

BIZ BLOG BASICS

Getting Your Business Blog Started



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Introduction

Let me ask you something? Do you have a blog? If you're reading this report chances are that you either don't have one set up yet, or you're just getting started with blogging. I think you're going to be amazed at how much of an impact something as simple as a blog can have on your overall online business.

It doesn't matter if you're becoming a blogger, with your blog the core of all your online efforts, if you're an online marketer who wants to grow his reach, or if you're a small business owner with a brick and mortar store, you will benefit from having a blog and I look forward to sharing business blogging basics with you in the coming pages.

What I like best about blogging is that it is easy and a lot of fun. It allows you to express yourself and your passion for what you do. You will connect with your customers, grow your reach, and engage with people that are just as interested in your niche as you are.

We'll talk a lot more about the benefits of blogging in the first chapter. For now, let's just say that it will probably become your favorite work task and something that helps you grow your business, no matter what you do. After that, in chapter two, we'll get into the nitty-gritty details of setting up your blog, how to blog, and how to make it a part of your overall business strategy. Finally in chapter three we'll talk about some of the blogging mistakes people make. This will help you avoid the same beginner (and not so beginner) mistakes, so you can become a successful blogger from the start.

Let's dig right in and get started. Read through the report from start to finish, and then get your blog set up. Once that's done, come back to chapter two and three as needed until you find your blogging groove.

The Power Of A Blog

Before we get into the “how-to” portion of this report, let’s talk strategy. As a fellow business owner, I don’t have to tell you how important and helpful it is to go into a new project with a good strategy on using it to its fullest advantage. That’s what we’re doing here by talking about the power of a blog and what blogging can do for you and your business.

Sharing Content Made Easy

A blog makes it easy to share content on a regular basis. It really is as easy as writing an email and sending it. Back in the day it used to be hard to share content. You had to learn programming or invest in expensive programs and get a designer to design your website. Today, you install some free software, pick a free or paid template and start writing.

A blog is essentially a CMS - a content management system. Everything is easily accessible in one space from the posts you write to the images and files you share with your readers. By keeping it simple and user-friendly, there’s no reason you can’t set aside a little time each week to share content.

While written posts first come to mind when you think about a blog, don’t feel that you’re limited to writing. You can share photos, videos, and audio files on your blog. How you share your content is up to you. Pick the format you prefer and of course keep in mind what your customers find most helpful.

Use Your Blog To Build A Relationship With Your Readers

A blog is a great tool for building a relationship with your prospects and customers. One of the unique aspects of a blog is the comment feature.

Not only is it easy for you to share content on a regular basis, it's just as easy for readers to respond by leaving you a comment. Start a conversation and build a relationship with your readers. You can do this by actively encouraging comments. Invite them to ask questions or share their own experiences in your posts.

Of course a relationship isn't built in a day. Your first job is to grab your reader's attention and then keep them reading. That's easily done by linking blog posts and inviting blog readers to join your mailing list. More on that in the "how-to" portion of this report. With each blog post, you're deepening the relationship until your readers are comfortable spending money with you.

Grow Your Reach

Blog posts are easy to share on social media and more likely than a lot of other content to be found in the search results. This means that you can use your blog to grow your reach and connect with new potential customers. I can't emphasize how big of a deal this is.

With something as simple as writing a blog post once or twice a week (or daily if you're ambitious), you can share your expertise, your products, and your website with people you couldn't reach otherwise... all without spending big bucks on marketing. If that doesn't sound like a great reason to start blogging, I don't know what does.

Share Your Expertise And Establish Your Authority

It takes time for your potential customer to trust you. They need to learn that you know what you're talking about. What better way to do just that than sharing your vast knowledge on your blog.

Don't be afraid to "give away the farm" when it comes to information. Prove to your readers and potential customers that you're an expert in your field and can help them make the right purchasing decisions. It doesn't matter how you make money. This works if you're running a local store, selling your products online, or are recommending products and services you're an affiliate for.

Once you've proved to your readers that you know what you're talking about, you can introduce them to your products and show them how they can help solve problems, entertain, or fulfill whatever the purpose of your product (physical or digital) is.

