# Blogging for Business

## 50 Steps to Building Traffic and Sales

by Chris Garrett

**W** Wordtracker

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# Business Blogging

Most business people now realize that if they are not visible on the world wide web, then in the eyes of their customers, they don't exist.

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## A website isn't enough

The web has become part of your customers' daily lives. Nowadays, people turn to Google ahead of the Yellow Pages. In fact, many of us turn to Google before talking to our doctor, accountant or lawyer.

Of course, your customers need to be able to find your website. And, if you're to be successful, they should be able to find you ahead of your competition. If a customer Googles a question, you want yours to be the website that supplies the answer

There is a second challenge, too: it is not sufficient merely to have a web presence. A website that is little more than a brochure is of very little use or interest. Websites packed with market-speak, self-glorifying me-me-me, or abstract mission statements are a turn-off. As are stale pages written five years ago based on a press release that was only barely relevant back then.

You have to provide good quality content. Content attracts prospects, holds their attention, engages them in conversation and then converts them into customers by building their trust in your ability to deliver.

The easiest and most direct way to accomplish this is through what is commonly known as "blogging". That is the "What".

This book investigates "How?"

**Action!**

## How to use this book

This book is a practical guide to setting up a successful blog. Throughout it you will find explanations and discussions about concepts that will help you in your blogging.

But we know theory is not going to be enough. Action is needed. So, with that in mind, we've split each chapter into two parts - **Theory** and **Action**.

The "Action" sections are practical, step-by-step guides to setting up and operating your blog. You can take the action as and when you come to it, or wait till you've finished reading the book. The final chapter (nine) lists the actions from the rest of the book. It's your launch plan.

There is no homework for this chapter, other than to go on and read the next one.

# Why Blog?

## Chapter 1

A blog is simply a set of articles, usually listed in reverse chronological order. Generally, readers can reply to the content with their own comments.

A blog will improve your business's web visibility, and allow you to engage your prospects with content tailored to their needs.

At this point you might already be sold on the idea of creating a business blog. You may have experienced first hand the positive influence a blog can have on a customer. Or, you may be questioning why you need to add a blog to your existing web strategy.

Either way, it's useful to compare blogs with other types of websites and to examine the benefits and risks associated with business blogging.

# Blog vs website

So, how does a blog compare with a traditional website?

**Action!**
**see pg 18**

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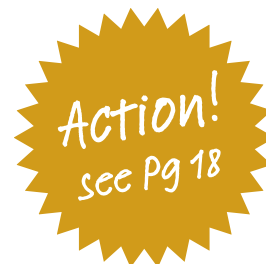
**While the exact definition of a blog has never really been pinned down and probably never will be, most people agree that a traditional website consists of static pages that rarely change**

A blog, on the other hand, is continually updated.

There is an expectation that the blogger will add more, fresh content over time.

Your existing website may be built using a "content management system", where the author has the ability to add or modify text. Maybe you paid a hefty sum in licensing fees to gain this ability?

If you have to pay a webmaster or designer to change the content of your site, you will definitely want to read ahead.

## Many benefits

Blogging software includes many of the features you would expect to find in those expensive content management systems, but usually for free. It tends to be easier to use, as it's aimed at end users rather than highly paid IT consultants.

Blogging software gives you the ability to change your website quickly and easily. Blogs do not have to be used just for articles, or "blog posts" as they are called. You can use them to create pages about your company, clients, and services.

Another benefit is that you don't need a programmer to add features to your site. For example, the ability to search all your online content is a built-in function of most blogging software.

So blogs are easier, less expensive and more flexible than traditional websites. And a blog is more likely to be found in search engine results pages.

This is partly because the most popular blogging software is built to be search engine friendly right out of the "box". As soon as it is set up, it will be far more attractive to search engines than most of the brochure-style websites you'll have visited.

Another important difference is a concept I will keep returning to: quality content. One of the most significant factors affecting search engine results is content, particularly excellent, topic-focused content, targeted to a keyword that is well linked-to by other websites.

Google likes useful content. Google wants to provide its search visitors with useful, timely and relevant content, and not advertising – it has Google Adwords for that.

If you turn out useful articles about topics that your industry or niche cares about, you are far more likely to gain attention, and all important links, from other website owners in your market. What would you rather link to, a corporate homepage or a well written article that explains a key concept? Which would Google rather present to its own users?

With this in mind, do not be surprised when you see blogs outranking even top brands for key search phrases.

# Blog vs newsletter

You may be thinking that you already turn out articles and useful industry commentary in the form of a newsletter.  So, why blog too?

### Reach a wider audience

The main difference between a newsletter and a blog is that when you post a blog article it is visible for the world to see and therefore also visible for Google to find. In fact, most blogging software actually notifies search engines when new content is published and ready to be indexed.

### When you publish a newsletter only its recipients get to know

Connect up an email service such as AWeber to your blog and you get all of the benefits of an email newsletter with none of its limitations. You can set it up so that you rarely have to go into your email service account. Simply post a new article and your email recipients will receive a copy automatically.

Email is a powerful way to convert prospects, but combined with a blog it is doubly so.

# Blog vs community

Another type of website you may have considered is the community forum. In a forum, people with a common interest can come together and discuss, dissect, inform and debate the issues of the day.

## In the past these might have been called bulletin boards and discussion forums

Today, they are often referred to as "social sites". The features are pretty much the same. They allow visitors to interact with each other with varying degrees of sophistication, from simple replies to building profiles and sending private notes.

While you can add some of these more advanced features to a blog, this is not really in the domain of blogging. A proper membership service or forum application can be a great addition to your site, depending how you want to interact with your customers.

A blog can complement a community forum, because it can help bypass the Catch-22 of community building. People want to go where other people already gather. This is the "empty restaurant" syndrome where nobody wants to be the first to be seated at a restaurant. Similarly, no one wants to be the first to a party; we want to go where there is already a buzz and atmosphere.

This is why it's difficult to get a forum started. Without an ongoing discussion, people don't gather. And the forum becomes a lonely place.

A blog breaks this cycle by kicking off the community interaction. People are drawn in by the articles, inspired to comment by interesting points of view, and interact with each other by replying to earlier comments.

Unlike a forum, the conversation is guided by the site owner or editor, rather than any user being able to start a new thread. Via moderation you have complete control over which comments appear. This is a comfort for companies with strict publishing policies.

# Business blog risks

I would like you to come away from this chapter inspired to get blogging and keen to reap the benefits that a business blog can bring. But we should be realistic about the potential risks.

## They include the following:

### Time and resources

At first blogging might appear to be simple, but you will quickly discover that the best blogs take preparation, time and effort to maintain; and in most cases the people doing the work will have other important tasks to attend to.

### Expectations

Setting up a blog raises expectations in your customers' and visitors' minds. They'll want you to be more accessible, open and transparent. You will need to keep your audience informed and answer any critics.

### Writing

A stale or badly written blog is worse than no blog at all. You might discover that no one on your team has any writing ability. While you do not need to be Shakespeare, many companies have found it more productive to use the services of outside bloggers or an editor, to create a more polished output.

### Liability

In any legally sensitive area you need to be aware of the risk of unchecked content being published and viewed as official communication. You have to monitor your comment area carefully, as you might be held liable for any user-generated messages that appear.

### Technical

While blogging software is easy to use, you need to keep abreast of some technical housekeeping issues. Blog software is routinely improved, fixed and updated; every so often, new versions are released. Keeping your software and any add-ons up to date makes you more secure from hacks. Plus, you need to ensure everything is routinely backed up in case of a bug; you do not want to lose all your writing.

The good news is that most risks are easily mitigated, either by being aware of the issues or retaining outside help or coaching where your company lacks skills or experience.

# Business blog benefits

I have already outlined some of the benefits that business blogging can bring, but it is worth going into detail.

## They include the following:

### Attract an audience

Every business needs traffic, whether this is foot traffic in a high street store or "eyeballs" to an online store. A good blog not only generates traffic, but also helps retain that traffic, keeping people coming back and growing in loyalty.

### Inform, interact and learn from your audience

Informed and educated visitors become confident, loyal customers. More people are turning to the internet to research before they buy. You can position your company as a go-to resource, thereby winning more business. Plus, with blogging, information flows both ways. You can gain insights into your customers' minds, their needs, challenges and preferences. Comments, feedback forms, surveys and polls become instant, spontaneous market research tools. It's like working with a free focus group that tells you what products you should create and why.

### Retain your audience

Too many marketers focus on gaining initial visibility through advertising or attention-seeking stunts. If that tactic does not convert into instant sales, the budget and effort are wasted. With a blog you can hold prospects' interest for longer, winning customers round over time, and bringing them back to hear from you long after their first contact. No need for spammy, desperate-sounding sales messages.

### Energize your audience

Even better than a growing, loyal audience is a growing, loyal audience that takes action. A blog can motivate your visitors to do things. All you need is copy that warms them up, a motivating story and a clear call to action.

### Recruit help, contacts, employees

Why spend thousands on recruitment consultants and advertising when you have the best recruitment mechanism at your fingertips? Your blog audience is the most likely to respond and be appropriate future employees and networking contacts.

### Respond to stories and customers

Customer service and public relations have never been more important; a bad story can spread around the web's social networks at speed. Your blog becomes a responsive outlet to explain your side of any story and douse the fires of negative activity.

### Links for direct traffic

You can't beat valuable, authoritative content for attracting links from other websites, forums, discussion lists and social networks. These links bring a quantity of attention, but also quality, targeted visitors that turn into good leads.

### Links for SEO

As well as the direct traffic benefit of leads, links are important in bringing in search visitors. The more linkable your website, the better your search results will be. Very often traditional websites are difficult to link to and not easy for search engines to index. This can be due to the website's structure, the software it's built with, or overly complex URLs. Blogs are almost always superior in this respect.

### Building trust and familiarity

Trust is vital in making sales and important for encouraging visitors to opt into your lead generation process. By starting with compelling information and resources, and by encouraging repeat communication, you build familiarity. Over time, this creates a strong bond of trust, making sales so much easier.

### Branding

This positive attention and these value-based, long-term experiences don't just create trust. They help to create a stronger, better brand. This leads to word of mouth advertising, which is one of the best forms of promotion you can get.

### Grow a community

Through discussion, interaction and comments, you can help forge a sense of community that can be strengthened both online and off.

### Offer better service

Your blog provides multiple routes for customers and prospects to get in touch. It can show your human, approachable side, allow better customer interaction, and improve customer service.

### Initiate more sales

All of these benefits add up to more new and repeat sales from much happier and better informed customers.

# Action: Get started

Before you go any further you need to answer some important questions.  You need to know where you are now, where you are going to, and what you need in order to get there.

## 1. Assess your situation

Plan your blog carefully and it is more likely to be a success. Take time to answer the following questions:

a.  What is your current situation?

b. Where do you want to go?

c. How will blogging help you?

## 2. Build your team

a. What skills do you have access to that complement your own?

b. Who do you have around you who can help? What are their skills?

c. Who might you need to hire?

## 3. Gather your resources

a. How much time can you carve out for blogging each month?

b. Do you have existing websites or a social media following to help promote your new blog?

c. How much money do you have in your blogging budget for design, technical help, hosting and advertising?

d. What other resources do you have access to?

## 4. List your constraints

a. What do you have to be aware of that might hold you back?

b. Are there legal issues you need to be aware of?

c. Is there a technical issue you need to overcome before you can make progress?

## 5. Decide your approach

Answer the previous questions and think about the issues raised before working out your plan of attack. Consider all the resources you are going to need, and the milestones you will aim to hit. Then answer the following questions:

a. What is your goal?

b. How you will know when you have reached this goal?

c. Which milestones do you need to hit toward your goal?

d. What resources do you need to acquire?

## Summary

Once you know where you're going, the journey can begin. In the next chapter we'll start preparing to blog with some market research, network building and software installation.

If you have any queries, questions or comments about any of the topics in this chapter, I'd like to hear from you. Just leave a post on the Wordtracker Academy.

# Prepare to Blog

## Chapter 2

While I would not blame you for diving right in and beginning your blog now – that is how many people get started – you will have a far better experience if you take time to plan your blog.

There are so many blogs and websites competing for the same audience that you need to be smarter, work harder, and most of all, provide more value than any other online resource.

# Competitor analysis

Your first job is to work out where you fit in the market. What is your niche? Who is already talking to the people that you most want to address?

Action!
see Pg 28
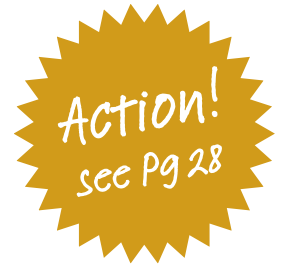
## First, make a list of all the resources available, including:

### Companies and directories

The obvious place to start is with organizations already on your radar. Scour yellow pages, company lists, directories, professional membership organizations, event stand holders and attendees, and any other bricks and mortar contacts.

### Content research

Go online and see who pops up when you perform searches. Look regionally, with searches such as "new jersey lawyer". Target problems and solutions, such as "shark infestation". The companies you find will be competing with you for search results.

### Communities

Which providers are linked to or discussed in relevant online communities, social networking services and forums?

### Niche leaders

Who are the individuals who stand out as the go-to contacts of your industry or market? Which authors are prominent in Amazon and offline book stores? Can you identify the "thought leaders" of online and magazine journal writing, event-speaking and seminars, or even radio and television appearances?

### Alternative solutions

Many problems have multiple solutions, so look at how the alternatives are found, presented and sold.

**You should now have a growing list of competitors. Go over your list, taking careful notice of the following factors:**

### How easy were they to identify?

Do they spring instantly to mind or did you have to seek them out?

### How visible are they?

Do they appear many times or only under one category, such as trade shows? Are they prominently returned on general or industry-specific Google searches?

### Once you land on their website, rate the experience

Does the company provide lots of useful content about itself and the services or valuable articles it provides? What does it do well, or not so well? Is the site easy to use and attractive, or difficult and confusing? Does the site have personality, or is it gray and corporate? Would you return to it?

### How do the companies fit into the niche?

Do they differentiate themselves or blur into an homogeneous mess?

You'll probably find that there are a few stand-out results and many companies that, for whatever reason, fail to impress.

Any of the plus points you find can be used to help create your own presence. Improve on the best ideas or use them as inspiration. The failures highlight practices you should avoid.

# Networking

Some of the people and organizations returned in the previous process will be competitors. Try to think of them as potential networking contacts, too.

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### Networking in blogging is crucial

You will not get very far without winning over other people. People are your readers, and your best source of word of mouth advertising and inbound links.

The more value you offer, the more you boost your niche visibility. As a result, you will attract and help more people. And those readers in turn will help you.

It might be confusing to think of other companies as being both competitors and a source of help, but in blogging this seeming paradox makes perfect sense. It's a well-worn cliché, but blogging is a conversation conducted by writers who respond, extend, argue, report on and debate different topics. Bloggers are always looking for fresh material that their audience can point to or critique.

Another factor to keep in mind is that the more differentiated you become the fewer real competitors you have. In fact, do your positioning well and you become complementary – perhaps even necessary – to the companies who would otherwise view you as a threat.

# Technical stuff

There are some technical challenges and decisions that you need to sort out before you embark on the really interesting, creative aspects of blogging. If you are a geek you will love this piece of the puzzle.

## You need to decide on the best place to host your blog:

### Domain name

Your first decision will be where your blog ought to live. There are a few logistical and usability factors involved in the decision, but fortunately, there are no wrong answers.

• **Extend existing site** – The approach most companies take is to add the blog to an existing site. This has the benefit of using your existing hosting and domain name resources. The blog content becomes an extension of the visitor experience. Any links that the blog attracts will also help boost the main site.

• **New host on existing domain** – Another approach is to create a "blog.yourdomain.com" location, so the blog utilizes the name recognition of your existing domain but creates a satellite site independent from the main web content. This can be seen by search engines and occasionally visitors as a new and separate site. It does not require the look and feel of the original corporate website.

• **New domain** – The ultimate departure from your existing web presence is to build a completely new domain. It might seem like more work to do this, but depending on your corporate structures and bureaucracy, you may find it is easier. Having this split opens up the option of using simpler but more limited all-in-one software, such as Typepad, where the name, hosting and software are rolled into one service and a single monthly fee.

Before you make a decision, you need to keep in mind the options that are open to you. If you are counting on using your existing website hosting, or integrating with content that already exists, this will have an impact on the software choices you have available.

## Software

Each brand of blogging software will require particular programming and server services from your web host. In most cases blogs require a database in which to store content and settings. For example WordPress, probably the most popular blogging platform, requires the use of the PHP programming language and MySQL database server. So, you'll need to be sure that your web host can support those services.

**Making the choice will largely depend on:**

• **In house expertise** – Are you or any of your colleagues already familiar with a particular package?

• **Hosting factors** – Would you need to get new hosting to use the package you most prefer?

• **Community help** – Which software has the most community support? The English-speaking world is dominated by WordPress, but that does not necessarily follow elsewhere.

• **Consultants** – At some point, you may want to hire a consultant to work on your blog. You need to evaluate whether your software choice is likely to limit your options.

• **Freelancers** – The same goes for your access to any freelancers you might want to tap into for technical, design or writing assistance.

## Hosting

As already pointed out, you have a choice of a new hosting company or service, or your existing provider. You also have the option of an all-in-one solution, where the software and hosting are rolled together. WordPress.com (the service, not the software), Typepad, and Simplweb come to mind here. In all cases you will need reliable speed, backups, and uptime, and to be sure of technical support availability and helpfulness.

## Theme/design

If your blog is not going to live within your existing website you will want the blog to look attractive, accessible, professional, easy-to-use, and most of all, to be search friendly. And it is going to need to convert (get your visitors to take the action that you most want them to take). For new designs you are going to have a choice of:

- **Free off-the-shelf design**
- **Paid off-the-shelf design**
- **Custom design**

Whichever choice you make, you are going to want it to be unique. There is a limit to how well you will be able to differentiate and brand your visitor experience with a 'me-too' look and feel. I recommend a paid theme called Thesis that is sold by a company called DIYThemes. Get a professional blog designer to provide a bespoke "skin" for the theme so that it looks exactly as you want it but with a robust framework under the hood.

## Features and add-ons

Blogs need to provide more than just content for your visitors; they are going to want to do stuff, too. So, you should consider:

- **Content and multimedia** – Plain textual content only goes so far. You will want to embed audio and video, and provide downloads such as whitepapers or e-books.

- **Subscription options**

- **Contact form** - At the very least you will need a way for visitors to get in touch with you. A contact page that lists your address and telephone number will be sufficient for some, but a flexible contact form can be easier for visitors to use, while protecting your email address from spammers.

- **Membership features** – Do you want to control users' access to your site? You could provide a client area, or enable paid access to premium content.

- **E-commerce** – If you want to sell products you will need the ability to show "buy now" buttons. If you have products that could be bought together, you'll want a shopping cart.

- **Lead capture** – Visitors must be able to sign up to email lists and newsletters. It is an essential feature for any business. Larger businesses will want to hook up their customer relationship management (CRM) system. Once you have gone to the effort

of creating compelling content and attracting visitors you don't want them to leave without giving you their contact details.

## Housekeeping

There are not many routines you need to follow to maintain your blog, but you should consider:

• **Backups** – Your hosting company should make regular backups, but they might not do so frequently and the process for restoring a backup may be inconvenient. Taking your own automatic backups with an easy restore procedure is good housekeeping.

• **Comment moderation and spam** – Comments are great, but you'll want to control which comments appear for all to see. To prevent spam, use a good spam filter like Akismet.

• **Web statistics** – To see how many visitors you are getting, where they're going, and where they're coming from, you will need a good web metrics application. There are several choices, the most popular being Google Analytics.

• **Webmaster tools** – Google also provides a useful application for checking how well your site is being indexed and searched, called Google Webmaster tools. If Google has a problem with your site, this is where you find out and work out a fix.

If you work through the action points presented in this chapter, your blog's infrastructure will be in order. And you will be ready for the next step, which is to determine your plan of attack.

# Action: Prepare to blog

Work out where your blog will fit into the overall marketplace so that you can stand out and get noticed. Start building your blogging platform by installing and configuring the software that will host your blog.

## 6. Analyze your competitors

a. Start a new spreadsheet that will store your competitor website information. Add columns for name, URL (web address), notes, email address, plus any social tool profiles such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

b. Search Google for "[your keyword] blog" ("plumbing blog", "photographer blog" and so on) and add the results to your spreadsheet. For rating purposes look at the design, features, and how easy they are to find.

c. Next find any directories that list websites in your market and go through those.

d. Make a list of the best features that you will need to replicate, things these competitors do not do well, and how they tell visitors what they do.

e. Follow links to all the social media profiles and take a look at what they post, how they interact, and how they are presented.

f. Work out your positioning so that you can stand out from the rest. What do you do differently? Why should someone go to you rather than them?

## 7. Build your network

a. Open a Twitter account at http://www.twitter.com. See image:



- Go to Twitter.com and hit the "Sign up now" button

- Choose a username. This will become your Twitter address. Eg, my username is "chrisgarrett" and my Twitter profile lives at http://twitter.com/chrisgarrett

- Choose a username that represents you, your company or your brand. Avoid anything that seems hard to say, spell or recognize.

- Fill out your profile and upload a friendly, approachable picture, preferably your photograph rather than a logo.

- Add some "Tweets" so that your Twitter account has something for people to look at. Post interesting links, interesting things that you are up to and maybe useful quotes and tips.

b. Open a StumbleUpon account at http://www.stumbleupon.com. See image:
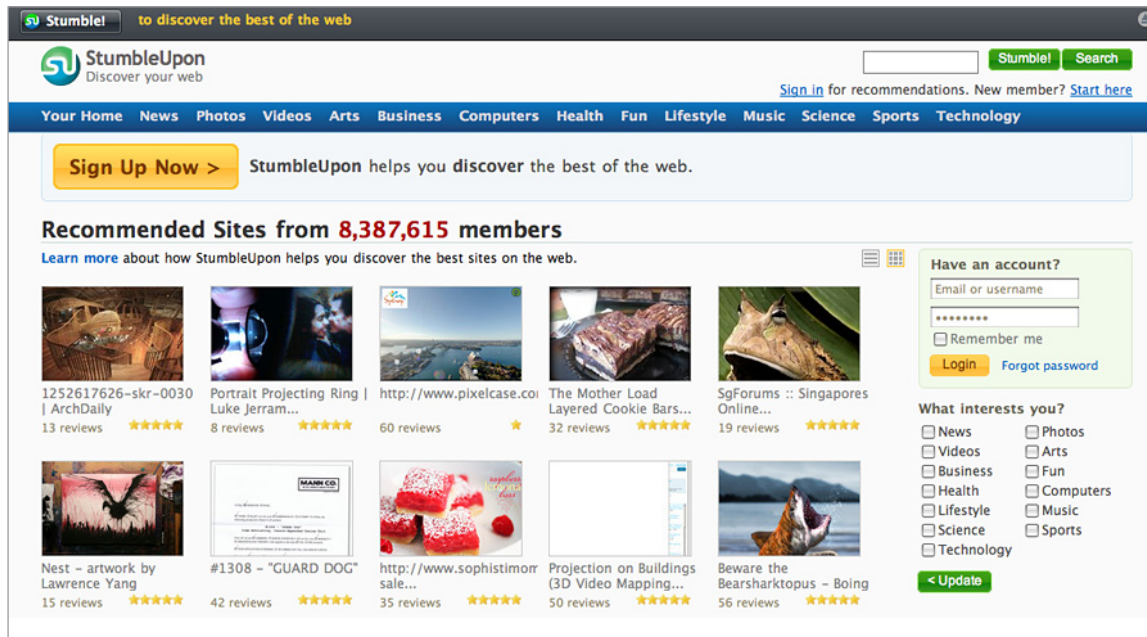


• Browse over to StumbleUpon.com and hit the "Sign Up Now" button. Add your details, making sure you select a username that looks friendly and NOT spammy.

• Find contacts using the Connect with Friends feature: http://www.stumbleupon.com/find_friends.php

• Go over the list you just created in the action exercise "Analyze Your Competitors" and add any contacts that you found as friends by searching for their name.

c. Create profiles at LinkedIn and Facebook, adding everyone you know as contacts and friends.

## 8. Get hosting and a domain name

**There are many different places where you can buy domains and host your blog. Here we will use Dreamhost, a simple all-in-one service:**

a. Go to https://signup.dreamhost.com/. See image:



b. Select "Host a Domain" and go for the "Yearly" billing to get the best deal.

c. To get your domain, select "Register a new .com/net/org/info domain for me."

