

Special Report: BLOGGING SUCCESS

A Guide to Blogging for Profits

Brought to you by
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Blogging Success – An A to Z Guide To Blogging For Profits

Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after. – Anne Morrow Lindbergh

“Do you have a blog?” Have you heard that question lately? It seems that everybody is now talking about blogging as the best way to promote your online business and increase your sales, but not everyone actually knows exactly what blogging is or how it works.

While the growth rate of blogging is slowing down, there are still a staggering one hundred and twenty thousand new blogs created every day. The popularity of blogging is increasing significantly with the number of blogs in the web’s one hundred most visited websites growing from eleven to twenty-two in the last year. People are beginning to see blogs as a really valuable source of news and information.

This guide will help you understand blogging a little better and give you some tips on how to create a successful blog.

In this report you will discover:

- The **definition** of a blog
- How blogging can **help your business** - Expert tips to write a great blog
- Coming up with **original ideas** for blog posts
- Tips for writing a **popular** blog
- Getting **traffic** to your blog - Including SEO techniques
- **Tools** necessary to create a blog - Including the debate on free blogging services v. hosting your own blog
- Ten common blogging **mistakes and how to avoid them**

What is a blog, really? Blog 101.

A blog (short for web log) is an online area designated for publishing short articles or similar information, within a predefined template. It is a quick and simple method of creating content on a webpage without having to worry about technical page layouts or formatting.

A blog can be on any subject you choose, and can be updated as often as you wish. Some people add posts to their blog each day, while others only create a couple of new posts a month.

Personal blogs can often take on the form of a diary, with the author describing what they have been doing since the last posting. Business blogs tend to be more informative and are used to offer advice to customers, announce new products, promote other related sites, and generate interest in the business.

The following definition of a blog comes from Blogger, a blogging service owned by Google:

“A blog is a personal diary. A daily pulpit. A collaborative space. A political soapbox. A breaking-news outlet. A collection of links. Your own private thoughts. Memos to the world.

Your blog is whatever you want it to be. There are millions of them, in all shapes and sizes, and there are no real rules.

In simple terms, a blog is a web site, where you write stuff on an ongoing basis. New stuff shows up at the top, so your visitors can read what's new. Then they comment on it or link to it or email you. Or not.”

Although each blog is individual, they tend to have a few things in common:

- A main posting area with posts, or articles, listed in date order, newest on top. These posts can be organized into categories, for example you could have one category of personal blog posts and a category of business related blog posts
- An archive containing older posts or articles
- A method for people to leave comments about your blog posts. Your readers can log into your blog with a user name to leave remarks about your articles.
- A number of links to other relevant sites, often known as a 'blogroll'
- A number of feeds including RSS, Atom or RDF feeds.

What blogging can do for you.

1. Blogging is a great way to build up strong relationships and brand loyalty with your customers. Using a blog makes your customers feel that they really are interacting with you personally.
2. Using a blog helps you to keep your finger on the pulse of your business, and to get feedback from your customers on suggestions you make or products you are promoting.
3. A blog is an ideal place to showcase the talent and expertise within your business. People find short blog postings easy to read, and if they find them useful and informative they are more likely to trust you and buy other products.
4. Blogs can increase your search engine ranking. Search engine marketing has a very low cost per lead and a high return on investment. We will look at optimizing your blog for search engines later in this guide.

Can I start my own blog?

Absolutely! Anyone can write their own blog. There are millions of people worldwide writing blogs, from small online businesses promoting their products, to travelers describing their adventures, and mothers detailing the development of their children. Before you begin to write a blog, however, you should ask yourself a simple question.

Is your business or niche going to give you enough material to maintain your blog?

Starting a blog is easy, and we will discuss how to do this later in this guide. The difficult part is maintaining momentum and coming up with new material for posts each day, week or month. The next section looks at preparing yourself for blog writing, and generating ideas for original posts.

How to blog like a pro.

People often underestimate the time and effort involved in maintaining an active blog. As well as coming up with ideas and writing regular posts, you may want to respond to comments from your readers and keep your site in good order.

