

CAN TOP QUALITY LOCAL BLOGGERS HELP RESCUE NEWSPAPERS?

No one knows what the Dodo bird sounded like. But it might have sounded a lot like the bleating of some of today's newspaper editors: "Never change, never change, never change!"

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The Dodo bird was fatally fearless of its predators and could not evolve fast enough to survive in a changing environment. By the late 1600s, it was gone. Wake-up call to newspapers: Don't be

dodos! It's not too late to evolve. But time is running out. And here's a tip: When it comes to information, people want great content.

They do not really care if the content has been created by the newspaper's own reporters. Readers simply want the BEST content available.

They want access to lots of information, quickly, easily, *in one place*, and from a reliable source. And they are increasingly willing to trust and rely on reputable blogs for quality content.

According to a recent Forrester study, blogs and newspaper websites now have the same audience share—about 17 percent— among Internet users between the ages of 18 and 24.

If newspapers continue to offer only their own content, and readers discover they can go elsewhere to find a better selection that matches their needs and interests, newspaper sites will be the Dodo birds of the Internet.

On the other hand, if newspapers start aggregating the best local blogs and websites covering a wide variety of subjects, they will provide their time-starved readers with the ultimate customer service: They will save readers time, give them valuable information from trusted sources pre-approved by their trusted local newspaper, and make them both better informed and happy.



THE DODO BIRD: AN EXTINCT FLIGHTLESS BIRD OF MAURITIUS, LAST SEEN IN THE LATE 17TH CENTURY. ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Meanwhile, the bloggers featured in the newspaper's website and print products will gain exposure they never dreamed possible. Those bloggers will become an enthusiastic grassroots viral marketing campaign for the paper and its website. At no cost to the newspaper!

IT IS A WIN-WIN SITUATION FOR EVERYONE

Remarkably, only a handful of the world's newspapers have employed this strategy, preferring to remain "pure" journalistic operations. What a noble epitaph: "Here lies the daily newspaper. It was a pure journalistic operation that saw no reason to evolve."

There are roughly 133 million blogs on the Internet, according to technorati.com. Millions are silly. Millions more are garbage. Millions, however, represent some of the best thinking, writing, and reporting in their fields.

But a reader of most newspaper websites would never know that. Where bloggers exist at newspapers, they are almost exclusively staffers writing what used to be called columns posing as blogs to appear "with it."

A few dailies have created lists of local bloggers or invited bloggers to write on the newspaper's website. But the editors rarely check the blogs for quality and almost always ghettoize those bloggers on a single page where blogs about sex, baking cookies, assault rifles, Jesus, kittens, baseball, and pot smoking are thrown together with no thought to organization other than chronology. Unless someone likes to read random blogs without regard to topic, these pages are useless.

Even if readers like that serendipitous ap-

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proach, most newspapers also make it very difficult to find their bloggers. Newspapers tend to give their blogger ghettos non-intuitive URLs only tangentially connected with the newspaper. Consider these ridiculous reader blog site URLs:

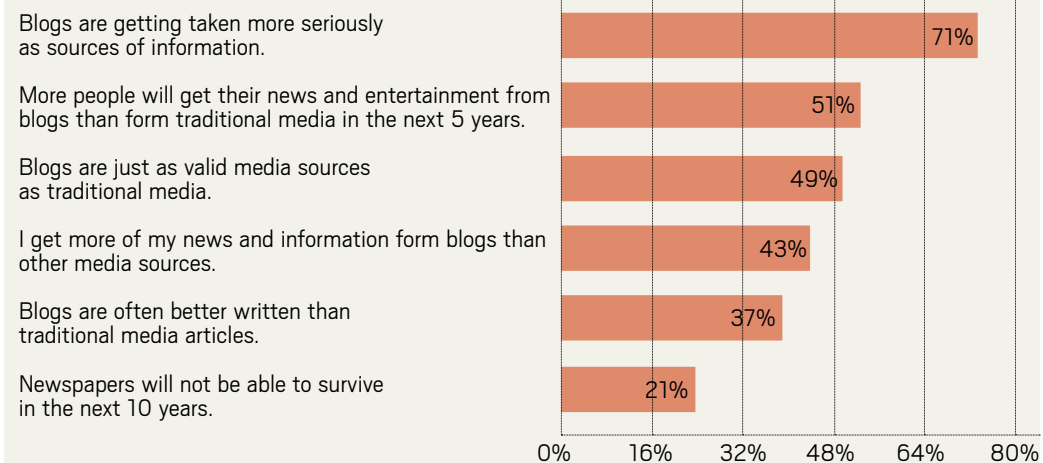
- <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/local-blog-directory/>
- <http://www.indystar.com/section/OPINION11>
- <http://blog.seattlepi.nwsourc.com/reader.asp>, and the least easily recalled URL:
- http://www.statesman.com/news/content/standing/sitelife_blogs_faq.html

And then those newspapers give each non-staff blogger an equally useless URL such as:

- <http://www.azcentral.com/members/Blog/Jim8413>
- http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/community_altamonte_blog/; and the stunningly idiotic:

PERCEPTION OF BLOGS AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Blog acceptance: Technorati's annual state of the blogosphere research found that blogs are increasingly accepted as reliable sources of information.



