

The Beginner's Guide to Blogging

These days it can seem as if almost everyone has a blog.

Your kid sister is on Tumblr, your Mom collect recipes and publishes them on WordPress, and friends share links from their Blogger and LinkedIn publishing platforms.

Businesses, too, have embraced blogging with enthusiasm.

Content marketing rules the roost for online businesses, and inbound marketing is founded on quality material published regularly and in service of a customer base. Blogging, in this context, makes real business sense.

But how do you get started blogging? And how do find success when you do – either drawing in readers, pulling in clients, or monetizing a blog platform? If you're the sort of person who wants to get started blogging but is not sure where to start then this is the eBook for you.

In four chapters we outline everything you need to know to get up and running with your own blog.

- **Chapter 1** explains the importance of choosing a niche for your blog. Whether you're an individual or a business, staying on-topic is required to develop and feed your audience of readers.
- **Chapter 2** provides an overview of the many different blogging platforms. It explains the difference between hosted and self-hosted blog platforms, and recommends the best option for your personal situation.
- **Chapter 3** helps you to craft those first and most important blog posts. It explains the process to work through to ensure that your first post – and every one after it – is perfect, optimized, and ready for reading.
- **Chapter 4** is focused on promoting your content. It explains where to promote, how to promote, and focuses on the social side of things. It's not enough to create content, you have to make sure it is shared, too.

So what are you waiting for? It's time for you to join the blogosphere!

So you've decided to join the world of bloggers - congratulations!

But where to start?

While starting a blog is the work of just minutes, building a blog that will attract visitors, provide leads for your business, and even provide you with a regular income is something very different, indeed. To develop this sort of blog you'll need more than just a username and a password.

You'll need a plan, and you'll definitely need a niche.

In this chapter we'll explain why you need to find a niche before you even consider getting online and we'll give you tips on how to find a niche to blog about. We'll even reveal our exclusive 30-minute method to move from 'no idea where to get started' to 'ready to go'.

Are you ready to start building your blog? Great - let's go!

CHAPTER 1

FINDING A NICHE FOR YOUR BLOG

The Importance of a Niche

A quick Google search will confirm what you have always suspected: there is a blog about just about every topic under the sun.

There's not a lot of overlap between blogs about organic gardening, public policy, and digital cameras, but believe it or not all successful blogs have two things in common.

First, there is a motivated person behind every one - the blogger.

And second, each blog has a specified niche.

When it comes to the first point, well, you have that covered. The blogger is you, or your marketing and content team, or a group of your friends. If you're interested in starting a blog its reasonable to assume that you're on-board with being a blogger or on a blogging team.

For the second, though, it's the first and perhaps most important choice you'll make about your blog. The niche you choose is important for three reasons:

- 1. It will define what you write about.** The niche that you choose provides you with a clear topic and theme that you'll write about consistently on your blog. You won't be jumping from topic to topic, or writing about politics one day, sports the next, and baking the day after that. Your niche will set the tone for the work you'll publish and the content that you create.
- 2. It will define the audience that you attract.** Visitors to your blog will be people interested in the same niche as you. If you are targeted in your writing and if your posts are grouped around a specific subject, you'll attract readers who share that same narrow interest. While a broader focus might attract a more diverse group of readers, they won't find much reason to stay, or return.
- 3. It can allow you to monetize your blog in the future.** Choosing a niche where there is a possibility to monetize your blog in some way in the future is a smart move, but it's one that you have to make even before launching your blog. Whether you are an individual considering targeted advertising or affiliate marketing opportunities, or a business blog that wants to develop targeted and qualified leads, having a well-defined niche allows you to eventually monetize your blog to the benefit of yourself and your business.

So choosing a niche is important, and it should be a choice that you make before you launch your blog. But how do you choose a niche to blog about?

3 Tips for Choosing Your Niche

Choosing your niche is a personal or corporate decision and it will be driven by a number of factors. However, there are three tips that will make choosing (and maintaining) the niche you choose.

1

Start With Passion

Blogging is not a hit-and-forget pursuit. You'll need to post regular content about your niche on your blog every week, maybe even every day. This means that there is real value in choosing something that you care about, something that you can realistically remain motivated about in the long term. In short, you need something that you are passionate about. For a business this can be easy: ask yourself what your business does, what industry they work within, and what the company's unique selling point is. Questions like this can help reveal the niche that a blogger or team of bloggers can remain passionate about. For an individual, try and identify the areas of your life where you find your passion, be it sports, the home, photography, a hobby, or a game.

2

Consider Your Expertise

While it can be nice to start and manage a blog where you are learning along with the readers, your visitors will generally arrive looking for answers and expertise. If you have expertise in a certain area, taking advantage of that expertise in crafting your posts and building your blog can save you time, energy, and a lot of research. For a business blog, drawing on your expertise is a great way to highlight your products and services, and to demonstrate that you know a lot about your market. For individual bloggers it's a matter of choosing something you know enough about to save yourself the time required for extensive research before every post. Writing about something that you already have expertise in won't mean no research, but it will help you research less, and faster.

