

New Technologies and the Effect on Travel Marketing: Links and Resources

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Blogging

Definition and Background:

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>

Hosted Blogging Services

This is not intended to be any kind of exhaustive list – as noted in our presentation, there are now thousands of options for hosted, free blogging. However, also as noted in our presentation, most of those blogging options are offered as part of a larger social-media experience.

- Blogger: www.blogger.com – owned by Google – this is the largest free & commercial blog hosting service, and continues to absorb smaller blogging firms (such as Blogspot).
- Wordpress: www.wordpress.com – This is the hosted version of Wordpress, with almost all features available for free, and some important add-on upgrades available for relatively low cost.
- Typepad: www.typepad.com – this service is more oriented toward professional blogging, as there is no free offering. However, Typepad is high quality software, and the company running it – Six Apart – has been in blogging since very early.

Blogging Software to run on existing web servers

As with the hosted services, there are hundreds of potential ways to run a blog on or in conjunction with an organization’s existing web platform. Correspondingly, the software that is best for a particular organization will be dependant on your server platform and other factors.

- Wordpress: www.wordpress.org – note the .org domain extension! This is where users, site administrators, and software developers can get the whole Wordpress experience – the software, documentation, community support, etc. To many people, Wordpress has become the de facto standard against which other blog platforms are compared.
- Movable Type: www.movabletype.com – This software is from the same folks as Typepad (Six Apart). Free software with paid support options. Well regarded.

More blogging software is compared here:

http://www.ojr.org/ojr/images/blog_software_comparison.cfm - however, this is an area that moves so quickly that I strongly encourage users to use Google, Wikipedia, etc., to get up to date information – as well as talking with your peers / colleagues to find out what they are using as well.

Promotion and Tracking

This is an emerging area. Early this year (2007), I had the opportunity to ask a couple of social media “experts” for their thoughts on the lack of deep (Webtrends-like) analytics options for tracking blog / podcast / etc. subscriptions (see Newsfeeds / RSS below), and the answer was basically something to the effect of “Smart people are working on that – trust us.”.

For your blog itself, tracking can be done as it is for most any site currently – some combination of log file analysis and ASP-style tracking services (again, Webtrends covers both of these areas). However, for newsfeeds, where many folks may consume your content without visiting your site, things get trickier.

In a somewhat ironic twist, probably the best way to keep up with the emerging field of Web 2.0 analytics is to *subscribe to related newsfeeds!*

All of that said, we did touch on two particular services in our presentation:

- Technorati: www.technorati.com
Technorati is both a promotional outlet for blogs (if you’re taking our core advice, and have a frequently-updated, topical blog, it’d be a mistake to not list it here!) and kind of a popularity-contest / meter. It ranks and groups ‘hot’ blogs in topical categories.
- Feedburner: www.feedburner.com
As mentioned in our presentation, Feedburner provides two important pieces:
 - Easy / simplified subscription to your blog’s newsfeed regardless of what blog platform you are using OR what reader / aggregator software your readers use to consume your content

- Subscription rate analytics that are currently unmatched by any service that I am aware of.

Podcasting

Remember: Podcasting is just Blogging, with the addition of media “enclosure” elements (like attachments to e-mail).

How-Tos

- Wikipedia entry on Podcasts: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcast>
- Very thorough tutorial suitable for beginners: <http://podcastfreeamerica.com/index.php?features/entry/the-real-beginners-guide-to-podcasting/>

Audio recording and encoding software

If you have a modern machine, you may already have software capable of producing at least the initial audio files for a podcast.

Manufacturer-Installed:

- Mac OS X: On recent (mid-2006 and later) Macs, GarageBand comes pre-installed as part of the iLife software suite. GB is great for podcasting and has a set of predefined defaults for using it for this purpose. However, it is also predictably biased toward producing podcasts best suited for iTunes, the iPod devices and the dot-mac Apple hosting service.
- Windows 2000 / XP / Vista: All of the MS operating systems (actually since Windows 3.1.1!) include “Sound Recorder”, which is a barely adequate program for recording simple, single-track files.

Free Software:

- Multi-platform: Audacity - <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>
Audacity is a great, completely free and open-source software package for a wide variety of audio recording and production circumstances. It has default settings that work well for general podcasting.
Note: as with many open-source software packages, Audacity is generally available in “Stable” and “Development” versions. For general use, I strongly recommend sticking to the Stable versions unless you are a) a techno-masochist or b) really like to experiment, even at the cost of some time / effort when the program crashes, eating your last hour of work.

