



**SURVEY: THE PARADOX OF BLOGGING
AND CONTENT MARKETING:
“If They Are So Co-dependent,
Why Aren’t More People Doing It?”**

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Executive Summary

“Content Marketing is the new king of everything!” shout the headlines. “Blogs are on the wane!” cry the research. “Pinterest is cool” gush the marketers.

No matter what the hot new thing ultimately becomes, the role of content in your Content Marketing strategy is unassailable. And Blogs must remain a critical component of how you tell your story to the market. In fact, we would argue that it is next to impossible to execute a well-structured web content marketing strategy without having at least one Blog. And yet, we keep running into companies who do not have one.

To test our belief that blogs are still not mainstream, Percussion conducted research to focus on the rise of content marketing as a discipline and the use of blogging as an engagement platform. The survey of 806 mid-market technology companies, showed that only 20.5% have a blog today. Further, of those with a blog, nearly 25% hadn't updated it in the last 30 days at the time of our research.

We found these statistics a remarkably stark reminder that just because the web “intelligentsia” have moved on to the next new thing, doesn't discount the value of the last buzz worthy topic. It is possible that a percentage of these companies who are not blogging started at one time or another and just gave up—something we will research further in the coming months. Regardless, if they are going to do content marketing, we would expect these companies will have to take another shot at getting blogs right this time.

Blogging isn't necessarily easy. It requires commitment and perseverance. Do it well, and the rewards are clear—more traffic, better engagement, and higher conversions.

This paper digs further into the statistics from our research. And, to help make the research actionable, we include three “Do Nows” at the end. Not surprisingly, number one is “start a blog!” Read on for the other two.

The Role of Blogs in Content Marketing

“Content Marketing” is everywhere right now - books are written about it, sites are dedicated to it, trade events and seminars organized around it. Seth Godin says “content marketing is the only marketing left.” Search “content marketing” in Google and there are over four million results. You hardly find a marketing strategy article that doesn't mention Content Marketing.

It's clear that content marketing is rapidly becoming essential to achieving your marketing objectives, and many companies have already incorporated content marketing into their overall marketing strategy. According to the 2010 and the 2011 B2B Content Marketing report, 90% of all B2B marketers say that content marketing is one of their highest priorities.

Great content establishes your brand and builds online authority and reputation. The more frequently you publish new content, the faster your SEO will improve. However,

due to tight budgets and resources, publishing at the pace needed to impact SEO is challenging for most marketers.

Bloggging, although not the hot, marketing topic du jour (that's SO 2005!), is one of the best solutions to that frequency challenge. Effective content marketing consists of creating and publishing a variety of content types, but your company blog should be the foundation of the overall strategy. Your blog is the launching pad for distributing content and serves as the landing page when your content is shared. And most importantly, you can solve the "frequency" challenge with a short blog post once or twice a week. This maintains the freshness of your site, and gives you the runway needed to develop the more resource intensive content like whitepapers, videos, infographics, ebooks, and others.

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The Research

Since blogging is proven effective and one of the least costly content marketing tactics, it would stand to reason that every company is blogging, right? Or at least the 90% who say content marketing is a high priority in their overall marketing plan?

That was our assumption at Percussion, but we kept running into companies that either hadn't posted to their blog in months, or had no blog at all. Was this just a strange coincidence, or are there still a large number of companies without a blog, even though content marketing is a high priority?

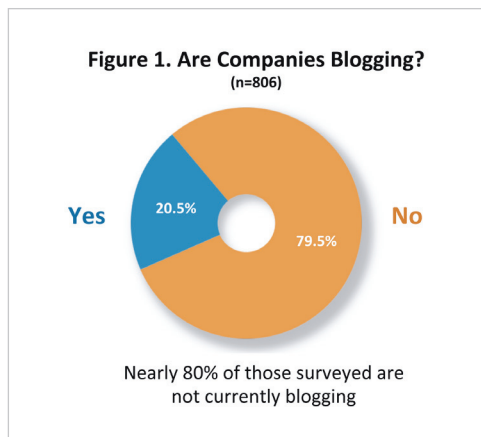
To find out, we conducted a survey of 806 technology companies, primarily in the North American market, to see if our experience matched the realities of corporate blogging today. Specifically, we researched the following:

- Does the company have a blog?
- If yes:
 - Have they posted in the last 30 days?
 - What technology or platform are they using for their blog?

We focused on mid-market technology companies with annual revenues from \$20 million to a max of \$100 million. Why limit it to this range? We assumed that those over \$100 million in revenue have large marketing budgets and can fund blog initiatives with a small percentage of their total budget. They do not have the same kind of budget "trade-off" decisions of smaller companies, and are more likely to fund a blog. A random sampling of larger companies supported our assumption.

