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Blogging Basics for Field Service Businesses



Introduction

In our *Ultimate Website Checklist for Field Service Businesses* in this Kit, we highly recommended that field service businesses have a blog. Here's why:

- **Search engines like websites with frequently updated content**, and will rank them higher than static websites.
- **You can develop posts around your customers' greatest problems and needs**, which gives you more opportunities to use keywords your customers are searching online.
- **You own your blog and everything on it**—unlike social media, where you're 'borrowing' the space. If Facebook were to decide it didn't like you, all your posts would disappear—but a blog on your business domain is your own piece of virtual real estate.
- **Blog posts can educate your customers** and offer them an improved customer experience.
- **Sharing your expertise positions you as a thought leader in your industry.** (And who would prospective customers rather hire—the foremost plumber, electrician, or HVAC company in the field, or the anonymous business owner whose website is basically a one-page flyer?)

Of course, a blog filled with self-promotional posts, blurry images, and typos may be worse than no blog at all. There are many ways to get it wrong, which is why the internet is littered with dead blogs. So we gathered our best-practice tips to make the process smooth and easy for you.

It's blogging time!

1.



Take Care of the Details.

First, let's get some housekeeping out of the way. These steps can shave a lot of time off the blog-building process.

Fill it out.

If you haven't already, please fill out our *Ultimate Website Checklist for Field Service Businesses* in this Kit. There, you'll take care of tasks like developing a name for your blog, determining who your target market is, and even developing a handful of post ideas. We also included links to helpful resources that will help you with these action items.

Learn the system.

When your web design firm set up your blog, they probably used a blogging platform like Wordpress or Hubspot. If they offer a training in how to use the platform, take it. Otherwise, you can find tutorials for every common blogging platform online. While these blogging systems can seem complicated at first, after a few posts you'll be a pro.

Help readers share.

If your design firm didn't already do it, ask for help installing social sharing buttons so your readers can click and share any post on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other platforms. Some blogging systems, like Wordpress, offer plugins that let you easily add these buttons on your own.



Consider hiring a pro.

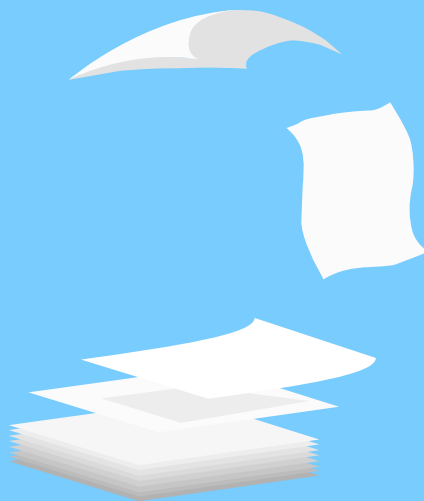
If you don't have someone on staff who can take care of the blog, and you don't want to do it yourself, think about hiring a professional content writer or blogger.

You'll find writers who charge a little and writers who charge a lot, but remember that you get what you pay for. If you want real results from your blog, hire a writer who can prove they've gotten results for their clients—like increases in blog viewership, social shares, or newsletter subscribers. Even better if the writer has experience writing for your industry, and if they can also handle layout, images, and SEO!

Wait—a writer with experience in the plumbing industry who knows Wordpress and is skilled at graphic design? A blogger who knows their way around a boiler and is experienced with the Hubspot blogging platform?

Yes, they really do exist. Try advertising locally or on freelance job boards, but we recommend staying away from sites that tout low prices as their main advantage. Can't afford a good content writer? Try to find a local pro who's willing to swap blogging for your services. (You never know, there may be a writer in your town who needs to have their bathroom replumbed.)

2.



Get the Writing Right.

If you've decided that you or a member of your staff will be writing the blog, keep these best practices front and center.

Go long *and* short.

Way back when, the conventional wisdom was that online readers are an impatient breed, unwilling to scroll down a page or read more than 300 words at a time. However, blogger Neil Patel [did the research](#) and discovered that 2,000+ word posts on evergreen topics—meaning topics that will be as relevant in five years as they are right now—‘perform better at every level’. Here’s why:

- **Longer posts help you stand out from the lazier bloggers** who churn out only tiny posts.
- **Long, evergreen posts attract links and shares forever.** (The more people who link to and share your blog, the more visitors—and customers—you’ll get!)
- **Search engines consider longer posts to be more authoritative,** and therefore rank them more highly than short ones.
- **Customers find longer posts more authoritative as well,** boosting your expert cred.
- **You can repurpose long posts into all sorts of other content,** saving you time and money. For example, a long post can become a series of short emails for an autoresponder email campaign, a podcast, or a downloadable report—and you can even collect several of them into a free e-book for your customers.

Don’t worry, you don’t need to be producing several epic posts every week; sometimes a topic is important but simply doesn’t warrant 2,000 words, so mix short and long to get the best from both.

