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Blog Biz for Beginners

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About the Author

I put my first computer together from a kit. It had a calculator’s keyboard (no A-Z). It had only one kilobyte of memory (one thousandth of one megabyte) and there were no text-to-computer translators available, not even BASIC. I blew that up but used and tinkered with increasingly sophisticated and useful personal computers ever since.

My first venture on the Internet was an on-line presence for my [Magic shop](#). I am also a professional magician. I edited the autobiography of a friend, a retired professional magician, whose career took him and his wife around the World.

That started me writing and selling my own ebooks. My ebooks are about magic, web site development, marketing, mail order and writing ebooks, all based on my own experience and research. You can get them through the [eBookwholesaler Member](#) that supplied this book to you.

I’ve loaded this ebook with everything that I believe can help you to avoid many of the bumps and dead-ends on this part of the electronic highway. But, please understand that the Internet is still expanding rapidly and sites constantly change.

I’ll be very grateful for feedback and try to promptly answer your questions about any aspect of this book. Please visit me at <http://www.ezy-internet.com/contact/>

I am especially grateful to Jason Cain, <http://www.goldblogger.com/> He willingly shared his knowledge and provided lots of valuable information for you in the audio interview.

I hope that you enjoy your Internet adventures like I do and make even more money than me, if that is your goal.

Be careful and have fun.

Introduction

The blog, web log or web diary is not really new – people recorded their opinions and events in their lives on web sites from the start of wide access to the Internet.

The dramatic increase in numbers and the much higher public profile of blogging is because of the arrival of many new software programs and services that make it easy, even for inexperienced people without any sort of technical background, to do their own blog. Even the most humble personal computer has enough power and storage space to produce and store our scribbles.

That’s enough background. The “History of Blogging” will have to wait for another time and a different author, I’ll put a couple of sites for those that are interested in the history in the listing later in the book and on <http://www.ezy-internet.com/bloginfo/>.

This little book is for people that, like me, want to make blogs for other people to read and respond to so that we can make more money.

I’ve listed a few well-known marketers who have their own blogs (there are many others) – these people are as busy as they are successful, so they’re not blogging for fun but for the positive impact it has on their bottom line!

My focus with this book is to show business people with limited experience of blogging, and possibly the Internet as well, how you can efficiently use a blog to make your business more profitable and even make money from the blog itself, if that’s something they want to focus on.

The only ‘message’ that I want you to get from this book is that;

blogging is easier than you may think

it will cost you less than most other forms of on-line promotion for the potential return

the effort and resources that you put into the blog will not be wasted and

you should start in the next few days rather than waiting for it to get even cheaper or easier.

I’ll try to cover all the essentials without bogging you down in details. Remember, you can contact me about any topic in this book at any time through <http://www.ezy-internet.com/contact/> Please give me enough detail so that I can give you the best answer I can.

I’ll cover a couple of topics in this book that I feel are very important for any blogger and which are seldom mentioned;

I’ll briefly cover some potential drawbacks and pitfalls in blogging later in this book.

I’ll also provide some tips which could smooth your way if you have not mixed with or sought help from technical people such as those who develop and support many of the blogging services and programs, especially the free ones.

The Truth about Blogs

The blog is a close relative of the ordinary web site (covered in “Web Biz for Beginners”), Businesses of any size can only benefit from having their own blog and their own web site to communicate with their current customers and attract new ones.

The truth is that **blogs and web sites are easy to produce and maintain**. Many web designers and Internet marketing consultants wrap their methods in jargon and hype but anyone that can;

- ✓ interact with other people,
- ✓ write a letter,
- ✓ maintain records
- ✓ Use a computer and surf the Internet

.... has the resources and ability to produce their own blog and make money with it!

Major Players are Active in the Blogging Landscape

A good indication of the potential is the active involvement of major Internet players. Just a couple of weeks before ‘Blog Biz for Beginners’ was published, Google released a new tag (which its Search engine spiders would recognize) to help combat the blog-related problem of comment spam which I’ll tell you about later.

Google had the full cooperation of its biggest rivals, MSN and Yahoo, which shows that the big players are very supportive of the increasing use of Blogs.

All providers of blogging services and software that I have checked, were very quick to revise their products to take of advantage of this new tag.

There are other advantages for anyone that sets up a Blog, whether it’s business oriented or not. The popularity and ease of this type of communication helps people to improve the way that they

express themselves; presenting their thoughts, opinions, experiences and advice in interesting and useful ways to their readers.

This can pay off in their personal and business activities.

But the huge potential benefits for small and large businesses are little understood and ignored. I still hear people say that

- × “it’s too expensive”,
- × “the Internet is full of crooks” and
- × “we haven’t got enough spare time!”.

The truth is that;

- ✓ much of the software is free or very low cost,
- ✓ the resources needed to set up and maintain one or more blogs is small.
- ✓ blogs are less formal so you don’t need to be a professional writer
- × **your competitors may already be getting the benefits of having their own blog!**

Search the Net for blogs that may relate to your type of business. Don’t be surprised to see the largest and the most innovative companies in your field probably already have blogs on their sites or maybe the owners or some of their staff are actively contributing to relevant blogs that are operated by other people.

Whether or not your close competitors have blogs, it’s time for you to get started. Your own blog can increase your profile with potential customers and your rankings on the search engines in a short time and at minimal cost.

First Steps

I suggest you read through this entire guide and listen to the interview of Jason Cain that I made. You can do both at the same time! That’s almost all the research you need to start on your path to profitable blogging.

That’s two view-points about the power of blogs and their value to businesses.

