

Building a Publishing Platform #3: Start Your Own Blog

By Stephanie Gunning
“The Publishing Insider”

The Internet provides many avenues to promote your work for little or no cost. Among the easiest ways to establish a presence is to create a blog. Most are freely offered to the public, although some are by subscription. There are a few blog hosting sites that make it easy to get started (www.blogger.com, www.blogstream.com, and www.iblogs.com) by providing you templates that give you choices of color, layout, and basic features like a personal profile. All this is free of charge to you. If you choose, you can allow advertising on your blog—Google AdSense spots are most frequently seen—and you can build in track backs, which are links to other people’s websites and blogs. A main goal should be to increase your pool of readers and influence. Counters may be installed to monitor statistics on visitors.

Yesterday I phoned my friend Pam Driscoll to find out how she liked her new blog (short for Web log): <http://www.tidal-pool.blogspot.com>. She’d set it up a week earlier in order to start building a platform for her essays on mixing family life and spirituality, entitling it “Am I Here Yet?” and asking: *“What would have happened if the Buddha was a middle aged single mother of three who worked in corporate America? Would she have become enlightened? More importantly,*

would she still have to drive her teenagers to the mall?”

Pam was in my most recent “[Writing Your Breakthrough Nonfiction Book Proposal](#)” course. As her work blends family memoir with spiritual investigation and flights of imagination and humor, she needs to build a loyal following before publishing a book. She has to define her territory for her audience, and understand how they relate to her concepts, so that she can serve them the best. We brainstormed a column and/or blog. It’s an appropriate beginning place for many nonfiction writers, and some seasoned bloggers have even translated their work into substantial moneymaking opportunities.

As a new blogger, it’s critical to get the word out to as many people as possible to generate word-of-mouth and a regular ongoing traffic flow to your page. Pam did this by emailing her friends and family, and posting a notice on a bulletin board from a group where she’s a member, announcing: 1. She loves to write, 2. She’s ready to put it out there, and 3. She wants feedback (gentle, helpful criticism or loud applause). Her notice went to 125 people and she asked them to circulate it. What was the result?

“Setting the blog up couldn’t have been easier. Then I started acting like a writer,” she said. “I’ve created space for my writing. Ideas are coming faster than I can write them down. It’s as if a creative channel has opened up.” She continued, “At first each blog took me one or two

hours to put together. Then I realized they weren't sharp enough and came back to them. It's fun tearing them apart and putting them back together. The pieces are tighter and more cohesive. I am pleased. There's real satisfaction in the process."



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Stephanie Gunning is one of the most sought-after nonfiction writers in the publishing industry. She is the coauthor or ghostwriter of 14 published books, and has 3 more in the pipeline for 2007. Her essays have been featured in the anthologies *More Hot Chocolate for the Mystical Soul*, *Hot Chocolate for the Mystical Teenage Soul*, *Magical Souvenirs*, and *Angel Visions*.

Respected and beloved for her boundless enthusiasm and energy, razor-sharp intelligence and insight, good humor, and integrity, as much as for her talent and skill, throughout her career she has worked with numerous bestselling authors: Gregg Braden, Hale Dwoskin, Frank Lipman, Ruby Payne, Marlo Morgan, Ruth Montgomery, and Donna LeBlanc, to name a few. Currently, she resides in New York City.