Bloggers Guide To Profits

Introduction

What are blogs?

As you might have experienced, surfing the web was a fairly passive activity in the past. Like reading or watching TV or a bit of a combination of the two. The website as such, was all designed to be a rather one-way informative medium. Then came the advent of the 'blog…

So what on earth, er, the World Wide Web, is blogging? Abbreviated from "web log" a blog is simply a stream-of-consciousness kind of writing. Whether you are a major celebrity or a high school kid, you can blog. It requires no technical skill at all and costs almost nothing. They have become amazingly popular and are continually in the news. Recently, some people have been fired by major corporations for blogging about the goings-on at work! So you know there are plenty of readers out there.

What's the buzz and what's in a blog anyway?

What can be included in a Blog?

What could you include in a blog? Practically anything that comes to your mind.

In many instances, the discussion depends upon the theme of the website or a web page itself that is associated with a blog. Blogs are an excellent way of expressing personal opinion. These range from discussions about news, current events, sports, hobbies, careers, and various other topics. If you can think it, and you can type, you can blog it, more or less.

Blogs are being used effectively now by businesses as well. As stated earlier, Blogs are fast gaining popularity as an efficient marketing & advertising tool that helps businesses promote their products and services. Much more on this in a moment…

Why Blog?

As described earlier, blogging does not need any sophisticated programming skills, and even does away with complex coding. With almost no barrier to entry, it is estimated that there are more than 10 million blogs on the Internet today and growing.

Since bloggers enjoy the freedom and power of posting their thoughts and views instantly, blogging empowers visitors with a sense of instant gratification.

We all might want to blog – just ramble on and often complain! – for personal reasons or for fun. We perhaps want to stay connected to the big wide world out there, get something off our chests, or try to entertain far-away friends.

Blogging, much like a website, gives you a worldwide reach. Besides creating and maintaining a blog is far easier, quicker and cheaper compared to managing a website.

Are you starting to see the business potential here?

Business Blogging!

What is business blogging?

When the world of blogging got buzzing with activity, the interest it generated did not go unnoticed by profiteers.

Business Blogging, sometimes called B-Blogging, is a recent development, but it's growing fast and you'll see why.

Today blogging emphasizes being informational rather than promotional. Unlike mass marketing, blogging gives the organization a human face. In other words, marketing your business with blogs is as close as it gets to face-to-face marketing. And this is something that is seen as the biggest advantage of blogging…it's a personal thing. Not some scary company talking, but a *real* guy or gal.

Hence, blogging for business is a strategic activity designed to promote the organization's vision, provide an online brand, secure untouched markets, and establish the company as the leading voice in the industry…all by making the company seem more human, low-key, and accessible.

Small Businesses and B-Blogging

Small businesses have the opposite problem – they often want to seem bigger and less personal.

You will find that a large number of small business owners are partnering with business bloggers and search optimization firms, because of the potential rewards it holds for them.

It's increasingly obvious that large numbers of eyeballs don't matter to most online businesses – it's the right eyeballs. The key is to get visitors who are actually interested in your products and services. Blogs do just this.

According to recent studies, around 10 % of small businesses have already incorporated blogging as part of their marketing approach. Further, another 16% plan to include blogging in their plans in the next two years! These are big numbers, and growing.

What's the appeal?

You will find many instances where blogging can be useful for the small business community. A few segments, where blogging can be especially useful, are as follows:

1. **Business Consultants:** As a business consultant, you almost certainly need to maintain closely-knit contacts with the business and industry. You also need to nurture these links with a lot of hard work and skill over long periods of time. Blogging can help business consultants keep in touch with wide spectrum of the business community, nurture further contacts and keep networked with other business consultants.

2. **'Bread and Breakfast' Businesses.** Bread and Breakfast business depend to a great extent on seasonal traffic; hence keeping in touch with old clients is important to get repeat business from them. You can use blogging to stay in touch with these individuals through the year.

3. **Specialist Retail Agencies:** As a specialist retailer, you may have an edge over other retailers if into selling specialist products, say, mountaineering equipment or exclusive skiing equipment. Blogging can

help you to interact with a niche clientele, by including news and posts about such specialist equipment and exclusive product updates.

4. **Non Commercial and Not for Profit Agencies:** If you are a non commercial **agency** spread over a large geographical area, you can include blogs to keep members informed about meetings, activities, and further developments.

