

# How to Start a Business Blog

## *Free workbook!*

A step-by-step guide with exercises to help you plan, set up, and create content for a business blog

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**This Book is Only the Beginning! Online Seminar Series Coming!..... 6**

**Remarkablogger Workbook: How to Start a Business Blog..... 7**

**Who This Book is For..... 8**

**What You'll Find in How to Start a Business Blog ..... 8**

**Who is Remarkablogger?..... 10**

**Why am I giving away all my best ideas in a free book?..... 11**

**11-Step Process to Starting a Business Blog..... 12**

**Step 1: Understand Blogging in General..... 13**

    You Don't Know What a Blog is? You're Kidding, Right?..... 13

    Practical Definition of a Blog and Blogging ..... 15

    How Blogs have Changed Recently ..... 16

**Workbook Exercise: Understanding Blogging in General ..... 18**

**Step 2: Know the Benefits of Blogging for Business..... 20**

    Why You Should Have a Blog ..... 21

    Blogs are Easy ..... 21

    Blogs are Cheap ..... 22

    Choice of Designs ..... 23

Blogs are Easily Extensible .....	23
Wealth of Help and Resources .....	24
Better Search Findability .....	24
Blogs Encourage Interaction .....	25
What if You Already Have a Website? .....	25
<b>Exercise: The Benefits of Business Blogging.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Step 3: Understand Who You're Blogging For .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Your Ideal Customer .....	28
Why Bother? .....	31
<b>Exercise: Create a Portrait of Your Ideal Customer.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Step 4: Determine the Purpose and Goals of Your Business Blog.....</b>	<b>33</b>
Purpose.....	33
Goals.....	34
<b>Exercise: Determine the Purpose and Goals of Your Business Blog.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Step 5: Determine the Authors of your Business Blog.....</b>	<b>36</b>
Choose the Willing .....	37
Get Samples .....	37
<b>Exercise: Choosing Authors for a Business Blog.....</b>	<b>38</b>

<b>Step 6: Determine the Business Blog's Policies.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Exercise: Draft a Company Blogging Policy .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Step 7: Determine Blog Platform and Blog / Website Integration.....</b>	<b>41</b>
Blog Platforms.....	42
What if You Already have a Website? .....	43
<b>Exercise: Working Through Blog/Site Platform/Integration .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Step 8: Design Considerations.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Exercise: Deciding Factors for Blog Design .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Step 9: Choose Blog Categories and Tags.....</b>	<b>50</b>
Categories.....	50
Tags.....	51
An Example of Categories and Tags .....	52
<b>Step 10: Write the Initial Content.....</b>	<b>53</b>
Conventional Wisdom.....	53
How Much Initial Content?.....	54
Should You Backdate Your Initial Content? .....	55
<b>Exercise: Draft Initial Content Ideas.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Step 11: Draft a Comment Policy .....</b>	<b>57</b>

To Comment or Not to Comment ..... 57

Problems are Opportunities..... 57

Comments and Blogging Go Together ..... 58

Craft a Comment Policy ..... 58

**Step 12: Develop a Crisis Management Plan ..... 61**

    If a Crisis Hits Before You Have a Blog ..... 62

    Creating a Blog Crisis Management Plan..... 62

**Exercise: Draft a Crisis Management Plan..... 64**

**You Have a Blog. Congratulations. Now What? ..... 65**

    Posting Frequency ..... 65

    Future Publishing ..... 66

    What the Heck Do I Blog About? ..... 66

**The 10 Types of Freelance/Business Blog Posts..... 67**

    1. Customer success stories ..... 67

    2. Product or service tips and tutorials ..... 67

    3. Upcoming products or services information ..... 68

    4. Request feedback from customers ..... 69

    5. News and announcements..... 69

6. Industry news.....	69
7. What to look for in a.....	70
8. What to watch out for from.....	71
9. Related interests .....	71
10. Product, service, or process explanations and stories .....	71
<b>An Introduction to Gateway Blogging .....</b>	<b>73</b>
Your Business Blog is a Gateway.....	74
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>75</b>

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## This Book is Only the Beginning! Online Seminar Series Coming!

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I'm going to follow the release of this book with a **month-long weekly series of online seminars**. The seminars will cover several chapters per session. Each session will feature more in-depth explanations, followed by an extensive question-and-answer session. These will be conducted using [UStream](#). All you need is a broadband internet connection.

There will be four sessions, each one at least two hours long, once per week, for **only \$97!** That price covers all four sessions in the series. This book is far more in-depth compared to the posts on which it's based at [Remarkablogger](#), but these seminars will be **even more in-depth**, along with the chance for you to **ask specific questions and participate in the discussion**.

**Now that you're subscribed to the Remarkablogger feed or email, you will be notified when the next series will run. Keep an eye on your feed reader or email!**

*PS: to get the most out of both the book and the online seminars, make sure you jot down any questions that spring to mind as you're reading, so you can ask them in the seminars. Printing out the book is very helpful because of the notes area at the right. You can use it while you read and during the seminars.*

## Remarkablogger Workbook: How to Start a Business Blog

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Businesses of all stripes and sizes are taking the plunge into business blogging. Business blogs need to be treated differently than personal or professional blogs (where the blog itself is the revenue-earning vehicle, sometimes referred to as pro blogs or money blogs).

If you're interested in this book, that means that you are blogging currently for your business or you are considering it. I wanted to make this book something different – something, well... **remarkable**. There are plenty of ebooks out there that are more fluff than stuff. Not only did I want this book have some real meat on the bone, compared to many others, I also wanted it to become a real tool that you could use to implement the ideas contained within it.

That's why I'm calling this a **workbook**. It features a notes area on the right margin of each page and exercises you can complete to help you plan or improve your blog. It really works well if you print it out and scribble on it and mark it up. That's pretty old-school, I know, but hey: books have their advantages. There are plenty of hyperlinks and proper features in the PDF (such as bookmarks) that make the on-screen version easy to navigate and



use. There's also a companion audio version of the book you can listen to while you're commuting or multitasking.

## Who This Book is For

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This book is written for the freelancer or business person who is looking into creating a blog as a marketing tool for the business. It is aimed squarely at people who know there is value to be found in having a strong web presence, but need to cut through all the buzzwords and marketing crap to get the straight info on the what, why, and how of business blogging.

This book is also written for a freelancer or business person who already has a blog and wants to dramatically improve its performance and its ability to meet its objectives.

## What You'll Find in How to Start a Business Blog

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- Plain English explanations of blogging and other terms defined from a business viewpoint.
- Thorough, easy-to-understand listing of the advantages of business blogs, as well as an unflinching look at their issues and problem areas for business.
- A step-by-step guide for setting up and managing a business blog.

- Guides for how to stay on track with a business blog and create content that takes into consideration the unique aspects of business blogs.
- Exercises and questionnaires to help you think through and plan your blog.
- An introduction to a better way to frame and understand the function and purpose of a business blog, called **Gateway Blogging**.
- A glossary of blogging terms

## Who is Remarkablogger?

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Remarkablogger is Michael Martine, a long-time web designer, blogger, software trainer, internet entrepreneur, and strategist. Remarkablogger is the name of my one-man consulting company. I offer blog consulting and coaching for individuals and companies.

I help you wade through the blizzard of options and choices when it comes to planning, setting up, and managing a business blog. If you're new to blogging or your blog has stalled or not delivered the expected results, I can help you start your blog right or take it to the next level, and help it fulfill its intended purpose.

You can reach me most effectively by email at: [michaelmartine@gmail.com](mailto:michaelmartine@gmail.com)

You can also reach me through [Skype](#), the world's most popular internet phone service, at **michael.martine**.

