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AUTHOR, *SMALL IS THE NEW BIG*

# clear blogging

How People Blogging  
Are Changing the World  
and How You Can Join Them

**BOB WALSH**

FOREWORD BY PAMELA SLIM

**Apress®**

# Clear Blogging

How People Blogging Are  
Changing the World and  
How You Can Join Them



Bob Walsh

## **Clear Blogging: How People Blogging Are Changing the World and How You Can Join Them**

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ISBN-13 (pbk): 978-1-59059-691-3

ISBN-10 (pbk): 1-59059-691-9

Printed and bound in the United States of America 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Distributed to the book trade worldwide by Springer-Verlag New York, Inc., 233 Spring Street, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10013. Phone 1-800-SPRINGER, fax 201-348-4505, e-mail [orders-ny@springer-sbm.com](mailto:orders-ny@springer-sbm.com), or visit <http://www.springeronline.com>.

For information on translations, please contact Apress directly at 2560 Ninth Street, Suite 219, Berkeley, CA 94710. Phone 510-549-5930, fax 510-549-5939, e-mail [info@apress.com](mailto:info@apress.com), or visit <http://www.apress.com>.

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*This book is for John and June Rossi for their support and love these many years,  
and for Linda Sinclair—you are greatly missed by all who knew you.*



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# Foreword

**T**he moment comes at different times for a new blogger, but it is unforgettable. After posting a fleeting thought, curious insight, personal theory, or random rant on your blog, you go off to attend to regular business for a few hours. Then, returning to your email box, you start to see tens, sometimes hundreds, of messages. Your heart starts to pound as you see your daily reader statistics shoot through the roof, and read comments about your post from bloggers around the world.

In this quiet, exhilarating, and scary moment, you realize that people are listening to you, and they care about what you have to say. Whether blogging for personal or professional reasons, discovering your voice is a liberating and revolutionary feeling. For so many people who feel stifled, not heard, taken for granted, or disrespected, the feeling of creative outlet is invigorating. Finally, there is a vehicle for saying the things that need to be said.

Most people are changed by this experience and become thoroughly immersed in the world of blogging. The pursuit of new ideas, creative partners, and reader contact consumes many hours of the day. Most bloggers care profoundly about what their readers think, and always strive to create fresh, useful, and insightful information. Doing so can be a big challenge and can take up more time than is healthy or reasonable, if you are not careful.

For wannabe or new bloggers, *Clear Blogging* offers an efficient, easy-to-understand, and compelling overview of what blogging is and how you can quickly jump in and participate. For more seasoned bloggers, it offers multiple ways to more efficiently plan, research, write, connect, and promote the ideas contained in your blog. When I started *Escape from Cubicle Nation* a little over a year ago, I had never even read another blog, and I set up most of it in a wildly inefficient way. As I read Bob's multiple technical tips and tricks for blogging more efficiently and effectively, I only wished that I had this information a year ago! It would have saved me a lot of grief. The multiple case studies and interviews highlight what I have found by tripping all over the blogosphere: There is much wisdom in the everyday insights of men and women around the world. You just have to know the right places to find them.

The act of blogging changes your status from passive observer to active participant and expert witness. While the medium is still relatively new, the potential for your personal and professional growth through writing about what you deeply care about is without limits.

Those like Bob who we deem "experts" on blogging hold that distinction because they have dove in, contributed the best of their minds to developing the medium, and actively participated in shaping conversations.

You, too, have something important to contribute and people eager to hear what you have to say.

What are you waiting for?

Pamela Slim

*Author, Escape from Cubicle Nation Blog and Podcast*

[www.escapefromcubiclenation.com](http://www.escapefromcubiclenation.com)



# About the Author



**BOB WALSH** has been a contract software developer in the San Francisco Bay Area for the past 23 years, specializing in desktop information systems. His company, Safari Software, Inc., has for the past decade amazingly focused on the same thing, albeit at a higher hourly rate.

