

16.8: Other social media options

Blogging

A blog is a website where entries (blog posts) are typically displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogbasics (2017), defines a blog as a “frequently updated online personal journal or diary”. Blogs usually allow readers to comment on blog posts. A typical blog will feature text, images and links to other related blogs and websites.

Blogs for marketing can help you:

- Create an online identity
- Create a voice for yourself or your company
- Promote engagement with your audience
- Build a community.

Blogs can be very successful marketing tools. They’re an excellent way to communicate with staff, investors, industry members, journalists and prospective customers. Blogging also helps to foster a community around a brand, and provides an opportunity to garner immediate feedback on developments.

Corporate blog content should be:

- Industry relevant
- Appealing to your target market
- Transparent and honest
- Personal and entertaining
- Related to what’s going on in the blogosphere
- Posted regularly.

Search engines value regular, fresh content, and blogging can create just that. The more you post, the more often search engines will crawl your site looking for additional, relevant content. Basing your blog on the keyword strategy created during the SEO process can also ensure that your website ranks highly for key phrases. Blogs, by their social nature, can also increase the incoming links to your website.

Using a blog platform that is designed to be search engine-friendly is crucial to harnessing the SEO power of blogging. Some features of SEO-friendly blogging platforms:

- Each blog post should be assigned a unique page that can easily be accessed and indexed by the search engines (this is called a permalink).
- It should be possible to tag pages with keywords relevant to your SEO strategy.
- Each post should be able to have its own unique metadata (title, description and key phrases).
- Social sharing and bookmarking functionality should be built in.

Promoting your blog

Note

Cards Against Humanity used Medium in early 2017 to post about a ‘fake news’ press release after the Super Bowl. You can read more about this at: www.adweek.com/creativity/why-did-cardsagainst-humanity-air-or-not-air-a-horriblesuper-bowl-ad-about-a-potato/

List the blog in blog directories. While they’re not as popular as search engines, many Internet users visit them when looking for information. Examples include Blogarama (www.blogarama.com) and BlogCatalog (www.blogcatalog.com).

Blogs are powerful because of their reach, their archives and the trust that other consumers place in them. For a marketer, they present opportunities to learn how others perceive your brand and to engage with the audience. Some brands get this right; some get it wrong. Blogs can provide a snapshot of audience sentiment regarding a brand. Marketers can also listen to blog activity around competitors to gain market insights.

Blogging platforms that can be used to set up a blog quickly and easily include:

- WordPress (www.wordpress.com)
- Tumblr (www.tumblr.com)
- Blogger (www.blogger.com)
- Medium (<https://medium.com/>)

Note

Tumblr is a part blogging, part microblogging tool and part social community. Each user has his or her own Tumblelog where they publish short text posts, images, quotes, links, video, audio and chats. Tumblr is perfect for users who don't need a full blog, and want to publish quick multimedia posts, usually from their mobile device. If you are interested in seeing how to use this platform see this article: [How to use Tumblr www.lifewire.com/how-touse-tumblr-4049305](http://www.lifewire.com/how-touse-tumblr-4049305)

Podcasts

A podcast is a digital radio or video programme downloadable from the Internet. It is possible to subscribe to a podcast as one would to a blog. You can listen to a whole range of programmes and voices; just as blogs have allowed users to become writers without having to deal with a media channel controlled by someone else, podcasting has allowed anyone who fancies doing so to become a broadcaster. Many traditional radio shows are now also available in podcast format. Many liken the shift from traditional radio to podcasts to that of traditional TV channels to on demand online services, but at a much faster pace. Users see podcasts as the “Netflix for radio” (Main, 2016).

‘Podcatching’ software allows you to download the latest edition of any podcast you subscribe to automatically. Most people use iTunes, go to www.apple.com/itunes/store for loads more information on podcasting and a huge list of available podcasts. You can listen on your computer or transfer the file to an iPod or MP3 player. Podcasts are usually free, and the most successful ones have very high quality content and production value.

Podcasts are usually recorded and edited using home equipment, and are done for the love of it. Specialised podcasting software is available, such as Apple’s Garage Band or QuickTime Pro. These packages make it quite simple to record, mix and format the audio files correctly. Just like bloggers, though, many podcasters are trying to figure out ways of making money from their podcasts and turn listeners into revenue.

21% of Americans have listened to a podcast in the last month, which is the same number of Americans that use Twitter. In addition, 75% of podcast listeners take action on a sponsored message, which creates a huge potential audience for your marketing messages (Main, 2016). Podcasts thus offer an incredible opportunity for marketers. The bottom line is that you now have a way of getting content to your target markets without having to persuade a media channel to carry it or to pay huge advertising rates.

Podcasts are:

- **Targetable:** You can create highly relevant, niche content and then promote it to a specific target market.
- **Measurable:** You can see exactly how many downloads and subscribers you have.
- **Controllable:** It’s your content.
- **Responsive:** Set up a blog alongside your podcast and alter content according to the comments; you are actually having a conversation with your market.
- **Boundary free:** It’s the Internet.
- **Relatively inexpensive:** The equipment, software and skills are readily and cheaply available, and there are few or no distribution costs.

However, the content must be:

- **Excellent quality:** Like anything on the Internet, it is just as easy to unsubscribe as it is to subscribe. Quality content is what keeps listeners coming back.
- **Real and valuable:** While there is value in having product or service information embedded in a website, there is no point at all in producing an audio version of a company brochure as a regular podcast. Even if editorial is not actually paid for, a lot of the time it has been influenced in some way by advertisers. Although there are podcasts that carry adverts, users can fast forward straight past them and the chance of real success lies in branded content.

This is not about advertising or even just product information. It is about coming up with ideas for real programmes that, through informing or entertaining, enhance your customers’ experience of your brand. Refer to the chapter on [Content marketing](#) for more

on creating non-promotional content that generates real value for customers.

It is also worth noting that brands do not need to make their own podcasts. A number of companies are advertising on other podcasts and doing well. In fact podcasts have become entry points for media consumers for plenty of brands. And with the audience growing rapidly, it is a strong channel that shouldn't be ignored (Main, 2016).

Bookmarking and aggregating

If there are websites you visit often, or that you would like to keep as a reference to come back to, it is easy to use your browser to 'bookmark' them. This means that you store the URL so that you can locate it again easily. It also gives you a personal library of websites that you can store on your computer.

Social bookmarking sites, however, allow you to store these links online, use tags to describe them, and share these lists with other users. Some of these sites allow you to submit URLs that other users vote on, while others allow you to use the tags saved to browse through the lists and libraries that have been generated.

Websites that encourage users to submit content to bookmarking and aggregating sites use chiclets. These are buttons placed around the content that make it easier to submit and share the article. These services allow you to see what the community of web users finds useful, interesting or humorous. You are able to find other users with similar interests to yours, and explore the websites that they have found that you might not have come across yet.

Content submitted to a social bookmarking or aggregating site can dramatically increase traffic to a website, and expose the site to many new views.

Seeing how users categorise your content will give you an idea of how your audience perceives your website and company. It may be remarkably different to how you think they see you. Look at other websites which are tagged similarly. You may find new competitors, and possibly new ideas. You can also use these services to share what URLs your company finds interesting. This can be a useful resource to add to an online press room, as well as a utility that fanatics of your company would get really excited about.

To generate links and traffic, investigate the sort of content for which your target audience loves voting, and create that content. A word of warning: never do the content submission and voting yourself. It's one sure-fire way to incur the wrath of these communities. Organic growth is the only way to go here. It may take time as you build your reputation and value among the community, but the end result can be very worthwhile.

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