3

Review What You Already Read

If you're getting ready to launch your own blog you are almost certainly reading other blogs already. Take some time to think about the blogs that you enjoy reading, the ones that you return to every day or even every hour, and think about what they have in common. If they are all in the same niche then you have an idea of what you could target. On the other hand, if you are reading blogs about different niches then perhaps you'll be able to identify what makes all of these blogs interesting to you and develop a niche at the nexus of these different blogs. For a business, look at what your competitors are blogging about and see what you can emulate or where you can innovate. For individuals, try grouping the blogs you read into categories and try and understand what niches these categories represent.

DOZ's 30 Minute Method to Find Your Blogging Niche

On top of these three tips the team at DOZ has developed a 30 Minute Method for finding your niche. If you're stuck for what to choose, or if you're not sure that you are on the right path, this method can help you find the perfect niche for your blog.

A few caveats before we lay it out.

First, getting through things in 30 minutes is easy, but there's nothing wrong with taking more time. Remember that you are looking for the *raison d'être* of your blog so, if you aren't pressed for time, you can take longer.

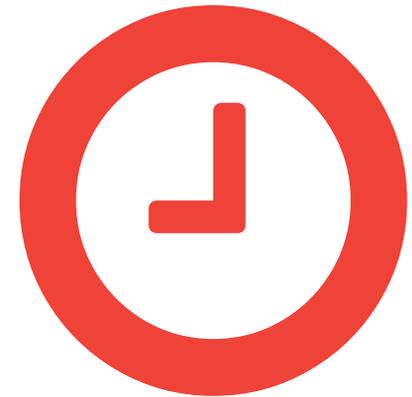
Second, moving through some steps in this method more slowly than others might be useful. If you feel like you need to take a little longer at step one or step two, take the time.

Those aside, if you can't wait to start blogging and are itching to get online, this method is made for you - in half an hour you'll have a niche identified and can start thinking about the next steps in your blogging journey. Here's how it is done.

Before You Start

We're going to do this 'old school'. Make sure you have a pen and paper close to hand and avoid using a tablet, smartphone, or computer instead. You are trying to get through this in just half an hour so you don't want distractions pulling you aside for even a minute. Make sure you are in a space where you can work uninterrupted for the next half hour - again, you don't want to lose time to colleagues, kids, or ringing phones.

Finally, get yourself a timer or a watch. We're going to move through the steps in 5 minute intervals so you'll want to know when to move on.



DOZ's 30 Minute Method to Find Your Blogging Niche

0:00 to 5:00 - Passions on the Page

GO!

In this first five minutes you should get as many of your passions onto paper as you can. Let things flow, and don't worry about making an ordered list. Whatever pops into your head is useful here, so don't worry if you skip from sports to electronics, to your hobby and your work. There'll be time to figure out how everything fits together later. Don't worry, too, if you list seems to double-up on some things. If you end up with cooking, baking, kitchens, barbecuing, and picnics on the same list it is not a problem. Indeed, it might make it easier to find your way through the next step.

5:00 to 10:00 - Group the Passions

OK. So everything is on the page? Now it is time to order it up.

Look at the passions you have on your paper and see if you can group them together into some categories. Don't be too harsh on yourself, and no need to rush: if you see electronics, technology, internet, and drones, group them together somehow. Circle them, highlight them in different colors, or re-write them in a list on a fresh sheet of paper. If a passion seems to fall into two categories, list it or connect it in both. Your goal here is to determine the categories you are passionate about, not to make independent lists of absolutely unrelated passions.

10:00 to 15:00 - Expertise

Back to brainstorming!

Just as you got your passions onto paper quickly, now you need to take a separate set of paper and get your expertise onto paper. Try and think about your expertise in terms of skills. Don't just say you are an expert manager, for example; instead, think about 'people skills', 'leadership', 'financial planning', 'project planning', and 'resource allocation'. If you enjoy watching football on television, make sure you are thinking in terms of 'football tactics', 'play analysis', 'player reviews', and 'know everything about team X'. Again, don't worry about the order - just get them down on the paper.

15:00 to 20:00 - Connect Expertise to Passions

Bring it together!

Look down at the two pieces of paper you have: one with the categories of passions and the other with your expertise. Now spend five minutes looking for ways that these cross over. You might be someone whose real expertise is in public speaking and leadership, but you are passionate about sports or technology. Look for ways to connect these such as, for example, coaching (leadership and sports) or TED talks (public speaking and technology). Keep your mind open, but an eye on the clock, too.

DOZ's 30 Minute Method to Find Your Blogging Niche

20:00 to 25:00 - What Do You Read?

Take a break from the introspection and think about others for five minutes! On another sheet of paper see if you can map out the blogs and other websites that you read regularly. Don't go into detail or describe them - the name will do - and, again, don't try to categorize them: just get them down on paper. You'll find that the ones that come to mind most quickly have something to do with the passions and expertise you've just listed out. This is entirely normal, and a result of your mind already starting to identify a theme or even a niche subconsciously. Avoid the temptation to refer to your computer or handheld device for clues from your browser bookmarks: if it's not coming to the top of your mind it might not actually be that important to you after all.

