



Are You Blogging Yet?

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To Your Blogging Success,
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Are You Blogging Yet?

While there are many blogs out there in the blogosphere, not everyone is blogging... yet. This report is meant for those of you who have not yet begun a blog or have just started blogging. It contains questions and answers about blogs.

This report should help you wrap your head around the idea of blogging and give you and your blog a place to start.

What is a blog?

The term blog comes from two words; 'web log'. Technically, a blog is an online journal driven by a script and a database. The blog script provides you with an online dashboard for typing in your journal entries and the database stores your words.

But what is a blog really?

A blog can be whatever you want it to be.

It can be an online journal or web-based diary. It can be your article archive or a place to keep your newsletters. A blog can include whatever you want it to include; words, music, video, graphics, and anything else that comes along.

A blog can be very personal and meant for family or friends only. It can also be a platform for airing political views and rants about anything. The kind of blog you're probably interested in is one used to promote your business, or educate your potential customers, or promote affiliate products.

What should I blog about?

With a blog you can show more of your personality, while still talking about business. This is a unique and positive aspect of blogging. Who hasn't gotten caught up in following their favorite blogs on a weekly or semi-weekly basis?

There are people who seem to be natural bloggers and they know just what to write about. If that's not you – don't worry, you'll get the feel for it as time goes by. If that doesn't happen, you can work in some PLR or outsource some your posts. You can even "say" what you want to say via a podcast on your blog.

The best way to look at your business blog is to see it as both a marketing tool and a relationship building activity, with the emphasis being on relationships first and marketing second. This seems to be the most successful approach for many marketers, although it does depend on the subject of your blog.

Even on a business blog you can allow glimpses into your personal life. You can briefly share your vacation plans or let readers know about what motivates you. People like to do business with people who share their values and ethics. Try combining the personal and business with blog posts about a marketing lesson you learned while vacationing in Timbuktu.

Don't go overboard though. Don't vent about your personal problems. Potential clients and customers don't want to hear about your pending divorce.

Blogs are such a great way to promote your business. When your readers follow you on your blog, they come to see you as an interesting person who gives value and is to be trusted. This can only help you when you have a new product to sell. People who regularly read your blog can be your biggest supporters, especially when you support them too. The more you can engage your readers and get them to comment, the more connected they will feel. Share your top notch resources and opinions on your blog.

Here are some blog post ideas:

- Share industry news.
- Answer frequently asked questions.
- Share your products and services.
- Brag about a client's accomplishments.
- Share articles your market is interested in.
- Comment on business trends.
- Display your knowledge of industry history.
- Share text or audio interviews with experts your market is interested in.

Continued...

Website or Blog?

Let's back up a bit. Maybe you've never had an online presence and you're not sure if you should go with a blog or a website. How do you figure out what's best for you? Let's go over the differences between the two so you can decide.

Navigation

A website's navigation is like that of a book. Its main index is the home page where the introduction and table of contents are located. The home page has all the links to all the pages in the website.

And like a book a blog is usually read from top to bottom, although with newest entry first, going on down to the oldest entry. Some links are noted in the blog's sidebar and are commonly found under headings like "Archives", "Categories", "Favorite Links", and "Blogroll". If a link is inside a post, it may not be as easy to find as it would be if listed on a website. Another drawback with a blog's navigation is that favorite posts get lost down the page as new posts are added.

Ability to update

A website has static content. The website can be updated, but only through an html editor like Dreamweaver or through your professional website person. Hiring someone to continuously update your website can be costly and doing it yourself can be time consuming.

Blogs can be continuously and easily changed or added to. In fact, you should be updating your blog often with new, fresh material to keep the feeds fed, the readers engaged, and the search engines happy.

User friendliness

A website requires some design skills, copywriting skills, and a bit of HTML knowledge. It takes time to learn these things or money to hire a web designer. There are html editors that make it easier with a What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) ability and some of these editors are free to use.

It used to be that blogs had a blog-look to them, but not anymore. You can make your blog look however you want it to look - like a website, a blog, or a single page sales page. For the average person, setting up a first time blog is

much easier than setting up a first time website. And with hundreds of free themes at your fingertips, it can look professional.

Author-Reader interaction

With blogs, readers can leave a comment (if the comment feature is turned on) to any post they want to. The blog owner can then respond to the reader's comment by posting an answering comment, and so on. Reader comments are important because they help to get other readers engaged in the blog.

Websites usually have a "Contact Us" with an email address for the reader to email them. These emails won't be seen by other readers. There is no two-way or owner-readers communication.

Professionalism

Having a blog or a website means you will have hosting fees. You can find hosting relatively inexpensive these days and I'd recommend you do that as it's more professional.

To sum it up, if you have information that does not require regular updating, a website may be the answer. If you want more interaction going on with commenting and being able to frequently update without the updating fuss, a blog may work for you.

Depending on your business, consider having both - your website for your main static information, and a blog hosted on your website for constant fresh traffic and reader interaction.

