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Overcoming The 5 Objections To Tech Blogging

By Drew Conry-Murray

There are lots of people in the tech community who have an inclination to write a technical blog, but never get around to it. In my experience, people have five general objections:

1. I'm Not An Expert
2. I'll Get Things Wrong
3. No One Will Read It
4. I Don't Have Time
5. The Internet Can Be Hostile

These objections are valid, but they aren't necessarily insurmountable. Here's a few tips on how to overcome them.

1. I'm Not An Expert

Maybe you aren't, but so what? Everyone knows something. Start with a subject you're comfortable with, no matter how basic.

For example, if you've found a solution to recurring problem at work, write about that. I routinely see tweets from technical people who had a problem, searched it on Google, and found a blog they themselves wrote. Thanks, self!

Also, keep in mind that new people are always coming into tech, and they have questions. Lots of questions. Writing a blog on something that seems simple to you may be information gold to someone just getting started.

When you inevitably run up against the boundary of your knowledge, don't stop. Do research. Talk to colleagues or peers. Watch a video. Read a book. Take a class.

The act of writing helps reinforce what you know, and provides a map to areas where you can expand your knowledge. Don't wait until you become an expert to start blogging. Start blogging to become an expert.

2. I'll Get Things Wrong

Probably you will. Most people do. Technology is complicated and it's easy to make mistakes. Being wrong comes with the territory.

If you're lucky*, someone will point out your error. Hopefully they won't be a jerk about it, but whether they are or not doesn't matter. It still stings. You'll feel embarrassed. You might say some bad words.

What do you do next?

Fix it. No need to make a fuss or pile on the *mea culpas*. Just acknowledge the error, make the change, and move on. That's how learning works.

*I say "lucky" for a few reasons. 1. It means someone read your blog! 2. It means someone was willing to take the time to contact you. 3. Your blog no longer has a mistake.

3. No One Will Read It

Building an audience is hard. It takes time and persistent effort. Don't tie your sense of self-worth to your traffic numbers, particularly in the early days.

But there are ways to attract readers. Get on social media. I recommend Twitter. There's a lively community of technologists across IT disciplines on Twitter, and they tend to be supportive. LinkedIn is also a worthwhile place to share your work.

Don't just use social media to promote your own posts. Share other people's work. Leave comments. Engage in conversations. Have a sense of humor. Don't be a jerk.

If you're writing about a technology that has an active community, such as an open source project, use hashtags or "@" them to let them know. The same goes if you're writing about a commercial product. Vendors have marketing and PR people scouring social feeds for coverage, so if you tag or "@" them, they'll check it out. If they like your post, they might share it.

Just don't be a shill. Shilling might win some vendor love, but you'll probably alienate your core audience.

4. I Don't Have Time

This is a tough one. If you want to blog, something else in your life has to give way. Family and work get top priority, which means you'll have to swap out something else, be it leisure, hobbies, fitness, sleep, TV, and so on.

Honestly, I don't have a lot of advice here, other than to say that if writing is important to you, you have to make the time. It doesn't have to be a lot: a few hours a week can be enough to get posts out the door on a semi-regular schedule.

5. The Internet Can Be Hostile

When you write publicly, you open yourself up not just to good faith criticism, but also to hostility, racism, sexism, intolerance, and harassment.

Frankly, this is less of an issue for white men. It's a significant issue for women, people of color, and the LBGTQ community. If you belong to a group at risk for harassment, I hope it won't stop you, but you have to evaluate what's best for you.

Those of us who enjoy a protected status must call out perpetrators and be advocates for at-risk groups. We can't let bullies, bigots, and trolls thwart people from participating in the tech community.

Resources To Get Started

If you want to make the leap, here's a few easy ways to start.

Blogger: This is a free blogging platform from Google and gives you your own domain name. Note that Google will toss your content into its algorithmic ad-serving maw in exchange for the service.