## 9. Install your blog and theme

a. Go to your hosting account and find the "One-click Installs" option. See image:
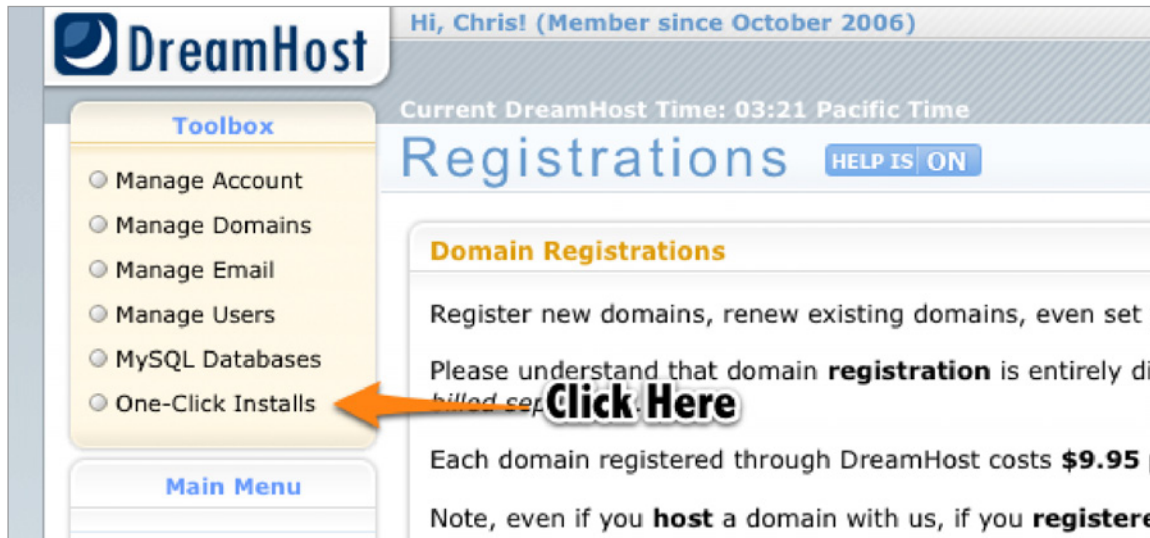


b. If asked, select to install in "Advanced mode" because "Easy mode" does not give you the flexibility you require. See image:
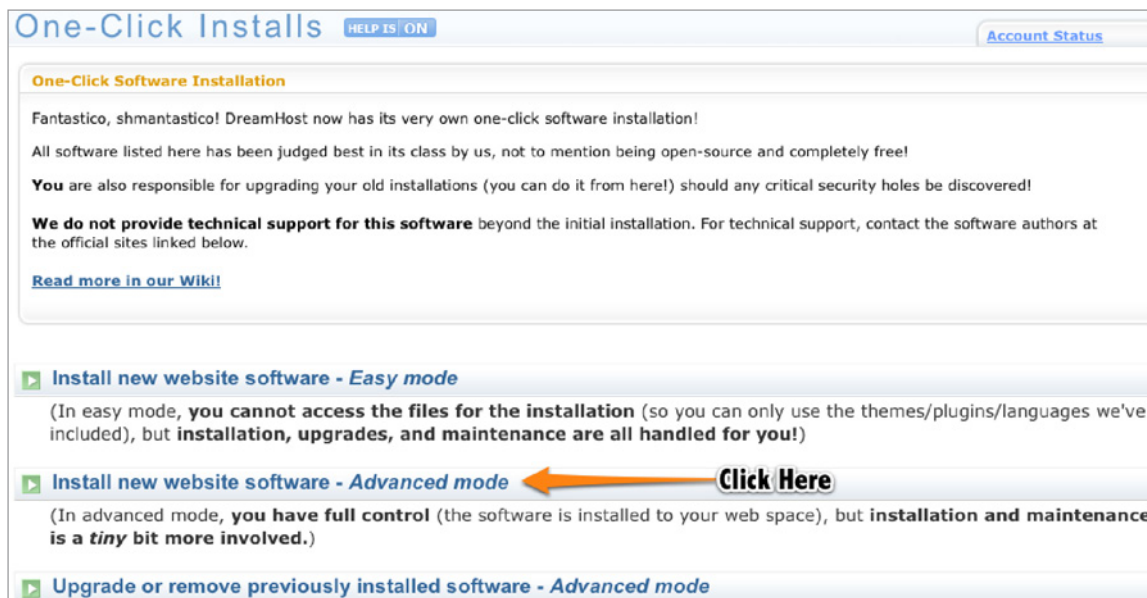
c. Select WordPress. See image:
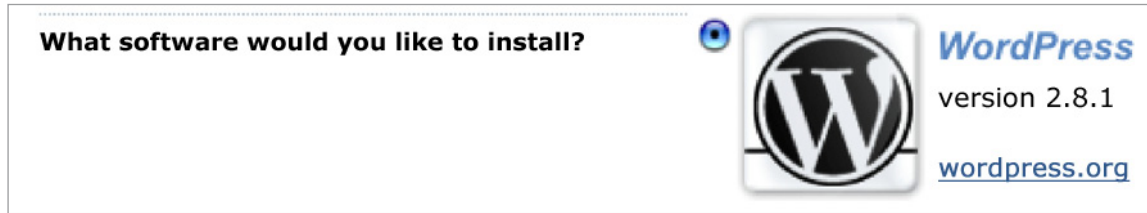


d. Select the domain you wish to "Install to". See image:
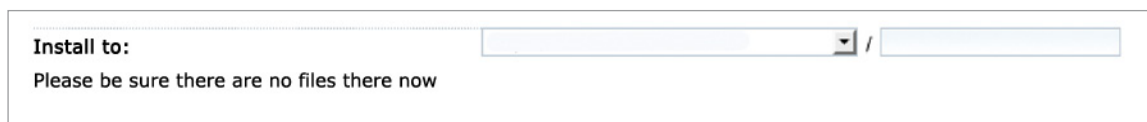


e. Enter a "New Database Name". See image:



f. Select to install a new "Create a New Hostname now" to your domain. See image:
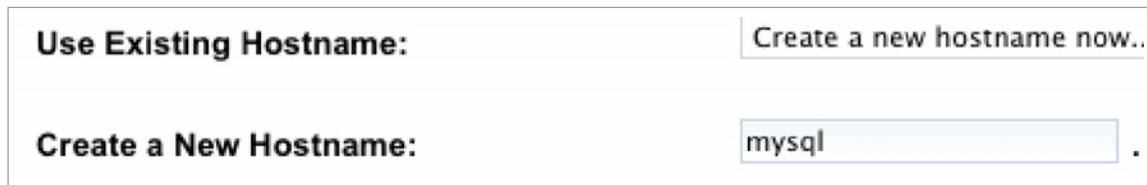
g. Enter a "New Username" for the database. See image:

**First User:** Create a new user now... ▾

**New Username:** mydbuser

**New Password:**

**New Password Again:**

h. Hit the "Install it for me now" button. See image:

Install it for me now!
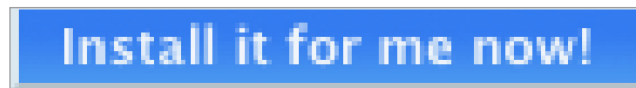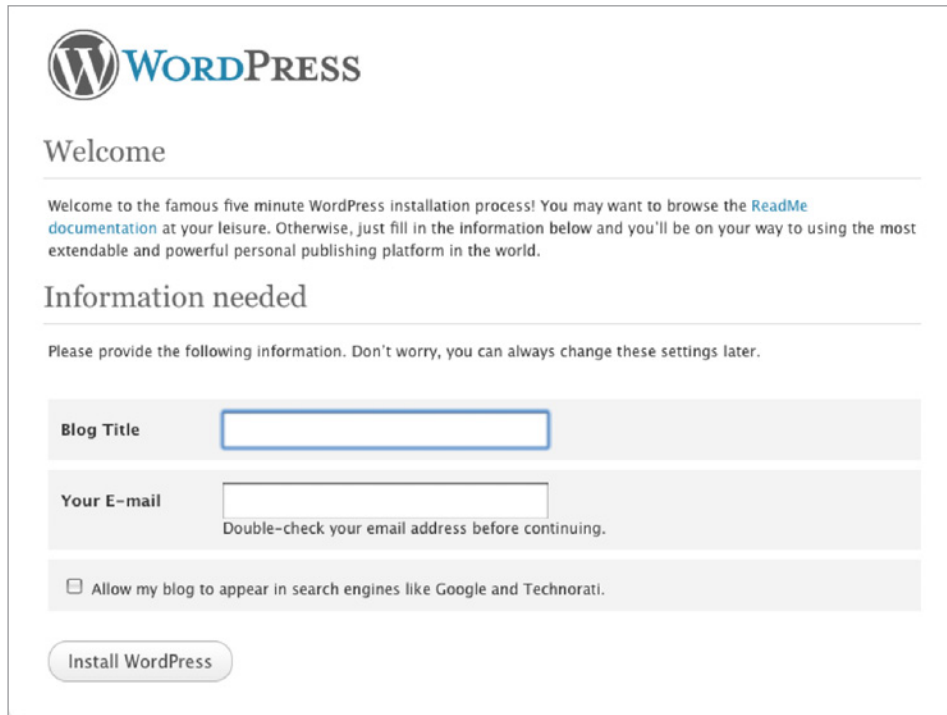
i. Wait for the blog to be setup. See image:

✓ Success!

WordPress will be installed to

You will then receive an email
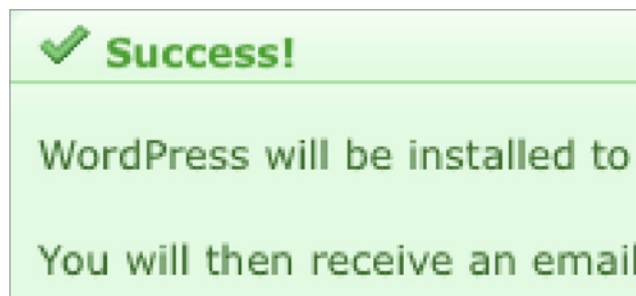
j. You should receive an email with instructions. See image:

```
Now....

1. Please create an admin user at:

-http://              .com/wp-admin/install.php
```

k. Give the blog a title, add your email address and tick "Allow my blog to appear in search engines like Google and Technorati". See image:



l. Copy down the temporary password so you can log in. See image:

m. Log in. See image:



n. Click the red "Yes, Take me to my profile page" link. See image:



o. Scroll down and change your password. See image:

p. To select your blog theme go to the "Appearance" section from your left hand menu. See image:



q. You can choose from existing themes. See image:
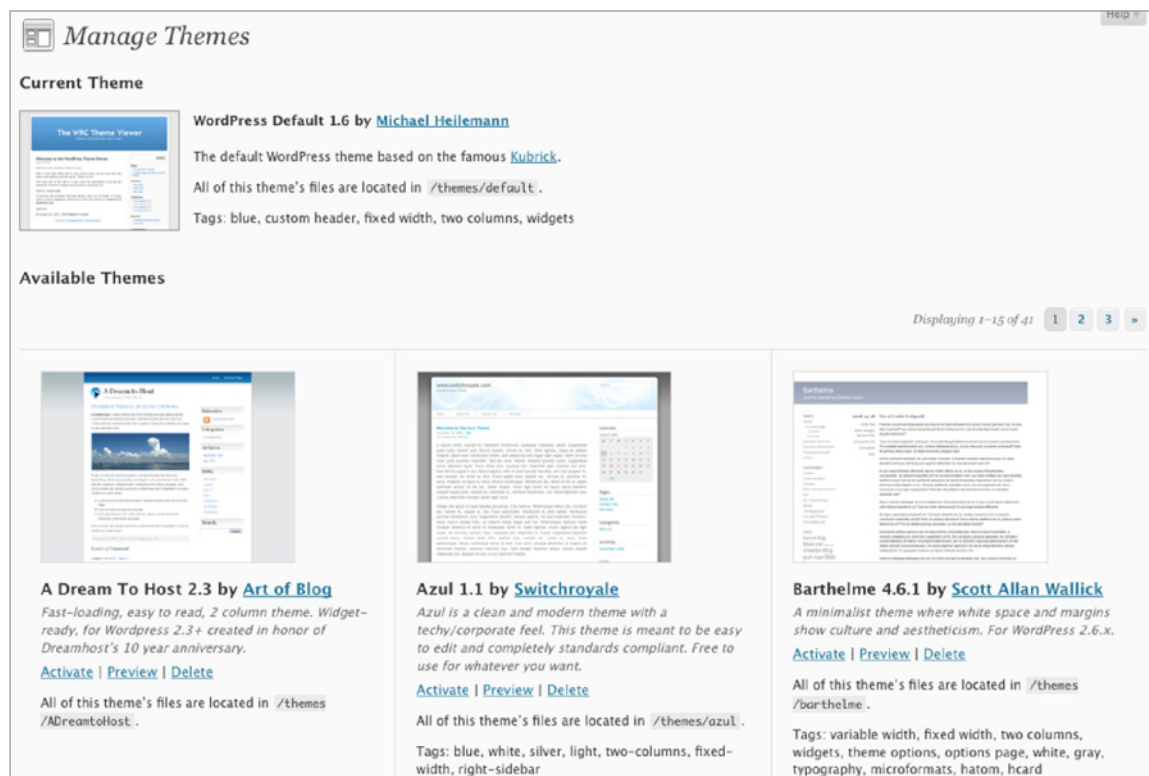
... or you can upload a pre-built theme to your wp-content/themes directory. See image:
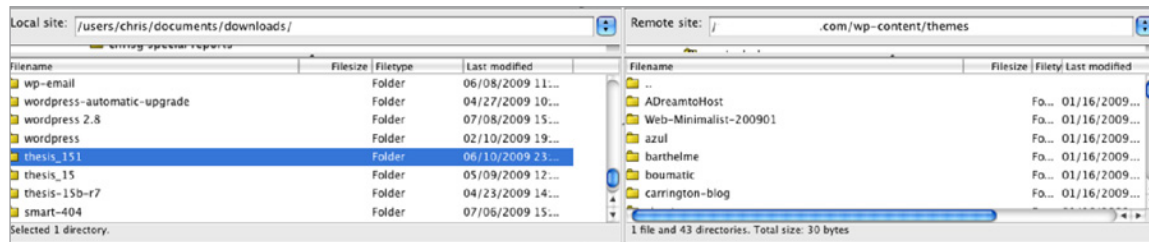


I like to use the pre-built theme "Thesis" by Chris Pearson.

r. Once uploaded, find the theme in your "Appearance" section. See image:
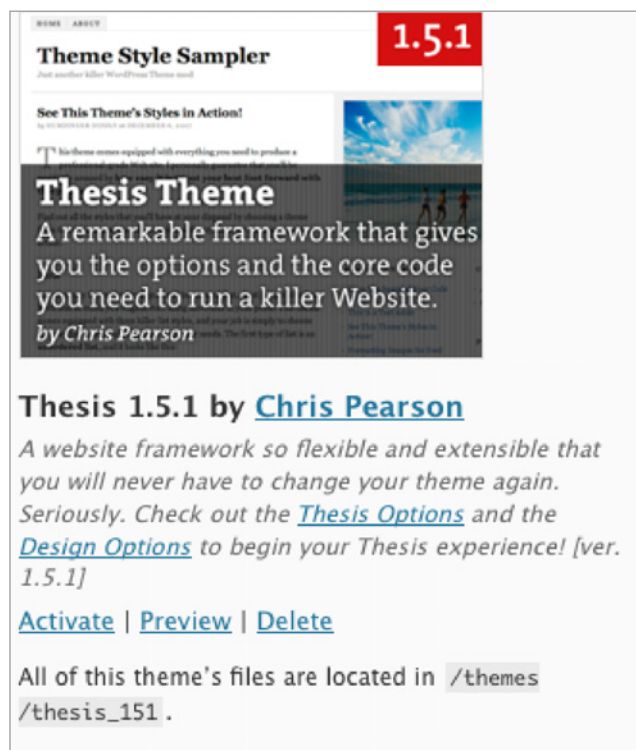


s. Click the theme, then hit "Activate" in the popup window that appears.
See image:
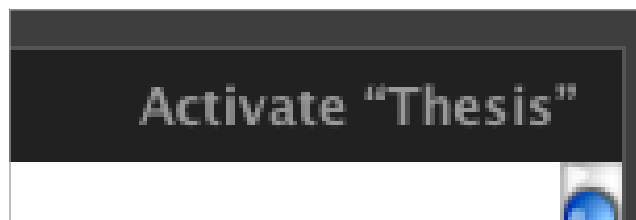
t. Your new theme is now installed and your first post has been created, ready for you to edit.
See image:
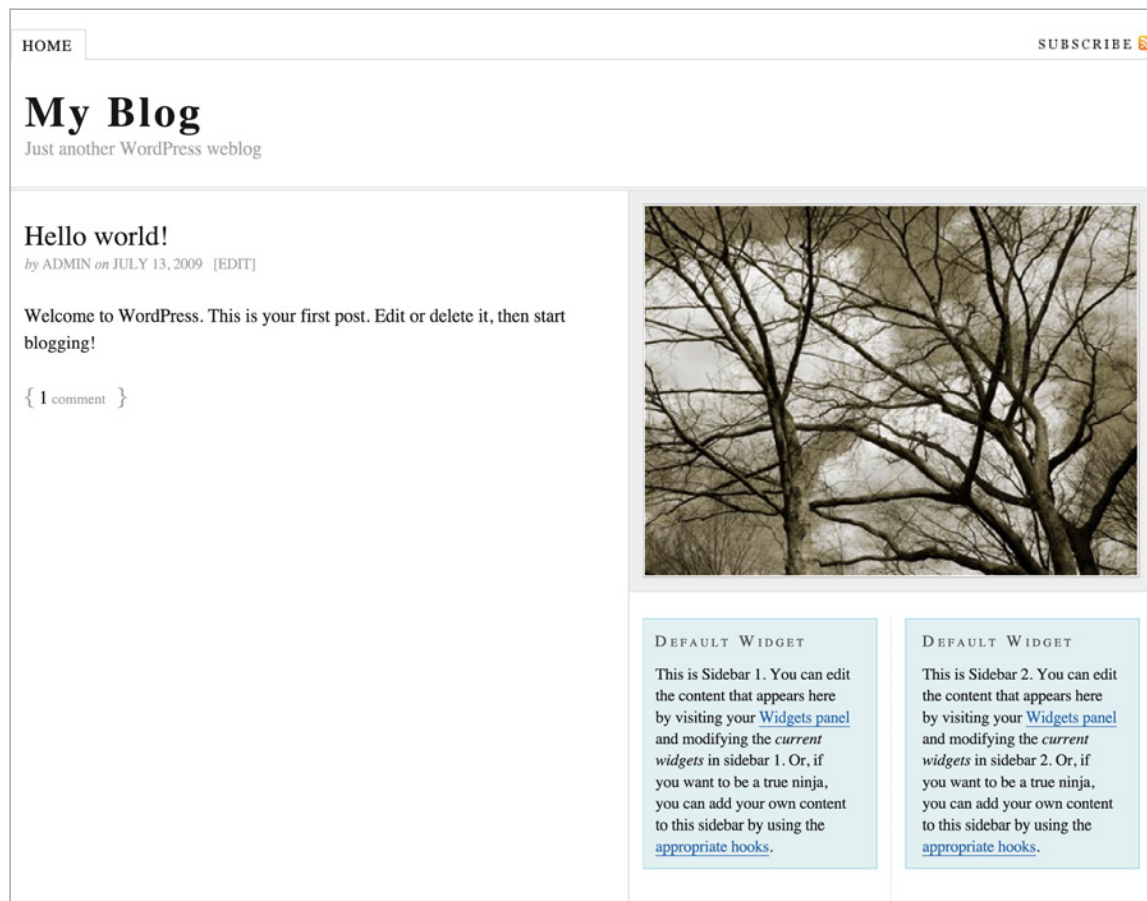


## Summary

This chapter's actions set up your site's infrastructure - you have to build it before you need it. Checking out your competitors and peers, networking and making contacts and building up social media accounts all needs to be done before you have any scent of a hidden agenda. So the earlier you get started the better!

If you have any queries, questions or comments about any of the topics in this chapter, I'd like to hear from you. Just leave a post on the Wordtracker Academy.

# Planning
# and Strategy

## Chapter 3

You have the technology sorted and you know what great, or not so great, stuff your competitors are up to. You are well placed to launch your blog. But don't take the leap quite yet.

# How will you measure progress?

As mentioned in the first Action section, you need to know why you are blogging. What goals are you working towards?

*Action! see pg 46*

## What would blogging success look like for your company?

An important part of goal planning is knowing how you are going to measure progress towards your goals. Which metrics and performance indicators will you use?

### Targets

Decide on some targets to aim for. Your milestones might include:

- **Your first 1000 subscribers**
- **Your first 100, 1000, 10 000 visitors**
- **Your first sale, or your first 100 sales**

The old saying "you get what you measure" holds true. You need to decide what you want to achieve and how you're going to measure it. A high score table of visitor numbers is useful, but you'll also want to know whether the systems you have in place are working, or if anything has broken down.

These metrics will update you on the health of your blog. In general, you want each measure to improve month on month. If you see a dip there is likely to be a problem. Without measuring, you will not know until it is too late.

### Feedback

Your measurements can give you important feedback about any experiments you try. Test a new traffic tactic and you'll know right away whether it has worked successfully, or if you need to go back to the drawing board.

## Some important metrics questions include:

- **What is it you want to achieve by blogging?**
- **How can you tell you are making progress?**
- **Which specific metrics will you monitor?**

## Metrics you might want to measure are:

- **Brand mentions**
- **Traffic**
  - Increase
  - Referrers
  - Content type
  - Downloads
  - Repeat vs new
  - Total audience size
- **Subscriber opt-ins**
- **Leads**
- **Average visitor value**
- **Conversion rate**
- **Link growth**
- **Business opportunities**
- **Pass-along rate**
- **Coupon redemption**
- **Tracking links clicked**
- **Survey responses**
- **Event attendance**
- **Comments received**
- **Ideas/knowledge received and acted on**
- **Product/service developed**

# What is your target market?

The next question to answer is: who do you need to attract to your site to meet the objectives identified in the previous section?

---

**Too many bloggers scramble around in a non-focused way aiming to attract "traffic"**

Yet too many of the wrong type of visitor won't get you any closer to your goals.

My approach is to decide who my best customers are. If you could clone one of your customers and make a dozen of them, which would you choose and why? What are their attributes?

What are their preferences, wants, needs, challenges, problems, desires, loves and hates? A vague idea is not going to help you; be highly specific. The better you understand your target audience, the better you will be able to service them and convert them into customers.

## Get talking

You can do a lot of this work by making educated guesses, monitoring behavior or through polls and surveys. But the best approach is to ask a customer face to face, by telephone or via Skype. If that's not possible, they may be happy to answer questions by email. Telephone or face to face works better, because dialog tends to produce more detail. You never know which small suggestion will provide the big insight that makes all the difference to your business.

Some people call this a pen portrait or a target profile. It does not really matter how you collate the information, but **you must do the work**. Put in the time to understand and get inside the head of your target audience and you will recoup the investment many times over.

The company that understands its customers best, communicates with its prospects best and provides the most appropriate solutions - wins.

# Tell your story

Everyone loves a good story. Every individual and company has a story to tell. The unique path that brought you to where you are today makes you interesting.

## Most stories are made up of who, what why, where and when

Who, what and why are the most important questions. The more details you can collate the richer your story can become.

A sense of location, history, personality, motivation and outcome creates color and drama. The ups and downs of your successes add to the story and provide a rationale for the way you approach business.

### Raw materials

Before we look at your story, we need raw materials:

• **Who is your prospect and what can you give them?**

• **What do you do?** – More importantly, what do you do that will be attractive to your target market and help you achieve your goals?

Once you have decided, work out how you perform this service, or bring your product to market. That gives us the 'who' and the 'what'.

• **Why should your customers be interested?** – If they were to buy your products, what changes or benefits would they see? How would their lives be improved? Which problems would be solved?

This is the 'why' for your prospect. You also need to know the 'why' for your organization.

• **Why do you do what you do?** – What drives your company to keep going?

# Define your positioning

As we saw in the previous chapter, providing a valuable and needed service – even in a market where there is strong demand – is no guarantee of success.

---

## Lots of companies are ready and willing to supply that need

Your business must stand out.

Defining a unique selling point (USP) will encourage customers to select you over an alternative vendor.

### Be genuine

Your selling point needs to come from a genuine, authentic and logical place. Take another look at your story and pinpoint the parts that support your sales pitch.

For example, is your history a potential differentiator? Or are you the biggest, first, oldest or most experienced? Is the way you approach your market different? What do you do that nobody else can or does? Is there something special about the way you create or provide your service? Do you have more expertise or experience with a certain type of customer, problem or market?

By using your competitor list and being aware of your target market's needs and biases, you should be able to identify a competitive advantage. If not, you'll have an idea of where to take your business in the future.

### Make sense

Being different is good but insufficient. You have to be different in a way that makes compelling sense. Tomorrow, you might go to work wearing a green catsuit with flippers on your feet. That would be different. But really, would that be a compelling reason for someone to buy from you, rather than a competitor? Of course not.
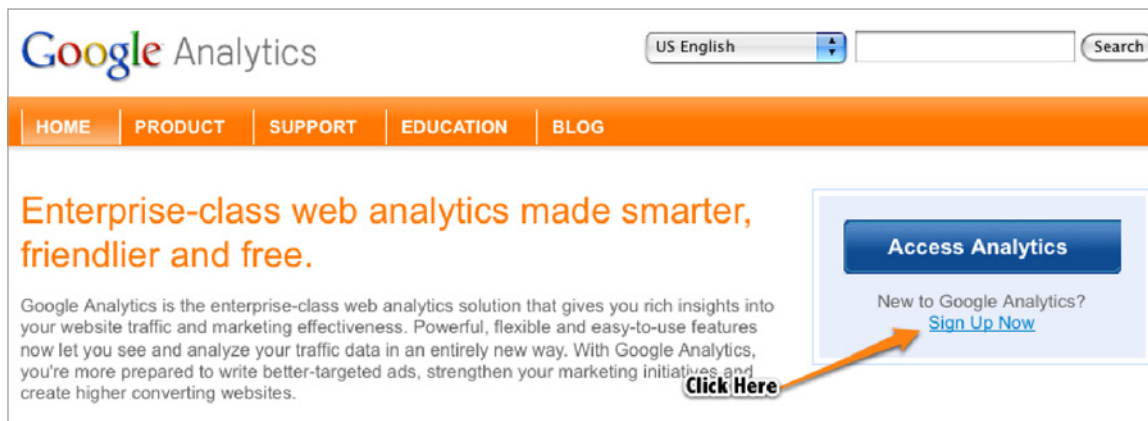
So, work hard on creating a value-based difference, then deconstruct everything about it so that you can explain it simply.

# Action: Plan your business blog

Some planning is still required if you want to do the best possible job and gain great results for your business.

---

### 10. Measure your goals with Google Analytics visitor tracking

a. Sign up for Google Analytics here: http://www.google.com/analytics/

b. Create a Google account if you don't have one.



c. Start a new Website Profile

d. Add the domain for your site.

e. Copy the supplied code.



e. If you are using Thesis, add the code in the options.



f. For other themes go to Appearance, then Editor.

g. Edit the "Footer" template and paste the code before the closing </body> tag.



## 11. Build your target audience profile

**Work out who your perfect prospect is by building a pen portrait with the following questions:**

- What are they called?

