

# Developing a Lab Blog for Professionals: A Work in Progress



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# Major Topics to Be Addressed in Lecture

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- Characteristics of a “professional blog” and blogger
- Origins and daily workflow of *Lab Soft News*
- Marketing and promoting your blog
- Critical role of search engines and “Google juice”
- Blog interactivity; building a blog community
- Growth and activity data for *Lab Soft News*

# Characteristics of the “Professional” Blog and Blogger

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- Many bloggers view their efforts as a personal diary of their daily activities that they then share only with friends/family
- I define a professional blog/blogger as an activity by a “professional” with education/experience in specialized field
- Goal is to provide an authentic resource that will be valued by colleagues; opportunity to engage in dialogue with peers
- Blogging is “short form of journalism” that is self-authenticating; provide links to relevant key resources
- Blogging is also an intermediate form of professional dialogue; more formal than conversations & less than articles



# The Three Most Important Characteristics of a Successful Blog

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- First of all, blog notes must be *succinct*; speaks to the need to busy professionals to quickly capture critical information
  - Blogger acts as a filter; capturing important stories of the day & then echoing them often with analysis of events
- Secondly, blogs must have *authenticity*; readers are professionals who don't want to ingest biased news
  - Authenticity flows from both the credentials of the author(s) of the blog and on daily "earned" loyalty
- Lastly, blog must be *interesting* and *edgy*; must capture attention of readers with little time to spare
  - These qualities flow from the literary qualities but also from the openness of the media; building a *community*

# All Web Content Is Free or Wants To Be Free



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- Nearly all content on the web is free or wants to be free; subscription model only rarely works (e.g. WSJ)
- Therefore, cannot charge for content because will be competing with others high quality but free sites
- Readers of successful blogs are paying with their attention which, for them, is very valuable/scarce
- If want to monetize blog, need business model based on the value of this attention (e.g. advertising model)
- Mainstream media (MSM) are only now coming to grips with free content and how they need to adapt to blogs

# Details About the Origins and Workflow of Lab Soft News

- *Lab Soft News* launched 12/2/2006; blog now about 15 months old; about 500 notes posted and 142 comments
- Typical length for my notes is 400-600 words (excerpt + analysis); blogger must have ability to write quickly & easily
- Typical daily note provides excerpt from a lab-related story from the web + commentary; about 30-40% lab IT stories
- Research for notes exclusively based on web resources; advantage of digital articles is cut-and-paste capabilities
- Key research support from *Google Alerts*; I provide set of key words and Google then emails URL/captions of all hits



# Blog Daily Production and Monitoring Issues; Publishing on a Shoestring

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- Support for my blog provided by company called Typepad; provides web-based application to create notes + hosting
- For \$150/year, the company provides me with 1 gigabyte of disk space and 10 gigabytes/month bandwidth (download)
- I compose daily notes in window in normal English prose; automatic conversion into HTML code in separate window
- I assign topical categories for note (equivalent of a tag), click on a button, and note is published in top down order by date
- For first 13 months, I wrote a note each day; now publish a note Mon.-Fri.; keep queue of about six notes in draft form

# Marketing and Promoting Your Blog; How to Attract Visitors to Site

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- Great blogs are discovered & not promoted; key to blog popularity is creating useful information & authenticity
- Discovery/attention by search engine “spiders” that crawl web requires abundant/ updated material
- My blog note hosting service alerted search engines as soon as blog published; indexed by Google in four days
- I also provide on blog an internal search capability hosted by Google; Google critical asset for my blog
- I used this internal Google search engine to scan previous notes for key words & establish links to them



# Search Engines Critical for Discovery by Visitors; Quality of Notes Maintains Traffic

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- Getting known is critical factor in promoting traffic; build credibility with other blogs using trackbacks
- I use a service provided by *Site Meter* that provides rich mix of real-time data about who visits blog and when
- Provides data for hot topics that will attract visitors; don't be hesitant to "milk them" if interested in them
- You will build critical mass of notes & loyal readers who will support you; your community is most critical asset
- Approached by syndicators of blog content who are feeding to MSM and companies monitoring blogosphere

# Google Juice: What Is It and How Do You Acquire and Keep It

- “Google juice” is how high your blog is listed on the “search engine retrieval page” (SERP) of search engines
- Acquire “google juice” by blog activity/turnover, # of outgoing site you link to, & # of sites that link to you

