

CHAPTER 5

COMMUNITY: CREATING AND BUILDING IT

As we advance in the Internet era, the reasons people go online have changed. In the late 1990s, we thought everyone would want to e-mail, shop for pet food, or read whatever information a company or organization chose to put on its home page. Media outlets created websites to expand their readership, but they basically uploaded their daily print content—nothing more and nothing less.

It's become fashionable to refer to this mind-set retroactively as Web 1.0. Now we're deep into Web 2.0. It's a buzzword that means different things to different people, but the gist is this: ✦ When people go online these days, they want to be able to interact with the people and content they find there. As they interact, they create communities that are united by like interests or temperaments. These communities don't have to suffer from the limits that differences in geography, race, sex, age, appearance, or class have put on us in the past. You, a mom in New York, can converse for years with a mom from Illinois whom you've never actually "met." But when she has to put her cat to sleep, you will send reams of sympathy e-mails. We've heard plenty of stories of



THE BLOGOSPHERE: AN INSTANTANEOUS, RAUCOUS DEMOCRACY

DEEPAK CHOPRA, BESTSELLING AUTHOR AND HUFFPOST BLOGGER

The blogosphere produces conflict in a writer. It's a raucous democracy, a global Athens with all kinds of customers striding through the agora. Perverse thoughts intermingle with healthy ones, like bacteria and vaccine in the same syringe. Vituperative cowards snipe from the safety of an anonymous keyboard. Walking psychotics effloresce their symptoms. Yet the temptation is to return again and again. Not simply to be heard (the fraction of words actually listened to must be less than a glass of water in the Niagara), not simply for the freak show, not even for the liveliness of the debate. More than these, a writer is motivated because the blogosphere is instantaneous. Every opinion is fresh off the shelf, and there's a unique thrill in broadcasting your brain, minute by minute, across the world. Of course that's mostly a fantasy, but so is every other means of communication. Talking person to person, one can be totally misunderstood, just as on the Net. Blogs give you a chance to be misunderstood en masse—and grateful when that one sympathetic reader responds and gives you hope for the future of the mind.

people isolated by illness who find new life as the wittiest poster on, say, a current affairs blog.

This chapter is about building the kind of community around your blog that makes the blogosphere a fascinating—and sometimes even warm and fuzzy—place to be. "A blog is only as good as the people who read it," says Katie Saddlemire, HuffPost's community manager. That is why one of your top priorities as a blogger should be to make your readers feel loved. The best way to do this is through prudent management of the comments feature. "Comments have their downsides, but if managed well, you can use them to create a space for lively debate that keeps readers



WHY WE NEED ANONYMOUS COMMENTERS

JOHN RIDLEY, NOVELIST, SCREENWRITER, AND HUFFPOST BLOGGER

A constant of nature is that with substantive progress comes useless by-product. With fire, there is ash. With nuclear power, there is nuclear waste. With television, there is *Two and a Half Men*. This universal constant is equally true with blogging. That which has allowed for the unfiltered expression of the reasoned, the informed, and the thoughtful has also disgorged that which is the anonymous responder. This is not meant in any way to denigrate the essential value of the anonymous responder. The same as carbon monoxide, they, the nameless, are part of the gaseous composition that drives the engine of the digital age. Without the unsigned masses who are compelled at odd hours to respond to anything and everything posted on the web, bloggers would merely be Internet writers—which is just the unemployed version of mainstream media journalists.

coming back for more," she says. "That's what we like to do at HuffPost."

So far, it seems to be going pretty well. Our bloggers often tell us that the sheer volume of comments they get at HuffPost keeps them posting. With over 260,000 registered members, we sometimes get as many as 20,000 comments per day. Lots of comments means lots of people are reading, "and that is immensely rewarding for any writer," says Jim Moore, an Emmy-winning TV news correspondent and HuffPost blogger. "I have written pieces for major publications like the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Boston Globe* and the *Financial Times* and I am quite confident none of them were as carefully read or as widely read as my blogs on HuffPost." A Site Meter counter can tell you that people are reading your blog. But only comments can tell you that they care.

Of course, "care" doesn't necessarily mean "agree with you."



