Crossroads Dispatches

The generalist synthesist weblog - quite often about innovations in innovation and marketing. Juxtaposing the right brain and left. Yin and yang. Analytical and intuitive. Technical and visceral. Future and in-the-now. Intersection of technology, creativity & innovation, leadership, systems, beliefs and worldviews. Eventually, on-the-road coverage from a world journey to the emerging creative class centers

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Corporate, Executive, or Personal Blogging - We're All Evangelizing Something

I've been thinking about evangelistic blogging. I'm passionate about agile software development. I think it could be extended further into the marketing realm (during the preconception - or requirements gathering - and distribution/delivery phase of a product). I even organized a full-day conference around it back in 2002. I'd love that more people knew what it was and embraced it.

Last week, the Agile Alliance held the 2nd annual Agile Development Conference. I volunteered to create a conference blog and organize bloggers to cover it in exchange for entry to the conference itself. No consulting fees, no travel expenses. And no bites. The blogosphere is ripe for agile development. However it has mostly only infiltrated the ranks of hands-on developers - and not captured the hearts and minds of analysts, press, project managers, product managers and high-level management.

To see the difference in mindshare that participatory media brings to the table, compare the Supernova conference to the Agile Development Conference (ADC here on out) coverage - they were occuring concurrently - by comparing Technorati stats.

At 9:48 pm Pacific this past Friday, there are 161 posts for Supernova. A quick review shows less than 10% are actually talking about cosmology and not the conference. There is one person saying they are headed out to ADC but nothing further.

At 10:37 a.m. Monday there are 224 posts for Supernova. There are no new posts on ADC.

At 12:04 p.m. Tuesday there are 245 posts for Supernova. There is one new post referencing ADC 2004.

Supernova had other community tools beside their conference blog - a group metablog, a moblog, an eventspace wiki and more. IT Conversations is invited to record it and stream it live (transcripts up soon). The press was invited to cover it -

and blog it ([one compiled list](#) of Heath Row of [Fast Company](#)'s notes). Just like a cocktail party, once a conversation is going others are likely to join in and critical mass of buzz builds with one conversation threading into another. Note that Supernova attendees do not outnumber ADC attendees - but Supernova's impact reverberates due to the amplified word-of-mouth.

Most of us are selling something. Selling an idea, a concept, a meme - whether the message is 'please care about Mother Earth'. Or hey give this a spin. Maybe it's not pushy. Maybe you're "just putting it out there." And maybe the pitch is Love. So much of blogging is evangelistic. There are far fewer audience-read (versus friends and family) blogs that are purely storytelling for its own sake - with no point of view.

Most personal and noncommercial blogs are intended to influence. [Boing Boing](#) is not just braincandy, as they purport. There's obviously a [Cluetrain](#) [digital freedom](#) agenda too.

Journalist Steve Gillmor unabashedly evangelizes RSS [on his blog](#).

> We will look back in a few months/years and notice the moment when RSS, like the browser, flipped the switch for a new era of computing and communication.

It makes sense we want to evangelize what we're passionate about. And write about what we're passionate about - *or else why write?* [10 Tips on Writing the Living Web](#) advises (and it's the main point on which all the other nine hinge on) - **Write For a Reason**.

> "…write passionately about things that matter. …**If you don't really care, don't write**. …If your site belongs to a product, a project, or an enterprise, you must still find a way to represent its passion and excitement. If you do not understand why your product is compelling or comprehend the beauty of your enterprise, find the reason or find a new writer."

Just yesterday [Jeff Nolan, SAP Ventures, writes](#):

> I don't think that every business should rush out and get a blog. I can't tell you how many board meetings I've been in lately and someone pipes up about how blogging is hot and how the company should do blogging… whatever that means. **The point of blogs is to personalize something that can't easily be desribed, like a point of view or idea**. Group blogs, like Many-to-Many, work because of the personalities behind them and the common thread of interest that acts like glue. I'm not so sure that company blogs will have the required honesty, candidness, and most importantly, human voice that is necessary.

I don't advocate twisting an executive's arm to blog. **'Blogging is hot' is not a sustainable motivator for blogging**. And it has to be internally motivated or it'll fizzle. And honestly, I've given this a lot of thought, I don't know if I agree that solely the top brass can be the thought leaders for the company. [I agree that the](#) blog can be a great opportunity for an executive to talk about things that excite her

outside the bounds - broadening the landscape - of what the press would be immediately interested in (see Mark Cuban or Phil Libin).

Anyone who is compelled to write should (and if they're not, they're not). Employees, customers. (Worried about pissing off the boss? Unless your all-consuming passion is bashing your products and your boss, I don't see a problem. **Your** blog might not even be about work.)

When given the choice between having the CEO meet face-to-face with customers on their premises, in their environment or grudgingly (or even enthusiastically) writing a blog while holed up in their office - I'd say ditch the post and go see your customers.

I'd prefer to see more customer blogs like Hacking NetFlix (via A Penny For). Type in 'skype blog' on Google and you get Stuart Henshall - a passionate customer evangelist for Skype - as one of the top results. Who's more credible to you - the CEO of Netflix talking about Netflix or Mike at Hacking Netflix talking about Netflix?

But if the executive or corporate blog isn't any fun but just a stress inducing tightrope walk (what will legal say? what will the broad think? are my competitors reading this?) it'll be deathly dull for the writer as well as the reader.

As per Seth Godin (via A Penny For):

> "Safe is risky!
>
> Safe is invisible!
>
> If you want to play it safe, please don't bother wasting time on a blog."

(Safe throws a bucket of water on the fire.) Passion is not safe. And effective evangelism sizzles and buzzes and reverberates.