

AN INNER SUCCESS CIRCLE SPECIAL REPORT

# You Have A BLOG... NOW WHAT?



**From the Blogging 101 Series**

Presented by

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for Members of

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

# Blogging 101: You Have a Blog... NOW WHAT?

## Introduction

**S**o you have taken the plunge and you've got a blog of your own! Either you set it up yourself or you hired someone to do it for you. You're convinced that blogging is going to bring you new customers, make you look like an expert, and generate lots of sales. You may even have an idea or two for what you might possibly blog about.

But getting a blog set up and posting on it isn't the half of it. First of all, you need to deal with the fact that blogging isn't just a one-shot deal. Adding a post every once in a while won't get you the results you're hoping for. For blogging to really pay off, you have to do it over and over again, several times a week, at least for as long as you expect to get those results. It's more like brushing your teeth than painting the house.

And there's more. While it's true that blogging can be one of the best marketing moves you could make to grow your business and your brand, it's also true that you have to do it right. But don't worry. Even though there are a number of things you have to do correctly, it's not rocket science. I'll show you exactly what you need to do to blog "right."

Read on!

Marty



## Writing for your readers

**W**hen online entrepreneurs talk about blogging, they usually think about all the ways it can help them. They wax nostalgic about traffic, sales, and their soon-to-be-achieved “expert status.” But what they often forget is that to gain traffic, revenue, and attention, you need to provide something your audience wants. If you’re focused on your business and what blogging can do for YOU, you’re going to alienate your readers and come off as a self-absorbed jerk (to put it mildly).

**Here are the top five mistakes that bloggers make and how to avoid them:**

- 1. Thinking “What do I want to write?” vs. “What does my audience want to read?”** It’s okay to include a few personal details or stories every so often. But keep in mind that your target market doesn’t care too much about your new car or your kitten’s celiac disease – unless it has a direct bearing on their life or the niche you’re writing about. If your website is about natural health cures for pets, then include the gory details of Fluffy’s gastrointestinal distress. Otherwise, focus on your readers’ biggest worries and problems and how you can solve them. Save the chit-chat for your therapist or your spouse.
- 2. Taking “informal” too far.** One of the biggest mistakes many bloggers make is to get carried away in their efforts to be informal, with the result that they appear downright unprofessional. By their very nature, blogs tend to be casual, based on conversation and interaction. Just don’t get sloppy. Be sure to check spelling and grammar, and capitalize words where needed. Think about it... Would you trust a brain surgeon who can’t be bothered to capitalize and punctuate properly?
- 3. Becoming undependable.** You don’t have to blog daily if you don’t want to, though you do have to blog *consistently*. If you blog fifteen times one week and then disappear for a month or two, you’ll appear flaky and disorganized. Instead, use the scheduling function on your blogging platform to set up a regular posting routine. If you want to sit down just once a month to write, that’s fine. But be sure to set up your posts so they appear on a regular schedule.
- 4. Ignoring the interactive element of blogging.** Blogs should be dialogues. You throw out the conversational ball, and your readers catch it and toss it back in the form of comments, e-mails, and even responses on their own blogs. If you write but don’t listen or respond, you’ll seem distant and unapproachable. It’s important that you care what your customers and readers have to say, or at least appear that way.

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**5. Making your blog read like a press release.** Customers love blogs because they believe they're getting a behind-the-scenes glimpse at your business. If everything you post reads like a corporate press release, no one is going to stick around. After all, they might as well read your annual report.

This doesn't mean you need to air your dirty laundry in public, but you do need to give the occasional "behind the curtain" scoop. Share what you're working on, the challenges you're facing and how you're overcoming them, and details about your process. Occasionally, you might even want to ask for advice on how to solve a minor business problem. Asking people to provide input helps them feel like part of the team and increases brand loyalty.

As you can see, these aren't difficult concepts to grasp. You don't have to write Pulitzer-Winning prose or answer complex "meaning of life" questions. Instead, just be yourself – your best self! – and keep your readers' interests in mind.

