

## 4

### Finding Your Voice

*No one can be exactly like me. Sometimes even  
I have trouble doing it.*

TALLULAH BANKHEAD

What makes great weblogs great? Some cover their chosen topic with such thoroughness that they become the authoritative source for information in their field. But even these weblogs can't cover every single bit of information that may appear in a week, especially since most are single-handedly produced by individuals in their spare time. Besides, a weblog that thoroughly aggregated all the information on a topic would be only that, a news feed; a weblog is the result of human selection and reflection.

The elements of a superior weblog are identical for the blog, the notebook, and the filter: point of view, discrimination in choosing links, and the life experience of the writer. It is the writer's unique fusion of interests, enthusiasms, and prejudices—her personality—that makes a weblog compelling. In short, a weblog's quality is ultimately based on the authenticity of its voice.

Personal detail is not necessary for "voice," but every good weblog has a point of view, whether it is openly articulated or whether it is made evident through the material the weblogger chooses to link. Wood S Lot is a fine example of the importance

of the human editor, and the ability to build a reputation based strictly on the merits of the material one links. Its editor, Mark Woods, has done a remarkable job of providing a daily compendium of links about art, philosophy, progressive politics, and literary culture. He works almost exclusively with headlines and pull quotes, and while you'll rarely hear Mark speak directly, his voice is strong.

## Defining Your Purpose

It is not important that you know exactly what you are doing when you begin writing your weblog, but you must have at least a loosely defined purpose for your site, and you must vaguely know for whom you are writing—or perhaps more importantly, for whom you are not. This will prevent you from making a few critical misjudgments, and from there your weblog will begin to take on a shape of its own.

But let's start at the beginning.

What is the purpose of your weblog? It can be anything: keeping in touch with friends and family, promoting your business, seeking to influence opinion, or even providing emotional therapy. I would define four broad purposes for maintaining a weblog, though most weblogs serve more than one of them: self-expression, keeping in touch, information sharing, and reputation building.

**SELF-EXPRESSION:** Some people simply want a space to write. For them, a blog can be a place to vent, to observe, to gloat, or to be silly. Ranging in form from numerous short bursts of thought to one longer, more focused piece a day, these weblogs are a personal creative space. For Web designers, a weblog can be a place to really play with the medium, frequently redesigning in styles that no commercial client would consider. Some people have created photo weblogs or weblogs made entirely of other kinds of images. Others use

current events and links to other sites as a springboard for their own essays.

Every weblog, no matter what its purpose, will deepen its maintainer's creativity. Having to produce something for your weblog several times a week will force you—or give you an excuse—to practice your craft, whether it is writing or pulling out your camera to take a few shots. A weblog will invite you to expand your range by requiring you to write explanatory text even if you are “not a writer,” enticing you to post photographs even if you are “not an artist,” and inspiring you to write a full-length essay when you find yourself running out of space to fully express your opinion in your weblog proper.

Writing short is hard, and the daily practice of having to summarize or analyze an article with concision will make you a clearer writer and a better thinker. Even the practice of contextualizing an article with links to related (or tangential) material will exercise your creativity, encouraging you to make connections you might not have made otherwise. Many webloggers are motivated to learn more about Web design or to expand their coding skills in order to add functionality to their site; because their reward is a better weblog, this becomes a fun project instead of a tedious task.

And something else: Because you know how hard you are working, because you can feel yourself stretching each time you try something new or a little risky, maintaining a weblog will give you a new confidence in your own creativity, especially if you have habitually thought of yourself as an “uncreative type.” It is hard to give credence to the idea that you have nothing to say when you are posting every day; and the notion that you are not creative becomes laughable once you regularly begin exploring new ways of expressing yourself.

**KEEPING IN TOUCH:** For many people, a blog-style weblog is an efficient way to keep in touch with family and friends who, for whatever reason, they seldom see. This may take the form

of a weekly update or an endless stream of minutiae that, added together, create a detailed portrait of their lives. By frequently posting the news of the day, these webloggers create an online answer to the ritual "How was your day?" and keep their loved ones informed about the meaningful and inconsequential events of their lives. Most webloggers have found that even a weblog that was never intended to convey personal information will, when not updated for several days, generate a note from their mother asking if they are feeling well.

