IBM Blogging Policy and Guidelines

Introduction
Responsible Engagement in Innovation and Dialogue

Whether or not an IBMer chooses to create or participate in a blog or a wiki or other form of online publishing or discussion is his or her own decision. However, it is very much in IBM's interest – and, we believe, in each IBMer's own – to be aware of this sphere of information, interaction and idea exchange:

> To learn: As an innovation-based company, we believe in the importance of open exchange and learning – between IBM and its clients, and among the many constituents of our emerging business and societal ecosystem. The rapidly growing phenomenon of blogging and online dialogue are emerging important arenas for that kind of engagement and learning.

> To contribute: IBM – as a business, as an innovator and as a corporate citizen – makes important contributions to the world, to the future of business and technology, and to public dialogue on a broad range of societal issues. As our business activities increasingly focus on the provision of transformational insight and high-value innovation – whether to business clients or those in the public, educational or health sectors – it becomes increasingly important for IBM and IBMers to share with the world the exciting things we're doing learning and doing, and to learn from others.

In 1997, IBM recommended that its employees get out onto the Net – at a time when many companies were seeking to restrict their employees' Internet access. We continue to advocate IBMers' responsible involvement today in this new, rapidly growing space of relationship, learning and collaboration.

Guidelines for IBM Bloggers: Executive Summary

1. Know and follow IBM's Business Conduct Guidelines.

2. Blogs, wikis and other forms of online discourse are individual interactions, not corporate communications. IBMers are personally responsible for their posts. Be mindful that what you write will be public for a long time – protect your privacy.

3. Identify yourself – name and, when relevant, role at IBM – when you blog about IBM or IBM-related matters. And write in the first person. You must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of IBM.

4. If you publish a blog or post to a blog and it has something to do with work you do or subjects associated with IBM, use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent IBM's positions, strategies or opinions."

5. Respect copyright, fair use and financial disclosure laws.

6. Don't provide IBM's or another's confidential or other proprietary information.

7. Don't cite or reference clients, partners or suppliers without their approval.

8. Respect your audience. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc., and show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory – such as politics and religion.

9. Find out who else is blogging on the topic, and cite them.

10. Don't pick fights, be the first to correct your own mistakes, and don't alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.

11. Try to add value. Provide worthwhile information and perspective.

Guidelines for IBM Bloggers: Detailed Discussion

1. **The IBM Business Conduct Guidelines and laws provide the foundation for IBM's policies and guidelines on Web logs (blogs).**

   The same principles and guidelines that apply to IBMers' activities in general, as codified in the IBM Business Conduct Guidelines, apply to IBMers' activities online. This includes forms of online publishing and discussion, such as Web logs (blogs) and Wikis.

   As outlined in the Business Conduct Guidelines, IBM fully respects the legal rights of our employees in all countries in which we operate. In general, what you do on your own time is your affair. However, activities in or outside of work that affect your IBM job performance, the performance of others, or IBM's business interests are a proper focus for company policy.

2. **IBM supports open dialogue and the exchange of ideas.**

   IBM regards blogs as primarily a form of communication and relationship among individuals. When the company wishes to communicate publicly as a company – whether to the marketplace or to the general public – it has well established means to do so. Only those officially designated by IBM have the authorization to speak on behalf of the company.

   However, IBM believes in dialogue among IBMers and with our partners, clients, members of the many communities in which we participate and the general public. Such dialogue is inherent in our business model of innovation, and in our commitment to the development of open standards. We believe that IBMers can both derive and provide important benefits from exchanges of perspective.

   One of IBMers' core values is "trust and personal responsibility in all relationships." As a company, IBM trusts – and expects – IBMers to exercise personal responsibility whenever they blog. This includes not violating the trust of those with whom they are engaging. IBMers should not use this medium for covert marketing or public relations. If and when members of IBM's Communications, Marketing, Sales or other functions engaged in advocacy for the company have the authorization to participate in blogs, they should identify themselves as such.

3. **What does an IBMer's personal responsibility mean when blogging?**

   A blog is a tool individuals can use to share their insights, express their opinions and communicate within the context of a globally distributed conversation. As with all tools, it has proper and improper uses. While IBM encourages all of its employees to join a global conversation, it is important for IBMers who choose to do so to understand what is recommended, expected and required when they discuss IBM-related topics, whether at work or on their own time.

Know the IBM Business Conduct Guidelines. If you have any confusion about whether you ought to post something on your blog, chances are the BCGs will resolve it. Pay particular attention to what the BCGs have to say about proprietary information, about avoiding misrepresentation and about competing in the field. If, after checking the BCG's, you are still unclear as to the propriety of a post, it is best to refrain and seek the advice of management.

Be who you are. Some bloggers work anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. IBM discourages that in blogs, wikis or other forms of online participation that relate to IBM, our business or issues with which the company is engaged. We believe in transparency and honesty. If you are blogging about your work for IBM, we encourage you to use your real name, be clear who you are, and identify that you work for IBM. Nothing gains you notice in the "blogosphere" more than honesty – or dishonesty. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. But also be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be judicious in disclosing personal details

Speak in the first person. Use your own voice; bring your own personality to the forefront; say what is on your mind.

