

I can't help myself. I have to keep this discussion about blogging going.

Is blogging just the end result of someone's input into a Content Management System. Of course it is. So what. You could point a URL to a daily post in a discussion forum. It would have far better interactivity than a blog, and would be just as easy to post as often as the author would like. Does that make the output purely a forum post ? Or for those old school among us, putting up a page on a website could be a blog, a column, a report, whatever. The manner of how you post something to the web is not even worth discussing. A blog is a blog is a blog.

If you blog, regardless of what software you use, you are a blogger and what you produce is a blog. If you want to call yourself a columnist, so be it. If you are a reporter in a 1 page internet only publication, yes you are.

From there, only one question comes up. Why. Why ? Why do you do what you do. Is it because:

You get paid to do it ?

Because you want to promote something or to promote yourself ?

Because you want to start a discussion ?

Because you want to communicate with customers, fans or ??

Because its a way to say whats on your mind ?

Because you want to make money from it ?

I'm sure there are other reasons to communicate on the web. What software you use, even whether you use video, text and/or pictures, really doesn't matter.

What matters is why you do what you do.

For most of us, we start on the furthest reaches of the long tail of all content. To make money from whatever it is we produce is not only difficult, its near impossible. To get off the long tail is near impossible as well. Only a few will ever find their way to a point of generating enough consumers of our content to have any choice in whether we monetize or influence a material number of people. Others of us will still be in the long tail, but have influence in a small vertical segment important only to those who already know us, or come to know us. Its possible to be a big player in a small pool, and get paid for it, still reside on the long tail.

The hope by all on the longtail is that the "quality" of the publication will garner enough consumers to move them off. Like the artist whose art is better, the band or musician whose music is better, the producer, director or actor whose video is better. Everyone hopes that quality of content is the final arbiter of attraction and success.

The worst part of it all is that when you are on the long tail, it takes a lot of money or luck to get off and 99.99pct , never get off. Which is exactly the definition of the longtail.

Thats for individuals.

For corporations who publish on the web (as opposed to aggregate 3rd party content), again, regardless of what content management software they use, or what they call themselves, the longtail is death. If you are a blogger, and you work for a major media company, you are born with a silver spoon in your mouth. You are granted a platform with traffic. Thats the good news. The bad news is that you also have ratings. If you can't hold your traffic or build upon it, you better hope you generate sufficient value in other places, or your days of publishing on the web may be numbered. For those of you who haven't noticed, paid bloggers do come and go from media websites if they don't produce. But wait, there is worse news.

The media companies that have traffic foundations and can dual purpose people so that they can publish off line and online come with their own set of problems. They are paddling as fast as they can to retain their offline businesses. Newspapers, to continue to use them as an example, are pushing as hard as they can to sell papers and retain advertisers. For those who think that a newspaper is just like a newsletter, you have never been a paperboy.

To try to maximize online traffic and resultant revenue, newspapers turned to blogging. Saul Hansell of the NYTimes commented that blogs are used uniquely and thoughtfully by NYTimes reporters to communicate new information and create discussion. That's great. It's a way for the paper to drive readers to their website, keep them as readers and hopefully add more readers. It's using whatever content management system they use to give more value to readers. Wonderful.

Unfortunately for them, they are now in the same old grind that they are in with the newspaper business. Their articles, I mean blogs, vs everyone elses' blogs. They hope that readers believe that their content is better and that brings them back. They hope like the new TV show following the hit, that they can retain audience. An approach which puts them on the exact same content treadmill as even the smallest blogger. . For some on the NYTimes website, as with any and every other newspaper website, they will manage to stand out from the crowd. The majority will not. They will bump their way down to where everyone else is. Such is the nature of the content business. No matter what anyone at the NY Times thinks.

That is the endgame I see for newspapers that publish complimentary content on their website. You can call it blogging. You can even call it something else. The point I didnt make clear enough in my previous post, is that it has to be something else. No matter the quality of the writer, its just another stab at an audience in a medium where there are no barriers to entry. Its just one more example of the newspaper business following everyone else onto the web and doing exactly what everyone else is doing, but expecting they will be better because they are "The big paper". Thats a huge mistake.

Call me crazy, as many out there have, but I would have made every effort to be different in a way that leverages brains, technology and size. I would have sat down and tried to figure out the answer to the question "What leverages our strengths and pre empts every blogger out there so that people perceive blogging as the low end and our presentation as the future of the medium"

You wouldn't have to get it right out of the gate, but you could send a message that you are striving for more and those with "merely a content management system for blogs" will not be able to do what you do.

This is the bias that comes from 25 years in the technology business. A feature that anyone can add is not a sustainable differentiation. Since you can easily add it anytime, like everyone else, instead, always look for what can set you apart and pre-empt the competition.

Or you can follow the pack. The longtail is there waiting for those who do.