

COFFEE BREAK BLOGGING

Podcast Transcript

Episode 64: Blogs vs Learning Centers

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Hello! Welcome back to Coffee Break Blogging Episode 64.

Now for me, it feels like I'm getting back into the chair. I know I'm releasing these things every couple of weeks but I actually, internally; I'm doing these things in batches. So I actually sit down and I record either a couple of weeks of these things in advance. Sometimes I shoot all the way and go for the entire month in advance. So for me, the last time I sat down to record an episode of this show was about 2 weeks ago. And today, I'm sitting down to record a few more. So if you are watching the video component of this on YouTube you will all notice that my shirt will be the same for the next few episodes and that is exactly why. 😊

But today, I want to talk to you about this idea of blogs versus the idea of a learning center.

Now, what do I mean by that; what am I going to be really talking about here? Well, here's the big idea behind this; is that it does not have to be about "blogging." This is a weird thing to say being that I run a company called Blog Marketing Academy and everything I do is surrounding the idea of a blog. But the thing is, just because we use this piece of software or this format that has been known as a blog does not mean that we have to call it a blog.

If you look at the idea of a blog actually... well, what usually it was considered to be; what the old school way of thinking of what a blog is, it tends to be the idea of a journal style site. It comes from the words "web + log" and it basically just merged in together back in the late 90s; probably that was when it happened, I forgot the exact time blog came to be but that is essentially what it is. It has gotten the roots in this journaling style of content creation.

And that is why most blogs are designed so that the front page has this chronological list of your latest thing and every single post has the date on there and that type of thing and it is because it was set up primarily as a journal style thing.

Now here is the thing, the internet had pretty much outgrown that method of content creation. There are a lot of people who still use their blogs in that way; totally fine. I mean if you are running a personal site or what you're doing is very date driven like a news oriented market; then it will make perfect sense to remain in that format. But the thing is, as you probably are all well aware, there are a lot of people out there who are using software like WordPress who... it isn't really a blog. The stuff that they are posting is not date based. It does not go on a chronological order, so really the basic set up of a blog is immaterial. The thing is, you still have a lot of people who see that word "blog" and they associate all these old things... pet pictures, what you had for lunch and all those stupid stuff that we all used to do with our blogs; I used to do it to. I used to do all the funny things back into the "My Space" days and all that with blogging that I did that I am not particularly proud of; and you know there's a lot of baggage with this word "blog."

So really, when it comes to the day, some people like us who know better; we understand that blogging has expanded into other things. But then you will get a lot of people who think they know what a blog is; you still have kind of this old school journal style concept of it, or you are going to have people who straight up don't know what it is. And believe it or not there are still many people out there who do not really know what a blog is. They just know that that is "some" thing on the internet and that is pretty much it.

So what it really comes down to is that there are a lot of situation where the word "blog" is actually going to devalue what we are actually doing and you might not want to call what you are doing a blog or having set up like a blog.

So, content marketing today has expanded way beyond blogging. The word "blog" tends to have the connotation of "writing" because it comes from those "journal roots" and when we journal, we are typically writing something down. We are not recording a video of ourselves or speaking it out; we are generally writing something down. So, writing blog posts is essentially what is associated with the word "blogging" but we all know that content marketing has evolved way past the written blog post. And in fact, I think these days if you are doing primarily written content, you are really dropping the ball. You needed to be doing more than that. Today, it is not just about writing. It is about things of videos and podcast and webinars and eBooks and white paper; you name it. There are many different things that you not only could be doing but probably should if you want to have a complete content marketing strategy.

So we need to consider taking the word "blog" out of blogging. If you go to this set up of company website for your local business... do you need to have a blog or you might want to have a "learning center."

Now what is a learning center? You could call this anything you want. A learning center is just kind of like a generic term. You could call it a Knowledge Center, you could call it "guides," whatever, but it is the idea that there is a section of your site that contains reference information, useful information; stuff that could show your visitor how to do something and give them immense value. You do not want them to see the word "blog" and they kind of like they are going to talk about their latest sale or they are going to talk about like a stupid crap like a journal might do. You want to raise the perceived value of what you are doing and accommodate that a lot of it is not going to be written anymore.

