

How to Start A Blog

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www.domain.me



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INTRODUCTION



A year ago, a student organization approached me and asked if I can help them with starting a blog. They saw me as someone who helps organizations with their social media presence and who knows domains. I was eager to help them with blogging too. But, the big question was - where to start?

Like in any other situation when you are starting from scratch and you don't know how, I asked the good old Google for help. Then, I went to some of my friends, they reached out to friends of their own, and there we were – writing a blog. Soon after, I realized that lots of people were interested in learning how to blog, so we organized a workshop. We had way more applications than we could handle, so we organized another one, and another one. Of course, in order to achieve all of this, you need someone to organize and coordinate everything. Our organizer was Sanja, the creator of this Domain.ME e-book.

Right from the start, she wanted to put everything on paper and make it available for everyone who wishes to start working on his or her own corner of the Internet. She dedicated a crazy amount of time to consult other people, to collect their opinions and structure everything so it's really easy to implement.

In the end, what we got is the ABCs of blogging, whether you envisioned your blog as a creative outlet or something that will have you earn money on the side. It will save a lot of time and give you the right push, and if there are any questions left over, we at .ME are here to help you with that as well. Just reach out. :)

Natasa Djukanovic

CMO of Domain.ME

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Natasa Djukanovic'.

MANY REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD START BLOGGING



Since 1997, when John Barger first coined the term “blog” by calling his site a “weblog,” blogging has gone from being the newest form of self-expression to a whole new industry. The practice of using your blog as an online journal for sharing thoughts, interests and hobbies has largely remained. Today though, blogging is much more than a hobby. It can be a powerful tool for advancing one’s career or a career in itself.

I am your best example. I started working with .ME by writing an occasional article for their blog. I am sure that in the beginning I definitely loved this new adventure more than they were impressed by my work, but with a bit of practice and selfless mentorship, two years later I am working in a digital marketing agency and serving as .ME’s Blog Editor and influencer marketing coordinator. I have the privilege of working and interacting with some amazing people – online and offline – on a daily basis. I have also started a personal travel blog I always dreamed about on the side – wanderingpaws.me.

**6.7 million
people
blog on
blogging
sites**

Of the people who blog:

88% write about personal interests and hobbies. Blogging about your interests challenges you to learn more, to grow with your blog in ways and directions you cannot even imagine. It offers a unique opportunity to meet likeminded individuals, and perhaps even form long-lasting friendships.

62% of people are using their personal blog to grow their career. Blogging about things that are related to your industry can set you apart and position you as a thought leader, or at least signal that you are following latest news and trends and know how to express yourself in written form.

35% of people are using their personal blog for promoting their company. A large number of people are using blogs to promote their business, which is not at all surprising considering that people will always put more trust in people than in impersonal companies. As a matter of fact, another survey showed that 61% of consumers have made a purchase based on a blog post they read and that an even larger number of consumers (70%) learn about businesses through articles rather than ads.

As if that is not enough, blogging is also a lucrative business – our survey showed that **61% of bloggers have received job offers as a result of their blog while 60% of them said that they have found new clients.** Blogging is a business!

"Many people and many companies fail to see that bloggers are actually small business owners. They are a one-(wo)man show, yes, but they progress and learn all the time. They grow – they have their own fan clubs, communities, and they earn money from it."

Nataša Djukanovic, CMO of Domain.ME



12 million people blog via social networks instead of the platforms they own and control

Blogging is a great opportunity to grow your career, expand your network and earn some additional income. [Research shows](#) that people who blog have noted a positive effect on their professional and personal lives.

As a more drastic example, once “humble blogs” led by one or two key people have [evolved into major publishing businesses](#), with Huffington Post earning more than two million dollars per month, Mashable earning more than half a million and Perez Hilton earning almost half a million dollars per month.

Maybe you won't grow your blog to those proportions (although, why not?), but blogging has too many perks attached to it to not even try. **Successful bloggers generate income not only from advertising, but from brand partnerships, design opportunities, book deals, TV shows, products lines, speaking gigs, etc.**

Blogging will get you out there, give you a new form of self-expression, open doors for you and challenge you.

Blogging will allow you to build your personal brand.

Blogging will demand you to stay on top of things that are relevant to you, continuously learn new skills, and most importantly, learn how to spot a market need, deliver the solution and engage your consumers – something that is very useful no matter which industry you are working in.

However, even though the benefits are plentiful, not many people are actually writing a blog. That is what we call **an opportunity**.

I want to help you use that opportunity. In this e-book, you can find tools to help you get your blog started and useful resources to come back to along the way. Most of all, I wish you would see .ME and me as [someone you can turn to](#) if you have a question or need advice.

Interested? Continue reading and see what happens. :)





This is why you should start blogging!



The term "blog" was first coined in 1997 by John Barger, when he called his site a "weblog"



Since then, blogging has gone from being the newest form of self-expression to a whole new industry.

Blogging is a great opportunity to grow your career, expand your network and earn some additional income.



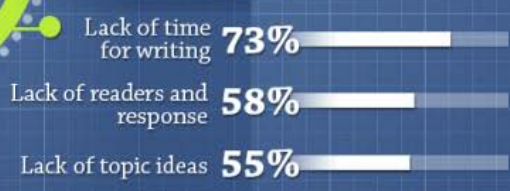
88% write about personal interests and hobbies.

62% Grow their career.

35% promote their company.



Why is it challenging???



Is blogging worth the hassle? You tell us!



Visit our blog at www.domain.me and discover more!



60% of bloggers said that they have found new clients



61% of bloggers have received job offers as a result of their blog



79% of bloggers stated that their blog is either very important or important for their personal brand.

Research on the link between personal websites and career success conducted by .ME Registry, operator of .ME domains, and branded.me, a personal branding platform. More about the research can be found on <http://dot.me/personal-research>

A DISCLAIMER BEFORE YOU START

Before you start blogging, you have to make a deal with yourself about what kind of blogger you want to be.

Is your blog just an addition to your personal website with an occasional post here and there?

Is it an outlet for your creative side?

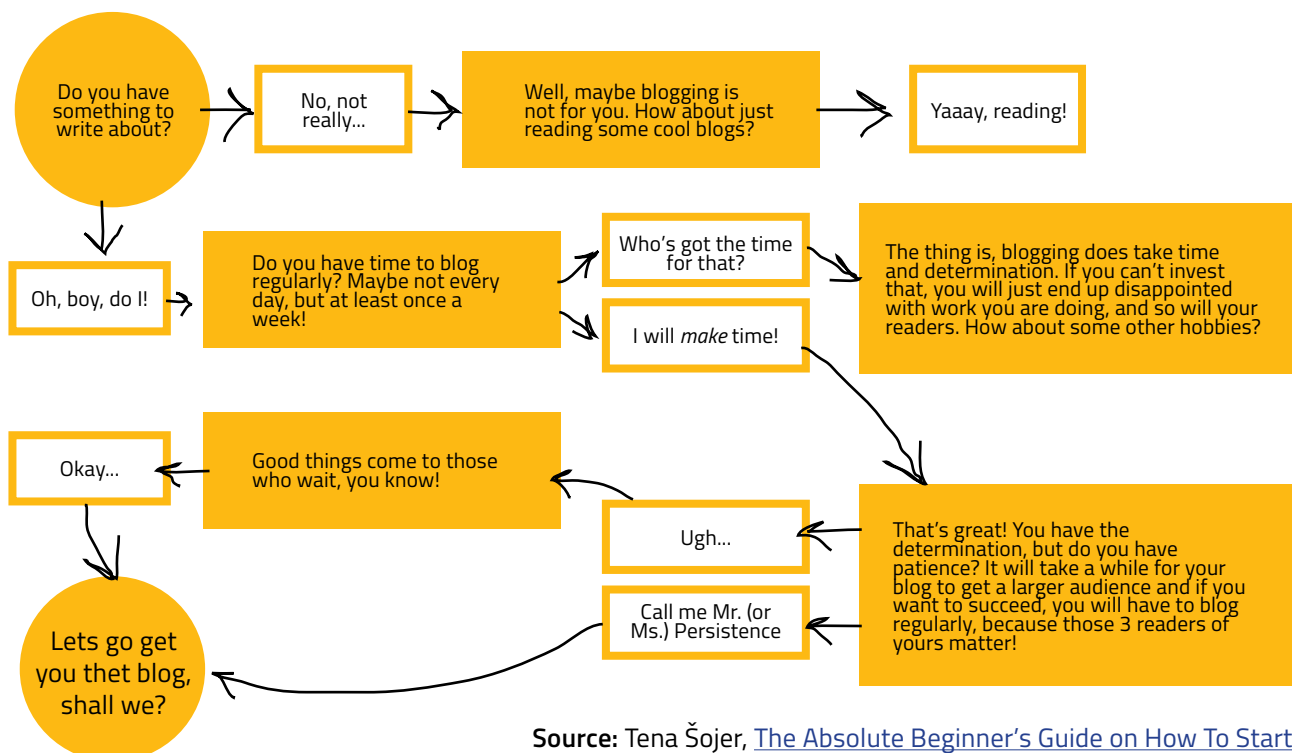
Is it something you want to see grow with time?

Blogging requires a lot of time, energy and heart. To be considered a true "blogger," you will have to write consistently and regularly engage with your followers. You'll be writing while your friends will be Netflixing, reading or hanging out. If you truly want to be followed and build a name for yourself, your posts will have to create value for your audience, and that (usually) means no last-minute writing.

No doubt, it'll be exhausting at times, but if you persist, trust me, the rewards will come. Evaluate the level of your commitment now and to make sure this is something you really want to do.

If you are not sure, check out this chart:

Hopefully, you discovered and committed to your love for blogging and you will be joining us on this journey! :)



Source: Tena Šojer, [The Absolute Beginner's Guide on How To Start a Successful Blog: The Very First Steps](#)

Featured chapter I:

HOW THEY STARTED!

Disclaimer: These posts were part of our influencer marketing #BeginningOfME paid campaign, which asked established influencers to reflect on how their blogging careers evolved. It's important to realize your blog doesn't have to be perfect – especially when you're starting out.

[Leticia Barr, Tech Savvy Mama](#)

When I started Tech Savvy Mama in 2008, I never imagined that my place on the web could develop into the full time business and brand that it's become today. I had no idea that my voice could be so powerful and that I could leverage it to bring much needed awareness to create positive change. There is so much I didn't know when I first started, including the fact that I'd still be doing this nine years later.



Yes. THAT.
Apologies to
your eyeballs!

[Lori Felix, More with Less Today](#)

In the beginning, I saw every other blogger in my niche as a competitor and I constantly compared myself to them. This was a huge mistake on my part. After going it alone for about two years, I reached out to another blogger with a question and she invited me to join a Facebook group full of other bloggers who were looking to grow and share their knowledge.

That exchange opened up a whole new wonderful world for me. I had been missing out on a supportive community of collaborators, not competitors. Blogging can be a lonely endeavor. Make some friends, support each other, and don't compete. The internet is big enough for everyone!

Emily Chapelle, Joyful Abode

Through incarnation after incarnation, redesign after redesign, eventually including my husband, dog, then my three kids, one thing always stayed constant.

Me.

I am the constant. Through almost 10 years of blogging, I've been in every post. It's my point of view. My voice. My words. My take on what's happening. My experiences. My projects.

Me.

None of my site was just built overnight. This little internet home of mine has been built over almost a decade, with lots of love and care. I started out just spilling my thoughts, sharing my experience.



Joyful Abode in 2007

Mitch, Gay NYC Dad

My blogging success also comes from having learned “how to” share with you. I have learned to share in an interesting manner. I try to focus on topics that you would want to read about. And, I try to educate: by opening up to my readership about my family, what we go through, to ultimately show people how a two dad family is not that different from other families. The example I love to use is, that as gay dads we do not have a disco ball in the living room, what we do have is what the rest of the country has. A teenager who needs to be motivated to do his homework, and not spend every minute on his phone! My message is that we are all the same because we are all different. Now that is some heavy stuff!

Everyone had to start somewhere. This is YOUR moment. Don't overthink it - start writing!

First Things First:***WHY ARE YOU WRITING, WHAT ARE YOU WRITING ABOUT AND WHO ARE YOU WRITING FOR***

Before you move on to choosing your domain name and the platform you want to build your blog on, you have to answer the following questions:

Why Do You Want to Start a Blog?

It's very important to set goals for yourself and your blog before you start writing. That way, you will both hold yourself accountable and be able to achieve progress. But to be able to set the goals, you have to know the reasons you are starting a blog in the first place.

