.

Stephan Spencer:

Oh, that's good! Toby... what's your vision?

Toby Bloomberg:

My vision is the same as a lot of other people here in that there is going to be a huge number of blogs out there. But that blogs will become more and more niched. And that people that are looking for blogs will somehow find them but they'll find them in the niches that are interesting to them, whether they're businesses or whether they're hobbyists, but there will be more and more niche blogs. The other thing that people will want to know is they'll look for credibility in blogs. The smaller companies will have to put "About Us" pages on – it drives me crazy when people don't do that. Also, a lot of blogs that I've been reading recently don't have an e-mail link. That will have to be on there to supplement credibility. I see the integration of social networking software. Where you meet up or link up is integrated with blogs. I think that that's gonna be huge. And I agree with what you've said about podcasting. I also think V-logging is going to come into its own very soon, and that's going to be very, very exciting. The users and visitors will take our blogs, and they'll turn them into their own uses. They'll turn them into what they want them to be, which is I think a side step of the end of corporate speak. For example, I spoke to a woman the other day who works for the March of Dimes. They have a blog, and what they've found in their blog was they put it up as a resource initially but they're finding that people are using it for a support for each other. So it's a means of information, but it's also a means of social networking.

Stephan Spencer:

Robert?

Robert Scoble:

Ah, one of the guys I'm really looking up to is Eric Rice who's doing not just a blog but a podcast and also video and ah, that's a trend that's really interesting to me. Now you're able to share yourself on the Internet in whole new ways. You can do you drawing with Art Rage, photos with Flickr, you can do podcasting and video blogging with V-log. Stuff like that. And you can share yourself in a whole new way that just wasn't really possible or hard to do just a few years ago and certainly wasn't possible to do without the broadband that we now have. I think that's exciting in terms of corporate life. I look at Channel 9, and I see people who are adding onto the conversation right underneath our video, so it's an open-source style marketing really. Which is really interesting. You know I get to have my say as a representative of a company, and then everybody else gets to have their say, right underneath. In fact, right on the homepage you can write Microsoft sucks, you know we don't pull that down. I find that to be fascinating. It's a fascinating new world, and I think that's just going to accelerate, once people figure out the usefulness of video, the usefulness of being really conversational, bringing your customer right into the

Robert Scoble:

conversation right on your homepage, when you see that then you know the world has really shifted.

Stephan Spencer:

Robert you brought up an interesting web site with Flickr, I think that's actually a trend where things are heading. Flickr I think was quite successful because it emulates online role-playing games, as in a massively multiple, multi-player online role-playing game, and I think we're gonna see a lot more of that on the web. A lot more web sites that are role-playing in nature where you can kind of get lost and meet some new interesting people and go on quests and eventually find your way back home and so forth. I think we're gonna find a lot more web sites going from passive brochureware to that role-playing sort of nature.

Robert Scoble:

Yep.

Stephan Spencer:

And also I think that we're gonna see RSS really becoming the channel of choice for getting these blogs and, and all the kind of great content otherwise we couldn't possibly scale to keep up with everything. The information glut is already so, so problematic. Well, with that we're going to wrap up now. So, thank you very much everyone for participating on this call and thank you listeners for listening. Roy would you like to make any closing comments?

Roy Young:

Certainly. I want to thank everyone for educating our readers. I want to thank Stephan Spencer for a superb job in pulling together the leading experts in the field of blogging, and for keeping the traffic flow organized and thorough. So thank you all so much for participating and have a great day!

About the Thought Leaders

Toby Bloomberg is a marketing consultant and a blogger. As president of Bloomberg Marketing, she helps clients increase business opportunities by developing integrated marketing plans that utilize interactive tactics, such as blogs, and incorporating traditional initiatives when appropriate. Toby speaks nationally on Internet and traditional marketing topics; instructs a management consulting course at the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University and is a teaching artist for the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta. Although she now calls Atlanta home, Toby is a Yankee from Boston.

