Hello a fellow business owner,

Are you just setting up your blog or already have one up and running?

There are plenty of tips and how-to’s out there about blogging for beginners. Do you have the time to go over all of them?

That’s why we’ve compiled them here for you in this handy A to Z guide.

To inspire you and give you tips to quickly get you started!
Audience

“This may seem simple, but you need to give customers what they want, not what you think they want. And, if you do this, people will keep coming back.”

~ John Ilhan, Founder of the Crazy John’s Mobile Phone Company

It’s a good thing A comes first, because knowing your audience is the most important aspect of blogging. It affects everything:

- what kind of content you create
- how you promote and share it
- what calls to action you include in your content
- how you design your blog
- and more

Think about the problems and informational needs your audience has and do deliver what your readers want!

Branding

“Unless you have absolute clarity of what your brand stands for, everything else is irrelevant.”

~ Mark Baynes, Global CMO of Kellogg Co.

Your logo and other branding materials aren’t just for stationery, business cards, and products. Use them when setting up your blog.

When coming up with the blog posts – be consistent with your voice. You are speaking in the name of your business, right? Communicate your brand values.
Case Studies

Focus on the core problem your business solves & put out lots of content & enthusiasm, & ideas about how to solve that problem.

~ Laura Fitton, Founder of Oneforty

Case studies - where you showcase a problem one of your customers had and how your solution took care of it - make you look more authoritative and credible.

They offer proof that your product or service works.

Include quotes from the customer, a testimonial at the end, and as much data as appropriate for powerful case studies.

Development & Design

Create your own visual style... let it be unique for yourself and yet identifiable for others.

~ Orson Welles, American Actor, Director, Writer and Producer

Don’t underestimate the power of your web design and development team. The way your website and blog are built and designed will change dramatically depending on your audience, product or service, and the end goal of the blog (engagement or generation of sales).

Bring experts in different fields work together. You need to consider:

- usability
- social media
- design
- coding

This way you'll end up with a professional blog.
Engagement

“The closest thing to being cared for is to care for someone else.”

~ Carson McCullers, Author of The Square Root of Wonderful

So you want your business blog to generate leads and repeat customers, right? Engagement is the right way then.

Ways to engage with your audience include:
• respond to comments on blog posts
• ask for and actually use feedback
• create content they want and are more likely to share
• share content on their preferred social networks and channels

Focus

“One reason so few of us achieve what we truly want is that we never direct our focus; we never concentrate our power. Most people dabble their way through life, never deciding to master anything in particular.”

~ Anthony Robbins, Author and Motivational Speaker

Of all the other business blogging for beginners guides you’ve seen, how many talked about knowing the focus of your blog? I’d guess not many.

Basically, **Focus = Unique Selling Proposition + Angle.**

As a business, you probably have a Unique Selling Proposition.

But what you probably don’t have is an angle for your blog. Your angle is how you approach your industry and what kinds of things within your field you’re going to write about.
Goals

“It is not enough to take steps which may some day lead to a goal; each step must be itself a goal and a step likewise.”

~ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German Writer, Artist and Politician

If you don’t know what you want your blog to do for your business, how will you know if it’s successful?

Setting goals for your blog gives it a purpose and helps you make better decisions to keep your blog on course. Be specific and give yourself a timeframe to reach your goals.

Helpful, Valuable Content

“By publishing content that shows buyers you understand their problems and can show them how to solve them, you build credibility.”

~ Ardath Albee, Author of eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale

One of the most important blogging for beginners tips you’ll ever find is to create valuable content that actually solves a problem or helps your audience somehow.

Your business blog is not the place to talk about you and your products. It’s a way to help your customers and prove that you want to help them.

Of course your blog posts will link to your services or product pages occasionally. But the message should always be “What can we do to help you?”
Interviews

“The greatest good we can do for others is not just to share our riches with them, but to reveal theirs.”

~ Zig Ziglar, American Author, Salesman, and Motivational Speaker

Like case studies, interviews are a powerful type of blog post with a lot of benefits, including:
• top-notch information from an expert your audience wants to hear from
• removing the burden of creating original content from your shoulders
• making you seem more authoritative and credible by association

Plus, your audience will learn to come to you for the best information.

Additionally, interviews are perfect for multiple formats. You can post an email interview or audio transcript on your blog, share a video of an in-person meeting or Skype call on your blog and YouTube channel, and publish interviews as podcasts on iTunes.

Jump on the Content Marketing Bandwagon

“Give them quality. That’s the best kind of advertising.”

