

# The gentle art of self promotion

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# Welcome to my world..

- Lectured in Computer Science in University of Hull
- Now I write and say things for money
  - And for fun
- Blog at [www.robmiles.com](http://www.robmiles.com)
- Tweets at @robmiles

# Introduction

- Why self promote?
- How you should promote yourself
- Things to do
- Start a blog....

Why self promote?

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- Sad fact:

The world doesn't care that much about you

- There is always the chance that your greatness will be recognised by the waiting world

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- Sad fact:

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- There is always the chance that your greatness will be recognised by the waiting world
  - But don't hold your breath
- A bit of self-promotion will do no harm
- Think of it as building a brand

# What do you self promote?

- Trying to promote yourself as something you aren't will not end well
  - You will find the effort really hard to keep up
- You should promote a “slightly amplified” version of yourself
  - i.e. you on a good day
- Remember you are building a brand for life...

# Becoming Successful

- A lot of self-promotion is not guaranteed to make you successful
- However, it definitely improves the odds
- What you're doing is getting yourself into a good position to be lucky
- Two principles:



# 1. Always Be Doing Something

- The one thing I would say is that I've always found great benefit in just "doing stuff"
- Sitting round waiting for the one "great" idea to come to you out of the blue will not work
- Making stuff and seeing what happens when you put it out there is much more likely to get you somewhere
- I find it is always surprising where things end up, and how folks respond to them
- Doing lots of stuff is also a great way to build up your skills

## 2. Don't be afraid to show people your stuff

- If you have a super-secret algorithm that is a total game changer then maybe you should keep it under wraps
- But if you just have an idea for a “thing” that you think might be quite neat, then get people involved and find out what they think
- The biggest problem with any new idea is getting it out there
- The more people you can make aware of what you are doing the better
- Don't be precious with your ideas, particularly when you're starting out

How do you promote yourself?

# The good news:

- There are thousands of different channels that you can use to promote yourself
  - You can blog and podcast
  - You can tweet
  - You can post on Facebook
  - You can make videos and put them on YouTube
  - You can post on forums
  - You can put pictures on Snapchat
  - You can publish things you've made yourself
  - You can even review products on Amazon.....

The bad news:

The bad news:

So can everyone else

# Standing out

- You need a way to make your content stand out from the rest
- How you do this depends on your specialism
- I use sheer persistence and giving things away
- You can make a plan to stand out, or you can just do a lot of stuff and see what happens

# Standing out

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- You can make a plan to stand out, or you can just do a lot of stuff and see what happens
  - I like this approach



