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This month's PE Tip Sheet column is written by guest columnist Camille Yates, community and corporate relations manager for the Fort Pierce Utilities Authority, where she is responsible for all internal and external marketing and communications. Yates served as the curator of the Manatee Observation and Education Center and currently directs the overall planning, marketing, development, implementation and operation for the center. She holds a master of science in conservation biology/ecology from the Florida Institute of Technology and has published many papers on wetlands ecology related to wading birds.

PE Tip Sheet No. 20: **Should You Use Social Media To Get Your Message Across?**

By *Camille Yates*



Blogs, message boards, podcasts, wikis, and vlogs: all relatively new words that some of us don't know much about but that make up what is referred to as social media. These are online tools and platforms that people use to share opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives with each other.

Social media can take many different forms, including text, images, audio, and video. Some utility companies have started to get on the social media bandwagon as a method to communicate with their customers or the general public. In this article, I will provide information about blogs.

What exactly is a blog? Blog is short for weblog. A weblog is a journal (or newsletter) that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. Typically, blogs represent the personality of the author or the Web site. According to *Wikipedia*, the term "weblog" was coined by Jorn Barger on December 17, 1997. The short form, "blog," was coined by Peter Merholz, who jokingly broke the word "weblog" into the phrase "we blog" in the sidebar of his blog, Peterme.com, in April or May of 1999. This was quickly adopted as both a noun and a verb ("to blog," meaning "to edit one's weblog or to post to one's weblog").

Weblogs, or blogs, are just very simple Web sites. Where a traditional business Web site usually requires considerable programming skill to build, maintain, and update, you can be up and running with a blog in a matter of minutes.

Along with simplicity comes a related benefit — little or no cost for start-up. Most bloggers use a Web-hosted platform; two of the most popular are Blogger™ and Movable Type™. Since the hosting companies have

pre-configured the programming, all the blogger needs to do is select a template, adjust a few settings, and start posting. These simple Web pages look as clean and professional as anything on the Web.

Once the blog template is established, several modifications can enhance the Web siteways. Popular modifications include:

- ◆ Text and/or banner ads relating to the blog's theme.
- ◆ Affiliate advertising that displays, for

example, links to recommended books.

- ◆ Photos, screen captures, and graphics.
- ◆ RSS feeds so visitors can subscribe and be notified whenever a new post is made.
- ◆ Links.

Serious bloggers usually pepper their posts with hyperlinks to external blogs to provide more information to the reader and forge relationships with other bloggers.

Even though creating the blog is fairly

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take a bite out of time

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Certification Boulevard

Roy Pelletier



Test Your Knowledge of Industrial Applications

- What is a drainage well?
 - A structure that collects wastewater.
 - A structure that controls floods.
 - A structure used for measuring rain data.
 - A structure that dispenses reclaimed water.
- An ORP meter can be used to determine water quality. What does "ORP" stand for?
 - Oxidation Regulating Potential.
 - Oxidation Residual Process.
 - Oxidation Reduction Potential.
 - Oxidation Receptor Process.
- What is the common preservation method for an industrial waste sample to be tested for CBOD₅?

A. Cool to 4°C	B. Dechlorination
C. Acidification	D. Cool to 4°F
- Heavy metals are considered a pollutant because of their:

A. Color	B. Appearance
C. Weight	D. Toxicity

- Given the following data, calculate the CBOD₅ in a sample of industrial wastewater:
 - Sample Volume = 3.5 ml
 - Initial D.O. = 6.8 mg/L
 - Final D.O. = 4.2 mg/L

A. 460 mg/L	B. 223 mg/L
C. 345 mg/L	D. 587 mg/L
- An industrial waste facility has a TSS value of 1,560 mg/L entering its pretreatment process, with a TSS value of 275 mg/L entering the sanitary sewer. Calculate the percent removal of TSS in this pre-treatment process.

