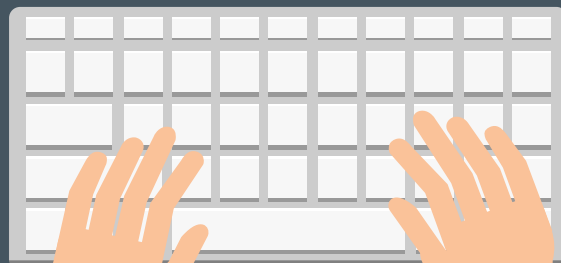


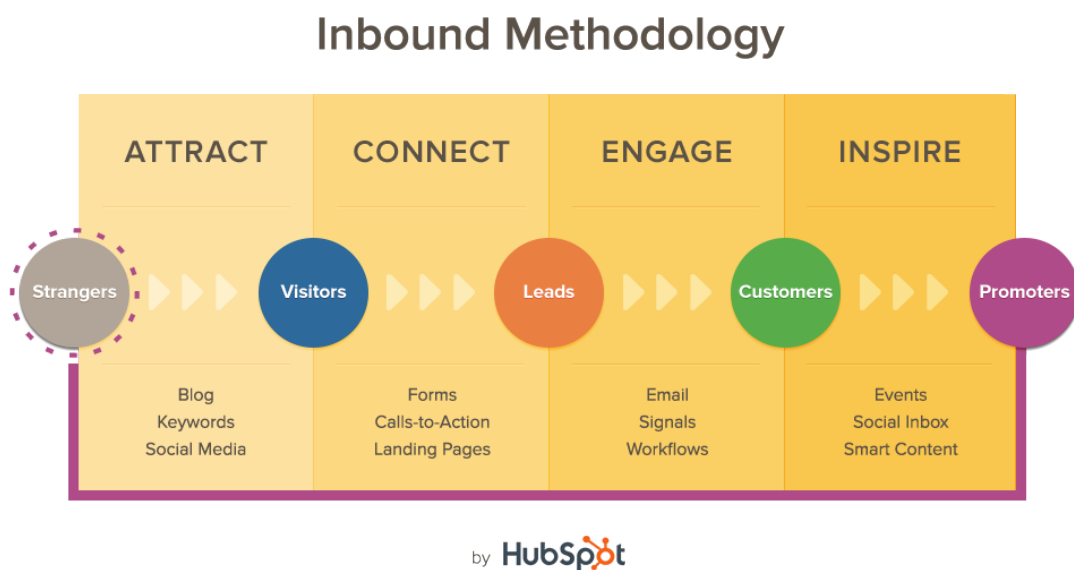


*An Introduction to*  
**BLOGGING**  
*For Nonprofits*



## INTRODUCTION:

The facts speak for themselves. Marketing data clearly shows that blogging is one of the first (and one of the most critical) pieces of the inbound marketing methodology.



According to HubSpot research, Marketers who have prioritized blogging are 13x more likely to enjoy positive ROI\*. But merely writing blog articles won't dramatically transform your marketing. Your blog has to be well-optimized and promoted, and most of all, rich with content.

A blog is a long-term marketing asset that will bring traffic and new supporters to your nonprofit website. In this ebook, we will walk you step-by-step through the blogging fundamentals and show you how to start reaping the benefits of this valuable marketing and awareness channel.

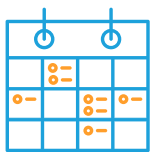
## CHAPTER 1:

# Why Your Organization Should Have a Blog

Blogging is a low-cost marketing asset with long-term returns. It is strongly related to attracting high-quality traffic, generating new supporters, and increasing awareness for your mission. Yet, the impact of blogging extends to several major marketing benefits that nonprofits often overlook.

### FIRST

First, blogging helps you in respect to search engine optimization (SEO). The more blog posts you publish, the more indexed pages you create for search engines to display in their search results. In other words, blogging helps you rank higher in search engines and get found when people search for your organization or cause-related terms. Thus, the blog enables you to attract organic traffic and familiarize people with your organization—even if they are looking for information about your mission, and not you.



