

BLOGGING AS A MEANS OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING

By

AMIR AHMAD A. NASR

Submitted to the Business Information Systems Programme
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Bachelor of Technology (Hons)
(Business Information Systems)
Jan 2008

Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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Approved:

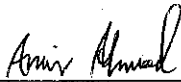
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April 2008

CERTIFICATION OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that I am responsible for the work submitted in this project, that the original work is my own except as specified in the references and acknowledgements, and that the original work contained herein have not been undertaken or done by unspecified sources or persons.



Amir Ahmad A. Nasr

ABSTRACT

This study explores problems related to knowledge sharing in the Information Age and attempts to provide a solution for them. The primary problem revolves around how locating the relevant information we're looking for online is becoming harder since it is not well organized and quickly accessible within the vast internet. In addition to that, there is more "noise" available than useful quality content. The research delves into the use of blogging as a fast, up-and-coming means of knowledge and quality content sharing amongst communities of bloggers with similar interests. Knowledge sharing implies a bi-directional exchange of information. To read blogs is not enough. One must start a blog and engage other bloggers with shared interests. Therefore the study and methodology of conducting it involves implementing a blog (using the open source blogging platform WordPress), promoting it to those interested in the topics it covers, socializing online with a community of like-minded bloggers, and at the end measuring the usefulness of blogging as a means of knowledge sharing by analyzing blog participation. The implemented blog for the purpose of this study is located at www.PassionBasedLearning.com and the blog's topic is about learning, knowledge management and personal development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family for the support they have given and last but not most certainly not least, I would also like to thank my supervisor, Ms Mazeyanti M. Ariffin for her help and great patience throughout this research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As more and more people get internet access and publishing content online gets easier, finding relevant exact information will become more difficult.

Many countries are now making the move from industrial economies to knowledge economies. [1] For knowledge economies to function well, good knowledge workers are the primary factor and part of being a good knowledge worker is possessing a decent understanding of online knowledge sharing and having the skills to engage in it effectively.

1.1 Problem Statement

1.1.1 The Increasing Staggering Amount of Online Information

The Information Age has ushered in an explosion in the amount of content available on the internet, and together with it countless technologies have appeared online to help facilitate the sharing of this knowledge effectively.

There is little awareness about the significant power of these online technologies which facilitate knowledge sharing. The untapped potential in using them is huge. The trouble is that it's not being tapped as much as it should be. As a result, as the amount of information increases, so will the problems in finding that which internet users seek.

1.1.1 The Increasing Need for Effective Methods of Knowledge Sharing

An online phenomenon that has taken knowledge sharing into a whole new amazing level is the blogosphere.

Over the past few years, thousands of blogging communities discussing all kinds of niche topics have formed online. A huge amount of knowledge is being shared and even created within these communities. As all of this happens, the majority of online knowledge seekers are not leveraging blogs and blogging for effective learning.

1.1.2 The Misconceptions and Lack of Awareness about Blogs

Another problem is that many people have misconceptions about what blogs are. They think they're silly online diaries teenage girls maintain about unimportant personal topics – something which is far from true. Others think blogs have zero credibility and shouldn't be trusted. These misconceptions should be corrected by conducting more researches and empirical studies proving the usefulness of blogs and also by highlighting the ones that have already been conducted successfully.

Besides these misconceptions, there are also people who are still largely unfamiliar and unaware with what blogs are and what blogging is all about. Awareness should be increased.

1.2 Objectives and Scope of Study

The goal is to demonstrate the effectiveness of blogging as a good means of knowledge sharing.

1.2.1 Objectives

- Build a blog-based website about a specific topic (I chose knowledge management and learning).

- Engage a community of people sharing the same interests.
- Arrange and store content as it grows, by applying knowledge management principles.
- Demonstrate the effectiveness of blogging and the blogosphere as good ways to engage in knowledge sharing.

1.2.2 Scope of Study

The main and primary scope of this study is focused on exploring the potential benefits blogging has as a means of knowledge sharing online (and possibly even within organizations).

The scope of the audience of the implemented blog is students, entrepreneurs and knowledge workers interested in knowledge management, learning and or personal development.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What Is a Blog?

A blog (also known as a weblog) is a relatively new online technology which enables people to publish their thoughts and easily share knowledge. One doesn't need to know programming or even HTML to operate it. [2]

Each piece of content published individually is known as a blog post. Posts are organized in sequence based on the date they were published and are also classified by the categories they are tagged with. They are stored and archived in a sequential manner.

Archives

December 2007

November 2007

October 2007

September 2007

August 2007

July 2007

June 2007

May 2007

Figure 1 Example of a blog archive

Writers of blogs are known as bloggers. Unlike discussion forums, a blogger has control over what he/she publishes. As a result a blog ends up becoming a space in


which a blogger can comfortably express his or her personality. It's highly individualist in nature.

Visitors and readers of a blog have the ability to comment on each post a blogger publishes. A lot of discussions and knowledge exchange occurs within the comments section. The following is an example of a typical blog post.

It shows the date of publication and at the bottom displays the latest number of comments.

NOV
19

Becoming Self-Taught



Most of the skills I use to make a living are skills I've learned on my own: Web design, desktop publishing, marketing, personal productivity skills, even teaching! And most of what I know about science, politics, computers, art, guitar-playing, world history, writing, and a dozen other topics I've picked up outside of any formal education.

[Read the rest of this entry »](#)

23 Comments » | Posted in: [Featured](#), [Lifestyle](#)

Figure 2 Example of a blog post [3]

A blogger may also link to another blog and comment on another blogger's ideas. This can result in a lively debate which is very public in nature. The act of linking also contributes to the spread of traffic and readers from one blog to another. Commenting and linking are digital forms of social interactions. It is for this reason that blogs are often called and known as a type of social media or social software.

