

Jeremy Wright On Weblogs, Professional Blogging and Buying/Selling Blogs

Contributed by Sheila Ann Manuel Coggins

An Interview with Jeremy Wright

Jeremy Wright is the blogger extraordinaire behind the popular ensight.org. He is also the author of *Blog Marketing: The Revolutionary New Way to Increase Sales, Build Your Brand, and Get Exceptional Results*, a book published by McGraw-Hill. In this interview, Jeremy shares his thoughts on his own blogging life, on professional blogging, and on buying and selling weblogs.

ON PERSONAL BLOGGING

You must have answered this question a hundred times, but let me ask again: How long have you been blogging and why did you start?

I've been blogging nearly 3 years now. Which, in blogger years, means I'm about 55. I started, like many people, because I found someone I admired. I often commented on their blog, then eventually began to read other blogs and finally started my own. Truth be told, I started 3 blogs before I found one that stuck. And, that third one was a group blog at first, though eventually I took it over as the solo author.

How many blogs do you have right now? Which one is your primary blog?

I currently write on 5 blogs. My primary one is Ensign (www.ensight.org), which is my personal blog. I also write on the b5media blog (www.b5media.com), at Business Blog Consulting (www.businessblogconsulting.com) and I maintain two personal, private blogs. One just for family and friends and one that is a very personal "diary", effectively. And, no, sorry, no URLs for those blogs for you!

ON PROFESSIONAL BLOGGING

Do you consider yourself a professional blogger? Why or why not? How would you define a professional blogger anyway?

I consider myself the President of b5media, mainly. In many ways, I am a professional blogger, but not in the traditional sense. Only about 20% of my income comes directly from blogging. However, all of it comes from "blogging-related" activities such as books, speaking on blogging, etc. I also write articles and such, though, so in truth, if I stopped writing my personal blog, or pulled all of the advertising off of all of my blogs, I would still make a decent living.

Does that make me a professional blogger or not? I'm not sure. To me, a professional blogger is anyone who earns their living in the sphere of blogging related activities, including consultants, marketers, etc. So, I guess I am one according to my own definition, though I'd never call myself one (if, for no other reason, than that the US border guards once had an issue with that as my occupation).

Do you think blogging is a viable way to earn a living?

The short answer is yes. The long answer is that if all you are doing is getting money via blogs, you are likely opening yourself up to a fair amount of risk if that income ever drives up. I'm a huge believer in people thinking of themselves more as professional [insert personal interest] than bloggers. If you love gardening, and you blog about gardening, and you make money from the blogging; Well, I'd rather people think of themselves as a professional gardener. Because it is the passion, not the blogging, that is actually making them money.

Similarly, if you're a gardener, I believe you should be expanding how you are making money. Do some local courses, write an ebook, sell some of your plants, etc. Ideally, you would be able to express your main passion in your whole life and earn money doing so. Blogging should just be a part of the puzzle.

What's the best way to become a professional blogger?

Like all career changes, the best way is to start off slow. If you actually intend to earn all of your living via blogs, you'll need to realize that it will likely take 3-10 months of working 3-4 hours a day to actually earn a living from blogging. And, even that isn't guaranteed, because you'll make a lot of mistakes, learn a lot of lessons, and still not necessarily make a full-time wage at it.

However, if you started blogging and did some blogging for a blog network to earn some initial money, then did some blogging for hire, some consulting and wrote a few articles, you could be earning \$2000-2500/month within 1-3 months.

This is how I got into blogging professionally. I took on whatever jobs I could find, but I was incredibly overworked for the first 4-6 weeks. Then, I started dumping some of the lower paying, less rewarding, higher work jobs for better ones as they became available. After about 4 months, I went from working 16 hours a day to working about 5 hours a day, and I had the freedom to actually explore my interests.

Professional blogging isn't an easy career path, but if you're willing to work at it, it can serve you quite well.

How and when did you start thinking that you can earn money from blogging?

Wow, I'm not sure. I think within 8 months of starting blogging, I'd seen some ads around. I decided to ask on my blog if anyone wanted to advertise, and pretty soon I was earning about \$800/month from the blog itself. I think at that point, I realized that if I worked at it, I could actually make a living doing this. In fact, my wife and I said that if I started earning \$1200/month from blogging, I could quit my job. Our reasoning was that I could take a part time job and make up the difference between what blogging was earning and what I was making at my job. In the end, I didn't quit until I was making more than my full-time salary. But, the waiting period between the \$1200/month line and the \$3000/month line was only about 6 weeks because I went looking for writing jobs, not just blogging ones).

What do you have to say to people who do not approve of the commercialization of blogs?

That they are perfectly entitled to their opinion. The great thing about blogging has always been that people could do what they wanted in their little corner of the blogosphere. I'm not sure why commercialization should be any different. It is always people's choice who they read and why, after all.

ON BUYING AND SELLING WEBLOGS

I know that part of your blogging income comes from creating and selling off blogs. How and why did you start selling blogs?