Blogs

Joyeux nolife
Note du 24.12.2008
Parangon de la chip music , Doctor Octoroc propose sa version rétrofuturiste des chants de Noël. Intitulé 8-bits Jesus, l'album du compositeur emprunte allègrement ses sonorités aux titres phares de la Nintendo Nes : the Legend of Zelda, Castlevania, Super Mario ou Faxanadu. We wish you a merry faxanadu Carol of the Belmonts Super...

Playtime par Laurent Checola , Olivier Dumons et Pierre Bouvier
Des mondes virtuels sur PC, aux créations originales des consoles de la nouvelle génération, Playtime décrypte l'univers des jeux vidéo.

L'ère de la mobiquité...
Note du 26.12.2008
L'ère de la mobiquité a officiellement commencé (quel titre pour une fin d'année ;-))... Pour la première fois le nombre de laptops (portables) vendus dans le monde en un trimestre a dépassé celui des desktops (les ordinateurs de bureau). La différence n'est pas encore grande - 38,6 M contre 38,5 - mais elle est symbolique et...

Transnets par Francis Pisani
Journaliste indépendant, installé

Most Recent Reader Blogs

Potato Soup w/ Garam Masala
By CassieSampson: 12/26/2008 12:18 PM CST

What Restaurants Do You Always Forget About--But Shouldn't?
By DatebookDiner: 12/26/2008 8:56 AM CST

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation
By StanFleming: 12/25/2008 8:21 PM CST

I Have A Dream
By DT: 12/25/2008 7:14 PM CST

Christmas Story
By DGritters: 12/25/2008 12:13 PM CST

Merry Christmas, Everybody!!!!
By Klinzboy: 12/25/2008 11:48 AM CST

Des Moines snow plow drivers: A wacky bunch of cut-ups
By dougpotter: 12/25/2008 1:29 AM CST

A special Christmas message to...
By DamagedEagle: 12/24/2008 6:05 PM CST

TWO DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO READER BLOGS: LEFT: *LE MONDE* PRESENTS NON-STAFF BLOGGERS ON THE THEME PAGE WHERE THEY BELONG, IN THIS CASE ARTS BLOGGERS ON THE ARTS PAGE, GIVING THEM CONTEXT. RIGHT: *THE DES MOINES REGISTER* (IOWA/US) PRESENTS NON-STAFF BLOGGERS IN ONE PLACE ONLY — A BLOGGER PAGE ORGANIZED SOLELY BY TIME. *LE MONDE* VETS THEIR BLOGGERS, RESULTING IN HIGH-QUALITY CONTENT. *DES MOINES* OPENS THE FLOODGATES, GETTING A COLLECTION THAT APPEARS TO REINFORCE DOUBTERS' FEARS ABOUT QUALITY.

- <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/apps/pbcs.dll/section?category=PluckPersona&U=ea20d3511a8416ab0dd09e30c2d84b6&plckPersonaPage=BlogViewPost&plckUserId=ea20d35191a8416ab0dd09e30c2d84b6&plckPostId=Blog%3aea20d35191a8416ab0dd09e30c2d84b6Post%3afcbb16fb-dcd1-4fc4-ad230aeb12e3a212&plckController=PersonaBlog&plckScript=personaScript&plckElementId=personaDest> (To be fair, this is a URL provided by a service called BlogBurst that develops blog platforms for newspapers. But that is no excuse for such stupidity.)
- <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-jones> and
- <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-cusack>

The *Huffington Post* is loaded with top-notch local names (like Mr. Cusack's) and dozens of less famous but equally high-quality bloggers. *The Chicago Tribune* has none. The *Huffington Post* is selling advertising on its blogger pages. *The Tribune*, obviously, is not.

Aggregation and multiple-author blogs like the *Huffington Post* are making money by attracting millions of unique visitors to the best content in the verticals of the user's choice (*Huffington Post*, *TechCrunch*, *Daily Kos*, *YouTube*, etc.).

Those sites don't (yet) have the local newspaper's brand recognition or respect. The newspaper still is the best local information source in its market (for now).

But newspapers must start doing the hard

work of finding, vetting, and incorporating the hundreds of high-quality local text and video bloggers in their markets (e.g., 3,000 videos about Washington, D.C. were posted in one month alone on *YouTube*). If newspapers did that, they would have a wealth of new content that currently is going begging for a home, an audience, and advertising inventory. Newspapers would quickly increase their depth, reach, relevance, and revenue by weaving those high-quality local blogs throughout their websites and by publishing excerpts in the category-appropriate pages of the newspaper.

