

●Building The Perfect Wordpress Blog

By Paul Short

For anyone wanting to get set up with their own fully functional web site, quickly and easily, the simplest and most versatile software out there today is WordPress. With a hosting account and domain name you can literally have a basic but complete web site set up in minutes.

But don't let the word 'basic' fool you! WordPress has the potential to be a whole lot more than a basic site or just a blog. It can be used for anything from a personal blog where you blabber on about what you had for dinner and post pictures of your cat, right up to an enterprise class content management system on a mega news portal and just about everything in between.

As I write this, <http://www.about.com> <http://www.lockergnome.com> <http://www.techcrunch.com> portions of <http://www.cnet.com> ,Yahoo! and tens of thousands of some of the biggest and most complex sites online are running WordPress as their blogging or content management systems.

If you want a site software that will grow and scale as you and your site grows, no matter how big, keep reading. I'm about to show you just a few of the possibilities WordPress has to offer.

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●Getting Started with WordPress

To get started with WordPress, you'll need a few of the most basic tools, including:

- The latest version of WordPress from <http://wordpress.org/download/>
- A Domain Name and a Hosting Account. If you don't have a domain name, you can register one at <http://www.namecheap.com> for under \$10 a year. If you don't have a hosting account, you can get one for under \$10 a month at a provider like <http://www.hostgator.com> or <http://www.hostican.com>
- And an FTP program (File Transfer Protocol) like <http://www.smartftp.com> to upload and update files to your hosting account.

Other than the above, all the extra tools you'll need, like a text editor and unzip utility are already on your computer.

●Let's Get Your Blog On the Web!

All of the hosting accounts I mentioned above have WordPress built in as a one or 2 click install. If your host uses cPanel as the control panel for your account, look for the 'Fantastico' Icon, a little blue smiley faced guy. Click on it and chose to set up Wordpress from that page. By simply following the instructions, you'll have a very basic blog set up in seconds.

If your host doesn't have Fantastico or a self-installer of some sort, follow the steps below:

1. Log into your hosting account and set up a database using their interface. Write down your database name, the username and password.
2. On your computer, use your unzip utility to unzip the Wordpress folder you

downloaded earlier.

3. Inside that folder, you'll find a file called `wp-config-sample.php`. Open that file in your text editor and type in your database name, username and password. Now, rename that file to `wp-config.php` and save it in the same folder.
4. Use your FTP program to upload all the wordpress files and folders to your hosting account. If you want to have your WordPress blog as the front end of your site, upload the files to your root directory. If you want to have the blog in a separate folder off your main site, create that folder and upload the files to it.
5. Now open your web browser and go to `yourdomain.com/wp-admin/install.php`. Follow the instructions and be sure to use a proper email address and write down your password. Once finished with this step, your blog is installed and ready for posting... after some tweaking ;-)

● **Not Necessary, but Powerful**

● **Ways to Tweak WordPress**

Once your blog is set up, you can literally start posting right away. The site will function perfectly right out of the box. However, there are a handful of quick and easy tweaks you can do in the next few minutes that will make a world of difference to how well your site performs in the future. Now is the time to do them.

1. First of all, log into your WordPress dashboard and click the Options tab. Under General options, fill in your blog name and tag line, preferably using the most important keywords you'd like associated with your site. Below that, put in your timezone and click the Update Options button.
2. Next, click the Writing tab and at the bottom under Update Services, paste in this list and click the Update Options button:

<http://rpc.icerocket.com:10080/>
<http://rpc.technorati.com/rpc/ping>
<http://api.feedster.com/ping>
<http://api.moreover.com/RPC2>
<http://ping.syndic8.com/xmlrpc.php>
<http://api.my.yahoo.com/RPC2>
<http://www.bitacoles.net/ping.php>
<http://www.blogdigger.com/RPC2>
<http://www.blogoole.com/ping/>
<http://www.blogoon.net/ping/>
<http://www.blogpeople.net/servlet/weblogUpdates>
http://www.blogroots.com/tb_populi.blog?id=1
<http://www.blogshares.com/rpc.php>
<http://www.blogsnow.com/ping>
<http://www.blogstreet.com/xrbin/xmlrpc.cgi>
<http://blog.goo.ne.jp/XMLRPC>
<http://bulkfeeds.net/rpc>
<http://coreblog.org/ping/>
<http://www.lasermemory.com/lsrc/>
<http://www.newsisfree.com/xmlrpctest.php>
<http://ping.amagle.com/>
<http://ping.bitacoras.com>
<http://ping.blo.gs/>
<http://ping.bloggers.jp/rpc/>
<http://ping.blogmura.jp/rpc/>
<http://ping.feedburner.com>
<http://ping.myblog.jp>
<http://ping.rootblog.com/rpc.php>
<http://ping.weblogalot.com/rpc.php>
<http://ping.weblogs.se/>
<http://www.popdex.com/addsite.php>
<http://rcs.datashed.net/RPC2/>
<http://rpc.blogrolling.com/pinger/>
<http://rpc.weblogs.com/RPC2>
<http://www.weblogues.com/RPC/>
<http://xping.pubsub.com/ping/>

The above is a list of update services (Ping Sites) that will automatically be notified every time you make a post.

What's important about this list?

