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Women bloggers unite

By SARAH SCHILLACI, HERALD NEWS | 04/03/08 02:13 AM

Business convention offers tips, support

PATERSON -- The Internet has given us some real doozies -- chain e-mails, pop-ups, Perez Hilton. So when Shirley Frazier heard about the newest Web craze of the early 2000s, blogging, she was understandably skeptical.

"I wondered if it was going to be like a Pet Rock," she said.

The Paterson resident already had a thriving gift basket business and was a professional speaker with her own Web site. She didn't know if the techie movement with the strange name would be worth the work, so she waited and watched the trend develop.

In 2005, she decided that she had waited long enough and launched the first of her four blogs. She's been thrilled with her choice.

"It's a great way to share information and ideas on whatever topic you choose," she said.

Frazier, 50, is among the growing population of women who have made names for themselves on the "blogosphere," the network of Web-based personal notebooks that expound on news, sports and the happenings in almost any special interest group.

There are also business bloggers like Frazier, who use their blogs to share thoughts on their industries, network with peers, and ultimately, make money.

Today's the first day of the BlogHer Business convention in Manhattan, a gathering of women who use social media to promote their businesses. Attendees range from individuals with start-ups to representatives from Microsoft and Hearst. It's one of eight BlogHer conferences that will be held nationwide this year.

Elisa Camahort Page, who co-founded BlogHer in 2005, said the organization has filled a need for women seeking support on the blogosphere.

"Three years ago when we started, there was a question being asked which kind of needed to die, which was, 'Where are the women bloggers?'" Page said. "We really wanted to create an opportunity for women, to raise the profile of all women and what they accomplished with their blogs."

Those accomplishments aren't just political diatribes and melodramatic life stories -- professionals trade business ideas each day with their posts.

On her gift basket blog, Frazier discusses how to create brochures as well as how to reach out to clients.

One benefit of blogging, Frazier says, is that the frequent updates make blogs come up higher on search engines. If you Google "gift basket industry," her blog is the third on the list.

"You don't know why, you don't ask why," said Frazier. "You are busy doing your business."

She also generates revenue through ads and links to Amazon.com, in addition to promoting her public speaking business.

Frazier was one of the featured speakers at last year's BlogHer Business convention in New York, and plans to attend a conference later this year in San Francisco. While she hasn't met any other business bloggers in the North Jersey area, she's eager to see other women venture into the blogosphere.

"Expansion is what entrepreneurs do, you kind of shake your tree and see what falls out, which topics interest you and your blog audience," she said. "It's not a man's world anymore."

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