Be customer-focused.

While your blog will be branded with your business name and logo, posts don't need to overtly plug your company. Otherwise, why not skip the hassle and just take out an ad somewhere? You want to build loyalty and attract new customers, and showing that your goal is to help them above all else will turn them into fans of your business. (You'll see customer experience as a major theme throughout this Kit.)

Sure, if you have a new service or are running a promotion, write a post about it. Just make sure you provide enough interesting, educational content that your readers are willing to keep coming back. For example, try posts on:


- How to DIY simple projects like installing a dimmer switch, upgrading a faucet, or repairing a sticking door.
- How to choose a boiler/plumbing service/smart home system. (If you could use a post on how to choose a boiler, we wrote a [customer-friendly post](#) on that very topic that you're invited to swipe and use on your own blog.)
- How to perform an annual whole-house checkup.
- Top 9 ways to save energy this winter.
- Reviews of industry-related products customers are likely to use in their own home, such as plumbing tools, paint brands, thermostats, etc.

Notice how these post ideas help the customer *and* promotes your services!

Write killer headlines.

The headline of a post is what draws people in, so it's important to develop headlines that pique the reader's interest. Here's how:

- **Use keywords.** Make sure to get your long-tail keyword for each post into its headline. (More on this in the *Simple SEO* guide in this Kit.)
- **Address your audience.** A broad post that seems like it was written for every human on Earth will actually attract fewer clicks than one written for a particular audience. After all, the specific post seems like it was written just for them! The more specific the better, like 'Bristol Estate Agents: You Need This Certificate by May' or '7 Easy Home Repairs for Homeowners Who Aren't Handy'.
- **Choose power words.** According to [Buffer](#), the five most influential words in the English Language are *you*, *free*, *because*, *instantly*, and *new*—and they also give the thumbs-up to words like *trust*, *proven*, *safety*, *results*, *complete*, *create*, and *latest*.
- **Keep it under 70.** After seventy characters (including spaces), your headline will be cut off in search engine results.



A final big rule is to *break the rules*. The best practices for headlines (and for blogging in general) are always changing as more research is done and as trends and reader preferences change. Also: People do get tired of seeing the same formulaic headlines over and over. If you have a compelling reason to write a long headline or not use your keyword, go for it.

Keep it friendly.

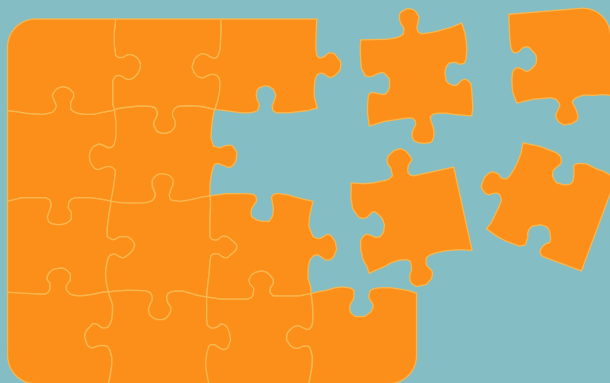
Remember, the people reading your blog aren't industry pros, otherwise they'd be doing their own plumbing and HVAC work. That means you should write in a friendly, conversational tone. For example:

- **Use contractions** (*it's* vs. *it is*, *you're* vs *you are*). This goes a long way towards making your writing feel less like a business memo and more like a customer-friendly guide.
- **Skip the jargon.** While you want to come across as an expert, the right way to do it is to explain industry concepts in a way the casual reader can understand.
- **Use short words.** Ten-dollar words impress no one. Why say *utilise* when you can say *use*?
- **Keep paragraphs, short, too.** Long paragraphs tend to be difficult to read, especially online. Try limiting paragraphs to three or four sentences.
- **Break up long sections.** Instead of one long blog post of dense copy, chunk down the post using subheads, bullet lists, and images. It also helps to highlight important phrases in bold just to break up the sea of text.

You be you.

To help your blog stand out, let your field service business's (and your!) personality shine through. You don't have to be like everyone else. If you like to tackle controversial topics on social media and with your friends in real life, you can do that on your business blog. If humor is your strong suit, use it. Readers will remember a controversial, funny, or otherwise rule-breaking blog more than a bland, safe, boring one. (Besides, don't you want to attract customers who are into your brand's style?)

3.



Say It with Pictures.

Visual content is 40 times more likely to be shared on social media, [according to Buffer](#). Pictures also make your blog posts more readable and interesting, and can enhance the customer experience. Here's how to do blog images right.

Find quality images.

While it's easy to grab images from other websites, it's just not nice. Once your blog is on a roll and you know it's worth spending a few more dollars on, you can sign up for a subscription to a stock image site like [iStockPhoto](#) or [Getty Images](#).