The viewpoint that matters most is yours. You must be prepared to allocate the necessary time and other resources to producing and maintaining your blog. It really doesn’t take much, especially if you carefully check out the resources in this Guide.

And it’s a step that could pay off for you out of all proportion to your investment, whatever sort of business you are in.

If your business requires a lot of interaction with the public, your blog will provide a fairly informal information and enquiry gateway. It’s an easy task, with most of the blogging programs that are now available, to add your own pictures. They have to be clear or they’re not worth using but they don’t have to be large or high-resolution masterpieces that would be a drag on your bandwidth.

You might put pictures of your products but only where they are in use, preferably by happy customers. If you offer accommodation or outdoor activities, get yourself a (tax deductible) digital camera and put an instant picture of current conditions on your blog, same day every week for a year. You’ll not only get visitors to your current pages to see what conditions are like – they also go to your archived pages to see what conditions are like at specific times of the year.

And, if you’re a service provider, offer some tips about your specialities. Your comments are likely to spread far and quickly.

Does this mean that blogs are not as useful when your market is just in your local area? That’s far from the truth. Put your customers (with their prior permission, of course) on your blog. Add some relevant tips on how to use your products or your services. Make your blog a non-controversial news-sheet that your community can access, for free, any hour of the day or night.

Your local profile will improve and potential new suppliers and clients will find you through the Net that might not have found your advertisement among the dozens of your competitors in the Yellow Pages. All this will cost you much less than a display advertisement in your newspaper which would be gone from everyone’s home and memory in a couple of days.

Avoid long rambling entries; just put up short, pointed entries in your blog. Concentrate on problems that your customers are most likely to have at the time you are writing. That means you will use key words that people will use when seeking information about those problems on the Net.

And these entries will continue to be potent attractions ever after because your blog will automatically store the entries you’ve made in searchable archives, full of the keywords which are most relevant to your clients!

One more important step

Go to some of the blogs and resources that I list in this guide, then hit the search engines, such as <http://www.google.com/> and <http://www.askjeeves.com/> to see what blogs are already out there that may relate to your business or whatever interests that you intend to be the focus of your blog.

Decide whether you are going to use a service like [Blogger](#) or get some software, such as [Thingamablog](#), and produce everything for your first blog on your own computer.

Gather the material that you will use for your blog in one folder on your computer and keep all the papers and photos (if you use them) together, close to your computer.

You can also use news feeds to provide some or most of the content of your blog. You’ll need to list the web locations (URL’s) of the sites whose feeds you will be using.

I’d recommend also that you draw up a plan of your blog and list the topics that you’re going to write about. You’ll need to check that any links you’ll use on the blog are correct – much easier to do that in advance.

Focus on Your Business – Not Your Blog

Bloggging is great fun, especially as you start to build a group that visit regularly and contribute useful comments to your blog. It would be easy to get carried away with personal aspects of the interaction.

There’s no harm to mentioning the latest football match but remember, you could easily upset potential customers and others if you start a spirited discussion about politics, religion or even football.

If there are several people in your business, it’s important that just one person has the main responsibility for updating your blog and keeping it as spam-free as possible. You’ll soon realize that you must treat your business-related blog as seriously as you would a television or other media advertising campaign.

Don’t let it become a static notice-board with nothing but stale news and out-of-date responses. It is the topicality of the news and the responses that your contributions attract which give your blog much of its appeal and the most encouragement to readers to contribute and to keep returning to see what else you have added.

But, blogs can carry some personal references that would perhaps be out of place in other forms of promotion. You will probably find that people will be more willing to comment, ask questions and even endorse your products and services through a well run blog than through the usual comment form you see on most web sites.

You know that customer feedback can be very valuable. Make sure that every comment is read and followed up where the visitor leaves their contact information.

Although some marketers have become a bit casual with regard to using comments that come through their blogs, I believe you should always check whether or not the person whose name is on the comment actually posted it and is willing you to use it with enough identifying information to make it credible.

A glowing testimonial from, say, J.W. of Australia is basically worthless because there is no way that other visitors can follow it up. Just check, however, before you splash someone’s name, contact information and endorsement on your site.

Promote Your Blog Off the Net

Your blog will quickly become a valuable promotion tool. You will, naturally, put your off-line contact information nearby. It’s also wise to put your blog’s web address on some of the promotional material that you use off-line.

Making Money with Your Blog

The audio interview with Jason Cain has probably given you some ideas on how you might start to reap some dollars from your blog. Jason speaks from hard-won experience and is very generous with his knowledge.

You can;

- ✓ Put advertisements for your products or some that you affiliate with next to your content.
- ✓ Put links to your sales pages in the content (original material) of your blog.
- ✓ Gather the content that you produce for your blog, expand it with more information and produce special reports or even ebooks that you can sell or give away to your visitors.

You might not make as much as Jason does with the original reports that he writes and offers through his blog, at least at first. But, remember, that Jason has carefully built up his subscriber list, not by bloating it with hundreds freebie-seekers, but concentrating on providing material that has value which attracts the serious marketers and keeps the coming back.

It's important to keep your blog focused on the main topic.

If you sell cat-related items, don't put in a lot of material about your visits to stock car events.

Think carefully about the title of your blog – that's what will be publicized by directories and happy readers, so make sure that it contains at least one important key word relevant to your business.

Update your blog at least daily. Search engines love blogs (Blogger.com is owned by Google!) Frequent, relevant and interesting updates will bring more people to your site more often and that means more chances to sell them something (helping them will end up helping you too, of course).

Dealing with the “Hard” Stuff

This section is an overview of the technical terms and processes that are used with many Blog programs.

