



A Definitive Guide to Corporate HR Blogging

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A Definitive Guide to Corporate HR Blogging

What You'll Learn:

- Why blogging is important to your success
- How to develop the case for blogging
- How to get management approval
- How to handle bad news and negative criticism
- How to start a blog – the technology, definitions, and more
- How to write a blog – editorial calendars, story ideas, research
- How to build traffic – linking, social media, commenting, etc.
- How to go beyond blogging – Twitter, social networks

Included in the Guide is a list of the Top 10 HR Blogging Best Practices that you can use as a constant reference. We've also accumulated tips and ideas from a number of top bloggers that are sprinkled throughout the Guide.

The goal of this Guide is to provide all of the essential, *practical* support you need to succeed with a corporate HR blog. We focus on actionable steps; so this is a resource you can use regularly throughout the process of starting a blog, getting approval and writing. We hope you'll enjoy the Guide and find it valuable – and we always encourage feedback! You will find contact information for both authors at the end.

Why Blog?

This is the biggest question most people ask when thinking about blogging and how it might benefit their business. For recruiters the question is simple: *“Will blogging help me find and recruit the people my company needs?”* If blogging isn’t bringing in new candidates, what’s the point?

Ultimately that’s true. For you to invest the time as a recruiter, blogging has to deliver results. And it can. The key is to think of blogging as a long-term, evolving strategic initiative. Blogging won’t help you fill a position instantly. But it will help you expand your reach and build a community of people (readers, job seekers, etc.) that’s interested in you and your company.

1. **Rome wasn’t built in a day.** And neither is a blog. Successful blogs do take work. But remember: You don’t necessarily need hundreds of thousands of visitors on a monthly basis. You don’t need your blog to be recognized as one of the 100 most popular blogs in the world. You need to reach the right audience, with the right message and that will translate into the right hires.

Blogging takes commitment, and that commitment has to come from you, management and the entire organization. (We’ll talk about this further in the Guide.) But don’t panic: You won’t spend hours a day blogging. You’re already overwhelmed; we know exactly how you feel. And a big reason for writing this Guide is to make it as easy and manageable as possible.

2. **Success is an ongoing process.** Blogs evolve over time. They change. They improve. You won’t get it perfect out-of-the-gate, but the great thing is that you don’t have to. It’s so easy to change things over time, which means any mistake can be corrected, and you can test out new ideas regularly. The key: Don’t think about the value you get on Day 1 or even Day 50, think about the value on Day 100 and beyond. Realistically, you need to invest at least 6 months into a new blog before you can sit back and truly measure success. You’ll see success before that, but give it enough time and effort before really judging.

3. **Think strategically.** The #1 reason blogs fail is because people don’t view them strategically. Many people still think, “Isn’t blogging about telling people what I ate for breakfast? Isn’t a blog just a glorified diary?” It can be, and many blogs start out that way, but as soon as you think about a blog strategically you’ll see much greater success. Thinking strategically means:

- a. Setting goals and objectives
- b. Getting proper buy-in and support
- c. Mapping out alignment with the company’s brand & marketing strategy
- d. Learning best practices on writing
- e. Learning best practices on social networking & social media

- f. Developing your personal brand
- g. Extending your personal network

Top 8 Ways Blogging Generates Leads

We've pointed out that the only real reason to blog is if it generates quality candidates. Think of those candidates as leads. *Think of blogging as an ongoing investment in persistently attracting and engaging the people you know you're going to need.* This is one of the first mental shifts HR and recruiting functions need to make. (For the purposes of this Guide, we're taking a broad view of HR to include companies that may not have a dedicated recruiting discipline.) **HR – specifically talent attraction - is an exercise in sales and marketing.** If you don't believe that, you're missing out on most of the best talent for your company, guaranteed. If you do believe that, or you're almost convinced, then blogging makes complete sense, because blogs can generate leads. And whether blogging is owned within Recruiting or under an HR Generalist, it's important that the HR function embraces and supports it to nurture engagement across the organization.

So how does a blog generate leads?

It's easy to say blogs generate traffic, and some of that traffic becomes leads. That's entirely true, but *how and why does that really work?*

1. **Your personal brand matters.** Building a personal brand and understanding its true value is a topic for much greater discussion, but here's a simple truth: People like to work with people they like. In fact, many people will stay at a job they don't love, or with a difficult boss, if they really like their teammates. As a recruiter you're one of the first people that interacts with job seekers and candidates. Your personal brand – how you present yourself to the outside world – serves as a reflection of your company and can make a great or lousy first impression.

Your personal brand also matters because you have an opportunity to demonstrate expertise in your field. Again, this serves as a reflection of your organization and the rest of the people who work there.

Finally, think of yourself as a magnet. You are a magnet attracting job seekers and candidates to you (and in turn to your company.) A strong personal brand creates a stronger magnet.

2. **You create a network.** Think of the blogosphere like a giant spider web. Lots of connections, lots of directions people can travel. Truth be told, a spider web has a lot more organization and symmetry to it than the blogosphere; many people think of the blogosphere as the Wild West! What's important to note is that

blogging allows you to build up a network for yourself – connecting with likeminded individuals, others in your industry, recruiters, etc. That network is extremely valuable for generating leads: by linking to your blog, sending referrals, sharing best practices. If you're a recruiter in a small or medium-sized business you may feel quite alone within your organization – maybe your entire HR Department is you! Looking outside your company at the online network – which we guarantee is friendly and easily accessible – will help you succeed.