Making Money With a Blog

It's time to get to what most people want to know about blogging... how to make money with it. Here are a few ways:

Earn using Google -

Google was once just a search engine but it is now a very powerful enterprise. You can earn from Google by using their free service known as AdSense. All you need to do is sign up for AdSense, it's free. Then pick the size of your ad and your text and background colors. After that you can display the AdSense ad code that's generated on your blog. You've seen the AdSense ads - they

come in box form or link form, and the subjects of the ads closely match what the blogger is blogging about.

For example, if you just posted some tips about how to prepare healthy meals, then the ad unit might display ads about healthy meals, healthy recipes, weight loss snacks, diets, etc. Every time your visitors click on any of these ads, you make money. Just don't click on them yourself or ask others to do it as this is against the terms of service and will get you banned.

Promote Other Profitable Sites -

A lot of online businesses offer affiliate programs and one way to promote these affiliate products is to post their banners or links on your site. When people click through the banner or link and then purchase something from that company, you receive a commission.

Examine some marketing blogs and you'll see the banners I'm talking about. The blog owner may or may not be actively promoting the product in their blog's content, but they *are* passively promoting it just by showing the banner in the sidebar. If people click through that button and buy, the blog owner makes a percentage of the sale.

To actively promote a product that you are an affiliate for, you can post a product review on your blog with your affiliate link embedded. You should primarily talk about the pros of the product, but be sure to list a con or two so your readers know that you actually tried the product and they can trust you. If you don't already have an affiliate product that would work, take a look at the products on Clickbank, PayDotCom, and Commission Junction.

Be an Ad Salesman –

The downside of Google ads and affiliate programs is you do not have as much control on your earnings and the ads that are displayed on your blog as you might like. One way past this is to sell ad space. The amount of traffic you get helps determine how much you can charge. A well-trafficked site might charge \$120 or more for 3 months.

Include a Store –

You can sell hard products or digital products in your store. One idea is to use CafePress or similar to put logos and graphics on coffee mugs and t-shirts. If your blog is a pet blog, you might want to set up a store selling pet products.

Another option is to set up a store through Amazon. You can list interesting and targeted items through their Slideshow or Carasel widgets on your site. When people click through the widget, it brings them to Amazon, and they take over the ordering process from there. Your job is done. You earn a percentage of the sale.

Similarly, you can have an eBay store page. There are WordPress plugins that will show up to the minute auctions on your page in any categories you pick. Again, you earn a commission from sales generated from people clicking through your store to eBay and purchasing.

Sell/Flip the Blog -

Get your blog up and rolling nicely along. Have some great posts and monetize it with some of the above ideas like AdSense, affiliate programs, and advertising, then sell the blog. It makes sense if you want to earn some money and move on to a different blog project. For some people, the fun is in setting the blog up and getting it started.

Making money from a blog is not as hard as it seems. But of course like with any other moneymaking venture, you have to do your job and do it well. Think it through, set up a plan of action, test it out, tweak it, and keep going. As your traffic builds, so will the money you make.

Types of Blogs

There are several blog scripts available for use including:

- Blogger – Free. You can have a blog on their site (blogspot.com) so in reality, you don't own the space your blog sits on. This means they can shut down your blog at anytime and all your content will be lost (if you haven't backed it up on your computer.)
- WordPress – Free. You can have a blog on their site (wordpress.com), which can give you the same issues as Blogger, or grab the open source script (wordpress.org.) for use on your own hosting account. Putting the blog on your own site is preferable, as well as more professional-looking.
- Typepad – Paid service (typepad.com).

For a business or marketing blog, a common choice is WordPress.

WordPress is an open source script. This means that anyone can take the source code and edit it. A community of very creative people are constantly improving the code and releasing updates for free use.

WordPress is flexible. It works with a huge variety of plugins. Before you decide, make sure WordPress works with your hosting company. Most hosting companies now have Fantastico, which allows you to add your blog instantly by just filling in a few blanks on a form.

What should my blog look like?

First impressions are important, and not only should your blog look good, the layout needs to fulfill your needs. Do you want 2 columns or 3? Think about what you want on your blog, such as AdSense, a spot for products you're selling, etc., and how that will look with the theme you choose.

The look of a blog is determined by the theme you choose to use. A theme is a set of page templates and a Cascading style sheet (CSS.) Together the templates and the style sheet tell the database how to display its data.

This is what makes a blog so cool. At any time you can change the whole look of your site by simply changing the theme, and there are hundreds of free themes and hundreds of paid themes you can choose from.

If you're familiar with php code and CSS you can tweak a theme by changing colors or widths, etc. If you aren't familiar with these codes you can learn or hire someone to do it for you. With the right techy on your side you can make your blog look any way you want.

The first customization task you can undertake is to have a custom header graphic created for the top of your blog. A few themes don't have graphics at all, but you'll probably want to carry your logo over to your blog and the header is a good way to do it.

Your blog could also include:

- A link to your RSS feed.
- Mailing list sign up form.