If there’s any part that really stumps you, you can either

- make some time to follow up through the support forums for the particular program that you’re using or
- Ask me at <http://www.ezy-internet.com/contact/>. I can’t guarantee to be able to fix every query which you may encounter but I’ll try, at least, to point you in the right direction.
- select a different blog software program or service that doesn’t require you to use that option.

There’s always alternatives and, with the increasing popularity of blogging, even more and better ones will be available in the future.

That’s no reason to put off starting your first blog. There are programs and services that almost anyone can use to put up a professional looking blog in a very short time.

Sometimes you’ll find that something is easier to **do** than it is to try to grasp the concept mentally just from reading some instructions. If you find something in this ebook seems hard to follow, try to work through it with the particular software or service that you have chosen.

If it’s still unclear, please email me and we can try to work through it for you.

Start now - the experience you’ll gain and the contacts you’ll make could be invaluable when you decide to improve your blog or take up new and better options as they become available.

Getting Answers to Your Questions in Forums

I'm referring particularly to the Forums associated with the free blogging software programs though some of the points I want you to consider may also have relevance when seeking help in other on-line Forums too.

These forums are set up and maintained financially by the person or group that produced and supply the free blogging (or other) software. Over time, if the program is any good, other enthusiasts try the program and then join the Forum.

Some of them will offer coding help and some might offer to help run the Forum, answer some of the queries or just help to keep it running smoothly. This assistance can be as valuable as cash to the program's producers.

Having people with similar interests and, sometimes, even greater knowledge helps everyone.

Then, along come the amateur, inexperienced users like me!

We have more questions than a year of quiz shows and some of us have no patience or consideration. Never hesitate to ask any questions that you may have in the Forum – the only *dumb* questions are the ones you are too shy to ask.

Not asking may cause you big problems while asking a question that's been asked before won't, as long as you show that you've done some checking yourself. Remember too, that you might be helping other people that really are too shy to put their hand up.

I always have questions when I install a script (mini software program). I needed help to get the RSS feed working on my first Word Press blog. I signed up for the Support Forum on their site and searched for any similar questions. I clicked through to the one that seemed closest to my problem, read through and then added my question to the bottom. Within 2 days, I got several clear and helpful replies (I asked about a couple of supplementary points in between answers).

That sort of response has been the usual result of posting questions at this sort of forum.

You can choose whatever way of asking questions that suits you but these tips have served me well in dealing with many such forums. I had one advantage of having to ask a lot of questions of technicians and computer enthusiasts in my previous off-line work.

Recognise the experience, knowledge and generosity of people that may have spent years learning how to do this work well enough to be paid substantial salaries and who then donate some of their own spare time to help improve what is available to us and help us to use it properly.

Read the Documentation, check any archives, FAQ’s (Frequently Asked Questions) and, yes, their blog BEFORE you ask how to fix your problem.

I suggest that, if you have any trouble, you read the basic documentation twice, a day apart. That will give your brain time to absorb instructions which may be like none it’s seen before, get some real work done while you’re asleep and be ready when you have a second go at it.

If there are fixes or patches suggested, then it’s worth trying them too.

Write down any messages that you see when you try to install or use the program. Also have the basic details of your computer such as Mac/PC. Operating system (Mac OS/Linux/Windows 98/Dos/XP (which service Pack?) The color is not relevant. (sorry, but would you believe that is an answer that most techs actually get from time to time?!))

Register as a Member of the Forum, even if it’s not required and even if you aren’t sure that will persist with the particular program. It’s polite, that’s all.

If you have found similar questions to yours in the Forum, refer to them when you put up your question. Or, you’ll almost certainly be advised to find and read them which will just cost you more time.

Don’t expect, as a right, detailed answers. But, if you don’t understand something, say so.

You don’t need to put up all the information about your computer system etc but don’t omit anything that seems relevant.

You may wait up to 2 days for responses. The volunteers may live in a different country to you, a different time-zone or just be busy. Even techs know what weekends are really for. Be patient.

Don't let this put you off asking questions. Most technical people I've dealt with (my own lack of technical knowledge and poor dexterity mean I've dealt with a number) love interesting problems. Interesting problems are never ones that are answered on Page 2 of the basic manual.

If you see a question that you can answer, don't hold back.

Code

This word causes some people to immediately look for another option.

But, some coding just involves changing some words from the sample entries supplied with the program to your own information, such as your domain name and the path to certain programs on the server where your web site is hosted.

This information is usually shown on the Control Panel that most hosting companies supply when you set up the account for hosting your web site. If you can't find it, email the support people at your hosting company.

The instructions supplied with most programs that require you to edit code are very clear because the questions that you might have are probably ones that the programmer heard from many users.

They're probably also explained in detail on the support forum and the FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) pages for that program.

You can use just about any web editing program to make the necessary changes to your code but you can also use any simple text editor such as Notepad.

RSS

RSS is a method that many blogs use to make their original content available to readers and also for republishing on other people's blogs. It's the standard method for getting updates from the blogs that you are most interested in.

There are a number of varieties of RSS but we’ll avoid the history and the technical niceties to concentrate on the practical aspects.

There are several ways to access (get material from other people’s blogs) and publish (make the content of your blog(s) available to other people) with RSS.

Here are a couple of the easiest.

Collect Information from RSS Feeds

When you find a blog that is particularly interesting to you, look for a small button with XML, FEED, RSS or similar on it. Click on the button (some blogs will have several as they try to cater for users of the various RSS versions - XML and ATOM are 2 of the most common).

That will send you to a page of garbled text – you’ll probably recognize some of the content from the blog among some other stuff that doesn’t seem to make much sense.