Seth Godin is a bestselling author, entrepreneur and agent of change. He is the author of six books that have been bestsellers around the world and changed the way people think about marketing, change and work. These include: *Permission Marketing*, *Unleashing the Ideavirus*, *The Big Red Fez*, *Survival is Not Enough*, *Purple Cow*, and *Free Prize Inside*. Seth is also a renowned speaker and was recently chosen as one of 21 Speakers for the Next Century by Successful Meetings. Seth was founder and CEO of Yoyodyne, the industry's leading interactive direct marketing company, which Yahoo! acquired in late 1998.

Shel Israel is editor in chief of Conferenza, an insider's e-newsletter covering technology executive conferences. He also describes himself as a "recovering publicist" and is currently co-authoring a book on why businesses should blog, Shel is creating this work on a blog (<http://redcouch.typepad.com>) and his new book will be published by John Wiley & Sons in January.

B.L. Ochman is president of whatsnextonline.com, an Internet Marketing and Business Blog. A strategist, and blogger, her Internet marketing clients include Ford Motors and IBM. BL is the publisher of What's Next Blog and the marketing tactics newsletter What's Next Online. She is also author of *What Could Your Business Do With a Blog?*

Steve Rubel is a PR strategist with nearly 15 years of public relations, marketing, journalism, and communications experience. He currently serves as Vice President, Client Services at CooperKatz & Company, a mid-size PR firm in midtown New York City. Widely viewed as an expert on blogging, podcasting and open source marketing, Steve heads up the agency's new Micro Persuasion practice, which helps clients launch conversational marketing programs. He widely evangelizes the use of these new technologies via his well-read Micro Persuasion weblog.

About the Thought Leaders

Robert Scoble is one of the blogging world's most well-known personalities. He works at Microsoft as a technical evangelist for the Longhorn team. Robert's blog, at scoble.weblogs.com, is known as The Scobleizer, and recognized as one of the most popular and most linked blogs on the Internet. Robert is co-authoring the book *The Red Couch*, along with Shel Israel. Robert and Shel together maintain The Red Couch blog at redcouch.typepad.com.

Doc Searls is a writer and speaker on topics that arise where technology and business meet. He is Senior Editor of Linux Journal and head of the online journal Doc Searls' IT Garage, he is also co-author of the best-selling book *The Cluetrain Manifesto: The End of Business as Usual*. A former radio personality, Doc has appeared on TechTV, CNBC, CNet Radio, and as a moderator and panelist at events in the U.S. and abroad. He is also a regular on two on-Web radio programs: The Linux Show and The Gillmor Gang. Doc co-founded Hodskins Simone and Searls in 1978, which became one of Silicon Valley's leading advertising and public relations agencies.

Stephan Spencer is the founder and president of Netconcepts, a 10 year-old multinational web agency specializing in search engine friendly web design and ecommerce, as well as email marketing through Netconcepts' gravityMail division. Stephan is a Senior Contributor for MarketingProfs.com. He has contributed to Catalog Age, Unlimited, New Zealand Marketing magazine, Building Online Business, and others. He is co-author of the analyst report *The State of Search Engine Marketing 1.0 – New Strategies for Successful Cataloging* published by Catalog Age. He is a sought-after speaker at conferences around the globe for organizations such as IIR, IQPC, the DMA, SMEI, and Internet World.

Debbie Weil is President of WordBiz, a Washington D.C.-based publishing and consulting firm that works with senior marketers to provide strategic consulting on how to incorporate a blog into a company's online marketing strategy. Debbie has a unique background as a former journalist with an MBA and corporate marketing experience. She worked for Network Solutions, Inc., the original dot com company. She has published *WordBiz Report*, an award-winning e-newsletter about email and Web content marketing, since July 2001, now read by 15,000 subscribers in 87 countries. She is a widely read columnist for ClickZ.com, writes regularly for MarketingProfs.com and has spoken at a number of Internet and marketing conferences and public workshops on Business Blogging & RSS.