ON RESPONDING TO COMMENTS

AMITAI ETZIONI, DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNICATIONS POLICY STUDIES AT GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY AND HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Before you start blogging, have a long talk with your favorite shrink or best friend. You better be ready not to be showered with kudos and to face barrages of criticisms, not all of which you will consider fair. Most people who respond use aliases, and that makes them more open or less civil (the difference is in the eye of the beholder) than they are when they have to show their face. You can respond to each comment individually or in bunches, which is one of the merits of blogging. But do not expect that you will win over all your critics. Say what you believe needs saying, and take the rest as part of the great free-for-all that is known as cyberspace.

Like an honest friend, a good blog community will tell you when you've got toilet paper trailing from your shoe.

"The interactivity from commenters is a gift and a curse," says Spencer Ackerman, a senior reporter at The Washington Independent and HuffPost blogger. "I like hearing critiques of my work, and I like getting suggestions and ideas for other stuff I should cover, but there's only so many times a day you can read about how much you suck. I suppose you shouldn't play with fire if you're not prepared to see the burn ward, though." Some bloggers describe their rougher days as requiring "Teflon underwear" to keep from sustaining flame war injuries.

But while blogging requires a tough skin, it need not require special Skivvies. This chapter tells you how to build a blog community that resembles a campfire—with lots of singing and telling stories—rather than a bunch of arsonists trying to burn each others' houses down. We'll end this chapter with a short discussion of

the broader blogging community, including its awards and in-person institutions.

Best Practices for Building Community

These guidelines will help create a sense of inclusion around your blog and keep thoughtful readers coming back:

- Create clear community guidelines
- Ask readers for input
- Read and respond to your comments
- Rate and reward good comments
- Keep the conversation going
- Make yourself accessible
- Admit when you are wrong
- Nix spam
- Keep people in line

The first seven of these guidelines are about being the good cop who gets to know the kids on the block. You hand out candy for good grades and fill in as a referee in the local soccer game. The last two are a bit more "bad cop," cracking down on the kid who breaks windows before he goes out and breaks someone's head. All are necessary to create the kind of neighborhood a normal person would want to live in.

Create clear community guidelines. As Saddleire puts it, "People appreciate knowing what to expect. If you expect readers to comment on your blog, it's a good idea to create a set of simple ground rules for them to follow." Include basic information in your guidelines, such as what your blog is about. What is not OK

Your voice should be engaging. Invite reader commentary and criticism, and respond to it. Develop a tone that encourages others to speak their mind, and listen to them. Allow them to help you get better.

—ALEXANDER REMINGTON, THE WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL ASSISTANT AND HUFFPOST BLOGGER

for people to say? Under what circumstance will you delete a comment? "Being up front about your standards helps keep things civil and gives you something to point to when someone breaks the rules," Saddlemire says. You can read HuffPost's guidelines later in this chapter on page 105.

Ask readers for input. End posts with some version of "what do you think?" or ask for people's personal experiences with the issue you're writing about. In 2006 and again in 2008 HuffPost won a Webby Award for Best Political Blog. One of the fun things about the Webbys is that winners must limit their acceptance speech to five words. So both times Arianna asked HuffPost readers for their suggestions. In 2006, our commenters offered up over 300 five-word speeches. "Our HuffPost team kept going back and forth over dinner as to which one I should use," Arianna recounted in her blog the day after the Awards. "Among the top contenders proposed by our readers: 'It's all Geek to me,' 'So, missions CAN be accomplished!,' 'Couldn't do it without Bush,' and 'The WMD are located at . . . ' And our editor, Roy Sekoff, came up with two that remained in the running right until I walked on stage: 'Ws not the only decider' and 'The revolution will be blogged.'

"In the end, I ended up going with the five-word speech offered by HuffPost commenter *simonw*, with me adding a little self-mocking twist: 'Dah-lings,' I said, ratcheting up the accent, 'Make blogs, not war.' I considered going with 'Make blogs, not fucked-up wars,' but cooler heads—i.e., my partner Kenny Lerer—prevailed. So thanks to *simonw*; if you're ever in New York, stop by the office and borrow the Webby for as long as you like."

In 2008, our readers came through with what Arianna called "an embarrassment of pithy riches—offering up over 1,000 sug-

gestions. Some were impassioned, some were funny, many were both—and all were very creative. Color us impressed. And appreciative: Thanks to everyone who sent one in.