~ Milton Hershey, Founder of the Hershey Chocolate Company

Blogging is a huge part of content marketing, but there’s a lot more you could do to supplement it. Other content marketing initiatives that might work for you could be:
• how-to videos on YouTube and Vimeo
• infographics on Flickr and Pinterest
• article marketing on Squidoo
• podcast series on iTunes
• free ebooks in exchange for email addresses
 Know Your Key Metrics

“
You need the kind of objectivity that makes you forget everything you’ve heard, clear the table, and do a factual study like a scientist would.

~ Steve Wozniak, Co-Founder of Apple

Setting goals helps you know why you’re doing something. Knowing your key metrics helps you discover if something is working or not.

Some of the things you measure are sometimes called “vanity metrics” because they make you feel good about all the work you do but they don’t necessarily matter for business. Other metrics are crucial to your business.

Some key metrics for blogs include:
- comments
- social shares
- visits to leads (lead conversion rate)
- visits to customers (customer conversion rate)
- visits from search engines
- time on page/site
- click-through rate
- number of links attracted

Go ahead and keep track of your vanity metrics, but make sure you’re paying the most attention to the critical indicators.

Link-worthy Content

“ People share, read and generally engage more with any type of content when it’s surfaced through friends & people they know and trust.

~ Malorie Lucich, Facebook Spokesperson

The more authority links you have pointing to your blog, the better you’ll do in search results and the more traffic you’ll get, both from organic and referral sources. So how do you get the best kind of links?
By creating the kind of content people want to link to and share.

These links are natural (which search engines love) and more powerful because they come from your customers and fans, not you.

**Marketing**

*Before you create any more “great content,” figure out how you are going to market it first.*

~ Joe Pulizzi & Newt Barrett, Authors of *Get Content. Get Customers*

If you want attract traffic to your blog so it can help you generate leads and engage with prospects, then you have to market it.

Marketing your blog could include guest blogging, article marketing, social media, and more. Content marketing is especially useful when you are working with a dynamic website.

**Navigation**

*Simlicity is the key to brilliance.*

~ Bruce Lee, Chinese American Martial Artist, Actor, Filmmaker and Philosopher

Clear, easy-to-use navigation is crucial if you want your audience to stay on your blog and go deeper into your website. The easier your navigation is to use, the more exploring visitors can do, which helps them learn more about you and can help convert them into leads.

Good blog navigation includes at the very least an uncluttered bar at the top or side of the page. It can also include:

- well-organized topical categories
- “most popular” or “most recent” posts in the sidebar or footer
- important links in the footer of every page
- related articles at the end of the blog post
- links to social media profiles
Options for Subscribers

“\textit{The big subject is the need for people to simplify their lives in a world of exploding choices and how they go about doing that, and how marketers are focused on the wrong thing. They need to bring value to people not just by creating new options but also by simplifying choices.}\textit{

~ Joel Rubinson, Chief Research Officer of ARF
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One of the best blogging for beginners tips is letting people subscribe to your blog. They get updates, you get repeat traffic and permission to market to them - it’s a win-win.

Offer several options for readers to subscribe or follow your blog to make things easier for them, including email, RSS, and all social media accounts or pages.

Post Regularly

“\textit{Doing well with blogging is not about writing one keypost, it is about performing day after day and helping a few people at a time.}\textit{

~ Aaron Wall, Founder of SEO Book Blog
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There’s nothing worse than an abandoned blog. If you can’t commit to blogging regularly, don’t do it all.

There are quite a few reasons to be regular and on schedule with your blog:
\begin{itemize}
  \item blogging even a few times a month will increase traffic and leads
  \item the more frequently you blog, the more traffic and leads you get
\end{itemize}

Create an editorial calendar that outlines what you’ll publish when, and stick to it. The results will exceed your expectations!
Quantify and Measure Statistics

“Making mistakes doesn’t mean that what you did was a failure, or the wrong take. It was just a ‘mis-take.’ You need to go back and do another take. In each take there is a lesson.

~ Wally Amos, Founder of the Famous Amos Chocolate Chip Cookie Brand

Remember your goals and key metrics? This is where they come into play. Once you know what your goals and metrics are, use your analytics tools to measure them. Create benchmarks so you can see your progress over time.

And if something isn’t working, scrap it and try something new!

Relationships

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.

~ John C. Maxwell, Author, Speaker and Pastor

It can be difficult to have real relationships with hundreds or thousands of subscribers and customers, but you can make them feel like they have a real relationship with your business. A couple of ways to do this include:

• focusing on engagement
• responding to comments and emails
• incorporating feedback into your blog posts and products
• acknowledging contributions and suggestions
• showing genuine care

There are plenty more ways to build relationships in business blogging.

