IBM Blogging Policy and Guidelines

Introduction

Responsible Engagement in Innovation and Dialogue

These guidelines apply to new media-initiatives, created by IBM, such as blogs, wikis and other forms of online publication or discussions. It's very much in IBM's interest - and, we believe, in each author's own - to be aware of this sphere of information, interaction and idea exchange. Every (guest) author for an IBM new media-initiative, must know and follow the guidelines in this document.

IBM's vision on new media:

To learn: As an innovation-based company, we believe in the importance of open exchange and learning – between IBM and its clients, and among the many constituents of our emerging business and societal ecosystem. The rapidly growing phenomenon of blogging and online dialogue are emerging important arenas for that kind of engagement and learning.

To contribute: IBM – as a business, as an innovator and as a corporate citizen – makes important contributions to the world, to the future of business and technology, and to public dialogue on a broad range of societal issues. As our business activities increasingly focus on the provision of transformational insight and high-value innovation – whether to business clients or those in the public, educational or health sectors – it becomes increasingly important for IBM and IBMers to share with the world the exciting things we're doing learning and doing, and to learn from others.

In 1997, IBM recommended that its employees get out onto the Net – at a time when many companies were seeking to restrict their employees' Internet access. We continue to advocate IBMers' responsible involvement today in this new, rapidly growing space of relationship, learning and collaboration.

IBM Blogging Policy and Guidelines

Guidelines for Bloggers: Executive Summary

1. Use common sense when posting messages, comments or blogs.

2. Blogs, wikis and other forms of online discourse are individual interactions, not corporate communications. Authors are personally responsible for their posts. Be mindful that what you write will be public for a long time – protect your privacy.

3. Identify yourself – name and, when relevant, job role, when you blog about your company or matters that relate to your company. And write in the first person. You must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself.

4. The disclaimer on the new media-initiative applies to every author posting messages/content.

5. Respect copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws.

6. Don't provide confidential or proprietary information, always consider that the internet is a public space that everyone can access.

7. Don't cite or reference clients, partners or suppliers without their approval.

8. Respect your audience. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc., and show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory – such as politics and religion.

9. Find out who else is blogging on the topic, and cite them.

10. Don't pick fights, be the first to correct your own mistakes, and don't alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.

11. Try to add value. Provide worthwhile information and perspective.

Guidelines for Bloggers: Detailed Discussion

IBM supports open dialogue and the exchange of ideas. IBM regards blogs as primarily a form of communication and relationship among individuals. When the company wishes to communicate publicly as a company – whether to the marketplace or to the general public – it has well established means to do so. Only those officially designated by IBM have the authorization to speak on behalf of the company.

However, IBM believes in dialogue among IBMers and with our partners, clients, members of the many communities in which we participate and the general public. Such dialogue is inherent in our business model of innovation, and in our commitment to the development of open standards.

One of IBMers' core values is "trust and personal responsibility in all relationships." As a company, IBM trusts – and expects – her partners, such as (guest) authors, to exercise personal responsibility whenever they blog. This includes not violating the trust of those with whom they are engaging. Authors should not use this medium for covert marketing or public relations.

Be who you are. Some bloggers work anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. IBM discourages that in blogs, wikis or other forms of online participation that relate to IBM, our business or issues with which the company is engaged. We believe in transparency and honesty. If you are blogging about your work, we encourage you to use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify who you work for. Nothing gains you notice in the "blogosphere" more than honesty – or dishonesty. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing be the first to point it out. But also be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be judicious in disclosing personal details

Speak in the first person. Use your own voice; bring your own personality to the forefront; say what is on your mind.

Respect copyright and fair use laws. For IBM's protection and well as your own, it is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others. You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work. And it is good general blogging practice to link to others' work. Keep in mind that laws will be different depending on where you live and work.

Protect confidential and proprietary information. You must make sure you do not disclose or use confidential or proprietary information of any company or person on any

blog. For example, ask permission to publish someone's picture or a conversation that was meant to be private.

Protect clients, business partners and suppliers. Clients, partners or suppliers should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval. On your blog, never identify a client, partner or supplier by name without permission and never discuss confidential details of a client engagement. It is acceptable to discuss general details about kinds of projects and to use non-identifying pseudonyms for a client (e.g., Client 123) so long as the information provided does not violate any non-disclosure agreements that may be in place with the client or make it easy for someone to identify the client. Furthermore, your blog is not the place to "conduct business" with a client.

Respect your audience and your coworkers. Remember that IBM is a global organization whose employees and clients reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory – such as politics and religion.

Know your fellow bloggers. The most successful bloggers are those who pay attention to what others are saying about the topic they want to write about, and generously reference and link to them. Who's blogging on the topics that most interest you? On the Internet, a quick way to find out who's saying what is to use the search tools on Technorati, DayPop or Blogdigger. Drop your fellow bloggers a note to introduce yourself and your blog. There is also an informal community of IBM bloggers, so you can quickly find out which of your peers is part of the conversation.

Don't pick fights. When you see misrepresentations made about yourself or your company in the media, by analysts or by other bloggers, you may certainly use your blog – or join someone else's – to point that out. Always do so with respect and with the facts. Also, if you speak about a competitor, you must make sure that what you say is factual and that it does not disparage the competitor. You should avoid arguments. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end. Don't try to settle scores or goad competitors or others into inflammatory debates. Here and in other areas of public discussion, make sure that what you are saying is factually correct.

Be the first to respond to your own mistakes. If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so.

Use your best judgment. Remember that there are always consequences to what you write. If you're about to post something that makes you even the least bit uncomfortable, review the suggestions above and think about why that is. If you're still unsure, feel free to discuss with fellow bloggers, your colleagues or the blog moderator. Ultimately, however, you have sole responsibility for what you choose to post to your blog.

Don't forget your day job! You should make sure that blogging does not interfere with your job or commitments to customers.