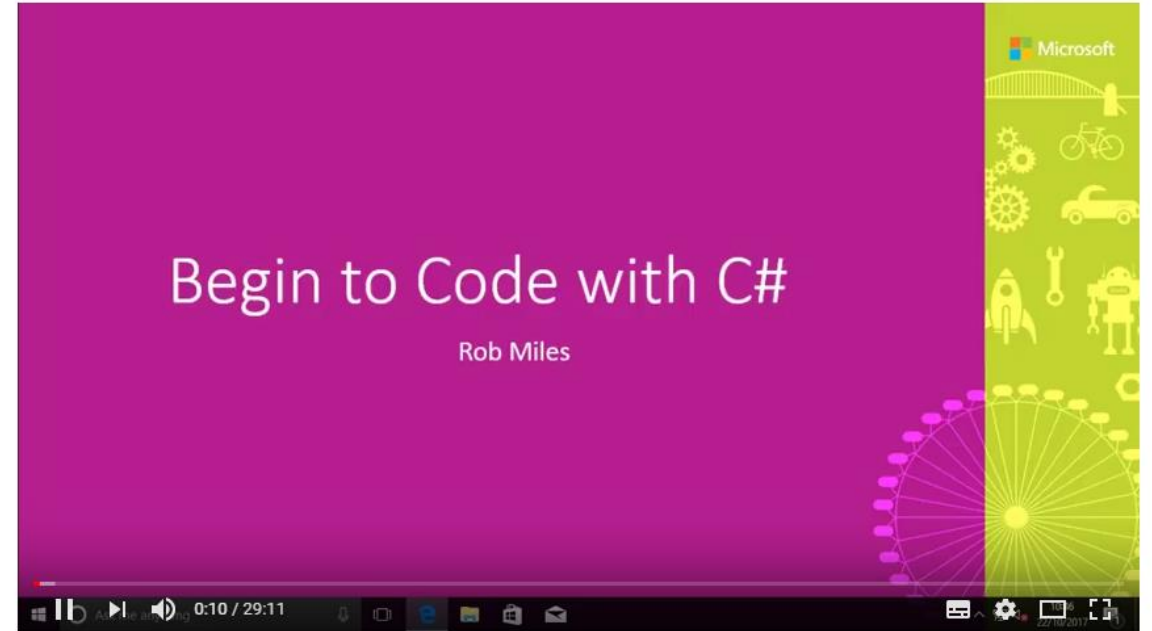
# Most important tips

- What you should do should either be something you enjoy, or something you want to get good at
- If you like writing then write
- If you want to get good at public speaking (and you should) then speak
- If you want to learn how to make videos then make videos

Things to do

# Videos

- Making videos is great fun
- You can make live video or you can make screencasts
- Can be lucrative, but never has been for me personally....



# Recording videos

- I've found that the best way to record live video is to use my iPhone
- The video editing and publishing tools on this platform are very good
- Try and keep the phone still (use a tripod) and make sure you record in a quiet environment

# Screencasts

- A screencast is where you capture your screen and then create a video that describes how to do something on your computer
- I've done a lot of these
- They are particularly good for training
- I usually prepare a presentation first, to give me a script

# Screencasts

- You'll need a program to capture your screen
- Remember that you don't have to capture all of the screen
- I have some notes in one part of the screen, and the capture area in another

[www.flashbackrecorder.com](http://www.flashbackrecorder.com)

# Screencast etiquette

- I try and do everything in one take
  - Try and talk round mistakes
- Leave gaps around difficult bits so that you can cut elements in and out if required
- It is worth spending money on a decent microphone
- Try to stop yourself moving backwards and forwards during taking, this can cause change in volume

# Forums and Groups

- Whatever your specialism, there are bound to be forums and groups that are dedicated to them
- You should engage with these in a constructive way
- Start by “lurking” until you get the confidence to make some posts and build your reputation



# Give things away

- If you make something useful, consider giving it away for free rather than trying to sell it
- This can be a great way to build up your brand
- You can also get involved in open-source projects
  - You don't need to be much of a programmer for this, they are always looking for testers as well as coders

# Enter competitions

- There are a lots of competitions out there
- Find ones in your field and take part
- You don't do this because you might win (although you might), it's all about the journey
- Make sure that you document your entry as you go
- Make your own competitions if there aren't any

# Public speaking

- The big one
- I used to hate doing this
- Now I'm quite happy
- This came from practice and experience
- Treat learning to speak in public in the same way that you would treat learning as new lab technique

Start a blog

# Everyone should blog

- Blogging is a really good thing to do
  - Even if nobody reads it
- I think everyone should write a blog



# Reasons for blogging

- Blogging makes you practice your writing
  - It makes you able to write sensible text quickly
- Blogging makes you discoverable
  - It provides a “one stop shop” that you can point people at if they are interested in you
- Blogging lets you remind yourself of how you did something
  - I frequently find my own blog posts when I search for help with a topic...

# Hang on, isn't blogging old hat?

- It might be argued that blogging is not really the thing anymore
  - Perhaps you should be tweeting instead?
  - Or making podcasts?
  - Or YouTube videos?
- All these things are a good idea, but blogging lets you practice writing, which is a very good idea (and you can do the others too)

# How to get started

- Get yourself a domain name
  - This gives you a unique identity on the network which you can transfer to different hosts if you need to
- Sign up with a blogging service
  - I use a service called Squarespace.com but you can also use blogger or GitHub
- Start writing



# Get a domain

- I was lucky, I managed to get robmiles.com
- And @robmiles
- But you should get a domain of your own
- They are surprisingly cheap
- I use namecheap

[www.namecheap.com](http://www.namecheap.com)

# Why get domain?

- If you have a domain you can change your hosting and email providers without having to tell your readers
- A domain gives readers the impression that you're taking this seriously
- Much cheaper and less permanent than a tattoo