2.2 Knowledge Sharing and the Blogosphere

Over 120,000 blogs are created everyday [4]. Most are personal, rarely updated ones, discussing random things from Baskin Robin's ice cream, to how cute Persian kittens are. However some of them are authored by very active knowledgeable bloggers focusing on specific domains of knowledge, whether it's economics, mechanical engineering, politics, music or even knowledge management. With passing time, such blogs sometimes become the center of passionate communities interested in the same topic as the bloggers themselves. A lot of knowledge exchange happens on such blogs. Furthermore, as content grows, it is relatively easy to retrieve old useful discussions.

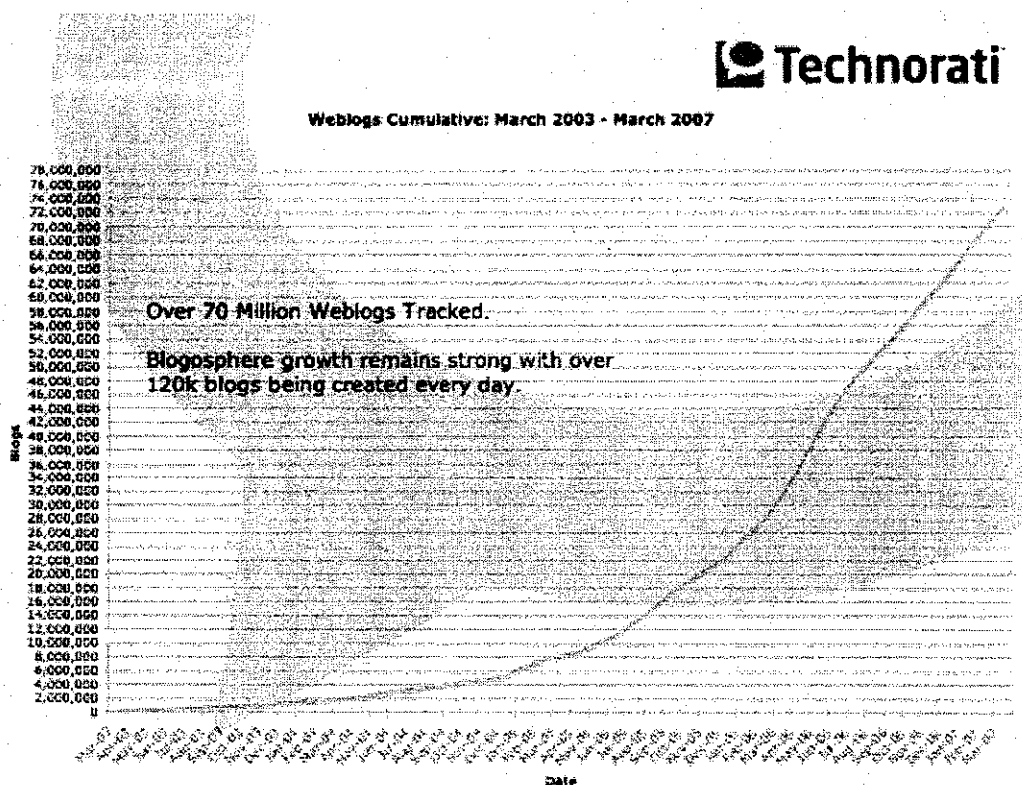


Figure 3 Blogosphere growth [4]

Unlike the interest-centric email lists of the early 90's, during the infancy of the internet, blogs offer a much better format for communication, collaboration, knowledge exchange, information retention and content organization [5]. They even apply the use of taxonomies through the use of tagging.

Knowledge management practitioners began noticing the potential of implementing blogs and other social media technologies (referred to as Web 2.0) like wikis and social networking, in corporate settings only a few years ago. This has given rise to a new niche academic field in knowledge management, known as KM 2.0. It promotes the implementation of Web 2.0 technologies in the enterprise, and hence Enterprise 2.0.

Technologies are only one minimal aspect. Getting employees in a company to use them is a challenging one however thanks to usually weak incentives. In the open internet, the pool of potential users/readers is gigantic. It's not as difficult attracting people to read, comment and exchange knowledge. The incentive for such people is already present. It is simply non-other than a strong passion for learning.

2.3 Blogs as Vehicles for Knowledge Management Initiatives

The massive growth of the blogosphere has caught the eyes of many people. Some of them include members of academia who see its great potential for knowledge management and knowledge sharing purposes [6].

Using weblogs, or blogs, as vehicles for knowledge management initiatives is a relatively new concept, but one that has gained rapid recognition. The earliest weblogs appeared only a few years ago. As personal journals, often espousing individual political views or chronicling personal daily events, blogs did not seem to fit into an organizational knowledge management framework. Attitudes towards weblogs and uses of blogs are changing quickly, however. In a collaborative work environment, blogs bring significant

benefits to enterprises willing to adopt the technology. Writers of blogs, called bloggers, can add to the sum total of knowledge for research projects, share industry and product knowledge, capture and disseminate pertinent news from outside the enterprise, and contribute valuable insights on specific subjects. They are particularly useful for promoting knowledge in cross-cultural environments [6].

As the excerpt above mentions, blogging for knowledge management initiatives is indeed a relatively new concept. It is for this reason that there are many skeptics. New is untested and untested apparently is unreliable. The skeptics aren't winning however.

Some major multinational companies have already started implementing internal and external blogs [7, 8]. Internal blogs are ones used for collaboration and knowledge management purposes while external ones are mainly for the purpose of public relations. Even CIO magazine is publishing articles promoting blogs as a better option than email for communication in collaboration-intensive environments [5].

