

For a complete list of ASMP members who responded to our call for blogs, links to their sites and for Salwen's detailed Q&A's with selected veteran bloggers, visit the ASMP Web site at: [Web link tk](#)

GET A BLOG: MARKETING SUCCESS IN THE BLOGOSPHERE

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS EMBRACE BLOGS TO INCREASE BUSINESS AND EXPAND CREATIVE OUTLETS

Las Vegas-based portrait photographer Wayne Wallace only opened his studio a few months ago, but his client list is steadily increasing every week. He attributes much of his success directly to his focused, blog-based marketing efforts. "I get 99 percent of my business through the Web," says Wallace. "And most of my Web traffic originates on my blog site." Not everyone can benefit so directly from blogging. Yet professional photographers—with brilliant imagery at their fingertips—are in a unique position to take advantage of the marketing potential of blogs.

BLOGGING FOR SUCCESS

Fuse the words "Web" and "log" and you get "blog," the latest phenomenon to sweep the Web. Using incredibly simple (often free)

online blogging applications, anyone with Internet access can publish any combination of text and photographs for a worldwide audience. These customizable, dynamic, journal-styled logs often focus on the blogger's personal experiences. However, blogs can also be used to promote business, directly and indirectly. And "hidden" blogs can be used to power a whole new type of Web site particularly well-suited to photographers seeking to regularly update content.

By their nature, blogs are very personal. And the key to successfully marketing with blogs is to share engaging and relevant personal information with both established clients, future business prospects, as well as friends and family. The best blogs come across as casual and relaxed, yet it can take a lot of thought for them to appear that way. It also takes careful consideration—with clear marketing goals and sound blog-building strategies in mind—to ensure that blogging does not become a waste of time, or worse, a liability to a photographer's business image. Luckily, blogging strategies and concepts are easy to grasp, and there are many ways to successfully incorporate blogging into an overall marketing strategy with little effort and clear returns.

THE WEB OF WEB SITES

"I have created a web of Web sites on the Internet, linking them together with my blog" Wallace explains. "This was at the heart of my marketing plan when I moved to Las Vegas last year." With both extensive marketing skills and a twenty-year career as a computer "techie" to guide him in his plans to refocus his career on photography, a dynamic web presence seemed only natural to Wallace. It also matched the personality profile of his target client: young, web-savvy and fun to work with.

"Multiple sites can make a photographer's presence on the Web more dynamic," Wallace explains. Blogs lend themselves to this very naturally, increasing the interactive nature of the Web. Unlike static Web sites that must be designed all at once, blogs can grow more organically, starting with one simple posting and expanding from there. Each new posting can be added in minutes without disturbing the rest of the site. Hyperlinks can direct the viewer to different postings on the blog, as well as to outside Web sites.

Photographers can link a blog to a main site and visa versa, as well as to other photo galleries.

"I use my blog site as what I call my main landing pad," says Wallace. "This is where most people are directed from a search engine. From there they will get a glimpse of my services and a sense of my personality. Then they can click onto one of my other sites." Wallace's blog leads the viewer to his polished, highly-visual commercial portfolio site, plus his headshot services site and his site for photo retouching services, both of which have extensive marketing copy as well as links back to his blog.

THE PERSONAL, SOFT SELL

International corporate/industrial location photographer Suzanne Salvo maintains a blog to promote the business she runs with her husband, Chris. The postings read like informative and witty op-ed pieces on a wide range of topics—from running a successful photography business to experiences photographing in Iraq to Italian culinary delights. Excellent writing, quality photography, and interesting personal stories combine in a neatly formatted layout that has relevance for clients, friends, and family members alike.

"At first I didn't see any business benefit from a blog," says Salvo, who had been regularly updating the company Web site with new photos and content. "But blogging is different. It's fast and quick and easy. It's personal and intimate and casual. It's creatively satisfying and fun. And to my surprise, our clients love it." Indeed, more than 75 percent of the Salvo's blog traffic comes from viewers other than family and friends, and the content certainly builds a much broader picture of the sweat and passion the Salvos dedicate to each project. "Clients feel they are getting an uncensored inside peek into what our lives are like and who we are," says Salvo. "It's a way for them to get to know us personally. That builds trust. And trust is really what makes a client choose one photographer over another."

THE HIDDEN BLOG

Portland, Oregon-based commercial photographer Andy Batt has a more subtle way of using a blog in his marketing efforts. "This is really a 'hidden blog,'" says Batt. "I am using a blogging application to post images on my main site, and to post small, casual comments about them, but viewers are not really aware they are in a blog." In this way, blogs can essentially serve as the engines that power a whole new kind of innovative Web site only now beginning to emerge online. For example, Batt's blog includes comment functionality so that viewers can post feedback next to each image. However, if Batt decides he no longer wants this feature, he can turn it off in just a couple minutes.

