

7 Days to

Profitable Blogging

How to Set Up Your Blog
For Long Term Success...
the First Time Out

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Blog Basics

A blog is sometimes called web log or weblog. At first, they were used as a personal place, for collecting links, sharing commentary – but now; they are a valid and VALUED form of communication for business people of all types. From the basics of blogging, to the intermediate areas – such as social bookmarking, and article marketing, to the advanced techniques using auto responders and more, there's something for every affiliate marketer to put into motion.

The great thing about blogs is that people read them for fun and for information – in fact, blogging is one of the few areas of the internet that covers business, pleasure, networking and play.

They do for your company what face to face marketing could only do in the past – they provide you with a real, interesting connection to your readers – personalised contact, and information about your company that will allow them to empathise, and discuss your most important points, and anything that ties in with hot button topics and your business.

Blogs give your readers and consumers a chance, not only to read and connect with you, but a chance to comment and discuss with you, and your team, the information that you're sharing – allowing them to further relate to your message. And a consumer that relates to you is a customer in waiting!

Our guide covers the very basics of blogging – it skims into areas that you'll possibly never have heard of – and cover them so that you can employ them in seven days – or less.

Day 1

Starting a blog is as simple as finding a space online to write – and the time to write.

To start though, you'll need to work through a brief list of steps to create your space.

Before you even consider your blog though, you have to think about WHAT you're going to blog about. It's important to stop and think about your blog, before starting it because, to be quite honest, without purpose, blogs are pointless. And this pointlessness will dilute your message considerably.

So, you need to think about what you're writing and why. Consider your theme – and then build some keywords around it, because for the first little while, you should try to include at least some of them in every post. You'll get archived in all of the right places that way, which will lead valuable NON COMMENT generated traffic to your blog. You'll also be commenting on blogs similar to yours and hopefully, generating more traffic based on the links you leave.

You can choose your topic, keyword, and theme simply by considering what, in connection to your business you're an expert in. Once you've looked at that, you can decide whether it's profitable, or viable to pursue it. If not, look at a related area that you can cover – your blog should always relate to your business choices, and give you interested traffic. Having said that, your blog isn't a free advertising system and nothing more – you've got to remember that people will be turned off by blatant advertising.

Choosing your keywords

Keyword Research

Keyword research is relatively simple – you can undertake basic research at <http://www.thetoolman.net/keywordtool/research.php>

You can use this to research your general keywords – and check on their

general profitability, if you're using CPM advertising. You might not be – but most blogs make a residual income from AdSense or similar, and it's not something you should overlook, for your long term stratagem. Niche blogs can earn well.

Once you've found a profitable overall keyword, you'll need to check out your competition -

<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

Though considered less effective now – it's still a good tool for finding your competition levels. You'll be able to assess your competition – basically, you're looking for a niche that's either tiny, if it's narrow, or large, if it's broader. Your narrower niches can only support a tiny amount of blogs – whereas the broader your definition, the more your niche will support – but the flip side to that, is that you've got more competition.

Once you've worked out your profitability, and competition, you can also use the keyword search at Overture to evaluate your other keywords (and get an idea on where to start blogging from).

You can place that information in a spreadsheet for reference – or use programs like article architect to extend on your research (affiliate link for article architect)

Once you've made a list of your keywords – and paced them into a spread sheet, you can take your research a step further. Article architect does it for you, but if you've not got that piece of software, or a similar one that researches keywords, you can do it manually.

Open up both Google and Yahoo, and start plugging your keywords into it – at the top you'll see a listing 1 of (a number) – you can then divide your 'competition' number by the total of your searches (a number) – that will give you a rating for that keyword – and the keyword with the 'best' ratings are the ones you'll probably want to focus on.

Article architect does this automatically – highlighting the 'optimum' keywords – and there are other pieces of software will do the same. The reason you're doing this is to see where your keywords will have the

best chance of ranking – you'll be able to find the best place to 'position yourself' this way.

Keep those keywords handy – you'll need them when you start writing content.

Got your keywords? What do you want to blog about?

Once you've got your keywords, you'll have an idea, at least, of the profitable areas of your niche that you can take advantage of. You'll be able to choose an interesting niche – for both you to write in, and your prospective readers.

You'll find that you can narrow it down pretty easily based on what you've got on your keyword lists – and what YOU feel like you want to write.

While its important to work out what you want to do with your blog, based on your view of profitability, it's also important to remember that working based on keywords alone is a sure fire way to build an impersonal, and possibly unmotivated blog for your readers.

Day 2

Look at what you're ABOUT to do from a reader's perspective

One of the more important actions anyone creating or 'cleaning up' a blog can do is look at what you're doing or about to do from the perspective of average Joe reader.

Average Joe doesn't care about profitability. He doesn't care that you're optimising to make the most out of PPC clicks. He REALLY doesn't care that you've worked hard in getting your information into the search engine – and in front of them.

ALL he cares about is what they are looking for – and they are hoping that YOUR site is the site that will provide it.

Average Joe will remain on your site and read ONE POST in for anywhere up to 30 seconds. They might then click on your PPC advertising – they might sign up for your newsletter – they might read more of your posts (yes!) or, if your site doesn't live up to what they were expecting – what they were looking for, they'll click away, either back to the search engine, or to their next option from the search engine.