Use a disclaimer. Whether you publish a blog or participate in someone else's, make it clear that what you say there is representative of your views and opinions and not necessarily the views and opinions of IBM. At a minimum in your own blog, you should include the following standard legal disclaimer language: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent IBM's positions, strategies or opinions."

Managers and executives take note: This standard disclaimer does not by itself exempt IBM managers and executives from a special responsibility when blogging. By virtue of their position, they must consider whether personal thoughts they publish may be misunderstood as expressing IBM positions. And a manager should assume that his or her team will read what is written. A blog is not the place to communicate IBM policies to IBM employees

Respect copyright and fair use laws. For IBM's protection and well as your own, it is critical that you show proper respect for the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others, including IBM's own copyrights and brands. You should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else's work. And it is good general blogging practice to link to others' work. Keep in mind that laws will be different depending on where you live and work.

Protecting confidential and proprietary information. You must make sure you do not disclose or use IBM confidential or proprietary information or that of any other person or company on any blog. For example, ask permission to publish someone's picture or a conversation that was meant to be private.

IBM's business performance. You must not comment on confidential IBM financial information such as IBM's future business performance, business plans, or prospects anywhere in world. This includes statements about an upcoming quarter or future periods or information about alliances, and applies to anyone including conversations with Wall Street analysts, press or other third parties (including friends). IBM policy is not to comment on rumors in any way. Do not deny or affirm them – or suggest either denial or affirmation in subtle ways.

Protect IBM's clients, business partners and suppliers. Clients, partners or suppliers should not be cited or obviously referenced without their approval. On your blog, never identify a client, partner or supplier by name without permission and never discuss confidential details of a client engagement. It is acceptable to discuss general details about kinds of projects and to use non-identifying pseudonyms for a client (e.g., Client 123) so long as the information provided does not violate any non-disclosure agreements that may be in place with the client or make it easy for someone to identfy the client. Furthermore, your blog is not the place to "conduct business" with a client.

Respect your audience and your coworkers. Remember that IBM is a global organization whose employees and clients reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Don't be afraid to be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory – such as politics and religion. If your blog is hosted on an IBM owned property, avoid these topics and focus on subjects that are business-related. If your blog is self-hosted, use your best judgment and be sure to make it clear that the views and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the official views of IBM. Further, blogs hosted outside of IBM's protected Intranet environment must never be used for internal communications among fellow employees. It is fine for IBMers to disagree, but please don't use your external blog to air your differences in an inappropriate manner.

Add value. Blogs that are hosted on IBM-owned domains should be used in a way that adds value to IBM's business. If it helps you, your coworkers, our clients or our partners to do their jobs and solve problems; if it helps to improve knowledge or skills; if it contributes directly or indirectly to the improvement of IBM's products, processes and policies; or if it helps to promote IBM's Values, then it is adding value. Though not directly business-related, background information you choose to share about yourself, such as information about your family or personal interests, may be useful in helping establish a relationship between you and your readers, but it is entirely your choice whether to share this information.

Apply the skills and values learned from participation in IBM jams, IBM forums and other kinds of online collaboration. Although a relatively small percentage of the IBM population has thus far participated actively in blogs, we

have a deep well of experience in online collaboration – perhaps deeper than any other company in the world. Starting with the VM Fora in the 1980s, and extending up to our emeetings, teamrooms and companywide jams on w3 today, IBMers have honed skills, wisdom and creativity in many forms of online collaboration and engagement. We should bring this experience to bear in blogs and wikis.

For instance, think about constructive forms of facilitation you've seen in jams or the IBM Forums. What did those IBMers do that helped develop the discussion, moved it forward, brought people together who were making complementary points, encouraged others to express themselves – or to push themselves? Blogs aren't restricted to expressing opinions, or disputing opinions, or discussing products or services or one's personal life. They can also be a forum for genuine public discussion and learning – and IBMers can play a fruitful, mature and constructive role in helping that happen.

Know your fellow bloggers. The most successful bloggers are those who pay attention to what others are saying about the topic they want to write about, and generously reference and link to them. Who's blogging on the topics that most interest you? On the Internet, a quick way to find out who's saying what is to use the search tools on Technorati, DayPop or Blogdigger. Drop your fellow bloggers a note to introduce yourself and your blog. There is also an informal community of IBM bloggers, so you can quickly find out which of your peers are part of the conversation.

Don't pick fights. When you see misrepresentations made about IBM in the media, by analysts or by other bloggers, you may certainly use your blog – or join someone else's – to point that out. Always do so with respect and with the facts. Also, if you speak about a competitor, you must make sure that what you say is factual and that it does not disparage the competitor. You should avoid arguments. Brawls may earn traffic, but nobody wins in the end. Don't try to settle scores or goad competitors or others into inflammatory debates. Here and in other areas of public discussion, make sure that what you are saying is factually correct.

Be the first to respond to your own mistakes. If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so.

Use your best judgment. Remember that there are always consequences to what you write. If you're about to post something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, review the suggestions above and think about why that is. If you're still unsure, and the post is about IBM business, feel free to discuss your proposed post with your manager. Ultimately, however, you have sole responsibility for what you choose to post to your blog.

Don't forget your day job. You should make sure that blogging does not interfere with your job or commitments to customers.