

FACILITATING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MOBILE BLOGGERS

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to methods for blogging and particularly posting content on the web from a mobile telephone. The invention relates more particularly to facilitating communication between bloggers via mobile devices

Background to the Invention

Blogs or "weblogs" may take a number of different forms. Some blogs serve as news sites for a particular group or subject, whilst others are simply lists of interesting sites. Some blogs include more personal content and may take the form of a shared journal that is available for viewing by others on the web.

The act of updating a blog is referred to as "blogging" and someone who keeps a blog is referred to as a "blogger". Postings on a blog are typically displayed in reverse chronological order with the most recent additions to the blog being displayed such that they will be viewed first.

Blogs are typically updated daily using software that allows people with little or no technical background to update and maintain the blog and publish it on the web. Blogging software automates the technical steps involved in updating and managing a blog, such as handling comments, uploading and archiving, thereby leaving the blogger to work on the content for each post.

A moblog or "mobile weblog" consists of content posted to a weblog from a mobile telephone or similar portable device such as a personal digital assistant. Therefore, moblogs require software which enables content to be published on a web page from a mobile device. Content suitable for a moblog may include short message service messages, multimedia messages, photographs and video files created by a mobile telephone.

30

Summary of the Invention

According to a first aspect, the present invention provides a method for communicating a message to a mobile telephone associated with a user

involved in maintaining a blog. Firstly, a plurality of users register their details including a mobile telephone number associated with each user, with an Internet website which hosts the blog. During the registration process, each registered user nominates a user name by which they will be identified. A
5 registered user then composes a message that is to be sent to another registered user's mobile telephone and enters the user name which is associated with an intended recipient of the message. Both the message and the user name are submitted to a designated telephone number, and the message is forwarded from the designated telephone number to the intended
10 recipient's mobile telephone without providing the registered user who is responsible for sending the message, direct access to the mobile telephone number associated with the intended recipient.

According to a second aspect, the present invention provides a method for maintaining a group blog. Firstly, a plurality of users register their details
15 including a mobile telephone number associated with each user, with an Internet website which hosts one or more group blogs. Once registered, the users select one or more groups of which they wish to become a member. A group member composes and posts content on the group blog and other group members are enabled to edit the group blog by adding to or modifying the
20 previously posted content. Only group members are enabled to add to or modify content. Group members add content to the group blog via an Internet website associated with the group blog and via mobile telephones.

According to a third aspect, the present invention provides a method of generating revenue using an Internet website hosting a blog. Firstly, a plurality
25 of users register their details including a mobile telephone number associated with each user, with the Internet website that hosts the blog. Once registered, the users select one or more groups of which they wish to become a member. Each group will have associated with it a group name. A group member composes a message which is intended to be sent to the remaining group
30 member's mobile telephones and enters the group name associated with the group. Both the message and the group name are submitted to a designated telephone number. The message is forwarded from the designated telephone number to the group member's mobile telephones without providing the

registered user who is responsible for sending the message, with direct access to the mobile telephone numbers associated with the remaining group members. The group member responsible for sending the message may be billed for each message sent to the remaining group members. Alternatively,
5 the remaining group members or any other registered blogger, who elected to receive such communications may be billed, either for each message received or on a subscription basis.

It is an advantage of the present invention to provide means whereby registered users who are involved in maintaining a blog can communicate with
10 other registered users who are involved in maintaining a blog hosted by the same website without undermining the privacy of registered users by permitting access to their mobile telephone numbers.

It is another advantage to provide a means whereby a group of registered users can cooperatively maintain a group blog whereby group
15 members can add to or modify content previously posted by other group members.

It is a further advantage of the present invention to provide means for raising revenue using an Internet website that hosts a blog.

20 **Brief Description of the Drawings**

The invention will now be described in further detail by reference to the accompanying drawings. It is to be understood that the particularity of the drawings does not supersede the generality of the preceding description of the invention.

25 Figure 1 is an online registration form according to an embodiment of the invention.

Figure 2 shows how a short message service (SMS) registration request is composed by a user to be sent to a designated telephone number for processing in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

30 Figure 3 shows how a user composes a short message service (SMS) text message to enable the user to "chat" with another registered user in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

Figure 4 shows how a group member composes a short message service (SMS) text message to be posted on a group blog in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

Figure 5 shows how a group member can post a multimedia message including an image file on a group blog in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

Detailed Description

According to one embodiment, a method is provided which enables a plurality of users who are involved in maintaining a blog which is hosted on a particular Internet website, to communicate with each other using their mobile telephones.

