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# Tumblr's easy and its reblogs drive traffic, but ...

... the hit newcomer to the small business blogging space is still a bit unsteady, as Monday's big outage shows. A men's accessory store owner talks about the ups and downs of the platform.

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By **Jeremy Quittner**

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Many, if not most, entrepreneurs have now grasped the marketing potential of blogging, whether they do it as an added component of a business website or through social media sites like Facebook or Twitter. Blogging lets entrepreneurs advertise their businesses and services by engaging potential customers in a conversation.

The latest generation of software makes blogging easier and more efficient, with plug-ins that let people integrate blogs with Twitter, Facebook and Myspace, pretty much at the press of a button. The next generation also makes posting content like pictures and videos—a task that's the bane of many an amateur blogger—simpler.

While Wordpress has the most users—in the millions, by some estimates—newcomer Tumblr, based in New York, is garnering attention because it easily entwines with other social media, like Facebook and Twitter, sending updates to those sites as users post new content to Tumblr. The extent to which the minimalist platform, now at 500,000 page views a month, according to the company, has become a part of the social media scene became apparent Monday. An outage took Tumblr down for almost a full day, as the blogosphere filled up with groans and complaints.

“Tumblr is an interesting fusion between a blog and a Twitter feed,” said Alex Romanovich, founder and managing partner of Manhattan-based Social2B, which helps small businesses integrate social media and blogging into their marketing strategies.

Something else to keep in mind: Tumblr, like other services, offers a hosted option or a nonhosted one. For maximum control of blogging content and the look and feel of blogs, the nonhosted option offers business owners the ability to create their blogs on their own servers. That rules out any issues about ownership of content, such as famously exists with Facebook. Wordpress offers a nonhosted environment, and so does Drupal, an open-source alternative.

“The biggest difference is you own the content when you blog and post and share,” said Mr. Romanovich.

Matt Fox is sole proprietor of [FineandDandyshop.com](http://FineandDandyshop.com), an online men's accessory store with about \$50,000 in annual revenues, based in Manhattan and founded in 2008. Crain's New York Business contributor Jeremy Quittner spoke with Mr. Fox about his use of Tumblr. Following is an edited version of their conversation.

### **Crain's: Why did you decide to set up a blog for your business?**

Mr. Fox: I was seeing so much online with blogs for men's fashion, and it was important from the beginning to have not only direct sales but creative communication with [potential customers]. There are thousands of [FineandDandyshop](http://FineandDandyshop.com) fans, and I have created a community that shares. It is not all about selling to people. It is about having a conversation and sharing ideas and photos and asking questions. Social media, including the blogs and Facebook, have been critical for this. We can cultivate this community and facilitate the conversations and also make sales. The blog directs customers to [FineandDandyshop.com](http://FineandDandyshop.com), where they can complete a sale.

### **Crain's: Why did you choose Tumblr, and what do you like about it?**

Mr. Fox: I started using Tumblr in March or April of 2010, that is in addition to my Blogger blog. I saw that somebody had posted something about our shop on Tumblr. It said, “Look at this shop; I want to buy everything in it.” It was a popular Tumblr blog and several people reblogged the post, and I saw how the traffic to my site increased by just one initial post. I loved that concept, that something could become very viral. Something clicked for me that this would work really well for business.

I also love the correspondence between blogging and Facebook, and I loved the reblogging concept—people can easily share things with other people, or share things they like with their followers. So often, as a blogger, I just want to put something up [quickly], and with Tumblr I just reblog it. The really cool way it works is that, similar to Facebook, you have a dashboard, and you are seeing all the posts of all the people you follow, one right after another. So you can spend half an hour scrolling through things you like, and if you want to

reblog something, it just goes up to your blog.

Outside of Tumblr I have hundreds of blogs I look at, much of it is information I use to keep on top of the world of men's style. As I go through my dashboard of other people's posts, it is very easy to share by just pressing "reblog."

**Crain's: How is the social media component different from other blogging platforms?**

Mr. Fox: With Tumblr, you have the option, when you make updates, for it to Tweet for you or go to your Facebook page. Though I try to create different material for each one, sometimes I will do some crossover. I want my followers to connect with me in different ways. But it is the reblogging function and the ease of quickly seeing in 10 minutes the hundreds of posts of blogs you follow [that makes Tumblr valuable.]

**Crain's: How difficult was it to get up and going?**

Mr. Fox: It is incredibly easy. It took me five minutes to get going, though it took a week to have plenty of posts I could publicize to my base. But the setup was dummy-proof. Putting up material is also very easy, whether that is uploading a photo or putting up a caption.

**Crain's: What are the biggest drawbacks with Tumblr?**

Mr. Fox: It's still a startup, and there are times I am facing problems with it that day, and I see other people are as well. For example, the queue may not work for posts. It can get stuck. Another drawback: I am obsessed with Google Analytics, I use it to look at traffic and to see spikes in traffic, but a lot of people are reading their posts on their [Tumblr] dashboard, so it does not register. I can't tell how popular it is. I see people reblog my material, but it's not scientific.\*

**Crain's: What, if anything, does it cost?**

Mr. Fox: Nothing, just time. It is a great deal. It verges on free advertising.

**Crain's: What has been the return on the investment of your time?**

Mr. Fox: I'd say the biggest thing is it has broadened my community and, to some degree, buyers. But more important, it is the community of people who are interested in style that I have this conversation with. In general, I've seen more traffic to my website since I started using Tumblr—maybe a 15% to 20% increase since 8 months ago.

**Crain's: How important is blogging with Tumblr to your business?**

Mr. Fox: This is very important for my business. Among the social media channels I use, it is maybe third, after Facebook and my Blogger blog. It is something I am still experimenting with, but it is an up-and-coming part of my business.

\*Tumblr did not respond to telephone and e-mail requests for comment on the story.

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