Hosted Podcasting Services

Despite the proliferation of people competing to spend huge amounts of money serving your videos for free (see below), the field of services who will entirely host your podcasts is pretty narrow, because it’s a costly proposition once a podcast becomes popular. Even

the couple of free services listed here will generally ratchet up to have some cost once you have a certain number of subscribers / downloaders:

- Pod-O-Matic: www.podomatic.com
Strengths:
 - Hosts your audio file, also processes your audio file into multiple formats suitable for different devices (e.g. you can use GarageBand to produce an “extended” podcast with artwork and track markers, and Podomatic will auto-convert this into plain mp3s for non-iPod / non-iTunes consumption.
 - Allows quite a bit of bandwidth use for free.
 - Has a growing directory (it will never compete with iTunes, though) that exposes your podcast to interested parties
- **Weaknesses:**
 - Default templates are not attractive
 - Administrative interface has so many options that it can be confusing for new users
- Switchpod: <http://www.switchpod.com/>
- Podbean: <http://www.podbean.com/>

Podcasting Software for install on existing web servers

As mentioned in the presentation, most blogging software, including Wordpress, can be used for podcasting. However, a good example of podcast-focused software that can be downloaded and run on an existing web server is Loudblog: <http://www.loudblog.com/>

Using Wordpress for Podcasting: <http://codex.wordpress.org/Podcasting>

Video

While we did not cover video in any depth during our presentation, here are some links to services that aggregate video that may be useful in putting together a video podcast (vodcast).

Advice: Before uploading video to any service, take the time to read the enormously long Terms of Service, and make sure they’re compatible with the rights you have on the media you plan to broadcast!

Video Hosting Services

- Youtube: www.youtube.com – The obvious famous name here. Owned by Google but currently operated separately from Google Video. Terms of Service skew heavily to content *users*, not content *owners*.
- Google Video: <http://video.google.com/> - Google’s video hosting and cataloguing service.
- Revver: www.revver.com – Video hosting service with an interesting model that rewards uploaders / owners of popular content.

- Blip: www.blip.tv – Similar to Revver, with interesting categorizations of content.

Note: The video podcasting scene is currently being impacted somewhat by the introduction of the Apple TV Set Top Box, which forms a bridge from the iTunes video podcast directory straight to the living room TV! Apple has issued some quality guidelines to ensure that your content looks good in this newly-expanding medium: www.apple.com/itunes/store/podcasttechspecs.html

Newsfeeds: RSS / Atom

Explanations / Definitions / History

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_syndication
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_\(file_format\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_(file_format))
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atom_\(standard\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atom_(standard))

Web-based readers

- Google Personalized Home: www.google.com
Like My Yahoo!, Google personalized home doesn't shout about the fact that it is, in fact, a fancy newsfeed aggregator. Super-abbreviated steps to get going with Google as your newsreader (this is what I use...):
 - Go to www.google.com
 - Click the 'Personalize this page' link, currently situated at the top-right of the site.
 - Create an account if you don't already have a gmail account, or log in if you do.
 - Once you are returned to your "Personalized" home, click "Add Stuff", and then click the (small) "Add by URL" link next to the search box. This is where you will put the links to XML newsfeeds.
Note: That last bit – finding and adding XML links directly, is what Feedburner (see above) solves. Also, the newest generations of browsers (IE7, Firefox) have facilities for better handling newsfeed links – though IE is not going to help you add items to Google, for obvious reasons.
- My Yahoo!: <http://my.yahoo.com>
- Google Reader: <http://reader.google.com> – Note that this is more of a "hardcore" newsreader than the two competing "personalized home" examples above.

Desktop Applications

Many of the modern web-browser applications have desktop newsreader functions that may blur the distinction between web-based reading and desktop (offline) reading – these include the Mac default browser, Safari, and the increasingly popular Opera browser (www.opera.com).

Others:

- Amphetadesk: <http://www.disobey.com/amphetadesk/>

- NewsGator / FeedDemon: <http://www.newsgator.com/home.aspx>

Social Media

For the context of our presentation, we discussed Social Media largely in the context of Affinity Marketing, though of course it is a more expansive topic than will be covered here.

Examples

- The 800-pound gorilla(s) in the room:
 - www.myspace.com
 - www.facebook.com
 - www.linkedin.com
 - www.orkut.com
- Music Verticals that readily demonstrate the mechanics of the concept of "Affinity Marketing":
 - www.last.fm
Last.fm is a service that uses an Amazon-like system of "People who like *x* also like *y*" to make music recommendations.
 - www.paperthinwalls.com
Paper Thin Walls is an indie-music oriented music review site that allows logged in users to create Myspace-like home pages with configurable, user-generated content, as well as having affinity features like "Neighbors" – On Paper Thin Walls, your "Neighbors" are people who have rated the same songs you have similarly to your rating. Further, PTW includes its own blog platform, forums, etc.
- Travel-Oriented
 - www.goseetell.com / www.goseeoregon.com – www.goseeoregon.com was featured at the 2007 WACVB tech summit by numerous presenters (including GoSeeTell founder / developer Martin Stoll) as a great example of social networking and User Generated Content in a Travel / Destination marketing context.
- Specialty, configurable Social Networks
 - www.ning.com
 - www.verb.com
Both Ning and Virb are designed / pitched as more configurable Social Networks – the basic concept is that you can implement a mini-Myspace for your specific audience.