



**The Power of Blogging**  
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# What is a blog?

## *What is a blog in simple terms?*

- ★ It began to gain note in 1997 – Web logging
- ★ It began as an informal online journal, or diary – a webmaster's log.
- ★ Sometime a 'stream of consciousness' journal of what was on the writer's mind, and so began the idea of linking to something the author finds interesting.
- ★ A frequent publication of personal thoughts
- ★ The trend has exploded (the blogging phenomenon has gained momentum with easy access online publishing systems including WordPress, Blogger, etc).
- ★ A blog gives personal engagement which your site probably is not doing at this time.
- ★ A blog can create power and give you authority.

It is your intellectual property that can make the blog have authority within your own verticals.

- ★ It is your opportunity to become 3-dimensional
- ★ Critically - A blog should be fun, if it is a chore give up.
- ★ Conversational style of documentation
- ★ The blog may focus on specific interest, yet cover off-topic areas
- ★ Part of the decline of the printed media, we are our own journalists, we can now create media for ourselves
- ★ It is the touch paper to ignite a whole new world of possibilities.

***Don't get confused by the technology and terminology: If you can hold a conversation, and you can use Word or Outlook, then you can blog.***



# The benefits of blogging

## Key objectives

- ★ **Selling Products.** By demonstrating particular uses for your product, niche applications, or tips to get more out of the product, you are indirectly helping to sell more products. Just remember that informing people about using products works better than directly selling the products.
- ★ **Brand Building.** By demonstrating broad and deep knowledge, expertise and passion of your market, you can become an authoritative voice, and the information channel that people will turn to for an authoritative opinion. Becoming such an authority can help you to dominate searches relating to the topic of authority.
- ★ **Increase Customer Satisfaction.** Your blog can be used to share tips and advice on how to get more from your products, enabling customers to better appreciate their value.
- ★ **Build your own news channel.** You can use the blog as a newsletter to keep customers and prospects informed of all the latest news and events connected with your business.
- ★ **Build an Industry News Channel.** You can use your blog to build an authoritative and valuable resource used not only by customers, but also by other players in the market, and truly dominate the market media that way.
- ★ Above all, **build Trust!** Many internet users still feel issues of doubt and uncertainty about shopping online. Trust is a massive factor in sales. However, beyond that, no matter how good your products, your sales pitch, and your site generally, if people do not trust you, they ignore the lot.

## Why are you blogging?

A Business Blog can provide a variety of benefits that you can use and maximize according to your desired objectives and purposes in creating and maintaining the blog.

- ★ **Lead Acquisition.** People who read blogs are generally more accepting of, and trusting of, the internet, and far more likely to be comfortable with online purchases. A blog post can target a very tightly defined market niche/need effectively and efficiently.
- ★ **Customer Communication.** A blog adds a new window for your customers to see you, hear your message, and communicate back to you through statistics and comments.
- ★ **Bypass/Own Media Channel.** A blog, given suitable resource and content becomes its own media channel, and can quite realistically surpass offline magazines for subscriptions and readership, and you will own it.
- ★ **Superb Content.** Regular blogging massively increases the presence that your business site is likely to have in each search engine index, each one helping (through its internal links on the page and navigation) to push the entire site higher in the rankings.
- ★ **Human Appeal.** Puts a human face and personality with your company, which is of tremendous benefit in the faceless world of the internet. People like to buy from their contacts and friends in any industry. A blog can help you seem to customers like that person they know - their contact/friend in the business.
- ★ **Efficient Publicity.** Far more cost-efficient and cost-effective than traditional methods of public relations and related marketing with far more versatility and control.



## What is your target audience?

The target audience from your blog does not need to be limited to simply trying to sell to potential customers. The blog is more versatile than that, and you can write content to appeal to many types of visitors.

- ★ **Customers** - People who have already bought your products and may want to better use or maintain them, etc.
- ★ **Prospective clients** - People who might buy your products but have not yet done so and have not been moved by the selling on your main site.
- ★ **Researchers** - People who will advise potential customers. Especially in the B2B market, the person who visits the site first to evaluate it and your offer is often not the buyer, nor even the decision maker.
- ★ **Disgruntled customers** - If you can get disgruntled people posting on your blog – you have the right of reply.
- ★ **Journalists and Industry observers** (includes other bloggers)
- ★ **Your competitors** – Communication, explaining market issues, and becoming a key point of engagement can make even your direct competitors grudgingly become regular readers of your blog, and even contributors to your success.



# How to blog

## Or – Business Blogging for Beginners

So you now have:

- ★ A good understanding of what a blog is.
- ★ Defined the objectives of your business blog.
- ★ Determined who your blog is aimed at.

## ***Define Business Blogging Policies:***

It is certainly worthwhile to document a policy for your business blog.