3. **You create fans.** Who doesn't want fans, right? Fans are great – they're supporters and evangelists. Fans will participate on your blog, share stories and generate referrals. Fans may become leads, but think of them in a broader sense: a community of people who will help you when needed.
4. **You build authority.** Blogging isn't about sitting around a campfire and singing "Kumbaya". There is a strong community component to blogging, and it's very difficult to succeed without being a member of the larger community of bloggers (in your industry and outside your industry) but it's also about YOU. You build authority by providing valuable content, interacting and participating. Your authority grows with your personal brand, and your authority helps attract people.
5. **You give candidates a sneak peak inside.** An HR blog is always about you and your company. How you represent yourself will reflect on your company. And one of your goals should be to give job seekers and candidates a peak inside your organization. In effect, the blog is an extension of your corporate recruitment site and allows you to deliver fresh, relevant content. Give candidates what they want! Show them a "Day in the Life" of employees. Show them pictures. Talk about the company's position in the marketplace. Open up your doors – even just a little bit – and watch job seekers and candidates eagerly walk through.
6. **You teach.** Blogging allows you to more effectively and frequently communicate information about the types of opportunities available at your organization. Well-known brands can have a unique challenge when they're known for a specific segment of business or product. Lesser-known or newer companies can use blogging to generate awareness. In either case, job seekers may not be aware of the breadth of careers and opportunities available – blogging allows you to teach people about the work you're doing that they didn't know about, and the related jobs that are available.

"Candidates know the Intel brand but don't know enough about the types of opportunities we offer." **Sejal Patel, Project Manager Staffing Marketing and Channels; Allen Stephens, Recruitment Marketing Program Manager – Intel**

And as an added bonus, you can teach more through regular job postings by including a link to your blog in them; that's adding information and value, and differentiating your job postings from the competition.

- 7. You learn.** There's no progress without learning. Blogging puts you out there and gives you the chance to learn about your industry, your market and so much more. If you're interested in technology and how to leverage it beyond blogging, then dipping your toe into social media and social networking through blogging is key. You will learn more about who is the right fit for your organization. Blogging is a great learning experience and as you learn, improve and evolve, you'll generate more leads – all the while enhancing your company's brand visibility and competitive positioning.
- 8. You persist.** Posting on a job board is a limited-time, transactional process for recruiting. Blogging is an evergreen strategy; it never goes away or stops bringing value. It's about persistence and long-term, strategic value. As such it can help in developing a longer-term lead-time strategy.

Bonus Tip: Share your results! Through your blog you're likely to attract customers as well as candidates. Get those customers connected to the business partners within your organization and follow-up to see if those leads converted to business.

Getting Management Approval to Blog

This is one of the first things that scare recruiters away from blogging – can they get management approval? I certainly hope so! If management can't recognize the value of blogging you've got bigger problems, because that means management doesn't understand the value of strategic recruiting and inbound marketing.

Before you reach out to management for approval, you'll want to complete two important tasks:

- 1. Assess your company's blogging activity.** If people within your organization are already blogging (on behalf of the company) you'll want to connect with them. You'll want to know how they got started, what work groups they're in, how long they've been blogging and what results they've seen. As important, you'll want to learn how they got approval and whether there was any management resistance. And find out if they have a blogging policy in place or a code of blogging conduct.
- 2. Develop your compelling case.** This is very important and will make the rest of your job in securing approval much easier. The key is to sell the value of

blogging. Here are some points regarding value and how to build your case for blogging:

- a. **Bloggging builds employer brand:** Having a strong, positive employer brand is key to attracting top talent. Blogging is a great way of building that brand. Note: Work with the marketing team to ensure brand consistency and gain leverage.

“Blogging lets you build credibility internally and trust externally.”

Amybeth Hale, Research Goddess

[\(http://www.researchgoddess.com/\)](http://www.researchgoddess.com/)

- b. **Bloggging provides a positive candidate experience:** Job seekers are more demanding than ever, especially younger generations. And treating them poorly is a recipe for disaster. Studies have shown that significant percentages of job seekers will not purchase products and services from companies that treat them poorly during the recruitment process. And an even larger percentage will tell at least three people about their bad experience. Blogging is a great outreach tool. It’s a great way of creating a positive experience, and if necessary, responding to negative reactions to your organization.
- c. **Bloggging provides new sources of leads:** Blogs will attract job seekers that you never reached before. Remember: Blogs are like magnets. From search engine optimization, incoming links, and overall brand building through social media and social networking, your HR blog will tap into new audiences on a regular basis.
- d. **Bloggging isn’t expensive:** Blogs are not expensive to run. They take time, and there’s a cost associated with that time, but the infrastructure costs are next to nothing. And depending on the overall success of your blog, you may find that it supplants other recruitment tactics that are more expensive.
- e. **Bloggging can be scheduled:** You’ll want to explain to management how long blogging will take (per week, etc.) so that you can get time carved out of your schedule to do it. You can’t create *more time* (as cool as that might be!) so you’ll have to fit blogging into your schedule. Management has to let you do that, so they either shift other work to other people, or find ways to re-arrange your schedule. Luckily, with a strategic plan in place (from this Guide!) you’ll be able to present a very clear blogging plan and show that the time commitment is worth it.
- f. **Bloggging ROI can be measured:** You can measure the ROI of your blog. The ultimate measurement is hires. It may be hard to close the loop from

traffic generated (potential job seekers) to leads (applicants) to hires, but even anecdotally it will be possible to measure your blog's success.

Guaranteed: As your blog grows, more and more applicants will come into their job interviews and mention it. Certainly you can measure traffic, and that alone can provide overall value to your company.

Bloggng Policies Are Needed

If you're a very small organization with direct access to the CEO, we suggest having a few quick rules about what's not publishable on the blog. You don't necessarily need formal documentation or legal reviews, but if these things will result in easier CEO/management support then take them into consideration. The scale of the policies you'll want to develop and implement will grow as the company grows. Bigger organizations will require more due diligence on blogging policies.

"We worked with marketing on developing a blogging policy and took the lead to present an outline. Then we presented it to legal. It made a difference in establishing credibility." **Ben Gotkin, National Recruiting Director -- RSM McGladrey**

Here are some blog policies that you should discuss with management:

1. **Subject matter approval:** It's not a bad idea to get overall approval on subjects you can discuss. Hopefully this is kept as broad as possible.
2. **Forbidden subjects:** Being open, authentic and real on a blog are important, but that doesn't mean you have to talk about absolutely everything all the time. Create a list of subjects that you're proposing *not* to blog about. This should be an open discussion. Hopefully this isn't an exhaustive list, but there will be some topics better left off the blog. And that's OK. Subjects that are generally touchy areas: anything proprietary, financials (not yet public), competitors, client wins, and personal stories of employees (you don't want to invade private lives).