5. **Crisis situations:** Blogs maintained in crisis situations help people keep in touch with the latest developments, rescue operations and can even provide information about missing or injured loved ones.

You will also find that encouraging customers to provide feedback is an excellent way of utilizing blogs. They help generating new ideas as well, as they are an excellent way of getting a customer's message across to the company.

Advantages of Business Blogging

Simply put, blogging is another way of getting the message across to an intended target audience. It is all about optimizing sales by maximizing relationships with your target audience. Blogging is cheap compared to almost any other marketing method.

Boosts Online Branding

As the owner of a small business, you can effectively boost your online presence by blogging about the products and services offered, the industry and related interests, which can help generate interest and can enhance sales too. Just like nobody knows how tall you are on the radio, nobody knows the size of

your business on the Web. Talk like you own the market and before long you probably will.

Enhancing customer relationship programs

Business Blogging is a sure way to get in touch with a large customer base without using email and other potentially annoying and ineffective techniques. You can make this happen by keeping updated blogs about customer interests, new products and services, current and industry related news and such.

The benefits you can obtain here at low to no cost can be equivalent to an email marketing campaign at a fraction of the costs and without potentially annoying your client base.

Enhances Search Engine Optimization

As blogging does not require any fancy graphics, or complex HTML code, it is virtually the darling of search engines. Many search engines frown upon heavy and unnecessary graphics, but tend to index text.

Many search engines like Google rank a site based upon the number of links that point to it. If you provide useful and interesting content increases interest among readers, it makes the blog site even more popular. Linking to other interesting sites and including important keywords while writing the blog can increase viewers. Blogging can promote a website by virtue of the number of links you as a blogger could put in your website.

These links can cause a domino effect because they will refer to another website, which in turn will refer to another, and so on and so forth. If a myriad of links start pointing to the website, this can do wonders for website search engine rankings. This is also sometimes known as a 'viral' effect, referring to

the way a virus multiplies in a host organism. When a blog links to websites similar in theme or idea, webmasters may reciprocate by linking back. This increases the affinity of search engine robots which may give a higher ranking to the website.

Better Tool for Media and PR

Blogs are an excellent PR and media relation tool too, as every marketing manager might have found. If you place advertisements in traditional media like newspapers and television, they can be extremely expensive. Whereas, the cost benefits offered by blogging could be peanuts compared to a television or a newspaper campaign and your material will generally have much longer life – in theory, forever.

Enhances Niche markets

If you sell something online that other websites also cater to, as an online retailer it could be extremely difficult to obtain and edge over others. Selling to a niche market can be an advantage because there is something unique to talk about in detail, which others lack. You might regularly blogging new developments, also specialist talk. This can attract niche customers to the site and can significantly increase customer attention and consequently your sales.

Blogging for business

A few simple rules to follow while developing your B-Blog are:

> a. B-blogs should be updated on a timely and routine basis. Never should stale information be left lingering on a b-blog.

b. As a blog is informative, its content should be crisp and natural, and not ordered or planned like that in a newspaper. Also, it should be easy to access old blogs in an archive.

c. Develop a theme, and form an original writing style. This will make you a unique blogger, and give you a strong and loyal audience.

d. Clarity and simplicity in a blog is of utmost importance!

e. Use keywords extensively to entice search engine robots. This includes visibility in search engine listings. Use key words in titles as well, though titles should not be more than 10 or 12 words long

f. Frequently published blogs will mean search engines will come back later to index the site.

g. Use your spelling and grammar checkers!

h. Syndicate your blog with RSS service (discussed later) to boost readership.

Blogging Resources

Blogging software & tools

Now that you know what a blog is, and how it can benefit your business, let's look at some of the most commonly used ways to get your blog up and running.

WordPress

WordPress is the most popular blogging software used online today. This is because it is not only free to use, but has a huge support community that helps new and veteran users alike.

The biggest advantage to using WordPress, is that it is constantly being updated and improved upon. In fact, because it is open source software, there are hundreds, if not thousands of programmers constantly creating WordPress plugins.

These plugins are basically like bonus features you can use with the software, to upgrade its functionality (Making your life much, much easier).

You can view a list of these plugins at:

http://wiki.wordpress.org/?pagename=Plugin

One major feature of the software, is that it automatically creates a RSS feed for your blog (The benefits of RSS will be discussed later on).

