

Chief Virtual Officer

Tips for Your Business Blog

How to Get Started, What to Write, How to Promote and
much more!



Sue L Canfield
2/25/2013

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Getting Started with the Basics.....	3
BLOGGING BASICS.....	4
BEYOND THE BASICS.....	6
Promoting Your Blog.....	8
Other Helpful Tips:.....	9
THE ADVANCED STAGE	11
BLOG QUESTIONNAIRE.....	14
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	16

Introduction

Blogging is just one piece of the puzzle in your social media marketing strategy. Yet it is the very foundation for your social media marketing. You use your blog as a starting place to post at Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and any other social media sites you use.

You may feel overwhelmed with the idea of blogging and are unsure where to begin. It is my goal to help you become familiar with the basics of blogging so you can get started using this additional strategy in your marketing.

Since blogging is marketing, it is important to think of blogging as a tool to educate your prospects and clients. Your willingness to share valuable information on your blog with your prospects before you ever ask them to use your services builds a relationship.



As with all marketing strategies, consistency is important. That means you must be consistent in your blogging as well. Once you get started, set up a strategy to continue posting blog entries on a regular basis.

To help you create a blogging marketing strategy, this package includes basic blogging information, resources and a questionnaire.

Getting Started with the Basics

Why should I have a blog?

Blogging is the foundation of internet marketing. Blogs are easy to create and maintain. They are great for SEO (Search Engine Optimization).

A blog is an easy way to keep in contact with your clients and prospects. Your blog can be used to post articles relevant to your industry and of value to your clients. Traditional marketing, whether it be television, radio, cold calls, direct mail, or email blasts, are easy for your clients and prospects to ignore. But a blog makes it easier for your prospects to find you.

Benefits of a blog:

- Blogging helps with SEO (search engine optimization)
- Blog entries can be reposted on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and other social networking sites
- Blogging attracts people to you

Three Keys to Successful Blogging: Reading, Commenting, Writing

Reading: Reading other people's blogs keeps you up-to-date on what others are interested in. Subscribe to blogs relevant to your industry. Search for relevant blogs at [google.com/blogsearch](https://www.google.com/blogsearch). You can subscribe to and manage blogs at [Google.com/reader/view/](https://www.google.com/reader/view/).

Commenting: Commenting on other people's blogs builds relationships. You will get noticed by other bloggers and blog readers. Comments should increase the value of the article. Some things you can do in a comment are:

- share an example related to the article
- add a point
- add a useful link
- disagree
- ask a question



When you post a comment, be sure to include your name and a link to your blog. You may just get the blogger to link back to your blog.

Writing: This is the part everyone worries about. What will I write about? How will I be able to keep up with it? Here are some basic writing tips:

- Keep it short. It doesn't have to be a long post. One to three short paragraphs is more than enough.
- Make it specific. Don't be vague. People will get bored quickly and move on unless it's interesting and valuable to them.

BLOGGING BASICS

- Make it interesting. Use images or formatting (bold, italics, lists) to create eye appeal.
- Don't be too self-promotional. Sure, it's your business. But this is not the place for a sales pitch. This is a place where people can come to be educated. They know where to find you once they want to do business.
- Create interesting titles. They can be funny, enticing (a list of 10 tips), or keyword rich for search engine optimization.
- Write regularly, at least weekly. I suggest at two to three times a week.



So now you're asking, 'what do I write about?' It is not as difficult to come up with topics as you may think. Some suggestions:

- Lists of 5 ideas, trends or thoughts
- A list of relevant links with a short comment on why you found each valuable
- Share a recent experience you had
- Answer questions your clients or prospects often ask
- Comment on other blog articles you've read
- Turn a press release into a blog entry (again, tweak it so it's not too self-promotional)

How Do I Promote My Blog?

1. Email all your friends, family, colleagues and announce the launch of your blog. If you've already started blogging, send out an announcement at 6 months, 1 year, or at your 50th blog post.
2. Trade guest articles with a similar blogger.
3. Include a blog article in your newsletter and make sure to include a link back to your blog.
4. Use your online business networking sites, such as Digg, Facebook, and LinkedIn, to let everyone know of your blog.
5. At the end of your article, ask a question and ask for comments. Put it in bold.
6. Add images to each blog post and then post them on Pinterest with a link to that blog post.



Where Can I Create a Blog?

There are several places you can go to create a blog.

- Blogger.com
- WordPress.org
- MovableType.com
- LiveJournal.com

Resources

Books

Duct Tape Marketing, John Jantsch
Guerrilla Marketing, Jay Conrad Levinson
Permission Marketing, Seth Godin

Websites

Duct Tape Marketing - <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/>
Guerrilla Marketing Online - <http://www.gmarketing.com/>
Seth Godin - <http://www.sethgodin.com/sg/>

What's next?

So you got your free blog account set up. What's next? How often do you post and what do you write about? Don't lose any more valuable time. With your blog you can engage your prospects and clients in an informal conversation.