### ***Why?***

- ★ To provide guidelines to employee bloggers and
- ★ To provide a code of ethics that will serve to build trust with readers

The policy documents may define the following (using plain English):

- ★ What the blog topics are.
- ★ What is unacceptable (important).
- ★ Process. E.g. How posts are verified as acceptable (proof read) before publishing.
- ★ Posting frequency.
- ★ Commenting policy.
- ★ Additional guidelines regarding use of company resources, ghost writers and what they can and cannot do etc.
- ★ Disaster planning - i.e. How the blog is to be employed in some sort of disastrous event.
- ★ Post deletion and modification policy
- ★ Respect company confidentiality and proprietary information.
- ★ Show respect for the company, fellow employees, customers, partners and competitors.



# Creating Content:

## **Research:**

Reading other related blogs including the comments made to various posts along with related forums and again the comments and questions raised by readers. Doing this will give you an idea of what people want and exactly what you might be able to provide. You may discover a niche that nobody is currently addressing.

Your existing knowledge of your customers (age, sex, location, socio-economic backgrounds) can all be used to inform the choices you make regarding the topics of your blog and the language and style of your blog writing.

*“For a blog to be successful, your content needs to be **useful and unique to your readers**”* – Note the words ‘useful’ and ‘unique’. (This means knowing a little about your readers.)

## **What is useful content?**

- ★ **Entertaining** – people are increasingly using blogs as a source of amusement and fun
- ★ **Education** – blogs are great for presenting tutorials or instruction. E.g. How to use a particular product from your catalogue.
- ★ **Information Resource** – People have an unquenchable thirst for information on everything from train times to price comparisons.
- ★ **Discussion and debate** – The interactive nature of blogs makes them an ideal platform for sharing and discussion.
- ★ **News** – Presenting selected news stories from a particular industry can be very popular.
- ★ **Developing Community** – People like to belong – Your blog could enable customers and clients to ‘connect’ with others and feel part of a supportive community

## **Inspiration:**

Numerous sources including:

- ★ The news, magazines, other blogs, websites.
- ★ If you sell products based upon price – favourable price comparisons are always newsworthy and unique.
- ★ If you have exclusive deals/products – immediately unique
- ★ Your expertise in a particular area.
- ★ Customer Testimonials

## **Try to be unique**

With so many blogs in existence (around 100 million), and new ones being created every second, it is becoming increasingly difficult to stand out from the crowd. Whilst you may be presenting the same information or news that is presented elsewhere, your manner and spin can make it unique to you and more relevant to your readers

## **Be Remarkable**

Easier said than done, but if you can in some way distinguish yourself from the crowd and get noticed you will potentially attract attention, readers and links.



**How?** Again – **read around**. Look at other blogs in your niche or market sector. You can always just match what they are doing but you would only be 'keeping up with the Jones'. But you may be able to do it better than your competitors, or differently.



# Bloggging Process

## *Get your routine down*

1. Set aside time to blog each day / two days / week / month etc.
2. Draft your post
3. Categorise
4. Add images and format the post
5. Re-read and edit before posting
6. Get someone else to read it (proof read and approve)
7. Publicise via whatever avenues are appropriate

Never publish a post without reading it through and ideally get someone else to proof read it.

Keep your writing style simple and largely **free of jargon**. Readers are immediately turned off by language that they don't understand so write for the widest possible audience.

**Try to develop a dialogue with your readers** – but only when you know you have some. This can be achieved by inviting comments and feedback – even offering 'guest blogging' spots or publishing stories submitted by your blog readers.

If people ask questions in your blog, answer them as soon as possible

Some bloggers even take the time to respond to a commenter directly via email as well

## *Drafting Your Blog Posts*

Using the **draft** facility in WordPress allows you to get your blogging ideas down, save them and then come back later to work on the post a little more.

**Keep it Short:** The attention span of blog readers is short. Write posts to match.

This doesn't necessarily mean really short blog posts. But it does mean make your blog post readable in short bursts by making the paragraphs quite short.

As a general rule of thumb: posts of between about 250 and 1000 words work best.

People will tend to scan posts so, if appropriate, use simple lists

**Structure your blog posts** – We've all heard how 'content is king' – but there are many a blog post with some excellent content that has simply fallen flat due to the way in which it was structured and presented.

The Blog Post **Title** is all important

The **first paragraph** (or leading paragraph) – ideally no more than about 2 or 3 lines – should introduce the topic and entice the reader to read on

Subsequent paragraphs should be short

Lists are good for those who like to scan

Summarise and conclude.

Choose images carefully, but do use images to add visual appeal to the posts.

***Write as if you are talking. If you are stuck, use a voice recorder and talk to it as you would talk to a friend. Then play it back, and transcribe what you have recorded.***



Be careful with supposition and subjective positions. Until you read pretty widely, sometimes your potential customers will know more about the rest of the market (and thus your position within it) than you do. If you claim to be the best, cheapest, smartest or any other subjective measure, then any reader who disagrees is forced to question all you say and you lose trust and acceptance. Make clear when you state opinion.

## **How Often? - Frequency of posting**

Some say that the best blogs are updated every day, others say that it is not *really necessary* to update a blog more than once a week, unless one of your objectives is to become a touch-point for industry news. One thing that is certain is that routine works. If your readers know that your blog is always updated on a Sunday then you are likely to develop more regular readers than if your updates are sporadic.