Show Your Customers How To Consume Your Product(s)

As a good business owner, you know how important it is for your reputation and repeat sales to make sure your customers are happy with the products they purchase from you or through your recommendations, and that they know how to best use them.

Help your readers consume your physical or digital products and services by sharing your tips and ideas for making the most of what they bought. You can do this in a multitude of ways including sharing user guides and other instructional materials on your blog.

In addition, it might be fun to create a series of picture-rich blog posts, or videos that are tutorials for using and making the most of each product. You could even allow customers to share creative ways they are using your things.

As you go along and get your feet wet with these types of blog posts, I'm sure you'll come up with all sorts of fun pieces of content that will help your customers.

Build Residual and Passive Income

You work hard on your business. Sometimes it feels that there just aren't enough hours in the day to do everything you need to do to take your business to the next level. While part of your business is limited by how much time you can spend making and selling your products, or how long you can have your store open, there's a way to use your blog to generate more income.

Have you heard of residual and passive income? These are types of income that allow you to make money even when you're no longer actively working on a project. For example, let's say you're writing a blog post about a related product or service and you're using an affiliate link to send your customers to the other business. For each sale you make an affiliate commission. That's passive or residual income. The idea is that you write the blog post once and then profit from it again and again for months, if not years to come.

Let's say you write one of those types of blog posts per week. As time goes by, your passive income keeps growing and growing. That gives you a lot of leverage and allows you to get more done, and make more money, without having to work more.

Make It Easy To Be Found (and Learn More...)

We already established that a blog can help you grow your reach. It also makes it easier to be found by anyone actively searching for you or your products. Blogs frequently show up in search results.

Blog about yourself, your business, how you got started, and of course plenty of blog posts about each of your products. In other words, use your blog to make it easy to be found by your target audience.

Another good strategy for being found is to blog about common questions and problems your customers face and how you can help answer those

questions and overcome and solve the problems. For example, if you're selling a raised garden bed, you could blog about the benefits of raised bed gardening and how it will make it easier to prepare the soil and start your first garden. You could share posts with ideas for what to plant in your beds and how it can help you feed your family healthier foods.

Get Attention From Social Media and Traditional Media Outlets

In addition to making it easy for you to share content, blogs are also very good at making it easy for readers to share your content on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest to name a few. There are plugins that make it as simple as pressing a button. Social media is a great way to grow your reach even further and find new customers.

Last but not least, this increased presence on the web makes it easy for representatives of traditional media to find you. How much of a difference could it make to show up on local television, get an interview on the radio, or be mentioned in newspaper articles? It's the best kind of free advertising, one that not only shares you with lots of new people, but also gives you further credibility and authority.

Let's Recap

Here's a quick rundown of what we covered in this chapter. Use it to review as needed.

- A blog makes it quick and easy to share your content.
- You can start to build a relationship with your readers.
- Grow your reach and introduce new people to your products and your brand.
- Share your expertise and grow your authority with your readers.

- Show your customers how to best use your products and services.
- Build passive income to supplement your income from your store.
- Make it easy to be found by others.
- Allow readers to share your content on social media and make it easy for traditional media to find you.

Biz Blogging Basics

Now that you have a pretty good understanding of the power of blogging and how you can use it to grow your business, let's get into the how-to portion of this report. We'll start at the beginning with setting up your blog and then move into some tips on blogging and what you should do to get the biggest effects on your reach and of course your bottom line.

Setting Up Your Blog

This is by no means to be an all-inclusive, step-by-step guide for setting up your blog, but instead designed to give you enough information to get started. There are plenty of guides and even YouTube videos out there to set up any type of blogging platform. You can of course also outsource the entire process.

If you already have a blog set up, feel free to skip over this section of the chapter and move right along to the info on how to blog, how often to blog etc.

