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Susan J. Getgood
Social media marketing consultant



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Professional Blogging FOR **DUMMIES®**

by Susan Getgood

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About the Author

Susan Getgood has been involved in online marketing since the early '90s, and watched the Web evolve from the first browsers to the interactive communities people participate in today. Since 2004, she has helped organizations integrate social media into their marketing strategies to meet their customers online, build their brands, and drive revenue.

Prior to founding her consulting practice, Susan held a variety of corporate marketing and management roles including Senior Vice President of Marketing at Internet software company SurfControl, General Manager of Cyber Patrol, and Director of Corporate Communications at The Learning Company.

Her professional marketing blog, where she writes about blogger outreach, social media, and marketing strategy, is Marketing Roadmaps (<http://getgood.com/roadmaps>). She also writes a personal blog, Snapshot Chronicles (<http://snapshotchronicles.com>), and a family travel blog, Snapshot Chronicles Roadtrip (<http://snapshotchronicles.com/roadtrip>).

Susan was named a Fellow of the Society for New Communications Research in 2008, and speaks regularly at social media conferences like BlogHer, Mom 2.0, and New Comm Forum. She is a co-founder of blog ethics and education initiative, Blog with Integrity (www.blogwithintegrity.com), and was a contributing editor for BlogHer's Fall 2009/Winter 2010 Digital Parenting/Family Connections project.

She lives in a suburban setting that includes a big backyard full of birds, including two Downy Woodpeckers who are extremely possessive about their territory and have been known to chase off much larger birds. She has two cats who are very interested in making the acquaintance of the birds and spend much of the day plotting, a ten-year-old son whose role model is Chuck Bartowski, and several Scottish Terriers who are determined to trap a skunk of their very own under the deck, so they can play with it any time they want.

Susan loves to talk about blogging and social media, and looks forward to hearing from the readers of *Professional Blogging For Dummies*. You can contact her at sgetgood@getgood.com or on Twitter at @sgetgood. More information about her consulting and speaking services is available at <http://getgood.com>.

Dedication

To my mother Sandra and my son Douglas. Mum, because she's been my first reader my entire life. And Douglas, because he's the most important one.

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Foreword

Over five years ago when I first met Susan Getgood, the term *professional blogging* might have seemed almost oxymoronic. Sure, there were a handful of bloggers who had been hired by forward-thinking companies to write nascent “corporate” blogs. There were a couple of blog networks that hired bloggers to churn out regular content. There were a couple of advertising and affiliate marketing options out there (most of them low-paying) through which a handful of very large individual bloggers made some actual money.

But the average blogger wasn’t motivated by monetization. The average company wasn’t thinking about how to engage with bloggers. And the average reader didn’t consider their favorite bloggers to be professionals, let alone *brands*.

A lot has changed in five years.

Today, the vast majority of the largest businesses are active in some way with social media. They have blogs, Twitter accounts, and Facebook fan pages. They advertise on blogs and hire PR firms to conduct *blogger relations*.

Today, blogging and social media savvy is a highly sought-after job skill.

Today, the opportunities for bloggers have exploded.

What hasn’t changed in these last five years is the fact that most bloggers are still motivated by passion and commitment. And the best professional bloggers have as much passion and commitment as the ardent hobbyist.

So, driven by passion and commitment, and presented with numerous, sometimes competing opportunities . . . how can bloggers make the most of their opportunities in the most sustainable, professional way possible?

Whether you’re newly drawn to the blogosphere and its opportunities, or wanting to take your blogging to the next level, this book is a comprehensive guide to how to do just that.



A lot has changed in five years. These are exciting times, and I can't think of anyone better to give you great advice on joining the ranks of professional bloggers than Susan Getgood . . . a veteran marketer, long-time blogger, and leading voice on best practices for businesses and bloggers alike.

Elisa Camahort Page, co-founder and COO, BlogHer, Inc.