If your existing e-mail system makes it nearly impossible to find what you need or effectively manage many documents, you might be ready for enterprise blogging on your corporate intranet, according to analysts and vendors at the Enterprise 2.0 conference in Boston [5].

The current path we're headed on suggests that blogging as a means of effective knowledge sharing is increasingly gaining momentum.

2.4 Using Blogs in the Field of Formal Education

It's interesting to note that experts in the field of education (which in some areas overlaps with knowledge management and more specifically knowledge sharing) have also noticed blogging's potential [9]

A consultant and former chief scientist at Palo Alto Research Center, Seely Brown spoke at a conference on technology and education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The conference was organized to mark the end next year of an eight-year partnership between Microsoft and MIT to explore the use of technology in learning.

... "As you work shoulder to shoulder with other kids, all the work you do and work in progress is done in public. So others understand what you're thinking," Seely Brown said.

The evolution of the Internet can facilitate this approach, he said. Web 2.0 tools, such as wikis and blogs, make information sharing and content creation easier [9].

Ideas such as the above aren't only expressed in conferences but have also been mentioned in academic journals [10].

In this paper we report on our experience using a blog to support teacher education. The system has been used to support communication and reflection while students were spending a period of teaching practice. The system has not been used, despite its potential usefulness. In this paper we reflect on this experience to identify strengths and weaknesses of blogs in supporting learning in the field [10].

A few academic experts even went as far as conducting empirical research to measure the usefulness of blogging for knowledge sharing and learning purposes within a university environment [2].

The study investigates the impact of weblog use on individual learning in a university environment. Weblogs are a relatively new knowledge sharing technology, which enables people to record their thoughts in diary form and publish those diaries as web pages, without programming or HTML coding.

The research sought to empirically determine whether the keeping of on-going (web based) learning logs throughout a semester would result in better overall student performance. This was hypothesized, because web based learning logs appear to promote constructivist learning, provide reinforcement, and increase accountability (non-anonymous idea sharing). Results from an information systems undergraduate course with 31 students indicate that weblog performance is a significant predictor for learning outcome, while traditional coursework is not. Weblogs appear to have highest predictive power for high and low performing students, but much less predictive value for medium performers. Results also suggest that there is a learning effect for weblog authoring [2].

What the aforementioned suggests is that there also learning benefits not just for engaging other bloggers but also for authoring one's own blog. The research shows promising results but it's one conducted within a university environment – a context in which learning is formal. World-class academic institutions such as Harvard are already using blogs as knowledge sharing tool [11]. The same is true for MIT [12].

Weblogs at Harvard Law School

Free blogs for the Harvard community

Weblogs at Harvard Law is provided by the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School as a free service to the Harvard community. Anyone with an email address at harvard.edu, radcliffe.edu, or hbs.edu can sign up instantly and be blogging in minutes.

Recently Updated Blogs

Robert John Bennett - Revision: Harvard Novel	2:04 am
Technische Universität München - Deutschland, Technical University of Munich - Germany	2:04 am
Letters from Munich	2:04 am
Home Is Where The Heart Dwells	12:04 am
Doc Seatis Weblog	Apr 12

Brought to you by Berkman
The Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School

Create a weblog

[Blogging at Berkman](#)

[How To Guides](#)

Already a blogger?

Username:

Password:

☐ Remember me

[Login >](#)

Project Info
[Terms of Use](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[Legal FAQ](#)

Create a weblog —

Protected by Akismet • Blog with WordPress

Figure 4 Harvard blogs

Blog Portal

HOME LINKS PROJECTS CONTACT ME

Get Your Blog Today!

Welcome to the Beta Caddie Blog Server(CBS). Browse the **most recent posts**. The current blog roll is now on our "Community Server".


Getting your blog:

1. The first step is to register (you must be on campus)
2. Email software@mit.edu, include the username from 1.

Optional:

You can also request your own picture gallery.

Due to spam problems, new blog creation has been restricted to members of the MIT community (students, faculty, and staff). Please email us at software@mit.edu to request a blog.



Email us at software@mit.edu to request a blog on this server. You can also request a forum and/or photo gallery.

Figure 5 MIT blogs

In organizations and companies if the task of blogging is an official part of one's job then it becomes formal. On the internet however, blogging is completely different and seems to result in better outcomes due to the informal nature of knowledge sharing it provides.

2.5 The Properties and Social Aspects of Blogging

There are numerous reasons for why blogging can be a good method of knowledge sharing. The special properties and highly social aspects it possesses are what makes it unique and suitable for this purpose.

Bloggers can connect to one another very easily. In fact the blogosphere is an enormous network of interlinked blogs. Those sharing the same interests tend to link heavily to one another and as a result form clusters within the vast blogosphere.

Blogs are also very viral in nature. Content is delivered rapidly and a hot story can spread like wild fire, sparking a fruitful debate. Another aspect of this rapid delivery is the fact that it's very easy to publish content on a blog.

Besides rapid delivery, blogs also offer high searchability. Each post can be tagged with a category and can be retrieved easily by simply searching within that specific chosen category.

Storing content as it grows is very easy to do with a blog. Retrieving is also simple and isn't tedious. Categories (also known as tags) are included in posts and act as a taxonomy which organizes blog posts accordingly.

2.6 Social Contexts and Lev Vygotsky's Theory of Learning

Each community of bloggers discussing a certain topic also acts as a social context in which the understanding of the knowledge being discussed is socially constructed.

This, according to Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, is the type of context in which learning can properly take place [13].

