

Blogging Essentials

Steps to Organically Boost
Traffic & Cash Flow



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Blogging Essentials

I've often spoken about the value of blogging. Whether you're an individual who wants to make a few extra bucks while providing a commentary on the things that interest you or a company who wants to instill their values and brand in their existing staff, blogging is one of the most influential "non-media" platforms in use today.

In the mid-90s, most of us wondered who in their right mind would keep an "online journal", as it was known before its evolution. These frequently updated web logs (see, "web logs" became "weblogs", which in turn evolved into just "blogs") quickly became popular among online junkies who wanted their information fast and less biased by big media.



A blog is traditionally maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, and supporting material such as images or video. Entries are most typically found in reverse-chronological order and support comments by readers in an interactive format. The word "blog" can also be used as a verb.

Although blogging was the staple of '90s geeks with angst, it quickly grew into a powerful marketing tool, news platform, and communications medium. Further popularized by hosted blogging tools, usage spread quickly in the late nineties, with the initial online journaling platforms being replaced by content management systems and professional blogging tools.

Blogs have gained increasing notice and coverage for their role in communicating news and providing a platform for outreach, marketing, and collaborative information. Not to mention, if you do it right, you can make some good money.

Herein, we'll review what it takes to maintain a successful blog and review money-making options related to blogging.

Authenticity & Transparency

Blogging is a huge influencer of branding and reputation enhancement, providing that authenticity and transparency are maintained. Authenticity and transparency are the bedrocks of blogging – particularly company blogging. Being open and honest will improve trust within a target community.



When people refer to “authenticity and transparency”, they’re basically saying “be honest”. If you act like you’ve got nothing to hide, and back it up by (gasp) having nothing to hide, your readers will trust you.

Yep, honesty breeds trust – who would've guessed?

So, why should we be so honest on the web? Isn't the Internet where we're supposed to be able to lie as much as we want?

To put it simply, everyone has a bullshit detectors, and you don't want to get called out; it would be embarrassing to say the least. To have a successful blog, maintain your integrity, post your actual opinions, offer reason, and allow comments. Engage in a conversation with your readers, but most importantly, write unique content from your honest point of view.

Finding a Niche Market

People have been on a “long tail” marketing craze for a while, talking about all the little niche markets that make up a larger percentage of potential clients. The phrase “The Long Tail” was first coined to describe the niche strategy of businesses such as Amazon that sell a large number of unique items, each in relatively small quantities.

Targeting all those little pockets of people drives highly targeted traffic to sites, so why shouldn’t everyone get in on it? Perhaps without realizing it, many bloggers have already done so.



With the rise of social networking and blogging, we’ve evolved online as we have in other ways; our online personas often mirror our offline lives. Our interests are targeted to something specific and sometimes, such interests don’t necessarily fit into a general blog with wide subject matter – posts such as these often get ignored or lost in the shuffle, and as a result, many bloggers feel they need a niche to be heard.

As a result, blogs have now gone the way of the e-mail address: one for personal use and one for business use (and perhaps one for your alter ego). One for customers and one for employees, each in its own niche within its own community: online society is quickly becoming similar to offline society and there are plenty of niches to fill.

Although in many cases, the point of having a blog is to gain a wider audience, with too much crossover, your audience won’t be as targeted as possible; and once you’ve started crossover readership, it can be difficult to pull it back to your niche focus. It is important to market your site to the appropriate audience, so ensure that you comment on other sites in the same niche, that you advertise appropriately on your site, and that you keep your focus.

There’s nothing wrong with a targeted message to your targeted audience, so don’t expect to please all your existing readers – instead of relying on trying to keep everyone happy, find your own audience based on the niche market of your subject matter... and keep posting!

Internal Blogging for Companies

A blog is an essential tool for companies who want to effectively communicate with their staff. A blog will:

- Capture information for short and long-term reference -Foster cross-discipline communication of information
- Localize information and increase “findability”
- Decrease deficiencies found in traditional knowledge transfer

Usually placed on or linked from the company intranet, the internal blog should be one of the most easily accessible points to gain internal company information.



Ideally, everyone should be able to post entries; however, to maintain a sense of decorum, it is sometimes best to allow all management to have access to post entries while everyone else in the company should have access to post comments.

Typically easier to pitch to the execs than an external blog, internal blogs are also substantially easier to implement with buy-in from senior management, as the content isn't viewable from external sources. In addition, an internal blog is more likely to be read by employees than a typical company intranet, newsletters, or general announcements.

