

Feature Article: Social Networking on Blogs

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We all know that it's great to hop on social networks like Facebook, Squidoo and Twitter, right? But have you ever considered that a blog is a social network, too? You bet it is, but I'm talking specifically about the comment section within each blog. We all know that it's great to pitch bloggers for your book or product, right? But there's more to it. Really, it's about online networking or cyber-schmoozing. Before you even target a blog for your pitch, you should get to know them first. Here's how:

First, you'll want to get to know the blogs in your market. To do this you'll want to follow them and communicate with them via the comment section on their blogs. You can find these blogs through blog search engines like Google Blog Search and Technorati.com. Once you find the blogs that are top in your market (I suggest going after the top 5-10 to start with) then you'll want to see what they post on and comment on their blog posts. What does this do? Well, it'll help give you a voice on your top blogs and give the bloggers a chance to get to know you. Here are some tips for commenting intelligently on blogs:

- **Be interesting and thought-provoking.** Save the "wow, great blog" comments for when you are really looking to \*not\* impress someone.
- **Watch, then comment.** I recommend following the blog for a few weeks before jumping in. You want to get a sense of the tone of the blogger and how he or she responds to comments.
- **Try commenting on at least five blogs a week,** this way you're not spending \*all\* of your free time doing this and still you're able to get a voice out there in the blog-o-sphere.
- **Offer additional insight to the blog post,** perhaps you've had a different experience than what the blogger cited. If so, politely and intelligently tell them your viewpoint and invite other ideas.
- **Be entertaining, engaging, and helpful.** Always. Don't push your book, yes you can mention it - but don't push it, that's a big no-no.
- **Try to build a rapport with the blogger** by being consistent, that's why you don't want to follow too many bloggers. You'll be too fragmented this way.
- **Be inspiring, readers love inspiration.** Don't just gush for the sake of gushing.

Commenting on blog posts is a sort of social networking, even better in fact because blog posts and their associated comments are searchable. Keep in mind that you'll want to always list your URL when you log in (and most blogs require that you do log in and leave your online "footprint").

Once you have spent sufficient time online you'll start to get to know the bloggers that are a significant "voice" in your industry. This type of networking will help when you go back to pitch them your story, book or product. Remember that bloggers, like any other on or offline media, want the scoop. So give them what they want. Here are a few tips for pitching bloggers once you've networked with them:

- **Know what they like:** don't pitch them a book review if they don't review books. Just because you have become commenter-extraordinaire doesn't mean that they'll bend the rules for you. Well, they might, but better to let them suggest it.
- If the blogger does review books and/or products **check out their submission guidelines** before sending them a pitch.
- If you're sending them a story idea **be sure and tell them if you've pitched this idea to anyone else**. If they have an exclusive, tell them and give them a (reasonable) deadline for responding if you're going to shop this around.
- **Present the unexpected:** it's OK to take chances, it really is as long as you stay on topic. Pitch the blogger, you never know what could happen.
- **Make it easy:** if you're pitching them a story don't just pitch them and expect them to do all the work. Make it easy on them by offering to co-interview (when appropriate) or offering them experts you think might work well for the piece.

The key is that as you're getting known online, the Internet is one big networking party. Just because you can hide behind your monitor doesn't mean that you're invisible. Remember that everything is your resume and everything leaves a footprint. The best thing you can do is get out and cyber-schmooze, the worst thing you can do is be unprepared. Do your homework and remember, online networking (when done effectively) can benefit you enormously both in your online footprint as well as the connections you'll make. Don't worry about spending hours on this, it's really about quality not quantity. Get out there and social network on blogs, you'll be glad you did.

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