"It was a very tough call but, in the end, we decided to go with 'President Obama . . . Sounds good, right?,' submitted by *Sunflower1*. The other finalists were: 'Big Brother, we're watching you' (submitted by *SilthyTove*); 'No country for old media' (*jungpatawan*); and 'Fuck it . . . We'll liveblog it!' (*LiarLiarIraqsOnFire*)"

One thing: if you ask for input, you should be prepared to . . .

Read and respond to your comments. If a poster has directly addressed you or brought up a thoughtful critique of your idea, you should answer this comment. If for some reason you don't think your answer should be public, try to e-mail the person, or ask the person (in the comments section) to e-mail you. This indicates to other posters that you have registered the comment. Note: You should make it clear that you, the blogger, are the person responding (see the Lee Siegel story below).

Rate comments and reward the good ones. Some blogging programs have a feature allowing you to recommend a comment. People often put a lot of effort into their comments. Logan Nakyanzi Pollard, executive producer of Air America Radio and HuffPost blogger, posted an essay not too long ago called "Oh I Get It, the Left Just Doesn't Want to Win This Year." It got over six hundred comments, but "what surprised me more than the number of responses was the level of engagement the readers were making with the post," he says. "Folks were writing their own essays to answer mine, and then posting even more commentary in response to other readers' reactions." Good posts deserve

Don't be put off by some of the comments that seem negative or even hostile. Some provide interesting criticisms, and we learn more from criticism than from praise, pleasant though the latter may be.

—JOSEPH NYE, PROFESSOR OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AT
HARVARD UNIVERSITY AND
HUFFPOST BLOGGER

a bump. Over time, people who consistently post good comments can achieve celebrity status at a site. Make a point of noting the good ones—you might invite these readers to guest blog from time to time. Not only will this make them feel ever more that they're a part of your community, it will buy you a well-deserved vacation.

Keep the conversation going. Sometimes a thoughtful post can spark a whole new round of deliberation. Write posts that reply to what's being said in the comments. Posts based on comments send the unmistakable message that you care about what readers think.

Make yourself accessible outside of the comments section. Post an e-mail address where readers can send tips, praise, or critiques. Thank people who've bothered to send you thoughtful e-mails, and respond to any legitimate beefs (like complaints about your horrible background template).

Admit when you are wrong. You should double- and triple-check your facts. But if you make a mistake or new information comes to light, a growing convention in the blogosphere is to correct a post using the strike-through feature to make changes so readers can see what you said originally and see the correction right next to it. The golden rule of community is to treat other people how you would like to be treated—and no one wants to hang out with someone who refuses to acknowledge when they've stepped in it.

If comment threads lead into areas about which your knowledge is incomplete, readers will respect

your willingness to say the most important three words in the English language: "I don't know."

—Todd Seavey, *Facts and Fears for the American Council on Science and Health blog*

Nix spam. Though thousands of new spam blogs are started every day, some spammers aren't content to stick to their own blogs. They want to put ads on yours. Their bots crawl through cyberspace posting links to penile enhancement pills and gold speculation schemes on any unprotected blog they can find. These posts are annoying both to you ("Wow, six comments! Oh, wait . . .") and to your readers, who have to skip over them to get to the red meat of the debate. Many blogging software programs have anti-spam features. A popular one requires readers to type in CAPTCHAs (which stand for "Completely Automated Public Turing Test to tell Computers and Humans Apart") when they submit a comment or post. CAPTCHAs are usually weird-looking letters and/or numbers. A human can recognize that a squiggly Q is still a Q (unless you have bad eyesight; good programs have different options for the visually impaired). A computer has more difficulty with this task. Consequently, posts that make it through this screen were most likely created by humans, and actual human beings tend to get bored typing posts about penile enhancement all day.

Keep people in line. This is a section unto itself. It is part of the larger question of whether bloggers should moderate their comments, and if they do, whether they should do it proactively or after the fact. By proactively, we mean reading and evaluating each comment before it sees the light of day on your blog. Most of the major blogging software programs have a moderating fea-



It's not foolproof. Not long ago, one spammer devised a scheme that had humans solving CAPTCHAs in order to look at pornographic images. As each CAPTCHA was solved, spam got through site filters. But it works pretty well and, more importantly, CAPTCHAs aren't a big enough deterrent to keep most legitimate posters from having their say.

ture that allows you to do this. When you switch on the moderating feature, the software e-mails you (or otherwise alerts you) every time someone posts a comment. You decide whether to accept or delete the comment.

