



BLOGS FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Blogs are a form of social media that provide businesses with the opportunity to speak directly to the market and give readers a chance to respond and to share posts with others thereby creating a conversation among many like-minded individuals. This booklet focuses on the opportunities, benefits and how to's of creating a successful blog to market your business.

What is a Blog?

A blog is a type of website maintained by an individual or business where commentary, news, articles of interest and graphics can be posted. A blog differs from a traditional website in that it is usually updated more frequently and provides mechanisms for readers to leave comments and share posts with others.

With the right content and approach toward your blog and its readers you can personalize your company and build a solid reputation and foundation online. If you produce content regularly and consistently review and respond to comments, you can build a loyal readership and create a strong interaction with potential and existing customers.

What can a blog achieve for your business?

Like all other social media marketing, blogs can:

- Establish you as an expert or thought leader in your industry boosting the credibility of your company
- Increase traffic to your website since readers of your blog are interested in your industry and likely to require the products or services you sell
- Raise your search engine ranking

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- Showcase your products or services
- Build brand awareness and respect
- Grow your business

Creating a successful blog requires patience, focus, responsiveness and a time commitment. If you are willing to research, learn the do's and don'ts, and take the plunge, you can reap many benefits for your business.

Getting Started

1. Research and Planning

At first glance, writing a blog seems like a relatively easy endeavour but there is more to it in order to be successful. Before you begin, there are a number of factors to consider.

Questions to Ask Yourself	Factors to Consider
What do I want to achieve from my blog?	If you want to start blogging, understand why you want to blog and what you would define as being successful. Do you need to raise awareness of your business in the marketplace? Are there market myths you want to dispel? Do you want to personalize your company? Do you want to establish yourself as a thought leader in your industry?
Do I know who I want to reach?	Know your audience. Before doing anything else, decide who the target audience is for your blog. Keeping this in mind at all times will not only boost your efforts to create compelling content but will also help you focus on your niche area of expertise.
Have I got the passion?	If you want to become a thought leader or acknowledged expert in your field, then you must keep yourself up to date on topics and issues in your industry. You will need to continuously be aware of hot topics, advances, news and events, and anything else relevant to your readers. Having this knowledge will be expected by your readers and will also help you come up with content for your blog.
Do I have the time?	The biggest resource required is time not only for the writing of posts but also for research and keeping up to date on industry issues, responding to comments, making comments on other blogs, repurposing content for other social media opportunities and evaluating metrics.
Do I have the resources?	A successful blog requires frequency of posting and consistency. Do you have staff that can help with research and content ideas? Can you assign someone to monitor comments and report metrics?

Setting Objectives and Goals

Your ultimate goal is to attract leads and convert them into sales. Unlike other marketing activities, blogging is not a direct path from A to B. Take a good look at your strengths and weaknesses in your market, and determine how a blog might fill in any gaps. What did your research and planning reveal? Do you need to raise brand awareness?

Would your business benefit from showcasing your expertise? Are customers in your industry confused about its marketplace offerings and would they appreciate some clear explanations? Does your online target audience comprise avid readers or quick surfers?

Knowing what is needed and how a blog can provide solutions will help you set your objectives and goals.

How to Set Up Your Blog

Hosted Option: If you are just starting out, you may want to consider creating a blog by using one of the hosted plans that are free and quite easy to set up. There are a number of sites, such as *wordpress.com*, *blogger.com* and *typepad.org*, all of which offer numerous templates to choose from, along with the ability to be up and running literally in minutes. When using these hosted format blogs, bear in mind that:

- All data (text content, images, videos, audio) that you upload to the blog will be hosted in the stated application service so you may incur extra costs if you exceed the amount of allowable hosting space. And, if the application ceases to exist for whatever reason, you may end up losing your data if you fail to export it in time.
- Your web address URL typically takes on the host domain, so it could look like *mysitename.wordpress.com* or *mysitename.blogger.com*, etc.

