

## **Blogs Are New PR Tool**

The word “blog” is still a mystery to most, which may be why it headed the list of most looked-up words in the last 12 months in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, thereby claiming title to “Word of the Year 2004,” awarded by that publisher.

That’s not blog’s only claim to fame.

Technorati, a blog analysis firm, reports an estimated 4.8 million blogs populating our cyberspace or blogosphere.

Further, a blog is born every 5.8 seconds, according to Pew Internet & American Life, a U.S. research firm.

So, what exactly is a blog?

Merriam-Webster’s rather stuffy definition is “a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer.”

Blogger.com is a bit more conversational - “A personal diary. A daily pulpit. A collaborative space. A political soapbox. A breaking-news outlet. A collection of links. Your own private thoughts. Memos to the world.”

Or in other words, says Blogger.com, a blog is “whatever you want it to be.”

In the world of public relations, a blog is a new way of communicating to colleagues, customers, partners and countless, curious others.

Smart businesses are already picking up the idea - fast.

Gizmodo.com, recipient of “Best Tech Blog” 2004 WeblogAwards, pulls in 50,000 page views per week to its blog about electronic gadgets. The gadgets range from Solar Powered Wallpaper, an innovative student project from New York University, to the Yamaha Hybrid

Pedal Taxi, designed for next year's World Expo to replace regular taxis, to the Wireless Heart Monitor, developed by researchers at the University of Ulster, for high-risk cardiac arrest patients.

The Green Cine Daily is a blog "full of stuff" about independent and non-mainstream movies. The blog's newsy bits range from *New York Times* book reviewer Michiko Kabutani's remarks that David Thomson's "The Whole Equation: A History of Hollywood" is "appealing but overstuffed and at times undernourished," to talk about IndiVision, a new low budget feature film-making venture in Australia.

Who's behind the blogs?

Gizmodo.com is published by Gawker Media, who touts the ability to bring "a young and influential audience" to brand advertisers.

Behind the Green Cine Daily is GreenCine, an online DVD rental, video-on-demand and Divx service selling foreign films, classics, documentaries, rare titles and "other esoteric fare." These blogs get the word out about their niche, plus they brand themselves as an authority while driving traffic to their website.

Not all blogs are business-related or b-blogs.

Numerous blogs are personal diaries. Some serious. Some not.

Faiza Al-Araji is a blogger from Iraq. Her blog, "A Family in Baghdad," is about her war diaries. According to the BBC News, she is among 70 or so other Iraqi bloggers who want "to get the pain out of my heart" and "to show people in the world, how is our daily life."

Ellen Simonetti, an airline attendant, also started her blog as a personal diary. Unfortunately, her semi-fictional account of "life in the sky" plus some "inappropriate images" of her posing in her flight attendant's uniform, recently got her into trouble with her employer,

Delta Airlines, who suspended her “indefinitely without pay.”

Whether b-blogs or personal diaries, blogs can be powerful communicators, yielding both expected and unexpected results.

On Wednesday, January 12, 2005, the Westchester/Fairfield Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America will host “How Blogs Are Changing Public Relations - And How You Can Adapt,” featuring guest speaker Steve Rubel, VP at CooperKatz & Co. and author of MicroPersuasion, the PR world’s “most influential” blog.

Businessmen, curious to know more about blogs and their potential role in public relations campaigns, may wish to attend. Check [www.prsa-wf.org](http://www.prsa-wf.org) for more information.

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