

How to Be a Blogger

Introduction to Blogging

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Becoming a Part of the Blogging Culture

The blogosphere, made up of countless blogs from all over the world, is one of the most popular faces of the Internet. It's not just for teenagers anymore. Several years ago, most blogs were run by kids who just wanted to keep in touch with their friends, or people who just wanted to talk about their daily life.

These days, almost everyone online has a blog.

Chances are, you have one – and if you don't, you should. Don't think you've got nothing to say - you do!

Stay at home moms like to blog about their daily lives and raising children. CEOs of major corporations own blogs about the latest happenings at their company. Many celebrities run blogs, and they blog about their upcoming events, movie and roles (not to mention scandals).

And marketers have blogs about every niche imaginable!

I'm confident to say I myself am part of the blogging culture - and I wouldn't have it any other way. Thanks to blogging, I've been able to make a living doing what I love since 2005.

Blogging is a great way to reach out to the people on the Internet. They can touch millions of lives, and spread your message like no other medium. You can say almost anything you want, and there will be an audience for almost every niche!

You can run a blog just for fun. If you want to talk about parties you attend, restaurants you eat at, places you go shopping, or where you go on vacation, someone will probably want to read about it.

Even if the only audience you have is your close friends and relatives, you'll have fun and be able to say whatever's on your mind.

More and more people are turning to blogging as a way to make money. Some people just want to make a few extra dollars for spending money, but others are actually making a full-time income with their blogs.

A few prominent bloggers even boast of making hundreds of thousands of dollars with their blogs (a la Perez Hilton, who parlayed his blogging fun into thousands of dollars in ad money each month, which delivered him his own TV show, podcast, and clothing line)!

There are plenty of ways to make money blogging. Whether you're a college student who just wants to make a little extra cash for pizza and clothes, or you're a serious marketer who wants to make a small fortune, it's totally possible with blogging.

Blogs are *big*, even if they're *small*. Some blogs get millions of hits per month. Blog traffic has been growing steadily for several years as consumers gain confidence from peers rather than trusting hard hitting sales pitches they find on the web.

With more and more people jumping onto the blogosphere bandwagon, it probably won't slow down within the foreseeable future. If you're thinking about getting into blogging, it's a good idea to get started now.

It generally takes a few months to begin building up a following. And you really need regular visitors if you want to make money with your blog. You should work to gain subscribers to your RSS feed, because those people will come back often to read your new posts.

And remember to lend your own unique voice to your posts. One of the most important nuances in regards to why blogging is such a major global phenomenon is the fact that people really enjoy reading unique voices on certain topics.

They crave the differences in personalities. It's refreshing to read information that has personality and isn't stale or stuffy, which means it's been translated by a single editor so that every voice is uniform. This is why columnist pages in local newspapers are so popular.

Your unique voice is the most important part of getting regular visitors to your blog. If you want to see examples of this, visit some of the most popular blogs you can find. You'll see that one thing these blogs have in common is the fact that the bloggers make engaging, funny, or original posts.

That's your key to making it big in the blogosphere!

Before You Blog, Build a Blueprint

A lot of bloggers put together a blog without any real plan for how they're going to promote it or monetize it. Putting a blog together without a plan is like trying to build a house without a blueprint.

It's possible, yes. But the end result is probably going to be shoddy, and the whole thing could fall apart at any minute.

You should create a solid plan of action before you even buy the domain. You need to develop a strong blueprint before you ever get started. Waiting until after you've already set it up and are getting traffic could mean a lot of extra work going in to correct mistakes.

Changing themes and adding plugins after you're already getting traffic could interrupt your traffic. Sometimes new plugins and themes can temporarily break your blog, which could mean a loss of traffic (and money) until you're able to fix everything.

The first part of your plan should be choosing a niche, of course. Part of choosing a niche is finding products you can promote. If a niche has no products available, you could create your own.

But if there are no affiliate products available, it could be because there isn't enough demand there for a product. In this case, you'd have to do some careful market research in order to determine whether or not a niche is truly viable.

- What's your purpose for blogging?
- Do you have your own product you want to promote?
- Do you want to promote affiliate products?
- Do you want to just put AdSense or CPA offers on your site?

You need to ask yourself questions like these so that you'll know how you intend to monetize the site. If you plan to promote affiliate products, you should test the products yourself before you promote them.

If you don't, your visitors could end up being very upset if you promoted a product of really poor quality and they bought it because they trusted you. Even worse, what if you end up promoting something that turns out to be a scam?

You don't necessarily have to purchase every product you wish to promote. If you can prove you have a decent amount of traffic (and sometimes if you just *ask*), you may be able to get free review copies of some of the products you'd like to promote.

