Tips on Blogging
for Business

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A guide to help you plan and prepare for your blog

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Introduction

Blog is a compound word made from "web log" coined in the mid-90s to represent keeping a diary, log, or journal in digital space.

Once considered a medium just for journaling, blogging is now a powerful amplifier for industry content.

History of Blogging

Keeping a log of one's online events had roots in 80s Usenet Newsgroups, then evolved to an online diary format in the early 2000s. Slashdot is an example of a longstanding tech blog. Platforms were eventually built to make it simpler to update blog content without needing extensive coding knowledge, thus WordPress was born.

Bloggers quickly found a voice to call out areas of interest that traditional media was leaving in the dark. While blogging can be categorized in many ways, it's also considered a form of inbound marketing, new media or self-publishing.

Taking Care of Business

Any free blog platform such as Blogspot would suffice for casual use, but we believe in making the investment in your business blog. This guide is to help you focus on helping your brand, product or company share information in the digital space and engage with your customers to drive traffic to your site.

Why Take Time to Blog?

Sharing your expertise and experiences

Using tasty chef images, let's use cooking as a metaphor for blogging. Anytime you talk about your expertise, you align yourself as an expert in your field or industry. Blogging creates a knowledge base of your work, and offers it up for engagement with visitors. You are perceived as an expert in your field. This takes time and consistency.

Fresh content brings visitors to your site

Blogging increases the number of pages on your website in an organized way, so from an SEO perspective, the more pages you have, the more likely your website is going to get higher Google rankings. Check out the glossary for more info on "indexing."

Blogging generates leads

Small businesses that blog get 126% more lead growth than small businesses that do not blog. The average company that blogs generates 55% more website visitors, 97% more in-bound links, and 434% more indexed pages. Read more great stats from Impact Branding & Design at http://ow.ly/fhDCm

Planning & Strategy

Categories

The first step to blogging success is to pick three to five categories that will be the focus of your blog's purpose. Write a two- to three-sentence description for each category. For example, if you own a bicycle shop, categories might include "best places to ride around town" "tips on DIY bike fixes" and "latest bikes to hit the market" so write around those.

Titles

Titles are what people see on the front page of Google. It's what brings in your audience from their search page. Study magazine headlines to help you write eye-catching and compelling blog post titles.

Keywords

Keyword research helps you decide the best direction to take when writing your content. Use the Google keyword planner tool. It's free and the keywords are downloadable.

Hosting 101

Self-Hosted vs. Free Platforms

An important thing to keep in mind with blog design is that not all blogs are created equal. We think it's smart to pay the hosting and URL fee to start your business blog off right by owning it yourself. It is important to really think this process through in the beginning.

If you are trying to decide whether you should go the free route or the paid route, just ask yourself one simple question: Do I expect to make money from this blog in any way? If the answer is yes, then you need to own your domain name.

Domain Name

A domain name is the same thing as your URL. It's also known as your web address that people type into a browser when they are loading your website. For example: **http://www.iTeachBlogging.com.** They are purchased through Domain Name Registration companies.

Hosting

Hosting service is what allows the world to see your website. Essentially, you are

buying space on a server that is available to the world wide web. **Choose a host with a long history of optimal "uptime" and their reviews for customer service are good.**

Why WordPress Is the Right Choice

Widgets & plug-ins
WordPress has nearly 28,000 different types of widgets and plug-ins to choose from, and the list keeps growing.

Clean-code theme
We use two premium WordPress themes to build all of our blogs, a foundation from which we create your unique design. We recommend Thesis Theme or Genesis Theme but there are so many great ones to browse. For us, a clean theme means that there is no unnecessary code installed in the theme that might slow it down or cause it to work incorrectly.

Easily updated by YOU
If you want to change out an image or content in a page, there are many resources available online. Sign up anytime at **my.ITeachBlogging.com** to watch tutorial videos. WordPress is about as easy to use as Microsoft Word.

Category
For a blog, you will also be able to fill out all of the SEO Data and Description for each Category as well.

CMS
A Content Management System essentially allows you to easily create and edit page content. So instead of having to build each page of your website using html you can easily click a few buttons and just "add a page." With html you have to download the html code, make changes and then upload it again AND hope that you got the code right.

SEO ready & friendly
Our themes are developed with SEO tools built right in, with a place for all of your meta data. When you create a new page or a new blog you'll see a place for your Custom Title Tag, Meta Description and Keywords.

Analytics
Thesis Theme makes setting up your Google Analytics quick, easy and painless.

404 page

You will be able to easily define your 404 page. You can either specify one of your current pages or create a new one to suit your needs.

Checklist

It may be time to refresh your current blog, to start over with your own URL, or just get the one you have redesigned. Here are a few things to ask a web or blog design company:

- Are you building on WordPress?
- Will I own the blog? (Some companies charge you a monthly "lease" fee.)
- What SEO tools are you going to use for my blog?
- Is it easy for me to change content myself?
- Will my design be mobile responsive?

Ask yourself:

- Does my current blog have a consistent brand, and look professional for my industry? Check up on your competition.
- Do I know how many people are visiting my blog?

More Blogging Tips

• Videos can replace images in a blog post. Go back to old posts and "refresh" posts with new videos or pictures.

• When you visit other blogs, leave genuine comments that link back to your own blog. Don't buy fake comments for your blog.

• Do not be afraid to ask for comments.

• Make sure that you link to other websites in your blog posts. Give people a reason to comment on your blog posts by asking questions and engaging/responding with your visitors.

• Read magazines. Use the same headline, format, style and "punch" for your blog posts to attract and engage readers. Visit Emotional Marketing Value Headline Analyzer: http://www.aminstitute.com/headline/

• Do your industry research before picking color palettes. What are your competitors using?

• Leave plenty of white space on the page. Walls of text rarely enhance the reader experience.

• Use bullet points instead of long sentences – they are easy for the reader to skim.

• Some websites have a blog built in, but if your blog is separate from your business website, make sure the blog links back to it.

Glossary

Blog vs. blog post: A blog is your online presence or platform where you update content with your writing; the blog post is the single article uploaded to your blog.

Inbound link: When another website links to your website. It helps to create authority and credibility for search engines.

Index/Indexed pages: Indexing is when Google has found and categorized each page or post. You can index faster by submitting it through Google (or Bing) Webmaster Tools.

Mobile responsive: When loading, the mobile responsive blog reformats to fit the browser screen, optimizing usability for the viewer. So it will load and view on an iPad, Chromebook, smart phone, or TV as cleanly as a desktop.

Keyword: A word or phrase typed into the search field of Google (or other search engine) to help people find content. Your goal is to have that keyword on your website, thus keyword research.

Page vs. post: The clickable but static tabs that you see in your nav bar are pages. Posts are blog articles that get "pushed down" your page as you upload new content.

SEO: Search Engine Optimization

Skin: The layout and format of your blog design.

Site map: A guide that helps Google find and categorize you – it's a structured list of all your URLs and their hierarchy at your site. A site with a site map gets a better index rating.

Subscribe: When a visitor opts in to receive emails that you've updated your blog with a new post.