Write down the URL of that page (<http://www.ezytodo.com/blog/feed/rss2/> for instance)

You now need something that will read the feed for you. There are many software programs – free or commercial – search for aggregators or feed readers.

But, let’s start with [the Bloglines service](#).

1. Sign up with Bloglines
2. Go to your account page
3. Click on ADD
4. Enter the address of the first Blog feed that you want monitored.
5. Click on SUBSCRIBE.

You can read the content from that blog by clicking on its title in your account.

To save having to visit Bloglines each time you want to check on the blogs, which would be almost as time consuming as visiting each of the blogs directly each day, just look in the Extras section of the Menu on the left of the screen and click on ‘Download Notifier’.

You’ll go to a new page where you can download a (100Kb – very small) notifier version that suits your type of computer; Windows, Mac OS, and some that are tweaked to work best with particular web browsers.

It will take you very little time to install (after you scan it with your virus checker, of course – **scan everything!**).

The Notifier just sits in your task bar. A colored mark will appear whenever there have been any new posts to the blogs that you registered on your Bloglines account.

Of course, you want to be able to feed your hungry crowd of customers and potential customers. You’ve got news that you know they want to hear.

And you want get started without having to learn to write and tweak the code yourself.

There are many programs for doing this and you’ll find them listed with the feed readers that you searched for. That’s because people that are looking to get one are usually interested in getting one of the others too.

I use Word Press and Blogger for my main blogs, but many other programs also produce the feed without much extra effort on your part.

With **Word Press**, find the link to the RSS2 feed on your blog and click it – if you see the sort of text I described above, that’s fine. If you didn’t then you need to tweak – go to the Word Press Support Forum and look for ‘RSS link’. I know the information is clearly explained there because that’s where some people explained it to me.

It’s something most get right first time but, with the vast range of systems that we use and different servers used by web hosts, it’s inevitable that some combinations throw up a problem sometimes.. And you, like me, will be able to put your RSS Feed in place in less than 5 minutes!

Publish Your Own RSS Feed

This is essential for any business blog and very handy for others as well. That’s because everyone wants to spread their influence or, at least, contact, people in the same industry or that share our interests.

For this, you need to create a blog which offers an RSS feed so that other people from all over the Net can link to it easily. Most blogging software and blogging services already have this feature and it will soon be hard to find any that don’t because of the greater popularity of those which give you RSS without having to add another program to your computer.

You can submit the feed address to Blog directories for more hits and potential sales.

If you sign up with Blogger.com, then your Blogger blog will produce a feed for you! Whichever program or service you use, check the documentation to see how to find your Feed address. It will vary but is not difficult. If you cannot find it, most of the free programs are supported by fantastic volunteers in Support forums on the web site where you got the program.

The commercial programs and services offer help, usually by email or through forums as well.

See a special section that I’ve included in this Guide about how to get the best help from volunteer forums. It’s simple but not always obvious and can save you some time and aggravation.

Usually, there will be at least a small button on your published blog with RSS or ATOM on it. You don’t need to study the technical information about these terms unless that’s what you like to do with your time.

Just hover your cursor over the button and write down the web address that shows up in your browser’s task bar. Some programs and services (including Blogger) have a Control Panel where you can see the address of your Feed displayed – even simpler.

You could just distribute that address and people would probably be drawn to your blog if they had an interest in the subject you focus on.

But you can add greatly to the effectiveness of your Feed by using an online service called FeedBurner at <http://www.feedburner.com/>

This service, free at the time of writing, gives you access to statistics about the number of people that request your feed and the number of requests for specific items in your feed as well as compatibility over the range of currently popular variations of the ‘standard’ Feed formats, even if your program or service only provides limited compatibility.

You need to register your details with FeedBurner, add your Feed address and then you can soon start distributing a slightly modified version (which includes feedburner.com).

Then just check in to your Feedburner account to view your statistics, etc.

Blogger – Easy Set-up

The easiest system to get started with is probably Blogger.com .

The system provides everything to create your blog for free (at the time of writing) and you can have your Blog hosted with Blog*spot for free too, if you don’t mind a few advertisements.

Of course, you can;

- host your Blogger blog on any web site that you already have and avoid the extra expense,
- set up a separate domain for your blog at your own expense or pay from \$5 a month to upgrade your Blog*spot space so that the advertisements are removed and you have access to other features.

Let’s do a quick run-through of what Blogger call the “3 Step” process.

Even if you intend to use all the free options (and there’s nothing wrong with that), take some time, before you actually go to their site, to sketch out the basic information of your blog.

Write down:

Titles for your Blog. They should be relevant to its subject and, if possible, include a relevant keyword. Work up some alternatives. Don't use anyone else's Brand name or Trademark.

A short description of your blog. Be upbeat and explain why people should visit your blog regularly – what they will get from doing so.

Some thoughts, comments and small pieces of relevant information and news that can be the basis for your first few posts.

Blogger constantly tweak and update their offers and their services in accordance with feedback from their customers (and probably a few psychologists as well). So, don't be surprised if the appearance of blogger.com and the various buttons and forms shown in the pictures that you see in this ebook have changed when you get there.



This tweaking is what all smart webmasters should do to ensure that visitors have the best possible experience whenever they visit and that there's something new for the Search engine bots to find each time that they swing by.

STEP I

Go to Blogger.com



Click on the orange arrow, “Create Your Blog Now”.

This is where you put in your personal details. Fill in everything, as fully as possible:

<http://www.ezy-internet.com/>

- The User name for your account,
- The password that you want to use for your account,
- The name that you want displayed on your blog,
- The email address that you will use with your blog.