So, what should be included in an internal company blog? Obviously, any company announcements, including new products, new company directions, staff additions and changes, awards won, events, and especially “fun” things like riddles, links to interesting sites related to the industry – even birthdays and other announcements can be included. Usually just a couple of posts per day are sufficient to communicate all information without overloading your readers. Any more than that, and information can easily be missed. Space out your announcement and do a “round-up” once a week to reiterate all important communications and links.

It typically takes five to ten repetitions for a piece of information to reach and be comprehended by the majority of staff, so the more vehicles there are for internal communications initiatives, the better – and if the staff is young or tech.-oriented, what better way than a blog?

Making Money through Blogging

You've written a bunch of great blog content or perhaps you've written an e-book and you've been giving it away for free. You have solid traffic to your site, but you don't want to advertise. How do you create cash from your site?

If your blog is a success and you've been giving your content away, you've got a solid basis of authority and an existing customer base. The only thing that's left to do is package what you already have and sell it.



Check out the self-publishing services offered by companies like Lulu ([://www.lulu.com/](http://www.lulu.com/)).

If you already have an e-book that you're offering for free, you can add the option of a hard copy book for a price – or like many new authors, organize your existing blog content into a book.

Alternately, if you prefer to stay faithful to the paperless e-book option, you could take a cue from countless successful subject matter experts, add additional content, and charge for an “unabridged” version, which you can sell not only through your own blog, but through multiple other niche websites as well as monsters eBay ([://www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)) and Clickbank ([://www.clickbank.com](http://www.clickbank.com)). Better yet, automate the process and create an ongoing cash stream.

Once your blog has solidified you as an expert in your subject matter, with your expertise and existing traffic; it won't be difficult to turn your work into something profitable.

SEO Content

There are numerous simple methods to make money through blogging, including Google AdSense, affiliates, sponsorships, paid reviews, and brokering services, but before implementing any targeted monetization systems, the first thing you need to do is make sure your blog is well-ranked in the search engines, enabling people to actually find your site to then click on any advertisements (or what-have-you) you may have implemented.



Most people use search engines to find what they're looking for, and from those people, many won't look past the second page of results. There is a higher probability of someone clicking on a link to your site if you are ranked highly within the search engines - and the more hits you have, the more potential money you can make.

Although in the past, search engine optimization has most often referred to making changes in the development of your site, people are now realizing that content is absolute king. Valuable content, coupled with readability and site structure, provides the basis for any SEO -friendly content. There is a fine balance between giving your audience with compelling content and providing search engines with popular content.

Developing content with top search terms in mind (i.e.: writing for what your audience is searching for) is the most sure-fire way of increasing your ranking; use these additional tips to help increase your traffic:

1. Focus on niche markets - if you broaden your subject matter too much, you'll find yourself lost among too many results to count. Focus on particulars and frequent other blogs in the same niche; comment on other posts leaving a link back to your blog. Instant traffic!
2. Research popular search terms using resources like Alexa ([://www.alexa.com/](http://www.alexa.com/)), Digg ([://digg.com/](http://digg.com/)), Google Trends ([://www.google.com/trends](http://www.google.com/trends)), and Technorati ([://technorati.com/](http://technorati.com/)) - remember; you're not looking for keywords that you WANT people

to search; you need to find out what they're ALREADY searching for and use those popular terms to create new content and thus boost your ranking.

3. Make use of your Meta tags to ensure that your title, description, and keyword tags are unique to your page's content, and pair down unnecessary language to boost your keyword density.

4. Test your site using a Meta tag analyzer and a keyword density analyzer; there are many free tools available to analyze your content and tags. Some search engines claim to ignore Meta tags entirely, but frequently use the description tag to provide a page's description in search results. Well-written tags are strongly recommended.

5. Use Google Analytics ([://www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics)) or a similar service to keep track of where your hits are coming from, and write new posts based on popular posts you've already written - why reinvent the wheel when you can learn from your existing content? Analytics will track all traffic to your site and will tell you everything you want to know about how your visitors found your site and how they interact with it - you'll be able to focus your content based on what's already been proven popular and improve to convert more visitors.

6. Make use of your blog roll - link to external sites as well as other posts within your own blog; this will increase referral traffic and most search engines give more weight to pages that are frequently linked. A very general rule is that the higher the off-site pages rank, the quicker the site will be crawled, and so the greater number of important sites that are linking to YOUR site, the more often search engines like Google will crawl your site in the future. Many well-linked sites are crawled several times a day.

Blogging Glossary

These are popular terms you may come across during your foray into the blogging world.

A

Atom

Another popular feed format developed as an alternative to RSS.

Autocasting

Automated form of podcasting that allows bloggers and blog readers to generate audio versions of text blogs from RSS feeds.

Audioblog

A blog where the posts consist mainly of voice recordings sent by mobile phone, sometimes with some short text message added for metadata purposes. (cf. podcasting)

B

Bleg

A blog article that begs for something, such as a donation or product sale.

