F5 Weblog Guidelines and Policy

Steven Webster, 2012-09-12

At F5, many of us do things everyday that will change the world as we unleash powerful forces that enrich networked applications. Telling the world about them in a positive, insightful, efficient, and personally interesting manner through Weblogs (aka "Blogs") will help us to further reinforce our rich history of innovation and leadership.

Blogs enable you to tell the world about you and your work - by posting periodic thoughts and information - without asking permission first. But, by providing the opportunity to speak to the world via F5 blogs without direct management oversight, we are accepting higher risks in the interest of higher rewards for you and all F5 shareholders. Further, because you may be writing about F5 in a variety of contexts, people will logically consider you a spokesperson for F5. This applies to both technical and financial community readers.

While we realize all F5 employees are adults - we don't want to micro-manage or babysit - we do require that all employees wishing to Blog read and sign our "Weblog Guidelines and Policy" to establish a common understanding of Blog responsibilities to protect you and F5.

Familiarize Yourself with Blogging

The intent of Blogs at F5 is not to get everyone "Blogging". The goal is to raise F5's voice of leadership throughout the online community where appropriate and to help customers, partners, and shareholders better understand how we can help them achieve their respective goals. To do this effectively, take a look at some of the existing F5 Blogs and other community Blogs to understand Blog tone, style, and etiquette.

Protect F5 and Yourself – Don't Share Confidential Information

This is common sense. But, just because your Blogging, it doesn't mean there is absolute freedom to say anything. Keep in mind that Non-Disclosure Agreements (from F5 and F5 customers and partners) and your Employee Confidentiality Agreement still apply when Blogging.

A good rule of thumb is that if you think mentioning something might be a breach of confidentiality, it's probably safest to assume it is. This applies to product as well as financial information about F5. If at any point you have a question, please contact your manager or F5 Legal – they will be more than happy to help you determine what F5 considers public and private information. It's always better to confirm BEFORE posting than after.

Personality (Yours!) Counts

At F5, we value the individual diversity of our world-class team. Your personal interests in addition to your professional contributions to F5 provide the basis for interesting ideas about F5 and how our technology can be utilized. While our goal is to utilize Blogs to communicate F5 information, they are also a great way to share more about you and your unique personality. Readers like to know that there are real people behind the products they purchase. The combination of your personal interests and professional efforts can work together to make your posts more interesting and appealing to a wider audience.

Financial Information – Stay Far, Far Away

Working for a publicly-traded company brings unique responsibilities for its employees. There are more rules about what you can and cannot say about F5 financial information than most of us have time to learn and understand.

Therefore, the best recommendation for mentioning financial information is DON'T. Talking about F5 revenues, profits, projections, product ship dates, roadmaps, or even our share price are all very risky for you and F5. So, just don't do it. Talking about these types of topics puts you and F5 at significant legal risk.

Your Blog Quality Reflects Directly On F5

When people read poor grammar or see spelling errors in documents, it causes them to immediately question the skills of the writer. Fortunately, there are spell and grammar-checkers for those of us prone to spelling errors and fat-finger typing. Use these tools to catch errors before posting to your Blog to keep a professional level of quality.

You will also want to keep your Blog posts clear and concise. After a few paragraphs, readers are likely to tune out and miss your main point. Here's a good technique to keep your posts clear and concise: draft them first in MS-Word (or similar) and review them a few times before pasting them into your Blog editing tool. If your post is long, consider breaking it into multiple posts.

Consider the Impact of Your Words (and the consequences)

Since anyone can read your post, assume they will. This means that you need to think through the potential consequences of the information you share. While your intent may be good, people can misunderstand or pull your words out of context and use them in unexpected ways. Here are a few examples:

> **Post**: "Really, in the end, a BIG-IP LTM 3400 will do everything a 6400 can. So, save your money. Buy the cheaper device… "
> **Unexpected Result**: F5 sales person, after properly assessing prospect requirements, is pitching a BIG-IP 6400 in front of a large group and someone in the audience points to a printout of the post and exclaims, "What? Your own employee says we don't need the more expensive gear."
> **Consequence**: Debate ensues at customer site and sales person is required to spend additional time trying to address this while regaining credibility. Worst case is that F5 loses the sale.

> **Post**: "So, I was testing the latest NIC from Vendor X and it's a total piece of junk. I switched to another and it worked flawlessly. I can't wait to get my hands on their next-gen "NIC5000" which they should have available in 6 months."
> **Unexpected Result**: Company X finds the post, is enraged, and decides to
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> 1. Cancel special pricing for their current and future products
> 2. End a mutually-beneficial relationship with F5
> 3. Decides to file a breach of confidentiality lawsuit against F5.
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> **Consequence**: The special pricing change directly affects the price of products we sell which in turn affects our financial results negatively driving share price down. Further, the lawsuit incurs high legal costs and needlessly sullies F5's public image.

> **Post**: "Everyone know that the security of software from Vendor XYZ has always been weak. So, don't trust it. Always use F5 gear with their products. Otherwise, you'll be sorry…"
> **Unexpected Result**: Vendor XYZ, who also happens to be a valued business partner, reads the post. Not only do they get upset and call into question the value of a partner that discredits then, their legal team decides it's more serious. Attorney's get involved…
> **Consequence**: There is a very serious, uncomfortable discussion with F5 management, you have to retract your statement publicly and look foolish, F5 looks stupid, and the hard work by your F5 peers is completely wasted. It could even lead to worse implications for you personally.

> **Post**: "I really like porn sites. One of my favorites is... "
> **Unexpected Result**: No one cares.
> **Consequence**: Aside from looking really stupid, is any further explanation really needed here?

Since a Blog is effectively a public space, we ask that you treat it with respect commensurate with any public community space. We expect the utmost respect for co-workers, customers, partners, and – yes – even competitors. Posting to your Blog is all about judgment. Saying things that could potentially embarrass F5 or its partners or customers is not just dangerous – it's just plain stupid.

Failure to Comply with this Policy

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We expect nothing but fantastic posts that help you and F5 achieve its business objectives. But, please be aware that the F5 may request that you temporarily limit posts to topics unrelated to the company (or, in rare cases, that you temporarily suspend Blogging altogether) if it believes this is necessary to ensure compliance with securities regulations or other laws.

Summary

Weblogs are a great opportunity for you to share ideas about technology and F5 that further reinforce our image of technology and thought leadership. We want to make it easy for you to post – without oversight or micro-management – whenever you feel inspired to. In exchange, we ask that you understand and agree to these basic principles that will protect you and F5. If at any time you have questions or need additional consultation on what is appropriate for F5 Blogs, please contact your manager or the F5 legal department.

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