

Blog Critique

The Durham Bike Cooperative has a blog that is incorporated into their website and there are things it does well and things its needs to work on.

First, it's important that the co-op does not treat their blog like a "Press Center." This means that sometimes the co-op falls into the idea that their blog is a place to self promote themselves by posting news-like posts, or posts that read like a press release. Many readers look at press releases as impersonal and solely self-promotional, so while they provide pertinent information in regard to what the co-op is doing, readers tend not to trust them. A blog is designed to reach/connect with customers on another level. They should be written more conversationally, with some character. So, it's fine to talk about the same information that might be included in a press release, approach it in a different way because it's important to have a more casual voice in the blog. Also, people think want to know about who and what is involved in your organization. It would be interesting for your audience to see "A Day in the life of a board member," "How do we make a bike," etc. This could make the blog must more interesting, and could bring in a wider readership/audience for the co-op.

Second, it is important to blog regularly. If the blog posts are interesting, people are going to want more. The co-op doesn't use its blog regularly. For example, the last post was in July, and it's now the end of September. A successful blog posts at least once or twice a week and tries to keep a regular schedule. This practice keeps readers returning consistently and has the potential to expand the audience. That being said, blogging regularly is easier said than done. But there are 2 big steps you can take to make this happen:

1. Brainstorm ahead of time: Think about potential blog posts for a few weeks in advance. This gives the writer of your blog an idea of what to write so he/she is not struggling to find a topic the morning of a posting day.
2. Get other people involved: Have the members of the board come together and pitch ideas, so the burden of the blog doesn't fall all on one person. You can also assign different writers in different weeks, and consider sourcing content from your customers, if it seems pertinent.

While there are some things that the co-op needs to work on, there are some aspects that it is blog does well. A successful blog provides a call to action and the co-op does this well. For example, The Tour de Fat came to the triangle and it benefitted BikewalkNC, Triangle Spokes, and the Co-op. When the co-op introduced the event on their blog they provided a link to volunteer and one for more information about the event. The co-op also does a good job of keeping the length between 400 and 600 words. 250 is too short for Search Engine Optimization, but if you get much longer than 600 words it becomes too much for the readers to digest. The co-op does a really good job of keeping their blogs at an ideal length.