Blog Carnival

A blog article that contains links to other articles covering a specific topic. Most blog carnivals are hosted by a rotating list of frequent contributors to the carnival, and serve to both generate new posts by contributors and highlight new bloggers posting matter in that subject area.

Blog client

(Weblog client) is software to manage (post, edit) blogs from operating system with no need to launch a web browser. A typical blog client has an editor, a spell-checker and a few more options that simplify content creation and editing.

Blogger

Person who runs a blog. Also blogger.com, a popular blog hosting web site. Rarely: weblogger.

Bloggies

One of the most popular blog awards.

Blogroll

A list of blogs, usually placed in the sidebar of a blog, that reads as a list of recommendations by the blogger of other blogs.

Blogosphere

All blogs, or the blogging community.

Blogware

A category of software which consists of a specialized form of a Content Management System specifically designed for creating and maintaining weblogs.

C**Collaborative blog**

A blog (usually focused on a single issue or political stripe) on which multiple users enjoy posting permission. Also known as group blog.

Comment spam

Like e-mail spam. Robot "spambots" flood a blog with advertising in the form of bogus comments. A serious problem that requires bloggers and blog platforms to have tools to exclude some users or ban some addresses in comments.

D**Desktop Blogging Client**

An off-line blog management (posting, editing and archiving) tool

F**Fisking**

To rebut a blog entry in a line-by-line fashion.

Flog

A portmanteau of "fake" and "blog". A blog that's ghostwritten by someone, such as in the marketing department.

Feeds

RSS Feeds

M**Moblog**

A portmanteau of "mobile" and "blog". A blog featuring posts sent mainly by mobile phone, using SMS or MMS messages. They are often photoblogs.

Multiblog

A blog constructed as a conversation between more than two people.

P**Permalink**

Permanent link. The unique URL of a single post. Use this when you want to link to a post somewhere.

Phlog

Type of blog utilising the Gopher protocol instead of HTTP
A Photoblog. A portmanteau of "photo" and "blog".

Photoblog

A blog mostly containing photos, posted constantly and chronologically.

Pingback

The alert in the TrackBack system that notifies the original poster of a blog post when someone else writes an entry concerning the original post.

Podcasting

Contraction of "iPod" and "broadcasting" (but not for iPods only). Posting audio and video material on a blog and its RSS feed, for digital players.

Post

An entry written and published to a blog.

Post Slug

For blogs with common language URLs, the post slug is the portion of the URL that represents the post. Example: <http://domain.com/2008/01/this-is-the-post-slug>

R**RSS**

Really Simple Syndication is a family of Web feed formats used to publish frequently updated content such as blog entries, news headlines or podcasts.

RSS aggregator

Software or online service allowing a blogger to read an RSS feed, especially the latest posts on their favorite blogs. Also called a reader, or feedreader.

RSS feed

The file containing a blog's latest posts. It is read by an RSS aggregator/reader and shows at once when a blog has been updated. It may contain only the title of the post, the title plus the first few lines of a post, or the entire post.

S**Spam blog**

A blog which is composed of spam. A Spam blog or "any blog whose creator doesn't add any written value."

Slashdot effect

The Slashdot effect can hit blogs or other website, and is caused by a major website (usually Slashdot, but also Digg, Metafilter, Boing Boing, Instapundit and others) sending huge amounts of temporary traffic that often slow down the server.

Subscribe

The term used when a blogs feed is added to a feed reader like Bloglines or Google. Some blogging platforms have internal subscriptions, this allows readers to receive notification when there are new posts in a blog.

T**Templates**

Templates, used on the "back end" of a blog that work together to handle information and present it on a blog.

Theme

CSS based code that when applied to the templates will result in visual element changes to the blog. The theme, as a whole, is also referred to as a blog design.

TrackBack

A system that allows a blogger to see who has seen the original post and has written another entry concerning it. The system works by sending a 'ping' between the blogs, and therefore providing the alert.

V**Vlog**

A video blog; a vlogger is a video blogger (e.g. someone who records himself interviewing people of a certain field).