A user or "blogger" may register with the Internet website which hosts one or more blogs online or via short message service. If the user elects to register online, the registration process will involve completing an online form as shown in Figure 1. The online form requests details such as a user nominated username or "nick name" which will later serve to identify the user. The user also enters details regarding his or her age, sex, brief description or "self intro" and an image in .gif, .jpg, or .bmp format to build up a user profile. These details will be published in association with the user's blog to enable bloggers to learn something about each other. Other personal details such as the user's first and family name, address, email address and mobile telephone number are not displayed to the public to protect the user's privacy. An acknowledgement is sent to the user supplied email address when an account has been created on the user's behalf.

Alternatively, a user may register via their mobile telephone using short message service (SMS). In this case the user composes a short message service (SMS) registration request in the following format as shown in Figure 2:

moblog<space><nickname>

The "nickname" is nominated by the user and becomes the user's username once the registration process is complete. Since each registered user must be identifiable by a unique username, nicknames should preferably consist of a

combination of letters and numbers (but not symbols) and range from 3 to 20 characters in length.

Once the user has composed a registration request in accordance with the above instructions, the user sends the message to a specified telephone number to initiate complete the registration process. The user's mobile telephone number is transmitted together with the registration request.

A registered user is identified online by their nominated "nickname" or username. Once registered, the user is enabled to chat to other registered users either online or via short message service (SMS). In order to chat online, the registered user simply logs in using the registered username and password at the registered user's preferred chatroom. The user simply types a message into the text field provided and clicks submit to post the message.

To chat to other registered users via short message service (SMS), the user composes a short message service (SMS) message in the following format as shown in Figure 3:

<recipient nickname><space><message>

Preferably, the length of the message should not exceed 160 characters. The message and the user name of the intended recipient are to a designated telephone number. Messages submitted via short message service (SMS) will be posted on the blog site in addition to being sent to the intended recipient's mobile telephone.

This method enables a registered user to instantaneously communicate or "chat" with another registered user without the intended recipient's mobile telephone number having to be disclosed to the registered user who is sending the message.

It will be evident to a person skilled in the relevant art that a registered user could send multimedia (MMS) messages including images and video files to the intended recipient using the same method.

According to another embodiment, a method is provided for maintaining a "group" blog. A "group" essentially consists of a group of people who share similar interests. A group blog makes it possible for people within such a group to share their views, pictures and multimedia messages. Registered users may

either join an existing group or may choose to start their own group based on a topic of their choice.

The process of becoming a group member requires the user to execute the same registration steps described above. Once a user is registered and
5 has a username, the registered user may select one or more existing groups of which they wish to become a member or may even start their own group.

Group members are enabled to access the group blog engine once they are logged on. Group members may compose content to be posted on the group blog. A group member may start a new topic or alternatively, any group
10 member may edit content posted on the group blog by any other member by adding to and/or modifying the content.

A group member may add a text entry to a group blog as shown in Figure 4. The short message service (SMS) message is composed in the following format:

15 <group code><space><message>

Group members may also create picture entries in their group blogs as shown in Figure 5. The multimedia message is composed by attaching an image to a multimedia message in the following format:

 <group code><space><message>

20 Whilst group blogs or "chat" associated with some types of groups (generally referred to as "public" groups) may be viewed by non group members, only group members are enabled to edit the group blog.

A variation of the "public" group blog, is the "private" group blog, wherein only authorised registered users are permitted to join a group. Permission to
25 join a "private" group has to be issued to a registered user by a group leader. It is intended that only group members will be enabled to access a "private" group blog for viewing and/or editing.

When joining a group a registered user selects the group that they wish to join from a list of available groups. If the selected group is a public group, the
30 registered user is immediately directed to the group blog site and instantly becomes a member. If the group is a private group, the registered user indicates their interest in joining the group and a email conveying the same is directed to a leader of the private group. If the group leader authorises the

registered user to join the group, the registered user will be informed of their group login name and password.

A registered user may become a member of more than one group but it is recommended that registered users do not join more groups than they are able to manage since group leaders have authority to deactivate inactive group members and suspend their group membership.

Group members can choose to chat with selected group members only by specifying the username of the group member they wish to communicate with in the short message service (SMS) message. Functionality is also provided whereby a group member may elect not to receive any short message service (SMS) messages from a particular group and its members.

According to yet another embodiment of the invention, there is provided a method of using an Internet site which hosts a blog to raise revenue. In accordance with this embodiment, users become registered members in the same manner described earlier. The registration process involves setting up an account associated with the registered user's telephone number.