Is it to gain recognition as an industry expert? Connect with likeminded people who share your passion and interests? Promote your company and its products? Establish an online diary of sorts? Change the world?

Go ahead, state your "dream goals." What do you expect and hope to see after one year of writing?

Make sure to outline in writing:
How often will you be posting content?
How much traffic will you attract?
How many new people will you reach?
How much will you earn from your blog?

Whatever your goals turn out to be, make sure they are S.M.A.R.T.

S – Specific	Examples:
M – Measurable	3 posts per week*
A – Ambitious	100 daily visits by the end of the year
R – Realistic	20 shares on social media per article
T – Time-related	3 comments per blog post

*Don't be afraid to include numbers in your goals. This is not something written in stone. You can change and adjust your goals later. Start with something realistic, easy to achieve but not too easy, and then adjust as necessary.

What Are You Going to Blog About?

Since blogging will take a lot of your time and energy, it will be much easier if what you are writing about is something you are really, really interested in.

Think about things you love and are knowledgeable about: your passions, topics you like to talk or debate about, subjects you love researching, your special talents. Whether you are a gadget-freak, love home-design, have a unique perspective on environmental policies or just want a place to exhibit your literary skills – everything goes. You can also write about yourself and your adventures – our blog is about .ME, so why not make one about you?

But there is another dimension to choosing your topic and niche.

You see, when starting a blog you can have two approaches. The first one would be starting your blog based on something you are passionate about, whatever that may be, and hoping you will gain followers with time. The second one would be choosing an attractive niche from the start, with a specific angle and pursuing followers who already show interest in the topics you're covering. If you plan to monetize your blog one day and already have a large audience, I recommend the second approach.

Michael Sheehan, HighTechDad



Honestly, I started because I wanted to review gadgets and consumer electronics. It was pretty selfish and since I didn't have the funds to buy each and every gadget that came out, I had to get a bit "creative" to find a way to do so.

But as I was writing about tech, my wife and I were also raising three girls. And I suddenly realized there was a niche that nobody was really talking about: technology within the family. So that is where I decided I could and would hang my hat and hopefully be a positive influence.

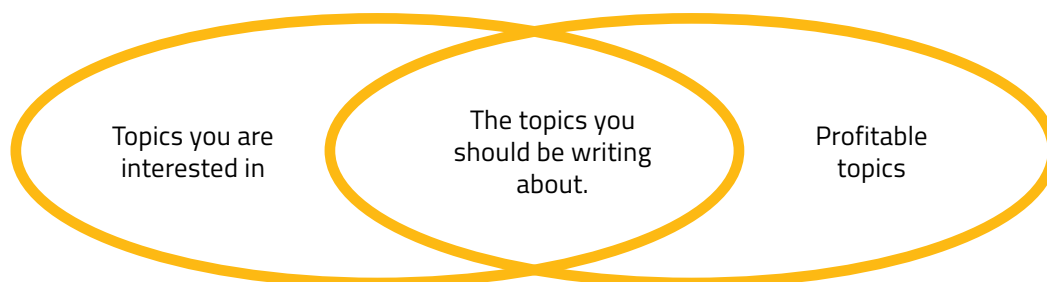
I adopted the tag-line: where technology and fatherhood collide. It IS a collision. And tech and parenting and children do not often go hand-in-hand. Trust me.

So I adopted that niche and just started writing about tech, consumer electronics, cars, social media, business tips, cloud computing (as it was relevant to a job I had), work advice, parenting and a bunch of other things. With every review and almost with every article, I take the perspective of a parent. My articles often talk about how technology is or is not relevant to the family or home environment. Or how a car's features are liked or not by me as a dad or by my wife and kids as passengers, or how to have conversations with your children about social media or bullying, or how to replace a battery on your child's iPhone.

As [Tena Šojer says](#), If you plan to monetize your blog in the future, you have to choose a niche that is neither too big nor too small.

When you are just starting, it may be tempting to go with a really general topic. After all, the more general the theme, the more to write about, right? However, that also means that many people may be doing the same thing, and that the competition will be fierce. On the other hand, if your niche is too small, you may not get any noticeable traffic. And if you are making the effort to write something valuable, it deserves to be read.

Instead, try to find a unique point of view. Think about your past experiences, things you love and are passionate about, topics that you can debate on and talk about for days on end. You will be writing a blog post per week for the next year, so you have to be sure you have 50+ topics to write about. Now, think about how many people would find what you have to say valuable. Tweak your topics if needs, but try to find a balance between what is profitable and what makes you feel happy and fulfilled.



Choosing a profitable niche

If you want to monetize your blog, aside from making sure you write about the topic you can imagine yourself writing about in years to come, you want to make sure that people are interested in what you are planning to write about. There are many ways to do that. You can see how many similar blogs already exist or, more specifically, how many times people search for terms related to your topic. There are many tools that can help you with keyword research, but these two are easy-to-use and free:

Google Keyword Planner – Select “Get search volume data and trends” and enter your keyword(s) to get information on the average search volume per month for the last year and a half. You will also get

an estimate on the bid for the keywords and the level of competition. Combine the volume for several keywords to get the overall search volume and to focus on those that are most promising. This tool has many features, so don't be afraid to play around and explore.

Google Trends – Getting information on trending topics at the moment can be very useful when brainstorming new blog posts. Go to the search bar and enter your key term to see its popularity over time. You will get information on which part of the world is searching the term most often, as well as on the most searched queries that include the term. This could be really useful in terms of comparing popularity of synonymous keywords so that you can focus in optimizing your content for those that the most people search for.

Who Are You Going to Be Writing For?

In the end, it all comes down to your readers and content they are interested in. One of the hardest and most important things to learn is to keep your readers in the forefront of your mind at all times. You have to get to know them, and I mean really know them – their likes and dislikes, challenges and goals, habits and more. What you learn about them will influence so many things, from the things you'll write about, to the color scheme of your blog and posting times on social media.

Try to discover who the people interested in the topic care about, or more importantly, whose interest you want to grab. When writing, pretend that this person is standing in front of you and that they're listening to you when you speak. This will influence your tone, the expressions you use and your overall attitude. It will lead to your audience finding **you** and your message resonating with them.



CHOOSING A HOME FOR YOUR BLOG

The next step is choosing a platform to host your blog. Here, you have two basic options: either a **hosted** platform or a **self-hosted** platform. We always recommended using a self-hosted platform, but let's first explain the differences.

Deciding on a blogging platform

Hosted Blogging Platforms

Hosted blogging platforms have their challenges (and we'll get into that later), but they are ideal for people who are just starting and don't want to bother with the technical aspect of things. They are usually completely free, or partially free (also known as Freemium), and very easy to start. The most popular ones are Tumblr, Blogger and Medium.



The benefit of starting on an established blogging platform is that you are coming somewhere where everything is already set up. You have someone who provides you with everything a modern writer needs and ensures that your blog functions as it should. By becoming a member of these sites, you join a community of bloggers you can look up to and connect with. You also have readers that come to that blogging platform in search of new and interesting things to read, which can grow your follower base.

I know you must be very enthusiastically nodding your head by now, but let's take a look at the downsides too. While blogging platforms do make your life easier by taking care of things such as the layout, design, hosting and such, you are very limited in personalizing your blog in any way. Hosting platforms provide a limited number of prearranged themes to choose from, and that's it. The address of your blog looks something like yourname.blogger.com or medium.com/yourname, which many people see as a sign of inexperience. You are also basically giving another party the rights to your name.

Most importantly, on a hosted platform, you're not really the owner of your little space on the web. If at any time the platform decides to change its business model or gets sold to someone, there is nothing you can do. No one can guarantee that you will be able to remain there and that the conditions will remain the same. Think about Vine, for example, and all the content creators who are now being left without their main channel of expression.

Building your online empire on a hosted platform is a little bit like renting an apartment. It all may be going well. You love your place, the cost is right, the neighborhood is perfect, but what happens if the owner decides to sell it, or move back in? With hosted platforms, there are also many restrictions that limit

your interaction with your followers and your plans for monetizing your blog. They may put limitations on the number of ads you can put on your blog or even place their own, in which case you will have no control over what brands are being associated with your blog and no benefit from it.

All of these reasons are why we always recommend a self-hosted platform. It may require a little more work – this e-book is here to help with that! – but the end-result is very rewarding.



Self-hosted Blogging Platforms

Self-hosted blogging platforms offer you complete control over your online kingdom. They require you to register your own domain name and choose a hosting plan, but you are completely in charge of your blog and everything you post there. Self-hosted platforms are the equivalent of getting your own apartment and controlling your fate.

This will require some, but not substantial, investments. You will have to choose a hosting plan, the prices go from \$5 to \$9 dollars per month, and your domain name – you can get .ME from as low as \$9 dollars per year.

Next up is choosing your Content Management System or CMS. A CMS is here to help you manage the content on your site with a few clicks. As opposed to building your blog or website from scratch, they come with a framework that provides you guidance

when choosing features and themes for your site, but still allows for heavy customization. In our experience, the most popular CMS platforms are: WordPress.org, Joomla! and Drupal, and you can find our review of all three [here](#).

Many blogging experts recommend WordPress as the go-to blogging platform. It is easy to use and extremely customizable. Even our company website (domain.me) is on WordPress. Throughout this e-book you will find advice on how to optimize your blog.

I know how all this talk about choosing a domain name and a hosting plan can be a bit scary for beginners, but don't worry! I will guide you through it all.

WordPress powers more than 26% of all websites



What Is a Domain Name?

Just like you need an address for your business in the offline world, you need an online address for your blog as well. That address is your domain name and its impact can be similar to getting a premium place on Fifth Avenue. When you pick a domain name, you are creating an online identity for your blog, and it needs to speak volumes – about you as the author, about the content and the nature of your blog. Your domain name will be something your blog will be recognized for, searched and remembered by. So don't rush, be very patient and deliberate when choosing your domain name. Take your time, think it through and get feedback from friends, family and experts.

To register a domain name visit one of the [registrars](#) that work as resellers for domain names. You will have to pay the one-year registration fee up front and then the cost of renewal once a year.

Read more about the criteria for choosing a domain name in chapter 5.

Choosing a Hosting Plan That Works Best

To build a blog you need a host to own your own piece of online space. You can imagine it as a lot you will build your home on. This is where all your content will be stored.

After registering your domain name, this is the second most important decision you will have to make. The hosting provider you choose will be entrusted with the task of keeping your blog live and at peak performance. They will make sure that any time a visitor comes to read something of yours, the blog is there, and it's loading fast.

There are many domain name registrars that offer hosting services as a part of their package, so you can take care of both at the same time. Or you can get your hosting from a different company than the one you got your domain name from. Whatever you choose, make sure that the company has a good reputation and offers all around support.

When it comes to hosting packages, they vary from one hosting provider to another and can include different features, such as domain names, disk space, data transfer, free or paid email accounts or 24/7 support.

Five Things to Look for in a Hosting Provider

- 1) They have good reputation. Check forums
- 2) They offer 24/7 phone and/or e-mail support
- 3) Their package includes e-mail accounts
- 4) Their package allows for scalability if your blog grows
- 5) Offer security-monitoring services

With so many hosting plans to choose from, it is not hard at all to become confused about them and which one of their packages is the right one for you. There are some things that you should watch out for in order to have your blog load fast when your readers need it.

The physical location of the hosting server plays a role in the load speed of your website. You'd want to make sure that you have your blog hosted on a continent where most of your readers come from. For example, if most of your readers come from Europe, you would want your website to be hosted in Germany or some other European country.

Choosing a hosting package often comes at the crossing point of following four things – ease of use, resources, support and price. You have to be aware of your needs and how big your blog could become. To start, choose something smaller with the option of upgrading if your blog grows in size and visits. If you are just starting out, some hosting providers now offer separate hosting packages that are completely optimized for WordPress and easy to use. Look out for these if your budget allows it as they tend to give you great performance without you having to worry much about optimization.



Tell Me More About Navigating WordPress!

You will notice that I did not spend much time explaining how WordPress works – no talk about navigating the dashboard, choosing themes and plugins or customizing your website appearance. That is mostly because there is already so much quality content on the .ME blog, where you can find answers to most of your questions. After all, WordPress may not be your CMS of choice at all.

Aside from that, I really wanted to focus more on teaching you how to create high-quality content on a regular basis, acquire readers and, if that is your goal, grow a business out of your blog. If I achieve that mission, I will be happy. :)

As I said, head out to the .ME blog for technical advice on how to customize your website or blog or take a look at [First Site Guide's](#) awesome blogging guide that has a ton of really useful advice.