## Finding topics

**M**any businesspeople resist starting a blog in the first place because they have no idea what they can write about every week for the rest of their life. While the idea of blogging into eternity may seem a little daunting, it shouldn't be. Assuming your business is in a niche that you enjoy, you should never face a dearth of topics to write about. Have you ever met a football lover who ran out of things to say about their favorite team? Or a golfer who didn't enjoy rehashing each hole of the last 18 holes they played?

What about a shoe-lover who can wax poetic over the finer points of stilettos vs. platforms? Or an opera lover who'd love nothing better than to hear about your trip to watch *Les Mis* in Paris?

The point is, if you are excited about a topic – and you are open to discussion and dialogue – the possibilities for interesting posts are endless. All the same, there will be times when your writing well runs dry. That's why I recommend you create a list of ideas so you always have prompts to give you a good start.

Here are just a handful of places to find ideas:

- **On other blogs.** Follow the leaders in your industry to see what they're talking about. You can provide your own perspective on the latest topics, or you can predict what's happening next. For instance, if everyone's talking about the challenges of outsourcing overseas, you could create a post about the legal considerations of outsourcing to freelancers abroad, or a post about cheap places to outsource domestically. (You can see a good example of this at my blog: [Exciting Science of Email Marketing Data](#) )
- **On forums.** Reading industry forums can give you the fly-on-the-wall view of what people are struggling with, wondering about, and doing in your industry. Even if you don't actively participate, you can "eavesdrop" on what people are discussing and create blog posts that answer questions or add new insights.

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- **In the news.** Some of the best blog posts are those where you take a current event and talk about how it impacts your particular niche. For instance, if it's time for the Olympics and you have a photography blog, you could talk about the best lenses and techniques for capturing action shots. A marketing blog could talk about the ways the Olympic committee is marketing the Games, and a fashion blog could talk about how the Olympic games impact fashion.
- **From the past.** A great place to find post ideas is to go back in time. For instance, a recipe site could include blog posts on old-time cooking, or on what a typical diet might have looked like at different points in time, or on recipes we're still using today that haven't changed much in the past hundred years.

The overall theme is to take the lens of your niche and use it to look at the world around you. Your job as a blogger is to interpret the world for the rest of your market, letting them know what's important, interesting, and noteworthy. If you look at every newspaper article, every book you read, even every TV show you watch and ask yourself, "How does this impact my market?" you'll have a good start.

## Every Post Has a Point

Choosing a good topic is only the first step in creating a fantastic, bookmark-worthy blog post. After you've selected a subject – or maybe even beforehand – decide on the main point of your post. Each post on your blog should have one point. Whether it's to encourage readers to sign up for your email list, urge them to leave a comment, or encourage visitors to buy something, each and every post should have a specific point and a call to action.

**Here are some common points that blog posts could have:**

**To encourage subscriptions.** If you write what Darren Rowse of ProBlogger.net calls a "pillar post," you may impress your readers so much that they're longing for more. At the bottom of these posts, include a sign-up box for your email list so you can capture traffic while they're still wowed by your brilliance.

**To sell something.** Whether it's your own products or someone else's, blog posts can make people more receptive to buying something. Product reviews, case studies, and new product announcements can help you sell a product or service. Just be sure to skip the hard sell.

**To engage your readers.** Sometimes, you may want to reinforce that sense of community. To get your readers to respond, you could ask questions, invite discussion, or actually suggest that readers respond in the comments section or on their own blogs.

**To encourage viral marketing.** If you want your posts to go viral, you need to create valuable, evergreen content that others will want to save and pass on to friends, or even tweet to their followers on Twitter. These types of posts, called "pillar content," make up the backbone of your blog. While they may not be directly monetized, they encourage readers to return again and again, and to recommend your site to their colleagues and friends.

Of course there are other reasons for blogging, so if you have a reason that's not listed above, not to worry. The key is to *have* a reason, and to *know that reason* before you even start writing. Then and only then does that post belong on your blog.

