



From Content to Customer



A 10 point guide to the perfect business blog

What makes a great business blog? Well the clue is in the word 'business'. People post online for all sorts of reasons but for a company the real value of a blog lies in its ability to influence the target audience and ultimately drive sales and leads.

A 'perfect' business blog should certainly have an impact on the reader but it should also be written with a clear set of objectives in mind and generate a measurable response. There are a whole range of techniques and strategies that you should be using to create your business blog. These are some of the most important:

1 Objective Thinking

A business blog doesn't sit in splendid isolation, it should be an integral part of your marketing and content strategy. And just as the creative in an ad campaign is designed to trigger a defined response (or set of responses) on the part of the audience, your blog should be written in the context of a content strategy with clear goals. It may be, for instance, that your goal is to drive leads. If that's the case the content should be tailored not simply to be relevant to the audience but also to drive the kind of interactions that allow you to build a relationship.

2 Part of a Plan

As such the blog should be part of a content plan. If you post four or eight times a month it's important to balance the imperative of keeping updates fresh and interesting - which probably means covering a diverse range of subject matter - while also bearing in mind the performance of objectives. As such, your blogs should be scheduled (usually over a month or a quarter) with the topics aligning with your marketing plans.

3 Compelling Style

Your blog should be written professionally and in a style that appeals to your target audience, while also reflecting

your brand values. In order to do that you have to know absolutely who your target customers are and design a prose style accordingly. That style could be 'in-the-know' chatty on a young person's fashion site or 'supportive and authoritative' if you're selling IT equipment to small business owners who will typically be looking for a supplier that can provide expert advice.

4 Search Matters

One key role of the blog is to drive inbound traffic to your site as the content you post will give you a higher organic search ranking and thus help your business stand out from online competitors. So think carefully about what



your audience is interested in. Seed your blog with words and phrases that align to the keywords searchers are likely to be using.

5 Hot Headlines

Stylistically speaking, headlines are hugely important as they whet the reader's appetite. Think of it this way. When a potential customer clicks through from a search engine, you probably have a split second to convert them from an impatient browser who could bounce off at any second to a curious reader. In the game of 'should I stay or should I go' an arresting, relevant, intriguing and/or timely headline can make all the difference.

But don't tell whole story in the headline. For instance, in sports news terms, the headline 'Liverpool 1, Manchester Utd 1' tells the whole story - so why go further. In contrast, the headline 'Liverpool and Man Utd in to the Wire Thriller' invites further exploration. Equally important, provide sub headlines and entry points to guide the reader through while making the whole package look more appealing on screen.

6 Visual Aids

Your blog needn't be - and probably shouldn't be entirely text based. A visually arresting blog will be much more appealing and where relevant you should use not only pictures but also infographics and videos to get your message across.

Visuals are particularly important in the consumer sector and your blog may benefit from linking to an online gallery to entertain and inform the audience.

7 Calls to Action: Encourage Downloading

In the early days your relationship with the audience will be mostly anonymous. You may get the odd comment but the majority of readers will consume your prose and move on. So encourage interaction.

You can do this by putting in calls to action, such as asking readers to subscribe or, better still, register their e-mail addresses to receive a download. It's a win/win. The customer gets in-depth product or marketing information. You get an e-mail address and a hot lead. Equally, the call to action could be a click through to e-commerce enabled product pages, driving sales.

8 Reach Out Across Social Media

Search engine activity will get you a certain number of views but for maximum impact you should promote your blog as widely as possible. At one level that can be done through links on the main website, links on other marketing collateral and e-mail signatures, but it's also important to promote through social media.

For instance, you might run a short PR-friendly version of the blog on your Facebook page and also Tweet to your followers. Encourage existing followers to share while also calling new readers to like and follow.

9 Quality Original Content

But ask yourself, why should my customers share?

Why should new customers like your page? The answer is simple. If you provide high quality original content - material that your readers can't find elsewhere - then it is much more likely that you'll find a large audience.

10 Be Ambitious

And the right kind of original content - say an acerbic market analysis by your CEO or a thought provoking survey - can be the route to coverage in the trade press or national newspapers. Blogging is in some respects (notably style) an art but it is also a science of sorts where the content you provide should feed through a series of causes and effects to definite results. And the blog that delivers results is the perfect blog.

