

Technology

“IF YOU’RE DEALING WITH IDEAS AT A FORMATIVE LEVEL,

Blogs About Biz

Do you blog? If so, you’re part of a small but growing number of business educators recording their thoughts on business issues in an online public forum. Short for “Web logs,” blogs are online journals where writers post their thoughts to an audience of online readers. When blogs first appeared in the mid-1990s, they often were nothing more than glorified diaries. They evolved into a medium perfect for journalism, analysis, and political commentary. Today, blogs have also become a popular teaching and communication tool for academics, especially those in law and medicine.

Slowly, more business school professors are blogging as a way to communicate with students, post assignments and bibliographies, share favorite Web links, and present their thoughts on topics of the day. Martin Grace, professor of risk management and insurance at Georgia State University’s Robinson College of Business in Atlanta, has kept a blog on risk management since last March at riskprof.typepad.com/tort/.

Grace admits that at first he was a bit wary of the practice for fear of posting something he might later regret. “I was wary of the publicness and permanency of it. If you wrote something idiotic, it would be there for the whole world to see,” says Grace. “I also worried about spelling and grammatical errors. I know newspaper reporters do this all the time—but they have editors!” Such concerns may be one reason why blogging has been slow to catch on among business professors. In addition, they may not believe their work to be as “exciting” as law or medicine, so they may think they have nothing to “blog” about, Grace says.

“I also have a law degree, so I started by reading blogs by lawyers and economists, who have a lot to say about the public policy issues of the day,” says Grace. “Business professors, on the other hand, are talking about whether it makes good sense for this firm to make that investment. It may seem less exciting than a topic like civil unions.”

James Garven, professor of finance and insurance at the Hankamer School of Business at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, keeps a blog at www.finweb.com. Also an avid blog reader, Garven subscribes to the blogs of several law and economics professors and has discovered that bloggers generally run in three categories—those who want to teach and inform, those who want to stimulate discussion, and those who want to keep a record of their own

thoughts and research. “If you’re dealing with ideas at a formative level, writing about them regularly helps you put the pieces of the puzzle together,” Garven says.

Starting a blog can be fairly painless, even for the technologically uninitiated. If you can type, you can blog, say these bloggers. Blogging software can often be downloaded online—inexpensively or even for free. Many academics use software such as Movable Type, a program available at www.movabletype.org. An older version of the software is available for free; the newest version, Movable Type 3.1, is available to educators for \$39.95 and includes tech support. Users can download the program to create a blog on their universities’ Web servers; or they can use the company’s TypePad service to place a blog on Movable Type’s central server.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Outblaze-EDU: E-mail Messaging for the Education Market

In only a decade, e-mail has gone from optional novelty to ubiquitous utility. With this ubiquity, however, companies must manage the billions of e-mails sent globally each day, while stopping viruses; keeping their systems safe from hackers; and thwarting spammers, who purportedly send more than 50 percent of all e-mail.

Outblaze, a company headquartered in Hong Kong with a U.S. office in Stamford, Connecticut, and offices in China, Korea, India, and the Philippines, recently launched an e-mail platform designed for the education market. Outblaze-EDU provides students and faculty with anytime-anywhere access to e-mail, online calendars, file sharing, and

message board services. In addition, it provides security features such as anti-spam, anti-virus, anti-piracy, and content-filtering.

Higher education has different needs than business, says Stef Bensi, managing director for Outblaze USA. “When employees leave a company, it just





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sity’s Kelley School of Business in Bloomington, Rasmusen has kept a blog since May 2003 at www.rasmusen.org. Unlike Grace, he had no compunctions about blogging—even though an August 2003 blog entry he posted on homosexuality garnered him negative attention from university administrators.

“Free discussion is important to scholarship, so I never let my pride or fear of

being wrong stop me,” says Rasmusen. “But I write my blog for myself as much as for anyone else. I view it as a record of ideas, facts, and links I find useful—a record I’m willing to let others see.”

Still, the fact that blogs are so public is also their most significant

Obviously, faculty bloggers should be careful about what they post. Because blogs are public, faculty who post controversial opinions or criticism of their universities do so at their own risk, as Eric Rasmusen discovered. A professor of economics and public policy at Indiana Univer-

shuts down their accounts,” Bensi says. “But universities want to provide e-mail services to alumni on a long-term basis for networking and fund-raising purposes.” So, a business school with 5,000 students and 30,000 alumni may provide 35,000 e-mail accounts this year. In two years, that number grows to 40,000 accounts, and, in another ten, to 65,000 or more.