So the idea of a learning center or a knowledge center on your site is going to be a collection of content. It might not be written, it might be video, it might be webinar recordings... it might be some white papers that you have released there or you could have a place a place where all of your eBooks are compiled in one place; then grab your eBooks for reference information. Or opt-in for them; even better. But it is the idea of not pigeonholing yourself and it is this idea of having a blog. And I think there are a lot of situations where for the purposes of your target market you might not want to call it a blog. You might not want to have the word blog in your top navigation. You might want to call it something that is more befitting of what it actually is that will communicate the value to people who are not as familiar with what blogging is all about. Or perhaps they still got some of those older thoughts about what blogging really is. And they might look at the word blogging at your type navigation in the side that they are just not interested in it.

But if you give them useful, actionable information; if you are running a yard service business and you have a company website and you have the word "blog" on there, what are you going to blog about, really? What are you going to blog about if you are running that type of a business? But it does not mean that you do not have informative, very useful information regarding that your target audience who might hire you are a yard service. You know... How to do really nice landscape design or how to plant a garden and not have it die. I don't know. Whatever might come to mind for your prospects. But the thing is, that is useful contents; actionable content that you might put into a section of your site that is called a learning center or a knowledge center.

Now one of the things about this is we get out of that blogging template is that you can remove the dates from it. Just because you are using WordPress and it is designed to do this chronological posting does not mean that you need to have to look that way on your website. So get rid of the dates. Again, coming back to the idea of you running a yard service business and you got a company site; do you need to have dates on those things to where somebody sees a date on your article about how to plants and not have them die on you right away? Is that information that is going to go archaic? Probably not because the idea of planting a plant has existed for a really, really long time.

But what you do not want them to do is see that article and see that it was written last year and automatically think, "I don't know, it is kind of old." You don't want them to think that. And not only that, the date is completely irrelevant. So remove it all together. Turn this into a collection of useful resources. You could still use posts inside of WordPress or even use pages inside of WordPress. They do not have to be presented in a chronological format.

That is a functioning theme; it gets a little bit more involved. Technically, that what I am going to do here in this format of a podcast but the presentation of your posts is functioning on your theme. It does not have to be in chronological order. That just happens to be how most themes work. But you can link to posts manually. You can have pages for different sections and then link to the post manually. Go into those sections. It does not have to be revolving dates or have the traditional blog layout. And last that I have to mention; you can totally use blog software like WordPress to do this. It does not have to look like a blog.

So that was the big idea that I really want to get forward to you today: The idea of blogs vs. a learning center or a knowledge center or something like that. You could come up with whatever name that you want. But there are a lot of situations out there. I mentioned the idea of a yard service business. Many different local business; and even people who have primarily online businesses that do not need to have that extra mental baggage... but whatever those frequency notions of what a blog actually is; you might not want them to attach those frequency notions to whatever it is that you are doing. So you can get around that by simply changing your terminology. Change the framing of what you are doing by calling it something else.

Over at the Blog Marketing Academy; the only reason I still call it blog is because my target audience is obviously bloggers, so they know exactly what it is. So I am going to call it blog but if I were doing a Blog Marketing Academy style training business, in a completely different market that had nothing to do with the internet but yet they are doing the training on the internet; I probably won't call it a blog anymore. I will call it something else. I would be doing pretty much the exact same thing; I will just change the framing of it.

Okay? So, a little strategy talk there... blogging vs. learning centers; look at your situation and decide, "Is your target audience going to really know what a blog is?" Are you going to be misleading them or framing them in an incorrect by calling it blog; and maybe you want to call it something else. It does not mean that you do don't want to do it. Everything - that we talk about it here at the Blog Marketing Academy is going to be applicable to any form of content marketing. Even if you are doing running an offline business and you have got a company website for it; everything that we have talked about around here is going to apply to you just as much, it is just that you might want to change the framing a little bit. Okay?

See you in the next episode; Episode 65... Talk to you soon!