

# Dead Man Blogging

<http://www.businessesgrow.com/2011/06/29/dead-man-blogging/>

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**“Here it is. I’m dead, and this is my last post to my blog.”**

I’ve been haunted since I read those words a few weeks ago.

[Jenn Whinnem](#) had hosted a discussion on {grow} about our [digital footprint](#) and the implications when we die. [Johnny Russo](#), added a [link to a post](#) by Derek K. Miller, who wrote his farewell to his blog community and family in anticipation of his death from a terminal disease. It is a stunning, poignant, post and it ends perfectly. “I loved you, I loved you, I loved you.”

Since that day, Derek’s post has been pounding in my head. When I die, should I just die, or do I publish a coda? What happens with this community? Is there such a thing as a digital legacy and is

that something you can prepare for?

In 2007 I suffered an extremely serious spinal cord injury and could have died. The doctors were surprised I could walk afterward and suspected the injury might even affect my cognitive abilities. For months, my brain was on random play, sending unpredictable signals to my arms, legs and neck. I never knew what sensation or pain I would be feeling next. My nervous system was out of control and nobody could know when, or if, this would end.

I was lucky. Other than a plate in my head, the lasting effects of this trauma are minimal.

So I’m acutely aware of how fast you can lose it all. Death had a hand on me and I escaped that time. But it is going to happen, perhaps without warning. Perhaps tomorrow.

How should I use this blog and my other “digital assets” to say goodbye to you, my friends and my family on MY terms? What happens to {grow} and this digital footprint when I die? Will any of you even know what happened? Does any person know how to get into my account to publish something to say, “Well, he’s gone. You can move along now.”

This is uncomfortable, but I have begun writing my farewell blog post. A little at a time. Might take years. But I’m doing it. I am also leaving a set of instructions to my kids so they can find the “publish” button. It’s a start.

I think this makes sense ... as much as an emotional issue like this can make sense. I think it would bring closure for all of us, although from my position, it won’t really be on my mind unless I turn into a blogger spirit who can’t rest until somebody publishes the last post! The WordPress Ghost.

How things have changed. My grandmother died exactly 10 years ago. She was a lively, interesting woman but her stories live on only in my mind. As far as I know, not a single video, photo, or voice

recording of Grandma exists in the digital world. In fact, if you google her name, the search returns images of Halle Berry. This would have amused her.

All my grandmother left was a box of photo albums and her collection of Hummel figurines. But we're busy producing fresh masses of permanent, searchable content. Buckets of it. Articles. Photos. Videos. We are the first generation who can potentially live forever through our personal published works. We can have a cyber-soul.

What is that digital life story going to look like for you?

When I started looking into this subject, I found that curating your content legacy and preparing for digital afterlife is becoming a big business. Think about it. As the Digital Natives grow older, of course they are going to want their cyber selves to live on. The ultimate narcissistic final act.

I found hundreds of resources out there to help you manage the digital end game, but here are just a few to give you a flavor of this emerging industry:

Several services will contact loved ones (or hated ones) with emails when you die. They all basically work the same way. You queue up your emails and then the service sends you periodic emails to confirm you're still alive. If you stop responding, your emails get unlocked and are distributed. This way, you can communicate your passwords, last wishes, and long-held secrets after you're gone. One site will send your emails on dates you choose for 60 years into the future. An example of a free service is [Dead Man's Switch](#).

Another cottage industry is the curation of digital assets for future generations. There is a wide variety of options, both free and paid. A site such as [My Wonderful Life](#) allows you to put together an online scrap book of everything that was important to you. This company has a great slogan: "You only get one chance to make a last impression."

While the world of physical assets is fairly clear-cut thanks to wills and legal procedures, digital asset management is confusing. What will happen to your domains? Where's that AdSense money going? What about your PayPal account? What about the half-finished novel backed up in Dropbox? [Entrustet](#) is an example of a company who will manage your assets as your "digital executor" when you pass away.

In the creepy category is [Lifenaut.com](#) which promotes "a database of personal reflections captured in video, image, audio and documents about yourself that can be saved, searched, downloaded and shared with friends." This information is meant to be filtered through an "interactive avatar," modeled on you, "that becomes more intelligent as you add more information."

[VirtualEternity](#) also claims to convert the personal data you provide into an avatar — sort of like one of those chatbots that some online companies use for automated but more humanish customer service. "We want to give users the gift of immortality" they say. Basically this is an avatar that you teach to be you.

If you want to keep up with emerging trends in this field, you might want to check out [The Digital Beyond](#), a comprehensive website on the subject examining practical, legal, and emotional issues of a digital legacy.

As I reviewed what I had written, I notice that this started out as a personal post about my mortality and digital legacy and it has devolved into a "how-to" post. Probably some deep meaning there. I'll let you junior psychologists figure it out.

Anyway, Mr. Derek K. Miller has inspired me to get serious about this and I'm considering my digital afterlife and how I want my blog to end some day.

Of course you already know the last line. "I loved you, I loved you, I loved you."

Why mess with perfection?