“Over time, a university has a buildup of accounts,” says Bensi. “Any expansion involves increased hardware, maintenance, and data storage costs. Universities, especially those using systems developed internally, don’t always have the technological resources to continue to keep their systems up-to-date.”

Outsourcing e-mail services that are compatible with a university’s

Web portal and servers from a third party can be a lower-cost option, he says. For instance, an internal e-mail system may cost a university \$1 to \$2 per user per month, while an outsourced system can reduce that cost to less than \$1.

Founded in 1998, Outblaze currently handles more than 200 million e-mails for 35 million users daily for companies such as Verizon, Dell, and LinuxMail.org. To enter the education market, says Bensi, “Outblaze has the scale to easily add and subtract hundreds of thousands of email accounts for schools each semester, implement the newest technologies at the lowest cost, and monitor the network for dangerous or inappropriate e-mail.”

For more information on Outblaze, visit www.outblaze.com.

benefit. Faculty bloggers receive comments not only from students and other faculty, but from others interested in their ideas. In this way, professors can use blogs to educate the public about business and as catalysts for their own research. Because blog readers, as a group, tend to be less critical than formal peer review panels, blogging offers professors an open forum to test out ideas before pursuing them further.

Well-read blogs also provide valuable exposure to academics, says Grace. “Our external affairs staff is

always trying to get our professors’ names into newspaper articles,” he says.

“This is a way to get the name of the university in front of people.”

For any business professor new to blogging, Rasmusen and Grace have some advice. First, says Rasmusen, decide

what kind of blogger to be. “Business bloggers should decide whether they are (a) taking notes for themselves, (b) writing a regular journal on topics of the day, or (c) writing an irregular posting of ideas and facts on topics of lasting interest.”

Finally, if they want their blog to be a destination for readers, academics should choose a specialty to better create a blog that inspires other people to respond, says Grace. “It may take a while to find a niche, but it’s important to find a specialty and stake out your territory,” Grace advises. “Just like in business, market yourself.”

DATABIT

According to Forrester Research, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, there will be an upsurge in the offshoring of U.S. jobs in the next year. It estimates that **830,000** jobs will leave the U.S. in 2005, a **40 percent** increase over its previous estimate. In the long term, the company estimates that **3.4 million** jobs will go offshore by 2015.

Conquering the Wireless Challenge

How does a business school jump fully into wireless networking? Administrators at the Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, think they have the answers. Since they fully integrated a wireless local area network (WLAN) technology with the university's existing network of wired and wireless technologies provided by Cisco Systems Inc., they say they have lessons to share.

"Wireless on a school campus has moved beyond the 'tipping point,'" says Kevin Baradet, chief technology officer at the Johnson School. Unlike a typical technology adoption curve, which is slow and steady, the "big bang" of wireless chips preinstalled on laptops resulted in a significant critical mass of students and faculty requiring wireless access, he says. "I think this time last year, all the top business schools were surprised by how fast students shifted from wired to wireless technology," Baradet says. "In May 2003, our students were carrying drop cables and plugging into wire ports. By December 2003, nobody had them or wanted to use them."

As a result, the Johnson School spent last year "catching up" to students, says Baradet, but now the school is ready to go. To complete its own transition from wired to wireless, the school used BeaconWorks WLAN, a product of Boston-based Chantry Networks. Before a full roll-out of a wireless community, however, Baradet notes that any business school should address a few key issues:

Understand user needs. The latest laptops and handheld devices often need tweaking to access the network.

Therefore, a business school should ensure that its help desk is appropriately staffed and prepared at the beginning of each semester for a flood of new users needing support.

Cut the cords. Few students come to business school expecting to "plug in" to a network. Installing ports should no longer be a priority.

Include enough access points. Any large-scale deployment requires access points that provide a great coverage area, but those points are inexpensive to install and maintain, says Baradet.



A state-of-the-art wireless network needs to operate with the same quality of service of a wired network. It should not resemble a cellular network which often has gaps in coverage. The Johnson School, for example, has 32 access points, which can handle 1,000 simultaneous users checking e-mail or doing light Web surfing. At peak times, the network handles around 300 simultaneous users.

Pay attention to building materials. The concrete in older buildings can block signals. Access points must be numerous enough to circumvent these obstacles and provide full coverage.

