

# US car rental firm takes blogging to the next level



By [Mike Stopforth](#)

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Budget car rentals in the United States, [www.budget.com](http://www.budget.com), is making waves in marketing and advertising circles with the launch of Up Your Budget, [www.upyourbudget.com](http://www.upyourbudget.com), a 16-city treasure hunt campaign with total prize money of \$160k (\$10k per winner, per city). The concept is significant as it marks the birth of the first entirely blog-based viral contest campaign in marketing history.

If the word is foreign to you, a blog (web-log) is a series of articles (called posts), usually around a theme, published to the Web as a website by an author or authors for a predetermined readership, or for the public domain.

Blogs are significant not only because the numbers say so (there are currently 20.2 million active blogs on record), but they uniquely offer Joe Public the opportunity to publish quality content to the Internet with the ease of typing up an email. You do not need any technical background to maintain a blog, and the software used to build most blogs is available for free use. This exciting new online medium has fast evolved from a geeky fad into a publishing phenomenon and is challenging long-established communications models in all industries.

Suddenly anyone with an Internet connection has a voice that can be heard around the globe, and most people are just itching to exercise their newfound freedom. Inevitably, companies get mentioned. Sometimes in customers' blogs, sometimes by suppliers, sometimes even in their own employees' personal online journals.

The blogging giant, which has grown in size exponentially over the last 3 years (the total amount of blogs on the 'Net doubles on itself every 5.5 months), has resulted in a new tide of consumer-generated media. This Monolithic Web of conversations, authored by consumer and citizen journalists and constructed on socially-oriented software, is a force to be reckoned with.

Budget Car Rentals is one of the many companies (most Fortune 500 companies run external and internal blog strategies) which has realised the potency of this new medium with its intrinsically viral nature, and is harnessing and capitalizing on it. In turn, they are contributing to blogging's evolution as a mainstream medium.

The Up Your Budget campaign is a "quantum leap forward for the medium", being the blue-chip marketing campaign created by a blogger, [www.whatsnextblog.com](http://www.whatsnextblog.com), illustrated by a blogger, [www.gapingvoid.com](http://www.gapingvoid.com), run on blog software, advertised exclusively on blogs (the announcement of the contest was made on 77 major blogs worldwide) and first reported by blogs. It has already been a huge success, with the first winner, a George Culbertson, already having claimed his \$10k. As it stands, the Up Your Budget home blog is receiving in excess of 10 000 unique visitors every day.

## ABOUT MIKE STOPFORTH

Mike Stopforth is a Web commentator, social software expert and connectivity specialist. A consultant with the Futurist Strategy Network, TomorrowToday.biz, Mike spends his time developing communication strategies for organisations wanting to embrace the opportunities presented by the New Economy. Join the conversation on his blog, TomorrowConnecting, email him [mike@tomorrowtoday.biz](mailto:mike@tomorrowtoday.biz) or call +27 (0)82 378 1691.

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