25:00 to 30:00 - Make the Link

Now you have three pieces of paper: your passions in categories, your expertise with links to your passions, and an idea of what you like to read. Now your job is to see where the links are. Do you have expertise in public speaking, enjoy technology, and like reading about great presentations on SlideShare? Make the link between these three things and you may have the seed of a niche. Do you have leadership skills, are passionate about sports, and enjoy reading about heroic sporting heroes? Make the link - maybe you'll be able to focus on telling grand stories about sporting heroes from teams you know well, or can be motivated to learn about. In this final five minutes you're trying to pull all your ideas together and see if there is a way to bring your passions, your expertise, and the writing you already enjoy together in a way that is unique.

30:00 - Your Niche in a Sentence

DING!

Times up.

All of the rushed work of the last 30 minutes leads up to a final task. You now should see if you can describe your niche in just a single sentence. Try and make it elegant - and, OK, this is going to take more than a couple of minutes - and ensure that it explains what you're interested in, why you are interested in it, what you'll bring to the table, and what your blog will be about.

It's a tough job, perhaps the toughest of all the steps, but when it's done you'll be able to reflect on the perfect idea for a niche blog.

And once you've done that, you can start thinking about how to put that idea into action.

Conclusion

Determining the niche for your blog is an important first step for any blogger and getting this right is a key to building a successful blog in the longer term. While focussing on broad tips is a good way to find your niche if you are really stuck, our 30 Minute Method is a fast and structured alternative for those who need a little more direction.

Let's assume you know what you want to blog about or, in other words, what your niche is going to be.

Now it's time to get online and get posting or, in other words, launch your blog.

But don't move too fast: there are still a couple of big decisions you need to make before you start pushing your content to the world.

Two big decisions await you.

The first is choosing between a hosted blog, or a self-hosted blog.

And the second - which depends on the answer to the first - is the platform that you'll use to blog.

In this chapter we offer advice on how to answer these questions, the pros and cons of hosted and self-hosted solutions, and the pros and cons of the various blogging platforms the modern internet offers. After all of this, we'll explain what we think the best solutions for most business and personal blogs are, and how to get set up in just a few clicks.

CHAPTER 2

CHOOSING YOUR BLOG PLATFORM



Hosted or Self-Hosted

The first decision to make is where your blog will be on the internet.

A quick review: for a website to be online it needs to be hosted on a web server that can be found. This web server is called the host server (or just host) and when it comes to a blog you host is either going to be provided by someone else and free (what is called 'hosted') or provided by either someone else or yourself, and cost something each month (what is called 'self hosted').

Don't be confused: even a self-hosted blog need not be stored locally on the premises of your business or in your home. Self-hosted only means that the responsibility for the hosting - paying the monthly costs, installing the blog software, updating the software, keeping everything online - falls to the blogger and not the blog provider or free host. If it was just a financial decision then the choice would be obvious: a hosted blog is free, and a self-hosted blog comes with a monthly cost.

But there's more to the decision than this, including the following three important points.

Customization

If you want to make your blog really something that is yours and yours alone, then a hosted blog may not be for you. While most hosted blogs allow a choice of themes, and while you can name your blog just about anything you like and even buy a personal domain name, your options for customization are generally more limited than a self-hosted blog. If you want your blog to look different to the millions of other blogs out there, you'll probably prefer the self-hosted option.

Monetization

If part of your strategy for your blog is monetization (making money off your blog) then your options with a hosted blog are limited. As the saying goes, if you are getting something for free then you are the product - and when it comes to hosted blogs, the host is the one making the money off your work. There are a couple of exceptions (Google's Blogger platform allows for Google AdWords integration and monetization) but for real money making you'll want to go self-hosted.

Ownership

You know those long legal disclaimers that you always click 'agree' to but never actually read? Buried in most of them is a clause reminding you that publishing on a hosted blog platform means that the company behind the blog platform owns your work. If they turn off their service, delete your work by accident or on purpose, or otherwise make money off of it, that's too bad for you. A self-hosted blog, on the other hand means you own your work, you control what is deleted and retained, and - as long as you keep paying the bills - it won't go anywhere.

Hosted or Self-Hosted

Our Advice

So how do you make the choice?

If it's a matter of ease of getting set up and low cost then hosted is likely the way to go. Nothing is simpler and cheaper than starting a hosted blog, and if you just want a place to write and record your thoughts, share with others, and build a following you'll be fine with a hosted option. If you're an individual just starting out in the world of blogging, this is probably a good place to get going and assess whether the blogging game is for you.

If you want to take more control of your blogging experience, the visitor experience, make some real money from your blog, and be sure that you won't lose anything you post, then self-hosted is the way to go. For most businesses this is the preferred option, and for most individual bloggers who stick with the game more than a few months, this is probably the better choice. Getting things set up the way you want them set up rather than how a company wants to set them up for you is a big advantage, as is the chance to monetize, integrate with a website you already own, and - once the set up is complete - it really isn't that difficult to manage, update, or that expensive to maintain.

Overall, unless you are really just testing the waters, then self-hosted blogging usually makes the most sense for most bloggers.



THE BEST PLATFORM FOR YOUR BLOG

There are dozens of different platforms available for bloggers, with the number growing every month.

Open source projects and efforts that integrate with established cloud service like Evernote and Dropbox compete with long-established players in the blogging world for the attention, and blogs, of the hundreds of millions who post every day.

But which to choose for your blog? And what are the pros and cons of each platform?

Here we'll identify and assess five hosted and five self-hosted blogging platforms and identify their strengths and weaknesses.

