

From the Desk of David Lantz

Launching your BLOG

One way to communicate with people all over the world is to use a BLOG. This is short hand for “Biographical Log.” Yes, there are many – what I’ll call “cheesy” – BLOGs out there. But, there are also a lot of good ones that provide valuable information. Whether you simply want to communicate with family & friends, provide an outlet to let the world know what you’re thinking about, or communicate with a community of people with whom you need to stay in contact on a consistent basis, a BLOG can be very useful.

The problem many people face who wish to use this powerful tool is a very simple one: How do I get started?

So today, I thought I’d write an article that helps take some of the mystery out of the process. I’ve created one you can see using a service through www.blogger.com, and I’ll be referring to that site as I go along to explain what I did.

First, Decide Why You’re Doing This

People are starting things all the time. Often, though, they seem to have a hard time with the follow-through. A BLOG is something that is easy to start, and then never do anything with. To make sure that your BLOG is something you’ll get some mileage out of, I suggest you take a moment and do the following:

1. Create a goal for your BLOG. What do you hope to accomplish?
2. Create a theme - both visual and verbal. Write articles and postings that relate to that theme.
3. Decide how often you’re going to post. Discipline yourself to stick to a schedule.
4. Find other sites that compliment what you do - link to them.
5. Create an email list that you send to people to let them know you've posted something.

The theme for my BLOG is built around showing people how to do ministry online. I’ve written an e-book called **Finding Community: Creating Connections on the Frontier of Online Ministry**. I believe a need exists to understand how to better use the Internet to tell people about Christ – and so I’m looking to write about that topic. And, because I have a newsletter ([Conversations with the Culture](#)) that I email to about 300 people on a monthly basis, I can let those people know about my BLOG.

What about you? Take some time at this point to get a start on answering the first three questions. I’m going to go grab a cup of coffee while you’re doing that. I’ll be right back.

To learn about my newsletter, [Conversations with the Culture](#), [click here](#)

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Set up Your Blogger Account

Well, now you're ready to set up your BLOG. I recommend www.blogger.com. Why Blogger, you ask? You can choose the one you want – I have other BLOGs at www.wisejargon.com and www.brotherhoodscroll.net. But, I've recently discovered Blogger, and the interface seems very user friendly. You can visit my BLOG is at <http://findingcommunity.blogspot.com/>

The first thing you'll need to do is to set up your GOOGLE Account. If you don't already have one, simply provide an email address and password. Then, you'll be prompted to choose a template. Once you've done that, then you're ready to go "live".

There is something called a "dashboard". You'll want to go to www.blogger.com and use the user name and password you created. You'll find a place to upload a picture of yourself, friends – what ever you want. And, you are not limited by the number of pictures you upload. If you've already created your BLOG, why not take a moment to do that now? While you're at it, take a few minutes to create a profile about yourself. Go ahead. I'll be right here when you get back. Here – I've taken a screen shot of the dashboard from my BLOG and posted it here so you can see what it looks like

Visit

[Finding
Community](http://FindingCommunity)



Posting Something on Your BLOG

I recommend writing what you're going to post, reviewing/editing it, and then uploading it. You can create a document in word, and then copy and paste here. Some Blog hosts are quirky, so you may need to create that document in a program called "wordpad" off your

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computer. That program has limited text editing – and is therefore readable by virtually any BLOG authoring interface tool. That’s what I did for my first post. You can then go to your dashboard at [http://www2.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=\(Your ID\)](http://www2.blogger.com/post-create.g?blogID=(Your ID)) and post your first piece of writing!

Keep in mind that once you post something, things on the Internet called “robots” and “spiders” will come and find you. That’s actually a good thing, because they’ll tell the world all about what you’re writing. However, if you’re a little bashful and don’t want anyone to see your BLOG just yet, you can tell blogger.com not to list you anywhere. You can change that by going to what is called “blog-options-basic” from the Dashboard and set those settings the way you want them.

Watch What Happens When You Post Something New

Let’s post something. From the Dashboard, you’ll see something called “Manage Your Blog”. Click on “layout” and then “Add a page element.” When you do that, you’ll be given a choice of things to add. If you have a picture you’d like to upload, choose “picture” and click “ADD TO BLOG.” There, you’ve posted a picture.

Let’s say you post a second picture. If you do that, you’ll find that the one you posted last goes to the top of those objects. What if you want to have the first picture you posted remain at the top? Blogger makes it real easy to fix that. When you click on [http://www2.blogger.com/rearrange?blogID=\(your ID\)](http://www2.blogger.com/rearrange?blogID=(your ID)) you can grab the box that has your post/link/picture and move it (rearrange it). This is very helpful.

Notice also that when you add new posts, the older ones move down. Let’s say you’ve posted 6 articles, but you want to make sure someone can find the very first one you wrote (which is now at the bottom of the BLOG page). What do you do?

Notice that each BLOG post has a title. You can send someone an email with that link embedded in it, so that when they click on the link, the article you want them to see opens right there in their web browser. So, if your post is the third or fourth one, instead of going to your BLOG and scrolling down to the bottom of your BLOG page, the person will be taken right to your post. For example, if you go to <http://findingcommunity.blogspot.com/2007/06/launching-blog.html> , you’ll be taken to the BLOG post I made when I wrote this article. If, however, you go to <http://findingcommunity.blogspot.com/> you’ll see whatever is the most current BLOG post at the time you click that link.

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Conclusion

There's a lot to learn about how to make things look the way you want. You'll find the "help" feature very useful. The best way to get to know about this is to play with it. Another thing to do is to simply take a look at how others have organized their BLOG. Notice that when you're viewing your BLOG, there's a link you can click that says "SEE NEXT BLOG." Take a look at some other ones to spark some ideas. Then, if you don't mind, comment on my BLOG at <http://findingcommunity.blogspot.com/> to tell me about your experiences.



David Lantz provides project management consulting services to not-for-profit organizations. An Adjunct Professor of Business Management for the University Phoenix and Indiana Tech, he writes on the use of Business Technology and Christian Leadership. His latest publication is the e-book, **Finding Community: Creating Connections on the Frontier of Online Ministry**. Go to www.findingcommunity.net, to learn more, or email him at dlantz@buyingtechnology.com