

Blog Like No One is Reading

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ABSTRACT

Who knows how many people will read your blog? Does that matter? Learn how to quash your inner critic and blog with your own uniquely-authentic voice. Vulnerability and disclosure don't have to hurt. Let's walk through the steps of blogging for personal insights, accountability, and creating connections. Together, let's create a more inclusive world by sharing our stories.

AUDIENCE

Early to mid-career, new to blogging with interests in self-development, creating personal connections, and making themselves heard.

INTRODUCTION

Many women, myself included, are the "only" on the teams on which they work. If you factor in introversion, you might be looking at a self-imposed life sentence of silence.

We don't have to remain quiet, though. Reclaim your voice through blogging. Let your blog posts connect you to communities outside of your team, department, or company. Through this, we'll see that not only do we have voices worthy of being heard, but the world becomes a kinder, gentler, more inclusive place when we, as women, share our stories.

How can you reap the most from blogging? You blog like no one is reading. You write without worrying about whether anyone will read your blog or whether they will judge you. Those things are entirely outside of your control. What is within your control? Standing up and sharing your uniquely-authentic voice with the world.

When sharing our stories, we gravitate towards wins and highlights. This type of sharing puts up barriers to personal connection by promoting the myth that everyone is so much more competent, worthy, and

deserving than us. By neglecting to share struggles and quirky things about us, we also validate our own negative narrative that must hide our unworthy selves.

As an only child to a single mom, loneliness was of the way of my childhood. If you factor in a severe case of introversion and trust issues, I'm an unlikely candidate for disclosing anything personal. So, what compels me to share? It's not bravery, but a belief in the benefits of disclosure. When I tap into my purpose for sharing, anxiety fades away.

If you think that you have nothing to say, check that doubt. We all have stories to tell. If no one reads your blog, you have nothing to lose. However, you have everything to gain, like accountability, personal insights, and a new tribe of people to inspire you.

While I don't work for NetApp, blogging, and social media connected me with my champions — NetApp's Women in Technology (WIT) organization. Despite my insecurities, my amazing NetApp supporters gave me the confidence boost needed to submit this session. Let's continue the circle of inspiration.

If you are new to blogging, here are a few practical tips to get started.

1. **Capture those ideas.** If you haven't already begun jotting down ideas or thoughts, now is an excellent time to start. Random sentences, titles, ideas suffice at this stage. When I initially started blogging, I kept a document that contained a bulleted list of ideas. While my idea capturing process is a little more complicated now, the result is still a list of ideas.
2. **Forget perfection, and just write.** A professional writer once told me that you should spend 20% of the time writing and the other 80% editing that writing. So, pick an idea that you previously jotted

down and expand. If you feel like your writing looks like garbage that's fine. Embrace writing's iterative process. When you take a break, you'll see that your post probably looks better than you remembered.

3. **Know your purpose.** Figure out what you want to gain from this post. Maybe your motive changes between posts or genre of posts (personal or technical). When I recently wrote about my weight struggles and needing to make a change, I wanted the accountability of sharing my intentions with the world. Deviating from this path induces the quiet shame of not doing what I said I would. Knowing your purposes can also be used to summon some extra courage if sharing feels too scary.

Once you've identified your topic and why for writing, here are some of the ways that you can write authentically.

- Write about the things that make you different and embrace the uniqueness of you. These differences that you probably want to hide make you interesting.
- Embrace what you love and sprinkle it over your writing. For instance, I love gos hip-hop, and I frequently reference lyrics in my writing.
- When you tell your stories, don't forget to disclose the uncomfortable details, too. Don't worry about projecting a specific version of you. If you find yourself doing this, STOP! It's disclosure time. The best disclosure would be the kind that contradicts the image that you are trying to project.
- Learn to recognize any negative self-talk that holds you back from sharing. Stop and reframe it so you're talking to yourself like you would a friend. That inner-critic of yours is not your friend.

When you finish that blog post, and you feel uncomfortable with the parts of you that you've shared, you probably have written in your uniquely-authentic voice. This vulnerable space opens the door for others to share their stories. In this voice, discovering your truths, and you encourage others to do the same.

If your insecurity tries to stop you from sharing; soldier on, you may want to consider scheduling your blog posts and a Tweet promoting them, so they both post at a pre-ordained time. Pre-scheduling also creates a barrier to backing out of your post. Yes, you can still cancel your scheduled Tweet and post, but is it worth the effort?

Accept that the universe is ready to hear what you have to say.

So, what should you focus on next? The answer depends on what stage you are in your blogging practice.

#	Stage	Focus Area
1	Get started.	Focus on nothing but getting out your first few posts. Don't get caught up in crafting the perfect posts. The goal is to get started.
2	Get regular.	Focus on creating a process for logging ideas. This list turns into a backlog of potential posts. You will also want to set a metric for what regular posting would look like for you. Two posts a month is my number. Don't beat yourself up if you can't meet your quota. You may need to revise that number or change up your process.
3	Got traffic?	Now that you are regularly posting, you will want to look at how you promote your content. For instance, how often will you schedule promotion Tweets? Will you post to other platforms like LinkedIn? Once you reach this level, it's important to look at how you are optimizing for Search Engines.

Our voices have power. Let's use them to create a world in which we encourage and empower others. Use blogging as a platform to feel connected, seen, and heard.

OUTCOMES/CONCLUSION

Attendees will leave this session believing that that they have a voice worthy of being heard and that uniquely-authentic writing is a powerful way to be seen and create personal connections.

They will be fully empowered to blog with confidence because they:

- Know how to get started blogging
- Understand how to summon their own uniquely-authentic voice



- Are prepared to share their stories and create personal connections.

All of these things may be what the attendees need to level-up in their careers, personal lives and ultimately change the world. One blog post at a time.

PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

If this submission is selected, I commit to attend HopperX1 NYC and deliver the above described session.

REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2018 Retrospective: Wins, Woes and Lessons Learned – Becky’s Bits and Bytes (<http://beckyelliott.com/blog/2019/01/07/my-retrospective-review-of-2018-wins-woes-and-lessons-learned/>)
- This is How to Increase The Odds of Reaching Your Goals by 95% (<https://medium.com/the-mission/the-accountability-effect-a-simple-way-to-achieve-your-goals-and-boost-your-performance-8a07c76ef53a>)
- Are You Introvert? Here’s Why You Should Write – The Writing Cooperative (<https://writingcooperative.com/are-you-introvert-heres-why-you-should-write-209570bda5b2>)



BIO

After dropping out of a liberal arts college that focused on reading and discussing the “Great Books”, Becky Elliott accidentally found her way into an IT career and eventually settled on a Minor in Journalism and a Bachelor of Science in Information System Management. For 20+ years, she has held a number of roles in Dev and Ops, and the area in between the two.

In recent years, Becky has leveraged her blog to create connections and inclusion into the Tech Community as a NetApp A-Team Advocate, Tech Field Day Delegate, and vExpert. Community is the space within which she both re-discovered a childhood love for writing and awakened a hero’s journey kind-of-desire to encourage others to share their stories in their uniquely-authentic voice.