Self-hosted Option: Another approach is to set up a blog application from within your existing host server where your website files reside. This is typically found within your host control panel administration either under the folder “Simple scripts” or “Easy Scripts” or may have an icon of its own. Simply double click on the blog icon and follow the instructions for installation. There is no extra fee for this as it is part of your hosting offerings. If you wish, however, to have a customized template created or to customize existing templates to follow your design brand, then you may need to hire a designer to help you. All content data will reside within a database on your server.

Pros of self-hosting

- Free
- Easy to set up

Cons of self-hosting

- You are responsible for keeping up with ongoing application version control, plugin and theme updates.
- You are also responsible for keeping regular back ups of database and application files, which is very important.

- You may need to hire a designer/developer to make your blog robust.

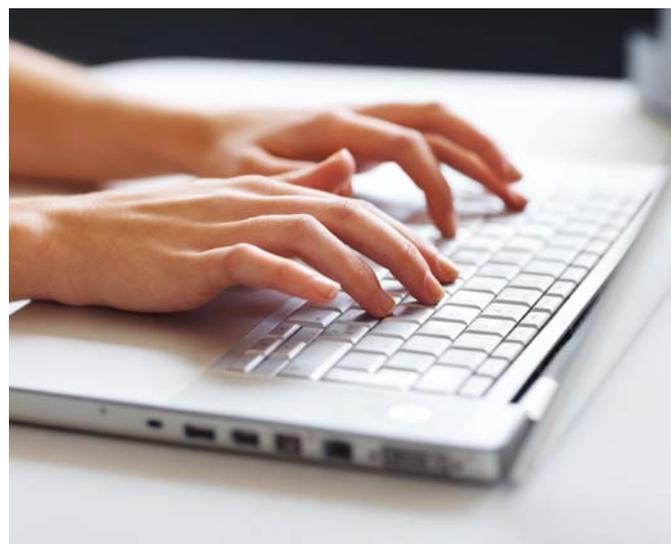
Either method is convenient for the small business owner, though the latter has more features and functionality as well as scalability for growth.

Costs/Benefits for SMEs

The biggest “cost” factor is the time required to create and maintain your blog. In terms of benefits, raising brand recognition, credibility and respect are the more obvious ones. Beyond these, there are bottom-line benefits to a successful blog that are directly measurable:

- Blogging helps optimize your website for search engines, representing a cost-effective means of driving traffic to your site.
- If you are currently participating in a long-term Pay-Per-Click advertising campaign, a blog may serve to reduce these costs as natural optimization improves.

While a blog should have a single writer—or a single “voice”—to be most effective, you can get help from employees to research and suggest ideas. You can also assign someone to monitor comments and report metrics. (See *Nuts & Bolts* section of this document.)



2. Understanding Best Practices

Because creating and maintaining a blog can be a time-consuming endeavour, you want it to be successful. Here are some guidelines to follow:

Tips for Creating a Compelling Blog	
Provide needed/wanted information	A blog is neither a sales pitch nor a corporate brochure. Provide information that is valuable and educational to your customers and prospects. Your goal is to establish yourself as an expert and your blog as a resource so that your business will become synonymous with credibility, and then trust in the products and services you offer will grow. People are also more likely to begin sharing your blog with other potential customers.
Keep it short	You are competing for attention with an information-laden web audience. You will lose readers if it takes too long to convey your message. Keeping it short also makes it easier to share, which helps build a community.
Have a point of view	On one hand, you don't want to insult or even slander someone but, on the other hand, you want to be different, get noticed, and spark opinions and response from others.
Write professionally	No one wants to read or share a post that is mediocre or full of errors. Make sure it is grammatically correct and typo-free. If you give readers content that they are proud to be associated with, they will share it with others.
Start a conversation	One way to get readers to respond is to ask them a question at the end of your blog. It can be as basic as "What do you think?" Your goal is to get people to leave comments and share your blog with others. Posts with a robust comment trail are good for bloggers. Comments signal to readers that the post is interesting enough to read and you are also likely to increase the number of shares.
Be a person, not a company	Introduce yourself by including a profile about who you are and what you do. Avoid saying too much about your company. It's also a good idea to state up front who the blog content is intended for as a courtesy to busy readers.
Monitor and reply to comments	Let your readers know that you care about what they have to say by responding to their posts as soon as you can. But don't over-reply. If a conversation between others evolves as a result of your blog but does not require input from you then let it be.
Comment on other blogs	You can increase your readership by making thoughtful comments on the blogs of other people in your industry. It is especially powerful to interact with fellow bloggers who have left comments on your blog. It can cement a relationship with them, plus draw their readership to your blog.
Don't try to clone your website	Your blog design should repeat elements of your website like the graphics or colour scheme and should incorporate a similar typography, but it doesn't need to match your site exactly. The idea here is to create something that resonates with your website but is somewhat different.