All the above sites basically add a link to their pages every time your blog is updated. Because the above sites either a) get and send you small amounts of traffic or b) are constantly being crawled by search engines that come back and crawl your site, you'll get some traffic and inbound links just by the act of posting content on your blog.

With a regular site that doesn't use WordPress or some form of blogging software, you'd have to physically go out and get links and traffic by yourself. WordPress does it for you. You won't get a lot from this, but some is better than none in the beginning.

3. Click on the Permalink tab. On that page you'll see several options for how the links to your posts will be structured. The date based format is fine, but you can actually get really creative here.

For instance, with a date based format, your links would look like this:

`yourblog.com/2007/06/23/your-post-title/`

I've tested several different formats and one that's equally as good and arguably much better for search engines is:

– `yourblog.com/123/your-post-title.php`

which can be achieved by selecting the Custom option and pasting the following into the text box:

`/%post_id%/postname%.php`

After making your decision, click the Update Permalink Structure button to save the changes.

4. Next click the Users tab and then Your Profile. Fill out the form with your own information and click Update Profile to save the changes.
5. Now click Manage and then Categories. This is where you get to specify a few categories for your blog. Make sure they're broad enough where you'll have lots of material to blog about in each one but not so broad as to be too general.

In the Category Name field, type in the name of your category with proper capitalization because that's what will be visible in your blog's side menu. In the Category Slug field is what will be in the actual url pointing to that category.

For example, if your category is called “Cat Pictures” your category slug could be “cat-pics” or “cat-pictures” or even “catpics.” What's important is that both the description and slug are self explanatory and contain keywords that help both human readers and search engines determine what they will find when they follow that link.

Your WordPress blog is now configured better and more SEO friendly than approximately 75% of the millions of other blogs out there. You already have an edge in the blogging game.

But your blog still has that awful blue blob at the top...

● Customizing Your WordPress Blog

You'll find literally thousands of free WordPress themes out on the net. Most are ready to download and install on just about any standard WordPress blog, but before you go out and find the prettiest or coolest one, there are a number of things to consider:

1. What will be the main type of content you'll be publishing? If the bulk of your content is going to be text, in the form of articles or news, you'll want a theme that showcases that content in an easy to navigate and easy to read format for your site visitors. Something with the posts as close to the top of the page as possible, comfortable font face and dark text on a light colored background.

Preferably black text on white.

2. Does the template organize the content properly? Generally, on the front page of your blog, your latest post is at the top and older posts are below in descending order. But what about the side columns? Are they wide enough and offer enough flexibility to add common elements like a newsletter signup form, a MyBlogLog widget, your Flickr photostream, etc.? Those things aren't necessary, but they are things you want to think about when choosing a blog theme.
3. In the same vein, if you want to have lots of things in your side columns, will a 2 column template suffice, or should you go with a 3 column?
4. Will you be placing ads on your blog? What style and size will they be? Will they be inserted in the side columns, the content, etc?

It's best to plan out your objectives and know what you'd like to achieve with your blog before choosing a template. Spend a little time surfing around various blogs and looking through WordPress template directories like the following:

<http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/>

<http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/>

<http://themes.wordpress.net/>

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

<http://www.wordpresswow.com>

<http://wpgarden.com/>

<http://templatextreme.com/products/wordpress-themes/>

<http://www.bloggingpro.com/archives/category/wordpress-themes/>

● Installing Your New WordPress Theme

Once you've decided on a WordPress theme you'll need to install it for it to show up on your site. Follow the steps below:

1. Download the zipped folder from the site where you found the theme and use

your unzip utility to unpack or unzip the folder. Then check that folder for a readme.txt file or something similar to find out if there are any special instructions you need to know.

2. Use your FTP program to upload the files to your site. Generally, you'll be uploading the files to your /wp-content/themes/ folder.

3. Log into your WordPress dashboard and click the Presentation tab at the top. Under where it says Available Themes, click on the new theme to install it on your blog. Now visit your blog's main page to make sure it looks ok on your site.

Some of the more complicated themes out there, or ones that were meant to be customized by the blogger may require extra work. Since there are almost an infinite number of possible customizations, getting into that is beyond the scope of this guide, but if you have a little experience with building or customizing sites already, you can easily do so by clicking the Theme Editor link and doing it right from that area of the WordPress dashboard.

●Turbo Charge your WordPress Blog with Plugins

Here's where WordPress shows it's true power. If you thought there were a lot of themes and templates around for WordPress, there's probably just as many plugins. Plugins are little scripts that bolt on to WordPress and add extra functionality that WordPress doesn't have out of the box.

So which are the best ones? You're going to hate me for this... It Depends, on a lot of things. Like, the purpose of your blog, the content you'll be featuring, is it a personal blog or a business blog where you'll be making money? ...and so on.

Generally though, you'll need something in the way of comment spam fighting and management, SEO, Social Networking and bookmarking and tagging.Plus a few others.

The following list is what I personally use on several of my blogs and the added functionality they provide are things I simply couldn't live without now.

●Basic Plugins Every Blog Should Have

1. Akismet Spam Protection.

On almost every blog I've ever put online, and I've had/have a lot, the first comment I get is spam. Akismet helps solve this problem by connecting to a central database at wordpress.com and checking each comment your blog gets against a huge database.

