We Blog. Should You?

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I've worked in digital marketing for almost 13 years and have always preached "content is king" to clients, emphasizing the importance of compelling content distributed via social media, email, newsletters, and blogs. However, I find it funny that I, myself, have never actually created content for a blog … until now. It's also funny that the reason for this blog post is to promote a report we just published … on blogs: Why Utilities Tell Their Stories Through Owned-Content Sites (available with certain E Source memberships).

Interesting fact: The term blog was coined by Peter Merholz in 1999 after breaking up the word weblog (first used by Jorn Barger to describe "logging the web") into "we blog" on his site.

How many utilities have a blog, and what do they write about?

We asked the utility industry, "Do we blog?" and if so, "Why do we blog?" According to the 2018 E Source Social Media Survey results, 41% of utilities maintain a blog, but 47% don't and aren't planning to start. So for those who do blog, what are the goals and how does maintaining a high-quality blog positively impact a utility's brand?

The first thing we learned is that utilities don't necessarily call their blog a blog. Xcel Energy's Connect is a blog but Southern California Edison's (SCE's) Inside Edison is referred to internally as a branded journalism site. Others position theirs as a news site, such as Alabama Power's NewsCenter and TVA's Newsroom. At E Source, we've termed all of these as "owned-content sites" for clarity.

We also learned that utilities blog for a variety of reasons—to improve brand perception, strengthen community relations, engage with the media, and boost employee engagement—but the one thing they all have in common is to tell a story.

"Don't underestimate the art of storytelling. We're all human and we want to be touched by stories. If your utility does a lot of good things, you can highlight that through 'newsy' storytelling." —Caroline Aoyagi-Stom, SCE

So what makes a compelling story? The simple answer is: anything only you can tell. For utilities, that means letting your audience peek behind the curtain to see how your company's making a difference, through its employees and within the community. Readers want to know what their utility's doing to

make their lives better and how those efforts benefit society and the environment.

And if “content is king,” then consider the channels for content promotion—social media, email, and newsletters—your royal couriers. A compelling owned-content post doesn’t serve its purpose without readers, so utilities must regularly cross promote across multiple channels to get the message to the masses.

For more information, members of the E Source Corporate Communications Service can read our report Why Utilities Tell Their Stories Through Owned-Content Sites. It provides interviews with SCE, Xcel Energy, Alabama Power, Tennessee Valley Authority, APS, and KCP&L, as well as strategies for writing authentic content that drives readership.

At E Source Forum 2018 in September, we gathered together communications professionals for the session “Wake Up to the Branding Opportunities of a High-Quality Company Blog.” We’ve compiled the highlights from the session in a 5-part video series that covers everything you need to consider when creating a blog or owned-content site.

Part 1: Goals and Measurement

Make sure you align site goals with company goals and measure performance of posts to make sure you're reaching those goals.



Part 2: Storytelling

Humanize your company by telling stories about the work you do with customers and community partners.



Part 3: Buy-in and Resources

You don't necessarily need a large budget to start a blog or owned-content site as costs may be low compared to traditional communication channels.



Part 4: Promotion and Driving Traffic to Your Blog

Paid advertising allows you to drive targeted audience traffic to your blog or owned-content sites. You can also tease a story via organic social media posts and email newsletters.



Part 5: Lessons and Advice

Don't underestimate the art of storytelling.



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