Setting Up Hosting And Registering A Domain If Needed

The first thing you'll need is a domain name and hosting. If you already have both for your business, you can easily add a blog and make it www.YourDomainName.com/blog

If you are setting up new hosting, it helps to find hosting companies that make it easy to install and run blogging software. Read through the next section, determine what blogging platform you want to use and then check with your potential hosting companies to ensure they have what you need to run the blog. Mainly this will be fairly basic stuff including PHP and MySQL databases. Most hosting companies will be well set up for a blog, but it is good practice to double check.

If you're starting out with a new blog, a small hosting plan should be all you need. It will give you plenty of space and bandwidth without breaking

the bank. You should be able to find quality website hosting for about 15 dollars per month. Good hosting companies will give you the option to grow as you go with larger, more expensive hosting plans, and the transition from one to the other is usually pretty quick and easy.

Before we wrap up this section, let's talk about free blog hosting. There are a few different options out there where you can set up a free blog. The biggest provider out there is WordPress.com (not to be confused with WordPress.org). It's a great service and if you're blogging for fun (as a hobby), it's the way to go. This guide however is about blogging for business and there's one important reason why you don't want to go with a free service. That reason is that you don't have control and ownership of your blog. While it may work fine for a while, you never know when the company may choose to close down your account or stop offering this free service. Stories come up all the time where big bloggers who were making a decent living from their free blogs got their account and with it their livelihood shut down. It's simply not worth the risk. You want full ownership and full control over your business blog, buy some hosting and spend the few dollars per month to get started.

Choosing A Blogging Platform

Next it's time to choose a blogging platform. There are several great options out there. The most popular option out there is free open source software from WordPress.Org. It's incredibly flexible and you will be able to find themes and plugins that do just about anything you need your blog or website to do. Another big benefit of WordPress is that it's so popular that most hosting companies support it well and even offer easy one click installations.

That being said, look around and see what platform you want to use. Think about any functionality you may like to have. It's also helpful to find a few blogs that you like the layout and look of. This will give you an idea of what you would like your own blog to look like.

If possible ask those bloggers what platform they use. You can sometimes even find that information along with a link to indicate what theme they

are using in the footer info on the site. If not, send them a nice email. Most bloggers don't mind sharing this info and are happy to help.

If you have blogging friends, you may even be able to talk them into letting you take a peek at the backend and getting a feel for how these blogging platforms work. If not, look around the web. Most paid blogging platform providers have a sample account set up for you to play with.

DIY or Professional Blog Designer?

Once you've decided on a blogging platform and made up your mind how you'd like the blog to look and what functionality you may want, you have to decide if you want to set everything up and customize it as needed yourself, or if you'd rather hire a professional designer to do this for you.

If money is tight, you can set up your blog yourself and use a free or paid template that helps you get close to what you've envisioned your blog to be. At the very least it will get you started and up and running. Once your blog starts to become profitable, you can then invest those funds into a professionally designed template if need be.

If you're a bit tech savvy, or don't mind learning the ins and outs of blogging software and templates, you should be able to find a template and plugins that do what you need them to do. Of course knowing a bit of coding will come in handy here as well. The big advantage of using a popular blogging software is that there are tons of tutorials and videos out there to help you do just about anything. If you have the time and patience to learn something new and play with it until you get it right, DIY will be a good option.

If on the other hand your time would be better spent working on the rest of your business, hire someone to get everything set up for you. This will allow you to focus on money making tasks instead.

A Few Tips On Writing Your First Blog Post

Once your blog is up and running, it's time to write your first post. This can seem like a bit of a daunting task when you're staring at a blank screen. An easy first post is one that simply introduces you to your readers. Share with them who you are, and what your business is all about. If you have a vision for your blog (which you should), you may want to share some of that with your readers as well. Wrap it up with a list of other places they can find you (your main website, your brick and mortar store, social media accounts etc.) and you're done. Add a picture of yourself or your store and you're ready to publish your first post.

Above all don't worry too much about your first post. Get it under your belt and get comfortable with the process. Early on there won't be a lot of people reading your blog and you always have the option of editing and improving it later. For now, look at it as good practice.

It may also help you to jot down a quick outline for your post before writing it. With an outline it feels more like a "fill-in-the-blanks" exercise as you simply add a few sentences here and there. Start writing and come back later to edit and improve before publishing if you need to.

