

# Bloggers & Brands



## Green & Clean Mom

A simple how-to-guide for bloggers looking to work with brands and small business. Covering how to shine as a blogger and set your blog apart from the others. A deeper understanding of what a blog ambassador is and what a blog tour is. Plus an inside look for brands, PR firms and small business with tips and advice on how to work with bloggers. From a professional bloggers point of view with real life advice. Resources, links and more to get you started!

Getting it right  
from the **START!**



## A Personal Note

Thanks for reading this short eBook on simple things you can do as a blogger to make yourself shine for the brands you want to work with. Hopefully you are reading this eBook because you want to blog professionally and make money working with brands large and small OR you want to learn more about working with bloggers. I will cover simple ways to make yourself as a blogger sparkle, to what to do after a junket or how to be a blog ambassador – I share with you all of my own personal tips. Tips that I personally use and tips that I’ve developed after seeing things go astray! Even tips I have developed from learning lessons based on my own mistakes

and moving past them to become better at what I do.

This simple eBook is also intended to help brands; individuals and small business better understand blogging. The insight could be invaluable and lend itself to amazing partnerships with bloggers. As both a professional blogger making a living and a consultant connecting bloggers and brands I have a very good understanding of both sides. I only bring my own experience to the table with hopes it strengthens blogger and brand relations.

The blogging community is like home to me but like all families there are rivals, competition and occasionally ranking. We bloggers can support each other, be there to listen, learn and advise. An online family that is uplifting, motivational, inspiring and there in times of need and celebration! Yet there is also the side of this “family” that lends itself to critique and sometimes life isn’t fair! The internet levels the playing field for all of us to be friends without borders because where you live is not important online- this doesn’t mean we are online for the same reasons. I take all of this into consideration because I love my online community and blogging family and friends.

I hope this provides you with ideas and tactics that will help you in your blogging journey. It is my advice based on almost five years of knowledge and experience. I hope you gain something from this. The eBook or guide as some call it, is written in first person because I truly want you to feel as though I’m talking to you. Communicating with you the reader and sharing like a friend my knowledge.

Best Wishes, Sommer



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## Every Blogger is an Influencer but Not Every Blogger is a Professional Blogger

Does a blogger have to be qualified to work with brands, sit on advisory boards or review products?

*Technically, no.* There are not degrees given in the field of blogging, nor is there a set of benchmarks that must be met. However, I say that yes, a blogger must be qualified in his or her area of expertise if he or she wishes to be taken seriously as a professional blogger. And like most things, there's a range when it comes to a person's expertise - I'm pretty good at balancing my checkbook, but should you come to me for financial planning? Nope. Should I sit on an advisory board as a financial guru? Sorry, not my field. But if you want to talk early childhood, I can do that. My master's degree in early childhood education is a pretty good credential that lets you know I can represent in that department. And if you're interested in learning about living green, I can talk that talk, too. My life experience speaks for me there. Running my own business? Been there, done that, wrote the book.



One of the things I love about the internet is that anyone can be a blogger. It's a level playing field with tons of great opportunities. So if you want to influence what people think, the choices they make and the things they do, get them to read your blog. If you want to be a professional blogger, write about things in your field, AND get folks to read your blog. Also, do this:

**Develop a brand.** This isn't about getting the fanciest logo; it's about telling people what you're all about. My thing is Green and Clean. Yours might be independent music, vegan cooking or kids' toys. Pick your thing and be clear about it in what you write and how you present yourself.

**Offer a product or a service.** I'm offer eBooks, training courses, I speak at events and I professionally consult for brands and small business. I also have a children's

book. These are tangible, valuable products and services. What are yours? Will you design websites? Will you offer advice? Or is your writing so compelling that companies want to advertise on your site?

These qualities represent some of your qualifications, and they help companies learn more about you. Now, if I was hired to develop a blogger advisory board, I would look for the following qualifications before reaching out to any blogger:

### **How long have they been blogging?**

- What is their blog about? Do their mission and values align with the company? I'd read their about me page, disclosure page, press page and many, many posts.
- What have they reviewed in the past? Have they ever mentioned the company's product?
- Are there testimonials?
- Is there a media kit detailing their reach, prices, services and resume?
- Twitter and Facebook feeds. What are they saying, and how are they saying it? Do they have a tone that the company appreciates? Is their language appropriate? How many friends and followers do they have? How many people are they really capable of influencing online?
- Ranking and Klout. These tell me how big a blogger they are, what kind of social media footprint they have, and how web savvy they are. I'd check their Alexa Ranking, Google Ranking and Klout Score.
- Google research. What are others saying about this blogger? What brands have worked with this blogger? Is there a YouTube presence? How do I feel about what I find there?