## Happy Headlines

You've heard it before: People DO judge books by their covers, and they also judge blog posts by their headlines. If your headline isn't entertaining or compelling, your potential readers won't expect anything different from the rest of your blog post, and so they may not bother to read it.

Yet, writing great headlines can be a challenge. After all, you need to include your keyword phrase for search engine optimization purposes. But as long as you keep your focus on your readers, you'll find that there is a great deal of crossover between what your readers want and what the search engines want. After all, the search engines want to deliver the best results to their users.

### Here are some tips for writing effective blog post headlines:

- **Start with the point of your post.** Each post needs to have a single call to action, and a single point. Choosing a headline that supports this point will help make sure the rest of your post stays on topic.
- **Put the keyword first.** Search engines give higher priority to the words at the beginning of the title. So if you are writing about parsley's health benefits, instead of writing "Twelve Powerful Health Benefits of Parsley," rephrase it to be, "Parsley: Twelve Powerful Health Benefits."
- **Keep it short.** Common wisdom is that Google will only display up to 66 characters in a title and will crop the rest. That's yet another reason to put your most important words up front.
- **Make it interesting.** The best titles are a bit mysterious or clever. Just don't sacrifice clarity for the sake of cleverness! You're much better off going with a straightforward title than being so obtuse that someone scanning titles on Google has no idea what your post is going to be about.
- **Make a promise... and deliver.** Tell people what you're going to tell them, and then spend the rest of your post delivering on that promise.

### Here are some great headlines I've seen lately:

- **How to Blog Like Bond. James Bond.** (copyblogger.com.) While this post won't pull a lot of search engine traffic (I don't think very many people are searching for "How to Blog Like Bond!"), it is very appealing to the blog's regular readers.
- **Free Blog Content: Embed YouTube Videos in your WordPress Blog Posts** (nicoleonthenet.com). You can see right off the bat what Nicole's trying to rank for – Free Blog Content. Yet the title is also compelling for browsers and regular readers.
- **Advil's Lawsuit Waiting to Happen** (sugarrae.com). I use Advil. I want to know what about Advil might give rise to a lawsuit. Don't you? In fact, I bet you're going to go try to find this post after you're done reading this report.

- **7 Ways To Make Damn Sure Your Email Gets Read** (ittybiz.com). Maybe not totally search engine optimized, but it's still compelling enough to pull a ton of readers. (Now, you have to remember, if you're not familiar with her, that Naomi swears an awful lot. So it makes perfect sense that she uses the word "damn" in her headline. That's *her* style. It might not be yours.)

Headline writing – like much of internet marketing – is a balancing act. You must balance clarity with interest, and cleverness with SEO. Just do your best and stay true to your style.

## Structuring Your Blog Posts

Got a topic? Got a point? Got a headline? Good. Now you're ready to write. There are a lot of writing programs, suggestions, and systems out there, many of which are quite good. You can spend some time investigating them, but here's a quick rundown of approaches I've used with excellent results:

- 1. Write an email.** How often do you get stymied for what to say in an email to a friend? Probably not very often. So instead of telling yourself you're writing A Blog Post (which can sound intimidating and important), tell yourself you're writing an email to a friend. You can even do this in your email program. Put your headline in the subject line, keep your point and call to action in mind, and start writing. Then you can cut and paste to your blog publishing software, editing a bit as needed, and you're done.
- 2. Outline it.** This is probably my favorite method, though it gives some people uncomfortable flashbacks to ninth grade English class. Write your title, and then list three or four main points you'd like to make or examples you want to include. Flesh them out, and you're done!
- 3. Speak it.** Record yourself talking about the topic, or just sit down with a friend and talk through your post, taking notes of points and ideas you come up with as you chat. (Bonus: If your audio recording is pretty coherent, you can release it as a podcast on iTunes for an added bang for your buck).
- 4. Just write.** Sit down, start typing, and see what comes out. Don't edit yourself until you're done. Then go back and edit, reformat, tighten, cut, and expand as needed.