The question of whether to pre-moderate depends on both your blog size and your tolerance for the odder life forms of the blogosphere.

If you have a relatively small blog with only one or two posts a day and a few dozen comments at most, you probably don't need to pre-moderate. Horrible posts will be rare enough that you can deal with them after the fact. "You want to read through the comments that are posted to your site and address any that violate your rules," Katie Saddlemire, our community manager, says. "Some bloggers delete bad comments, some post replies reminding everyone of their rules. A lot of blog software has ways for you to ban users from commenting, which can be useful for repeat offenders. Do what you're comfortable doing, and be consistent."

This idea of moderating after the fact on small blogs is not a hard and fast rule. If your blog deals with a sensitive subject, you might draw more nastiness than you would otherwise. Joan Price, who keeps a blog about sex after age sixty called *Better Than I Ever Expected* (and is the author of a book by the same name), tells us that "a couple of radio 'shock jocks' ridiculed my blog and invited their readers to visit it and comment." When she stopped by later, "my blog was peppered with horribly vile and obscene comments. It took me a whole morning to find and delete all of them." So now she keeps the moderating feature turned on. She reads comments and either accepts them or deletes them.

Of course, if you are your blog's sole "employee," pre-moderating has downsides. You have to remember to check your site, or check



We never censor comments based on political or ideological point of view. We only delete those comments that . . .

- are abusive, off-topic, or use excessive foul language
- use ad hominem attacks, including comments that celebrate the death or illness of any person, public figure or otherwise
- contain racist, sexist, homophobic, or any other slurs
- are solicitations and/or advertising for personal blogs and websites
- use thread spamming (you've posted this same comment elsewhere on the site)
- are posted with the explicit intention of provoking other commenters or the staff at The Huffington Post.

your e-mail for pending comments, as often as you can. Legitimate readers get annoyed when they have to wait a week for a comment to appear. At that pace, they may as well write their newspaper a letter to the editor! You have to give up a lot of spontaneity to deal with bullying incidents this way.

Larger blogs, on the other hand, can have multimillion-person audiences. That sometimes brings out the kinds of people who enjoy the virtual equivalent of streaking at the Super Bowl. So sites like ours do monitor all comments before they're posted. We actually have over two dozen people who spend their time monitoring HuffPost comments (they work remotely, though sometimes we like to picture a war room of moderators zapping nuclear comments as they come in).

We think of pre-moderation as akin to stopping a nutcase from shouting "fire" in a crowded comedy club so everyone else can enjoy Bill Maher in peace.

The above guidelines, unheeded, would make HuffPost a less pleasant place for the 99 percent of site visitors who visit us for the right reasons. We don't believe we—or you—have any responsibility to establish a platform for the 1 percent of visitors who are “trolls” (Internet slang for disrupters intent on mischief). You know who these people are—the ones who post on a progressive site that all Democrats are pedophiles, or on a conservative site that all Republicans are Nazis, or on a site celebrating tulips that tulips should be ground up and incorporated into bathroom tile. Their whole purpose in posting is to sow discord and get attention (because their own blogs probably aren't getting any).

But we want to stress that trolls are part of the negative fringe—not the rule—of the blogosphere. This is where we differ from cultural critic Lee Siegel, who became the poster child for troll behavior two years ago, even though he frequently rails against it.

A writer for *Slate*, *The Nation*, and other places, Siegel joined the staff of *The New Republic* in June 2006 as a senior editor. He started keeping a blog on the website. As often happens, readers left anonymous comments in the magazine's “TalkBack” section criticizing his work. In particular, some fans of *The Daily Show* host Jon Stewart took issue with Siegel's criticism of the comedian.

In response, Siegel decided to create a virtual sock puppet who would defend him and savage his critics. He called this character “sprezzatura.” The *New Republic* user sprezzatura proceeded to praise Siegel mightily on the boards and even told other readers that “Siegel is brave, brilliant, and wittier than Stewart will ever be. Take that, you bunch of immature, abusive sheep.”

