

**The Publicity Club of New York presents  
WEBLOGS: WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW AS PR PROS  
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**Lockhart Steele, Managing Editor - GAWKER.COM**

Good to see you all.

I'm a journalist and I've been a print journalist for the better part of ten years, so it's an interesting situation for me having just made the leap from the print world into the blog world. I've been dealing with publicists on the print side of my job for the better part of a decade and now have the interesting challenge of dealing with it on the weblog side of the world. And it's actually very different, the way in which publicists should interact with and do interact with bloggers and I think we'll dig into that in the Q&A.

Briefly, I want to just talk about blogging in New York City, it really kind of got going a couple of years ago when, really, the two women over here to my right each started writing a weblog, different in tone but both kind of focused on New York City. Liz Spiers was the first writer for Gawker and kind of invented what Gawker became and Jen Cheung runs a site called Gothamist that is kind of a variation on, well Gawker really does New York through a media prism, Gothamist does it more through a news prism – what's going on in the city in sort of a *New York 1* kind of way on a daily basis.

We all started with no readers and no audience and each of these sites has grown to the point now where they each have tens of thousands of daily readers who tune in, I think, throughout the work day. And that's one thing that's different about blogs versus other media is I think blogs exist in large part because people have boring jobs and they want something to look at when they're sitting at their desks. So as a result, the way that media is presented in blogs is necessarily different from a magazine article. The idea on a blog is to be quick and fast and just to give someone a link to more information. So rather than write 500 words a really good blog post on Gawker would be maybe two sentences, and then underneath that, and this is the key thing that differentiates blogs from any other media that came before it, is you have a hyperlink, you might have several.

But the point of weblogs really, at some level, is to send you to other sites. People come to Gawker to see what Gawker is saying about things that are going on in the media world. So on a typical day on Gawker you might have a little item reporting on, it might say, "*The New York Post* reported today that people are being fired from a certain magazine," or it might talk about, "*The New York Times* said this..." or it will link to other blogs.

Basically, a good way to think of it is to think of it as a blog as sort of a filter of information. You don't want to think of blogs as a monolith, a lot of people, I think, get this idea like, "Wow, I'm going to get this item in the hands of bloggers," as though bloggers were all the same. It would make no more sense than saying, "Hey, I've got this great product I want to get it in the hands of 'Journalists'." Blogs are different and Gawker, the company I work for now, runs ten distinct niche blogs on niche topics. The site, Gizmodo that we do, for instance, is all about technology so our editor lives in this world of gadgetry and technology and he is always on the lookout for what's new in gadgets. The two people who write Gawker probably couldn't care less. I think a lot of people have to stop thinking of blogs as this monolithic world where "blogs are just blogs" it really is not that different from previous forms of media. And Gawker is really trying to take that old media model of "pick a topic area, create great information around it, sell advertising around it" and that's the model, that's nothing radically different, nothing radically scary, except for the links.

I'll just close by talking about that: blog post are about, I think at the end of the day, what they link to. And I think one of the problems that publicists have had in the past when they've tried to pitch to blogs or interact with blogs is they might send a blogger, for instance, a press release. Now, to a blogger that is almost a singularly useless piece of information because it's going to be written in a way that is unappealing to their audience. It's probably not going to have anything that they can link to and so a blogger gets a press release and basically says, "Well, what am I gonna do with this?" What bloggers want and when people interact, like I write this website about

New York City real estate and I interact routinely with the publicists at all the major New York real estate firms. The ones that are smart will send me a link to a property on their website and say, "Hey, here's an interesting property that went on the market today, why don't you link to it?" and if it's appropriate I might. It's an example of someone looking at what we do and tailoring what they're talking to us about to our medium, versus a publicist who sends me a press release announcing a property sale – it's really not anything I can do anything with. So, I think as you start to explore the world of blogs, those of you who haven't, really keep that hyperlinking in mind because it's the key differentiator. And if you really want to get inside bloggers' heads, realize that every time they're thinking about what to write about they're also thinking about what to link to.

Thanks.

**Peter Himler, President PCNY and Moderator** – We always talk about targeting your pitches so I suppose we need to be hyper- or specially-targeted for these folks. How many people know what RSS stands for? Raise your hands. Lockhart, you want to explain why RSS has enabled the blogging world to be what it is or what it's going to be?

**Lockhart Steele** - Sure, RSS is a technology that basically lets you subscribe to a weblog. So that rather than visiting a particular website you can receive weblog posts almost the same way you receive email. So you can wake up in the morning and you can have a list of your ten or twenty favorite blogs and instead of having to go from site to site, click on one link then click on the next link, if you have what is called an RSS reader or it's also referred to as a news reader, it goes out on the Internet, gathers your favorite pieces of blog posts that you've specified and kind of organizes them for you, again, in a program that looks a lot like email. You can read them really quickly the same way you might bang through your inbox; it's like 1-2-3-4-5. But what's significant about it is that a lot of people are using the technology. It's certainly not mainstream at this point but it's at a point where certainly each of our blogs has thousands of people who interact with our sites who never actually visit the sites themselves. What it means is that people are finding a way to keep up with this avalanche of information whereas it might never have been feasible to keep track of more than maybe half a dozen or a dozen blogs. My RSS reader has something like 150 blogs in it because some of those probably only update once or twice a week and what having the news reader lets me do is not have to visit those sites every day to see if there's something new there, it comes to me. If someone has done something new on their site – Oh! It pops up for me. And then if I want to visit the site there's a link to do that. Hope that was somewhat clear!