You can learn more about me and read my blog at <http://remarkablogger.com>.

## Why am I giving away all my best ideas in a free book?

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I'm not! Not even by far. But I am giving away enough of my ideas and experience on business blogging for one simple, straightforward business reason: **because it brings me business**. How can you judge my experience, competence, and insight unless you can take an extended "test drive" of my thinking? And without the trust that is established from that, would you be likely to hire me?

I can provide all the general information I want, but until you and I are talking about **your** needs and **your** blog, it's still just general information. Nothing beats personalized, customized strategies and help for **your** blog.

## 11-Step Process to Starting a Business Blog

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What follows after this is an step-by-step process for how to start a business blog. After each step is an exercise to help you complete this step in real life. Sometimes the exercises will help you clarify your thinking, and other times the exercises involve writing or creating actual material in the set-up and launch of a business blog.

## Step 1: Understand Blogging in General

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A business would be ill-advised to start a blog without understanding what blogging is all about. Blogging might seem strange and foreign to a more traditionally-inclined businessperson. Some people in the company might know about blogging, read blogs daily, and have personal blogs. Others simply haven't a clue, and may not care about blogging. If you're contemplating a blog for your business, chances are you already know about blogging. You may need to help others understand [what is a blog](#), and [why you should have a blog](#).

### You Don't Know What a Blog is? You're Kidding, Right?

You mean in this day and age, you don't know what a blog is? Relax! You're not alone. **Many people still don't really know what a blog is.**

The word itself, blog, is short for *web log*. The main feature of blogs that sets them apart from other kinds of websites is that the site's content appears mostly on one main page in the form of **posts**. A post is the basic unit of content in a blog. The newest post is the first one at the top, and the next most recent post comes after the first, and so forth. Most blogs usually show only the most recent posts, with the remainder stored in accessible **archives**. Usually, clicking on a post's title will take you to a page where that post in its

entirety is the main content on the page. Many home pages of blogs feature only the first few words of each post (an excerpt), and you can click a link if you're interested in reading the rest of the post.

The listing order of blog posts meets the needs of people who want to keep up with the latest news. Your email inbox does the same thing. Can you imagine how exasperating it would be to have to scroll to the bottom of your inbox just to see the latest email you received? This is why blog posts are listed newest first.

About eight or nine years ago, this post format was something new—most websites consisted of a series of pages linked to from a “home” page, like how a table of contents points to pages in a book. It was difficult and time-consuming to make changes to a website. By contrast, blogs are very easy to update, thanks to advances in the proficiency of the underlying technology. Blogs can have pages, too, like a “normal” website, but their primary feature is a series of posts. Sometimes posts can be long, but most are only a few hundred words in length.

Blogs have certain common features other than posts, and it is often these features that perplex people. Two such features are *categories* and *archives*. **Categories** are a way to classify and group blog posts. For example, at Remarkablogger I have a category called [Google](#). Whenever I write a post about something related to Google services and products, I assign it to the Google

category (and to other categories, if applicable). There is often a list of categories on a blog page, either in the left or right column. You can click on any category to see all the posts which are assigned to that category. If you click [Google](#), you will see all my posts on Google collected in one place.

**Archives** are past posts collected into groups by month. Links to a blog's archives are also usually in a sidebar. If all that organization of material seems like a lot of work, it isn't! That's because what makes this possible is that **all of a blog's content is stored in a database**, so that it can be retrieved and displayed in many different ways by your blogging software, which is a computer program that runs on the web server. The archiving of old posts happens automatically as a function of the blogging software.

### Practical Definition of a Blog and Blogging

In practical terms, a blog is an internet publishing platform that's relatively easy to use and manage. A blog is just about the easiest way going to have a website. Using a blog involves creating written content (and, more and more, audio and video). Writing blog posts is most often done in a web-based form (somewhat like writing an email) in the administration pages of the blog. You log in to the admin area of your blog with a username and password. A team blog has multiple authors, each with their own usernames and passwords.



Even if you publish more than one form of media, blogging is, essentially, *writing*. You write posts, assign them to categories, create a list of links to other bloggers you like (this is called a *blogroll*), and respond to comments left by visitors. The ability for visitors to leave comments, and for blog authors to respond to those comments, is one of the hallmark features that makes blogs different from a “regular” website. For many blogs, loyal commenting visitors can form a community based around the blog.

### How Blogs have Changed Recently

I know there are many articles online defining what a blog is, but many of them are getting old. Blogging evolves at a rapid pace, and if you want to stay current, you have to put some effort into staying caught up. This is the reality of doing business today. The ease of use and features keeps improving with each new version of blog software such as [WordPress](#). The advent of a combination of technologies collectively known as [AJAX](#) has brought about new levels of interactivity to blogs. **Flash media** in the form of embeddable video players has revolutionized how people watch video online. Other advances in technology alongside flash video have brought about the rise of the video blog.

The rise of **tags** has had a big impact on blogging. A **tag** is a descriptive word or short phrase attached to a blog post so people can find it and so that it has a context with other blog posts that use the same or similar tags.

[Podcasting](#), or using [RSS](#) (Really Simple Syndication) to send audio and video to subscribers, has also exploded in popularity. RSS itself has nearly always been associated with blogs, but it's finally catching on with a mainstream audience. Many social and community-based services offer some kind of **widget** you can put on your blog to show your participation in that community. A widget is a little window or box of content that is fetched from someplace else.

Finally, the most recent trend is **microblogging** from mobile devices, and the tools that facilitate it, such as [Twitter](#). Microblogging is when you text short posts from a mobile device to a service which broadcasts the posts to people who are interested in receiving them from you.





## Step 2: Know the Benefits of Blogging for Business

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Blogging offers some compelling advantages for business. If it didn't, nobody else would be doing it. But every day, more and more businesses have blogs.

Here are some of the benefits:

- **Attracts new customers from new demographics** than your company has previously serviced. People who read blogs generally [spend more money online](#) than people who don't. Helps you answer the question: *where are my next generation of customers coming from?*
- **Provides your existing customers with a new window** through which to see you—and through which you can see them, via visitor statistics and/or comments.
- Provides an additional tool alongside more traditional marketing methods such as press releases, and yet also **lets you bypass traditional news media** so that you can speak in your own voice directly to your audience.
- **Increases your company's presence and placement in search results.** Blogs constantly churn out new content full of keywords your potential customers will use to search online for products and services related to your company.
- Puts a **human** face on an abstract entity such as a company.

- Provides your company with the best possible **crisis communications channel** available.
- Less **expensive** and more **effective** than traditional methods of marketing and public relations.

### Why You Should Have a Blog

Why should you have a blog? Because everybody else does, and you want to be cool, right?

Just kidding.

Many more people are blogging now than ever before, because there are real benefits to blogging. By this time, the benefits of having a website are undeniable. As a platform for websites, **blogs magnify those benefits tremendously, delivering on them better than a non-blog website can.**

How? Better search engine optimization, better communications with your customers, better marketing all around, and better positioning and branding for you in the marketplace.

### Blogs are Easy

A major advantage blogs have over other forms of website is that they are so easy to work with! I've seen a few other Content Management Systems (CMSs)

over the years, and nearly all of them are waaaaaaay more complicated to work with than Blogger or WordPress (I know there are other blogging systems out there, but these two are the easiest I've seen). **Blogs aren't that much harder to work than your email** once they're set up. Write a title, write your post, hit the publish button. Lather, rinse, repeat. The more you want to customize your blog, the more complicated things can get, but blogs are nowhere near the complexity of CMSs like [Joomla](#) or [Drupal](#) .