Once registered, users may elect to become members of a group, each group consisting of members which share similar interests. Each group will have an associated group name for identification purposes. When a member of the group wishes to communicate with other group members, the registered user will compose a message, and submit the message together with the group name to a designated telephone number as previously described. The registered user who sent the message may be billed (via their mobile telephone account) either for a single short message service message, or for the number of message sent on his or her behalf. That is, if a particular group has 23 members and the registered user chooses to communicate a message to all members of the group, then the registered user will be billed for 23 short message service messages. In one particular embodiment, it is envisaged that each group member would also be billed for each message that they have received. In other embodiment, group members may subscribe to a "group SMS magazine" whereby they will be billed a fixed monthly fee for which they receive an unlimited number of messages.

Similar billing arrangements apply to individual bloggers, whereby each blogger may be charged per short message service message sent/received, or may opt to subscribe to an "SMS magazine" whereby the blogger will be billed a fixed monthly fee for which they send/receive an unlimited number of
5 messages.

As previously described, functionality is provided to enable group members to indicate if they do not wish to receive messages from a group, or from certain members within a group.

Whilst the present invention has been described with reference to a blog,
10 it should be clear to those skilled in the relevant art that the methods described would have equal utility for enabling direct and instantaneous communication between people who are involved in any type of online discussion group such as a message board, forum, bulletin board or even a chatroom so long as a mobile telephone number on which the user may be contacted if provided
15 during registration.

Although the present invention has been described in terms of the example embodiments, it is to be understood that the disclosure is not to be interpreted as limiting. Various alterations and modifications will no doubt become apparent to those skilled in the art after having read the above
20 disclosure. Accordingly, it is intended that the appended claims be interpreted as covering all alterations and modifications as fall within the true spirit and scope of the invention.

Claims:

1. A method for communicating a message to a mobile telephone associated with a user involved in maintaining a blog, the method comprising
5 the following steps:
- (a) a plurality of users registering their details including a mobile telephone number associated with each user, with an Internet website hosting the blog;
 - (b) each registered user being issued with a user name on registration;
 - (c) a first registered user composing a message to be sent to a second
10 registered user's mobile telephone;
 - (d) entering the user name associated with the second registered user; and
 - (e) submitting the message and the user name to a designated telephone number;
- wherein the message is forwarded from the designated telephone
15 number to the second registered user's mobile telephone without providing the first registered user direct access to the mobile telephone number associated with the second registered user.
2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the message is forwarded to a
20 mobile telephone via short message service.
3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the message is forwarded to the mobile telephone via a multimedia message service.
- 25 4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the first registered user composes the message using a short message service.
5. A method according to claim 1, wherein the blog is maintained using a mobile telephone.
- 30 6. A method for maintaining a group blog, the method comprising the following steps:

- (a) a plurality of users registering their details including a mobile telephone number associated with each user, with an Internet website hosting one or more group blogs;
- (b) one or more registered users selecting a group of which they wish to become a member;
- (c) a first group member composing content to be posted on the group blog; and
- (d) a second group member adding or modifying content posted by the first group member;
- wherein addition or modification of content is restricted to group members, and group members add content to the group blog via an Internet website associated with the group blog and via mobile telephones.
7. A method according to claim 6, wherein each group is designated as a public group of which any registered user may become a member, or a private group of which only authorised registered users may become a member.
8. A method according to claim 7, wherein only authorised group members can access a group blog maintained by a private group.
9. A method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of appointing a group leader who is responsible for management of the group blog.
10. A method of generating revenue using an Internet website hosting a blog, the method comprising the following steps:
- (a) a plurality of users registering their details including a mobile telephone number associated with each user, with an Internet website hosting the blog;
- (b) one or more registered users selecting a group of which they wish to become a member, each group having an associated group name;
- (c) a first group member composing a message to be sent to one or more remaining group member's mobile telephones;
- (d) entering the group name associated with the group;

(e) submitting the message and the group name to a designated telephone number; and

(f) billing the first group member for each message sent to the remaining group members,

5 wherein the message is forwarded from the designated telephone number to the group member's mobile telephones without providing the first group member direct access to the mobile telephone number associated with the group members.

10 11. A method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of billing the remaining group members for each message received.

12. A method according to claim 10, further including the step of the remaining group members subscribing to a service, whereby they are entitled to
15 receive a designated number of messages within a specified period of time.

13. A method according to claim 10, wherein a group member chooses to communicate only with selected group members by specifying one or more user names associated with individual group members.

20

14. A method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of a group member electing not to receive messages from other group members.

15. A method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of a group
25 member electing not to receive messages from one or more particular group members.