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Blogging to share good practice.

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Gill Phillips, the Director of Nutshell Communications Ltd and creator of [Whose Shoes?®](#), in the first of a two part blog talks about the advantages of online networks in allowing for a more dynamic approach to communication and knowledge sharing in the Social Care Sector. [Whose Shoes?®](#) is an exciting tool allowing you to 'walk in other people's shoes'. Through a very wide range of scenarios and topics, the tool helps you explore many of the concerns, challenges and opportunities facing the different groups affected by the transformation of health and social care.

I love Twitter. It is so immediate and dynamic – a great way of linking up with like-minded people and having conversations with folk that you would never otherwise get to speak to – either because of hierarchies, distance or sheer logistics. Running a small business, this is a wonderful opportunity. I am judged on my merits and unhindered by artificial boundaries. I build relationships with decision-makers in a wide range of organisations. For promoting specialist products and services such as mine, this is far more effective than traditional networking or marketing methods. I come into contact with self-selected innovators as [Twitter](#) is not yet “mainstream,” especially for CEOs of public sector organisations. By definition, I am dealing with people who are prepared to push the boundaries and embrace more creative approaches to communication and knowledge sharing.

But sometimes the 140 characters allowed on Twitter are simply not enough – you have something to say, something to contribute. Blogging provides the perfect platform. I have been writing a blog now for over two years and it is interesting to look back and see how it has evolved. I couldn't possibly have planned the course of its development at the outset – I think it had to be organic – and indeed somewhat quirky, to fit with the way I like to do things.

Blogging is really a way of sharing stories. Stories are a brilliant means of helping people understand what is happening in people's lives and, in consequence, promoting person-centred approaches to health and social care. I can embed tweets, photos and videos to bring my material alive. Far more accessible and engaging than an endless stream of dry reports, methinks.

So, how do you get a blog off the ground? You write engaging stuff... but who is going to read it? This is where a strong social media presence comes in. I post regular links to my blog through Twitter and LinkedIn and sometimes Facebook; my friends and followers pass it on (by re-tweets and comments) to their people and before long the statistics of viewers and subscribers are increasing. It is fascinating and encouraging to see the blog reaching other countries and now being viewed somewhere in the world pretty much 24/7.

I am “[LinkedIn](#)” with over 1000 people, most of whom have relevant roles in the health and social care sector, so an immediate “potential audience” for my blog. I co-manage a LinkedIn group “The personalisation group to integrate social care, health and housing” – again 2300 members might be interested if I post a link to a relevant blogpost as a discussion in the group. People can either comment on the blog itself or in the discussion groups, so this also fosters an immediacy that is exciting and refreshing.

I was speaking to an editor of a care magazine at a recent conference and suddenly realised just how powerful blogging can be. I wrote some thoughts about the conference that night and posted them the following morning. It has turned out to be [my most popular blogpost](#) to date. The editor of a printed magazine has a much longer lead time and, amidst these rapid communication channels, finds it much harder to be topical and capture the buzz of the moment.

I have always loved writing and enjoy the flexibility and freedom of a blog – it is completely non-prescriptive; just what you and your readers want to make of it. For me, it brings together other personal interests as I include my own photos and sometimes videos. More recently, [I have experimented with 'Storify'](#), but then learned how to [embed tweets directly into my WordPress blog](#) as a means of capturing key debates. There are no rules, you just have to find what works for you and I take pleasure in this discovery process.

I follow other people's blogs, both for interest in the content and also to learn new tips. Dan Slee, Senior Press and Publicity Officer at Walsall Council, has written several blogposts sharing insights into social media generally and [blogging in particular](#). I also regularly [comment on other people's blogs](#). People say this is a good thing to do to raise your presence on social media. No doubt it is, but I do it because I like to engage with people. I like to comment and I like it when people leave comments on my blog. Sometimes I just click on the 'like' button and smile because someone somewhere immediately knows that their blog is being read and appreciated.

The blog that I comment on most regularly is '[Creating life with words – Inspiration, love and truth](#)' by Kate Swaffer. Kate lives in Australia and I subscribe to her daily blog talking about her experiences of living with (young onset) dementia. I am often working late at night and see Kate's blog pop up in my inbox. Within minutes, I am communicating directly with this inspirational lady on the other side of the world. Sometimes we even [re-post each other's blogs](#). Powerful connections indeed.

My 'core business' is my [Whose Shoes? concept](#) – looking at issues from different perspectives. I have developed [Whose Shoes? products](#) – a board game version and now a new [electronic tool in partnership with Think Local. Act Personal \(TLAP\)](#). These facilitation tools help people engage with personalisation and other important changes in health and social care and [work together to co-produce local action plans](#). In tomorrow's blog I look at how a passion for raising awareness of dementia led to the development of this concept and how blogging helped me to get this idea off the ground.

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