Here are a couple of tips to help you get organized before you begin to publish your blog:

1. Keep 'em coming.

Decide on a regular posting schedule and stick to it. Depending on your business you may want to post every day, or you may feel once a week is enough. Whatever you decide, you should try to post at regular intervals. This sets your readers' expectations and will encourage them to log in when they know you will have posted something new.

2. Set aside time to write.

Most people find it easier to write at a particular time each day or week. Personally, I like to write first thing in the morning before the day's

developments become too distracting. You might prefer to write after dinner when the kids are safely tucked up in bed and you can give your post your full concentration. When you know you have an hour set aside to write your blog you will not be worrying all day about when you will be able to get it done.

3. Schedule time to upgrade your blog.

Writing a blog requires a certain amount of maintenance work. This includes re-categorizing posts, checking for broken or out of date links, and installing new features to keep your blog fresh and innovative. All this takes time, but the work is more manageable if you schedule time each month to update your site.

Research Exercise: Visit blogs dedicated to your business niche. Document your thoughts about the blog. What do they do well? What could you do better? What do you like about their blog that you could apply to your own?

Tips and tactics for keeping it fresh.

There will be days when you sit down to write your blog and you find your mind is a total blank. This happens to everyone at one time or another, so don't let it put you off blogging altogether. There are lots of different types of blog posts you can write, and many ways to come up with ideas for new material.

Tip #1 – Keep a folder for blog post ideas.

Keep a folder handy where you can store material to be used in blog posts. This might include simply ideas that you have during the week, a link to a good website you have found in the course of your work, or an interesting post on another blog or message forum. You can also include information on any product you have used during the week so you can write a simple review in your blog.

When you are stuck for ideas delve into this folder for inspiration. It can give you some much-needed inspiration. Clear it out regularly and get rid of out of date information, otherwise searching through your ideas folder can be as difficult as coming up with a post topic from scratch.

Tip #2 – Keep spare posts or stub posts.

On some days you may find you have more time and inspiration than others. When this happens, try to write an additional post or two to be used on days when you have writers block.

If you are writing a full post, make it generic and not time sensitive, otherwise it may be outdated by the time you want to use it. Alternatively write "stub" posts, or short summary posts, that can be expanded or fleshed out with topical information when you want to publish them.

Tip #3 – Follow on from previous posts.

Don't be afraid to keep telling a story from your previous posts. If one post has generated a lot of interest and comments, you can pick up threads from these to write a new post.

By doing this you are addressing your customers' concerns and telling them what they really want to know. Make sure you link to previous posts so that new readers can refer back to know what you are talking about.

Tip #4 – Vary the type of posts you write.

If you are having trouble coming up with fresh ideas, it may be that you need to take a new look at the format of your blog posts. The most successful blogs have a variety of post types. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Your posts can be **different lengths**. Some readers may prefer a short punchy entry from time to time.
- A longer **formal article** can make a good contribution to your blog occasionally.
- Publishing an **interview** with an expert in your field can really add to your blog. If you don't want to include the whole interview, use extracts in your blog with a link to the full transcript.
- **'How to'** posts are popular as your readers gain practical information, and they are not too difficult to put together.
- A **product review** can make a great blog post if it is something that will really benefit your audience. These types of blog posts are perfect for including affiliate links so you make some extra money.
- A **bulleted list** of tips and tricks. Readers love these because they are quick to read and create high value.
- Don't be afraid to include **personal anecdotes**, particularly if you have a lot in common with your target audience. For example if your customers are all parents, you can write about your own children from time to time.

Your blog is your personal creation, so nobody is going to tell you what you can or cannot write as a blog post. Don't be afraid to be a little creative and experimental and if certain posts attract a lot of traffic or positive comments, include these more regularly in your blog.

What the best read blogs accomplish, and how you can do it too.

People are naturally interested in what other people are up to, which is why TV soaps and reality TV shows are so popular. Reading just one of your blog posts should be enough to hook your readers and get them logging in regularly for updates. Here are some tips for writing popular blog posts.

1. Be yourself and try to find your own style.

Your posts will be much more appealing if they come from the heart rather than the head. Trying to express views or opinions that you don't believe yourself will make your blog confusing and difficult for your readers to relate to. Don't be afraid to be different, some of the best blogs are individual, eccentric and very personal.

