

Blogs and credibility

Re: Liberal MP at Centre of Blog Controversy, Mark Evans, Tech Post, Jan. 17

Mr. Evans writes that "old-style media tools" are inadequate in the face of blogs. As a public relations practitioner, I find blogs a fascinating addition to the media landscape. However, three communications principles lead me to wonder if Mr. Evans hasn't overestimated their effect: reach, audience and credibility.

The prominence of the debate between Ottawa professor Michael Geist and Toronto MP Sam Bulte is driven by Mr. Geist's access to traditional media. He has a weekly legal column in the business pages of the *Toronto Star*. That column reaches an enormous number of people.

Contrasting the audiences of traditional mass media to blogs, blogs build on a community of interest. They largely attract people of a common mind.

Thirdly, blogs are not subject to the same editorial scrutiny that exists in radio, TV or print. For that reason, they do not have the credibility of traditional media and their online editions.

Elections are key periods when we realize that everyone around us has opinions. People are motivated — and encouraged — to express those preferences at the ballot box. That having been said, I highly doubt that any politician on the campaign trail is worried that the person at the door has seen this blog or that blog. To date, blogs just don't have that reach, audience diversity or credibility.

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