Develop networks collaboratively. Successful wireless networks are developed using a collaborative, rather than a top-down, process. Provide a liaison who will hear and voice the requirements of users throughout the

transition. Only by including all users in the process can a school ensure satisfied users and smooth deployment.

Accommodate peak work times. A wireless network should have enough capacity to accommodate an academic community's peak traffic times. For corporations, this time is roughly 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; however, a university population works differently. At the Johnson School, peak times happen between 12 p.m. and 2 p.m., and between 7 p.m. and 2 a.m.

Consider additional features. A wireless LAN alone may not meet a business school's needs. For example, professors may want to limit students' usage of wireless devices during classes. A wireless solution that provides separate networks to faculty gives them additional control in the classroom.

Integrate with current technology.

No business school should build a wireless network from scratch, or be required to endure massive upgrades when technology changes. It's wise to choose a solution compatible with past and future technology.

Develop a partnership with vendors.

Chantry Networks is still heavily involved with the evolution of the Johnson School's wireless network, says Baradet, which will make the school's transition to future technology more seamless. The company also benefits from an ongoing partnership, he adds.

"We've become a development partner for its product," Baradet says. "We've given the company a lot of feedback and are essentially a testing lab. Chantry's staff see things happening here that they couldn't imagine or create in their own testing environment. So, they gain the knowledge to make the product even better."

SUCCESS
(suc*cess")

[n. The accomplishment of goals necessary to achieve a particular task, realize a particular dream or satisfy a particular need or want. The outcome of effort. From the Latin *successus*—to succeed.]

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INNOVATION IS OUR TRADITION

Teaching Ethical Hacking

Computer hackers, who seek out vulnerabilities in computer systems to harvest valuable data such as credit card information, are believed to cost global business billions of dollars annually. A recent study by Good Harbor Consulting, a firm based in Virginia, found that corporations now spend up to 12 percent of their technology budgets on security, up from 3 percent only five years ago.

In response to this trend, some graduate students at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte want to learn to beat hackers at their own game. In a course called Vulnerability Assessment and System Assurance, offered through UNCC's College of Information Sciences, students will learn how to defend and secure a computer net-

work. They will also learn the secrets to hacking into almost any system from some of the most talented—and benevolent—hackers in the world. As “ethical hackers,” students also will learn the legal and ethical considerations that arise in cybersecurity.

The course is modeled after programs offered primarily by military institutes, says Bill Chu, the professor of information technology leading the course. “This particular

course will expose our students to dark-side techniques. They'll gain insight on how bad guys can penetrate systems and they'll learn how to effectively protect those systems,” says Chu. “We're teaching them to think like the bad guys. They're learning a different mindset.”

The course follows a case-study format and includes a strong lab com-

ponent. In addition, students must sign a legal agreement, which states that they will not misuse or reveal any of the tactics they learn.

As “white hat” hackers, these students may perform a valuable service to industry. Companies are paying such hackers to examine their systems and identify any security weaknesses before “black hat” hackers have a chance to access sensitive information.

Making Dot-Coms History

Researchers at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business in College Park have received a \$235,000 award from the U.S. Library of Congress. The goal is to strengthen a two-year-old initiative to preserve records from the now-historic dot-com era of the late 1990s. The award will be supplemented by \$245,000 in contributions from the project's partners, which include the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University in Fair-

DATABIT

Cybersecurity is becoming a big business. In a recent study, Computer Security Institute (CSI) projects that the number of jobs in cybersecurity will grow at an annual compounded rate of 14 percent until 2008. It also estimates that by 2008 the number of cybersecurity professionals will be 2.1 million, up from today's 1.3 million.



fax, Virginia (www.chnm.gmu.edu); digital library Internet Archive of San Francisco, California (www.archive.org); and computer forensics firm Gallivan, Gallivan & O'Melia of Seattle, Washington (www.digitalwar.room.com).

The Smith School will use the funds to develop a digital repository to house business records and other materials collected through the Business Plan Archive (BPA), which was launched in 2002. On its Web site businessplanarchive.org, the BPA contains venture presentations; business, marketing, and technical plans; and other documents from more than 2,000 failed and successful Internet startups.

Some estimates suggest that nearly 30 percent of all business records produced today never touch paper. As a result, recording business history requires the active preservation of digitally produced materials. "The need to save these materials is evident," said David Kirsch, the project's lead researcher and assistant professor of entrepreneurship at the Smith School. "Our team will help us figure out what can be saved, what should be saved, and exactly how best to do it."

