

# Leadership Blogging

REPORT: MIKE ALDERSON AND GRIFF WIGLEY- JUNE 2006

## Weblogs as an effective leadership tool

**We are at a moment of opportunity and change.** Technology is bringing to the heart of people's lives a degree of unprecedented choice and control. That in turn is changing the assumptions and behaviour of the public and their expectations of public services and politicians. More power and responsibility is flowing towards the individual and away from major companies, institutions and professionals.

As individuals now have the information to challenge what once they accepted at face value it raises many key issues, not least, who do you trust? In the new world of free information and choice, trust becomes a key factor determining which individuals, organisations and companies succeed and which do not.

The need for greater visibility, accessibility and familiarity of policing services are key concepts understood throughout the British Police Service. Their importance should not be underestimated, for together they are the key building blocks of trust: the very foundation of policing.

Leadership blogging for police leaders will help you become more visible to your community, to your key opinion formers and to your colleagues. It will help you become more accessible, but in a way that you control and, as the local police leader, it will allow you to express your thoughts, views and operational successes in a way that makes you real and familiar to your audience.



# Leadership Blogging

## TECHNOLOGY

Technology has come a very long way in the last couple of years. From being the preserve of bespectacled engineers in remote IT departments and specialist software companies, it has evolved into a practical working tool that is cheap, easy to use and has significant business benefits.

The ease of use and the low cost of access has seen an explosion in so called 'social software' – the means by which individuals, groups and companies can express themselves and interact with their particular communities. Team that software up with a faster and ever-expanding internet and you have a winning combination.

Enter the blog. Weblogs, or blogs, have become a business and social phenomenon. The blog search company Technorati now tracks over 37.3 million blogs and the blogosphere is doubling in size every six months. In fact it is now over 60 times bigger than it was just three years ago!

On average, a new blog is created every second of every day. Generals have them, business leaders have them, companies have them, students have them and grandma and grandad have them. They inform, amuse, challenge and stimulate. They provide a tool for you to put your point of view over without third party interpretation or interference, and allow you to highlight the good work that your team does day in, day out. They play a key part in mainstream media news and they can play a key part in delivering your message, thoughts and observations.

Blogging is done through web-based programs or applications. This means that you can access your blog from anywhere that you have an internet connection. At a conference and want to update your blog? Just fire up the laptop, log on and get blogging. It really is that simple.

The cost of a blog varies from free to an average of under £10 per month, depending upon the level of sophistication you require (you pay for the greater software capability). For a good business-use blog with the capability to create your own chosen look, colours and style, add pictures, review comments and view comprehensive performance statistics to see who is reading your blog and how often, expect to pay £8 or £9 per month.

## KEY BENEFITS

Police leaders can use blogs to project and amplify their leadership skills and activities in ways that aren't otherwise easily done. A blog is primarily a publishing tool, an additional voice, and, in the hands of a leader, it's best thought of as a means to increase and extend your influence.

Your blog should be viewed as an additional tool in your communications armory and should be seen as complementing your overall leadership communications strategy. With your blog you can:

### **Leverage and amplify leadership interactions that otherwise disappear**

In the course of any leader's week, there are literally hundreds of interactions with colleagues, community groups and other agencies. Whether these interactions are face-to-face, phone, electronic or paper-based, they comprise the bulk of how leaders exhibit their day-to-day influence. A phone call from a member of a community group, a conversation with a staff member at lunch, an email exchange with a colleague, an off-topic discussion at a team meeting – all likely evaporate into thin air, for all intents and purposes, as soon as they're concluded. Even most paper documents such as memos and reports are quickly relegated to the trash, the shredder, or the filing cabinet, never to be seen again.

With a blog, leaders can select from among this never-ending parade of interactions the ones that they deem strategically significant, and give them a longer "shelf-life." With a posting to their blog, the story of the interaction gains immediate wider audience while making it significantly easier for that audience to pass the story around to others who they think should know about it. Colleagues frequently ask, "How much time is blogging going to require?" It's a fair question.

# Leadership Blogging

Blogging feels like just another task when you first start out, and it does require some time commitment to work it into your week. But once you experience feedback from your blogging, you start to realise that not only are others reading your blog but that it's starting to have influence, your attitude towards the task of blogging changes because it becomes strategic.

*"I'm going to blog this because I know that she'll read it and pass it on to..." "When this group of people sees what I've blogged about this, then they're more likely to..."* You start to realise that your blog leverages your leadership strategies in time-effective ways.