Search Engine	Search Phrase	SERP Ranking
Google Blog Search	“surgical pathology”	#1
Yahoo Search	“offshore medical schools”	#2
Search MSN	“Abbott rumors”	#5

# Building Interactivity and Feedback; Key Elements in Developing a Community



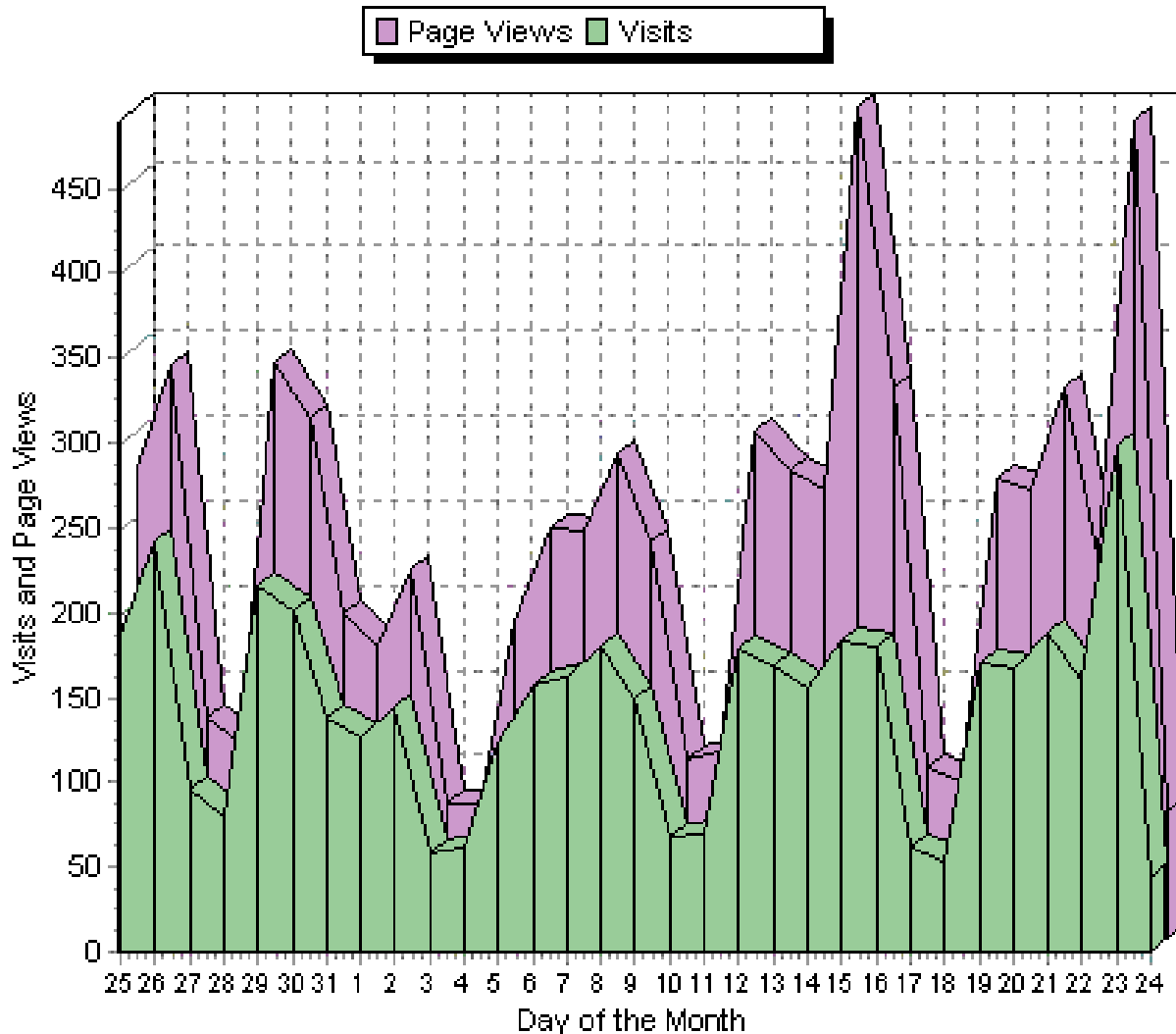
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- Necessary for blog readers to develop loyalty as incentive to continue reading; bonding with community
- Community formed if value is provided and they feel part of the process; they vote with their mouse
- Ideally, readers will comment on notes & add their experiences; most satisfied to only read the notes
- Will obtain positive feed back from casual conversations in hallways and in meetings such as this one
- Don't start a blog if you require constant feedback because will not receive it; blogging solitary pursuit

