



## **Enterprise Social Media:**

# 6

Six Myths and Realities of  
Blogging and Social Media  
in the Enterprise



## Myths and Realities

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To help clarify some of the “Myths and Realities” associated with social media in the enterprise, Awareness evaluated initiatives from companies across many industries, including manufacturing, retail, education and publishing, to determine what drives a successful strategy. Awareness, one of the key companies driving the adoption of enterprise blogging and social media technologies, has compiled a number of enterprise and social media best practices based on the company’s expertise in working closely with hundreds of communities in leading enterprises across many industries, including financial services, hospitality, online publications and retail.

Awareness’s enterprise social media platform is used by companies to build communities that are public-facing to engage customers, prospects, and partners; internal, allowing employees to communicate, capture and share knowledge and information; or a combination of internal and external, where employees, customers, prospects and partners can all communicate in a corporate, borderless community. The company’s customers include enterprises such as Northwestern Mutual, McDonald’s, Kodak, Discovery Communications and Cannondale Bicycles, and large newspaper publishers such as the New York Times Company.

The following document details these “Myths and Realities” and serves as a guide for any organization seeking to effectively use blogs, wikis and other social media technologies at the corporate level.

## 1

## MYTH

## MYTH #1

**MYTH #1: Guidelines are the Holy Grail for Reducing Corporate Blogging Risk**

From a company's perspective there are many potential risks associated with social media initiatives. One potential danger is that a blog may reveal confidential company information, exposing the company to compliance risks.

To minimize the risks associated with blogging, much focus has been given to developing a set of "blogging guidelines." Despite their well intentioned efforts to help employees responsibly engage in a dialogue with colleagues, customers and the market in general, these guidelines have done very little to mitigate the risks associated with corporate blogging initiatives.

## REALITY

**REALITY #1: To Reduce Risk, Companies Should Implement Administrative Controls**

The reason that corporate blogging guidelines fall short is that they don't address the same challenges that are inherent in other communications channels. The reality is that most companies already have a "code of conduct" document in place that encompasses email, instant messaging and any public communication.

"One of the biggest misconceptions in business today is that guidelines are the best way to protect the 'purity' of blogs, while reducing the risks associated with the open, informal nature of the medium," says John Bruce, CEO of Awareness. "While guidelines can be a useful component of a blog strategy, our research and experience working with customers shows that administrative controls and oversight complement these policies and have made possible some of the most successful initiatives to date."

To help customers address this issue, Awareness provides a host of administration capabilities that allow companies to make extensive use of the valuable content created in each blog while reducing the risk of inappropriate blog content being released. The point is that people may inadvertently write content that is not for public consumption and companies need the controls in place to flag and prevent it, and train staff what content is appropriate.

# 2

## MYTH #2

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### MYTH

#### **MYTH #2: To Build a Successful Corporate Blog, Companies Should Select the Right People to Blog**

In many enterprise blog initiatives, blog authors are hand picked to represent the company. These authors are either company employees or marketing consultants that are brought on board to not only create blog content, but also establish a company's presence and "voice" in the blogosphere. In some cases, blogging takes the form of evangelical outreach and the authors are often tasked with sticking to the company message and promoting its most important products and initiatives. Meanwhile, employees who are in the trenches developing products are subject matter experts, but do not have an opportunity to participate.

### REALITY

#### **REALITY #2: Blogs Can and Should be Widely Distributed as Personal Knowledge Repositories with Processes to Make the Best Content Available to the Right People in the Right Context**

"One of the biggest mistakes we see is that companies try to manage their blog initiatives by controlling by whom and how blog content is created," says Bruce. "While this is perceived as a low risk proposition, we find that this tactic either backfires because it lacks authenticity or isn't compelling, or that it simply does not generate enough content to help the initiative gain traction and achieve its results." Adds Bruce, "Selecting a blogger, or a few bloggers and asking them for high quality content every day is a recipe for failure and content burn-out." Instead, Awareness has observed that its most successful customers have built communities where user-generated content is created freely by many or all employees, via blogs, wikis and other social media tools. These tools are provided widely to everyone in the company as knowledge repositories where content spans day-to-day activities and adds insightful commentary on corporate and industry issues. The key is being able to liberate the best content from these communities and present it to the right audience at the right time, in the right context. Awareness clients have used this approach to create intranets, extranets, client knowledge portals and even entire community newspapers from the best content in individual blogs.

