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Is There Still a Need for a Corporate Blog?

In the age of social media, do we still need corporate blogs at all? Jérôme Chariatte, research associate at the Department of Communication Studies and Media Research at the University of Fribourg, explains what an important contribution they make to balanced corporate communication.

Whether I'm interested in political initiatives, adventure travel or vegan cuisine, there's a blog on every topic these days. In fact, the number of blogs has risen sharply in recent years. While last year it was estimated at over 500 million, today it is estimated that there are more than 600 million blogs worldwide^{1/2}. More and more companies are also using so-called corporate blogs. But what is the purpose of these corporate blogs? Why should I, as a company, take the trouble to manage a blog?

The question is justified, because maintaining a blog is very costly. A blog is understood to be a website on which – in reverse chronological order – regular articles on a specific topic are published and which often enables interaction possibilities with the website visitors³. This requires high human and financial resources. Companies must, for example, commission employees or external authors to write topical articles. In addition, the company must ensure that the published articles are also coherent with the corporate communication.

This is where I see the potential of corporate blogs: Blogs are an effective tool of corporate communication. The communication goals of companies can be very different and the orientation and design of blogs varies greatly depending on the industry. But blogs are mainly

useful for the company's self-marketing and for maintaining relationships with customers.

More attention

Blogs bring attention to companies and offer a new platform for self-presentation. Maintaining a corporate blog, for example, increases the company's visibility online, which brings companies to the front in the rankings of search engines such as Google. By publishing expert articles on a corporate blog, a company can position itself as an expert and shape its own corporate image. This is enormously important in today's globalized and digitalized world, where a company's image is shaped by numerous external sources of information (for example, print and online newspapers, trade journals, social media).

Of course, a company's website is also used for self-presentation, but a blog can be used to build a much more differentiated and human company profile, among other things through storytelling. Storytelling is – as the name suggests – a communication strategy that refers to telling a story. Originally, blogs were mainly used by private users like a digital diary to share their interests and opinions. Today, companies do the same and discuss topics that interest them or report on their activities (such as social engagement).

Often, the contributions are written by employees, which brings out the human side of the company and makes it more accessible. This is particularly important today, as digital developments such as social media have led to a trend towards personalization in corporate communications.

For internal and external relationship management

Like social media, blogs are based on the technologies of Web.2.0, which – unlike static websites – is characterized by interaction possibilities. This interaction can be used both for internal and external communication by companies. On the internal level, companies use blogs (for example on the intranet) for employee communication. Here, employees can share experiences and stimulate discussions, thus helping to shape the company. This can also promote employees' sense of belonging to the company.

On the external level, blogs serve the dialogue with customers and external stakeholders. For example, various blogs have comment functions, which allows interested readers to comment on what they have read and to enter into a conversation with the company. This brings several benefits to businesses. They learn what interests the clientele and can adapt if necessary or recognize dissatisfaction, problems and impending crises at an early stage.

In addition, corporate blogs enable the development of a community, which can be very valuable for companies. A community consists of like-minded people who are passionate about the same topic or company. Community members are often very engaged people who not only read the blog and exchange ideas, but can also promote the company outside of the blog. For example, blog posts are shared by community members via social networks.

Still relevant?

Regarding social networks: Are blogs still relevant for relationship management and brand building in times of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter? In many industries, interaction with relevant stakeholders now takes place primarily on social media. However, I see a big advantage in communicating via blogs. On blogs, companies are not bound by the guidelines of large tech companies (for example, the post length on Twitter). Especially for storytelling, where topics and stories are to be covered in detail, a blog is better suited in my opinion.

Furthermore, the relevance of social networks changes over time. What happens, for exam-

ple, if a company builds its entire online presence on Facebook, but after a few years it would no longer be used and other social networks would become more popular? With the maintenance of a blog, you are and remain independent.

Yours,

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Literature:

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