In 2005, Safari Software, Inc., joined the ranks of micro self-funded software companies, with the release of MasterList Professional. Bob quickly discovered he knew squat about all the nonprogramming aspects of being a micro-ISV. He did interviews and research, and then wrote *Micro-ISV: From Vision to Reality* (Apress, 2006), so he would know what to do right with his next software product, ActionTasks (<http://actiontasks.com>).

Bob started his first blog, ToDoOrElse (<http://ToDoOrElse.com>), in October 2004 and was quickly hooked by the sheer fun, ease, and reach of blogging. His second blog, My Micro-ISV ([www.mymicroisv.com](http://www.mymicroisv.com)), is a must-read for programmers who want to strike out on their own. His third blog, Clear Blogging (<http://clearblogging.com>) continues where this book leaves off, and focuses on ways to improve blogging and ways blogging is improving this world.

Before joining the ranks of the computer industry, Bob was a reporter for several news organizations, most worth bragging about being United Press International (UPI).

# About the Technical Reviewer

■ **THOMAS RUSHTON** has been programming since his first computer, a Sinclair ZX80. He has since progressed through creating complex workflow and document management systems for financial and legal organizations, and now works as IT Technical Development Manager for a UK-based law firm. He has a BSc in Computer Science from Durham University, and spent some research time in the field of software quality, before moving into the more financially rewarding IT career roles of programmer, DBA, and consultant.

When not slaving away over a hot keyboard, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Sarah, their young son, William, and his double bass.

# Acknowledgments

**A** lot of people gave freely of their time to answer nosy questions from this author, including, but certainly not limited to: Alvin Toffler, Seth Godin, Darren Rowse, Andy Wibbels, Cameron Reilly, David Copperfield, Dharmesh Shah, Eric Mack, Eric Marcoullier, Fabrice Florin, Gary Walten, Guy Kawasaki, Hiten Shah, Jane Anderson, Julie Vieira, Maeve Salla, Marshall Kirkpatrick, Meg Hourihan, Mike Magee, Pamela Slim, Patrick Galvin, Rajesh Setty, Neil Scheibe, Steve Rubel, Toby Bloomberg, Tom Foremski, Tom Reynolds, David Sifry, Ian Landsman, Kurt Opsahl, Nick Wilson, Josh McAdams, Amber MacArthur, Brina Kinser, Chad Coleman, George Westby, Andrew Anker, Lori Anderson, Mary Anne Walker, Michelle Tampoya, Christopher Parr, Don Dodge, Aniruddha Malpani, Eric Stutzman, Gretchen Ledgard, Zoe Goldring, Itzy Sabo, Kevin Pho, Michael E. Duffy, Nicholas Genes, Zane Safrit, Brian and Cambria Rollo, Richard Edelman, Nicola Hewitt, Sharla Oliveri, B.L. Ochman, Elan Nahari, Steve Olechowski, Shuna Fish Lydon, David Lebovitz, Alder Yarrow, and Blake Rhodes.

Next, the Apress people are first-rate all the way. Thanks again to Apress editorial director Dominic Shakeshaft, my editor Jonathan Hassell, and project manager Tracy Brown Collins for your help, support, and ever-professional guidance.

Hats off, too, to Marilyn Smith, copy editor extraordinaire, who kept her cool as she unmangled my manuscript, and Laura Esterman, who managed the alchemy of turning Word docs into correctly formatted PDF files and kept the compositor happy.

And a big, big thanks to Thomas Rushton, my technical reviewer, who made sure of each and every URL and whose comments in the margins would crack me up when things got too dull.

One last person to mention at Apress: Tina Nielsen, who was ever so nice as I pestered her for Apress books to keep the programming part of my brain from wasting away.

And, of course and always, my partner in life Tina Marie Rossi, for putting up with the missed family stuff and a lot more.

# Introduction

**A** funny thing started happening right around the start of this century: A few programmers and geeky people in general started putting on their websites a running weblog of what was happening with them, what cool thing they had just stumbled over on the Internet, and even a few pictures of their family and cats. Nothing too important, nothing too disruptive, nothing to pay attention to, right? Wrong.

