

Blogs, Blogs & More Blogs

By Heather Jacobson (www.valleyva.net , www.varevolution.com , www.blogmavens.com)

[mlzambos] Hello and welcome to our Discussion on Blogs, Blogs, & More Blogs.

[crystal] slash refresh 3

[mlzambos] First some basic instructions. If you need to change the refresh rate then type /refresh # where the # is seconds between each refresh do not go below 3. The Default is 5 seconds which is a good rate

[mlzambos] If you are on FireFox the chat will be in reverse. You need to switch over to IE to have the new items at the bottom and the older at the top.

[mlzambos] Anyone need me to wait while you change over to IE

[mlzambos] If you need to see more lines then type /show ### with the number of line you want to see.

[mlzambos] When we get to the Q&A section please type ? if you have a question and then I will call on you to ask your question so that it won't get lost in the mix of things. This will be done through the on board Private Messaging System.

[mlzambos] I will be Archiving this chat at the end for everyone to see also.

[mlzambos] Thank you for coming this morning.

[mlzambos] Heather Jacobson is the founder of Valley Virtual Assisants, (www.ValleyVA.net) catering to Solopreneurs who need assistance with their marketing efforts.

[mlzambos] Heather brings to the table her skills in marketing, sales, and business development as she partners with like-minded business owners who have set no limits on the success they can achieve.

[mlzambos] While the business is relatively new, the experience possessed by Heather and her team expands across many years and multiple industries.

[mlzambos] Valley Virtual Assistants (www.valleyva.net) is about automation, and automating as many processes as possible. This saves her time and saves the client money!

[mlzambos] The author of Making Dollars Out of Cents: 101 Tips for the Frugal Marketer, Heather is also the publisher of the popular ezine, Marketing Made Simple,

[mlzambos] a monthly publication filled with simple marketing tactics designed to enhance one's marketing efforts. Additionally, she is a coach and co-group leader with Virtual Assistant Training.

[mlzambos] Most recently, she and partner, Becki Noles, founded the Virtual Assistant Revolution, (www.virtualassistantrevolution.com) a low- cost alternative to coaching.

[mlzambos] Heather is passionate about promoting the Virtual Assistant industry and participates in many Virtual Assistant networking organizations. She strives to help others who wish to make their businesses a success.

- [mlzambos]** In May 2006, Heather was nominated by her peers and became the first recipient of the Janet L. Jordan Award presented in association with the inaugural International Virtual Assistants Day,
- [mlzambos]** which was registered in the Chases Calendar of Events by the members of the Online International Virtual Assistants Convention (OIVAC). The Janet L. Jordan award is “to honor a newcomer
- [mlzambos]** Virtual Assistant who has been in business for less than 2 years and has reached a milestone in their short career in the industry.
- [mlzambos]** This milestone needs to be an accomplishment that has helped to boost their new business to an overwhelming success.”
- [mlzambos]** Heather they are all yours.
- [HeatherJ]** Good morning!
- [HeatherJ]** Thank you for having me to talk about blogs, a subject that I love to talk about
- [HeatherJ]** How many of you currently have a blog?
- [imyourva]** I do.
- [crystal]** not me
- [HeatherJ]** How many of you are interested in learning what a blog can do for your business?
- [jennydecki]** I do.
- [mlzambos]** Me just not active at this time.
- [didjaever]** me
- [HeatherJ]** Okay...well today I'm going to talk about successful blogging strategies.
- [HeatherJ]** For the last half-century, we are slowly evolving our habits, expectations, businesses, life-styles, needs, social interactions and self-conceptions to catch up with the computer revolution.
- [HeatherJ]** Society is still learning to express itself within and through the new tools. The blog is more than the sum of its parts. It is a tool that enables people with different tastes to come together and explore the creativity within them.
- [HeatherJ]** Blogs give you a voice to your views and expression that craves an outlet. These expressions of free emotions enable you, the blogger, and your readers to typically be "early adopters" or “trendsetters” and “opinion leaders”.
- [HeatherJ]** Blogging has taken off in a remarkable fashion. Blogs run from single person operation to large communities spread throughout the world. Besides offering a great way for readers to constantly find updated news and information, it also allows you to connect to thousands of readers in a personal way.
- [HeatherJ]** The plethora of tools available today has helped revolutionize blogging. You no longer need to hire a programmer and there are many free options out there. These are probably the reasons why they have been widely adopted and maintained.