You can see where this is going. When *The New Republic* figured out why sprezzatura was so passionate, the magazine decided that creating multiple electronic personalities to insult the

readership was poor form. *TNR* suspended Siegel in September 2006, though—making this less of a morality tale—he had resumed writing by April 2007. He also got a book contract out of the deal. His *Against the Machine: Being Human in the Age of the Electronic Mob* came out in January 2008. In it, he blasts the Internet, “where the rhetoric of democracy, freedom, and access is often a fig leaf for antidemocratic and coercive rhetoric; where commercial ambitions dress up in the sheep's clothing of humanistic values; and where, ironically, technology has turned back the clock from disinterested enjoyment of high and popular art to a primitive culture of crude, grasping self-interest.”

Well . . .

To be fair, some of our own bloggers also note that the Internet's anonymity can do strange things to people. “If you're writing on a hot topic, the mob mentality can and will emerge,” says Beth Arnold, a journalist and HuffPost blogger. “Get ready for attacks, because they'll come. For the most part, it doesn't bother me for people to passionately disagree because I like the debate spirit. But I have been astonished at how vicious and mean people can be over any subject. You wouldn't want to meet some of them on the street. You wouldn't want them to know your address or phone number. When the mob mentality sits down at the table, you feel the rage that lies under the surface of humanity and the social constructs of civilization.”

We certainly have seen some comment threads get nasty. We've seen them hijacked and seen people get ganged up on. But no one who's attended a condo board meeting thinks this facet of human nature is unique to the anonymous world of the Internet. What is unique to the Internet is its ability to create a real-time conversation between people who might never have the opportunity to meet each other in person because they can't afford the same

condos in the first place. We've seen some incredibly thoughtful comments. We've seen witty comments. Of course, two pitchfork-wielding mob members might still have time for witty repartee on their way to burn a few witches. But not all in-person interactions are brilliant or meaningful either. What matters is the ratio. And frankly, we're having a lot more discussions about democracy, human values, and the like these days than we did fifteen years ago.

All this is to say that, while the blogosphere can be a wild place, camp counselors and the conscientious kids who are appalled at such things usually stop fights before too much marshmallow ends up in people's hair. As a blogger, it's your responsibility to deal with the handful of people who like flame wars, so everyone else will enjoy the campfire, the conversation, and the debate.

Community Institutions

"I'd like to thank the Academy . . ."

Like any other creative community, the blogosphere touts those who practice the craft well. People do this every day with links, but sometimes it's fun to put on a virtual red-carpet show. Blog awards are a lot like blogs themselves. Anyone can start one. Some awards garner far more nominations and votes than others. Winning is often based on turnout (so if you want to win an award, find an unknown one, then badger all your readers to vote). Here are a few we've come across.

The Webby Awards (www.webbyawards.com). These honor all kinds of Internet properties, of which blogs are one. Established in 1996, the Webbys are presented by The International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences whose members include David

Bowie, Matt Groening, Richard Branson, Harvey Weinstein, and Arianna Huffington. Winners must limit their acceptance speech to five words. HuffPost has won twice for Best Political Blog, in 2006 and 2008.

The "Bloggies" (bloggies.com). You won't get much cash (2008 prizes for the biggest categories were 2008 cents, or \$20.08) but the scope of categories is impressive. Fat Cyclist (from a cyclist named Elden whose wife is fighting breast cancer) won the best sports blog in 2008, and we found ourselves strangely sucked into the Best African Blog, Dotty Rhino, about a rhino named Dotty's adventures in the Mkomazi Game Reserve in Tanzania.

Blogger's Choice Awards (bloggerschoiceawards.com). Run by IZEA, a social media marketing company. Winners in 2007 included Rosie.com for the best celebrity blog and Slope of Hope—about U.S. stock charts—as a top business blog.

The Blooker Prize (lulublookerprize.typepad.com). With a nod at the esteemed Man Booker Prize (for books), self-publishing outlet Lulu.com gave the Lulu Blooker for the best book based on a blog in 2006; the contest subsequently continued as the Blooker Prize in 2007. Winners in 2006 included Julie Powell's *Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen*, her memoir of cooking through Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Volume I*. The top winner in 2007 was *My War: Killing Time in Iraq* by Colby Buzzell (Arianna Huffington was a judge).