STEP 2

Now, you name your blog and choose whether to have it hosted at their Blog*spot service, as either a free or paid account, or whether you will use web space, which you already have elsewhere, to host your new Blog.

My opinion is that it is better to have the blog on your own web site, even if it means a couple



more, fairly simple, steps at this point and, possibly, the expense of an extra web site.

That way, you get the maximum benefit from all the work that you put in to providing good content and promoting the blog. The rest of your site where you have

the blog will get some benefit from the visitors to your blog and that means that you will have more chances to sell them something.

You need to supply the following:

FTP Server: The File Transfer Protocol server is the area where you transfer files to and from your web site. Check the information in the Control Panel for your site. It's usually in one of these 2 formats; **ftp.yourdomain.com** or just **yourdomain.com** If you are unsure, please check with the Support section of your Internet Service Provider.

Blog URL: The web address of the file that will be your blog.

http://www.yourdomain.com/blog.html or http://www.yourdomain.com/yourblog/index.html if you want to put your blog in a special folder on your website. You could use anything that you want to, instead of “yourblog” for the folder name.

FTP path: This path is usually set out in your Control Panel; something like /home/yourdomain/public_html Again, if you are unsure, please ask your Web host.

Blog filename: This is the name of the page, such as myblog.html or index.html – **not** the Title of your blog.

The next two entries are optional. If you fill in the boxes, you will save yourself some time each time you update your blog. Technically, there is a possibility of a security risk but I regard it as extremely small with a net-savvy, major company such as Blogger (owned by Google).

If you don’t fill the boxes in now, you will have to type in the information each time that you want to update your blog.

FTP username: this is the user name that you use to transfer files to and from your web site.

FTP password: this is the password that you use when you transfer files to and from your web site.

Ping Weblogs.com: This option notifies a major blog directory whenever you update your blog.

I can’t think of any reason that you might not want the free publicity for your business blog!

Click the button and you can now choose a web page sorry, blog design from several that Blogger



<http://www.ezy-internet.com/>

commissioned specially to be used by their clients.

Try to find something that’s likely to appeal to your visitors and is appropriate for your business profile.

Now, you can start posting to your blog and reaping the rewards.



Here’s my quick effort. I think that you can do much better and it won’t take you much effort or time and expense. Any experiments that you do with one blogging service or program are not wasted if you change your mind and decide to use another later on.

The Downside to Blogging

Here is a brief run-through of some possible hassles that you might encounter when you start blogging.

Just telling you the “good stuff” about Blog Biz wouldn’t be right.

Colorful Language and Contrary Opinions.

Many bloggers express themselves with varying degrees of bluntness in their blogs. You should use what tolerance you have while you are researching, or even just enjoying, the variety of blogs that you come upon.

These people don’t hold back when they prepare their blogs, any more than they do in their everyday conversation. “After all,” they say, “this is ME and you can take it or leave!”

Also, some of the people that use the comment option that is available on most blogs to respond to what the blogger has written, spray abuse and insults at them. This is because they feel protected by the anonymity of the Internet. They’re probably aware that, though some can be traced, it’s a task that would take time and other resources that the blogger will probably decide that they are better off using to get on with their business.

These “flames” are removed as quickly as possible by the owner. Despite that, the blogger may still get complaints from other readers though it’s not really the owner’s fault. They make the comment facility available to encourage interaction with their readers and help to build a sense of community, only to see it abused by the Net equivalent of the people that spray obscene graffiti on suburban brickwork.

Comment Spam.

The Comment facility and the list of most recent referrers which are so important in encouraging people to keep coming to your blog and referring some of the visitors from their blog to yours is also targeted by spammers. The same people and companies that fill your email inbox with email spam now use software that searches the Net for blogs and adds their advertising to the comments area.

The offers are crude. The spammers know that their ‘contributions’ will be eliminated by you as quickly as you physically can. Their aim is just to have their web-links in your referrers list and make large numbers of un-related, even nonsensical, comments to all your posts so they can benefit from the high interest that Search engine spiders are currently showing in blogs.

The automated software and methods used to distribute this rubbish grows more sophisticated every day. These intrusions are funded by on-line gambling interests and some operators in on-line porn, so they can afford the very best software. Blocking the spammers is at least as difficult and time consuming as it is to try to protect your email service.

But, just a few weeks before ‘Blog Biz for Beginners’ was released by Ebookwholesalers, bloggers got some high-power help, all for free!

Google released a new tag to be put in the code for blog pages, which its Search engine bots would recognize, the ‘no-follow’ tag. The other major players, MSN and Yahoo gave full cooperation and blogging software and service providers rushed to change their products to accommodate this welcome gift.

It doesn’t stop Comment spam or inappropriate URL’s appearing in your blog. But the Search Engines spiders that visit your web blogs for possible inclusion in the Search Engine listings will ignore anything that has this tag on it.

That means that the spam entries will not continue to help push the gambling and other unsavory web sites’ listings higher in the search engines’ pages. That removes one of the major attractions to the people that fund these attacks and will, over time, help to reduce them.

The major benefit to bloggers is to know that the big players are willing to cooperate with each other and provide some support to the blogging community when major problems occur that are obviously beyond the capacity of smaller operators like most of us.

Unwelcome Referrers.

This is more common than straight-forward spam advertising. You could get acceptable responses to your blog writing but notice that the links which are attached to some of them are to gambling or other sites that you don't want to be associated with!

Your choices are simple, but limited:

Use software that does not offer the comment facility or block all comments.

Insist that all comments are checked by you or your staff before they appear on the blog.

Use a service such as Backblog so that you can check comments before posting and block the IP addresses that unwelcome ones appear to come from.