### FREQUENCY MATTERS

In this framework, frequency of publishing blog posts matters a lot. Our research has shown that organizations that published 16+ blog posts per month got almost 3.5X more traffic and about 4.5X more leads than those that published between 0 - 4 monthly posts.\*



### OPTIMIZE YOUR POSTS

The other essential element of attracting more traffic through organic search is optimizing your blog posts. Make sure your blog titles incorporate relevant keywords that people enter in search engines as they conduct research.



### THINK 80% THEM—20%YOU

To attract people with blog content, you have to break out of your own bubble. Most of your best-fit constituents may not know you even exist yet (don't worry, we'll change that. Think instead what those "strangers" are searching for that is related to your organization's mission—and write content to help and educate around those topics.

## SECOND

Second, your blog is an asset that lets you tell your nonprofit's story. So if you have some success stories to share, a blog will help you earn people's trust and support, and stay top-of-mind for your community or industry.



### FEATURE YOUR ADVOCATES

How are your constituents and other supporters helping your nonprofit drive change? How are you helping them in return? Write blog posts telling touching stories about how some of your members, volunteers, or donors have formed a relationship with your organization.



### BUILD THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Use your blog as a platform to showcase your expertise on a given subject. Inject your knowledge of your cause into your blog posts, and let your knowledge help your nonprofit stand out.



### EARN PEOPLE'S TRUST

Blogging is an excellent way to tell the stories rich with social proof and data on the impact of your mission. Highlight contributions from your constituents, volunteers, or members and let the story of their participation compel others to act too.

### THIRD

Third, a blog gives you valuable real estate to place calls-to-action to encourage website visitors to complete the action you want them to. At this stage of the game, you are trying to retain your blog readers and engage them further with your website and your content. So you might ask them to sign up for your newsletter, attend your informational event or download a free guide that you have.



#### MAKE BLOG CTAS CONTEXTUAL

Make sure you are matching the content you have written to the offer you want to highlight. In that way, you create a seamless connection between the two and cater to the reader who is ready to learn more about the topic. This is a very natural way of gauging interest and capturing new contacts. The contextual call-to-action is going to be much more appealing and have a much higher click-through rate to the subsequent landing page



#### CTAS IN SIDEBAR

One possible placement of calls-to action is the sidebar of your blog. You can create banners to advertise some of your top-performing offers and add them around your blog for visitors to click on.



#### CTAS IN BLOG POSTS

You can place calls-to-action within the blog post itself, at the beginning, middle or end of the article. Also, don't forget to create contextual calls-to-action, by hyperlinking keywords to appropriate offers that you have.

### Should You Have One or Multiple Blogs?

In some cases, when you are targeting niche audiences with very different needs, it might make sense to create separate blogs. Yet it's always better to start with one blog and then consider further segmentation. It's better if you integrate your efforts. The content creation and management process takes a tremendous amount of work and time. You need to minimize the work and maximize the profits.

In general, you are able to separate content by tagging it with appropriate keywords. So when people search for these keywords, they will arrive at the specific blog post and receive further information. To be successful at this task, you need to have a clear understanding of the personas you are targeting.



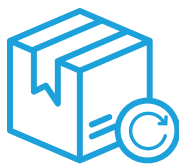
## CHAPTER 2:

# How to Create Blog Content

By now, you should be convinced of the value of blogging. But you have probably also started wondering what content you can possibly cover. What to write about? Welcome to the club! Finding topics to blog about is one of the most common challenges marketers face. The good news? Organizations, probably better than most B2B or B2C companies, understand what their constituents care about. After all, your job is to serve them, right?

We always recommend that you start by answering some of your supporters' most popular questions—reviewing industry trends, discussing your plans to meet your goals, or conducting brief interviews with experts from your organization. The best part—these creative efforts don't have to be as time-consuming as they seem.

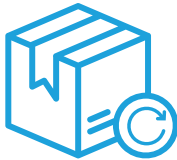
### RESOURCES FOR NONPROFIT BLOGGING



#### REPACKAGE

Start with something simple. Do a thorough audit of existing content or internal communications. Many times, you can take something that may have been published internally, remove some proprietary information, and transform it into a great blog post because, ultimately, you're showcasing the inside of the mission and the organization. Great content should, in a sense, showcase the inner workings of an organization. What better way to do that than with repackaged internal content?