## 3

## MYTH #3

## MYTH

**MYTH #3: Company Blogs Are Mainly Effective as a PR and Marketing Tool**

In a survey conducted by Awareness and Guidewire Group, more than 60 percent of respondents indicated that they use blogs for PR and marketing purposes. This number demonstrates that to date a large number of corporate blogging initiatives have been motivated by building goodwill and establishing thought leadership in the marketplace.

“One of the most surprising discoveries about most enterprise blogging programs to date is that they lack vision about the value that blogs and social media can bring to the enterprise, and fall short in their ability to leverage the vast amounts of content and information that’s created to fuel key corporate functions, such as sales, research and development and customer service,” says Bruce.

## REALITY

**REALITY #3: Blogs and Social Media Should be Leveraged to Improve Fundamental Business and Communications Processes Across the Organization**

For many successful companies, blog-driven social media initiatives go beyond public relations and are used to support a wide range of business activities, as well as improve relationships with external groups, such as partners and customers. This is particularly important as it opens up a new and highly interactive communications channel with key audiences and, as important, helps turn participants into stronger advocates and a valuable source of useful content.

For example, Northwestern Mutual recently launched a company-wide blog and social media initiative, powered by the Awareness platform, to better capture and share important employee knowledge using blogs and RSS technologies. A key objective of Northwestern Mutual’s campaign—the company plans to give every employee branded blogs and customized RSS feeds—is to encourage employees to share information, thoughts and expertise, and increase dialogue and conversation across all project groups and departments.

# 4

## MYTH #4

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### MYTH

#### **MYTH #4: Creating Celebrity Bloggers is Key**

Jonathan Schwartz is one of the best known bloggers in corporate America. He works at a large company (Sun Microsystems) and his blog is read by thousands of people on a daily basis. Schwartz is an example of an “A list” blogger and his success in becoming a high profile evangelist has created the impression that all companies that launch blog initiatives should anoint one or more bloggers as their celebrity spokespeople.

### REALITY

#### **REALITY #4: Companies Should Harness and Make Available Blog Content that Aligns with Appropriate Company Initiatives**

Blogs are a profound and constantly changing communications channel. As blogging technology improves and is better integrated with other forms of corporate content, individual blogs will become less apparent and relevant and the value of the content that is created in them will become paramount.

Innovative companies are implementing technologies that allow them to manage blog content in even broader and more impactful ways. Some are currently leveraging interesting and compelling blog content across marketing channels, such as the corporate web site and within advertisements. For example, an insightful posting on an employee blog could drive customers to other corporate resources (or even products). Further, useful postings from employees, such as customer service representatives, could be aggregated into a new customer service support section on the company's web site or support intranet. These are just a few examples of the ways that blog usage is evolving in the enterprise.

# 5

## MYTH #5

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### MYTH

#### **MYTH #5: Simply Giving all Staff Blogs Will Foster a Successful Enterprise Program**

In recent years, companies of all sizes have launched enterprise blogging initiatives where employees are given individual blogs and encouraged to write about a range of issues, from personal experiences to thoughts on industry and company developments. While these initiatives create a new communication channel for companies, it is often challenging for the general public to navigate through the blog smog—the hundreds or even thousands of blogs that are available—to find content that is relevant to their interests. As a result, corporate blogging initiatives often create a new layer of information overload and struggle to achieve the objectives for which they were launched.

### REALITY

#### **REALITY #5: A Successful Corporate Blogging Initiative Requires a Robust Administrative, Editorial and Technology Infrastructure**

The key to overcoming this challenge and implementing a successful, long-term corporate blogging strategy is a technology infrastructure that provides both end-user blogging capabilities and administrative and editorial management tools. Such tools allow companies to review and pick the content and perspectives that align with a company's goals across various categories, such as sales, marketing and engineering, and then aggregate it into a central community site.