- Who do they think they are?

- Who are they really?

- Who do they want to be?

- Who do they like?

- Who don't they like?

- Who is their peer group?

- Who do they not identify with?

- What are their beliefs?

- Where do they live?

- Where do they work?

- Where do they learn?

- Where do they want to be?

- What are their needs?

- How old are they?

- How youthful do they act?

- How conservative are they?

- What are their driving ambitions?

- What are their wants and needs?

- What are their pleasures?

- What are their pains?

- What do they love?

- What do they hate?

## 12. Craft your story

### Write your signature story by answering the following questions:

- Who are you?

- Who do you work with?

- Who do you work for?

- Who do you work with/for?

- What do you do?

- What have you done?

- Where do you do it?

- Where have you been?

- Where are you going?

- When did you start?

- When did you change the way you work?

- Why do you do what you do, in the way that you do it and why should anyone care?

Include major successes, mistakes and how you learned from them, and the results you have created. You are better to have too much information and trim it down, rather than have a short story that makes no sense or has little impact.

## 13. Define your competitive edge

### Use this fill in-the-blanks template to build your positioning statement for when you are talking directly to a prospect:

"Unlike other providers of _____ , I/we _____ which means for you _____"

## Summary

If you've followed the above actions then you've now set up goal measurement, created pen portraits, developed your signature story and worked out a hook or an elevator pitch.

Why? Because you need to know who your audience is and what you are going to say to attract and interest them. If you do not prepare, then you will be stumped when put on the spot and asked: who are you and what do you do?

If you have any queries, questions or comments about any of the topics in this chapter, I'd like to hear from you. Just leave a post on the Wordtracker Academy.

# What to Write

## Chapter 4

If you have been turning my advice into action you should have a pretty good idea of where your blog will fit into the market. You will know who you want to attract and the needs and biases of that audience.

Now we need a content plan. It must serve the needs of your audience and lead visitors to take the actions you want, like opting in to your email newsletters or buying your products.

## Some people say that content is king

I agree - to some extent that content is not everything, but if you want to attract well-targeted, eager buyers to your blog, content will be the core of everything you do from this point on.

Without consistent compelling content you will find it difficult, maybe impossible, to achieve sustained traffic, willing opt-ins, loyal members, or long term sales. There are short cuts, underhand ways of fooling search engines and customers, but social media are making it increasingly difficult for spammers and schemers to short-cut their way to profit. And, over time, those of us who put value first will win out.

## So, we need to be writing good stuff

We want our target audience to be attracted to our content, consume and get value from it. Which means we need to work out exactly what they want to read.
How do we do that?

We set about building a question database. We are not talking about anything complex or technical – just a spreadsheet of questions that your audience would like answered. Answering those questions will provide value where it is most needed and in the process make you a hero to your customers.

# Surveys and polls

As mentioned in the previous chapter, your best source of audience insight will come from the audience itself.


Action! see Pg 60

## Question your audience

Pick up the telephone, do an email survey or use an online tool.

Simply create a free form that builds a neat spreadsheet in real time.  Some people like to use dedicated services like SurveyMonkey, but my preferred approach is to use Google Docs.

Once you have gathered some readers – enough to make a survey worthwhile – you can ask them to complete it. Email your list or ask social media followers on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. If there are busy forums in your niche, make sure you add a line to the "signature" that appears each time you post a message. Use the message to drive people to your survey.

At the time of writing (August 2009) I am running a campaign here. This has been promoted through social media and forum signatures and so far I have about 200 signups.

A great way to generate attention and build a database of your target profiles' content needs is to perform what I like to call "question-building teleseminars".

Put up a landing page announcing the topic of the teleconference with a form asking for name, email address and a question. This form submits to an email autoresponder which returns an email giving details about the teleconference, including what number to dial and when. You can also ask attendees to submit questions they would like to be answered in the conference. When you run the call, simply answer the best or most popular questions.

A question-building teleseminar could be promoted by email and social media. Let users know how they will benefit from attending, eg "get your biggest questions about X answered live."

As well as building a list of questions, this work creates great, keyword rich content. Make the conversation available as an audio download, or as a PDF document if you can get the call transcribed.

# Forums, comments, Q&As

### Search relevant forums

Forums contain a wealth of content ideas, written in your prospects' own words, just waiting to be trawled and collated into your database. This is a more passive method of data collection; if your niche is sensitive or you have competition concerns, no one need know that you are gathering the information.

# Social media for content research

### Research social media sites

Social media conversations can be used to bring out questions that lead to excellent content and resources. You can start these discussions with a question, or you can use the various services' built-in search tools.

# Keyword research from Wordtracker and Adwords

**Put your core keywords into keyword research tools and you will find the terms that people are using in their search engine queries - and the popularity of each term**

You can see where people are facing problems or challenges and the way they describe those issues when looking for help.  Wordtracker's Keyword Questions tool allows you to put in a search term to find the questions people are asking about that topic. This is content gold, ready for you to refine.

## Here's how it works

You just enter a short keyword phrase – one or two words – and the tool will pair it with six question words – what, why, when, how, where and who – and then conduct a broad match from Wordtracker's database.

• So someone with a coffee website could enter 'coffee' and find questions like 'who invented the coffee maker', 'why use cold water when brewing coffee', 'how to make iced coffee' and 'how to clean a coffee pot'.

• A flower shop could enter 'sorry' and find questions like 'how to say sorry to your girlfriend' or 'how to say sorry after huge argument'.

• A website on UFOs might be interested to know that the most popular questions on UFOs include 'how to fake UFO photographs' or 'how to build a UFO'.

People have tons of questions about all sorts of things. They want answers, and many of them will go to a search engine to find them. By providing the answers to their questions you'll create interesting copy and pick up a lot of relevant traffic for your website.

Use the questions as inspiration for articles and you'll rank for the question as well as for other related keywords. Furthermore, since each article you write will address a specific question it is more likely to attract keyword rich inbound links.

You can also use Wordtracker's Keywords tool subscription service to save your keyword research. This allows you to develop keyword lists over time and use them to plan the structure of your website. I explore this in more detail in the Actions section.

# Wordtracker's new blogging tool

### SEO Blogger

Once you start blogging Wordtracker has another useful tool, SEO Blogger. It sits in your web browser and tells you what terms people are searching for, how many people are searching for them, and the exact phrasing to use in your headlines to attract that audience.

# Mind mapping

### A mind map will help you visualize your content

Once you have collated your raw information needs, you will have to organize it before you can make sense of it and put it to use.

When I'm working I like to make notes with a mind map, though sometimes it's easier to use a database or spreadsheet.  A mind map is simply a diagram that will help you visualize the different categories you want to include in your blog.

I collate the major content areas and themes into a master mind map. This should include your various questions and topics. It will help you put them them into groupings and make connections between concepts. It helps you to see the "shape" of your content universe.

# Planning your content

A mind map is particularly useful for bloggers. It helps you break your blog into categories, series, and downloads. And it will help you plan the format; some subjects will benefit from being presented as video and audio, rather than as text articles or e-books.

**Other bloggers I know like to put their content ideas onto index cards and stack them into piles, helping them to generate categories. Then decide on media types.**

**You should organize your content into:**

• **Standard articles** – These are your blog's bread and butter content that readers will return for day after day.

• **Discussion pieces** – If you want to build community, you should launch conversations through great questions, dialog and debate.

• **Promotional items** – This might be content that you hope will get social media attention or generate links. You could launch a competition, create a writing project, viral or carnival. Whatever you do, there will need to be additional content that gets your blog extra visibility.

• **Series** – If you want visitors to see benefit in returning to your site, publish a series of articles that drip feed linked entries over days or weeks. Just like a television soap opera, each entry should end with a cliffhanger or an advert for the next episode. Add a call to action for the reader to subscribe and they won't want to miss the next installment.

• **Flagship content** – Is your best content. While every successful blog has authoritative content that is a long term resource for visitors, flagship content goes a step further. It is free content that readers would usually expect to pay a hefty premium for. It acts as an ambassador for your site, gets shared around, builds your brand, gets people talking and most important, brings visitors back to you. It could be a great e-book, a video series or a collection of audio interviews, as long as it provides excellent value.

# Creating your editorial calendar

An editorial calendar organizes your rollout of content over the year. It should tell you who needs to do what, when.

## Failing to plan is planning to fail

On a weekly basis, you might decide to have certain content go out on particular days - perhaps a poll on Tuesdays and a podcast interview on Fridays.

Having all this in your calendar will mean you are better placed to take advantage of any opportunities that arise.

You will want to plan for vacations, big product launches and joint ventures. Then there are seasonal considerations. Most industries will have a must visit trade show, and there are national and religious holidays to work around.

Knowing when you will need content allows you to plan and have something ready. After all, failing to plan is planning to fail. And another chestnut; prior planning prevents poor performance!

# Action:
# Content research

Now you have an idea of what your audience is about and a unique position for your blog. Next you need to determine the exact content needed to achieve your goals.

## 14. Create a customer survey with Google Docs

a. Go to http://docs.google.com

b. Start a new form by choosing "Form" from the "New" drop-down menu.
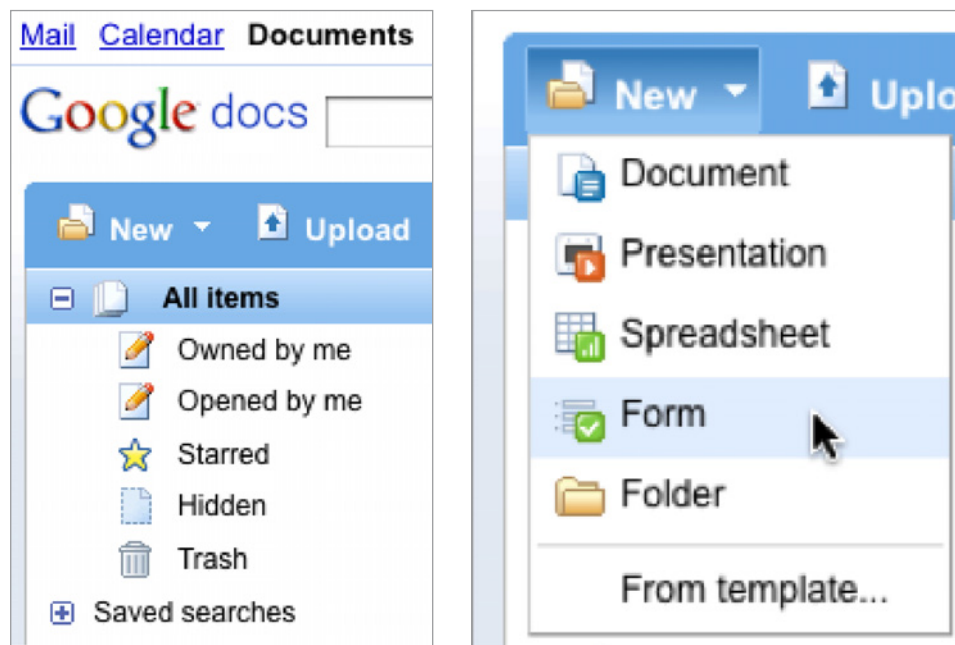
c. Give the form a title and description and start editing the form's sample questions.  See image:
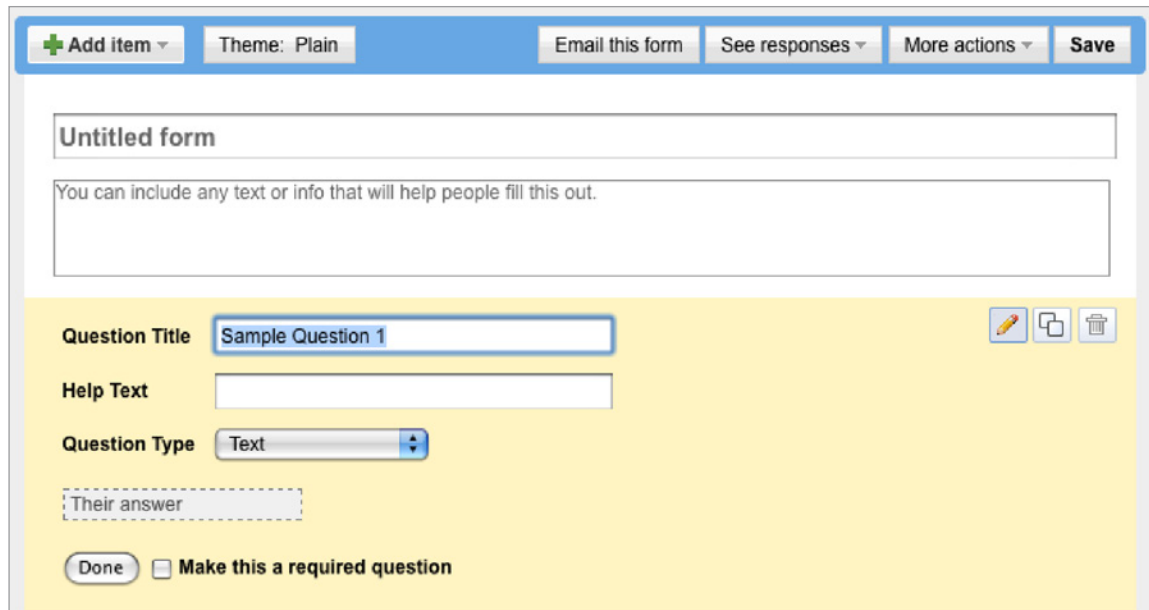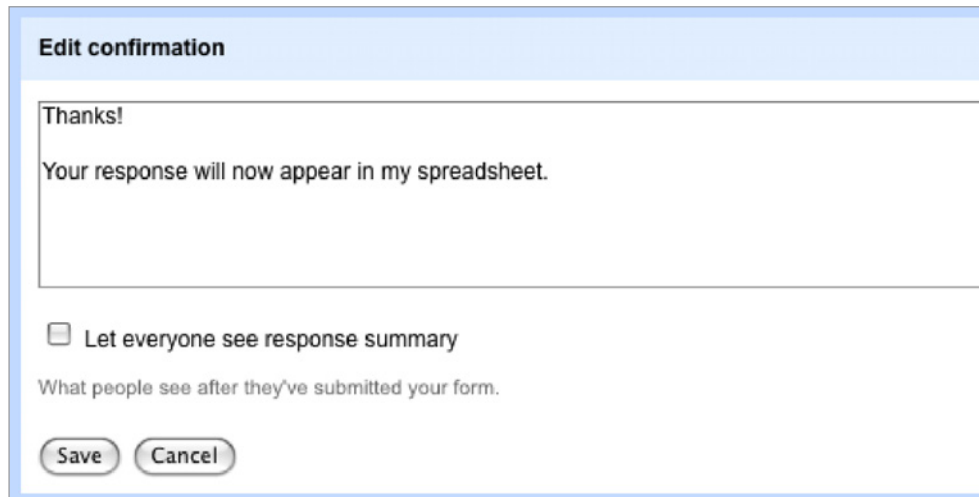


d. Add new questions using the "Add item" drop down menu. Choose the appropriate type of question, and it will appear in your form.  See image:
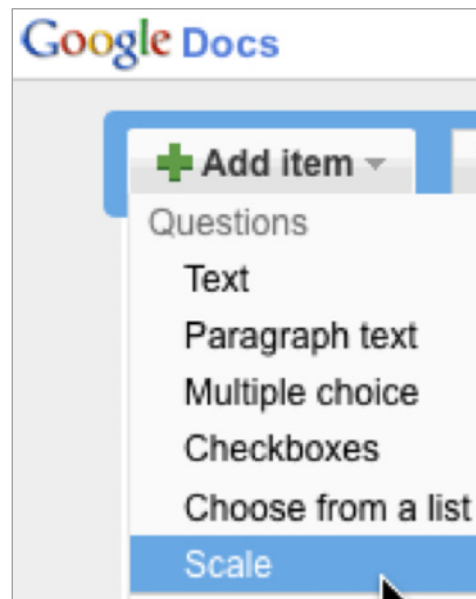


e. Existing questions can be edited, copied or deleted using the buttons shown in the following image:

f. You can also choose what should happen when a user submits their responses.  See image:
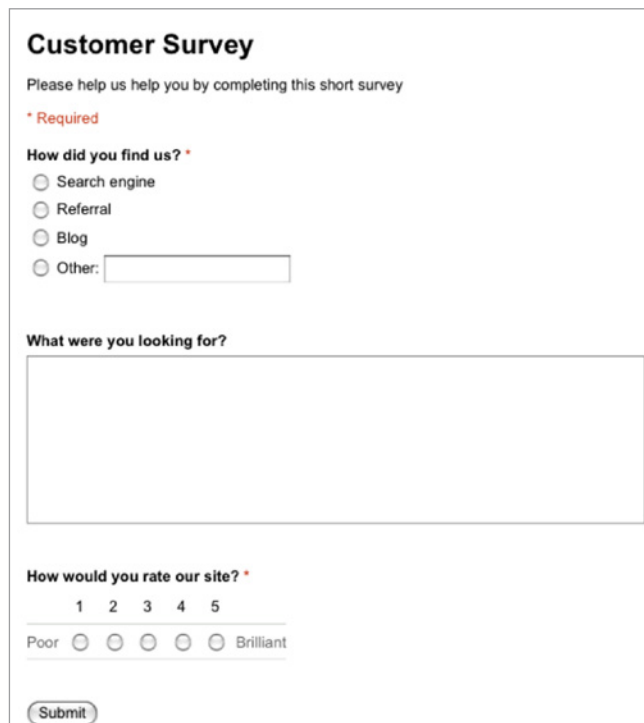


g. When you have finished editing your questions, hit "Save" and view the form using the link at the bottom.  See image:



h. You should now be able to see your form as the visitor will see it.  See image:

i. Check the results as submissions come in. On the editing screen you can use the "See responses" drop down menu to view either a summary or a spreadsheet.  See image:
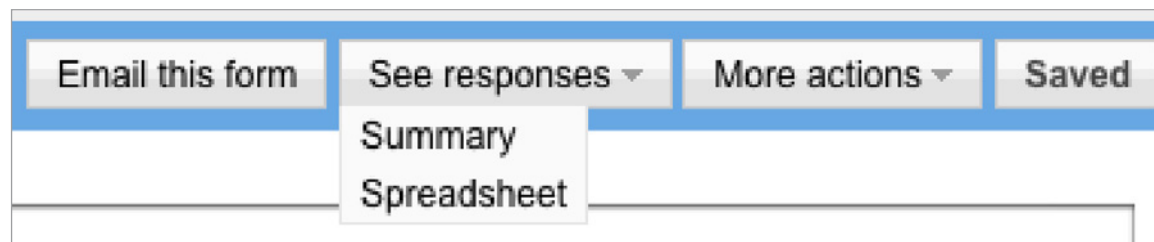


## 15. Make a list of prospect questions

### Make a list of questions that prospects might ask. Not just about things like features and benefits – go deeper.

Create useful content by answering questions like those in the following list:

• What do prospects need to know before they buy from you?

• Which terms, jargon phrases or concepts often confuse customers?

• Do customers tend to raise the same questions over and over?

• Are there common objections that you need to overcome in order for customers to be happy to buy?

## 16. Search social media for trends

**A number of services can help you search social media to find out what is popular, including the following:**

a. Popurls  http://popurls.com. See image:
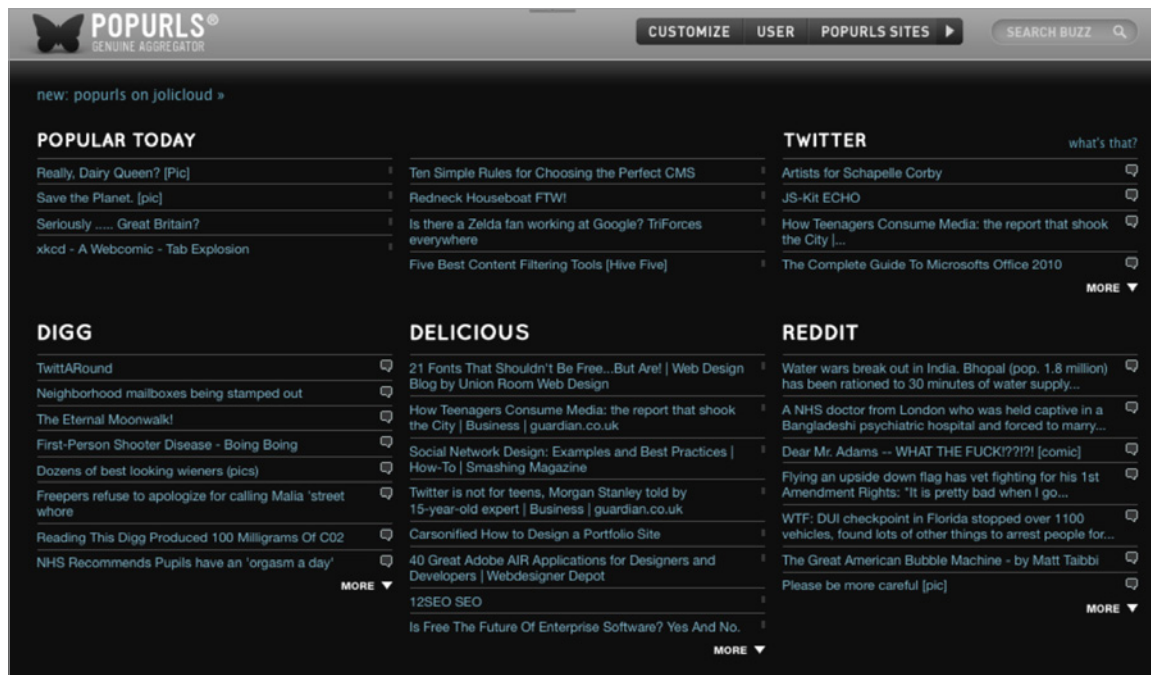


b. Twitter search http://search.twitter.com.  See image:
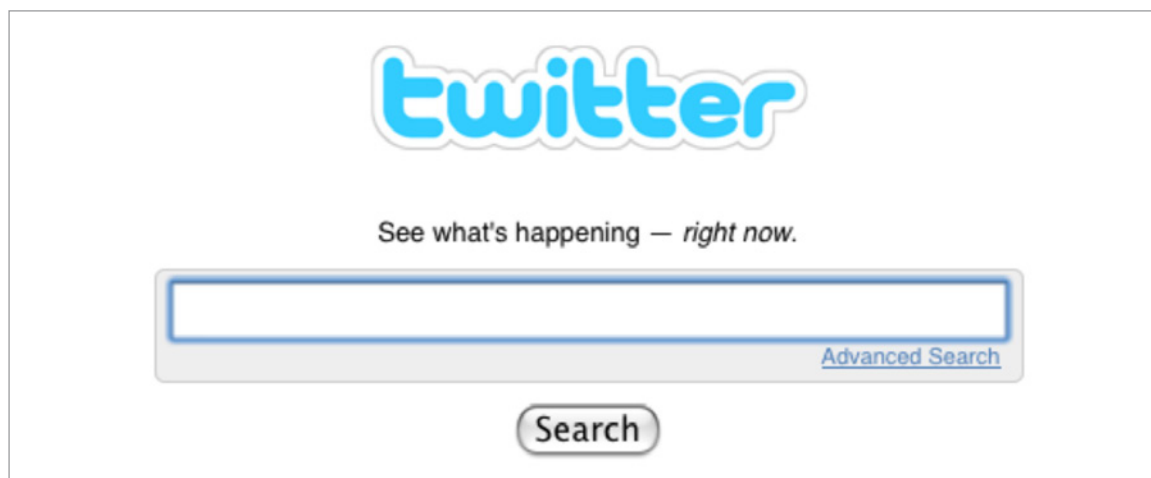
c. Digg search http://digg.com/search.  See image:
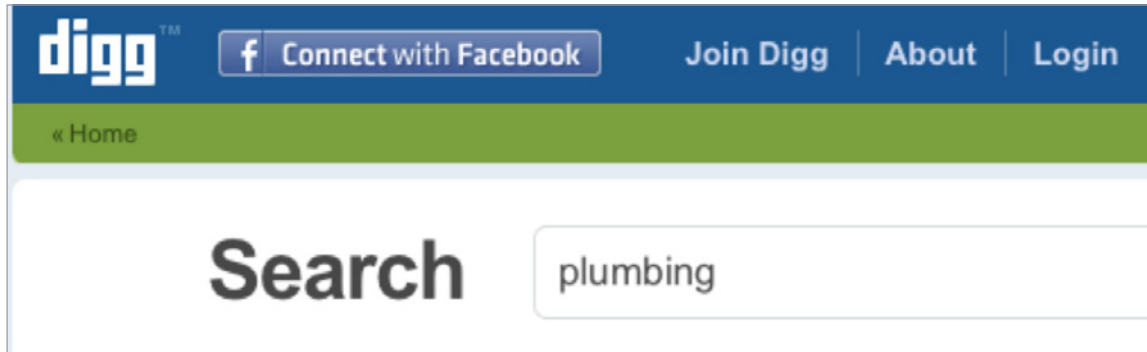


d. FriendFeed search http://friendfeed.com/search/advanced.  See image:
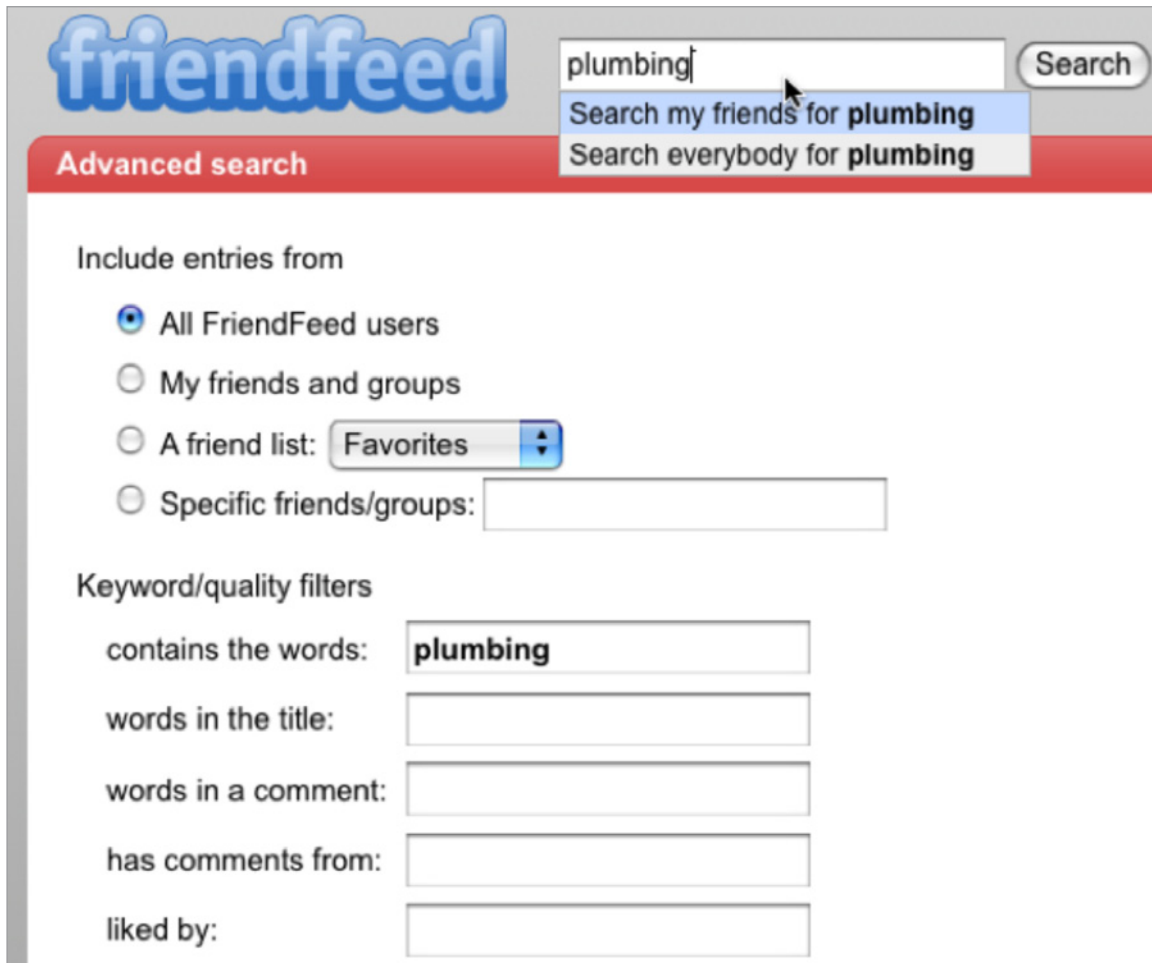
## 17. Keyword research

a. Use Wordtracker's free keyword suggestion tool at: http://freekeywords.wordtracker.com