It doesn't hurt to ask. Even if you don't have any existing traffic yet, you can write to the owner of a particular affiliate program, tell them what you're planning to do, and ask if you could get a review copy.

Some people won't give you a review copy. Plenty of marketers get requests for review copies from those who just want to get a copy of their product for free. So if you run into a skeptic, or someone who's been burned before, you may get turned down.

In this case, it's probably best to just go ahead and buy the product if you really want to promote it. If it's a scam or a really crappy product, just ask for a refund.

You can also consider using a donation button on your blog. If you can't find any good products to promote, and you don't have the time, money, or ability to create your own product, you can still put up a donation button. If your blog is very good, you may get donations.

Or, you can always sell ad space on your blog. If you start getting a substantial amount of traffic or you get a very high PageRank in Google, you could charge a lot of money for a link on your blog. You can also get paid for making posts on your blog that review other sites.

Should a Blog Topic Be Broad or Narrow?

There are two schools of thought regarding blog topics. Some people believe your topic should be very focused, because you can bring in a flurry of laser-targeted visitors. Plus, you have less competition in smaller market segments.

Another group of people believe that anything worth doing is worth doing big. They believe that the only way blogging can truly be worth it is if you're bringing in massive traffic, and the only way you can achieve that level of traffic is by being very broad – casting a wide net, so to speak.

For example, you might have a sports blog that has broad appeal. You could talk about baseball, football, basketball, soccer, tennis, and golf. This would give you a much more broad appeal, and the potential for larger traffic.

But since there would be so much competition, it might take a lot longer to get more traffic coming in. Plus, the way I see it is, if I'm interested in golf, I really won't care about the other parts of the blog, so the value of it plummets in my eyes.

But let's say you choose *golf* as your broad topic. Even this is broad, although you just segregated it from the other sports in existence. There are many things you could write about golf – vacations, apparel, clubs, courses, techniques, etc.

You could choose an even more targeted niche like *women's* golf or *senior* golf. This is a smaller segment of a small niche. This means you could get traffic faster, because there would be less competition.

Less competition means you have the potential to rise faster in the search engine rankings. Of course, women's golf would get far less traffic from the number one spot of Google than the combined traffic of all of the other sports niches, but the chances of that traffic converting into a sale will soar.

So basically, it boils down to how you feel about your abilities. If you believe you have the ability to get one large blog to the top of the search engines rather quickly, then you might be able to handle a broad topic blog.

If you don't believe your abilities are up-to-snuff, then you might want to stick with a smaller niche at first. Remember, you can always start other blogs later. You could either build a network of small niche blogs, or you could start out with one broad blog and then start multiple sub-niche blogs later. You could then link to all of your smaller blogs from your large blog.

You could also start with the smaller blogs, get them to gain some popularity, and then start a large, broad blog later. Once you start the larger blog, you'll have several smaller blogs already getting traffic and already having PR that can link to the larger blog to get it started.

If you already have a lot of SEO experience and you're confident in your ability to pull off some great search engine rankings quickly, then starting with a more broad blog might be a better option.

You can still get some of the benefits of having a smaller blog by having categories for each of the smaller niches on your broad topic blog. One last thing to keep in mind is that your traffic will be less targeted if you run a broad blog.

If you have a site about skin care, you may get a lot of traffic that's just looking for information about the best lotions or skin creams. But if you start a blog about something specific, like acne, you're more likely to get people who are ready and willing to buy something.

Where Will You Host Your Blog?

A lot of people start out by hosting their blog for free at one of the common blog hosting companies. There's nothing inherently wrong with that, but it's a much better idea to host your blog on your own domain if possible.

Let's take a look at WordPress. WordPress is a very popular blogging platform. You can host your blog on their servers, or you can download the software and host your blog on your own domain.

There are a few reasons why you should host your own blog, rather than hosting your blog directly on WordPress.com. For one thing, WordPress doesn't allow you to promote affiliate links on their domain.

So if you want to make any money with your blog, you can't host it on their server, you'll have to host it yourself. Another reason why you shouldn't host your blog on WordPress

is the fact that you can't use the variety of plugins and themes that you could use on your own domain.

WordPress is very limited as far as the functionality, so don't expect to have anything really cool on your blog if you host it there. You can find free WordPress tutorials to help you get started with your blog.

Now let's look at Blogger. They *do* allow commercial blogs, so you can post affiliate links there if you want. But they're also against what they deem as "spam blogs" or "splogs." If they decide your blog is spam, or they decide it's "too" commercial, or they just don't like it, they can delete it for any reason.

There goes all that hard work you put into it!

You have to agree to those terms and conditions when you sign up. That means that even if you don't actually break any rules, they could still delete your blog if they chose. That's a pretty powerful motivator.