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Tips for Creating a Compelling Blog

Design from the top down

Ensure that the most important elements of your blog are prominently displayed: your main content and your header, followed by your company branding. As you develop your blog design, make sure that those three elements stand out above all others. As well, blog post titles should stand out over any subheads within the text. Everything else should be designed with logic and usability in mind. For example, sidebar elements should appear in the order that you would expect a reader to look for them.

Nuts & Bolts

1. Designing Your Blog

Free Templates vs. Custom Designed

Most blogging software provides free templates as part of the application or, alternatively, you can search for open-source (i.e. free templates) on the Internet. They typically have similar layout choices and structure but differ by providing graphics that represent a variety of industries. You can usually search by category or type of blog you want to develop. Some free templates offer you colour and font options but tend to limit your ability to customize beyond that.

It is important that your blog reflects well on your company. That includes content, first and foremost but it also means conveying your branding and professionalism visually. Your blog design can have a huge impact on how it is perceived. While many small business bloggers start with basic templates offered by vendors such as WordPress, they often find themselves upgrading to a customized solution over time.

Custom designed templates can be found through various websites or you can have your own designer develop it. The premium themed templates offered on the Internet are available for a range of fees depending on the complexity of the theme offerings. You can either buy a licence to use a premium themed template or you can purchase it outright for your exclusive use.

2. Developing a Content Plan and Timeline

With some upfront planning, writing a timely, consistent blog does not have to be a daunting commitment. Many business blogs are published weekly so that can be a good frequency as a start.

Begin by choosing an overall topic/focus for your blogs, and then create an editorial calendar that lists specific topics you would like to cover. You do not want your overall focus to be so specific that it will be too challenging to come up with content but you also don't want topics to be so wide ranging that readers have no idea how they relate to your business. If they are unsure about whether or not your blog will cover something of interest to them, you could lose them. The idea is to carve out a niche for you.

Do not be alarmed if your editorial calendar has a few blank spots. If you keep on top of industry issues and trends, topics will emerge.

TIP: Keep track of your customers' buying cycles throughout the year on your editorial calendar. That way you can ramp up content and ensure that your posts are timely and relevant. You can even include a stronger marketing message or additional link to your website.

3. Use of Photography and Video

Don't be hesitant to use multimedia in your blog. Incorporating video, photos, charts or graphs can break up chunks of text in an appealing way. If you use multimedia, remember to keep the search engines in mind and offer video transcripts or alternative tags to describe images, as they are not recognized by search engines.

In addition, remember to provide proper credit for any materials you use from external sources.

4. Marketing Your Blog

There are many ways to promote your blog to increase its readership. The key is to be consistent and look for opportunities as they arise. Here are some ideas to help.