Seven years later, there are nearly 60 million blogs, and something like 30 million active bloggers, with the number of blogs steadily doubling every six months or so. You see, the people formally known as the audience, consumers, and likely voters have started hearing, reading, reacting, and conversing via blogs.

Today, blogging profoundly shapes:

- What products, fashion, and music are hot and not
- Public opinion, policy, and politics
- What news is—from the evening news and the *New York Times* right down to your local newspaper
- Who knows what about the company you work for, the industry or profession you strive in, and the occupations and avocations out there

More than a few of the old rules about how people find out about what's going on in their world have gotten a massive upgrade called blogging. It's my hope and intention that this book will help you learn and master blogging for your own benefit.

Given the title of this book, I ought to make a few things clear about what this book is not. If you're wondering how your corporation can implement and deploy blogging as an efficient marketing tool, best to look elsewhere—this book is not for you. It doesn't cover how to start the next Engadget.com or Gizmoto.com tech-toy blog, or how to become the next Arianna Huffington or Michelle Malkin. And this is not your usual Apress technical, code-on-every-page book. In fact, there's exactly one line of actual code in this book for a simple reason: As millions have already found out, you don't need to be a programmer to blog, and that's good.

What I think you will get from this book is how and why you should start your own personal, business, professional, or occupational blog (or all of the above), and if you're already blogging, some of the ways you can make your blog more successful.

## Who This Book Is For

Whether you are someone looking to connect in an increasingly disconnected world, you're wondering how to get ahead in your profession or in the online world, or you just want to tear up your passive-audience ticket stub and start participating in the conversations around you, this book is for you.

I had two types of readers in mind in this endeavor to nail down how to blog successfully. First, I wanted to help people who have never blogged, and because blogs have now come to their attention, they wonder if blogging has something in it for them. The short answer is yes! The long answer is in this book. You'll find out about blogging if you run a business, are building a career, do hazardous work, would like to report the news, or just want to join the online conversation about your interests.

The second audience for this book is bloggers who, for one reason or another, just haven't gotten the results they expected when they started blogging weeks or months ago. Here, you'll find a ton of advice, tips, and help from bloggers who've found their road to blogging success.

## How This Book Is Structured

Here's a quick rundown of what you'll find in *Clear Blogging*. If you're absolutely new to blogging, by all means read it sequentially. If you've already started blogging, you might want to have a look at specific chapters that catch your eye, then circle back to see what other kinds of blogging are going on.

Part 1, "Revolution in Progress: Please Make Noise!" details what blogging is, why you should care, and how to get started.

*Chapter 1, Why Blog?:* If you think blogs don't matter, this chapter is for you. We'll talk with one of those "A-List" bloggers, Steve Rubel, about how blogging is changing, and how buzz and influence now work.

*Chapter 2, Hooking into the Blogosphere:* So what exactly is a blog, and how do you find blogs that you want to read and comment on? You'll find out in this chapter. We'll walk through going from what matters and interests you to finding blogs worth your time to read. You'll discover how to turn the blogosphere into your own personal information wire.

*Chapter 3, Getting Started:* We'll cover how to start a blog with three typical blogging services: Blogger, TypePad, and Windows Live Spaces. You'll get some idea of how to size up which of these three, or any other blogging service or software, is right for you.

Part 2, "Building Your Blog," is where we have a good, hard look at the different types of blogs out there: personal, professional, and business.

*Chapter 4, What Do Good Blogs Share?:* Whatever kind of blog you decide to create, good blogs have certain practices and traits in common. This chapter takes a look at these and shows you potentially career-ending mistakes to avoid. We'll also talk about your legal rights as a blogger with the man who literally wrote the book on it, at least for Americans.

*Chapter 5, Building Your Personal Blog:* There are blogs for the whole world, and there are blogs for just you, your family, and perhaps your friends. We'll look at two popular personal blogging systems, LiveJournal and Vox, and talk with several bloggers about the whys and wherefores of having a personal blog.

