



Mini eBook Series

# B2B Blogging That Works:

The Essential Platform for Branding and Conversion



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# B2B BLOGGING THAT WORKS: THE ESSENTIAL PLATFORM FOR BRANDING AND CONVERSION

## INTRODUCTION

### SAVED FROM BANKRUPTCY BY BLOGGING

It was the summer of 1989. Marcus Sheridan, one of the partners of River Pools, was on the edge of despair. The housing market had crashed and, with it, their company was about to implode. Every single business consultant they approached had advised them to file for bankruptcy. Sheridan faced the possibility of losing his home, letting his family down, and firing 16 employees.

But Sheridan wasn't ready to give up yet. He had observed that the market was changing; people were changing the way they bought things. They did a lot of research on their own and pretty much had their minds made up by the time they approached a vendor. And most of this research was being done online.

That's when a light bulb went off in Sheridan's brain. He decided to use the internet to answer questions raised by potential pool buyers and earn their trust—whether or not they eventually became customers.

So, he and his partners brainstormed every single question they had heard from potential customers. Then he spent every single free minute creating articles and videos to answer those questions and published them on their blog. Their tagline: "Welcome to the Most Educational Swimming Pool Blog in the Country!"

This turned their business around. The blog helped River Pools attract more traffic, get more leads, earn the public's trust, and make more sales than ever before. The business did not fold up. In fact, it became so successful that Sheridan has since opened a spin-off company, The Sales Lion, to help other businesses implement what he did.<sup>1</sup>

That's the power of blogging to promote a business.

## WHY BLOG? THE BENEFITS OF BLOGGING



How can something as simple as your company blog save your failing business, launch a new one, or make an existing one sustainable?

Blogs began as simple web-based journals or logs. These “web logs” came to be known as “blogs” for short. Blog posts are the individual articles that appear in a blog. Because journals or diaries are written sequentially, blog posts tend to be displayed according to their date of publication as well, with the most recent ones showing up first. However, most blogging platforms (WordPress being one of the most popular) allow the publisher or blogger to show posts in different ways, such as by popularity, by category, and others.

**Here are some ways your business can benefit from blogging:**

- A blog is a great way for your company to express its branding. It shows off your company’s personality, values, and USP.
- Blogging helps potential customers find your business. They are already searching online for the solutions you provide. By publishing a search engine-optimized (SEO) blog that addresses their questions, you will become more easily discoverable to them.
- When you provide valuable, useful information, you gain the trust of your blog readers. This makes it easier for you to convert them into email subscribers and buyers.
- Blog posts exhibit your knowledge and expertise, thus reinforcing your authority in the industry.
- A blog also helps you better serve your existing customers. You can use blog posts to teach them how to get the best results from your product. Many customers search within a vendor’s website for answers to support-type questions.

**BLOGGING MYTHS (AND THE TRUTH BEHIND THEM)**

**1. You have to be a good writer to blog.**

While blogging entails writing, the conventions of blogging are much more relaxed than the writing you learned in school. Blogs are expected to be conversational and personable—not read like an academic treatise. Of course, good grammar and accuracy still matter. The blog represents your business, after all.

**2. Blogging only helps B2C.**

Remember Marcus Sheridan from our introduction? Through his marketing business, The Sales Lion, he has helped hundreds of businesses promote themselves through blogging (and other forms of content marketing). More than half of them are B2B.

Studies by the Content Marketing Institute, Hubspot, and others have consistently shown that blogging helps both B2C and B2B organizations get more traffic, increase leads, and boost sales.



### 3. I can't possibly think of enough topics to blog about.

To get the best results from blogging, consistency is important. This can get overwhelming for some businesses. But if you keep your finger on the pulse of your industry, listen to your prospective customers, and respond to their needs, then you will never run out of topics to publish on your blog.

It is easy for your blog to stand out if your competitors are not blogging yet. But what if they are already ahead of you in this respect? That certainly does not mean you should not blog about the same topics. Add your own spin and give the topic a different perspective. SEO expert Brian Dean says you can out-blog anybody by making your blog post either longer, more up-to-date, better designed, or more thorough.<sup>2</sup>

### 4. Traffic is the most crucial factor to a blog's success.

Your blog is no use if nobody reads it. However, simply attracting more traffic is not necessarily better, either. Getting the *right* traffic—people who fit the profile of your ideal customer—is more important. Always write for your ideal customer and keep them in mind every time you promote your blog.