How Often Should You Blog?

One of the first questions you may have once you get started with your blog is how often you should write and publish new posts. I wish there was an easy answer. The truth is instead of fixating on a certain number, what's more important is that you blog regularly and keep to a schedule of sorts so your readers know when to expect a new post. For example, you may start by blogging once per week, keeping up that schedule week after week.

If you find that you can get more blog posts written on a regular basis, go for it. Move up to twice per week and see how that works with your work schedule. Keep trying different blogging schedules until you come up with something you can stick with in the long run.

It's also helpful to have a few blog posts ready to go in case you have an extra busy couple of days in your business or get sick. This way you can continue to stick to your blog post publishing schedule no matter what.

The only wrong way to do things is to not blog for days and weeks at a time. Don't overcommit yourself or you'll burn out and end up doing just that. Don't allow your blog to go stale. Stick to your blogging schedule and slow down if you need to. At a minimum, you want to get at least one new blog post per week published.

What Type Of Content Should You Post?

Before we start to talk about regular blogging, let's quickly run through the different types of content you can post on your blog. The first is of course a text post. This can take a variety of formats and lengths from quick tips, to lengthy tutorials or lists. Take a look at what other successful bloggers in your niche are doing and take inspiration from the types of posts they create. Of course your text posts can be enhanced by adding images and even video and various other media files.

Images make for great blog post content. You can create posts that mainly consist of a series of images with a little text to help the reader understand what's going on with the images. Image posts make great tutorials, but you can also use them to showcase your products, or share with your readers how others are using your products for example.

Video and audio posts are another interesting thing to try. It depends on your audience and how they like to consume your content. Try different formats and find a balance between the type of content that's easy for you to create and showcases your products well, and what your audience wants. You should also switch up the length of your blog posts and mix things up. Most importantly, make sure you get high quality content published on a regular basis, no matter what the format and length.

Plotting And Planning

I've mentioned a few times throughout this report that it is important to blog regularly. This will help you grow a loyal readership and it will also help you with getting free traffic from search engines. They love sites that are updated regularly and reward them by sending more traffic to those types of sites. But how do you go about making sure you're blogging regularly, even when things get busy and you get distracted?

What you need is a plan, and a Blogging Calendar is the perfect place to record your plotting and planning. There are plugins out there for your blogging platform that allow you to create an editorial calendar, but you can also use whatever existing calendar you're using - be it digital or physical. Or you can use a simple notebook to keep track of your blog post ideas and scheduling.

The important part is that you sit down, brainstorm blog post ideas, and then figure out what post you want to write when. While your blogging calendar doesn't have to be set in stone, it will help you get writing in the morning and ensure that you publish blog posts on a regular basis.

How much you plot and plan and in how much detail is up to you. Some people find that writing a topic or idea down for each post is all they need to get them started. Others find it helpful to have an outline and links for further research or resources they want to mention in their posts. Play around with different formats and strategies until you find a system that works well for you and keeps you blogging regularly. Plan at least a week's worth of content ahead, but you can certainly go much longer than that.

The Importance Of Editing Your Blog Posts

Once you're done writing your post, you may be tempted to hit publish right away. Resist the temptation and instead walk away for a bit. Then

come back and start editing your blog post. You'll be surprised how many little spelling errors you will catch that spell check missed.

You may also find that your post could use some tightening up, or that you didn't explain something as well as you thought you did. Start editing and improving your post as needed. Make sure it is formatted for easy scanning and reading, that the images support the content, and that your blog post has a purpose. Ask yourself what your goal is with each post and if you've accomplished that goal.

Pay Attention To Your Blog Post Titles

The single most important part of your blog post is the title. It's what will hopefully grab your reader's attention and pull them in to read the post. It's also important in letting search engines know what your post is about. Last but not least the title is usually what shows up when a link is shared on social media.

Take your time when you craft your titles. You want to strike a balance between working in your keywords for search engine optimization, and copywriting to pull in your readers. It may be helpful to start with a working title, write your blog post and then spend a little time crafting your final title.