• Enter a "seed" keyword, click "Hit Me" to find real searches made that contain your seed keyword. Each keyword is a potential clue to finding out what your target audience wants to know and therefore a potential content idea.  See image:

b. Superior to the free tool is Wordtracker's Keywords tool, a subscription service. Take a free trial here: https://www.wordtracker.com/trial/

• Enter a seed keyword, configure your search for US or UK, broad, exact or phrase match, misspellings, plurals and adult keywords. See image:
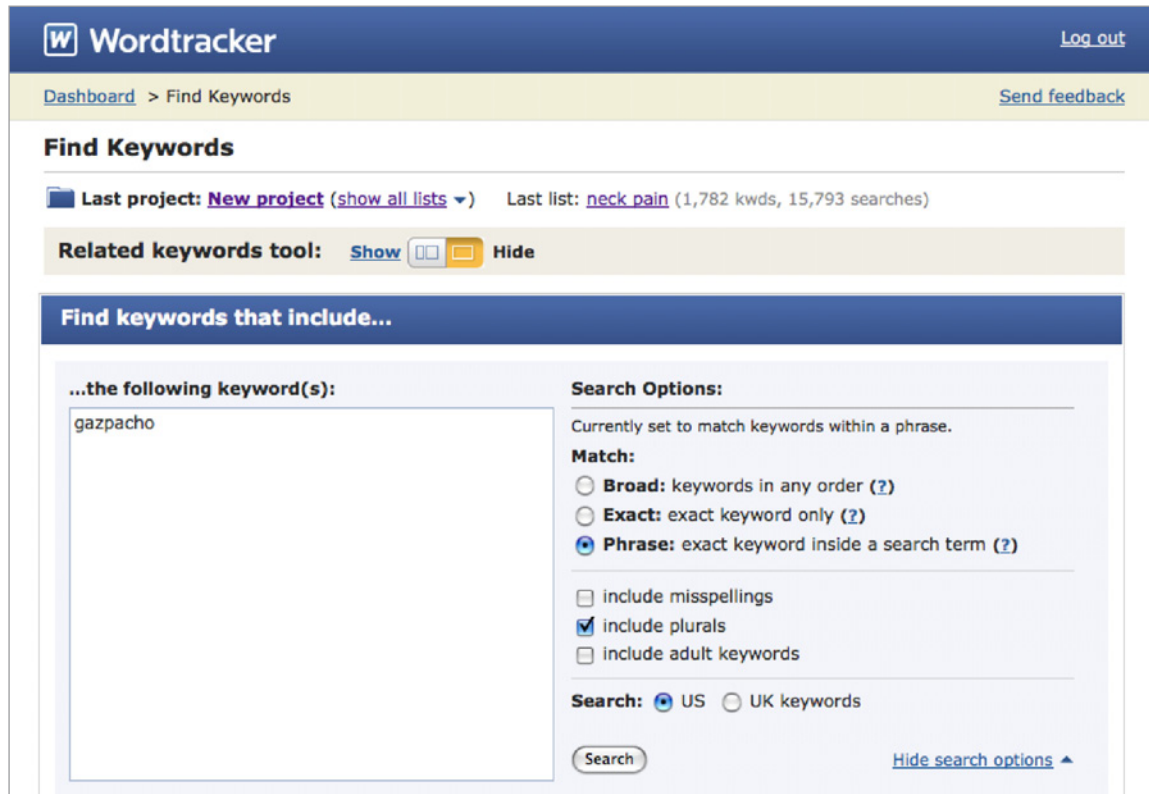


• You'll see up to 1,000 keywords containing your seed word. That's up to 1,000 content ideas. See example results in the following image with gazpacho as the seed keyword:

• Wordtracker's paid for Keywords service also includes a related keywords search. Enter a seed keyword and the tool suggests related keywords.  See image:

• Save your keyword research as a list that you can use and develop over time.



• Each list can be for a category on your blog. Your blog's lists can be grouped together into a project. See the following image showing the lists in a project for an osteopath's blog:
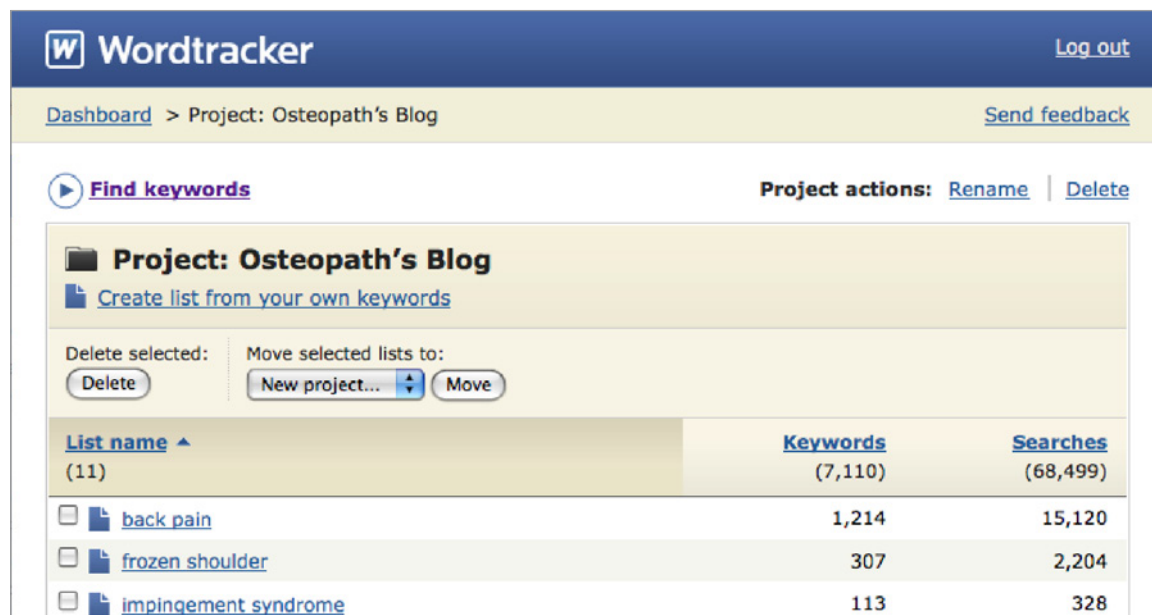


• Your blog's lists of keyword research can be developed over the lifetime of your blog – a deep source of new content ideas based on what real people are searching for.

## 18. Create a content idea mind map

### There are some excellent mind mapping desktop tools, both free and paid.

I like to use Bubbl.us, a free web based tool. While not overflowing with features, it will get you going very quickly without having to buy or install any complicated software.

a. Go to http://bubbl.us/ and click "Start Brainstorming" to get started. See grab:



b. Click the words "Start Here". See grab:

c. Edit the text to reflect your main concept. See image:



d. Move your mouse over the bubble to see your options. See image:
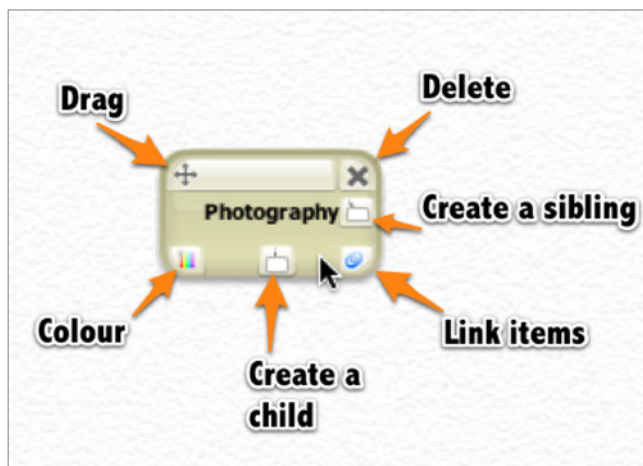


e. Use the child and sibling bubble buttons to expand your concept into more details. See image:
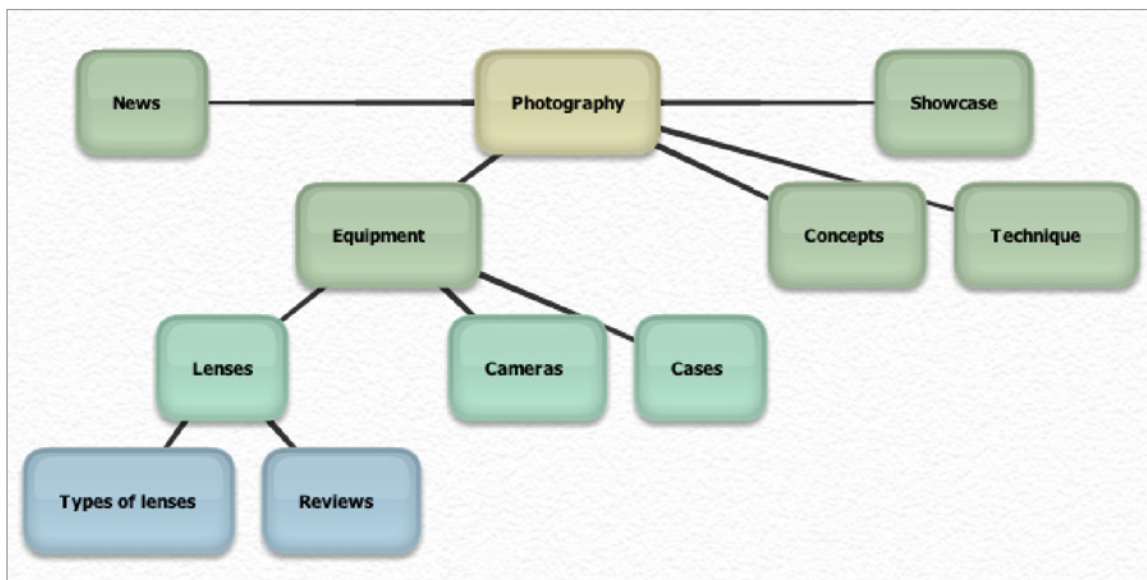
f. Take individual concepts and drill down and expand the ideas, adding more detail.

g. Export your mind map when you've finished. Find the "export" option by clicking the "Menu" button. See image:

h. Configure your export. See grab:
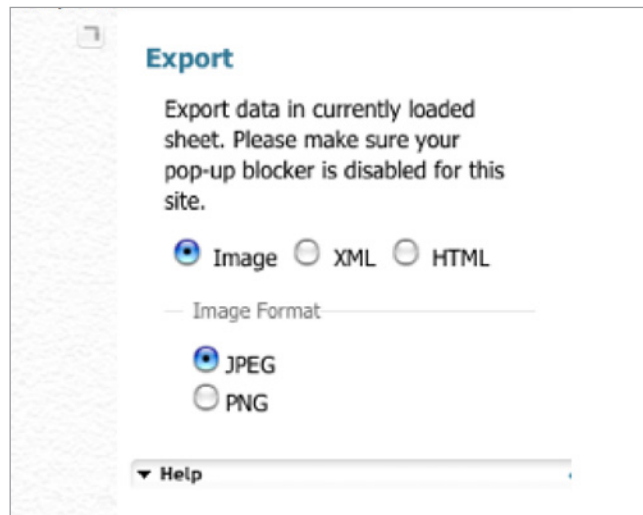
## 19. Plan your content and categories

a. Once you have developed a mind map, even a rough draft, you will see there are groupings that naturally form. You might find you have perfect categories already.

b. Take as many content ideas as you can and put them onto index cards or pieces of paper, and try to put them into piles, grouping related ideas together and finishing with between five and seven categories at most.

c. Once you have your list of categories you will need to give them brief, meaningful, beneficial and hopefully, search-related category names. Eg, "Photography News", or "Camera News" rather than simply "News".

d. Remember that categories are for your visitors' navigation, not your own sense of neat and orderly filing.

## 20. Draw up an editorial calendar

a. You can plan your yearly, monthly, weekly and even daily content with an editorial calendar.

b. Any campaign that needs a big lead up should be marked with start dates, milestones and launch days.

c. Plan content with the aim of gaining traffic, links and credibility. Use a good variety of articles and post types so you are not always only focusing on one aspect of your blogging.

d. Build up posts in draft for times when staff will be away or too busy.

e. Take out your calendar, or start a Google Docs spreadsheet. Mark seasons – is your niche seasonal? Can you take advantage of season changes for content ideas? For example "Things to do in the summer", "Winter activities" and also plan for when times are quiet.

g. As well as national and international holidays, make a note of industry dates, conferences, events and typical launch schedules. Will you need to attend these? Are you going to cover them editorially? How do they impact on your own events and launches? Do you need to plan for them or around them?

h. Add staff vacations and any other time where resources will be impacted.

i. Will you have a rota for who writes when? Add it to the calendar.

## Summary

The better you can mind read your audience's needs, the better you can serve them, and the more compelling your blog will be. These actions help you understand and deliver exactly what your readers want - making you ready and able to attract your audience.

If you have any queries, questions or comments about any of the topics in this chapter, I'd like to hear from you. Just leave a post on the Wordtracker Academy.

# Attracting
# Visitors

## Chapter 5

There is no point in creating all this great content if no one but you and your pet hamster ever get to see it. So we need to get your content in front of an audience – preferably the readers we identified in earlier chapters. Our next job is to build visibility, awareness and traffic.

## In the beginning it will be difficult to get people to visit your blog. So – do not expect a flood of visitors right away

Later on you will have gained momentum, so attracting visitors will become easier.

Initially you will find that you get a small, steady trickle, or spikes of traffic with little in between. Once you get on a roll, though, your audience will do a lot of the work for you.

Keep in mind too, that a combination of techniques works much better than one tactic at a time. A myriad approach gives your potential audience more opportunities to see your messages and hear about your content.

Another key is that not all attention is created equal. There is good, positive attention, and poor or damaging attention. Just because people are noticing you, it does not mean you are being successful.

When someone hears about your content, what do you want him or her to think? How do you want people to remember you?

Bloggers are often opinionated, frequently controversial, and nearly always keen to try new traffic-generating methods. As the representative of a business, you have to be far more selective in your approach than social bloggers. Most bloggers are beholden only to their own reputation so they can get away with starting an argument with a more popular blogger in the hope of siphoning off some attention, or writing something salacious, sensational or tabloid. You need to consider whether those tactics would be the best way of promoting your business.

Your reputation, audience loyalty and long term trust are your biggest assets; do not risk damaging your brand for the sake of short term traffic gains.

# Grow your traffic

We talk about "growing" traffic. This is an appropriate phrase to use because promoting your blog is much like planting and nurturing seeds.

*Action! see Pg 82*

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**These seeds might eventually become trees that provide fruit; some will never mature; and some will take longer to sprout than others**

Just as you must select between the thousands of varieties of plants for your garden, you have many traffic promotion tactics to consider. The main factors you will need to consider are:

## Resources

Does the tactic require you to spend money, recruit help (paid or otherwise), or take a lot of time to implement?

## Skill level

Will you need a high degree of technical, creative, writing or other ability to make progress with the approach?

## Effort and maintenance

Is it a set-and-forget deal, or will you need to be constantly tweaking, fixing, adding or monitoring your campaign?

## Time to result

Are the results from this technique instantaneous or will you need to wait for feedback? Does the traffic build slowly, or does it come all in one go? How long will it take in preparation before you can get faster results?

## Comfort zone

Different techniques will suit some personalities better than others. And you might want to consider your own values to see if the tactic involves crossing any ethical lines.

# Your blog as a hub

With all your traffic promotion efforts, whether paid or free, you should think of your blog as your hub, and your traffic sources as spokes on a hub.

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**Regardless of the type of activity you take part in – offline, social media or advertising – make sure you drive people back to your hub, as this is where you retain and engage visitors' attention, more effectively and for free**

Find out where your target audience hangs out. Where are they gathering in numbers? What are their online watering holes? Go to those places, get to know them, observe, participate, contribute to conversations, and then lead people back to your site.

Community interaction through social media is an activity that you need to maintain if you are to get the most value out of it. While your content, postings and links in social media do not go away, and will continue to send you visitors long after they were created, your best results will come from consistent and valued contributions.

It is best not to get over-fixated with contributing to those services at the expense of your own audience. Too many people establish a great presence on a third party site, like YouTube, Facebook or Twitter, but neglect their own blog. It is no use being Facebook-famous if that does not help you achieve your business goals.

If you concentrate on participating outside your blog, without developing your own valuable content, you will be forced to keep up intense efforts just to maintain visibility. And, you won't be in control of your own profile. This is like tending someone else's garden; you risk being locked out. So make use of social media, gain the attention they provide, but drive people back to your blog. That way, you can continue the dialog on home ground where you are in control.

## Advertising

It is possible to generate traffic through advertising, but at a cost. Getting your advertising right will take time and energy, including ongoing maintenance and tweaking. A lot of people think that advertising is set-and-forget, but those people either pay an outside agency to handle it for them ("checkbook traffic," as I like to call it) or tend to end up over-paying. Take your eye off a pay per click campaign and the budget can overrun by a substantial amount. So do not set an advert, then go away for a week's vacation!

## For blogs, the main advertising options are:

• **Pay per click** - Google Adwords, Yahoo!

• **Banner advertising** – banners and sponsorships

• **Newsletters** – paid mentions in emails

• **Social media** – Facebook and StumbleUpon

# Search engine optimization

Whole businesses have been built around good search visibility. Search traffic can be highly targeted, and arrive in such volume that you may feel you do not want to focus on anything else.

**The risk you face, though, is that the search engines can move the goal posts – so that a torrent of traffic becomes a trickle**

Another thing many people do not realize is that search results are not easy to come by, and the more valuable they are  the harder they will be to compete for.

There is too much involved in search engine optimization (SEO) for us to cover it properly here, but the main things you need to be aware of are:

• **Site construction** – Your site needs to be built in a search friendly way. Thankfully most of the hard work is done for you if you use a well constructed blog platform like WordPress; implement a well-built theme such as Thesis; and use popular SEO plugins, such as "All-in-one SEO pack".

• **Content and keywords** –As mentioned in previous chapters, you need to use a tool like Wordtracker to identify the search terms that your prospects are looking for. Once you have a good list of phrases, write your blog posts around those topics. Use the exact keywords as well as variations. Headlines are particularly important.

• **Links** – You will want to gain a good quantity and quality of links to those articles, preferably using the same keywords you identified before. This tells search engines that your content is important, and what keywords to rank your content for.

For more tips on how to optimize your site, I recommend Aaron Wall's book. [**"50 Kick-Keyword Strategies"**](#)

# Link building

Links are not just important for search engine optimization, but also for sending quality direct traffic.

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**Some of your best-converting traffic will come from other bloggers and contacts within your niche or market. This is why networking, getting out there in the community, and participating in discussions are so important.**

You might pitch people to link to you, get links as a consequence of social media visibility, or leave links yourself:

• **Linkbait** – Linkbait articles are content written with the express purpose of attracting people to link to you, either because they like the content and think it is valuable, or because they have some kind of reaction to it that prompts them to write a response or rebuttal.

• **Carnivals** – Carnivals are where a blogger invites friends to write about a topic, then rounds up the articles that are produced into a list. Some carnivals happen as a one-off, others are done on a routine basis.

• **Directories** – Directories are like the online equivalent of the US white pages directories (yellow pages in the UK).

• **Forums** – Discussion forums can be a good source of links, but be cautious only to place links where they are welcome, or you may be labeled as a spammer.

• **Comments** – When you post a comment on a blog there is normally a place to enter your website URL. Not all blog comment links are counted by search engines, but some are. The best approach is to comment without thought to links. Any that appear in your link list can be seen as a bonus.

• **Hub sites** – Hub sites are services like Squidoo that allow you to create a site that is pretty much a page of links to interesting content around a single theme.

• **Profiles** – Your forum and social media profiles tend to allow you to create a link to your various websites, social media accounts, photo galleries, and so on. Many of these links count in the search engines.

# Guest posting and article marketing

Article, or e-zine marketing is an older form of link building, where you write articles and then submit them to special sites, called e-zine directories.

## Add your own articles to a e-zine directories

People who need a steady stream of new content for their newsletters, blogs or websites are allowed to copy these articles, providing they include your author "resource box".

This can provide direct traffic and generate links for you. The direct traffic comes mainly from people finding your content on the directory site. These directories can have good search engine visibility. When web masters utilize your content on their sites, or their email newsletters appear in a web archive, that shows up as a fresh link to your site.

Guest posting is a similar type of article marketing. You write for free for someone else in return for a link back to your own site. These deals tend to be negotiated personally, so take a bit more effort. But, they have the benefit that you can target the blogs you want to write for and include more than one author attribution.

## Traffic success factors

While I have shared some tactics, there are some over-arching concepts that you should keep in mind:

• **Think long term** – Short term tactics may offer quick rewards, but beware of hindering long term success. As with most things in life, if a tip seems too good to be true it usually is. This goes for "automatic traffic-generating" systems or software, stacks of free or cheap traffic, and any of the multitude of traffic ponzi schemes out there.

• **Measure** – Always measure your results. What you measure tends to improve, whether that's paid techniques or free approaches that have an opportunity cost associated with them. Do not want waste time, money or effort on a strategy that is not working for you.

• **Tweak** – Most approaches do not work perfectly right away. Establish a system of continual testing, tweaking and marginal improvements.

• **Offer overwhelming value** – Do not be cheap with your ideas or advice. Now more than ever, you need to give, give and give some more before you think of taking. You have to ask yourself why someone would want to read what you have to offer and why they would then tell their friends, or link to you? Give so much value that your visitors cannot help but pass your web address URL on to everyone they know.

• **Be genuine, approachable, helpful and friendly** – People are more likely to help people you if they feel a personal connection.

• **Mutual respect** – Do not talk down to readers or social media participants. Do not rant, moan, bitch or snipe. If you show respect  you will have respect returned to you.

• **Ask questions and learn** – None of us knows all the answers. Blogging and social media are excellent sources of learning, so take the opportunity.

• **Go for targeted, engaged traffic** – Quantity might work for some, but if you intend to sell products and services, you need a tighter, targeted and more engaged audience.

• **Don't attract attention for its own sake** – You are building traffic for a reason. As well as measuring how much traffic you are getting, make sure you are optimizing how well that traffic converts from visitor to subscriber and from subscriber to customer.

Always remember your brand. It is too valuable to risk damaging it with some crazy traffic trick.

# Action: Attracting visitors

Everything we have discussed up to now has been preparing for this point: opening the doors and welcoming your audience. Getting traffic and visibility is a huge part of any blog's success, so let's take a look now at how you can attract more visitors.

