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Description of document: Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) Blogging Policies and Guidelines, 2009-2010

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Source of document: BBG, FOIA/PA Unit
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*Office of the General Counsel
Freedom of Information and Privacy Act*

February 23, 2011

RE: Request Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act– FOIA #11-028

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated December 27, 2010, to the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). In your request, you ask for a copy of the document “Blogging Policies and Guidelines” maintained by Rebecca McMnamin. Enclosed is a copy of the document you were seeking. No information responsive to your request was withheld or redacted.

This release completes the Agency’s response to this FOIA request, and it is now closed. There were no chargeable fees for processing this request. If you have any questions regarding your request, you may contact me at (202) 203-4550 or write the Office of the General Counsel, Broadcasting Board of Governors, 330 Independence Avenue, S.W., Room 3349, Washington, DC 20237. Currently, inquiries are not accepted via E-mail.

Sincerely,

Andrew T. Krog
FOIA and Privacy Act Officer



Blogging

Contents

Blogging Best Practices 1

What Can You Do With a Blog?

A blog should relate in some way to stories covered by VOA, for example describing what went on *behind the scenes* or offering insight that is not covered within the actual story or media file.

A blog post can simply be a less formal news report looking at an issue that users might find interesting; almost like posting your notes on a subject.

A blog can also be an objective, balanced, first person view of something; observations.

A blog can focus on a specific theme or issue, such as immigration or women's rights. The theme should be something that can be developed and explored over time (as opposed to something extremely time-sensitive, like the 2010 midterm elections).

A blog should include links (especially hyper-linked text) to other relevant sites and news stories, even if they are not VOA products.

A blog post should not be a long block of text. Use short paragraphs, and add pictures or video to make the content more engaging. Make sure that you have the rights to any graphics, photos, audio, or video you post on the blog.

Promoting Interaction on a Blog

Blogs need to be written in a manner that encourages responses from readers. There are many different kinds of "calls to action." You can encourage readers to respond with comments, explicitly asking for their thoughts and opinions. Ask users to share their experiences, or even to suggest topics for future blog posts. Solicit user-generated content by asking readers to email pictures or video.

It is just as important to show readers that their engagement matters. Respond to comments in a timely manner, especially ones that ask questions. Recognize readers who contribute regularly and meaningfully. You can also showcase user-generated content in future blog posts. Many journalists hold regular "Q and A" sessions on their blogs, where they respond to reader comments about current events and the craft of journalism.

You should also think about forming relationships with other websites and blogs that address similar topics or target similar audiences. This will enhance your readers' experience (as they will be exposed to additional resources) and give you more avenues to promote and share your content.

A blog can be written in a more conversational tone than a regular news report. A blog can provide journalists with an opportunity to develop relationships with their audience.

Tips for Journalists who Blog

Take time to explore other journalists' and news organizations' blogs. Identify your favorites and think about what makes them work. A unique angle? Memorable photojournalism? A big push for interactivity?

Before you start a blog, think about what your niche will be, whether it is relevant to your target audience, and how you will update the blog as part of your regular workflow.

For more suggestions and ideas about maintaining a quality blog, visit http://www.mediabistro.com/10000words/top-10-blogging-tips-from-around-web_b228.

VOA/IBB Blogging Policies Updated June 16, 2009

Blogs may be hosted on VOA sites such as myVOA.com, or on external blogging sites. Bloggers are encouraged to create blogs or contribute to blogs on external sites that are popular with the target audience as this will both go to where the audience already is, and help to drive traffic to VOANews.com. When using non-VOA sites – you should identify sites that do not specifically target a U.S. audience.

- Blogs or blog contributions are to be identified as being from VOA.
- Content must reflect VOA journalistic, editorial and ethical standards.
- It is the blogger's responsibility to provide balance to biased or political statements on any blog they maintain, and to prevent the discourse from becoming inflammatory. Bloggers need to maintain credibility by avoiding personal or political viewpoints.
- Creation of a blog and/or participation in an existing blog on behalf of VOA must be approved by a supervisor.
- Blog topics should be vetted with editors/supervisors.
 - A blog should relate in some way to stories covered by VOA, for example describing what went on behind the scenes or offering insight that is not covered within the actual story or media file.
 - A blog post can simply be a less formal news report looking at an issue that users might find interesting; almost like posting your notes on a subject
 - A blog can also be an objective, balanced, first person view of something; observations
- Blogs need to be written in a manner that encourages feedback/responses from readers.
- VOA should clearly post "rules of engagement" for blog contributors:
 - Stay on topic.
 - No obscenity, profanity, vulgarity, hate language, SHOUTING, or other bad behavior.
 - No personal attacks. No inflammatory language or calls for violence.
- Pre-Moderation vs. Post-Moderation:
 - Most blogs should be pre-moderated to ensure that submissions meet the standards identified above.
 - Post-moderation is appropriate, if the subject matter is not sensitive, and if the service has adequate resources to regularly check blog posts throughout the day.
 - Make the moderation rules clear to the users.

- A blog should include links to the referred text and/or media files on a VOA website. It may also include links to other relevant sites.
- The VOA web site should include a link to external VOA blogs.
- Blogs should be updated regularly; in general at least three times per week.
- If a blogger is going on vacation, or will not be posting for whatever reason, inform the audience.
- Close discussion threads if you cannot continue to monitor additional comments, or if the topic is no longer timely. Be sure to inform the audience the blog is closed to further comments.