

VIDEO 1: WHY DOES BLOGGING HELP YOUR INBOUND MARKETING?

Hi, I'm Dee Dee with HubSpot Academy

Let's start with the big picture here – why does blogging help your inbound marketing?

When people first started blogging, they mostly wrote personal accounts sharing their lives or their travels. Today, that's all changed.

Blogging is now a way to regularly publish and promote new content related to your business and industry.

And it helps your inbound marketing in two ways. It helps you attract new visitors, and it helps you convert those visitors into leads.

So how does it attract new visitors?

Think about a stranger searching for information online. They have questions or problems that they're looking to solve. If your blog posts provide those answers, those strangers will find your posts, and will want to click through and read them, turning them into visitors. This is the attract stage of the Inbound Methodology.

In addition, every time you publish a blog post, you're creating a new, unique page online. This means that you're increasing your chances of ranking in search results, having other websites link to you, and being shared on social media. And all of this results in new traffic to your site.

Now, how can your blog help to convert those new visitors into leads?

Once people visit your site, you've opened the door to them. Think about it -- if they're interested in your content, they're more likely to be interested in your offers and convert into leads.

So your blog can strategically promote offers from your business – anything from your latest eBook to a free consultation. If your visitor wants to learn more, you can provide them with that next step.

Finally, your blog can help you stand out as an expert in your industry. The more you blog, the more that people will start to look to you as a reliable, trustworthy source of information. And building that trust with your prospects will help them turn into customers down the line.

So, now what? Well, in the next video, you'll learn how to create the most effective blog posts for hitting your goals. See you there!

VIDEO 2: HOW DO YOU CREATE A SUCCESSFUL BLOG?

Okay, so now that you know how blogging can help your inbound marketing, how do you create a blog that successfully gets those results?

Let's dive into some blogging strategy and best practices.

The first step is to pick a topic and a title.

At a high level, write educational content.

Remember those people searching for information online? Well, in order to attract them to your blog, you need to answer the questions and problems that they're searching for answers to. Put yourself in the shoes of your buyer personas. What are they going to be searching for?

Now make sure to write about your industry, not yourself.

Remember, you're trying to attract strangers to your blog who have never heard of your company before – so they're not going to find you through search engines if you're just blogging about yourself.

Next, brainstorm a list of specific topics that you could blog about.

Ask your sales and marketing teams - what are the most frequently asked questions? What do your buyer personas need help with? What do you wish people knew about your industry? What are industry bloggers, social media, and even your competitors talking about?

Perhaps most importantly, when picking a topic, do keyword research. Keywords are the words and phrases typed into search engines. They're the topics that people are trying to learn more about. So which keywords do your buyer personas use? Which are associated with your industry? Write about those topics to get found and start ranking higher in search results.

Lastly, pick one topic to focus on per post. Don't try to solve every problem in one fell swoop. This will make each post clearer for your readers and for search engines. It will also make sure



that your post gets more qualified traffic, because you'll know that the people clicking through are looking for information about that specific topic.

Now, let's talk about picking a title.

Think about how you read things online. You probably scan the content first, before you commit, to see if it catches your interest.

And the title is one of the first things that you see.

Start by with a working title for your blog post.

A working title is something to "work" off of as you begin to write your post. Start here to narrow your topic down and focus on one single angle. A topic, like "choosing paint colors" could breed multiple different blog posts. A working title, like "The best colors to paint your kitchen" is specific to one single blog post.

Next, include a long-tail keyword in the title.

A long-tail keyword is a specific phrase that people are searching for. It should be based on the topic that you've chosen for that post. If you're blogging about how to produce an internet radio show, then your long-tail keyword would be "produce internet radio show".

Also, make the value of the post clear in the title. Your title should help readers and search engines understand what your post is about. Set the right expectations - what is the reader going to get out of it? What information is covered? What format is the blog post going to take?

