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## Blogging sprouts as a career path

**Companies have started to hire people to get their messages on the Web**

By **MARY JACOBS** / Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

If you can't beat 'em, hire 'em.

That emerging marketing strategy is creating a new career: corporate bloggers.

At times, individuals who run blogs – short for Web logs, online journals online journals known as Web logs – or blogs – have been a thorn in the side of big companies, generating bad buzz about products and airing unhappy customers' complaints to a wider

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audience.

RICKY MOON/Special Contributor

But some companies are taking a different approach, hiring corporate bloggers to get their messages out to the blogosphere.

**Tom Mighell, Cowles & Thompson senior counsel and litigation technology support coordinator, operates a 'blawg,' or legal Web log, for the law firm.**

"Given the changes barreling down upon us, blogs are not a business elective," decreed a recent *BusinessWeek* article. "They're a prerequisite."

Stonyfield Farm Inc., a dairy products maker in Londonderry, N.H., hired a corporate blogger to write company-hosted blogs on nutrition and health as well as organic farming ([www.stonyfield.com/weblog](http://www.stonyfield.com/weblog)).

Microsoft Corp. plans to hire bloggers to generate excitement about an upcoming product release. Electronic Data Systems Corp. of Plano last week launched its "Next Big Thing" blog at [www.eds.com/blogs](http://www.eds.com/blogs) to discuss the future of technology.

And many companies are encouraging their employees to blog as a way of connecting with customers. General Motors Corp. vice chairman Bob Lutz has his own popular blog ([fastlane.gmblogs.com](http://fastlane.gmblogs.com)).

Currently, only 4 percent of major U.S. corporations offer public blogs, according to a survey by New York research firm eMarketer.

But ads for blogging jobs are turning up on online job boards, and many expect the field to grow. Also, hiring managers are adding blogging and blog-watching to the job descriptions of marketing managers and communications generalists.

### 'A more human face'

Companies hiring bloggers want candidates who can write in a conversational style about timely topics that speak to customers, clients and potential recruits, according to CareerJournal.com.

Corporate bloggers' jobs entail research, finding news links and providing personal insight. Salaries typically range from \$40,000 to \$70,000.

"One of the major points of a corporate blog is to put a more human face on the organization," said Sally Falkow of ExpansionPlus, an Internet marketing and PR firm in Pasadena, Calif. "You have to develop an authentic voice."

Ms. Falkow chronicles the corporate blogging scene on her own blog, [falkow.blog.site.com/public](http://falkow.blog.site.com/public), and also hosts blogs for client companies.

Corporate blogging is a new form of public relations writing, Ms. Falkow said.

To generate traffic, a good corporate blog can't just spout the company line, because readers expect the openness and even irreverence that characterizes most blogs. Corporate bloggers must balance readers' expectations of freewheeling self-expression with the goals of the corporation.

"The best blogs are the ones where you can truly have a conversation with your customers," said Robert D. French, an instructor and technology adviser at Auburn University in Alabama.

"A company that gets a blog needs to know that it's informal and involves give-and-take," said Tom Mighell, a veteran blogger who is senior counsel and litigation technology support coordinator at Cowles & Thompson in Dallas. "You need to be willing to push the envelope a little bit and show that you're willing to share with your public."

## Inventing the role

Corporate bloggers must know how to navigate untested waters. Most corporate bloggers find themselves inventing the role.

Some, such as the Stonyfield blogger, are internal employees of the corporation. Others are independent consultants.

Ms. Falkow of ExpansionPlus writes a "news blog" for a telecom company that's trying to boost its visibility in the industry.

"It's a little like a clipping service," she said. "We're posting all the current news that's relevant to the business and making the blog the go-to place to get information about the industry."

Mr. Mighell hosts a blog on Internet legal research ([www.inter-alia.net](http://www.inter-alia.net)). He thinks blogs will become a key component in the overall corporate marketing portfolio.

"I see the corporate Web site eventually transitioning to the role of an online brochure, with the fresh content going through the blog," he said.

Not all businesses are suited for blogging, he said, but industries that change frequently and need to update the public can benefit.

Legal research is a natural field for blogging because laws and court decisions constantly change. In fact, legal blogs have their own nickname: "Blawgs."

Blogs are also being touted as a way of boosting an individual's marketability as an expert in the field. Mr. Mighell isn't looking to change jobs, but he said his blog has clearly enhanced his career.

"I get a lot of speaking gigs, and I'm asked to write a lot of articles," he said. "It's been a lot of fun."

How can someone position for a blogging job? The quick answer: Start blogging. That's how public relations and marketing students are learning about blogs at Auburn.

Mr. French has added blogging to his courses because many Auburn grads are landing jobs that include blogging in their job descriptions.

One grad recently joined a publishing firm that may start a blog to connect with customers; another landed a sports marketing position that may involve blogging.

Mr. French's public relations campaign classes set up blogs in which students interact with PR professionals on class projects.

Students also learn to use Internet tools such as PubSub ([www.pubsub.com](http://www.pubsub.com)) and Blogdigger ([www.blogdigger.com](http://www.blogdigger.com)), which scan blogs regularly to pick up industry buzz.

"I tell my students, 'These tools are out there - you're going to encounter them, get ready,'" he said.

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