Introduction

According to the Pew Research Center Internet & American Life Project, nearly 80 percent of U.S. adults use the Internet. These people use search engines to find information, consult review sites for product recommendations, make travel arrangements, and read blogs. With numbers as large as these, big business has embraced online marketing through blogs and social networks in a big way: More than 90 percent of the Fortune 500 companies use social media in some fashion and nearly 16 percent publish blogs.

On the other hand, small businesses and individuals have had difficulty tapping into this mother lode. Small businesses typically don't have big budgets to devote to experimental marketing programs. Every dollar matters, and the new online forms are largely unproven.

You may have heard stories about professional bloggers, such as Heather Armstrong (www.dooce.com) and Darren Rowse (www.problogger.com), who make a great living from their blogs. Maybe you have an idea you want to try or perhaps you built a successful hobby blog, but just don't know where to start to make the blog work as a business.

This book offers small businesses and individuals practical guidance for successfully using a blog in, for, and as a business. I can't make you a success or deliver a six-figure blogging income, but this book can point you in the right direction.

About This Book

You don't have to read this book from front to back, but you might want to. *Professional Blogging For Dummies* follows a chronological progression that mirrors the steps of building a professional blog.

I start with what you need to think about when you decide to do a blog, provide an overview of the different ways you can make money with your blog, and then move into a step-by-step guideline for building the blog. I conclude with tips for maximizing your blog's success with the right promotion, measurement, and content strategies.

Of course, each chapter also stands alone, so you can use this book as a reference. I divided chapters into sections to make it easy to find the specific information you need to accomplish a particular task.

The best part about the book? I chocked it full of real-life examples of people just like you who have built successful blogs and were gracious enough to share their experiences with me so that I could share them with you.

Foolish Assumptions

Every author writes for an audience. In fact, that's one of the things I cover in this book. And at some point, the author has to make a few assumptions about her readers. These are my main assumptions about you:

- ✓ You have a hobby, passion, or idea and think you want to start a professional blog. Maybe you have a hobby blog that you want to monetize.
- ✓ You have a computer with high-speed Internet access and know how to use your Web browser and a word-processing application.
- ✓ You may already read blogs and participate in social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Conventions Used in This Book

I know that doing something the same way over and over again can get boring, but sometimes consistency is a good thing. For one thing, consistency makes stuff easier to understand. In this book, those consistent elements are *conventions*:

- ✓ When I type URLs within a paragraph, they look like this: `www.wiley.com`.
- ✓ When I want you to type something or give you steps to follow, they appear in **bold**.
- ✓ New terms appear in *italic* the first time they're used. Thank the copy editor!

How This Book Is Organized

This book is organized into five parts. If you're just getting started with your first blog, you probably want to read the chapters in order. If you already have an established blog and are just trying to understand how to monetize or promote it, Parts II and IV are the most important parts.

No matter what, be sure to read Chapter 3. That chapter has important information about the impact of the Federal Trade Commission's guidelines for endorsements and testimonials on professional blogs.

Part I: Getting Started with the Business of Blogging

Part I examines blogging at the professional level and explains how a blog can help you promote your existing business or create a new blog-based business. Practical guidance includes setting objectives, identifying your audience, analyzing your competition, and defining a unique niche for your professional blogging effort. I also provide an overview of legal issues that impact your blog, including U.S. laws regarding copyright, online advertising, and privacy.

Part II: Making Money with Your Blog

Part II is all about how to make money with your blog. Chapter 4 is an overview of the options, and the subsequent chapters delve into each area — sales, consulting, advertising, and paid posts — in detail. I include real-world examples throughout so you can hear from people just like you who have developed successful blogs.

Part III: Building Your Blog, Step by Step

Part III covers the things you need to do before you can develop your blog, from how to choose your blog name, software, and Web hosting to making decisions about the design. This part also goes over the key milestones in developing (or redesigning) your blog, including a step-by-step checklist you can use to monitor your progress.

Part IV: Maximizing Your Blog's Success

After you build your blog, get the word out and start building your community of readers. Part IV covers blog promotion strategies, search engine optimization, working with marketers, and measurement. Because launching the blog is only the beginning, I offer some suggestions for how to grow your blog and keep it fresh.