**INFORMATION SHARING:** Weblogs may be designed as a resource about a particular topic, or they may link to whatever strikes their editor's fancy. In the very early days, the weblog was compared to the "Wunderkammer," a traditional German cabinet of curios, and some weblogs still fit that description. But even in those days, no one definition adequately described the range of subject matter covered by the various weblogs; today such a comprehensive definition would be even harder. Some weblogs are focused on current events, some on funny links; some are general interest, others are focused on a single topic. Some webloggers strive to introduce their readers to only the weirdest, most obscure webpages, others to provide a running commentary on the news.

Those who maintain this type of weblog are typically news junkies, inveterate Web surfers, or expert Web searchers. They spend a lot of time on the Web and they love to share their finds with others. They share what interests them most, and you can learn a lot about even the most private weblogger by paying attention to her subject matter and commentary. Some editors log items so that they can find them again. If this is your purpose, you will want to install a search engine on your site and take particular care in composing your linktext so that a search for an obvious term will bring up the appropriate results. It is extremely frustrating to have to read three full months of

entries to locate a link you distinctly remember logging, but can't locate with your search engine.

**REPUTATION BUILDING:** From the start, certain individuals and even businesses recognized that maintaining a weblog in their area of expertise would allow them to keep up with and organize information pertaining to their field while developing a Web-wide reputation as experts in their chosen profession. The first of these individuals were Web designers, but this strategy could be used by anyone, even hobbyists, whose colleagues research their field using the Web. These weblogs use every form and combination of links and text, from occasional links interspersed with lots of commentary to carefully selected links with little or no commentary at all.

In every case, readers come first for the information the site provides, but as time passes, the weblog editor, by association, acquires a reputation and soon her commentary takes on an importance it did not have only months before. It's less bogus than it sounds. By maintaining a weblog that is tightly focused on a particular subject, these weblog editors educate themselves by searching the Web daily for news and information pertaining to their area of expertise, exercising judgment in weighing the relevance or importance of what they find, and articulating their thoughts on the links they decide to include, either by summarizing the article or by analyzing the material presented. It is what experts do, and this practice will speed anyone's progress to that end.

Make no mistake, this works. I've seen businesses and especially individuals make names for themselves, going from unknown to "expert" in a year by providing a hub of information about a specific profession. When a reader's first impulse upon wanting information about a given subject is to visit a topic-driven weblog, it is a small leap to hire its editor to speak, consult, or otherwise practice their craft when the need arises.

Some reputation-building weblogs are maintained as part of a larger company site, which naturally includes the organization's contact information; reputation-building weblogs that are maintained by individuals, especially freelancers, often include a link to their resumes and may announce their attendance at conferences (especially when they are speaking) and other professional events. It is natural for any weblog to change over time to reflect the interests and purposes of its editor, and readers of established weblogs are often willing to pick through some detritus for a reliable ration of pertinent information; but even one of these long-standing weblogs will lose readers over time if its editor's focus shifts from becoming an expert to becoming a "Web personality" or if its editor becomes widely perceived as a crank.

### First, Do No Harm

The reputation-building weblog is vastly more concerned with its audience than any other type. It is likely to have a less casual tone than any of the others: It is on a par with a professional meeting or even a job interview. If you are seeking to build a professional reputation, never publicly complain about your employer or your clients. In fact, I would advise you to speak only rarely—and then carefully—about your personal life, if at all. I know of one weblogger who was not hired for a job after a potential employer read earlier weblog entries complaining about a former client. Do not publish anything on a professional weblog that you would not say at a job interview.

This does not mean that you should not be yourself, just that you should consult your mental picture of your audience to determine what will and will not be appropriate. Take into consideration, for example, how your audience will react to vulgar language, or whether they will be offended by links to sites that contain off-color material. Even a weblog aimed toward model

railroad enthusiasts might not link to pictures of J-Lo's latest Grammy outfit if that will create the impression that the maintainer is not serious about her rail joiners. On the other hand, if you think your fellow hobbyists don't get out much, an occasional link of this type may enhance your reputation among your constituency. When you are using your weblog to build a reputation, in all things, consult your audience's taste.

Ultimately, the purpose of your weblog is whatever you want it to be; most weblogs achieve several purposes simultaneously. The mix will depend on your circumstances and your personality. Still, it is helpful to have some idea of why keeping a weblog appeals to you. If you can't readily define your purpose, it may be helpful to take an inventory of your five favorite weblogs and ask yourself what each of them is trying to do. Or to approach it from another angle, when you imagine yourself writing your ideal weblog, what do you imagine your weblog looks like? What do you imagine your readers think about when they read your ideal weblog? Why do they come back?