None of these options are totally satisfactory – there's a fortune to be made by anyone that comes up with a widely applicable, convenient and reliable system. Of course, the spammers are making so much money that they might just buy the rights themselves so that they can continue their activities!

Your Time

You now know that your investment in time and money to set up and operate your own blog is really minimal. But you will inevitably be tempted to spend more time than you probably should “researching” – surfing from blog to blog.

Put a limit on it but also give yourself some research time each day – use the Bloglines notifier and prune the list of Blogs which you are notified about occasionally.

Blog Tools

If you were expecting a comprehensive review of all the blogging tools that are currently available, this is not it - there's simply too many!

I believe that you will find at least one or more of those I've tested and reviewed to be suitable for your needs and your level of experience. I've concentrated on a representative and easy to find collection of free or very affordable tools.

They each offer what their producer believes are the most useful assortment of features. You will have to weigh each of them against your own needs, experience and knowledge.

Don't ignore the free tools just because you may think, “If it was any good, they'd be selling it!”. Many of them are developed as personal projects by skilled and knowledgeable programmers, alone or in groups. These people get substantial payments for the work they do on a professional basis and are thus able to devote some of their own time, trying to produce something which is better for their needs, and possibly yours, than what is already available elsewhere.

That can mean that you get the fruit of many hours work by highly paid professionals for free or at much lower cost than if it was all done up in a fancy box at your local computer shop!

If you use any program where the supplier does not charge a fee but asks for a donation (“donationware”) or even just a postcard (“postcardware”), then don't put off pushing a few dollars through the link on their site or sending them a quality postcard.

Please don't get upset about advertisements on sites that supply free or low-cost (shareware) programs for you to use. They have to do something to cover their costs. Complaining about that is like complaining about the advertisements in your newspaper. Of course, if the advertising is too intrusive, ignore the advertiser's offers and get your software from another site.

Otherwise, the time may come when the only quality software you can get comes in a large box with an appropriate price-tag!

You need to have your site hosted with a company that gives you access to a recent version of php and a MySQL database to use many of the programs listed here. Setting these programs up is not as hard as it may seem or I would never be able to do it myself.

It’s unlikely (I did not say impossible) for you to do any damage if you try to set up your own blog software. There are always some instructions with the software and usually very helpful forums at the producers’ sites where they and other users are quick to help each other with any problems.

Some other blog software programs need only to be put into a new folder (directory) on your computer and you are ready to start!

There is nothing to stop you having different blogs on the same or different sites that you control.

You could even produce each of them with different programs or through different services such as Blogger. It’s not recommended though, because of the time needed to keep up with changes and even program-specific problems with the different programs or services.

But I’ve done that over the last few months, to give you real-world information and working examples of some of the different options that you have available to you. I believe that my experiences, actually running the different types of blog under field conditions, lets me give you better feedback than if I was to just report what the software and service providers said they could do for you.

Blog

Free Desktop editing. No MySQL

This is a spare time effort by freelance programmer, Fahim Farook. The payment he gets for the enormous effort he’s put in to his software is when someone pays for something on his “wish list”. Blog is free to [download here](#).

You set up this software on your own computer, make a folder, or directory, on your website and then write everything at your keyboard and publish it to your site by FTP, using a file transfer program such as WS FTP, Cute FTP or the freeware Right FTP.

There is no need for a MySQL database – all your information is contained in the files created by the program. You may need to tweak the settings to get the program to work exactly as you want but I found all the help that might be needed readily available from the support forum and even by direct email from Fahim.

[His blog](#) forms the home page of his site and is, in my opinion, an excellent example of mixing posts about work and other interests.

You can download some other useful programs that Fahim wrote from his site, including a free and very handy email obfuscator –feed your email address through this and get a muddled version to paste into your web pages. This is less likely to be collected and used by spammers!

Blogger

Free Online service No software or database required.

I suspect that many readers of this guide will [try Blogger](#) first. It’s an attractive and easy to use package with just about all the features you could ask for.

There is no special software or tweaking needed, All you need to do is go to Blogger.com, sign up for your account and start putting together your Blog. It really is that easy!

Blogger was one of the first services to offer free and paid hosting options as well as providing the software for their clients to produce blogs. This used to require that your blog was hosted on their server ([Blogspot.com](#)) but the service evolved to where you can now specify whether you will use that service or have the Blog published on your own website!

Blogger was bought by Google for a large amount and the service has been through a number of changes, with more features and options being added from time to time.

At the time of writing, all Blogger options are free!

You can not only create more than one blog, you can use any of a growing number of free, professionally designed web page templates as the basis for your Blogger blog.

They have recently started to offer users of their Blogger service the ability to add [Audio entries](#) to their Blogger blogs! After you’ve set up your Blogger account and published the first entry in your Blog, you can use any phone to contact their AudioBlogger service, record your entry and it will be available on your blog very quickly!

This service is currently most useful to users in the United States of America because you have to phone a North American number to have your audio recorded and posted, but they say that they intend to set up facilities in other countries over time so that their users outside the U.S.A. can also use this feature without the expense of making international phone calls.

The audio posts are limited to “just” 5 minutes each but you should be able to say enough about any particular aspect of your topic in that time, shouldn’t you?

Remember, the popularity and the potential value of your blog as a marketing tool, depends on its appeal to your visitors – readers and listeners. All of the entries that you make, written and audio, need to be kept brief and focused for maximum impact.

The audio takes up 1kilobyte of space for each second of recording but Blogger host the audio portion of your Blog.

On your Blog, there will just be a link to your audioblogger post, an icon (small picture) and a time stamp of when you recorded that entry. There are just a limited number of icons to choose from at the present time.

