



Blogging for sport organizations: Your questions answered



It's a common story: a sport organization creates a blog because they feel they 'should' have one. However, everyone gets busy and forgets to update it, or the summer student who was running it leaves, or the athlete-blogger gets swamped with training and stops returning emails. The blog starts to collect dust, or it morphs into a collection of news articles.

Of all the web content that sport organizations produce, blogs are probably the most under-utilized or improperly utilized.

That does not have to be the case, though. With a strong blogger and a clear objective, you can produce engaging, highly shareable content and gain a loyal following of readers.

In this module, we'll discuss how to maximize your text-based blogging. Stay tuned for a future module on video blogging and podcasts.

For live-blogging best practices, check out [Module 14: Twitter 101](#)

What you will find in Module 22:

1. [To blog or not to blog?](#)
2. [The difference between a blog post and an article](#)
3. [Blogging best practices](#)
4. [Time allocation for bloggers](#)
5. [How to promote a blog](#)
6. [How to recruit bloggers](#)
7. [Creating policies for bloggers](#)

1. To blog or not to blog

The question of whether blogging is right for your organization depends on several factors:

- Realistically, do you have the time to maintain it?
- Do you have one or more willing bloggers with both strong writing skills and a unique perspective to offer? If not, can you recruit some?
- What are your communications goals? How does a blog accomplish them? (For more on creating a social media action plan, read [Module 15: Nine easy steps to creating a social media action plan](#))

Reasons To Blog

1. Attracts high-quality web traffic (readers who are very interested in your sport).
2. Gives a “human face” to your organization.
3. Can be content that is easy to share, especially in the hands of an engaging blogger.
4. Can build a consistent audience.
5. Offers a behind-the-scenes look into a world that intrigues many people.
6. Helps your high-performance athletes/coaches connect directly with fans.

Reasons to Not Blog

1. Maintaining the blog is time-consuming.
2. Blogs appeal mostly to people who are already fans of your sport/team and may not be appropriate for those focusing on engaging new fans.
3. Finding a blogger with the right combination of sports knowledge and writing skills can be difficult.
4. Because blogs take time to read, they can be less popular than other, more easily digested content types.
5. If you don't offer something unique or new, your blog might not garner a large audience.

If blogging isn't right for your organization, that's okay. However, if you think blogging might have a place in your communications strategy, read on to find out how to maximize your blogging efforts.

2. What's the difference between a blog post and an article?



The line between a blog post and a news article is often blurry and some organizations do not distinguish between the two. Many bloggers say, that articles are usually more factual, informative and direct in their delivery, while blogs usually have a stronger sense of voice, are more casual, and are often more personal.

In short, the news section of your website should be for announcements (press releases, news about achievements or awards, information on upcoming events or programs), while a blogging section should allow you to discuss topics, engage in dialogue, and share your thoughts and opinions.

For example, “Register Now For The Learn To Swim Program”, would be a news article, while, “When Should My Child Learn to Swim?”, would be a blog entry.

3. What are some sport blogging best practices?



If you're a long-time reader of this social media guide, you'll know that we emphasize quality over quantity when it comes to creating content. The best SEO and marketing strategy won't save a poorly written or unfocused blog post.

Here are the top 10 ways to create engaging blog posts:

1. **Have a reason to post.** As with any online content, if you're not adding anything to the conversation, you're likely to be tuned out. Ask yourself why someone would want to read your blog post. Is it educational? Informative? Entertaining?
2. **Know your audience (and give them what they want):** Ask yourself who will be reading your blog. Newcomers to your sport? People with a high level of sport knowledge who want sophisticated analysis? Friends and family members of athletes? Having a strong understanding of your audience will allow you to focus your blog. Once you know who's reading, the next step is to find out what they want. Use Analytics to determine what type of

content is most popular with your social media followers, and research what blog posts about your sport are most popular. In the beginning, don't be afraid to try many different types of blog posts and see which ones resonate with your followers.

3. **Tell a story:** Humans are hardwired to connect with stories. Unfortunately, inexperienced bloggers often write in an expository "postcard" style; ("Having a great time at the tournament. The food is good. We're excited to play our first game.") Add stories and anecdotes to bring your blog to life and make your readers feel like they have a front-row seat to the action.
 4. **Adopt a blogging persona:** Unlike a news article, blogs often have a strong 'voice' or style. To maintain a consistent blog, it helps to think about your blogging persona beforehand. Will the blog be funny? Casual? Serious? Chatty? To learn more about an Organizational Voice, check out [Module 7 - Organizational Voice 101](#).
 5. **Be relevant:** The Internet moves at a rapid pace and those who can keep up will be rewarded. A blog post about a big win will exponentially attract more traffic if it's posted the day after the game than if it's posted a week or two later.
 6. **Use images:** Studies show that blogs with images are more popular than those without. Try to use original photos, since stock photography can make your blog look boring or stale. Some bloggers like to place text (such as a strong quote) over an image to create an image macro that can be used to promote the blog on social media. Infographics are also popular.
 7. **Focus on readability:** Your readers don't have a lot of time, so guide them through your blog by having a clear layout. Elements like headers, titles, captions and bullet points can improve readability.
 8. **Write a strong headline:** Some bloggers say they spend up to 50% of their blogging time on a headline alone. Your headline should tell your audience exactly what to expect and should include any popular keywords within your sport. (For example, 'wheelchair rugby crash' is a popular search in the wheelchair rugby world. If I was writing a blog post about the high-impact nature of the sport, I'd make sure to put the phrase 'wheelchair rugby crash' in the title). Food for thought: one study found that headlines with a question mark received twice as many social media shares.
 9. **Add links:** We'll talk more about Search Engine Optimization in future modules, but suffice to say that Google's most recent algorithm reduces the impact of keywords and increases the importance of links and other 'relationship-building' content. Give your audience access to more information by linking to other blog posts, relevant news articles, etc. within your blog post, and Google's algorithm will reward you.
 10. **Include an author bio:** Unlike news items, blog posts have a stronger focus on the author. Help your audience put a face to your blog by including an author biography and a photo.
4. I don't have much time to devote to blogging. Should I still blog?