## 21. Start a Google Adwords Pay Per Click (PPC) campaign

a. Sign up for Google Adwords at https://adwords.google.com

b. Create new campaign

c. Select where you would like your ad to appear. See image:

d.Choose the sites and devices on which you want your ad to appear. See image:



• "Google search" is adverts alongside Google search results. "Search partners" are sites such as AOL etc. "Content network" is Adsense on other websites like blogs and forums.

e. Set your daily budget. See image:



f. Control budget by setting a date and time schedule. See image:

g. Name your first ad group. Build each ad group around one significant keyword. See image:
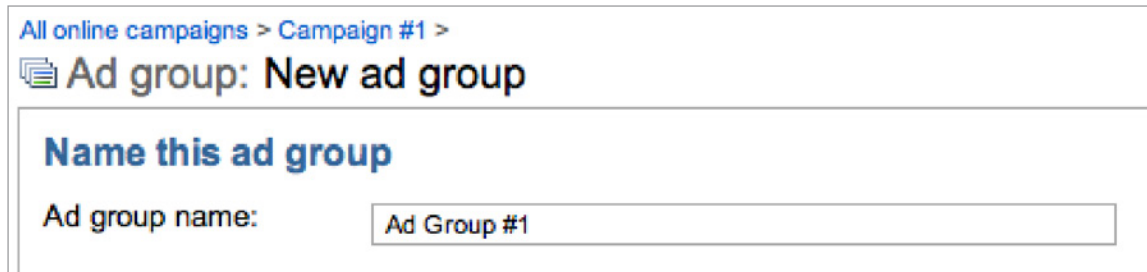


h. Create your first ad. See image:
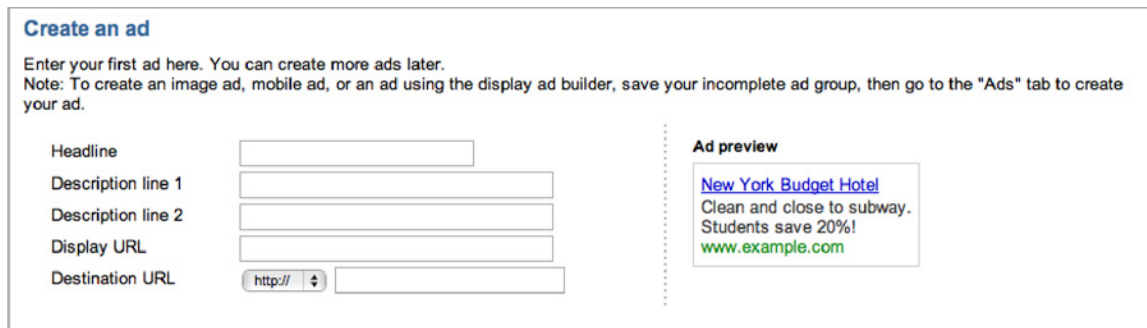


i. Try to include the keyword in the ad text. Display URL is the green text the visitor will see, destination is where they are taken when they click.

j.Enter the keywords that you want your ad to be found with. You can edit these later. See image:
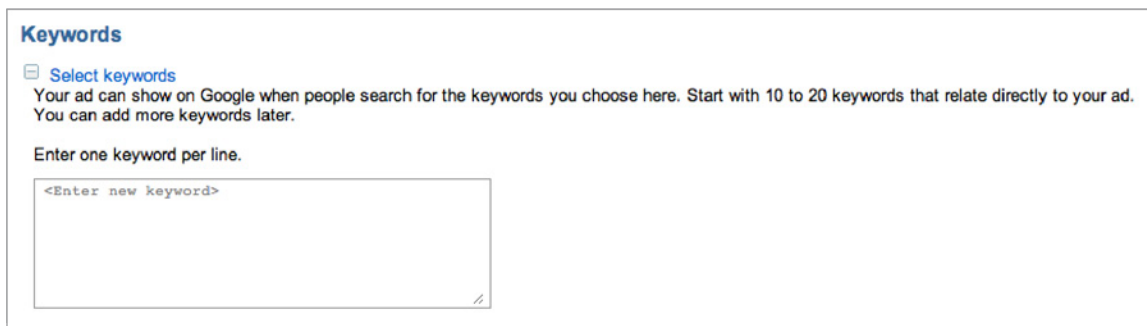
k. Get a traffic and cost estimate and set how much you are willing to pay per click. See image:



**Ad group default bids (Max. CPC)**

You influence your ads position by setting its maximum cost per click (CPC).
user clicks on your ad. Your max CPC can be changed as often as you like.

Search ⑦          £   0.5

Content: managed placements     £ [      ] - Off

Content: automatic placements    £ [      ] - Off

Leave blank to use automated bids. ⑦

l. You can also manage costs by more precisely controlling your keyword bids. See image:



▼ **Advanced option: match types**
Use keyword match types to better target your ads:
    keyword = broad match
    "keyword" = match exact phrase
    [keyword] = match exact term only
    – keyword = don't match this term

m. Be sure to add negative keywords to each of your ad groups. These are keywords you do NOT want to be found with - for example "-warez" or "-free" – and they stop you paying for traffic you don't want.

n. Wordtracker's Keywords tool is great for finding negative keywords. For each ad group, enter its main keyword into the tool and search the results for negative keywords.

o. Save each ad group's negative keywords into a Wordtracker List that you can develop over time.

p. Without care and attention, it's easy to lose a lot of money on Google Adwords Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising. See Ian Howie's more detailed and advanced work on PPC on the Wordtracker Academy here: http://www.wordtracker.com/academy/pay-per-click

## 22. Use StumbleUpon for traffic

a. Make sure you have downloaded the StumbleUpon tool bar from here:
http://www.stumbleupon.com/help/Download_and_Installation_Questions/

• Go to the web page you wish to vote up and hit the "Thumbs Up" button on the toolbar. See image:



b. If you have already voted on a page the button will be highlighted; click again if you want to remake your vote. See image:



c. Hit the speech bubble to write a review of a web page and give your vote more weight. See image:



d. Enter the text of your review and any relevant tags that categorizes the page you're reviewing. See image:
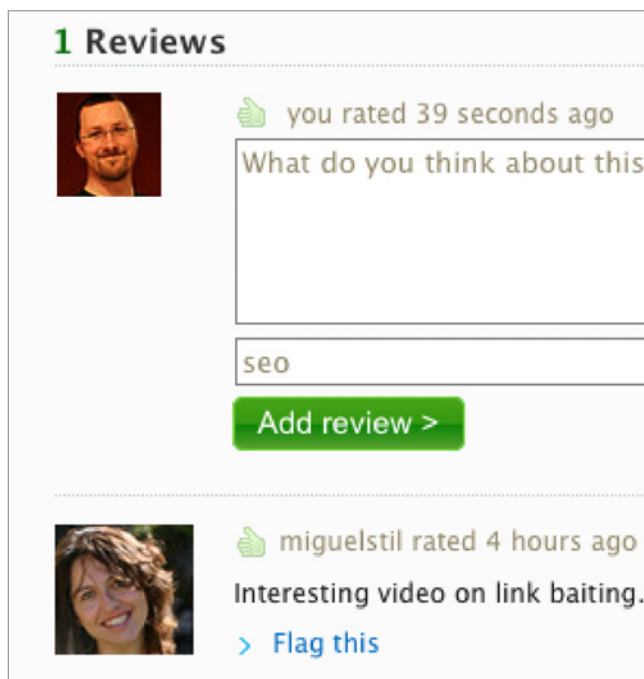
e. If you're the first person to vote on a page then you have "discovered" it and must classify it. See image:
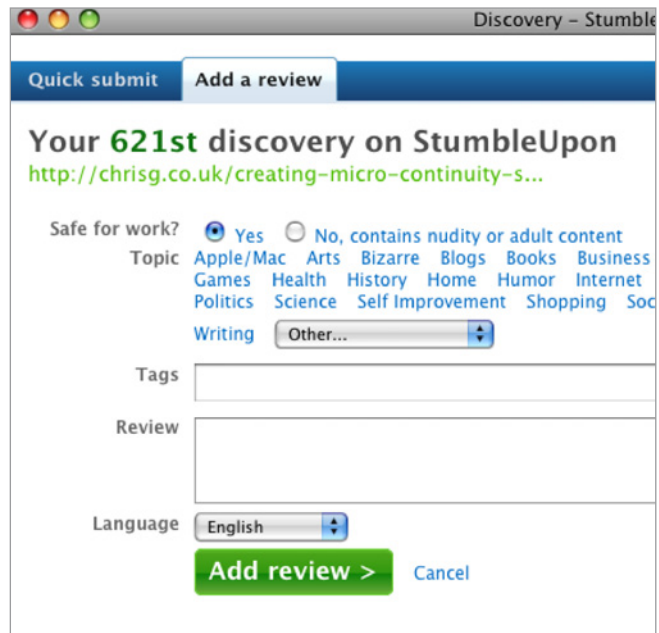


f. Set if the contents are "safe for work" (SFW) and select the most appropriate category. As before, select some tags and write your review.

g. Once you have voted on a page, use the "Send to" feature to ask friends to vote too. See grab:
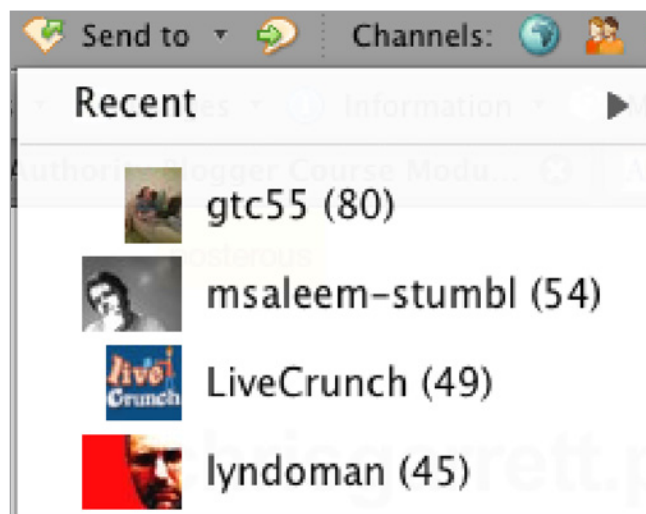
h. You can also bulk-email your friends from your StumbleUpon profile. For example my StumbleUpon profile is found at chris-garrett.stumbleupon.com - hover over your Favorites to get the share link. See image:
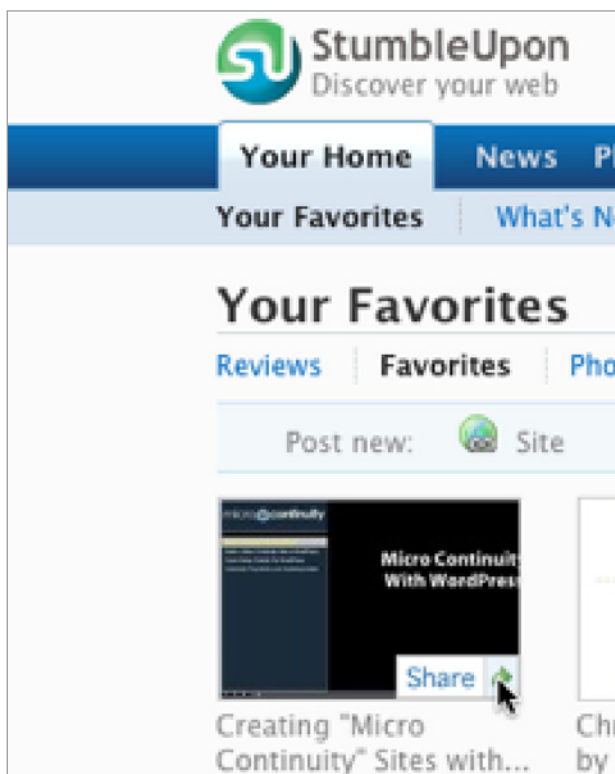


i. When you click "Share" you get the form to select your friends and write your email message. (Remember your friends will not thank you for over-using this!)

See image:
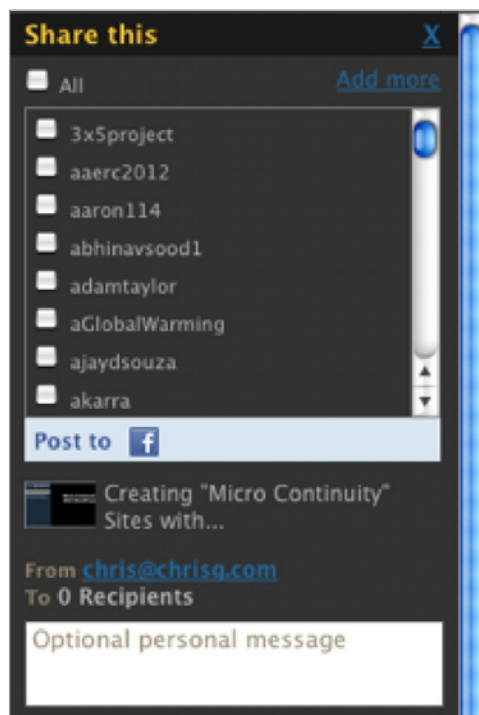
## 23. Twitter traffic

a. When "tweeting" a message with a maximum of 140 characters there is no room for long URLs so you need a URL shortener. I use Cligs. Register with Cligs at http://cli.gs/. See image:
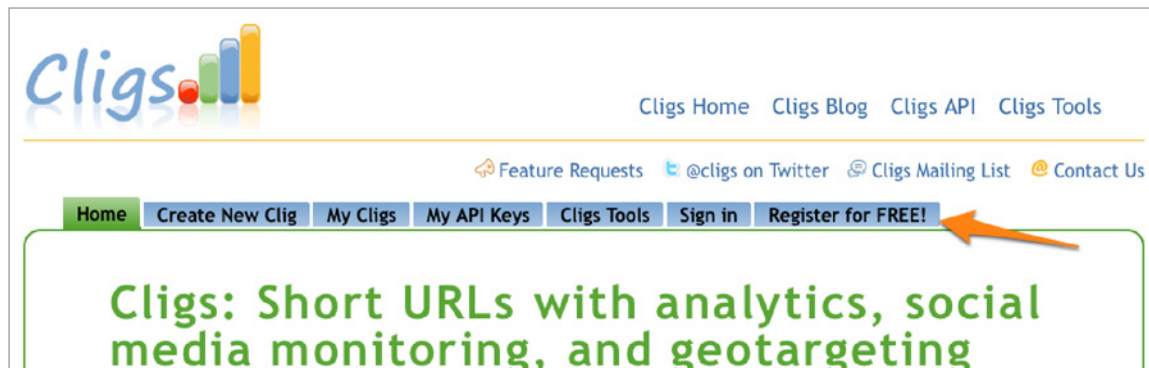


b. Create your short URL by pasting in your full URL and hitting "Create New Clig". See image:
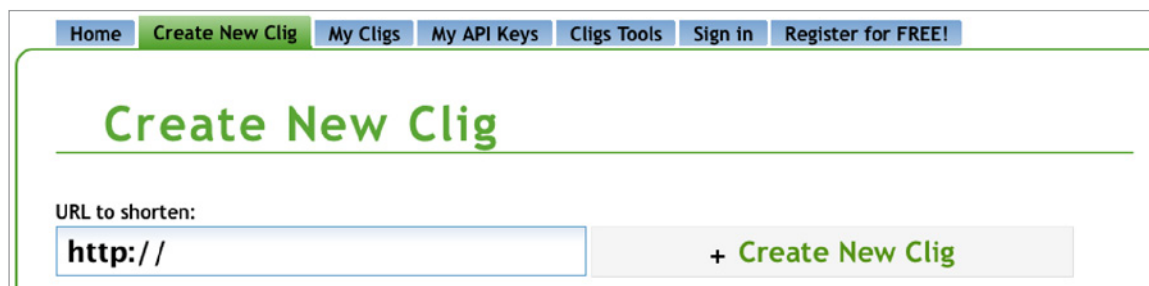


c. You can copy the resulting URL to your clipboard and paste, or hit "Tweet Clig". See image:

d. Include the shortened URL in your tweet and write your message inviting a click. Ask for retweets to help your message spread, eg. "Some interesting article http://xxx (Please RT?)"

e. Encourage tweets of your posts with the Wordpress TweetMeme plugin. Download from http://tweetmeme.com/about/retweet_button Once installed, a "tweet" button will appear on your post pages. See image:
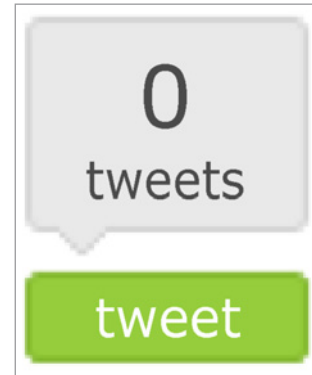


f. Make sure you add your Twitter name in the settings as the "source". See image:
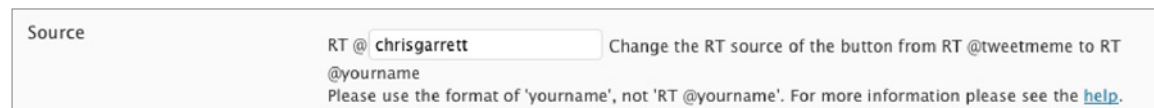
## 24. Write a guest post

### Earlier I said that guest posting is a great way to gain exposure, traffic and links. Here is exactly how you can do that:

**a. Announce your availability.** If you are going to guest post then you are going to have to find places that will accept your articles. The easiest thing to do is to let people know that you are available. Explain that you are open to writing free articles for their blog in return for a link back to your own site. Make sure you say that you might not be able to get around to everyone, just in case you get flooded with offers.

**b. Search for opportunities.** Look for blogs that overlap your own audience; best is when they overlap but not 100% the same, as this will expand your reach and get you in front of new people. Easiest will be sites that have open invitations to guest post, or have a history of publishing guest posts. Toughest will be blogs where the owner does not know you and has never published a guest post.

**c. Approach blog owners.** Send a brief note asking if they are open to you writing a guest article. Focus on their benefit (a free piece of valuable content that you would be happy to promote in social media so that they might also see a traffic boost). Supply example articles you have written elsewhere, and perhaps provide headline ideas or topics that you could write about.

**d. Discuss topics.** It is important that you agree topics before moving on to the writing, just in case the blog owner has already covered your idea or has other plans. Make sure you are happy with the topic too; it is not worth forcing yourself to write about a topic you are not comfortable with.

**e. Arrange the deal.** Who will own the content? How should you send the article? When is it needed by? In what format? How will your author attribution look? Make sure all the logistics and arrangements are made before putting in the hard work.

**f. Write your post.** Write the article to the best of your ability, and make sure it is polished, accurate, and bug-free. If you want to make an impact you have to be on top form. Sloppy work will only gain you a bad reputation.

**g. Craft your author bio.** Make sure your author attribution has a catchy call to action, rather than just your name and a link. What can you say to attract people to check out more of your work?

**h. Submit your article.** Send over your article in the way the blog owner requested and in plenty of time. Make it easy for them to just paste it in without too much work on their side. Not just for convenience, but to make sure that you get the best result for you also. Thank them for the opportunity and ask that they let you know when it is published so you can promote it.

**i. Publicize published post.** Your work is not done yet; you need to drive maximum traffic and visibility to the article! Tweet it, Stumble it, and ask your friends to do the same.

**j. Answer comments.** Something I have been bad with on occasion, but should always do … answer the comments!

## 25. Pitch for links by email

**Requesting links by email has been given a bad name by spammers but it can still work if you do things ethically and tactfully.**

Remember it is a numbers game; you will not get a link for each email you send out. But when going for bulk you should still hand craft each email. Take the time to do it right.

Manually personalize the following template for each email and send requests to each of your contacts:

*Hi [name],*

*I have just been reading your article [xxx] and [personalized comment].*

*We posted an article on a similar topic and thought you might like it.*

*[title]*

*[url]*

*Thanks for your time and I hope you find it interesting.*

*Thanks*

*[Your name]*

It always works best if you get to know the blogger first. The key thing is that you do not go in asking for a link, but offer something they might be genuinely interested in connected to their audience and subject.

Show you are a genuine human being by mentioning something on their blog that you found interesting. Or even better if you find a typo or some other bug that you can quietly and nicely point out. Show that you have really read their blog.

## 26. Make your blog search engine friendly

### Install the following Wordpress plugins to help optimize your content for search engines:

• **All In One SEO Pack** – Provides instructions to search engine spiders about which content should be indexed and which should be ignored. Eg, search results pages are blocked but categories are indexed. This plugin also helps you optimize your page titles.

• **Crumb trail** – Allows you to insert a crumb trail navigation which is useful to both visitors and search engines when your content grows large.  http://yoast.com/wordpress/breadcrumbs/

• **Sitemaps** – XML Sitemaps are for search engines only, helping them to find all your content. The following two plugins are Google Webmaster Tools compatible:
http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/google-sitemap-generator/
http://www.dagondesign.com/articles/sitemap-generator-plugin-for-wordpress/

• **Numbered paging** – Rather than "next" and "previous", numbered page navigation reveals more of the pages to the spider because search engines struggle with "next, next, next".
http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/wp-page-numbers/

• **Implement a friendly URL structure.** Your URL structure can have an impact on your search engine results. It's worth making URLs short, friendly and meaningful, without lots of unnecessary numbers and other characters.

I like to keep URLs down to just the page title. If your categories lend themselves to being used in links (ie, they are short and match common search phrases) you might want to also include the category name. Eg, blog.com/toys/teddy-bear and so on.

Wordpress calls your pages' URLs permalinks. Here is how to give your permalinks a consistent and simple structure:

• Log in to your blog control panel.

• Go to Settings, then Permalinks.

• Select Custom Structure.

• Set your structure to /%postname%.

• Hit Save Changes.

## Summary

There is a world of traffic-building opportunities. Hopefully the main ideas I have provided will give you a head start in gaining your site some visibility and leads.

While there are other paid options, most notably sponsored posts and paid links and other free techniques, I do not recommend you try them unless you know exactly what you are getting into and have already tried the ones mentioned above. This is because there are more risks involved, or a lower return on investment, or both.

Once you have some visitors, we need to look at how we can make them stay around.

If you have any queries, questions or comments about any of the topics in this chapter, I'd like to hear from you. Just leave a post on the Wordtracker Academy.

# Retaining more Visitors

## Chapter 6

When talking to people while coaching, or in forums and at networking events, it is common to hear bloggers' obsession with traffic. Much less emphasis is given to keeping visitors happy and turning them into loyal subscribers.

Perhaps part of the problem is the "high-score" mentality of trying to get to a new traffic milestone, or the ego boost of a web statistics graph that shows a torrent of visitors. While such focus is admirable, it leaves little room for considering whether those visitors found what they were looking for, or got value from your site.
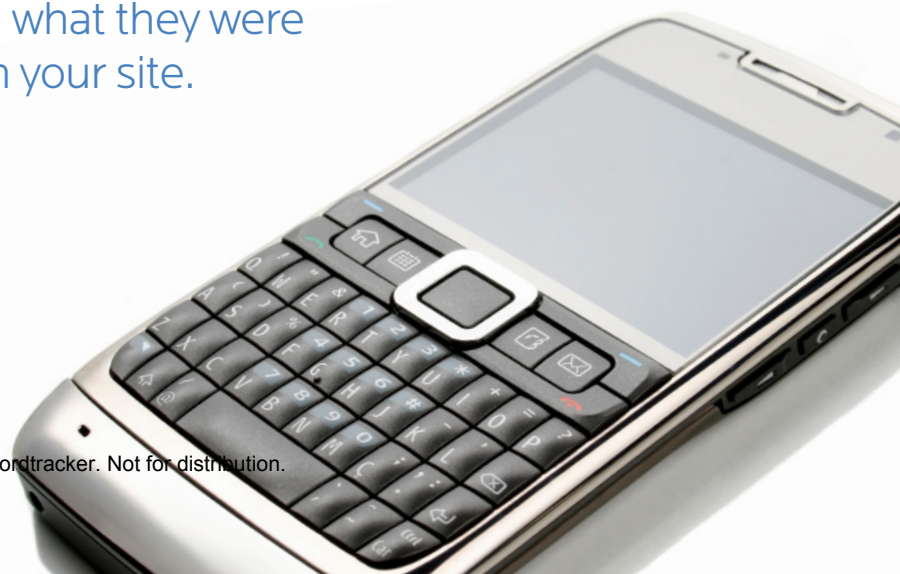
## The fact is the more readers you retain, the more traffic you will receive in future

This is not just from the obvious compounding effect of growing your overall audience. Once you reach a certain readership there is a "tipping point" where your loyal subscribers become advocates.

They start promoting your content – in links, referrals, social media votes, and real-world word of mouth.

One of my biggest recent subscriber boosts occurred when one of my past clients mentioned me in his free e-book. It was picked up by Seth Godin and other popular bloggers. I would love to be able to claim that this was due to brilliant marketing, but it was largely dumb luck – combined with the fact that I had done a good enough job for a client to remember me positively.

Another factor to consider is that engaged subscribers are far more likely to buy from you. This is not just because of the well known marketing maxim that a prospect can require up to seven exposures to a marketing message before taking action. Nor is it because you have a captive audience and can advertise for free. It is because valuable interactions, delivered in an informal, human tone can build trust and help overcome the objections that stand in the way of a sale.

A happy, loyal subscriber base is super valuable; it cannot be overestimated.

# Add a call to action

The first step in converting readers into subscribers is to give them a good reason to subscribe.

**Action!**
see pg 105

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**You need to have the following features in place if you want to convert visits into opt-ins:**

• **A compelling call to action** – "Subscribe" is an instruction, not a compelling call to action. It lacks a reason. Why should your readers subscribe. Be explicit. Let them know.

• **Create an incentive** – Some bloggers create an incentive, such as a free e-book, video or audio instead of a compelling call to action. This often works, but would be more effective if the freebie is combined with a compelling call to action.

• **Make it easy** – You need to place subscription options where they are visible and obvious. You need to remove clutter so that the visitor does not need to search around to find them. Even better, include additional subscription boxes under every article. After a visitor has enjoyed the article he can sign up.

• **Offer email** – I will repeat this mantra throughout the book: email rocks. Most people who visit your blog will never have heard of RSS and rather than explain it to them, offer what they know and use already. Emails convert much better than feeds and are more likely to get read. More than half of my blog audience subscribes via email rather than feed.

# Visitor experience is paramount

Why would you return to anywhere?
Perhaps if you enjoyed the experience and expect
future visits to be as good or better, correct?

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## You need to make sure your visitors' first experience is a good one

Better still, now that there is so much competition, the first time experience should not just be good, but delightful.

• **Provide value** – The first thing you need to do is write content that gets to the point, provides a practical solution and is well presented. Traffic can be generated through trickery, bait and switch, and "thin" content, but repeat visits require you to deliver on your promises.

• **Be a good host** – Your visitor needs to know there is a real, accessible person behind those words, especially now there are so many spammers out there. Make your personality come through, welcome people, show your face.