Once you have an idea of your purpose, it should be easy to define your audience. If your weblog's primary mission is to fill a niche by sharing information on a defined topic, and especially if you intend to build a reputation through your work, consider whether you are writing for a professional audience or one composed of enthusiasts. Writing for a professional audience will place the greatest constraints on your subject matter, your language, and your general demeanor. Again, if your weblog is directed at a professional audience, say only what you would feel comfortable saying in any other professional situation. From now on, this website is your calling card.

Writing for friends and family will affect your writing, too. You may be reluctant to include a link to an off-color site if your grandmother reads your site regularly, and you will not want to call one of your friends a dweeb if she will be checking in later in the week.

But if your weblog is strictly personal, you have a much greater leeway in your choice of expression and subject matter. A personal weblog, even one that is ostensibly topic driven, may be forgiven for veering into exotic subject matter. If you find that your subject-specific weblog has expanded to include other topics, you might consider starting a new weblog, but unless you are determined to become known as The Expert on your topic, I would advise you simply to expand your subject matter to "whatever I'm interested in." Unless you have unlimited free time I think it would be very difficult to maintain more than one weblog (though some people do so), and in my experience one of the primary benefits of maintaining a weblog is the opportunity to discover interests you weren't fully aware of or to develop the ones you have never actively explored.

### Using Your Audience

Your audience will play two roles as you create your weblog. First, keeping your audience in mind will prevent you from damaging your reputation or your relationships. Second, and even more important, awareness of your audience will force you to be better at what you do. It is your imagined audience who asks why a link is of interest or insists that you explain your point of view more fully. It is your imagined audience to whom you are describing your walk around campus ("Grandma loves birds; I'll be sure to mention that I saw a Baltimore oriole nesting in the elm tree that shades the physics lab"). Writing that you had an exceptional dinner last night won't jog even your own memory when you read the entry three months from now; but if you tell your readers that the lamb was flavored with rosemary, the potatoes whipped to silkiness, and the crème brûlée scented with rose petals, neither you nor they will wonder why you bothered to record the event.

If a friend mentions one of your entries and you find yourself telling her why you felt that link was interesting or describing the details of the incident you wrote about, you can be sure that you aren't doing your best work on your site. When you are writing, think of the questions another person would ask, or pretend you are explaining your position to someone. Imagine that you are describing the situation to a new beau, or just decide that you are writing to someone who thinks you're fascinating. Obviously, sometimes you will choose to link with only a bare description of what is on the other side. But if you do choose to comment, first take the time to understand your own point of view by using this imagined other to ask you questions about why you are linking or writing at all.

### Coming Up Short

As you read and think and write daily, you will quickly find that you are smarter, more interesting, and more articulate than you ever dreamed you could be. But when you are starting out—and even when you have been doing a weblog for a while—it really can seem that everyone else is doing better work than you. It happens to me still.

When this happens, take a spin through your favorite weblogs, paying close attention to what they do and how they do it. What kinds of articles or webpages do they link? How do they structure their linktext? Do they provide extensive commentary or do they let their link choices stand on their own? Do they summarize or analyze? When they comment, are they serious, humorous, or snarky? Are they reserved about their private lives or do they speak of personal things? When they do, which details do they reveal and which do they omit? Do personal stories take place in the past or the present? Do they involve others? And the most important questions: What do you like about their weblog? What makes it fun to read? It may

sound obvious, but you will become a better writer more quickly if you read and emulate the best.

Next, pick an entry that you especially enjoy and go try to do it yourself. Write some linktext or a personal entry in the voice of another weblogger, using your own material. Then try using that technique once a day for a week or two to see whether it suits you. I did this myself after reading one weblogger's complaint that others were not sufficiently summarizing their links, and his advice to use generous pull quotes. I had been more of the "clever linktext" school, and so I grumbled when I read this pronouncement, but one day I decided to try it out. For a week I constructed nearly every entry on Rebecca's Pocket by summarizing each article and following it with a pull quote. I became bored using this as a universal approach, but I learned a lot that week about when this technique worked best and how to select pull quotes for the greatest effect.