### Blogs are Cheap

Bang for your buck, blogs are cheap, cheap, cheap! How cheap? **How 'bout free?** [Blogger](#) and [WordPress](#) are both free, as are many other blogging platforms. Blogger and WordPress offer free hosted versions, and WordPress can be [downloaded for free](#) and then installed on your own web server using your own domain name. Domain names for the free hosted blog services are like this: `http://yourblogname.blogservicename.com` which isn't as desirable as: `http://yourblogname.com` Domain names and web hosting are dirt cheap, anymore (often only a few dollars a month). The cost of entry is very, very low. Joomla and Drupal are free, but their complexity is often beyond the skills and experience of a beginner. If you need to hire help for your site, it can get expensive. While it's usually better to host your own blog, if you are on the absolute tightest of budgets, then it might make you feel better to know that even though self-hosted blogs are preferable, **there are plenty of great**

**blogs that are hosted on free services.** Both [Blogger](#) and [WordPress](#) feature them prominently. I'm not presuming what kind of endeavor you're engaged in that's causing you to consider blogging, but if you're running a business, you should host your own blog and not use a free service. You need a professional image and you need control over your site.

### Choice of Designs

There is an incredible selection of freely available [WordPress themes](#) to choose from when deciding on a blog's appearance. There also are themes that cost money. Custom WordPress themes can be purchased at very fair prices. The sheer magnitude of themes available out there just numbs the mind! There are thousands of them.

### Blogs are Easily Extensible

Plugins, widgets, or gadgets... whatever you want to call 'em, you can extend or add extra functionality to your blog, often quite easily. Many blogs use [plugins](#), such as the bookmark/email post feature at the bottom of each post, or the listing of recent comments in the sidebar. The contact form on my blog is powered by a plugin. Your ability to subscribe to follow-up comments via email when you leave a comment is also powered by a plugin. There are plugins doing things that you can't see, such as helping my posts and pages



be **more search optimized** and fight spam comments. Nearly all such extending functions are freely available. If you're not a programmer, you could never hope to have functionality like this in non-dynamic website. There are free scripts for sites other than blogs, but the enormous selection and ease of use of plugins or widgets is another factor that **makes blogs an ideal choice as a website platform**. Extensibility makes your life as a content producer easier and more fruitful.

### Wealth of Help and Resources

In addition to the official help documentation for [WordPress](#) or [Blogger](#), you will find that bloggers like to help each other, and that there is a wealth of information in hundreds of well-written blogs. Sites that use other CMSs are often about subjects or commercial interests that aren't as helpful to a blogger. There are strong communities around these other platforms, but help is more likely to be found in diverse discussion forums rather than blogs.

### Better Search Findability

There is much about a website's design that can either help or hinder that website's search findability. Web designers must also be search engine optimizers at the design level. Optimizing your website so that it ranks higher in search results is known as search engine optimization, or [SEO](#). The biggest

factor in better SEO is better content—content that is naturally full of the same keywords that people would use to search online for related information. A blog about a single subject or niche is regularly pumping out new content that contains keywords, and that’s good for search ranking. There are a variety of add-ons or plugins for some blog platforms (WordPress, especially) that will help your SEO considerably, and there are some WordPress themes which have been carefully designed for better SEO.

### Blogs Encourage Interaction

One of the primary features of blogs that sets them apart from other platforms is **commenting**. Blog comments are nowhere near as complex as a discussion forum. Readers can leave comments at the end of blog posts and pages. Often they respond to each other as well as to the post content. As the blog author, you can participate in and help foster the discussion.

### What if You Already Have a Website?

Do you have to scrap your existing website in order to have a blog? Certainly not! You can integrate your blog into your existing website with either Blogger or WordPress (not the free hosted version of WordPress at [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com), but the version you must install on your own server at [wordpress.org](http://wordpress.org)). But here’s something to consider: why not bring the ease of blogging to your entire

website? WordPress, for example, specifically lets you create pages. A particular page can be set as the site's home page. It's just as easy to create and edit pages in WordPress as it is to create and edit posts. In most WordPress themes, adding a new page automatically adds links to that page in the theme's navigation. If it's been a while since you last redesigned your website, you might want to freshen things up a bit by using WordPress as the CMS for your entire site.

## Exercise: The Benefits of Business Blogging

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Answer the questions in the spaces provided below.

1. What do you feel is the most compelling benefit to having a business blog?

2. Which benefit listed above are you the most skeptical about, and why?

## Step 3: Understand Who You're Blogging For

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If there's one common mistake people make when they're starting a new business and a new blog, it's that they don't have a clear understanding of who their market really is. It's a mistake to assume that your clients or customers are going to be people like yourself. And if they're not like you, how can you know what they want or need?

### Your Ideal Customer

You can create a portrait of your idea customer. Your ideal customer will have certain traits that will make her or him predisposed to do business with you.

You can put together a list of details about your ideal customer, such as:

- Median age
- Median income
- Education level
- Political views
- Marital status
- Number of children
- Rent or own home

- Employed or self-employed (or even perhaps unemployed)
- Sex (majority are male or female)
- Computer/internet usage
- Operating system
- Monitor size/resolution
- Web browser
- Location

Of course, these are “nothing more” than marketing demographics and technographics, but have you sat down to figure out what kind of person you’re looking for as your customer/blog reader? The answer is not “everybody.” The world is too big and you won’t reach anybody trying to be all things to all to people.

Let’s take it a step further. Consider the following points and questions:

- In one word, name this person’s strongest desire. It may one of the following:
  - Achievement

- Belonging
- Efficiency
- Productivity
- Reach
- Safety
- Savings
- What does this person most fear?
  - Being a copycat
  - Being attacked
  - Being ignored
  - Being outmaneuvered
  - Being undersold
  - Disapproval
  - Falling behind
  - Losing customers
  - Operating in the red

- Rejection

These represent only a starting point. You can delve quite deeply into this subject by studying things such as census data, internet demographics studies, personas, and the like. Quick searches online will reveal an abundance of information on these subjects.

The point is, you need to know who you want to talk to. Note that I did not say that you need to know who you **are** talking to—I said you need to know who you **want** to talk to.

### Why Bother?

Why should you do all of this? Because if you waste all your time and money focusing on the wrong people, your business will fail. The wrong people will not buy from you. They might read your blog, but they won't become customers. If you hone and craft your blog's content to your ideal customer, your blog will not appeal to anyone but people who match your description of the ideal customer. Others will find the content of the blog does not appeal to them, and they will leave. And that's **good**, because they weren't going to buy anything, anyway.



Exercise:

## Create a Portrait of Your Ideal Customer

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Using the points above as a framework, draft a short written document that is a portrait of your ideal customer.

## Step 4: Determine the Purpose and Goals of Your Business Blog

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One way in which business blogs are unlike personal blogs is that they're not... well, *personal*. They are personable, but they're not personal like a diary is personal. **Business blogs need to fulfill a business purpose.** Or, if you turn it around to face the customer: a business blog should meet customer needs. A business has a purpose beyond just earning money. Earning money is simply the result of a business fulfilling its greater purpose. **A business blog helps the business fulfill its greater purpose.** Hammering out the purpose of a business blog is one of the most important early steps in the process of starting a business blog.

### Purpose

The purpose of a business blog should be summed up in one simple statement. For example, the purpose of my Remarkablogger blog is to get consulting clients. If I sold products, the purpose of my blog might be to help me sell more products and increase customer loyalty and satisfaction regarding those products.

## Goals

Goals are what you need to accomplish in order to fulfill your blog's purpose.

