

## MODULE 7

## BLOGGING

## KEY OBJECTIVES

1. To understand how blogs can also showcase content.
2. To bring together the team to discuss how this may benefit your audience and content.

## KEY FEATURES

1. To consider and become familiar with a number of platforms to host your blog.
2. To provide guidance and tips to enable your team to launch a blog.

**Blog definition:**

*noun*

a regularly updated website or web page, typically one run by an individual or small group, that is written in an informal or conversational style.

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN

When we started working in schools and community groups back in 2013 one thing that really jumped out at us was the lack of provision for young people who enjoyed writing for a purpose outside of the classroom. So we got together with a number of young people and allowed them a forum to discuss what they would like to do with these urges they had to write more beyond school.

Bringing together young people aged between 10 and 18, from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, different schools and with lots of different interests really opened our eyes to what was needed. We knew we wanted them to create content for something, whether it be a website or magazine and they were extremely responsive to this. [www.nebeep.com](http://www.nebeep.com) was created and three print versions were also published in the first year.

So, while setting up an actual physical publication might not be for you, you may consider a blog or just create content using these guidelines for a website you already have access to.

This module has been written to give you some pointers on setting these up successfully and how to manage them, using our own experience at running the Beep project for the last nine years. Creating the content will be just the same for the blog as it would be for the publication – consider what your audience wants to hear or read about and work from there.

## PLATFORMS

There are lots of different platforms out there to use for your blog or podcast. We have always used WordPress for our blog and have included in this resource the guidance we give to our writers when they join the Beep project. But there are others such as Wix, Squarespace, Blogger or even Tumblr you may prefer to use for blogging.

All of these platforms have been created to allow you to publish content easily and with limited experience. So it might be best to ask around and get the opinion of others who have published their own blogs already to see what platform worked for them. WordPress worked for us as it is what we use for all our websites plus the functionality suits our needs.

### TOP TIP

Research and consider the different platforms available for starting your own blog and think about how you will run your blog

Things to consider at this stage of setting up your blog would be:

- Cost,
- Functionality,
- Appearance,
- Reliability.

## CONTENT

Once you have figured out what platform you are going to use to publish your blog it is then time to think about content for it. Speaking on our blog, we knew we wanted to create content that was relevant to young people so we thought of all the content young people would like to read.

News, reviews, politics, interviews and opinions were all important to the team of writers who masterminded the *Beep* project. But of course, you could have a blog that is specific to a certain topic such as sport, fashion, trends, cookery...the list is endless. But ensuring you have enough content to post on your blog is key.

One of the mistakes we have made in the past is launching a blog without having a backlog of content to post on a regular basis. Therefore, it is worth having a schedule planned so there is no lapse in content as once you start promoting it and people start visiting it, there has to be a variety of content on there.

Even today after running our blog for almost eight years, we still only post a maximum of two stories a day. With a backlog of unpublished content we

know even if all our writers were to cease writing, there is enough to run the site for two – three weeks while we secure additional content.

People don't need to see tens of stories published a day, regular engaging and educational content is what is needed and you could post something every other day if that is what you are able to do.

## CONSISTENCY

We have attached the guidelines our writers use for the *Beep* project to this module so you can see what we expect of our writers. This also covers our pointers to keeping your publication uniform. Regardless of whether you are creating a magazine, newspaper or blog, you want everyone to be using the same format. If you make this clear when you start creating content it will reduce the pressure when it comes to putting things together.

So, establish a font you want the content to be typed up in and a size as the work starts to be created. It is amazing how many young writers get carried away with word art when writing their stories for it all to be deleted when it comes to putting the publication together. Just like if you are having your team write up their stories, ensure it is in their best handwriting – there is nothing worse than putting the stories into the publication and finding you can't read a few words.

The same goes for the use of italics to identify the names of movies, albums, video games etc. when reviewing; if you want your writers to italicise these, then make it clear to them by setting guidelines. Determining word count for your articles is something else we recommend you establish, obviously, this can be down to the age of the writers you are working with.

Your guidelines don't need to be *War and Peace*, but if you make your team familiar with them for every piece of work they contribute it isn't only good practice but it encourages principals of what is expected as they progress through education and into work.

## TEAM EFFORT

Bringing your team of writers together, as already mentioned previously, to determine the content and what you are going to be presenting to your audience is always a 'light-bulb' moment. When we started the *Beep* project, when it was just a thought in our CEO's head, she envisioned it being called *The Young Gateshead Times*.

This idea was soon squashed when presented to the team of young people who came together to establish what young people actually wanted from the platform. The team opted to call it *Beep* for a couple of reasons. Not only was it short, snappy and memorable, but the fact that the majority of the team felt their opinions were 'beeped out' by adults and the widespread media, *Beep* was way more apt.

So, from that point onwards, taking into consideration the thoughts and ideas of the team has become a factor that underpins everything we do. Enabling young people to work together in creating something that they are responsible for encourages a great deal of respect, not just for the project and the team but also for themselves, so why not encourage it?

## PUBLISHING AND PROMOTING

Once you have your content ready to publish you might also want to consider how you will promote it. Using social media is a great way of promoting your blog and it is free. Depending on the age of your writers, you can also ask them to promote their stories on their own social media channels and encourage them to ask people to like any social media accounts you may have set up for your publication as well.

We have found Twitter, Instagram and Facebook work well for our content. Specific topics we may post to LinkedIn as well. But like anything, it is gauging the audience you have on such platforms and deciding if the content is suitable as to whether it will have an impact on your readership.

Other ways of promoting your blog would be to link it to your school/organisation website or send a link out in any correspondence, for example, newsletters etc.. There are various ways of raising awareness of your content, but it is always worthwhile to use the networks you already have in place and those of your writers, to get the ball rolling. Once you have content and people are responding to it, you may consider advertising on social media platforms as this is a relatively inexpensive way of reaching a targeted audience that you select.

With social media being such a popular way to share news and views, there are ways of tracking your content and seeing how well it has done compared to other articles. These reports also give you the opportunity to see the best days and times for your content too. But just remember, the fact that you have started your own blog and have created content for it are mammoth steps and ones you should be proud of. Well done.

### SUCCESS CRITERIA

- Understanding what the differences are between a blog and a newspaper
- Be able to identify different types of blogs and the audiences they cater for
- Recognise the different platforms available for creating blogs
- Be able to follow guidelines if creating content for either a blog or publication \*\*
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*\*\*advanced learning*