

**Rajesh :** Correct.

**Govind:** Yes Toby, I think as a journalist it's difficult to relate to the application of ROI, but I guess from a corporation's point of view that is the way to go!

**Rajesh :** I believe that is not just relationships etc., but jump in search ratings; tone of voice in comments & feedback; inclusion in blogrolls and of course response in mainstream media than can showcase Impact.

**Rajesh :** Govind, as a journalist, and writer, what is the value/ information you seek from a business blog?

**Govind:** I have no Indian examples to go by, but if I look at blogs in companies like General Motors, Sun Micro or even Google, I guess it gives me valuable insights into the process of innovation; it gives me insights into what's cooking next and also, some insights into the people behind the products and services. Understanding what people are thinking is also critical, because that is a pointer, not just to what is going on within the company but also their understanding of and response to external developments and the environment.

It's also interesting to read what people are saying to these companies, their reactions, questions and posers. They could be consumers all over the world or journalists like me, or people belonging to other walks of life, maybe even policy makers

**Rajesh :** Sure, but are companies listening to the voice of the consumer?

**Govind:** In some ways, yes, because theoretically their existence should depend on that! But are they doing it by tracking the world of blogs? Not really! Not yet, at least. That ties in with the larger point on internet adoption by active consumers of products and services that corporations are selling.

**Rajesh :** True, I expect that to change, however, as critical mass has started to build - marketers and corporates look at that.

**Govind:** One more point. I think many Indian companies have barely reached or graduated beyond setting up an effective website as a tool to reach out to consumers and blogs come much later. Take away automobiles, financial services, hospitality and a few others, most other companies and industries are barely connecting with their consumers, or interacting.

**Rajesh :** But, we may jump technologies, like we did with pagers and blogs are more 'need based'.

**Rajesh :** In ways true, but again it could link with the numbers so far...

**Govind:** I do hope that companies and their executives communicate and interact with the world at large- very simply put.

**Toby:** Govind, I really like your statement.

**Govind:** They have to do more of that, in general, and then on blogs! Companies have to define their very existence as based on the consumer, not sure too many Indian companies practice it, of course everyone says it...

**Rajesh :** Agreed. They say, loyal customer, I think the company needs to be loyal and not the customer.

**Toby:** Love that one too Rajesh.

**Toby:** It's a very different mind-set but one that will provide critical in a globally competitive world.

**Govind:** Agree. I think some companies in some industries are beginning to explore the digital world, so to speak, often led by digitally inclined CEOs - that's where it starts. So it's a two way process. Am only seeing small strains on both sides.

I maybe wrong about this but I do get the sense that Gang of Girls and Being Girl are not really CEO initiatives but marketing department led, which is fine but on a larger plane it shows that the space that we are talking about has not been fully embraced.

**Rajesh :** True, I don't think we have seen any true corporate blogs, except Infosys and maybe a couple of others.

Govind, residents of communities like Second Life are reacting sharply to blatant commercial usage - are marketers going overboard? Also, how relevant are communities like Orkut for a marketer?

**Govind:** I am familiar with Second Life as a concept and have visited the site and read about it, but am not familiar with the issue.

**Govind:** You talk about communities. I think they are relevant to marketers, undoubtedly, it's just that much of this is nascent in the Indian context. You forwarded the P&G shampoo link, I think. There is Unilever's Gang of Girls - so there is an attempt to create a community itself as opposed to reaching out to one. I don't know whether that suggests absence of communities which are specific or relevant to certain products or services or the inability of the marketeers to reach out.

**Rajesh :** That's true and more & more marketers will, and should, try and congregate at communities that are more defined than a larger environment, which is anyway difficult to monitor.

**Toby:** There are companies in the States, and even a marketing research firm in France that are exploring 2nd life. What is interesting to me is this is b2b and not b2c Reperes Second Life .

**Toby:** I believe that 'community' is the trend in social media. Second Life gives people the illusion to merge online with quasi reality. It seems to me that the more technology integrates into our lives the more we yearn for more people contact. Second Life is one way to bridge the gap...

**Rajesh :** But is there a fear of it becoming too commercialized? It's like selling ads and no programme, no one wants to see just ads!

**Toby:** if there is too much commercialism people will not log on. They will find a balance.

**Rajesh :** Absolutely!

**Govind:** It's interesting what Toby is saying. Just that from an Indian point of view, it's early days still, though I am sure we will reach there sooner, not later, as some of us already have.

**Rajesh :** Toby, search is contributing a significant amount to Internet traffic and marketers are looking at SEO and SEM like never before. How can blogs help in optimizing search presence for marketers? I think search ratings should be a good reason for people to start blogging...

**Toby:** Yes, and for many companies that is part of the ROI. Blogs and search engine ranks go together like p&j (peanut butter and jelly).

Those little spiders love fresh content, html and inbound links. Those are elements that make for a successful blog. Diva Marketing Blog is the poster child of SEO via blogs. Type marketing blog in google and my little blog pulls up #2 - sometimes #1. There are usually over 2million hits on that search and several google sense ads. My ranking is all from organic search techniques.

**Toby:** the relevancy for me is that is what I do - marketing blogs- so as a business development strategy it can't get much better.

**Rajesh :** Amazing! You need to teach us, a few, if not all those tricks . Toby, to conclude, what are the take-aways that you would like to share with us?

**Toby:** A couple of points that we should keep in mind: No matter who writes a company blog, the CEO or an administrative assistant the Blog Mantra should be kept top of mind: Honesty, Transparency, Authenticity and throw in a little passion.

Business blogs are a long-term strategy so passion about the topic is important; as is good writing skills.

Blogs are not written by internal departments crafting messages; they are authored by the people within those departments who are sharing their passions with people who are interested in similar issues and concerns.

Blogs provide a unique vehicle to engage customers if the blogger remembers to: listen, learn and then interact.

**Rajesh :** At that note of learning, let me once again say thanks to all of you, for joining in and making this such an insightful discussion. I am sure, this is the just the beginning of many such conversations we will engage in, soon. See you all.

To participate and carry this conversation forward, the moderator invites Impact readers to [www.BlogWorks.in/blog](http://www.BlogWorks.in/blog). You can reach [BlogWorks™@blogworks.in](mailto:BlogWorks™@blogworks.in)