### 5. Blogging is a quick fix.

Don't expect direct sales to be the outcome of your blog posts (although it *can* happen, don't count on it). Give it time. It is, in fact, important not to make your blog content an aggressive sales pitch.

You may find that some of your older blog posts tend to bring in the most traffic and possibly the highest number of conversions. Hubspot calls these compounding blog posts. Like a snowball, they keep bringing results as time goes by. Blogging is a marathon, not a sprint!

## BLOGGING BY THE NUMBERS

- 68% of marketers surveyed say they use blogging.<sup>3</sup>
- 60% of marketers surveyed say creating blog content is a top priority for their company.<sup>4</sup>
- 59% of B2B marketers consider blogs their most valuable online channel.<sup>5</sup>
- Companies that blog 15 or more times per month get 5x more traffic than companies that do not blog. Small businesses (1 to 10 employees) tend to see the biggest gains in traffic when they post more articles.<sup>6</sup>
- B2B marketers are much more likely to use blogging (78%) when compared to B2C marketers (6%).<sup>7</sup>
- B2B companies that blog only 1-2x/month generate 70% more leads than those who don't blog.<sup>8</sup>



- An average company will see a 45% growth in traffic when increasing total blog articles from 11-20 to 21-50 articles. B2C companies see a 59% increase in traffic after growing total blog articles from 100 to 200 in total.<sup>9</sup>
- B2B marketers are more likely to increase their blogging (71%) than B2C marketers (63%).<sup>10</sup>
- 42% of organizations that use inbound marketing say their blog posts are 501-1,000 words long.<sup>11</sup>
- Online articles with relevant images on average get 94 percent more total views than those without.<sup>12</sup>
- B2B marketers are more likely to have their blogs mobile-optimized (62%), when compared to B2C marketers (51%).<sup>13</sup>
- 29% of consumers say they want to see more blog content in the future.<sup>14</sup>

## BLOGGING BEST PRACTICES

### HOW TO MAKE YOUR BLOGGING EFFORTS PAY OFF

#### LENGTH

For search engine optimization and better rankings online, your blog posts should be at least 250-300 words long.<sup>15</sup> If they are shorter than that, search engines will not have enough content to crawl and determine what the post is about. On the other hand, longer posts give search engines plenty of opportunities to decide what you are writing about. That is why longer posts tend to perform better and earn higher rankings on search engines.

But how much longer than 300 words should your posts be?

To get your post read, research by Medium says the ideal length is 1,600 words.<sup>16</sup> If you go much longer than that, reader attention declines. Moz found that posts with 1,800 words or more had the highest number of inbound links.<sup>17</sup>

While all this seems to indicate that you should make your blog posts as long as possible, it's not quite as simple as that. Your post needs to be only as long as necessary for you to provide high-quality, in-depth content. Don't make it so short that it does not provide valuable information. Neither should you fill it with fluff just to reach what you believe is the ideal word count.

#### FREQUENCY

As with article length, there are no hard and fast rules about blogging frequency.



The statistics mentioned previously seem to indicate that the more blog posts you have the better results you are likely to get. That is true, but only as long as those blog posts are, in fact, of good quality. It will not do you any good to publish a lot of poor quality posts simply to maintain the frequency of publishing. That will only destroy your brand, online reputation, and conversion rate.

The rule of thumb is: publish as often as you can while maintaining the quality of your posts.

That said, you should not publish so infrequently that your readers forget about you and your blog. Aim for a minimum of at least one high-quality blog post per month and then work your way up from there. The key is to be consistent.

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### BEST DAYS AND TIMES TO PUBLISH A BLOG POST

Are there best days and times to publish a blog post? That is another tough question to answer. As soon as anybody gives an answer, then everybody starts publishing on that day and time. This leads to increased competition for audience attention. Eventually, what was prime time for blogging moves to a different time slot.