• **Empathy** – If it seems you just want your visitors' dollars or attention, you will lose your audience. You need to demonstrate that you genuinely want to help, inform and connect.

• **Engagement** – Is about creating and holding interest, but also proactively seeking interaction and involvement. It means everything from telling stories to asking questions.

• **Inclusion** – The first-time visitor needs to feel that they have found a place where they can hang out. Anything that confuses or irritates, or makes them feel stupid or unwelcome will drive them away. That goes for in-jokes, overly complex navigation, unwritten comment policies and cliques. Is your blog the online equivalent of the friendly "Cheers" bars, or one of those bars where, when a stranger walks in, the music stops and everyone turns around and stares? Or just as bad, is it like one of those posh restaurants where you cannot read the menu and you do not know which fork to use? Make your blog easy, accessible, and welcoming. Use conversational language. Add pictures. Use buttons for navigation.

---

# Incorporate multimedia

### As your visitors spend more time on your site, they will warm to you

Through audio and video you have an opportunity to convey your personality and sense of humor, which is more difficult using only words – anyone who has caused accidental upset through a dashed-off email or text message knows this to be true! Get your face on video, or record podcast audio. It does not need to be high production value studio-style. In some markets, the home-produced look will work in your favor.

# Comments to community

### The comments people add to your blog help them get to know each other – and you

This leads to the warm fuzzy feel of being a part of something.

This is good news for you!

Encourage comments and reply to as many as you can. Be careful to trim out spam and comments that are likely to cause offense. Use a comment subscription plug in so that people can opt to get emails when someone replies to their comments. This encourages inter-visitor discussion.

# Polls and surveys

### Ask questions of your audience

Show that the visitor's opinion is welcome and sought. Get answers to questions, and gain insights with polls and surveys. By having to return for the results, you incentivize visitors to come back.

# Series posts

### Get repeat visits with a …. cliffhanger

By serializing your content into multiple parts and placing cliffhangers at the end of each piece, you encourage visitors to come back for each entry – and to subscribe – so they do not miss anything. The more value you give your readers in each article, the greater their incentive to carry on following your story.

# Related posts, categories and tags

### Keep suggesting content for your readers

Put relevant content in front of your readers and they are likely to keep reading and clicking, until they do not have the time or energy to continue.

If you do not offer useful content, they will surf to somewhere that does. Amazon is an excellent example of a site that does this well. Its "related" and "customers also bought" suggestions are tempting, on-topic links that visitors are likely to follow.

# Events and competitions

### Good, better, and bang-on brilliant

Sorry to use a cliché, but what is your blog's "wow factor"? Good content is fine, but if you have strong competition then you need to add something more; something exciting; something that builds a sense of anticipation and buzz. Competitions are great for this, but the more creative you can be the better. Again, anything with a future payoff encourages people to come back to your site.

# Exclusivity

With a little thought you can add a touch of exclusivity to almost any sales message. You can offer exclusivity in two ways.

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### First, what can you provide that no one else does? Second, what can subscribers get that regular web readers do not?

Answer those and you will gain far more subscribers, and more importantly, keep them longer.

In his book, "Writing Kick-Ass Website Sales Copy" Nick Usborne provides a fantastic illustration of how to emphasize your product's exclusivity. He takes coffee, a staple product, and makes it sound desirably exclusive. Here's a coffee ad off the internet.

### Jamaican Blue Mountain Estate Coffee

*Jamaican Blue Mountain Gourmet Coffee is grown on a limited number of Estates in the Blue Mountain range of Jamaica, usually between 2000-5000 feet above sea level. Only certified Jamaican Blue Mountain Estates within a prescribed region can call their quality coffee Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee. This unique quality coffee is grown on steep mountain slopes, which make*

*it extremely difficult to grow and to harvest. The finest quality coffee berries are harvested by hand, with each cherry berry picked individually only when perfectly ripe.*

That headline isn't really a headline at all. It's just the name of the coffee. But there is a very exclusive message within that introductory text.

### So let's have another go at that headline:

*Blue Mountain Estate Coffee – picked by hand, one coffee berry at a time, from the high, steep mountain slopes of Jamaica.*

That sounds more exclusive. That's something to talk about when you are serving coffee to your friends after dinner. That makes you feel you are buying something a little more interesting than the coffee at your local supermarket.

"Writing Kick-Ass Website Sales Copy" is available from Wordtracker for $39.

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# Teleconferences and webinars

Hosting webinars and teleseminars is a great way to build an email list that you can use to promote your blog or sell product.

## Teleseminars and telephone conferences versus webinars:

I recommend anyone try their hand at putting on telephone conferences or webinars, but you might be wondering what is the difference and what are the pros and cons of each.

Telephone conferences and teleseminars are where you use a "bridge" telephone line that allows many people to be on one telephone call at once. Ordinarily, the presenter will talk while everyone else is muted and listens. You might also interview someone, so everyone can hear your questions and their responses.

A webinar is very similar, but as well as being able to hear what is said, the presenters can share information via your computer screen. This could be a Powerpoint presentation or even live video. For example, you might demonstrate step-by-step how to use a particular piece of software. Another great feature of webinars is that the audience can interact via a "chatroom", where they can send messages, ask for help and submit questions. Or you can set up a poll where attendees can vote.

## Here I have outlined some thoughts, so you can weigh up the differences and make your choice:

### Telephone

- **Positives**
- Less preparation
- Attendees do not need a computer
- No technical knowledge required
- Can host from anywhere you have a telephone connection
- Can join from anywhere you have a telephone connection
- Inexpensive (to host or join)
- Easy to record
- Easier to get partners to join

- **Negatives**
- No visual element
- Difficult to demonstrate software or products
- Lacks interaction tools
- Call costs for international audiences

- Impossible to convey data and stats comfortably
- People have to print handouts to see charts and tables

## Webinars

- **Positives**
- Present slides or live demonstration
- Attendees see as well as hear
- No need for long distance calls, see and hear online
- Get questions, requests for help and poll answers using interactive tools
- Handouts not necessary
- Record video of the talk

- **Negatives**
- Costs tend to be higher than telephone conference
- More technical complexity
- Greater need for preparation
- Recording and editing more difficult
- Host needs to have access to a computer (other parties do not)
- May be intimidating for low tech audiences

I use FreeConferenceCall.com, Accuconference and GotoMeeting which allow me to have a backup plan if, for any reason, I cannot use one of these services. With GotoMeeting/GotoWebinar I can show my audience how to use a piece of software in real time by sharing my desktop.

Even when doing a simple interview I like to use a web-enabled conference line, because my audience is world-wide, and outside the USA not everyone has a cheap long-distance plan. Anyone who does want to use the telephone can still call the telephone line as normal and does not have to go through a website.
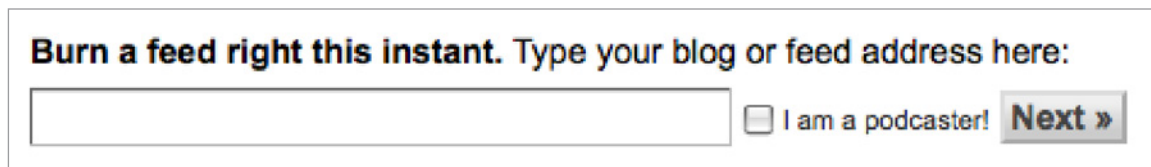
That said, not every audience is comfortable with the idea of a webinar, and so for them I go with telephone only.

# Action: Retaining more visitors

It is not enough just to get lots of visitors coming to your blog. If your visitor arrives and immediately leaves, your blog becomes a revolving door. The good news is there are practical steps you can take to keep readers sticking around.

## 27. Set up FeedBurner
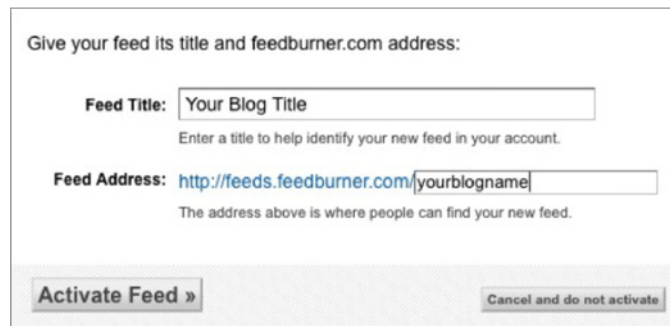
a. Register at FeedBurner.google.com

b. Add your feed URL, usually in the form of yourblog.com/feed

**Burn a feed right this instant.** Type your blog or feed address here:

☐ I am a podcaster! Next »

c. Give the feed a title. See image:

Give your feed its title and feedburner.com address:

Feed Title: Your Blog Title
Enter a title to help identify your new feed in your account.

Feed Address: http://feeds.feedburner.com/yourblogname
The address above is where people can find your new feed.

Activate Feed »        Cancel and do not activate

d. Download the FeedBurner Plugin for WordPress from here
Install and set up the plugin. See image:

## Set Up Your FeedBurner Feed

This plugin makes it easy to redirect 100% of traffic for your feeds to a FeedBurner feed you have created. FeedBurner can then track all of your subscriber traffic and usage and apply a variety of features you choose to improve and enhance your original WordPress feed.

1. To get started, create a FeedBurner feed for          This feed will handle all traffic for your posts.
2. Once you have created your FeedBurner feed, enter its address into the field below (http://feeds.feedburner.com/yourfeed):

   http://feeds.feedburner.com/YourFeed

3. Optional: If you also want to handle your WordPress comments feed using FeedBurner, create a FeedBurner comments feed and then enter address below:

Save

## 28. Add an email newsletter

a. Open an email newsletter account at Aweber.com

b. Create a new list. See image:



c. Set up your company details. See image:

d. Add your reply address. See image:



e. Create your opt-in form. See image:

f. Add any extra form fields that you wish to use. See image:



g. Optionally, add "Blog Broadcast" so blog posts are sent to your email list. See image:

h. Add the RSS feed URL using the feedburner version. See image:
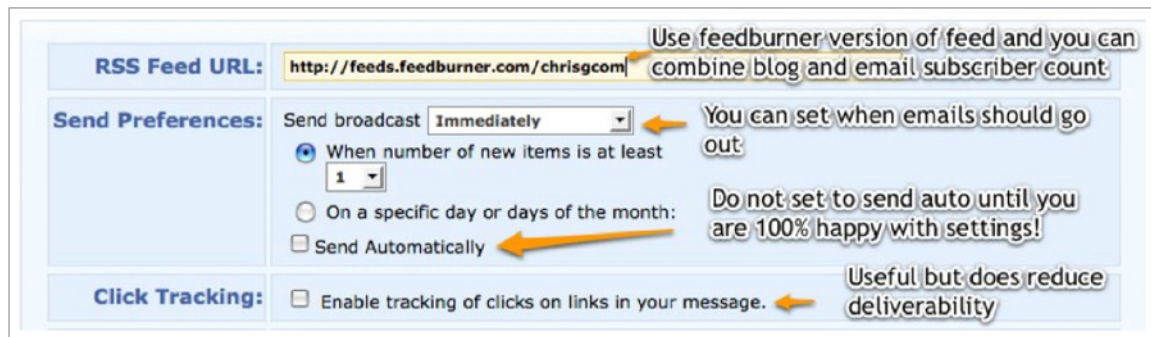


i. Select a template. See image:



j. Add a new post and test the email works. See image:
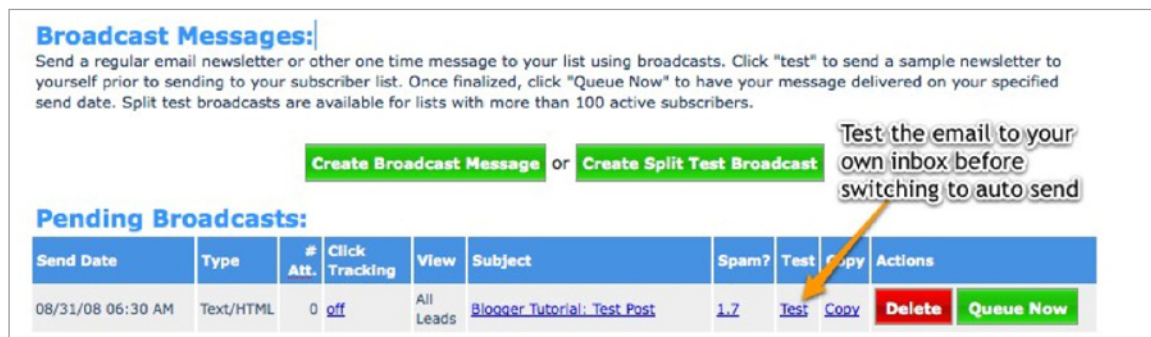


It might take a little while for the new post to be queued up and you will need to create a new blog post to check any changes. Unfortunately, Aweber does not make it easy to test your blog broadcast emails!

## 29. Create a quick video

a. Sign up at video.seesmic.com. See image:
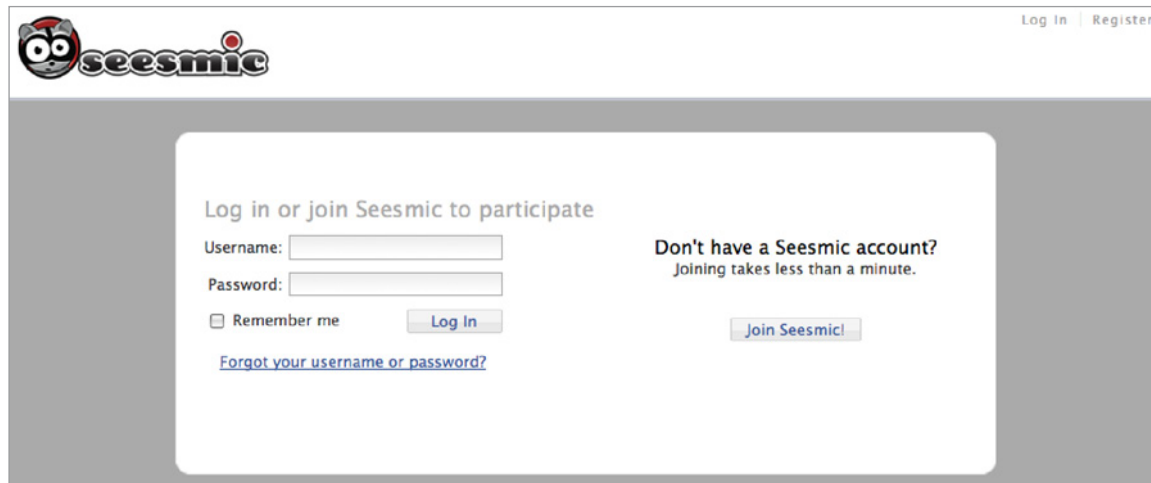


b. Hit the big red record button. See image:
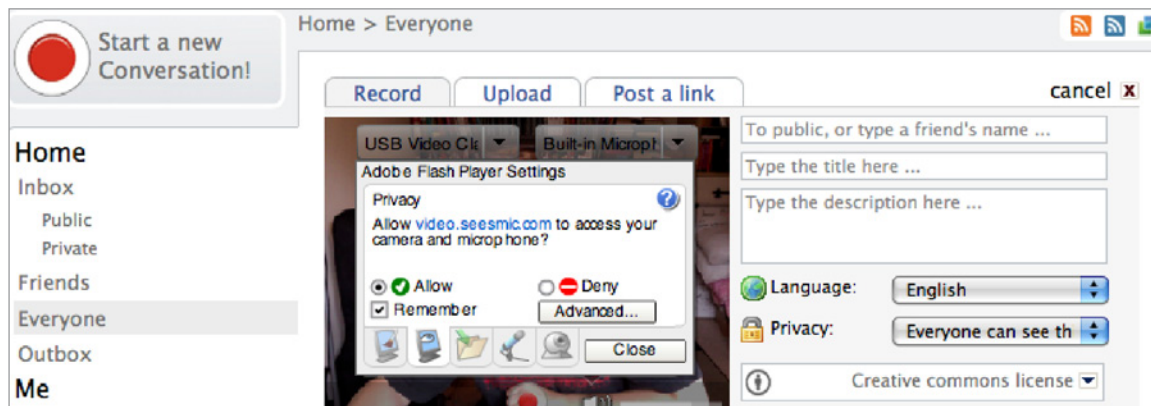


c. Set to allow the software to access your webcam and microphone.

d. Hit the red button to start and stop recording. See image:
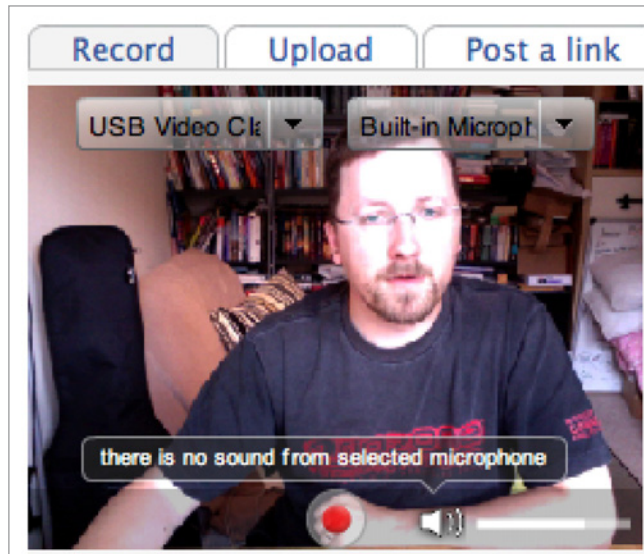


e. Click "Post Video" to save. See image:



f. View your video and copy the link or embed code to put up on your blog.

See image:

## 30. Add the "subscribe to comments" plugin

a. Go to your blog dashboard, click 'Plugins' and 'Add New'. See image:
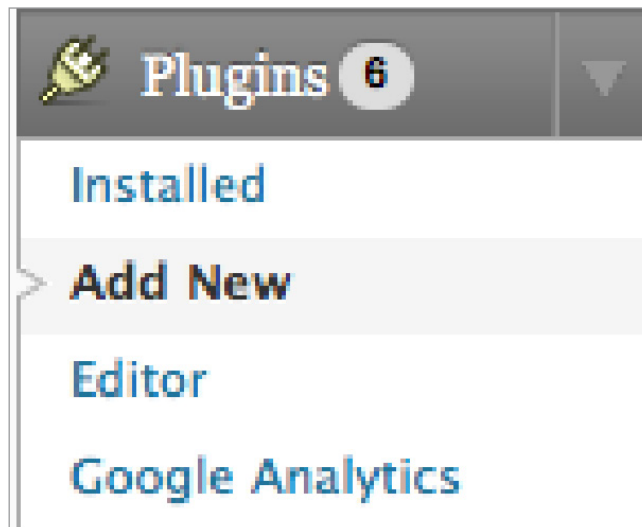


b. Search for "Subscribe Comments". Click the "Install" link. See image:
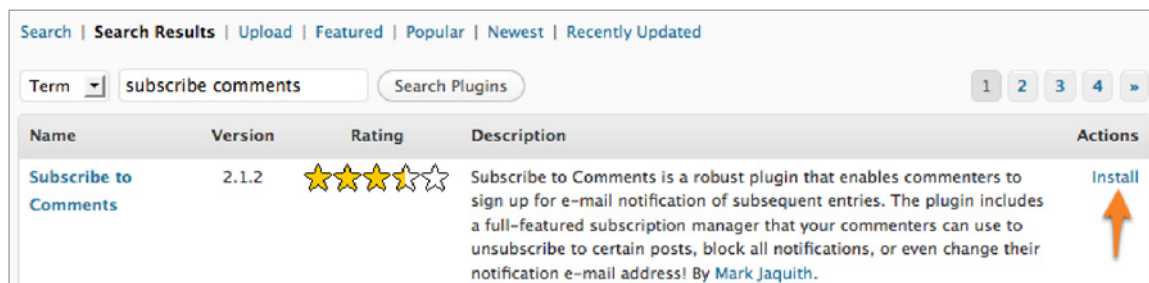


c. On the popup that appears, hit "Install Now". See image:
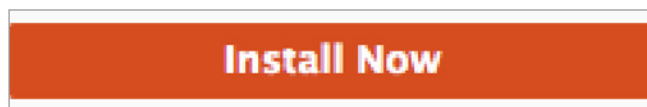
## 31. Survey your email subscribers

**A great way to get some instant feedback is to ask your email subscribers just one question and get them to email the replies.**

While this obviously creates more work for you and potentially a full inbox, it both provides insights into your reader's thoughts, and shows that a real human being is behind the email address and that you respond.

a. To send an email broadcast, first create a new Broadcast Message. See image:
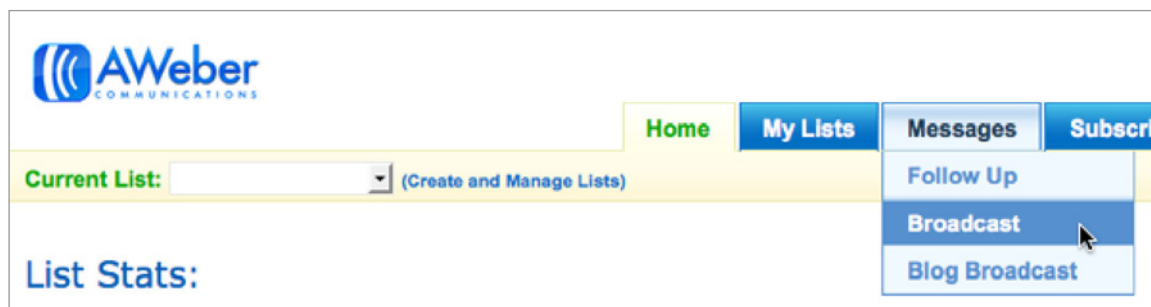


b. Hit the Create Broadcast Message button. See image:



c. Add your subject line and message. See image:
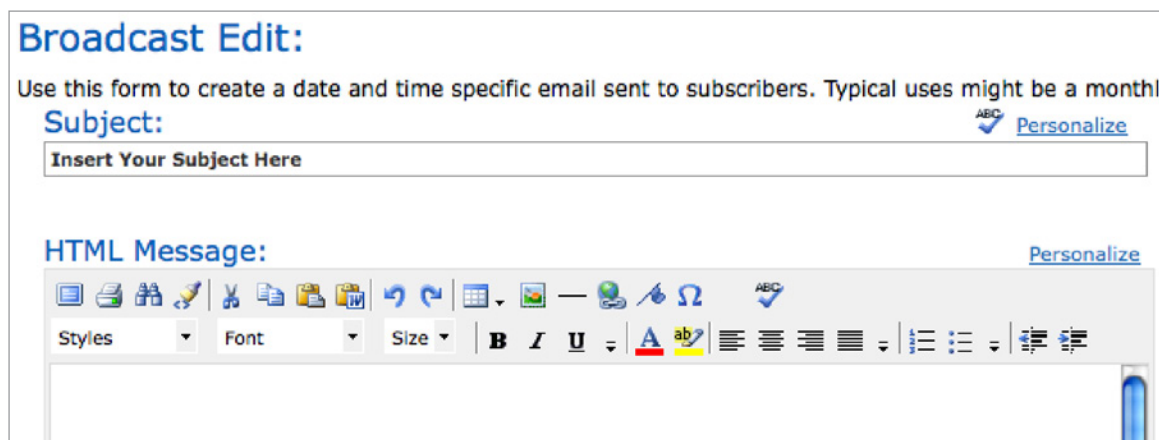
d. Remember to create both HTML and plain text versions of your message.

e. Personalize your message using the Personalize drop down menu. See image:

I use firstname_fix to add the recipient's first name if I have collected it.
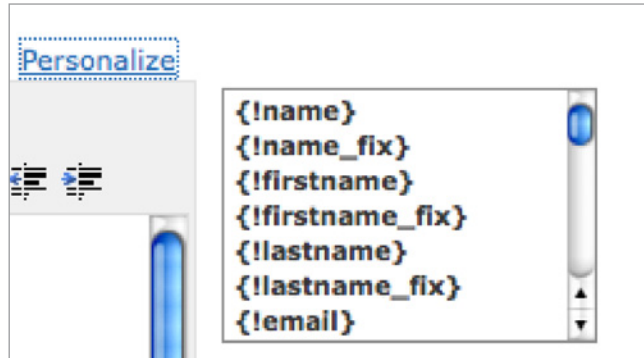
f. Set when you would like the email to be sent out. See image:

g. Hit Save Broadcast Message when you are finished. See image:
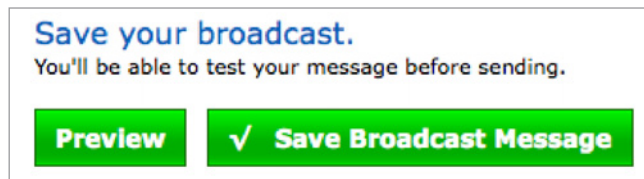
h. Test the email using the Test link before Queuing, to make sure it works ok. See image:
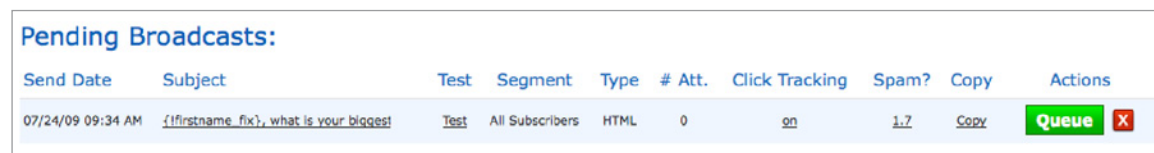
i. Proofread the message in your inbox before sending. See image:
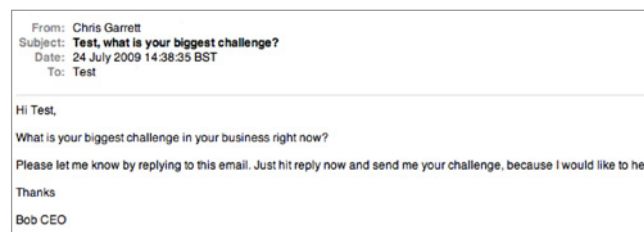
## 32. Write a series of blog posts

**Series posts can really build reader loyalty, and with a little preparation they are not difficult to do.**

a. Brainstorm ideas for potential series.

b. Select the series you are going to write first.

c. Outline the series, splitting parts into logical chunks.

d. Outline each individual entry.

e. Go over the outline and tweak, add and trim to make sure it flows and covers everything it needs to.

f. Write compelling headlines for each part.

g. Write the introduction article describing what you will cover.

h. Write the summary or wrap-up article closing off the series using the above outlines as a guide.

i. Write each individual article.

j. Set the date stamps for each post so that they go out in sequence.

k. To interlink your series automatically, use a plugin such as this.

