

You can tell which people listed blogging as a performance review goal

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I had been kind of baffled by some of the Microsoft employee blogs that appear to consist almost entirely of rehashes of Knowledge Base articles, or sometimes even just “A new Knowledge Base article on topic X has been published.” Now, that’s useful information to have if you’re interested in topic X, but is it really something you can build a blog around? Can’t you just [sign up for KB notifications](#) manually? (That’s probably how the blog author found them anyway.) And then there are the head-scratcher blog entries like *[There are no new KB articles this week](#)*.

But I never really thought too much about them. They merely registered as noise to me. Baffling noise, but still noise.

And then I learned why these types of blogs exist: Because somebody put down blogging as a goal on their annual performance review. If you want to say that one of your goals for the next year is to maintain a blog, you have to specify how to determine whether that goal was met. As I’ve noted earlier, [Microsoft is obsessed with measurement](#), so the way to tell whether your blog was a “success” is to come up with some sort of metric for success. These people naturally chose *Number of blog postings per month* as their metric. Running behind this month? No problem, just crank out a few *Hey, here’s a Knowledge Base article you might be interested in* postings and you’ve filled your quota.

This is another example how deciding how you’re going to measure something affects the people you’re measuring: They alter their behavior to maximize the metric rather than the concept the metric is supposed to be tracking. If you decide that you want to expand the Knowledge Base and set numeric goals for employees on how many Knowledge Base articles they should write each year, don’t be surprised if you find that in the waning weeks of the year, there’s a spurt of largely useless Knowledge Base articles.

In an internal discussion of this topic, I wrote, “Blogging to improve your review score is like entering politics to get rich.” While it may be true that politicians tend to get rich, and many people enter politics [in order to get rich](#) (or more legally, enter politics in order to exit politics

in order to get rich), I believe that getting rich shouldn't be the motivation for entering politics. And improving your review score shouldn't be the motivation for blogging.

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