For the under \$20 million revenue companies, we initially thought there was too much variance in terms of company maturity curve, significantly skewing the data. A 20-year old technology manufacturing company with \$15M in revenue will have a very different profile than a 5 year old high growth web software vendor. As our data analysis unfolded, we did revisit the under \$20M companies as well.

What We Learned: Companies Just Aren't Blogging



There is an assumption that technology companies embrace blogging and have been blogging since the days of the “web log.” Software companies, like Macromedia and Microsoft, were pioneers in corporate blogging. According to a 2002 Wired article, tech companies that didn’t follow in Macromedia’s footsteps would soon be outdated. A 2005 Harvard Business School newsletter noted that “many of the early adopters of blogs have been technology companies eager to

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leverage blogs’ ability to position a company executive for recognition as an expert in a given industry or on a specific topic.”

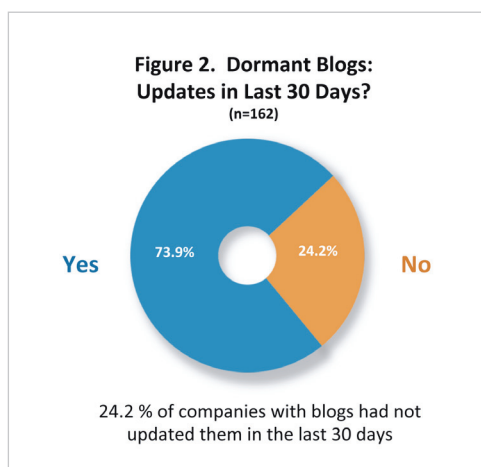
While the early technology blogs were used to communicate with the developer community, by 2007 blogging had extended beyond developers. Marketing teams understood the positive impact blogging had on search engine optimization, and began to include blogs in their SEO strategy.

Given the early adopter reputation of technology companies, and the impact content—or lack of content—has on achieving SEO and marketing objectives, it was pretty surprising to see how few actually are.

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Are Companies Committed to Their Blog?

Further, for the companies with a blog, we looked at whether they were actively blogging or if their blogs were dormant. We defined a “dormant” blog as one with no blog posts in the last 30 days at the time of the research.



Of the 162 companies with a blog: Almost 25% had not posted in 30 days.

If asked the question “Are you blogging?” companies with dormant blogs would likely answer “Yes.” But if your blog has been dormant for more than 30 days, you are not blogging.

A commitment to frequent posts—at least once a week—is the only way to realize the full benefits of your blog. Frequent, fresh content improves SEO, builds followers, and establishes trust

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with your prospects and customers. Since the early days as developer information-sharing forums, blogs have been about building a community and engaging in the online social world. Today, providing great blog content is the best way to grow your social network.

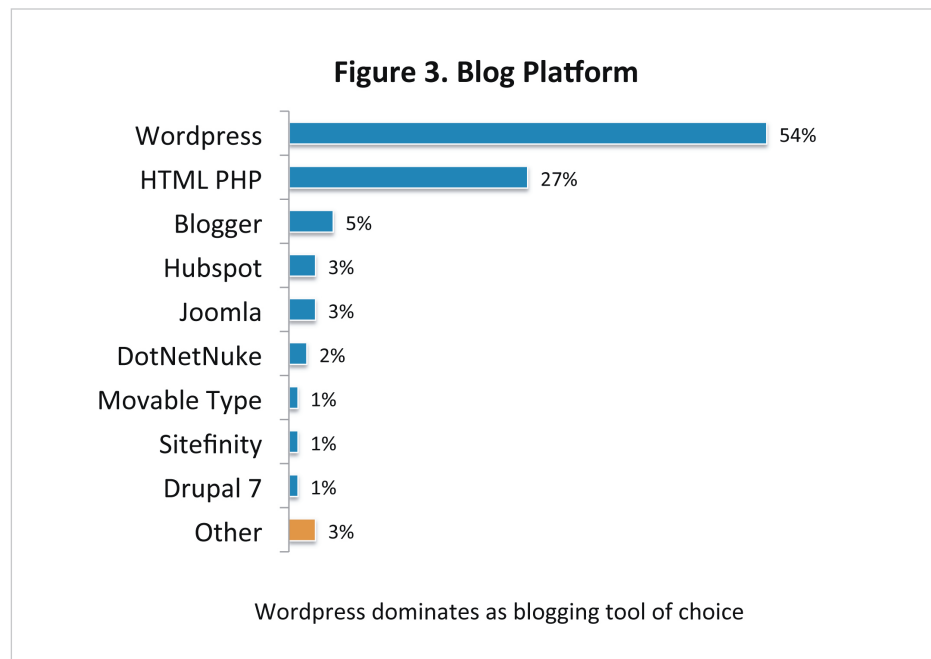
What Tools are Companies Using to Blog?