Tips on Promoting Your Blog	
Promote your blog on your website	A blog can become an important source of dialogue with your customers. Put a link to it right on your homepage. And also put links to your website in your blog.
Make your blog your constant marketing companion	Include your blog URL everywhere you use your logo or list your web address. That includes email signatures, ads, business cards, presentations, press releases (a particular SEO boost if you use services like Canada Newswire) and marketing materials.
Make content available in RSS feed	This permits syndication of your blog material making it available to other websites.
Syndicate your blog	Research to learn which sites syndicate content that is relevant to your industry.
Make your RSS button easy to find	It should not be difficult for readers to subscribe and, if the RSS button is placed in an obvious spot, it can even encourage them to do so.
Add links to your other posts in your blog	This applies to your current post but it is a good idea to also add new links to your older posts.
Be a guest blogger	Writing a guest post for another blogger who is of interest to your readers can increase search engine rankings and can draw their audience to your blog.
Always use Calls to Action (CTAs)	Place CTAs at the top and/or sidebar of your blog page. Also use them in each blog you post. Examples are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free white papers or other research materials for download • Webinars or event sign-ups • Free product trials/demos/discounts
Share on your networks but don't just repeat the same content on each medium	If you have a presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, your audience may be connected to you on all three platforms. If you syndicate the same content at the same time you could lose readers or, worse, be considered a spammer. Craft an update or repurpose the content so that it is most suited to the platform and then release each over a few hours' time span.
Thank those who share your content	This will encourage more sharing, which in turn will help make your content more share-worthy. On Twitter, consider re-tweeting their share with your thank you. That will encourage anyone who missed the original post to take a look.
Ask people to "Like" you	Ask employees to "like" your blog and share it on any of their relevant networks.

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Tips on Promoting Your Blog

Re-share your blog link on Twitter	Twitter followers tend to be logged on and off more frequently and at different times of the day. In order to get a particularly important message out to those who may have missed it, find creative ways to re-tweet without posting the same content. Also ensure that you have posted unrelated and non self-serving content in between tweets.
Leverage other Twitter attributes	Use relevant hashtags when you promote your blog on Twitter (e.g. #yourtopic). Also monitor customer issues and respond with relevant blog post links.
Remember, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn aren't the only social media platforms	Post your blog on such sites as Digg, StumbleUpon, Delicious or Redditt. Also investigate niche social sites to see if any fit your target market and research which other social media sites people in your industry are connecting on.
Go to www.technorati.com , a blog directory search engine, and claim your blog	This can help ensure that you are indexed in blog search engines.

5. Advertising

If your blog has a strong following, you may want to create a revenue source by introducing display banner advertisements or keyword advertising. The revenue you earn can help offset costs associated with running your blog and keeping it current. Make sure, however, to keep your audience and reputation in mind by choosing advertisers who are professional and offer products or services that are of interest to your readers.



Here are two additional revenue-generating options you may want to consider:

- Offer sponsorship of your blog.
- Introduce promotional article advertising. Such articles are paid ad content that typically gives more information to readers than most advertising. Ensure that it is obvious and clear that the article is an advertisement.

Advertising Best Practices:

1. Clearly label ads as ads. By not making this distinction, you could annoy readers who click on an advertisement expecting something else.
2. Make it relevant. Try to tie in ads that are complementary to the topic of the post (in such cases, you can then place them either above or below the post) or at least use ads that relate to your overall blog site.
3. Change and rotate banner ads regularly.
4. Keep advertisers happy. Ensure that you have a good banner metric system in place.

6. Integrating Social Media Applications

Sharing your blog content on social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, Google+ or any of the social bookmarking sites listed below can be done several ways:

- Set up special distribution plug-ins. You can automate distribution to your profile on various applications, which will include post titles, short post description and a link to the full blog post.
- Encourage readers to click “follow” or “share.” Readers who do this share your blog with their own followers or communities, opening up the chances of driving new traffic to your blog.

Social Media Aggregators

These are tools or platforms that enable users involved in social networking to catch up with their network activity all in one place. They will save you time if you are trying to monitor multiple social media sites and are also helpful for your content planning. Examples include:

FriendFeed: A popular application that allows you to share content across Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and other social networks (www.friendfeed.com).

HootSuite: A web-based social media aggregator for tracking and posting updates (www.hootsuite.com).



Minggl: A browser add-on that lets you manage and interact with all your contacts from one place (www.minggl.com).

Tweetdeck: An app that provides real-time social web access, allowing users to connect with Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and MySpace (www.tweetdeck.com).