# Hosting

- If you want to host your content there are lots of options for you
  - I tend to avoid “closed” platforms such as Facebook as you don’t really have control of your content – but you can use them to promote your posts
- Remember, if you host your content for free you can expect exactly the level of service that you’ve paid for

# Paid hosting

- I really like Squarespace
- You pay around 12 pounds a month but you get a bunch of templates, lots of customisation options and things like forms to interact with your users
- It's what I use for robmiles.com

[www.squarespace.com](http://www.squarespace.com)

# Free hosting

- If you want to host for free you can use blogger or, my personal favourite, GitHub
- GitHub is harder to use (you have to build the pages yourself)
- With your own domain you can change host easily

[www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)

[www.github.com](http://www.github.com)

# Build a workflow

- You want it to be as easy as possible to publish your posts
- Squarespace will link to Twitter and Facebook to automatically tell them I make a post
  - Twitter will also link to Facebook like this
- Tools like “If this then that” can add more automation

**[ifttt.com](https://ifttt.com)**

# Learn “Markdown”

- Markdown is a formatting language that is used by a lot of web tools
- It provides a quick and portable way you can format text for web use
- Lots of blog hosts understand markdown  
[github.com/adam-p/markdown-here/wiki/Markdown-Cheatsheet](https://github.com/adam-p/markdown-here/wiki/Markdown-Cheatsheet)

# Tag Everything

- You should tag all your posts so that it is easy to find related content
- I also have a “tag cloud” that lets readers see all the things I’m interested in

.NET Gadgeteer  
.NET Micro Framework  
3D printing  
Arduino  
BeginToCode  
board games  
book reviews  
Books C4di  
Conferences  
development  
Downloads  
Embedded  
Events  
film reviews



# Finding your “voice”

- If you start writing a blog regularly you will at some point find your “voice”
- This is an expression of your personality
  - Humorous or serious
  - Technical or abstract
  - Opinionated or neutral
- Work at your “voice” so that it is a good, positive, expression of yourself

# How often should you blog?

- I try to blog every day
  - But then again I am an idiot in this respect
- Try to blog at least once a week or so
  - If you leave it too long you create a “guilt mountain” that might stop you from making another post
- But bear in mind.....

# How often should you blog?

- ...you **DON'T OWE YOUR AUDIENCE ANYTHING**
- If you want to blog just once every 6 months, it's not as if you've sold them anything

# Beware the trolls....

- I've not had much problem with trolling
  - But then again I try hard to avoid saying anything particularly contentious
- Controversy might get you clicks, but it will also get you a lot of attention from people that you might not want to meet up with
- You will also get your share of spam and bots
  - Make sure you're informed of any comment activity by your host and be prepared to spend time "gardening" your posts to keep out any weeds

# Other people

- I don't mention any of my family by name in my blog
  - I also never post pictures of them
- Other people are referred to by their first name and linked through if appropriate
- That's my policy, but I recommend it as a starting point for you too

# How much of you do you post?

- This is a very personal thing
- I never post about how I'm feeling, except in very broad terms
- I also never post about how fed up I am with my job/life/family
  - And I can't believe that some people do

# How do people find my blog?

- It is important that you make your blog as discoverable as possible
- Make good use of search tags
- Promote on Twitter and Facebook
- Put your site onto aggregators for people to find
- Respond to forum posts and blog posts with links to your blog posts about the topics discussed

# How do I make my blog useful?

- Use tags
- People love blog posts that help them solve a problem, so HowTos are especially popular, as are reviews
- Things that are useful to you are often useful to lots of other people like you



# How do I use Analytics?

- Whatever host you use, you should use analytics to find track use
  - This might be rather depressing
- You should also look at a figure known as the “bounce rate” that tells you how many people just visit one page
  - Use Google Analytics, everyone does

# How do I make a nice home page?

- My rules:
  - Keep it simple
  - Use a consistent template
  - Put things on the home page that might encourage folks to stick around
  - Add pictures

# How do I get rich?

- I haven't managed this.....
- You can put ads on your page
  - But this upsets some visitors and might not be worth the effort
- I regard the blog as a promotional tool and a way of practicing writing, so I reckon it is good value

Review

# Self promotion checklist

- Get a domain name
- Sign up with a blogging host
- Start blogging and find a voice
- Do one or two of the other things
- Whenever you do something, give a little thought to how it could be used to build your brand a bit.....

