

Establishing Your Reputation: Your Author Blog

The Basic Whys and Hows of Blogging

The term “blog” is a condensed version of the word “weblog”. It is an online journal to which the author posts regularly.

Think of your blog as a recurring newspaper column. If you still read a printed newspaper, you probably have certain columnists whose writing or subject matter is interesting, and you seek out their columns when reading the newspaper. Bloggers who post regularly have similar groups of followers. This is an important part of building your audience.

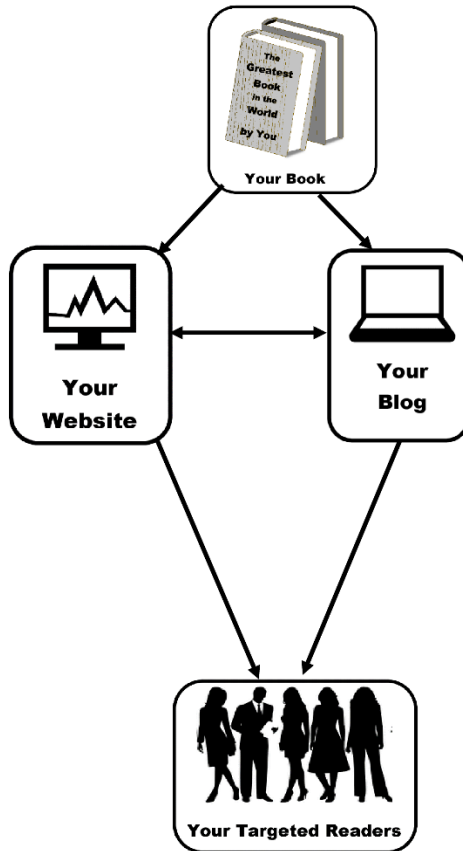
You’ve heard it before, and you’re about to hear it again: **if you’re not blogging already, you need to be.** It’s the perfect way to build your reputation as an expert in your field.

“But wait,” you’re thinking. “That was why I wrote the book!”

Yes...but is your knowledge on that subject limited to what you put in your book? And is it static? Of course not! You have a wealth of knowledge in your chosen field, and you’re constantly honing your skills there and learning new things. There were probably a lot of good things you had to cut out of your book to make it a marketable length. There are new industry developments on which you can comment. There are news stories that may impact your field, new research, or little-known facts and how-tos you can share with your fans.

Many authors have actually put together another book using several past blog posts! Tweak them a little, update any outdated information, put them together so they flow well, and voilà, there’s your next book.

The diagram on the next page illustrates the role of blogging in your online marketing plan.



As you can see from the diagram, your blog gives your audience **yet another way to find you**. It and your website **feed content back and forth** to each other; you may set up your blog as a part of your static website about the book. This keeps fresh content flowing to your site and helps raise your site's profile in search engine results.

Your blog also helps **position you as an expert** on your subject matter. Each post provides another set of keywords on which somebody may be searching, and they may find you and be thrilled to have found the expert on your subject...after all, you wrote the book on it!

Some potential readers will also stumble across your blog, just as some did with your website. That gives you a few more people finding you than were from your website alone. For these

reasons, starting a blog is an important first step in your social media marketing plan.

How often should you post to your blog? I've heard it said that if you want to be famous online, blog every day. Most people who blog regularly do so at least weekly. But you can vary your schedule, posting whenever something strikes your fancy. Blog as frequently or as infrequently as you like...but no more than once a day. Brief posts on thoughts that occur to you through the day should be saved for the other social media sites, which we'll get to shortly.

If you have a huge burst of creativity that hits you and suggests several blog posts at once, you can write them all now, then schedule them to be published at a future date and time that will spread them out for your followers and allow you to reach them when they're most likely to take the time to read your blog.

I strongly suggest spending some time setting up a **blog editorial calendar**. This will give you subjects that will seem timely and relevant to people at the time you post them. You can tie in with holidays, national observances, awareness months, etc. that relate to your book's subject matter. If you're speaking somewhere, blog about it ahead of time to encourage people to attend. As your next book nears completion, blog about something that will tease readers about what's in it. An Excel spreadsheet is a great tool for setting up your editorial calendar.

About what should you blog? Whatever strikes your fancy. Your blog is like a journal, recording your thoughts on things happening in your professional life. It's just a journal that you share with the world instead of keeping in your desk drawer.

Bloggging shouldn't be a chore; it can be fun! The best blogs let the personality of the blogger come through. You can blog about something in your personal life and a revelation it gave you that applies to your professional life. Or about something you learned at a conference you attended, and how you plan to put that information to work in your own situation. Or about your thoughts on a recent political development or world event. One of the top online marketing gurus regularly posts about skydiving, his cats, his fitness regime, or his family life.

Making yourself more human to your followers helps build your audience for your books. If they like reading your blog, then

maybe they'll buy your book to see if they like reading that, too. It gives you a platform from which to launch future books.

If you're really at a loss when it comes to blogging, start following some other people's blogs to see what they're writing about. After reading several for a little while, you'll start to get an urge to join in the conversation. Even shy writers can interact effectively online! Digital marketing is like a series of cocktail parties perfectly designed for shy writers.

You can find plenty of worthy blogs by going to one of the social bookmarking sites described later in this book and searching on topics that interest you. And once you have a blog of your own, you can post links to your latest post in other social media sites!

How long should each blog post be? Again, that's entirely up to you. Some groups will organize blog-hopping events that encourage no words at all, only images that tell a story. Those can be fun. If your subject is more in-depth, you may have a post that runs several hundred words long, sort of like a magazine article. But think of those long articles with columns of unbroken text, and don't overwhelm your readers. Break up longer articles into short bites of information with sub-headlines.

