# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO B2B BLOGGING

Gain more website traffic and targeted leads through business blogging



#### **CONTENTS**

- 4. Introduction
- 5 Chapter One: Why Blog
  Blog Strengthen SEO
  Blogs are Accessible 24/7
  Blogs Help in the Buying Process
- 1 0 Chapter Two: A Closer Look at B2B Blogging
  The Marketing Funnel
- Chapter Three: Goals & KPIs
  Goals
  Thought Leadership
  Brand Awareness
  Customer Service and Community Building
  Key Performance Indicators
  SMART Blog Goals
- **18** Chapter Four: Buyer Personas Questions
- 21 Chapter Five: Niche Analysis
  Find and Assess Existing Blogs in Your Niche
- 24 Chapter Six: Blog Topics Editorial Calendar

## 26 Chapter Seven: Blog Team Key Players

The Blog Manager

The Bloggers

The Blog Editor

The Graphic Designer

The Blog Promoters

Blog Setup

**Content Management System** 

**Domain Name and Hosting** 

Social Media Setup

Google Analysis Setup

Subscription Form

## 34 Chapter Eight: Content Creation Writing the Content

Buzzsumo

**Hubspot's Blog Topic Generator** 

Google Keyword Planner

**Focus Writer** 

**Designing/Sourcing Graphics** 

Unsplash

Canva

**Proofreading and Styling** 

Grammarly

## Chapter Nine: Content Promotion Be Social

LinkedIn

Pinterest and Instagram

Facebook

**Twitter** 

Reach Out to Influencers

Find Your Tribe

## 46 Chapter Ten: Performance Analysis Traffic Per Source/Medium

Social Signals

Number of Links

**Email Contacts** 

#### INTRODUCTION

Blogs have come a long way — from mere online journals to reliable sources of information, education and entertainment. Today, blogs are essential tools in achieving marketing and business goals, especially if you're serious about establishing a strong online presence and building a community around your brand.

While there's an exponential growth in the number of blogs being published, many conservative businesses still don't see the importance of investing in a blog. Lack of time and human resources are the usual excuse, but mostly there's a lack of understanding on how blogging and content marketing can actually reach more targeted customers and therefore growing your business in a more cost-efficient way.

## **CHAPTER ONE: WHY BLOG**

Data shows that blogging, when done right, can make your website more visible to your target market, therefore gaining you more traffic, leads and sales. Here are some more statistics.

- 45% of marketers say blogging is the #1 most important piece of their content strategy. (Social Media Examiner)
- 94% of people who share posts do so because they think it might be helpful to others (New York Times)
- The average word count of top-ranking content (in Google) is between 1,140-1,285 words (Search Metrics)
- Companies who blog receive 97% more links to their website. (Hubspot)
- Blogs are the 5th most trusted source for accurate online information. (Hubspot)

### **BLOGS STRENGTHEN SEO**

Websites with a blog tend to have 434% more indexed pages. In other words, blogging makes your site more visible to search engines.

Since the early days of SEO, industry experts already use blogging to improve search engine visibility. Of the many SEO tactics that don't work anymore, blogging remains to be effective. How? There are four important SEO factors that make a site rank better in Google — (1) keywords, (2) fresh content, (3) social signals and (4) links.

Consistent blogging hits all of these targets.

- Blogs naturally inject relevant keywords into your site, and not in a spammy, keyword-stuffing kind of way.
- Blogs refresh your site with new content regularly, and Google gives plus points to fresh content.
- Blogs increase opportunities for social media activity, and social signals affect search engine rankings.
- Blogs, especially the ones with targeted and valuable content, attract quality links. In fact, companies who blog have 97% more inbound links.

### **BLOGS ARE ACCESSIBLE 24/7**

Your blog posts are always accessible to your readers. Whether they landed on your site because they were searching for something on Google, or they intentionally looked for your brand, or they've been following your blog already, they can consume blog content anytime and as long as they want.

30-second commercials or billboards are only visible for short periods of time and therefore have a small window of opportunity to convince a potential customer to make a purchase. Blogs, on the other hand, are accessible as the need arises, and from anywhere in the globe. Even old posts will continue to generate traffic and inquiries. The more you blog, the more chances for your site to attract an audience.