Social Bookmarking

Social bookmarking is a method for Internet users to organize, store, manage and search for bookmarks of resources online. Tagging is a significant feature of social bookmarking systems, enabling users to organize their bookmarks in flexible ways and develop shared vocabularies. It usually involves users assigning keyword descriptors to “tag” each bookmark or link they want to share, and then saving them to a public website. You are not actually sharing the “file”, just the “reference link” to it. This allows other people to search by those terms and find those pages. Most social bookmark sites organize their bookmarks with informal tags. You can get up-to-date bookmarks if you subscribe to the social bookmarking site feeds.

The ideal marketing strategy for a business is to place an icon of one of these bookmarking sites alongside an article, so site visitors can tag the article. The more times this blog post/article is tagged, the higher the popularity ranking of the page. A high popularity ranking draws attention and drives traffic back to your site.

Examples of Popular Social Bookmarking and Networking Sites

Pinterest: a bulletin/pinboard type of social media sharing based on themes. Useful for interior decorators, artists, crafters, etc. (www.pinterest.com).

Reddit: a social news website where registered users submit news or articles and other users vote on whether they like them. The most popular ones display at the top of the list (www.reddit.com).

Technorati: an Internet search engine that searches blogs. Technorati tags are added to your blog postings; the more viewers click on them, the more authoritative your blog content is deemed (www.technorati.com).

Digg: a social news website which allows submission of stories and voting privileges, also known as “digging” and “burying” (www.digg.com).

StumbleUpon: a “discovery” search engine allowing users to discover and rate web pages, photos, videos, using peer-sourcing and social networking principles (www.stumbleupon.com).

Del.icio.us: a social bookmarking web service for storing, sharing, and discovering web bookmarks. Web users save what they like using the Delicious bookmarklet in their browser bar to add websites to “themed stacks” for easy sharing (www.delicious.com).

As a business owner, you may want to consider signing up for any or all of these accounts and add their badges (also known as tags or buttons) and links to your various blog articles or specific content areas on your website.

7. Importance of Keeping a Blog Current

You certainly don’t have to blog every day, but be consistent. Set yourself a schedule of once every week or two to start. Remember, the more you blog the higher the chances are that you will be discovered by your target audience. In addition, some syndication sites want a certain amount of created content before adding your blog to their syndication.

Ideas for Fresh Content

It is one thing to tell yourself that you will diligently deliver content, it is quite another to actually do it. Here are ideas on where you might find material to write about.

- **Repurpose good content.** You may be surprised to find that you already have lots of great content that, with some repurposing and rewriting, would work beautifully in your blog. Check all your marketing materials, speeches you have delivered or transcripts from webinars you conducted. And don’t forget to link to any video you may have created.

- **Share articles of interest.** If you have read something of great interest to you, then it will likely be of interest to your readers too. Write your opinion about the article and share it online. Ensure the article source is credited.
- **Leverage presentations.** Talk about audience reaction and/or questions following a presentation you have made, or write about presentations from others at conferences you have attended. Consider creating a podcast or video of a presentation you have made and post a link to it.
- **Conduct interviews.** Consider speaking with thought leaders in your industry or even fellow bloggers and writing a blog about their opinions.

You can also surf the web for content ideas. Here are some online sources you can try.

Idea Sources for Fresh Content

Competitor Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.compete.com • www.opensiteexplorer.org
Blog Directories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.google.com (click on “Blogs”)
Article Ezines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ezinearticles.com/ • www.submityourarticle.com/course/ezinedirectories.php
Twitter Search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • twitter.com/twittersearch • www.tweetdeck.com/ • www.twellow.com/
Facebook Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.Facebook.com/search.php • www.Facebook.com (click on “Groups”)
Linked In Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.linkedin.com/directory/groups/
Google Alerts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.google.com/alerts

8. How Feeds Work

While quality content and a good reputation in your community are the two key elements to being found by your desired audience and search engines, it is a good idea to syndicate your blog. RSS is the process of syndicating your content while Ping is a notification service to directories and subscribers about your new posts. All blog posts automatically contain individual RSS feed addresses.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication)