[HeatherJ] Blogs are popular. It seems as if everyone has jumped on the proverbial blogwagon. The competition is high and the benchmarks aren't what they should be. It's no different than your business, your website, etc. You have to find a way to stand out and equally important to define and

[HeatherJ] follow strategies that could pave your way to success.

[HeatherJ] Identify Your Target Market

[HeatherJ] Your blog is no different than your business. Who are you trying to reach? Small business owners probably won't cut it. The foremost strategy to success is identifying and adapting to your target market.

[HeatherJ] Blogs are useful, but they often come with a lot of fluff. Think about it. There are at least as many opinions as there are readers, so identifying who you want to reach is key. When blogs were first introduced, readers had to sift and choose. If you knew who these readers were,

[HeatherJ] then you could adapt yourself and your content to their needs.

[HeatherJ] Also important is building trust through conversation. Conversations that build trust and awareness deliver information that is timely, relevant, and informative.

[HeatherJ] The content of your blog should create personalized conversation with readers. To do this, it is necessary to know the audience who will be reading the content.

[HeatherJ] In other words, understanding the target market is the most essential aspect before thinking about any other strategy element. Understanding your target market is knowing whom to reach and what their informational needs are.

[HeatherJ] Once this is known, you can prepare yourself to fill those needs.

[HeatherJ] Additionally, knowing your target market is allows you to plan things ahead of time. For example: even before you officially launch your blog, you can gather topics that will start the initial discussion, considering the group/community you will focus on.

[HeatherJ] It pays to work on target audience and it is important to plan, as this attracts primarily those readers who are directly interested in your services or products.

[HeatherJ] Summing it all up, effective knowledge of the target market enables you to:

[HeatherJ] • Efficiently segment the audience profile

[HeatherJ] • Gain valuable marketplace intelligence through data mining

[HeatherJ] • Know and follow evolving trends and movements

[HeatherJ] • Cater to the profile characteristics within the planned content categories

[HeatherJ] • Effectively individualize communications

[HeatherJ] Most human verbal communication is not rocket science; it's sloppy, looping, incoherent, and wordy. Blogs compare rather well to an older and more widely used communications tool, talking.

[HeatherJ] Advertising in a blog will enable you to quickly communicate with a critical mass of thinkers.

[HeatherJ] Give The Readers What They Want

- [HeatherJ]** The web gives a lot of exposure; blogs stabilize the exposure with a profound purpose. The purpose of your blog is to complement e-newsletters, serving readers in a way that extends your expertise and leadership in the market.
- [HeatherJ]** So, what is it that is expected from a blog? A blog is considered to be a place to inform and to be informed. Straight talk is what readers consider to be an ideal blog message.
- [HeatherJ]** Straight talk is a four or five sentence of direct, informative content about a specific issue or bit of news.
- [HeatherJ]** This isn't to say that you can't post a longer article. You'll notice on some of my posts I ramble. But I have something to say and it's not anything that I don't think my readers will find valuable. You'll notice most of my longer posts are rants about customer service.
- [HeatherJ]** A blogger should always remember that if there are doubts that readers will discount the article entirely based on its context; they shouldn't consider linking it at all.
- [HeatherJ]** Don't talk about your kids' runny noses, that you forgot to play tooth-fairy for the third time this year or that the police paid you a visit because your nine year old decided that today was a good day to stand up to a bully and deck a kid.
- [HeatherJ]** Your potential clients don't need to know, they probably don't care, and it doesn't make you look like the ideal candidate when they are searching for a virtual assistant. Keep those stories for your personal blog.
- [HeatherJ]** I'm not saying you can't discuss your life because you should. But find a way to tie it in to your business. My kids teach me a lot about business and marketing even though they don't realize it.
- [HeatherJ]** If your son wants to build a lemonade stand in the worst way and you live at the end of a dead end street how can you make that into a blog post? Simple. You talk about location with marketing. It really is that simple.
- [HeatherJ]** Validation of the message is one important aspect that a blog post is expected to adhere to. Be clear about your source to avoid the likelihood where your readers may stop trusting you.
- [HeatherJ]** These chances may take shape if discovered that the information source has been disguised or the blogger didn't make the source of an article clear. The readers might have evaluated these sources differently had they been given all the facts.
- [HeatherJ]** Into every aspect of the practice of blogging, simplicity is one of the blog's distinguishing characteristics and greatest strengths.
- [HeatherJ]** A writer's goal and priority should always be clarity. If it's not your thought, idea, or work, then make sure that you give proper credit.
- [HeatherJ]** It is your responsibility to focus exclusively on producing content that attracts the reader. What determines the right kind of content? If you "hang out" with your target market online (or off) what are they talking about?