Every imaginable topic is addressed by bloggers, and thus every newspaper could address every reader's needs simply by aggregating and organizing that content.

If, however, newspapers don't do that, their competitors like the *Huffington Post* are very happy to step into the void to run the blogs and sell the ads.

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BostonNOW incorporated high-quality local bloggers much like *Le Monde*, with nearly 4,000 local bloggers signing up to be hosted on *BostonNow.com*. The bloggers were highlighted on the home page and in the theme-appropriate sections of the website and the print product. [Full disclosure: The author was the founding editor in chief of *BostonNOW* and introduced the concept of incorporating bloggers in a newspaper's website and print product.]

The results were stunning. In less than a year, *BostonNOW* had at least twice as many monthly unique visitors as similar U.S. free dailies that had been publishing for 1-7 years. It also was selling interactive campaigns to clients who were creating their own blog presence on the site. For example, a local bank paid \$90,000 to build its blog on *BostonNOW*

ONLY A HANDFUL OF NEWSPAPERS "GET IT"

Le Monde, based in Paris, leads the field, publishing select, high-quality non-staff blogs throughout the newspaper's website. Expert technology bloggers appear in *Le Monde*'s technology section. Top-quality arts bloggers appear in the arts section. Sports bloggers in sports. And so on.

John Cusack
Get John Cusack's RSS Feed

Become a Fan
Get Email Alerts from this Blogger

John Cusack makes films.

Le Monde

Blog
Croire au père Noël
Note du 23.12.2008
Si l'on regrette un âge, c'est souvent celui de l'enfance. L'adolescence, en général, période confuse mais néanmoins formatrice, ne s'attire pas les suffrages des adultes mélancoliques. L'enfance où tout reste possible potentiellement, où par la magie de l'imagination l'on devient cow-boy, pompier, aviateur et que...

AGENDA
Comédies musicales, cirque, théâtre : fêtes à Paris pour finir 2008
"Le Monde" propose une sélection de douze spectacles, à Paris, dans un genre féerique, et qui courent jusqu'aux fêtes de fin d'année. Ballets, comédies musicales, cirque, théâtre sont à l'honneur.

BLOG
Le Monde des Siries
Les séries existent depuis les débuts de la télévision. Elles la rendent meilleure...

BLOG
La république des livres
L'écrivain Pierre Assouline nous dit sa passion de la chose imprimée.

Nice rugby
par Julien Schramm et Rodolphe Rolland
Regards croisés - et nigés - sur le ballon ovale.

GETTING BIG-NAME BLOGGERS: THE *HUFFINGTON POST* HAS MADE A BUSINESS OUT OF GETTING CELEBRITY BLOGGERS LIKE MOVIE STAR JOHN CUSACK TO WRITE ON THE *HUFFINGTONPOST.COM* ALONG WITH HUNDREDS OF OTHER HIGH-QUALITY BLOGGERS. THE MIX HAS BEEN SO SUCCESSFUL THAT THE *HUFFINGTON POST* IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR SITES ON THE WEB. THEY ARE EXPANDING INTO NEWSPAPERS' TURF, LAUNCHING 13 U.S. METRO AREA SITES IN THE U.S.

DOING IT RIGHT: *LE MONDE* DOES THE BEST JOB OF INCORPORATING HIGH-QUALITY LOCAL BLOGGERS IN A NEWSPAPER WEBSITE. LEFT IS A SPORTS BLOG AND AN ARTS PAGE BLOG PROMOTION; BELOW THE HEADER OF ONE OF THEIR READER BLOGS.

Le Monde.fr CRÉEZ VOTRE BLOG Envoyez à un ami

您一双健康明亮的眼睛 二宝
Un oeil sur la Chine

to appeal to recent college grads looking for financial advice. Two condominium developers paid \$10,000 each for their own blog sites. (*BostonNOW* was closed in 2008 when its Icelandic investors pulled the plug as a result of their country's economic collapse.)

When I spoke at an international conference of journalists and bloggers in New York City, a renowned video blogger said, "Before *John Wilpers* and *BostonNOW* came to town, we thought of newspapers as *THEIR* newspapers; now we think of *BostonNOW* as *OUR* newspaper." Web-centric bloggers who'd posted on *BostonNOW* and had excerpts of their posts appear in the paper began calling *BostonNOW* for tearsheets of their posts! These were young adults who had not previously picked up a paper!

Another example: *BostonNOW* published an excerpt from a top Boston-area blog without permission (an accident). The site editor was upset, but the blogger was conflicted. "My phone was ringing off the hook with friends telling me it was great that my blog was in the paper," she said later. "I knew I should be angry, but I was so excited! I couldn't wait to see the paper."