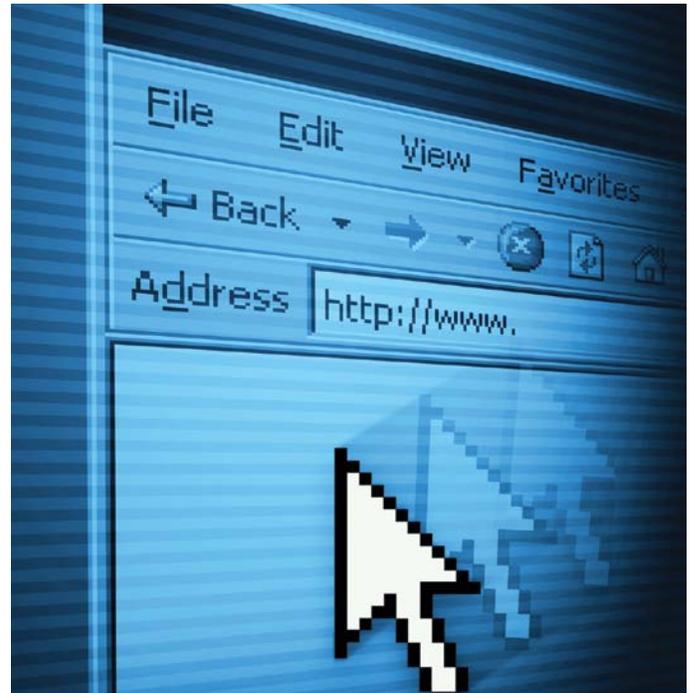
One of the most effective SEO strategies is to distribute your blog content through RSS feeds to other sites, which will also help build inbound links. All blog sites have the backend RSS structure already built in. Placing the RSS icon on your blog sidebar allows readers to subscribe to your blog, receiving your posts directly in their blog readers or email.

Ping Services

You can subscribe to a service (e.g. Ping-O-Matic or Twingly.com) that automatically notifies blog directories and those who have subscribed to your blog that it has been published, showing the latest post title and a short description. "Pings" will go out when you make any changes to existing posts too. Be cautious about "re-pinging" a previously-published post that is substantially the same. If people see the same content too many times, you risk annoying your potential and existing blog followers.

9. Plugins, Widgets

Plugins and widgets (small applications that enhance your core blog program) are tools that offer visitors additional visual and interactive options and features. Examples include a calendar widget on the sidebar of your blog, or a FAQ plugin that categorizes and posts relevant pages within your blog.



There are also a number of backend plugins that help you, the blog owner, with functionality, maintenance and marketing of the site, such as Google Analytics, blog backup, SEO, or even ones that help to optimize the blog program.

CAUTION: There are thousands of plugins available and more are constantly being developed. Be wary when selecting a plugin. Make sure that it is supported by the version of your blog application and update your plugins through regular maintenance. Also make sure you keep your plugins up to date to ensure that they are continually being supported by the provider. Since having too many plugins could slow down the site, choose appropriate and relevant ones.



TOP MUST-HAVE WORDPRESS PLUGINS

Plugin Name	Description
1. Akismet	An essential spam filter to ward off software that targets blogs and automatically posts spam comments and trackbacks, visit www.askimet.com .
2. All in One SEO Pack	A basic plugin for any Wordpress blog that adds functionality to aid in search engine optimization; should be activated prior to any other plugins.
3. Google Analyticator	Adds the necessary JavaScript code to enable Google Analytics to work on any WordPress blog.
4. WP-DB-Backup	Allows you to back up your core WordPress database tables easily.
5. WP Touch	Helps to create a mobile-friendly blog.
6. Facebook Comments Importer	Imports the comments posted on your Facebook fan page (or public profile) to your blog.

To access Plugins, click on the left sidebar navigation link “Plugins” from the admin screen. You will then see a list of already installed plugins. If the above plugins are not already installed, you can access them from the Plugins search bar, and then click on them to install and activate.