## **Categories and Tags:**

**Categories** are like chapters of a book, or a table of contents of a text book. These generally simple phrases or words provide an indication of the overall topics of the posts in that particular category.

**Tags** are more like the index of a book. They are like the list of keywords, or glossary, at the back of the book that people may use to search for specific terms.

### **Always keep in mind:**

- ★ The Reader is the Most Important Person:
- ★ How will my categories and tags assist the reader?

WordPress themes generally turn categories into tags.

Categories are often allocated at the time of writing. Some say: do not start categorizing until you have 5 or 6 posts. I always start categorising from the outset as this is part of my 'routine'.

**Your categories may be defined as part of your company blogging policy.**

If you imagine categories as a paper filing system – every post you make must be filed in the appropriate file:

1. Keep the number of categories small
2. Each post goes to **one** category only
3. Categories are a navigational signpost

**Tags supplement categories.**

They don't describe the whole post (like a category) – they give an indication of the posts content.

## **Common Business Blogging Mistakes**

Include:

- ★ Not starting one
- ★ Expecting too much too soon
- ★ Not allocating adequate time



# Blog applications

## *What application should you use?*

There are plenty out there including: Typepad, Grey Matter, Moveable Type, Joomla, Drupal, Blogger, WordPress

## *Why does Fresh Egg recommend WordPress?*

- ★ Ping-out - I submit a post and I can be in Google SERPS ([Search engine results page](#)) within 5 minutes.
- ★ Flair, Functionality, Adaptability - **Scalability**
- ★ Avoid duplicate content - many people are still doing it incorrectly
- ★ WordPress is open source and it's free of corporate tape - User Friendly, Themes Support
- ★ Customisable
- ★ Plug-ins - Most Commented, Latest Comments, Social Bookmarking, Site Map creators, Video, Feeds, Ecommerce, All in one SEO Pack, Next Gen Gallery, Google XML sitemaps
- ★ Constant evolvement, constantly being upgraded
- ★ Multiple skins - Why not share the seasons with your readers - Why not use themes at seasonal time, i.e. Summer, Spring, Winter, Christmas etc - They can be turned on/off at the push of a button - **Engagement**

## **Open Source Software**

WordPress is an [Open Source](#) software which allows it to be used free of cost. You can use it on any kind of personal or commercial website without have to pay a single dime for it. It is built on [PHP/MySQL](#) (which is again Open Source) and licensed under [GPL](#).

## **User Friendly**

You don't really have to be experienced to use WordPress on your website. Nowadays most of the hosting companies provide the ability to install WordPress on your site at a single click of the mouse. The administration section is easy to navigate and it's even easy to add articles/content to your website.

## **Themes Support**

You will never run short of templates when using WordPress. If you don't like the themes that come with the default installation of WordPress, you can hunt on the Internet and you will find thousands of free themes that you can download and use for your website. There are themes which can even make your website look like a regular site instead of a blog.

## **Plug-ins Extend Functionality**

WordPress plug-ins allow you to do just about anything that you want and can be installed in a jiffy. For example, you want to paginate your blog posts, just look on Google and you can easily find the relevant plug-in that will easily do the job for you.

## **Standards Compliant**

WordPress is software that follows all the [Web Standards](#) and keeps your blog or website compliant to all the rules that have to be followed when running a website.



## **SEO Friendly**

Search Engines have to be definitely kept in mind when building a website. WordPress uses different functions which allow it to be search engine friendly. For example sending pings to other sites, making categories, tagging your posts, use of h1/h2 tags etc.

## **Large Community Support**

As per recent statistics, WordPress is used on more than 1% of the websites on the Internet in the world. There is a large user community backing the development of this software. So, whenever you face any problems, you can go through all the available WordPress forums and communities and find answers for all your questions.

So, you see the benefits of using WordPress now? And, you can add to this list by providing your feedback in the comments



## Promoting your blog

- ★ Look at other industry blogs; see how they are engaging their readers. See what response they are receiving. Where possible, become a welcome part of those conversations.
- ★ Comments – Use other blogs to leave a footprint back to your own blog. Quality on-topic and knowledgeable comments will engage readers to enquire more on the writer.
  - Use Gravatar, leave a visual footprint
- ★ If a post on another blog inspires you to a particularly long comment, feel free to post a related piece on your own blog, citing the blog that inspired your post.
- ★ Trackbacks - Linking to other blogs gives you a trackback on many in their comments.
- ★ Blog directories – Use them, get your blog listed in the right places
- ★ Use traditional printed media – letter heads, business cards, etc
- ★ Import the RSS Feed into your social network profiles such as Facebook
- ★ Linking and feeds from primary site
- ★ Using newsletters, promote engagement from newsletters
- ★ Offer articles to other blogs, your articles would feature a link back to your own blog
- ★ Blog as yourself separately and link this to your work blog.
- ★ Send personal emails to any notable commenter to thank them and engage them further to bring them back.
- ★ My Blog Log – Join this to link-in with communities



## **Enquiries:**

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