
BLOGGER'S BOOT CAMP: A HANDY GUIDE FOR BANKERS ENTERING THE BLOGOSPHERE

Banker who blogs for his bank rates this guide a "buy";

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Blogger's Boot Camp: Learning How to Build, Write and Run a Successful Blog, by Charlie White and John Biggs, Focal Press, Elsevier, 199 pp.

Reviewed by Frank Sorrentino III, chairman and CEO, North Jersey Community Bank, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

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Frank Sorrentino moved into social media both personally and for his bank very early, and has blogged on his own blog, www.bankingonmainstreet.com, for some time. That's how we came to ask him to review this new book. Sorrentino He also posts on Twitter, LinkedIn, and other channels. Sorrentino recently became an online contributor on www.forbes.com as well. Check out his blog here, where you'll also find links to his writings on the Forbes site. Sorrentino's previous reviews include *Clutch* and *Inspiring Leadership: Unleashing Creativity In The Workplace*.

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In today's business environment, it has been essential to a company's growth to have a presence in the social media sphere. While it's important for companies to actively engage on Facebook and Twitter, blogs can be just as powerful and create real value. Is writing your own blog something that intrigued you, but you don't really know where to begin?

I began writing my own blog, "Banking on Main Street," nearly two years ago, and found *Blogger's Boot Camp* to be a useful reference on how to write and maintain a successful one. The authors are experienced and

successful online writers and bloggers.

Learning the essentials of this channel

While for the non-professional blogger this book might be "TMI" (too-much-information), the fact remains that there is much valuable information here. By the end of the "boot camp" the reader is well-versed in blogging essentials. The authors train the reader in essential topics including: what a blog is; how to get started; the type of style to strive for; grammar issues; and how to use social media or RSS (Really Simple Syndication, a means to alerting readers to new blogs) to enhance your blogging's success.

White and Biggs take the reader through a logical progression on a step-by-step analysis of where to start and what tools are needed, all the way to how to write professionally and make money doing it. While earning an income is not the intention in my case, the knowledge and skills discussed certainly helped me to better understand the world of effective blogging.

By using real world case studies and examples, the writers walk the reader through the process of understanding what makes a blog successful. Reviews of topics you probably remember from English Class are dealt with in the realm of the often less than professional world of social media and the Internet.

In the authors' words:

"Even if your story selection is the world's best and your headlines the grabbiest, your readers' respect for you and your writing plummet when you make a grammatical error. As soon as your readers think you're uneducated, they'll start suspecting your research methods, your judgment, and your basic level of intelligence suck too."

—Charlie White and John Biggs

This insight, "Blogging goes way beyond mere writing, it's a conversation between you and your audience" is just one example of how this book goes further than just providing a how-to manual on blog writing.

Putting blogging in perspective

Do you read the same things, the same ways you did five years ago? Even, one year ago?

The book takes the reader through the changing news environment where print is quickly moving into obscurity, and demonstrates how blogging is "expanding your reach and voice to create a unique online identity."

If blogging is in your bank's future, you'll find help in sections about content production and audience gathering. While it is assumed that the reader will be knowledgeable about topics written, an emphasis on best practices for critical elements to success like perseverance and reader engagement are articulated throughout the chapters.

Through my own experience, I have learned that having the commitment and patience to consistently develop quality, timely content and create a two-way conversation with readers who comment is critical to boosting your blog's credibility and viewership.

So if you have been thinking about how to take part of a conversation regarding your interests, or your point of view in how you run your business, and want to use a blog as one of the tools to do so, then Blogger's Boot Camp is right place to start.

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