

reporting capabilities as well as its list and subscription management services. In addition to basic send, delivery, open and bounce rates, one look at her IMN report tells Hopkins which articles her various subscriber audiences read the most.

Last August, on a visit to IMN's web site, Hopkins saw an announcement introducing DirectBlog and knew she'd found the answer to her sales communications challenge. Weblogs are fast becoming the new way to e-communicate – particularly among the techno-savvy. They work like an online running log or diary. The host of the “blog” posts articles, news and commentary on a regular basis. It can be pushed via email or accessed via an RSS feed. Or it can simply have a permanent link on the company's web site. The audience opens the blog and finds a threaded stream of postings dating back to Day One. Here was the repository Hopkins needed. Moreover, IMN's DirectBlog included detailed content behavioral analytics. Not only could she provide the sales channel with important information, she could learn back from the worldwide force how to better support them on an ongoing basis.

Highly Effective, Easy to Produce

Symblog now keeps almost 325 sales people, distributors, service representatives and corporate managers continuously informed. According to Hopkins, “Since September I've published 26 issues – one per week. I use it to communicate product changes, welcome new sales engineers or support personnel, and remind people of upcoming sales meetings and to use the extranet site. OEM manufacturers, our biggest customer group, are constantly calling into the sales admin people and asking for things like datasheets. We use the blog to remind our internal people that all that information is on the web site. It offloads a lot of busy work from our staff.” Hopkins goes on to say that not only does *Symblog* help her manage information to and from the sales force, it does it at a very low cost. “It only takes an hour or two to import and publish the weekly content.”

But *Symblog's* most impressive claim is its viewership statistics. Starting last September, its initial open rate was 23%. By the end of December it was in the 60% range. And now it's tracking at 75%. Functionally, Hopkins and her team embedded links to data sheets and web sites. There is even a response button readers can hit to email questions or comments directly back to Hopkins and her team.

Hopkins recalls, “When I first sent it out the head of my division called my boss who then called me and said what the heck is this? What's a blog? Now it's become part of our vernacular. People expect it to be there and look forward to it. They can easily click back into the archives. It's really cool. Like a 3-ring binder that we add to for them every week.”