Words from an Expert

CHOOSING A HOME FOR YOUR BLOG

Danica Kombol

Founder and CEO of Everywhere Agency

A great blog has great content first and foremost, but also has a phenomenal name that everyone can remember. I met Kristen Howerton at a blogging conference and when she told me her blog was named [Rage Against the Minivan](#), I knew immediately what her blog was about and to whom it spoke: all those American moms (like me) who rage against the minivan. I assumed that her blog would be irreverent (it is), opinionated (it is) and not a guidebook to perfect parenting (it's not). That's a clever blog name for a specific blog concept.

That said, I meet bloggers all the time who regret their initial blog name choice. They started out writing about parenting and have branched out into many endeavors and now regret having a moniker with "mommy" in the title. So how do you pick the ideal blog name? Truth? Picking a blog name is picking a brand, so stop and ask yourself, am I going to want to wear this brand around my neck, 24 hours a day for the next five years or more?

There's no surefire way to choose the perfect blog name, but here are a few questions we recommend you ask to help you get it right the first time:

1. Is it relatable? Does it relate to what you actually write about and what your readers want to hear? The blog [TechSavvyMama](#) is relatable because you know that by hearing those three words strung together that this is a blog by a mom who's savvy about technology. I know I want to read that blog when I have questions related to my kids and technology. I can relate. If your blog name requires explaining, then you probably have the wrong blog name.

2. Is it memorable? Clever does not equal memorable. People have trouble remembering more than three nouns in a row. Don't crowd a lot of random ideas into a blog title and expect people to remember. Carol Cain's blog, [Girl Gone Travel](#) is memorable. You know this a blog by someone who shows her wild side and loves to travel.

3. Is it in tune? By in tune, I mean whether your blog name relates to the tone of your blog. If your writing style is serious, pick a blog name with serious undertones. If it's witty, be witty. I meet bloggers who chose blog titles because they loved the way it sounds, but the sound of that title has nothing to do with the way they write. Anne Parris' blog, [Not a Supermom](#) sets a tone – a tone for humor and being humble. That's a great blog name.

So there you have it – three not-very-scientific but sensible tips for naming your blog! Now, what to do if you're stuck with a blog name you now regret? A moniker that is hanging around your neck like smelly sausages? Oh honey, change it. There's no rule in the blogosphere that says you can't rebrand, refresh and rename your blog!



Quick Tips on the Side:

- 1) Make it unique. Check if there are similar domain names already in use.
- 2) Make sure it passes the radio check – it's spelled the same as it sounds, there are no hyphens or numbers. If someone mentions it on the radio, would you be able to understand it and remember later?
- 3) Keep it short and memorable.
- 4) It's best to be able to match your domain name to your social media profiles for branding consistency.
- 5) Make sure you really love it. It will stay with you for a long time.

TIME TO START WRITING

Your first blog post is very important, but maybe not in the way you think. Ideally, it will set the tone for your blog and provide an introduction into your work. But even more important is the insurmountable hurdle that first post presents for most writers.

You have defined your niche and are full of ideas for your first dozen blog posts but are not sure where to start. You are uncertain if people will like it. Suddenly, you are not so comfortable putting your thoughts and opinions out in the open.

These thoughts and doubts are something all bloggers go through, and here's the deal: Don't expect your first blog post (or even your 20th) to be perfect. You don't have to be Tolkien or Stephen King to be able to write well. You're having a conversation, not writing a literary masterpiece. Also, your knowledge is always more important than your grammar (though please do your best on that one).

In this chapter, I will try to cover everything you need to keep in mind when writing that first post and every other post after that.

Write About What You Know

Ivana (Ivy) Gutierrez
Author at [Domain.ME](#)blog

If you plan to start blogging about gadgets, because that's what's popular now, even though you prefer knitting, think again. Your blog will only be as good as you make it. If you pick a topic/theme you are passionate about, then you will have a lot to say about that topic, and it will be easy for you to write. Your love for the topic will be apparent in your posts, and readers appreciate a passionate and knowledgeable blogger.

Imagine the Person You Are Speaking With

We already mentioned the above. You are not writing an essay. You are not giving a presentation. You are simply having a conversation. Once you choose your niche and know who your target audience is, keep that person in mind all the time.

Imagine that that person is your friend. Try to predict the response of that person to your writing. What would make her laugh or pay attention? What questions would she have? Is that person a beginner? Then keep it simple. Is she perhaps on what we could call an advanced level of understanding? Then keep her interested.



Focus on One Message

People usually take one of two most common approaches to writing a blog post. Some get an idea and just write and write until the idea is completely transferred to paper. Others first plan the whole blog post in their mind and then start systematically writing paragraph by paragraph. While focusing on one idea comes more naturally with the second approach, there are clear benefits to the first one. When you write freely, without thinking about the structure, paragraphs, titles and other elements of your blog post, words come easier and you write faster. What we also noticed is that when you are inspired in such way, your emotions and personality shine through, which makes your post really genuine and relatable.

No matter the approach, the most important thing is to take a break and then come back to the post and revise, cut and rearrange until you get to the end result you are happy with. Do not hesitate to turn one blog post into two or three. Even if your paragraph is perfectly written, if it does not fit in with the rest of the text, cut it and keep it for another post.

Do you know how we got the idea to include these info boxes in the e-book? Using the second approach – too many ideas, too few chapters. :)

Having many things to say and share is great. Trying to fit it all into one blog post is not.

Why Would Anyone Care About Your Post?

I know, it sounds harsh, but it is supposed to. Neil Patel of KISSmetrics and Quick Sprout says that one of the most important questions you have to ask yourself before you start blogging is what is the purpose of your post is and why would anyone care about it. These two questions are different sides of the same coin.

The purpose of your post is something that comes from you – what you plan to achieve with your post, and how do you plan to achieve it. [According to Neil](#), that purpose can be to:

Entertain – Here we are talking about posts with the main purpose of entertainment. That can be everything from a video of your two puppies playing to an update on your latest project that is communicated via a popular culture reference. Once again, it all depends on what your audience considers entertaining.

Solve a problem – With posts like these, you address a specific problem a person has and provide a solution.

Encourage discussion – Some posts exist solely to encourage conversation. Basically, this is where you introduce a concept and ask your audience for their input.

Teach – While similar to problem solving, the goal of this post is not to solve a specific problem, but to provide general knowledge that will enable a person to get to a solution later on.

Of course, this does not mean that posts cannot have different elements and achieve multiple purposes, but usually, a post should be focused on achieving just one thing. For example, the goal of this e-book is not so much to solve a problem of people not knowing how to start a blog, as it is to educate all future bloggers on how to win at all major milestones when it comes to writing a blog and growing your online audience.

Next, think about why would people care about what you have to say. It should be something that is directly connected to your readers and their pain points. This is what you have to keep in mind if you want to make sure that the problem you are aiming to solve is actually something people will be interested in.

In the same post, Neil suggests there are two types of pain points and that they need to be addressed differently.

1) **Acute pain** is something that is hurting now and that we need to resolve ASAP. It moves us to actively look for a solution. Once you identify acute pain, it is easy to write about it. Just make sure to make your blog post easy to find by using the right keywords and promotion channels.

2) **Chronic pain** is something we have felt for the longest time – until it became something we learned how to live with. When it comes to chronic pain, you have to make the reader remember the extent this pain can reach, and the problem it causes, before offering a solution.

Make Your Post Unique

No matter what your post is about, someone probably already wrote about it. There are hundreds of tutorials, blog posts, webinars and e-books with the same goal of this one. However, we believed that we have a unique angle. A way to provide advice that will be timeless, filled with voices of those who manage successful blogs, and useful to both those that are just starting and those that wish to make their blog into a business.

With so many people around the globe creating content, repeated concepts are hard to avoid. Sometimes people unintentionally end up writing a post very similar to something that was already published, just because they think the same way as the other person or approach the problem in a similar way. Your job is to decrease the chances of that happening to you.

Once you decide on a topic, do your research. Look at the top ten results on the Google search and analyze them. Who are they addressing? How detailed are they? Is there something missing? Look at YouTube and Quora to see what people are talking about there and the answers they give. See related searched and topics as well. If possible, do a hashtag search on social media as well. Try to approach your topic from different standpoints to diversify your point of view.

Do not be afraid to mix and match in order to put a different spin on it. Writing about leadership? How about “10 Leadership Lessons We Can Learn about Leadership from Captain Jean-Luc Picard”? Gadgets, perhaps? “How Would an Apple Watch Change the Outcome of the Game of Thrones Season Finale”?

Once you settle on a concrete idea, search again to check if someone already wrote about it. They did not? Great, write on.



7 Essential Elements Every Blog Should Have

1. About Page

People relate to people. Make sure to share something about yourself and the reasons for starting your blog. People who love your writing will love it even more once they know who is behind it. Even if your blog is anonymous, do not miss this. The goal of an about me page is to let visitors know what they can expect from your blog, no matter what it is about. Once your blog gains traction and your monthly visits grow to 5 digits, include a media kit as well. A media kit is a PDF summary of what your brand is all about, who your audience is, examples of your work (on all your channels) and types of cooperation you are interested in. If you are not sure how to make one, we have a tutorial and template for that as well. Just contact us at info (at) Domain.ME.

2. Contact Form

You have to give people the means to contact you. Ideally, you would feature the social media accounts they can follow you on and engage with your work, as well as your contact email. Another option is to embed a contact form they can fill out on your blog that is connected to your email. This page is especially important if you wish to work with brands in the future.

3. Related Post

Encourage people to read more by offering them posts on the same or similar topic. If someone was interested enough to read your article all the way through, it is highly probable they will want to read more.

4. Subscription Form

Make it easy for people to stay updated with your blog. Place your subscription box in a prominent place and encourage your readers to subscribe. Connect your blog to your MailChimp account, which is the easiest one to use in my opinion, choose one of the pre-arranged templates and done. Just make sure you subscribe to your newsletter as well to be sure what is going out. :)

5. Sharing Icons

Encourage people to share your content with their followers by making the act really easy. The most important thing is to make sharing icons visible. Then, if possible, add additional sharing elements that allow visitors to pin your post to their Pinterest boards or tweet a sentence that they like.

6. Categories

No matter what your blog is about, it is highly probable that you will cover different topics or at least different perspectives. In that case, use categories to group your posts. That will improve the user-experience you provide to your readers because it will be much easier for them to navigate your site. Also, it will help search engines understand your content better.

7. Search Box

Another feature that makes it easier for visitors to explore your blog and find what they like.



What is the Best Medium for Sharing Your Message?

Okay, you are writing a blog post, but it does not have to be a blog post in the traditional sense of the word. There are many media formats available that can sometimes help you express yourself better than you would with text.

Why not share your next interview in the form of a podcast? You can still have a transcription below that would take care of the SEO part of the job and be available for those who prefer reading.

Have a lot of statistical information to share? Why not structure it and share it in form of an infographic?

Do not limit yourself to one medium exclusively – use the whole arsenal.

Think about the Structure

People will not read big chunks of text. You have to admit there has been a time when even your eyes glazed over when faced with a wall of copy. If you want to keep your visitors reading, you have to make your post visually appealing and easy to skim through.

Keep your paragraphs shorter by implementing the “one idea = one paragraph” formula.

Group paragraphs with similar ideas under subtitles.

Numbered lists and bullet points are always a good idea when enumerating things.

Use formatting: Bold key messages and use italics for names, quotes or questions.

Keeping it short... or long?

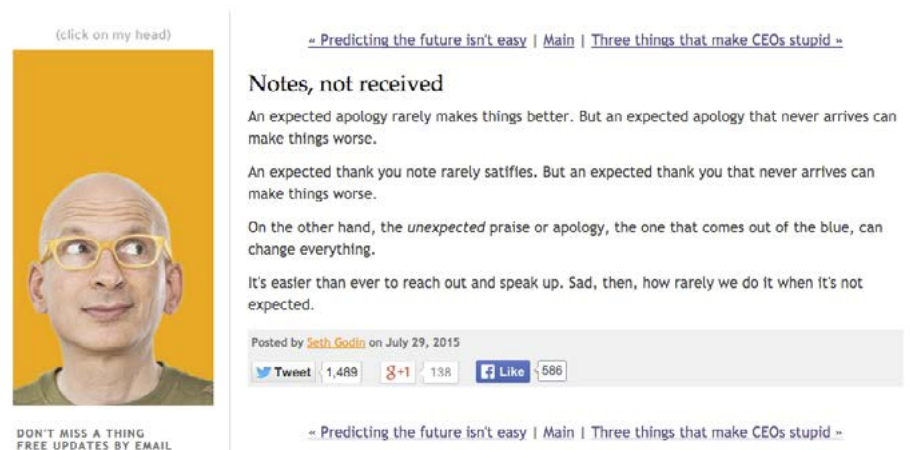
The debate on whether blog post should be short (400 to 800 words) or long (more than 1200 words) is still ongoing. On one hand, we have [studies like Slate's](#) that show how people do not read entire articles, and on the other, we have a [Buffer study](#) showing how posts with more than 1600 words get the most engagement. Who to listen to?