- [HeatherJ]** What's the burning question they all have? Take the idea and run with it. What can you come up with? Do some research and see what you can find. I'm willing to bet when you're done, you've got the start of several posts.
- [HeatherJ]** The most compelling bloggers are not necessarily the ones with the most insightful analyses and the best links; the most successful bloggers are those who get the reader interested in their viewpoint.
- [HeatherJ]** Bloggers link to one another and that allows the reader more easily understand opposing points of view. For bloggers, not linking to others is a death sentence for their ratings.
- [HeatherJ]** Be At Your Creative Best
- [HeatherJ]** Blogs are, at best, an essential cog in the World Wide Web and at worst, a mindless diversion. In any case, many of them are interesting, thought provoking, and oftentimes downright entertaining.
- [HeatherJ]** In fact, the immediacy of the internet and the ability for people to constantly update sites make blogs the perfect platform for you to express themselves in a creative manner while providing their readers with links to useful information.
- [HeatherJ]** The demands and maintenance of a successful blog pester bloggers to be at their creative best. The urge to be the best and to be there forever builds a better writer out of a normal blogger.
- [HeatherJ]** Blogs allow you to show your personality where as your website is just an informational page about your business. Very rarely are you able to tell what type of person is behind the site.
- [HeatherJ]** Authoring a blog offers a refreshing, personal, tone absent from much of the typical content found on the Web. There are no editors making the writing on most of the blogs feel honest and real.
- [HeatherJ]** Clarity Is The Key
- [HeatherJ]** Blogs are a great tool for brainstorming and sharing knowledge; however they should be written and thought upon clearly.
- [HeatherJ]** Whatever you write for your blog should make sense. Grammar, spelling, punctuation, rhythm, syntax, and structure matter if you're running a blog as a marketing platform for your business.
- [HeatherJ]** You want to shine and you want your potential clients to know that they are dealing with a talented individual. Have a clear focus. Don't talk in circles.
- [HeatherJ]** If you need help with your writing, hire a ghost writer. Give them an outline of what you're trying to convey and have them work something up for you. You can also find an article online and post your comments on it. But have someone double check your work.
- [HeatherJ]** Follow The Standard Rules
- [HeatherJ]** Blogs release the voice of the readership by allowing experts in their field to correct others, and be corrected themselves. With so many participants, being dissimilar becomes difficult and it becomes more difficult with a certain set of similar rules.

[HeatherJ] Use these standard rules to help your blog stand out from the rest:

[HeatherJ] Time Is Your Ace

[HeatherJ] Bloggers should take care of the freshness of the content. Publishing the content on time is the mantra. Bloggers may post a link to the original news source and can convey the news hours before established outlets can commit resources to their own rehash and news top.

[HeatherJ] Share The Credit

[HeatherJ] While traditional media avoid reporting anything "not invented", bloggers should reveal the web's vast resources through compulsive linking. Giving credit to the real authors should do this linking to web resources.