Blogging Software

Free Multi-user platforms

Software packages installed by weblog authors or domain name owners to run on their own systems available to use by the general public: Developer:

- Multi-user version of WordPress: [://mu.wordpress.org/](http://mu.wordpress.org/)

Free and open source software

These software packages are offered as free and open source software:

- Apache Roller (Java-based): [://roller.apache.org/](http://roller.apache.org/)
- b2evolution (PHP/MySQL): [://b2evolution.net/](http://b2evolution.net/)
- bloxom (Perl): [://bloxom.sourceforge.net/](http://bloxom.sourceforge.net/)
- byteflow (Python/Django): [://byteflow.su/](http://byteflow.su/)
- DotNetNuke (C#/ASP.NET): [://www.dotnetnuke.com/](http://www.dotnetnuke.com/)
- Dotclear (PHP/MySQL): [://dotclear.org/](http://dotclear.org/)
- Drupal (PHP/MySQL): [://drupal.org/](http://drupal.org/)
- Frog CMS (PHP/MySQL): [://www.madebyfrog.com/](http://www.madebyfrog.com/)
- Elgg (Apache, MySQL, and PHP): [://elgg.org/](http://elgg.org/)
- Habari (PHP/MySQL,SQLite,PostgreSQL): [://www.habariproject.org/en/](http://www.habariproject.org/en/)
- Livejournal (Perl) (Also available, developer hosted): [://www.livejournal.com/](http://www.livejournal.com/)
- LifeType (PHP/MySQL): [://lifetype.net/](http://lifetype.net/)
- Movable Type (also offered in developer-hosted form as TypePad): [://movabletype.com/](http://movabletype.com/)
- Nooto (Ruby on Rails): [://nooto.org/](http://nooto.org/)
- Nucleus CMS (PHP/MySQL): [://nucleuscms.org/](http://nucleuscms.org/)
- PHPSlash: [://sourceforge.net/projects/phpslash/](http://sourceforge.net/projects/phpslash/)
- Picoplog (PHP) (photoblog): [://daubau.it/picoplog/](http://daubau.it/picoplog/)
- Pixelpost (PHP/MySQL) (photoblog): [://www.pixelpost.org/](http://www.pixelpost.org/)
- PyBloxom (Python): [://pybloxom.sourceforge.net/](http://pybloxom.sourceforge.net/)
- Serendipity (PHP/MySQL,PostgreSQL,SQLite): [://www.s9y.org/](http://www.s9y.org/)
- SimplePHPBlog (PHP) (No database system required - Flat-file): [://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flat_file_database](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flat_file_database)
- Slash (Perl/MySQL): [://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slash_\(weblog_system\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slash_(weblog_system))
- Subtext (C#/ASP.NET): [://subtextproject.com/](http://subtextproject.com/)
- Textpattern (PHP/MySQL): [://textpattern.com/](http://textpattern.com/)
- Typo (Ruby on Rails): [://www.typosphere.org/projects/show/typo](http://www.typosphere.org/projects/show/typo)
- WordPress (PHP/MySQL) - also offered in developer-hosted form as Wordpress.com: [://wordpress.org/](http://wordpress.org/)

Proprietary software

These packages are under a proprietary software license. They may require the purchase of a license key to use them. The specific licensing terms vary but some are free of charge for personal or non-commercial use.

- Community Server (also offered in developer-hosted form as CommunityServer.com): [://communityserver.com/](http://communityserver.com/)
- ExpressionEngine: [://ellislab.com/](http://ellislab.com/)
- Radio UserLand: [://www.userland.com/](http://www.userland.com/)
- Traction TeamPage: [://traction.tractionsoftware.com/traction](http://traction.tractionsoftware.com/traction)
- Windows Live Writer (free of charge): [://get.live.com/writer/overview](http://get.live.com/writer/overview)
- XCAP Community Platform: [://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XCAP Community Platform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XCAP_Community_Platform)

Unknown license

- Battle Blog: [://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle Blog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_Blog)
- Blogsphere: [://www.blogsphere.net/](http://www.blogsphere.net/)

Developer-hosted

Software services operated by the developer, requiring no software installation for the weblog author:

- Blogger: [://www.blogger.com/](http://www.blogger.com/)
- Blogging Systems: [://www.bloggingsystems.com/](http://www.bloggingsystems.com/)
- Blue Kaffee: [://www.bluekaffee.com/](http://www.bluekaffee.com/)
- Israblog: [://israblog.nana10.co.il/](http://israblog.nana10.co.il/)
- LiveJournal: [://www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)
- MySpace: [://www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)
- Open Diary: [://www.opendiary.com](http://www.opendiary.com)
- Skyrock: [://www.skyrock.com](http://www.skyrock.com)
- TypePad: [://www.typepad.com/](http://www.typepad.com/)
- Typo: [://www.typosphere.org/projects/show/typo](http://www.typosphere.org/projects/show/typo)
- Windows Live Spaces: [://home.services.spaces.live.com/](http://home.services.spaces.live.com/)
- Wordpress.com (hosted version of WordPress): [://www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)
- Xanga: [://www.xanga.com/](http://www.xanga.com/)
- Vox: [://www.vox.com/](http://www.vox.com/)