 One of the cardinal rules of blogging is that bloggers must post on a daily or at least weekly basis to build a loyal following. This is great advice, and it's true that a consistently maintained blog

will result in a larger audience than a sporadically updated one. That said, many sports organizations successfully blog only during high-profile events (Olympics, World Championships, Canada Games, etc). If you keep your social media channels updated with other content, your blog posts should still find an audience.

If you'd like to increase the frequency of your blog posts but lack time, remember:

- Many potential bloggers like athletes and coaches are too busy to commit to a regular blogging schedule. Instead, offer them one-off guest blogging spots.
- Depending on your sport, you may be able to recruit bloggers from people outside of your organization like journalism students. You get content and they get something to add to their portfolio.
- If you only intend to blog during short periods of time (such as during tournaments), show that this choice is intentional by creating a blogging series. One organization, for example, created a Road to Gold blog series during the Olympics/Paralympics where athletes and coaches blogged about their pre-Games experiences. After the Games were over, no one expected this blog series to continue.
- Try blogging about topics that don't require a large time investment from one person. For example, you could do a "Head-to-Head" series where two coaches/athletes answer a particular question, or a series where each month an athlete answered a single audience question.

5. How should I promote my blog?



Many popular bloggers will tell you that growing your blog's audience is all about relationship building. Tap into your existing relationships and connect with experts in your field to grow new ones.

- **Share others' content to encourage them to share yours.** Build relationships with other bloggers and members of your sports community rather than spamming. (The golden rule of online marketing is to have 80% be your content and 20% be shared content).
- **Share** your blog on your social media channels and in your e-newsletter.
- **Consider collaborating** with similar blogs (such as fan blogs or your National Sport Organization's blog). Invite guest bloggers to post on your organization's blog. Those bloggers will bring their own audience, and you may get invitations to write guest posts on other sites.
- **Comment on similar blogs** to engage in dialogue with other bloggers on social media sites.
- **Use keywords.** While Google's SEO algorithm places much less importance on keywords put in a page's meta-data, using popular keywords within your blog post will still help people find your content. Just make sure to do it in an organic way.
- **Reach out** to influential people in your community, such as super fans, high-performance athletes and sports administrators. Ask them to share your content.
- **Share old content.** For example, an old post on how to get a good deal of sports equipment could be reposted at the beginning of the season.
- **Consider posting on the weekend.** While studies show that 87% of blog posts are published on a weekday, posts published on a weekend got more social media shares. Blogs posted on Saturdays received the highest percentage of social media shares.

Respond to all comments: Encourage discussion by replying to any comments your blog post

receives. If a reader takes the time to comment and doesn't get a response, he or she likely won't comment again.

6. How do I recruit bloggers?



In the sport community, a good blogger has a combination of sport-specific expertise and an engaging writing style. If you're lucky, that person will also be a  high-performance athlete or coach who can also offer a unique behind-the-scenes look at your sport. Many sport organizations report that finding and keeping bloggers can be difficult.

- Many of the most successful bloggers are not high-performance athletes, but alumni or up-and-coming athletes. Put out a call for bloggers in your e-newsletter, your website and your social media channels and you'll be surprised at who answers the call.
- Professional sport teams routinely recruit journalists and fans to blog. While you may not have the Canucks or Whitecaps' communications budget, you might be able to recruit journalism students.
- Many would-be bloggers are hesitant to try blogging because they don't know what to write about. Draw them out by putting out a call for blog posts on a specific topic (e.g. What's your favourite sport memory?).
- Support your bloggers by creating a package for them that contains guidelines, writing prompts and tips for success. Here's a [Blogger Guidelines Template](#) you can use as a starting point.
- Offer would-be bloggers guest posts to ease them into blogging. The idea of writing a monthly blog post can be daunting, but a one-off post can give potential bloggers a taste of the medium. If they enjoy it, they'll continue.

7. Do I need a policy for bloggers?



 To make sure that everyone is on the same page, it's always a good idea to create a simple blogging policy that lays out details such as how to use images, how to credit sources and how your organization will deal with editing blog posts. We've got a sample policy in [Module 16: Creating a social media policy for your sports organization](#)

Have a question about blogging? Want to share your blogging success story? Email arley@bcwheelchairsports.com to get in the conversation.

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To learn more, check out our Social Media Toolkit, found [here](#).



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