Each time you post to your blog, the software automatically updates your feed. This is a dynamic feature that will help expose your blog to a wider audience, and best of all, requires no extra work on your part.

Installing WordPress

The first step you will need to take, is to download WordPress here:
http://wordpress.org/download/

You can then follow the detailed installation instructions. Should you run into any problems, don't hesitate to use the support forum at:
http://wordpress.org/support/

After you have installed the software, you will want to change your theme. The theme is simply the layout/design of your blog. You can make it look as simple, or as creative as you wish.

To choose a theme for your WordPress blog, visit:
http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/

Once you have chosen your preferred theme, simply download the file to your hard drive. The zip file should contain easy installation instructions for changing your theme in a few simple steps.

These are just the basics you need to get started using WordPress to power your blog. As you become more familiar with the software, you can slowly begin to use more of the advanced features and plugins.

Popular WordPress Plugins

As we discussed earlier, there are a vast amount of helpful plugins you can use for WordPress. Here are five of the most popular plugins available:

Spam Karma 2.0 – One of the most frustrating obstacles to running your own blog, is automatic comment spam. This is an underhanded tactic that unscrupulous marketers use to get free advertising on your blog.

Spam Karma 2.0 is the best anti-spam plugin available. Without getting too technical, this plugin will run all comments through a series of spam tests before posting them to your blog.

Click here to download this plugin

WP-Contact Form – This plugin allows you to add a contact form to your blog in two easy steps.

Click here to download this plugin

One Click Backup v. 1.3 – Quickly and easily backup your blog using this plugin.

Click here to download this plugin

Google Sitemap Generator – One of the hottest ways to get your Website/blog pages listed on Google is by using a *Google Sitemap.*

Use this plugin to instantly generate your own Google Sitemap, and you should see a dramatic increase in the pages Google indexes from your blog.

Click here to download this plugin

WP Subscribe To Comments – This plugin will give your readers instant email notifications when there are new comments to your posts.

This is a great way to keep your visitors coming back to read your blog!

You can download it here:
Click here to download this plugin

Blogger

If you are searching for the easiest way to start a blog, then perhaps Blogger is the solution for you.

You can setup a Blogger account and add your first post, literally within minutes.

The drawback is that you only have so much control over the design/layout of your blog, and a limited amount of features.

If you can live with these shortcomings, then a Blogger account is your best option.

Setting Up Your Blogger Account

Step 1 – Getting Started

Follow the link below and click on the "Create Your Blog Now" arrow.

http://www.blogger.com/

Step 2 – Create Your Account

Once you have clicked the arrow, you will be taken to the **"Create An Account"** page.

Here you will create your account username/password (Be sure to write down this information and put it somewhere safe).

Don't forget to read over the *Terms of Service* agreement, and check the acceptance box.

