

# Better Business Blogging eCourse

## Better Business Blogging

### eCourse Part 8

#### “Key points to remember and mistakes to avoid when running a successful Business Blog”

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## KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER AND MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS BLOG

We have covered a lot of areas over the previous sections of the eCourse from the initial planning phase, through writing the first articles and then moving on to developing and promoting the blog using the many tools at our disposal.

Now that we are nearing the end of the eCourse, it is a ideal moment to look back and check back that the main elements that we have been looking at are in place and working for us. It is also a good time to check that we have avoided some of the mistakes which can hamper a Business Blog and reduce its usefulness. So whether you are in the process of setting up your Blog, already posting or still planning it, then here are some of the key points that you should be keeping in mind.

The elements have been divided along the lines of some of the key phases in the development of your Blog: they cover the initial setting up of the blog, writing the content of the posts, using it to interact with your readers and also promoting as widely as possible.

If you organise and use your Business Blog correctly then you will be amazed by the results it can produce for you, though this will be dependent on the work that you are able to put into it. Like any marketing and communications tool, the better you make use of it, the more successful it will be - by following the points below, you should be able to make sure that all the time and effort you are channelling into the Blog is being used to positive effect.

### 1. Setting up the Blog

#### ***a) Don't skimp on time spent planning your Blog***

The planning process for your Business Blog is a crucial time but unfortunately one that is all too often skipped over or done hurriedly. By spending a little time planning out what you want to achieve with your blog and how you will do it, you will save a great deal of pain later on. Time spent in outlining the focus and the target audience of your blog will pay handsome dividends and you should ideally also make time to map out the posts for the first few weeks so that the initial postings go smoothly.

#### ***b) Keep Navigation Easy***

Blogs are structured automatically for you but you should still make sure that the categories are well indicated. Let your readers get back to your main blog home page quickly and easily (convention suggests that clicking on the banner at the top should take you back to the home page). Excessively long lists of categories will cause confusion - so, if you have lots of categories that you wish to include, then break them down into 2 or 3 sub groups and make them easier to use and navigate in that way.

## ***c) Make Key Posts easy to find***

Once you have a number of posts on your site, then make sure that the ones which really describe what your business is all about are not hidden away within the structure of your Blog. Instead, create a page which is linked to directly from your sidebar or your home page, called something such as “Top 10 posts” or “Key Articles” or whatever you feel best describes them. This page can then contain links to all of your key posts. In this way, you make sure that they are highlighted in amongst all of the other information that you provide.

## ***d) Profile and Contact details***

Not putting a profile and contact details on your blog is missing out on an opportunity and potentially shooting yourself in the foot - this is particularly the case if your blog is set up as a stand alone site rather than integrated as part of your company website. We mentioned this in the set up stage but it is worth re-iterating here. If I find what I am reading interesting then I may want to get in touch with the author, so make it easy for me to do so! You should also use your profile page as the place where you can outline the goals of your blog as well as presenting yourself - use this to achieve maximum effect for yourself.

## ***e) Create your own look and feel***

All blog software comes with base templates which dictate what a Blog looks like - whatever you do, don't leave it as this default base version! There is nothing worse than spending time creating a wonderful blog full of excellent information and then leave it looking like thousands of others - would you do that with a website or with a book? No! Make sure that you change it either yourself or get someone in to do it for you - it will differentiate you and what you have to say as well as help with your positioning, so make the most of it.

## ***f) Avoid a hosted system for a Business Blog***

You need control over any important aspect of your business and a Business Blog is just that, so don't leave it on a hosted system where you have little flexibility or that all important “control”. To use it and develop it properly, you need to have full access to all the elements - only in this way will you reap the rewards over time. Having this control also helps 100% in work you do with Search Engines - if you are already a Blogger user (for example) then you will be blown away by the extra possibilities that a system such as WordPress can give you when it comes to the Search Engines rankings.

