



# The Nitty Gritty of Knocking Out a Daily “Lab Industry” Blog

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# Some Background Information About My Blog: Lab Soft News

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- Blog launched in December, 2005; has been in existence for more than two years; total of 843 notes have been posted
- When blog was launched, I posted a note seven days a week; quickly reverted to a schedule of posting notes Monday-Friday
- Over time, number of readers reading notes by email push & RSS subscription has increase; now 271 such readers per day
- Number of “inbound” readers per day has been steady at about 100; about 25% of such readers are referred by search engines
- Monthly total of 11,000 readers with 130,000 on yearly basis
- About 22% of inbound readers originate outside U.S.; in rank order, referring countries Canada, India, Brazil, UK, Australia



# Producing a Blog; Criticality of Search Engines for a Successful Venture

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- Technical aspect of blogging easy; I used TypePad which provides simple software to post all of the notes & host the blog
- You can post your first blog note in about an hour with TypePad from time that you decide to launch your blogging career
- TypePad also provides a large integrated set of widgets which add various functionalities to the blog such as Google search
- TypePad “pings” other web sites to alert them when posting blog notes; LSN discovered and indexed by Google bots in days
- Key function of a blog such as LSN is to function as a filter for readers; pre-digest news and analyze for professional readers



# Criticality of Search Engines; How to Gain Google Juice

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- Great blogs not marketed – they are discovered; search engines enable discovery by readers based on the indexed content
- Google juice defined as the position of your blog notes on the search engine results page (SERP) based for particular search
- Ideally, you want your blog referenced on first search page and ideally near the top; many people go no further than first page
- The search engine bots or spiders are attracted to inbound and outbound linking activity; details of algorithms secret
- After discovery of your blog by readers, you are on your own; need to provide entertaining content to retain their loyalty



# Process for Generating Daily Blog Notes; Inspiration Plus Perspiration

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- I get ideas mainly for notes mainly using Google Alerts & Google Reader; latter is a superb news consolidator
- When I see interesting item, I copy “money quote” plus link into a note in draft form; usually 15-20 draft items waiting in queue
- As I scan the draft queue, most interesting ones pop out; on week-end, I set up a tentative list of five notes for next week
- Need to discipline myself to “only” one note per weekend day; time commitment is about two hours per day X seven days
- Optimal length of about 200-300 words per note; short form or journalism; readers want you to quickly get to the point



# Advantages of Blogging, Assuming You Can Write Well and Quickly

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- Unbelievable cost-benefit ratio; can reach >100,000 readers per year with your ideas for a yearly cost of \$150 + sweat equity
- I estimate that I attract more interested readers in a single day than the total number of readers for one of my journal articles
- My range of interests in pathology & lab medicine has expanded from my previous narrow academic mentality in informatics
- Putting aside the blog readers referred by a search engine, majority of readers are very select audience of lab professionals
- Blog functions for me as an *idea factory*; similar to a research lab notebook where you can develop new ideas and concepts



# Case Study of the Impact of Lab Soft News: Merger of Lab, Pathology, Radiology

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- On October 23, 2006, published a blog note entitled: “Ten Reasons for Merging Pathology/Lab Medicine with Radiology”
- Groundwork for idea had already been generated by GE and Siemens’ purchases of IVD companies starting in about 2005
- “Molecular Summit” devoted to this exact topic was launched on February 5-6, 2008, about 15 months after note was published
- Blogging enabled new ideas to be launched unencumbered by opinions of journal editors or hierarchies in academic depts.
- Google juice search example: *merger, pathology, radiology*; LSN cited in references 1-2 and 5; ref. # 3 Siemens and #4 iPathology



# Relationship Between Lab Soft New and Lab InfoTech Summit

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- Tight relationship exists between *Lab Soft News* and *Lab InfoTech Summit*; build community across blog & conference
- Package of benefits for conference “corporate underwriters” includes placement of their logos on the blog for a year
- All of the PowerPoint presentations of the conference faculty and podcasts of their lectures are quickly posted on the blog
- In essence, this constitute “marketing” for *Lab InfoTech Summit* but can also be viewed as educational content in informatics
- My non-stop inquiries into lab and informatics topics keeps me abreast of research; enables easy selection of faculty & topics





# Blogging as a Serious Professional and Academic Pursuit

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- Seeing now only earliest forms of web publications and blogging; all serious journal publications will become electronic
- Lead publication time for research will shrink from months to weeks; blogs will provide more prestigious analysis/commentary
- Blogging will become respectable publication vehicle for clinical-track academics; high level articles intended for other physicians
- However, these same articles will also be easily accessible by sophisticated healthcare consumers; greater health literacy
- Most “corporate blogging” very boring; IVDs and lab software companies will act as sponsors for popular academic bloggers



# Desire to Build, in Time, a Network of Laboratory Oriented Web Sites

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- All lab software and IVD companies, have their own web sites; constitute one major component of lab exposure on web
- Another segment are corporate educational offerings: Labs Are Vital, QC Net, Lab Tests Online, Beckman Coulter webinars
- Another segment are the web sites of professional societies such as CAP, AACC, ASCP, CLMA; CAP Today on-line is favorite
- Goal is to create meta-site providing an index of universe of lab & pathology blogs & web sites; quick update on lab world
- Another feature of such a meta-site would be ability to access all of the important teaching content on web for lab/pathology



# Take Home Points Regarding Professional Lab Blogging

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- Creating a lab blog easy technically but involves sweat equity; can build readership over time if you have useful message
- Highly addictive enterprise; blog acts as an extension of your mind and a workbench for developing/disseminating ideas
- Early days in the development of a critical mass of lab-oriented corporate web site, blogs, and professional society web sites
- Opportunity to tie all of these assets and resources together into a “lab network” with a meta-site as the gateway to them
- Value of blogging as an academic enterprise not yet recognized; will become an important “publication” vehicle for physicians