**Blog writing is not like the essay-writing we were graded on in school; it's much more conversational. No one will be grading your blogging efforts. All good writers edit their stuff.**

Writing is as difficult or as easy as you allow it to be. Many of us come from backgrounds where we were told we weren't good writers, or that our spelling and grammar were atrocious. But don't let that stop you if you have something to say! First, blog writing is not like the essay-writing we were graded on as students; it's much more conversational. Second, no one (probably not even your ninth grade English teacher!) will be grading your blogging efforts. Third, all good writers, even Stephen King, Scott Turow, and Prologger Darrin Rowse edit their work. And if they do it, you should, too.

## Speaking of Editing: Easy Editing Techniques

**W**ant a sure-fire way to make your writing even better, no matter what your current level may be? Here it is, in a word: Editing. All writers, professional or amateur, need to edit their work. Editing makes the difference between a masterpiece and an unreadable mess. If you don't edit your writing, you might discover weeks later that you used the word "internal" instead of "internet" throughout your post.

I've read many, many blog posts – and ebooks and published printed books as well – that makes me wonder if the author ever went back and re-read what they wrote before publishing. It is appalling!

Don't be intimidated though. Editing doesn't have to be overwhelming. In fact, here are a few easy tricks that will help you make your work ready for prime time:

- 1. Take a break.** When you're too close to a piece of writing, you can become blind to some of your mistakes. Take a walk around the block, step away from the computer for a short break, grab a cup of coffee, sleep on it overnight, and then get back to work. You'll suddenly see your post with new eyes, and many errors will just jump out at you. (For an amusing take on this, see [Ode to the Typographical Error](#) )
- 2. Read it aloud.** Reading aloud makes you slow down. You can't gloss over words when you have to pronounce each and every one! That's why reading out loud is a great way to catch spelling and grammar errors, along with repetitive words or phrases. You'll find it just won't "sound right" if there's a problem. Sometimes I have someone else read it out loud back to me, as I follow along on a printed copy, circling errors as the pop up.
- 3. Outsource it.** You can also hire an outside editor to do a copy edit of your writing. Check out sites like [www.shelancers.com](http://www.shelancers.com) for qualified assistance. If you should decide to outsource your editing, you'll get the most bang for your buck if you group a bunch of posts together instead of sending them one at a time.
- 4. Swap with a buddy.** Find a buddy who might be interested in an editing partnership. You can exchange your posts and read each other's work, checking for grammar and spelling errors, nonsensical sentences, and unclear areas.

As you can see, editing doesn't have to be an overwhelming, complicated process. It simply involves going over your work to make sure it's clear, concise, and clean. Whether you do it yourself, work with a partner, or hire an assistant, the important thing is to do it. You'll be glad you did.

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## Incorporating Audio and Video

When you think “blogger,” you generally think of a writer. But with Web 2.0, that’s no longer always the case. Quite a few bloggers also incorporate audio and video into their blogs. Even if text is your main mode of communication, using other media forms to engage your audience is a powerful blogging strategy. Here’s why: The more senses you involve when you communicate with your audience, the more brain cells – literally! – they will dedicate to you. And more connections means higher levels of involvement and trust.

Here’s the best part: Once you learn how to record and upload your media, audio or video blogging can actually be quicker than writing – even for professional writers!

Here are some fun ways to pull audio and video into your blog posts:

- **Reviews.** If you’re reviewing a product, what better way to show the process than by recording your experience with it? From unpacking the item to assembling it and putting it to use, video reviews add fantastic value to your post.
- **On-the-Spot Reports.** If you’re in the fishing industry, how cool would it be to “take your audience with you” to your favorite fishing spots? Talk about making a connection! You could do the same for cooking (“Let’s take a field trip to the farmers market!”), running (“Here are my five favorite running trails”), and more.
- **Demonstrations or Tutorials.** Instead of trying to explain a cooking technique in words and photos, why not create a video of yourself performing the technique live in your own kitchen? If a picture is worth a thousand words, video is worth many times more than that.
- **Interviews.** Text interviews are great, but being able to hear you interact with the interview subject takes the experience to a whole new level.