Social constructivism is a variety of cognitive constructivism that emphasizes the collaborative nature of much learning. Social constructivism was developed by post-revolutionary Soviet psychologist, Lev Vygotsky.

... He argued that all cognitive functions originate in, and must therefore be explained as products of, social interactions and that learning was not simply the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by learners; it was the process by which learners were integrated into a knowledge community [13].

The blogosphere is a vast space with many small knowledge communities. It is the process itself of integrating and engaging a knowledge community that brings about learning and facilitates good knowledge exchange.

2.7 Factors That Make a Blog Successful At Knowledge Sharing

As mentioned previously, blogs are essentially a social medium and the blogosphere is a vast social network in which like-minded bloggers form clusters and communities.

The primary factor that determines the success of a blog as a tool for knowledge sharing is social activity. Just like in the real world, online, how well a blogger socializes determines the success of that blogger's blog. This can be broken down into two things, firstly, what you have to say, and secondly, how well you market yourself.

2.7.1 Content

The originality and value a blogger provides in the form of content is the first factor which makes a blog successful at knowledge sharing.

Frequent blog posts containing unique content eventually attract a loyal readership. A portion of this readership then begins to comment regularly on each post and in the process forms a community which engages in knowledge sharing.

2.7.2 Social Marketing

Writing regular solid content alone won't do the job. A blogger needs to interact with other bloggers and the communities on their blogs. This is done by commenting on posts of other blogs, linking to them and adding commentary about what they think.

Bloggers who promote their blog posts on major social media sites such as YouTube also tend to do very well. YouTube gets millions of unique visitors every month and has a huge active community of commenters.

Commenting on blogs and YouTube, and linking to other blogs with the intention of promoting a blog are all forms of social marketing.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Researching Existing Blog-Communities

The first step in conducting this research is studying existing online communities of bloggers who discuss the relevant topics of learning, knowledge management and personal development. One must locate them and observe the interactions and knowledge exchange that occurs within them in order to determine their well-being.

3.1.1 Exploring Technorati's Data

Technorati is the premiere destination on the internet which provides data on the blogosphere. As of early 2007, Technorati was tracking over 70 million blogs [4].

Finding blogs discussing specific topics is easy when using Technorati. It monitors daily posts published on blogs and classifies them according to the categories they're tagged with.

So, for example, if I want the latest posts about knowledge management, all I need to do is key in "knowledge management" and search it in Technorati. This will result in a listing of recent blog posts tagged with "knowledge management".

All that's required is exploring the resulting list to see which blogs are focused on knowledge management and discuss it most of the time. An important aspect of this search is to have a look at each blog's blogroll, a list of links to other blogs on similar and related topics. Eventually, a community of more than 20 blogs covering the relevant subjects can be easily found.

3.1.2 Analyzing Content

After locating the blog community, the next step is to analyze the content being published both in posts and in the comments section since that will determine the quality of the discussions and also will indicate how knowledgeable the community is about the topic being discussed. Looking at the content also shows how diverse the opinions available are.

3.1.3 Observing Activity

Besides content quality, the level of activity is also important. Blog communities that post frequently and almost daily are the ones with very vibrant and lively discussions. They have momentum and are usually very passionate about what they discuss given that they spend a lot of time researching and writing about it.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Setting up the Blog

Setting up one's own blog is the first step involved in the implementation stage. If one chooses to have a basic set-up then registering for a free blog at available services like Wordpress.com and Google's Blogger is the ideal option. However, for the purpose of this research, I decided against going with a basic set-up and opting instead for a professional approach which involves a number of aspects.

When entering a community of bloggers, one needs to become a contributor through commenting and also by publishing posts on his or her own blog. The more value a contributor can provide, the better the learning experience and discussions will be.

Furthermore, commenting on other blogs will attract traffic to one's newly implemented blog. Traffic is very essential because without it there is no readership and without a readership, there can't be any discussion.

4.1.1 Getting a Domain Name and Selecting a Platform

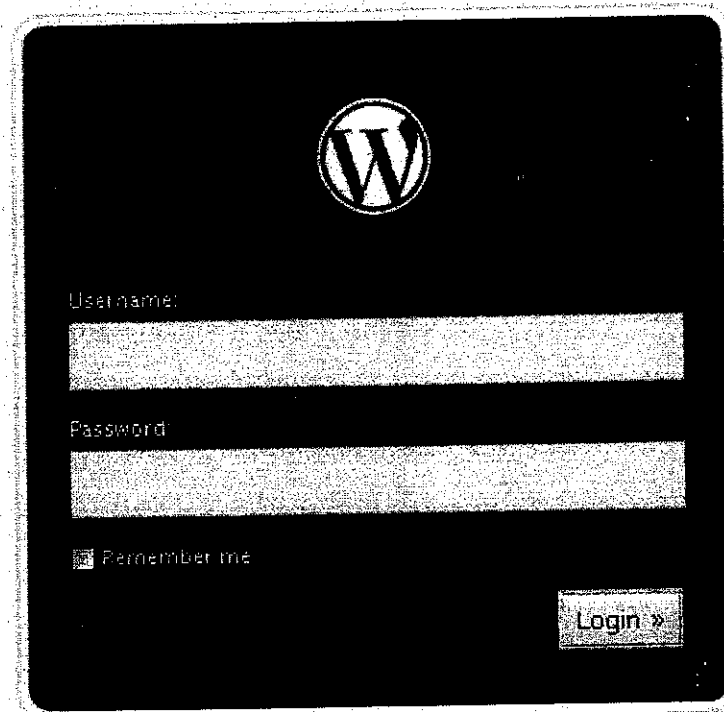
Most blogs are hosted on websites like WordPress.com and Google's Blogger.com for free. Professional bloggers however who are serious and dedicated get their own domain names and paid hosting.