On the aggregated community site, organizations should also provide functionality that lets readers to search across individual blogs, categories and most recent posts and leverage web feeds to allow readers to subscribe to the corporate blog, individual blogs, or even specific categories (such as all developer or sales support posts).

In addition to aggregation capabilities, other important elements are the ability to provide branded blog templates, communities and permissioning. Finally, a comprehensive enterprise blogging solution should address how blogs integrate with corporate infrastructure like authentication services, subscriptions, CRM systems and existing personalized portals, as well as ensure that blog initiatives deliver functionality, such as reporting and archiving, to maximize compliance with corporate and regulatory requirements.

# 6

## MYTH #6

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### MYTH

#### **MYTH #6: Blogs Are the Only Tool Needed to Foster Employee Communication and Encourage Customer Interaction**

According to a July 2007 Forrester Research report, companies that had deployed a wide variety of social media technologies that could interact with each other, including RSS, podcasting, wikis and social networks, in addition to blogs, got the most value out of adopting these tools than just using one or two of these solutions.

While it is still considered a revolutionary step to encourage blogging in the enterprise, many companies now realize that encouraging participation and generating content to include within these communities can be a difficult and slow-moving process. While blogs have been at the forefront of the user-generated revolution and have spearheaded the enterprise form of “community journalism,” they are, at the same time, a rather static content display. With exception to the immediate blogger and an auxiliary comment field where readers can respond, these blogs are often not inviting enough for most audiences to really engage in.

### REALITY

#### **REALITY #6: It Doesn't Have to Look Like a Blog: With Social Media Tools, Companies Can Encourage Widespread Participation, Ensuring that Content Is Not Only Read But Is Dynamic and Engaging**

The ultimate driving force behind blogging is the fundamental notion of “user-generated content” in which a broad range of individuals are collectively contributing to a common cause. Organizations are beginning to see that what started as “blogging” is evolving into the notion of “online communities” that incorporate many additional aspects of social media—wikis, podcasts, RSS feeds, tags, voting, rating, geographic information, user profiling, etc.

A true test to any blogging and social media initiative is the number of people it encourages to participate. Enterprises are using social media tools to build online communities that are engaging to customers, employees and partners and are filled with content that is dynamic and interactive. Communities that can stimulate, organize and share profile-rich content from any source—including blogs, comments, tags and other social media which can enhance corporate intelligence—are communities that provide persistent and pervasive value to an organization.

# 6

## REALITY

### REALITY #6 (continued)

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Enterprise social media is being used by a number of organizations to create online communities in three major ways. These communities can be designed to be:

- 1) Public facing to engage customers, prospects, and partners;
- 2) Internal, where employees can communicate, capture and share knowledge and information; or,
- 3) A combination of internal and external, where employees, customers, prospects and partners can all communicate in a corporate, borderless community. Awareness customers, like McDonald's and Kodak, are learning that connecting internal and external communities is where they get the greatest leverage and value from enterprise social media.

For more information on the "Myths & Realities" of blogging in the enterprise or to learn more about Awareness' enterprise social media platform and solutions, please visit [www.awarenessnetworks.com](http://www.awarenessnetworks.com).



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**About Awareness**

Awareness helps companies build and operate branded Web 2.0 communities. These online communities let customers, prospects, employees, or partners connect with each other and share content. At the core of the Awareness solution is an on-demand social media platform that combines the full range of Web 2.0 technologies—blogs, wikis, discussion groups, social networking, podcasts, RSS, tagging, photos, videos, mapping, etc.—with security, control, and content moderation. Awareness builds these features into complete communities for companies, or customers use the Awareness API and widgets to integrate Web 2.0 technologies into their own web properties. Major corporations such as McDonald's, Kodak, the New York Times, Northwestern Mutual, and Procter and Gamble use Awareness to build brand loyalty, generate revenue, drive new forms of marketing, improve collaboration, encourage knowledge-sharing, and build a “corporate memory.”