If you log into your WordPress dashboard and click the Plugins tab, you'll see a short list of plugins and Akismet is one of them. It's already preloaded into WordPress when you download it. That's how important it is.

Activate this plugin and follow the instructions for setting it up on your blog. It'll save you a lot of time and headaches by helping you manage the inevitable spam all blogs get.

2. Google Sitemaps Generator for WordPress

<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/google-sitemap-generator/>

This plugin will create a google sitemaps compliant XML-Sitemap of your WordPress blog. Currently homepage, posts, static pages, categories and archives are supported. The priority of a post depends on its comments. More comments, higher priority! If you have external pages which don't belong to your blog, you can also add them to the list. This plugin will automatically notice Google whenever the sitemap gets regenerated.

3. All In One SEO Pack for WordPress

<http://downloads.wordpress.org/plugin/all-in-one-seo-pack.zip>

Does just as the name suggests – it creates the proper META tags, optimized titles, allows you to specify titles, prevents search engines from indexing duplicate

content, etc. Basically, it takes the headache out of onsite SEO and allows you to concentrate on writing and generating traffic instead.

4. Sociable Bookmarking Plugin - <http://push.cx/sociable>

One of the best ways to get traffic to your blog is through links from other sites, especially from Social Bookmarking sites. The Sociable plugin places a row of social bookmarking buttons at the bottom of your posts that allow your readers to easily bookmark your pages at their favorite sites.

● Statistics Plugins

Since knowing how many visitors and subscribers a site has, where they come from and what they do while on your site is important in the grand scheme of things, I've included 2 of the best statistics plugins out there today.

1. FeedBurner Feed Replacement Plugin

http://www.feedburner.com/fb/a/help/wordpress_quickstart

The plugin will detect all ways to access your RSS feed and redirect them to your FeedBurner feed so you can track every possible subscriber. It will forward for your main posts feed, and optionally your main comments feed as well. Just get the plugin at the link above and install it according to the instructions on that page.

Once it's installed and you've signed up for your free FeedBurner account, you'll be able to add different functionality to your blog, like stats on how many feed subscribers you have, what type of feed readers those subscribers use, you'll be able to add different social bookmarking links right inside your feed, etc.

Feedburner even has an email management service that will email out new posts to people every day. It's a powerful little service and best of all, it's free.

6. WordPress Automattic Stats Plugin

<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/stats/>

Installing this stats plugin is much like installing Akismet, all you need is to put in your [API Key](#) and the rest is automatic.

Once it's running it'll begin collecting information about your pageviews, which posts and pages are the most popular, where your traffic is coming from, and what people click on when they leave. It'll also add a link to your dashboard which allows you to see all your stats on a single page.

● Multi-Media Plugins

One way to pump up your blog is by using a variety of content like videos and photos. Not only will these offer more interest to your readers and visitors, but it'll make your blog more sticky and also offer more promotion and traffic generating avenues.

Following is a short list of plugins to make adding a more diverse amount of content easier:

1. Embed Video Plugin

<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/embedded-video-with-link/>

This one does just what the name suggests. Not only can you use it to make adding video from video sharing sites like <http://www.youtube.com> and <http://www.metacafe.com> easier, you can also use it to help add your own Flash, WMV, Camtasia presentations, etc. I'll write more on the benefits of adding video to your blog later on.

2. Flickr Photo Album <http://tantannoodles.com/toolkit/photo-album/>

If you take your own photos and want to display them on your blog, one of the easiest ways to do so is to just upload them using the built in file uploader. However, that can get disorganized quickly. So why not open an account on <http://www.flickr.com> and let that service handle the storage and organization of

your photos for you.

Then, just download the Flickr plugin and pull your photos from there.

The WordPress Flickr Photo Album plugin will pull in your Flickr photosets and display them as albums on your WordPress site. There is a pretty simple template provided, but you can customize the templates 100% to match the look and feel of your own site.

3. PodPress – WordPress Podcasting Plugin

<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/podpress/>

If you've been online or even watch television regularly for any length of time, you've probably heard of Podcasting. Podcasting is basically a name for creating your own audio files, like commentary, interviews, etc. and offering them to your blog readers in an easy to use format.

Podcasting also gives you extra promotion and traffic opportunities that I'll talk about later.

●Moneymaking – Ad Management Plugins

Unless your blog is a strictly personal site, or one that is not monetized in any way, you'll probably be placing ads on it. You can easily do this by editing the theme code using the built-in WordPress theme editor and everything will work fine.

However, if you're serious about making money with your blog, you'll want the extra functionality that the following plugins offer.

1. AdSense Deluxe Plugin

<http://www.acmetech.com/blog/adsense-deluxe/>

This plugin is loaded with a ton of features and functions for managing the use of AdSense or Yahoo! Publisher on your blog. Once configured, it allows you to place

ads anywhere in your posts just by using simple tokens or bits of code that you copy and paste wherever you want the ads to show up.

It does a lot more than that, like allowing you to change the format of your ads, change colors and placement, etc.

2. aLinks Plugin - <http://www.headzoo.com/alinks>

If you promote any type of affiliate products, this plugin is for you. All you do is set up your affiliate links and keywords in a special area of the wordpress dashboard and just write your blog posts as you normally would.

Whenever the aLinks plugin detects one of your keywords in your blog posts, it automatically links that keyword using the associated affiliate link you specified.

