

## **S2E2: This is why scientists should start blogging today**

Welcome to the SciComm Toolkit podcast. The show for scientists and science communicators to gain all the skills they need to bring their science stories to life. I am Soph. I am a science communicator and digital content creator, but also your host for the show.

For anyone that doesn't know, back when I was doing my PhD, my first foray into science communication was blogging. It started off with the more traditional and diary style types of blog posts like a day in the life of, and mixed in with pieces I had written about certain science topics. It evolved to show more about PhD life and now my career in science communication and more, but my little blog ended up winning the UK Blog Awards back in 2018 which was something I could never have dreamed of when I hit publish that very first time and maybe getting 10 views - most of which I think came from my family.

Since then I've tried out many other types of science communication and hopefully added more strings to my bow, but science blogging is something I always gravitate back to. It is one of the best ways to do science communication in my humble opinion, and it is why I really would love to get more scientists click-clacking away on their keyboards and putting blogs out there into the world.

Science blogging is not like the images of lifestyle, travel or food bloggers that might immediately spring to mind when I say the word 'blog'. Don't get me wrong, there is loads that we can learn and take away from those genres, but science blogs are ways to share science and give it more context. A way to humanise science more in a way. Science blogs play such an important role for science and scientists themselves, so in today's episode I just wanted to share 3 big reasons why scientists and science communicators should be science blogging. I hope it will convince you or at least give you some food for thought before I share more about the hows of blogging in future episodes. But for today, we are just going to start with the whys.

So the first reason is to share and communicate your research beyond publications and manuscripts. Science, like art, needs to be shared. As scientists, we all want our work to reach, impact or help someone. That could be anyone from another scientist using the same technique as you, to patient group perhaps. Not all publications are going to get media coverage and yes you can tweet about your latest paper which will reach your followers, might get some retweets to increase that reach further and you might even get some clicks through. But 24 hours later, it disappears into the mysterious fog of previous tweets which makes it quite tricky for anyone to find again at a later date.

This is where blogs come in. They allow you to tell the story of your publication, the ups and downs, the triumphs and the challenges. They give you the opportunity to share your findings in an accessible way, and in a way where you have control over what is said so nothing is sensationalised and so on, and in a way where you can really highlight why it matters and why someone should care. That might be in your publication, but repackaging it in this way will get so many more eyes on what you have done, and in a way that more people can find because blogs are more searchable than social media. Blogs are a great way for you to take control of your online presence. It is why they are better than having a

social media profile - although that is really important right now too - and another reason why you should have a website - which could be your blog. All points that we can dissect further in the future.

The next reason is to build your authority. They are like your positioning statement and what you want to be known for. Your science blog isn't just for writing about your latest manuscripts. You can comment on the latest developments in the field. You can correct misinformation about a topic. You can advocate for a cause or action that you are passionate about. You can get more people talking about a topic or issue. You can add value by bringing to light topics that aren't talked about enough.

Someone who has carved a spot for themselves and done this so incredibly well is Professor Paul Knoepfler; a stem cell biologist in the US. His blog [ipscell.com](http://ipscell.com) covers all the news and breakthroughs in the stem cell field.

When it comes to building an authority and as a result a network, I think it is also important to share here who might be reading your blog. This will obviously depend on the goals of your specific science blog, but it will be read by colleagues, potential collaborators and also potential lab mates and students who might want to join your lab. Not only could your blog give them a sense of your research as we have discussed but you can use this platform to share more about what working with you in your team would be like. You can write posts about lab retreats, conferences, hell even give your current team members a chance to write something on your blog. All of this can also show potential and future colleagues how they can develop and grow by working with you, and what they can learn beyond the science.

All of this applies if you are a science communicator too. Let people know what topics are your speciality, what types of science communication you do and how you can help or what you offer to others, but also your stances on things and so on. It is also a way that anyone who might be hiring you or collaborating with you can get a sense of what you are like to work with too, but also get to know YOU more beyond just a contract of work to carry out.

So not only can you use science blogging to put your science on the map, but you can put yourself on the map too.

Building on that the third reason why you should start science blogging today is all about careers, ambitions and skills. Learning to write about your science that isn't the traditional academic way is a skill. One that you have to practice, practice, practice and blogging gives you that opportunity. It allows you the chance to add you back into your writing and share your experiences, develop your own voice and so on. These skills are so important not only if you want to explore careers away from the lab bench and academia, but if you want to stay too. I guess that is the whole reason I have created this podcast and it is a theme to probably everything I will ever share as part of this toolkit. But when it comes to transferable skills there is nothing better than having actual proof that you can point people towards to show you can do it and a blog is just one way you can do that.

But beyond the skills, you might have career ambitions to do a TED talk, or you want to write a book. You might want to build a community for academics about mental health or you might dream of being invited to be a keynote speaker at conferences about whatever topics you are passionate about. Having a blog where you share opinions and round ups of news and topics and being a go to source for something, is going to get you noticed and help you take the next step. I got my TEDx talk because they saw my blog and I think nearly every email I get with a request is because they found my blog and now they want me to speak about science communication or my career path or whatever it might be.

Blogging is such a powerful tool for you, your science and your career. Yes it might be another thing that you have to add to your to do list and you might be worried about where you will find the time to do that, but these are things I will cover in future episodes as we talk about the hows of blogging some more. Yes it is an investment and a commitment but the rewards are worth it. I can say that from experience.

Welcome back to the self-assembly arena aka the DIY section of the podcast. The part where I share a resource or an activity that you can do right now to help improve your scicomm skills.

Now as much as I would love it if this has convinced you to start a blog, I am not expecting you all to go and sign up straight away. It is a time investment so I know you will want some time to think about it, so for today's DIY section, I want you to get yourself 10 post it notes or 10 small pieces of paper. I want you to take that first sticky note and write down why you would want to blog, what would be your motivations if you decided to start your own, or indeed if you just wanted to try it out and started writing for your organisation's blog or a friend's. Then with the other nine sticky notes, I want you to write down a blog post idea on each of them. Now I want you to do this because I get told so often that I want to start a blog but I don't know what to write about, or I will quickly run out of ideas. I guarantee that you will surprise yourself by how quickly you will fill those nine sticky notes, and of course your first post it note, the one with your motivations, on it will help focus and guide you and make you think something like - ok I want to gain the skills to write a book about stem cells, here are nine things I can write as blog posts already.

I hope that this exercise will add more fuel to your fire and want to start blogging, but at least I hope it gets you thinking about what could be and why it could be so good for your career.

If you have any questions about science blogging, please do get in touch. You can get in touch through my website, or find me on social media. I'm @soph.talks.science on Instagram. If you want to, please take a snap of your post its or bits of paper and share it on social and tag the podcast in it @scicommtoolkit as we would love to see and support you further.

As always links to everything mentioned in today's episode and a transcript can be found on my website [sophtalksscience.com/scicommtoolkit](http://sophtalksscience.com/scicommtoolkit). You can find everything you need there for every episode of the toolkit so far.

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