In the second phase of the BPA project, researchers will collect detailed personal narratives from those who were directly affected by the Internet boom and bust. Entrepreneurs, employees, customers, suppliers, investors, and others can complete a survey at www.dotcom.archive.org, the BPA's companion Web portal.

The official name of the Library of Congress program is the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program. More information about NDIIPP is available at www.digitalpreservation.gov.

iPods Come to Campus

Laptops, PDAs, and mobile phones have

become fixtures on most campuses, serving as important conduits of educational and administrative content for faculty and administration. But should the Apple iPod be added to that list? Better known as a tool for the music industry than for education, the device is a standard gadget for this year's freshmen at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. Last fall, about 1,800 Mac- and PC-compatible iPods were distributed to freshmen and other university staff.

The iPod project is part of a pilot program between Duke and Apple Computer that will be evaluated after a year. The cost of the project is estimated to reach at least \$500,000 and will be covered by strategic planning funds that the university has set aside for one-time innovative technology purposes. Students can use their iPods to listen to foreign language exercises, review recorded lectures, take verbal notes, or record interviews. Campus publications could also use the medium to distribute audio editorial for students.

"We're approaching this as an experiment, one we hope will motivate our faculty and students to think creatively about using digital audio content and a mobile computing environment to advance educational goals," says Tracy Futhey, Duke's vice president for information technology and chief information officer.

Could the iPod make its way to the business school? It's not yet in the

plans for Duke's Fuqua School of Business, says Nevin Fouts, associate dean of information technology. Still, Fuqua's IT department is watching the iPod program with interest as

it looks for ways to leverage next-generation devices, he says.

"We meet regularly with a student technology advisory council of handpicked MBA students who work with us to develop Fuqua's technology environment. We've also been working with companies to help us find useful technology that goes beyond laptops and handheld computers," says Fouts. "We're trying to find the right technology to extend the MBA experience in a very transparent way."

NEWSBYTES

■ .EU DOMAIN COMING SOON

The long awaited ".eu" domain, for companies that want to incorporate their affiliation with the European Union in their Web addresses, will be available in 2005. During an initial two-month "sunrise" period, only companies in the 25 EU countries that own registered trademarks on their names will be allowed to register their addresses. This measure



has been taken to thwart "cyber-squatters," who register Web addresses using well-known names of companies or individuals and then attempt to sell them back to the trademark holder, often at exorbitant prices. After the sunrise period, any EU resident or company can register a domain name with the .eu suffix.



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■ VIRTUAL CAREER GUIDANCE

EM LYON, a business school located in Ecully, France, recently launched its Career Centre, which integrates EM LYON's virtual campus and software from Quebec-based Technomedia. The Career Centre offers a three-stage process. First, students use online self-assessment tools, including a 360-degree assessment and personality testing tools. Second, students move on to training tools that teach them how to work with recruiters, look for a job in a global market, research a company, and write a resume and cover letter. Finally, students can access a network of personal development professors and career professionals. EM LYON's Career Centre

DATA BIT

Reuters reports that the city-wide wireless network planned for Taipei, Taiwan, will be able to accommodate the city's 2.6 million residents, include up to 20,000 access points, and cost \$70 million. The network is being built by Taiwan's Q-Ware Corp. with help from HP, Intel, Microsoft, and Cisco, and is scheduled to be operational by the end of this year.

is now available for its bachelors- and masters-level students, and eventually will be extended to all EM LYON graduates.

■ LAPTOP DAY AT ST. JOHN'S

Last semester, St. John's University distributed close to 3,700 laptops to entering freshmen. Although this was the second year of laptop distribution, it was the first after the expansion of the school's wireless computer network to cover all indoor and outdoor areas of its campuses in Queens, Staten Island, Manhattan, and Oakdale, New York, as well as its campus in Rome, Italy. With last year's contingent of 3,400 laptops already in use, more than 7,000 stu-

dents and faculty can access the wireless network from any point on its five campuses.

■ GOING AFTER GOOGLE

Although Microsoft is a dominant force in software technology, there's one area where it lags behind: search engines. Microsoft mogul Bill Gates has announced the company will soon launch a search engine to give the current search engine leader Google, a run for its market share.



Microsoft's new search engine will initially search 5 billion indexed Web pages. In a preemptive strike, Google has doubled its capacity to 8 billion pages. Google presently holds 36.1 percent of the market; Yahoo, 30.6 percent; and Microsoft, 14.4 percent, according to the U.K.'s *The Daily Telegraph*.