Suggestion: Go to management with a list of blog post ideas that you're already working on. That way they can see what types of topics you do want to discuss. It will help frame this discussion in a positive way.

3. **Blog post approval:** Ideally you'll demonstrate that you can manage the approval process, so you won't require management approval for every blog post. It will really slow down the process and probably limit you more than

necessary. This also implies that you'll be approving anything written by other employees for the blog. We'll cover that a little bit later.

4. **Employee approval:** Have a policy in place for getting employee approval to use their names, images, content, etc. on the blog. This might already exist in an employee agreement, but discuss this with management anyway. For example, you might want to write a post about Dan the Web Developer and what it's like to work at the company – but you'll need Dan's approval, input, etc. The Legal department most likely has or can develop a simple "use of likeness" form.
5. **Community openness:** You want to set the overall tone for how open and communicative your blog will be. For example, will you allow comments? Will you moderate them first? Will you allow negative comments? This is a very important question and potentially one of your biggest hurdles with management. You'll need to decide how open and community-driven you will make the blog? Our suggestion: Make it as open as possible. Here's why:
 - Blogs are great for managing negative experiences or criticism, because you can respond quickly and the response is public (and available to your fans and evangelists to promote). There have been numerous cases of bloggers responding to negative public criticism and getting significant positive feedback from the community, including the CEOs of public companies.
 - Supporting an open environment brings greater credibility and authenticity to the blog – something that will correlate directly to value.

Suggestion: Offer legal training and writing workshops to help contributing writers maintain quality that's consistent with the company policy.

Intel publishes its blogging policies online for everyone to see. This is a great resource for anyone looking for a template to prepare a blogging policy document: http://www.intel.com/sites/sitewide/en_US/social-media.htm.

How to Manage Negative Criticism or Feedback through the Blog

When you blog, you're opening yourself (and your organization) up. Most of the time that's great; and you can expect positive feedback from readers, job seekers, candidates and employees. But you also need to be prepared for the occasional negative criticism, bad news, difficult questions or potential crises situations.

Thinking through the range of issues up front and partnering with your HR, marketing and legal teams will help everyone be better prepared to respond. Anticipating as many possibilities up front will help, but the unexpected will always

happen. Across the spectrum of difficult questions, you should decide how much information you want to share publicly and how you will respond.

- Questions around areas like compensation have always been sensitive for companies to discuss publicly, but people are asking these questions more frequently and expecting a level of transparency. You may want to consider providing ranges through your blog or you may also prefer to handle them as part of the interviewing/hiring process. Most importantly, be consistent with your responses.
- Negative company news may best be addressed by linking to the public press release. Some companies may be more supportive of employees responding independently but these can be rough waters to navigate.
- You don't need to respond to every comment but it is important to monitor the activity around comments. Sometimes commenters will work this out themselves and quiet a negative voice. If others begin to fuel the negativity you're better off responding earlier rather than later to present the company's point-of-view.

*"You never control 100% of the conversation. Blogging, allowing comments, engaging in new ways can seem like losing control. But the secret is that we never had real control in the first place. When any kind of crisis hits, having an established blog is one of the best ways to improve your control of the conversation. You have a way to distribute information, receive feedback, respond to concerns, and gather information" – **Becky McCray, Small Business Guru, Blogger/Podcaster** (<http://www.beckymccray.com>)*

- Topics such as layoffs, rumors or after-the-fact, is an area you'll want to cover up front with your corporate partners. Rumors, in particular, have become a concern more recently with the advent of social media tools.

Here's a good reference: <http://tinyurl.com/mgzn3q>

*"Many HR professionals shy away from social media out of a fear of litigation. This fear comes out of unfamiliarity with the tools and technologies. Learn about blogging by reading other HR blogs. Pay attention to style and the way authors construct their posts. If you have questions about the substance of a post, write to the blogger and ask. Join a social network that is tailored to recruiting and HR professionals so you can see how your peers are integrating social media into their lives." – **Laurie Ruettiman, HR Professional** (<http://punkrockhr.com>)*

How to Start a Blog

Blogging has very little to do with technology, so even if you're not heavily interested in technology or not comfortable with technology, don't worry. There are numerous services you can use to blog that require almost no setup whatsoever:

- WordPress – <http://www.wordpress.com>
- Blogger – <http://www.blogger.com>
- Typepad – <http://www.typepad.com>

These are all free. Of course there are some limitations. Matching your corporate website design, for example, is not always possible using these free, hosted solutions. That may or may not be an issue though.

There are also other software platforms that aren't specifically for blogging, but have blogging capabilities. Standout Jobs (<http://www.standoutjobs.com>), for example, has a blog component that you can easily enable within your career site or recruitment micro-site.

"The key to building a successful HR blog is to stop thinking about it and starting blogging. As many HR blogs as you might think there are, there really aren't too many because "old school" HR people refrain from becoming public spokespeople. By having your own HR blog, you immediately differentiate yourself from your peers and start to get your voice out there and network with other HR thought leaders." – Dan Schawbel, Author, Personal Branding Blog (<http://personalbrandingblog.com/>)

Dan's absolutely correct. Inasmuch as planning, organization and corporate approval are required, think about subscribing to the "dip a toe" strategy; where it's OK to try, test, make mistakes and learn.

The Bare Essentials

Blogs are fairly simple things; although once you get into blogging more heavily you'll find all kinds of cool, new things to try out. But the basics are straightforward:

1. **Blog design:** Most blog software allows you to pick basic templates or themes. You are generally able to match colors to support the company's signature look and feel, which will be important to your Marketing department. In many cases you can add a basic graphic that is part of the company brand as well. You do want to make sure you have an appealing, professional-looking design. Design

does matter. But when getting started, don't fret too much about it; pick a simple, attractive design and go from there.