Part V: The Part of Tens

Like all *For Dummies* books, this one has a Part of Tens. These chapters list ten common mistakes and how to avoid them, ten blogs you can benefit from simply by reading (I have), and ten tips for jump-starting your creativity. Some of the most important advice in the book is found here.

Professional Blogging For Dummies survey

In 2008, Technorati reported that the top reasons bloggers blog are to

- ✓ Speak their mind
- ✓ Share their expertise
- ✓ Connect with like-minded people
- ✓ Keep friends and family updated

And in 2009, Technorati probed into the financial side of blogging and reported that only 17 percent of bloggers derive their primary income from blogging, largely from advertising and affiliate marketing. (See <http://technorati.com/blogging/article/day-4-blogging-revenues-brands-and>.)

Not wanting to base my conclusions on Technorati alone, I conducted a little original research into the subject, using online survey tool SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com). My survey objective was simple: To give you a snapshot of what people just like you do with their blogs. The best way to use the data is as an indicator of general trends among bloggers.

To solicit respondents, I reached out through my blog, Facebook, and Twitter, clearly describing the survey as a survey of independent, individual, or small-business bloggers, to be used as data for this book. A number of my friends and colleagues also passed the word onto their fans and followers.

My conclusions: It's a smaller sample than a national polling organization would have, but it's sufficient to confirm the Technorati results — that a fairly small percentage of bloggers earn their livings from their blogs.

In conjunction with the in-depth case-study interviews in the book, the survey also paints a good picture of what's going on with blogging. You don't have to ask 139 bloggers what they're doing to measure results or promote their blogs. I did it for you.

To see the complete results from this survey, check out my blog Marketing Roadmaps (<http://getgood.com/roadmaps>).

e-Cheat Sheet

The e-Cheat Sheet (www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/professionalblogging) pulls together important checklists, such as setting your professional blogging objectives, creating your editorial mission, and working on blog development.

Icons Used in This Book

To make your experience with this book even easier, I use various icons in the margins to indicate particular points of interest.



A lot of the content in *Professional Blogging For Dummies* is informative and requires you to do more digging into your situation before you can take action. However, sometimes I give you specific suggestions on how to do something more effectively. When I do, I mark that info with this Tip icon.



This icon is a friendly reminder of an important point you want to make sure that you keep in mind.



This icon is the equivalent of an exclamation point. I use this icon to alert you to things that aren't as obvious as perhaps they should be. Think of this icon as a Remember icon with a big red flag attached.



I use this icon when I get a bit more geeky than usual to highlight technical information or steps. If you already know how to do whatever the topic is or aren't as geeky as I am, please feel free to ignore it.

Where to Go from Here

Time to just dig in. If you're new to blogging, I highly recommend that you start at the beginning and at least read Part I before you start skipping around.

If you have a blog and are looking for advice on

- ✓ **Monetization:** Read Part II.
- ✓ **Redesigning your site:** Go to Part III.
- ✓ **Promoting your blog:** Check out Part IV.

You can find more tips on the e-Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/professionalblogging. I also write about these topics on my own blog, Marketing Roadmaps (<http://getgood.com/roadmaps>).

I'd love to check out your blog! Drop me a note about your experiences at sgetgood@getgood.com (or on Twitter via @sgetgood). I especially want to hear about anything you want added to this book.

Part I

Getting Started with the Business of Blogging

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Before the Internet, we were only bustin' chops locally. But now, with our blog we're bustin' chops all over the world."

In this part . . .

part I starts with an examination of blogging at the professional level, and explains how a blog can help promote your existing business or create a new blog-based business.

I give practical guidance on setting your objectives, identifying your audience, and analyzing your competition so you can define a unique niche for your professional blogging effort.

And because you need to know U.S. laws regarding copyright, online advertising, and privacy, I cover those topics as well and recommend best practices for use with your blog.