As a result I decided to implement the blog, PassionBasedLearning.com by following the professional method since it creates stronger credibility in the eyes of new readers. New readers tend to take a blog with its own bought domain name more

seriously than free blogs. Moreover, going for paid hosting provides much more flexibility in designing the blog and customizing its important features.

The chosen system to use is the WordPress open-source blogging platform which is very popular amongst many highly influential bloggers. The platform is designed with MySQL, PHP, CSS and HTML, and is rather easy even for an amateur programmer to modify.

A great aspect about WordPress is that it also has thousands of available plug-ins designed by its countless fans worldwide. These plug-ins add up extra functionality to the system. They can turn it from a simple yet very sufficient blogging platform into a full-fledged and powerful content management system.



[Back to Passion-Based Learning](#)

[Lost your password?](#)

Figure 6 A typical WordPress login page

4.1.2 Writing Solid Content

Before starting to market the blog, it must contain a few good posts with solid and well-written content. This will make new readers and visitors to the blog, stick around longer and explore it which will in turn convert some of them into becoming regular readers and commenters.

Another important aspect to writing solid content is that it is precisely this type of useful content that receives links and mentions from others blogs. Links bring traffic and are a form of social interaction in the blogosphere.

Furthermore, words are essentially how you express yourself and personality. Just as in real life, if one is shy and doesn't communicate clearly, getting ideas across won't be easy. The same thing applies online. Quality content is king.

Copyrighting one's original content is also something important. A popular and simple way to do that on the internet is with Creative Commons copyright licenses.

4.1.3 Design

The design of the blog must be content-centric which means that it should make the content easy to read. For example, having red text against a purple background is very bad content-centric design because it makes reading very difficult. However, the usual black text against a white background is much more readable.



Figure 7 The design of the implemented blog

4.1.4 Search Engine Optimization

There are tricks one can apply when designing the blog to make it easier for search engine spiders to crawl on it and hence index its content in high ranking positions in search engines.

For instance, people searching for knowledge management, learning and personal development related articles on search engines like Google and Yahoo will see the links to relevant posts that I write containing the keywords they are looking for. That will slowly build up traffic to the site from search engine.

Over time, this traffic can contribute a lot to the blog but more notably, it's free traffic that doesn't cost any money to attract. In addition to that, the traffic is from the target market I want to promote the blog to – people interested in learning, knowledge management and personal development.

There are numerous ways to optimize a blog for higher rankings in search engines. The first is to make sure that the titles of posts are surrounded by the <h1> HTML code. Search engine crawlers give more priority to relevant keywords wrapped by <h1> codes. A second method is to include popular keywords people search in the titles and content of blog posts. Furthermore, pinging and submitting the blog to be indexed quickly in the webmaster sections of Google and Yahoo helps the blog get better rankings in search engines.

The follow is a table showing the changes made to some portions of code for improved SEO. The posts' titles were originally wrapped in H2 tags in the open-source WordPress design I chose.

BEFORE
<div class="post-title"> <h2><a href="<?php the_permalink() ?>" rel="bookmark" title="Permanent Link to <?php the_title(); ?>"><?php the_title(); ?></h2>
AFTER
<div class="post-title"> <h1><a href="<?php the_permalink() ?>" rel="bookmark" title="Permanent Link to <?php the_title(); ?>"><?php the_title(); ?></h1>


Table 1 SEO code modification

Together with solid content and incoming links from other blogs, the above methods work well hand in hand to boost the search engine rankings of the blog and hence attract traffic and a targeted readership.

4.2 Highlighting RSS Subscription Options

A blog's Rich Site Summary (RSS) should be very visible and highlighted. A blogger should always encourage readers to subscribe to the feed. Feedburner is a service that lets bloggers track how many people are subscribed to each of their blogs. It also shows the daily activity of how many people burned the feeds and read material from the blogs.

This is how individual posts look with the Feedburner RSS subscription options highlighted at the end of each one:

 Don't Miss a Single Post, [Subscribe to the RSS feed](#) or by Email TODAY! :-)

Enter Your Email Address:

[Send Me FREE Content](#)
Delivered by [FeedBurner](#)

10 Responses

Tiara

lol @ "I hope you disagree"

For me, it's not so much whether you agree or disagree with something, because with many issues it's not a two-sided thing. What comes really helpful is people sharing their own perspectives of the issue - often it's one that you haven't considered yet, and it fleshes out the issue and generates more creativity.

sterling | bizlift

Amir, nice topic. Sorry to disappoint you and agree with the post. :-)

People generally don't like to move out of their comfort zone. That's why they subscribe to media that supports their view of the world. It's why the world laughs at us Americans for eating at McDonalds when in Europe. :-)

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Figure 8 An example of a blog post

4.3 Promoting the Blog

Now that the blog is ready, the next step is to promote it.

4.3.1 Commenting On Other Blogs

The easiest and quickest way to promote one's blog is to comment on other big ones with large readerships discussing similar topics. Using Technorati, I found great blogs and began contributing in their comments section. I gave my opinions about the blogger's posts and interacted with other commenters. It's a form of social interaction and networking.

4.3.2 Emails to Fellow Bloggers

After creating a list of about 50 blogs with shared interests, blogging about the same topics my blog is focused on, I began emailing the bloggers to introduce myself as someone who is new in the "neighborhood". This creates awareness amongst those bloggers in my field, that there is a new one who just started out. Creating familiarity is useful since it doesn't make me seem like a stranger.