- About Me page with background info about you, plus your picture.
- Links to your favorite blogs.
- Widgets/gadgets that promote social networking sites that you belong to.
- Links that let readers submit you to social bookmarking sites.
- Information about other websites you own or products you're selling.

There are many widgets available to totally customize your blog. But don't let the excuse of "not enough time to make my blog pretty" keep you from starting your blog. Just get it up and start blogging. You can add plugins and widgets as you go and change the theme or header graphic at any time.

How often should I blog?

There really isn't a fast rule on this; you should blog as often as you have something interesting to say! Some very successful bloggers post every day and some post just a few times a month. Be as consistent as you can. There's nothing worse than having someone avidly follow your blog and then you stop blogging for months and months. It also looks bad for your credibility and business if you totally let it go. It makes you look unorganized or like you don't care about your business. Would you hang around a marketer whose blog hasn't been updated since 2009?

The more you blog, the more you and everything on your blog will be front and center in your reader's minds. But don't blog just to blog, have something interesting, funny, helpful, informative, or instructional to say.

How do I get people to interact on my blog?

When you have a business blog, do you want to have a lot of interaction from readers? Well, yes! Comments show that you have readers who believe in your message, products, and services. Frequent comments suggest that your blog has a lot of readers and thus suggests you are popular. You thought you left all that behind in school, didn't you?

You can encourage blog comments by closing your blog posts with questions for your readers or requests for their opinions. You can ask for help on a problem you're having or set up a poll. Make sure the link to make a comment is obvious. If your niche market isn't very online savvy, you may want to explain what they need to do to leave a comment.

When a reader does comment, be responsive even if you just post to say thanks for commenting. This encourages others to post as well. Everyone likes to be acknowledged when they take the time to comment.

Is anything missing with my blog?

A common "missed aspect" of blogging is not apparent on your blog. One thing that helps you be a great blogger is to visit other people's blogs on a regular basis.

Search for blogs on similar topics and read recent posts. If you have something useful to add or you want to give them a quick kudos, leave a comment. Your commenter name will also be a link to your blog. If you make your comment stand out, you're more likely to get people clicking on your URL and stopping by to check out your blog.

Some people like to add their favorite blogs to a blog roll, which is a list of links on the blog's sidebar. Some of these bloggers will return the favor.

You should take every opportunity to share the link to your blog. Add a link to your main website, if you have one, and include the URL in your email signature. You should also put it in your sig line when posting on forums, where allowable. If you're active on social networking sites, many of them allow for your blog URL.

If you find a blogger that you find really interesting you can invite them to be a guest blogger on your blog. This means that they write a post for your blog and include their bio and URL. Hopefully, they will invite you to be a guest blogger on their blog in return for the favor.

Another way to share readers is to initiate a cross blog conversation where you carry on a question and answer, but almost as if you were emailing each other privately. The trick is to post the questions on one blog and the answers on the other so that readers have to follow both blogs in order to catch both the questions and the answers.

Depending on your market and your readers, you may want to participate in a blog carnival. This doesn't work with all types of businesses so use your best judgment.

Blogging is very important to your business. Not only does it improve your web presence, but it is an easy and effective way to keep in touch with clients and prospects. As your potential customers get to know you and trust you, you will grow your business and income, whether it be through AdSense ads, banner ads, your own products, affiliate product reviews, or your online store.

Blogging Terminology

Blogs have been around long enough to have created a language of their own. Here are some terms you may come across:

Blogger - The person who owns the blog.

Blog hopping - Hopping from one blog to another by clicking on link after link, usually starting with a blogroll. Sound familiar?

Blogosphere - The whole blogging community.

Blogroll - A list of the blogger's favorite blogs, with links, in the sidebar of the blog.

Blogsnob - When someone responds only to the comments left on their blog by their friends and not others.

Comment Spam - When robots or spambots give a flood of fake comments on a blog.

Linkfest - A post containing several links to other bloggers' blog posts. The links are chosen by the blog owner.

Link Love - Linking to another's blog because you like it, not because you were asked to.

Permalink - It's the link to a single blog post - that post's URL. If you wanted to give others the link to read a particular blog post, the permalink is what you would send them.

Ping - When someone else writes about the blogger's original post, the trackback, or ping, notifies the original blogger.

Podcasting - When a blogger posts audio or video on their blog and RSS feed.

RSS feed - A web feed that publishes updated content from blogs or news headlines. RSS stands for really simple syndication.

Template - The skeleton of the blog that presents all the blog's information.

Theme - The overall blog look or design of the blog. The look of the blog can be changed by changing the CSS. There are many themes to choose from that work with WordPress blogs.

Trackback - By sending a ping alert, a blogger can see who has written about his original blog post and referenced it.

Vlogger - A video blogger who's blog is primarily video in nature.

Blogging is a fun and lucrative way to further your business, whether it's an offline or online business. Check back with [Blogging Success Secret](#) for future updates and new blogging resources.