2. Start a conversation

While blog posts are designed as stand alone texts, you should invite comments on your posts and spend some time replying to these. Engaging your readers in your blog conversations can make them feel a part of the blog, and introducing new characters can make the blog more appealing to other readers as well.

Remember, when someone comments on your blog, it is just like they've come to your living room to sit down for a chat. You wouldn't dream of ignoring a guest in your home, so don't ignore the "guests" who visit your blog and comment. Comment back.

3. Include a photo

A photo next to your blog posts will help your readers to feel they are engaged in a face to face conversation with another real live human being, and you really are actually speaking to them. You don't need to have model looks. People likely won't be judging how you look. As long as you are comfortable with your photo, other people will be too.

4. Add illustrations

A written blog without illustrations, pictures, graphics or photos can appear very dull. Look out for interesting pictures you can write a blog post around. Cartoons are particularly effective, and there are many image galleries on the internet where you can download high quality pictures.

5. Pay attention to grammar

Nobody is suggesting you need to write the way you were taught at school. Online writing, particularly for a blog, should be casual and informal; you should write as you speak. However, your posts should make sense and be free from typos.

Make sure you read through your posts several times before you publish them. Nothing destroys your credibility quicker than bad writing and misspelled words. If you are copying and pasting phrases you should pay particular attention to whether your completed post makes sense.

6. Use appropriate vocabulary

Knowing the correct and up-to-date words and terms that relate to your business will help to establish your reputation as an expert in your field. However you should not confuse your reader with too much jargon if you are not sure they will understand you. Avoid long and complex words when a simple one will serve the same purpose. You are in the best position to know the type of language that will appeal to your audience, so use it in your blog.

7. Practice makes perfect

Publishing your first couple of blog posts can be quite daunting. You will read them and alter them over and over again to try to improve them. How do you know if they are any good? How do you know if your readers will enjoy them? Then, suddenly, a few weeks later you find you are dashing off a blog post in your lunch hour, and still finding time for a chicken salad.

Continually practicing writing your blog helps you to develop your style, makes the words flow more easily, and improves the quality of your posts. If you aren't happy with your first few posts don't give up, they *will* improve.

8. Keep an eye on your stats

Most internet businesses will use their stats to help with search engine optimization. How many visitors are you getting? How did they find your site? What keyword did they use? However, they can also be used to ensure you are writing posts that appeal to your readers. Which posts caused the greatest volume of traffic and which generated the most return visits? Use your stats to build a better site for your readers.

Tell the world about your blog: Quick and easy traffic generating tips.

Every blogger wants more traffic but just how do you get it? The best approach is to blog consistently, and use the right keywords within your blog posts to drive traffic to each post.

A blog can also be promoted the same way you would a traditional website. You can write and distribute articles to the search engines, buy banner ads, and invest in PPC advertising, etc.

Here are a few solutions to help you drive traffic to your blog...

Optimize your blog for the search engines

A blog is naturally attractive to search engines as they are content-rich web pages that have many links and are regularly updated. Techniques for optimizing blogs are similar to optimizing content websites, but they can actually rank much higher than a static website. Here are a few simple rules:

1. Naming for success. How to choose your blog domain name.

If you can, choose a separate URL for your blog. The domain name should include the primary keyword you want to optimize your blog to. If you can't get your keyword in a domain name, you can include it in a sub domain.

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Example:

Keyword = babynames

BLOGGING SUCCESS – A GUIDE TO BLOGGING FOR PROFITS

Main Domain – www.babynames.com

Sub Domain – www.parenting.com/babynames

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2. Navigating for success.

Make your blog easy to navigate. Set your blog up so that it is easy for search engine spiders to navigate. Your navigation bar should be displayed on all pages, and your archives and previous posts should be accessible from each page so that the spiders can read them easily.

3. Tagging for success.

Optimize your post titles and blog header tags. Using your primary key phrase in your blog header tags and post titles will increase your search engine ranking for that keyword. Your blogging software will take the keyword in your posts titles and use them in the permalink posts it creates.