## BLOGS HELP IN THE BUYING PROCESS

As consumers ourselves, we know how much we rely on blog reviews when we want to purchase anything. We do a thorough research about the brand, the company or the person we want to do business with. In fact, blogs have been rated as as the 5th most trusted source for accurate information online. And 70% of consumers learn about a company through content rather than ads.

Imagine if you have the answers to your target market's questions on your blog. A great blog is one that is designed to answer these questions and lead your readers into your sales funnel in a subtle way. In any case, whether it results to a purchase or not, you help people know and understand their choices, and if you ask me, helping others make decisions is a noble reason to blog too.

## CHAPTER TWO: A CLOSER LOOK AT B2B BLOGGING

While blogging can work wonders both for B2B and B2C companies, there's a significant difference between the two in terms of the marketing funnel.

Know which part of the funnel needs help vs. works fine.

**AWARENESS** 

**CONSIDERATION** 

**COMPARISON** 

**CONVERSION** 

**RETENTION** 

Don't try to target most of your content at more than 2 of these stages.

Rand Fishkin (Moz) explained this well, "The B2B funnel is very similar to a B2C funnel. In fact, marketing funnels in general work like this: People become aware of a product. They have some consideration for whether it's something they might actually want to buy. They do some form of comparison against other solutions. They decide to convert or not. Then there's a retention element.

Retention element is less true in a lot of B2C fields, especially eCommerce one-time purchases. I t's generally more true in the B2B world."

Aside from the retention element, B2B companies have to show thought leadership and authority in its specific niche for other businesses to want to do business with them. Blogging is one of the most effective ways to exemplify thought leadership in today's digital age.

Here are some quick statistics on B2B blogging trends:

- Studies show that B2B Businesses are more likely to use blogging than B2C businesses this 2016. (Social Media Examiner)
- B2B marketers who blog get 67% more leads than those who do not. (Hubspot)
- 76% of B2B marketers say they will produce more content in 2016. (Content Marketing Institute)

This ebook is created with more specific attention to B2B companies who want to explore the opportunity of blogging to grow their businesses, or to those who want to level up their blog strategy this year and beyond. Ready?

## **CHAPTER THREE: GOALS & KPIs**

In a recent study on B2B marketing, there's an increase in the amount of content being published and the number of companies setting budget for content this year. However, almost 50% of these organizations claim that they don't have a documented content marketing strategy.

You can't just start publishing blog posts aimlessly. A documented strategy means an intentional strategy—where overarching business goals are translated to performance metrics and metrics are translated to relevant blog topics. All of these begin with goal setting.

### <u>GOALS</u>

Goal setting is one of the crucial first steps that are often overlooked. Many would just jump to content creation without a clearly defined set of goals and strategy. Don't let your effort go to waste by wild guessing on what to post or how to layout your blog. Make your goals evident in your blog's content.

You have to begin with your big picture goals. Now, it's easy to expect higher traffic and more social shares, or more customer engagement and a bigger email list, but you often have to expect less from one area to expect more from another.

What do I mean? For example, if your number one goal was "Brand Awareness", the strategy and the metrics for this may be totally different if your main goal was "Thought Leadership". Know which goals are more important to you and which ones you're willing to compromise for the other.

To be clear, the bottom line is always to increase traffic, leads and sales. How to achieve that would be your big picture goals. Here are some of the usual big picture goals in coming up with a blog strategy for B2B:

#### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

B2B companies offering unique products or highly technical services would want to become an authority in topics relevant to their niche or expertise. Being a Thought Leader means you're able to provide answers to questions in your target audience's minds. By answering their questions, especially the ones with higher levels of difficulty, you're able to build authority in that particular industry, therefore making your target market trust you enough to do business with you.