A. 29.3%	B. 60.7%
C. 25.5%	D. 82.4%
- True or False:** It is not possible to test for dissolved oxygen in industrial wastewater using the Winkler method?
- An industrial facility has a confined space manhole with hazardous gas. The vapor density of the hazardous gas present is 0.85. Where is this gas more likely to be found?
 - Near the bottom of the space.
 - Equally distributed throughout the space.
 - Near the top of the space.
 - At this density, the gas will dissipate immediately.
- Which agency is responsible for overseeing the implementation of a pretreatment program?

A. Health Department	B. EPA
C. Congress	D. IRS

- What does the term "EPOC" mean?
 - Energy pollution of context.
 - Emerging pollutants of concern.
 - Every person of Canada.
 - Evaluate public opposition calmly.

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Do you have a question or an exercise you would like to feature in "Certification Boulevard?" We'll be glad to publish it. Just send your question (with the answer) or your exercise (with the solution) to:

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There is no limit to the number of questions or exercises you may submit. Please include your name, city, and organization or company so we can give you credit.

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simple and economical, the blog itself can have enormous value. Individuals blog to explore a subject of interest, to communicate with family and friends, or just to blow off steam. Companies blog for many reasons, such as building dialogue with customers, establishing themselves as thought leaders, enhancing search engine optimization, and promoting new products or established brands. Many entrepreneurs benefit from blogging by promoting their businesses on their blogs. With millions and millions of people logging onto the Internet everyday, blogging has become a lucrative move.

Bloggers usually communicate among themselves. This is one of the appeals of blogging. It creates a community of people sharing their ideas, thoughts, and comments with each other. Like it or not, bloggers are (or will be) talking about your company. Listening to the blogosphere provides you with valuable feedback and alerts you to issues that impact your company — before they become a crisis.

Each customer is different; there is not one communication strategy that works for everyone. Blogging about various subjects will keep customers interested in your company. While one customer may want to know where the water outages are (if any), another

may want to read tips on how to conserve water. Having a large variety of content available to customers is important, and that should be the main focus of your blog.

So, if you are thinking about creating a blog for your utility company, you need to know a few basic tips that could help you get started.

- Consider your audience.** Even if your blog is generally personal, it still would be better to consider the minds of your readers. You have to think of something that would interest them. Water conservation, water rates, and water treatment may be subjects to blog about.
- Be genuine.** A blog is not the place for corporate hype. Select your blog writer as someone who is knowledgeable about the water industry, yet can write in an easily understandable, genuine fashion. It is very important to develop subjects that everybody can understand.
- Pictures speaks a thousand words.** To make your blogging worth the browsing effort of your readers, try putting in a few photos. It does not necessarily mean you have to place a picture of the blogger. But some photographs of the subject the blogger is speaking of will make the site more interesting.
- Avoid making multifaceted and complicated blogs.** Blogs should be simple. Bear in mind that most people who use the Internet scan

stories rather than read word for word. Shorter, to-the-point blogs will be more successful in getting the message across.

- Make it interactive.** As much as possible and if your capacity will allow it, make your blog interactive. You can do this by placing some video or audio clips in your blog.
- Put a subscription form on your blog.** By putting an RSS feed on your blog, readers can sign up and will be notified when you have posted something new. Depending on whom you talk to, RSS stands for Rich Site Summary or Real Simple Syndication. Either way, RSS is an important technology that should be included in the blog. RSS feeds automatically and constantly delivers the latest news and information right to your customers.

Should you develop a blog? If you can't commit to writing short posts two or three times a week, and if you're not open to dialogue with your customers, then blogging might not be for you. It is better not to start a blog page than to create one that has only a few articles posted and lies dormant. It can make your company—your professional services—look like the doors and windows are all broken and no one cares.

Before you decide to create a blog, make sure that someone in the company is willing to take the time to post blogs regularly. Guest bloggers can take some pressure off if your lead blogger begins to tire.