

Start a New Blog

Idea In Short

Start writing publicly now. Blogging forces accountability, builds your professional brand and creates intellectual property you own rather than rent from a platform. Write for yourself first, find your tribe and ship your art before it is perfect.

Eight Years of Blogging and a New Venture

I started my original blog in 2012. Eight years later, I started a new blog called Strategy Happy Hour. This time I serve as the editor, not the writer. The shift reflects a belief that more professionals should publish their own thinking, own their content and build a body of work in their own name.

How It All Started

When I started a new job in 2011, there was not a lot of work. Our group was not busy and I was bored. I wanted to use my brain more, but what were my choices? An MBA was something I already had. Corporate training videos felt pointless. An industry certification was possible someday. None of these felt right.

My brother-in-law had been blogging for several years. As an avid reader and writer, this sounded like his thing, not something I would enjoy. Over many holiday dinner conversations, I warmed to the idea. Timidly, almost reluctantly, I wrote my first post in March 2012. The post was 96 words, entirely uncontroversial and non-committal. I did not really know what I wanted to blog about, so I kept going. I wrote, experimented and listened to readers.

One of the best parts of having a blog is that it is yours. You can write whatever you want. The blog was anonymous for five years until I started teaching at Emory in early 2017. The freedom of owning your own platform is something no corporate social media account can replicate.

Why Blog at All

This is a sermon my friends and students have heard repeatedly. If you have shared a meal, coffee or wine with me, I probably tried to talk you into starting a blog. There are several reasons. The internet is thin. While there are tons of websites, much of it is just self-promotion by people on social media or corporate public relations. It is millions of pages of hey, look at me. Genuine, thoughtful writing is rare and valuable.

You have something to say. What have you learned through your work that will help others? You can build an audience for your brand of thinking, writing, working and living. Good business writing is rare. It takes discipline, practice and curiosity. With the pandemic, business will not return to normal. Some things will change permanently, and that is fascinating, largely undetermined and worthy of debate.

Most importantly, you need to own more of your content. Think of it as intellectual property 1. You should publish in your own name, not in your company's name or your client's name. Content you create on a platform you do not control can disappear overnight. A blog you own is an asset that compounds over time.

What to Write About

This could be anything. Your poetry, your cooking podcast, your Excel modeling tips, your woodworking projects. If you want to take it in a more career-focused direction, a few questions help. What do you find yourself studying, reading, watching and thinking about? What would you like to invest the next three to five years getting exceptionally good at? What are you consistently surprised that people do not understand?

Ask what your friends say about you. If you could get paid \$250,000 to do one thing six days a week, what would it be? What do people compliment you for? What work do you take professional pride in, almost to a fault? What do you enjoy teaching other people? The answers to these questions point directly to your topic.

Write for Whom

Write for yourself first. If you think it is boring, please do not ask others to read it. In the first two to three years, very few people will read what you write. That is fine and even helpful. It

gives you space to find your voice without pressure. Write for the people you like to discuss this topic with and find your tribe.

Write for one person. Do not try to impress the average reader, because the average reader does not exist. Trying to please everyone leads to bland, forgettable content. Writing for a specific person forces clarity and honesty. The right audience will find you if the work is genuine.

Write Privately or Publicly

This was my first hedge. Why not just write privately on a document and start a blog when the writing gets good? Wrong. The public nature of sharing the work is what makes it good. Do not worry about your first blog, book, drawing or recording being bad. That is a given. What matters more is the learning curve.

Sharing your work provides accountability. Putting your name and face on the work really motivates you to do your best. It brings professionalism. You push aside your ego and actually listen to feedback. It shifts your thinking from what I think to what do I think that is worth sharing 2.

Ship Your Art

As Seth Godin, the marketing strategy savant, says, artists ship 3. Others can see, experience, enjoy and criticize it. You are not sheltering it in your brain or your basement. You are birthing it to the world. There is something visceral, vulnerable and human about sharing work. What if people do not like it? What if no one reads it? What if it is no good?

My response to that is yes, exactly why you should do it. Godin talks about dancing with your fear and cracking through the social resistance that keeps us gun-shy. The fear is not a signal to stop. It is a signal that the work matters. Listen to more podcasts of amazing people. Surround yourself with examples of people who ship despite uncertainty.

Strategy Happy Hour

Strategy Happy Hour is a blog I started for my previous students and friends to publish their thinking. It is a safe place for them to put their words and thoughts on metaphorical paper. I

am the editor and they are the writers. This is not a marketing forum for consultants or guest blogging. These are the topics that a smart, fun set of MBA types would discuss over Thursday kegs.

The first seven posts covered diverse topics. The silver screen losing its allure, why brands matter more in a digital world, whether the pandemic could disrupt the vaccines business model, zero-based budgeting for life, why givers win the marathon of life, issues with bond issuing and the slowbalization of supply chains. Working with these writers over the weeks made me proud of their work. They shipped their art, and that is the whole point.

- 1Intellectual Property, Wikipedia
- 2Have LinkedIn and Medium Killed the Old-Fashioned Blog, Harvard Business Review
- 3Seth Godin, Wikipedia

Summary

Blogging is ownership, accountability and craft. You publish in your own name, not your company's. The first attempts will be bad, but the learning curve is the point. Write for yourself, find your tribe and ship your art. The internet rewards those who show up consistently.