We'll also tell you what our recommended blogging platform is, and why it will work for most businesses, and most individual bloggers.

Let's start with the hosted blogging platforms.

Hosted Blog Platforms

Wordpress.com

Wordpress.com (as opposed to the self hosted Wordpress.org or just Wordpress) is a hosted blogging platform that can be set up in just a few clicks. There are a variety of free themes to choose from and posting is simple from an administrative dashboard or even by email. Getting setup takes just a few minutes and offers a **yourwebsite.wordpress.com** URL, though for a fee you can upgrade to your own domain. The downsides? Wordpress.com blogs don't allow you to use any of the thousands of Wordpress plugins you can find online, nor is it possible to monetize your blog with advertising.



Blogger

Blogger was one of the first hosted blogging platforms and was bought out by Google in 2003. It offers a range of themes and the ability to link your blog to your Google Account (should you wish). Getting started is a breeze and there are a range of themes that can be chosen to complement your personal style. You'll receive a URL that looks something like **yourwebsite.blogger.com**, though the URL served to readers will depend on where they are (if they are in France, for example, they'll be redirected to yourwebsite.blogger.fr). You can integrate Google AdWords to monetize your blogging if you wish, but the downside are the generally terrible, plain, and basic blogging templates, and the lack of interest that Google shows in developing the platform further.



Hosted Blog Platforms

Medium

Medium is a minimalist blogging platform that focuses on making blogging easy, reading a pleasure, and sharing a focus. Getting on board means having a Twitter account, but you're only a couple of clicks away from your own Medium blog once you have one of those. The interface for bloggers is very clean and the editing and formatting tools basic, but adequate. The URL of your Medium site is going to be a little ugly, likely looking something like this (**medium.com/@twitterhandle**) unless you are a designated journalistic outfit on the platform. It's popular among the tech crowd, is built for social sharing and has a growing following online, but nothing you blog there is your own to monetize or customize outside of basic formatting and image selection.



Tumblr

Tumblr is somewhere between a microblog and a fully fledged blogging platform, though some fairly significant players, including The Atlantic, have taken advantage of Tumblr to produce some fine blogs. Tumblr makes it quick and easy to post almost anything - text, images, embedded video and audio - and also to re-post the blog posts of others. Built for social sharing and attracting a young user base, Tumblr is ideal for getting short posts out there quickly. The URL will look something like **yourwebsite.tumblr.com** and, while it is free, it can also get messy quickly. If you are looking to post long-form content, it is possible on Tumblr but other options are better.



Hosted Blog Platforms

Svbtile

Like Medium, Svbtile is a minimalist blogging platform where the focus is on a smooth, clean writing experience. Nothing distract the writer from their writing, or the reader from the reading. Lots of white space, a simple platform to navigate on the back-end, and an elegant presentation of posts make Svbtile a good choice for purists at heart. On the downside, while you have a hosted blog it is not free: after a two-week trial it will cost \$6 per month. Your Svbtile URL will be **yourwebsite.svbtile.com**, though it is possible to add your own domain name. The drag and drop image feature is a nice UI feature, and this will appeal to those who appreciate the writing and reading experience over the pursuit of click-for-quick-cash monetized blogging.

The logo for Svbtile, consisting of the word "SVBTILE" in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

Self-Hosted Blog Platforms

Wordpress.org

Unlike Wordpress.com (the hosted option) a self-hosted Wordpress install is entirely customizable. Indeed, Wordpress can be used as the basis for everything from a simple blog through to an entire website. There is usually a simple, one-click install process for Wordpress on most hosts, and the learning curve, while real, is not that steep. The availability of plugins help to power, speed up, optimize, and customize your blog, and you can change themes - whether free or paid (premium) - with just a few clicks of a mouse. Monetization is easy, and a full e-commerce store attached to your blog is simply a matter of installing the right plugin. Wordpress currently powers around a quarter of all websites on the planet making it a common choice for blogs of all types.



Ghost

Ghost is a minimalist blogging interface that takes only a few seconds to upload to your host. Still really early in development, it is gaining in popularity in the blogosphere due to its clean, simple backend, and its writing-focused front end. Ghost-powered sites load quickly, are built responsive so that they display perfectly on smartphones and tablets as well as computer screens, and collaboration with co-bloggers or managing a group blog is simple, too. The install is quick and while the Ghost community is significantly smaller than the Wordpress community (and this means less community support and community-driven products like plugins and themes), it really is possible to make everything from a magazine style publication to a simple chronological journal using Ghost.



Self-Hosted Blog Platforms

Movable Type

Movable Type was one of the first blogging platforms and maintains its position in the self-hosted domain by virtue of its loyal user base and the strong feature set. Now a fully-fledged content management system (CMS) Movable Type differs from Wordpress and Ghost by being a paid CMS that is self-hosted - a formerly open source option is no longer supported. Movable Type has all of the features of the a true CMS and broad support in the developer community, too, though significantly less market share than Wordpress. Getting set up is relatively easy and posts, pages, and everything else on the site can be customized and monetized from the install. The downside? The lack of a large community for support and the upfront cost of the software driving your platform.