The same is true of resources that you may already provide your constituents. Guides, whitepapers, and reports can all make fantastic blog posts with a little reorganization and polish.



Next, reach out to others in your organization. Identify people who serve as your organization's primary sources of communication with the outside world. Give them a pad of paper, and for one day, ask them to write down every single question somebody asks them. Ultimately, this will give you a really rich list to help you generate blogging ideas.

### BRAINSTORM



Even if you leverage resources outside of your nonprofit and infiltrate other departments within the organization, it's still easy to run out of content ideas quickly. Therefore, you should be constantly seeking new opinions and new insights.

Hold brainstorming sessions and consider creating a collaborative document to allow people to build on one another's ideas. If you are a small nonprofit, identify peers or fellow bloggers who might be willing to participate in such brainstorming sessions. For instance, you can create a Facebook group with other people who are in a similar situation. When you join a group that you can bounce ideas off, you'll discover something really interesting: when you suggest a blog post idea to the brainstorming group, people will react if they are interested in the topic. If they don't react to it, it probably won't drive that much interest for the larger audience either.

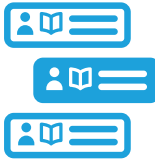




## GUEST BLOGGING

Another method of generating content for your blog is to invite other industry experts or constituents to write guest posts for you. Use your network to find people who might be interested in guest blogging. Be confident in pitching them benefits of guest blogging.

For instance, guest bloggers can gain exposure beyond their normal readership and generate inbound links that can help them rank better in search engines. Guest blogging is also a great way to begin a co-marketing partnership and build a strong relationship with industry influencers.



## CURATION

Another great way to generate blog content is through curation, or the aggregation of other valuable pieces of content. If you are going to curate information, make sure you're curating it to provide some type of value for your audience.

[Don't just curate content for the sake of doing it. Ask yourself these questions:](#)

- Are you saving the reader time by putting all of these resources in one place?
- Are you offering your own opinion and insight against what somebody else has said?

This information doesn't have to come from your organization alone. Most people are going to be flattered if you want to share their content. It's also a great opportunity to build a relationship with them. The simplest guideline is to do unto others as you would have done to yourself. Make sure you're following other bloggers' content usage guidelines, and make sure you appropriately attribute the original author. When linking to others' content, it's also a good idea to create links that open in a new tab or window.

## HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU BLOG?

When you are thinking about the frequency of your blogging, start doing the math backwards. If you need five new contacts a month who you can follow up with, then how many new visits to your blog do you need?

Once you start publishing posts a few times a day, you will see a significant increase in traffic. Another question you need to consider when creating your blogging schedule is how to best set expectations. You might blog once a week or twice a month, and that will be okay so long as your posts hold great content, and your blogging cadence is somewhat consistent.

## CONTENT PLANNING

An Editorial Calendar will help you maintain a healthy balance of content types. In your content creation plan, make sure you have a steady backlog of content, some of which addresses topics with long-term value that will remain valuable for your readers year-over-year. In this way, you are also considering the long-term effects of your blog.



[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD A FREE EDITORIAL CALENDAR TEMPLATE.](#)

Try to build an editorial calendar to help you map out your frequency, give you a general idea of the content you'll be creating, and serve as a blogging schedule. What is more, it will help you develop an approach. For instance, if you are working hard to rank for a specific keyword, you can focus on your content around that keyword for a month and then measure the results. Have you increased your search engine ranking for that given keyword?

An editorial calendar will also help you maintain a healthy balance of content types covering various topics and lengths such as posts that are short and shareable vs. those that are meaty and comprehensive. You should always plan for blog content to get published at certain designated times, but also be able to take advantage of industry-related news stories that allow you to create a timely blog post and leverage the buzz that's already being generated around the topic. Therefore, it's important to also be agile and flexible in your content creation process.

## CHAPTER 3:

# How to Optimize your Blog for SEO and Lead Generation

Frequency and quantity of blogging are certainly two big factors that will impact your business results. However, you won't get far without doing all the little things right for your blog posts as well.