To help you choose a direction, I've listed some non-mutually exclusive overarching goals a business blog can strive towards:

- Convey company news and events.
- Demonstrate knowledge, expertise, passion, and authority in a niche or industry.
- Provide helpful tips and info on getting the most from company services or products.
- Pass along success stories from customers about how your business has helped them become more successful.
- Dominate a niche or industry in search results (hence market and mind share) by becoming the authoritative source for information on a subject and using good SEO.
- Become a resource for the media and cottage industry about your business' market, elevating your business' position and brand.

When I speak of a business blog, I'm not specifying any size of business. What I've written above could just as easily apply to a business of one as to a Fortune 500 company.

The points above can be combined in any way: all of them or some of them can be the goals of a business blog. The first one alone would make me and everyone else yawn as we reached for the back button. They aren't exhaustive, either.

## Exercise: Determine the Purpose and Goals of Your Business Blog

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Write your business blog's purpose:

List the goals your business blog needs to meet in order to fulfill its purpose:

## Step 5: Determine the Authors of your Business Blog

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With personal blogs, an author can choose to go it alone or join with others as a group blog. The choice is up to the author. With business blogs, there are also many possibilities, ranging from a single author to a team. Business bloggers are not necessarily company employees, who often already have plenty to do without adding blogging responsibilities. Below is a list of some business blog authorship possibilities:

- **Single company person**, who becomes the public voice of the company. This person must be chosen with care, as they will essentially become the spokesperson for the company. Choose someone who is a people person, who is articulate, who can write well, and who can act as a bridge between customers and the company. This person can be a company leader (such as GM's Bob Lutz) or a more front line individual (such as Robert Scoble was for many years at Microsoft).
- **Multiple company employees**, who share a common general company blog or who can author multiple company blogs according to the company's different service and product groups.
- **Ghostwriters**, who do not work at the company, but blog for the company on the company's blog. The word *ghostwriter* may have negative connotations for some people, but there are many professional

ghostwriters who do excellent work. There is nothing wrong with hiring ghostwriters to help busy high-level executives blog. You don't have to hide it, but you don't have to draw undue attention to it, either. A plain-language disclaimer page is all that's needed. The whole point behind ghostwriters is that they don't take direct credit and are unknown.

Which option is best depends on the size of your company and whether or not company people have the skills or time to blog. There's no reason why the second and third options couldn't both be employed. You can always begin with just one person and grow from there as needed.

### **Choose the Willing**

Only choose people who are already blogging on their own or who really want to do it. The unwilling and skeptical will make for lousy bloggers, and will harm the company's image, not enhance it.

### **Get Samples**

Ask for writing samples from your prospective bloggers. This applies to employees just as much as it does to ghostwriters. Don't choose someone who sounds like a commercial or a lawyer. Choose someone whose writing sounds



## Step 6: Determine the Business Blog's Policies

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For a business of more than one person with a blog or multiple blogs, having clear blogging policies and procedures is essential. And when I say "clear," I mean: plain English that anyone can understand, not "clearly this was written by lawyers and you have no hope of understanding it." If you're going to join the blogosphere, don't go writing something that sounds like a contract from the 1700s.

### **Business Blog Policies should:**

- Clearly state what the blog topics are to be.
- Clearly state what is unacceptable or out-of-bounds.
- Clearly state what should be done if there is any doubt whether or not a topic is acceptable (most of you might take that to automatically mean don't publish it, but that may not be the best thing to do—risk does have its rewards, after all).
- Provide a mechanism for review and approval of gray area topics.
- State expectations for posting frequency and length.
- Explain the business blog's commenting or no-commenting policy.
- Clearly outline the bloggers' authority, capacity, and procedures for customer service issues that may arise through the blog if the blog allows comments.



- List what company resources the blogger has at her disposal (information, images, printers, computer, and audio/video equipment, etc.) and what, if anything, can be expensed.
- Outline what should happen if bloggers temporarily cannot fulfill their obligations: who they should contact and what will be done (skip posts or employ a guest blogger, etc.).
- For ghostwriters or professional company bloggers, explain the pay package and payment schedule.

As you can see, there is more to this than you might first think. Many business decision-makers are coming to understand the power and benefits of blogging, but are afraid of the risks. I think the benefits far outweigh the risks, and so far the experiences of real businesses that are blogging are bearing this out<sup>1</sup>. Use the framework above to draft some common-sense business blog policies.

The above are policy points for company blogs—not for employees' personal blogs.

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<sup>1</sup> Businesses such as Microsoft, Dell, and Google all have blogs. Businesses not in the computer/internet/software tech industries that have blogs include GM, McDonald's, and Stonyfield Farms.

## Exercise: Draft a Company Blogging Policy

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Using the guidelines above, write a company blogging policy in a word processor.

## Step 7: Determine Blog Platform and Blog / Website Integration

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For a business, deciding to blog opens the doorway to many possibilities and questions. Some of these possibilities mean taking a hard look at the way things have been done in the past, with an eye towards doing things in a new way that better serve the company's future.

There are several business website configurations, and your business site will likely conform to one of these:

- Single domain, static site
- Multiple domains or subdomains, static sites
- Single domain, dynamic site
- Multiple domains or subdomains, dynamic sites all on the same platform

- Multiple domains or subdomains, dynamic sites all on different platforms

**Domains** are the website address names, such as *yourcompany.com*.

**Subdomains** are a way to have multiple sites on a single address, such as *finances.yourcompany.com* or *products.yourcompany.com*.

**Static** sites are comprised of web pages written only in HTML (hypertext markup language) by a person, page by page. This is how all websites were once created, and many are still static sites.

**Dynamic** sites store all their content in a database. Software on the web server called a **content management system** (CMS) puts the content together as HTML and sends the dynamically generated web page to a visitor's web browser. Company employees can add and modify website content using the CMS with little to no technical skills. Most new websites created now are dynamic.

Blogs are the **dynamic** type of website.

## Blog Platforms

There are a great many blogging platforms. By "platform," I mean any kind of software or service, regardless of where that software is located (your

company's servers or hosted by a third party). However, there are really only a few that you would want to go with. This is due to their capabilities and their widespread support by extensive, knowledgeable communities.

It's important to go with a winner in business blogging just as in many other endeavors, so that your company blog is taken seriously. They are:

- WordPress
- TypePad
- Moveable Type
- Blogging add-ins for other CMS's, such as Drupal or Joomla. Some of these are native to the CMS, others allow for integration of WordPress or TypePad blogs into the site.

### What if You Already have a Website?

Another issue to consider when starting a business blog is what do with the existing site. Here are your choices:

- **Create a blog as an entirely separate site on its own domain.**  
This allows you to have a different look for the blog compared to the main business site. If the blog doesn't work out, you can easily "cut it off" since it never was deeply intertwined with the main site.  
Disadvantages are that your online presence just got a split personality

which may confuse some customers, and you still have to figure out a way to link to the blog from the main site.

- **Create a blog as a subdomain or directory of the existing site.**

This shows a greater dedication to blogging, which your blog-savvy customers will appreciate. You'll have to get the blog and the main site to play nice with each other, though. You'll want visual consistency between the blog and the main site. You'll have to figure out how to add links to the blog from the main site where appropriate without making it look like you duct-taped your site. This is a common option, and for good reason: it makes sense from all points of view, from blogger, to company, to visitor.

- **Replace your current site with the blog's CMS.**

This option gives you the chance to do that redesign of the old site that probably needed to be done, anyway (hey, it's not 2001, anymore). The WordPress blog system, in particular, makes an excellent content management system. You don't even have to have the blog on the home page, if that's your preference. The win-win in this situation is that not only did you get blogging, but your company's entire website just got insanely *easier* to manage. There's even a secret bonus for doing this: with only a few tweaks, your new WordPress-powered site will probably be far more optimized for search engines than your old site was before.