Expression Engine

Expression Engine is another CMS that supports blogging and might be a good solution for a business that wants to build a blog into their broader web presence. Like Movable Type, though, it is a paid option and a steep \$300 price tag up front might put some off, especially given its relative lack of market share. That said, there is a free, less-feature-rich version of Expression Engine that non-commercial blogs can use with a couple of provisos, including that the site link back to the Expression Engine site. Support is good and the reputation of the company is positive, but the cost of getting up and running with only a blog can make this a less attractive option.



Self-Hosted Blog Platforms

Chyrp

Like Ghost, Chyrp is a super-lightweight blogging platform that focuses on keeping things fast, clean and load speeds way down. Because of this it lacks the true CMS capabilities of Wordpress, Movable Type, and Expression Engine, but as it is built for one thing (blogging) and doing that one thing well, Chyrp users won't miss what they would just call 'bloat' anyway. Chyrp is simple to install and the backend easy to negotiate. Text and image posts are handled well, and while themes are available, there is a far more limited choice due to its so-far limited market share. The blog output approaches something similar to Tumblr which may appeal to those who like the Tumblr design but want to take control of their work and their blog on a self-hosted platform.



The Best Platform For Your Blog

Our Advice

We've already recommended that you opt for a self-hosted platform so, building on that, what should you choose?

Without any hesitation most businesses and individuals will find that a Wordpress install is their best option.

Wordpress is the unofficial standard for bloggers and, as the CMS that supports about 1 in 4 websites worldwide, is entirely flexible when it comes to both blogging and building a complete website. There is fantastic community support, regular stable updates to the code, and thousands of themes, plugins, and customization options available right out of the box.

A simple Wordpress install can be completed in seconds, a site can be up and running in minutes, and the blogging platform is intuitive. On the downside there is a bit of a learning curve when it comes to customization and monetizing the Wordpress platform, but the wealth and breadth of the existing support, the books and videos, and the free advice on how and why to do both is enough to take even the amateur blogger from nervous novice to confirmed and confident in a short time.

Conclusion

There are two simple questions you need to ask yourself before launching your blog on a particular platform: will you go hosted or self-hosted, and what platform will you choose when you do?

For most businesses and individuals interested in blogging a self-hosted Wordpress install is going to provide the best combination of control, ownership, and monetization, and with around a quarter of the web driven by Wordpress, it is a platform that has proven its worth time and time again.

If you are following this eBook then you should have identified a niche and determined which blog platform is the best for your new blog. Both of these steps are important, but they aren't really what comes to mind when people talk about blogging. Blogging, after all, is about getting your content out there, publishing posts, and sharing your knowledge, expertise, and interests with the world. So if posting is 'real' blogging, then today we move from the theoretical to the practical as we explain how to craft the perfect blog post.

What is a Perfect Blog Post?

It's probably worth starting by describing just what we mean by 'the perfect blog post'. Or maybe better, what we don't mean.

We don't mean that we'll explain how to make your post interesting, on topic, or crafted for a certain niche reader. That part is really up to you - the blogger - and it's not really something that can be taught in a single blog post. What we mean by 'the perfect blog post' is a post that is easy to find, easy to read, easy to share, and optimized for search and for reuse.

The perfect blog post might be short or long, it might be heavy with images or heavy with text, it might be sarcastic, argumentative, or explanative - but if you follow the advice below it will be more likely to rank highly on search engines, be shared by your readers, and help you establish the sort of authority you are seeking as a blogger.

CHAPTER 3

CRAFTING THE PERFECT BLOG POST

Ten Steps to a Perfect Blog Post

We've developed a ten step process to move through every time before publishing a post to make sure it is as good as it can be.

The first time you work through these steps it is going to take some time. You'll feel like you're adding additional, not useful work to your blogging and, anyway, didn't you start blogging so that you could press publish and get your ideas out there? Why should you be adding additional steps, especially ten of them, to every single blog post you publish?

In response there are two things to keep in mind.

- **First**, without a deliberate strategy to be read, found, and shared, you won't be read, found, or shared. Unless you are blogging entirely for yourself alone, then you need to think about how people will encounter your blog, how you'll bring them back for the next time, and how they'll do part of the work in promoting your content by sharing it. Our ten steps help you do exactly this.
- **Second**, with time you'll find that the ten steps become second nature and a part of your post writing and publishing process. The more you blog, the more posts you push out, and the more comfortable you become with your blogging platform, the easier the ten steps will be. Habits are easy to form when it comes to blogging so developing good habits early is a long term benefit to your blogging.

With that in mind, here are the ten steps you should move through to craft your perfect blog post every time - and the first kicks in even before you're done drafting!

10

Ten Steps to a Perfect Blog Post

Press save

1

Let's assume you've written the perfect post. It's interesting, engaging, and challenges the reader to think and react. It's perfectly timed to enter the zeitgeist and perhaps rocket to virility. The tone is perfectly pitched, the word choice is inspired, and you're all ready to publish when...something happens. Your internet cuts out, your browser freezes, you lose electrical power, and in an instant your post is toast. Want to avoid the hassles that come from losing your work in the browser? Two tips. First, draft outside of the browser window (use Evernote, Scrivener, or even a simple text editor) and, second, press save often. While most blogging platforms include an auto-save feature, drafting outside of the browser means you won't have to worry about a crash that's outside of your control. What's more, get into the habit of saving every time you take your fingers from the keyboard, every time you stand up from your desk, and you'll be sure never to lose your work.