4.3.3 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is a very powerful way of promoting websites and blogs online. This is because there are many social media sites available on the internet now covering a wide a range of topics. Many of them have millions of signed up members who discuss different topics which are categorized by the community using folksonomies. There are many big social media websites on the internet and I chose to focus my attention on two of the most popular ones.

Digg:

Digg is a huge website containing socially-driven content. Stories and blog posts are submitted which makes them appear in the "Upcoming Stories" sections of the site. If users like the story, they vote for it. If they don't like it, they bury it.

When a story or blog post gets enough votes, a headline linking to it goes to the main page which then makes the thousands of people who are online at any given time click on it and visit the website or blog. This drives a lot of traffic and new readership. Besides voting and burying stories, Digg's users also interact with each other and forward one another useful stories.

StumbleUpon:

StumbleUpon is a little similar to Digg. Users submit a story and if they like it, they give it a "thumbs up" vote and if they dislike it, a "thumbs down". A "thumbs up" vote is basically a recommendation to other readers. Every time you click "Stumble", StumbleUpon takes you to a random website related to your interest which you can then vote for and review. If enough people vote positively for a story, video, picture, or blog post, the system will send significant traffic in hundreds and sometimes even thousands of people. I submitted my own blog posts from time to time.

StumbleUpon
Discover new sites

Home Websites People Videos

Welcome AmirAhmad86
Likes: 77 pages, 0 video, 2 Photos + 32 fans

What's New Favorites Friends Inbox

Favorites » My Blog

New Feature! We are now showing thumbnails of websites you rated on your blog. We have turned this feature on for you. To change settings for how you view blogs, [click here](#).

Post to Blog Blogged Pages Liked Discovered Top Picks

& 7 Steps to Becoming a Self-Taught Expert of Your Desired Domain
Mar 23, 7:20pm 2 reviews education, self-improvement, learning, personal-development
<http://passionbasedlearning.com/2008/03/7-steps-to-becoming-a-self-taught-e>
Four out of the top 10 richest men in the world are drop outs. They succeeded through self-educ.

& The 7 Great Things Blogging Did for Me and Can Do for You
Feb 25, 4:22am 2 reviews internet, writing, blogging
<http://passionbasedlearning.com/2008/02/blogging-benefits/>
A post about the great benefits of blogging.

Scott H Young & Productivity Tips from High-School Chemistry: Build...
Feb 25, 10:31pm 1 review self-improvement, motivation
<http://www.scotthyyoung.com/blog/2008/02/25/productivity-tips-from-high-scho>
Catalysts lower the energy needed to trigger a reaction. Similarly, a motivation catalyst lowers th
you need to get started.

Preblog
Feb 25, 9:06pm 1 review internet-tools, self-improvement, bloggin
personal-development
<http://preblog.magn8.com/>
Blog about tomorrow as though it happened yesterday.

Blog Marketing: Monetize The Comments On Your Blog
Feb 25, 5:00pm 1 review internet, blogging
<http://blog.mindvalleylabs.com/blog-marketing-monetize-the-comments-on-you>

Figure 9 Snapshot of my StumbleUpon account

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I launched the blog on 31st January and so far the results have been positive. The online promotion efforts have been successful, especially ones focused on using StumbeUpon.

5.1 Traffic Results and the Blog's Status

As of 13th April there are 17 posts and 86 comments which is an average of 5.4 comments per post.

Published Piece	Number
Post	17
Comment	86

Table 2 Blog's status

The total number of visits has been 8,474 mostly from the United States. The page views are 14,760. This data is measure by Google Analytics, a free web application that tracks a website's incoming traffic and analyzes it. The highest number of RSS subscribers recorded by Feedburner is 100.

Readership Stats	Number of hits and views
Visits	8,474
Page views	14,760
RSS subscriptions	100

Table 3 Readership and traffic stats

5.2 Social Media Marketing Results

The results of social media marketing are encouraging. I did a decent amount of networking online through Digg and especially StumbleUpon with people sharing similar interests related to the topics the implemented blog covers.



Figure 10 Snapshot of StumbleUpon friends

As the figure above shows, I befriended 92 people and I was befriended by 32 who kept track of my blog and what I Stumbled.

5.3 SEO Results

The results of search engine optimization weren't noticeable and I believe this is because the blog is still new. To rank well in search engines, a blog needs to have a good number of incoming links and since the blog has only been recently established there aren't many incoming links as would be preferred.

5.4 Results of Commenting On Other Blogs

Commenting on the numerous blogs I read had a significant contribution to traffic. With the exception of one very large one, most blogs contributed small amounts of traffic. However when added up, the traffic received is significant.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

During the project, I learned more about the subjects I covered through reading other similar blogs and also by engaging with commenters. By measuring, the current level of participation and emails I've received, it is evident that blogging and the blog implemented for the purpose of this study, are indeed useful knowledge sharing tools. The 100 RSS subscribers are social proof that people found the blog beneficial. Furthermore so is the positive feedback received from the Digg community. As explained previously, when a post is submitted to Digg, people can "Digg it" if they like it or "Burry it" if they don't. The following figure is further proof of the positive impression.

And there you have it...

That's basically it! Take your time and apply those steps to create the personal learning environment you desire. Embrace this powerful system of free web-based services, immerse yourself and like a sponge, absorb all you can. You may also compliment your diet of blogs posts and articles with other forms of media such as podcasts and videos. Last but not least act on what you've learned.

If you liked this post please share it on del.icio.us or vote for it on Digg, I'd heartily appreciate it.



Figure 11 Example of a post that was well-received

As demonstrated above, that particular blog post received 99 Diggs after I requested from readers to vote for it.