There are a wide variety of blogging tools available today, including hosted blog sites, opensource platforms, and web content management products. In our sample, Wordpress was the most popular blogging tool (54%), with a mix of other open source and free platforms running a close second.

Perhaps more interesting was how few content management systems showed up in our sample. Even accounting for sites that were using PHP or Wordpress as their main web site platform, the overall lack of web content management systems stood out. As a result, the blog was merely a silo of content with a simple link from the home page to the blog. Some blogs look more integrated than others, but they remain two separate structures.

The challenges and added complexity of having the blog as its own silo may be contributing to the lower number of people blogging. When the blog is a silo:

- Authors need to learn multiple systems for blogging and web authoring
- Setting up a blog requires additional IT intervention
- Information can't be shared and reused easily across platforms
- Site metrics are tracked separately, making performance analysis cumbersome



These silos show a lack of understanding of the necessary codependency of blogging, content strategy, and social media. Connecting the blog as part of the web content management system promotes reuse of content, shared tagging and drives higher conversions. This represents a substantial opportunity for companies who are launching their content marketing initiatives.

Connection Between Company Size and Blogging

To see if there was a relationship between company size and the presence of a blog, we broke our sample into three segments based on annual revenue: \$20-25M, \$30-49M, and \$50-100M.

A clear pattern emerged: the more revenue, the greater likelihood of a blog.

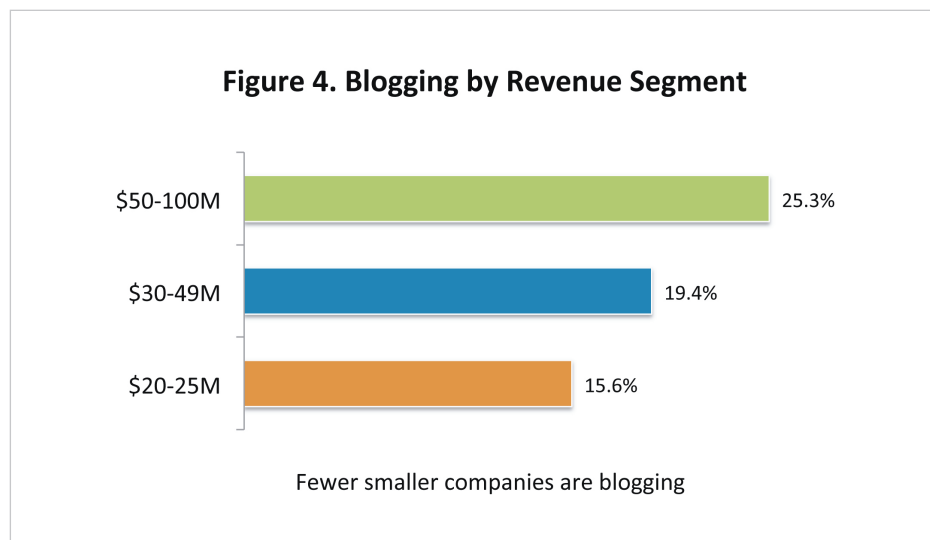
Only 15.58% of companies in the \$20-25M range had a blog, compared to 25.35% in the \$50-100M range.

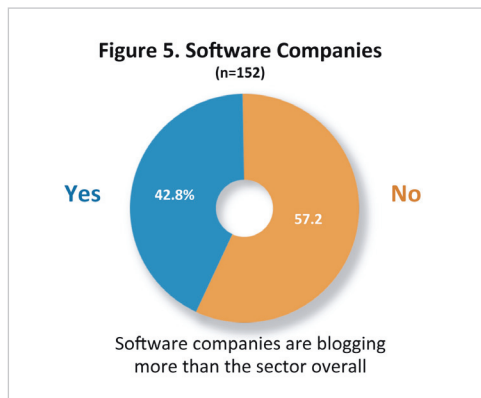
If company executives do not understand, or believe in, the ROI of an active blog, they may see it as a “nice to have”—IF they can make room in the budget.

The smaller the company, the smaller the budget, resulting in fewer blogs.

It then follows that the larger companies with bigger marketing teams and budgets are more likely to allocate resources to a blog, and our data supports that— a full 10 percentage points difference for the largest revenue segment.

