

Much is being made of my decision to ban bloggers from the locker room. To me its pretty amusing. In particular I find it amusing that there is a presumption that if a blogger works for a big company, they must be better. The logic extends to the conclusion that if only I would evaluate the different blogs and make a qualitative selection, then big newspaper bloggers would be chosen as among the best. Let me just say, that should I go that direction, that I find quite a few individual bloggers to be far better than those earning a salary to blog . In fact, some of those blogs are written anonymously.

Which leads to my firm belief that newspapers having "bloggers" is easily one of the many bad decisions that newspapers have made over the past 10 years.

Much of what I am about to say can be considered semantics, but guess what, marketing and branding are all about semantics and perception.

Consider this a rule in marketing that could be added to my [Startup Rules](#).

**Never, ever, ever consider something that any literate human being with Internet access can create in under 5 minutes to be a product or service that can in any way differentiate your business.**

If you feel that you must offer this product or service as a means of "keeping up" or as a checklist item that you must have for competitive reasons, then do everything possible to brand the product or service in a manner that segregates it from the masses. Perception is reality. If you can leverage your existing brand to create the perception that yours is different from the masses in some meaningful way, then you must do everything you can to do so.

Creating a perceived differentiation can take the form of promoting better execution or quality of the product or service, or it may be something as simple as just branding it with a different name than the mass product or service.

Failure to do so will pull your brand down to that of the masses or elevate the masses to a position of being better able to compete with you.

A blog is a blog is a blog is a blog. The NY Times Blogs on their website are blogs. People who have blogs have a hard enough time coming up with a definition of what blog is. Potential or even current readers have no real idea of what the term blog reflect in terms of quality or content.

I'm sure the NY Times, like all major media outlets hopes that because it is branded a NY Times blog, that readers will have the perception and expectation that it will be of a higher quality than say, Blogmaverick.com .

That when readers actually read the blog, they will see that its of a higher quality than say, Blogmaverick.com. It may well be that some do. The marketing reality however is that there is a significant risk that they will not. That rather than assigning the brand equity of the NY Times to the blogs hosted, they will take the alternative path of assigning their perception of what a blog is to the NY Times, there by having a negative impact on the brand equity of the NY Times. That's an enormous risk for any mainstream brand to take.

If I worked for the NY Times, or any other media company with any level of brand equity, I would have done everything possible to define the section of our website that offers ongoing as anything other than a blog. I would make up a name. Call it say.....RealTime Reporting.

RealTime Yankees: Catch in depth, up to the minute reports on the Yankees as only the NY Times world re known staff of Sports Writers can bring up

RealTime City Hall: The NY Times has more journalists covering the action at City Hall than anyone else. Catch in depth, up to the minute reports on NYC politics as as only the NY Times can.

Brand it RealTime. Brand it anything. Make sure you market it as having the characteristics unique to your staff that NO ONE ELSE on the net can bring.

if I were marketing for them, I would be doing everything I could to send the message that "The NY Times does not have blogs, we have Real Time Reports from the most qualified reporters in the world. Like blogs we post continuously , 24x7x365 to keep you up to speed, unlike blogs, we have the highest level of journalistic standards that we adhere to. A copy of which is available at....." You get the picture.

I would also market it as an extension of the print version. All the news that cant fit in print. In the sports world, I think this is where main stream media really has dropped the ball. There is no shortage of speculation and opinions on the net. There is an incredible lack of depth when it comes to game and team coverage.

Maybe its my own prejudice as an insider. I would much rather read any article on [82games.com](#) or even some of the stuff that [John Hollinger](#) writes (although I think that the PER stuff is meaningless, i like how he tries to go in depth to analyze performance) than the stream of consciousness riffs that we find on every blog, regardless of host.

When I see content branded as a blog, I'm probably not going there unless its via a link from some other source. If I happen to find my way to a given blog multiple times, Im probably going to subscribe to the RSS feed. Even the, I don't ever consider a blog an authoritative source. I don't ever expect that all sources were confirmed and facts were check. Regardless of who hosts it. That's not a good thing for newspapers. **They still have a chance to assign some level of authority to what they produce for their websites and calling it a blog is a huge mistake**

Remember, there is TV , and there is HBO. A blog is a blog is a blog