



“We’re excited about the possibilities Techdirt creates in bringing together this collection of bloggers and opening up a great way to engage with them on a regular basis.”

Mike Prosceno
Vice President
Marketplace Communications
SAP

To learn more about the Techdirt Insight Community, visit www.insightcommunity.com or call 1-888-930-9272x88

Understanding Blogger Relations: An SAP Case Study

For the past couple of years, companies have been trying to understand the concept of “blogger relations.” While there are still some companies that choose to mostly ignore bloggers, others have begun to treat them more like the mainstream media. While this tends to be better than ignoring them, it is still a general misunderstanding of how blogging works.

Relating to Bloggers

Bloggers tend to be passionate, knowledgeable and insightful about the topics and issues they cover. They do not blog out of a duty, but out of enthusiasm. Many do not make money from their blogging, but simply write about topics because they care about them. Bloggers tend to share analysis and opinion, rather than reporting and breaking news.

To another degree, bloggers are also closely related to the analyst community. Yet, rather than being regarded like analysts, they are still treated like reporters: spammed with news releases, given products to review and occasionally offered opportunities to interview executives for stories. While trying to build relationships with bloggers is a step in the right direction, categorizing them as either extensions of the press or analysts misses the real power of blogging.

Engage Bloggers for Their Analysis

The first step in the right direction is recognizing the real opportunity of blogger relations: engaging bloggers for their analysis, not just as mouthpieces to report what the company wants.

Bloggers have created an ecosystem unto themselves. Bloggers write about and respond to what other bloggers are saying, create an ongoing conversation, and deeply explore issues through a back and forth discussion — rather than simply putting out a final statement. It is the analytical insight and ecosystem culture that too many companies don’t understand when they practice blogger relations.

The Techdirt Insight Community is helping to change this notion by creating a system and business model for companies to organize their own efforts to engage bloggers. This model helps companies reach out to bloggers by asking them for advice, opinion, knowledge and analysis on various issues -- rather than simply feeding them press releases. It engages the bloggers in groups and encourages conversation, rather than just a one-way feed of information.



SAP's Blogging Ecosystem

One early leader in understanding the blogging ecosystem is SAP — which has launched its own blogger relations program similar to what Techdirt Insight Community has designed. SAP's VP of marketplace communications, Mike Prosceno, has helped establish SAP at the forefront of emerging blogger relations by recognizing and welcoming the true aspects and benefits of the blogosphere.

At two of SAP's largest customer events, SAPHIRE and TechEd, SAP established what it calls "Bloggers' Corner." Expert bloggers who cover topics related to the enterprise software field were invited to attend these events. Rather than just being treated like media, the bloggers were given separate badges, and spent most of their time together, discussing and debating different ideas. To further promote the notion of community, SAP scheduled conversations between groups of bloggers and company executives, rather than the typical one-on-one interviews. The result? It was the company executives who were often more interested in hearing the bloggers' thoughts, opinions and analysis than using the time to repeat the marketing messages that had been announced in news releases.

This added component to the company's existing media and analyst relations program really leveraged the value of the bloggers. SAP knew their target bloggers are industry experts who will ask probing questions, discuss the results and challenge SAP on difficult issues — while introducing SAP to important issues and viewpoints from outside the company.

Bloggers Thrive on Conversation and Discussion

But more than just recognizing who they are, SAP recognized what bloggers are about. Bloggers thrive on the conversation and discussion, not on the "exclusivity" of a concept. By allowing the bloggers to work together, SAP and the bloggers started a real conversation that allowed everyone to build on each others ideas. Both the bloggers and SAP executives came out of each conversation with a deeper understanding of each topic, and plenty to think about going forward. There were multiple viewpoints that led to real introspection and analysis for why people disagreed or where new ideas and solutions might be created.

A true blogger relations program must recognize these two issues: First, bloggers are not simply there to report, but to analyze — and the best way to engage with bloggers isn't to push content at them, but to ask for their analysis; to engage them in conversation. Second, recognize that the value is in the conversation between the bloggers as much as it is in the conversation with the bloggers.

Introducing the Techdirt Insight Community

Mike Prosceno and SAP are early leaders in corporate blogger relations. Techdirt is now extending the opportunity for other companies to engage with bloggers and tap their expertise and knowledge by launching the new Techdirt Insight Community. Techdirt has brought together hundreds of expert bloggers in various fields, categorized their areas of expertise and insight, and created a system enabling companies to engage with groups of expert bloggers at the same time — not by pushing news releases on them, but by asking for their opinion and analysis.

"The Techdirt Insight Community is a great extension of what we've been able to bring together with our Bloggers' Corner events," said Mike Prosceno at SAP. "It's helping companies recognize that the value of bloggers is in their analytical abilities and the overall conversation they generate, rather than in just the posts they write. We're excited about the possibilities Techdirt creates in bringing together this collection of bloggers and opening up a great way to engage with them on a regular basis."