## ***g) Not setting up friendly permalinks***

Setting up search engine and visitor friendly permalinks and URLs for your blog is beneficial from all points of view and so something that you should certainly do from day one. If you leave them in a format such as [www.yourblog.com/?cat=34](http://www.yourblog.com/?cat=34) then you are immediately missing out in a number of ways - so set them up correctly from the

start and make sure that you are not left ruing this as your Blog develops and it becomes more difficult to change.

## 2. Writing the Blog

### *a) Publish as regularly as possible*

Try to publish as regularly as possible. This doesn't mean that you need to post every day, though it is a good idea to make sure that you publish as frequently as you wish or are able to. If you can post at least twice a week then that is a good place to start but keep to that regular rhythm. If you leave it a long time between posts then people will tend to wander in and out rather than become dedicated followers. One last reminder - don't post for the sake of it and don't sacrifice quality!

### *b) Stay on planned topics*

Try to avoid mixing lots of different subject areas in your blog: as a business blog you want to keep the content as targeted as possible to your niche market area and thereby ensure that you get as much exposure and coverage as possible. Keep to your main topics and keep your target audience in mind - with that in place, you are likely to have much more success that if you start to stray onto many different areas.

### *c) Make your title descriptive*

When you write your posts, spend time on the title you give them. Make the title descriptive and ideally include your main keyword for the article in it so that it helps with your SEO ranking as well. The title will often form part of the post's permalink which makes it doubly important to get the keywords in there if possible.

### *d) Reference other sites where applicable*

If you write an article which references other articles then you should ensure that you state where the reference comes from as well as creating a link back to the article itself. It's akin to good manners in Blogging and stops people labelling your post as a simple copy of someone else's work. You should also remember to create a [trackback](#) if the article is on a blog - this will benefit you by creating a link back to your post from the original, as well as informing the author that you are continuing to develop the themes of their blog.

### *e) Spelling and Grammar*

While Blogs may be slightly less formal in terms of writing style, you should still try to make sure that the spelling and grammar is good in your posts, partly because it displays professionalism and partly because spelling mistakes can distract people from the content they are reading. The easiest way to achieve this if your Blog does not have a built in Spell Checker is to write in your preferred word processor, use their spell checker and then copy it across to your blog after that.

## ***f) Don't use Advertising***

On a Business Blog, I would strongly advise against adding advertising such as AdSense or eMinimarts etc. anywhere on your Blog. If you are creating the blog to generate revenue for you directly, then they may well be appropriate because they are then serving the main aim of your blog, that of creating income. However, for a Business Blog, it is inappropriate and is likely to do little other than distract your readers or, at worst, alienate both your visitors and potential customers.

## **3. Interacting using your Blog**

### ***a) Turn comments on and use them***

The level of interactivity that you can achieve through the comments function of a Blog should in itself convince you that you must have this function turned on - in fact, there are some people who are of the opinion that it's not a real blog if you don't.

This doesn't mean that you have to let all visitors leave comments immediately - you can moderate comments or ask for people to sign up to leave a comment, in fact most systems will give you good flexibility in this respect. You also should guard against Spam Comments which are automatically posted to create backlinks to a site - a spam filter such as Akismet ([www.akismet.com](http://www.akismet.com)) (excellent and free of charge for most blog systems) will ensure that you avoid comment spam which might drown out the real comments you receive. However you decide you wish to accept comments, make sure you DO accept them.

### ***b) Respond to your comments***

This may seem an obvious comment to make but it is often overlooked. If you are receiving comments then that is great news because it demonstrates that you have provoked enough interest in your readers that they want to comment on your content. So reply to them, thank them for their comments and answer any points raised - this lets them know that you have read their comment and starts up the first elements of a conversation which you can then develop further.

### ***c) Link to other Blogs and other sites***

Never miss an opportunity to link up to other sites. I don't mean in an "I'll put a link to you if you put a link to me" reciprocal type of way that you might have used for your website. I'm talking about you linking to others when you reference their articles and referring to comments that they have made, both of which you should do as often as necessary.

It may seem mad that I am recommending that you link outwards when you also need to develop inbound links to your Blog, but these will come, I can assure you. The blogosphere is all about links, that is how people connect most often so don't be afraid to link outward to others. Links will also be of interest to your own visitors and, by giving them access to additional sources, you will quickly become the hub of information for them on your area of expertise.