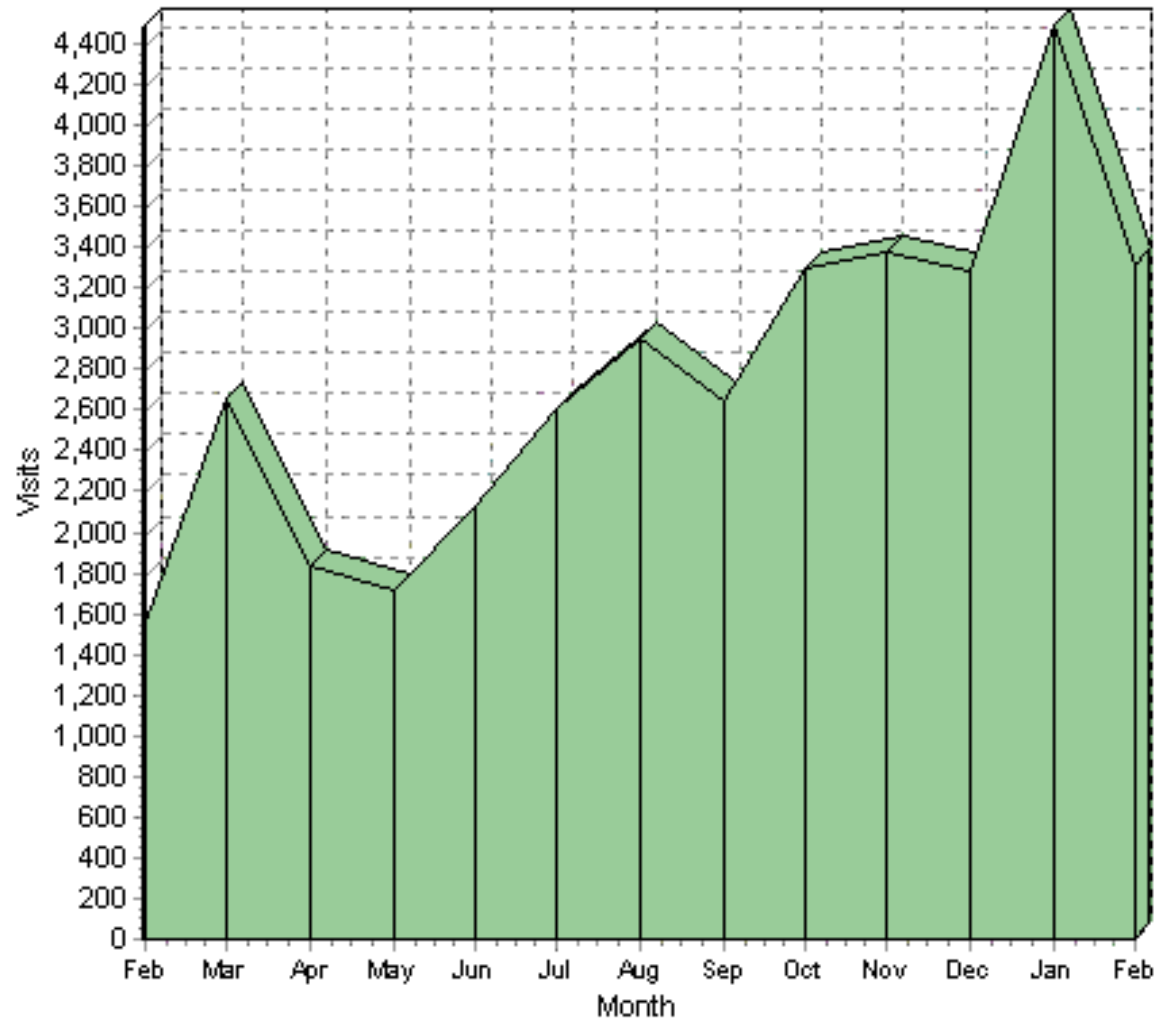
# Referring Search Engines Ranked by Visits February; Criticality of Google

2,673	Not referred from a search engine	66.8%
519	<a href="http://google.com">google.com</a>	13.0%
248	<a href="http://search.msn.com">search.msn.com</a>	6.2%
188	<a href="http://search.yahoo.com">search.yahoo.com</a>	4.7%
109	<a href="http://blogsearch.google.com">blogsearch.google.com</a>	2.7%
29	<a href="http://search.live.com">search.live.com</a>	0.7%
28	<a href="http://google.ca">google.ca</a>	0.7%
17	<a href="http://google.co.in">google.co.in</a>	0.4%
14	<a href="http://google.co.uk">google.co.uk</a>	0.4%