#### **BRAND AWARENESS**

When I think of "Brand Awareness" in relation to B2B blogging, the following brands immediately come to mind: Hubspot, Buffer, Copyblogger. They publish blogs that are amazing resource for highly technical topics when their main product, in fact, is software. They have become household names when it comes to marketing best practices, and that's the kind of brand awareness you want to achieve.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

An effective way to keep your existing customers happy and engaged is to create content that will help them use your product or understand your service better. You have to know their pain points, listen to their questions, and be able to address these concerns. When you're able to create this kind of resource for your customers, you're also building a community around your product or service. Both of which are good goals to aim for when starting a B2B blog.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

'Goals' and 'KPIs' (Key Performance Indicators) are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the results you want to achieve. However, we want to put a distinction between these two important concepts.

- GOALS: are the desired big picture outcome.
- KPIs: are key metrics that indicate level of performance, and therefore measures if you're achieving your goals.

We already discussed what the usual big picture #goals are in coming up with a blog. Now it's time to identify KPIs to use as gauge for your performance. We like using the SMART goals method when breaking down goals. S-pecific, M-easurable, A-chievable, R-ealistic and Time-bound.

#### **SMART BLOG GOALS**

Here's a sample of a specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound KPI:

Increase traffic by 20% (5,000 per month to 6,000 per month) by June 31, 2016.

Listing down goals in this manner gives you a clearer and data-driven direction for your strategy. Setting up these benchmarks will tell you if your efforts are able to bear fruits.

## CHAPTER FOUR: BUYER PERSONAS

Identifying reader personas is very important to make sure that you're publishing quality and relevant content.

Blogging for B2B organizations can be highly technical and therefore should be targeted to very specific reader personas. People are looking for answers and solutions and these days, it's not enough to just have "blog categories" or general themes. One has to know exactly who you want to attract so you can create content that's custom-fit for them.

When developing a marketing strategy (instead of just a blog strategy), we call these "buyer personas"

Others like calling this "dream clients" or "target market". We call it "buyer persona" because it gives more intention to the term, specifically when you want to lead them through a buyer's journey or marketing funnel.

When creating your reader or buyer persona(s), consider including demographics, behavior patterns, motivations, and goals. Think about the key phrases they would search in Google. Think about what their questions might be, what their job is, what their responsibilities are, how you can help them do their job better.

Identifying your reader personas is an on-going process. Sometimes you get to know your target reader more as you go along.

### **QUESTIONS**

Here are some helpful questions to guide you in identifying your reader personas.

- ✓ What is his job?
- What industry does he belong in?
- What are the skills he needs to do his job well?
- ✓ What are his biggest challenges?
- What are the key phrases he might search on Google?
- What are the tools he needs to do his job better?
- What are the questions he usually asks?
- What are the topics that will add value to his life and career development?
- What are his interests outside of his job?
- What groups or social networks does he usually hang out?

## **CHAPTER FIVE: NICHE ANALYSIS**

76% of B2B organizations alone have set budget for content marketing this 2016. Which means, whatever your niche is, chances are, there are authority bloggers and thought leaders that already exist there. You want to know what these blogs are, see what they're up to, and find out what works for them. By doing so, you get to set benchmarks for your own strategy and identify how to position yourself in that niche.

## FIND AND ASSESS EXISITING BLOGS IN YOUR NICHE

The easiest way to find niche blogs is through Google itself. Type on the google search box: "keyword" inurl: blog. For ex: "customer service" inurl:blog"

This will return pages with the keyword you're looking for, and have the word "blog" in their URL. It will filter out non-blog pages in the list of results, therefore only giving you the most popular blogs in that niche.

List down 3-5 of the best blogs in your chosen niche, and assess these blogs based on content, presentation and performance.

- ✓ What are the topics they discuss?
- What works for them? What doesn't?
- ✓ What are their best performing posts?
- What are they missing and what can you do to fill in the gap?
- What will set your own blog apart?

## **CHAPTER SIX: BLOG TOPICS**

Let's have a rundown of what we've done so far:

- Set goals and key performance indicators, check.
- Identified reader personas, check.
- ✓ Analyzed top performing blogs in specific niche, check.

Based on your goals, KPIs, reader personas, and competitive analysis, start listing down blog topics that you want to talk about and publish on your blog. Begin an editorial calendar and start plotting these topics into specific dates.

### **EDITORIAL CALENDAR**

A multi-authored blog is recommendable particularly in a B2B scenario where you want to establish your brand as a subject-matter authority. This is like saying, "Hello. We know what we're doing. Here are the experts you'll be working with."

