

Building Your Business: 10 Ways to Write Powerful Blog Posts

By SUSAN YOUNG



According to Technorati, a popular search engine for blogs, there are 71 million blogs floating around. That number has probably jumped since you read these words! It's amazing to think so many people have so much to say! One of the major challenges I am constantly hearing from entrepreneurs, business professionals, nonprofit leaders and others is that they don't know how to write blogs. So they do nothing. Corporations are hiring to train their staff about how to write their blogs and develop online relationships. It's no fun being stuck or afraid. The technical part of Wordpress and widgets is one thing. In my world, content is king. Your blog is your moment in the sun. It's your voice at the podium with the microphone and spotlight, talking about whatever you care to discuss.

There seems to be a lot of confusion about how important blogs are to growing your organization. I know my marketing and public relations goals are twofold: create curiosity and become known. It doesn't matter if you're a solo entrepreneur, a professional speaker, author, a corporate marketing executive or a PR coordinator for a nonprofit. Our presence affects our prosperity.

Merely having a blog is very different than proactively using it as a key marketing vehicle to drive traffic to your website. Blogging increases your online visibility and allows you to tie your posts in with Search Engine Optimization strategies. Blogs build your credibility and help to position you as an expert in your field. They also enable you to showcase your knowledge and intellectual capital in a fun and casual style. In addition, blogs give you the chance to help people solve their problems and deal with challenges. Another benefit to creating regular posts is that the link to your post can be shared in Social Media circles. Viral marketing quickly helps spread your message. Above all, blogs create curiosity which prompts readers to visit your website and learn more about your products and services.

The goal is to increase your visibility, credibility and revenues.

Here are 9 quick tips to writing powerful blog posts:

1. *Write about something you are knowledgeable about and enjoy.* Stick to



what you know. When people read my blogs, and articles, and watch my TV and video clips, they know they'll get information related to my 25 years in news, PR, communication and business. I wouldn't dare offer tax-saving tips or great recipes. I'm a news writer and stink at numbers. I can't cook. Oh well.

2. *Be transparent.* Be authentic and avoid hidden agendas and negativity. Write with integrity. Your reputation is on the line. Your name is on every post. Be proud of what you write.

3. *Write in short, punchy and easy-to-understand sentences.* My theory is that we should write to express, not to impress. People are so busy these days that we all appreciate concise and succinct communication. Look at Twitter- 140 characters!

4. *Weave in your personality.* Blogs are not typically written in a formal business style. Blogging is more casual, which allows us to inject our personality into our posts. This helps to connect with your reader.

5. *Avoid J-A-R- Jargon, Adjectives and Rhetoric.* Your readers are probably not looking for a stuffy dry sales pitch but for something that's compelling and thoughtful. Deliver it and you'll develop a loyal following.

6. *Connect your posts with timely news stories.* The news provides us with plenty to blog about. By mentioning current events (and reacting to them as you desire), you show people you are interested in what's happening in our world. You can also tie in the news to your business, customers and prospects and create attention-grabbing and timely posts.

7. *Speak directly to the reader.* Use active verbs and first-person language. Ask them a question or write a statement such as "Consider this" or "How about you?" Keep people engaged. You can build rapport with people through your writing. Bring it full circle to get them thinking, feeling, reacting and involved.

8. *Solve their problem.* Providing useful tips to help ease a pain is important (like this!) Think of it as your reader has an injury and you have the medicine to help ease their discomfort. The tipsheet-style approach is effective because it's reader-friendly. The

bullet points allow your reader to skim the content and glean nuggets and key information.

9. *Forget about the length.* There is no right or wrong when it comes to writing blogs. Some people post only a few lines a day, others have several paragraphs or a tip-sheet. Longer doesn't mean better, it just means longer (see #3)

"Why would anyone care about what I have to write about or say?"

This question was posed to me during one of my recent webinars that help people create blog posts (<http://budurl.com/z3bj>) that will attract followers, establish credibility and build business.

It's a legitimate question from a small business owner who is looking to find her special place in the big world of blogging.

My answer is simple:

People will want to read your blogs and hear what you have to say if you connect your experiences and knowledge to them. Let's be real. People don't care a whole lot about me or you. They care about themselves, their own success, their own challenges and their own worlds. That's the key to connecting with them. Your blog may have your name on it but the content must address a problem or challenge that directly impacts your reader. Show your reader value and a willingness to help them. Share a short story or anecdote from a situation that you've overcome that they may be dealing with. They will relate to you, read it with interest, and as a sign of appreciation, they will share the link or Retweet with others.

This reveals another question: How do I know what challenges people are facing? Another simple answer: read their posts, watch the news, listen to colleagues at networking meetings, eavesdrop on conversations others are having in the cafeteria, at a seminar, or in the elevator. What's the buzz in your industry? What is keeping people up at night? Pay attention, then start writing.

Shift the focus of your content away from yourself and onto your reader. Then they will care about what you have to say.

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