TOP MUST-HAVE BLOGGER TOOLS

Plugin Name	Description
1. Blog Backup	Backs up your blog if you have registered. The registration is very simple and your backup job is completed with a click of single button, visit http://blogbackupr.com .
2. Who Is Linking To Me	A tool that adds a widget to your blog that will display five of the most recent links to your blog generated via Technorati, visit www.justsayhi.com/bb/linking .
3. Measure It	Helps you to measure the sidebar area of your blog page if you want to create a button or widget in that area, visit https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/aonjhmdcgbgikgjapjckfkefpjhpgma .
4. Social Marker	A tool that will bookmark the URL that you enter to exactly 50 social and other bookmarking sites. The best way to increase traffic to your blog is to submit the URL of each and every post, visit www.socialmarker.com .
5. Windows Live Writer	An offline editor for your blog which supports most of the popular blogging platforms.
6. Facebook Share Button Blogger Widget	A powerful widget that allows your visitors to share your content on Facebook, visit www.facebook.com/facebook-widgets/share.php .

10. SEO Tagging

The success of a blog is dependent on how many people read and follow it. Therefore, you want it to be picked up by search engines and blog directories as often as possible. Administered through your blog post editing page, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) tagging is the process of adding tags (i.e. keywords) to each of your blog posts to help search engines find your relevant content. Here are some strategies to assist with tagging:

- **Use tools to research what others are writing about in your industry.** If you are just starting out, you can access tools to first identify the keywords that your audience would use to search for your offerings. To help you identify those keywords, investigate various blog directories, type “http://keyword:blog” in the search bar, or go to Google search, type in the keyword, then select blogs in the filter. This will give you a feel for what people are writing about in your industry. You can also set up Google Alerts, which will email you whenever something is being written about a particular topic.
- **Use keywords.** When writing your blog try to use the keywords and phrases that you have identified so that your target audience will find you.
- **Write unique content.** Posting content in your own voice and including your opinion not only will make you more interesting to readers and strengthen your position in the community it will also make your blog more valuable for search bots.
- **Submit your blog site to Google and blog directories.** Examples include www.blogscanada.ca, <http://thecanadianblogdirectory.com/> and <http://photoblogdirectory.net/Canada/>.
- **Develop a linking strategy.** This includes linking your current post to your previously-published posts. This will increase the chances of search bots discovering

both current and past posts and will also encourage readers to check out previous posts. Also consider linking to other writers’ blog posts and building inbound links by asking them to link back to you. **A caveat:** know the links you include and never link to a suspicious or low quality site that does not reflect your professionalism.

- **Create “lightweight” pages.** Use a reliable hosting provider and make sure that any images or files you include are small so that the page loads quickly. Search engines like Google have started to take page load speed into account.

11. Maintenance and Upkeep

Most self-hosted blogging applications need to be updated regularly to ensure upgrades and security issues are addressed. Instructions on how to do this will likely be included with the application. Always do a backup of your database and application prior to any major updates. If you have plugins, they will need to be updated regularly as well. There are many online tutorials that help you through this process. Alternatively, you may choose to hire a professional. **Note:** hosted solutions like WordPress, Blogger and TypePad will take care of the updating for you.

Test, Measure, Test Again...

Analysis of metrics can give you valuable insight into your blog’s performance. It can also help you determine what works well—and what doesn’t—so that you can focus on topics that will increase readership. Review your blog metrics frequently and adjust your posts accordingly.

Depending on the goals you have established for your blog, you may want to focus on different measurements. Here is data that many business bloggers gather to help measure the success of their blog.



HOW TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF YOUR BLOG

Key Measurements to Check in Google Analytics	Metrics Revealed
Monthly visitors	The number of visitors your blog received. Will help you determine its reach.
Page views	Shows which articles generated the most visitors, revealing which were successful and which were not. Will help you select future blog topics.
Referrer pages or site	Shows which web or social networking sites brought visitors to your site.
Keywords and search queries	Shows what visitors are looking for as well as which wording used in your post content has shown best results.
Blog subscribers	Shows how many people have subscribed to your blog. This is a great measure of the level of appreciation, as these readers have opted to receive your blog.
Comments generated	Shows the number of comments your blog posts have received. Will help to reveal which posts and topics are of highest interest.
Social media shares	Shows the number of people who have shared your blog content via sites like FaceBook, Twitter, etc. Demonstrates the relevance and appeal of your blog content.