Blogging isn't just about eyeballs on your page – it's about eyeballs on your page, and comments in your inbox. People have to have a reason to come back, and the simplest way to ensure that is to ensure you've got a reason for them to WANT to visit your site again.

This stickivity is what makes blogging so tantalising- if you can get it right, your blog will attract Average Joe, Average Jane and all of their friends, because the best blogs get commented on in other places – and shared with others.

So, from a reader's perspective is your blog going to fulfil a) your niche and b) give your readers quality, quantitative content that will either strike a controversial or empathic chord with them, giving them something to comment on.

Give Your Readers What They Want

Studies suggest that there's up to a quarter of the internet reads blogs – that's a lot of eyeballs. And on top of that, another study suggests that there's two blogs founded every minute. Two blogs a minute is 120 blogs an hour – and nearly 3000 a day. Take that to its logical conclusions and that's a lot of blogs competing for a less rapidly increasing source of traffic.

More than that though, blogs are competing for a specific NICHE of readers – though its true that some blogs will pull in readers from search engines, blogs still don't have the impact of static sites – and the average internet user may not know HOW to search blogs – let alone that <http://blogsearch.google.com> even exists, so you can't rely on them finding you UNLESS you are not only good – but one of the best in your niche.

Once you've got the absolute best information in your niche, you can be sure that you'll attract the right kinds of traffic, and that they'll attract MORE traffic by referencing you on their sites – bookmarking you, and more.

Blogging is all about the reader – ultimately, its not about how well you position yourself, or how strongly you optimise your site – though you can bookmark yourself, and generate a certain amount of traffic that way – the best sites have faithful readers that bookmark and discuss the site independently of ANY input from the site owner (you).

The best blogs are one or a mix of tips and advice, hobby or interest discussion, technique and connection. When blogging, if you can make a connection with your reader, then you've won most of the battle. 'Connecting' with your readers is as simple as being personable, and approachable, and giving people a chance to empathise with you.

Who is your reader?

Thinking about what your reader wants to see lets you work out WHO your reader is. Which you'll need later too, to advertise your blog effectively.

So who IS your ideal reader?

Do they have a specific interest, within your niche?

ULTIMATELY, when you know who your reader is, you can plan the creation of a blog that will fully appeal to any readers you attract. If you've planned on whom you're targeting, you'll find it far easier to write content that will continue to satisfy your readers, whilst giving you room to evolve and plan more content as you grow.

Got all of that sorted out?

Now you can move onto the technical stuff!

Day 3

Choosing your platform

There are several major platforms to blog on, but for simplicity's sake, we're only going to focus on three options: Wordpress (self hosted), Wordpress (hosted) and Blogger. All three give you strong, steady options to blog from, and all three are easy to configure – and best of all, all three should integrate with any structure you've already created or are planning to create within your business.

You may find, however, that you can't integrate the self hosted Wordpress with your site, but you should find that you can find a complimentary template on most good self hosted Wordpress blogs.

Wordpress – self hosted

By far and away, one of the most popular options for anyone that is serious about their blogging, the self hosted Wordpress option. You can install your blog anywhere on your site, and its completely within your control, which means YOU can choose what you'd like to have running – an important feature if you're looking to add the ability to do things like email the information to people, or polls. Or your own advertising in some cases.

By far and away, the easiest way to install Wordpress is via Fantastico – most cpanel hosts offer both Fantastico and the ability to install up to date Wordpress. Otherwise, you can find instructions online at <http://wordpress.org> You can choose your own themes, your own plugins – and modify it in any way you see fit.

Wordpress (hosted)

Hosted Wordpress is a secondary option for anyone whose hosting won't support the Wordpress self install options. You can grab blogs from lots of places, but places like <http://wordpress.com> won't allow you to run a commercial blog – while places like <http://thejv-press.com> do, in exchange for joining their email list.

Hosted Wordpress blogs will only ever offer the very basics of WordPress blogging – you can't control the themes on offer, which means you can't choose a specific theme – unless it's already installed on the site. The same applies to plugins.

Blogger

Blogger is a Google owned blogging system, and is highly popular with non tech savvy people. It gives you a basic frame to build on – and is less flexible than either version of Wordpress hosted blogs.

However, Blogger is a great option if you really don't want to modify anything to do with your blog, other than the theme and possibly add some surface widgets.

Blogger also lets you archive your blog on your own site, giving you all of the benefits of self hosting with none of the update headaches.

Ultimately, there are more software options for your blog – such as Moveable Type (perl based) and Typepad (hosted, by the same company that offers Moveable Type and Livejournal). Moveable type is not free for commercial purposes – another one that isn't free, but is a really solid blogging package is Expression Engine – again, you'll have to make sure that you get a valid licence for it, for the purposes you want to use it for.

What about CMS's?

I'm not recommending any of the CMS based systems, despite the fact that you can use them to build really nice, really strong blogs; you can't use some of the nicer features of blogging that you really need to take full advantage of, to get the most out of your efforts.

Most CMS systems don't have tagging protocols, track backs and pinging - though they have ways to leave comments per article or post, you'll find that they are lacking for full featured blogs.

All of the options will give you a blog that you can build a solid base from, but of course ultimately, where you want to build your blog, be it on your own website or via Blogger (to archive on your site) or hosted with

another site, you'll have to stick with what you choose – purely for the fact that you're going to be promoting it – and the last thing you want is to move on after a couple of weeks cause you've played with the others and discover you prefer one over the other.