Remember: First impressions do count and your blog design will be the first thing people see. Here's an extension of this point: <http://bit.ly/14sm5>

2. **Blog URL:** You want the URL of your blog to be as simple and relevant as possible. If you're working with corporate and marketing, you could get something like <http://standoutjobs.com/site/blog>. If you're registering a new domain name or using one of the free services, give the Blog Name and URL some thought before picking it. Think about what's important in your industry. This is an opportunity to begin thinking strategically about what will help attract people to your blog. The blog doesn't have to be called, for example, "My Company's HR Blog" it could be, "Recruiting in the Health Industry from Company X."
3. **Comments:** Commenting is a key part of blogging. You want to encourage dialogue and feedback. You can choose to moderate comments (which many bloggers do so it's not a faux pas) before publishing them, or police them after the fact. There are services for catching spam (for example, Akismet: <http://akismet.com/>) to help block out the junk. There are ways of encouraging more commenting, which will be covered later in the Guide.

Tip: Don't be too worried if you're not getting any comments. It can take time. And there are many popular blogs that don't receive many comments. Even if people aren't commenting, they are reading, listening and sharing.

4. **Trackbacks:** These are inbound links to your blog. Links to your blog are a very, very good thing. Some people say, "Links are the currency of the blogosphere." You want lots of quality links coming back to your blog. Most blog software keeps track of trackbacks and will display them underneath your blog posts, like comments.
5. **Tags and Categories:** Tags and categories are important in helping to organize content and provide readers with a view into what they can expect to find in your blog. They also help people find relevant content. Each blog post should be assigned a category and relevant tags.
6. **Syndication:** This is an important part of pushing content out to your audience and keeping them coming back. Use email subscriptions as well as RSS – both are offered through services such as FeedBurner or FeedBlitz, and they're easy to setup. This will also provide you with some good data to measure readership growth and activity.

References

There are plenty of online resources for learning more about blogging, blog design and blog setup. Here are three worthwhile articles:

- <http://www.dailyblogtips.com/43-web-design-mistakes-you-should-avoid/>
- <http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/2009/04/13/8-principles-for-the-modern-blog-at-least-for-2009/>
- <http://michaelmartine.com/2009/04/14/how-to-set-up-a-blog-for-the-long-run/>

Free Blog Consultation

Sometimes getting started is the hardest thing to do. But that's OK! We're here to help. *Feel free to contact us for a free blog consultation.* We can help you get started, talk through the major points of the Guide and see if we can't give you the head start you need to make it happen!

How to Write a Blog

The heart of any blog is the writing. This doesn't mean you have to be an award-winning author, but writing is at the foundation of any great blog.

Going from the macro-level to the micro-level, writing a great blog means understanding the following things:

1. Contributors
2. Blog Topics
3. Research
4. Editorial Calendars
5. Staying Motivated
6. Types of Posts
7. Writing Post Titles
8. Writing Best Practices
9. Tips & Tricks

Contributors

Think about having multiple authors for your blog. There's no reason you need to be the company's sole voice. Taking an approach that incorporates multiple voices will make it easier to keep content fresh, provide readers with a broader view into the company and result in a more diverse conversation. Additionally, while the HR voice is important, people want to hear from line employees to get a sense of what it's really like. So incorporating multiple authors (or even guest authors pitching in occasionally) helps keep things fresh, lessens the day-to-day efforts of one individual, and expands the view into the company.

If you do pursue an approach with multiple authors consider the following:

1. Identify how you'll select contributors to get a diverse mix of voices representing the company, and have a team that you know can deliver. You'll also want people to understand the blog post approval process. And you may need to provide some training or mentoring to contributors that will help them get started.
2. Provide agreements around the length of time they'll be part of the writing team and the frequency of their articles (this helps them feel better about the commitment.)
3. Share your compelling case with your contributors so they see the bigger picture and the value of their contributions to attracting great talent.

"You can demonstrate the diversity of the company through the opinions and styles of writing when there is a group of contributors." **Ben Gotkin, National Recruiting Director -- RSM McGladrey**

Blog Topics

One of the biggest questions people have when starting a blog is simple, "*What do I blog about?*" And it's a pretty important question!

Here are some starting points for topics:

1. Industry news
2. Company news
3. Company hiring and recruiting information
4. Internal sneak peeks
5. HR related information

Industry News

As an HR person in a specific industry, you know the industry well. You have to in order to recruit properly. Blogging about industry-related news is a great way of demonstrating your expertise as well as your company's positioning in the market. People will go to a lot of different resources for their news and information, but you can provide an "insider's look" at many things. This is also where you can think about recruiting other employees to blog with you. Every company has subject-matter experts that want to share their knowledge.

Here are a few recommendations:

- a. DO blog quickly on the latest industry news from your perspective. Be careful about any official positioning on behalf of your organization. Taking an objective view will most likely be important in delivering on your blogging policy agreement.
- b. DO link out to industry news, even if you don't provide a great deal of commentary. Your blog will serve as a valuable, central resource and it will show that you're on top of things.
- c. DO provide insight into where you think the industry is going. Position yourself as an expert in the market.
- d. DO speak about the competition and what they're doing – and do so in an authentic way – but avoid criticizing them, it won't look good and could lead to trouble.
- e. DO talk about your industry as it relates to Human Resources and job availability. For example, are there specific skills that are becoming more important? Are there types of jobs that are declining in relevance?

Company News

There's no shame in tooting your own horn. Just don't do it very often. The corporate HR blog is a place to demonstrate expertise and leadership, develop a community, and ultimately attract candidates. Candidates *want* to know about the company, and they don't want to read dull press releases.

You should be able to reflect on company news openly and give context to the news with respect to HR and job opportunities at your organization. In a perfect world you'd be able to criticize your organization as well, although this is always challenging. You will need the freedom to comment on bad news; otherwise you'll lose the trust of your readers. For example, if your company lets go staff, the

corporate HR blog has to comment on it. Work with management on policies that resolve these issues of criticizing and bad news before you start writing the blog.