As I said, many of you might find that this service has everything that you need. That’s great.

But, services change their offers over time and every service has their own rules that must be adhered to.

Blogger previously offered some of their services on a paid basis and this may happen again.

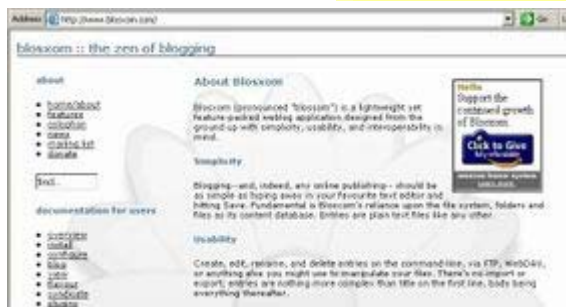
If this particular system doesn't “feel” right for you, there are many other options.

It's worthwhile to read through the details of ALL the blogging programs, even if you think Blogger will suit you just fine. Offers and charges can be changed at any time and just checking out the other systems will give you a broader view of the blogging scene and options.

But, if its ease of use and (current) low cost makes it seem a great option then check out the Chapter called, “**Blogger**” – Easy Set-up”.

Blosxom

cgi script , No mysql or php. Donationware



I don't know how to pronounce the name of this script but I know it's well-regarded and easy to put in place.

There is lots of clear documentation on the site too.

Metateque

Desktop based. Free & Donationware versions



Created by Travis Hammersley, this is another desktop blog publisher and you can [download the basic version](#) for free.

He also offers a version with more features, clearly outlined on the site, for whatever you wish to donate. I grabbed the Pro version because I was very comfortable with Microsoft

Word and Metateque Pro offers a similar interface as one option for inputting your posts.

Both versions are very easy to use.

I sent some questions about my initial set-up to Travis (it was just after one of the Windows version releases) and was very impressed with his commitment to help his users get rolling.



MovableType

Commercial

[MovableType](#) is one of the most widely used commercial programs and has, as you’d expect, a host of features. Many large companies use this program for their blogs.

Nucleus

(Free)

MySQL database and php 4.06 or higher



Another desktop publishing system that you can [download free](#). This is well supported with it’s forum and many plug-ins (add-on features) available.

Pivot

(FREE)

Donationware Web based editing No MySQL or php



This free blog software does not need external libraries or an MySQL database. Just [download it](#), edit a few lines, then upload the files to a new folder on your web site.

Unlike the desktop programs I’ve covered here, you set up

and make changes to your Pivot Blogs (yes, you can run more than one, if you want, on the same domain) by making the changes in a form that is a webpage in your web browser.

There is a large, very active and helpful user community. It was one of the first I tried and the response to my questions (I **always** have questions) were right on target.

Planarchy

Donationware See each version for requirements

Planarchy comes in 2 “flavors”,

Planarchy is a blogging program that you do not need an MySQL database for, just [download](#) and install the software, set up your blog or just some new entries, then tell Planarchy to upload it to your web site by FTP.

Planarchy 2 requires an MySQL database and php. It also needs the Microsoft .NET Framework to function. There is a link to the .Net download at Microsoft on the Planarchy site.

pMachine Pro

Free. Php & MYSQL AT least 2 Meg Server space
Has valuable extra functions not on other Blogs

The Pro suffix on the name of this package is true – until just a couple weeks before Ebookwholesaler published ‘Blog Biz For Beginners’, this program was being snapped up for \$45! It shows the value of ebooks – if this was a printed book, this information could not have been added at that late stage of production.

This program has the installation instruction on web pages and they’re very clear. I had no questions that were not covered by the instructions!

pMachine Pro lets you publish multiple blogs – you can put them each in separate directories(folders) or some can be on the same web page.

Among other features, there is provision for a full-featured forum, various special types of blogs, RSS syndication of the headlines (subject lines) of your posts, inclusion of your favorite feeds from other sites on to your blog, keyword searches of your blog mailing list, & other extra functions.

The Company is now focusing on its content management product, ‘ExpressionEngine’ and the content management features which are included in pMachine Pro (and no other blog software as far as I know) will probably encourage users to at least try the advanced product, ‘ExpressionEngine’ in the future.

pMachine Pro is one that you should seriously consider.

Thingamablog

Free. Desktop editing. FTP access No comments

Thingamablog is another easy-to-use program with some very nice templates. It is quick to download and install.

You create your blog content on your computer and can simply upload the whole thing to your site.

Word Press

Free. MySQL & php required

This powerful blogging application is easy to set up. If you are not overwhelmed by the need to add an MySQL database to your website, you’ll find Word Press very user friendly and there is great support from the user forums.

1. [Download the software](#),
2. add your MySQL database to your web site through the Control Panel supplied by your hosting provider. Just specify the name of the database and add yourself as a user.

3. edit the config file and rename it.
4. Upload all the files.
5. Run the installation file which will set up the more complex parts of the MySQL database.

It will also tell you, as it told me, of any errors in my set-up. This is written in a conversational, not angry, tone and without any technical references – great!

I just set up my first blog that uses the Word Press program. It’s very well documented and even gives possible causes of any errors that might occur during the automatic install process. They say that most people can set up their first Word Press blog in 5 minutes.

I’ll admit that I took 10! Part of that may be that I assumed things based on my experience with other programs instead of following the instructions. But that extra 5 minutes is not a big deal because the blog works well

Blog Services

BackBlog

Free and Paid (Pro) versions

This online tool is for bloggers that use software which does not offer visitors the opportunity to comment immediately on material that has been posted.