[HeatherJ] Roll On The Blogs

[HeatherJ] Bloggers should weave new broadcast networks. In other words, bloggers should regularly comment and link to other blogger's posts.

[HeatherJ] Chronology

[HeatherJ] To make room for fresh arriving news most of the traditional publishers dump their old product into search enabled database warehouses. But a blog should be like a diary-like stack of events. Its chronological news presentation should fit with innate human story-telling or information-processing

[HeatherJ] habits.

[HeatherJ] Site Construction

[HeatherJ] Do not over-engineer and brand-bloat the site. Avoid heavy-handed attempts at graphic branding that may generate more clutter and confusion with poorly placed content.

[HeatherJ] Highlight the urgency and directness of the content. Make it an insight-filled blog.

[HeatherJ] Reliability

[HeatherJ] Defeat the notion that blogs are unreliable. Writing only about the truth can do this. Be accurate. Be consistent.

[HeatherJ] Sometimes, blogs distill a reality too fragmented for a person to comprehend, so avoid breaking links and avoid directing people to sites where they would not like to go.

[HeatherJ] Adhering to Privacy Statement

[HeatherJ] Use your judgment when you're talking about another person. Blogs can be a great gossip trap. Don't talk bad about anyone that you don't know.

[HeatherJ] Yes, I talk about Deli Lady at my Kroger, but chances of anyone knowing what Kroger I shop at regularly is slim to none.

[HeatherJ] I do know her real name. But she will forever be known as Kroger Deli Lady to my readers.

[HeatherJ] A Touch Of Human Interest

[HeatherJ] Blogs should provide details from the writer's life and how you can apply them to subjects that your target market is interested in.

[HeatherJ] I've mentioned before that I talk about my children only when I can relate it to business and marketing. I talk about people I come across in everyday life, but only when I can relate it to my readers.

[HeatherJ] Discover The Passion Within

[HeatherJ] Be passionate about what you write about. It shows. When you have an excitement about something it can often be contagious. Your readers will respect the passion that you have for a topic whether they agree with your or not and will come to respect you even more.

[HeatherJ] Devotion

[HeatherJ] Devote time to your blog. Determine how often you want to post to your blog and stick to it. What happens is that we create a blog when we have extra time on our hands or when we're just starting our business. What happens when you get busy?

[HeatherJ] The first thing to go is the blog.

[HeatherJ] Don't allow that to happen. You can automate your blog posts. Take the last day of the month and sit down and write out your blog posts for the following month. You can then set them up in your blogging software to post automatically and you don't have to worry about it.

[HeatherJ] Work smarter not harder...

[HeatherJ] These strategies that I've talked about today will get you started on coming up with an effective blog to help boost your business and establish you as an expert.

[HeatherJ] Keep a few things in mind like know who you're trying to reach, be consistent and don't go long periods of time between posts, make sure the content is yours or properly sourced, and add some of your personality to your blog.

[HeatherJ] Happy Blogging!! Any questions?

[didjaever] ?

[mlzambos] Thank you Heather.

[JudyL] Do we seek groups such as WriteMeUP

[mlzambos]>**[didjaever]** Go ahead Kim

[didjaever] In your opinion, what is the best blog service??

[HeatherJ] Groups for ghost writing?

[HeatherJ] I'm not familiar with WriteMeUp

[JudyL] Write Me UP and Blog Charm are groups where

[HeatherJ] The BEST blogging service IMO is WordPress

[HeatherJ] For many reasons...it's free...it's on your server, so you have control

[JudyL] one posts to their blog, everything is linked and supposedly the

[JudyL] ad sense income will benefit the owners of the group and the writers

[mlzambos]>**[JudyL]** Judy please remember to type ? before asking a question so that they don't get lost in the mix of things.



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[HeatherJ] because it's attached to your site it helps improve your search engine rankings. My traffic dramatically increased when I add my blog on my site

[didjaever] That was my next question, can I ask it?