## 33. Add "related posts" plugin

a. My favorite related posts plugin is Contextual Related Posts. See image:

b. If that doesn't work on your version of WordPress, an alternative is the more advanced "Yet Another Related Posts Plugin". See image:
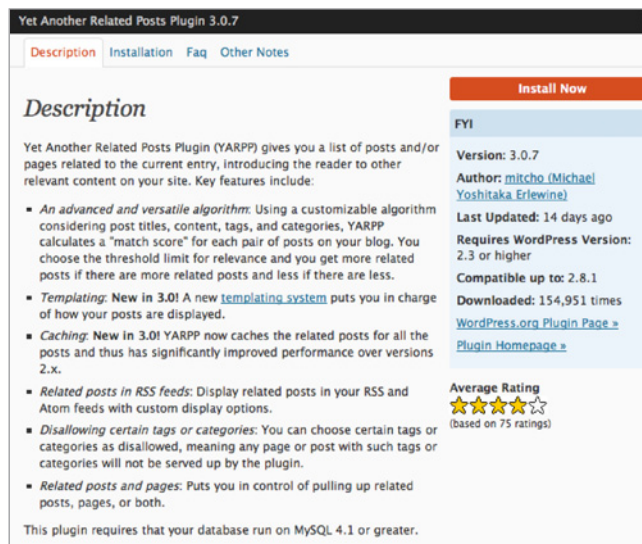
c. Find these plugins using the search "Related Posts".

d. Activate the plugin. See image:
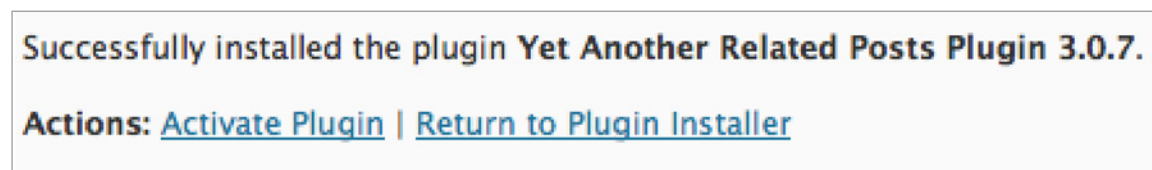
e. Tweak the settings by selecting the plugin from the the Settings menu. See image:
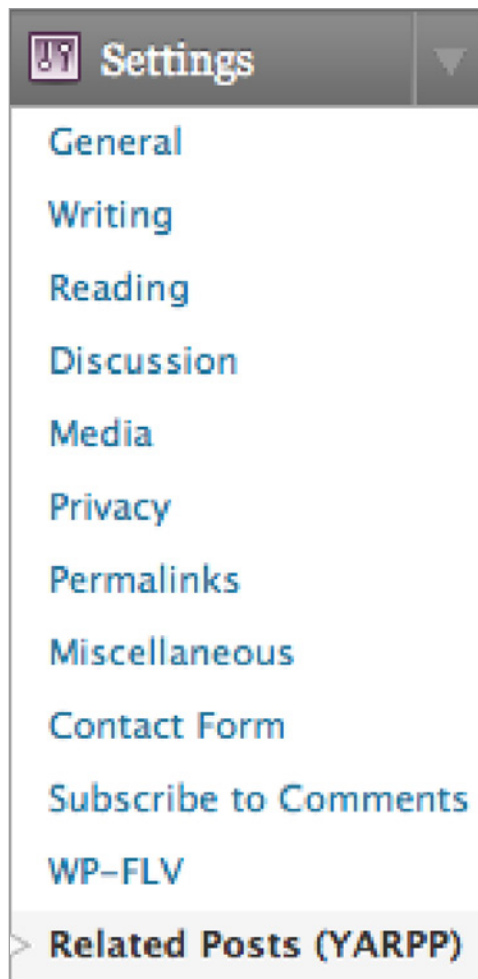
## 34. Hold a competition

**Competitions are a great way to create buzz and a sense of excitement.**

The mechanism can be very simple, but be aware of the laws of your country as in some cases a prize draw will need a "skill" element to avoid being seen by the authorities as an illegal lottery!

• Select a valuable prize that your audience can get excited about, eg a laptop, iPod, high value voucher or free service.

• Write up an announcement setting out the terms and conditions.

• Explain EXACTLY what your reader is expected to do to take part and make it very easy.

• Build in a viral element, such as a "send to friend" or a Twitter button.

• On the closing day write up the winner announcement and deliver prizes promptly.


Competitions can also be a great way to gain exposure, including:

• Blog writing competitions for links and traffic

• Twitter competitions for Twitter buzz

• YouTube video competitions to generate viral videos

• Awards competitions so people recruit their own audience to vote for them

• Team competitions so people need to bring in friends


Let your imagination go wild!

## 35. Hold a teleseminar

**Teleseminars are a great way to interact with your audience in a personal way without travel. They feel more intimate than the web, but you can still talk to hundreds of people at a time.**

Recall we sent an email to your readers asking for their biggest challenge? That can be the subject of your teleseminar!

a. Sign up to [freeconference.com](freeconference.com) (free for 150 lines and you can either pay $6.50 for an mp3 recording as a one-off or $9 a month for all your calls to be recorded).

b. Set up a new email list in Aweber just for the teleseminars (see earlier instructions).

c. Write an announcement using the Aweber form for people to opt-in. Provide the date, time (including time zone), and topic.

d. Send out the telephone number and access codes in a broadcast email (see earlier instructions).

e. Provide a follow-up email after the call with the mp3 audio link or attachment for anyone who missed the call.

## Summary

Really, if you put yourself in the place of the visitor, and you observe your own thoughts and feelings as a blog reader, then you can start to build up a good idea of what makes a site worth subscribing to (sticky) or alternatively what kind of a site will send you away never to return.

Keep a hold of that visitor-first idea and you will not go too far wrong.

Once we have happy subscribers, next we need to get all our hard work to pay off by creating customers from our readers.

If you have any queries, questions or comments about any of the topics in this chapter, I'd like to hear from you. Just leave a post on the [Wordtracker Academy.](Wordtracker Academy.)

# Convert Visitors into Customers

## Chapter 7

If you are blogging for your own enjoyment, then having someone read and appreciate your content is likely to be a pleasure in itself and a loyal, growing audience will be fantastic for your ego. But business blogs are different. Your business needs to make a profit, which means attracting visitors, having repeat visits, and turning visitors into customers.

## It does not end there, of course

As well as generating leads and making sales, you want your customers to come back and buy from you again. And again. So we need to look at approaches that encourage multiple and repeat purchases, and other long term value strategies.

A great win is to get customers to recruit more customers. Either by helping you make a better case for future leads, through testimonials and case studies, or by being more active and generating referrals, leads, and customers.

Let's not get ahead of ourselves, though. Our next task is to work out why someone would visit your site and choose to buy from you.

# Understand

Your first job is to understand your prospects and what is going on in their business, life or projects – and where your products and services fit in. You need to understand where they might be in the product-buying cycle.

*Action! see Pg 135*

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## These two factors have an enormous impact on the type of content you should show them

I'll give you a recent example from my life.

I was looking for a new car. I knew which model I wanted and how much I was willing to pay. All I needed to know was that a local dealer had the make, color, and model in stock and that he would not try to pull a bad deal on me, like the first dealer I tried. A straightforward situation: I had limited information needs, but was burned and cynical so my resistance was high.

A second example: I have been doing a lot of teleseminars and find that my collection of Skype headsets is wonderful but useless. I need a traditional telephone headset because internet telephony, at least where I am, is not reliable enough for paid conference calls. All I know is that I need a headset that works with a traditional phone line in my country. I do not know anything more; my information needs are great.

Two very different buying scenarios, but in both cases if I am ready to buy, I just need to see the right information.

## Questions for your customers

You should ask questions of your prospects and clients. Recent customers work best. Prospects that are resisting buying are an excellent source of objections. Have a real conversation and note:

• What information they will need before they decide to buy?

• What holds them back from buying?

• How they find a supplier?

• What are they looking for in a supplier?

• What does a supplier need to demonstrate?

• What convinces them to trust a supplier?

• What would they like to be different in future?

• If they could buy one thing that they cannot find, what would it be?

This list could go on, but what you are looking for is the kind of information that makes the sale. This comes down to:

• Product variation, comparison, competition, and suitability

• Features and benefits

• Price and payment options

• Service provider differentiation and confidence

• Delivery, availability, and logistics

# Educate

You'll want to place the different types of information your customers need in different places. Some information will be conveyed on product pages, and some between the lines of your content and emails. There are also places where you will be more overt, making a direct pitch.

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## The content will break down into the following categories:

- **Awareness, trust-building and relationship** – Continuous, valuable content written by knowledgeable and likable people

- **Pre-sell** – Content that warms up a prospect to be open to buying.

- **Sales** – Notifying a prospect that a product is available to buy. Putting all the information about a product or service in one place.

- **Post-sale** – How to use the product, get help, and what to do next.

Blogs do an excellent job of the first. The more a visitor returns to your excellent content, the more they will understand you and be willing to place their trust in your services.

Most bloggers, however, do not follow up. Perhaps they are put off by the idea of selling; that somehow it is sleazy. This is a shame, because sales work is often a matter of providing the right information to the right people at the right time.

# Solve

To get visitors, you need to write about problems and provide appropriate solutions. If you want to convert that visitor into a customer, you need to show that you have a way of solving your prospect's problem and that you can be trusted to deliver.

## We are not talking about features or benefits

A pen that works in space is not a compelling product if you already have a sharp pencil. To use another cliché: people do not buy power drills; they buy a hole in the wall.

In his e-book, [Writing Kick-Ass Website Sales Copy](#) Nick Usborne outlines this approach in more detail.

If you want to make a few bucks, tell people you can show them HOW TO.

Since the very dawn of marketing, the "how to" approach has worked like a charm.

- **HOW TO lose weight**
- **HOW TO save money**
- **HOW TO make money**

- **HOW TO make your lawn greener**
- **HOW TO train your dog**
- **HOW TO play the guitar**
- **HOW TO plan a wedding**
- **HOW TO build a deck**
- **HOW TO water ski**
- **HOW TO win the lottery**
- **HOW TO get upgrades on flights**
- **HOW TO learn a foreign language**
- **HOW TO grow orchids**

That's why so many headlines, offline and online, start with the words "how to".

It's a proven winner. Now look at your products and services and figure out whether there is a "how to" approach you can use.

# Demonstrate

The previous section might seem a little too much like selling for some. That is alright, because you can sell without being obvious. Remember: we decided that trust was important? Well, your prospects need to trust you and your service.

### Sites build trust with online chat ....

You need to address any anxiety about buying online.

That's why sites have online chat functions and 24 hour, 1-800 numbers. That's why they have better business bureau logos on their sales pages, plus a host of other third party validation icons. And that's why they offer iron-clad guarantees.

The whole idea is to reduce the perceived risk of buying.

A wonderfully entertaining demonstration that many internet users will remember came from Blendtec. The company's "Will it Blend" videos demonstrated the capabilities of its heavy duty blenders. They turned a range of consumer electronics, such as iPhones, into smoothie-style mush. After watching one of these videos, you were under no illusions that these things could blend.

There are other ways of demonstrating trust that don't involve turning valuable electronics into worthless dust. You can publish case studies, use anecdotes, interview past clients, or even get customers to guest post about their experiences. Just give your prospects reason to believe.

# Call to action

Old school sales people will tell you that at some point, you have to ask for the sale. You need to give your customers a clear call to action.

**Be direct. Ask for the sale.**

It is possible to make sales from a "shy" call to action.

With enough warm-up, anecdotes and trust-building, I find that simply mentioning my products and services generates leads.

That said, the stronger your call to action, the more likely you are to convert. So, be direct.

Often, your prospects will be unsure about whether to buy. They may really want to buy your product, but still have lots of anxieties about buying. So, you need to drive them towards the sale with clear, concise language.

Whispering won't work. **Speak up!**

# Segmentation

One problem with blogs is that they can aim to be all things to all people and satisfy no one. So, you need to segment your prospects.

## Segment, slice and target your prospects

Put your hottest leads on a list where you can give them all the information they need, without annoying those prospects who are not yet interested.

For example, I run monthly teleseminars about blogging, and interview experts in various fields. I know that if I mail my teleseminar list about an upcoming teleseminar, many more of those people will sign up than if I mailed my general list.

You should also have a customer list that's separate from your general lists. People who have paid once are far more likely to buy again.

# From customer to repeat customer

## You should treat customers much more generously than other subscribers.

---

### It bears repeating: you should treat customers much more generously than other subscribers

It is much harder and more expensive to recruit a new customer than it is to get an existing and happy customer to come back to you for something else.

The key is the word "happy". To be happy, your customer must have gained significant value from your products and services, while finding the experience beneficial and enjoyable.

When an existing customer is interested in your services, there are a few approaches you can use to maximize the value of your sale:

• **Cross-sell related products** – Fast food outlets offer fries with their burgers. Clothes retailers try to sell a shirt and tie with each suit.

• **Bundle products into a package** – Fast food outlets offer meal deals, so they can sell more products. Software suppliers sell training manuals.

• **Up-sell customers to a higher price point** – Fast food outlets offer larger portions. And most services have a "premium" version for a premium price.

A technique that works well but often gets abused, is the "continuity" model of subscriptions or memberships. Continuity simply means rather than a one-off payment you are continuously charged.

### There are lots of different variations of this model:

• The magazine or newspaper subscription where you are billed on a regular basis and sent the new editions through the post.

• The "book club" where you sign up and are sent the book of the month; send it back and you pay nothing, keep it and you are billed the price of the book.

• The "wine club" where, for a set fee each month, you are sent a selection of wines to taste.

• The membership club, society or association where, if you continue to allow your credit card to be charged, you stay a member in good standing.

---

When done transparently it is a brilliant way of showcasing your products and getting repeat business. But if you're not completely transparent, it can be a route to bad press.

The main problem is when people think they are just getting a one-off bargain, only to find later that their credit card has been charged on an ongoing basis and feel ripped off. Always make it clear what the customer is signing up for, and how to get out of the subscription, and all should be fine.

# Getting more referrals

When I ask new customers how they found me, they tell me they heard about me from another of my customers.

---

**A large percentage of my clients bring me new customers via word of mouth**

The easiest way of getting customers to make referrals is to talk about how your customers already do this for you. Do not wait for your customers to talk amongst each other; put the idea in their heads for them.

A more formal referral arrangement involves customers getting a commission for referring. In the internet marketing world, this is called affiliate marketing. If you sign up to a service, such as Clickbank, E-Junkie or 1shoppingcart, they have affiliate features that allow other people to sell your products for commission.

# From customer to advocate

Advocates are created by the excellence of your service – consistently, and over a long period.

### Winning advocates

The ultimate win for your business is when clients are so happy with your services that they become an advocate, telling anyone who will listen how great you are. This is a fine achievement and a worthy goal.

An advocate is likely to buy regularly and almost everything you sell. Advocates will encourage others to buy from you, too. They will talk about you, your products, and the benefits you bring. Successful brands, such as Apple and Virgin, have advocates who act as unsalaried sales people, continually promoting their business.

Keep asking your customers how you can improve, what you can do differently, and keep aiming to please. You will get there. And the feeling you have when people are advocating your services is wonderful – a reward in itself.

# Crafting the perfect testimonial

Testimonials are a fantastic way of reassuring your customers that your products are both successful and popular.

---

### If someone praises you, ask for a testimonial

The best testimonial is a mini case study, where the client outlines the challenges they faced including the specific problem you solved, what you did, and the results you achieved. Even better is if they outline their worries and objections, and how you overcame them.

Not everyone will be able or willing to give you permission to publish their name. So, if they simply want to write a LinkedIn recommendation, encourage that. LinkedIn testimonials are highly visible and generate trust, because they are seldom faked.

I do not like the practice of writing testimonials on behalf of clients and getting them to sign off on them. Of course, there are clients where this is the only testimonial you will ever get. Much better is if the testimonial is clearly in the client's words and heartfelt.

# Action: Convert visitors into customers

Having an audience is all well and good but how are you going to make money? You now need to convert as many visitors into customers as possible.

## 36. Add objection-busting content

**Your blog is a valuable tool in overcoming customer objections, effectively removing any barriers to purchase and pre-selling without overt pressure.**

a. Ask your customers and prospects what causes them to resist or worry about buying from you.

b. Brainstorm other possible objections.

c. Look at competitors' materials to see which objections they are answering.

d. Go through your list and categorize objections. Group similar objections together but do not leave out important specifics.

e. Take each objection and work out a logical answer.

f. DO NOT imply that the person is wrong, bad or silly to think that way!

g. Write blog posts around each objection.

h. Use case studies, anecdotes and testimonials to make the posts come alive and offer implied closure.

i. Test your articles on your customers and prospects, tweaking where necessary.

j. Publish on your blog as articles, then compile into a white paper or report.

## 37. Craft your sales pitch

**If you are going to sell your product or service in decent quantities you are going to have to refine your sales pitch.**

You will have to be able to convey a compelling statement that gains interest and positions your product well in your prospect's mind. Well enough that they investigate your sales pages at least!

a. Who is your ideal prospect? How do they identify their particular group? Find a name that resonates with your target prospect.

b. Talk to existing customers and ask them what the most compelling aspect of your product or service was to them. What made them buy?

c. Extract from their answers what big pay-off they anticipated, and how your particular approach added to this. Specify what you add or take away.

d. Refine the result into one short phrase that explains what you do, how, and what is the end benefit.

e. Add the target prospect group name that you selected in the first part, so you are speaking to a specific audience.

f. You can now build a sentence like this:

> *"[We] help/advise/provide/teach/make [target prospect group][benefit] by [what we do][how]"*

> *Eg: "Billy Bob helps sports people with injuries get back into competition by teaching a drug-free method of pain relief."*

> *"Chris Garrett helps professional service businesses attract, retain and convert more customers with lower costs using compelling web content."*

g. This can then be used in a number of ways. For example you could create curiosity by removing the "solution" part so they have to ask you for the "how". You could also turn it into a sales headline, for example "Who else wants to attract, retain and convert more customers with lower costs?".

## 38. Write a sales page

**Thousands of books are available on sales copywriting including Nick Usborne's [Writing Kick-Ass Website Sales Copy](#), part of the Wordtracker Masterclass Series.**

You can create a useful sales page very quickly with the following steps ...

a. By now you should know what the core of your offer is, and some potential objections. Make sure you have those in front of you and refer to them throughout your copy. They are your key messages and need to be the thread that binds everything together.

b. Turn your sales pitch into a headline:

• How to ...

• Who else wants ...

• Want to know the secrets of ...

• What ... do not want you to know ...

• Finally, now you can ...

• Give me ... and I will show you how ...

• You do not have to be ...

• How ... got result ... and you can too

• Revealed ...

• Don't ... before ...

c. Write a paragraph that explains the situation your product or service addresses.

d. Describe the benefits of your solution and approach, paying particular attention to overcoming objections before they are raised in your prospect's mind.

e. Inform the reader why you are the company to choose over anyone else.

f. Make your offer.

g. Guarantee satisfaction.

h. Instruct the reader on exactly how to buy.

 i. Tell them to buy. Now.

j. Summarize everything in a PS  - it is a sales page in one paragraph!

• The problem

• The benefit

• The offer

• The guarantee

• The reason to act now

## 39. Get persuasive testimonials

**Testimonials are the best objection-busting content that I know, but of course you have to have your product in customers' hands before you can get them.**

a. As soon as you can, get some people in your target market to try out your product or service.

b. Ask them the following questions:

• What was your situation before you used our product?

• What were your thoughts before trying it?

• How did it work for you?

• Which specific results did you get?

• Would you recommend it to others? What would you say to anyone considering this product or service?

c. Take the answers and craft them into a testimonial, then send to the customer for approval or edits.

## 40. Encourage consumption with autoresponders

### We are all busy and sometimes we sign up for things and then forget about them, or get distracted and move on to something else.

Using reminder emails we can pull our customers' focus back, and with an autoresponder you can set the emails up once and from then on it can all happen automatically without any intervention on your part.

You might use the autoresponder to send out training lessons, bonuses and free downloads, or encouragement such as "it has been x days since you … by now you should have …"

a. Log into Aweber and select Messages, then Follow Up. See image:
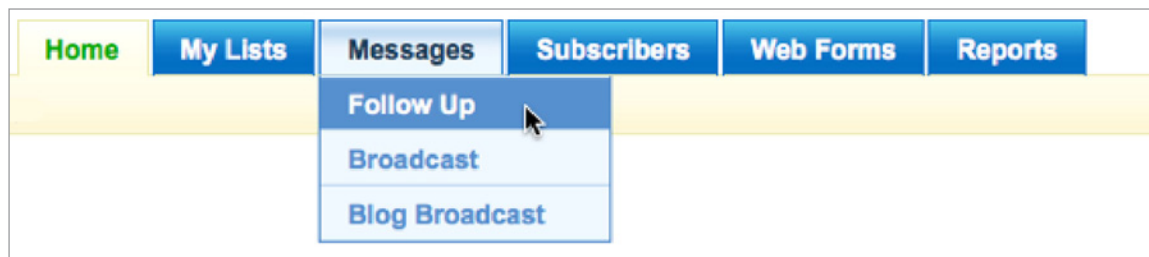


b. Click Add New Follow Up Message. See image:
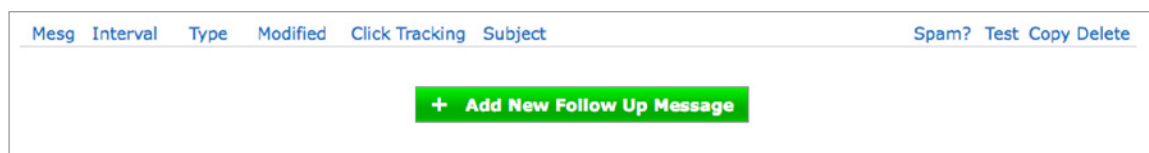


c. Follow the previously given steps for editing an email.

d. Your first message will be set automatically to go out to the recipient on opt-in. See image:
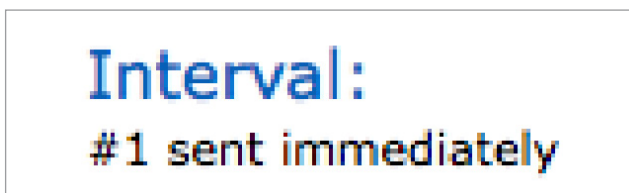
e. For the following messages, set an interval before each email is sent. See image:
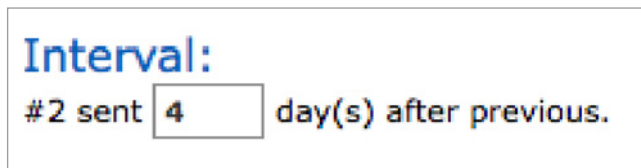


f. If your AWeber account is new then you can specify on which weekdays the email should go out.

## 41. Create a sales team with affiliate software

### To get more sales you can recruit people to sell on your behalf in return for a commission.

On the internet these folks are normally called "affiliates". How it works is that they sign up to be your affiliate and receive specially formatted links that track any purchases back to their marketing. When someone buys via these links, the affiliate software credits their account with their commission payment.

There are many choices for affiliate management. A good introduction is ClickBank as they have a huge number of affiliates already signed up and ready to promote your products. While ClickBank is for digital products, I use an alternative called E-Junkie.com for selling consulting.

a. Sign up at Clickbank.com. See image:
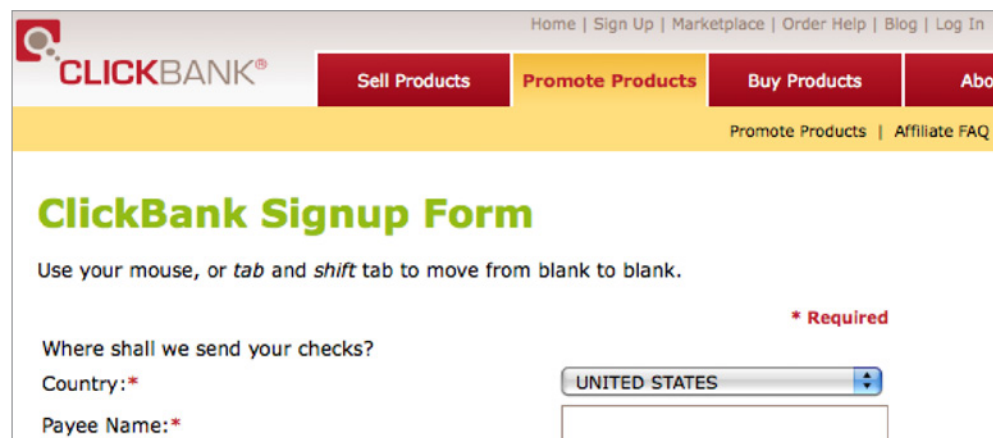
b. Check your email for a confirmation message. See image:



**Signup Not Yet Complete**

A signup completion link and 8 digit "confirmation code" have been emailed to you.

Please check your email and **click the link** to complete the process.

**NOTE:** If you do not receive our email within five minutes, it is because either your email program or your email provider has filtered it out as possible spam. You should take steps now to correct that problem.

c. Enter the confirmation code found in your email. See image:



**Enter Your Confirmation Code**

Enter or paste the eight digit confirmation code from the email into the box below. Then enter the text shown in the image and click finish.

