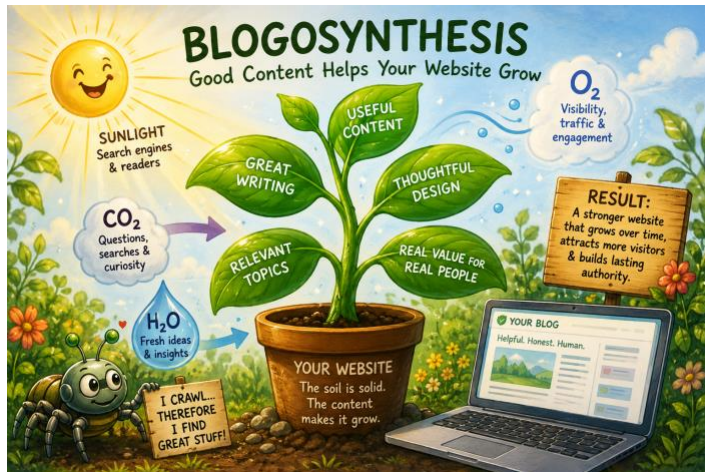




Blogosynthesis: How Good Content Helps a Website Grow

By Curtis Jerry Smothers

A website can sit perfectly still for months or years. A blog gives it life.

Every useful new article adds something for readers to discover, something for search engines to index, and another possible doorway through which someone can enter your website. Done consistently, blogging can turn an otherwise static collection of pages into a living, growing body of information.

Which, strangely enough, brings us to ninth-grade botany. Remember your lesson on photosynthesis? You may have had to memorize a long definition beginning with something like, “Photosynthesis is the process in which....”

For most of us, it was one of those *learn it, pass the test, and forget it* experiences. We yawned and moved on, secure in the adolescent certainty that we would never need to know anything about photosynthesis again. We were wrong.

Photosynthesis Meets Blogging

In simplified terms, photosynthesis is the process by which plants use sunlight, water and carbon dioxide to produce the energy they need to grow, releasing oxygen along the way. Stay with me. An “aha!” moment approaches.

Blogging performs something vaguely similar for a website. Good writing, useful information and thoughtful presentation combine with the energy supplied by readers and search engines to help a website grow.

Call it **blogosynthesis**. Yes, I know. Somewhere a botanist just groaned. But underneath the bad pun is a useful comparison.

A plant doesn't perform photosynthesis once and declare the job finished. It continually converts available resources into stored energy. In much the same way, a good blog gradually builds a storehouse of useful content. An article written today can still answer someone's question months—or even years—from now. That accumulated content becomes part of the website's energy.

Give People Something Worth Finding

There was a time when much of the advice about blogging for search visibility concentrated on keywords, rankings and attracting web crawlers. Those things haven't entirely disappeared, but the emphasis has changed. The better question today is much simpler: **Does this page give somebody something worth finding?**

A useful blog article might answer a question, explain a difficult subject, tell a good story, offer an opinion, teach a skill or simply entertain. If it does the job well, it gives readers a reason to stay on the site, explore another page, return later or share what they found.

Search engines benefit from many of those same qualities because their own goal is to help people find useful information. So rather than writing primarily for a mysterious electronic creature crawling around the Internet, write for the human being sitting in front of the screen. The crawler will find its way.

The Cellular Energy of a Website

Here's where my old photosynthesis metaphor still works surprisingly well. Plants store the products of photosynthesis as energy. Websites accumulate something similar through their content. One worthwhile article may not accomplish much by itself. Twenty, fifty or a hundred articles, however, can create an interconnected body of information with many different paths leading readers into the site.

Some articles will flourish. Some will barely see daylight. Occasionally an old piece will unexpectedly spring back to life because somebody searches for exactly the subject you wrote about years ago. That is one of the pleasures of blogging.

Writing doesn't necessarily disappear after publication. It becomes part of the accumulated intellectual inventory of the website. Or, if you'll permit me one final trip back to biology class, its **cellular energy**.

And Now, Your Reward

Since you've stayed with me through botany, blogging, search engines and one truly questionable new word, you deserve a science joke.

Q: What did the amoeba say to the protoplasm?

A: Don't bacilli!

If you don't get it, ask a science major to pronounce *bacilli* for you. Your science-major friend may not think it's funny either, but at least you'll have someone else to blame.

And that brings us back to blogging. A website needs more than attractive pages sitting quietly on the Internet. It needs ideas, stories, information and occasional bursts of silliness that give people a reason to visit. Keep supplying those things and, little by little, the site grows. That's photosynthesis.

Or blogosynthesis. There won't be a quiz.