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Software Companies Lead

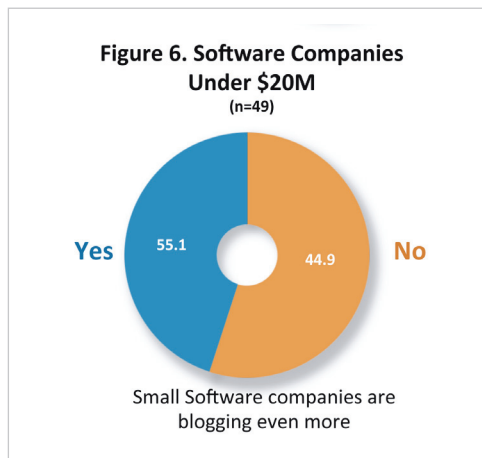
Given that software companies were blogging pioneers, we wondered if early adoption in the past would translate into a higher incidence of blogs today. We looked at just the software companies in our sample, and found that they did indeed have more blogs: 42.8% vs. 20.5% for the sector overall.

Small Software Companies are Even More Likely to Blog

We took it a step further and looked at software companies under \$20M in revenue and the numbers jumped even higher:

55.1% of software companies under \$20M in revenue have a blog.

While we didn't formally survey software companies that have just launched, in our informal "sniff test" of start-ups we had a hard time finding one that did not have a blog.



Software companies and these micro-startups run counter to our overall tech sector research that suggests that smaller companies, with smaller budgets, are less likely to have a blog. As a percentage of overall budget, blogs are more expensive for small companies, yet small software companies and micro-startups blog more than large companies. Why are these companies dedicating resources to blogging while larger companies are not?

If the principles of blogging are so valuable when you first launch your software company, those same principles should hold true the larger the companies grow. The point remains, blogging needs to be a core component of your content marketing strategy.

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Conclusion: Start Blogging, Today!

What do software companies and micro start-ups know that other technology companies don't?

Our takeaway is that companies that blog, many with small budgets and minimal resources, see the link between blogging and achieving overall marketing goals, and have made blogging the foundation of their content marketing strategy.

Some pundits (on their blogs!) say that Twitter or the next big social media platform, will replace corporate blogs. But that assumes a competitive relationship between corporate blogs and social media, rather than a mutually beneficial one. Each has its strengths, and they serve complementary purposes. Your blog is the voice of your company, where you share content, knowledge and conversation. Social media is the channel that enables you to easily share your content, build an audience (followers/ engagement) and engage with your community.

Blogging is as important to your content marketing strategy as your website, it is the cornerstone that supports all the items in your content library and enables your social media strategy. Your blog is the most effective way to publish new, socially engaging content at the pace needed to drive better search results, and increased social engagement, visitors, and leads.

“Three Do Nows”

To make this research actionable, here are three “Do Nows” to get you started tomorrow morning.

1. Start a blog.

Keep it simple, your posts do not need to win the Pulitzer Prize! Comment and link to an interesting article you read, post pictures from a company event, share other content like the latest white paper, a new presentation, or do a quick FAQ

2. Commit to one post per week to start and mark it on your calendar.

Do it weekly, no matter what!

3. Enlist others to contribute guest posts

Your company is filled with many smart people who have interesting information to share, enable them to get started.

If you start doing JUST these three things tomorrow, you will already be on a path to becoming a better content marketer.

Contact Percussion today if you would like to learn more about how to make Blogging a central part of your web content marketing strategy.

www.percussion.com

Sources

¹"Seth Godin: 'Content Marketing is the Only Marketing Left' and 10 New Marketing Lessons", Joe Pulizzi Blog, Content Marketing Institute, January 14, 2008

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³"Flash: Blogging Goes Corporate", Farhad Manjoo, wired.com, May 5, 2002

⁴"Does Your Company Belong in the Blogosphere?", Harvard Management Communication Letter, Vol. 2, No. 4, November 2005

⁵"SEO Benefits from Blogs", Lee Odden, Top Rank Online Marketing Blog, 2007

About Percussion Software

Percussion Software publishes a family of Web Content Management (WCM) solutions, CM1 and CM System, that help businesses simplify their web content management processes to increase traffic, drive conversion, improve personalization, and build community. Percussion's solutions' decoupled architecture uniquely allows business users across the organization to take control of content and presentation, provides unparalleled control over how web content is used and distributed across channels, and enables IT organizations to freely integrate third-party, delivery-side applications without restriction. Percussion's WCM solutions are used by Travel and Tourism corporations to generate online results, including Hotwire.com, Vegas.com, Princess Cruises, and Discover America.

To learn more, visit percussion.com.

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