[HeatherJ] Judy, I would steer clear of places like that. In my opinion, it doesn't set you apart from the rest and you can have a much more professional blog (with all the adsense earning to keep for yourself)

[crystal] ?

[HeatherJ] the benefits are greater when your blog is attached to your site

[mlzambos]>[didjaever] Go ahead

[didjaever] So it is true that adding a blog to your site keeps your website content fresh and keeps the search engines working for you, hence increasing your searching ranking?

[HeatherJ] Exactly!

[HeatherJ] you hit the nail on the head

[HeatherJ] and fresh content is key!

[mlzambos]>[crystal] Lets get the rest of Kim's question answered first.

[didjaever] Thanks!

[HeatherJ] many VAs that I know have received clients from them finding a blog post before their actual service site

[mlzambos]>[crystal] Okay Crystal you are up

[JudyL] ? They were friendly, but chaotic and off my topics. I'm glad to have the re=affirm.

[crystal] How would you go about marketing your blog?

[HeatherJ] There are many ways to marketing it

[HeatherJ] signature line obviously...RSS feeds, writing articles (which you can put on your blog), submitting them to various directories, blog rolling with other bloggers

[HeatherJ] when you have valuable posts and others track back that promotes you to all of their readers

[HeatherJ] But defining your target is key

[HeatherJ] who are you trying to reach

[HeatherJ] same as with your business

[crystal] so it's the same as promoting your website, but would you put in your sig that you have a blog too?

[HeatherJ] Crystal, as a member of the Revolution you have access to a list of 90 something places to submit a blog to

[JudyL] ?

[HeatherJ] you can

[HeatherJ] others have those animated readers that display your most recent topics

[HeatherJ] all of that nifty stuff can be done for free with feedburner.com

[crystal] ok, I haven't researched doing a blog yet, so this is new to me

[mlzambos]>[JudyL] Okay Judy go ahead with your question.

[HeatherJ] and you can also put your most recent topics on your website as well

[JudyL] Heather answered it to Crystal about places to submit

[HeatherJ] When you have a blog you have an additional marketing platform and then all your platforms can cross promote

[jennydecki] Woah. I missed that list.

[jennydecki] When you say link to others, do you mean in a blog roll or per post?

[HeatherJ] both

[mlzambos]>[jennydecki] It is in the Links section of the VA Rev.

[HeatherJ] If you see something relevant to your readers on another blog do a trackback (essentially a link to that exact post)

[jennydecki] Ok. With a blog roll do you have to be careful who you link to?

[HeatherJ] and if there is someone that you think your readers will like, put them on your blog roll

[HeatherJ] yes

[crystal] no matter what you have to be careful who you link to

[HeatherJ] you only want credible people there...it's your reputation

[mlzambos] Any other questions?

[HeatherJ] i just briefly touched on the subject

[HeatherJ] there are ways that you can make your blog profitable

[HeatherJ] which is why i keep putting them up...i think i'm up to 7 now

[didjaever] Thanks for your time!! You are a true inspiration to all of us!!

[crystal] it's a lot to know, I'm going to have to re-read this later to let it sink in

[HeatherJ] crystal, again as a Revolution member the full version of this is there

[JudyL] ?

[crystal] You have 7 blogs?

[HeatherJ] this was just an excerpt

[HeatherJ] yes, i do

[HeatherJ]

[didjaever] Heather: what is the address of your blog?

[JudyL] Do you have some that are not VA related?

[HeatherJ] yes!

[mlzambos] I will work on getting it up in the next day or too.

[HeatherJ] i have a personal blog, my most recent one that i'm setting up is on scrapbooking

[HeatherJ] my main ones are my vva one and my personal one

[didjaever] You have time to scrapbook?

[HeatherJ] and in the near future there will be one on veryintelligentwoman.com and that will be non va related

[HeatherJ] i MAKE time...