● **Advanced WordPress Plugins**

The following plugins are far more advanced than the ones previously mentioned. They require knowledge of PHP and the ability to edit the WordPress code, but are infinitely powerful. The ones I included here give you the ability to actually turn your blog into an automatically updating news style site by pulling in and sorting content from other blogs and RSS feeds.

How you use these plugins are up to you. I have no control over that.

1. FeedWordPress - <http://projects.radgeek.com/feedwordpress>

Pulls content from other blogs, news feeds like Google News, Yahoo! News, topix.com, etc and reposts them on your wordpress blog, automatically. If you have the urge to create your own news aggregator, or just swipe content from other sites for free, this plugin will do that for you.

2. WP-O-Matic - <http://devthought.com/wp-o-matic-the-wordpress-rss-aggregator/>

Does basically the same thing as the plugin mentioned above. It pulls content from

almost any site with an RSS feed and posts it to your blog automatically.

●Pulling It All Together

Now that the basics are covered and you can see how powerful and flexible WordPress can be, lets start pulling some of this info together. I'll start by answering a few of the most common questions I've been asked privately, or seen asked on forums.

1. What's the difference between a blog and a regular web site?

Essentially, a blog IS a web site. But the similarities stop there. In it's simplest form, a blog is a web site that uses a simple content management system that allows you to easily organize and publish material online. Blogs usually have extra functionality than regular web sites. Here are a few of the most obvious ones:

- Blog software has the ability to organize and categorize your content by date or keywords, already built in. You don't have to worry much about internal linking, archives or categories because with a few minutes of configuration in the admin panel, it happens automatically for you.
- Blog software outputs an RSS feed. RSS gives your readers a chance to subscribe to your blog with a special reading software so that whenever you add new content or a blog post to your site, they're notified automatically. They don't have to come back to your site to discover your new content.
- Commenting forms – On every post you write, WordPress attaches a comment form where your readers can leave their comments and you can discuss the content with them.
- Trackbacks & Pingbacks – When writing a post on your blog, if you link to another blog within that post, WordPress automatically tries to notify that blog and add a link back to your post in their comment section. Essentially, WordPress says

“Hey You, I just wrote something about you! Now come and look at it.”

- Because they're so easy to use, blogs are usually updated more frequently than regular web sites where it's a pain to manually design, link and update the site. Blogs are so easy to use that you can concentrate on content only after the initial setup.

There's more, but that's usually subjective and depends on the blogger's personal reasons or definitions of what a blog is.

2. How often should I post to my blog?

Another highly subjective question. The obvious (and cheeky) answer would be “as often or infrequent as you feel like.” But I'll try and do better than that.

You see a lot of people on forums say that the ideal amount of posting for a business blog is 2-4 times a week. However, if you look at the biggest and most popular blogs on the internet, like <http://www.boingboing.net> , <http://www.gizmodo.com> or <http://slashdot.org> , you'll see that they have multiple authors posting anywhere from 10 to 30 times a day or more!

When I was heavily into blogging, my posting frequency was 3-6 times a day but every time I bumped that frequency up to 8-10 times a day, my traffic almost doubled for that day.

My best advice is to post to your blog as often as you can sustain. Meaning – if you have the time and energy to post 3 times a day on a regular basis, do it. If you can only post 4 times a week, do it. But, above all, be consistent. If you post regularly for a while and then suddenly stop for a couple of weeks, you'll most likely lose the readership you built up the first go around.

3. Where do I get content for my blog?

Your own brain would be a good place to start. If you'd rather not go that route, you can get ideas for content any number of places.

- Read other blogs in your niche and write about what they are, but add your own concerns, twists, personality, experiences and opinions to it.

- Supplement the above with facts, quotes and citations from major media, Wikipedia, articles, magazines, your local newspaper, etc.
- Find content in any number of article directories.
- Press releases from services like PRWeb.com. It's also a great way to find up to the minute news to post.
- Get other people to contribute material to your blog. Some people love writing and will even write for you in exchange for links back to their sites. Some will write for pay or a percentage of ad revenue, or some will write just to see their name in lights.
- Hire people from services like <http://www.elance.com> , <http://www.scriptlance.com> or <http://www.workaholicsforhire.com> Oftentimes you can have short, nicely keyworded articles written for \$5 or less by people at those services.
- PLR content (Private Label Rights). If you look closely in the right places, you can find an almost endless amount of fresh content and article packs that people sell the rights to. Meaning, you can use it, change it and republish it however you want to.
- You can use one of the plugins I listed previously to pull snippets of content from other sources and rearrange it into a usable form. Lots of legit sites out there do this. Think about it – does Google write all their own news? No. It's all pulled in from other sites and sources.
- User generated content. Visit <http://slashdot.org> one of the longest running and most prolific blogs/forums out there. It gets 99.99% of it's content from it's own readers. Readers submit news stories and the Slashdot editors decide what to post on the site out of all those submissions.
- Blogging isn't just about text anymore. Think about the Podcasting craze. Can you talk intelligently about a subject? If so, turn on your microphone and record it. Upload it to your blog and manage it using the PodPress plugin I mentioned earlier.
- Do you have a webcam or digital video camera that hooks up to your computer? Record a video of yourself talking or doing something related to the subject matter

of your blog. It's free original content.