Easy – yourself. There is no right or wrong answer. Your posts should be as short or as long as you need it to be. Not convinced? Consider this:

Exhibit 1 – Seth Godin

[Seth Godin](#) is a marketing guru and bestselling author with one of the most read marketing blogs out there. His posts by default are very short. Take a look at this one:

Now take a look at his social media sharing buttons.



(click on my head)

- Predicting the future isn't easy | Main | Three things that make CEOs stupid -

Notes, not received

An expected apology rarely makes things better. But an expected apology that never arrives can make things worse.

An expected thank you note rarely satisfies. But an expected thank you that never arrives can make things worse.

On the other hand, the *unexpected* praise or apology, the one that comes out of the blue, can change everything.

It's easier than ever to reach out and speak up. Sad, then, how rarely we do it when it's not expected.

Posted by [Seth Godin](#) on July 29, 2015

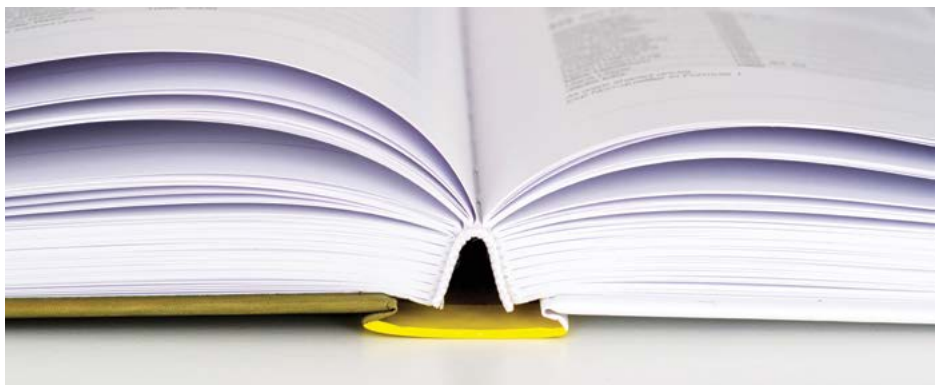
Tweet 1,489 +1 138 Like 586

- Predicting the future isn't easy | Main | Three things that make CEOs stupid -

Source: Seth Godin, *Notes, not received*

Exhibit 2 – Olivier Blanchard

Olivier is another best-selling author and a brand specialist. He is also a sought-after keynote speaker and has a very popular blog – The Brand Builder. As opposed to writing every day, he writes just a few times a year. His posts are very in-depth and have a lot more than the prescribed 1200 words. His stats are equally impressive.



What these two very successful bloggers have in common is not the length of their posts, but the fact that their posts match their audience, their style and their message.

But there is one more factor to consider: Longer blog posts rank better on Google.

[serpIQ research](#) showed that the average content length on page one of Google Search results have more than 2450 words. As you move up to page 10, the length of content rapidly drops. This could be due to the fact that longer content can fit in more keywords and also that there is just more information for Google to index, making longer content seem more “useful” by default. Maybe? No one knows what Google really likes except that Google tries to match what people like.

In the end, it all comes down to this: Length is definitely one of the success factors to consider, but it’s not the only one and certainly not the most important. The most important factor is the amount of value you provide.

Engaging Headline

I think it’s obvious by now – just writing high-quality content is not enough. One of the things you **HAVE** to get right is the headline, which is why this part of the chapter will be a bit longer than the rest, but bear with me. In most cases, the headline will determine if your post will be read or not. In fact, **8 out of 10** people will read your headline, but only 2 out of 10 will read the rest of your post.

A good headline does two things:

1) Introduces the topic – Your readers should be able to guess what the blog post is all about from the title. The title is a promise of what they can expect. This is why click bait is no good. People will click, but once you don’t fulfill their expectations, you lost them for good.

2) Makes your blog post easy to find – If you want your post to rank well on Google, you have to include keywords into your title, and that should be just a small part of your on-site SEO strategy. This does not mean that your post should not be clever; it definitely should, but just keep the most important keywords in mind.

People don’t only scan blog posts, they scan headlines too, which is why the first three words and the last three words of your headline are the most important. There are [distinct words](#) that can be repeatedly seen in the most shared headlines.

Headline Writing Strategies

Keeping all of this in mind, here are 8 winning headline formulas that are backed by proven psychological principles, [as originally explained by Courtney Seiter on Buffer's blog](#):

1. **Surprise** – Headlines with an unexpected element will capture our attention. This is the reasoning why copywriters sometimes misspell the words in their title, invent new ones, use caps lock (please don't) or put words in brackets.

[INFOGRAPHIC] How Online Content Can Help (or Hurt) Your Job Search

2. **Questions** – Ask a question to get people wondering. There is a reason why people respond so well to posts that begin with why, how and do you?

Do You Make These Grammar Mistakes?

3. **Curiosity** – The goal of your title is to create a curiosity gap – a gap between what people know and wish they knew. The formula goes like this: You give them a piece of information but keep them wanting for more. Headlines like these are the reasons why BuzzFeed and Upworthy articles are so successful. Just consider this one:

Do This One Thing to Stand Out From 99 Percent of Job Candidates

4. **Negatives** – When comparing 65,000 headlines with positive superlatives, negative superlatives and no superlatives at all, [researchers](#) saw that the posts with negative superlatives in their headline get the most engagement. One of the reasons could be that these headlines are surprising, but I would also say that this because they target our sense of fear and self-preservation, which is, according to [Maslow](#), a very powerful motivator.

Dangers Of Not Actively Managing Your Personal Brand

5. **How to** – Remember how I said that one of the post's purposes can be to solve a problem or teach? These headlines send a message that this is what this post does. They work because we all want to get better and gain additional insight into how things work.

How to Choose a Perfect Domain Name

6. **Numbers** – The reason why people like lists is because they value the predictability. Before you even start reading the post, you know exactly what to expect. Also, lists are easy to scan and process quickly. In fact, a [Conductor study from 2013](#) showed that people prefer "number" headlines to any other type of headline.

3 Ultimate Hacks to Write Your 'About Me' in Under 25 Minutes

7. **Audience referencing** – By this I mean directly addressing your readers in the headline. The most important thing here is to identify your persona correctly (but we already got that covered, right?) and address them. You want them to go "That's for me!" when they see the title. By doing this, you are basically personalizing your posts to their needs – a winning strategy.

Thinking About Building Your Website? Page4.Me Has Got All The Blocks You Need

8. **Specificity** – We already talked about it. People appreciate transparency and predictability. They want to know what they are going to get once they open the post. Aside from that, with headlines like these you communicate that you did your research and you stand behind your offering.

The 15 Minute (Summer) Guide To Updating Your CV For the Next 2.5 Years



Emotional Marketing Value

Whatever strategy you end up using, your goal should be to strike an emotional chord with your readers. Emotions are great motivators, and [research](#) shows that people share posts when they evoke strong feelings, such as happiness or anger.

[EMV Headline Analyzer](#), a free tool provided by Advanced Marketing Institute can help you calculate the emotional response your headline is expected to generate based on the words you are using. On average, you can be satisfied with a result of 30%-40%. Of course, you should always aim higher.

You can also evaluate the emotional score of your headline by going directly to real people. Write the whole article first and then move on to the title. Think of several potential options and test them with your colleagues or friends to see which one would they click on.

Start with yourself. Go through your Facebook feed and pay attention to which titles and images draw your attention, which make you stop and want to read it. Those are the kind of titles you want.

Quality over Everything

If there is one non-negotiable thing when it comes to your writing, it's the quality of your blog posts. At one point, maybe even at the beginning, you may feel pressured to write a certain amount of blog posts at certain times, or on specific topics, just to keep the stats rising. If that happens, stop looking at the stats.

The best bloggers write because they want to, not because of the people that read them. Every blogger knows how fun it is to write when words come easily. If you're trying to force them out, you're doing it wrong.

Do not be afraid to miss a deadline if that means making sure that the quality of your posts is what your audience deserves. Be persistent and consistent, and the views and subscriptions will come naturally.



What Next?

Every time you start writing a post, you should know how it reflects on your overall strategy.

Is this an introduction to a topic you need to expand on in the future? Make sure to mention that in the post and invite people to follow you.

Can this post be repurposed in the future as a SlideShare presentation, an infographic or a video? Short explanation videos are the future, so think about that as well! Highlight the information you will need to create a video during the initial writing process, when everything is still fresh in your mind.

CREATING GREAT CONTENT DAY IN AND DAY OUT

Now that you are writing posts on a regular basis, you know that coming up with some great content, topics and ideas or a novel approach isn't always simple. No matter how hard you try or how long you stare at the blank page, the words are just not developing into actual material.

Everything is just... Blank.

Luckily, getting out of the vicious circle of writer's block and frustration is not that hard. After all, the biggest source of inspiration a writer can have is the world around her. Everything can be a source of inspiration if you allow it.

News

Make sure to stay on top of the last news: technology, politics, entertainment, anything goes – you never know where you'll find inspiration. Even if your blog has nothing to do with those subjects, you will broaden your horizons and, hopefully, find new ways to talk about the same topic you've been blogging about for months now. The worst thing you could do is stay fixated on the news and stories regarding your niche only.

Google Trends

As we already mentioned, Google Trends allows you to keep an eye on what people are searching for the most at the moment. Just note that, when it comes to current news and events, timing is everything. You want to be writing about it now because in six months time the hype about Game of Thrones may be all gone. Ok, not really, but you get the point. :)

Social Media

Your news feed provides you the best insight into what your friends feel passionate about and which messages resonate with them the most. Another great source of inspiration? Trending hashtags on Twitter and Instagram. Just make sure to check out what they stand for first.

Important Dates

There are so many dates and holidays you can incorporate into your blog! There are internationally recognized options, but even dates that are important for smaller communities can be great for building content around. Take a look at this [calendar of geeky holidays](#) and try to get some inspiration from there. Use Pi Day to share a perfect

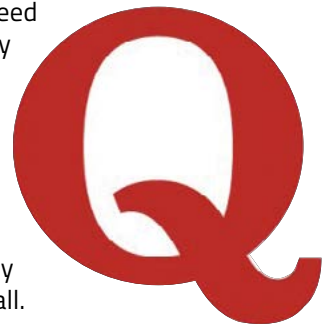
Fun Fact: .ME started its own holiday! Have you ever heard about the [ME day](#)?

blueberry pie recipe!

There is always something going on, you just have to jump on the bandwagon at the right time.

Quora

If you ever had a question you need a detailed answer to, you probably went to Quora. Seeing how Quora is the biggest crowdsourced answer platform, it can also be the greatest source for content ideas. Search for keywords regarding your niche and see the answers people have. If possible, join the conversation by providing a blog post that answers it all.



BuzzSumo

With BuzzSumo you can keep track of the best performing content for certain keywords and domains, as well as the people sharing it. It helps you identify the topics that get the most engagement, but also the influencers that could be interested in your content.

Your Audience

Crowdsource ideas from your own audience by reading through the comments on your blog and social media. What are people saying about your content? Do they have any questions? Ask your audience directly what they would want to read more of. Do it at the end of your posts, conduct a [poll](#) or even a [survey](#). Identify their main points and then find a way to address them.

Your Successes

Identify your best performing posts and try to expand on their success. Can you approach them

from a new perspective? Is there anything you missed the first time? Can you refresh the content with the newest information? Maybe do a SlideShare presentation out of it?