Having a blog isn't a qualification. Showing companies with whom you'd like to work that you're professional, interesting and knowledgeable about your brand and influence will lead you to the right brand, the right product, and the right audience.

### **How to Shine as a Blogger Who Wants to Work with Brands**

So you're a blogger, and you want to work with companies and brands. You want to qualify for a blog ambassador program, be a consultant, review products and attend press junkets. How do you get started? How do you groom your blog and work experience so that you're attractive to brands and PR firms?

Have a good ["About Me"](#) page. It's how companies know who you are and what you stand for. It's essential for this page to be excellent.

Create a media kit. What is it that you're bringing to the table? What are your stats, online and offline reach, who has given you testimonials? Put these components into a pretty little presentation and make it easy to find. Learn more from the free eBook *Blog to Business*, which helps bloggers, create media kits.



Make your blog and social network spiffy. It's like inviting someone to your house - you need to clean it first! Do you have a great theme and blog design? Can you clean up your sidebars? What does your Twitter profile say? How's your background information? Be neat and presentable - this is your online first impression!

Network online and offline. Let your online friends know you're interested in working with companies. Attend conferences or local events and begin to meet people who can refer you to companies or other connections. Be social, get to know people who have networks, and demonstrate your value as a professional.

Define what it is you really want to do. Want to monetize? Reviewing products means you're a business, and you'll have to claim those products on your taxes! Want to consult with brands, be sponsored for conferences, and be an ambassador? This means travel and working outside of business hours. Is your main goal to get a job with a company? Sit down and figure out each step of your plan before jumping in.

### **So you are invited to a Blogger Event or Press Junket! Now What?**

So you are a blogger and you get this email inviting you to a fancy event being held in a big city. The PR firm is holding a tour of a company, a luncheon, free product and a chance to meet so and so. Pretty darn exciting so of course you say, yes! I mean hello, you want to have a vacation from the family and you would love to network with new bloggers and talk your lingo. You may or may not know about the company but you are open to learning. At the event you want to shine, especially if you hope to continue a relationship with the company and then afterwards you have to have a follow-up process and decompress to figure out your next steps. Here are my top five tips for how to shine at a blogger event and junket and what to do after the event.

## Work it Baby

1. **Dress professionally but like yourself.** If you aren't sure what the dress code is, ask in advance. If you aren't sure of what to pack or wear, ask your friends online and offline but best of all be comfortable, look nice and you'll make a good first impression. If you don't usually wear heels, don't wear them for this event – you're sure to trip and look silly (personal experience talking here and battle scar)!
2. **Research the company,** find them online and do your homework. Then be prepared beforehand on where you think you might fit for this company or how you can help the company.
3. If you're attending an advisory meeting or masterminding with the company (they are picking your brain) make sure you **bring up suggestions that you're qualified to speak on** (if you've never been a blog ambassador or know what this is – be quiet). **Knowing when to speak to highlight where you shine is just as important as not speaking at all!** I like to take a lot of notes and create lists so when I do speak I am organized, sound smart and act professional.
4. **If you're attending a press junket think of questions beforehand that will appeal to your online audience and community.** What would your community, online and offline ask you or want to know? Ask questions that are not repetitive of what others are saying and take good notes and photos for your future blog posts of what the company is trying to show you (the press). If you decide to write about the press junket you'll be glad you took good notes and photos. Using quotes of what was said or what others said makes your report of the event more professional.
5. **The three do not's in my book: Don't argue. Don't Hard Sell. Don't Exaggerate.** All three make you look bad to the PR firm, the company's representative and the other bloggers. You'll seem like someone who is not a team player and competitive. Someone who is out for just themselves with the hard sell and frankly when you exaggerate everyone can see right through it and you'll look stupid. Companies keep working with me and with other bloggers because we are real, approachable and the follow up, delivery and ROI say it all – we don't need a hard sell or to exaggerate and neither do you!

## Dating to Marriage



The event has taken place, you've signed a non-disclosure agreement, met new friends, and may have been allowed to tweet and share with others your experience. Now what?

First and foremost, evaluate your own needs and business. What does what you've learned mean to your company, your blog, your community and your audience? Is this company a good fit for you? How do you envision your partnership from here? Make a list of all the things you liked about the company, how you would like to work with the folks you met and what you gained at the event. Sleep on it.