Want more? Here's how to [use Evernote to blog better](#) (and not lose a single word to the ether if everything goes pear shaped!)

Headline

2

With your work safe for editing it's time to turn some attention to one of the most important parts of your post: the headline. In a world of short attention spans the headline can be the key to attracting readers and giving them a reason to click on your blog in the first place. Make it snappy, make it inviting, and make it interesting enough that someone who doesn't know you and your blog is willing to spend a few seconds or more finding out what you have to say. There are various headline formats that have been repeatedly proven to attract readers including lists (7 Reasons Why X), how-to's (How To Do X in Y), and headlines with questions (Did you know X?). You want to ensure that your headline matches the content of the post - don't over-promise or mislead with 'click bait' - as well as make sure that it doesn't give the entire post away in a half-dozen words. Getting the reader interested and getting them on-site is your goal.

Want more? Here's how to make sure that your [headline is hitting all the right buttons](#) every time.

Ten Steps to a Perfect Blog Post

Image

3

Along with your headline it is the image or images that you use to illustrate your posts that will bring people to your site. With social sharing networks like Facebook and Twitter reporting that shares with images do far better than text based shares, having the right image on your blog post could be the reason it reaches the readers you are targeting - or it could be the reason that it falls short of expectations. To hit the former and evade the latter, make sure your image is bright, clear, related to the post, has the correct alt-tags, and can be loaded fast. Ensure your image is optimized for smaller screens, too, as more and more readers are browsing blogs on mobile devices, tablets, and smartphones. Finally, make sure that you have the right to use the image that you include with your post. The worst thing is the perfect image that is lifted directly from a Google Image Search and immediately found by the copyright owner. Avoid the legal headaches and choose the right, legal image every time.

Want more? DOZ's eBook on [choosing the right image every time](#) will give you the skinny on how to keep your blog post images picture perfect

Spelling and grammar

4

Consider where your blog post is at this point in the reading process. The reader has been intrigued by your headline and has clicked through to your blog. They've seen the feature image topping your words and it matches what the headline promised and - so far - all is good. Now they start to read your text and - a spelling error? A missing apostrophe? A stray capital letter? And...they've left. You'll see that reader in your bounce rate and that's about the only place you'll see them: your spelling and grammatical errors chased them away. Whether you are blogging for your company or for yourself, the only real tool you have to communicate your professionalism are the words you put on the screen, and this means that each and every word needs to be perfect. Read and re-read each post, have a friend or colleague read them, too, if you have trouble with particular elements consistently, and make sure that before you publish that post everything is in order.

Want more? Check out why having [great looking \(and great reading\) copy](#) is so important for your blog.

Ten Steps to a Perfect Blog Post

Consistent formatting

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So your first post went well and kept the reader interested all the way to the end. Their next step is hopefully to click through to one of the other posts or pages on your blog - but will they know their way around once they get there? If you keep your formatting consistent across the blog and across your site, it will make it far easier for your new reader to find their way around. Among other things consider keeping your menus in the same place on the page, using the same fonts throughout, keeping your titles and images formatted in the same way, having contact information in the header, footer, or sidebar on each page, and having a clear distinction between text that is hyperlinked and text that is not. Most blogging platforms will help you to do this automatically, but you do need to come up with a 'blog style' of your own. Don't be afraid to write it down, keep it close to where you do your writing, and use it as a checklist guide for every post.

Want more? Get an idea of the perfect structure for your blog post - and stick to it - by checking [our guide to structure and formatting](#).

Tagged and categorized

6

Your blog post is attracting some traffic - now you need to focus on getting people interested in your **other** blog posts. One of the ways that you can do this simply and without much effort is to take advantage of your blogging platforms tag and category features. Both are ways of organizing the content on your blog in a way that keeps a reader interested in a theme or topic reading your work. Categories are the large 'baskets' into which your work falls. You shouldn't have more than a handful of major categories in your niche, and they should be deliberately broad. Tags, on the other hand, are more specific and there might be dozens, even scores of different tags on your blog. Any individual post should be added to one category (perhaps two, but no more) and have a number of tags attached; where these categories and tags are clicked, all the other posts in this category or with this tag appear and - fingers crossed - your reader can click through. Easy to do, but so useful.

Want more? Check out the [DOZ blog](#) to see how we use just half a dozen categories to cover all of our content - and more than a hundred tags to keep it in order.

Ten Steps to a Perfect Blog Post

H-tags

7

Everything to this point has been about getting the reader to come to your site by clicking on a headline or being attracted by an image, and then keeping them on the blog to read more. But what about having your posts ranked in a search engine? Well there are a couple of little things you can do with every post that will help you rank higher and bring in the organic search traffic. One of those is h-tags, the heading and subheading tags that structure your work. Generally your title or headline will be a H1 tag and this is important, and if you use sub-headings (H2 or H3 tags, for example) these also are ranking signals for search engines. Using keywords in your headings will help you rank higher, and structuring your longer posts with subheadings make the reading experience for your reader all the better. Make sure every post includes a H1 tag, and use subheadings with keywords to divide up your text into manageable chunks and you'll be on the right track.

Want more? See our [guide to using H-tags effectively](#) to get a step-by-step walkthrough of how, and why, to use these elements in your posts.