Here is the same post at the Digg website:

The screenshot shows the Digg website interface. At the top is a navigation bar with the Digg logo and links for 'Join Digg', 'About', and 'Login'. Below this is a category menu with 'All', 'News', 'Videos', 'Images', 'Podcasts', and 'Customize'. A secondary menu includes 'Technology', 'World's Smartest', 'Science', 'Gaming', 'Lifestyle', and 'Entertainment'. A large advertisement for 'PROGRESSIVE DIRECT' is visible on the right side of the header. Below the header, a banner encourages users to 'Discover the best of the web!' and 'Learn more about Digg by taking the tour.' The main content area features a post titled '7 Easy Steps to Create a Personal Learning Environment' by 'supernova17', submitted 67 days ago. The post has 99 diggs and 1 digg it. The description of the post is: 'passionbasedlearning.com — A personal learning environment (PLE) is a helps learners manage and take control of their own learning. It includes communicating with others learning the same thing you are. A PLE c steroids. It makes it fun and increases productivity.' Below the post, there are links for 'Comments (3)', 'Who Dugg or Blogged It?', and 'Blog It'. A 'Global Setting' link is also present. Two comments are visible: one by 'adrian67' on 02/05/2008 saying 'Really interesting reading - thanks for sharing.', and another by 'AmirAhmad86' on 02/06/2008.

digg Join Digg About Login

All News Videos Images Podcasts Customize

Technology World's Smartest Science Gaming Lifestyle Entertainment

PROGRESSIVE DIRECT Start your s
You could s
ZIP Code:

Discover the best of the web!
Learn more about Digg by [taking the tour](#).

99 diggs 1 digg it

7 Easy Steps to Create a Personal Learning Environment

passionbasedlearning.com — A personal learning environment (PLE) is a helps learners manage and take control of their own learning. It includes communicating with others learning the same thing you are. A PLE c steroids. It makes it fun and increases productivity.

Submitted: 67 days ago

Submitter: [supernova17](#)

Share: [Share](#)

Bury It: [Bury](#)

Comments (3) Who Dugg or Blogged It? Blog It

[Global Setting](#)

by [adrian67](#) on 02/05/2008

Really interesting reading - thanks for sharing.

by [AmirAhmad86](#) on 02/06/2008

Figure 12 A snapshot of a well-received post at Digg

The study clearly demonstrates that blogging as a means of knowledge sharing should be taken very seriously. It works and is increasingly being adopted by major organizations and educational institutions as a good method of learning.

It is best when carried out as a self-initiative driven by a passion to learn new things. The reward of learning new things is already an incentive and doing it on the vast open internet is very possible and easy.

Besides demonstrating the benefits of blogging for knowledge sharing, the study also demonstrates the benefits of using social media sites like StumbleUpon for networking with like-minded individuals and gaining exposure for a newly launched blog.

The best way of finding out the great benefits is by experiencing the exercise of blogging itself. Once someone delves into it and begins using blogs for learning, the benefits involved become very obvious.

For the purpose of future related researches, it would be interesting to carry out the outlined steps in this study but instead of doing so individually; they can be done in a group so that each individual's results can be compared with the rest. This, I believe, will contribute to a more accurate conclusion.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TRAFFIC DETAILS

www.passionbasedlearning.com/
Dashboard

Jan 31, 2008 - Apr 12, 2008
Comparing to: Site



Site Usage

8,474 Visits

14,760 Pageviews

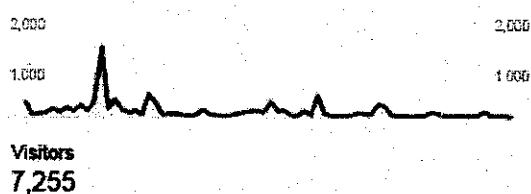
1.74 Pages/Visit

49.01% Bounce Rate

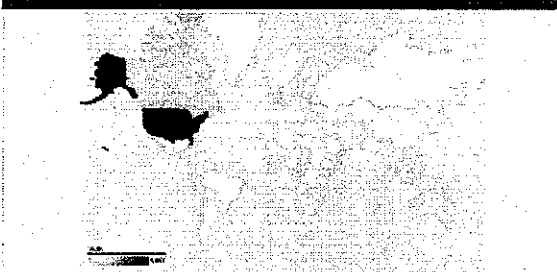
00:01:50 Avg. Time on Site

85.57% % New Visits

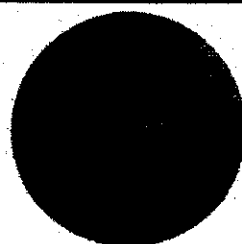
Visitors Overview



Map Overlay world



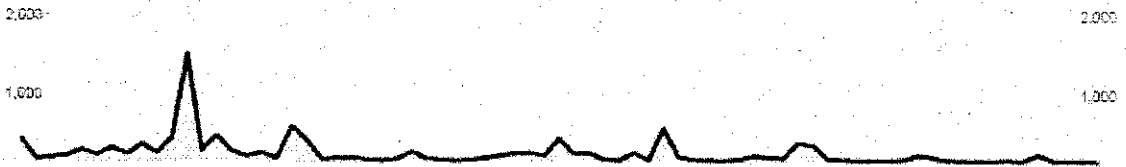
Traffic Sources Overview



■ Referring Sites
7,292 (86.05%)
■ Direct Traffic
688 (10.48%)
■ Search Engines
294 (3.47%)

Content Overview

Pages	Pageviews	% Pageviews
/2008/01/the-undentably-	4,237	28.71%
/	3,274	22.18%
/2008/02/how-to-overcome-	1,272	8.62%
/2008/02/create-a-personal-	1,117	7.57%
/2008/02/3-steps-to-revive-your	999	6.77%