You need to optimize your content to grab people's attention and rank well in search engines. What's more, your blog posts should also introduce offers that can directly impact your lead generation efforts (ex: getting contact information for new interested constituents). It's a fairly simple concept—the more visitors you can attract to your blog, the more chances for conversion.



### 1) SOCIAL SHARING BUTTONS

Give your blog content extended reach by including social media sharing buttons (e.g. "Like," "Share on LinkedIn," "Tweet," etc.) on every post. This will encourage readers to share your content with their personal networks and expand its reach beyond your own connections.



### 2) COMPELLING IMAGES

Include an image that conveys what the blog post is about. This makes your content visually appealing to readers and breaks up blocks of text-based content. A blog post that has some type of visual element—whether it's a photograph, a graphic, or some type of infographic—typically performs a little better than a post that's purely text.

### 3) EYE-CATCHING & OPTIMIZED TITLES



Headlines are the most important element of your blog posts. While there are quite a few elements that make up a successful blog post, one of the best things you can do to capture readers' attention and entice them to view your post is to write an awesome blog title. Here are several title tips for eye-catching blog titles:

#### Be Clear & Direct



"12 Quick Tips to Search Google Like an Expert" is an example blog title that tells readers exactly what they're going to get. Do they want to learn how to conduct better Google searches? Then they're going to read this post.

#### Create Urgency



Another type of successful blog title is the one that creates a sense of urgency or importance. You want people to feel enticed to read a post when they first see the title. Use words like, "right now," or put a timeframe around the relevance of the content.

#### Be Informative (How-to's)



Most people who read blogs are reading them because they want to learn how to solve a particular problem. Indicate that your article will actually tell them how to do something they don't know how to do. For example, "How to Create a Google+ Business Page in 5 Simple Steps."

#### Or Be Cautionary (How-not-to's)



Just like people love to know how to do something, they also love reassurance that they're not doing something wrong. So use your blog to give them advice on how to fix common problems or avoid major potholes.



### Newsworthy

We've found relevant breaking news type posts are successful in attracting viewership. Specifically, blog posts with the word "launch" in their title perform particularly well. Use words that indicate the post's timeliness or newsworthiness directly in your title.



### Be Simple

Try to keep your titles brief and concise. A long-winded title often sounds complicated and can lose a potential reader's interest. As a general rule of thumb, aim to keep your blog titles 8-9 words or fewer.



### Be Controversial

Controversial posts tend to spark a lot of discussion and debate, which also makes them spread quickly. So try making a blog title a bit controversial and see how your audience reacts to it. That said, don't be controversial just for the sake of being controversial. Make sure you present some solid points, including well thought-out descriptions and facts within the post to back up your opinion.



### Use Numbers

Numbers are a great way to set expectations for a post. It tells readers exactly what they're going to get, and exactly how much of it. Readers don't usually want to be kept guessing, so why not give it to them straight? Write a blog post about some newly published industry research and make sure to include data points in your blog title. An example of such a title is "4 Critical Ways Google+ Is Changing Search."



#### 4) FORMATTING IS YOUR FRIEND

In blogging, it is important to break up blocks of text into chunks. Online reading is not like reading a physical book. The online reader wants to be able to immediately scroll through content and scan subheaders, bold text, and even bullet points. For example, here is how we have applied bullet points and different font sizes to the same content in order to make it more visually appealing:

##### BEFORE

HubSpot is an all-in-one marketing software that helps your business get found online. It includes a suit of tools, such as keyword intelligence, blogging platform, email marketing, lead management, analytics, and more. To find out more about HubSpot, start your 30-day free trial today.

##### AFTER

HubSpot is an all-in-one marketing software that helps your business get found online. It includes a suite of tools, such as:

- Keyword intelligence
- Blogging platform
- Email marketing
- Lead management
- Analytics and more!

To find out more about HubSpot, start your 30-day free trial today.

### 5) IN-TEXT CALLS-TO-ACTION (CTA)



Once you have built a blog readership, you can start making attempts to convert those visitors into supporters. A well-constructed blog post should always include in-text links to other resources. To maximize potential for generating new contacts, why not point these links to landing pages for downloadable offers such as an ebook you've written, an upcoming or archived webinar, or other conversion opportunities?