There is NO HARM in testing them all out first and getting comfortable, if you've never blogged – or haven't explored for a while. Wordpress (self hosted) is easy to install 'vanilla' (no plugins or themes) via Fantastico – just follow the instructions presented and it'll install a simple Wordpress install in around three clicks.

Once you've gotten comfortable you'll need to decide on your theme – you'll also want to pick plugins for Wordpress, play with certain features in Blogger, and add widgets in other programs. We'll cover the plugins and other features for Blogger at the end of the book – for the moment, all you need do, now, is to find a theme you're comfortable with.

Picking a theme

Most people that found blogs have great plans – they want to write interesting content (that makes them money for their effort) and they want to be THE site that people come to for their information.

Most people don't consider what they want their site to look like though. Whether this is a deliberate oversight or if they just don't know what to do with their theme, it's probably one of the biggest 'beginner' mistakes that anyone can make.

Blogger comes with lots of pre-installed themes – or you can add your own CSS to it, to give it your 'unique' look. Its important to at least personalise any theme you choose be it on Wordpress(self hosted) or Blogger – its not possible on hosted versions of Wordpress, or at least, not as easily. There are customisable options on Wordpress.com but they cost money and they are still aren't as flexible as you can have on your own site, so aren't as customisable as you really need to present a professional image for yourself and your blog.

There are many themes that you can choose from – and it can kind of be like decorating your first house – lots of fun, but very wearing!

Wordpress:

<http://themes.wordpress.com>

<http://www.wpthemesfree.com/>

<http://www.wpthemespot.com/>

<http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2007/02/09/83-beautiful-wordpress-themes-you-probably-havent-seen/> (this might take a while to load, but its well worth it)

All of the above sites allow you to use their themes for free, though its well worth checking the licences – some are completely open – others are restricted simply to personal use.

You can also buy templates from professional designers – or look around and see who other people are using. It's a fair bet that your colleagues or favourite blogs will have designers to recommend highly.

Blogger

Unsurprisingly most Blogger template sites are actually hosted ON Blogger, so you've got a vast array of free blog themes.

<http://www.isnaini.com/2005/09/04/blogger-templates-no-60-profesional-themes/>

<http://blogger-themes.blogspot.com/>

<http://blogger-templates.blogspot.com/> - the final site also contains a lot of wonderful tips outwith the scope of this guide, about how to add more features, such as web albums (including Picasa) and forms.

Themes are easiest described as the thing that 'skins' your site to look different – more than that though, your theme controls ALL of the appearance of your blog – it's not just the wall paper on the walls, but the walls themselves in some cases.

Day 4

Blog content

Putting the cart before the horse?

Writing for the web isn't a case of collecting your ideas and then putting them online – and blog posting especially is a hidden and deceptively simple looking 'art form' all of its own.

Before you actually write one word of content though you need to think about what you're going to say. You should have your keywords organised into some sort of coherent list – and you should be weeding out the ones you're not interested in using. Once you've done that, you need to sit down and plan down your blog. You need to plan at least 20 posts and choose some sort of posting schedule.

Once you've planned your content, you can start writing your posts. In the case of WordPress, you can queue your posts as you are writing them, giving you the additional advantage of being able to post series and have them ready to go, without losing your flow. If you're using blogger, you should still write your posts as you can then simply copy and paste them into your blog on the day you want them to go live.

We always recommend that you stay at least three posts ahead of your posting schedule – that way, if you hit a dry spot, or find yourself too busy to post; you've still got 'emergency' content on tap, till you can re-evaluate.

What should a blog post BE?

Blog posts should follow one of a few formulae, but before you look at them – you should probably consider what they can and can't contain – there are a couple of 'no no's' in blogging.

First and foremost – your blog should be advertising light, if it contains any advertising at all. People don't want to talk about your latest and greatest advert – they want to read about your opinions and thoughts in your niche – they want to know that you DO actually know what you're talking about, and most importantly, they want to discuss, not be sold to.

This means that though your blog will do the job of promoting your product, you have to do it without being blatantly, obviously advertorial. You CAN write about products – talk about why you're so passionate about them – their features, the things that make you want to use them – or the services, or problems they solve.

You also don't need to just WRITE – you can upload pictures, podcasts (audio), video, multimedia – in fact, the more interactive your blog is, without intruding on the experience of the average visitor, the more traffic and return visitors you'll get and the more comments your blog will garner.

Writing for the web

Writing for the web is an art form.

You need to use short sentences, with subheadings, usually one per paragraph – those sub headings should be bolded, to stand out, because studies have proven, without a shadow of a doubt that the majority of internet users, especially those with a lower technical savvy than usual, skim read.

They skim read because we've been conditioned to believe two things about the internet: there's a lot of good information out there – but it can be incredibly hard to find, even on 'trusted' sites. Google's quality, page rank and duplicate content algorithms go a long way to helping to sift the dross from the perfect, but we're still left with people gaming the system, or worse, not being able to clearly state what we, ourselves are looking for.

Back to Average Joe for a minute. He doesn't know how to use boolean operators, in fact, it sounds too complex maths like to be of any interest to him, and many internet users don't search for things as much as ask Google questions.