Click on the "continue" arrow and move on to step 3.
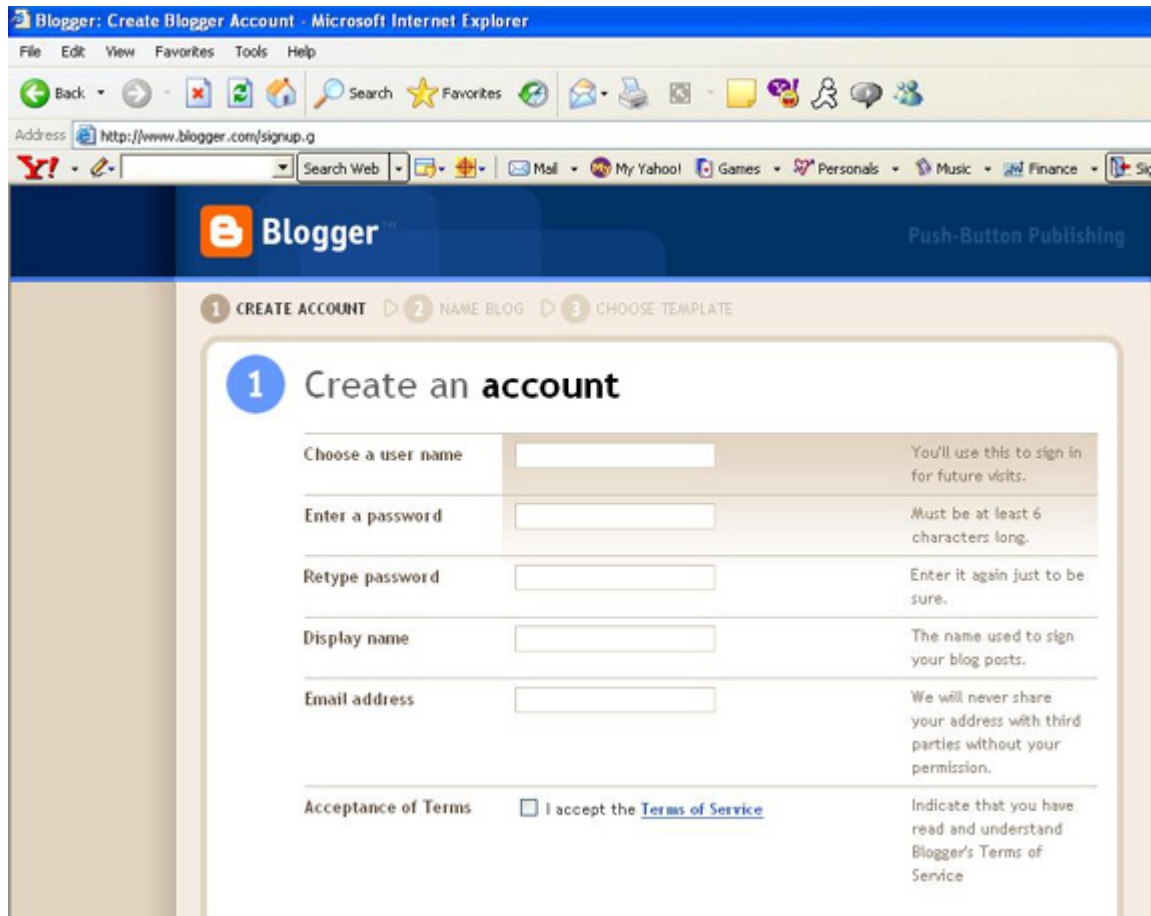
Step 3 – Name Your Blog

The next step is to name your blog.

It is a good idea to name your blog after the theme for which you intend to use it (I.e. Water Gardening, Ice Hockey, etc). Simply naming your blog, "My blog" or "Jane's Big Blog" is unprofessional and generally won't catch people's interests.

Putting some extra thought into your blog name can pay huge dividends down the road.

Once you have decided on an appropriate name, you can fill out the forms.

Ignore the advanced settings option, and click on the orange "continue" arrow.

Step 4 - Choose Your Blog Template

You are almost there, just one more step to go!

This is where you get to have a little fun and let out your creative side, by choosing your blog template.

Keep in mind that this template can be changed at anytime. Some people like to try out all of the templates, until they find one that is just right for them.

Or if you prefer, you can create a custom template for your blog. However, this can all be done at a later date.