As you can probably tell, I'm strongly in favor of the last option. The people behind WordPress have plans to continue ah... *pressing* forward (sorry!) with WordPress' CMS capabilities, making it even more powerful in future releases.

## Exercise: Working Through Blog/Site Platform/Integration

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1. Who would you consult with in order to decide what blog platform to use and how to deal with your current website?
  
2. What are this person's qualifications for dealing with blogs?

## Step 8: Design Considerations

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One aspect of personal blogging that doesn't translate into business blogging is [blog design](#). Personal blogs are like kitchen junk drawers, overflowing with widgets, advertising, blogrolls<sup>2</sup>, shoutboxes<sup>3</sup>, music lists, phases of the moon, and all other kinds of junk. It's one of the things that makes personal blogging personal, but nearly all of these things have no business being on a business blog.

There is still a large percentage of the general population who may be your customers that [do not know what a blog is](#) when they see it. People tend to ignore that which they don't understand. Leave out all those blog-specific items and focus on the content and fulfilling the [purpose of the blog](#). All you generally need are the following:

- Subscription tools for visitors, both RSS and Email, with the email more visible and prominent than RSS.
- Categories

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<sup>2</sup> A **blogroll** is a list of links to other blogs the blog author likes or reads regularly.

<sup>3</sup> A **shoutbox** is a small box on a web page in which visitors can type short public messages ("shouts" or "shout outs") that appear in a running list of messages in the box.

- Archives
- About or author information

Make sure your business blog carries your brand. Do not just get an off-the-shelf or free template. That's **not** you. It's somebody else. Have your blog theme or template professionally designed, or for goodness' sake at least customize a free theme enough to "make it yours." If you're redesigning your entire site to use the blog CMS, have your theme professionally designed. A WordPress custom theme design doesn't cost any less than any other professional web design. Expect to pay well over \$1,000 for a good one. There are plenty of good designers out there.

Some final tips:

- Pay for a good stock photography and let your blogger(s) use it to add visual interest to posts.
- Make sure your blog looks great in all common browsers: Internet Explorer 6 and 7, Firefox, and Safari for the Mac.
- If you're going to really use it as a blog, and not just as a light CMS, make it clear that it's a blog. Use the word "blog" or "weblog" prominently at the top.



- Consider using non-bloggy terms, like “permanent link” instead of “permalink<sup>4</sup>” and “links to this post” instead of “trackbacks<sup>5</sup>.”

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<sup>4</sup> **Permalink** is the permanently available hyperlink to dynamically generated content stored in a blog’s database. Because old posts “fall off” the home page of a blog and go into the archives, a term that communicated the idea of an unchanging link to a post had to be created, thus permalink was born. When a post enters the archives, the permalink for it will still work.

<sup>5</sup> **Trackback** is when another blogger links to one of your posts or cites one of your posts as the inspiration for their post. Trackback links to these posts often appear along with comments in a blog.

## Exercise: Deciding Factors for Blog Design

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1. Is your current web designer knowledgeable and experienced in designing blogs?
  
2. How web-savvy do you consider your customers and audience? How do you know? If you don't know, how will you find out?

## Step 9: Choose Blog Categories and Tags

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### Categories

Nearly all blogs have categories and/or tags as a means of organizing and classifying blog content. Categories are high-level general classifications of your blog's content. Business blogs should have categories, and at some point, you'll need to decide what they are. Most business blogs seem to divide their content into the following general categories:

- Company news and announcements
- Tips or information on specific product/service lines, with one category for each particular product or service
- Customer success stories
- Relevant industry news and opinion

A business blog doesn't need a lot of categories. Even for specific products or services, you only would want categories for the ones that warrant it. When you see what kind of traffic and comment activity your blog gets for certain categories, you will have a greater understanding of how your business is perceived. You can leverage your knowledge of that perception in the market to strengthen and build on your position.

Another reason to keep your initial list of categories small is to give it room to grow over time. Significant events (for good or ill) may occur in the future and might warrant their own categories. New products and services will go online and might need their own categories. You really shouldn't remove any categories, but if you have to, make sure to have your web people redirect the old addresses to relevant new ones. It's very likely you'll add some new categories down the road.

## Tags

Tags are a more recent method for labeling blog posts. Tags are more specific and granular than categories. One of the primary tenets of book [The Cluetrain Manifesto](#) is that hyperlinks subvert hierarchies. It's true: in physical media a hierarchical system is critical to finding what you want in the material. But on the internet, where everything is only a click or a search away, hierarchies are less valuable. In fact, with tags, things can be quite disorganized and messy, and people can still find what they need.

You can think of categories as quasi-hierarchical, but tags are "bottom up" rather than "top down". That doesn't mean you should put any forethought into tags on your blog. Because every tag is a hyperlink to the other posts with the same tag, each tag acts like a little doorway to grouped information

## An Example of Categories and Tags

Say you're an organization coach – you help people organize their workspaces, their homes, and their lives. Your primary web vehicle is your blog. On your blog you write a post called "Top Ten Tips for Keeping Your Desk Clean". In the post, you write about not having a "tickler" file allows for things to pile up on your desk. You also mention that not making immediate decisions leads to clutter, so you describe a fast way to make a decision about any thing you put on your desk. You have a blog category called **Office Organization**, so you assign the post to that category. That's a broadly defined bucket to put the post in. But for tags, any or all of the following could apply:

- Top ten
- Tips
- Procrastination
- Tickler file
- Decision-making
- Reducing clutter

If, on your organization blog, you have written about tickler files before and tagged those posts in which tickler files are mentioned with the tag "tickler

file”, a reader who hasn’t heard of a tickler file before can click on the tag, see the other posts with the same tag, and learn more about tickler files.

## Step 10: Write the Initial Content

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### Conventional Wisdom

It’s been given out as good advice that a blog should have something more than a few measly posts for people to read if you’re going to make a big production out of announcing the blog’s existence. If you’re not going to make a big noise about starting a blog, then this isn’t as crucial. But if you’re an established business with a bit of longevity and presence in the market, then when you announce the launch of your blog, the standard good advice really is pretty good: there had better be something to read.

Many companies have one foot in the old-school world of business management, and the other foot is testing the waters of technological empowerment and its consequences. A good old-fashioned press release can drive an initial surge of traffic to the new blog, so there had better be something of substance there to create a good first impression.

What are you going to offer your new readers that will impress them and convert them into RSS subscribers and long-term readers? Many other great bloggers have written plenty of excellent material on creating initial content for a blog. Yaro Starak calls it [pillar articles](#), Chris Garrett calls it [flagship content](#). Whatever you want to call it, it needs to be written **before** the blog launches.

### How Much Initial Content?

How much initial content should your blog have? There's no single answer to this. There's no formula you can apply. But you can answer a question for yourself: when you visit a blog and see there's hardly any posts older than a month, what's your gut reaction about the blog? It depends! Some blogs (like [Skelliewag](#)) didn't have much content when starting but what was there was great and the newborn status of the blog didn't matter. But think about how much content you'd want to see at a blog before you would ever consider trusting it or subscribing to it. My own personal threshold for this sort of thing is usually more than a couple months, but compelling content can make for an exception.

## Should You Backdate Your Initial Content?

In blogging software, it's a simple matter to give your posts date/time stamps from earlier than when they were written and posted. Some bloggers are tempted to backdate posts on a new blog to give the appearance of longevity. **Don't do it.** You cannot fool people by backdating your content. This sort of thing can easily be exposed on the internet, so don't even think about it. You will be found out. And then what kind of business relationships is that going to make for?