### 6) SIDEBAR CALLS-TO-ACTION



In addition to the individual blog articles you publish, the home page for your blog can help generate leads in itself. The top of your blog as well as its sidebar are both prime real estate for CTA banners and buttons. Design some visually stimulating CTAs that link to landing pages for some of your best-performing offers. Feel free to also test and rotate different offers to make sure you're using this space for maximum lead generation power.

### 7) MAKE IT ACTIONABLE



Whether people found the blog post through a search engine, an email, or a social network, they most likely clicked through to an article to solve a problem. What makes people share a post with others is the actionable insight it provides to solve a problem. Provide clear takeaways and actionable steps in blog posts to ensure your idea resonates with readers.

### 8) HELP PEOPLE RELATE



Metaphors are a timeless storytelling element. Don't leave metaphors to novelists. They should be an active part of blog posts, too. Comparing two seemingly different things and drawing connections between them is a valuable way to help readers conceptualize new ideas and generate more interest in a subject.

### 9) ENTERTAINING



Informative doesn't have to mean boring. Have your employees or constituents make some fun and timely images or videos to show off their personalities, for example. Have someone outside your company review your blog post to check for entertainment.

## CHAPTER 4:

# How to Promote Your Blog

There are thousands of blogs out there. If you are convinced that yours should stand out from the rest, you should do the necessary work to promote it. Promotion drives more traffic to your blog, increases your visibility, and helps to establish you as an authority in your niche.

A blog is much easier to promote if it has been optimized for success. For instance, you need to be using compelling titles and images. You should also make it easy for your readers to spread blog posts across their networks. Let's look at the different ways in which you can gain exposure for your blog.

### 1) FIND BLOGGERS



A great starting point for promoting your blog is to leverage your existing connections and create new relationships. Reach out to influential bloggers in the nonprofit industry and attract their attention through mentions on your blog and social media. Your goal here is to create an opportunity for them to share your blog posts across their network. What is more, you can create link-building opportunities that will prove essential in the accumulation of inbound links and how your blog posts rank in search engines.



## 2) SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING

In this ebook, we already mentioned the connection between business blogging and social media sharing. This is definitely an essential dynamic for the promotion of your content. Just about every blog now has social sharing buttons to make it as easy as possible for visitors to share your content.



Whenever you publish a new blog post, you should automatically publish it to the main social networks: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+. The most popular locations for buttons are above the content, below the content, or to the left of the content.

## 3) WEBSITE BANNERS

We cannot emphasize enough the power of calls-to-action in driving traffic to your blog. Consider placing calls-to-action on different pages of your website, such as your home page and About Us page.



Carefully craft the language for the call-to-action. For instance, you can emphasize the number of people who are already subscribed to your blog and use a call-to-action along the lines of "45,000 people already receive our new blog posts via email. Join them today!"

## 4) EMAIL SIGNATURES

Your blog most likely covers a range of topics, all tailored to your marketing persona(s). So whenever you send an email, you can link to the awesome resources located on your blog. Email signatures can drive a surprisingly high amount of traffic to your blog.



### 5) RUN A CONTEST



Consider running a contest on your blog to attract more attention to it. Come up with an entry system that requires other bloggers to link back to you. You can either have them publish a post on their blog, retweet a post from your blog, or 'like' your Facebook fan page in order to be eligible. Any one of these methods is sure to help expand your blog's reach and attract new visitors.

### 6) BLOG DIRECTORIES



Blog directories present another opportunity for promoting your blog legally. There are hundreds of free blog directories out there. You'll want to make sure to submit your blog to at least the top 25-50 directories available. This can help you get more traffic and help with rankings as well because it creates inbound links to your blog.

### 7) CREATE A VIDEO



Create a short video to describe what your blog covers and what its mission is. Then, publish the video to YouTube and allow a different audience to find it. You can also create a controversial or funny video that links to the blog.



## CHAPTER 5:

# How to Measure Your Blog

Blogging without measuring results is a waste of time. Measuring the results of your business blogging efforts can save you time and make you more money. Talk about a win-win!

When it comes to your nonprofit's blog, there are a range of metrics you can consider. In fact, the number of blogging metrics can get so large that tracking them all wouldn't leave much time for blogging, let alone other important aspects of inbound marketing.