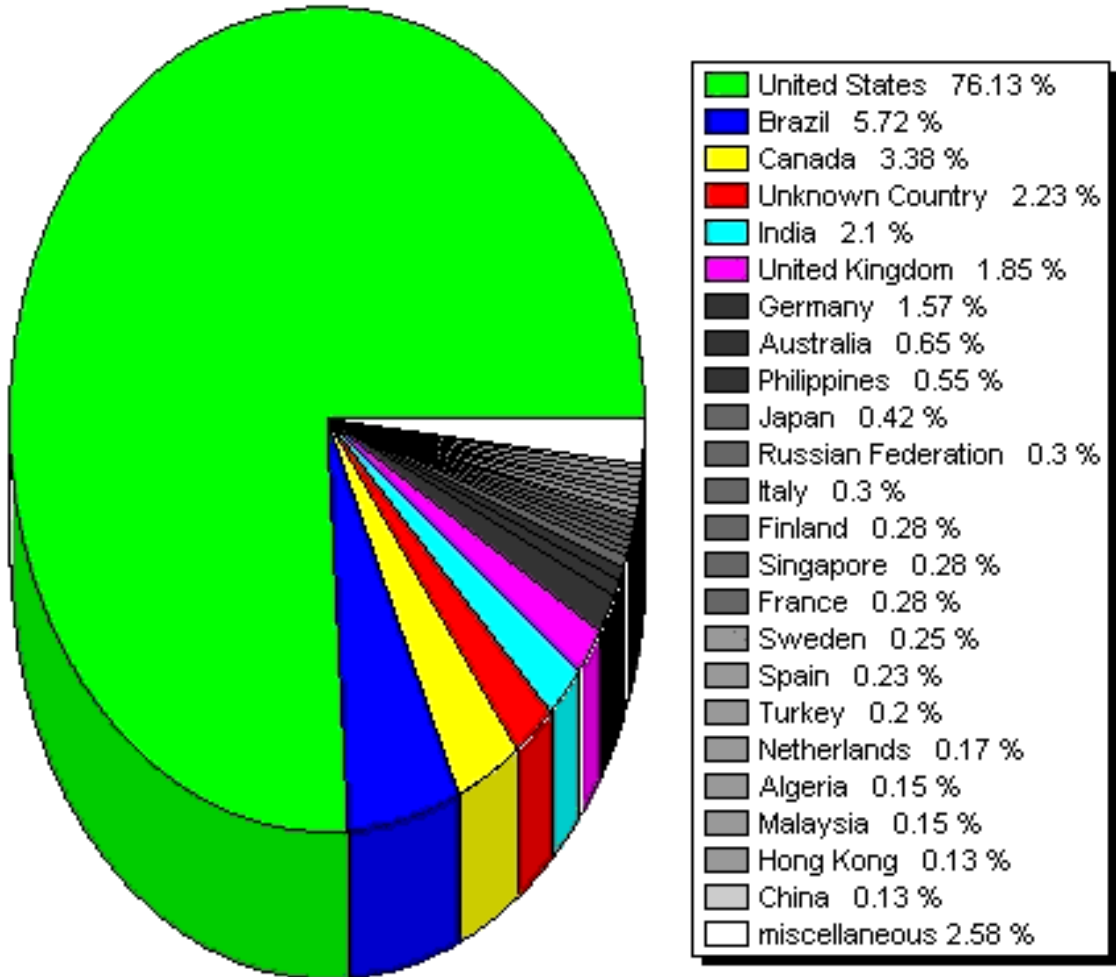
# Graph of Visits and Page Views to Lab Soft News by Month (2/24/2007)



# Graph of Visits to Lab Soft News by Year (2/28/2007)



# Graph of Lab Soft News Visitors by Country (2/34/2007)





# Summary and Take-Home Points from This Lecture

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- If you enjoy writing and have fresh ideas, may want to consider launching professional blog in clinical lab area
- Will never get rich with this endeavor but will have a wonderful time expressing opinions & attracting readers
- Your major function will be to assimilate lab news, comments on it, and provide filters for lab colleagues
- Cost will be less than two months of Starbucks cappuccinos; can reach a global audience with ideas
- Looks for synergies with other lab blogs; my synergies arise through promotion of *Lab InfoTech Summit* in blog