Instead, do a soft launch. A soft launch is when you make the blog public and you begin posting, but you don't blare the trumpets from the mountaintops about it. Some of your customers might naturally discover the blog before you've launched it officially. That's fine, think of these people as allies to help you get started. Recruit them. Write them personal emails thanking them for any feedback they might care to give. Once you've built up some material then you show yourself to the world officially.

## Exercise: Draft Initial Content Ideas

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Here are some initial content ideas to help you get started. Use some or all of these as a basis for creating the initial content for your blog:

- Why we're starting this blog



- Write the About page
- The number one piece of advice you can give to your customers
- Tips for getting the most out of your products/services
- What customers should do if there is a problem with a product/service
- Convey the vision of your company: what problems are you solving, and how? (Write it like a manifesto)
- A list of links to frequently searched-for pages on the main website
- Industry news, but with your spin on it
- Why people need a (your product or service)
- What to watch out for in a (product or service in your industry, use this type of post to differentiate your product or service)
- Where the company's going in the future (heh... you had better know!)
- Little-known killer uses for your product/service

You get the idea. The list above should give some ideas on how to get started. Even if you don't have a blog, yet, you can fire up the ol' word processor and start writing.

## Step 11: Draft a Comment Policy

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### To Comment or Not to Comment

One of the most hand-wringing decisions a company has to make if it's going to blog is how to handle comments. The thought of random people (some of whom are trolls and idiots) or even the competition showing up and leaving comments gives c-level types and lawyers hives. The first decision is whether to allow comments at all. There are many reasons not to, but **absolutely none of them are as strong as the reasons why you should allow comments.**

Yes, there will be idiots who leave dumb comments. There will be trolls (people who deliberately leave nasty comments to incite you). There may be spies from your competitors. There will be unhappy customers.

### Problems are Opportunities

None of these are reasons not to allow comments. Every one of them is an opportunity to show the world what great stuff your company is made of. Every customer service problem is an opportunity to prove yourself and cement your relationship with that customer further, which will cause positive word-of-mouth and lead to increased sales and loyalty. I know that there are some customers who will never be satisfied, no matter what, and they are a

drain on your time and resources. Those customers *should* be “fired.” But for the most part, problems are opportunities to impress. And if you don’t believe that, then hang up your hat and go home, because you have no business being in business.

### Comments and Blogging Go Together

My take is that if you’re going to blog, then you’re going to allow comments. Otherwise, don’t blog. Comments are a large part of what makes blogging special and appealing. Many companies have bravely entered the blogosphere allowing comments and reaped the benefits. Having comments shows you are listening. It shows that you care. And if you are smart, you will indeed listen and care and take some of those comments right to the bank in the form of fantastic suggestions and information that you would never get any other way. If anything, it is the **lack** of communication which has ruined reputations and sunk sales.

### Craft a Comment Policy

But you’re going to need a comment policy. A comment policy informs your blog’s readers what is acceptable in comments and what is not. Comments which do not abide by the policy are to be rejected, and those that do—even if you don’t like what the commenter says—should be allowed.

**You absolutely must allow people to say negative things about your company and/or its products!**

If you don't, nobody will trust you. And customer trust is your most valuable asset.

Trust is one of the main forms of currency on the internet (attention is the other). Only allowing pleasant and praising comments or no comments at all kills trust in a business.

What does a comment policy look like? You can use the one below as an example:

### **Comment Policy**

All comments are moderated<sup>6</sup>. Comments will be rejected for the following:

- Spam
- Blatant self-promotion
- Contains foul language, inappropriate sexual content, or hate speech
- Not relevant to the subject of the blog post
- Contains excessive links

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<sup>6</sup> **Moderated** means that comments are held until they can be reviewed by a blogger and approved or rejected.

- Is a customer service request or a question about your bill

While you are welcome and encouraged to comment on the blog and we value your participation, this blog is not a customer service center. We have avenues for customer service issues and billing. You can check out the FAQ or go to our help site for customer service issues.

Note that the above sample comment policy states that comments are moderated. Moderated comments do not appear on the blog until someone approves them. This gives you an opportunity to screen comments for violations of your policy before they appear on the blog. The usual points about spam, hate speech, and self-promotion are included in the policy.

The last point about customer service and billing requests/issues is something that is specific to a business blog. If your company already has service and billing methods in place, then you don't want the blog to be used for those purposes. If you're going to blog, you had better have decent customer service available and easy billing resolution (see how blogging helps everything?).

## Step 12: Develop a Crisis Management Plan

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Sooner or later, your company will experience a crisis. It could be a customer service crisis. It could be a financial crisis. It could be a natural disaster in your region. Whatever it is, tell me: where will people go in order to learn what's going on?

That's right: your website. And what will they see when they arrive at your website, hoping for the latest information freshly posted only minutes ago just like they get on so many other websites?

A company blog is probably the best crisis management tool you will ever have. During any kind of crisis, people will eagerly wait for every post that updates them on the situation. Stony silence and traditional communications channels are going to hurt you. Big time. Dell learned this the hard way when they started handing out grenades cleverly disguised as laptop batteries. Kryptonite bike locks learned this the hard way when it was discovered that their locks could be compromised with a simple ball point pen, and video of it spread across the internet. Kryptonite's response was to shove its collective head further into the sand. Their reputation was ruined, not by their badly designed bike locks, but by the way they so poorly handled the crisis.

## If a Crisis Hits Before You Have a Blog

Even if your company has never had a blog before, if a crisis hits, whip through the decisions I'm going to outline below and **set up a blog immediately**. Put a big fat link to it from your home page. Manage the crisis through to the end, and then you can figure out what to do with the blog and your site.

## Creating a Blog Crisis Management Plan

- **Decide who is going to do the crisis blogging.**

If your company has multiple bloggers, but you want only one voice to be the official source during the crisis, then have the other bloggers link to the main source of crisis information and then defer to that source. If you want your multiple bloggers to cover the crisis, then make sure they have access to information so that nobody is posting at cross-purposes with each other or with the company. Set up a central information hub for your bloggers through email or RSS.

- **Decide what you're going to say and, just as importantly, what you're not going to say.**

Normally, I'm adverse to bringing lawyers into anything about blogging, but in a crisis you may want their advice. That doesn't mean it will be any good or that you have to follow it. Especially if their advice will

cause you to lose customers and create an even worse public relations nightmare. If they tell you not to say anything at all, get new lawyers who understand the internet and the new rules. The most important thing is to talk to people through your blog like you are a human being and your audience members are, too. If someone pushes you to speak to something you've decided not talk about, be polite but firm and ask for their understanding and patience.

- **Decide whether you're going to allow comments during the crisis.**  
If you really get blogging, you will of course allow comments on your company blog. Depending on the nature of the crisis situation, you may want to temporarily turn off commenting. There may be perfectly good reasons to do so, time and manpower being two of them. However, you will be missing out on the greatest opportunity to really show your customers how awesome you can be by how you respond to and handle comments on crisis blog posts. When the shit hits the fan is your biggest chance to impress, to win people over, *to win them for life*. I suggest you take that chance.
- **Use traditional media to your advantage.**  
Inform your traditional media contacts that crisis information will be available from the blog, and that they can treat each post as a press release.



- **Make sure your web servers can handle the traffic surge.**

You may not have had all that much traffic before, but a crisis can send a tsunami of traffic that will crash your web servers in no time flat.