When to Post:

If you are just starting out, you may post just once a month. But quickly increase it to weekly. Then I suggest you work up to at least three times weekly. Be consistent and post at the same days and times if at all possible.

Finding Time to Write

One of the most challenging obstacles you may face is finding the time to post blog entries on a regular basis. Remember that this is an important part of your business. It's an investment to help your business grow. Writing a blog entry or an article is an easy and simple way to spread your message and get prospects interested in your services. So don't put it off any longer.

You might get an idea while driving to an appointment but not have time to write an entry then. Make a note of your idea and come back to it when you do have time. Set specific times to write. Make a regular appointment with yourself for a specific block of time. Then stick to it.



What Do I Write About?

So now you're asking, 'what do I write about?' If you get stuck and can't think of anything, make it easy. Write a 'how-to' article or a 'ten tips' article. Here are some other suggestions:

Answer Questions with Blog Posts

You probably get questions from prospects and clients about your business. Use these questions and your answers as a basis for a blog post.

Invite Prospects to Write Guest Blog Posts

Ask prospects about their business. Everyone loves to talk about their business. Ask them to share their knowledge and lessons learned that would be relevant to your readers. Invite them to write a guest post.

Write About Your Client's Success

If you have a client that's doing very well, with permission, write a blog post about them.

They'll probably send it to everyone they know. What better word of mouth could there be?

Ask Your Prospects for Feedback

Invite your readers to comment. Ask them for their opinions and feedback and post their comments. By including other people, you make your blog more engaging and interesting.

You get the added benefit of not having to work so hard to come up with content all the time.

Link to Your Prospect's Blog

If your prospect has a blog relevant to your industry, link to them.

Link to Resources and Other Relevant Articles

Some people are afraid that linking to other websites means your reader won't come back to yours. On the contrary, your readers will appreciate additional reading material on the subject and will visit your blog more frequently if they feel it is a good go-to resource.

In addition, linking to other bloggers increases the chances of them reading your blog and eventually linking back, which sends traffic directly to your blog and helps with search engine optimization.



Promote Your Blog Via Email

If you send a monthly email newsletter, include a link to your blog. You may even include one of your blog posts in the newsletter. Have a prominent option to subscribe to your blog by email on your blog site and your website. Include your blog URL in your email signature.

Promote Your Blog Via Online Business Networking Sites

Use these sites to promote your blog. When you answer questions on LinkedIn, include a link to your blog. You can also put a small post in your 'status' message. If you frequent online business networking sites, people start to recognize you, trust you and inquire about your business. You need to be consistent and add value to the conversation. Show a genuine interest in helping other people.

Promote Your Blog on Pinterest

Set up a board on Pinterest for blog posts. If you have more than one category on your blog, you can create more than one board at Pinterest. For this to work you need to include an image for each blog post. Then share that image with a link to that particular blog post on Pinterest.

Other Helpful Tips:

Clearly Define Your Goal and Target Audience

To create a successful blog, you need to define the goal of your blog. If you're not sure to begin with, that's okay. But to take your blog to the next step, start thinking about the goal of your blog and who you really want to target.

If this is a business blog, treat it like business. Invest the time and effort needed just like you would any other marketing strategy. Look for ways you can convert your readers into customers.



Some goals of your blog may include:

- to build a network of contacts
- to create better relationships with customers and prospects
- to position yourself as an expert in your field
- to get feedback from your clients
- promote a service by educating your prospects
- to distribute company news

Blog Layout

The layout of your blog should be easy to read. Make sure the fonts and colors are also easy on the eye. Consider using graphics for appeal. You can get images to download here:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/images/>

Quality Content

Creating quality content takes work and commitment. Here are some suggestions for creating quality content:

- Brief is better. For the most part, readers tire of lengthy posts. If you can say it in fewer words, do so.
- Include links. If you're writing about someone else, their post, or their website, link to their website and blog.
- Vary the length of your posts. As I already mentioned, brief is better. There may be times when you write a longer 'feature' post. That's okay. But your next post should be brief to avoid reader fatigue.
- Read. Read other sources of information so you have a wide array of information to gather content from.
- Create catching titles. This not only gets the reader's attention, it tells them what they are going to learn.
- Review your posts monthly. If you're repeating the same information regularly, you may want to create a blogging calendar and note the topics you post so you don't repeat too often.

Building Business from Your Blog

Blog posts should be informative and educational. Then include a call to action. Make sure your posts point people toward the action you want them to take.

Make it easy for people to contact you. Use your real name, add a photo, and include your email, phone number, and website address on your blog page.

Even while trying to sell, remember to be human, interesting, and involved.

Final Thoughts: Get your readers engaged. If you don't engage your readers, they won't come back. Successful blogs are those where the blogger listens and interacts. So make sure to respond to comments and participate in discussions taking place. Learn and listen from the readers who post comments.