Ignore the fluff.

Readers online ignore images that serve no purpose other than to jazz up the page, and they also tend to dismiss generic stock images of random people, [according to Nielsen Norman Group](#). However, viewers do look at photos of real people (such as the photos that accompany staff bios), and images that include information. Which brings us to...

Include text.

Yes, we're telling you to use text on the images that you use to break up the text. That's because blog visitors share images with text more than plain ones. For example, if you're working on a post on a DIY plumbing fix, the accompanying image could include the text 'The Easy Way to Fix a Dripping Faucet'. That's much more shareable than a simple photo of a dripping faucet.

It's easy to add text to images using the free service [Canva](#), which will also let you create images in the standard size for your blog, play with different filters for interesting effects, and add frames and shapes. Canva even offers an assortment of free photos, so try that first before searching online for photos or paying for them through a stock photo service.



Use alt tags.

Most blogging platforms let you add alt tags to photos—these are a description of the image, which are helpful for the visually impaired who use blog readers. They also help increase your SEO results, so be sure to use good keywords in your alt tags when possible.

Keep them small.

When images take more than a few seconds to download, readers often bounce right off your post in search of a faster solution. Hubspot recommends that you use images no larger than 100KB for the speediest loading.

Include more images in longer posts.

BlogPros analysed 100 high-ranking blog posts and discovered they used images every 350 words or so. This makes sense, since the images are helping break up large chunks of text in long posts.

Try infographics.

Infographics are the best of all worlds: They're attractive images, but chock full of informative text and compelling statistics. They're also highly shareable. Canva offers free templates that will let you easily create beautiful infographics.

4.



Post your Posts.

You're finally ready to get those posts out to your information-hungry customers! Let's talk about *when* to schedule your posts for the best results.

Post enough (but not too much).

The big question is, how often do you need to post to attract new readers, retain old ones, and keep the search engines happy?

The answer: Post as much as you can without sacrificing quality. Once per week is a good minimum to keep readers coming back, but studies show that the more you post the more readers you'll attract. Also, if your competitors have a blog with a large readership, you may want to post more than they do to help you compete. Finally, frequent posting is also good for SEO, mainly because you have more opportunities to use keywords, get links, and so on.

However, all that goes out the window if the quality of your posts suffers because you're trying to do too much. Your customers would rather see one amazing blog post per week than 50 so-so posts every month.

When determining your perfect posting frequency, keep in mind how much support you have: How many staff members or freelancers are blogging for you, what your blogging budget is, and how much time you and your staff can spare without cutting into the time spent actually serving your customers.



Create a schedule.

Once you have a goal number of posts, schedule your post ideas into a content calendar (like the Content Calendar Template included in this Kit). Include the headline, keywords, target audience, and other details that will help you and your staff stay on track. Excel can work well for your content calendar, or use Google Sheets to help everyone involved collaborate more easily.

Pick a time.

You could publish your posts any day and time you like and do just fine. However, if you'd like to optimise your schedule to get more clicks and shares, [TrackMaven](#) researched the best times to post:

- Wednesdays are very competitive, and Sundays do well because almost no one publishes that day. Sunday posts also get more shares than posts published on other days.
- 10am is when pretty much everyone posts; the time ranging from 3pm into the evening is less competitive *and* results in more shares.

When in doubt, test! It could be that everyone posts at 10 am because a previous study said that's the best time to publish. As we mentioned earlier, things change. Who knows...maybe you'll find that 1 am on Tuesdays works best for you.



5.

Promote your Posts.

You've created incredible posts with eyeball-grabbing images, and are posting them at the perfect time. You're almost done, but there's another important step: Promoting your posts to make sure as many people see (and share) them as possible. Here are some ways to get your posts in front of the right people.

Socialise them.

Promote your posts on all your social media accounts, from Facebook to Pinterest, being sure to include an enticing headline, a link, and an image.

Send the news.

If you have an email newsletter, be sure to let your subscribers know each time you have a new post. Email marketing platforms like MailChimp let you automate this process by linking the mail system up with your blog's RSS feed.

Contact influencers.

If there's a website, local magazine, or industry influencer you think would like (and share) your post, send them a quick email with the details. Influencers get tonnes of these emails from bloggers, so keep your note short and focus on how your post will help their readers or followers.

Give kudos.

If you quoted another person or linked to a website or another blog in your post, reach out via email to let them know—and to thank the author for their work.

6.

Keep it Going.



Don't make the mistake of spending a lot of time writing a post, only to let it die in obscurity as soon as the next one comes along. Go through your posts occasionally and make updates to the information, add new internal links (since you now have more posts to link to), and re-promote posts when they become relevant again (like posts on boiler repair in the winter).

Also, consider Commusoft's field service management software to help you better serve all the customers you'll be attracting through your new website and blog. Take [a tour of Commusoft](#) today!

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