For now, simply click the tab by the design that catches your eye and continue on to the next page.
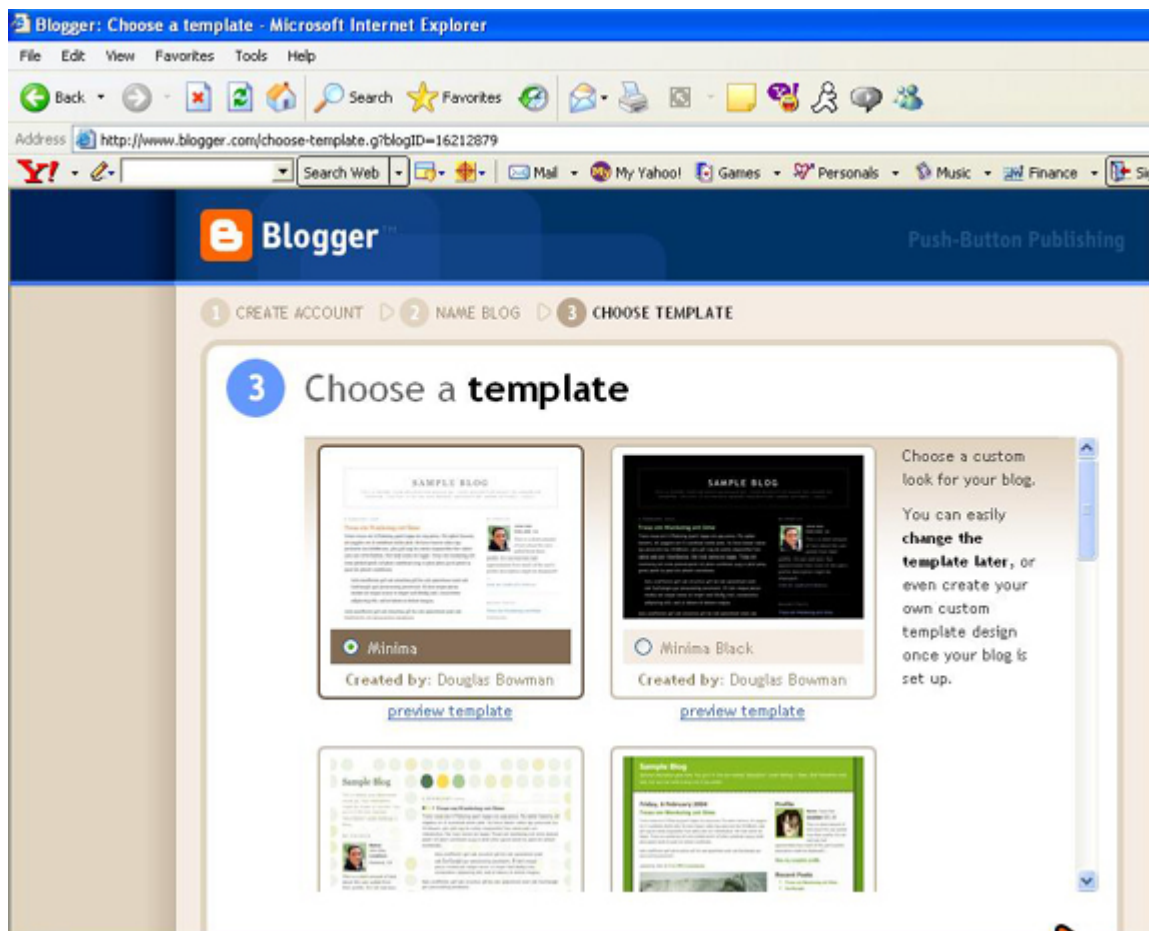
Step 5 – Generate Your Blog

Now comes the easy part. Just sit back and relax while Blogger creates your blog.

After your blog has been created, you will see the following page:
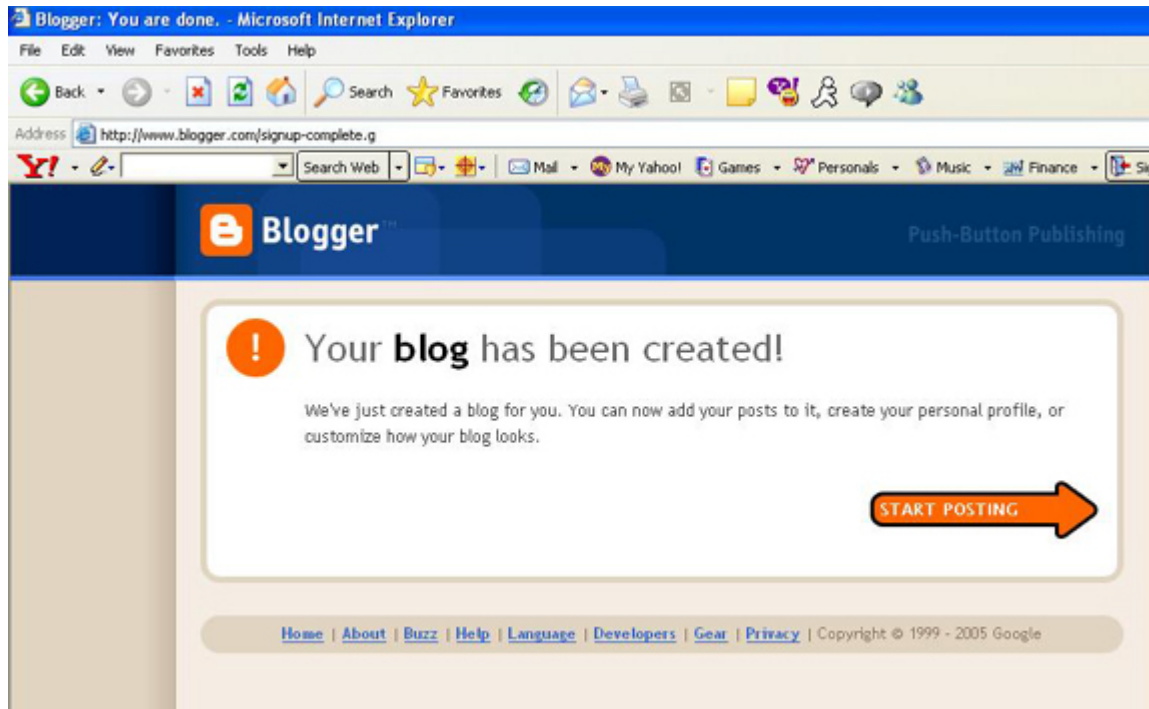
Click the "Start Posting" button to make your first official post.