The ultimate goal of trying out and analyzing new techniques regularly is to have as many tricks in your bag as you possibly can. By trying out various techniques and even trying on other writers' voices, you will expand your own range of expression. When you experiment in this way, don't worry that you will somehow suppress your own voice. What you will learn when you write every day is this: You can't not sound like yourself. If you are taking the time to formulate your own opinions, you will not be derivative, no matter what the formal elements of the entry itself.

As you read and analyze others' work, cultivate a sense of camaraderie with the webloggers you are learning from. Do not become competitive; let others inspire you to become better than you are now. When you see an entry that is particularly well formed, spend some time deciphering what makes it work so well. When someone posts an especially obscure or intelligent link, let that inspire you to do a little old-school surfing to find one of your own. Your weblog is your playground. Keep it

fun for yourself. Pretend that your audience thinks you are the most fascinating person alive, and use whatever tools you have to let them know exactly what you think about current foreign policy, your favorite brand of tofu, or your new haircut.

## The Audience of One

If you allow yourself to begin posting entries based on what you think someone else wants you to write, you are missing the point of having a weblog. Even more destructive is the numbers game. It is always flattering to discover that someone else likes reading what you write, but if you begin to focus on gaining the largest audience you can, you will destroy whatever pleasure you may otherwise derive from your work. Someone will always have a larger audience than you do, and someone else will always have a larger audience than theirs. The surest way to sabotage your enjoyment of your weblog is to start caring about how many people a day look at your site. So understand that the attention you pay to your audience is not aimed at impressing them. Your only objective is to avoid sorely offending them.

This distinction is crucial. If you begin to write or link to pieces that are intended to impress your imagined audience, you will quickly become bored, and probably boring. It was once a truism that any new weblogger would, in three months' time, announce that they "needed a break" only to return a week later, proclaiming that they were no longer writing for their audience, but only for themselves. *What audience?* I would always wonder, imagining angry emails demanding "more links about dog food!" If you want to create a compelling weblog, you must write for an audience of one: yourself.

The audience of one is the single most important principle behind creating a website—or anything—that is fresh, interesting, and compelling. Consult your own taste, and then consult

your audience—but only in regard to your presentation of the material. When you consider whether to add a link, first think carefully about whether it is interesting to you. If it really isn't, leave it. If it is, ask yourself why you think it is interesting or important, and then do your best to convey that in your linktext. When you sit down to update your site, write whatever is on your mind. You can edit it before you post it, or decide not to post it at all. But remember that your weblog is your play space and behave accordingly. On this page you are the king, and what is interesting to you is what is interesting to everyone. Here, your opinions are important, and everyone clamors to know what you think.

There are half a million weblogs; yours will be compelling only to the extent that it reflects your unique way of looking at the world. Your perspective is the point. It's the only reason to read a weblog at all. Do not be afraid to speak your mind. Many of us are afraid to say what we really think; but once you begin, you will find that it is refreshing and even liberating. Take advantage of the fact that you have such a space, and really take the time to say what you mean. You may want to spend some time researching your subject so that you can provide authoritative links to back up your opinion, a luxury only those with photographic memories have when debating a point in real time. Because you are writing, you have the time to get the words just right. Don't be afraid to use a thesaurus and dictionary to find the word that will most clearly express your point of view. Take your time. Think as you write, and be willing to rewrite until each sentence of each entry says exactly what you want it to.

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF:** Instead of linking the first account of a news story you find, take the time to search and compare several versions from different news sources, then link the one or two you think best tell the story. If you tend to read the same

news sources every day, redo your news portal with some different publications on top. If you read the same blogs every day, shake it up by checking their sidebars for blogs you haven't read and add them to your rotation for a while. When you notice that another weblogger frequently finds great articles from a news source you don't usually read, consider adding it to your rotation. When a blogger posts an entry that is especially funny or moving, try building on their story by relating a similar incident from your own life.

Keep it interesting for you and your readers by making your weblog a bit of a moving target. Research a news item in more depth than usual, relate an event from your own day from the point of view of your neighbor or coworker, or spend some time searching for good links on your favorite painter or poet. If you find yourself writing a long entry, consider turning it into a full-fledged essay. Start doing what you normally do, then take it to the next level.

**HAVE SOME FUN:** Even if your weblog is focused on serious subjects, both you and your audience will enjoy it more if you allow yourself to play around, at least occasionally. Write an entry in haiku, open a drawer and tell a story about whatever your eye falls on, or type a stream-of-consciousness comment on a news story. If you are a programmer, add new functionality to your website; if you are a designer, redesign; if you are a writer, put up some poetry. Anything that gives you pleasure will add personality to your site, and besides, what is the point of a hobby unless it's fun?