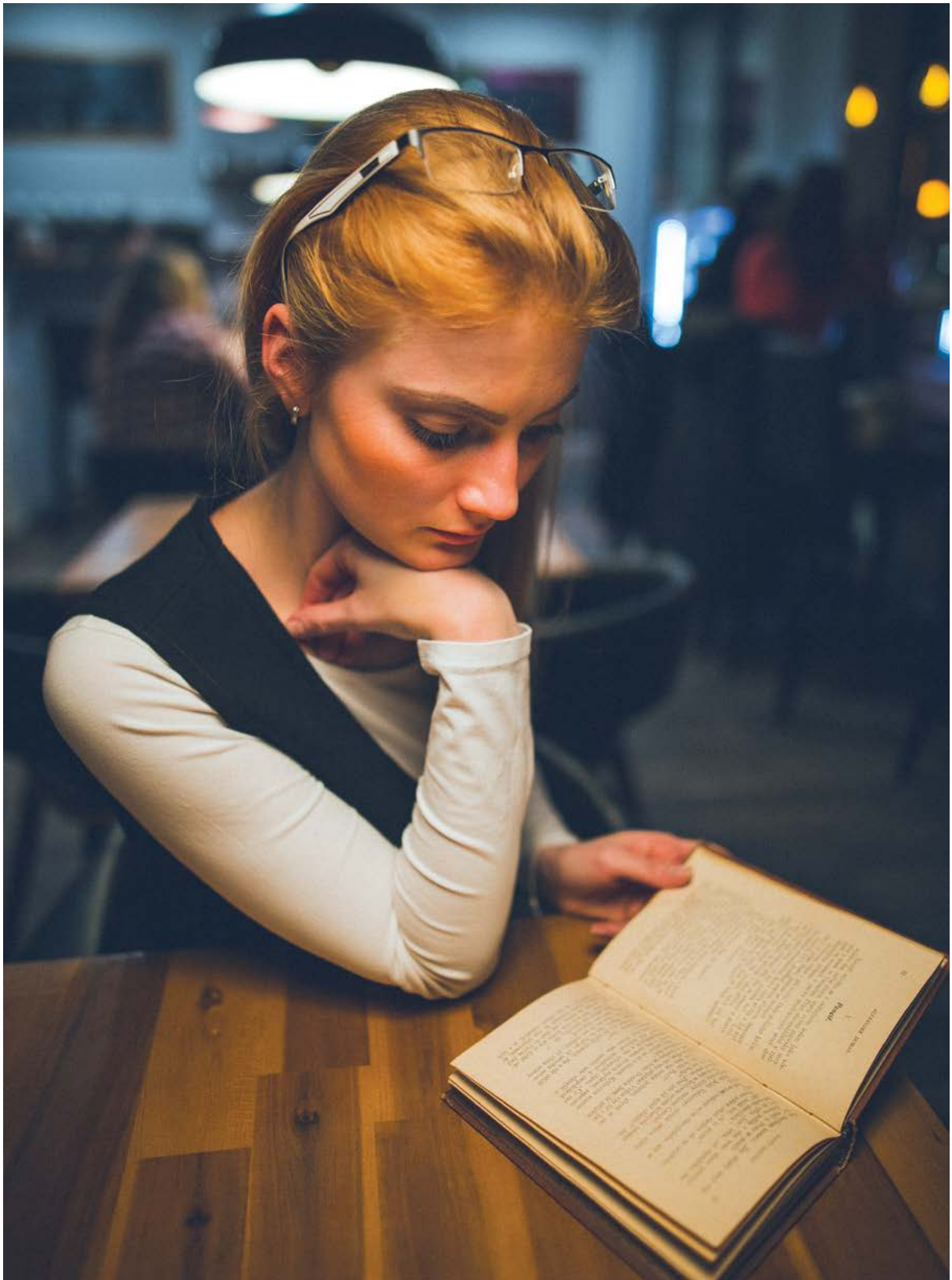
Your Competitors

Follow what the other people in your industry are writing about. See if there are any questions left unanswered and then address them on your blog. Don't shy away from expanding on their posts, just make sure you provide value and a fresh take on the existing material.

Blogs, Books, Pamphlets?

If you want to be a good writer, you have to read and read a lot. Not only will your writing improve in time, but by learning something new yourself, you will be able to transfer that knowledge to your readers.

The thing about inspiration is that you never know when it's going to strike. Most often it's when we are feeling relaxed and in the zone. Have an excel sheet or running document where you write down all your ideas, no matter how silly they are. One day, they may fuel your next great post.



SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

So, you've got your 52 ideas (one for each week of the year) all sorted out and have enthusiastically started writing. You made sure to make the introduction engaging, structure your posts well, include powerful images and you have thought of a more than clever title. There is just one problem... no one is reading your blog.

If you haven't realized it so far, writing a blog post is just half of the task you have to complete if you want it to reach your audience. After creating content, you have to also distribute it accordingly. That process starts by optimizing your website and your content for both your readers and for search engines.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of adding and modifying certain elements of your site in order for it to be visible to search engines and achieve higher ranking in search results.

Making your website visible on search engines

If you take a look at your website analytics – whichever platform you build your blog on, you should have an insight to either its native analytics tool, Google Analytics or both – you will be able to track the sources of your blog traffic. A big part of your traffic should come from "Organic Search," traffic coming from people who searched for something of interest on search engines like Google and Bing and were presented with your website as a result. The greater the percentage, the better your website is search engine optimized.

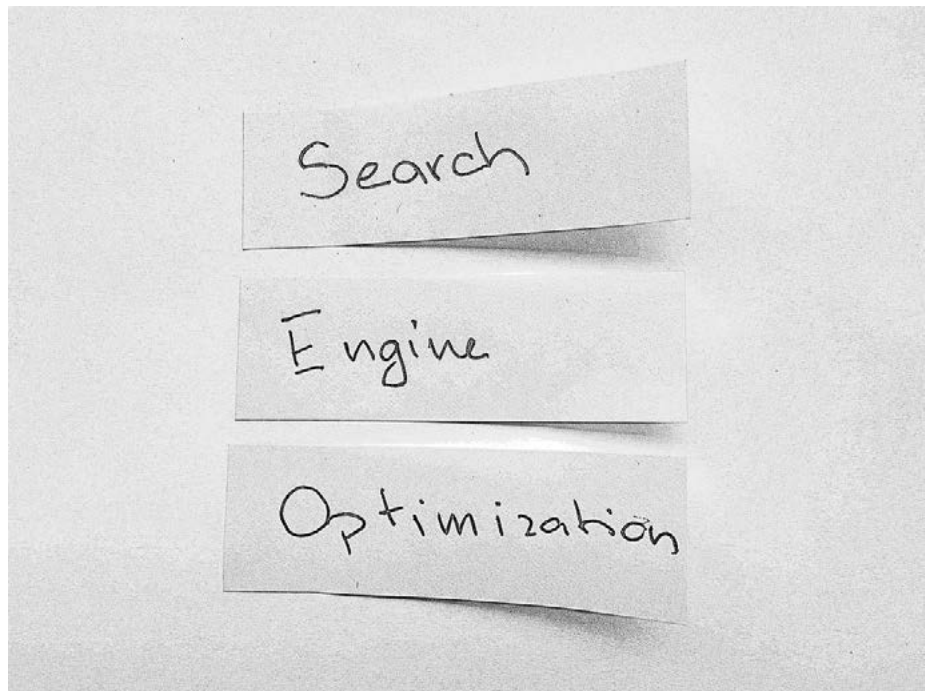
But what does being search engine optimized even mean?

Let's start by explaining how search engines work.

I will use Google, the most popular search engine, as an example, but they all work basically the same. In order to be able to present people with relevant results when people are searching for something, Google tries to "scan" as much of the web as possible. It all starts with Google crawlers that follow links from page to page, reading all available data and indexing them by content and other features. Once someone does a search, Google scans indexed pages and ranks the pages on their relevance, trying to promote the most relevant results first.

What you want to do is to make sure your blog ranks well for the keywords you want it to be found by. For example, if you are talking about DIY projects, you want to rank well for keywords such as "DIY projects," "DIY tutorials," "DIY Christmas ornaments" and so on, so people can find your helpful content. You don't want to rank well on "yarn," "recipes," or "football," because that has no connection with what you are writing about.

How do you make sure you rank well on important keywords? By including them in your site.



If you want to rank well for searches on dog training, then your website, of course, has to be all about dog training, but it also means you can do some tweaks on your website and your blog posts to increase your ranking.

Basically, what you need to focus on are:

1) Title – The name of your blog and your pages.

While clever titles can be tempting, when choosing between a page or post title that has no connection to your blog and something that sums up what your blog is all about, always go for the latter. Be creative, be unique, but still stay true to your niche.

Also, make sure to title each page on your blog and fill it with content. We did a blogging workshop back home in Montenegro a couple of months ago, and we saw the same mistake being made over, and over again. They would create a bunch of separate pages for their blog that they would either leave untitled or with a “Coming soon...” message for ages.



You don't have to have it all figured out from day one. Start with the basics – home, about and contact – and add pages as you go. Leaving it incomplete sends the wrong message both to search engines and to people.

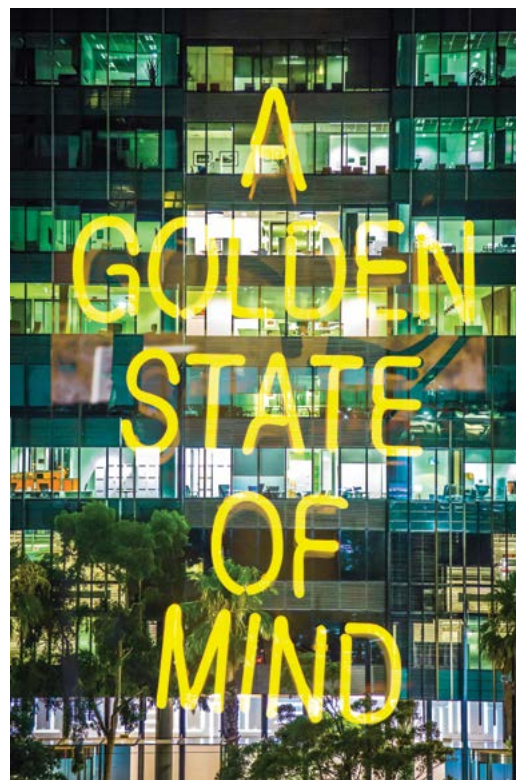
2) URL – Your domain name, aka your website address.

A few chapters ago, Danica wrote about naming your blog, and when in doubt, refer to her advice. What we can add is that, since you are hosting your blog on the web, match your blog name to your domain name. You want to make it as easy as possible for people to find you.

Also, when publishing blog posts, your CMS will generate a URL for them, but you can modify them before publishing. That way, even if your blog post title is long, you can keep the URL short and sweet. Like www.domain.me/about-me-tips

3) Descriptions – Short snippets describing your homepage, webpages and blog posts.

Descriptions are important both for search engines and for people. If you go and search for something, you'll see these in the results. By entering meta descriptions manually for each page and blog posts, you can influence the overview shown in search results and increase the chances of your blog post being clicked.



The same goes for social media. When sharing a blog post on Facebook or

LinkedIn, there is always a sentence or two that's displayed below the post title. If you don't enter its meta description, it will just show the first sentence of the blog post, whether you like it or not.

This means that you should write different descriptions for different pages between 150 and 160 characters long. Anything longer than that will be truncated by the search engines.

4) Images – Always enter the title and Alt description of your images.

Even the images you use should be optimized for search engines. Why? So people who look for images on certain topics can find your blog post. Make sure to enter the appropriate title for all your images but also to enter the Alt descriptions.

If anything happens with your media library and your images stop showing, the Alt description will be shown instead and could explain to people what used to be there instead of an empty box using up space.

We are guessing that search engines will soon be able to guess what's featured on images by scanning them, but for now, they scan all the other information they can get. Starting with its title and alt description.

5) Links – Add internal and external links.

Back to analytics. You have to track how much traffic you get from other pages from your site. By adding "Recommended posts" or "Most read posts" boxes to your blog, or even referencing your previous work in your posts, you are encouraging your readers to stay on your site longer. This is internal traffic.

External or outbound links, on the other hand, are valuable because they reference authors of a work you cited, direct users to additional information on the topic and help search engines understand what your blog posts is about.

6) Keywords

Keywords connect everything I talked about. When choosing a title, URL or writing a description, make sure to include at least one of your keywords. Include them naturally – don't force it – and you'll see your ranking slowly improve over time.

Why is all of this important? This is the information search engine crawlers see as part of the code and that they use to make sense of what your blog is all about. By keeping your blog well structured and having all info filled out, you are helping search engines help people by referring them to your blog.

Don't forget: People come before search engines

True, your blog posts need to be optimized for search engines, but first and foremost, they need to be optimized for humans. It is better to give up on a keyword than to write something that will not be appealing for your readers .. The most important thing is to create valuable and original content for your audience, and that is something that will be appreciated by search engines too.

Bonus Tip: Yoast Plug-In

If you decide to use WordPress.org as your blogging platform, the best thing you can do for your SEO optimization is to install the SEO Yoast plugin. This is the best and most popular SEO plugin there is, and it helps you add all the elements we talked about to your pages and blog posts via its easy-to-use form.