Second, evaluate what it is YOU can give back to the company, if you so choose. Do you want to be a part of any further junkets or think tanks? Do you simply want to review their brand or product? Why are you worth continuing to work with?

After a few days, follow up with an e-mail thanking the company contact person. Include your soft-sell pitch on how you might like to continue working with the company as they further develop their plans. This will help them keep you in mind, and it will be very professional. Include links to your media kit, press page and one or two testimonials.

If your budget permits, send a personal thank you note and box of sweets to your contact. I do this after the e-mail, but within two weeks of the event.

Be patient. Don't go for the hard-sell of pestering - they'll tune you out. PR firms and companies have a process for figuring out next steps, and they typically move slowly.

In the years, this approach has turned out to work very well for me. In fact, I landed a two year consulting contract with The Shaklee Corporation, taking this approach. Score!



## Working Moms Who Travel



Over the past few years, I've traveled more than ever before. I have two small children, and being a working, traveling mom isn't easy. During my time on the road and in the air I've learned a few things that have eased the stress for my kids and for me.

Prepare the kids, but not too far in advance. If I start talking about a trip too soon, they spend time fretting over my departure. This is too stressful for them. Gauge your kids' ages and maturity levels, and decide when would be best for you to discuss leaving. For me, it's about two days before I go.

Turn travel into a geography lesson. We have a large map, and I circle the city I'm traveling to. We talk about where I'm going, what state the city is in, and as the children get older, I plan to incorporate books at bedtime about the state and city. We'll even calculate miles and hours, for math lessons.

Share with your children what you do. If you're mom who is a blogger, read them [My Mommy is a Blogger](#). I wrote it for my own children, and I'm finding it to be a relatable book within the blogging community.

Provide comfort while you're away. Leave your children with people they trust and are accustomed to being with. If possible, keep their routines going. If they like to sleep Mommy's bed while you're gone, let it happen, or offer a robe, blanket or pillow. Do anything you need to so that they're comfortable, especially at night.

Allow them to help you pack. Have them write you a note to open on the airplane or to stick in your suitcase for a surprise. Do the same for them - leave little notes where they're likely to find them.

Ease the countdown. Use a calendar, and simply circle when you leave and when you'll be home. They can cross off day's in-between, and you might consider leaving a piece of chocolate to eat each day you are gone. When there's no more chocolate left, Mommy is coming home!

Don't be selfish. I love talking to my children when I travel, but phone calls make my daughter sad. I speak with my son when my daughter is occupied, and the adult they're staying with tells my daughter that Mommy called and said she loves her very much. Skype is a great tool for kids who won't be sad to see Mommy's face, and texting photos to the adult to share with the kids makes the trip more interesting for them.

Give them something to look forward to. Yes, "Mom Guilt" causes me to promise my children something upon my return, beyond my hugs and kisses! I have tackled this in many unique ways to avoid expensive airport gifts. I keep a closet at home stocked with small items I've found discounted over the year. Before each trip, I pack two items in the car for the kids. This way, when I come home it seems like I purchased the gifts on the trip. I also bring home rocks for my son. He thinks it's cool to have rocks from cities all over the country!



Check your calendar. Don't travel if you can avoid it on their birthdays or special events. Be organized, and don't miss out on big moments.

Mommies work and, sometimes, they travel for work. Don't beat yourself up or let others make you feel guilty. Instead, make it go as smoothly as possible so you can do your work well and be an outstanding mom!

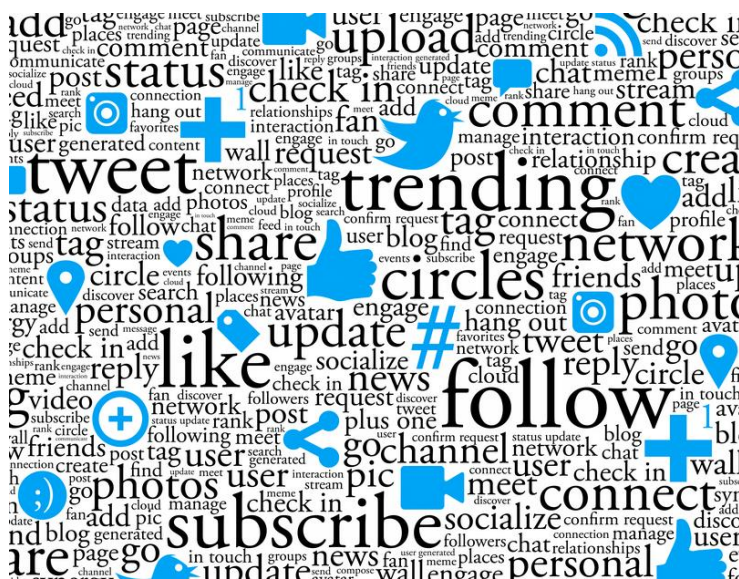
*This eBook has, so far, been about what the blogger can do. The next few pages are some of the tips I give companies and PR firms. I'm sharing this information with you to help you understand what a blog ambassador program should look like, how I advise they be run, and to help answer any questions on the differences between being an ambassador, having a blog tour and being part of a press junket.*