Crafting A Good Call To Action

Aside from the title, the other crucial part of any good blog post is the call to action. This is what you want your readers to do when they make it to the end of your post. Remember, it is important to blog with purpose and intent. Think about what you want your readers to do.

You may want them to leave a comment so you can start a conversation and learn a bit more about your readers. You may want them to share your post on social media so you can grow your reach. You may want

them to sign up for your list so you can reach them over and over again and market directly to them. You may want them to click through and check out or buy a product. Or you may want them to read another related blog post. There are lots of different actions you may want your readers to take.

Make sure you know exactly what that action is so you can craft your post around it. Then take your time and write a call to action. Sometimes this will be a pretty strong piece of copywriting (when you're trying to close a sale, or convince readers to sign up for your list for example), while at other times, it will be a soft encouragement to leave a comment or share a link. Make sure your CTA (call to action) is appropriate to the situation and the action you want them to take.

Grow Your List With Your Blog And Keep Bringing Your Readers Back Again and Again

I mentioned getting readers to sign up for your list in the last section. Let's look at that a little closer because it is such an important part in successfully turning your blog readers into paying customers or clients.

If you have an online business, you already know that your list is your most valuable asset. It allows you to get in touch with your prospects over and over again, sharing content, growing a relationship and making offers. If you're a brick and mortar store owner, you may think this isn't an important part of doing business for you. But wouldn't it be nice if you could let hundreds or thousands of people know about a cool new product that just came in? Or how about drumming up some extra business during a slow week by sending out a coupon code they can come redeem? No matter what your business looks like, you can benefit from a list. Use your blog to help you grow that list.

You can start by having an optin form in the side-bar of your blog where you invite readers to sign up for tips, ideas, and special offers. Then think

back on what we've talked about when it comes to blogging with intent. Come up with blog posts that help you promote your list. For example, you could share a tip that you recently shared with your subscribers in a blog post and then let readers know that this is the kind of stuff they can expect in the emails. Or hint at the fact that there's a special Labor Day Weekend coupon that will go out to subscribers next week... you get the idea. Work it into your post content and then craft a CTA that invites them to subscribe.

After that you may want to look into pop up forms and the likes. Make building your list a priority in your online business and use your blog as one of the many tools you have in your toolbox to grow your list. Not only will you be able to reach your subscribers to make offers, you can also keep bringing them back to your blog to read more, get to know you better, and realize that you know what you're talking about. That builds trust, and as we already established it takes that trust to create loyal, paying customers.

Let's Recap

This chapter was all about the basics of business blogging from getting started to the how-to aspect of writing and publishing posts. Here's a quick recap of what we covered.

- Setting up your blog including choosing a platform, getting a domain and hosting, and doing the setup and design yourself vs. outsourcing.
- How to determine how often you should update your blog and write new posts.
- We talked about the different types of content you can create in your posts.
- How a blogging calendar can help you plot, plan, and stay on schedule with your blogging.
- Why it's important to go back and edit your posts before you publish them.

- We went over the importance of headlines and how to strike a balance between SEO and Copywriting.
- I shared some tips for writing good Calls to Action for your posts and blogging with intent.
- We wrapped it up with some tips for growing your list with your blog.

Biz Blogging Mistakes

Before we wrap up this short report, let's quickly run through some common blogging mistakes. This short list will help you avoid them in your own business blogging and make sure that your blog is and stays an effective tool in your marketing tool belt.

Hanging On To A Badly Designed Or Outdated Blog

Blogs change and with them the design and layouts change. As you get more comfortable with your blog you find that some things work better than others. Your layout may change and eventually you're going to contemplate a completely new design to make sure everything works well, is easy to use, and looks current. By all means do it.

It's a mistake to hang on to the original design out of nostalgia or laziness. Your blog is part of your overall business and often one of the first things new prospects see. Make sure you're making a good first impression with a blog that looks good and is easy to navigate.

Running A Cluttered Blog

A blog is a great way to share your passion for what you do. But with that it's easy to go overboard and write about anything and everything and create different categories for anything you can think of. The end result can be a very cluttered blog that makes it hard to find what you're looking for.