- Don't want to or not comfortable doing your own videos? Go to <http://www.youtube.com> , <http://www.metacafe.com> , <http://www.tubetorial.com> or any of the dozens of other video sharing sites out there and find related videos to embed into your blog using the video plugin I linked to previously.

- Got a digital camera? Take pictures and upload them to your blog. In almost any niche you can write on, readers love photos.

There are tons of combinations of content you can post to your blog from an almost endless number of sources or ideas. You just have to be creative in your thinking. But most of all, if you are looking to build up your blog readership, make your content compelling. Keep your readers wanting to come back for more.

4. How do I get traffic to my blog?

I could write endlessly about this subject. You can use all the same ways to get traffic to a blog as you would getting traffic to a regular website, and you should be doing so. What I'll do is cover a few of the traffic generating methods that are (more or less) specific to blogs.

- WordPress blogging software outputs what's known as an RSS feed. What that does is present the same content you publish on your blog, except in a different format. The blog you see in your web browser is presented using html. RSS feeds use a different format, usually xml.

That xml format can be used or consumed in many different ways than regular html.

People with news readers or RSS readers like <http://www.bloglines.com> , <http://www.google.com/reader/> or any number of RSS reading programs on their computers can subscribe to your RSS feed and any time you add a new post, the reader is automatically notified. They don't have to constantly check your site for new posts.

What? They can get my content without going to my site? How will that build my traffic?

a) Publish partial feeds so that the reader has to click through to your blog to get the rest of the content.

b) They'll have to actually go to your site to leave a comment on your posts.

c) And this is the most important part – make sure what you write or post is compelling enough for your readers to do a) and b) above, or both.

RSS also allows your content to be used by other sites, effectively spreading your content to more places online than you can post it to yourself. It's known as syndication.

- Leave comments on other people's blogs. Read other people's blogs regularly and when you have something intelligent to say, post a comment on their blog, with a link back to yours, of course.

Not only does this create a link back to your blog that'll bring some traffic and SEO benefits, by commenting you're creating a relationship or rapport with the other blogger. Now they're aware of you and your blog. They'll come and check out your site and if they like your content they'll subscribe to your RSS feed, and, in the future, if you write something compelling, they may link directly to you in one of their posts, or add your link to their blogroll.

- Which brings me to one of the most important traffic generating method there is.

Networking with other bloggers and webmasters. This is something you should be doing regardless of whether you have a blog or not.

Build genuine relationships with others in your niche and you'll also build status. When more and more people look up to you as an authority on a subject, even if much of it just comes from who you know, traffic will grow.

- While we're on the subject of linking, lets talk about social bookmarking.

There are a ton of sites out there like <http://del.icio.us> that are essentially online versions of your browser's bookmarking or favorites function. The cool thing about these sites though, is that they offer the ability for people to bookmark sites or pages they're interested in and share them with others.

Earlier, I mentioned a WordPress plugin called Sociable. What it does is automatically place a number of little social bookmarking buttons on your blog posts, which makes it easier for your readers to bookmark your site and posts at those social bookmarking sites, where not only other potential readers see your link, but search engines as well.

For a huge list of social bookmarking sites, visit the following link:

<http://www.blogmarketingtactics.com/social-bookmarking/social-bookmarking-top-links.html>

5. How do I make money from my blog?

There are any number of ways to make money from your blog and I'll briefly get into a few of them before moving on to the next section of this report.

- AdSense, YPN, or one of the other contextual advertising programs available. Those are probably the quickest and easiest to set up since the ads are automatically geared toward the subject matter of your content.

- Similar to and alternative to contextual ads, would be other ad serving programs like <http://www.auctionads.com> – which uses the Ebay affiliate program and custom programming on their end to serve keyword based ads to your blog. When someone clicks through one of your ads and buys a product from an Ebay seller, you get paid a small percentage.

Amazon affiliate program, where you place ads on your blog for books and other products. Someone purchases through your links and you're paid a percentage of the purchase.

Promote affiliate products from any number of the affiliate networks out there, like <http://www.clickbank.com> , <http://www.cj.com> , or almost any niche product site that offers an affiliate program.

Offer your own products for sale. If you're an expert on a certain subject, especially one where information products are in demand, you can write up your own reports, ebooks or whitepapers and promote them on your blog.

Use your blog to build an email list or newsletter list that you can email content and offers to over and over, in addition to the blog itself. There's even a plugin available that helps with placing the Aweber email list management subscriber forms on your blog. You can get it here: <http://www.karlwarren.com/d/wpautoresponder.php>

In fact, I'm going to take this opportunity to build the last 2 or 3 points into a full fledged blogging business plan.

●The Ultimate Blogging Business Plan

In my opinion, and something I'll be proving soon, the bigger blogs out there are leaving a lot of money on the table.

I've been watching blogs and blog networks for going on 5 years now and have come to the conclusion that they're woefully under monetized. Most out there strive to get traffic and send it out through ads, for pennies per click, action or impression. They're practically giving away the traffic and eyeballs for nothing... compared to what they could be getting if they got a little more creative.

All you have to do is look at some of the products in the AdSense ads that are getting the best conversions - consistently showing up in the top ad spots on these blogs.