Keyword searching is a really good technique to learn, but for most people typing in short phrases, or whole questions, is the way to go, complete with punctuation.

Depending on the sophistication of the software in question, they might get exactly what they are looking for, but the same studies that suggest people

skim read, also tell us that people really don't understand how to get the most from the internet.

It was best summed up in the X-files – the truth is out there – but where?

Skim reading users do have their advantages – internet writing doesn't need to be tight – just on one (tiny) topic. Blog posts can cover one tiny minutiae of a subject and then head back, stating it differently, another day.

There is one exception to this rule – when the situation or post doesn't warrant that style, don't use it. It's easy for someone to suggest that you blog using subheadings, but if you're blogging about yourself and your family, you might find it very hard.

Blogging is ultimately about YOUR BRAND and YOUR STYLE, so use it well, and you can't go wrong.

The most popular blog post formula

Blogging has fallen into several styles, like articles in newspapers and magazines. You can write and choose to use several different formulae, but ultimately, you have to find a way, and a style of writing that is comfortable for you.

The most common and most responsive way of blogging is 'problem – solution'. You take one common problem or current trend, or newsworthy topic and you 'solve' it.

Solving it can be as simple as providing your opinion, showing where you stand on any given issue, or it could be offering an actual solution to a problem many of us encounter.

Problem – solution or 'action – reaction' blogs are very popular with a vast majority of readers, but aren't without their inherent problems.

For a start, if you're 'solving' a current newsworthy item, although you are giving people a view of the fact that you are, in fact human, you'll also find that unless you are being very careful about expressing your views, you're

going to upset someone, somewhere along the lines.

This can be a good thing – being of conviction in what you're saying not only gives you the authenticity that most blogs lack, for fear of stirring up trouble, but will also promote conversation – but not all of the conversation you promote will be positive.

You have to take the good with the bad and accept that no matter what you do, you'll always ruffle some feathers – just like in real life.

Another type of highly popular blog post is the review.

It's fairly straight forward to write a review post, but you've got to be careful. If it doesn't fit with the theme of your blog, you'll find that it actually damages your overall traffic. Your blog should always be laser focussed on the niche you want to talk about, and related areas to the niche. You can't go off topic!

Another type of post is 'a list' – lists of the ten most popular (x)'s.
(x) reasons why (y) is the only option/ a very bad idea
(x) reasons why you should/should not do (y)
(x) life saving hacks.

The highly popular blog, <http://lifehacker.com> is full of these tips and tricks – an article centred on solving a problem. The problem may not be implicitly stated, but instead touched on in general terms, but the solutions are always bang on the money, and that makes this blog a must read.

Its style is easy to emulate too. What problems does your niche have – are there several solutions (that you know of?) and can you express them in simple terms?

The final type of post that is very popular and easy to write is the feature – features can be one article, or several long articles, with links to each other. They should cover something important and be packed full of information. Keyword rich, you want your readers to come away feeling like they've really learned something, and search engines to come away with a whole new platter of wonderful content to add to their indexes.

The art of writing itself

Ultimately, you have to remember that though some blogs are founded for personal gain, if you're working on it to make any sort of income at all; you need to consider that your blog is a marketing project. You're either marketing the content, your company, or in some cases, yourself.

Once you've gotten your head round that, you'll also understand why you can't use slang, or make spelling or grammar mistakes, but more importantly, you'll realise that blogging might be the one 'voice' or face you present to people, so you'll need to offer a consistent, interesting brand.

There are specific, specialised types of post that work well with blogs from an internet marketer's point of view – like information about your company. Go beyond FAQ's and contact information – and share the nitty gritty about your operation. Make your blog readers feel like they are getting in on a secret of some description – or share something that wouldn't ordinarily be online – such as your motivation for going into business.

You can also recommend other marketers that you like, without appearing too fawning, if you're honest. Talking about experience is a sure fire way to improve on both your customer image, and your professional image.

You can also....

Use your blog to archive articles and other freebies for your company.

More importantly than that though, always ensure that you've got somewhere in your blog for people to sign up to your mailing list. Giving them the option to do that will also mean that you've got multiple traffic streaming to and from you blog, and though it seems odd to set up like this at first, people ARE more likely to sign up for your newsletter (with and without incentives!) if they like what you're saying on your blog.

As an extra bonus, you can 'tie' your blog feed to your auto responder, giving people the option of signing up to receive your posts by email – thus negating the need to come to your site until you post – we've covered

that in the 'advanced' section of this e-book.

It has been suggested that there's a definite link between people that sign up for your newsletter, and people that comment on blogs attached to newsletters – and these people are the ones that are interested, interactive readers. They have a vested interest in commenting on your blog.

Style AND substance

Blogging isn't just about providing search engine content, and though its a great way to make connections with your customer base, the most important thing to remember is that shallow content breeds shallow contacts.

What this means is that if you're posting trivial stuff, people that are interested in little more than the trivial stuff will read your blog, and no one else.

Post about the 'meaty' stuff – and you're more likely to not only getting responses, but to gain responses that will help you further shape your content to fit your readers.

Though you will start out with a strong plan, and should try to stick to that as much as possible for the first few months (so as not to confuse yourself or waste the research you did in founding the blog) you should also consider the needs, wants and interests of your readers. Do THEY comment on more of one type of content? Can you write to fit the things they are raising?