[crystal] she writes 7 blogs and she scrapbooks

[JudyL] Can one use blogspot and link in to the website

[HeatherJ] yes you can, however, it won't be connected to your site and won't help with your search engine rankings

[HeatherJ] i started with blogger and now am with wordpress and it's 10x better

[HeatherJ] and now my blog can blend with my site

[mlzambos] Heather will help you set up a WordPress Blog for a nominal fee. She helped me. Once you are set up in Word Press it is really easy to work in.

[HeatherJ] and in regards to time, this summer was a slack summer with my blogs

[HeatherJ] but school strted today so i'll be back in full swing!

[JudyL] ?

[HeatherJ] I do have a special for VAs and thats \$25 for an install

[didjaever] Can you explain a little more about how Wordpress is related to your site and why the others aren't?

[HeatherJ] Wordpress is installed on your server

[HeatherJ] so you have comeplete control over it

[mlzambos]>[JudyL] You are next

[HeatherJ] your blog would be at _____ (or whatever you call it)

[HeatherJ] where as with blogger you get a subdomain and it's not connected to your site at all

[didjaever] So does it have to be supported by my host?? EX. GoDaddy?

[HeatherJ] yes

[didjaever] ok

[HeatherJ] and as long as you're on the linux package it will work

[HeatherJ] not the lowest plan, but the next one up

[mlzambos]>[JudyL] Okay go with your question.

[HeatherJ] but there are also cheaper hosting options out there that will work as well

[HeatherJ] i've used dayana host for \$15 a year

[JudyL] How does one get the readership

[jennydecki] you can post-date posts in wp so you can post everything on sunday and it will post and ping each day of the week (I heart WP)

[mlzambos] Need PHP and SQL in your plans

[HeatherJ] and had my blogs installed on there. There it is a one click install and takes minutes to get up and running

[HeatherJ] yes

[HeatherJ]

[HeatherJ] that's what i do

[crystal] ?

[HeatherJ] i set them all up for the month at one sitting

[JudyL] Do you contact them, use signatures or do they find you on GOOGLE, etc.



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[HeatherJ] set it and forget it

[HeatherJ] all of the above

[HeatherJ] Judy

[mlzambos]>[crystal] hold on need to get Judy's question answered first

[JudyL] ??

[HeatherJ] The first thing I do is submit it to the submission sites

[HeatherJ] then i just start promoting it through all of the other avenues that I have

[mlzambos]>[JudyL] You are behind Crystal

[HeatherJ] If you have a subscriber base you can send an announcement that way

[mlzambos]>[crystal] Go ahead Crystal

[crystal] can you use your website background on your blog - for branding?

[HeatherJ] the readers will come if you keep at it

[HeatherJ] yes, you would have to have it custom designed. I had my vva blog done for \$75

[HeatherJ] adn that included the cariaature of me

[HeatherJ] their prices have gone up a bit but still affordable...if you know css you can make your own

[jennydecki] If you use WP you can use a static home page feature and static page feature and you can run a whole site on wp.

[HeatherJ] yes, i know many who base their sites on WP

[mlzambos]>[JudyL] Go ahead Judy

[HeatherJ] it's another alternative

[JudyL] How much did you write before you began aggressive promotion?

[crystal] I wondered how that worked

[HeatherJ] there are also over 900 predesigned templates for WP out there

[HeatherJ] I had a few posts up there...readers filter in and out

[HeatherJ] my blog actually was an accident

[HeatherJ] i started it to keep track of what i'd found on getting started in the industry

[HeatherJ] and didn't really promote it at all

[HeatherJ] except my signature line

[HeatherJ] and then i realized that people were reading it and i moved it over to WP and then changed my target, but the original blog vastartup.blogspot.com is still there in the original location and still making money

[JudyL] **

[JudyL] Not a question -

[mlzambos] okay Heather has an appointment that she needs to leave right at 12Noon for. So one more question.

[JudyL] I think I've been cheating myself by not pursuing this with better discipline

[HeatherJ] there are alot of things i feel that way about judy!

[mlzambos] If you think of any others you can email Heather and she will take all the received questions answer them and we will post them to today's topic.



[HeatherJ] so no worries!!!

[HeatherJ] Yes...

[mlzambos] email address is

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