This is also an opportunity to share cool things your company is working on. Make sure this falls within your blogging agreement and that you're not disclosing proprietary information. What do you want to be known for? By providing interesting and relevant content you can position the blog as a destination to learn about the latest things.

Company hiring and recruiting information

Very few companies ever go into detail on their hiring and recruiting policies. But this is useful and interesting information to readers and job seekers. You can also have some fun with this content and make it interesting. And you reveal a great deal about your company's culture and inner workings. Some ideas:

- What to expect in a job interview
- Stories from recently hired people
- Learning and development programs and opportunities
- Career progression stories that highlight internal growth and experiential learning
- Stories from leaders that talk about their commitment to developing new talent
- Mentoring or affinity programs new hires would be interested in joining
- Tips on answering interview questions
- Explanation of new job openings (you can really expand on a generic job description by providing so much more information about the role)
- Details of perks – health benefits, parking, free lunches, etc.

Internal sneak peeks

Job seekers want the inside scoop on your company. They want to collect as much information as possible before deciding whether your company is the right fit. The more you can do to open your doors and provide that sneak peek inside, the better. Here's a great example of an "internal sneak peek" blog post from Digg: <http://blog.digg.com/?p=123>.

Some ideas:

- "Day in the life" or "week in the life" stories
- Employee interviews
- Events – but keep it relevant like recognition/celebration of performance

Internal sneak peeks can be some of the most powerful and useful content on an HR corporate blog. But make sure this content truly reflects reality. If there are negative or challenging elements within a "day in the life" story from one of your employees,

share that information. If you sugarcoat it, new employees will discover disconnects between what you're publishing and the truth, and that won't go over well. This is again a key element of discussion with management – you need the flexibility to represent reality.

Think about mixing in some video and audio. Video is particularly powerful at connecting job seekers to a company – the job seekers get to see the office, the people, etc. They get to “feel” the vibe. Video is also extremely easy and inexpensive to incorporate given the low cost of equipment like a Flip camera.

Having said that, you are in a position to craft your message. There's no harm in writing things carefully and choosing your words wisely. It is your job to develop the company's brand (and yours) with caution and effort, and you shouldn't feel like you're being inauthentic for doing so.

“The last thing I want to see on a corporate HR blog is some corporate or marketing speak that came off a brochure. Imagine you're an employee who is considering applying. What do you want to see? You want to see the work environment, and really understand what the job is all about. Here's the thing ... you want rockstars right? Well rockstars are more likely to come your way if you show them the stage and the venue first.” – Jim Kukral, Small Business Web Consultant, <http://www.jimkukral.com>

HR-related information

Although HR-related information won't be the focus of your corporate HR blog there's still some worthwhile and valuable content to share with readers. After all, you're in the HR industry (within the larger industry of your company) and writing some content about HR will help you reach a broader audience of recruiters, other HR professionals, etc. Furthermore, there may be some HR-specific issues of significant relevance to job seekers. Changes to visa policies for hiring foreigners, for example.

Beyond legal / policy-related issues, you can also blog about how HR is evolving. For example, you might write a blog post about how companies are engaging their workforce through the use of collaborative tools. Or, write a blog post about the use of workforce planning strategies; addressing the needs of the current workforce and getting smarter about planning external hiring.

“Blogging provides job search advice, puts a personal face on the organization, promotes and differentiates the company's brand, and becomes even more important for unknown companies.” Ben Gotkin, National Recruiting Director -- RSM McGladrey

Research

Researching topics for blog posts, relevant content, news, etc. is a key component of writing a great blog. You want to have plenty of worthwhile material at your fingertips – to inspire you, link to, comment on, etc. And the key to successful research is doing it quickly. That means setting yourself up to get the information you need when you need it.

Here's a quick step-by-step guide to effective blog research:

- 1. Create a Blog List.** One of the first things you want to do is create a fairly comprehensive list of relevant blogs focusing on those in your industry and HR in general. You should categorize the blogs, and you might want to rank them as well. Include contact information in the list.

Include traditional websites in the list as well, because you'll likely get a lot of industry-related news from these sites.

If you don't know where to start your search for sites and blogs, try Google (<http://www.google.com>) and do some basic searches. You can also try Alltop (<http://www.alltop.com>), which is a great resource of top blogs pre-categorized into various topics. There's an HR-specific Alltop: <http://hr.alltop.com>.

Also, look at blogrolls – those are the lists of blogs that many bloggers include in the sidebars of their blogs; very often they'll highlight similar, high quality sites of interest.

Remember: This is an evolving list; you don't need to find every worthwhile blog and site instantly. Start with whatever you can find and build the list over time.

- 2. Get an RSS Reader.** Most blogs (and many websites) publish their content via RSS feeds (Real Simple Syndication). This allows you to subscribe to a blog and read its content in an RSS Reader, where you can collect as many RSS feeds and blogs as you like. I recommend using Google Reader (<http://www.google.com/reader>). It's easy and a great way to get started.

Subscribe to the blogs you've discovered so that you can readily review them when looking for a worthwhile topic.

- 3. Google Blog Search.** Google has a search engine that only returns results from blogs. It's at <http://www.google.com/blogsearch>. You can use this to search for the latest news or information. I often do this when I have a vague idea for a topic, and I can throw a few keywords into Google Blog Search to see if there's any recent, relevant content.

4. **Track Topics.** There will be specific topics that you regularly blog about. But finding specific points of discussion within those topics – worthy of a blog post (or two) – isn’t always easy. A simple way to stay on top of your most important topics is to track them. You can use Google Blogsearch to do this quite easily:
 - a. Go to <http://www.google.com/blogsearch>
 - b. Do a search for a topic or keyword – say “social media recruiting”
 - c. On the results page, look at the bottom left-hand corner of the page and you’ll see options to “Subscribe”. One of those will be RSS.
 - d. Since you have an RSS Reader now, you can grab the link and include it in Google Reader.
 - e. Every time someone writes a blog post with the tracked keywords, you’ll know about it.