Purely from a stylistic point of view, blogging works far better when you're using the active tense (Our newest division opened – we're putting the finishing touches to a launch) rather than the passive (our new division was opened – we've been working on a launch) – passive tense is both flat and doesn't contain energy. Its motionless, and doesn't give the impression of dynamism, which, when keeping a blog is very important.

Speaking of dynamic – ALWAYS be enthusiastic!

Blogging should never be a chore, and if it begins to feel that way, you

really need to stop and question WHY.

Blogging is about sharing your passion, your enthusiasm, and your experience with others, and to do that, you've got to believe in what you're writing. If you don't, then how can you expect your readers to enjoy and comment?

If you love what you blog, you'll never work a day on your blog, in your life ;)

Day 5

Promoting Your Blog

Just putting your blog online is not enough. Once your content is off to that flying start (and its perfectly acceptable to found a blog and then backdate a couple (though, not too many!) posts to give your readers something to read. So over days 1 to four, you should have decided what to blog about, created and installed your blog, made sure you've got enough content to last you at least a month and posted it.

Now what?

Well, the long and short of it is, NOW comes the hard work – NOW you have to promote your blog.

Promoting your blog will put it in front of people. Fortunately, there's a myriad of ways to do it, but, unfortunately, they all take time.

Blog Marketing Ideas and concepts

You'll want to make sure that once your blog is developed and in place that its positioned perfectly to capture your market – in doing so you'll find that your blog markets itself.

To start with though, you've got to find your niche – the USP you want to target.

Defining your blog's USP is easy – what sort of reader do you want to attract, and what are they interested in? Does your blog cover it? That's IT!

Once you've worked out your blog's USP, you can then plan where you want to advertise and approach readers – you'll also be able to track down competitors and colleagues in the arena that your blog. You'll need to know about them to know where best to comment!

Make Your Blog pull people in...

Your blog should, quite literally, mesmerise people and draw them in – interest them in reading about your opinions and information, and most of all, be completely on point for what they were expecting. Your blog should contain as much unique information as you can possibly manage, whether you've rewritten it from PLR or written your content from scratch – it should ALWAYS be unique. You'll avoid Google's duplicate content filter, and better than that, you'll get a reputation for not following the herd.

In the case of internet marketing, this does include ads about launches, but one of the biggest mistakes most bloggers (and mailing list owners!) are making is that they think that they HAVE to share the mailing information they've been given, as an affiliate.

This is a mistake because like seeing the same image over and over again, people will start to block out affiliate based ads – so instead of sharing what you've been given, verbatim, how about writing your own ads? Its unique content and will interest people far more than flashy music or templates, but having said that, you do need to consider making your blog at least a little memorable. Choose a template that speaks to you on a professional level, but is uncluttered, unfussy, and most of all, interesting and easy to use. There's no point in using a flash template or a FLASHY template if you've got little to no clue how to make it work.

Making your customers aware your blog exists is a bit harder, but not impossible.

Most internet marketers have access to forums, mailing lists and more – so use them to tell people about your blog. If you're lucky, a 'big dog' marketer will see what you're talking about, and link to you – hint, talk about them, though don't say anything untrue! - and you'll probably get some spill over. These 'big dogs' might also consider running a solo ad for you, but you may have to pay for it, and unless you're in exactly same niche as them, or at least one that overlaps considerably, this may not be all that worthwhile for you.

More ways to let people know you exist.

Blogging is an emergent technology – you have to keep this in mind,

because if its an emergent technology, so are the ways you promote your blog.

You can promote blogs via link exchanges designed specifically for blogs. There's several of them including:

<http://blogcatalog.com>

<http://poweredbywp.com>

(in this case it only accepts blogs on the Wordpress platform)

Blog catalogues are probably a very good way to get a very small, but very targeted amount of traffic – usually around a similar level to submitting to places like <http://dmoz.org> (a directory for everything online, edited by humans).

Blog link exchanges are less common, despite the fact that there's technology in place, on most every blog, to allow people to share important links, but so far, there's been very little in the way of 'automatic blogrolling' possibly because its so open to abuse.

There are sites though, that run link exchanges specifically for blogs. One of the less typical and highly popular versions of this traffic exchange for blogs is a site called 'mybloglog'.

MyBlogLog as an internet marketing hotspot

Mybloglog isn't JUST a traffic exchange – it provides 'a return on attention' – it is, in essence the bloggers blog tool. And for an internet marketer, its quite simply a community with leverage.

And as communities go, built around blogging, MyBlogLog is really quite cool. Owned by Yahoo, it does a great job of providing traffic, and growth to blogs.

And therein lies the rub.

You have to be very careful when using traffic exchanges to promote your blogs.

Most PPC based networks (unless you're lucky enough to run your own) frown on it – and some people have reported that they've been banned from ppc using it.

Even Yahoo's oddly.

Having said that, if your primary interest is traffic, you don't need to worry. MyBlogLog gives traffic until you're swamped. And its fairly targeted, as long as you categorise yourself properly.

MyBloglog's community is also a rather interesting place to hang out – you can pick up tips, tricks and find other blogs that are in your niche – again, you need to know where these people are, if only to know what your competitors and colleagues are doing.

Blogging is, when it comes down to it, a community 'thing' – you need a community around your blog for it to be a success, and on the whole, MyBlogLog provides the community aspect that most people need – at least to begin with.