**ALLOW YOURSELF THE LUXURY OF IMPERFECTION:** This is your space. In order to get good at anything, you must be willing first to do it badly. If you can't get the words quite right, put the entry up anyway. If you're not sure if anyone else will get the joke, post it immediately! (Historically, some of my funniest



material is understood and appreciated only by me. And it's damn funny.) You will most enjoy writing your weblog if you approach it as your private sandbox. If, after writing and rewriting an entry, you can't quite articulate your objection to current foreign policy, post it anyway. You'll have another chance to try tomorrow or next week or next month.

Writing is often a useful way for me to get at what I'm thinking. When I write an essay I have a chance to spend time focused on a particular set of ideas, and in mulling them over I come to know more fully what I think. A weblog entry, being shorter, doesn't afford the same level of extended reflection. But over time, I may observe my thoughts beginning to take a shape. Be willing to think out loud when you are commenting on the news and on your world. You will not be perfect, ever. But by writing daily you will become a better writer and by articulating your ideas you will find out what you think.

I believe that a weblog is judged superior based on the authenticity of its voice. My prescription as outlined in this chapter is founded on three elements: challenging yourself, having fun, and most importantly, writing from the perspective that your opinion matters. The sole purpose of the weblog is to describe the world as seen through one person's eyes. That which you think is smart, interesting, idiotic, or moving is the only subject matter worthy of being placed on your site. On your weblog, your view of the world is the only one that has any bearing. I cannot say this strongly enough. Your authentic voice will come from articulating the world as you experience it, whatever that experience is. As you honestly stretch yourself to meet the world, describing it as best you can, your voice will begin to emerge. As you continue to investigate your own way of seeing things, that voice will strengthen.

This applies to collaborative and professional weblogs as much as it does to personal sites. A weblog that is maintained by a group of people will simply reflect many points of view.

On some, distinct voices will speak to the reader, one after the other; on collaborative weblogs whose members share a strong vision, individual voices will be harder to distinguish. In both cases, a new voice will emerge, that of the weblog itself, a synthesis of many viewpoints that merge to create a distinct community.

Topic-specific sites may be less personal, but they are equally subjective. Anyone can perform a daily or weekly search for news stories on a particular topic or subscribe to a headline aggregator. But it requires human judgment to sift through those results to compile a daily list of genuinely topical links. Only a knowledgeable individual will include a seemingly unrelated article because they can see the ramifications for their field, and only a well-informed person can contextualize current news with related or historical links to give their readers a fuller understanding of the significance of an event. Even the most relentlessly nonpersonal weblog has a point of view, and weblogs that provide links and no personal commentary range from the informative to the very funny. Link choice is voice, and those who say otherwise have not quite grasped the essence of hypertext.

Remember that even the strongest weblogs have days when they are rather dull, and even the most experienced webloggers become discouraged and bored with their sites. My favorite acting teacher told a story about performing brilliantly onstage one night. When a close friend came backstage after the performance she asked, "How was it?" and waited to hear the raves. Her friend said sympathetically, "It's okay, there will be other nights." Her point was that you are never the best—or even a good—judge of your own work. She taught us to focus on our task and not to waste energy worrying about the results.

Since a weblog is performed in entries instead of real time, you have the luxury of deciding when and what to post. But once it's up, don't waste any time agonizing about whether it is



good enough. Put in the effort while you are creating the post, and then let it go. Insert a correction later if you make a factual error, but don't agonize about wording that doesn't completely convey your thoughts.

The distinguishing characteristic of a successful weblogger is not that she is consistently brilliant, but that she consistently updates her site, whether that be once a day or once a week. Reading a great weblog is rather like getting inside someone's brain and just poking around. The best weblogs of all types are varied, opinionated, unexpected, and incomplete.

I would encourage you to embrace all the elements at your disposal. Experiment with different forms of linktext, different lengths of entries, much commentary, no commentary. Write short. Write long. If you are so inclined, play with the design of your site. If you love to code, your site can be a project that expands as your skills grow; if you don't know anything about coding, your site may become a fantastic impetus to learn a little bit about HTML or cascading style sheets. Add photographs. Write essays. Hone your Web searching skills and publish the results. Tell stories. Be willing to experiment. Play.