In this example, the blog post title explicitly tells you that you'll be reading about 3 tools to help you prepare for Google's next algorithm update. You know exactly what you're going to get from this blog post - how it's valuable to you, and how much information it contains.

Then, make that title pop! Just because you need to be accurate doesn't mean that you can't have fun. Use alliteration, like the phrase Dynamic Dinosaurs or Terrific T-Rex's. Or, use provocative language, like 57 Dinosaurs that Would Have Eaten You.

Lastly, shorten the title. This is vital for search engine optimization, because Google only shows the first 50-60 characters of a title in search results. Avoid having your awesome title get cut off.

In this example, the title, "11 Ways to Make Your Content Appealing to International Audiences" is 65 characters. You can figure the character count out by typing the title into a word processing program or by using an online character count tool. As you can see, this title is a little too long - the last word of the title gets cut off in the search results page.



Moving on to the body of your blog post, format and optimize the post so that both people and search engines can easily read and understand it.

When you blog, whitespace is your friend.

Whitespace is the empty space on the page. It allows the visitor to focus on the content, not the clutter. Don't write long paragraphs that form into huge blocks of text - this will make your information look dense and hard to read.

As you can see in this example, there's plenty of whitespace on the side margins of the post, around the title and first image, and between the paragraphs of text within the post. The space makes the post more easily digestible - nothing is crammed together, and though the post is long, it doesn't feel overwhelming or hard to read.

You can also break up the text in your blog post by using section headers, and bullets or numbered lists to highlight your points.

Within this same blog post, you have a section header - "The Advantages of Geo-Targeting" - which lets the readers know what they're about to read. You have a numbered list as a sub-header right below that, which adds some clarity - you know how the post will be structured, and it's easy to understand. And you even have another numbered list within the first section, which makes the information in the paragraphs of text easier to digest.

Bolding important text can also help readers quickly understand the key takeaways from the post.

The numbered list in this post has a bolder font, making it stand out - but even more importantly, your eye catches the line, "Always focus on the wants and needs of your user." This is the key takeaway from this section, so even if you skimmed, you'd still get that valuable nugget of information.

And include images to visually break up your text. Images grab attention and help your readers understand the post at a glance. Place one at the top of every blog post to entice your visitors to read further. Your photos don't need to directly illustrate what your post is about, but they should be loosely related to your content.

Next, you want to optimize the blog post for search engines. When search engines crawl your blog, they don't read every word. Instead, they scan certain parts of your post to understand what you're writing about and how trustworthy the content is.

Optimize the page around your long-tail keyword, placing it in the page title and the post title, which are typically the same thing; in the URL, the image alt-text, the body and the headers.

In this example, the primary long-tail keyword would be “calculate value sales incentive”. You can see it in the page title and post title, and in the URL for the post. And though you can’t see it here, that long-tail keyword is in the alt-text behind the image. Alt-text allows a search engine to understand the image and have it show up in image search results. Moving down to the body, the first paragraph reads “There is a definite connection between sales incentives and a profitable return on investment (ROI)” - so you have the keywords “sales incentives” right off the bat.

Moving down, the paragraph reads “Many times, there are intangible benefits that are difficult to measure but just as valuable” - you’ve got the keyword “value” in there. In the next sentence, “First and foremost, there is an equation you can use to calculate your ROI”, which has the keyword “calculate” in it. And in the header, you’ve got “Sort out your incentives”. As you can see, the post doesn’t repeat the long-tail keyword over and over - so don’t be afraid of breaking up your long-tail keyword, or using synonyms or variations of the words. Search engines are pretty smart, and will still understand what your post is about.

And include relevant internal and external links within the post. Link to related blog posts or your site pages when appropriate. And while it may sound counterproductive, link to outside resources. Google Webmasters encourage this - it shows that you’ve done your research. Don’t go overboard - link to one or two sources per paragraph at the very most. The next step is all about lead generation - promoting your offers on your blog.

As you attract more and more visitors to your blog, that increased traffic means an increased opportunity to generate leads.