OPB – other people's blogs

I've mentioned, while explaining a lot of this, that you should also know where your competitors are in relation to your blog.

Other people's blogs are also a great way to attract traffic – after all, they've already got people from your niche coming into their blog – the leg work is done – and the really big ones in your niche also have a nice secondary effect.

MOST blogs, when you comment on them, or comment about them and trackback (see the advanced strategies for more information on this!) will provide a link back to your blog, with your comment.

Sometimes its 'no follow' (a protocol introduced by Google et al. to combat spam) which means you don't get 'credit' in the search engines for your link back, but people can still click through to your blog. Its always of vital importance that if you're making a comment that you WANT associated with you that you include a link to your site. Each link has the

potential for traffic, either coming to your blog to blast you for your view point (this is still good traffic, believe it or not – if the person cares enough to come over and challenge you, they may stay to read more) or to agree with you, which most times is where you'll pick up new readers from other people's blogs.

The people that agree with you, especially on controversial topics are automatically more likely to comment on your blog – and once someone opens a dialogue, they usually continue it.

That's not to say you should troll blogs to disagree with others. You shouldn't deliberately look for a reason to pick a fight on another blog – in fact, it's usually good practice not to argue at all on blogs. If you truly believe the person blogging is presenting a 'fake' point of view, by all means call them on it. Lots of Big Dogs meet people doing that all the time, because it's human nature to take a pop at something further up the food chain – but it's important that you're doing it for all of the right reasons.

Though controversial conversations are the basis of strong blogging conversations, it's also essential that you come away from them looking like a reasonable person, with understandable and approachable way. And as with everything else in blogging the keys to this are reasonable and approachable.

Passion is important, but tempered passion, and reasoned argument are usually the best way to attract people from controversial topics – after all, would YOU feel comfortable talking to someone that screams everyone else down?

Responding to Other Blogs

Controversy aside, there are some important etiquette points to pay attention to when responding to any blog post – or to comments on your own blog:

Make sure you understand, fully, what the person is saying. You shouldn't respond to a comment in anger- it'll only lead to escalated tensions, and if something was said in a joking way, however unclear, you'll probably

come off looking like the bad guy, even if that's not how YOU meant it. People perceive comments the way they expect the tone to be – so if its out of character for you, it will, generally look far worse.

Once you're ready to respond, you should stay on topic – or at least, start on topic, if you're responding on your blog. If you're responding in the comments area, remember that its a small area and doesn't allow anywhere near as many words as you can fit in a blog post, so if its a LONG response, you should consider taking it, instead to your blog. You should then always link back – blogger ad Wordpress both track these – bloggers calls them 'backlinks' and Wordpress calls them trackbacks (more about effective use of them in the 'advanced' section at the end of the book)

Ultimately, the person that owns the blog gets to decide whether to run your comment. You can't force someone to post your comment and harassing them, again and again, will only lead to you being banned, and possibly named and shamed. Unless this blogger is an unreasonable person themselves, this will only lead to damage.

The bottom line to this is that the more readers you have, the more traffic you have – the more customers you should generate.

Day 6

The social networking and bookmarking debate

So far, we've touched on the basics of commenting, blog marketing and mybloglog – now we're going to go into slightly more advanced techniques for garnering readers.

Social networking and bookmarking has grown in popularity alongside blogging and though not all of them are designed to be used with blogging, most of them are.

There are four main ones that I always suggest people focus on

<http://digg.com>

<http://stumbledupon.com>

<http://del.icio.us.com>

<http://technorati.com>

Being fair, the last one isn't actually bookmarking, but is still, nevertheless, one of the mother lodes when it comes to promoting your blog.

Technorati.com

Technorati is quite literally, an index of all the blogs in the entire world, that it can see.

It tracks every blog post, removes the splogs, and then spits out a result based on the tags that people are using. The more people using the tag, the more traffic it gets from Technorati, because in addition to tracking what people are doing, they share what their users are doing.

Technorati is one of the best 'non community' communities out there – you can't really hang out there and talk blogs, not least, you can't talk YOUR blog, like you can on mybloglog, but you can see what other people are using similar tags to yours for, and work out how, if any way, you can use that to your advantage. At the very least, its yet another way to find other people's blogs (see Day 5).

Technorati, though not a community where you can talk YOUR blog, is still also a valuable place to get blogging tips as a whole – and find out where the hot trends are – tie them into your niche, and you'll generate more traffic.

Del.icio.us.com

Del.icio.us was one of the first bookmarking systems I ever used, and its great. It was designed for people, originally, to store the stuff that interested them, and share it with others, and access it 'on the go'. People soon discovered that like most social networking sites, delicious had a huge traffic effect for the sites that were being bookmarked regularly. This effect, further exploited by Digg (designed specifically around sharing the 'best of the community') has meant that blog bookmarking sites are gaining in both popularity and spamming. And though del.icio.us is a less effective means of bookmarking than Digg, it shouldn't be overlooked.

Another great use for delicious is to use it to categorise information and links that you want, either from a research perspective, and to offer your readers links that show you are actually involved in your community. Its amazing what a little relevant linking will do – and there's even some commentary that it works in tandem with your Google rank, because though Google looks for the votes to your page, in the form of links, it also looks for the pages you're linking to – possibly as a measure of how much you are involved in the community or niche you've chosen.