In the late 90s, I spent a few months buying websites, fixing them up, and then selling them. I earned nearly a full-time income doing this, so to me selling blogs wasn't any different at all. I've only done it a dozen or so times, but each time has been fairly simple, fairly rewarding, and fairly fun.

What's the first blog that you ever sold?

The first "blog" I ever sold was ResumeWiki.com. It wasn't actually a blog, but it was a blog-related project. I sold it on SitePoint.com for something like \$500. It was a site I'd developed in about 10 hours, and I simply no longer had the time for it. Since then I've sold (and bought back) my personal blog, WealthyBlogger.com and a variety of other blogs – as well as brokering several deals for friends.

How can bloggers identify the worth of their blogs, if they wish to sell them?

The short answer is that a blog is worth whatever someone is willing to pay for it. In truth, though, most people value blogs based on what they earn. Typically, 10-20 times earnings is what most blogs are "worth". However, that can go up or down depending on a variety of factors (such as what would happen if the owner stopped writing, how many income streams there are, how much traffic growth there is, how many subscribers to the feed there are, etc). Overall, the truth is that few people will earn more than a few hundred dollars for their blogs, because of the volatility of blog readers, and because few blogs earn any real money.

What should bloggers keep in mind if they wish to sell their blogs?

First, that selling your blog is hard. It's hard on you emotionally. It can be a roller coaster ride and at the end of it, you may not get very much money for your hard work. Unless you are writing blogs specifically to sell them (ie: built to flip), it is unlikely that you will earn decent money from selling your blog.

What are the best ways to sell blogs (private sale, ebay, other auction venues, forums...)?

Personally, I sell all of my blogs at www.sitepoint.com/forums. They have a section called Sell Your Site, where thousands of people come to look for quality sites, and blogs. They don't mind spending money, but they are smart about it and will ask lots of questions, many of which bloggers may not know the answers to right away.

Why would anyone want to buy a blog? What are the pros and cons?

It really depends on the buyer. For some, they are looking to start blogging without the pain of building an audience. For others, they are looking to make a profit by increasing the blog's revenues. For some others, it is about advertising or branding. There can be a lot of reasons to buy a blog.

In terms of pros and cons, the obvious con is that if a blog is centered around the personality of a single author, there is a huge risk in selling it. That risk is lessened if the blog is informational, or if the author isn't absolutely key. In terms of pros, it really depends on what the buyer is trying to do. Blogs are great as marketing tools, for advertising and for helping establish a new website. But, they require time, effort, personality and a great writing voice. Anyone should think long and hard before buying a blog but, if they are willing to put in the work it can be incredibly rewarding personally and from a business standpoint.

Have you ever bought a blog yourself?

Great question! To be honest, I've never bought a blog. I guess since I started blogging I haven't been in much of a buying mood. I have nothing against buying blogs, and would probably consider them if I was in a buying mood, but since I'm not, it's a moot point.

For people who wish to buy blogs, where should they start looking?

For me, the best place is SitePoint. Lots of great blogs and websites every day. There really aren't many places for buying and selling sites that are worthwhile, which is why I've always stuck with SitePoint. Great value, great sites and lots of other great buyers creates a solid atmosphere to find the deal you are looking for.

What should buyers keep in mind when purchasing a blog?

First, stay away from Ebay. Most sites and blogs sold on Ebay are tiny little things that have been up for a week. Second, you need to decide up front what you are looking for. What size of blog, what kind of traffic, what type of work you are willing to put in, what your budget is, etc. For example, if you are looking to create a blog for branding purposes, you really just want one with traffic and a good audience. You don't care if it is earning \$500/month. But, if you are looking to build the blog's income and turn a profit, you need to be on the lookout for blogs that aren't performing as well as they could be. If you are going to go that route, research website valuation tools and systems. There are lots of ways to value a website, and many of them apply to blogs.

Oh, and be smart. Don't just buy the biggest blog or the prettiest blog. Buy the right blog for you and your interests.

What are your plans for the future when it comes to buying and selling blogs?

Well, mainly I'm involved in building blogs with b5media. Beyond that, I really don't have any plans, to be honest. I can't say it won't happen, in fact it probably will at some point. But, the truth is that for now I'm quite happy to be building a blog network instead of buying and selling individual sites or blogs.

What do you think will the market for buying and selling blogs be like in the next few years?

I suspect we'll see more and more people building blogs simply to flip them and, as the website buyer industry increases its awareness of blogs, we'll see those blogs getting sold. I'm sure many small scale bloggers who have personal blogs will consider selling their blogs for a quick bit of cash, but most won't sell it, or will get offers so low they'll return to their personal blogs for the main reason they started them: for love of blogging. Overall, while this trend will undoubtedly continue, I don't see it having a huge impact on the blog world, as it impacts so few people. At the end of the day, for most people, the only time they will sell their blog is when they don't want to write it anymore and they would rather pocket some cash than let it die.

Disclosure: Jeremy Wright is a business partner and online friend of the writer.

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