4. Keywords for success.

Include keywords in anchor text of links. Keywords in links have more impact on your search engine ranking than keywords in simple text. Try to include both primary and secondary keywords in your links to other blog posts or pages of your main site.

5. SEO for success.

Include secondary keywords in the content of your posts. You don't want to overdo the secondary keywords in your blog posts as they will sound forced to your readers. However, using secondary keywords where appropriate throughout your posts, including titles, will increase your search engine ranking.

6. Update for success.

Adding new content on a regular basis will ensure frequent visits from search engine spiders and increase your search engine ranking.

7. Consistency for success.

Keep the same domain. Once you have set up a blog you should try to keep the same domain and host where possible. You might lose your search engine ranking, traffic and customers if you move around too often.

8. Submit and link for success.

Get links from other websites. Encouraging other sites to link to your blog will do wonders for your search engine ranking. The best way to do this is to submit your blog to search engines and directories.

Build your network. Build your community.

Posting appropriate comments on other people's blogs is a great way to get them to read and post comments on yours. Linking with other online businesses in your field or niche subject area helps to build your community and increase traffic to your blog. Make sure your comment includes a link back to a relevant part of your blog.

Blog marketing 101

Writing articles, columns, interviews or general content for other sites is a great way to market your blog if you include a byline with an appropriate link back to your site. You can also mention your site on any personal e-mails you send, as well as any other forms of communication you use.

It's as easy as 1, 2, 3. Tools you need to start your blog.

The technology you need to start a blog can be as simple or as complicated as you like, depending on whether you choose to use a blog publishing service or host your own blog.

Free blog hosting vs. hosting your own blog

There are two options when it comes to starting a blog, you can either make use of a free service such as Blogger.com, or you can host your own blog. Both of these have advantages and are worth considering when you set up your blog.

Option #1 – Free Blog Hosting Services.

Here is an example of a free blog hosting service:

Blogger.com

Blogger was created by Pyra Labs in 1999 during the dot-com boom, and was bought by Google in 2002. It provides a completely free web publishing and optional hosting service. Some of the features of Blogger.com are:

- Blogger has templates set up that allow you to begin your blog immediately without having to learn any html, although they do allow you to change your blog's HTML code whenever you wish.
- You are able to customize the look and feel of your blog using different colors and fonts.
- You can rearrange the elements of your blog page using a drag and drop feature.
- Photos can be added to your blog quickly and easily.
- You can even send text and images to your blog from your mobile phone when you are traveling.

Using Blogger.com requires you to stick to their strict content policy, which covers issues such as SPAM compliance, hate content, copyright, defamation or libel and using their blogs for illegal purposes.

Real advantages of free blog hosting services

1. No cost
2. No technical knowledge is required to set up a blog
3. Setting up your blog takes minutes
4. Changing your blog's design and updating features is simple
5. Customers will be familiar with blog features and functionality
6. You will be listed in blog directories such as Google Blog Search which may generate more traffic
7. Links from your blog to your website will increase search engine rankings

Disadvantages to a free blog hosting service.

- There is a view that having a blog URL ending in blogspot.com etc. is similar to having an @aol.com or @hotmail.com email address and can make potential customers view you as an inexperienced novice that doesn't know what they are talking about. There are a number of successful businesses using Blogger URLs so whether you choose to share this view is up to you.
- There are some definite disadvantages to using blog hosting services, however. You have a lack of control over your blog, with your provider being able to adjust the service quality whenever they wish. They can add advertising banners and pop ups to your blog that you have no say in. They can even promote your competitors on your blog space. In a worst case scenario, you could lose all your hard work overnight.

Option #2 – Hosting your own blog?

Many internet gurus believe that a serious online business should host their own blog rather than making use of a free blogging service, but most small businesses don't know where to begin. Here are some of the steps you need to take to host your own blog:

1. Name it.

Choose your domain name. Of course you are limited by the names available, and there are some rules to follow in choosing an effective domain name:

- Make your domain name descriptive enough for your visitors to know what to expect from your blog.
- Avoid domain names that include numeric characters
- Choose a domain name ending in .com, .net or .org.
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2. Register it

There are a number of registration services online, with perhaps the most established being Network Solutions. (I use GoDaddy.com.)