After each page or post, you will be given the option to enter the post title, meta description and a keyword your blog post is focusing on, so the plugin can give you suggestions on how to optimize your post further.

Another great feature is the option to enter different titles and meta descriptions for Facebook and Twitter.

PROMOTION, PROMOTION, PROMOTION

Hrvoje Hrsto,

Author at [Domain.ME](#) blog

So, after all the hard work you put into getting your blog on its own two legs, you've finally typed out that awesome post, proofread and edited it three times before actually posting it. And after a considerable amount of time, there are still no comments or buzz. The sad truth is, your post can be most educational and informative, but without any promotion, it is dead in the water.

Announce Your Existence

The first and one of the most obvious tactics is promotion on social networks. No matter if it is Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Google+ or any other. Probability that you are using at least two of those is pretty solid, so setting one up for your blog or posting about it shouldn't be too much of a stretch.

On Facebook, you should add your blog to your "About" section and/or create a page just for blog. If you have Twitter, tweet about your post 2-3 times a day, but change up your tweets, so they aren't copied and pasted – and redundant. On Instagram, post a picture from your post. Creating a separate board on Pinterest for your blog is easy and not different from any other board. Lastly, you can post it on LinkedIn, which is especially good if you're blogging for career purposes. Most networks allow interconnectivity, so posting on several social networks can be done with a single click.

Bookmarking Sites

You can also use bookmarking sites. The advantage is that they have literally millions of users, so promoting isn't limited only to your contacts. Some of the most popular ones are [Reddit](#), [StumbleUpon](#), [Digg](#), etc.

Guest posts

Yes, this means that you would write on somebody

else's domain, but hear me out. Whether it's a public blog that only features posts by guest bloggers or somebody that you know, it is the best way to get people who haven't heard of you to visit your blog. It will send external links from those sites, and the more you have of those, the better your blog will be placed on different search engines. Also, if you refer to some of your previous posts, link them too.

Commenting And Links

Another way of getting external links is through comments. However, be careful. Don't spam and make sure to leave only useful comments with links to your post. If your comments consist of only a link to your blog post, it could be interpreted as a spam, not by technology, but by annoyed readers of that and other blogs. And don't be shy about asking influential bloggers to link to your posts. Sometimes you'll get no for an answer, but sometimes you won't. Be nice, polite and logical. If you write about similar topics, the chances of cross-promotion are bigger, but you never know.

Discuss And Engage

Similar interests drive conversations, so don't hesitate to join a specific forum or board. One of the helpful tricks is linking your blog/post in your signature on the platform, but don't stop there. Add it in your e-mail signature, or even better, create a newsletter and/or mailing list.

The key to promotion is connecting and who are you connecting to. Stay true to your target audience and yourself. The message that you are sending is one of the most important parts of blogging.

Just keep in mind that content is king. You may lure tens of thousands of readers to your blog, but if you don't offer any substance, they will leave never to return again. Also, don't expect miracles overnight – building an audience takes time.



HOW TO DEAL WITH COMMENTS ON YOUR BLOG

Whether positive or negative, comments are an important part of writer-reader interaction. They are a clear indication that your writing struck a chord. They offer a valuable insight into the likes and dislike of your audience and tell you what works and what does not. The problem starts when constructive commenting, including comments that are negative, turns into trolling.

The jury is still out on best way to deal with these comments, and as someone who understands both sides of the debate – believing that all comments should be addressed and responded to and believing that turning the comment option off is the way to go – I can tell you right away that there is no right or wrong answer. So, in lieu of telling you what to do, I will do the second best thing and share with you the views of popular bloggers, so you can form your own opinion.

Why I don't have comments

[Seth Godin](#)

Marketing guru and best-selling author

I think comments are terrific, and they are the key attraction for some blogs and some bloggers. Not for me, though. First, I feel compelled to clarify or to answer every objection or to point out every flaw in reasoning. Second, it takes way too much of my time to even think about them, never mind curate them. And finally, and most important for you, it permanently changes the way I write. Instead of writing for everyone, I find myself writing in anticipation of the commenters. I'm already itching to rewrite my traffic post below. So, given a choice between a blog with comments or no blog at all, I think I'd have to choose the latter.

Stay Positive or Agree to Disagree

[Guy Kawasaki and Peg Fitzpatrick](#)

Best-selling authors and social media experts

Since others are watching, you should stay positive and pleasant no matter how banal, blasphemous, or baiting the comment. You can never go wrong by taking the high road, because winning the war for class and credibility is more important than winning the battle with one commenter.

If you can't stay positive (been there and done that), you can agree to disagree. There isn't always a right way, wrong way, or best way. Life is too short to be constantly fighting battles, and most battles are not worth the effort. Also, agreeing to disagree really pisses off "trolls" – online bullies who are always looking for a fight in order to compensate for inadequate organs or pathetic lives.

Comments Everywhere

[Chris Brogan](#)

Author, journalist, marketing consultant, and speaker

Two interesting and co-related circumstances have taken place. Comments have scattered to the winds. If you want to know what people are saying about your posts, you have to scan Facebook and Twitter and Google+ and everywhere else a conversation can be had. People complain to me all the time that folks will chat up the link in Facebook but leave no comments on the blog, as if the comments on the blog are the gold. (They're not. Nice to have, but not revenue-affecting. You'll live.) I just told people: engage where the people engage. Fair enough.

The SECOND detail is that we tend to want to add more opinion than before, and many people's comments have become blog posts or social network posts in their own right.

Content and comments are like Batman and Robin

[Ivan Brezak Brkan](#)

Founder of Netokracija, considered the 'Techcrunch of SE Europe'

The thing is, we don't actually want to turn away people who comment on our posts. Their feedback is valuable to us. They are the feedback we need to grow as bloggers and writers and reporters. Content and comments are like Batman and Robin, the dynamic duo making the blogosphere a better place.

While we like to think comments are something that only emerged in the last decade, in the digital era, people have always sent their feedback to the press - it just used to be done in form of a letter or by picking up the phone. By censoring the comments we put an end to this long tradition of writer (or blogger) - reader interaction.

What I tried doing is contacting the flammers in person - well, through e-mail at least. Saying, hey I read your comment, what seems to be the problem? Do you want to talk it out in person? (They never do)

Instead of censoring comments, lets try to influence the people who comment and create a new generation who do not hate everything on the Internet just because they can.

Are there any solutions?

[Mitch Joel](#)

Best-selling author, marketer and speaker

In fact, there are solutions, but no technology to truly deliver on it (yet). It requires online publishers to allow the conversation to be anywhere and everywhere. Instead of having people comment directly on the blog, why not enable them to leave their own thoughts wherever their social graph is most active? Loved something that you read here? Why not tweet your comment? Post it to Facebook? Expand upon it in Medium?

Write a follow-up on LinkedIn? Or whatever? Once this is done, you simply add the source link (or the blog post that got you all excited to comment on and share) and what appears after a blog post is a hybrid of curated comments and discourse from across the Web. Readers can then see not only these comments, but the platforms they were created on and the profiles of those who created it. If someone wants to add to the discourse, they simply do so on their own social networks and link it back to the source as well.

So, you see, there is more than one way to address comments. The middle ground is to moderate your comments in a way that the only comments showing publicly are those that you authorize. In the end, it all depends on you and the relationship you want to establish with your readers. Comments, after all, are not the only way to form a connection.



DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONTENT

Blogging is very competitive. In the digital economy, human attention has become the scarcest resource. Your competitors are not only other bloggers. You are competing with all other content on the Internet that demands the attention and time of your readers.

If you want your blog to be visited, you have to follow the blogging industry and its latest trends.

Now Trending: *Visual Storytelling*

One of the leading trends in 2016 when it comes to blogging and content creation in general was snackable content, preferable in video form. The visual-centric social networks like Instagram and Snapchat have seen rapid growth, while video posts are getting higher engagement levels by default.

There are three main reasons behind this:

1. Humans are visual beings. We process visual information 60 000 times faster than text. In fact, studies show that 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual. We also retain more information if it's delivered visually.

2. Our increasing dependency of mobile devices. When using our phones or tablets on the go, visual information is easier to process. Also, we most often don't have the time to go through 1200-word articles to get the information we need. We would rather go with an interesting infographic that in a visually appealing way sums up the most important points or a video that does the same.

3. Visual content is easy to share. Besides visual content being easy to browse and skim through, if you like something, it's very easy to save, add a comment or modify it in another way and share with your followers.

Your blog can contain more than traditional blog posts, and each post should have visual elements that accompany it, like pictures, infographics, videos and SlideShare presentations that you can also share independently on various social media channels.

Images

Every blog post should have images. Besides being visually appealing, they should be on point and help you communicate your message. Images are important for two reasons:

1. Images improve your ranking on search engines.

We already talked about the importance of entering the title and alt text when uploading your picture. Another lesser-known hack is to make sure the file name of the image you upload also fits the theme of the post and, if possible, contains a keyword or two. Always try to use keywords that are important for your blog – in the long run that will improve the relevance of your blog for that topic.

Every day:

72 hours of YouTube videos are uploaded

571 new websites are created

1023 WordPress blog posts are published

216 000 new photos are uploaded on Instagram

277 000 tweets are tweeted

2 460 000 pieces of content are shared on Facebook



2. Images are very efficient when attracting readers' attention.

One of the most useful pieces of advice I was given when I just started blogging was to think about the impact of an image. Do not be too literal. Go with metaphors and images that will awaken emotion, good or bad, with your readers. Ultimately, you want to evoke a reaction.

You don't need to be a graphic designer or a master of photo manipulation. There are many free tutorials and tools you can use to create high-quality visual elements for your blog. Some of them are:

1. **Photoshop** is your best option because it allows you the most freedom. You can be as creative as you want as long as you understand how to use the software. But even if you are a complete beginner, with our good friend YouTube and all the amazing people out there willing to share their knowledge, it is quite easy to learn.

2. **PowerPoint** is pretty limiting but very easy to manipulate. This may be your best friend at the beginning.

3. **Canva** is a (mostly) free tool that comes with predesigned templates for different themes and social media formats. It can be a real time saver. While some elements require additional payments (1 dollar per element), most of them don't. You can also upload your own elements to use and mix.

4. **PicMonkey** works in a very similar way as Canva. It also has predesigned templates and elements that help you tell your story. However, it has more features than Canva, including a very welcome one – an easy-to-use app for picture collage creation with lots of templates to choose from.

5. **Instaquote** is exactly what you imagine it to be. It is a user-friendly app that helps you merge text and backgrounds to create pretty visuals for Instagram. Of course, it can be used on Twitter and Facebook as well, but it was made primarily for Instagram. Someone noticed the abundance of uplifting quotes there. ;)

Whichever tool you choose, make sure to optimize the dimensions of your visual content for each individual social network. You don't want a particularly important part of your message not showing because of an extra centimeter or two.

Use relevant and high-quality imagery to power up your communications and drive engagement on your blog and social media accounts.

SlideShare

SlideShare allows you to upload your PowerPoint presentation, share it on social media and embed it in your blog posts. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn have integrated with SlideShare platform so your followers can browse through your presentation without leaving the network they originally found it on. Another side benefit is that you gain access to their 60 million users that can search for your presentation by topics and keywords you entered.

- Tweets with pictures get 18% more clicks, 98% more favorites and 150% more retweets compared to regular tweets. Even just adding the image URL increases the amount of retweets by 35%.

- Facebook updates with images get 87% more interaction compared to updates without images.

- Blog posts with images get 94% more visits and comments compared to posts that do not contain images.



Get featured on SlideShare!

SlideShare is always on the lookout for promotion-worthy presentations. Its team keeps track of all presentations being uploaded and handpicks those that will be featured on their homepage. Use this opportunity to increase your viewership by several hundred thousands by following these 7 tips the SlideShare team shared:

1. Write a powerful headline
2. Create an enticing cover slide to draw in your audience
3. Make sure your slides are well-designed (another word for pretty)
4. Keep us engaged and make your deck so captivating, the reader effortlessly clicks through to the end
5. Fully communicate your message. Keep it short but with a storyline.
6. Tackle news related or trending topic. Lists work too.
7. Be trend setting in terms of design, style or content. Be something others want to emulate.

SlideShare presentations are great for reviewing the old content on your blog. What was once a forgotten blog post can become a lively presentation with key points. You can also use it as a summary of a series of posts you wrote on the same topic or as just another innovative way to address your readers.

A big plus for SlideShare is robust analytics that give you information on how many times your presentation was viewed, liked, shared and downloaded, as well as from where your audience came from and who shared it on social media. This last part is great because you can connect with people who shared your presentation and showed their interest in your work.