Since my first edition of this book, **video content** has greatly increased in importance online. You can include videos as part of your blog posting. Keep those short: think about ads you've seen on TV. Once in a while, you may watch a full 30-minute infomercial, but not often. Most ads you see are one minute or less...so keep your videos around that length.

Say what? If you're a novice to online marketing, this part may be a little over your head, but it's important: Make sure you identify the **subheads** in your posts as such when you're formatting the text. You do this by assigning the Sub-heading **style name** to them instead of just making them bigger and bolder. Your blogging platform should have a formatting toolbar in it that allows you to choose pre-formatted styles fairly easily.

Doing this will add a **metatag** to these terms to ensure that the robots crawling the web for search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo will pick them up as keywords so that your blog shows up in the results when people are searching for information on that subject. Depending on the blogging platform you use, this is probably pretty easy to do. I use Blogger, and the style names are right there in the toolbar at the top of the page.

Keep this in mind, as well, when writing the subtitles for your blog posts.

With many websites, you can also **feed your blog into your website** as a separate page. This keeps your book's website from becoming stale, as Google likes sites that have **fresh content** regularly. Your webmaster or hosting company can likely show you how to set this up.

Widgets are handy little tools that allow you to add things onto your blog page. These could include a social media feed, video, or a link to sign up for your e-newsletters. Including some of these will greatly improve your blog's value as a marketing tool for your book. Most blogging platforms have a variety of widgets that are fairly easy to incorporate into your blog's design.

Remember: After your website, comes your blog! It's really your first foray into social networking.

Blogging Platform: WordPress

Yes, it's a tool for building a website that we mentioned in the previous chapter. But WordPress is the most popular platform for setting up a blog, with over 74 million WordPress sites worldwide and 100,000 new posts to them being created every day. Many people have also used it to set up their websites. The company behind it was only founded in 2005!

And it's free! There are plenty of design themes available to customize the look of your blog without your having to know how to code HTML. Many WordPress themes are free or available at a nominal cost. Once you've set up your account and selected a theme, you can start blogging regularly.

One of the reasons so many top bloggers prefer WordPress is that its blogs are more easily searched by the robots crawling the web, so their posts are more likely to show up in search engine results. It also has thousands of plug-ins that allow you to do things like display video on your blog or include your Twitter feed on it.

You'll find many online guides to working with WordPress, so I won't go into much detail here, as my experience with it is limited. Basic demographic information for it is as follows: 60% of WordPress users are female, and 40% male. The average age of its users is just under 40. Although WordPress blogs are written in over 120 languages, 66% of them are in English.

WordPress's Alexa traffic rank: 54

Blogging Platform: Wix

Wix, as well, is also a blogging platform. This site was founded in 2006 in Israel but has a presence in several other countries around the world, including the United States. In addition to a place that can host and provide a platform for your website, Wix is also a platform where you can set up a blog. Their free level includes ads from other businesses, but you can pay a reasonable amount annually to eliminate those and use your own URL for your blog.

Among the companies Wix has acquired to expand its capabilities are:

- Appixia, a company that creates native mobile e-commerce apps
- OpenRest, a company that develops online ordering systems for restaurants
- Moment.me, a company that builds event mobile sites and lead generation tools
- Flok, a company that provides tools for cultivating customer loyalty
- DeviantArt, an online art community

The company also offers platforms for booking hotel rooms, sharing music, and finding restaurants.

Wix's Alexa traffic rank: 434

Blogging Platform: Blogger/Blogspot

Blogger is an earlier blogging site designed by Google, and it's very easy to use. (And also free.) In its early days, it was known as Blogspot. Users like it for its simplicity, and you can use their tools to set up a blog that looks fairly personalized with colors and widgets that allow you to post photos with captions, links to your book's website, or ads that you sell to others once you develop a nice following.

Or you can insert Google AdSense that will allow you to make money from people advertising with Google on your blog. (Not a *lot* of money, but still, every little bit helps.)

The downside to Blogger is that it is a little more difficult for search engine robots to crawl. This seems odd, being as how it's

owned by the largest search engine out there, but it's what developers tell me. However, you may find it useful.

When it comes to demographics, 66% of Blogger's users are female, and their average age is almost 40 years old.

Blogger's Alexa traffic rank: 174

Your blog is the second piece of the bridge between you and your readers. The illustration below gives you a visual picture of where it fits into the picture.

You'll find a 2017 comparison between WordPress and Blogger in this article.¹ Tips on comparing blogging platforms (updated in early 2018) can be found here.²

While blogging is an important first step, it's not the end of your digital marketing. Let's examine your next logical step.

¹ Marko Saric, "WordPress vs. Blogger: The Definitive Comparison (2018 Update)" on HowToMakeMyBlog.com, updated December 22, 2017

² "How to Choose the Best Blogging Platform in 2018 (Compared)" on WPBeginner.com, last updated January 2, 2018

My Action Items: Author Blog

Check off each item as you complete it.

- Research and list holidays, observances, seasonal occurrences, etc. and how each could relate to the subject matter of my book.
- Assemble important dates related to my book's release, my appearances, book signings, etc.
- Compile a blog editorial calendar for the next 3 months, choosing what I will write about in my blog posts each week based on my above research.
- Choose a name for my author blog.
- Choose a hosting platform, theme, and appropriate widgets for my author blog, and get the basics of it set up.
- Write and publish my first blog post: about the launch of my author website!
- Follow up with my blog editorial calendar weekly or monthly, writing and scheduling posts to go live as planned.
- Follow news related to my book's subject and add any relevant topics to my blog editorial calendar as necessary.
- Complete my blog editorial calendar for the following 3 months, or for the remainder of the year.
- Continue writing and publishing blog posts at least weekly in accordance with my blog editorial calendar.