With its clean, clutter free interface, Delicious is also a great site in general to use, and was one of the first 'web 2.0' true sites.

Digg.com

Digg is, quite honestly, the mother ship when it comes to generating traffic from social networking – you can be pretty much certain that if anyone makes it on Digg, they'll soon be complaining.

NO server is designed to stream the loads that people see, after becoming a top Digg – its quite likely that though most people hope and dream of seeing traffic like that, you'll experience it once and think twice about ever attempting it again!

Digg is a great place to gain readers from certain niches – its a 'geeky' site, a lot like Slashdot, and is designed to draw attention to the sites that are in those niches, with worthwhile things to say. They do, however, have a business category, which means Internet Marketers, with the right slant, can use Digg for bookmarking.

Digging someone is sort of like saying 'I recommend this' – its a global word of mouth script, and is very, very good. Every time someone 'recommends' or diggs you, you rise back up to the top of the front page, giving you a brief chance in the limelight. If you attract more attention there, you'll be dugg again, and again, and again, or you'll sink until someone else diggs you.

There is no time limit on Diggs – no statute of expiry. So its also a great way to get traffic to older posts – and probably most importantly, you can Digg yourself. You shouldn't use your Digg account only for that, but its perfectly acceptable to submit your own site to Digg, occasionally.

The community can't – really – be gamed all that well, because its so vast, but there are ways to cheat at every social bookmarking site – Digg is SO huge though that many people find they just get...buried.

Like every community, it is, in part about friendships – the gaming effect would be really easy if everyone voted for everyone else, but, to be quite honest, most people vote for the stuff that really interests them. So once you hook them as a reader they WILL vote.

There's also no harm (whatsoever) in encouraging your readership, as it grows, to digg you, to bookmark you on delicious, or to add you to other sites – there are plugins and widgets designed specifically for that purpose – just make sure your traffic is voting for the best of your material, and you'll garner even more readers.

The main thing about Digg is its like a snowball. Gain enough momentum and people will continue to vote for you and you'll keep popping right back up to the top.

Stumbled upon.com

If by its nature, Digg is deliberate and chaotic, stumbledupon.com is just plain chaotic. Its a site designed around the 'random' browsing of most traffic exchanges and the voting of Digg. Stumbled upon though brings a surprisingly steady stream of traffic to most people – you place your site in categories and you are stumbled (randomly visited) from there.

Combine all four (and any others you personally enjoy) with MyBlogLog and there's no reason why you can't gain a couple of hundred readers a month within a few weeks.

Social bookmarking itself is one of the things that is still – pretty much – an unknown factor in traffic generation. Its important to remember that NOTHING is guaranteed, so if you do undertake any work on social bookmarking sites, track your results carefully. If you get a good result, then continue, but remember that if you've only got a finite amount of time to promote your blog, and you have to produce content first, and then drive traffic second, then you should consider cutting 'loose' anything that's hard work.

You CAN take short cuts. Bookmarking demon is one of several pieces of software that allows you to bookmark your blog without logging in, and out of each site and can speed up your time with bookmarking considerably. The only caveat to this is like every other 'auto' posting program, they can get you banned for spamming and should, generally, only be used in moderation.

Day 7

Tying it all up

The seventh day to blogging is a relatively short one – is everything you're doing, working so far?

You won't be able to evaluate traffic, but you should have a comfortable grasp of what you're going to be doing with your blog, and possibly a few fledgling commenters'.

From here on in you should be scheduling regular posting, and regular interaction on other blogs, in communities and forums, and of course, most of all, planning a strategy for continuing the building blocks you've started.

You won't know – yet – where the best bookmarking sites for you are – nor will you be able to decide whether your keywords are appropriate as yet. You WILL, however, know how easily you've found your first week, and you will be able to adapt your project overview accordingly.

You should also decide at this point, where you want to focus properly. Do you want to post daily – and can you commit to that? DO you feel posting less often will allow you to build a stronger, fluff free blog, without over committing? OR would once a week be enough?

Whatever you decide, after the first week or two, you NEED to be consistent. You should find a routine to settle into and then work towards continuing that schedule for as long as possible.

It IS possible to make money from a blog, but those blogs are at the top of their field, and this is simply because they are the best in their niche, blogs wise. As long as you aim for the best quality you can possibly produce, comfortably, you can't go wrong. It may take you a while to attract traffic, but if, in a month, you're still struggling to bring people in, you should review that side of your blogging.

While great content is the cornerstone of the best blogs – they also have a certain amount of focus on traffic driving. At critical mass (when that traffic brings in its OWN traffic) you can relax a bit on that side, but it

takes a while to get there.

You should always keep an eye on what works, and what doesn't though, because eliminating that will leave you with a leaner, stronger blog than people that don't pay attention to these things, giving you a definitive edge over your competition.

And beyond?

One month on.

Is your blog outperforming your expectations?

Every marketing strategy needs reviewed every once in a while. You'll need to tweak, to adjust, and most of all, lose the bits that you're getting nothing from.

Step One: Keep Track of Your Blog Results

Tracking your blogs stats is as simple as ABC.

First though, you've got to work out what you want to track. Do you want to track your traffic? Do you care more about comments? How about what you're earning...