I know, the conversion rates from clickthrough to purchase on some of these sites is around 1%, but lets do some math:

Blog visitor clicks on an AdSense ad and the blogger makes \$0.10 for the click. If the blog sends 100 people through that ad, the blogger makes a grand total of \$10.00.

On the advertiser's site, one of those 100 clicks converts to a paying customer, who just purchased a \$35.00 ebook, whitepaper or special report where the advertiser 'profits' \$20.00 from the sale, after paying overhead and ad costs.

Essentially, the blogger just lost \$20.00. If they had written and offered their own \$35.00 ebook they would have profited \$30 instead of \$10 if you set aside \$5 for overhead and processing fees, etc.

Very general and not all blogs would benefit from what I outlined above. However, some blogs, especially ones where premium content on the subject matter (paid ebooks and reorts) is in high demand, could certainly do well with this model.

Another thing I've noticed is that most of the A-List blogs out there don't collect email addresses or send out email newsletters. Balk at this if you will, but email marketing is still alive and well in a lot of mass appeal niches and industries.

Blog reader Ben knows nothing about RSS feeds or Bloglines. He doesn't even realize he's reading a blog, but, he knows email. Ben is the type of guy who'll consume almost any content he knows how to consume.

Ben signs up for that blog's email newsletter. It can be summaries of the blog content where ne clicks and revisits the blog to finish up an article, or a weekly newsletter containing unique content not found on the blog. In both examples, Ben is exposed to that blog's content in a format he's familiar with... and that content contains an ad or two, for the bloggers own product.

Blogging is all about content, sharing content, discussing that content and the overlying or underlying issues... and if you're into it to make money, it's about monetizing that content.

So lets take this and expand on it a bit more.

What niche or industry should you build your blog around?

In a few words: A Hot One where both physical and digital products are bought over and over by rabid consumers.

Golf, health products like weight loss and anti-aging, sex related products like books or courses on how to get dates or satisfy women, mind control products like CDs or special reports on how to control certain aspects of your own or someone else's mind, hobby type products where people spend outrageous amounts of money to support their hobbies, ie: collectibles, antiques, cigars, etc.

The list goes on, but the key to remember here is personal indulgence

Step 1. Find high or reasonably paying affiliate programs online, for products related to your chosen niche.

This may seem backwards right now, but knowing what your readers will be buying beforehand is a lot simpler than getting readers and then trying to figure out what they want. This way, you can gear your writing toward the subject matter of the products, which, in turn, draws in readers interested in those products.

Lets use the subject of health for our example. More specifically, healthy eating. This niche allows for a wide range of both physical and digital (info) products to be promoted, plus, it's a topic with mass appeal. Everyone wants to be healthier. The amount of vitamins, supplements, herbal products and reports, diet plans, etc. that can be sold over and over in this niche is almost endless.

Step 2. Get your blog up and running.

Use what you've learned earlier in this report to get your blog online. Get a domain name, hosting, install and configure WordPress with a great template and plugins, etc. Be sure the look and feel of the site is in keeping with the niche you chose.

I recommend using a three column template for the type of blog we're building, with a narrow column on either side and a wide content column in the middle. The reason for this is because you'll have space in the top of the left-hand sidebar to paste in your email sign up form. In the top of the right side column you'll be placing an ad for your affiliate products.

Step 3. Sign up at an email list service provider.

I recommend [Aweber](#), mainly because I know their service is good and well suited to the type of list building we'll be doing here. Familiarize yourself with their service and how it works.

Step 4. Organize your list of affiliate products.

In step 1, you found affiliate programs for products related to your niche. Organize

these products in a text file so you have your affiliate links handy, along with brief product descriptions, the benefits of each, etc. Keep that on file so you can build it over time, or remove low converting programs.

Step 5. Your email newsletter content.

On top of writing your blog content, you don't want the extra work of writing an email newsletter every week, so either write or hire someone to write health related content for you. Ideally, that email content will be closely geared toward your affiliate products without being blatant ads.

Each email that goes out will be short and 'newsy' or a fact snippet of about 200-300 words with a link or ad to the affiliate product in the middle and of course a link back to your blog at the end.

Have at least 50-100 of those emails written, then paste them all into your Aweber autoresponder so that when someone signs up for your list, the email series is automatically sent out each week, with your ads in them.

Step 6. Write, or have written, a short report or giveaway.

Have a short 15 – 30 page, high quality report written on a hot, in-demand topic related to your niche. This is the report you'll be giving away to entice people to sign up for your list. That report itself can also include an ad or 2 at the end for the affiliate programs you'll be promoting.

Design or hire out the design of an eye-catching, professional quality report cover in 2 sizes: one small one that'll fit neatly into the sidebar of your blog and one larger one to include as the front cover of your PD report.

Include links back to your blog and mention your list as well, since the report may get passed around as a free giveaway online. In fact, you could even encourage

people to pass it around as an extra free promotion tactic.

Step 7. Finish Configuring Your Blog

Now that your list management, free report, email series and affiliate product links are taken care of, go back to the blog you set up and add your email signup form to the top left sidebar of the template. Above it, place the small report cover and a few words about getting the report for free when readers sign up for your list.

In the top of the right column, place a photo of one of your affiliate products with some compelling text and link it using your affiliate link for that product.

