



Building your Digital Identity through Blogging

By Stephanie Sammons

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Blogs are everywhere. These self-publishing platforms where individuals showcase their opinions and ideas online exist in almost every industry, and chances are many of the websites you visit are actually blogs. Few financial advisors engage in blogging currently, though, and industry regulations are probably to blame.

This will change dramatically over the next several years. Think of a blog as your personal online newsletter, with which you have the ability to project authority, credibility, and influence to a much wider audience than simply your current newsletter list. Blogging is a modern-day marketing platform for cultivating client, prospect, and center-of-influence relationships. A well-designed and properly structured blog can provide you with an opportunity to proactively manage your online reputation and attract new clients into your business.

What exactly is a blog?

A blog is a self-publishing tool for wrapping your personal brand around your practice. It is a digital "journal" where you can share your insights through multiple media formats, including articles you write, videos, images, and even screen-casts. Blogging allows you to communicate your thoughts easily and effectively to your target audience.

Rather than driving prospective clients and social media connections directly to your website, driving them first to your personalized blog provides an opportunity for them to get to know, like, and trust you. Thus, a blog provides you with an opportunity for client relationship development and engagement, rather than simply showcasing your products and services on your website. Your blog should be personalized around who you are, what you care about, how you help people, and ultimately what makes you different.

In addition, blogs have built-in social engagement tools that can help you build stronger connections while getting your message out. For example, it is quite simple for a client to read your blog post on a particular topic and share it with a friend on Facebook. Blog posts can be easily shared as links on social networking sites, and posts can be sent automatically to your email subscribers. The more people who see your value-added insights, the more opportunities you have to build new connections and generate introductions.



What kind of content should I publish on my blog?

Your blog can be anything you want it to be. You can write about your hobbies and interests, local events, books, charitable endeavors, restaurants that you love, or anything else that you value on a personal level. Blog posts are a great way for your target audience to get to know *you* and connect with you around common interests.

People do business with people, not companies. Your blog will be more effective if you can weave your personality into your content.

Secondly, your blog is a place to publish your expertise about today's financial opportunities and challenges. If you use a blog just to publish pre-written financial newsletter articles, you will not attract much of an audience. You need to be passionate, interesting and different!

What if you are not a good writer? Blog posts don't have to be long-form articles. They can be short commentaries about anything from your opinion on a current event to your views on asset management. The opportunities are endless and limited only by your creativity! Find what works for you, use the formats with which you are most comfortable, and be consistent with the frequency in which you publish.

How can a blog help me build my online reputation and my business?

A blog gives you the opportunity to share your thought leadership widely. You have a great message, but how are you communicating that message? If you are skilled at working with doctors and dentists in helping them plan for retirement, how many doctors and dentists are you reaching? Blogging can help you communicate your message and increase your visibility in the markets that matter most to you, while simultaneously adding value to the conversation. Never before have you had the ability to build influence *and* reach like this.

What about capturing leads? If a prospect visits your blog site, he or she can be encouraged to subscribe to your updates, and you will be able to capture information about that prospect and stay in touch with them. Additionally, you can research and potentially connect with these prospects through social networks and learn more about them. Ultimately, growing your network will help you grow your business.

Does blogging take a lot of time and effort?

Blogging is not for everyone. It takes significant time and dedication to blog well. You must be willing to publish your ideas, thoughts, and opinions on a consistent basis. I recommend publishing content at least once a month. Otherwise you won't have much of an impact. Also, you'll want to have a professional presence with regard to your blog. Although there are several free blogging platforms, consider investing in this for your



professional brand. You are in the business of giving professional advice. Everything you do online must have a professional look and feel. Your reputation is at stake!

I suggest having your blog serve as a digital asset separate from your web site, which you can do either by choosing a unique URL or by placing it on a sub-domain of your existing website. Splitting the two allows your content to be more easily discovered, which is indexed separately from your website by the search engines. Most importantly, you don't want all of that great content you are publishing to get lost behind your website. Your blog should serve as the first stop, or the window into your personal brand where you can focus on building personal relationships first, and business second.

How do I promote my blog?

Promoting your blog is a key factor for success. Get the word out and let all of your contacts know about your blog! This can help generate buzz and visibility. Sharing your posts in the right social circles to stimulate engagement also drives traffic to your blog. That said, be careful about being too promotional. Writing guest posts for related blogs, commenting on relevant blog posts, submitting your posts to article sites, and partnering with other successful bloggers in the industry are the right ways to grow your visibility.

With millions of people sharing and searching online, your online reputation becomes increasingly important. What will they find when they come across your professional brand on the web? At the end of this article is a snapshot of one of my blogs, and I've also highlighted several features that have been discussed in the article.

Don't overlook blogging as a way to build your digital identity. Your blog will be a digital asset that grows in value over time, while paying dividends along the way.



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by STEPHANIE on SEPTEMBER 21, 2010 in BLOGGING, LINKEDIN TIPS

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With Blogging and Social Media, Focus on What You Can Control

by STEPHANIE on SEPTEMBER 18, 2010 in BLOGGING, SOCIAL MEDIA

ABOUT STEPHANIE SAMMONS

Stephanie Sammons is the voice behind "Smart Social Pro", a resource for professional advisors and practitioners to learn how to leverage the power of social media and blogging in their practices.

***showcase who you are and what you do for people!**

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Stephanie Sammons is Founder and CEO of [WIRED ADVISOR](#)™, helping financial advisors and financial services firms develop powerful and compliant social media strategies.

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