Tip: Use this technique to track your company’s name (and any derivatives), key, high profile management and any industry related topics of relevance. For the company name – it’s the simplest way to capture what people are saying about your organization.

5. **Use Twitter.** You can find lots of relevant and up-to-date content from Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>). It takes awhile to build your network there, but you can track trends (through Twitter search – <http://search.twitter.com>) and very quickly find other HR professionals to follow. Twitter can be used in much the same way as Google Blog Search for doing basic research on potential blog topics.

Editorial Calendars

One of the best techniques for blogging actively and successfully is to use an editorial calendar. You can very easily use Google Calendar for this, or another calendaring tool. You might even just write things down in a Word or Excel document.

Here are the reasons an editorial calendar is so valuable:

1. **Keeps you regular.** The biggest downfall of bloggers is that they stop doing it. Pick a regular routine – say 2 or 3 times per week (or even once per week) and set that in stone. Tuesday and Thursday become days you publish blog posts. That type of regularity is good for you, and it’s great for your readers too, because they know when new content is coming.

2. **Keeps you brainstorming.** Bloggers often suffer from “writer’s block”. They “run out of things to say.” You can avoid this by having an editorial calendar that’s at least a month long. If you’re planning topics a month in advance, you invest the time up-front to brainstorm ideas, and then focus on writing.
3. **Keeps you ahead.** Since you don’t have to scramble for ideas all the time, you can get ahead with your writing whenever you have a bit of extra time. You know what post you’re publishing in a few weeks, so you can write it well in advance.
4. **Keeps you relevant.** By planning ahead, you can tie posts to relevant dates such as holidays, or recruiting events. For example, when college recruitment season hits, it’s the perfect time to role out some posts about the differences in college recruitment and regular recruitment, or trends in college recruitment that are interesting. Without the advanced foresight into key dates and times of the year, you’d be scrambling to leverage those opportunities.
5. **Keeps you structured.** An editorial calendar adds a nice structure to your blogging. And that can significantly improve its quality. For example, you can start to think about series of posts – 3 or more posts that are related that you’ll string together over the course of a few weeks. Without an editorial calendar you’d never have that structure. Also, if you’re planning on having a group of writers contribute to the blog you’ll want to keep track of commitments and deadlines. But remember, you also want to have enough flexibility to layer in any emerging stories that are relevant to your brand.

Tip: Editorial calendars should be at least 1 month in length. It’s better if they’re longer – but you won’t be able to go beyond 3 months because it will take too long to put together and you don’t have the visibility that far ahead into what the key topics will be that you want to cover. Intel maintains a 5-week calendar.

Staying Motivated

Staying motivated is one of the biggest challenges. There are many reasons why bloggers lose interest and abandon their efforts – lack of traffic, lack of ideas, writer’s block, too busy with other things, etc.

It is very important to stay motivated and keep your blog updated regularly. That’s why an editorial calendar can be so helpful for advanced planning. And that’s also why having multiple authors or even guest bloggers can help a great deal.

Here are several resources for helping with motivation and writer’s block:

<http://www.problogger.net/archives/2005/11/29/20-types-of-blog-posts-battling-bloggers-block/>

<http://www.instigatorblog.com/6-steps-to-getting-back-into-the-blog-saddle/2007/03/05/>

<http://www.instigatorblog.com/bloggers-are-you-ready-for-writers-block/2007/09/30/>

Types of Posts

There are many types of blog posts, each with their own purpose and value. The best blogs mix and match types, to add variety and achieve several strategic goals. I've included a list of the most relevant blog post types for corporate HR blogs.

1. Informational (Long vs. Short)
2. Instructional / How-To
3. Lists
4. Interviews / Profiles
5. Link Post
6. Quick Response Post
7. Reviews

Informational: This is a fairly broad bucket for blog posts, but it would include any post that provides information on a topic. Think of company news as informational. Oftentimes, informational posts can be quite long. There's no "perfect length" for a blog post. Some will argue for long blog posts, others for shorter. Typically people's attention spans are finite and being pulled in many directions, but don't be afraid to write longer posts.

Instructional / How-To: A very common type of blog post where you're providing instructions on how to do something; often in a step-by-step fashion. This is a great way of demonstrating expertise in a particular subject. For a corporate HR blog, it's a good way of providing job seekers and candidates with critical information on how to present themselves to you. For example, "How to Prepare for a Job Interview". You could also use a How-To post to explain your internal methodologies for managing candidates.

Lists: Everyone loves a good list. Lists are fast to digest, easy to remember and often the type of content people bookmark for future reference. Some of the most popular blog posts are "Top 10" lists. Lists are also some of the easiest posts to write, because each list item can be fairly short.

Interviews / Profiles: People are always fascinated by other people. Interviews and profiles are a great way of introducing employees to blog readers. They get a sneak peak inside and a more personal connection.

Link Post: This is often called a “Resource Post” because it’s used as a way of linking out to a lot of great content. One of the ways you can establish yourself as an expert is to find other great content for your audience. Link Posts are very easy to write – just link to a handful of resources (blog posts, websites, etc.) and provide a brief summary on each. Consider putting Link Posts into your regular Editorial Calendar.

Quick Response Post: In your research, or daily reading of other blogs and websites you’ll often come across articles and stories that you want to comment on. And you should! Leaving comments on someone’s blog is a great way to build attention and traffic. But take it another step, and reply to that person’s post with your own, on your blog. This is the “Quick Response” post. You take someone else’s blog post, and respond to it in a short, quick blog post of your own.

Reviews: This may not be as relevant for a corporate HR blog, but you can certainly review technology that you use, job marketing techniques, job boards, etc. People love reviews, and you can throw in the occasional one quite easily.

