

Launching a Blog: Creating an Online Voice for Your Agency

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Launching a Blog

- Context, Creation and Growth of Nextstopstl.org
- Technical Considerations
- Social Media Policy Decisions

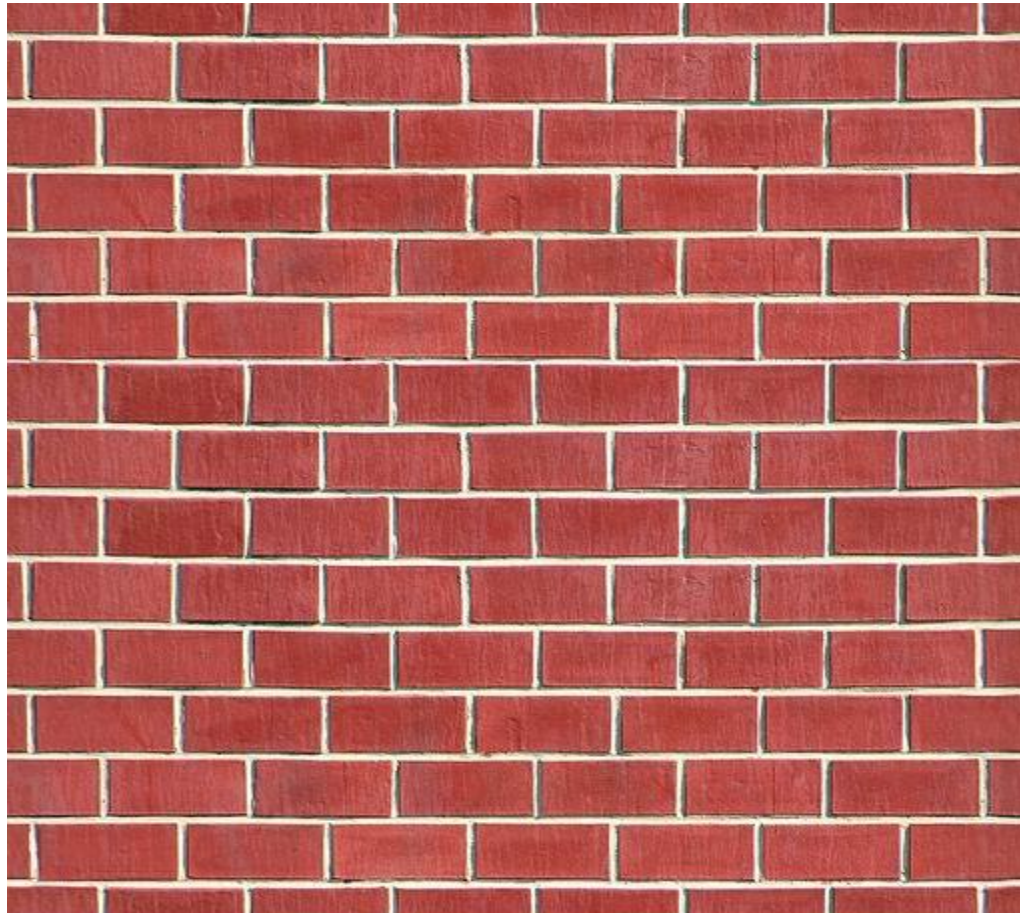
Context

- Public image problems!

Why a Blog?

To create a conversation between you, the transit agency, and your riders in order to facilitate transparency, credibility and customer service

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How a blog can help:

- Tell YOUR story
- Defensive to offensive
- Move beyond sound bites
- Greater depth
- Connect with your riders
- Facilitate listening

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<http://www.nextstopstl.org>

Starting the Conversation

- Talk to each other
- Start commenting on other blogs – build a relationship

Team Building

- foster cooperation to implement and maintain
- build vision
- use examples (i.e. www.nextstopstl.org)

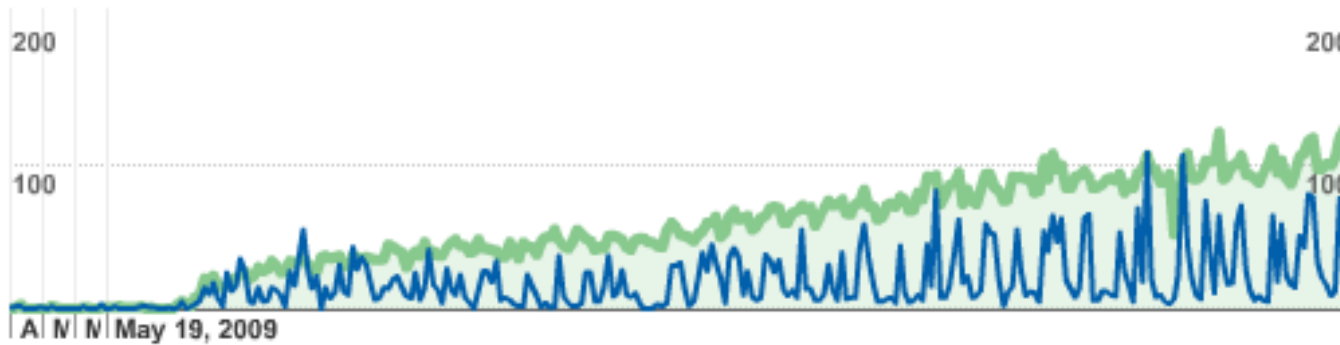
Agency Culture Change

- focusing on customers and not the agency
- morale
- take down barriers
- info sharing culture - transparency
- improved internal communications/discussions

Statistics

Feed Stats Dashboard

Show stats for



- 117 Subscribers

Marketing

- integrate into other communication/marketing tools
- build community around the blog
- draw people who are interested in what WE are doing

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Technical Considerations

Site Hosting

- Assess infrastructure to determine whether internal or external is best
- If external, choose quality host (\$\$)

Domain Name/Branding

- Determine if blog will be separate from main website
- Cons of hosted options (ie blogspot/wordpress.com)
- Separate site allows for addl flexibility/branding
- Traditional Rule: domain name under 21 characters – try for no more than three words/15 characters

Blogging Platform/CMS

- Wordpress most popular blogging tool
- Choose what is easy for setup and for users

Design

- Keep home page simple
- Emphasize your content
- Purchase a theme

Capabilities/Plugins

- Akismet –spam blocking
- All In One SEO – easy page titles/meta data
- Contact Form 7
- Google XML Sitemaps – send your info to Google easily

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Social Media Policy Decisions

Comments

- All moderated with power to delete/modify
- Be Civil
- On Topic
- Legal
- Honest

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Code of Ethics

- How we, as the blog team, will present ourselves
- 16 points
- <http://www.nextstopstl.org/policies/metro-blogger-code-of-ethics/>
- A blog is a relationship. Your readers need to know where you stand

Privacy

- Email Addresses
 - never shared/sold
 - only for blog purposes
 - optional newsletter opt in
- Zip Code
 - optional
 - demographic purposes

Internal Usage

- Created Social Computing Guidelines document
- You are personally responsible for what you publish
- Identify Yourself
- Respect your colleagues and get the facts straight
- Provide context and support your argument
- Respect the law and the rules

Final Thoughts: What Could We Do Better

- Still working thru workflow problems with getting stories posted
- Still seen as a niche effort. Others need to catch the vision
- Be Courageous - overcome fear of Controversy

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Next Steps

- Subscribe to our feed
- Comment on our blog
- Send us your feed
- We will comment on your blog
- The power of the broader conversation

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Thank You!