

1. What is a blog?

“Blog” is a shortening of “web log”, and is a form of high volume, shorter length (typically 500-1000 words with variability) ranging in quality from very high to very low. Blogs are a primary and growing form of information sharing today.

Blogs cover all topics and are widely consumed on all computer devices (desktop, tablet and mobile) by a growing percentage of the population. They allow for quick “bites” of information, and do not tax attentional capacity. Blogs generally do best if they are well written, entertaining, easy to read, and substantive without trying to cover too much territory. There are exceptions to this including longer blogs which are more academic, news article-style blogs often written by journalists and freelance writers (and of varying quality), and the like.

Blogs are often written to be “on trend” with currently popular themes or resonant with current events to generate the most interest. Blogs can also be “evergreen” material, which is reposted from time to time. As the number of blogs builds up, the cache of evergreen material is established as a foundation for an ongoing social media presence. That way, even if there is a lull, good material can be circulated. Because there is such a rapid turnover, re-presenting blogs multiple times in social media is necessary so more people have a chance to encounter the material, even though the blog is only posted once on one’s website.

2. What value does a blog have for GAP?

Blogs provide several avenues of value for GAP. From a marketing and outreach point of view, blogs are a standard and customary tool for raising brand awareness, reaching new audiences in the public sphere, sharing important information, and creating a necessary digital presence for GAP. Organizations which post unique blogs, and share them on social media properly, get more website views than organizations which do not.

As part of a broader initiative, blogs can be an essential tool to recruit new members as well as help with fund-raising efforts. By raising GAP’s brand value through informative, relevant and high-quality writing, blogs are a key building block in digital marketing, and work in concert with social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, professional listservs. Blogs generate material which may be incorporated into e-newsletters. Inviting guests to blog can help build crucial networks and introduce potential members to GAP as an easy step toward becoming an invited guest.

3. What is the review process for a GAP blog?

Blog drafts are written by a GAP member, typically as part of a committee, and may also be penned by invited guests. The blog draft is submitted to a subcommittee of the Publication Committee, and is then circulated for rapid turnaround to reviewers. The reviewers then funnel the draft back to the author for revision and (hopefully) a finished version is ready for publication with only minor polishing. Blogs may be written by committee, or by co-authors. Reviewer should include checking references for accuracy. Blogs can be edited after they are posted.

4. How will the GAP blogs be disseminated on social media?

The completed blog is posted on Ourgap.org, and a link to the blog is generated for sharing. There are many avenues for sharing, including the aforementioned Twitter and Facebook. GAP’s Twitter handle is @thinkpsychiatry (great handle!) and Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=group%20for%20the%20advancement%20of%20psychiatry>.

Sharing others’ blogs helps develop new relationships with other blog sources, individuals and organizations. This can lead to being invited to guest-blog on someone else’s blogs, or share GAPs material for credited re-publication on other websites. This is a good example of how blogging can extend GAPs presence to new audiences. It is better to allow re-publication of blogs with the stipulation of properly crediting the source. This is usually written into the legal section of the main website.

Including links within the body of GAP blogs, back to other GAP blogs, can drive traffic back to GAP. Including links to external partners, both within blogs and in a special section for partners on the main website, can help to drive traffic to the GAP website as well. Inviting great guest bloggers is a very good way of both building relationships as well as creating more blog views, as the guest writer is likely to promote their material.

Social media accounts can be conveniently managed from one master control panel via several affordable (perhaps free) “dashboards”. Hootsuite is the one I’ve been using to manage several accounts and post to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and others. It can auto schedule posts to multiple locations at times when they are most likely to be read, and can post to special interest groups on LinkedIn as well as GAP’s pages. Hashtags can be used for additional targeting, for example a blog about depression would have a catchy title, a link to the blog, and #depression #psychiatry.

The name of the game of to produce good material with some frequency, generate a growing audience, create reciprocal relationships, and cross-share material to amplify reach. Messaging quality and importantly, visual images which are important on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn also, determines “clickability”. Therefore, it is better to add an interesting image to accompany posts on social media whenever possible.

5. What risks, if any, do the GAP blogs pose for the organization?

Stale material can project a less favorable image, so it is important to keep the social media presence reasonably fresh. This isn’t a major problem, and would just mean social media traction would develop more slowly. The flipside is that recycling evergreen material as noted above is useful. If you developing a following, and then drop the ball, you can lose those followers.

Blogs with controversial or problematic views or material can generate negative attention. Blogs which are inaccurate could lower the credibility of the organization as an expert source, conversely with the potential positive effects. Blogs can be easily edited or taken down, though the Internet maintains a repository of deleted material in some cases. None of this is likely to be an issue for GAP as the Publication Committee governs what makes it onto the website.

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The legal section of GAP's website should include, if it does not already, a properly-worded disclaimer regarding not offering professional advice or services, and to seek such services if appropriate.

6. What additional actions would improve GAP's social media and digital marketing strategy?

Psychology Today: Obtaining a blog column on PsychologyToday.com for GAP as an organization would be a very effective tool for reaching a broad audience. Psychology Today (PT) gives authors ownership of material published on their website, allowing blogs to be posted there as well as on one's own website. Not all blogs would have to also be posted on PT, and some could be written specifically for their readership. PT also pays bloggers, approximately \$3 per 1000 views. Popular columns can generate significant income. An good example of a blog written by a group (the journal Contemporary Psychoanalysis) is <https://www.psychologytoday.com/experts/the-contemporary-psychoanalysis-group> Having a PT blog might also motivate GAP members to write, as it is a popular platform to effectively share one's viewpoint.

LinkedIn: A GAP company page on LinkedIn would be important for sharing material as well. GAP members on LinkedIn should be contacted along with other professionals. There are many relevant special interest groups on LinkedIn. GAP can position itself as a thought leader in several key areas using social media, building brand value for GAP as a whole, as well as creating a platform to share material from GAP Committees on specific subject areas.
Facebook: GAP's Facebook page would like nice with a photo and header, and may qualify for a free custom name to make the link great. There are other social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Pinterest), but many of them are image-driven and not suitable for GAP use without significant development.

MailChimp (e-Newsletter/Mailing List Management): A service such as MailChimp can generate segmented mailing lists, and be used to send email newsletters, and create social media ready links to allow people to sign up to receive the GAP newsletter with links to GAP blogs. This is more labor-intensive and involved, but relatively easy to implement if there is material available. This could be used to reach audiences outside of GAP, as well as to increase engagement with current and past GAP members.

Other Considerations: The above ideas represent some basic uses, free or low-fee. Posts on social media can be "boosted" to reach a larger, target audience, fairly affordably. For images, that's a complicated landscape, and can offer suggestions. GAP's social media channels can be fruitfully used to share news and commentary, as deemed appropriate, in order to help increase the number of followers. Strategies to increase followers are important to implement and maintain in order to fully leverage the power of social media.