

10 Suggestions For Blog Usability

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1. Provide the Personality

Blogging has generally been associated with anonymous or geeky-nicknamed authors. This makes it almost impossible to establish trust with the readers since there is no specific person that can be identified with the articles. Whereas business blogs would usually require a full-fledged "about us" section, individual authors would need a simple and short "about me" page on a weblog. Information aside from the author's name is important as it helps to establish authority, experience and credibility with the chosen subject. The lack of formal credentials however, should not be a hindrance to writing but the fact should be stated followed by a short explanation for the author's enthusiasm regarding the topic. The blog can also benefit from having a human face to its voice by providing the author's photo.

2. Make Use of an Effective Posting Titles

The title is very important in getting the reader's attention and convincing them to look at a particular blog. Authors should keep in mind the general guidelines in writing for the web regarding scannable contents when writing their headline. Headline writing is in itself a critical project in the same way that the body is. Search engines, news-feeds and other external environment can appreciate descriptive headlines. Searchers likewise, use the headline to determine whether it is worth checking at all or not. Titles should be able to provide the gist of the article through its few carefully chosen words. It would also be useful to choose large, clear and legible fonts to get the message across.

3. Establish Useful Links in Posts

One way to truly serve the readers is to make sure that they know where they're going and what to expect at the other end of the link. Relevant information should be provided either at the anchor text itself or the words immediately surrounding it. Most readers do not appreciate clicking into the unknown. The author's invitation to the reader to visit should be clear as vague links usually do not attract trust.

4.Link to Previous Work in New Postings

Valuable information should not be buried in the archives. The archives are where post pieces go to and remain. These articles can only be found if the author consciously directs them to it. Not all readers have been customers since the beginning thus this can provide the background and context in case they would require further reading.

5.Organize Site Search and Archives

A professional blog should consider archiving by title and in date order so that it makes for easy skim reading for users and encourage site search. Several blog software plugins or modules are able to produce menus and lines such as the "most read", "recent comments/posts" and self-tag great articles. When a blog had already over 100 entries, an archive list may turn out to be very chaotic especially if the author is still trying to promote each one. Archiving by week, month or year can work out fine for personal blogs but will not be user-friendly for a person looking for a particular product. Categorized posting can provide users the list of all postings on a certain topic, but tagging of postings should be selective so that they are placed where they belong.

6.Publish Regularly and Frequently

Web usability is essentially about establishing and meeting user expectations. Therefore, users should be able to anticipate when and how often updates will occur in a blog. Most blogs benefit from daily updates but there are topics that would sufficiently require weekly or monthly updates. Some publish three to four articles a day which is a pace that may be very hard to sustain. The author can determine for himself the best publication schedule depending on the topic. However, once a schedule is established, serious efforts should be directed at maintaining it with fresh content or there would be a big possibility of losing loyal and valuable readers.

7.Specialize Blogs

Handling a different topic on one blog is not as effective as specialized sites. Very few people have the time and patience to look for entries about a topic of particular interest to them in a site that offers the target topics sporadically among a wide range of postings on several other topics. A focused content reaches out to a specific group of readers and makes a site more influential and authoritative in a particular niche. If an author feels that he/she needs to speak out on an entirely different topic, then it would be much better to create a separate blog.

8.Simplify Blogs

Majority of blog readers are still actually mystified by the process and may not have a clear idea of what a blog is. Recognize the fact that not all are technically savvy and might be wary of active participation such as clicking on anything. This is especially true for new readers as clear information is capable of addressing feelings of discomfort regarding how he/she is expected to make his/her own posting or how personal information is handled. Some space in the biography or contact page can be allotted to explaining these issues by providing a "need more help" link so that regular readers need not see the explanation every time.

9. Authors Should be Sure of Their Posting

Anything posted on the Internet including blogs are archived, cached and indexed in many services that most are not aware of. As such, it is important that the author can stand up to what he/she says in the blog. This is especially true for hiring matters since more and more companies are taking the time to check out prospective employees including his on-line transactions. When in doubt, the author should avoid publishing articles that can be considered offensive by persons or entities that he/she have future interest in establishing a relationship with.

10. Make Readable Blogs

There are a lot of things that can make any blog unreadable. Buttons, glory badges, blogrolls and the like may be valuable tools but too much of anything can be counter productive. If it is necessary to have lots of buttons, it is recommended to have a separate page listing of all the desired buttons as well as explanations so as not to intimidate new readers. Readers may be interested to know a site's recommended links but if a list gets longer than ten, a random list of a few in the sidebar will suffice as long as they link to a separate page containing the rest. The design trend of more white space and large titles is like going back to the basics where what is essential is ably provided and delivered. About the author:
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