Infographics

There was a time that infographics went viral just for being infographics. People love infographics because they showcase a large number of facts in a structured and visually appealing way. In an age of constant hurry, a lot of people prefer getting the key points from an infographic than reading through a long article just to get, as they see it, the same end result.

In fact, here is a [great infographic](#) about the effectiveness of infographics.

While making a well-designed infographic can be a challenge, there are a variety of tools that can help you. Some of them have predesigned templates you can use or tutorials that guide you through the software. You can use one of the tools we already suggested or try Info.gram, Pictochart, Easel.ly or Visual.ly.

Infographics are great for showcasing the key points on a topic you usually write about, results of a research you conducted, or just a collection of stats you found and structured in a way that tells the story you want to share. Plus, Pinterest loves infographics.

- According to SlideShare, infographics are liked 4 times more than presentations and 23 times more than documents.

- Infographics get shared on social media ten times more than presentation and three times more than documents.

- An infographic is 30 times more likely to be read than a text article.

Video

The last five years witnessed the steady rise of the popularity of video content, especially amateur videos. There are many factors that contributed to this. One is that we have all the video equipment we need on our smartphones and that we prefer short-form content because everything else is too much of a time commitment. (Amateur) videos are easy to make and (all videos) are easy to consume.

Even if you are not a video blogger, you can still benefit from using videos in your work. Why not complement your report on the recent conference you attended by uploading a couple of minutes of at-the-scene video? Why not film an interview with a founder of your favorite startup? Sometimes, just 10 seconds are enough for your audience to get a sense of the atmosphere of the place you're visiting or event you are attending.

YouTube has become the second largest search engine. Just by uploading your video to the platform, you gain access to all the people who regularly visit it. Embedding YouTube videos in your blog post is also easy. Add a few sentences as an introduction, copy the embed link, and you are all set.

Social media platforms have already made video a seamless part of their platform. Facebook has decided to tackle YouTube head on by constantly improving its video user experience – the latest being a floating viewing option so you can continue scrolling while still viewing your video. Now even the [embedding of Facebook video](#) to your website has become possible.

Instagram brought video to its platform in 2013, a little more than a year after Facebook acquired it, when it allowed its users to directly upload up to 15 seconds of video content. In January 2015 Twitter rolled out its native video product that accepts up to 30-second long video clips. Today, there is a war between Snapchat Stories, Instagram Stories and even Messenger Stories – all platforms shifting to make video one of the central features of their product.

Before reading any text, 60% of site visitors will watch a video if available

Videos are shared on Facebook 12x more than text posts and links combined.

Facebook users uploaded 75% more videos in 2014 than in 2013.

The number of videos showing up in people's news feeds has increased by 360% compared to last year.

6 Tips for Making an Engaging Video

1. Keep it short. Try to be as concise and engaging as possible. One idea per video.
2. If you want to get more shares and engagement focus on inspirational messages than sales messages. Let your empathy and caring for your customers show.
3. Teach your audience something useful; solve a problem they have.
4. Share entertaining behind-the-scenes entertaining videos about you, your company and team members.

Why not share the short video from your last team-building event, or if it's a personal blog, silly moments from your family vacation?

5. Use the Featured Video option to make your video prominent on your page.
6. Draw attention to your video by promoting it on your cover image and changing the Call-to-Action button to Watch Now.
7. Include a CTA – don't let the viewing of your video their last interaction with your content.

THE LEGALITIES OF BLOGGING: BASICS

We usually start thinking about legal issues related to blogging when a problem is encountered. Be it when our work gets shared and/or used without permission, when we get contacted by someone for unintentionally using their content, or when our blog becomes big enough that we have to start paying attention to these things.

The main reason for this is not our lack of interest, but the fact that even lawmakers themselves are not sure how physical laws translate to our cloud reality, and each case becomes a subject of discussion. Since you are just starting, now is the perfect time to touch on the most important and basic things you have to know about intellectual property laws in places like the United States and countries of Europe.

What is not protected under copyright law are the facts. You can never get in trouble by stating facts, whatever your source is. What can be put under copyright law is the way you present facts. For example, an infographic you create, with your own design elements and comments – something that makes it your own – is copyrighted, even if you used facts from a different source.

Most of what follows is based on the talk and book by Ruth Carter, an expert attorney when it comes to issues of digital Intellectual Property. I encourage you to check out her book [The Legal Side of Blogging: How Not to get Sued, Arrested or Killed](#) for more information.

What You Need to Know about Copyright

The moment you create something – a picture, an article, a music composition, a sculpture, a drawing, etc. – you gain author rights over that work, which means that you have the right to control how and by whom that work is used. No one can copy, distribute, perform or even display your work without your permission.

But there is a catch. Even though you gain copyright right over your work, the moment your work is created and tangible, you cannot sue someone for copyright infringement if your work is not registered with your national Copyright Office first. The registration process is different from country to country and sometimes so complex that it's a good idea to seek legal counsel.

What Is a Trademark and Why Should You Care

A "trademark" is a brand name. In the United States, as defined by the Patent and Trademark Office, "a trademark or service mark includes any word, name, symbol, device, or any combination, used or intended to be used to identify and distinguish the goods/services of one seller or provider from those of others, and to indicate the source of the goods/services."

You can trademark your logo, tag line, even your domain name, and that trademark signals to your readers that you as a brand are associated with work that is presented, but you have to actually use the mark to have trademark rights.



Trademarks are important because they protect your brand identity from being stolen. You put too much time and effort into building your brand not to make sure you protect it with any means possible. In her [blog post](#), Carol Cain of GirlGoneTravel, explains how she decided to trademark her brand after listening to horror stories from well-established bloggers who got their brand identities, logos and content stolen and commercially used by larger corporations. If you think that your popularity and number of followers can protect you, think again.

How to Mention People and Events Surrounding Them

As a blogger, you are often motivated to talk about personal experiences and people and companies you interact with. However, when doing that you have to be careful not to commit the crime of defamation, or in simpler terms, to write something that will negatively reflect on the reputation of a person or a company you are writing about and is not true. Defamation happens when we make false statements about someone, but it can also happen unintentionally if we forget to add a key piece of information to the story, especially when it is about a private individual.

When you are writing about someone, you have to make sure that you have all the facts. While opinions are usually okay, whatever you say, present accurate, factual statements. Otherwise, you can get sued.

The moment you start writing our blog you, have to be aware that everything you write stays online. The concept is quite simple but sometimes really hard to grasp. Especially when you are just starting and not many people are reading your blog.



Every time you go to hit “Publish” ask yourself:

- Would I be comfortable with my family seeing this?
- Would I be comfortable with my friends seeing this?
- Would I be comfortable with my employer seeing this?

If the answer to any of those is no, reconsider. In digital age, a lot more than diamonds are forever.

How to Make Sure That the Pictures You Are Using Are Yours to Use

We all use visual elements to underline the message we want to send with our blog posts. While just Googling what you need is certainly the easiest option available, you have to be careful about using someone else's work. Contrary to popular belief, citing a source does not protect you from copyright infringement if the author of the picture did not give you the right to use it on your blog.

Aside from buying stock images, one of the ways to make sure you have the right to use the picture on our blog is to use [Creative Commons](#). Creative Commons is a non-profit organization that enables sharing of creative work through use of copyright licenses that clearly communicate the rights that authors have over their work. Just make sure to use the images with a license to modify and commercialize images.

Of course, the safest thing to do would be to use your own pictures exclusively. In fact, this is why many bloggers develop an interest in photography and design. These skills allow them to express themselves and create compelling visual content that will enrich their story and save them time in finding the appropriate and free-to-use picture.

The "Fair Use" Clause

The "fair use" clause is what allows you to quote other bloggers in your blog posts, for example, or to use brand names in passing like "McDonald's." It also allows you to quote a small passage in a book you are reviewing.

Fair use gives you the ability to utilize someone else's work as long as you transform it into your own original thoughts, or if your goal is to comment on the work or to educate the public. While fair use clearly has its advantages, it also means that you are under constant threat of someone using your pictures, changing their exposition a bit and calling it a means of personal expression. Although, if they are using it for their own commercial gain, it may not be considered fair use.

The "fair use" clause in the US is a multi-factor test with lots of elements being factored in. At the same time, this doesn't mean that you should give up. It means that that knowledge is power, and you have to know what you are fighting against.



Please note that what we shared here are just the basics, and that this article is not in any way a legal advice. If you want to know more about these issues and learn how to protect yourself and your work, you should go to a professional and seek legal counsel.

MONETIZING YOUR BLOG

Sarah Green

Author at [Domain.ME](#) blog

Whether you started your blog with a plan to turn it into a business or not, after you have gained some visibility, you will realize you have many options to turn your writing into a source of income.

Affiliate Marketing

One of the first steps bloggers take towards monetizing their blogs is usually participating in some sort of affiliate scheme. Today, affiliate marketing has definitely become one of the most profitable monetization techniques for affiliates who want to effectively raise their income. Basically, it is the digital equivalent to business referrals.

Affiliate marketing is a blogger's promotion of a particular product that contains a specific link with a tracking code. Once someone clicks through from your tracking link or makes a purchase based on your recommendation, you get a commission for that sale.

According to forecasts, it is expected that affiliate marketing spending will grow up to \$6.8 billion only in the US by 2020.

However, even though it sounds simple, there are several things to keep in mind, the most important one being preserving the integrity and authenticity of your blog.

Step 1: Integrate your content with affiliate marketing

Regardless of what first attracts visitors to your channel, it is the quality of your content that would either scare them away or make them want to stay. Like in any other relationship, this bond relies on mutual benefit. When trying to implement any of the affiliate marketing strategies to your content, you need to stay as unbiased as possible. Sure, a positive endorsement is always a plus, as well as a personal recommendation, but this strategy poses several risks.

Choose the right product to promote

As the main connection between your followers and a merchant, you need to know your target audience well. Some of the most important things you should keep in mind are:

Do you, or would you, use the product yourself?

Are your readers really interested in the product you're promoting?

Is the product something your target audience expects to see on your blog?

How affiliate marketing works?

The main aim of an affiliate is to post a special, affiliate link (containing your unique affiliate ID) to a product or a service so that the consumers can check it out themselves.

This entire process is based on affiliate cookies that get dropped on your visitors' computer once they visit your blog and check out the merchant's site. So, once the purchase is made, the merchant identifies your affiliate ID by using the cookie from the customer's computer and pays you the agreed commission.

Types of Affiliate Marketing Payment Methods

1. **Pay-Per-Click Marketing** – affiliate gets paid for every visitor referred to the merchant's website, regardless of whether the purchase is made or not.

2. **Pay-Per-Performance Marketing** – one of the most lucrative affiliate marketing types. An affiliate gets paid only when the follower undertakes a desired action, such as making a purchase or asking for some sort of information on the product.

a. **Pay-Per-Sale Marketing** – An affiliate gets paid for each sale they generate. Therefore, if you refer a visitor to the merchant's website and this visitor makes a purchase, you will get the percentage of the sale as a commission.

b. **Pay-Per-Lead Marketing** – This type of marketing is usually employed by the companies that want to grow their business by generating leads. Here, the main purpose of an affiliate is to help the merchant expand their customer list by offering their products to as diverse target audience as possible.

Are the products you promote offered at different price points?

Does the product have a money-back guarantee?

Step 2: Choose a reliable affiliate program

The affiliate program you choose depends on your area of expertise. If you are posting niche-specific articles, you would probably want to connect with relevant industry experts.

For example, if you are writing about natural cosmetics, you should apply to be an affiliate with an organic cosmetics company. Precisely because of this, **you need to choose an adequate and reliable program that would back up every aspect of your affiliate marketing strategy.** Some of the programs to check out are: **Amazon Associates, Google AdSense, Comissin Junction, ShareASale and Neverblue.** You can read a [great review of each here](#).

Step 3: Integrate affiliate links properly

There is nothing unusual in adding affiliate links to your blog, but it should never disregard its aesthetic value. Even though affiliate links help increase your income, they must not be allowed to damage your site's integrity since a lapse like this can even have an adverse effect. For this reason alone, you should always try to **find a perfect balance between monetization and user experience.**

The first thing you need to keep in mind is that the majority of your content needs to be completely ad-free. Apart from this, you should also link to the pages from your sidebar or footer; so that they are always visible and still that they do not over-encumber the rest of your blog.

Don't over-clutter your posts with affiliate links. Every serious blogger needs to keep their blog content organic, and every link you add makes this more difficult. In fact, Google penalizes websites with too many affiliate links.

