

TIPS ON HOW TO WRITE A JPLC BLOG

What is a blog?

'Blog' is an abbreviated version of 'weblog', a term used to describe websites that maintain an on-going chronicle of information, usually presented as a list of entries in reverse chronological order. This reflects the origins of blogging, in personal diary-type commentary, for example about a person's hobbies or interests. Each individual entry is called a 'post'.

Why blog?

Organisations have increasingly recognised the value of blogging. These blogs tend to be much less personal than hobbyist blogs, although they work best when they retain a degree of personal voice as well as reflecting an organisation's remit and priorities.

Blogging enables organisations to:

- Provide audiences with regular accessible content, in between events etc;
- React to and reflect on current events or topical issues in the case of JPLC the content of our recent conferences
- Promote the conference as having a strong and distinctive body of ideas and experience.

Because posts are published under one person's name, they can also promote individual contributors/delegates as interesting thinkers, commentators and experts in a particular field.

What should you blog about?

There are lots of possible starting-points for blog posts. JPLC is interested in a news item or topical issue;

- The experience of attending the conference and themes which emerged.
- Reactions to contributions and papers at the conference.
- How attendance may have prompted a new idea or posed a challenge.
- A report, book or article (ideally recently-published) that links back to a contribution at the conference.

How do I write a blog post?

A basic formula for structuring a post is:

1. Start by clearly identifying which audience you'd like to read your post and what problem your post will solve for them;
2. Write a compelling headline;
3. Write your hook;
4. Describe the problem or issue your audience faces;
5. Provide your analysis of the causes of that problem;
6. Link it to JPLC or a part of it;
7. Offer a solution, preferably something unique and actionable;
8. End with a call to action.

Don't get too hung-up on this structure though. Posts don't always have to offer a specific solution – it can be enough to offer a new or different perspective on an issue, something that other commentators have missed, or to issue a challenge, or just to inform people about a problem.

How personal should a post be?

This often worries people. When writing for an organisation, a post shouldn't be very personal and should remain professional. Rather, the point is to try to be direct, interesting and engaging about a topic.

How long should a post be?

Around 800 words works best – about a side and half of A4.

How often should we blog?

JPLC will post no more than one a week rather than all together. Blogs only build an audience if there is regular new content.

How do I make a blog post interesting?

- Consider why *you* care about a topic, and try to convey why the reader should as well;
- Preview your point or argument up-front – including in the title of the post;
- Avoid starting with “I went to an interesting event recently...” (instead, start with the idea to grab the reader's attention, *then* mention the event);
- Think about the structure of the post – what will keep the reader reading it to the end?

Given that it's a joint planning law conference blog, also try to make some reference to the conference, planning law or planning, the future challenges etc.

What happens next?

Send your Blog to lucinda@quadrilect.co.uk for the organising committee's comment. They'll say 'no' (not right for the blog, or not right now), or 'yes' and or make suggestions about content/structure.

We will advise of when it will be posted.

What are some examples of good blogs?

Take a look at RTPI centenary blog, among others: <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/briefing-room/centenary-blog/>

Any other advice?

The rise of blogging reflects a broader cultural change – a desire for less stuffiness and a recognition that the people who work in organisations are not faceless automatons. None the less the law of defamation still applies so avoid gratuitous insults or anything actionable. A blog is a place to float ideas (sensibly), challenge accepted wisdom (sensibly), and put yourself forward as someone with something to say (sensibly) – so be a bit brave and have a go.