Make sure you're prepared: upgrade your hosting service or your own equipment if you maintain in-house. If you pay for hosting, contact your hosting representative immediately when the crisis starts and let them know they'll need to be able to handle a spike.

If you think all of this sounds overly serious, I have one word for you: [Mattel](#). Here is their [recall page](#). What a bunch of corporate crap. Don't you feel safer already for your kids? Me neither. Can you imagine how powerful a blog would be for this? How it could win people's trust back even stronger than before? Apparently, Mattel can't.

## Exercise: Draft a Crisis Management Plan

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Write your business blog's crisis management plan according the guidelines above. Doing this often forces people to think about things they don't want to. Ride the discomfort—it won't last long. Most importantly, **resist the urge to write a crisis management plan that locks down communications**. It may seem counterintuitive, but open communications during a crisis are your friend, and silence is your enemy.

## You Have a Blog. Congratulations. Now What?

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You've followed the 11-step plan (there were originally going to be 12 steps, but that too much like quitting something, not starting!). Now you have a blog with some initial core content.

What next?

### Posting Frequency

You or your bloggers keep writing. Keep blogging. If you have hired professional bloggers, you should expect them to post as often as your contract with them specifies. If you and/or a few compatriots are doing that particular bit of heavy lifting yourselves, posting every day may not be possible.

A big team blog can offer quantity and quality, but a small one can usually only offer one or the other. Go for quality. The stronger the offline component of your business is, the less frequently you need to post. You could get away with once a week, if necessary, but three times a week would be much better. The stronger the online component of your business is, the more frequently you need to post. It's best if you can post every day.

## Future Publishing

Some blogging platforms (such as [WordPress](#)) offer the ability to write a post and publish it at a predetermined date and time in the future. This way, you can publish on weekends, holidays, or even during the blogger's vacation. If your blog relies heavily on current events and timely news, this isn't an option you'll be using much.

## What the Heck Do I Blog About?

This is so important it gets a whole section, which just so happens to be the next section, so please, keep reading...

## The 10 Types of Freelance/Business Blog Posts

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**Business blog posts generally fall into one of 10 types.** When you're trying to write for your business blog and you feel a little stuck (or if you're new to business blogging), you can just pick one of these 10 types of business blog posts to use as a guide.

### 1. Customer success stories

One of the most powerful types of posts you can write for a business blog is the customer success story, because it sells without the "hard" sell. As far as other people are concerned, you are in business to help **them**.

In fact, you could go as far as to say that your business helps others do their business faster, better, or cheaper. So you want to tell stories about how your business has helped others do their business faster, better, or cheaper than without you.

### 2. Product or service tips and tutorials

Keep your customers informed with your blog. Chances are, you and others in your company are the foremost experts on your own products or services. You

want your customers to be loyal, informed, and prone to brag about you. Keeping them educated with constant tutorials and tips helps you do that. It also helps you create scenarios in which customer success stories can happen. Microsoft has become very good at this, lately.

### 3. Upcoming products or services information

Use your business blog to provide your readers with sneak previews, teasers, beta invites, focus group/survey invites, and other buzz-builders. Customers who frequent your blog — especially those who frequently comment — may very well be early adopters of your company's products or services. These are people whom Seth Godin calls "sneezers". They are the ones who can do word of mouth marketing without even being asked to. They spread your "ideavirus" to others.

Providing some information on upcoming products and services makes your business blog a place of excitement and anticipation. It helps reward loyalty and spread your marketing message and brand at the same time.

Again, we can look to Microsoft as an example. Before Office 2007 was publicly available, it was available as a beta (test) version. Office 2007 developers at Microsoft previewed the new interface and new functionality, which helped to build buzz about Office 2007 before it was released.

#### 4. Request feedback from customers

Your business blog is a much better avenue than surveys and focus groups for getting feedback. Why? Precisely because of the reasons most people would say “no way” to such an idea: it’s messy and impossible to graph.

You can use blog polling services or plugins to provide some graph-able structure to the feedback, but likely your most valuable insights will come from comments to the post. People who feel strongly enough to take the time to leave a comment (good or bad) are a precious resource for your business, because it costs nothing to get what may be the most intelligent, valuable feedback you can have.

#### 5. News and announcements

Reporting news and announcements is often the first type of business blog post that comes to most people’s minds, and that’s why I deliberately did not place it high on the list. I wanted to you get some exposure to other post ideas and get you thinking about them.

#### 6. Industry news

Position yourself as a leader in your industry by relating industry news to your customers. Tell them why it’s important for them to know this, how it affects

them. Your customers want to know that you are aware of the big picture and that you're looking out for them. That helps reinforce the notion that they made the right decision by going with your products or services. With type of post, being opinionated is okay, but remember some important points: don't bash your competition — say nice things about them, and don't sell in these posts. Objectivity is not possible and most people know this, but trust is. You want your readers to trust you. You need to show modesty and humility and refrain from bragging or selling.

### 7. What to look for in a...

This is a classic educated customer type of post. There's an old saying: *an educated customer is our best customer*. In the so-called information age we live in, the better-educated you are about something, the smarter your decisions will be. Educating your customers (as opposed to bombarding them with your unwanted "marketing messages") puts them in control of a purchase process that engenders confidence by being knowledgeable. If you sold aftermarket performance parts for cars, you can't sell to someone who doesn't understand what's so great about your products unless you can educate them about performance and quality. Don't go for the hard sell. Educated people sell themselves on your products because you deal with them more as equals who are experts.

## 8. What to watch out for from...

Used judiciously, this type of business blog post implies that you're not doing these things — and others might be. Helps to build trust because you're looking out for your customers. You can only use a post of this type occasionally, because its effect quickly wears off with repetition, and you will look like you're just fear-mongering. You will see this type of post from someone who sells higher end products and services. For instance, if you sold expensive, custom-built computer workstations, you could write a post called "What to Watch Out for from Cheap Parts Computer Companies."

## 9. Related interests

If you sell outdoor gear then you should blog about trips you take. If you sell diapers then you should blog about parenting and your own experiences as a parent. You're relating to your customers by blogging about related interests you have in common with them. This is a benefit you get when you target a niche demographic rather than just a niche product.

## 10. Product, service, or process explanations and stories

Consumers want to know your process because they want to trust you. They really do, and they will if you give a reason. This is part of the new



transparency and openness in business. Consumers want to know where what they buy comes from and how it's made.

Tell your customers where your materials come from, how things are made, how your service processes are structured. Inform, inform, inform. Educated customers really are the best customers. And yet, you can do a great job with the story and anyone will "see" increased value in the product or service.

For example, I could show you a plain spice jar labeled Cinnamon. And I could show you an unusually shaped and designed jar that contained Moroccan cinnamon from a particular region where the soil is the best possible for growing amazing cinnamon and this cinnamon is processed by the same family for generation after generation and blah, blah, blah.

Which one would cost more? Nearly everyone would say the second jar would cost more. How do you know the first jar didn't have the same kind of cinnamon in it? It depends on the story I tell. Now, I am not suggesting for even a moment that you make things up that aren't true. Think about it this way: if your products or services don't have any good stories behind them, maybe there's something else deeply wrong with your business that a blog ain't gonna fix anyway. But otherwise, a blog is one of the best ways you have to tell the best stories about your products. And here's what is especially amazing about this: your customers will tell great stories, too, in the form of comments and in some cases even on their own blogs.

The previous 10 types of business blog posts will serve you in good stead for a long time. You can literally just pick one and start writing. It's a formula for always having something to blog about.

But to really make your business blog do what it was designed to do, which is further your business, we need to reframe how business blogging is done in a way that recognizes the differences between business blogging and other kinds of blogging and that serves the needs of a business blogger.

