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## netFRONT

### Blogging 101 >

**Executive Summary:**

*It's time to back up and see what all the fuss is about and to set some ground rules.*

**By Janeson Keeley**

Wikipedia defines a blog (or "Web log") as a type of Web site characterized by "regular entries of commentary, descriptions of

events, or other material such as graphics or video." Unlike traditional Web sites, blogs usually allow comments between the visitors and the author.

Blogs can be divided into three categories: news, opinion and commentary, and promotional.

News blogs may be produced by traditional media outlets, such as newspapers, or may be authored by citizen journalists. A true news blog applies journalistic standards to its posts and uses the blog as a means of publishing news more quickly than a traditional publishing cycle allows. Valerie Garner, author of [www.roanokekfreepress.com](http://www.roanokekfreepress.com), is a citizen journalist who also writes for The Roanoke Star-Sentinel. She notes that, "With a weekly [newspaper], I go into much more detail" than in a daily post.

Anyone can write a blog based on opinion, commentary, or experience. "Bloggers have the freedom to be controversial, provocative, opinionated in ways that professional journalists filing news stories don't," says novelist, non-fiction writer, and former OMNI magazine editor, Keith Ferrell ([landlessons.blogspot.com](http://landlessons.blogspot.com)) of Franklin County. "To get a good sense of this, take a look at a piece of bylined reporting written by a journalist who also blogs. The differences between the two should be clear."

For example, Valley Business FRONT's blog, [morefront.blogspot.com](http://morefront.blogspot.com), is strictly a news blog, subject to the same journalistic standards



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as the magazine, while editor Dan Smith's blog, [fromtheeditr.blogspot.com](http://fromtheeditr.blogspot.com), is a personal blog that, as Smith says, "has nothing to do with FRONT or with journalism."

Businesses and organizations can use blogs to "trumpet a new invention, offer explanations, inform, or entertain," says Anita Firebaugh, freelance writer, lifestyles blogger ([bluecountrymagic.blogspot.com](http://bluecountrymagic.blogspot.com)), and former news reporter. She adds, "A well-used blog is another promotion tool, just like Facebook or Twitter ... and should be a part of a marketing plan and utilized to best fit the business needs."


Some tips for effective business blogs:

Garner recommends that you familiarize yourself with copyright and defamation laws as they apply to blogs. Civil or criminal suits can be brought against bloggers who,

knowingly or unknowingly, violate these laws.

Ferrell cautions: "Be accurate in your blogs, and that includes attending to the 'basics' such as spelling and grammar. Don't build the best business in the world and then send the message that you're less than literate."

Firebaugh suggests that a company or organization decide ahead of time how comments will be handled. She recommends moderating comments, and notes that, "to create a blog and accept comments and then offer little in the way of active response is futile. People will not come back."

Finally, if you decide that a blog would fit well into your marketing plan, make sure that you commit resources to it on an on-going basis. A blog with two six-month old entries conveys the message, "Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time." 

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