### MEASURING VISITORS

One of the most basic metrics is also one of the most important ones. Visits are the count of people who came to check out your blog content. It's interesting to look at your total number of visits to measure the overall improvement of your blog. However, a better way to look at this data is viewing visits by individual blog articles.

Looking at success factors for individual articles helps you better understand the type of content your target audience is looking for. Look at your five most successful blog posts. What do they have in common?

### MEASURING LEADS

If your blog isn't generating new contacts (leads) for your nonprofit to reach out to, you are missing a huge opportunity. Attracting new constituents is what fuels the growth and success of your organization.

Sometimes a post may not get a ton of visits but still generate lots of new contacts. Without looking at the leads metric, a marketer might easily dismiss the less viewed post as a failure when that shouldn't necessarily be the case. Look at the leads you generate from blog posts. Also examine at what rate those leads convert into members, donors, etc. compared to other marketing channels.

## **SUBSCRIBER COUNT**

It takes more than reading one blog article for a person to develop an understanding of your expertise and credibility within your industry. Giving readers the opportunity to subscribe to your blog either via Really Simple Syndication (RSS) or via email is a common characteristic of a well-planned blog.

Looking at how many people subscribe to your blog provides a solid indicator of the quality and consistency of your content. Your subscribers act as the base readership of your content and can help spread it to others.

## **TRACK INBOUND LINKS**

When another website links to a page on your website, we call this an inbound link. Search engines use inbound links as a method to determine how pages appear and rank in search engine results.

As blog posts are normally educational or entertaining, they are great at generating inbound links and, subsequently, search traffic. It is important to look at how many inbound links each of your blog posts attracts. Different types of blog posts and topics will vary in the number of inbound links they drive. Looking at these metrics for each post will enable you to maintain a well-balanced content strategy for your blog.

## **WATCH SOCIAL MEDIA SHARES**

Social media can be a key driver of short-term traffic. Look at the historic social media shares for your blog posts to determine which types of posts get the most short-term traffic from social media. Compare that data to the number of visits or leads to see if there are any major inconsistencies. What could they be due to, and how can you use them to your advantage?

## CHAPTER 6:

# Four Blogging Best Practices

Great business blogs have to walk a fine line: they have to create value for current and prospective constituents while supporting a strategy that leads to growth.

Marketing blogs are often measured by very different metrics than blogs that function as media outlets. The media business online is about impressions and clicks. However, if you are a nonprofit blog and your goal is to attract members or other constituents, then you really don't care about impressions. While one person may generate 100 impressions in a week for a media site, for a marketing blog, that same person is only going to account for one lead (potential member) regardless of how often they view your content.

Because blogging for the purpose of marketing has different goals, it also has some distinct best practices that distinguish it from personal blogs or media blogs. That said, some of the key principles of media and personal blogs are still very much important in blogging for marketing.

The challenge is to find the right blend of content for your audience.

### 1) THINK LIKE A VERTICALLY INTEGRATED PUBLISHER

You are not a nonprofit blogger, you are a vertically integrated online publisher. Your job isn't to publish an article or two each week. Instead, you have the same responsibilities that publishers in traditional media have; the only difference is that all of those responsibilities are tied directly to your nonprofit.



Publishers have to create relevant content, determine the best methods to publicize their content to improve reach, and define advertising opportunities as well as manage them. As a vertically integrated publisher, you should do all of these things for your nonprofit to ensure that the content you create is valuable to prospective constituents and is delivered in a way that can support awareness and growth.

### 2) FOCUS ON NON-BRANDED KEYWORDS

It is likely that, if you have spent some time optimizing your website, you rank well in search engines for your nonprofit name and related terms. However, blogs used for marketing provide the opportunity to build incoming traffic from non-branded keywords.



For example, if you are an association for environmental scientists, you should be writing about the larger issues facing the field of environmental science and answering common questions about the profession, rather than simply blogging about what your association does. This content will not only help increase search traffic, but also drive better quality prospects to your nonprofit's website.