3. Choose your software

There are many different software programs available for blogging, one of the most popular being WordPress. WordPress is a free personal publishing platform which can make your blog as simple or complex as you require. In the 21st Century, Wordpress is THE way to go for self-hosted blogs.

4. Choose your host

Your registration service will probably provide hosting but you do not necessarily have to use it. A simple Google search will provide you with a large number of hosting services. Make sure the host that you choose is compatible with your blogging software. I personally use Bluehost.com and love their service. Most blog software programs have the following requirements:

- Most run on PERL or PHP (WordPress)
- Most use MySQL as a database

Advantages of hosting your own blog

1. Hosting your own blog means your visitors are not taken away from your domain to read your blog
2. Having a blog on your own domain can add credibility and professionalism to your business
3. You will have more flexibility in designing your blog
4. You will be able to add more additional features
5. If your blog is tagged to your website it will increase your search engine ranking

In these days of internet technology, no question is ever black and white. Using a free blog service or hosting your own blog are not your only two options. You could use domain forwarding, or you could use a paid blogging service such as Typepad.

Should you forward your domain?

Domain forwarding is a redirect that sends your visitors to another site when they arrive at yours. You can have your own domain name for your blog that relates to your business, but when your readers visit it, they are redirected to a blog hosted by Blogger.com or similar.

The advantage of this is that once you have told your registration service where you want to send your visitors, the process of maintaining and updating your blog is very simple. The disadvantage is that they will still end up at a domain which is not your own.

Typepad.com

Type pad is a web publishing service like Blogger, but it is specifically business focused and charges a monthly fee for hosting your blog. Some of the features of Typepad are:

- Your blog can live on your own domain name
- Typepad automatically supports feeds, podcasts and video casting
- You can build your own blog from scratch, or customize a Typepad template
- Typepad will automatically publish RSS and Atom feeds
- You can send TrackBacks to the sites you are blogging about
- You can embed functionality and content from sites like Amazon, Technorati and Skype

There are a couple of additional tools you might want to look at once you have your blog set up. These are a good SPAM filter to avoid being inundated with SPAM comments, and a dedicated software package to write posts, like Microsoft Live Writer, rather than relying on your blog software's editor which may lack functionality.

A final step in creating your blog, however you choose to host it, is to register your blog with Technorati.

What is Technorati and why should I register?

Technorati is a web based business that tracks various forms of social media on the internet, particularly blogs. It produces a quarterly report entitled 'state of the Blogosphere' which analyzes blogging trends such as the growth rate of blogs and postings, the most popular languages used in blogs, and the popularity of larger blog sites.

Technorati also remove splogs, or SPAM blogs from the web. Registering with them will ensure that your blog is tracked by Technorati, rather than being removed.

Ten common blogging mistakes and how to avoid them.

Blogs, like websites, can fail. Here's how to make sure yours doesn't!

1. Publish regularly.

Whether you post frequently or rarely is not as important and whether you publish regularly. You need to set your readers' expectations, so find a rhythm that suits you and maintain it. If you are going to be away, write posts in advance and set them up to be posted automatically at your usual time. You need to maintain momentum.

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2. Stay focused.

Trying to talk about more than one topic in a single post will confuse your readers and will make your posts hard to categorize. Try to keep your posts as simple as possible and stick to one subject. It's great that you have lots of ideas, but save them for future posts.

3. Connect with your readers.

To really connect with your blog, your readers will want to know something about you. Include an author biography, and preferably a photo to help you build up a relationship with your customers.

4. Have a point.

The headline of your post is all that will show up in search engine results and links so be sure to make it attention grabbing and relevant to your post. No one will bother to click on a link to your post if they don't have some idea of what it is about.

5. Pay attention.

Carried away by the success of their first blog, many authors start several more. Maintaining a blog takes time and effort and the quality of your blog will suffer if you spread yourself too thin. One high quality blog with regular postings is better than several neglected blogs.