Wordpress: Wordpress blog hosting starts at $5 a month and goes up from there. It's a popular and widely used platform, and if you've got big ambitions or a strong design aesthetic, Wordpress has enough templates and plug-ins to make it worth your money.

GitHub: Better known as a code repository, you can also post blogs on GitHub for free. It's a no-frills blogging platform, but what do you want for free?

Packet Pushers: I know this is self-serving, but Packet Pushers hosts a free community blog. We can set you up as an author, and you're off to the races. You don't get your own domain, but it's a low-risk way to try your hand. If you're interested, you can contact me at drew@packetpushers.net.

Tech Blogs: How To

Deploying IPv6 at IBM - APNIC Blog

https://blog.apnic.net/2019/03/20/deploying-ipv6-at-ibm/

Andy Mindnich at IBM tackles both the business and engineering challenges of bringing IPv6 into a large enterprise. This is a great perspective piece that can help defeat the objection, "There's no business reason for us to move to IPv6!" That's an old, broken perspective that still running around enterprises like a zombie. Andy will help you go for the head with tips on convincing decision makers, finding an executive sponsor, and getting a budget. - Ethan

It's Up to You to Decide if Apps are Cheaper in the Cloud - The IT Hollow

http://theithollow.com/2019/03/19/its-up-to-you-to-decide-if-apps-are-cheaper-in-the-cloud/

Eric Shanks walks through a few different scenarios to explain why calculating the cost of running an app in the cloud vs. on premises isn't as simple as you think. When you

factor in AWS reserved instances and re-design the app to leverage autoscaling, the cloud costs can come down dramatically. - Ethan

YA-NAT: Yet Another Network Address Translations Post - Neckercube

https://neckercube.com/index.php/2019/03/18/ya-nat...

Jed Casey has written a detailed post on NAT44 (translating IPv4 to IPv4) for folks who will encounter it in their certification studies. Jed notes that this topic tripped him up on a CCIE Route & Switch lab, so he's coming back to the technology armed and ready to conquer. The blog walks through 15 use cases (I told you it was detailed), plus bonus extras. If you're working on NAT either for certifications or day-to-day work, keep this post handy. - Drew

Redesigning the Data Center - BGP - Bytes Of Cloud

https://www.bytesofcloud.net/2019/03/redesigning-dc-bgp/

Here's a good overview of a real-world BGP design for a data center network from Brian Gleason, who blogs at Bytes of Cloud. Brian writes "When you get into BGP traffic engineering, there is no way around route-maps, prefix-lists, and regular expressions. You have to recognize that to control outbound path selection, you have to control inbound routes and vice versa. BGP outbound destinations are basically inversely proportional to the inbound prefixes received." - Drew

Goodbye Cisco UCS 6200 Fabric Interconnects - vMiss

https://vmiss.net/2019/03/07/cisco-6200-fabric-interconnect/

Cisco has announced the end of life dates for its UCS 6200 Series Fabric Interconnect. Melissa walks through the details of the announcement (support ends in May 2024) and offers sound advice on a migration plan. I know five years sounds like a long time, but these things have a way of creeping up on people, so maybe check out the blog and start your plans. - Drew

Issue certificates for IIS and Exchange with Let's Encrypt - 4Sysops

https://4sysops.com/archives/issue-certificates-fo...

Roland Eich writes about how to use free certificates from Let's Encrypt for your Microsoft IIS and Exchange servers. In addition to walking step by step for the process, he also shares a PowerShell script you can use as a reminder to renew your certs. - Drew

Tech Blogs: Opinion

The 737Max and Why Software Engineers Might Want to Pay Attention - J. Paul Reed on Medium

https://medium.com/@jpaulreed/the-737max-and-why-software-engineers-should-pay-attention-a041290994bd