Congratulations! You are now a blogger! How easy was that?

RSS and Blogging

What is RSS?

RSS stands for "really simple syndication" and is a new, easy, low cost method for distributing content on the web, using a newswire model.

How does RSS enhance Blog Performance?

A blog can be read with a standard browser, or alternatively, can be read by an RSS reader (or "aggregator"). Blogs and even web pages can be syndicated to form an RSS feed. This RSS feed then can be made available unfiltered to a client's desktop via a well-known URL.

> **Hint: WordPress automatically creates a RSS feed for your blog.**
> **The url below is an example of an RSS feed generated by WordPress**
> **http://www.elitelinksnewsletter.com/newsletter/wp-rss2.php**

Many content rich sites use RSS and Blogging to keep the user up-to-date with information, breaking news and other stories. Subscription by RSS makes the content come to the user rather than the user having to go to different web logs to fetch it. Hence, RSS utilizes 'pull' technology which means users ask for content, unlike email marketing, which relies on 'push' technology to push content unasked for.

RSS offers the potential of endless opportunities to the Internet marketing community right now. Cleverly written blogs are relatively easy to maintain pages that contain enough information about a product or a service to soft-sell it.

Major benefits of using RSS for Blogging

Higher Search Engine visibility

Several major search engines such as Yahoo! and MSN are offering to index your RSS feed along with your website (or Blogs) if your visitors include your RSS feed in their search engine specific accounts.

For instance, Yahoo! will spider your RSS feed and blog if a visitor to your blog includes your feed in his or her My Yahoo! account. Yahoo! is doing this within 48 hours of such an occurrence – a remarkably fast indexing time for Yahoo!

To top it all, this happens without costing you a penny! You can further speed up the process by subscribing to your RSS feed in your My Yahoo! account.

How To Add Your RSS Feed To Yahoo!

After you regularly start posting to your blog, you should add your RSS feed to Yahoo!

If you don't have a My Yahoo! account, go create one now by visiting this url: http://www.yahoo.com/

Simply click on the My Yahoo! icon and register.

Adding Your Content

The first thing you will need to know, is what your RSS feed url is. Once you are armed with this information, log onto your My Yahoo! Account.

When you first log into your account you will want to click on the "Add Content" button displayed below:
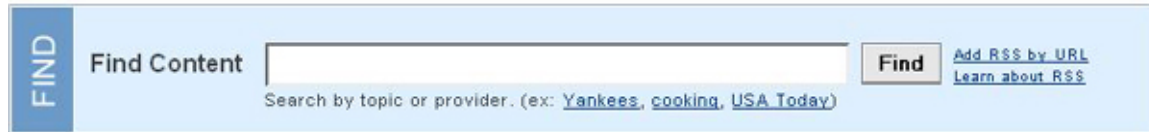
On the next page you will see a search box, and to the right of this box, there is a link you need to click on titled "Add RSS by URL"

On the next page, simply copy and paste your RSS feed into the box and click on "Add "

If your feed is valid, you will see it listed in the next step. Now simply click on the "Add To My Yahoo!" button.

You should double check that the feed was added, by going to the front page of your account. If you did everything correctly, you will see your feed listed towards the bottom.

If you don't see your feed, repeat all of the steps as necessary.

Getting Your Feed Listed On MSN

Microsoft has created a program similar to My Yahoo! called "My MSN."

You will again need to create an account, if you don't already have one.