## Blog Ambassador Programs and Press Junkets: Do it Right!

### Blog Ambassador Programs and Press Junkets: The Right Way

Most blogger ambassador programs or press junkets are organized by a PR company that has been hired by a brand interested in engaging and partnering with a group of bloggers. Personally, I've been invited to many junkets and events, and over the last few years I've learned a lot about what works and what does not, both for companies and for me.

I've noticed that PR firms convince a company that they need to use social media and bloggers, but aren't entirely connected to the movers and shakers in the industry. So they toss out e-mails to lots of bloggers asking them to attend (often with very little notice). Here's what could work better:



### **Companies:**

Get savvy about the firm you choose. Ask how they'll find your bloggers, who the bloggers are, and, most of all, if the firm has a RELATIONSHIP with the bloggers. Research the bloggers yourself before approving their attendance at your event. Try to have a staff member working directly with the firm on this. Better yet, hire a blogger like myself who is already connected to bloggers and can speak their language.

Engage in the process. When the CEO attends a junket or event and actively participates in the process, the outcome is far better than a quick appearance at a cocktail reception.



## **A Blog Tour**

A blog tour is **not the same** as having blog ambassadors. A blog tour is usually run by a company specializing in blog tours or hosted by a blogger who has the connections and qualifications to run a blog tour. A blog tour has the following components to make it a good blog tour:

1. **An organized and influential set of bloggers are invited to blog about a product during a set time frame.** This takes place when the company or blogger running the tour invites "x" number of bloggers to the tour and gives them the dates, information on the product, images, and expectations and provides a form for them to



complete and then captures their contact information and check box for agreements.

2. **The product is shipped to the blogger and they have at least 2 weeks to review the product, company or cause.** The company or blogger running the tour follows up with the bloggers to see if they have any questions and make sure they got the products.

3. A **reminder** email is sent to all bloggers of the expectations, date to run the tour and remind them if they cannot provide a fair, honest and accurate review to contact you to clear up any confusion and prevent crisis management.

4. Provide an **option for a giveaway for their readers or discount code.**

5. Provide **disclaimer** language for the blogger.

6. After all the bloggers have written the review it is good to support the bloggers by tweeting their reviews, Facebook the reviews and social bookmarking of the reviews. The bloggers will appreciate the exposure and your company will benefit. **Share** the links of all the blog posts with the other bloggers to help them promote each other.

7. **Read all of the reviews to ensure the bloggers are not saying something incorrect about the company or product or making false claims.**

8. Provide **compensation** to the blogger as a thank you for their time. This is a step beyond free product. When you begin working with bloggers you've entered into the paid media world and the bloggers should be paid for their time.

9. **Offer an incentive** or option to continue working with the company, becoming an affiliate, further reviews, joining you on Facebook or Twitter and/or reviewing more products at a later date.

10. **Follow up with bloggers that provided a high rate of return.** If a blogger created an increase in sales or traffic for your company, advertise on their blog and continue building your relationship with them.

**Well run blog tours take time to facilitate and oversee.** They provide a high return on investment if done correctly. They develop long lasting relationships with bloggers and are affordable in comparison to other media pushes for exposure.

### **Blog Ambassador Program:**

Your company wants to influence the influencers. That's where bloggers come in, as blog ambassadors.

A blog ambassador represents your company, mission, and brand online and offline. They're the troops on the ground offering feedback from others, helping promote your campaigns, and they are compensated for doing so.

A blog ambassador campaign should have clear goals and objectives that are outlined for the blogger. Typically, blog ambassadors genuinely care about the mission they're supporting, and it's reflected in their writing.

Involve the bloggers. Ask them for opinions on how your partnership might look. The synergy between what the bloggers know will work and what the marketing and PR plan is will feel and look great!