All that and you haven't even written a blog post yet! Which brings us back to that old question **“Where do I get content for my blog?”**

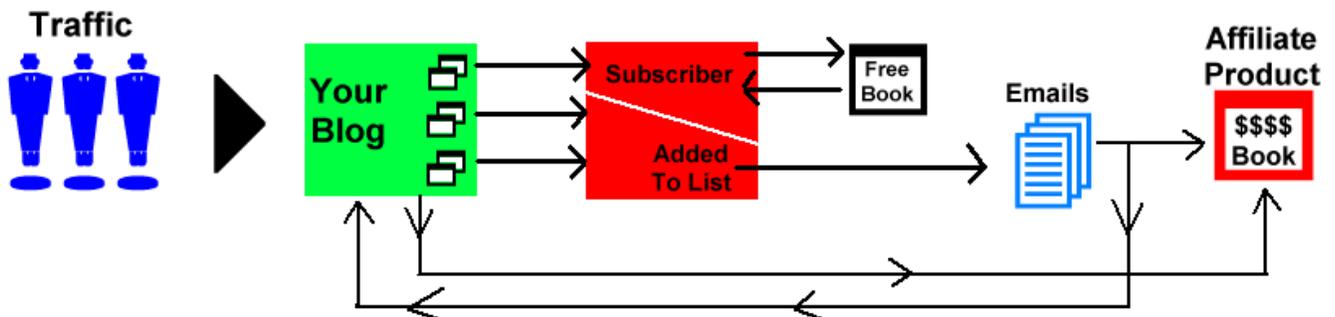
Go back to the section on content we talked about earlier and get some ideas, but for now the main thing is to just start getting frequent, consistent, top quality content up there.

So here's a basic outline of what's happening so far:

1. Readers are attracted to your blog because of the top quality content you offer. They come into your blog from links on other sites, comments you've made on other blogs, links where other bloggers have linked to your material, search engines, etc.
2. They read your posts and want more. So they a) sign up for your email series in order to get your free report, b) subscribe to your RSS feed or c) bookmark your blog on their computer or at one of the many social bookmarking services.
3. Either way, some of them will want to be exposed to your content or bring in

new readers just by their actions.

4. After being exposed to your content and ads a number of times, some of them will purchase products through your affiliate links, either once, or multiple times.



Pumping it up even further

Lets go back to the content issue again and I'll suggest another idea, one which I've tried and had some success with in the past. Lets talk about hiring writers to write your blog for you.

As I mentioned earlier, there are people out there that are all too happy to write or provide content on blogs in exchange for links back to their own sites. You'll find a few of those people, but they're notoriously unreliable. Once they find out how much work is involved or get it in their head that you're making money off their free labor, they drop off the planet.

In order to keep writers, good, eliable ones, you'll need to compensate them for their effort. There's a number of ways you can do this. You can simply pay them a couple bucks per post and a lot are fine with that. They know that if they make X posts in a

week or month, they'll get \$YYY.

What I've found to be most effective though, is to pay bloggers using a simple performance based plan. Essentially, pay them a percentage of revenue generated from the content they write. Not only does this give them the incentive to write more, it gives them a feeling of ownership and pride when something they write gets more traffic or gets mentioned on a high profile site. So once they get a taste of that aspect, they write even better and more frequently.

Notice how, in this section of the report, I haven't mentioned placing AdSense or other contextual advertising on your blog yet. I mentioned it earlier on in a somewhat negative way, but in the case of hiring writers on a performance based payment plan, I'm going to make an exception.

Allow the writer to place their own AdSense ads on any content they write, so they get 100% of that revenue only.

Yes, there's a bit of a trade off here. Some readers will be leaving your blog through those ads and you won't be making a penny off them. But, it more than balances out when you consider that your blog is being written by a real human being and you barely have to lift a finger to get the sales of affiliate products through the ads on the blog, the building of your email list and years worth of potential affiliate sales from both the blog and the list.

Essentially, you're getting a site full of great content that you didn't write yourself, a growing email list and sales... for not much more than the initial setup and a little maintenance now and then. And everyone's happy because everyone involved is getting paid.

Once you have some experience with this process and have spent time refining and testing a system that you're satisfied with, it's wouldn't be too hard to replicate that system across other blogs. Essentially, you could create your own blog network by doing this with more and more blogs.

You just follow all the steps for each blog. Once a blog is ticking along nicely and you've tested various affiliate products to find which convert into sales the best, and you've found and trained a writer to write for you, move on to the next blog.

You can even add a couple of twists to this plan.

The most obvious way to do what I mentioned above would be to set up a new site and domain name for each blog. That will work and is the basis for the larger blog networks like <http://www.weblogsinc.com> , <http://www.gawker.com> and <http://www.b5media.com>

But why not simplify our process even more by building one large content site that has multiple blogs on the same site?

I know, you read the forums and SEO blogs and the experts out there will say that you should have a different site for each niche. Having a site where one section talks about cars and the other talks about health will throw the site off topic and ruin it's search engine ranks or confuse users and readers.

Baloney.

Tell that to the folks at huge content portals like About.com, Wikipedia, Wordpress.com and any other big site that covers just about any topic under the sun, and under a single 'umbrella' domain. Or better yet, ask the so called experts to explain their way out of it and watch them squirm.

It's a heck of a lot easier to start small and keep building onto a site that has momentum and growing authority than to start all over again with trying to get a brand new site going.

