

## The Connectory

### What is it?

To explain what The Connectory is all about, we really need to first answer the question, 'What is a Blog?'

The word 'Blog' will eventually become as common as the word 'email' is today. Marketing experts are saying that it is now crucial for businesses to have a blog as well as a website. The front cover of Business Week (May 5, 2005) states "**Blogs will change your business. Look past the yakkers, hobbyists, and political mobs. Your customers and rivals are figuring blogs out. Our advice: Catch up... or catch you later.**" Those are some pretty powerful words!



The fact is, more and more people go to the internet to do research before making a purchase. Dave Taylor, a blogging consultant, says that 65% of people do research on the internet. And... if your business is not 'findable', it does not exist.

**Blogging makes you findable.**

A Blog is sort of like an online diary. You write small entries in it, ideally 2 or 3 times a week. Each entry is short (about 2 paragraphs), written in a casual tone, with your personality. Because a blog is updated regularly, the search engines really like them.

## Small Business Strategies


**Jun. 21, 2005 - Customer Retention Tip**  
Tip of the Day:  
Did you know that customers who complain to you (54%-70%) will do business with you again if you resolve their problem?  
And... happy customers who have had their complaints resolved, will tell between three and five people about their positive experience.  
What does that mean for the small business owner? It means that every problem is an opportunity, depending on how you handle the situation.  
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**Jun. 21, 2005 - Telephone tips for the small business owner**  
For today's topic, I thought I would give some pointers on how to talk to your customers on the telephone. Since most of your business is done on the telephone, good skills are crucial. You only have one shot to make a first impression.

- 1) Start phone contacts with: "Thank you for calling (XYZ Company, this is \_\_\_\_\_, how may I help you?)."
- 2) Use their name. Get the customer's name early by asking, and then use their name throughout the conversation.
- 3) Respect the customer's time. Having an order sheet by the phone with all the questions you need to ask will keep the conversation organized and timely.
- 4) Smile whenever you pick up the phone. Remember you can hear smiles as well as see them.
- 5) Never leave a customer on hold for over one minute without reconnecting with a status report.
- 6) Talk less, listen more. Make it your goal to understand the customer's needs and expectations rather than taking your way into a sale. Taking abbreviated notes throughout the conversation will help.
- 7) Always read back important order information (customer's name, address, phone, what was ordered, shipping info, etc.) to confirm that you have recorded it correctly.
- 8) Always, always, ALWAYS thank the customer for their business. Tell them how much you appreciate their choosing your basket company. Remember that it's the customer who's paying your salary.

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Blogs are also usually full of links (incoming and outgoing), which makes them even more desirable to search engines. (This is where the power of community blogging comes in...which we will discuss in a bit).

When it comes down to it, people do business with people they like, and feel a connection with. When people are looking for a company to do business with, they also want to feel like that person has the expertise and know-how to do the job right. Blogging is your opportunity to fill that need for your target market.

As a business owner, you can use a blog to write tidbits about your area of expertise. For instance, if you sell a specialty food mix, you can blog about recipe ideas using your products. If you are a realtor, you can talk about market conditions, or provide tips on increasing the value of your home. You can write about what is happening in your industry, book reviews, something interesting that happened in your shop today, a telephone call you just received from a happy customer, your thoughts on what customer service should be about, etc. Write

your entries as if you were writing a short email to a friend, which happens to be your target audience. You can use a casual voice. Try to stay away from the stiff 'corporate speak'. Just be yourself.

## **How does your blog reach out to the entire world, with so little effort on your part?**

The secret lies in another feature about blogs known as RSS (Really Simple Syndication). It's sort of like a newsfeed, that people subscribe to that contain certain keywords that they are interested in. This is where you announce to the world your information. You can easily do this on your control panel. Aggregators and websites which are looking for those keywords pick up your blog as part of their RSS feed. And, voila, your blog begins to appear in the places where it can make the maximum impact! It is when people add your RSS channel to their web sites (that is, they "subscribe" to your feed), the fun begins. When visitors to those other websites click on your headline, it takes the viewer right to **your** blog entry, and ultimately to **your** website. This happens not only from a single site or a single user, but potentially thousands of sites with their scores of readers. So, if you are sure of your content - **CONTENT IS KING**, rest assured, your website will get ever increasing hits. Readers who are attracted and interested in what you have to say, begin subscribing to your blog, so that they get notified every time you add a new and interesting entry. **Gradually, you come to be recognized as an expert in your profession or trade, and in your particular community!**

## **Where does the The Connectory or the concept of "collaborative blogging" come into the picture? Here is how it goes:**

As a member of The Connectory, you join and launch your own blog. Begin by creating your directory listing, and then launching your blog. Then, you can start writing short tidbits about your area of expertise - in a personal format.

Then, invite other members to "link" to your blog, and in turn, you link to theirs. Linking immediately raises your blog's credibility and credentials in the eyes of the search engines. And it is the search engines that bring more and more interested visitors (and customers) to your doorstep! This is the biggest advantage of being part of a unified blogging community.

As part of the community, members can also blog about points-of-view and interesting ideas that other community members have blogged about on their own sites. Providing a link to that member's blog - on a reciprocal basis - increases bonding within the community, and increases everyone's incoming and outgoing links, which the search engines LOVE! In addition, all the new blog entries are showcased on The Connectory's website for the benefit of the visiting public. Not only does the community benefit as a whole, but every member gets increased visibility to their unique target audience.

The Connectory also provides a community directory, that lists each business that would like to be part of this collaborative marketing effort. Here you can find people who are looking for comments on their blog entries, who are looking for links, and who would like to add friends- just like you. Every effort you make to help others, will also help you.

Everyone listed in the directory (including you) will have a short description of their product or service, with photos, and a video elevator pitch. You will find the link to their blog in their directory profile.

As part of the collaborative effort, we ask that you select 3 blogs per week from the directory, and make a 'comment' on one of the entries to help that person. These comments also help you. It's also important to 'add friends' and to create links from your blog to someone else's blog. The more everyone works together, links together, and communicates together through the directory and the blogs, the more 'findable' you become in the search engines, even outside the community and to your specific target audience!

**The power of blogging as an individual is amazing; however, the power of blogging as a community ... TRANSFORMING!**