Whatever your industry or niche, there are ways you can effectively use audio and video on your blog. Think creatively and brainstorm a list of topics that would be greatly enhanced by using audio or video instead of text, or in addition.

## SEO vs. Readability

Have you ever done a Google search on, say, refinancing your home mortgage? Your results might look something like this:

“Mortgage refinance home mortgage California home mortgage.”

Or,

“Refinancing mortgage home mortgage refinance loan.”

You take one look and say, “Hunh?” Suddenly you’re wondering if you did your search in English or Pig Latin. But the real issue here is that the website creators had a bad case of SEO overload. They are attempting to rank higher in the search engines by stuffing as many keywords as possible into the headline and the content on the page.

While this kind of keyword-stuffing might have fooled search engines in the past, Google has gotten

wise to it. Google now also uses LSI – Latent Semantic Indexing – to evaluate the relevance of websites. This means that Google looks for related words that would occur in a typical text on a certain subject.

In a normal post about refinancing a mortgage, for example, there might also be mention of comparing interest rates, speaking to loan officers, going to banks, pulling credit reports, improving credit scores, and so on. If Google doesn't find at least some of those words and phrases, the site might have a problem.

Your human visitors have an even lower tolerance for keyword-stuffed gobbledygook. Remember that you want to build an ongoing relationship with your readers so they'll come back again and again. That won't happen if your page is filled with phrases like "refinance lowest rates florida mortgage refinance now," no matter how interested they might be in refinancing their mortgage.

So here's the bottom line: Sure, you should have a good idea of the key terms people might enter into a search engine to find the content you're putting on your page. But once you have used those words or phrases in your title as well as a couple of times in your post, stop worrying about them and write for your readers instead. Hit the points you wanted to make. Deliver on the promise in your headline. Place your call to action. Once you're all done and you're in the editing stage, make sure you did the following:

- you mentioned your keyword phrase at the beginning and the end of your post
- you linked to any other posts on your blog with related information
- you linked to other resources or posts on the web.

See? That wasn't so hard, was it? Just remember that ultimately, the search engines are trying to find the best results to serve to readers who are looking for readability and usefulness. So make your posts readable and useful, and you'll keep your readers happy, and the search engines too.

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## Standing Out In a Crowded Room

With more than 100 million blogs on the internet – and more being added every day! – it can seem like an impossible task to get your poor little site noticed. But it is possible to make a niche for yourself, even in a very competitive market space.

**Here are ten ways to create buzz around your blog:**

- 1. Write great content.** It sounds simple, but it's true. If you want people to want to read your stuff, and refer your friends to your site, write content worth reading. Then do it again, and again, and again.
- 2. Interact with other bloggers.** There are many bloggers in your niche, and instead of viewing them as competitors, see them as potential partners. Comment on their blogs, retweet their messages on Twitter, join their Facebook pages, and so on. Make yourself their supporter, and they'll be more receptive to helping you out when they can.