## **Convey your message directly to a wider audience instead of depending on media institutions**

Media management is a key concern for police leaders and BCUs often find themselves at odds with local media over the stories that are published. Good news rarely makes it.

A key asset of your blog is the ability it provides you to provide the information that you want, in the way that you want it to your staff, colleagues and other agencies. You communicate directly, not through a third party. As you publicise your blog and as your readership grows, it becomes 'the place to look for the authentic viewpoint'

## **Use a voice of authenticity to have a one-to-one conversation with an audience**

An organisational website, in most cases, is a static collection of documents – information-rich but often perceived by site visitors as a dead brochure, its pages too often written by anonymous authors in an impersonal, public-relations style. A blog, however brings a voice of authenticity with a more personal and engaging tone that has wider appeal.

The very essence of effective blogging is its ability to humanise, to make familiar. It provides an environment, controlled by you the author, in which you can engage in a one-to-one conversation with many.

### **• EXTEND YOUR PRESENCE WITH A SELECTIVE WINDOW INTO YOUR DAY**

Broadcast media (radio and television) has an advantage over the written word in that it can report news and other events "live." This real-time element makes many news stories more compelling to the public. Leaders who blog learn that by giving their blog visitors a selective, near real-time window into parts of their workday, they make their blogs more compelling to read and therefore more influential.

### **• PROVIDE ANOTHER WAY FOR PEOPLE TO INTERACT WITH YOU**

A weblog is primarily a software publishing tool, one that gives its author a platform where ownership is not in question. But most weblog platforms allow a "comment" feature to be turned on, thereby creating a means for public interaction with blog visitors. This feature can be strictly controlled and allows you to be selective about what comments are shown and which ones you chose to respond to in order to make your point.

### **• STAFF**

No matter how much effort that you make, internal communication is always a difficult area. No matter how many hours that you do, people want to hear from the boss, to know what they are thinking on current issues, community problems, new policing initiatives, the work that they are doing and the place that they are doing it. Your blog provides you with this opportunity. To reach your staff, to reflect their good work to a wider audience. Experience from police areas where the leader blogs very clear: staff want to see and hear from the boss.

### **• COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

The Government message is loud and clear. Community leadership, in partnership with other agencies, will be a key component of delivering effective policing in the future. Your blog provides you with a way of voicing that leadership, of highlighting the ways in which you are meeting the communities needs and challenges. It provides a mechanism for you to highlight the full and active role that your command is playing in the wider partnership arena. You can blog the meetings, the issues and the responses that your team are providing.

# Leadership Blogging

## Mentoring for Police Leadership Blogging: the way forward

**To support police leaders in their use of weblogs as a tool and to help you develop your blogging skills Griff Wigley and Mike Alderson have teamed up to offer a three month Police 'Leadership through Blogging' Mentoring Programme for the police leadership community in the US and UK.**

Griff is a weblog coach with extensive experience in blog coaching in both the USA and UK, including a wide ranging programme of coaching for local councilors and council officials run across the UK for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Griff's work can be seen at [www.wigleyandassociates.com](http://www.wigleyandassociates.com) and [www.readmyday.co.uk](http://www.readmyday.co.uk)

Mike is a former Detective Superintendent with wide media and marketing experience. He has worked within the Police Reform Unit at the Home Office and now runs Citizen Focused Policing and BCU Performance courses on the Senior Leadership Development Programme at the Leadership Academy for Policing, Bramshill. Mike's work can be seen at [www.openeyecommunications.com](http://www.openeyecommunications.com)

The three month Police 'Leadership through Blogging' Mentoring Programme will include:

- Use of a secure online coaching website
- Personal online one to one coaching
- Full assistance in creating and setting up your blog
- Advice on style and site format choices
- Help in writing your 'trial run' blogs offline
- Guidance on integrating photographs into your blog
- Reviews of your blog content
- Coaching in length, style and content
- Help in linking your blog to other sites
- Advice and guidance on publicising your blog

To join the mentoring programme and for pricing details contact:

### **Mike Alderson**

E: [mike@openeyecommunications.com](mailto:mike@openeyecommunications.com)

T: +44 (0)7944 479 498

### **Griff Wigley**

E: [griff@wigleyandassociates.com](mailto:griff@wigleyandassociates.com)

T: 00 1 507 645 8319