From someone intimately familiar with the 737 and its control systems comes this post explaining the software and control surface issues with the 737 Max, some of the politics impacting the fix, and why all of this matters to software engineers. And to my mind, not just software engineers, but any of us in IT. That brought to mind my experience recommending global anti-virus, only to be told there was no budget. That is, until we were stricken with a worm that took an entire department down and racked up a bunch of staff overtime to fix. In the case of the 737 Max, the unintended consequences of politics and bureaucracy have proven much more devastating. - Ethan

The Network Sized Holes in Serverless - Rule 11 Reader

https://rule11.tech/the-network-sized-holes-in-serverless/

Russ White pokes at serverless "magic" with a large, pointy stick taking the form of a thought exercise. He points out, "Moving data ultimately still takes time, still takes energy; the network still (often) needs to be tuned to the data being moved. Serverless is a great technology for some solutions—but there is ultimately no way to abstract out the hard work of building an entire system tuned to do a particular task and do it well." - Ethan

Why Software Remains Insecure - Daniel Miessler

https://danielmiessler.com/blog/the-reason-software-remains-insecure/

This short post has a simple point. "The existence of insecure software has so far helped society far more than it has harmed it." - Ethan

Silo 2: On-Premise with DevOps - Networking Nerd

https://networkingnerd.net/2019/03/07/silo-2-on-premise-with-devops/

This post is a follow-up to a piece that made a case for DevOps being just another IT silo. Now Tom Hollingsworth is back to drive the stake even deeper into the ground. As Tom notes, DevOps is a set of principles, not a job role. But when principles collide with organizational structures that need to assign roles and measure performance, the structures tend to win. This leads to "DevOps teams" (which, according to DevOps principles, shouldn't exist), and those teams need to compete with everyone else in the organization for resources, status, and political clout, which infuriates DevOps purists. Tom's take? "Instead of complaining that those not doing it the "proper" way are wrong, let's examine why things get done the way they do and figure out how to fix it." - Drew

Ending Bans on Broadband Deployment - CCG Consulting

https://potsandpansbyccg.com/2019/03/21/ending-bans-on-broadband-deployment/

Rural areas of the United States have long been underserved by ISPs and telcos, in part because of legislation that stifles competition. Doug Dawson looks at new laws in three states that aim to spur the development of broadband services by allowing electrical cooperatives, which were instrumental in bringing electricity to rural communities, to also get into the broadband business. - Drew

Creating Automation Source-of-Truth From Device Configurations - IPSpace

https://blog.ipspace.net/2019/03/creating-automation-source-of-truth.html

This is part two in a series on the challenges of getting a source of truth on how devices are configured. Engineers need this source of truth if they're going to get robust automation and orchestration systems in place. Ivan investigates the benefits and challenges of using actual config state as your source. - Drew

New Packet Pushers Podcasts

We recently launched two new podcast series at PacketPushers.net. If you haven't listened yet, here's a nudge to check them out.

IPv6 Buzz

IPv6 is here, it's real, and if you haven't started grappling with the inevitable transition to v6, this podcast might help get you in gear. Hosted by Ed Horley, Tom Coffeen, and Scott Hogg, IPv6 Buzz dives into issues including address planning, IPv6 security, troubleshooting, and other practical topics.

Day Two Cloud

If you believe the hype, public cloud services are all unicorns, rainbows, and free cotton candy. Host Ned Bellavance digs deeper to reveal the messes that unicorns eating cotton candy can make. Like any other technology, cloud has advantages and drawbacks, so you need to know what you're getting into. Currently featured in our Community channel, Day Two Cloud will graduate to its own channel in April.

The Lulz

When people say they look up to me or see me as a role model.