The Best of Blog Awards (thebestofblogs.com). This competition finds some lesser-known gems. Categories include, among many others, Best Health/Fitness Blog (2008 winner: Escape

from Obesity), Best Mommy Blog (Punk Rock Mommy), Best Homeschooling/Education Blog (a runner-up was named, intriguingly, Three Standard Deviations to the Left), and best sports blog (I'll Run for Donuts, from a blogger whose hobbies are, in fact, running and donuts).

“In Real Life” Blogging Communities

Blogs are part of a virtual community, but sometimes people like to put a face to a screen name and maybe change out of their pajamas for a while.

X One way to **meet other bloggers is at the BlogWorld and New Media Expo**. This annual event attracts everyone from bloggers themselves to companies that serve bloggers and companies that advertise on blogs. There's also the occasional celebrity (Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban was the 2007 keynote speaker).

Another way to meet bloggers is through **Meetup groups**. The website Meetup.com helps people find other like-minded folks to hang out with in person. Sample **blogging groups** include Bay Area Bloggers (405 members when we checked) and BKLN 2.0 (308 members).

Still, these Meetup numbers are awfully low given the actual number of Bay Area or Brooklyn bloggers. So if you'd like to meet other bloggers in person, your best bet is to create your own group. (In moments of fancy, we envision these “blogging circles” to be like the sewing circles of the past. A few people would gather with their laptops, Wi-Fi, and a few glasses of wine and post about life . . .)

When you find another blogger you admire—and you become a regular member of that blog's community—check the person's

profile to see if a city is listed. If so, and you're planning on visiting the city at some point, send a note saying you'll be in town. Ask for something harmless like restaurant recommendations. Chances are, the person will ask if you want to get together. If another blogger e-mails you, consider meeting that blogger in person as well. Choose somewhere public and busy—but you're far more likely to meet a friend than an ax murderer. Join blog networks or form your own. If you're part of a network of New York mom bloggers, for instance, you can host a picnic in Central Park. Or if you become well known enough, you can start giving



HOW BLOGGING IS REVOLUTIONIZING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

JEFFREY FELDMAN, EDITOR IN CHIEF OF FRAMESHOP AND HUFFPOST BLOGGER

In July 2005 I led a Democracy Fest workshop under a tent on a brutal Texas summer day—the first time I stood in front of a group of people who had come to see me solely because of my writing as a blogger. While it was hot enough to fry an egg, the audience and I connected from first word to last—over an hour of analytical discussion about the place of persuasive language in American politics, a topic difficult to get through in perfect conditions, let alone when the thermometer tops a hundred degrees in the shade. It was a watershed moment for me. The bond that I had with that group without ever having met one of them was a product of the interaction between reader and writer that happens on blogs. It was on that hot Texas morning that I realized how revolutionary blogging was for American democracy and for the lives of everyone in it. Much more than citizen journalism, blogging catalyzes community, rapidly rebuilds the ties between people, and recenters our nation on the people that give it meaning. I believe every blogger has a story like mine, whether in Texas or in Tennessee, with ten people or with ten thousand. It is the moment when we feel our blogging come to life in the faces, voices, and hearts of people.

speeches and hosting meetings that will catalyze your readers to work together on the issues you address.

In the past, our conversations—and our attempts to learn from and understand each other—were mostly limited to the people in our immediate lives. Blogging helps us extend our sphere of influence. It also broadens the community of people we can learn from. Because of this dizzying scope, we're not worried that Americans are spending too much time hiding in dark rooms with computers, insulting each other anonymously. Yes, some people are doing this. But most of us choose to take advantage of the new social possibilities blogs provide. Far from being isolated cranks, we're building bigger communities than ever before.

In the next section, we'll share how HuffPost got started, its impact, and how your blog can be a part of this revolution in communicating and relating.

PART II

THE BLOG REVOLUTION IS HERE! BE A PART OF IT.

**THE IMPACT OF THE HUFFINGTON POST AND
OTHER BLOGS—AND HOW MAINSTREAM
MEDIA WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.**