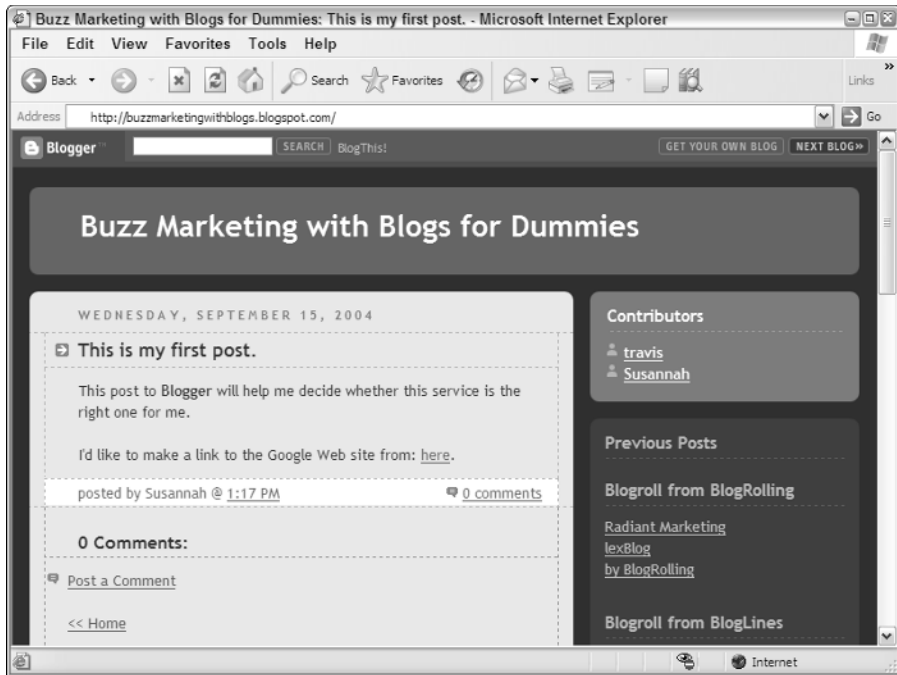


Figure 4-1: Is this hosted blog from Blogger.com a little bland for you? If you want to tweak, you need an independent blog software solution.



Rates for contract Web designers vary regionally, but be sure to get quotes from at least three different designers. Go with the one that's the best fit for your needs, and don't equate a high price tag with high quality.

✓ **Bells and whistles:** Blogs are a hot technology area on the Web right now, and that means a lot of innovation is in the field. Audio, video, mobile, and photo blogs are only some of the interesting ways people are choosing to blog. If you want to use all the latest tools on your blog, and perhaps increase your traffic while doing so, independent blog software often keeps pace with developments better than a hosted solution.

Independent blog software developers are catering to a technically savvy, cutting-edge audience that knows and demands current technology. And even if they don't extend their software regularly, many independent blog software companies encourage third-party developers to create plug-ins that can be used with their software. You can take advantage of newer technology or even contribute your own code to handle your specific need. A hosted blog solution simply can't match the nimbleness of independent blog software — at least as long as innovation continues in blogging.



At the same time, all this additional functionality can come at the sacrifice of stability or compatibility. Nothing's certain, but hosted solutions tend to be less buggy in regular use.