Put blog ambassadors in contact with one another, and communicate regularly. Create a Facebook group, private Big Tent group, or share e-mail addresses (with permission). Remind them of upcoming Twitter parties, posts they've agreed to write, updates for



the company, or events. Check in with friendly greetings now and then, too, to build long-term relationships.

By inviting bloggers to help create the plan, you're setting everyone up for success!

## **Connecting with Bloggers**

Influential bloggers can mean big hit counts, major product purchases and over-the-back-fence buzz. Online partnerships drive traffic, increase brand awareness, secure e-mail subscribers, and develop fans.

Before reaching out to bloggers, consider their audience. If you're offering food or beverages, you might look for kitchen or photography bloggers. If you specialize in great scarves, target a fashion blogger.

Here are a few simple ideas for blogger relationships with different types of industries, companies and brands:

### **Car Industry**

Invite a blogger to test drive a vehicle (or a few vehicles) for an extended period of time. Require them to take videos and photos and post regularly about features of the car. A weekend road trip might be a great way to check out all the extras in real-world scenarios.

### **Hotel Industry**

Offer a free night's stay in exchange for a blogger's review. Host a blogging mixer or conference in exchange for free or discounted rooms. Play up what you have to offer - indoor waterpark or a close proximity to great restaurants or shows?

### **Salon and Beauty Industry**

Host a blogger makeover and take before and after photos. Feature a set of products or services. Allow bloggers to host a special coupon with an incentive to earn referral bonuses.

Do note that bloggers are required to disclose free products and services, or if they're paid. Bloggers own their content, their opinions and their blog space, and it's their right to give bad reviews. It's your responsibility to make sure bloggers aren't making untrue claims or promises about your product, brand or service. By developing an open, supportive relationship, you'll be able to clear up misconceptions before they're posted online.

## **Suggested Reading and Examples**

### **Press Pages:**

<http://greenandcleanmom.org/press>

<http://thelemonbowl.com/media>

<http://classymommy.com/press/>

<http://www.extraordinarymommy.com/press/>

<http://inhabitat.com/press>

### **Media Kits:**

<http://www.beingreese.com/2014/04/how-to-design-free-media-kit-for-your.html>

<http://fitfoodiefinds.com/2014/06/blogging-biz-sell-client/>

<http://www.blogclarity.com/10-inspiring-media-kits-from-bloggers/>

<http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/12/15/create-a-media-kit-to-attract-advertisers-to-your-blog/>

<http://www.blissfullyeverafter.net/advertise/>

<http://livingincolorprint.com/blogger-to-blogger-media-kit-101/>

<http://ohksocial.com/make-money-blogging-create-a-stellar-media-kit/>

<http://greenandcleanmom.org/about/>

### **Suggested reading list for blogging and blog marketing:**

<http://amzn.com/l/R307PMVMNPZKPW>



## My Experience

### About the Author

I'm Sommer Poquette, children's book author of [My Mommy is a Blogger](#) and professional blogger at [Green and Clean Mom](#) where I blog about parenting, health, trying to be greener and everything in between. I'm also a subject matter expert (SME) for Stone Temple Consulting, writing for their client Home Depot on a regular basis.

I have a master's degree in Early Childhood Education and spent years as a preschool teacher, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher and early childhood advocate. Now I run my own at-home business as blogger and social media consultant. I specialize in blogger relations, outreach, management and strategy. I've worked with brands and companies of all sizes, including but not limited to the following: Horizon Milk, Verizon, ABC's The View, Ford Motor Company, eBay, White Cloud, Whirlpool, Method, ecoStore USA, Healthy Child Healthy World, Green Irene, Earth Mama Angel Baby, Cisco, BlogHer.com, BabyCenter.com and Stonyfield Farms.

I was previously a social media consultant for the Shaklee Corporation, managing blogger relations and outreach. I was rated a top 50 mom blogger by Nielsen Online in 2009. I've been mentioned by the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, ABC News Online and [other press and media outlets](#).

For more information about me and my work please visit:

<http://greenandcleanmom.org/about/>

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*<http://greenandcleanmom.org/disclaimer>*

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I'm Sommer Poquette, a White Cloud® blogger. Learn more about me at [mywhitecloud.com](http://mywhitecloud.com)

White Cloud Green Earth

White Cloud Green Earth

The image shows a woman, Sommer Poquette, standing and holding a globe. She is wearing a green short-sleeved button-down shirt and dark jeans. To her left are two packages of White Cloud Green Earth paper products. The background is a light green gradient.

**NOTES:**