It certainly wouldn't be a very pleasant thing to build a blog up to several thousand hits per day, only to have it deleted (and trust me, I've heard these horror stories). You'd lose all of that traffic, all of those backlinks, all of your reputation and your search engine rankings.

Imagine it all being wiped out overnight. That's not a good thing.

It's like having a fire rip through your brick and mortar store and you don't have any insurance to rebuild.

Another very important reason to host your blog on your own domain is that it gives you credibility. If you host your blog on your own domain, you'll appear more professional, and more like an authority figure in your niche.

People will automatically assume you're more serious if you're hosting your blog on your own domain, rather than putting it up somewhere for free. If you do decide to host your own domain, the first thing you'll need to do is choose a domain that contains a few keywords related to your niche.

If your blog is about house cleaning tips, then try to get housecleaningtips.com. If that's not available, go down your keyword list and find the next best thing. Then register the domain.

Next you need to find a host for your blog. You might want to choose a host that has Fantastico, which is a program that sits on the server and allows you to very easily install WordPress (and other scripts) without having to create and manage MySQL

databases yourself. Softalicious is another similar program many hosting providers offer.

Once you have hosting, you just need to go to your domain registrar and set up the name servers to point to your new host. Your hosting company's support should be able to help you with this.

Blogging Is Big Business

More and more companies are starting blogs, and many people are even forming their entire companies around blogging. Customers really love blogs because they're generally full of great (free) information, they offer a personal touch that generally isn't found on a standard corporate website, and they're not usually full of a lot of hype and hard sell tactics.

Another reason customers love blogs is that they offer a great medium for interaction. Visitors can leave comments and receive responses to their comments. This helps build loyalty to your blog and your company, and readers really enjoy this level of interaction with someone they consider an authority figure.

It helps them feel like they're really being listened to, and like the company really cares about what they have to say – even if that “company” is an entrepreneur like you! Blogs are a fantastic way to build loyalty.

You can reach your audience in a very personal way, much more so than with a standard, stuffy stagnant website. Readers expect to see some personality coming out in a blog. If you really let your personality shine through, you can build a following that will subscribe to your RSS feed and come back often, eagerly waiting to hear more of what you have to say.

This is a great way to brand yourself and your business. Since you can get more personal with a blog, people start to get to know you a bit as a person. This makes you seem more *real*, and people begin to trust you and your messages more.

For some reason, people trust websites with identifiable people behind them.

Remember, when you're blogging for business you should stay somewhat professional. It's probably best not to post about your aunt's cataract surgery or your grandma's cat that died. You can get a bit personal - after all, that's what really makes you stand out.

But most people who are reading your blog are there to find out information about the niche, seeking solutions to *their* needs. Keep your posts on topic, but get personal by providing your own voice within those entries.

Provide valuable information within your blog posts. People aren't going to keep coming back to your blog over and over just to read about the new products you're releasing, unless you're releasing some really revolutionary stuff.

They're going to want to read industry news, tips and tricks, special strategies, and other important information *for free*. While it's perfectly fine to blog about new product releases, it's also important to *keep* providing helpful information to keep your readers coming back.

Don't ever lose sight of the fact that your readers are real people. You know what you enjoy reading in a blog, right? You want solid information - something useful. You probably don't mind the occasional sales pitch on a blog full of great information, but you'd be pretty annoyed to reading nothing but pitch after pitch.

If you're running a business blog, it's important to keep your readers in mind. Give them the kind of quality information they're hungry for, and they'll keep coming back for more. In fact, the more you give them for free, the more loyal they'll become, and the more likely they'll be to buy from you in the future.

Blogging is all about informing and educating. If you can do that, your visitors will form a bond with you and they'll be sure to spread the word about your blog so that your URL goes viral and it attracts an even bigger following within your niche.

Blogging can be very lucrative, not to mention it enhances your overall branding and networking on the 'net. Here are the steps you need to take to get started RIGHT NOW:

- 1.) Pick a niche topic (my advice is to go narrow).
- 2.) Find a domain and buy it.
- 3.) Set up your WordPress blog with a private host.
- 4.) Pick a theme online – Google *free WordPress themes* and you'll find millions you can upload.
- 5.) Set up your blog for categories, ad space, and stick an opt-in box in it to begin building a list.
- 6.) Start posting to your blog using keyword relevant titles and entries.
- 7.) Start bookmarking your blog and sharing that link to get it moving in the viral direction.

8.) Test the conversion of various products you promote on your blog and switch out those that aren't working well for you.

I hope you've enjoyed this blog report. Feel free to pass it around and share it with others you feel it might help!

[your name]

P.S. Stop by one of my blogs and say hey, okay? I'd love to hear from you!

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