### 3) ASK READERS WHAT THEY WANT

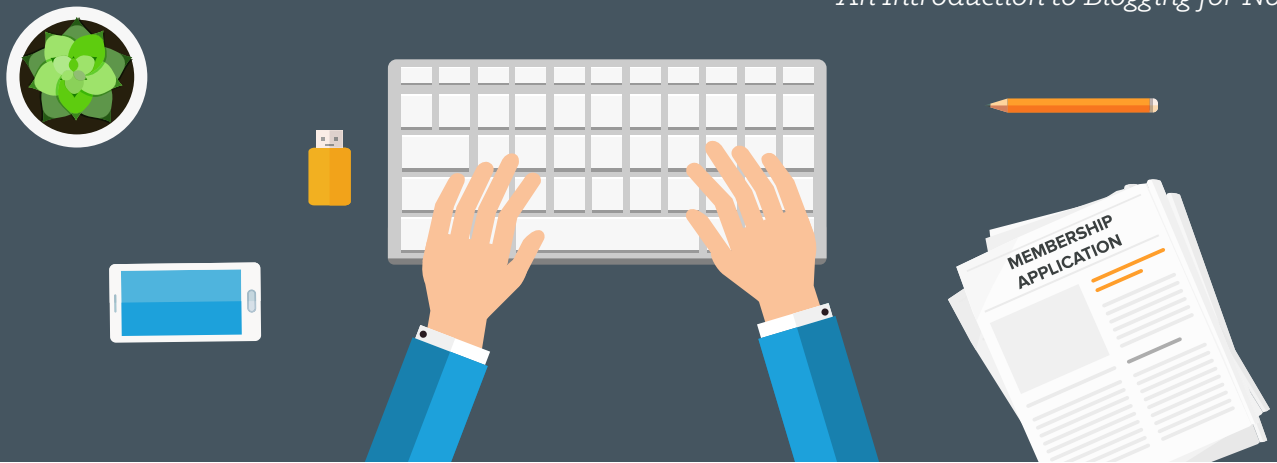


It is easy to get caught up in the type of information you think is interesting, but after blogging for a few months, you'll experience the need to ask readers what they want. Assumptions can often be wrong, so conduct a survey on your business blog as a way to obtain clear feedback from readers. Questions should address topics for future posts and types of content readers prefer (e.g. text vs. audio vs. video, etc.), and the survey should also include space for comments to give readers the opportunity to make their own, personalized suggestions.

### 4) CONNECT YOUR BLOG WITH YOUR WEBSITE



Blogs can be a major source of new traffic from search engines and social media. Realize that a blog post may be the first thing a potential customer sees about your organization. Having a blog as part of your website, either as a subdomain (blog. your-domain.com) or as a page (yourdomain.com/blog) is an important step to allow first-time visitors to easily learn additional information about your nonprofit. It is also important to make sure the navigation and other design elements of your blog make it easy for users to find information about your company if they're looking for it.



## CONCLUSION & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Blogging is an essential part of online marketing. It helps your organization gain exposure in front of a larger audience and engender action through storytelling. What's more, it directly impacts awareness of your organization's mission because it is strictly tied to an increase in organic search traffic and referrals as well as a robust way to generate support.

As you embark on your blogging journey, prepare for the workload tied to content management. Build an editorial calendar, and start adding to it some resources that you already have lying around, such as reports or informative brochures. We also recommend that you involve a few more people in the content creation process.

Blogging may seem like a lot of work, but done right—even the leanest organization can see serious results with a small but consistent commitment. Your organization is doing amazing things each and every day. Help people discover exactly what they are.





# FOR THE LOVE OF MARKETING.

## HUBSPOT'S ALL-IN-ONE MARKETING SOFTWARE HELPS NONPROFITS:



### ATTRACT NEW AUDIENCES

Optimize new and existing content to attract website traffic and increase awareness for your organization and cause with blogging, microsites, social media, and your website.



### PERSONALIZE EMAIL AND ONLINE INTERACTIONS

Engage prospective constituents with customized content unique to their interests, behaviors, or level of awareness with your organization.



### GENERATE MEMBERS, DONORS, OR VOLUNTEERS

Convert leads into members, donors, or volunteers with repeat engagements through email automation, on-site customization, and more.



### RETAIN CURRENT CONSTITUENTS

Delight current constituents with relevant and valuable communications long-after their initial interaction with your organization.

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