***Final Idea:** Publish job postings on your blog. But do it with style.*

***Willy Franzen, Entrepreneur/Author** (<http://www.onedayonejob.com>) says, “Some of the best job postings I’ve ever read were written for a corporate blog. Announcing your job openings on a blog takes some of the formality out of the hiring process. Example: Plaid knows what they want in a new hire, and they explain it perfectly in this blog post – <http://bit.ly/KXmRu>. This type of job posting may seem out of place on a corporate career site, but it fits in perfectly on a blog.”*

Reference Material:

<http://www.problogger.net/archives/2009/04/16/come-up-with-10-post-ideas/>

<http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/01/04/7-types-of-blog-posts-which-always-seem-to-get-links-and-traffic/>

<http://www.pureblogging.com/2007/09/10/the-5-types-of-blog-posts-that-experts-write/>

<http://blog.ogilvypr.com/?p=157>

Writing Post Titles

The title or headline of your blog post is the single most important element of the entire blog post. It's the hook that draws people into the content. Without a great headline, your blog post will too often be ignored.

And most people don't write great headlines. Or even good headlines. They write the blog post – toss something in for the title and publish. Big mistake.

This point cannot be stressed enough. Master title writing and I guarantee you more success with your blog.

Here are some quick pointers:

- **Be Descriptive.** The biggest headline mistake is not being descriptive enough. If I don't have an idea about the subject of your blog post from reading the headline, there's a very good chance I won't read it. Don't worry if your post titles end up being longer. Many people seem to go for 3-4 word titles, which are very hard to make descriptive.
- **Use Powerful Words.** A headline is a sales pitch. Every blogger is a salesperson, and your headline is the best tool you've got. Engaging, powerful words draw readers in. Think: Top, Free, How, Secret, You. Think about action words that encourage people to do something.
- **Be Personal.** People need to feel like you're speaking directly to them. Being more personal in a headline can help. An example: 5 Phrases You Never Want To Hear In A Presentation. Not 5 phrases someone else doesn't want to hear, but 5 phrases YOU don't want to hear. I'm talking to you.
- **Be Bold.** More than the use of powerful, engaging words, being bold is about taking a stand with your headline. The headline is the perfect place to state an opinion. It's the perfect place to make it clear that you've just written the BEST post ever on your subject matter. Be brave and claim ownership of something great.
- **Ask Questions.** Question headlines work because they draw people in to get an answer. It's a great format for a headline, but the same tips above still apply. Make the question as engaging, brazen, powerful and descriptive as possible. And answer it in your post...

*The absolute best resource for writing great headlines is here:
<http://www.copyblogger.com/magnetic-headlines/>. Read everything there, and keep that content bookmarked for future reference.*

Writing Best Practices

There are very few absolutes when it comes to blogging. But there are some best practices, which we've shared with the link references below.

<http://www.instigatorblog.com/5-steps-to-writing-the-best-blog-posts/2007/05/01/>

<http://www.instigatorblog.com/5-blog-writing-tips-to-get-more-comments/2006/10/04/>

Note: Spelling and grammar count! Take the time to spell check and edit posts to improve the overall writing style and quality.

Blogging Tips & Tricks

- Highlight the authors that are blogging. Too many corporate blogs don't reveal the authors, but that does your blog a disservice. A successful corporate blog will play up the personalities of the company's bloggers. *(Thanks to Willy Franzy for this great tip. Learn more here: <http://www.onedayonejob.com/>)*
- Add variety to text formatting – bold, italics, blockquotes – this helps break up content, and focus people's attention on key sentences, words, etc.
- Use pictures regularly – and put them at the top of blog posts as often as possible. Pictures help attract people to the content.
- Vary the lengths of blog posts – don't always write blog posts of a specific length, mix it up with shorter posts and longer ones.
- Link often – try and link to other sites / blogs as often as you can.
- Give credit where credit is due - Always credit sources if you reference content, and include a link to any original content that's available on the Web.

How To Build Traffic to Your Blog

For corporate blogs, building traffic can be challenging. Many people will perceive an ulterior motive to your blogging – to sell / market your products and services. For an HR blog that's not entirely the case, but people are still wary of corporate blogs. *In fact, a recent study by Forrester found that only 16% of people trusted corporate blogs (<http://tinyurl.com/5qdlc2>).* So that's definitely a challenge. Note: Following some of the best practices in this guide like authenticity, openness, and incorporating multiple voices can add credibility to your blog.

“Transparency is important to achieving authenticity. Personable, vulnerable and humanistic are traits of an authentic voice.” **Barbara Adachi, National Managing Principle of Initiatives and Advancement of Women - Deloitte**

Many of the resources listed throughout this Guide will also include a lot of content on how to build blog traffic, but here are a few key points for corporate HR blogs:

- Include the blog URL in every email you send out, especially to job seekers and candidates.
- Don't focus on social media / social news sites (like Digg, reddit, etc.) because this isn't going to necessarily generate valuable traffic.
- Comment on other relevant sites. When commenting, you can usually leave a link back to your blog, and this is a good way of building community but also generating traffic.
- Link to other blogs and make sure those blog authors know you've linked to them. Send them an email, comment on their site.
- Announce the blog launch publicly. Corporate blogs are still fairly rare (and corporate HR blogs are even rarer) so make a public announcement via a press release, email newsletter, etc.
- Ask every employee to include links to the blog on their social networking profiles.

Note: *Before really engaging in any techniques to build traffic, it's best to have at least 10 posts written on your blog.* That way when visitors come for the first time there's more “meat on the bones” and they can dig into things in more detail. When you write the “Welcome to our Blog” post introducing the blog – do it after you have at least 5 posts written already, to create that solid foundation.

“When you do start to blog, speak from the heart. Use common sense. Listen. The conversations you'll have on a blog are important, but the connections you make with your readers are more important and will last beyond the relevancy of posts.

Finally, stop procrastinating and start writing. Don't miss the opportunity to speak to multiple audiences in a more authentic voice. If you overlook the importance of social media, it means that you are probably overlooking bigger and more important trends in the economy. Who wants to do business with a company or HR professional who doesn't get it and won't even try?” – **Laurie Ruettiman, HR Professional (<http://punkrockhr.com>)**

Beyond Blogging – Twitter, Social Networks and More

An entire white paper or e-book could be devoted to other Web-based tools for attracting an audience, building community, etc. Twitter has grown immensely in popularity of late, and can be a valuable resource for promoting your blog and connecting with the right job seekers.

