

INSIGHTS INTO BLOGGERS

- 57% of bloggers are male, 43% are female
- 48% of bloggers are age 30 or under, but 52% are over 30
- 70% of bloggers have broadband/high-speed internet access at home
- 82% of bloggers have been internet users for six or more years
- 42% of bloggers live in households earning more than \$50,000 (£26,106) a year
- 39% of bloggers have college or graduate degrees
- 12% of internet users have posted comments or other material on blogs – representing 14 million people and a three-fold increase since April 2004
- 5% of internet users use RSS aggregators or XML readers to get news and other information from blogs and content-rich websites as soon as it's posted online
- Blog readership is growing among all demographics

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project

Blogger profile breakdown

	Blog users	Non-blog users
Male	57%	48%
Mean age	37.7	44.1
Mean online tenure (years)	5.6	5.0
Broadband access	64%	51%
Average household income	\$57,900 (£30,218)	\$55,600 (£29,016)

Base: US online consumers
Source: Forrester's Consumer Technographics, August 2004 North American Devices, Media and Marketing Online Study

Blog users that agree with the statement "I am a natural leader, people always listen to my opinion"

I regularly read other people's blogs

50

I have a personal blog

49

All online consumers

35

Base: US online consumers
Source: Forrester's Consumer Technographics, August 2004 North American Devices, Media and Marketing Online Study

Some brands are taking this a step further and launching their own corporate blogs. Companies including Microsoft (see case study page 28), IBM, Sun Microsystems and General Motors all use blogs as communication tools between their employees and the public. Most of the companies dabbling are from the technology sector.

Rafael Behr, blog editor of the British Sunday newspaper *The Observer* points out that blogging and the corporate world are not natural bedfellows. "The nature of blogging aspires to be anti-authority. If you want to blog and you're an established brand, then it is a contradiction."

Faking it

And blogging is not appropriate for all brands. "If you don't want to talk to people, don't have a blog," advises Cronin-Lukas. Most of the companies listed above have to open themselves to painful criticism as bloggers post comments on their corporate site.

For example, 'Randy's journal' a blog by Boeing's CEO includes criticism such as: "You can't be serious with such a blog. I just can't find anything of interest in it. Maybe you should think about your credibility," by Nick F. And a comment from Fred S which reads: "Take down your 'blog'. You embarrass us, everyone who reads it, and you make the world a dumber place."

Gaby Darbyshire, business development director at Gawker Media, a blog publisher points out that many marketers have jumped on the bandwagon when it's not appropriate. "Make sure you've got something interesting to say," she warns. Companies attempting to hide PR efforts in blogs are playing with fire. "One thing the blogosphere can smell a mile off is something fake or manipulated," she adds.

A number of brands have clumsily plunged into the blogosphere with painful consequences. Late last year, Mazda crafted a blog supposedly written by a 22-year-old called Kid Halloween. He posted a link to three videos, he said a friend had recorded, featuring 30-second spots for its Mazda 3. Other bloggers, tipped off by the expensively-produced videos and expensive web hosting service, became suspicious.

Mazda became reviled. "Everything about that blog is disgusting," wrote one post. Mazda pulled the site after just three days. "Bloggers outed Mazda really fast," elaborates Blackshaw. "Bloggers will spot any practise where marketers are disingenuous."

Similarly, Raging Cow, a new flavoured milk drink was ridiculed when it attempted to tap into the powerful word-of-mouth of blogging in 2003. Its owners, Dr Pepper/Seven Up invited young bloggers to be briefed about the new product and then blog