

Better Business Blogging eCourse

Better Business Blogging

eMail:4

“First Steps in writing your Business Blog”

This eCourse and associated documents are protected under the Creative Commons license. No commercial use and no changes are allowed. You can, if you wish, share it, post it or print it so long as it is done in its entirety with the copyright and link information intact.

This eCourse is available for free by visiting <http://www.betterbusinessblogging.com> - you will find it at <http://www.betterbusinessblogging.com/free-business-blogging-course/>

In return, I would consider it a mutual favour if you would subscribe to the RSS feed of my blog at: <http://feeds.feedburner.com/BetterBusinessBlogging> so you can then receive the latest articles from the Better Business Blogging site and keep up to date with developments and ideas in Blogging.

For more info on RSS, check out <http://www.betterbusinessblogging.com/category/rss-information/>

This eCourse was originally created by Mark White, an emarketing expert and blogging specialist. All efforts have been made to make the information contained in this eCourse correct. Mark White and Rosetta Alba Services Ltd are not liable for any actions that may result from the information contained in this eCourse.

Copyright © Rosetta Alba Services Ltd 2006

FIRST STEPS IN WRITING YOUR BUSINESS BLOG

Okay, so you have your Business Blog software up and running and the look and feel of your blog is as you want it - now you are ready for the off! It is the time to take the plunge, get started and make the first posts on your Blog.

Getting the first posts in place is always a telling time and you will probably spend longer on these than on any of the others. Don't worry though, the more that you write, the easier it will become, and you will find that you soon settle into a rhythm and develop your own approach to the Blog.

However, as you start to post, there are some questions which usually get asked early on, such as:

i) How long should the posts be?

Opinions vary as to how long a post should be. Some bloggers believe they should be 200 - 400 words, while others are happier with longer "article length" posts. The truth is there is no rule, though "bite sized" rather than longer posts are probably more typical; in many ways, however, this attitude stems from the time of purely personal blogs which tended to be shorter.

If you want to include longer articles, but prefer to maintain the shorter post length, then simply divide the article into two parts and post it as a two part "mini series".

The best advice is to tailor the length according to the type of readers that you wish to attract - if they will appreciate the additional detail then include that for them and make your posts as long as they need to be; if they are more likely to switch off, then adapt your content accordingly and keep more to shorter posts.

ii) How often to post

There is no set timescale as to how often you should post though, in general, the more frequently you can post the better. This is because it will encourage your readers to return regularly to check out your blog and will also boost your opportunities with the Search Engines. However, as a minimum, you should post at least twice a week - less than this and you will start to lose some of the impact that blogs will bring you.

The one caveat is that you need to maintain the quality of your posts, because this is what you will be primarily judged on. If you believe that the quality will suffer if you try to post too often then it would be better to reduce the frequency and keep the level of the content as high as possible. Nevertheless, you should maintain a regular flow to your posts so that the readers of your Blog know what to expect.

iii) Tone of the posts

For a Business Blog, I would not recommend an overly familiar tone that you could use in a personal blog, but you should still try to maintain a personal tone. One of the reasons that blogs work so well is the personal overtones that they can give which differentiates them from the sanitised “marketing speak” of some corporate websites. What is good is that you can develop your own style and tone as you go along.

Sitting with a blank screen or a blank piece of paper in front of you can be a daunting way to start. So to help you reach that point, here are some suggestions that you should try to implement to help the process go smoothly.

However, above all, you must remember to write with your audience in mind. When you strip everything else away, writing a business blog is all about communication, just like all types of marketing both online and offline

On with the planning and the writing ...!

Set yourself realistic goals for posting

Firstly, set yourself goals in terms of your blogging and then stick to them. In part 3, we looked how much time you wanted to dedicate to your Business Blog so, with that in mind, you need to decide how often you wish to post and therefore how much time you want to spend researching and then writing the posts.

As I mentioned above, posting more frequently is better in most respects so long as you can maintain the quality of what you are writing. However, whatever you decide, keep to it! If visitors to your blog know how often you are going to be posting, then this will give them confidence to come back on a regular basis to read more.

If it is consistently twice a week, then it is great and you will get visitors coming back on that basis - what you want to avoid is that they come back each day, find that there is nothing new to read and so be disappointed. Keep them interested and they will keep coming back.

Plan ahead

As you start, map out what you want to cover during the first few days and weeks, and note down the topics that you feel comfortable with. This will provide you with a framework to work with.

There should be some posts which cover areas which are key to your business, but don't worry about giving the perfect article every time - in any case, some of these topics may be better suited to when you have built up your readership. However, you should look to put down a base, primarily for your readers and to a lesser extent for the Search Engines, about the key subject areas that you will be covering and why it will interest them. I call these the Foundation articles or posts.

You don't need to plan every post - if you are looking to create a blog which will get people to return then you should also be commenting on breaking news or on articles which have been posted by others. Remember that if you haven't yet set up your RSS Reader then now would be a good time so that you can follow any favourite and useful blogs which may provide inspiration.

However, by setting out in your own mind a series of topics that you wish to cover, this will help in your initial writing - you can then add the additional commentary as you see fit.