## ***d) Make comments on other blogs***

Posting relevant comments on other blogs is a great way to get yourself known and also to encourage people to visit your own site, hopefully to continue the conversation that you have started. If you don't post comments on other blogs then you are just sitting and waiting for others to comment on your own Blog - conversations can be started by more than one person, so go out and start some!

## ***e) Create a Blogroll***

Most Blogs will have a list of other Blogs that they consider are worth reading which is called a blogroll. It's a good idea to include one in your own blog to show sites that you believe would add value - on Better Business Blogging, I have renamed mine as "Recommended Reading". Don't have hundreds of links or this will be unmanageable and will add little value; instead, select the ones that you have found most useful from your own perspective and that you believe your visitors would also find informative and add these to your blogroll.

## **4. Promoting the Blog**

### ***a) Use RSS as fully as possible***

Some people hide their RSS feed or make it difficult to find - you need to do the exact opposite. Using and promoting your RSS feed when you want to make information available to others is as important as including your email address when you want people to contact you. Make the links to your feed easy to find and publicise it wherever you can - also use the tools available to allow people to register to receive it by email. Over time you could also look at segmenting your main RSS feeds into smaller categories so that you aim different content at specific groups of visitors.

### ***b) Post and Ping***

Every time you post an article you should ping the relevant servers to make sure that their records are updated - this is the most basic 'promotion' that you can do, but it is highly effective. Ideally, this should be set up to happen automatically within your Business Blog, but if not then use one of the multiple ping services that are available and do it after every post.

### ***c) Submitting to general and Blog Directories***

Directories, whether they are general, Blog focused or RSS based are all good places to announce that your Blog exists and to make sure that the information it contains is accessible. They have a dual value of making the information available to potential visitors and also creating links into your site which will benefit your Search Engine positioning.

## ***d) Use the Search Engine Optimisation capabilities***

A Business Blog is ideally suited to getting good rankings with Search Engines, primarily because of its structure and the continual stream of new content. However, don't leave it there! There are additional steps that you can take to make it even more effective, both in your writing and by making some changes to the template that your blog uses. These changes will help you to make the most of the opportunity your blog presents.

## ***e) Use Tags***

You are likely to see a rise in the use of Tags in categorising and retrieving information, and used in conjunction with the word based searches that we are more familiar with. So make sure that your posts have these incorporated so that you can benefit from this additional search method. Social networking tags is how they started but they are going to become more and more popular in business areas as well and blogs are likely to be at the forefront of this.

## ***f) Learn about general online and offline marketing***

Rather general this one but it's important. While the inherent benefits that a Blog brings to the party for its own promotion are excellent, Business Blogs should be publicised like any other website by all of the online and offline means that are open to you. So look at getting involved with these methods wherever possible or talk to people who can help you in this, if you need to concentrate on your main business areas.

## **5. What's next?**

In the final part of the eCourse, we will have a look at the 5 'R's that I believe all Business Blogs need to focus on if they are to be successful.

## WORKBOOK ELEMENTS

Here is a simple check list of the points raised here and you might like to add some others as well that you believe are crucial to the aims and goals of your Business Blog.

### 1. Setting up the blog

#### Elements to consider:

- Planning the Blog
- Easy Navigation
- Easy to find Key Posts
- Profile and Contact Details
- Own look and feel
- Host your own Blog
- Friendly Permalinks

### 2. Writing the Blog

#### Elements to consider:

- Publish Regularly
- Stay on planned topics
- Descriptive post titles
- Reference external Sources
- Spelling & Grammar
- Don't use Advertising

### 3. Interacting using your Blog

#### Elements to consider:

- Turn comments on
- Respond to comments
- Link to other Blogs
- Make comments on other Blogs
- Create a Blogroll

### 4. Promoting the Blog

#### Elements to consider:

- Use RSS Feeds fully
- Post & Ping
- Submit to Directories
- Use SEO
- Blog Tags
- Online and Offline Marketing