That said, your editorial calendar is important to guide you through the process of content creation. This keeps your team on the loop, and helps you coordinate with key persons involved in each post.

Our editorial calendar is nothing fancy. It's a simple Google Spreadsheet with the following columns: Writer, Blog Title, Reader Persona, Category, Keywords, Notes and References, Publish Date and Status.

WRITER	BLOG TITLE	READER Persona	CATEGORY	KEYWORDS	NOTES, Preferences	PUBLISH Date	STATUS

Others use Trello or Asana as their task management tool or editorial calendar. For us, we like seeing it in a simple spread so we can sort out it out easily. Find out what works for you.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: BLOG TEAM**

As I mentioned a while ago, multi-authored blogs are ideal for businesses. Not to mention, it gives a chance for your readers to get to know the people behind the brand.

So if you're serious about maintaining a company blog, you have to be ready to invest in man power to make this happen. Either you hire dedicated employees to manage the blog, or get your existing team to crank up extra hours for it.

#### THE BLOG MANAGER



This person is the overall stakeholder of the blog, making sure that the blog is updated on a regular basis. He/she manages the editorial calendar, publishes the posts, and therefore is the final point person before any article goes live. Usually this person also serves as the Strategist, who leads the team in brainstorming topics.

#### THE BLOGGERS



Who are your bloggers? Ideally, you have a writer on board to help out in the content creation front. And then you want your very own subject matter experts to talk about industry-level topics. Encouraging (or incentivizing) your existing employees to blog is a good way to get the whole team to crank up blog content. In any case, make sure that you have regular blog contributors to keep your content creation machine running.

#### **KEY PLAYERS**

#### THE BLOG EDITOR



Usually the blog editor is also the blog manager. Best if you have someone in your team who has good proofreading skills. Aside from ensuring basic grammar and sentence construction, this person will ensure that all posts meet the company's brand voice and tone.

#### THE GRAPHIC DESIGNER



Articles with images get 94% more views than those without. Infographs and ebooks (such as this one) are also proven effective ways to add more value andsharability to your content strategy. If you don't have a professional graphic designer in your team, the blog manager should be able to choose visuals that complement and enhance your blog content.

#### THE BLOG PROMOTERS



With the growing number of blog posts being published each day, it's not enough that you wait for your readers to come to your blog. You have to take your blog where your readers are. The goal, of course, is to create content that's relevant enough that people will be drawn to share it. But your army of blog promoters already exist in your company. Passyour own blog posts internally, and encourage employees to share your company blog to their friends and circles of influence.

## STILL WITH ME?

Go ahead, breathe, get a cup of coffee and come back here to resume reading.

P.S. For more content creation tips, feel free to browse around Spiralytics' blog.



### **BLOG SETUP**

If your blog already exists, you can skip this step and move on to the next chapters. If you're totally new at blogging and not have a blog set up yet, here are the things you need:

#### **CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

There are several Content Management Systems available (Blogger, Squarespace, among others) but for starters we always recommend Wordpress. It's a free, SEO friendly, open-source platform with a massive community of third party theme developers and plugin support. It allows non-technical users to optimize and customize pages even without touching the codes. I've personally worked on a few CMS and found that Wordpress and Squarespace are the best for business blogging purposes. Check both options to see which one works best for you.

#### **DOMAIN NAME AND HOSTING**

Yes, get one. Or, create a subdomain if you already have an existing website. For example, use www.domain.com/blog or blog.domain.com. The point is, having your own domain instead of using free subdomain adds credibility to your company blog. If you're new in the game, you want to build up that credibility from the get-go.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA SETUP**

Setting up social media accounts is as important as setting up your blog. Put in mind that when you decide to blog, you also decide to be visible in social media. The thing is, social media users don't necessarily have blogs, but bloggers NEED to be in social media. I'll explain this further later. But for now, make sure you have yours set up and ready.

#### **GOOGLE ANALYSIS SETUP**

This is a must-have in your blogging journey. This is how you'll be able to track your performance and see how your site is doing on Google—and as we all know, Google is the search engine you want to be visible in.