To do this, I have coined the term **Gateway Blogging**.

## An Introduction to Gateway Blogging

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**Gateway blogging** is a term I created that helps to frame business blogging activities so that the blog supports the business, and not the other way around.

Those of us who are running small companies, micro-businesses, micro-ISVs<sup>7</sup>, and the like are more likely to have a blog as our main website than larger companies. We understand the importance of blogging generally, but it's easy to get lost in the minutia and distractions of blogging. We forget that the blog

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<sup>7</sup> **Micro-ISV** is a micro independent software vendor, which is a very small company (often only a handful of people at the most) who develop custom software solutions for their clients.

is really the tip of a wedge of paid products or services. Because directly selling or pushing product on the blog is a turn-off, it's easy to let the indirect nature of blogging lead us away from the purpose of the blog.

### Your Business Blog is a Gateway

So I've constructed this analogy: a business blog is the **gateway** through which customers and future customers enter, enticed by the information, skills for hire, or products/services they see just inside the gate. Once inside the gate, there are more rewards for going deeper beyond the gate. It's at this point where your sales funnel takes over. Gateway blogs don't replace sales/conversion funnels. Gateway blogs are the pointed, relationship-building add-on to that process.

To learn more, check out our new site, [Gateway Blogging](#). I say "our" because this is a joint venture project between myself and long-time business coach and author Greg Balanko-Dickson.

## Glossary

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- Archive** When blog posts go below the cutoff threshold for being displayed on the home page (usually 10 posts, but the number can vary) they are automatically placed in the archive. Archives are often grouped by month.
- Blog** A web publishing platform that displays content in reverse chronological order.
- Blogger** One who blogs. Also, a blogging platform owned by Google at <http://blogger.com>.
- Bloggng** Writing on a blog. Can be used as a substitute for the word "writing" when applied to a blog. For example, "I'm bloggng about our new product."
- Blogosphere** The world of blogs and bloggers. For example, commenting is a common occurrence in the blogosphere. Another example: transparency and openness are highly valued in the blogosphere. Another example: the news shot across the blogosphere, and was all the buzz.
- Blogroll** A list of links to other blogs a blogger reads or admires.

- Category** A broad label for the various subjects for a blog's content. Clicking on a category takes you to a page that collects all the posts assigned to that category.
- CMS** Content Management System. A program on a web server that uses a database to store website content and information. Allows people to create and update website content themselves.
- Comment** A reaction or opinion written by a visitor and reader of a blog, and attached to the post so that all of a post's comments come after the end of the post. Comments are one of the unique aspects of blogging that makes blogging different than other kinds of websites.
- Comment moderation** Submitted comments are held until they can be reviewed by a blogger and approved or rejected.
- Comment policy** A set of guidelines for what kind of comments on a blog are acceptable and what kind of comments might be disallowed.
- Comment spam** Comments left by software programs or by real humans for purpose of creating links back to sites that have heavy advertising or affiliate sales content which is unrelated to the blog post.
- Comment troll** A person who deliberately attempts to incite anger or a reaction from the blogger in comments.

<b>Database</b>	A system to store and organize information (data) electronically on a computer. The most popular database system for blogs is <b>MySQL</b> .
<b>Domain</b>	A website name, such as remarkablogger.com.
<b>Draft</b>	A blog post that has been started but which hasn't been published.
<b>Drupal</b>	A CMS that is more complex than most blogging platforms.
<b>Dynamic site</b>	A website whose content is stored in a database and served via a program that converts the data into web pages and sends them to a web browser.
<b>Feed reader</b>	Software that receives and allows a user to consume information via RSS feeds, such as blog posts and podcasts. Examples of feed readers are: Internet Explorer 7, Firefox, Microsoft Outlook 2007, Google Reader, and Bloglines.
<b>Future publishing</b>	Setting a blog post to automatically publish at a future date and time. Allows you to write posts in advance.
<b>Ghostwriter</b>	For blogging, a paid professional blogger who blogs as another person in a company.
<b>HTML</b>	Hypertext Markup Language is the computer language that web

pages are written in.

- Joomla** A CMS that is more complex than most blogging platforms.
- Microblog** A newer form of blog that features very short posts, often from mobile devices. Microblogging services include [Twitter](#) and [Pownce](#).
- Micro-ISV** A micro independent software vendor, which is a very small company (often only a handful of people at the most) who develop custom software solutions for their clients.
- Money blog** A blog about how to make money, usually online via affiliate sales programs, advertising, and internet marketing.
- MoveableType** A blog software platform.
- Niche** In blogging, a niche is a very specific overall topic for a blog.
- Permalink** Combination of the words **permanent link**. Because blog posts move off the home page and end up in an archive, the only way to link on a blog post in a way that stays correct after time passes is to link to a post's permalink.
- Pingback** A trackback that is created when a blogger links to another blog's post. The blogging software does this automatically. What most people call trackbacks are, in fact, pingbacks.

- Plugin** A small program that extends or enhances the functionality of a WordPress blog.
- Podcasting** A combination of the words **iPod** and **broadcasting**. Although podcasting has little to do with Apple's iPod media player, the name has stuck. Podcasting is a way to make audio or video media available to subscribers. People subscribe using software such as iTunes or Google Reader. Podcasting uses RSS to send updates to subscribers (see the entry on RSS).
- Post** The main unit of content on a blog. The act of making a post available for everyone to read is called **posting**. Comments are also sometimes said to be posted.
- Pro blog** Blog that makes money through internet advertising sales, paid reviews/posts, or marketing.
- Prologger** Person who earns a living blogging: Pro, as in professional, and blogger.
- RSS** Really Simple Syndication. [RSS](#) is a way to send updates to people who subscribe to them using special software that receives RSS updates (called feeds). Google Reader is an example of such software (see the entry for **Feed reader**).
- SEO** Search Engine Optimization. The practice of designing websites and content to rank better in search results.



- Shoutbox** A small box on a web page in which visitors can type short public messages (“shouts” or “shout outs”) that appear in a running list of messages in the box.
- SMO** Social Media Optimization. The practice of designing websites to make it easy for people to spread word about content they like through various social media services, such as <http://digg.com> and <http://stumbleupon.com>.
- Soft launch** Making a blog publicly available but not announcing it. This gives you a way to build content and get feedback from the small number of initial visitors.
- Splog** A combination of **spam** and **blog**. Splogs are automated blogs that make money for their owners via advertising or affiliate sales, and often have stolen (scraped) content from other blogs.
- Static site** Website made up of HTML pages on the server which are delivered to web browsers as they are.
- Subdomain** A way to have multiple sites on a single address, such as *finances.yourcompany.com* or *products.yourcompany.com*.
- Tag** Short descriptor for content in a blog post. Clicking on a tag usually shows all posts with the same tag. Tags are similar to categories, but are more granular in detail.

**Trackback** When another blogger links back to a post on your blog and manually pastes in the URL of your blog post into the trackback field.

**Transparency** A business value growing in popularity, in which full disclosure and a lack of any deception are the rule.

**TypePad** A blog software service. Learn more at <http://typepad.com>.

**Vlog** Combination of **Video** and **Blog** (itself a combination of *web* and *log*). Vlogs feature video as their primary form of content, rather than written posts. A person who runs a vlog is a **vlogger**. Many people don't like the words vlog or vlogger and prefer **video blog** instead.

**Widget** A small unit of content that often fetches data from another website. On a WordPress blog, widgets are units of content in the sidebar of the blog that can easily be created and managed via drag and drop.

**WordPress** A blog software platform. Learn more at <http://wordpress.org>.