

3.7.2009

## WEB LESSONS LEARNED

Ok, not that any of you were looking for my new web site last night, (Even my inflated ego doesn't think I have an audience for this site - yet), but if you were, you couldn't find it. I learned a very important lesson yesterday. Back up your stuff before you change your web hosting plan.

You see, I decided before I got into this blog thing that instead of going to a pre-formed blogging site, I was going to go the route of an actual web page. That way, if I can find a way to make this take off into something more than just a personal diary, I'll have everything I need ready to go.

So, after some of the people who were kind enough to read my first post gave me some suggestions (RSS feed, Guestbook comment section, etc.), I decided to step up from the \$6.99 per year plan to the \$3.00 per month plan (a hefty investment, I know, but I think I can swing it). Anyway, to do that, I had to move my website from one hosting site to another. Since it was owned by the same company, I thought it would be a simple transfer, but I was wrong. So after a couple hours of work on Thursday night, I had to duplicate all that effort last night.

Not only that, but I had to try and re-write the previous posts. I learned as a reporter, when you lose a story in mid-stream and try to recreate it, it's never as good as the first time. I'm sure that applies to the previous posts, but you may want to go and re-read them, because I know I changed some things and added some things (and yes, I'm sure lost some things) that were in the original.

I'm still working on getting all those things added to the site, by the way. The guestbook is there, and the RSS should be before this weekend is done. Little did I know that doing it this way means I'm going to have to learn a little about html (just what I need, more work!!!). But hang with me. I'm still learning and hopefully, it will keep getting better and better.

3.6.2009

## WHY BLOG?

Well, after starting this web page/blog yesterday, I really didn't expect to post on it quite this soon. I also didn't expect to get a call from my 10-year-old's school telling me she was throwing up in the hall this morning. So now I find myself at home today, and what better to do when you're home with a sickie than blog.

I avoided creating a blog for years, because so many of them seem so self-indulgent. But the digital age is upon us, and I figure between blogging, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, etc., if you don't get on the digital train, you're going to get left at the station. Have you noticed the way people look at you now if you tell them you don't have a Facebook page? It's akin to the rueful looks you used to get if you said you didn't vote! Yesterday, though, I found myself on the other end of that down-the-nose look.

I have a number of very good friends in the newspaper business. For those who don't know, I spent almost five years as a reporter. Anyway, I've done a poor job of keeping up those friends through the years. I made a comment to one of them (on his Facebook profile, ironically enough) that I missed him posting a link to his column on his site. That was the easiest way for me to keep up with his writing, I said, since I don't subscribe to the newspaper anymore. Apparently, that is a cardinal sin for an ex-reporter. I have taken a fair amount of grief in the past 24 hours from some of those old newspaper friends.

Truth be told, I really prefer having the hardcopy newspaper folded under my arm, casually strolling to the neighborhood coffee shop, and wasting the better part of an hour perusing all the pages. With no paper, how will I blow an hour of time, blogging from my cell phone? I still love newsprint. Unfortunately, with Blackberry's, iPhones, and Windows Mobile devices now being the norm rather than the exception, and with declining ad revenues, a declining subscription base, and the digital age a reality, papers have to change the way they've done business for the past 100+ years.

Almost all newspapers have an online presence now. Many, such as the New York Times, are figuring out newer, different (I hesitate to say better just yet) ways of delivering that content. Take a look at the way they handle their Twitter feeds. Multiple feeds posted repeatedly throughout the day with the headline and an attached URL link to the story. See a story you like, click it, and there you are, reading away. Check out Google Reader, which is an RSS (Really Simple Subscription) reader where you digitally subscribe to content and it pushes those sites to you to read.

I hope my news friends don't feel alone. Many businesses have to change to keep up. My profession of Direct Mail hasn't gone untouched by this digital craze, either. It is having a major impact on the way people market their businesses.

So now, I'm on that digital train. I blog. I Tweet (post on my Twitter site). I have a Facebook and MySpace (the latter hasn't been touched in months - I just prefer the Facebook interface). My phone has more processing power than the first two desktop computers I owned COMBINED! I can do almost anything with it that I can do with my laptop.

So to my old newspaper friends, who seem to think I'm taking money from their pockets and food from their children's mouths, I say, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I no longer

subscribe. I'm sorry that the old school newsprint, with the blackened fingers and tattered edges, is going away. I told one of them not to worry; the online content is still going to need writers and editors. As a matter of fact, they may even need more, since people are demanding more and more information these days. Or maybe they'll just ask you guys to do twice as much work. Maybe it was a good idea for me to leave that industry after all!