Use your blog to strategically promote your current offers. If your visitor wants to learn or do more, provide them with that next step.

Feature calls-to-action on the blog sidebar. A call-to-action is a button that promotes your offer. These will appear on every post, so they should target a large segment of your visitors. Include a call-to-action that catches people at the beginning of the buyer’s journey, when they’re still looking around for more information, and one for the end, when they’re ready to buy. And don’t forget to ask people to subscribe to your blog.

In this example, SpinWeb has short subscribe form on top of the sidebar, making it easy for people to subscribe to blog post updates. And right below, they’re featuring a call-to-action that reads “Frustrated that your website is not helping you reach your marketing goals? Get a comprehensive plan for success. Work with us.” This call-to-action would fall at the end of the

buyer's journey, when someone is making a decision about whether or not to work with SpinWeb. This will capture any visitors looking to take that next step with them.

Most importantly, include a call-to-action at the end of each post. This offer should be relevant to the content that a visitor has just read. Your visitor is there to learn something from your blog post, so provide an offer that gives them more educational content, like an eBook.

This is a call-to-action at the end of the same post. The title of the post was "4 Ways to A/B Test your Email Subject Line", and the CTA is for an Email Marketing eBook. The offer is about the same topic as the post, so a reader who wants to learn more would be interested in clicking through.

Alright. Now that you have some great blog posts, how do you promote them?

As helpful as it is for search engine optimization, it's also helpful to link internally to your blog posts for their promotion.

If you have blog posts that are about related topics, include a link to them within other posts.

In this blog post, there are links to related articles - one about mobile phone usage statistics, one about prior Google algorithm changes, and one about how to improve your mobile experience. So readers who are interested in learning more about those topics can click through, increasing the traffic to those other older posts.

You can also leverage your website.

You can use your blog sidebar to promote your recent or most popular posts, and add your blog to your primary website navigation. And, if your blogging platform provides the option, add a blog feed to relevant pages.

You can see here in this example that there's a link to the blog at the end of the main website navigation, which makes it easy for visitors on other parts of the website to notice the blog. And on the blog's sidebar, there are links to the most recent marketing posts, encouraging readers to browse.

Then, share those posts on social media.

Promote them when you publish - but don't stop there! The content that you published two months ago can always be shared again, as long as it's still relevant.

Also, make it easy for your readers to share your posts, themselves. Include social sharing buttons at the top of your blog posts, so that people can share your content without reading the whole thing.

You can see here on the left-hand side that this same post was shared on HubSpot's Twitter account, and on the right-hand side, you can see the conveniently placed social sharing buttons. In fact, you can see that 1,427 people have shared the post on their own personal Twitter accounts! This is great social proof that people have found this content interesting and valuable.

Lastly, promote posts through email. Send your leads relevant content about their interests or pain points, based on their buyer persona. Include blog posts in your email newsletters. And create a daily, weekly or monthly blog digest for your subscribers.

Finally, analyze the performance of your blog posts to see how you're doing and where you can improve.

First, look at the number of views for each blog post. This is a great way to figure out which blog content is performing the best. Knowing what content is popular can help you decide what types of posts to write next.

Also filter your most popular posts by topic, author, or even the channel that you promoted it on. Learn what topics you should continue to write about, reward the popular authors, and determine the best way to promote your blog posts.

And look at the number of clicks on the Call-to-Action at the end of an individual post. Are you converting any qualified leads? Are certain offers performing better than others?

At the end of the day, it's important to write consistently and frequently.

Commit yourself to a blogging schedule. The more often you blog, the more likely you are to get found. After all, each new blog post is an opportunity to attract new visitors. The more often you post quality content, the more you will see your blog grow and influence your business.

And there you have it - the fundamental strategy and best practices for getting your blog up and running, so that you can begin to attract new visitors and convert them into leads.

VIDEO 3: TOOL WALKTHROUGH

View the user guide or additional resources on the class page for a text version and instructions on how to use the tool.