The more your weblog reflects your interests and your worldview, the stronger your voice will be. Write as if your life were an exotic country, describing it as though it were unfamiliar to you. Work hard to share your unique view of the world with anyone who stumbles upon your page. Though you may think you are boring or commonplace, you are unlike anyone who has ever lived or ever will. Don't try to be different from who you are or different from anyone else; use your weblog to be more yourself every day.

Your singular way of experiencing and interpreting the world is the only thing that distinguishes you from a hundred thousand other webloggers. Use your weblog to distill your own unique way of seeing the world and to replace expected reactions with

genuine response. As far as you can, remove yourself from the expectations that every life accumulates relentlessly, and instead see and think and feel with the diamond clarity that is your own. Then will your true voice sing, the voice that draws others toward you even as it teaches you who you really are.

## Referenced URLs

---

Wood S Lot	<a href="http://www.ncf.ca/~ek867/wood_s_lot.html">http://www.ncf.ca/~ek867/wood_s_lot.html</a>
------------	---

## Good Advice on Weblogging and Writing

---

Adding value to your links, Jorn Barger	<a href="http://www.robotwisdom.com/web/value.html">http://www.robotwisdom.com/web/value.html</a>
The Elements of Style, William Strunk, Jr.	<a href="http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html">http://www.bartleby.com/141/index.html</a>

## Voice

---

There are many fine writers on the Web today. This is an arbitrary and very incomplete sampling of weblogs that I think have very strong voices.

Ancient World Web	<a href="http://julen.net/ancient/breaking.html">http://julen.net/ancient/breaking.html</a>
Caught In Between	<a href="http://www.lagtime.com/cib/">http://www.lagtime.com/cib/</a>
Daily Brad	<a href="http://www.bradlands.com/dailybrad/index.shtml">http://www.bradlands.com/dailybrad/index.shtml</a>
Dollarshort	<a href="http://www.dollarshort.org/">http://www.dollarshort.org/</a>
Follow Me Here	<a href="http://gelwan.com/followme.html">http://gelwan.com/followme.html</a>
Geegaw	<a href="http://www.geegaw.com/">http://www.geegaw.com/</a>
Jish.nu	<a href="http://www.jish.nu/">http://www.jish.nu/</a>

**Voice** *(continued)*

Larkfarm	<a href="http://www.larkfarm.com/weblog.asp">http://www.larkfarm.com/weblog.asp</a>
Misc	<a href="http://www.miscmedia.com/">http://www.miscmedia.com/</a>
Mister Pants	<a href="http://misterpants.com/01/">http://misterpants.com/01/</a>
rc3.org	<a href="http://www.rc3.org/">http://www.rc3.org/</a>
Riley Dog	<a href="http://www3.telus.net/blueplane/rileydog.html">http://www3.telus.net/blueplane/rileydog.html</a>
Strange Brew	<a href="http://50cups.com/strange/index.asp">http://50cups.com/strange/index.asp</a>
Textism	<a href="http://www.textism.com/">http://www.textism.com/</a>
Waterloo Wide Web	<a href="http://www.waterlooregion.org/www/index.html">http://www.waterlooregion.org/www/index.html</a>
The Web Today	<a href="http://www.thewebtoday.com/">http://www.thewebtoday.com/</a>
What's On It for Me?	<a href="http://www.perpetualbeta.com/weblog.html">http://www.perpetualbeta.com/weblog.html</a>

**5****Finding an Audience**

*Better to write for yourself and have no public than to write for the public and have no self.*

CYRIL CONNOLLY

It's natural to want an audience to read your work. You're spending one or two hours daily surfing the Web, crafting careful linktext, and deliberately expressing your thoughts and telling your stories. But there are what, half a million weblogs now? You might stand out, but how will anyone even find you? More importantly, how will the right people find your new weblog? You can take a number of simple steps to help them out. Let's start with the obvious ones first.

**Obvious Strategies**

**REGISTERING YOUR WEBSITE:** When seeking to publicize their site, the first thing most people think of is registering their website with the most popular Web directories and search engines.

A Web portal or directory is a listing of websites, usually organized into categories. Yahoo! is probably the best-known example. Additionally, these directories often allow you to "search the Web." Interestingly, the results you get from searching one of these sites are usually different from the ones you would get from following links from their top pages deep into their various categories. In other words, searching for