Meta-descriptions

8

The second small optimization tactic you should employ for every blog post is getting your meta-description right. The meta-description is the short description of your blog post that appears on a search engine results page just under the link to the post. Every post and every page on your blog should have a meta-description that explains what that post or page is all about. This meta-description should use the same keyword as is found in your post, in your headline, and in your h-tags to send stronger signals to the search engines on the topic of your post. It should also give potential readers a good reason to click on the post: if there's any hesitation because of the headline, it is up to the meta-description to get the potential reader off the search engine results page and onto your blog! Keep them short, keep them sharp, and never miss one when you craft your posts.

Want more? Meta-descriptions are one of the [5 quick SEO checks](#) in our five-minute guide to ranking higher.

Ten Steps to a Perfect Blog Post

Social sharing

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Let's imagine that everything has gone perfectly with your blog post. What's more, you have convinced your reader that your blog is worth visiting, and that the information that you have shared with them is valuable and useful. Congratulations: you've converted one reader. But why stop there? If you make it easy for the person reading your post to share it with others, then they will be promoting your blog instead of you - and if enough people do this, then your workload is cut down significantly. Every post should include social sharing options (Facebook, Twitter, images to Pinterest or Instagram, entire posts to LinkedIn, and so on) and you should encourage your readers to share. Ask them directly, or included 'Click to Tweet' extracts where sharing is made even easier. No post or page on your blog should be beyond sharing; after all, one of the best ways to gain new readers is on the recommendation of your current readers.

Want more? We explained how to use sharing to go viral in our series on growth hacking - [check it out and get shared today!](#)

Content re-use

10

The last step to crafting your perfect blog post is to make sure you have something more than a blog post. By this we mean you should have a plan for how the content can be reused. Perhaps your blog post will become part of a series. Or maybe it will be the basis for a podcast or a vodcast episode you'll produce later. Perhaps you'll be able to pull it apart and build a SlideShare presentation, or you'll repurpose the post, using the data to build an infographic or a chapter of an eBook. What you should avoid is posting and forgetting your content; after all of the work you've put into crafting this post, why use it just one sole time? Note that while there are penalties applied by search engines for posting exactly the same material multiple times on your blog, there is no problem repurposing the material in a different format and for a different audience. Take advantage of your heard work and use the content you have in a new way to attract new visitors to your blog - you'll be glad you did.

Want more? Reusing content is one of the strategies we identify as a means to [drive nonstop organic traffic](#) - check out the others on the list, too!

Getting your blog post out to readers can be a challenge, but there is a way for your readers to do a lot of the work for you.

It's called social sharing.

When a reader likes your blog post and shares it with their friends, colleagues, family and, yes, total strangers on the internet, they are promoting your work for you. Think of it like a megaphone for your thoughts, except in this case it isn't you that is sending your words into the ether but rather the people who have found your work that are doing the shouting.

The positive effects of social sharing are immediately felt and powerful. While your blog might have a readership that only just cracks double figures, a share from a reader that is re-shared by an even higher profile social networker can see your reach grow exponentially in just a few minutes. A simple favorite, like, or retweet from a person with hundreds of thousands of followers can launch your blog post into the big time, bring in more readers than you've ever seen before, and lay the foundation for a community of readers who visit your site daily.

But it's not all about luck, and getting that huge social share isn't just a matter of posting the right blog post at the right time. In fact, there are a number of steps that you can work through to give yourself the best chance of being shared. In this chapter we explain in detail the six things you can do to ensure that your post is shared, and that what is shared offers the best reflection of your blog, and your content.

CHAPTER 4

PROMOTING POSTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Promoting Posts on Social Media

🔗 Sharing Buttons

The first and most important step in developing your social sharing strategy is to allow social sharing to be easy on your blog.

While there is nothing to stop a reader copying and pasting your post's URL into a tweet or a Facebook share, add their own title, and even attach an image, it is additional work for the reader. In a world where attention spans are short and where automation is so easy, it's essential to make your social sharing a pleasant and easy experience for your readers, and take the pressure off them as much as you can.

The way to do this on your blog is by installing social sharing buttons, a series of clickable buttons on each page or post of your blog that allow readers to share what they've read with just two clicks.

The first click is on the social sharing button itself (for example, a Twitter logo) and then - automatically - a tweet is presented to the reader ready for sharing.

The second click confirms and sends the tweet so that, in just a handful of seconds, your post is shared. For most blogging platforms these social sharing buttons come standard and, where they don't, can be quickly added via a free or premium plugin to your platform.

✔ Titles

In the previous chapter we mentioned how important the title or headline of your blog post is for attracting the eyeballs of readers. When it comes to social sharing, it's even more important to get your title right. The reason is because your title or headline is part of what is shared automatically in the tweet, Facebook post, or other social share that your readers make.

While it is possible to adjust your blog code on each post to have a different headline or title shared to that on your post, it is additional work that rarely pays off - especially when anyone clicking the social share finds themselves on your blog post with a different title. What's important to keep in mind, then, when optimizing your blog post titles for social sharing are the length restrictions imposed by social networks, and the 'clickability' of the title you produce.

While your titles should be optimized for keywords on the blog post, you'll want to make sure it remains a compelling click for social sharing; avoid stuffing the title with keywords and look for balance instead.