That blogger became a regular *BostonNOW* blogger and a motivated advocate of the paper promoting the paper and its website to her tech-savvy, print-averse young friends

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some of whom became *BostonNOW* bloggers and passionate grassroots marketers for the paper.

If newspapers fail to embrace these new content creators, their future is threatened: "They (newspapers) are going to see the relentless emergence of new forms of media that might not even be built or positioned as competition, but which have the potential to siphon off their audience," said Andrew Nachison, co-founder of media think tank iFocos, in a *Knowledge@Wharton* article.

The message is clear: Learn to evolve or join the Dodo bird. Partner with bloggers and other emerging new media, or put another nail in the coffin of a once-thriving industry.

AN EXAMPLE OF THE WEALTH OF UNTAPPED LOCAL CONTENT IN ONE MARKET

There is a ton of untapped local content out there (blogs, vlogs, and podcasts) that can add to the richness and stickiness of *washingtonpost.com* and to the *Washington Post* itself. I recognize that not all of the content is high quality. Much is terrible. But even if 10% is terrific, that's a lot of great new stuff to draw new unique visitors to discover, enjoy, and pass the word about the bold new, expanded, inclusive *Post* website.



Local **BSO musicians well paid**

Most musicians in Boston and other U.S. cities usually have to get themselves some kind of non-musical day job to pay their rent each month — especially because there's still no Massachusetts state government or federal government public works program for unemployed U.S. musicians. But if you're a musician who's lucky enough to get hired by the "non-profit" and tax-exempt Boston Symphony Orchestra, you'll end up earning over twice the median income of a typical Boston household. — [BostonNOW.com/blog/bsomusic](#)

Healthy Thanksgiving

Learn to splurge while staying healthy with a smart schedule

1 Play Run around with your mascot, play football with your cousin or take the dog for a walk.

2 Snack Have some veggies with fat-free dressing, avoid high-fat foods like dips and bacon-wrapped treats.

4 Snack and cocktails Have some whole wheat crackers with low-fat cheese and cranberry juice and soda water to drink.

9 Exercise Whether you are playing rumpelstiltskin with Uncle Bill or taking a high-energy aerobics class, make sure to include 40 minutes or more of cardio.

10:45 Breakfast/Snack Be sure to include protein, such as an egg, white cheddar, sliced with veggies, so you won't be starving.

6 Dinner This is all about portion control. Cheese isn't healthy. First, the salad, plenty of veggies, fresh cranberries and a fat-free piece of white-meat turkey. Once you finish, wait 10 minutes before going back for the sweet potatoes and stuffing.

7 Dessert Don't worry about skipping dessert. Have small portions of cake or pie with a big scoop of fat-free vanilla yogurt on top of your pie.

ABOVE: *BOSTONNOW* USED SECTION HEADERS IN THE PAPER TO TEASE RELATED BLOGGERS.
LEFT: *BOSTONNOW* BLOGGERS APPEARED ON THE SITE AND IN FULL OR EXCERPTED IN THE PRINT PRODUCT.
BELOW: *BOSTONNOW* SOLD A LOCAL BANK A COMPLETE INTERACTIVE CAMPAIGN, INCLUDING ITS OWN BLOG.

THE UNTAPPED WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA BLOGGING UNIVERSE

	Washington Post staff blogs	Local blogs listed on Post website*	Total local blogs (technorati.com)
Redskins	2	5	186
Washington politics	13	109	782
Fairfax, VA	0	14	279
Maryland politics	1	5	158
Virginia politics	1	4	243
The Nationals	3	9	138
Religion/Faith	7	14	103

*The local blogs listed on *washingtonpost.com* appear only as links on a page buried deep on the site. None of the bloggers' content appears anywhere on the website or in the paper.

THE UNTAPPED WASHINGTON, D.C. VIDEO-BLOGGING UNIVERSE

	Washington Post video blogs	Local Vblogs listed on Post website	Local Vblog posts on youtube.com*
Redskins	0	0	119
Washington politics	0	0	582
Fairfax, VA	0	0	155
Maryland politics	0	0	74
Virginia politics	0	0	142
The Nationals	0	0	159
Religion/Faith	0	0	93

* Video blog posts in April, 2008 alone

* Sample local video subjects included: DC Youth Outreach Fashion Show, IRS protest (post had story and pics but no video), Man of Strength (DC kid honored for registering youth voters), Filipino Festival, speech of Iranian princess, video of DC mail delivery circa 1903, TC Williams HS Choir concert, a street trumpeter, a nutrition class for DC kids, etc.

THE UNTAPPED WASHINGTON, D.C. PODCAST UNIVERSE

	Washington Post podcasts	Local podcasts on Post website	Local podcasts (podfeed.net)
All subjects	14	0	310