Where Are Blogs Heading?

- Blogs are being taken seriously as an alternative to mainstream media with more and more people trusting blogs as sources of quality information and news.
- Corporate blogging is slowly decreasing because large companies with strong branding tend to use different marketing strategies. On the other hand, entrepreneurs and small businesses still rely quite heavily on blogging to enhance their business offerings by providing value-added information that supports their primary offerings.
- Sharing and linking back to blog posts is increasingly being done via social networks.
- With the rising usage of mobile devices, people are transitioning from traditional long blog writing to micro-blogging, in essence creating 'blog entries on the go'.

- Homemaker bloggers who are very connected to their communities are increasingly making their voices heard online. Willing to blog about products, this group enjoys a strong influence and impact on brands. As a result, they will continue to be taken very seriously.
- Over time, the longer content nature of blogs may give way to streaming content and micro "sound-bites" via social network status updates and tweets.

Related Topics Covered in Other Booklets

- *Social Media for Small Business*
- *Increasing Traffic to Your Website through SEO*

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Glossary of Terms

Aggregator: A company that provides an intermediary service between content providers, application providers and the mobile phone service carriers. It can serve several purposes including campaign management, analytics, administration as well as billing.

Blog directory: Searchable database of blogs listed by category and subcategory that often allow site owners to submit their blog for inclusion. It can help get your blog indexed by search engines.

Bots: Short for 'robot,' which is a computer program that runs automatically. For example, Google bots run through your website collecting data information.

Call to Action (CTA): A short phrase that tells your audience how you want them to behave after reviewing your marketing materials (e.g. "Learn more," "Order now," "Download here").

Ezine (electronic magazine): An electronic magazine that is delivered via a website or other electronic means.

Facebook "likes": Instead of writing a comment for a message or a status update, a Facebook user can click the "Like" button as a quick way to show approval and share the message.

Follow: A method by which a reader can be notified when new postings are available, usually by subscribing via a widget.

Google Alerts: A method to track whether someone is talking about a particular subject and keyword phrase. This is a good way to discover if someone is "Talking about you".

Guest blogging: Blogging on other people's blogs through invitation, posting articles, video, podcasts etc.

Hashtags (#): A tag used on Twitter as a way to explain a message to allow like-minded users to follow more easily (e.g. #DigitalConference12 - All those attending this conference can follow the conversations pertaining to the activities and impressions of the event).

JavaScript: A scripting language used mainly to create dynamic, interactive web pages. For example, web developers can use JavaScript to validate form input, create image rollovers and to open pop-up windows.

Keyword advertising: An ad that appears that is relevant to words or terms typed into a search engine.

Metrics: The process of collecting data that measures a quantifiable component of a company's performance.

PPC (Pay-per-click): a form of search engine advertising in which payment is based solely on click-throughs deriving from keywords placed in advance.

Pinging: In blogging, ping is an XML-RPC-based (extensible markup language for remote procedure call) push mechanism by which a blog notifies a server that its content has been updated.

Ping services: A subscription service for pings that broadcasts your ping to the major blog search engines or directories that you choose to ping.

Plugins: A set of software components that add specific capabilities to a larger software application and are frequently found in blog applications like WordPress.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) Feed: A family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works that enables users to subscribe to a site's latest content. Think of RSS as your own personal wire service.

Re-tweet (RT): On Twitter, a reposted or forwarded message by a user who wants to share it with their followers.



SEO (Search Engine Optimization): The process of attracting traffic to a website via search engine searches.

SEO tagging: The process of adding tags – that is, keywords – to each blog post to help search engines find relevant content. Tagging is administered through the blog post editing page.

Social bookmarking: Use of a service that allows readers to mark online material they found to be important.

Social media: A rapidly evolving online medium including various online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily via the Internet through sharing information and resources.

Social networking: Use of a dedicated social website to communicate informally with other members of the site, allowing users to share content, interact and develop communities around similar interests.

Widget: An interactive single purpose application used to enhance or integrate functionality on a website/blog. It can be either a tool or content and typically applied through a “drag and drop” technology.



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