

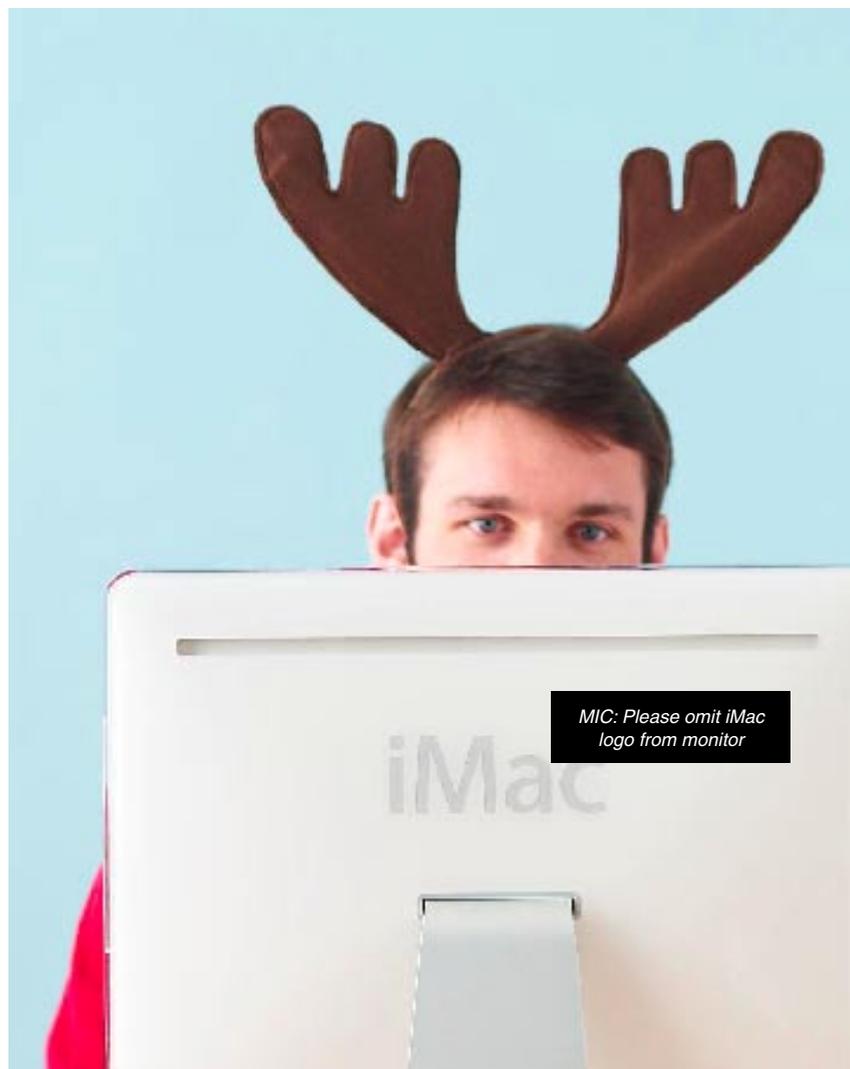
# Business blogs that get results

BLOGGING YOUR WAY TO MORE BUSINESS IS EASIER—AND MORE BENEFICIAL—THAN YOU MIGHT THINK

There's an appeal to an ice cream with a name like Moose Tracks. Particularly an ice cream named Moose Tracks that gets rave reviews. But sometimes, a catchy name and a delicious product just aren't enough.

"Moose Tracks is popular with consumers who have tasted it," says John Nardini, executive vice president of Denali Flavors, a small Michigan-based company that creates and licenses premium ice cream flavors such as Moose Tracks for regional and store brands. "Yet, there's a large percentage of the population that's never even heard of the product." That's why in 2005, Denali Flavors decided it was time to start blogging.

The company created four blogs—Moosetopia (a photo blog "written by" the Moose Tracks moose); Team Moose Tracks (detailing the fund-raising efforts of the company's cycling team); Denali Flavors (offering a



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—Debbie Weil

look inside the company); and Free Money Finance (a personal finance blog). All were designed to draw visitors to the Moose Tracks website ([www.moosetracks.com](http://www.moosetracks.com)) and increase awareness of the company's products. "We're effectively creating our own media outlet where we can advertise our products for free," Nardini says.

Apparently, the plan is working. "We estimate that the sales of our products were up 7 to 10 percent last year in a category that's mostly been down 2 to 4 percent," Nardini says.

Here's how the Denali Flavors blog approach could work for you, too: **Pick the right topic.** Not all four Denali Flavors blogs survived, but Free Money Finance ([freemoneyfinance.com](http://freemoneyfinance.com)), with its quick and practical tips on growing net worth, delivered 2 million impressions to the Moose Tracks website in 2007. And the company is revamping the Denali Flavors blog in time for the 2008 ice cream season.

"The key difference between us and most other business blogs is that our major blog, Free Money Finance, is not about our company, the ice cream industry or business in general," Nardini says. "But it does cover a very popular topic many people are interested in. That provides significant exposure for Moose Tracks ice cream."

Focusing on a topic related to your industry works, too. Stone Creek Coffee, a coffee roaster and retailer

of specialty coffees, with nine retail stores in Wisconsin, uses its blog at [www.stonecreekcoffee.com](http://www.stonecreekcoffee.com) to market events, showcase new products and discuss coffee-related topics. The blog—warm and welcoming, much like a coffee shop—has yielded high search rankings when people use search terms such as "wholesale coffee." It has also generated news coverage.

**Find the right writer.** "Sometimes, it's surprising who pops up as the right person to do the blog because it may not be the CEO," says Debbie Weil, corporate blogging and social media consultant and author of *The Corporate Blogging Book* (Penguin Portfolio). "You need to have some passion, some affinity for doing it."

If one person can't handle the task, consider a small group of employees.

**Blog consistently.** The more you post, the more traffic you'll likely get. "You have to keep the blog going a minimum of, say, three times a month. More is better," Weil says.

**Keep tabs.** For Denali Flavors, increased website traffic indicates success. Just don't expect it overnight. "You have to be committed to it for a while," Nardini says.

Weil says there are other ways to gauge success. "If you have a small group of dedicated readers who leave comments, your blog is working. If you get one phone call from local media and get featured in a story, your blog is working."

## WHY YOU SHOULD BLOG TODAY

There are many benefits to starting a business blog, says Debbie Weil, corporate blogging and social media consultant. Here are three reasons small businesses can benefit from this decidedly low-cost effort.

### BETTER SEARCH RESULTS

"Blogs are more search-engine friendly than static websites, so the first—and most important—reason for a small-business owner to start a company blog is to get found on Google®," Weil says.

### CUSTOMER INTERACTION

Weil sees business blogs as free market research for companies that create them. "By hearing from your prospects or your customers, you learn what they really want."

### MEDIA EXPOSURE

"Blogging can help small-business owners with limited budgets generate media exposure," Weil says. "Most small businesses don't have a PR firm, but if you become an expert on a topic and a reporter is looking for a quote, you'll get phone calls."

To get started, check out the [www.whatsnextblog.com](http://www.whatsnextblog.com) website. You'll find not only tips on how to start blogging but also examples of *bad* blogs to avoid.