

Corporate Blogging: The Fallacy of Quantity vs Quality



Lori MacVittie, 2008-22-09

As a corporate blogger I rarely post "off topic". There's a reason for that, and a reason why I'm doing so now. The core reason for doing so now is that it's a subject that's near and dear to me, having spent the majority of the past eight years writing and blogging in publishing and on the corporate side of the table, and I see far too many posts out there offering advice about blogging that's focused solely on "getting more hits". While that might be sound advice for personal blogs, it's off-key when it comes to corporate efforts.

There is a belief, and it's wrong, that more is better - whether it's more posts or more hits - when it comes to corporate blogging. In fact, the opposite is true: quality is more important - whether it's readers or posts - than quantity.

To understand the fallacy of quantity vs quality you first have to understand the history of trade publishing, and why it's suffered so much financial pain. [Don touched on this briefly](#), having also spent a lot of time in the publishing industry (we like to work together, thank you, I know it's weird, but that's the way we are) but I'm going to expand further on the topic.



Back in the old days (print) trade publications and, if we're honest, newspapers, were all based on one of three revenue models: advertising, subscriptions, or a hybrid of both. Magazines that subsisted on advertising only managed to do so by qualifying their circulation base, thus ensuring advertisers that they were paying those high rates because the reader-based was primarily their target market.

When the Web exploded everyone demanded "free" content, including from trade publications and newspapers. The publishing industry was a bit confused and wasn't certain how to respond to the move to the web because the revenue model wasn't the same. An anonymous page view of an article is hardly equivalent to a well-qualified reader, and thus advertising revenue on the web was seriously impacted. Advertisers were no longer willing to pay the same rate for "views" because they couldn't be certain of the value of that page view; they couldn't qualify it as being part of their target market.

Advertising rates plummeted, and trade publications - and newspapers - began to drop faster than the waistlines of girls' jeans over the past few years.

The publishing industry as a whole floundered for a time, until it started to implement more *gated* content. Gated content requires you to provide certain pieces of information during the registration process before you're allowed to see the content. Some of that information is, not coincidentally, similar to that traditionally found on a qual card - the card you filled out to see if you're qualified for a "free" subscription to a trade publication. This model breathed new life into publishing, as advertisers are much more willing to sponsor micro-sites or pay higher rates for advertisements on specific types of gated content because they are more confident about the *quality* of the page view.

Corporate blogging is becoming nearly a mandate for many organizations. Its value in promoting brand awareness, thought leadership, and market education cannot - and should not - be underestimated. But it is easy to fall into the trap of correlating quantity of hits to success; e.g. a thousand hits on a blog post is better than a hundred hits on a blog post, posting every day is better than two or three times a week. Quantity is often considered more important than quality.

As the publishing industry has come to understand, and as corporations should already know because they drove the industry to understand it, the quantity of page views is less relevant than the quality of the reader, and a few good posts are better than many mediocre or irrelevant posts.

It's actually fairly easy to write a post that will make the front page of [Digg](#), or make it onto [Slashdot](#) and generate a ton of hits. Unfortunately for most corporate bloggers the kinds of posts that generate that kind of traffic and interest are rarely related to their industry and thus do not forward corporate blogging goals of brand awareness, education, or thought leadership which, in most cases, should be relevant to the industry in which a corporation operates. Unfortunately, a post exhorting the benefits of a CRM or an application delivery controller or a BI suite are just unlikely to engender that kind of attention.

Relevant, engaging content that educates and forwards corporate goals should be the goal for corporate blogging efforts. Hit counts, while certainly nice, have been proven by the trials and tribulations of the publishing industry to be an unreliable measure of success and do little for the corporation unless it's well understood where the hits are coming from.

Yes, writing relevant content often results in a lower hit count, one of the challenges discussed by [Jeremiah Owyang](#) in "[The Many Challenges of Corporate Blogging](#)". I write primarily on the subject of [application delivery](#) - from [security](#) to optimization to [acceleration](#). It isn't, for the most part, controversial, nor is it as exciting as politics so its reach and audience is much smaller than, say, something of interest to the masses. But I've learned from long experience in publishing hits from the masses aren't likely to help "forward the cause". A page view from Sally in finance is unlikely to ever really be of value because she isn't involved in IT, would likely not understand the relevance of [application delivery to the applications](#) she uses at work, and isn't likely to discuss [high availability](#) or load balancing with the guys in IT or even be able to suggest or influence the option - she probably doesn't even know IT is looking into it.

The page view from Sally is virtually worthless in terms of achieving corporate goals. The problem is that it's impossible to know if a page view came from Sally or from the CIO or IT manager responsible for architecting an [application delivery network](#).

Targeted, relevant content does a much better job of qualifying readership than general, unrelated topics. Readers of a post on [cloud computing](#) or [virtualization](#) are likely to be interested in the technology and thus their hits are both valuable and desired.

But what about brand awareness? Don't we want to get our brand "out there"?

Yes, and no. You want your brand out there, certainly, but you want it out there amidst people who will actually do something with that knowledge. You want to attract and educate non-customers who *could be customers*, not non-customers who will never, ever in a million years be customers. Mass advertising and blogging might work for a brand like [GM](#) or [Apple](#), whose products are targeted at, well, everyone. But while John Q. Farmer might enjoy listening to an [iPod](#) while he's out riding his combine, he isn't likely to give a hoot about [application delivery](#) or [information security](#) or how awesome the latest [SSL VPN](#) might be.

Blogs cannot - and should not - go the way of traditional publishing. We can't gate the content, that does us and readers a disservice. But in order to quantify success of corporate blogging initiatives it is important to qualify, somehow, whether we're reaching the audiences we want to reach. The best way to do that is to artificially gate readership through relevant, quality posts.

Choose quality over quantity. Qualify through relevancy. Let's not repeat the painful process publishing had to experience to arrive where we're at today. Don't get sidetracked from your goals by lower hit counts than you'd hoped. If you're writing quality posts and seeing little growth, you may need to reach out to your audiences rather than let them come to you. Syndication, participation in appropriate social networking sites, link and bookmark sharing, etc... are all ways to reach out to and get your content in front of the appropriate audiences.

What you want to see is consistent growth - even if it's small - over time in not only hit counts but referrals and returning and new visitors as well as lower exit and bounce rates. Hit count is only one factor that contributes to a complex calculation quantifying "success". As long as you're staying on focus and growing, you're doing it right and adding value and you can be more sure that the hits you are getting are worth the effort you're putting forward.



F5 Networks, Inc. | 401 Elliot Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119 | 888-882-4447 | f5.com

F5 Networks, Inc.
Corporate Headquarters
info@f5.com

F5 Networks
Asia-Pacific
apacinfo@f5.com

F5 Networks Ltd.
Europe/Middle-East/Africa
emeainfo@f5.com

F5 Networks
Japan K.K.
f5j-info@f5.com

©2016 F5 Networks, Inc. All rights reserved. F5, F5 Networks, and the F5 logo are trademarks of F5 Networks, Inc. in the U.S. and in certain other countries. Other F5 trademarks are identified at f5.com. Any other products, services, or company names referenced herein may be trademarks of their respective owners with no endorsement or affiliation, express or implied, claimed by F5. CS04-00015 0113