3. **Add eye-catching images.** Lots of people are scanners, and they'll pop over to your blog to just see what's happening. Strong images are a great way to grab their attention; long blocks of text are a turn-off for most people.
4. **Add audio and video.** Adding other media forms is a way to mix things up and keep them interesting. While any one particular visitor might skip an audio, another one might be dying to hear your voice!
5. **Keep things relevant.** Comment on the latest trends in your industry, or relate top-of-mind news stories to your market. For example, if everyone's talking about reality TV, can you take a spin on the most popular show for your market? Be the go-to expert.
6. **Interview "big names."** While you may not be able to compete with the "celebrities" in your market when it comes to traffic, you can divert some of their traffic your way by interviewing them. This is a great place to bring in audio and video.
7. **Do a giveaway.** Find something people in your market would really like, and hold a contest or giveaway. (Hint: The more tightly tied the prize is to your market, the more targeted your traffic will be).
8. **Integrate your blogging with other social media.** Tweet about your best blog posts, and add a tweet stream to your blog. For most popular blogging platforms, this can be done easily with a blog widget. Post your blog links to your Facebook page and LinkedIn profile too. Build a Squidoo lens and add your blog's feed. Audios and videos should be added to podcast and video sharing sites as well as to iTunes.
9. **Guest post.** Guest posting means appearing on other blogger's sites. It allows you to reach a new market, complete with the stamp of approval from someone that this new market already knows, likes, and trusts. For more information on guest blogging – including how to hold your own "blog tour" – visit Nicole Dean's blog at [www.nicoleonthenet.com](http://www.nicoleonthenet.com).
10. **Interact with readers.** Your audience is your bread and butter. When they comment, you should be appreciative AND responsive. Engage them in conversation, either in the comments section of your site, or via email. Never ignore your readers!

**Very few bloggers actually do all the things listed on this page. That's why there's always room for someone new at the top... someone who's willing to do what others aren't.**

Very few bloggers – even those who consider themselves “professionals” – do all these things. That's why there will always be room for someone new at the top – someone who's willing to do the things others aren't. Someone like you!

## Adding Images to Your Posts

Remember when you were in second or third grade, and you went to the school library? Sometimes you'd pull a book from the shelf and take a look at it, only to quickly put it back in its place. Why? It had no pictures – just pages and pages of black text on a white background. How unappealing!

Today's web surfers are much like typical second-graders. If you don't show them something besides text, they're going to put you back on the shelf faster than you can say, "hopscotch."

Now, what if you're not a master photographer or an artist who can whip up line drawings at the drop of a hat? Are you destined to a life of being ignored by all but the bravest of readers? No! There are many ways you can incorporate photos, clip art, and other images on your pages:

1. **Take the photos yourself.** You don't have to be Ansel Adams, especially with today's cameras and auto-correction. If you can take a photo and crop it, you can upload it to your blog quickly and easily.
2. **Get "creative commons" images.** Go to flickr.com/creativecommons for millions of images you can use for free on your blog under the creative commons license. Typically, this means you can use the image for non-commercial purposes (e.g., you can't use it on a sales page or on the cover of your eBook), if you provide attribution to the photographer. That's as easy as including a caption with his name and a link to his Flickr site).
3. **Embed video from YouTube.** Do a search on YouTube to find interesting and relevant videos for your market, and use the code provided to embed the video on your site. Also check out sites like Vimeo for more options.
4. **Subscribe to a stock photo site.** You pay a monthly fee or buy a pack of credits you can use to pay for one-time use fees, and you'll have access to thousands of high-quality photos and images. Good stock photo sites are [www.clipart.com](http://www.clipart.com), [www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com), and [www.dreamstime.com](http://www.dreamstime.com), and there are many others as well. Just Google "stock images" or "stock photos" to find all the stock photos you could want.
5. **Use clipart from your computer.** You can also use clipart from your computer, though you may want to be careful with this one, as many "old school" clip art styles can make your site look dated. [www.clipart.com](http://www.clipart.com) Not sure what to use? Check out some of the leading blogs in your market and follow their lead.

**Forget about all the other details and ask yourself one question: Does this post, audio, video, image, or comment provide value to my reader?**

Including images in your post makes your page look more interesting and entertaining. Of course, for best results, those images should also add depth to the point you're making in your post.

## Conclusion

It's easy to become overwhelmed with all the do's and don'ts of the blogging world – particularly when you hear people throw around terms like SEO, keywords, bounce rates, and the like! But what ultimately counts is that you provide value to your market. Forget about all the other details and ask yourself one question: Does this post, audio, video, image, or comment provide value to my reader? If you can answer with a resounding, "Yes!" then you're well on your way to serving your market. Keep providing value over and over, and you'll eventually start getting the kind of traction, attention, and readership that you long for.

It's within your reach. All you have to do is follow the steps.



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