Keep your titles short where you can to avoid taking all the space up in a tweet or, worse yet, having your title truncated by the social networks. This looks unprofessional and won't help your shares get re-shared, hampering your social sharing efforts significantly.

Promoting Posts on Social Media

Hashtags in Titles

Chances are that the niche you are blogging about is not so narrow as to have no other blogs on the same topic. And if there are other blogs on the same topic then you can be sure that, on social networks and social media, the social sharing is probably being organized with hashtags.

One way to launch your blog post into the social stratosphere when it is shared is to have those hashtags relevant to your niche or blog post topic pre-attached, and this is achieved by including them in the title of your post.

Hence, instead of a title that reads '10 Ways to Use Instagram to Grow Your Small Business' you might title the post '10 Ways to Use Instagram to Grow Your #SmallBusiness'. Social sharing with this title will ensure that not only do the followers of your sharers see the post, but it also falls immediately into the #smallbusiness category and finds readers there, too.

A word of warning, though: stuffing a post title with hashtags is not going to help as much as it is going to hurt your post. Remember that the people clicking your links are reader first, and sharers second, and a title stuffed with hashtags is not going to be easy to read.

If you go down the hashtag route, stick with one - and consider this a 'sometimes' strategy more than an 'every post, every time' strategy for building your social sharing network.

Featured Images

When your post is shared using those sharing buttons you installed the social networks pull some data from your blog post. The title is the first, and generally the second is an image. By default, the social networks will generally take the featured image or, failing that, the first image in the post. Sadly, where your post does not include an image, it will either provide only a text link (that's bad) or an empty box noting that there is no image at the shared link (that's worse).

To avoid this problem and to optimize the social sharing that your readers are doing for you, it's imperative that every post include an image and, where there are multiple images attached to a post, that one is identified by your blogging platform as the feature image. Time and again research shows that links with images get more clicks and attract more readers than those links without any visuals, so including an image is a great way to ensure that the social sharing you blog wins pays off for you.

As always, ensure that you have the rights to the image being shared or that they are public domain images that you are free to reproduce, and make sure they are relevant to the blog post in question.

Again, it's all about not disappointing the reader when they arrive on your site, so don't have images of pets tweeted out on your behalf when your post is really about your transport services small business.

Promoting Posts on Social Media

☰ Meta Descriptions

Along with your title and your feature image, the other piece of data that the social networks pull from your post for sharing is the meta-description that you write for your post. In yesterday's post we explained why the meta-description is important for search engine optimization, but it serves double-duty as a key part of the social sharing your readers do for you.

The meta-description is generally included in the sharing card that is generated by clicking on the social sharing button on your site, so making it interesting, giving the readers a reason to click, and keeping it related to the blog post are all important.

Like the title, though, there are considerations for search engine optimization to keep in mind, too, and you'll want to make sure that the targeted keyword for your blog post is included in your meta-description.

However, with the importance of social sharing for building an audience, you cannot focus solely on search engines here. Make your meta-descriptions engaging, make them interesting, compel the reader to click and you'll have a shot at converting them to a regular visitor.

🐦 Social Sharing CTAs

Finally, and in addition to your social sharing buttons, you can also invite your readers to share your post (or parts of your post) directly on social media via the use of specific call to action buttons. An example would be the widespread 'Click to Tweet' buttons that allow readers to click to tweet (obviously) a specific extract from your post. Perhaps you have a key sentence or a significant takeaway that also happens to fall into Twitter's character limit. If so, you can use the 'Click to Tweet' plugin to send those words straight into the Twittersphere.

There are similar plugins offering the same sort of social sharing opportunities for images (on Pinterest, for example) but there are a couple of things to keep in mind with options like this.

First, make sure that what you are sharing fits within the boundaries of the social network. Yes, Twitter allows you 140 characters per tweet, but some of that is going to be taken up by the URL (20 characters) and if you include your Twitter handle, too, you might run out of space. Second, make sure that you don't overwhelm your reader with many calls to action (CTAs) on each blog post. Your goal is to get shared by every reader, not to confuse the reader with so many options they don't know where to click.

It is probably best to stick to one additional CTA on top of your sharing buttons per blog post - anything more might mean doing more harm than good.

CONCLUSION

Social sharing is a great way to build an audience, but you need to make sure that your blog is ready to go social. Adding sharing buttons is a must, and configuring the titles, feature images, and meta-descriptions on your posts for effective sharing is also important. Adding hashtags, where relevant to your blog post titles can help categorize your posts on social media and push your thoughts into wider and deeper conversations, and additional CTAs in the text of your posts or on your images can help get your work to a wider audience, and quickly.

DOZ

In 2013 DOZ was launched as the world's first crowd-powered online marketing service. DOZ's innovative platform helped brands to connect with a network of marketing experts around the world and draw on the local knowledge of professionals to run effective and profitable campaigns.

More than 300 brands around the world have connected with experts through the DOZ platform and worked with the DOZ team to manage their campaigns.

DOZ is the complete software service solution for every marketing team. Brands can take control of their campaigns and enjoy the space to strategize, organize, direct, and communicate with both internal and external teams. They can manage digital assets, plan and cooperate on campaigns, manage marketing tasks and quality assurance programs, and collaborate with marketing experts in a secure online environment.



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