Primary goal – traffic

Keeping track of your traffic is as easy as finding a stats program you like and using it. There's a great one built into cpanel called Awstats, or you could use <http://analytics.google.com>

Either way, you have to understand how to read the statistics.

Awstats is reasonably easy to understand – the most important two numbers in it are the unique visitors and your page views. You might also want to see who is bookmarking you – in the sense of coming back to visit you using a simple 'bookmark me' function in their browser.

Bookmarking beyond the simple 'favourite' concept.

Favouriting a site, or bookmarking it, is the act of saving the URL in a list that you can then access from a menu in your browser. But in recent years there's also been another way to bookmark a site – and that way is interestingly, to drive boatloads of traffic to your site, if used correctly. Its most important to remember that this form of 'bookmarking' was initially based on the browser based lists we keep on our own pc's – designed around allowing you to 'share' your favourites with others.

And then sites like Digg, Technorati and Delicious sprung up, giving people a broad range of ways to mark out the best items in another blog – sharing it, with everyone that's interested in the niche of the bookmarked blogs. If you're using social bookmarking, you should also try to keep track of roughly how well it's working out for you – how many 'diggs' you're receiving, how much traffic its referring in. You should be able to see that in your stats too, by looking for url's that refer from the sites that you're bookmarked on. If your website stats are doing their job, they WILL track this.

Once you know how well your traffic is performing, you can decide which content is driving the BEST traffic. If you've got a goal for your blog, be it making money, referrals, or simply driving traffic to your other site, you can use your traffic (and affiliate stats/earnings) to find out which posts are drawing the most traffic and work on extending on those results.

One month in you should have several 'cornerstone' posts that define the whole concept of your blog – giving your readers several strong posts that give both the tone and nature of your blog. These cornerstone posts should be among your strongest performing posts, or you should work on making a couple of stronger ones. These cornerstone posts can also be used, one month in (to give them plenty of time to index in search engines), as articles in sites like <http://ezinearticles.com> – giving you even MORE traffic coming in from relevant sites.

Advanced techniques

FeedBurner

FeedBurner is a great way to add additional options to your site, not

limited to subscription boxes, portable feed results, reposting of your information (for example, syndicating your articles is possible just by giving people your FeedBurner code. Their site updates automatically, and you control where they are clicking through to if they are interested in what you are saying in your articles. Its win – win).

FeedBurner was recently bought out by Google, giving you several amazing new options – including opening up their Pro services. Most people use a lot of the FeedBurner functions, so its highly recommended that you grab your own account and explore.

Advanced techniques with FeedBurner also include the ability to 'fix' feeds so that they are readable, and track your feed stats.

Once you've set up your feed in FeedBurner keep the URL handy.

Aweber

If you've fed your Blogger atom feed through FeedBurner this will also work, but Wordpress has feeds that work well with one of the most amazing things that Aweber offers for bloggers, and one of the main reasons I use Aweber.

Aweber has a facility that allows you to attach your blog feed to your email list, giving you the opportunity to email your list the instant you update your blog. This is a great way to automate some of your posting process. And all it takes is filling in a form in Aweber, and putting a subscription form on your site. Not so advanced really.

You'll also be able to set up a template for your posts at the same time – you can choose one of dozens of templates that can compliment your site. There is in fact, only one caveat to all of this.

If you post multiple times a day, you run the risk of annoying people – and if you don't post enough, your 'newsletters' may not be issued often enough. So you've got to set it up to post at regular intervals, which is where this gets slightly complicated.

Optimal posting is once a week – BUT...if you've got time critical

information, this might not work out well for you.

So, you need to work out how to get Aweber to send out an email once a week – if your average posting schedule is three posts a week, set it up to post your information every four posts – add one to your week's post UNLESS you only post once a week – in which case, set it to send once per week.

You'll also still be able to send 'broadcasts' announcing any time critical information – and you'll STILL be able to set up your auto responses to your list – effectively offering you 'triple duty' on your autoresponders.

Other autoresponders may not offer this service so you'll need to check with them.

If your business is more list driven than blog driven, you can also take your list and post it to your blog. You'll need to find a plugin that works with your program – and this does not (as far as I'm aware) work with Blogger.

Trackbacks

There are more ways than one to pay regard to a good blogger – if you're linking to – or someone is linking to you, MOST blogs will track this. Its called 'tracking back' – or backlinking in blogger – or, sometimes even pinging.

It is the art of linking back to a blog that you've read, and referenced – but more than that, its a way to get an effortless link BACK from a blog that YOU read, as long as they accept trackbacks.

Its an advanced technique, because you can't just 'trackback' to from any post – its important to choose only one, two or at a maximum, three blog posts to link back to.

When linking back, you have to use a special link, in the case of WordPress, its simply got 'trackback' on the end.

You use the 'regular' link in the post – this 'regular' link would be exactly

the same one as you use to access the single post – you then put /trackback/ on the end of this, and place it in the box designated trackbacks.

As far as I'm aware, Blogger has no option to do this, but might automatically post them.

No matter what you do with your blog, you'll always find that you can get more traffic, more interest, and more eyeballs to your site with a blog.

And no matter how you work on your blog, if you follow our pattern, you'll find that in a month you can make a huge impact on your website.

“To Your Greater Success”

Warmest regards,

Alex Major

NicheEmpires.com