

## The art of blogging and how to use it as a Self-Publishing Author

It has been fairly common practice for writers of all genres to have a personal website through which they can advertise themselves, and their writing! However, as with all things technological, the information world has moved on from websites and towards blogs and twitters (yes-twitters!) as a means of on-line communication.

Blogs are on-line weblogs that consist of frequently updated journal entry style posts on a webpage. They historically contained personal diary snippets of each bloggers life, focusing on their actions, future events, thoughts, fears, ideas and emotional struggles. As the number of blogs evolved, so blog communities were created, where one blog would be updated by many, and where others were able to respond to blog posts, creating on-line debates, fellowship and support. Twitters are small blogs. They function in exactly the same way as standard blogs, but they can only contain less than 140 characters.

Blogs and twitters are a powerful way to communicate worldwide and are heavily used by commercial companies and journalists to raise their own profiles and generate business. Such an influential communication route should not be missed by self-publishing authors and writers. But how do you use a blog to improve your work, increase your readership, and generate sales?

### Use it before you publish to liberate creativity and test new ideas

Blogs are a great way of experimenting with ideas. They allow you to write what you want (within reason) and to test a variety of different writing genres and styles on your blog's audience. This can help you define your style, structure and language of writing before you commence working on your latest novel or non-fiction book idea. Blogs also require regular, if not daily, updates to keep readers interested in their content. Having to update your blog everyday means having to write every day, and this is a great way to keep your mind creatively active.

Blogs are now predominately two-way, which means that you can post a blog entry and readers publish their comments on it! This on-line interaction enables you to publish samples of your writing on your blog, get feedback from your readers, and improve or amend your writing following this feedback - and all prior to submitting your work for final publication. As Peter Buckman of the Ampersand Agency explained to me, blogs are a 'terrific way of stimulating interest in writers and encouraging discussion of their work.'

The two-way communication aspect of blogs and twitters allows you to build up a readership or an audience of people who are interested in the book you are working on or who like your writing style. Therefore, even before you have published your book, you already have a group of individuals who are likely to purchase a copy as soon as it's released!

### Use it after publication to build up an audience and promote your book

Blogs and twitters can sometimes attract a bigger and wider audience than a standard webpage. Life today is often hectic, fast-paced and hurried. The snippet style writing of blogs and twitters allows readers to quickly get an update on what is happening in your life and your writing – something that is less easy to achieve through a webpage.

Blogs give you, the writer, an on-line portfolio which allows readers to feel as if when they read your blog they are getting to know the 'real you'. It is well known that people tend to buy the 'seller' not just the 'product' when they make a purchase, and this is hard to achieve in Internet sales...your blog is the closest thing you have to allowing a reader to get to know, and hopefully buy from, you – the seller. As Andrew Lownie, founder of the Andrew Lownie Literary Agency Limited, told me, 'A blog helps build a relationship with potential readers and entice them to buy books'.

This strategy has proved successful for writers such as Neil Gaiman and Nora Roberts. Gaiman started a blog for his novel 'American Gods' in 2001, which was subsequently mentioned in several newspapers and magazines, which certainly helped to promote his books. Similarly, Roberts used

her blog to build a strong relationship with her readers, allowing them to take part in her book tours by posting daily photos and entries. This also helped improve her popularity and sales.

Let's not forget however that there are an awful lot of blogs and twitters available for readers to view on the Internet, and unless you spend a fair amount of time updating your blog regularly and keeping the content interesting and relevant, there isn't any guarantee that many readers will view your blog. Regardless, it is still worth your while having a blogging presence on-line. As most blog and twitter entries include a link to other websites or articles, you have the opportunity to generate a reasonable number of incoming links to your primary website. Incoming links boost your search engine position, so the more links that you can generate towards your main webpage, the better. You can also add links to your blog or twitter entries that take readers directly to a webpage that is selling your book on your behalf, for example Amazon, which can also help increase sales.

Reading other people's blogs can sometimes prove to be just as useful as writing your own, as you have an opportunity to glean advertising and marketing tips for promoting your novel, are able to comment on the writing of others, and can quickly keep abreast of up to date news in the world of writing and literature. Why not check out:

- [You Don't Say](#) – A style and grammar guide with a splash of humour
- [WordHappy](#) – A celebration of good writing of all types
- [Publicity Hound](#) – An opportunity to glean tips on marketing and publicity generating ideas
- [Wordsworthreading](#) - Full of useful articles on writing, mini book reviews and humour

Happy Blogging!

**Samantha Pearce is a published novelist and article writer. She owns Words Worth Reading, an [editorial service for writers](#). Words Worth Reading provides comprehensive editorial services to writers, as well as running informative workshops. It is predominately run by expert volunteers and donates part of all submission fees to Oxfam. For more information visit [www.wordsworthreading.co.uk](http://www.wordsworthreading.co.uk) or email Sam at [enquiries@wordsworthreading.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@wordsworthreading.co.uk)**