#### **SUBSCRIPTION FORM**

As a business owner, one of your goals in blogging is getting highly targeted traffic and leads. So make sure you have a subscription form in a highly visible area of your site since this is your way to capture emails. Chances are, if your visitors find your blog posts useful, they will want to subscribe to it. Some of the tools you can use are Mailchimp, Convertkit, Infusionsoft, or any email marketing software you're familiar with.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: CONTENT CREATION

The initial steps are usually done in the beginning of the process or maybe once every quarter. Content Creation and Promotion, on the other hand are the stuff that fill up your daily to-do list. Competition is tough and there's so much great content consistently produced out there. If you want to be successful at blogging, you have to be good at creating content efficiently and consistently.

### WRITING THE CONTENT

Search the web for similar content and if there's any, think of ways to make yours more relevant. Tell stories. Type it as if you're talking to your audience face to face. Present supporting data and reference other websites and blogs.

Recommended Tools:

#### 1. BUZZSUMO

Ever wondered which articles or contents are getting the most shares for a specific topic? That's what Buzzsumo can help you with. Just input your keyword and it will show you a list of top content and influencers. This is a good way not only to research topics but also to find industry influencers and peers.

#### 2. HUBSPOT'S BLOG TOPIC GENERATOR

Hubspot's tool is one of the easiest topic generators that you can use. Just input a couple of nouns that you want to write about and voila, it will give you a list of topics that you can work with. It's not perfect though and you still need to tweak the titles that it gives you, nevertheless, it's a fast and easy way to create topics out of a single or two word ideas.

#### 3. GOOGLE KEYWORD PLANNER

This tool is used mainly for Paid Ads and SEO but it's a great tool for us in the content creation as well because it generates a list of keyword groups that are getting a high volume of search. Knowing which key phrases get high volume traffic from Google is a great way to begin your idea generation.

#### 4. FOCUS WRITER

When writing content, you can't afford to be distracted every now and then. Some writers need peace and quiet to do their work. While plugging in your earphones to listen to soft tunes can do that trick, writers will also need a clutterless screen to avoid the temptation of doing other things aside from writing. FocusWriter is a great tool that lets you do just that with its clean interface to get you immersed on your writing.

# DESIGNING/SOURCING GRAPHICS

Blog posts that have visual elements get more attention than posts that don't, so you want to spend time creating or choosing images to enhance your posts.

#### 5. UNSPLASH

Original photos are still best so take your own photos if you can. However, there are websites offering free high quality stock photos which can make the job faster and in a more professional way too. Unsplash and Pexels are two of our favorite, but there are other free stock photo sites out there than you can also explore.

#### 6. CANVA

Best if you have a graphic designer who create your blog's visuals. But in the absence of that person, Canva is a great tool to use. It's a user-friendly browser-based graphic designing tool that you can use to create social media images, infographics, blog headers/banners, among others.

# PROOFREADING AND STYLING

Have someone check your post for correct grammar, branding tone and voice. Make sure that it reflects your company's POV and values. Make the post easy to read. Utilize header tags to highlight sub-titles and important keywords.

#### 7. GRAMMARLY

It's easy to just depend on Microsoft Word's built-in spelling and grammar checker, but it's not as accurate as Grammarly. Best of all, it comes with a plagiarism checker which is idea for companies who work with freelance or outsourced writers.

# CHAPTER NINE: CONTENT PROMOTION

As they say, content creation is just half of the battle. The other half is getting your content right in front of your audience. Content influx is real. There are millions of blogs being published each day and you want to stand out from all of that noise.

But here's the thing. You don't need the whole world to see your blog, you only need to attract the right audience. You don't need a Buzzfeed-like exposure, you only need the right one.

And so we're back to discussing reader personas. When you have a good grasp of who your target reader is, then you'll have an idea where to find them. Hang out where they are. Join in their discussions. Most of all, share your blog content there.

Here are some ways to promote your content:

## **BE SOCIAL**

Social media still remains to be one of the most effective ways to promote blog content and interact with your audience. There are various social media channels that you can use. Take note—you don't have to be in ALL of them. Invest time and effort in social media channels that fit your goals and reader personas.