Don't add banners to the sidebar with an affiliate link. Banners are not the most effective way for you to incorporate an affiliate link. First of all, their lack of design will on its own make them seem malicious. More importantly, there is a phenomenon called banner blindness – no more than 14% of consumers can remember what the last banner ad they saw was about. For these reasons, it might be smarter to go for a sidebar image instead of banner.

Don't forget to mention that you're using affiliate links. One last thing: honesty really does go a long way. Be honest about your affiliate links, but don't brag about them either. The most elegant way to go about this is to have an affiliate disclaimer at the bottom of every page.



Influencer Marketing

With the rise of ad blockers and the phenomenon of banner blindness, it's evident that traditional outbound marketing strategies no longer work. Or at least, not as much as marketers would want them to.

The core issue here is trust, or lack of there of, which is why consumers have turned to each other – sharing, trusting and being persuaded by people just like themselves, people we call influencers. Brands are slowly recognizing this shift and are increasingly making influencer marketing a part of their marketing strategy. For you as a blogger, this is great news.

There are many ways to work with brands. You can do sponsored content, product reviews, conference ambassadorship and more. But, same as with affiliate marketing, you have to keep the integrity and authenticity of your brand at the forefront.

If you are not sure how to start, our best advice would be to choose a blogger network that connects bloggers with brands that want to work with them, such as [Everywhere Society](#) and [#WeAllGrow Latina Network](#). On the other hand, if you truly love and use a brand, and believe you would be a great fit, why not try and approach them yourself? Just make sure to clearly and concisely state why you want to work with them and why they should want to work with you. Which bring us to our next point...

Be selective when choosing which brands and campaigns to work on – you want to be associated only with values and efforts you truly believe in. If you stay true to yourself and your readers, the reward will come later, even if that means you have to turn down some sponsored gigs at the moment.

As you can see from this ebook, .ME has worked with many great bloggers, and some of them have generously shared their advice with you. There is no better advice to give, than what was summed up so perfectly by Jill Robbins of Ripped Jeans and Bifocals as part of our [#BizOfBlogging](#) campaign, which is why we decided to feature it in the next chapter. Thank you, Jill!

All the Little Opportunities That Go Unmentioned

While people focus mostly on the dollar amounts they earn as a direct result of their blog and writing, your blog can bring you so many opportunities for growth that can be even more valuable in the long-term than a single paycheck.

Maybe you started writing as a hobby, but you'll eventually have a cookbook published or a cooking show. Perhaps you started as a parent blogger but will work as a social media consultant or an influencer marketing expert – after all, you have the first-hand experience. Maybe you'll become recognized in PR circles and do PR appearances and crisis management for brands. Perhaps you'll build a conference and a blogger network of your own.

There are so many great and inspiring stories of men and women who invested their heart and time into their blog and who have seen it thrive, and it goes much further than a sponsored blog post here and there or an affiliate link. The greatest payoff of your blog is the growth you'll experience. The people you meet. The friendships you make. The horizons you widen. If for nothing else, start blogging for that alone.

92 percent of people trust recommendations from individuals (even if they don't know them) over brands.



Featured chapter II:

SIX THINGS A NEW BLOGGER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT WORKING WITH BRANDS

Disclaimer: This post was part of our influencer marketing #BizOfBlogging paid campaign, which included a dozen bloggers sharing their experiences of building their blogs into the businesses they are today. There are a lot of great blogs as part of this campaign, and we encourage you to check them out.

Jill Robbins

Founder of [Ripped Jeans and Bifocals](#)

When I first became a blogger in 2014, I had no idea what I was doing. I wanted to tell stories. I wanted to encourage others and give a voice to adoption that was relatable and authentic. Not sugar-coated. Real.

I planned to use my blog and social media to grow an audience who would buy my book once I got around to writing said book. I was absolutely sure there would be a huge bidding war between major publishing houses over who got to publish my memoir. Once my book was published, my blog's platform would provide me a built in audience of people who would buy it, read it, love it and land me on the New York Times bestseller list.

Fast forward more than two years and I'm not much closer to finishing a book than I was when I started my blog. I have a document saved in draft entitled "Book." I've made a halfhearted attempt to search for literary agents. I understand the world of publishing (and self-publishing) a little better now and unfortunately, major publishing houses going to the mat over who gets to publish my memoir is probably not likely to happen.

When I started my blog, I saw it as a vehicle to get what I wanted, nothing more. And while I still might write that book one of these days, I've figured out that my blog can be a source of income in addition to being a place of storytelling and encouragement.

Businesses and brands recognize the value of influencer advertising – using personal websites and bloggers to generate interest about their products and services. We consume news and information electronically. Today's consumer is less likely to buy a magazine at the news stand or scour the Sunday paper for ads and more likely to read and shop online.

Your favorite blogger shows up every time you open Facebook or Instagram.

Hey, she's holding some kind of energy drink and she's smiling. What's that she's got there?

And that's how it works.



I started working with brands fairly early on in my blogging career – and yes, I said career without hesitation. If you're snickering over my word choices, go right ahead. My tax returns and my level of job satisfaction make up for any naysayers out there.

If you're a just-starting-out blogger and are interested in blog monetization or brand partnerships, great! Here are six of my best tips to finding success with these partnerships and creating sponsored content that you'll be happy with.

1. Know your worth

A blogger might not have the audience to demand premium sponsored post fees six months after starting your blog but everyone's time is worth something. There are companies out there that will take advantage of a new bloggers' lack of knowledge and lack of confidence.

If a company offers a selfie stick and wants you to create and promote a 500 word blog post with images, and links to their product without compensating you, stop and think. You might only have 100 people following you on social media but if brands are reaching out to you (and they will reach out) they're doing so because they want their selfie stick in front of your 100 people.

Your time has value. Decide what your expected compensation is and unapologetically ask for it. That doesn't mean you can't negotiate (one of the perks of being your own boss) but don't think your work and a spot in your digital space aren't worth something, no matter how new you are.

2. Everyone has to start somewhere

I don't believe bloggers should provide advertising for no compensation and for me, compensation means cash money. I get a ton of requests to do posts in exchange for app subscriptions, cookies, laundry detergent and mattress covers and the answer is always no. I've been at this awhile and I can afford to be more selective. If a company approaches me, I not only have an audience behind me but I have experience. I can send samples of my sponsored work that in some cases, has sealed the deal on a new gig.

If you're brand new, you might start out working in exchange for merchandise but that doesn't mean you can't negotiate. Ask about store credit, gift cards or perks for your readers. Make promotion of your blog post on client social channels part of the deal.

Don't be afraid to start small but don't be afraid to recognize your worth and raise your rates once things get going.





3. Be dependable

Working with brands on sponsored content is a job. It's a fun job and it offers a lot of flexibility but it's still a job. Be timely. Don't take three days to answer an email. Turn your work in when it's due or when you say you're going to.

Blogging is like any other business. You're building an online reputation. Decisions on sponsored posts are often made by public relations people who might represent several brands. Don't limit your future opportunities for blog monetization by being flaky when it comes to blogger partnerships. Even though you're working in a virtual world, you still have the obligation to be professional. This goes a loooong way in building a positive online reputation – and that is what you want!

4. Be authentic and selective

Write in your own voice. If a brand hired you for a campaign, they're familiar with your online presence. Don't change your voice because you think you need to sound like an infomercial.

Don't jump on campaigns that aren't the right fit for you. I recently had a blogging friend recently ask my advice about applying for an opportunity with a major brand to write about lunch meat. This lunch meat contained preservatives and my friend is a super duper natural foods girl and posts online frequently about what she's comfortable feeding her family...and what she's not.

"I'd never actually let my kids eat that stuff, but it's a great opportunity."

A great opportunity to what? Be completely fake by telling your readers this is the most awesome sliced turkey ever when that sandwich is going in the garbage after you finished taking a picture of your kids pretending to eat it?

Bottom line, if it's not a product or service you can get behind and write about authentically, pass. Something will come along that is a fit.

5. Communicate up front

So, you've found the perfect sponsored opportunity. Yay! You're excited about the product and the client seems great to work with and values what you bring to the table. Get excited but don't get sloppy.

Make sure you're on the same page as far as when your work is due, how often the post will be promoted, what hashtags are required, how many links to the client website are expected, when and how you'll be paid, when and how (or even if) you'll receive product samples and perhaps most important, what happens if you absolutely hate the product?

If you think the product is a dud and cannot in good faith write something great about it, you need to tell your client immediately. In most cases, you're not being hired to review but to advertise. No one is going to want to pay you to write about how their product is the worst thing ever. I personally don't lead with "what if I hate your product" but if I find I can't write about it positively, I reach out ASAP. Your online reputation hinges on you being authentic and genuine.

Keep those lines of communication open. When you're just starting out as a blogger working with brands, make a list of those how, when and what-if questions and don't be afraid to ask them early.

6. Know the rules

If you're being compensated, you have to disclose that, both in your blog post and on social media. Make sure you understand the difference between do-follow and no-follow links and why a client who asks you to place a do-follow link is probably bad news. Read any instructions a client gives you carefully, and, even if it's dry, read the fine print. For more info on sponsored post contracts, read [HERE](#).

It takes time and patience to make your blog a profitable business endeavor. Keeping the balance between authentic storytelling and running my website for profit isn't always easy and I've gotten to the place I am through a ton of trial and error and a lot of luck.

Turning a hobby blog into a business can be overwhelming. There's a lot to learn when it comes to blog monetization but there are a lot of tools and resources out there (hopefully this is one!) to help you.



IT TAKES A VILLAGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

Danica Kombol

Founder and CEO of Everywhere Agency

“It takes a village” is an old African proverb that relates to raising a child. This phrase is equally relevant for building a blog. As with any great endeavor, don’t go it alone. Find your support network, your posse and directly ask for their encouragement. You’re going to need it because there’s a true vulnerability to starting a blog. You are putting your thoughts, ideas, personal stories and creativity out there. Unless you’re a certifiable narcissist, that experience can be terrifying. Find a community or tribe early on to give you that high five when you need it and encourage you to persevere when you’re ready to throw in the towel.

When I started my business, I assembled an unofficial “board of directors.” These were colleagues I trusted and friends invested in my success. My “board” met via phone, text and coffee shop. They helped me see my way out of the occasional doldrums and reminded me that half the battle is taking that first step. Starting a blog is, in fact, starting your own microbusiness.

I remember when [Ree Drummond](#) was just this cool redhead who had a blog (originally titled), **Confessions of a Pioneer Woman**. We’d see her at early blogging conferences and while we were intrigued by her story, I don’t think anyone could have predicted that today she’d be a best-selling author and host of her own TV show.

Perhaps your goal is not to be the next Pioneer Woman, and you are blogging as a hobby? Still, don’t hobby alone! There’s a reason hobbyists come together.

I’m a pie baker and while the act of baking is a solitary act, I joined a private community of pie bakers on Facebook called [Pie Nation](#). There, I find support in rolling out the perfect crust, tips on the best lard and can share photos of my prize-winning pies.

There are numerous groups online for bloggers. I founded the influencer network [Everywhere Society](#), and it became apparent early on that this group wanted to come together and share best practices, social media tips and blog posts. Everywhere Society today is much more than a database of 4,000 awesome bloggers, it’s a community that lives and thrives in a private Facebook group. I personally belong to half a dozen private blogging/influencer groups at least. Regardless of what your specific interest is, you can find a corner of the Internet that shares your passion for the topic.

And last but not least, there’s an old saying in social media. It goes like this; “You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.” Clever bloggers unite, support one another, and read, share and comment on one another’s post. The art of “not going it alone” means that you too must support other bloggers.

What you’ll come to find out is that blogging really opens a window unto the world. By putting your content out there, you’ll meet new people, make new connections, and your blog will serve as the gathering place for your own village community.

Ana Flores

Founder and CEO of
#WeAllGrow Latina Network

If you are a food blogger, find a community of food bloggers, and it’s usually happening on Facebook and the groups and things like that. Find them because they are the ones that are going to open the door to you, to those brands, to those sponsors, to understanding how do I take pictures, what equipment do I need to take my pictures, the best food style. We share all that insider information; we share because that’s how we all started, by somebody else opening that door to us and helping us out. We continue giving.



FINAL WORD

This e-book is proof that it really takes a village to create something beautiful. In the name of .ME, I wish to thank all these great people and amazing bloggers that put their signature on this project. It wouldn't be the same without you!

We want to be a village for you as well. We hope this e-book gives your blog wings and helps you make it everything you ever wanted. And if at any point you get an idea on how this e-book can improve, please let us know. We would like to see your name on our contributors' page one day. :)

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