Batt needed to employ a Web designer to build the blog into his site, but the technology powering the blog made integration easy to accomplish. However, as with any good marketing effort, Batt made sure to make alterations to his site in a very focused manner. "The idea was to use blog technology to deliver fresh images and ideas to anyone viewing my site," says Batt. "I'm a minimalist



It took a few days to fall into the rhythms of street shooting in NYC. At first you feel obvious, like you're in tourist mode. And the world around you senses that vibe and responds to it. After a few days you move past that, into a quiet confident mode. You feel like you've blended in a bit more, and the world responds by letting you take it's picture. Read more from Andy's blog at: www.andybatt.com

about this blog, because I wanted to use it to serve a simple idea, and also because I wanted to do something that I could see myself keeping up on for a long period of time."

THE EVENT-SPECIFIC BLOG

Many photographers have found excellent marketing benefits in creating blogs to publish stories and images relating to specific events, whether professional assignments or personal projects. These blogs differ from most in that they are limited to a specific time period. "Even though the Russian Chronicles 2005 is over, I continue to use the blog to successfully promote my career," says New York-based photojournalist David Hillegas. This blog, hosted by the Washington Post, chronicles Hillegas's 11-week trip across Russia with writer Lisa Dickey.

"Lisa had made the same trip in 1995 with photographer Gary Matoso," explains Hillegas. That first trip was actually undertaken by Matoso to help pioneer and promote real-time electronic image publishing. That resulting online journal (made before the term "blog"



Caption TK

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was coined) is still online today, and clearly illustrates how a well-executed blog can retain value even when it is no longer updated.

Hillegas's main Web site is clean, sharp and full of striking images, but it includes little promotional copy. The Russian Chronicles 2005 blog offers insight into the kinds of professional undertakings of which Hillegas is capable. "I don't think blogging should be thought of as a means to an end in terms of marketing," the photographer says. "It is just another tool in a marketing strategy. The most critical thing is to make yourself and your work as visible as possible. A blog is a cheap and lasting way of doing that." Beyond marketing advantages, event-specific blogs clearly offer inspiration to photographers by giving them an exciting publishing outlet. "Working on this blog every day for more than two months gave me tremendous confidence and helped me define my creative style," says Hillegas.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL BLOGGING

Wallace, Salvo, Batt, Hillegas, plus a number of other ASMP members interviewed on this topic all agree on the following essential points for blogging success:

■ **Know why.** The most important factor for succeeding with your blogging efforts is to know exactly why you are doing it, both before you start and as your goals shift over time.

■ **Do it well.** If you are going to blog, make sure you do it well, as your blog will influence how clients see you. Your blog can be casual and you can use this venue to present a different side of your professional identity. However, keep marketing-oriented blogs more "business casual" than "beachwear."

■ **Have fun.** Enjoyment of your blog experience is no small matter. If you don't enjoy blogging you won't do it, and your blog could turn into a liability. If you do enjoy blogging you will look forward to posting entries as a break from other responsibilities. In less than two hours a week you can easily publish new work, express ideas and share stories with a wide readership, all while inexpensively and effectively marketing your services and talents.

Based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Ethan G. Salwen is photographer and writer who is now totally enthralled by the possibilities offered by blogs.

EASY WAYS TO CREATE POWERFUL BLOGS

■ **Plan your blog before you begin.** Blogs are incredibly easy to start and maintain. And one of the joys of blogging is the pleasure of finding one's blogging voice over time. However, unlike those blogging for fun, professionals need to plan carefully to ensure their blogs serve marketing initiatives.

■ **Review a wide range of blogs** over at least a couple weeks. What draws you in? What turns you off? By the time you have digested a few dozen blogs, you will have a much better sense of what you want to emulate.

■ **Write a short planning document** that outlines marketing objectives, audience, editorial focus, intended content and publishing schedule. This simple document will greatly focus your blogging efforts.

■ **Add new content regularly.** There is nothing worse in the blogosphere than encountering a dead blog. Before you begin you must be committed to adding content on a regular basis. Pace yourself. Don't start out too fast and then fall off. Take it easy and be consistent.

■ **Add text.** Ironically, professional photographers are possibly the last people who should start photoblogs—blog postings with images only. Photographers already have main Web sites with image galleries to serve that purpose. More importantly, quality writing is essential in a blog geared to market a photographer's services. At the same

time, you should be very realistic about your own writing skills. If you are a weak writer, limit your writing to a few sentences that describe your images or photographic process.

■ **Keep your target audience in mind.** As you are blogging, ask yourself, "For whom am I posting this picture and/or writing this text?" Keeping your most critical clients in mind will ensure that the imagery and text you post—even on personal topics—represent you in the best professional light.

■ **Get personal, but not too personal.** Your blog offers clients a chance to learn more about you than they could from your main Web site or almost any other online source. So blog with sincerity, and feel free to share personal musings. At the same time, think "business casual" and not "nudist colony." You don't want to turn anyone off.

■ **Promote your blog.** Send an e-mail announcement to interested clients when you post particularly interesting new content. You should also add a link to your blog from your main Web site, as well as to your e-mail signature and your business card.

■ **Seek feedback.** A number of free tracking applications allow you to monitor traffic to your blog. However, for the most helpful input talk to your viewers about their experiences. Talking about your blog will also generate more interest and will give you ideas for postings.