#### LINKEDIN

is good place to find job-seekers and employers, business partners, collaborators. They also have a publishing platform for thought leaders, allowing you to share your thoughts about your industry, work ethics, world views.

#### PINTEREST & INSTAGRAM

are image heavy and therefore ideal for creative industries. It's a good place to showcase web and graphic design, interior design and architecture, fashion and retail, photography, real estate, etc.

#### **FACEBOOK**

is still the biggest social media channel, so whatever industry you're in, you want to establish presence there. Practically any niche has a place in FB. It has a comprehensive platform and an e-commerce functionality especially for businesses.

#### **TWITTER**

is good for real time updates. We see a lot of businesses using Twitter as a customer support channel. TV stations use it to engage with viewers. Many B2B organizations use it to connect with industry leaders and subject matter experts too.

# **REACH OUT TO INFLUENCERS**

At this point you'll realize that establishing an effective blog involves a lot of things beyond, well, blogging. You engage with your readers, connect with them through social media, join discussions. You can't just drop the link to your blog anywhere, leave, and expect people to read it. You want to give them a reason to check your blog out.

So when you find thought leaders and influencers in your industry, begin building relationships with them. Comment on their blog posts, follow them in social media, introduce yourself. When they see that your content is relevant, chances are, they will promote your content in their own social media feeds too.

### FIND YOUR TRIBE

"Tribe" is a fancy term used to describe a group of like-minded individuals learning from each other and helping each other in their pursuits.

You want like-minded followers and influencers in your "tribe". As we've repeatedly mentioned throughout this book, it's okay to not have a lot of readers, you only need targeted ones. In other words, you'd rather have 100 close friends than 1000 random acquaintances. These are the people whom you know can learn from and benefit from your content at the same time.

One practical way to find your tribe is to search key phrases, say, in Twitter, and see who are talking about the key phrases you searched for. Connect and engage with these people.

# CHAPTER TEN: PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Hey hey. You've almost reached the end of this ebook. The final step, of course, is to analyze your performance. Through this final stage you'll be able to assess which of your posts worked and which didn't. Your blog strategy evolves as you start seeing which blog topics are performing well, and which areas need more work.

This will also help you understand your readers better. For example, analyzing traffic sources will show you general reader profiles and demographics; analyzing social media activity will give you ideas on how to engage with your audience better.

Basic blog metrics to track:

## TRAFFIC PER SOURCE/MEDIUM

Traffic Sources is probably the easiest Google Analytics metrics to understand. It's the overall number of visitors who visited your site from different sources. There are four sources that your site can receive traffic from.

- Search Traffic number of visits that are generated from search engine queries
- Referral traffic number of visits that are produced from site links on other websites, including social media sites.
- Direct traffic number of visits that came from directly entering the site URL into the browser
- Campaigns you might not need this initially, but this is the traffic that comes from email campaigns if you have any.

Understanding where your traffic is coming from will give you ideas on how to optimize and promote your blog better.

## **SOCIAL SIGNALS**

Social signals is any social media activity which links to your blog. When people are sharing your posts, it means they find your post useful. See which ones garnered more social signals than the others & consider making more of these types of posts.

## **NUMBER OF LINKS**

Remember, one important purpose of blogging is to rank better in search engines. Google sees a link as a "vote" for authority, particularly those links coming from authority sites. The more links you have, the higher your rankings will be. We like using Moz's Open Site Explorer for this purpose.

## **EMAIL CONTACTS**

You may have a general picture of where your readers are coming from, but you want to get to know them more. You want to know their names. More specifically, you want to know their email addresses. See how many people subscribe to your blog and make it your goal to keep growing your mailing list.

# **HOORAY!**

You have reached the end of this post! Congratulations. Treat yourself to some cupcakes! (Or a burger.)

But you know what they say, the end of one thing is the beginning of something. So we look forward to seeing you launch your very own company blog and reap the rewards of your hard work. Good luck!

# NEED HELP DRIVING LEADS WITH SEO AND CONTENT MARKETING?

# WE CAN HELP! DROP US A NOTE



CONNECT WITH US!







VISIT OUR BLOG

blog.spiralytics.com