Add to that the tendency of new bloggers to add too many different widgets, banners, buttons, and various other things to their blog designs, and it's no wonder we end up coming across all sorts of cluttered blogs.

Try to look at your blog with fresh eyes, or ask for the input from family and friends. What is really necessary on your blog and what's clutter that should be trimmed off? Your goal is to have a blog that's clean, organized, and easy to read.

Not Blogging Regularly

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to not blog regularly. When life and work get busy, it's easy to let blogging go by the wayside. And once you get out of your habit of writing 2 new posts per weeks, it's easy to let weeks and then months go by without writing and publishing anything new.

As your blog goes stale, search engines will stop sending lots of free traffic your way. Readers will stop checking in and with it, they will stop sharing your content on social media. And new people who do come across your blog, will notice that there has been nothing new added recently, making them doubt that the rest of your business is up and running.

Not Updating Your Blogging Software (including Plugins)

Blogging software is great, but it has one important downfall... hackers are constantly trying to exploit weaknesses and find new ways to hack into sites and use them to their advantage. That's why it is crucial to keep your blogging software up to date. Not doing so can be a costly mistake. Set aside some time each month to make sure everything is up to date, secure, and backed up.

It's a lot easier than you may think and often involves nothing more than the click of a button. If you don't have the time or desire to do this yourself, hand the task off to a virtual assistant.

Using A Free Blogging Service

Another costly mistake you can make is to use a free blogging service like Tumblr, Wordpress.com, Blogger etc. While these services and blogs are great for hobby bloggers, it's not something you want to build your main business hub on. You have no control over it and your account can be shut down at any time, causing you to lose everything you have on your blog.

Set up your blog on your own hosting so you have full control over it and don't forget to back it up regularly. Your host may even be able to set up automatic backups for you.

Going Too Far Off Topic

As you start to get into the swing of blogging, you may be tempted to stray further and further away from your core business and message. While it's certainly fine to branch out every now and again, don't make the mistake of going too far off topic and losing your focus.

Planning your posts ahead of time and sticking to no more than 5 or 7 main categories for your blog posts will help with this.

Not Promoting Your Blog

Like any other part of your business, your blog needs to be marketed and promoted. This is particularly important in the beginning. You need to get the ball rolling and get the word out about your new blog. Write some guest posts and articles, share your blog on social media, and do what you can to promote it. Once your readership grows and people start to

share your posts, you can ease up, but never stop promoting this important part of your overall business.

Not Marketing Your Business With Your Blog

Similarly, it's easy to simply share great content on your blog, hoping that readers will seek out the rest of your business and come to you to spend their money. This doesn't work in other areas of your business and it doesn't work on your blog either. You have to actively market and sell yourself, your products, and your services on your blog. Don't be shy. You don't have to sound like a used car salesman, but make it easy for your readers to spend money with you.

Let's Recap

Here's a quick summary of the blogging mistakes you want to avoid at all costs.

- Hanging On To A Badly Designed Or Outdated Blog
- Running A Cluttered Blog
- Not Blogging Regularly
- Not Updating Your Blogging Software
- Using A Free Blogging Service
- Going Too Far Off Topic
- Not Promoting Your Blog
- Not Marketing Your Business With Your Blog

Conclusion

Throughout this report we covered many of the basics of business blogging. We talked extensively about why it is important to start your business blog and make it part of your overall marketing strategy.

Next we covered the bare basics of blogging. I want to remind you that this is not meant to be an extensive step-by-step guide but instead a good overview to help you figure out what your steps should be. There are lots of great resources for setting up your blog and extensive courses that go into blogging in much more detail. Never-the-less I hope you found this overview and the tips included helpful.

We wrapped this report up with a short chapter pointing out some of the biggest mistakes people make when it comes to blogging. I hope you take them to heart and do your best to avoid them. Do that and your blogging journey will go much smoother and hopefully become much more successful than it would otherwise. Above all I hope this report inspires you to give business blogging a try.