Confirmation Code from your email:*

Please enter the text from the image below:*

Finish

8WBNNT

This image is unreadable
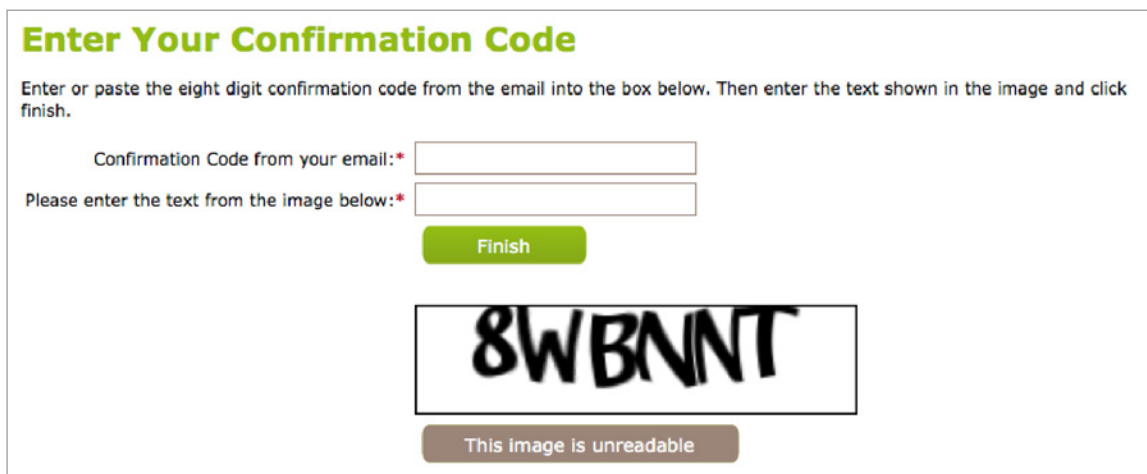
d. Set up your sales page on your own site.

e. Set up your "thanks page" on which you deliver the product download info.

f. Create your product in Clickbank. See image:



Add New Product

g. Add the product details. See image:



h. Determine your buy button link format. See image:



NB. Item is the item number of the product, and vendor is your Clickbank nickname.
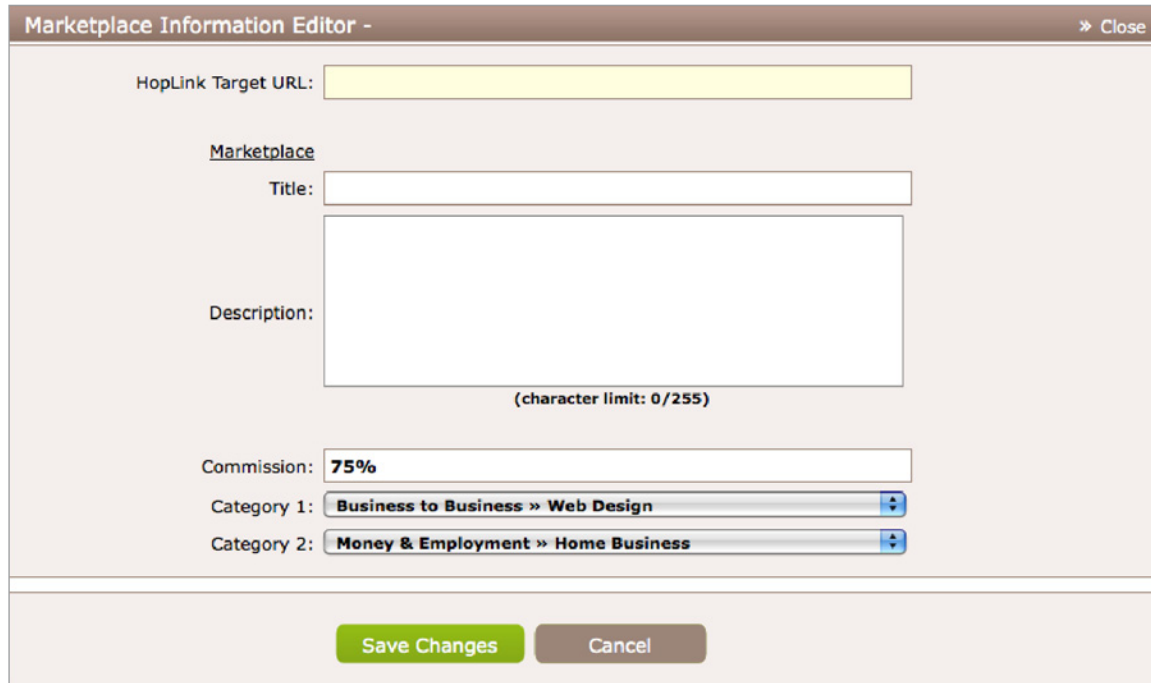
i. Add your buy button to your sales page. See image:



e. Set up your 'thanks page' on which you deliver the product download info.

k. Set your Marketplace information. See image:



NB. The HopLink URL is your sales page.

l. Request approval. See image:



m. Fill out the information then hit Submit. See image:
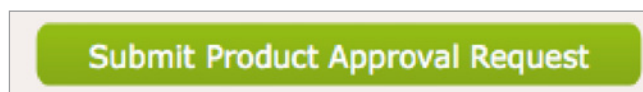


When approval comes through you will need to pay a one-off fee to activate your vendor account.

## 42. Segment your audience

**A key way to get more loyalty and conversions is to segment your audience into groups.**

Each group should be communicated to apart from the others, feeding them what they want to know, in the way they want it, when they want it, with targeted custom offers.

a. Find interest-based sub groups in your audience.

b. Create topical email lists, one for each group.

c. Offer your audience opportunities to opt in to these sub-lists using free gifts as sign-up incentives.

d. Create a customer list to segment customers from non customers.

e. Also consider creating a "gold" customer list for your best customers.

## Summary

Your business blog is there to help your business by creating leads, turning leads into customers, and bringing those customers back for more. Hopefully you will get some ideas from this chapter that will help your business grow its profits.

If you are going to have long term success you will need to be consciously building an excellent brand, so next we will go through some general business blogging dos and don'ts.

If you have any queries, questions or comments about any of the topics in this chapter, I'd like to hear from you. Just leave a post on the Wordtracker Academy.

# Building your Brand

## Chapter 8

By now you will know that business blogging is about more than using the right blogging software and pumping out articles. In fact, having a blog and crafting content is only the start.

Once your blog is active and people start arriving in substantial numbers, your priorities will change. As well as attracting and retaining readers, you will want to build and maintain a positive beneficial brand.

**When people talk about branding they often discuss message creation, managing appearance, designing logos, and repeating brand names and catchphrases**

In fact, brand image is more about users' experiences and your reputation than the color of your logo and the fonts you use.

I believe it was Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon the online retailer, who stated that:

**"Your brand is what people say about you when you are not in the room."**

So while design considerations have an impact – appearances are a large part of an experience – your customers will be more interested in how you and your company behave, your values and ability to deliver on promises.

## Congruence and consistency

Two key factors that affect your blogging brand are congruence and consistency. What are they? And what do they mean?

**Congruence** – Means ensuring that every element of your business – design, copy, images, colors, logo, service and price – supports the benefits you offer your customers (known as your value proposition). Everything you say and do should be aligned with who you are and your values. Your behavior must match the message you are trying to communicate to customers. Nothing you do or say should contradict those values.

**Consistency** – Is congruence maintained over time – to the point where people can predict your behavior in any given situation, because your beliefs and actions have been so unchanging. If consistency is lost, customers get confused – and confused people don't buy.

These concepts are important: your brand will be damaged if there is a disconnect between what you say and what you do. For instance, if you were to find a premium brand in a discount bin it might undermine your belief in that brand. Or, more annoyingly, a company that advertises its great customer service undermines its brand if its call center keeps you on hold for an hour.

## More tips

Here are some tips on becoming a better-branded business blogger:

• **Be there** – Once you set up a presence in social media, and especially in a blog, you raise expectations. Your customers will expect you to maintain this standard and be on hand to answer queries. You need to show that you are contactable and that the words are written by a real human being. There are many aspects of your business that can be outsourced, but presence and participation are non-negotiable.

• **Be interested** – You must show that you care about what your audience is thinking, and keep engaging them. If you do not keep abreast of your niche's news and changes, it will show. Keep the fascination with your subject alive.

• **Be authentic** – Some people recommend putting on a false front, or "fake it till you make it", but I recommend honesty. Any dishonesty is likely to be found out and the internet has a long memory.

• **Be open** – Do not try to hide your motivations or agenda. If you are selling or commercially involved in something you are talking about, be honest and open about it.

• **Be interactive** – Show that communication with you is two-way and in multiple channels. Engage your audience on your blog, on forums, in video and in social media. Listen to what they have to say, and act on it. You do not have to act on every suggestion, but you do need to show that you are listening and available.

## Listen, serve, delight

It is possible to take the above advice and distill it into three main steps:

• **Listen** – Show that you want your audience to communicate and listen to what they tell you. Your audience is your best source of inspiration and feedback.

• **Serve** – Deliver what your audience wants, needs and asks for. Answer your customers' questions, create products that meet their challenges, and package your business in an appealing way.

• **Delight** – Don't just meet your customers' needs; exceed them. Constantly surprise your customers with the value and service you provide.

# Make your presence felt

**Promote. Communicate. Sell.**

Once you have a handle on who you are, and can communicate this consistently, you need to raise your visibility.

Participate on social networks, engage people on Twitter, spread white papers and PDF reports, and create videos for YouTube. Interview thought leaders in your industry. Get interviewed.

It is no good having a great brand if nobody knows about it, so you have to network and promote yourself.

# Show your humanity

**Flawed perfection**

Having an excellent brand does not mean you should try to come across as perfect. In fact, if that is the image you project, people may assume you are a fake, so it could do more harm than good.

Show you are human, admit to mistakes in interviews and anecdotes, and use them as examples of what not to do. People will warm to you, and also be more forgiving when, inevitably, you make your next goof.

When you do make a mistake, own up to it immediately, and tell people what you are doing to put it right.

# Ask for questions

Marketing is the art and science of getting and keeping customers. So, find out what your customers want. Get into a conversation - find out what questions they need answering.

### How do I create gold dust?

Some people try to avoid being asked questions. They think people who ask questions are trying to get something for nothing. Really, though, you should encourage questions. They show what your readers are thinking, the problems they face, and the challenges they need your help to solve.

Answering questions is a great way of promoting your business. Your readers get answers, you show what a helpful and generous person you are, and build positive brand exposure. And you get content, product and service ideas. I have mentioned this a couple of times, but it is important. Readers' questions are like gold dust. Value them.

If you are not getting asked questions, you need to show that you are open to them. In your blog posts, in your sidebar, in email signatures remind your readers that you are a human being and answer emails.

It follows that your emails need to be sent from a working and answered email account and not a dummy address that bounces if you try to reply to it.

# Ask questions

As well as answering questions, you need to ask questions of your audience.

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**There are specific questions that relate to your market or industry and there are general questions, such as:**

• What is your biggest challenge right now? (content ideas)

• How easy or difficult is it to find information to help with your challenge? (If the information is difficult to find, you have an excellent opportunity to stand out by offering it.)

• What kind of company are you?
(Small, medium, non-profit, or solo.)

• How experienced are you with _____ ?
(So you can tune your content.)

• If you could buy one thing from me, what would it be?

• Has my content/service/product helped you? If so, what specific results have you gained? If not, please describe ... (You can get excellent testimonials and feedback this way.)

I am sure you can see how valuable those answers will be. Just imagine the kind of intelligence you can gain by asking the right questions.

# Provide excellent service

You think it would be obvious that you need to offer excellent customer service, but so many companies think selling online is just about making the sale. Stellar service is a key competitive advantage.

## Extra effort or expense can pay off in many ways

Your extra effort or expense can pay off in many ways. Excellent service is a great way of creating advocates.

At one point, online retailer Amazon was accused of creating problems, just so it could show how good its customer service was. I don't believe that, but I can see how others would. My friend Damian tells a story to anyone who will listen of how, in Amazon's early days, he bought a DVD box set that consisted of six disks. One of the disks skipped in a certain place on one chapter. Unlike the other company he bought DVDs from, who would treat him like a criminal and expect him to package and return items at his own cost, Amazon apologized, sent him a whole new box set and told him to keep the original. He was delighted. He gave away the original and two people benefited from Amazon's service.

Solving a customer's problem successfully is one of the best and easiest ways of creating great testimonials, case studies and opportunities for referrals. You just need to put yourself in your customers' place, and go the extra mile or two.

## Add extreme value

Just enough is not enough if you want to stand out, get noticed, and grow. Do not skimp on the value you offer. Your free content needs to be better than your competitors' premium content and your paid products need to blow your customers' minds.
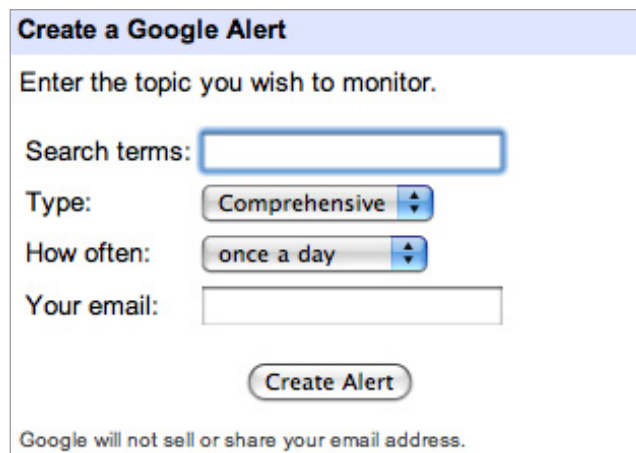
# Action: Build your brand

Your brand and reputation are your biggest assets. Establish a positive brand, get that reputation to spread and you will reap the benefits for years to come. Here is a list of things you can do to encourage a stellar brand experience that will stay with your customers.

## 43. Track your brand with alerts

**You need to know when people are talking about you. Both for positive reasons (such as media mentions) and negative (like complaints).**

a. Use Google Alerts at alerts.google.com. Simply add a search term that is relevant, such as your name, your company name, any of your brands, and so on. See image:

**Create a Google Alert**

Enter the topic you wish to monitor.

Search terms:

Type: Comprehensive

How often: once a day

Your email:

Create Alert

Google will not sell or share your email address.

b. Use TweetBeep.com to track your brand and keywords on Twitter.

## 44. Show your personal side
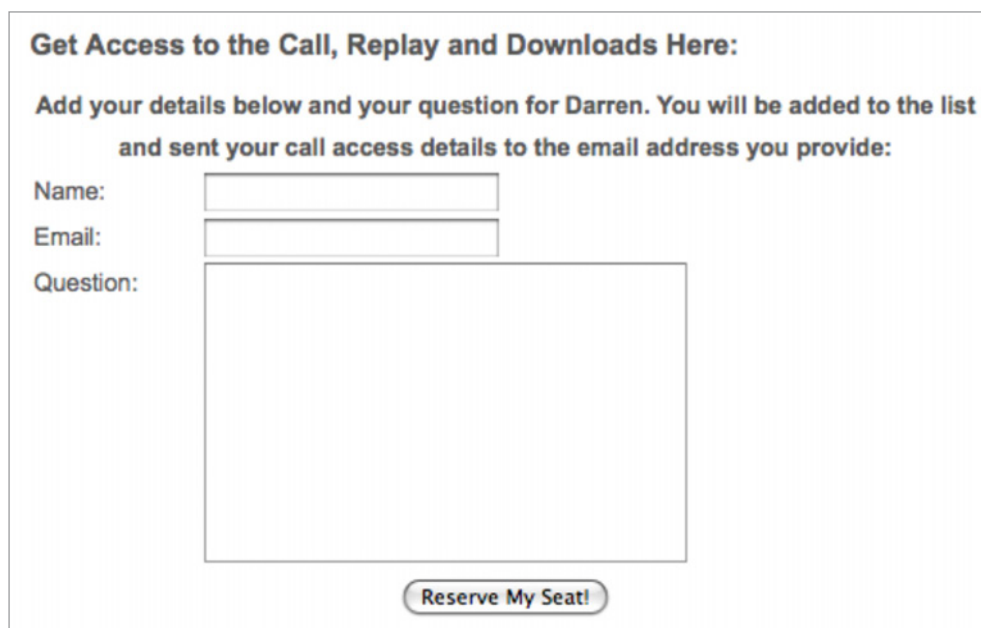
**People connect with people they like, so give people a reason to like you. Help them get to know the real you in the following ways:**

a. Share photographs from Flickr.com.

b. Include hand-drawn notes, doodles and illustrations in your content.

c. Talk about more than work, work, work on Twitter.com.

d. Tell stories in blog posts.

e. Connect FriendFeed.com to your other social media accounts.

f. Record "behind the scenes" videos and upload them to YouTube.

g. Create a personal blog using Posterous.com so you can share interesting articles you find, or post thoughts and photographs while out and about via email.

h. Add your Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and Facebook accounts to be notified when you update Posterous.

i. Attend or organize a TweetUp in your area (a group of people arranging to meet at a location, organized via Twitter).

j. Try some podcasting with your own BlogTalkRadio.com show.

## 45. Run a Q&A webinar

**A great way to get insights into the challenges and thoughts of your audience is to get them to tell you what is on their mind with a Q&A teleconference or webinar.**

a. Set up your call with your conference provider, taking note of all dial-in and access details.

b. Set up a new email list. Add a custom field for people to add their question.

c. Embed the form in a new blog post as your calls landing page. See image:



d. Set up an autoresponse email containing call-in details to go out after signing up.

e. Promote the landing page leading up to the live call.

If you promote it well you will attract lots of great questions directly to your inbox.

## 46. Get interviewed

### Getting interviewed is a fantastic way to reach a new audience and position yourself as an expert.

Interviews can be performed over telephone, Skype, video, email or chat, but the best results come from when people can hear you speak. Easiest technically is a telephone conference line with automatic recording.

a. Work up a list of topics that you could be interviewed about and that others would find interesting.

b. Ask people in your network if they would like to interview you.

c. Consider doing interview swaps where you interview a friend and they interview you in return.

d. After you get interviewed once, heavily promote it, making it clear you are available for more.

e. Also look out for anyone who regularly interviews others in related fields, approach them with some of your interview ideas.

## 47. Provide customer service with Twitter

### Being able to provide immediate customer service is one of Twitter's strengths.

a. Set up TweetBeep.com to monitor Twitter mentions of your company and products.

b. Also use a TweetDeck.com search column.

c. Acknowledge compliments made about your company.

d. Answer any questions raised about your products.

e. Do not get into arguments, where appropriate @reply anything that you would be happy to discuss further offline – Direct Message details if/when the customer follows you.

## 48. Write a special report

**Social media fans love free and valuable content, and being the provider positions you as an expert. Consider writing a special report, a short e-book on a focused topic, and offering it for free.**

a. Use the questions submitted in the Q&A conference to work out what your prospects are most interested in.

b. If the subject is wide, drill down into that topic to find the most interesting single issue.

c. Generate detailed questions around the topic, like:

- What is the topic?
- Why should someone care?
- What is the big issue?
- What concepts do you need to be aware of?
- What processes, procedures and steps are involved?
- How does it work?
- What mistakes are often made in relation to the topic?
- What objections might there be to the idea?
- What are the next steps?

d. Answer these questions.

e. Edit the questions and answers into a narrative flow.

f. Add a cover and copyright page.

g. Export as a PDF.

h. Upload to your blog.

i. Add a TweetMeme button and social media buttons.

j. Inform your contacts and social media followers, and ask for retweets.

## 49. Get feedback

**You need to be constantly getting feedback, both positive and negative, if you are going to improve or know you are on the right track.**

To find out what you are doing well, could do better and should be doing, try the following:

- Add a request for feedback to your email signature for a short time.
- Ask on Twitter and in your social media profiles.
- Occasionally post asking for feedback on your blog.
- Email subscribers occasionally asking how you are doing.
- Consider giving an incentive to response, but not too often.

## 50. Identify your advocates

**Identifying your advocates requires you to be looking, listening and being aware.**

Advocates might be very visible or they might lurk. In general though, they will likely do one or more things to stand out, including:

- Comment a lot. Maybe first to comment.
- Link to you a lot.
- Interact a lot.
- Retweet you.
- Volunteer without hesitation.
- Fill out every survey or poll.
- Attend your webinars and fill in the attendee questionnaire.
- Bookmark your posts in social bookmarking tools.

- Remember or remind even you of details others forget.

- Buy AND consume your product.

- Refer people to you.

## Here are some simple ways of getting the most from your advocates:

a. Maintain a list of advocates and potential advocates.

b. Lavish a LOT of personal interaction and attention on those people.

c. Come up with rewards that will energize them further without spoiling the relationship.

d. Invite them to your "inner circle" email list or membership.

e. Give them small jobs to do if they are open to it. Possibly with some visible status.

Above all be sensitive that you do not overplay your hand. Some people might be put off if you come on too strong or even be insulted if you offer a reward they do not feel is appropriate or necessary. Get it right and your advocates become a wonderful extension of your team.

## Summary

The key to using a blog and social media to build your brand is to dig deep to unearth your true values and beliefs, then represent yourself in a positive and authentic way that is an honest reflection of those beliefs. Do not deviate from those values even in the face of profit or exposure opportunities.

Next up we will list all the book's Actions that will take you from first decisions to having a popular and valuable blogging asset.

If you have any queries, questions or comments about any of the topics in this chapter, I'd like to hear from you. Just leave a post on the Wordtracker Academy.

# Action Plan

## Chapter 9

This chapter takes the actions from the rest of the book and puts everything together into a step-by-step action plan for launching a blog and making it work for you.

# Action plan

While you might want to skip steps, the more of these tactics you choose to implement, the more likely your blog will be a resounding success.

---

**Take your time and work through steadily; resist the temptation to rush or skip ahead**

## Chapter 1. Get started

- ☐ 1. Assess your situation.
- ☐ 2. Build your team.
- ☐ 3. Gather your resources.
- ☐ 4. List your constraints.
- ☐ 5. Decide your approach.

## Chapter 2. Prepare to blog

- ☐ 6. Analyze your competitors.
- ☐ 7. Build your network.
- ☐ 8. Get hosting and a domain name.
- ☐ 9. Install your software and blog theme.

## Chapter 3. Plan your business blog

- ☐ 10. Measure your goals with Google Analytics.
- ☐ 11. Build your target audience profile.
- ☐ 12. Craft your story.
- ☐ 13. Define your competitive edge.

## Chapter 4. Content research

- ☐ 14. Create a customer survey with Google Docs.
- ☐ 15. Make a list of prospect questions.
- ☐ 16. Search social media for trends.
- ☐ 17. Keyword research.
- ☐ 18. Create a mind map.
- ☐ 19. Plan your content and categories.
- ☐ 20. Draw up an editorial calendar.

## Chapter 5. Attracting visitors

- 21. Start a Google Adwords Pay Per Click (PPC) campaign.
- 22. Use StumbleUpon for traffic.
- 23. Use Twitter for traffic.
- 24. Write a guest post.
- 25. Pitch for links by email.
- 26. Make your blog search engine friendly

## Chapter 6. Retaining more visitors

- 27. Set up Feedburner.
- 28. Add an email newsletter.
- 29. Create a quick video.
- 30. Add the 'subscribe to comments' plugin.
- 31. Survey your email subscribers.
- 32. Write a series of blog posts.
- 33. Add a 'related posts' plugin.
- 34. Hold a competition.
- 35. Hold a teleseminar.

## Chapter 7. Convert visitors to customers

- 36. Add objection-busting content.
- 37. Craft your call to action.
- 38. Write a sales page.
- 39. Get persuasive testimonials.
- 40. Encourage consumption with autoresponders.
- 41. Create a sales team with affiliate software.
- 42. Segment your audience.

## Chapter 8. Build your brand

- 43. Track your brand with alerts.
- 44. Show your personal side.
- 45. Run a Q&A webinar.
- 46. Get interviewed.
- 47. Provide customer service with Twitter.
- 48. Write a special report.
- 49. Invite feedback.
- 50. Identify your advocates.

## Summary

Blogging can be an enormously successful part of your business's marketing plan. A recent survey by HubSpot said businesses that blog gain on average 55% more visitors, 97% more links, and are indexed by search engines 434% more than their non-blog counterparts.

All good stuff, but a word of caution - it is incredibly easy to go wrong if you are not careful.

Launch too soon, with too little preparation, and not only might you waste hours of good work and effort, but you could also damage your reputation in your market.

That said, you need to balance caution with action. Do not fall into the trap of "analysis paralysis".

This is why throughout this guide we have looked at the concepts, ideas and theory, for developing a successful business blog, and then followed up with actions and exercises that you can use to put those ideas into practical application.

The action plan outlined above has been proven by my own experience as a professional blogger and consultant working with a diverse range of businesses and individuals.

Follow this process and you should find that blogging helps increase your profits, builds your audience and profile, and is enormously enjoyable.

I would love to know how you get on, so please let me know your results by either contacting me at the Wordtracker Academy or my blog. If you prefer to Tweet, Wordtracker is here and I'm at http://twitter.com/chrisgarrett

I'm looking forward to seeing what you create - happy blogging!

*Chris Garrett*

## Questions, feedback and comments

If you've queries, questions or comments about any of the topics in this book, we'd like to hear from you. Just leave a post on the Wordtracker Academy

## Customer service contacts

Use our support system
Email a message to support@wordtracker.com
Chat live with one of our support team at
Or call us:

• From the USA and Canada: 011 44 333 200 4555

• From the UK: 0333 200 4555 (calls are charged at local rates)

• From any other country: +44 333 200 4555

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© Wordtracker LLP
Unit 11-12 Apollo Studios, Charlton Kings Road,
London NW5 2SB United Kingdom

CEO: Andy Mindel
Technical editor: Mark Nunney
Design/production: Andrew Paulson and Neil Gardiner
Sub-editors: Julie McNamee and Jerome Smail
Chief marketing officer: Ken McGaffin
Marketing manager: Justin Deaville