

Many of the people who write blogs today simply want to share their opinion on something. But then there are the business-minded folks, who have found a way to use blogs, or Web logs, to bring in a little extra cash too.

I recently wrote a column detailing how to get a blog up and running to boost your small business.

If you're interested in taking it further — blogging for bucks, if you will — here are five strategies that could turn your blog into a moneymaker.

1. Sell advertising. This is likely the most common means

of leveraging a blog to generate income. If yours happens to become a well-known blog, or one that is well-received in a particular niche, it's always possible to sell ad space on your own. For lesser-known blogs, services such as Google's AdSense or BlogAds enable bloggers to establish ad programs. AdSense — which lets you select several ads that are consistent with the content of your blog — pays you based on how many readers click on the ads for further information. Even better, it's free. BlogAds, on the other hand, hooks bloggers up with would-be advertisers and levies a commission in return for any ad placements that result. "The nice thing, too, is that the ads are relatively unobtrusive," says Scott Allen, co-author of "The Virtual Handshake: Opening Doors and Closing Deals Online." 2. Help sell others' products. Here is another click-through opportunity. Affiliate programs enable your blog to serve as a conduit between

readers and online sites offering various goods and services. One popular choice is Amazon.com. If, for instance, you offer book reviews or even just mention a book in passing in your blog, an affiliate program provides a means for your readers to click directly from your blog to Amazon to obtain further information about the book. If they break out the checkbook or charge card, you get paid as well. 3. Solicit contributions. Not every blog-related income opportunity involves hawking goods or services. As Blanche DuBois did in "A Streetcar Named Desire," consider relying on the kindness of strangers. Ask for contributions. If, for instance, your small-business blog supports a cause or issue in some fashion — say you repeatedly mention tax reform, health care or some other topic — you can always ask for reader support. Even if you've attracted a group of regular followers who

simply enjoy reading what you have to say, they may be willing to underwrite their loyalty with a little financial help. Programs such as PayPal make it easy to establish a simple on-site contribution collection button. "There are lots of worthy 'cause' blogs that would qualify for donations from grateful members of the blog community," says Las Vegas communications consultant Ned Barnett. 4. Market your services in your blog. Many people associate blogs exclusively with a cyberspace-based soapbox — a place to shout your opinions and little more than that. Granted, blogs are an ideal venue to share your thoughts with others, but don't overlook their capacity to generate new business as well. When appropriate, work in references to what you do and, in turn, what you may be able to offer any would-be client or customer who may be reading your blog. That can spread your opinion

and your business moxie at the same time. "Instead of short commentaries that begin a dialogue with readers, as many blogs do, I write the equivalent of journal articles that demonstrate my

abilities, strategies and perspectives on specific issues," Barnett says. "When it resonates, it means money. Since starting this approach, I have generated three new paying clients and brought in about \$10,000 on revenue — directly attributable to specific blogs."5. Use a blog to deepen your existing customer relationships. Nor does any marketing material inserted in blog content have to be limited to bringing in completely new business. By using a blog to regularly communicate with existing clients as well as other readers, you can take advantage of the opportunity to fully inform them about everything your business does. That may expand your readers' understanding of the

full scope of your products or services."My blog has helped existing clients determine the range of my skills and services," says Ted Demopoulos of Demopoulos Associates, a Durham, N.H. consulting and training concern. "One client who had only used me for training in the past was surprised at my range of expertise and is now using me for a consulting project. Another who only used me on technical projects is now considering me for a more business-oriented project."

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