



Intern Blog: An Innovative Approach to Market and Inform

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ABSTRACT

As the public increasingly relies on the Internet as its source of information from "experts," dietitians must position themselves as the nutrition authority in all media on the Internet. One medium, known as a blog, is an online journal of opinions, experiences and events.

A blog may include written text, short articles, links to other websites, photographs, images and/or imbedded videos. Placing a blog within a dietetic intern's professional website allows the intern to add text or visual description of skills she/he has developed to offer an employer, and informs an internship director more clearly what is transpiring in the internship.

Prior to development of a blog some basic understanding of how the Internet can and does function as a communication tool is critical as is an understanding of the writing style that is most effective in communication over the Internet. Avoidance of negative statements and/or silly, unprofessional pictures is recommended as each can and will reduce the effectiveness of the blog as a professional marketing tool.

An intern in one program utilized a blog within her professional electronic portfolio to showcase her technical writing skills and to a lesser extent her graphic art capabilities in a web-based medium. This blog provided this dietetic intern, a future practicing dietitian, with an opportunity to project a positive image as the nutrition authority and advocate to a global public visiting her website.

WHAT IS A BLOG?

A blog (which is an abridgement of the term **web log**) is a website that an individual maintains to express themselves on views of their choice, providing videos or graphics to their viewers, or to give viewers an idea of their day- to -day activities. While many blogs are used as online diaries for entertainment purposes, businesses and groups are beginning to use blogs to advertise events, professional accomplishments and networking opportunities.

Medical Blogs have become increasingly popular in the last few years. WebMD offers visitors of the website a variety of blogs on various topics. Blogs are written by doctors, nurses, and registered dietitians.

Understanding that blogs are the wave of the future, the American Dietetic Association has developed a blog written by media spokespeople for the American Dietetic Association. The blog "specializes in communicating the straight story on food and nutrition that is based on sound science and common sense." To learn more about the ADA blog, go to: <http://www.rdsweighin.typepad.com>.

EXCERPTS FROM A WEEKLY BLOG

June 27 – GRADUATION

My dietetic internship comes to a close today. I have to say that it is bittersweet to be finished. We are all going in different paths and I have seven new colleagues that I know I will keep in touch with. I have had many wonderful experiences throughout this year but I must admit that I am glad that working for free is now complete and I can begin to make money!!!



One last time as a group, to the left is a picture of the eight interns of the 2007-2008 University of Maryland Dietetic Internship!

April 28 - May 2 -- Food and Friends

Food and Friends taught me much more than I expected. Although they originally began as a means of providing food to HIV/AIDS patients, they have extended their services to breast cancer patients through a grant with AVON. I had the opportunity of meeting one of their new clients this past week that was younger than I was and had just found out she had breast cancer. Without her diligence, the cancer would have never been detected and she would not be undergoing treatment. This lady had a partial mastectomy on April 4th and then had a child on April 15th. During the time I spoke to her, it became very apparent to me that the services of Food and Friends would definitely help her make it through these difficult times. Never had I been so proud to be participating in such an organization!

March 31 - April 4th -- Union Memorial Hospital

My second week of staff relief, and my last week at Union Memorial Hospital. Wow, time has flown! I have really had the opportunity to test out my clinical skills this week while being in staff relief and I feel as though I did pretty well!! I have gained a great deal of confidence being the "decision maker" on the two floors that I covered and I felt that I handled the floors very well on my own. I survived my clinical rotation!!! My last day was a bit rough having 18 patients to see and several issues with my patients at the beginning of the day, but I did survive! I learned a lot from Union and know I will use the knowledge that I gained in the future. The most important thing that I learned is that I can do clinical. I was very scared beginning my rotation due to the amount of time that had lapsed since my clinical nutrition classes, but I successfully completed my clinical rotation and am confident that I could work in a hospital in the future!

January 14-18 -- Riderwood Village

Our theme meal was on Thursday!! We had a lot of fun this week getting our food and decorations ready. We had prepared a production schedule for what needed to be done each day and everything the day of our theme meal. We were able to pretty well stick to what needed to be done; although, it took us about twice as long to do everything as we expected. Nevertheless, we had an excellent day on Thursday and feel that it was a huge success. The residents seemed to really enjoy the food and telling us stories from where they grew up and the foods that they remembered from their past. We really enjoyed doing this meal for the residents and I hope that we were able to bring back memories from their childhood.



September 10-14 -- National Agricultural Library

This week was my first actual week of supervised practice. My first rotation is at the National Agricultural Library (NAL) working with WIC Works, which is a resource program for individuals that work with WIC participants. This week I have updated two different portions of the website, whole grains and infant feeding. I get to use the knowledge that I have learned from the training classes the last 1 & 1/2 weeks and update the website. I think I expected to have to do a lot of technical work which I was a little worried about because I do not have a lot of technical experience. I have really enjoyed working on the websites so far, and it has been great to find out more about the WIC program.



PURPOSE OF A BLOG

- Allows the intern to reflect back on the previous week to gather what he/she has learned and/or experienced.
- Provides the internship director with valuable feedback on what the intern is doing during the rotation.
- Gives preceptors insight about the intern and prior internship experiences.
- Provide future employers with an idea of the experiences the intern was involved in.
- Gives current and future interns an idea of what they may expect at different rotation site.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- The intern was able to see their professional growth from the beginning of a rotation until its completion.
- Completing the weekly blog allowed the intern to reflect on the things that were learned during the rotation and realize areas for further study and improvement.
- The intern can be more successful in finding a job because of an increased ability to express the knowledge and skills gained throughout the internship.

WHAT A DIETITIAN NEEDS TO BEGIN A BLOG

- Time – it only takes 10-15 minutes to sit down and write a blog
- Cost – It's FREE. There are many sites such as Google that allow you to set up your own blog website for free. It only takes a few minutes to get your own site and begin blogging.
- Website knowledge -- you do not need to know how to build a website to be able to blog. The templates are very user friendly and all you have to do is type in your content and the site does the rest for you!

CONCLUSION

- An intern can benefit from a weekly blog to provide reflection on the work that he/she has accomplished and to indicate what areas where more work is needed.
- The internship director can use the weekly blog to better understand how the intern is doing and see what they are learning during their weeks at a specific rotation site.
- A future employer can find out what the intern has experienced to see if the intern is a fit for the job in which they are applying.
- A Registered Dietitian can use a weekly blog to assess their current job position and see areas of improvement.
- This is also a great tool in which to keep resources or information that may become useful in the future.