Thanks, but reconsider!

via Katherine McNamara @kmcnam1

IT News

FCC Opens Stratospheric Spectrum for Experimental 6G - SDxCentral

https://www.sdxcentral.com/articles/news/fcc-opens-stratospheric-spectrum-for-experimental-6g/2019/03/

"The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on Friday unanimously approved an order to create a new category of experimental licenses between 95 GHz and 3 THz to give researchers and engineers more flexibility to test the capabilities for wireless communications." Those frequencies have scientific applications along with IoT. Distance between endpoints will be measured in feet, but lots of data could be carried.
- Ethan

Juniper, Apstra, Big Switch Join Team Sonic - SDxCentral

https://www.sdxcentral.com/articles/news/juniper-apstra-big-switch-join-team-sonic/2019/03/

Microsoft's SONiC (Software for Open Networking in the Cloud) is one in a growing number of Lego brick options used to create your own networking stack on whitebox hardware. SONiC is not a NOS, but rather, "it allows cloud operators to share the same software stack across multiple switch vendors' hardware. It can also run on various switching platforms via the Switch Abstraction Interface (SAI) specification…" More momentum for SONiC as some big names climb on board. Read the piece to understand their reasons. - Ethan

Desperate to get through to executives, some cybersecurity vendors are resorting to lies and blackmail - CNBC

https://www.cnbc.com/2019/03/18/heres-how-cybersec...

We're all familiar with marketing material from security firms that go heavy on the FUD (Fear, Uncertainty, Doubt) as a way to stoke anxiety and frame a narrative for the necessity of their products. Now CNBC has interviewed executives at Fortune 500 companies to look at how security vendors threaten and lie to them in an effort to pitch products. For example, a security vendor will contact an executive with dire warnings of an incident, when in fact they're just making a sales call. Some executives said security companies have threatened to disclose breaches if the vendor wasn't allowed to pitch a product. This behavior is old news to folks in the tech industry, but it's interesting to see it make its way into the mainstream press. - Drew

Michigan's DNA Shaped a Populist Security Start-Up - Barron's

https://www.barrons.com/articles/how-michigans-dna-shaped-populist-start-up-duo-security-51553084081

This is a pleasant little profile of Dug Song, a founder of Duo Security that was acquired last year by Cisco for $2.35 billion. While the profile still engages in a bit of the typical lionizing of entrepreneurs, its core message is that people don't have to live in Silicon Valley or San Francisco to launch and build a successful tech company. That's an idea worth spreading. - Drew

AWS gets On Demand with Direct Connect

https://aws.amazon.com/blogs/aws/new-gigabit-conne...

AWS Direct Connect has been a fixed service that takes weeks to provision and modifying the capacity takes time. AWS is now moving to dynamic provisioning of the Direct Connect at 1, 2, 5, or 10 Gbps of capacity. Now you can boost your direct bandwidth for a week to upload those backups and switch it off when you are done. - Greg

Facebook's Apology Tour is Going To Take Years

Facebook continues to demonstrate that it doesn't care about users again (remember, users don't pay, advertisers and data farms do). This time they stored user passwords in clear text on internal systems so that any Facebook employee had access. - Greg

New Products & Industry Takes

The multicloud we need, but not the one we deserve - Cumulus Networks Engineering Blog

https://cumulusnetworks.com/blog/multicloud-need-not-one-deserve/

An odd title for a post that's actually about applying routed vMotion to multi-cloud. Still an interesting read, pondering the possibilities of using routed vMotion to move a live VM from one cloud to another. The article doesn't address the practicality of such a possibility, including the impact of latency, the cost of moving all those VM bits around, and the problem of storage for the migrated VM. Is it possible to move a VM between clouds? I suppose so. Is it practical? In certain circumstances, perhaps, but on the whole, I doubt it. Maybe I'm wrong. - Ethan

Nokia Commits US$750K to Support the Work of the Internet Engineering Task Force - Nokia

https://www.nokia.com/about-us/news/releases/2019/03/20/nokia-commits-us750k-to-support-the-work-of-the-internet-engineering-task-force/

Nokia is putting up three quarters of a million dollars over the next few years to support the IETF. The amount puts Nokia at the highest level of contributor to the standards organization. Nokia will also host the IETF's upcoming meeting in Singapore this November. - Drew

The End Bit
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