THE ADVANCED STAGE

Now you're ready for the advanced information. Let's learn more about specific blogging tools, plugins, feeds, submitting your blog posts, social networking accounts, and getting more traffic.

Basic Comparison of a Few Common Blogging Tools

Blogger.com is owned by Google. It's free, hosted, and easy to use. It gets a lot of exposure because all its blog addresses end in .blogspot.com.

Typepad is very popular and easy to use. It doesn't have a free version. It's a hosted blog with multi-tiered pricing. You can create unlimited blogs that map to your domain name.

WordPress is very popular and easy to use. Your blog can be hosted or self-hosted. There are lots of free plugins and it's search engine friendly.

Some WordPress plugins are:

- Google Analytics
- Google Sitemap
- Simple Tags
- Feedburner
- Tagalizer
- What Would Seth Godin Do

Plugins can be found at <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/>.

My Recommendation

I highly recommend using self-hosted WordPress. The cost is minimal and it allows for more options and control. Contact me for more information or visit our web design page to learn more about our easy WordPress Kit at <http://spinhead.com/services/#kit>

Feeds

These are places you can register your new blog at to get more exposure:

- www.feedburner.com
- www.blogcatalog.com



Ready,
Set, Go!
Instant
Blogging
Kit
\$300

You can also submit your posts here to get it distributed to multiple social bookmarking sites automatically:

- www.onlywire.com
- www.socialmarker.com

Social Networking Sites

Sign up at these social networking sites to promote your blog:

- www.digg.com
 - del.icio.us
 - www.reddit.com
 - www.propeller.com
 - www.newsvine.com
 - www.shoutwire.com
 - www.slashdot.com
 - www.technorati.com
 - www.stumbleupon.com
 - www.spurl.com
- and more...

Getting More Traffic

There are several things you can do to increase traffic to your blog. You can find popular blogs in your niche and make meaningful comments on them. Join social networking sites and participate in the conversations. Provide valuable content on your own blog.

So how do you find good blogs to comment on? You can set up a Watchlist in the Blogger Central section of www.technorati.com. This is a great resource showing you the popular tags and blogs containing those tags.

You can also use <http://www.google.com/blogsearch> to find blogs in your niche. Another comprehensive blog directory where you can promote your blog is www.blogcatalog.com.

There you can also join BlogCatalog Groups or join in on the Blog Discussions. There's a widget you can add to your blog.

At <http://www.blogger.com> you can watch Blogs of Note and search for blogs in your niche.

Commenting on Other Blogs

Making meaningful comments on other blogs can increase your traffic. Meaningful comments don't mean you just say 'great post'. Contribute to the conversation with a compelling or even controversial comment. You want to grab reader's attention without being insulting. You want them to click on your name and read more at your blog.

Comments are not the time to promote your products or services. Just add valuable information. You can add your blog URL to the comment form, but not in the comment itself. If there's a particular post in your blog you want to direct them to, be sure to include that in the link. Add links to other websites that lead the reader to a solution to a problem being discussed.

John Jantsch of Duct Tape Marketing says in *Let's Talk: Social Media for Small Business*:

"Comment on a group of relevant blogs. Visit some of your chose blogs, add relevant comments, and engage in the conversation going on inside these blogs. This, by the way, is an important part of online networking and may help get your blog noticed down the road."



BLOG QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:

Business Name:

Industry:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

Briefly describe your business:

How long have you been in business?

How would you describe your target market or ideal client? Be as specific as possible.

What are the challenges, issues, problems your clients have?

What results do your clients want?

What solution will you deliver?

Tell me a little bit about yourself. What types of things do you enjoy doing, hobbies, etc.? (You will learn that finding out about your client's personal interests can help you market better to them.)

Where do you see your business in one year; five years?

What specific goals do you want to accomplish by blogging?

How much time each month do you want to spend on blogging?

How much have you budgeted monthly for blogging?

Do you have a...? If yes, please note the website and blog address.

Website

If yes, how often do you update it?

Blog

If yes, how often do you post entries?

Where is it hosted?

E-newsletter

If yes, how often do you send it out?

Any other comments or questions you have about blogging:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My Blog: <http://chiefvirtualofficer.com/blog/>

Sue L Canfield, Chief Virtual Officer, has been an administrative assistant for over 25 years and has owned her own business as a Virtual Office Administrator since 2005. She saves time and money for busy solo professionals and service providers by providing administrative and marketing support, helping them create and implement strategies to promote their businesses. For more information, contact Sue at her website, ChiefVirtualOfficer.com, email sue@ChiefVirtualOfficer.com, or call (715) 296-0347.

Contact Sue for more information on getting started with your business blogging.

Sue L Canfield, Chief Virtual Officer

<http://www.ChiefVirtualOfficer.com>

Sue@ChiefVirtualOfficer.com

(715) 296-0347

