

To Blog or Not To Blog...  
By Anne Josephson

Why should your gym club have a blog?

The answer is simple: Everyone is doing it.

Ok not *everyone*, but most businesses have a blog (65%). And, 85% of those businesses believe their blog contributes to their success. But consider this: most gyms have some sort of social media presence, be it via Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. And, given that 70% of social media experts expect to **increase** blogging this year, more than any other form of social media, blogging is quickly becoming the go-to form for content marketing.

Still not convinced? Then consider these dozen reasons why having a blog might be valuable to your gym club:

1. **Blogging connects you with your customers.** You can share important information with your customers and interact with them. Your customers (or potential customers) get to know you and to trust you.
2. **Blogging connects your staff across departments.** Your recreational coaches can keep up with what is going on with your team. Your team coaches can understand the value of non-competitive forms of gymnastics. You are able to reinforce your club's mission, vision and purpose to those who are tasked with carrying them out.
3. **Blogging is an excellent way to shape your philosophy and your brand.** You can explain your goals, ideals and even your policies in a way that you cannot on a website, a Facebook post or a tweet. Your company takes on a personality when you blog.
4. **Blogging positions you as an expert.** When you blog you gain the instant credibility of being a published writer. How do experts become experts? By sharing their expertise!
5. **Blogging improves your writing.** You do not have to be a professional writer to begin a blog. Think of blogging as writing an open email to a good friend, a client with a question or as an entry in your journal and suddenly it isn't all that intimidating. Besides, you will get better at writing over time by writing a blog.
6. **Blogging allows you to present your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) in a way that is not overtly marketing or sales.** A website is an electronic brochure. A flyer is an obvious advertisement. But a blog is informational, educational and inspirational. And, when done correctly, promotes the great work you are doing at your gym. Why do you do what you do? How does your club define success? What is your philosophy on competition? These are just a few of the things that you can discuss on your blog.

7.  **Blogging is one of the least expensive forms of marketing.** For the price of free on sites like WordPress.com, Blog.com or Blogger or for a few dollars a month on other sites WordPress.org or Squarespace, you can begin your blog in a matter of a few minutes. It's true for even those (like me) who are not super tech-savvy.
8.  **Blogging is the heart of your social media campaigns.** Your blog can easily be repurposed for Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, LinkedIn, StumbleUpon etc.
9.  **Blogging boosts your SEO.** Search engines like Google reward valuable content with higher placement on their search engines.
10.  **Blogging boosts business.** According to a recent HubSpot survey, 60% of businesses who blog acquire more customers.
11.  **Blogging allows you to use other people's content to tell your story or reinforce your message.** You do not have to reinvent the wheel for each blog post. There is plenty of great content out there that can be re-blogged, linked to or reprinted from other people's blogs, articles or videos.
12.  **Blogging is fun.** Like most things that require effort, it isn't always a blast, but in the end, blogging is rewarding.

Convinced yet?

Like most things, starting is the biggest obstacle. The good news is that there is lots of free advice on how to begin a blog. (A Google search "how to begin a blog" yields almost 3 million hits!)

Here are my 12 tips on getting starting your blog:

1.  **Before launching your blog, think about the following questions: Who are you writing for? What do they struggle with? How am I going to help them with that? Why do I want to help them?** For instance, in my JAG GYM blog, I primarily write to JAG clients. They struggle with how to parent their athlete, how to cope with their child's disappointments and how to understand the complicated world of gymnastics. I help them navigate these parental challenges by sharing my own experiences as a parent and provide an "expert" voice as someone who understands how gymnastics works. I want to help them because parenting is a tough job, I care about kids and I see my role as someone who can help lighten the load.
2.  **Read other people's blogs.** This will help you understand what works, what doesn't and gives you content that you can reuse in your blog by sharing it or responding to it.
3.  **Keep a file of ideas.** When you think of an idea, get an email or a question from a parent or come across an article that you think would be good for your blog, file it away for inspiration when you sit down to write. Think about the content you like to read. What causes you to share an article with your friends or on your Facebook? Write that.

4. **Write a handful of blogs before you launch your site.** It's always a good idea to have five to ten short posts written so when you launch your site you have a few weeks of content to post without feeling the pressure of having to generate content on the spot.
5. **Choose a site on which to host your blog.** I use Wordpress.com. There are many pros and cons to the various sites out there. Do a little reading and decide what works for you.
6. **Commit to a schedule.** Once or twice a week is sufficient. You do not have to blog everyday to be effective. Just pick a schedule and stick with it. Consistency is key.
7. **Sit down and write it.** Yes, just do it. My favorite advice on writing comes from John Green, author of *The Fault in Our Stars*, "I just give myself permission to suck. I find this hugely liberating."
8. **Make your articles easy to scan.** Lists or bullet points make it easy for people to read.
9. **Think about your title.** Catchy titles gain attention.
10. **Choose a graphic to go along with your post.** There are free sites for pictures or you can use a pay site like Getty Images or Shutterstock for royalty free images.
11. **Promote your posts to your network.** You can build your blog, but people will not come unless you let them know it is there. Email your client base, post it to your Facebook, tweet it and ask others to share it with their networks. This is how you will build an audience.
12. **Follow Nemo's advice: And just keep swimming.** In the beginning almost no one will read your posts, just keep going. Eventually, some posts will do great; others not so much. It's okay. Just keep writing.

Good luck with your blog! Please feel free to follow my blogs: The JAG GYM blog ([www.annejosephson.wordpress.com](http://www.annejosephson.wordpress.com)) and on The Huffington Post (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anne-josephson>).

How to get ideas

Who am I writing for?

What do they struggle with?

How am I going to help them with that?

Why do I want to help them?

Do I have the credibility to do this?

Nuts and Bolts

Wordpress

Read a lot

Currate ideas

Commit to a schedule (one or twice a week)

How to write

“I just give myself permission to suck. I find this hugely liberating.” John Green, *The Fault in Our Stars*

Content needs to  
Appeal to audience  
Feel real; have a voice  
Illustrate and solve their pain  
Be sharable  
Catchy title and graphic

Write then what  
Build it and then they will come...no.  
Need to promote it on social media  
Facebook  
Twitter  
Send to people  
Email  
Ask people to share

Resources  
Shutterstock  
Getty images  
Blogs and books on blogging

Just keep swimming