For example, experts used to say that the middle of the week was the best time to publish blog posts. Every blogger started doing it, readers got inundated and started paying attention to fewer blogs. And now, guess what? Sunday has become the least competitive day to blog and the day when your post is most likely to get the highest number of social shares.<sup>18</sup>

If you are just getting started, don't get hung up about when to publish your posts. Focus instead on setting up systems so you are able to get new posts out there on a regular basis. And then you can begin tracking your results and discovering what works best for you and your readers.

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### CREATE REMARKABLE BLOG POSTS

Millions of blog posts are written every day.<sup>19</sup> Depending on what industry you are in, competition can be fierce. Not to forget that people's attention spans are only getting shorter.

You have to earn their attention by publishing only remarkable blog posts. Do not publish something just for the sake of having a new article on your blog.

"Here we are today; the content factories have either imploded or are on death's doorstep, while brands, publishers and agencies focused on quality content are building audiences and succeeding in their content marketing efforts," Joe Pulizzi, Founder of Content Marketing Institute, wrote in *Chief Content Officer*. "Those companies that... truly focus on creating stories worth telling—will be the ones left standing."<sup>20</sup>



Here are some tips:

- Write attention-grabbing headlines and sub-headlines.
- Always add to what is already been written about the topic. Don't rehash what is already out there.
- Write in a way that is engaging and easy to read.
- Pay attention to design. Your post should be easy to scan and pleasing to the eyes.
- Support the text with relevant images (photos, illustrations, Infographics, charts, etc.) and videos.
- Link to useful and authoritative resources, including other blogs or websites.

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### USE AN EDITORIAL CALENDAR

As you may have realized by now, blogging is hard work; but you can make it easier. Get organized by creating an editorial calendar, so you know ahead of time which posts are going to be published when, and by whom. You can get free templates [HERE](#).

An editorial calendar helps you write faster, because you do not have to sit there wondering what to write about. It also helps you to keep your blog content aligned with other promotions, holidays, and other significant events in your business.

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### PROMOTE YOUR BLOG POSTS

Publishing posts is only part of the work involved with blogging. The other part is promoting your posts so that your target audience will get to read them. There are several ways for you to do this, including:

- Send an email to your subscribers to let them know when you have a brand-new post.
- Share links to your post in all your social media accounts. Use a social scheduler like Hootsuite, MeetEdgar, or other similar tools to pre-schedule links to go out for the next 12 months or even longer (for your evergreen posts only).
- Pay for ads to promote blog posts that are performing well in terms of converting readers into email subscribers and customers.





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## REPUBLISH YOUR BEST POSTS

At least one year after original publication, identify which of your blog posts have resonated well with your audience. These are the ones with a lot of page views, social shares, and, most importantly, the highest conversions to your email list. Update the post with new or refreshed content, and then republish it.<sup>21</sup>

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## FOCUS ON YOUR AUDIENCE, NOT YOUR BRAND

It is tempting to use your blog as just another PR platform, but to get the best results from blogging, you must resist. Make your blog about your audience, instead. That means writing about the topics that they care about—not what you or the Board or company executives care about.<sup>22</sup>

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## OPTIMIZE YOUR BLOG POSTS FOR THE SEARCH ENGINES

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) begins on each individual post. Use a plugin like the Yoast SEO Plugin for WordPress to optimize each post by making sure that the title, slug, text, and other elements reflect a specific target keyword.

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## CONVERT READERS INTO SUBSCRIBERS

Don't be satisfied with people reading your blog posts or even sharing them in social media. That is not enough. Ultimately, you want readers to become your subscribers, so you can continue to communicate with them, nurture the relationship, and turn them into customers.

To accomplish this, make sure each blog post offers at least one opportunity for the reader to sign up for your email list. Create a lead magnet that is relevant to the blog post and offer it in exchange for the reader's contact information. Also, test different types of opt-in forms on your blog, to see which one gets you the most number of subscribers.

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## GET STARTED

### NEW TO BLOGGING? TRY THIS QUICK EXERCISE!

One of the hardest things about blogging is coming up with a continuous stream of topics to write about. Use this BrainWriting exercise to quickly come up with many possible topics for your blog.