Set out your stall at the start

Within this first set of posts in the first month, try to write and include 2 - 3 key Foundation articles, ones that sum up some of the areas and concepts that you will be focusing on in your blog as a whole. These could be simply instructive in nature or could contain a number of different concepts that you will expand on in later posts over time.

This approach will have a number of different benefits:

- i) firstly, it will show the readers what areas they can expect to be covered in the future;
- ii) secondly, this should be a subject area that you feel particularly comfortable about which will make the writing easier;
- iii) thirdly, it will give you articles that you can refer back to in future posts, perhaps as you go on to develop the points raised. This will also start to create additional links and reference points in your blog.

If you are unsure about the type of things to include, then you could do a lot worse than go back over some of the presentations that you have made to clients or partners. These will include a lot of the ideas that you will now have the opportunity to expand on and develop as you write your blog.

Plan a short series of posts on a specific topic

Writing a series of posts on a subject which is important to your overall subject area is a good method of getting you going and establishing a relevant area of focus in your Business blog.

A series can help in a number of different ways:

- it will give you a number of posts to write on a single topic which will help to get you started and gain some momentum in your writing;
- it will encourage you not to make your blog posts too long because you will have to segment a topic into a number of shorter posts;

Better Business Blogging course

- as people pick up on your blog, they will be able to trace back previous articles easily and then be more likely to revisit for updates;
- you will be able to promote a series more easily than individual posts later on, hopefully when you have built up the number of visitors to your blog;
- as they are likely to be themed within a topic, then they will also be nicely attractive to Search Engines and add additional internal links.

Don't make the series too long although you can come back to it and develop it further later on. However, you can of course develop the initial series further if your readers request additional information.

In my own case, I selected SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) for Blogs as the topic of a series. For me, it warranted a series because of the amount of information that the area contains and yet is perfectly suited to being divided into smaller self contained articles.

Comment on news in your industry / market sector

If you are going to be the primary source of information for your readers in your industry or niche then you will need to keep up to date with developments in it and be prepared to give your opinion on them. In any case, this is a great way of **adding content to your site** which also **adds value** to your readers and helps build the level of **trust and confidence** that they have in you and your knowledge.

In addition to other resources that you may use, make sure that you have subscribed to the RSS feeds of the main news suppliers as well as other commentators on your industry so you will be certain to receive breaking news as quickly as possible. When you do comment, always remember to credit the sources and link back to the original article - if you are quoting directly from the original, then make that clear as well, ideally using the 'blockquote' feature.

Having a source of industry news and information made available to them is of course a real benefit for your readers. However, by being aware of what other specialists in your area are writing about, it also gives you the opportunity to add comments to their blogs or use trackbacks to reference their posts - this will help to develop your reputation in your area and increase the links back to your Blog. We will look at this subject in more depth when we deal with 'Promoting your Blog' later in the course.

Don't sell

As a word of warning - avoid the temptation to use your Blog to sell directly. A blog is not a tool for direct selling or direct advertising and trying to use it as such is likely to be counter productive.

Visitors will come to your Blog because they are interested in what you are writing about and want to find out more about the subject - this gives you the opportunity to find out more about them and start to engage with them. If your product or service is

Better Business Blogging course

good then they will discover this from your posts and are more likely to buy from you or recommend you when the time is right. However, just like networking, let them develop the trust and confidence in both you and what you have to say first and let the “educational marketing” in what you are writing be your selling tool for you.

What’s next?

Should you be telling everybody about your new Blog now? Well, probably not quite yet. Unlike a normal website where you launch a version that is likely to be a “finished article” (if that can ever be the case) and change only gradually, a blog will develop quite quickly as you make a number of postings over the first few days and weeks.

It is therefore sensible to wait until you have some content on the site for people to come and look at - you want to impress them and make sure that they go away with a clear indication of what you are talking about and the intention to come back again. So wait until you have about 10 posts in a few different categories so that the blog has more of a complete appearance than a half finished one. Aim to impress from the start!

In addition, for many businesses, having a Blog which helps their Search Engine rankings is important and Business Blogs are ideally suited to developing this. You can help this process by using certain elements of *SEO* or *Search Engine Optimisation* in your Blog and your posts.

This is what we will be looking at in the next part of the course.

WORKBOOK ELEMENTS

Here, you have the opportunity to make notes on some of the elements that we have touched on in this section to give yourself a record which you can then develop.

1. How often to post?

Ideally, I would like to make . . . posts every week

2. For my starting (Pillar) posts, the main subject areas that I am considering to start with are:

Subject Area 1:

Subject Area 2:

Subject Area 3:

3. As a possible first series of posts, the area that I am going to look at will cover:

.....

As a possible division of this, 3 topics that I will concentrate on are:

Topic 1:

Topic 2:

Topic 3:

4. First month planning of posts:

Week 1

Post 1:

Post 2:

Post 3:

Week 2

Post 1:

Post 2:

Post 3:

Better Business Blogging course

Week 3

Post 1:

Post 2:

Post 3:

Week 4

Post 1:

Post 2:

Post 3:

5. What are my main news sources that I need to keep up to date with what is happening in my industry or field?

Blogs:
.....
.....

Websites:
.....
.....

Other:
.....
.....