Just keep different niche content grouped together and well organized in themed files, folders and subdirectories, give it all an easy to navigate structure and keep building.

A for worrying about search engines, let this sink in: Search engines rank **pages**, not **sites** when someone does a keyword search and some of that weight falls on the

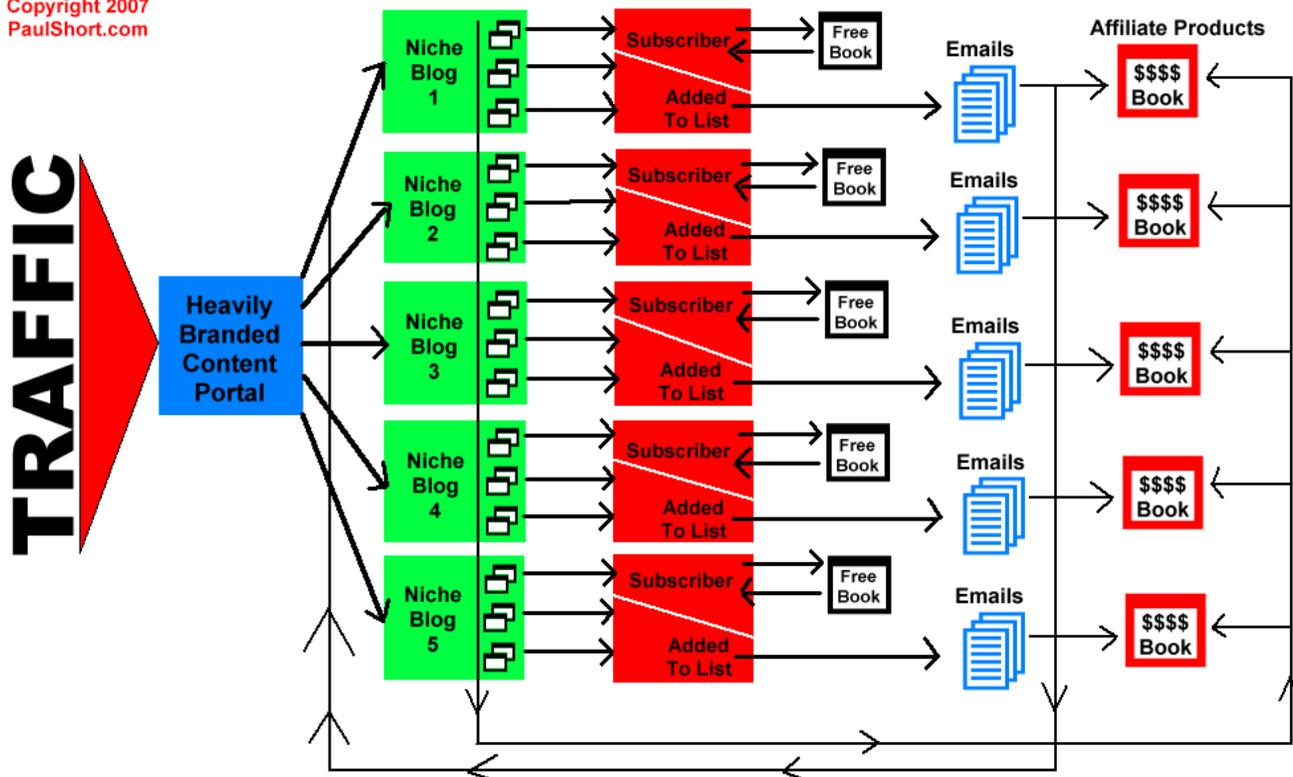
authority of the site the page is on. Think about it, building a single big site long term gives it authority, which helps its pages to rank higher.

For a content based network, it's only logical to build it as large as possible so new content feeds off the authority of the old.

Confusing readers? Readers who are interested in health and vitamins also have cars, and mortgages, clothing, play golf... By adding a new section to your site that deals with a different niche, you'll have the advantage of the crossover traffic as well.

So let's get a visual of that big content portal and how you can maximize its revenue generating power.

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In the diagram above, what you're seeing is simply an expanded version of our previous outline.

If you were to replicate our system using a single main domain and use folders and subdirectories instead of building a separate site for each niche, it would look something like the above.

Now how do you manage all that and organize it into a logical setup while still having all the benefits of separate blogs?

If you were only going to concentrate on a certain industry, like health where there are a lot of different sub-niches, you could probably manage by just installing a new version of a wordpress blog into each subdirectory. But if you're going to have any more than 5 or 6 blogs, or want to be prepared to blow it out and have dozens or hundreds of blogs and writers in the future, there's a version of WordPress out there called WordPress MU (Multi User)

WordPress MU was originally built for people who wanted to offer blog hosting to the public, or for organizations and non-profits wanting to offer blogs to their employees and users. It would serve our purposes well here though, because it allows you to set up as many blogs and writers as you want with just a single installation of WordPress.

You can learn more about and download WordPress MU here
<http://mu.wordpress.org>

● Conclusion

What I've outlined above is just one way to use WordPress to power one or more content sites. As you can see from this report, WordPress is extendable and can be configured to do almost any type of content management you can think of.

For more information or to ask specific questions about WordPress, visit <http://codex.wordpress.org> or <http://wordpress.org/support>