6. Keep it all together.

Your blog is an ongoing story or conversation. You will want to refer to previous posts but you won't want to explain to new readers the entire contents of your previous articles. Insert links to the relevant posts, and keep an easily accessible archive of your most significant articles.

7. Respect your readers – all of them.

Receiving negative comments can be frustrating and upsetting, but don't forget that the author has made the effort to read your post and make a comment on it. You have managed to reach out and make an impact on an individual, even if that has not had a positive outcome.

Read your post again objectively, keeping the negative feedback in mind. You may be surprised that you start to agree with the comments. View all comments as valuable feedback that you can learn from, whether negative or positive. You may change your mind about something.

8. Do your research.

Getting your facts wrong will discredit your blog in no time. Make sure you research your topic thoroughly and double check any facts before you post.

9. Keep it simple.

There are all sorts of high tech features you can now add to your blogs, including feeds and complex plug-ins. Be careful of sacrificing blog quality for

technology, though. Too many plug-ins can slow down the functioning of your blog, and your content may suffer if you are spending too much time on fancy features. People visit a blog to read the posts so make them your number one priority.

10. Keep your feet on the ground.

It is important to generate new traffic to your site, but you must remember to look after your regular readers first. Occasionally you may have a post that for some reason goes crazy, getting you hundreds of visitors. Only a handful of these will become regular readers, however, so don't get too carried away. Cater for your regular subscribers first and new traffic will come naturally.

Blogging isn't just a lot of fun, it is good business. A blog can connect you with your community. It can drive traffic to your website. It can sell products for you. A blog can help establish your brand, enhance your press, and increase your exposure. A blog can even help you build credibility and trust with your target market.

Of course, blogging isn't as easy as tossing a few unorganized thoughts on the screen and hoping it will work. A blog involves planning and a few strategies. You now have the tools to create a fantastic, business building blog.

Blog on!

Blogging Worksheet:

Blogging is a fantastic way to communicate with your prospects on a regular basis. It enables them to be heard and it gives you an open forum to respond. Blog technology is growing every day and blog sites are becoming quite advanced and dynamic. Many new business owners are foregoing the traditional website and are selling their products and services on a blog. Whether you have a separate blog or your business is based around a blog website, it may be beneficial to take advantage of this dynamic communication tool.

What will you blog about? List some topic ideas or concepts that will be beneficial to your reader.

What tone will your blog have? Will you write as if you're talking with your friends or will you have a more authoritative or formal tone? Write down your ideas for the tone of your blog.

Will your blog be for fun and entertainment or to generate a profit? For example, a blog about the life and trials of a mother of triplets has a different approach than a blog that might review products to make the life of a mother of triplets easier.

How regularly will you contribute to your blog?

How will you generate ideas to blog about? How will you organize your ideas?

Will you have guest bloggers? If yes, who will you consider inviting to blog? Doesn't have to be specific people, just concepts for ideal guest bloggers.

Blueprint for Success: Blogging Steps

Step 1. Determine a concept for your blog. What are you blogging about?

Step 2. Decide if you are blogging for profit or for fun. If you're blogging for profit, how? Affiliate income? AdSense? Are you marketing your own products? Determine this before you get started.

Step 3. Name your blog. Don't forget to optimize your name for search engine success.

Step 4. Find a host. Blogger.com, wordpress.com, host it yourself, or even your own website hosting company may have blog software.

Step 5. Establish a regular posting schedule, and set time aside to get it done. There's nothing more disappointing for a regular visitor or fan than to have their favorite blog drop off the face of the earth. Be realistic about your schedule. If you can blog every day, great, if not, plan to blog at least once a week. Any less and your blog won't be able to sustain long term interest.

Step 6. Post! Try to keep a regular posting schedule so that you can connect with your readers regularly and keep them coming back for more.

Step 7. Promote your blog. Promoting your blog is just like promoting any online business. Include links to your blog in every online communication. Tag your posts so the search engines can find them and trade blog posts with relevant businesses to generate interest.



This Special Report is just one of the many benefits you enjoy only as a member of Marty Marsh's Inner Success Circle. If you received this report and you are NOT yet a member, please join here: <http://www.innersuccesscircle.com>

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