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**Time Required:** At least 15 minutes

**Participants:** You can do this by yourself, but it is best to invite others in the organization. Get people from sales, customer service, and other areas of the company to join. You will be surprised by the variety of ideas you come up with.

**Procedure:**

1. Prepare one sheet of paper for each person participating. On top of each sheet, write, “What questions do our prospects and customers have before, during, or after using our product?”
2. Give each employee one worksheet.
3. Set a timer for 5 minutes. During that time, each employee writes 3 answers to the question. At the end of 5 minutes, each employee passes their worksheet to the person on their right.
4. Set the timer for 5 minutes again. Once more, each employee writes 3 answers to the question. Feel free to look at the other ideas already on the sheet and use them as inspiration to get new ideas or combine ideas together.
5. Repeat until the time is up.

Now that you have an extensive list of topics, go over each one. Decide which ideas can go into the editorial calendar, which ones are promising but need to be tweaked, and which ones should be discarded.

You can do this exercise every quarter, with varying trigger questions, to have an endless supply of blog post topics.

## MOVE FORWARD WITH BLOGGING

Blogging is an inexpensive, simple, and effective way to express your branding, attract a bigger audience, and grow your email list. That is why it has become a popular form of content marketing for both B2B and B2C organizations.

As with any marketing strategy, you will get the best results by following a few guidelines. These include focusing on providing high-quality information that your target audience wants, staying aligned with your brand, values, and goals, and being consistent in your efforts. Use your blog as a platform to serve your audience—not to publish your press releases!

**Do you need help getting started or keeping your blog fresh? MintCopy can help. We provide search engine-optimized blog posts, as well as copywriting, web content, email marketing pieces, and news releases that are easy to read and wonderful to share. [Contact us](#) to explore how we can make content marketing easier for you.**



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<sup>1</sup> Sheridan, Marcus. *They Ask You Answer a Revolutionary Approach to Inbound Sales, Content Marketing, and Today's Digital Consumer*. Hoboken: Wiley, 2017. Print.

<sup>2</sup> <http://backlinko.com/skyscraper-technique>

<sup>3</sup> 2016 Social Media Marketing Industry Report, p. 46

<sup>4</sup> Hubspot State of Inbound 2016, Hubspot, p. 8

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.demandmetric.com/content/content-marketing-infographic>

<sup>6</sup> Marketing Benchmarks from 7,000+ Businesses, p. 26

<sup>7</sup> 2016 Social Media Marketing Industry Report, p. 46

<sup>8</sup> Marketing Benchmarks from 7,000+ Businesses, p. 31

<sup>9</sup> Marketing Benchmarks from 7,000+ Businesses, p. 36

<sup>10</sup> 2016 Social Media Marketing Industry Report, p. 49

<sup>11</sup> Hubspot State of Inbound 2016, p. 61

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.mdgadvertising.com/blog/its-all-about-the-images-infographic/>

<sup>13</sup> 2016 Social Media Marketing Industry Report, p. 15

<sup>14</sup>

[http://www.stateofinbound.com/?\\_\\_hstc=20629287.97036c77d4bb1f2c627b7bbo10936f7d.1493998372723.1494205527230.1494209439128.4&\\_\\_hssc=20629287.2.1494209439128&\\_\\_hsfp=3154634147](http://www.stateofinbound.com/?__hstc=20629287.97036c77d4bb1f2c627b7bbo10936f7d.1493998372723.1494205527230.1494209439128.4&__hssc=20629287.2.1494209439128&__hsfp=3154634147)

<sup>15</sup> <https://yoast.com/blog-post-length/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://medium.com/data-lab/the-optimal-post-is-7-minutes-74b9f41509b>

<sup>17</sup> <https://moz.com/blog/what-makes-a-link-worthy-post-part-1>



<sup>18</sup> <https://trackmaven.com/blog/best-time-to-publish-a-blog-post/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.worldometers.info/blogs/>

<sup>20</sup> Pulizzi, Joe. "The Great Video Game Crash of 1983." In *Chief Content Officer: Brave New Word (The Agency Issue)*. Content Marketing Institute. April, 2017. p. 3. PDF.

<sup>21</sup> <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2017/03/blog-posts-new-life/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2017/04/b2b-enterprise-marketers-audience-brands/>