This can be done by visiting the MSN Website and clicking on the My MSN link in the menu navigation bar. http://www.msn.com/

Once you have registered, and are logged into your account, you will want to look for the following box:

Copy and paste your RSS feed url into the box and click the green arrow.

Your feed will then be displayed on the next page. Place a checkmark by your feed and click "OK."

You will then be taken back to the main page, where your feed should be displayed.

That is all there is to it!

Each time you create a new blog, be sure to add it to both Yahoo! and MSN using the steps listed above.

Websites and Directories for hosting/submitting your blogs

This is a comprehensive list of websites that allow you to post your blogs. Many of these also provide the functionality of hosting your own blogs. In other words, these are third party service providers we discussed earlier.

20six	22 Blog
Apcala	Australian weblogs
Bibliopolis Blogs, for librarians	Birmingham Bloggers
bitacoras.net	Bitadir
Blizg	blo.gs
Blog Africa	Blog Catalog

[Blog Hot or Not](#)	[Blog Universe](#)
[Blogarama](#)	[Blog-City](#)
[Blogcult](#)	[Blogdir.com](#)
[Bloggando](#)	[Bloggator](#)
[Blogger.com](#)	[Bloggernity](#)
[blogging ecosystem](#)	[Blogging Network](#)
[b-logging.com](#)	[BlogHop](#)
[bloghosts](#)	[Bloginality](#)
[Blogomania](#)	[blogs4God](#)
[BlogsCanada](#)	[BlogsHost.info](#)
[BlogSpirit](#)	[Blogster.com](#)
[BlogStreet](#)	[BlogSweet.com](#)
[BlogTree.com](#)	[Blogwise](#)
[British Blog Directory - BritBlog](#)	[Canadian Blogs Directory](#)
[CrimsonBlog](#)	[Danish weblogs](#)
[dcmetroblogmap](#)	[DeadJournal.com](#)
[DFW Blogs](#)	[Diarist.Net](#)
[Diary Registry](#)	[DiaryLand](#)
[diary-x.com](#)	[DirLog](#)
[DK3.com portal system](#)	[Dragid.com](#)
[easyjournal](#)	[eatonweb portal](#)
[Emo Blog](#)	[Euroblogs](#)
[Famblog](#)	[GeekPhilosopher](#)
[Get Linked](#)	[GetBlogs.com](#)
[globe of blogs](#)	[GreatestJournal](#)
[Indiana Blogs!](#)	[InkNoise](#)
[Interactive-X](#)	[iUplog](#)
[Jablog](#)	[Jewish Blogs](#)
[Aetheri.com](#)	[Antville](#)
[John Doe Journal Neighborhood](#)	[JournalFiend](#)

Journals Online	Big Blog Tool
LA Blogs	BlogDot
Blogeye	LexBlog
Blog Drive	Blog Studio
The Blogatorium	Library weblogs
Linked	blogger.de
Bloghorn	LiveJournal
Blogmosis	LiveLogCity
London Bloggers	Blogsome
LS Blogs	metapitas
Blurty	MindSay
Moblog	DearDiary.Net
ModBlog	motime
Digital Expressions	Mukin
music-blogs.com	My Journal
eBloggy	My Personal Diary
Facto	MyDearDiary
GeekLog	MyITBlog
myjamby	MySmartChannels
MyWebLog.com	negimaki
NewsIsFree	Nolablogs
nyc bloggers	Online Writers Directory
Open Diary	Open Directory - web logs
Open Weblog Directory	ORBlogs
Phlog	Pitas.com
pitas.com	pMachine Hosting
Qlog	QuickBlog
rememory	Research Blogs
San Diego Bloggers	Scribble Journal
scribble.nu	seablogs

SeoBlog	Shade of Grey
Small Business Blog Directory	Sparkpod
Tabulas	tBLOG
Teen Open Diary	The Big Blog Company
The Blog Hunter	The Lefty Directory
The Pepys Project	The Posting Station
The Talking Forest	The X Dot Com
TongueWag	TypePad
uJournal	Upsaid
Vancouver Bloggers	we::blog
WeBlog	Weblog One
WeBlog Romania	Weblogger
weblogs.com	Weedweb
Wil's Domain	Wowimbored.com
www.memebot.com	Xanga
Xenoblogs	Yahoo! 360°
zBlogger	Zeal
zoomshare	