*Chapter 6, Professionally Blogging, Blogging Professionally:* Professional people of all sorts are finding blogging can build their reputation online and off. In this chapter, we'll talk with legal, medical, and other professionals about why they blog, what they've learned, and what they've gotten from blogging. We'll also see how one company, Microsoft, has embraced blogging. Finally, we'll take a look at an emerging new kind of job: the professional blogger.

*Chapter 7, Building Your Company Blog:* The smaller your company the bigger the impact can be of starting a blog. We'll talk with a variety of small business people who are using their blogs to not just even out the playing field, but to tilt it in their favor. And we'll talk with the CEO of the largest privately owned public relations firm, Richard Edelman, about why he's telling some of the most powerful corporate leaders out there that they had better start blogging.

In Part 3, "Secrets of Influential Bloggers," we'll dig down deep into the technologies, techniques, and wisdom of some extremely successful bloggers. If you are now blogging, this is the part of the book you're going to want to read page for page.

*Chapter 8, Power Tools for Bloggers:* Two tools bloggers want to take full advantage of are Technorati and FeedBurner. In this chapter, we'll talk with David Sifry, CEO of Technorati, and Steve Olechowski, cofounder of FeedBurner. We'll also look at how to get the most value from these two services.

*Chapter 9, Successful Blogging:* So how do you blog successfully? This chapter covers the mechanics of continuously finding topics for new posts, writing well, and how to make it easier for your readers to find you. We'll get some advice from people whose blogs are highly influential (Rajesh Setty, B.L. Ochman, and Seth Godin) about what makes a good post and what makes a good post great.

*Chapter 10, The New Fourth Estate:* Blogging is changing mainstream media in ways reporters, editors, and politicians would not have imagined a few short years ago. In this chapter, we'll talk with several reporters who have fired their newspapers and gone the blog route, and some people who are redefining just who is a reporter. We'll also look at how you can become a "citizen journalist."

*Chapter 11, Adding Podcasting to Your Blog:* In the same way blogs made written posts easy to do, find, and discover, blogs make it simple to create and distribute audio blogs, or podcasts. In this chapter, we'll look into what it takes to create and post a podcast, and talk with two leading podcasters about the subject.

*Chapter 12, Monetizing Your Blog for Fun and Profit:* While blogging, like the Internet itself, may have started out as noncommercial, that was then and this is now. If you fall somewhere between not minding a little more pocket money and wanting to make your livelihood blogging, this chapter is for you. Besides covering the ins and outs of dozens of ways of successfully monetizing your blog, we'll talk with Darren Rowse, who is making over \$100,000 a year with his blogs, about how he does it.

*Chapter 13, Building Readership:* For public blogs, the bottom line is building readership. In this chapter, we'll cover how you measure, build, and create readership. We'll also look at a couple of ways outside the blogging box to further the reach of your blog and introduce it to even more potential readers.

In Part 4, "Blogging Toward the Future," we change direction.

*Chapter 14, Blogging from the New Front Lines:* Whether you're a copper in the UK, a lawman in the American Southwest, the wife of a cop in Los Angeles, a scientist in Antarctica, or a soldier in Iraq, your blog is your way of communing and communicating. Welcome to the new front lines.

*Chapter 15, Welcome to Your Future:* Finally, in this chapter, I haul out my crystal ball and make eight predictions about where blogging is going.

## Getting Updates

This is one of the very few Apress books out there with no code, honest! But, if you're looking for updates on the ever-changing blogosphere or posts on the never-ending stream of new tools to help personal, company, and professional bloggers, please click right over to <http://clearblogging.com>.

## Contacting the Author

Got a question or want to learn more? Please visit one (or more!) of my blogs at <http://clearblogging.com>, [www.ToDoOrElse.com](http://www.ToDoOrElse.com), and [www.mymicroisv.com](http://www.mymicroisv.com). Or you can stop by my micro-ISV website at <http://safarisoftware.com>. Also, feel free to drop me an email at [bobw@safarisoftware.com](mailto:bobw@safarisoftware.com).