

So You Think You Can Blog—Yes You Can!

Use these tips to maximize your efforts

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It's great to see so many IECA members using social Web technologies to market their business, especially Facebook, blogs, Twitter, and LinkedIn. These technologies are helping members provide more information to existing clients as well as reach new clients. Blogs also add new content to your Web site, which helps with search engine rankings. Some examples of blog topics that members have used include getting the most out of college visits, college rankings, emotional health issues, FAFSA, education trends, homework, athletics, and waitlists. You should write about what trends you are seeing in your practice.

Give one of these technologies a try if you haven't already. Ask your colleagues what has worked for them and what hasn't. Or contact me to help you get started.

Here are a few tips to help maximize your marketing reach with your blog.

Be sure to feature your blog on your Web site. In fact, all of your social networking tools should be featured on your Web site, as your site should be the hub for all of your marketing efforts; everything else should link off of that. You should also have your blog featured on your Facebook page and LinkedIn accounts.

Provide a link to the home page of your Web site on your blog—this link should be prominent, near the top of your blog. Remember, all of your Web technologies should point back to your Web site. Also, if you have room, add a sentence or two about your practice under an "About Us" header (see Claire & Chip Law's blog for an example of this: <http://askusaboutschoools.blogspot.com>)

Offer the options to subscribe to your blog with an RSS feed reader or via e-mail to make it simple for your readers to keep up with your blogs. (<http://feedburner.google.com> is one option and is free). You can see examples of these options on the IECA blog (www.IECAonline.com/blog).

Post your blog on your Facebook page to help reach more readers: For individual Facebook pages: go to the notes tab at the top of your wall (or click the + sign to add the notes tab. Then click on 'edit import settings' on the left side of the page. Add the URL of your blog. For 'Fan' Pages: Click on 'edit page' on left side of page. Scroll

down to 'Notes' and click on edit. On left side of page, click on 'edit import settings'. Then add the URL of your blog.

Add the Share buttons to your blog to encourage readers to share your blog with others and bookmark your site (www.addthis.com/web-button-select). Share buttons make it easy for readers to circulate your blog through their own social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Delicious, etc), publicizing your content to their friends and followers. You can see an example of these share buttons on the IECA blog (and images above).

Register your blog on several blog catalog sites, including Technorati.com, Networkedblogs.com, and Blogcatalog.com. And make sure you tag each blog with keywords appropriate to your subject (college applications, college advice, learning disabilities, boarding school advice, etc.). The idea is to use keywords appropriate to your content that also correspond to keywords people use in search engines. For help in determining keywords, you can use Google's Keyword search tool: www.google.com/sktool/. Just type in your blog's URL and subject and Google will give you a list of suggested keywords.

Feature your full name as the author of the blog (or include the person who did write it if it wasn't authored by you). I see many blogs that only use the generic "by Admin" as the author. You worked hard to write your blog; take credit for it. It also gives your blog more credibility. The IECA blog lists IECA member blogs in the sidebar; if you would like us to feature yours, send me the link and I'll add it. You should also link your blog to the IECA blog (www.IECAonline.com/blog). Inbound links to your Web site help with your search engine ranking.

Anyone can blog. The important thing is to share timely information that is useful to others, which increases visits to your site, raises your credibility, and gives potential clients a sense of who you are before hiring you.

If you have other tips to share, please send them to me and I will post them in an upcoming issue. If you would like specific feedback on your blog or other Web technologies, feel free to contact me at Sarah@IECAonline.com