Be creative and think outside the box.
Strategy

“With a clever strategy, each action is self-reinforcing. Each action creates more options that are mutually beneficial. Each victory is not just for today but for tomorrow.”

~ Max McKeown, Author of The Strategy Book

If the worst thing is an abandoned blog, the next worst thing is a blog without a plan. Use your goals and key metrics to create a strategy for your blog that works for your business.

A good blogging strategy outlines:
- a publishing calendar
- goals and key metrics
- methods for market research and gathering feedback
- engagement and social media tactics

Having created a plan – stick to it!

Test

“If you’re not trying to do something better, then you’re not focused on the customer and you’ll miss the possibility of making your business great.”

~ Jonathan Ive, Senior Vice President of Industrial Design, Apple Inc.

When you measure things, you find out if they work. When you test things, you find out if something else works better.

Testing is the key to building a business blog with high click-through rates and conversion rates. You can test everything from headlines and calls-to-action to button location and color.
Ultimate Guides

“Recognize that giveaway items serve as silent ambassadors, reinforcing your expert Identity – choose them carefully!”
~ Susan Friedmann, Author of Reaches in Niches

This type of content is definitely the one you want to include on your blog. Writing the Ultimate Guide to an aspect of your field demonstrates your expertise, and who doesn’t want to hire an expert or buy from the best?

Ultimate guide posts are usually very long - think 2000 to 4000 words - and include lots of photos, graphs, videos, infographics, screenshots, and other resources to be as in-depth and valuable as possible.

Vary Your Media

“...one must always be different.”
~ Coco Chanel, French Fashion Designer and Founder of the Chanel Brand

If all you do is write for your blog, that gets boring really fast. For your blogging to be successful, you need to use different types of content.

For example, you can add graphics to your blog posts.

Video is great for product demos, how-to posts and tutorials, interviews, and anything visual. Plus you can publish them on video-sharing sites like YouTube and Vimeo for increased exposure.

Podcasts apply to all the multitaskers in your audience or anyone who prefers to listen instead of read or watch. They’re great for interviews, and since iTunes is still a relatively untouched market, it’s a pretty easy way to get new subscribers and more exposure.

Infographics are hugely popular thanks to visual social media like Pinterest. And they help make complex data more easily understood. A good
infographic is usually more link-worthy and shareable than text alone.

If you don’t have the time or resources to create these types of media in-house, you can embed the super-helpful videos and infographics of others into your blog posts or partner with another business to create them.

Write Epic Content

“What makes content engaging is relevancy. You need to connect the contact information with the content information.”

~ Gail Goodman, President & CEO of Constant Contact

Creating content that is as helpful and valuable as possible is so important, it shows up twice in our guide to blogging for beginners.

For the content to be epic, it should be:

- relevant
- interesting
- thought-provoking
- controversial
- entertaining

X Out Sidebar Ads, Banners, and Pop-ups

“Stop interrupting what people are interested in, and be what people are interested in.”

~ Craig Davis, Founder of Brandcarma

Have you ever visited what looks like a great website for the first time when a pop-up immediately interrupts and annoys you? You probably hated it, and your audience hates it too.
Ads, banners, and pop-ups can be really useful in generating leads and getting email addresses for permission marketing, but they can also turn visitors away very quickly. If you choose to use them to monetize our blog – do not overuse them.

Your Unique Voice

"Think big and don’t listen to people who tell you it can’t be done. Life’s too short to think small."

~ Tim Ferriss, Author, Entrepreneur, Angel Investor and Public Speaker

Just like every writer has a tone of voice and style that makes their writing distinct, so does every business. Some businesses sound quirky and fun, while others give off more serious, authoritative vibes.

To really make the most of your blog, figure out what your business’s voice is, and make sure all your blog posts and other customer-facing messages employ that voice.

Zap Boring in the Bud

"A business has to be involving, it has to be fun, and it has to exercise your creative instincts."

~ Richard Branson, Founder and Chairman of Virgin Group

Just because you decide to use a professional voice in your blog doesn’t mean it should be boring. Creating content that is both useful and interesting is one way to get more comments, shares, and more engagement in general.

Varying your media and content types and always using great images in your blog posts are some other ways to zap boring before it even begins.
Your Turn

“It’s quite fun to do the impossible.”

~ Walt Disney, Co-Founder of the Walt Disney Company

Now as you are equipped with all the tips and know-how – give it a try! Act, test, analyze, get back to us and tell about your experiences and achievements!

Stay inspired, my friend!

For further information or questions, please contact:

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