The same holds true for social networks such as Facebook (or even LinkedIn).

In most cases, you can syndicate your blog posts through social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn – so that people spending time on those sites can more easily find your content.

Ultimately, your corporate HR blog still serves as the best anchor for reaching and interacting with job seekers. Blogs are the best way of building authority and thought leadership – while Twitter and social networks are good places for leveraging the success you build off your blog. Think of Twitter and social networks as distribution channels (for starters) and then as more dynamic, on-the-fly communication tools.

References:

Twitter on Alltop: <http://twitter.alltop.com>

Twitip: <http://www.twitip.com>

Top 10 HR Blogging Best Practices

1. Getting management approval will likely be an ongoing process. Think small, dip a toe and build a long-term case with a real understanding of long-term value.
2. Involve Marketing and Legal early in the process, and work collaboratively with them. But don't get bogged down in legal issues, and don't overburden yourself, other bloggers and your organization with legal guidelines and restrictions.
3. Bring on multiple contributors from different areas of the business. This will provide a broader, more holistic view into your organization. But identify someone as the lead to manage the process, monitor content, etc.
4. Be personable, authentic and real. Job seekers and candidates don't want corporate-speak and buzzwords. They want information and dialogue with real people about real issues and stories.
5. Spend as much time listening and learning as you do writing. Blogging isn't really about how much content you produce, it's about how well you can leverage content to build community, and convert community members into candidates.
6. Market the blog at every opportunity – links in emails, URLs on business cards and promotional material, through employees, etc. Put the blog URL in job postings. Make it a core component of your outreach, and think about how to promote it every day.
7. There's no shortage of topics to cover: industry news, "day in the life" stories, recruitment information/news, etc. Use an editorial calendar to stay on top of things and add diversity to the types of posts you're publishing.
8. Think of your blog as core piece of a true, dynamic talent network.
9. Write the best headlines possible. The headline is the most important part of a blog post.
10. Setup the proper systems for research, idea generation, content writing, management, etc. and blogging doesn't have to be a daunting or time-consuming task.

Resources

Below is a compilation of valuable resources to help with your corporate HR blog. Some of these were referenced in the guide itself.

Corporate HR Blogs

Jobs @ Intel Blog: <http://blogs.intel.com/jobs/>
RSM McGladrey – Success Starts Here: <http://mcgladreycareers.blogspot.com/>
Deloitte Women’s Initiative: <http://blogs.deloitte.com/winblog/>
Microsoft JobsBlog: <http://microsoftjobsblog.com/about/>
One Louder from Heather Hamilton, Microsoft Employee Evangelist:
<http://blogs.msdn.com/heatherleigh/>

HR Related Blogs

Top 100 Career Blogs: <http://www.risesmart.com/risesmart/blog/career100/>
Fistful of Talent: <http://www.fistfuloftalent.com/>
Punk Rock HR: <http://www.punkrockhr.com>
RecruitingBlogs.com: <http://www.recruitingblogs.com>
HRM Today: <http://www.hrmtoday.com>
Personal Branding Blog: <http://www.personalbrandingblog.com>
HR on Alltop: <http://hr.alltop.com>
Toolbox for HR Blogs: <http://hr.toolbox.com/blogs/hr-blogs/>

Blogging / Social Networking / Social Media Best Practices

ProBlogger: <http://www.problogger.net>
Chris Brogan (social media/blogging guru): <http://www.chrisbrogan.com>
Daily Blog Tips: <http://www.dailyblogtips.com>
Dosh Dosh: <http://www.doshdosh.com>
Instigator Blog: <http://www.instigatorblog.com>
Entrepreneur’s Journey: <http://www.entrepreneurs-journey.com>
Successful Blog: <http://www.successful-blog.com>
Web Strategy by Jeremiah Owyang: <http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/>
Copyblogger: <http://www.copyblogger.com>
Blogging on Alltop: <http://blogging.alltop.com>

About Ben Yoskovitz

Ben Yoskovitz is the CEO and co-Founder of Standout Jobs. He has 12+ years experience as a software entrepreneur specializing in B2B and Web-related businesses. Ben is an avid participant in social media, and has consulted with numerous small and large organizations on implementing social media and Web marketing strategies.

Ben writes a blog about startups, entrepreneurship and social media, at <http://www.instigatorblog.com>.



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About Standout Jobs

Standout Jobs provides a next-generation recruitment communication platform enabling companies (both large and small) to attract, engage and convert the right job seekers into applicants and hires.

The Standout Jobs platform helps companies launch interactive, Web 2.0 career sites and recruitment micro-sites, dedicated to improving and promoting their employer brand and leveraging social media and search engine optimization to more efficiently and effectively find the best people.

For more information, please visit <http://standoutjobs.com>.

About Susan Burns

Susan is the Chief Talent Strategist and Founder of Talent Synchronicity. She has over 20 years of corporate experience in talent-intensive businesses and has contributed value differentiating talent initiatives, business results and corporate brands through senior leadership roles in talent acquisition and front-line business assignments.



Learn more about Susan and follow her blog on TalentSynchronicity.com

Contact Susan Burns:

- talentsynchronicity@mac.com
- <http://www.twitter.com/talentsynch>

About Talent Synchronicity

Talent Synchronicity works with companies to develop adaptive talent strategies resulting in enhanced value and agility for the talent function, competitiveness in pursuing and securing top talent, and success in delivering sustainable results.

Talent Synchronicity's adaptive strategy model helps companies design customized solutions to support alignment between the company's strategic business directives and talent function. Consulting services include:

- Integrated Recruitment and Talent Management Strategy Development
- Employment Brand Differentiation
- Social Media Strategy
- Workforce/Talent Planning
- Recruitment Leader Development
- University Recruitment and Relations Strategy
- Recruitment Team Structure and Processes

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