Visitors find that being able to add comments adds greatly to the sense of ‘community’ that can develop. Your readers can discuss the points you make with you rather than just accepting or rejecting what they see on the web page.

[sign up with BackBlog](#),

fill out the form and

their system will immediately produce the code (text) that you will put in your web page.

Did that mention of ‘code’ raise the hair on your neck?

Don’t worry!

All you need to do is;

1. open a copy of your web page in your web page editor or even a simple program such as Notepad.
2. paste in the supplied text as instructed by Backblog.
3. save the page and load the new version to your web site.
4. Test it out by entering a comment yourself, just as a visitor would. If you find any problems, there is plenty of help available at the Backblog site.

BlogLinker

Free No special requirements

This is a voluntary service by Zaeem Magsood, well worth supporting. Add the details of your Blog to this service and you’ll get more links (search engines like links!)

From their site;

BlogLinker.com is a free tool to manage your web links on your blog/website and to dramatically increase traffic to your site. It can be embedded anywhere in your web page and can be easily configured to fit the existing design of your site. blogLinker is the only tool of its kind.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

1. Sign-up to blogLinker and fill in your Profile.
2. Copy the code from the 'Get Code' page and paste it in your webpage. You must mention blogLinker.com somewhere in your blog.

3. Add, edit, hide or delete links in your list using blogLinker.com.

HERE'S THE BIG IDEA: If you link to a member of blogLinker, the member will automatically link back to you, thus dramatically increasing the number of visitors to your site!

There is NO for FTP, HTML, frames or programming! The Bloglinker list service is perfect for weblogs, but can of course *be used on any type of website*

I've italicized that last comment because there is one point to remember about the results you might get from this service. Occasionally (I've only heard of 3 instances over the period that I've used it) someone adds an adult site or some other site of limited appeal to the members of the service. Every time, the operator has quickly stopped the intruder from continuing to link to Members sites and blocked their use of the service.

But, every time, he has received a some totally unwarranted abuse (even threats of legal action against him, not the spammer) from some Members that he has been supplying this valuable free service to.

He says that he is seriously considering giving the whole idea up for that reason or listen to the next offer he gets for the site and service.

Now, how much complaining do you think those Members might do if someone bought him out and made everyone pay for what he's been doing for free all this time!

Coachamatic (and other services)

Andy Wibbels calls himself a blogging evangelist. He provides coaching, courses and is an accomplished speaker. There is a lot of information available on [his site](#).

Bloggers

Jason Cain

[GoldBlogger](#)

Jason Cain has been blogging since 1999 and is the author of **the original book** on making money with a blog. He teaches marketers how to blog and bloggers how to make money.

Listen to the audio interview with Jason that accompanies this ebook and then:

Read his book at: <http://www.goldblogging.com/>

Read his mind at: <http://www.goldblogger.com/>

Seth Godin

[Seths's Blog](#)

Seth Godin is a legend in the Internet marketing area. He wrote and gave away an ebook, ‘**Unleashing the Idea Virus**’, which is still regarded as **the most downloaded book ever!** His views on marketing and many other aspects of the modern world are always worth reading.

Paul Myers

[TalkBiz](#)

Paul Myers is a very successful copywriter and he covers a wide range of topics in [his blog](#) and the newsletter. Always blunt in his choice of words but always gives great value.

John Reese

[Marketing Secrets](#)

John Reese is the marketer that ALL the other marketers were talking about earlier this year – he made sales of over \$1,080,496 from one package in one day. Go to his site (if you're not already

on your way there after reading that) and, as well as reading and perhaps contributing to [his Blog](#), you can get his FREE report about how, exactly, he achieved that phenomenal result.

Allen Says

[Secretwisdom.com](#)

Allen Says is one of the most successful and influential Internet Marketers. He is the owner of the famous Internet Marketing Warriors. The material he writes and publishes in his [blog](#) is credited with helping his readers to add thousands of dollars to their bottom line! Access to the blog is free at the time of writing.

Andy Wibbels

[EasyBakeWeblogs](#)

Andy Wibbels calls himself a blogging evangelist. He provides coaching, courses and is an accomplished speaker. There is a lot of information available on his site.

The Future for Blogs

I don't think blogs will replace or even seriously damage the viability of your daily newspaper. Lots of news organizations incorporate their own blogs into their business.

[The Guardian](#) is a very good example. As well as a [Blog carrying the news of the day](#), they also have a [Blog with the news of the Internet](#)

I don't think that they will even replace the electronic newsletter, or e-zine, though some marketers disagree.

There is a trend for marketers to post their e-zine on a special page on their site and just email a notice to their subscribers that a new issue is available.

They might as well start a blog because the additional features that come with it and the high profile that blogging has would probably be worth making the change now rather than after they find all their major competitors have their own blogs.

You can put photos in your blogs but you can also have a blog that is almost entirely composed of pictures. What about the load as people visit and, inevitably, copy your pictures to their computer?

Well, there are services that will, currently, provide hosting for the picture blog without charge if you don't mind some advertising around them.

There are even some that let you send your photos taken with your mobile phone to your blog.

You don't load high resolution copies of your photos to the Net, so their re-use – outside of other web sites - is pretty limited. There are several programs available that will watermark (add small background text) to your pictures too.

Go Forth and Blog

Let me know at <http://www.ezy-internet.com> about your blogging experiences and don't hesitate to send any questions.

I'll be blogging at my various sites and probably will continue to use at least a couple of different programs. I won't specify them here but I'll keep adding reports about my experiences in my Internet blogs. For the latest update, please visit <http://www.ezy-internet.com/bloginfo/>

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)