7,255 people visited this site

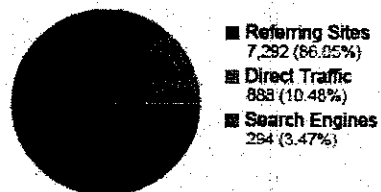
- 8,474 Visits
- 7,255 Absolute Unique Visitors
- 14,760 Pageviews
- 1.74 Average Pageviews
- 00:01:50 Time on Site
- 49.01% Bounce Rate
- 85.65% New Visits

Technical Profile

Browser	Visits	% visits	Connection Speed	Visits	% visits
Firefox	6,974	82.30%	Cable	3,392	40.03%
Internet Explorer	1,203	14.20%	DSL	1,974	23.29%
Safari	210	2.48%	Unknown	1,766	20.84%
Opera	39	0.46%	T1	978	11.54%
Mozilla	34	0.40%	Dialup	337	3.98%

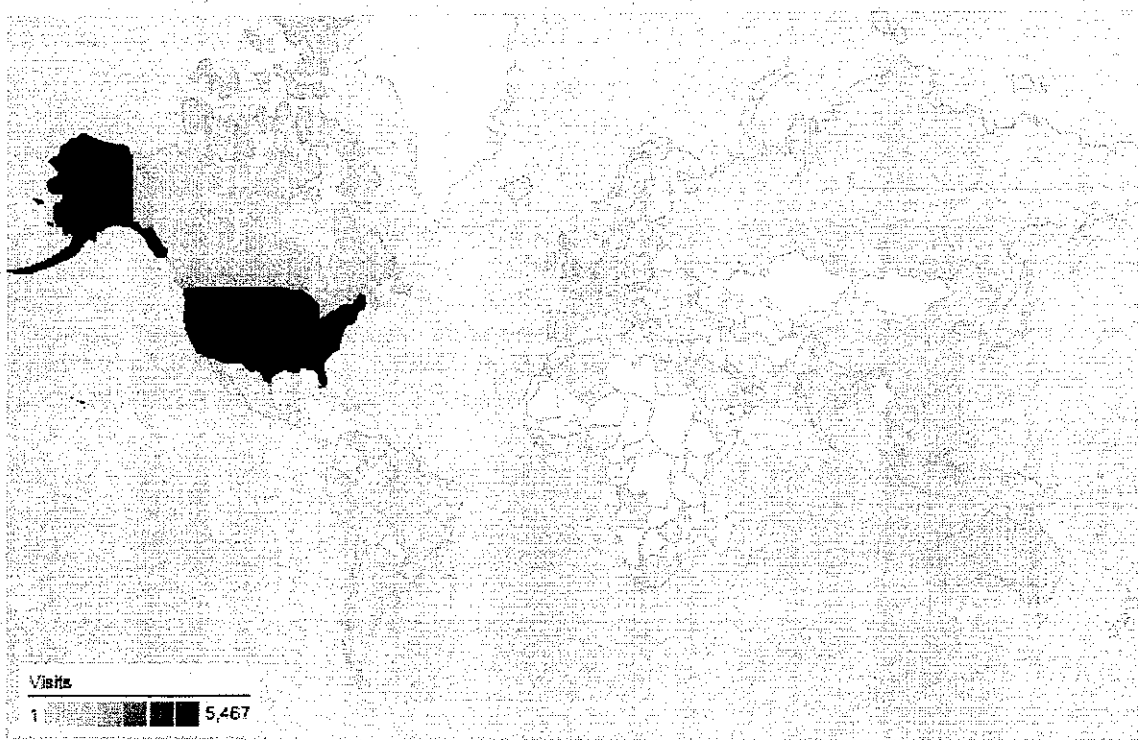
All traffic sources sent a total of 8,474 visits

- 10.48% Direct Traffic
- 86.05% Referring Sites
- 3.47% Search Engines



Top Traffic Sources

Sources	Visits	% visits	Keywords	Visits	% visits
stumbleupon.com (referral)	5,374	63.42%	passionbasedlearning	31	10.54%
(direct) ((none))	888	10.48%	passion based learning	26	9.52%
zenhabits.net (referral)	497	5.75%	passion-based learning	8	2.72%
google (organic)	276	3.26%	amir ahmad	5	1.70%
digg.com (referral)	144	1.70%	lev vegotsky	5	1.70%



8,474 visits came from 99 countries/territories

Site Usage					
Visits 8,474 % of Site Total: 100.00%	Pages/Visit 1.74 Site Avg: 1.74 (0.00%)	Avg. Time on Site 00:01:50 Site Avg: 00:01:50 (0.00%)	% New Visits 85.71% Site Avg: 85.57% (0.17%)	Bounce Rate 49.01% Site Avg: 49.01% (0.00%)	
Country/Territory	Visits	Pages/Visit	Avg. Time on Site	% New Visits	Bounce Rate
United States	5,467	1.68	00:01:14	91.59%	46.66%
Canada	664	1.71	00:01:21	88.55%	44.86%
United Kingdom	537	1.67	00:01:14	89.94%	51.40%
Malaysia	513	2.59	00:08:00	20.27%	57.89%
Australia	160	1.61	00:01:37	83.75%	61.87%
India	104	1.77	00:01:48	88.46%	61.54%
Spain	89	1.94	00:05:01	39.33%	60.67%
Germany	77	1.66	00:01:15	93.51%	50.65%
Netherlands	57	1.82	00:02:12	89.47%	59.65%
France	51	1.49	00:00:44	50.98%	64.71%