THE SMALL BUSINESS OWNER'S GUIDE TO BLOGGING

Content

Before you get started, make sure you have something worthy to say – not everything needs to be published (although many crappy blogs will beg to differ!!).

The secret to blogging is knowing your audience. Here are some ideas to get inside their heads:
- What are they Googling? Or what do they wish they knew but haven't yet thought about?
- What gets them ticking?
- Will they laugh/cry/empathize with your content?
- Is there a relevant trend in your industry that you can weigh in on with your opinion?

Length

A good blog post is anywhere between 350-750 words, with the average post being around the 500 mark. However, more detailed and technical blog posts can benefit from lengthier body texts of up to 2000 words – just don't waffle on about a topic unnecessarily!

To maintain readability, vary sentence length.

Time

Blogging can seem daunting and in the beginning it may take you much longer than you had planned, but try dedicating 1-2 hours twice a week to write quality content.

To keep you focused, use this infographic as a time-management tool (start at 12 o'clock):
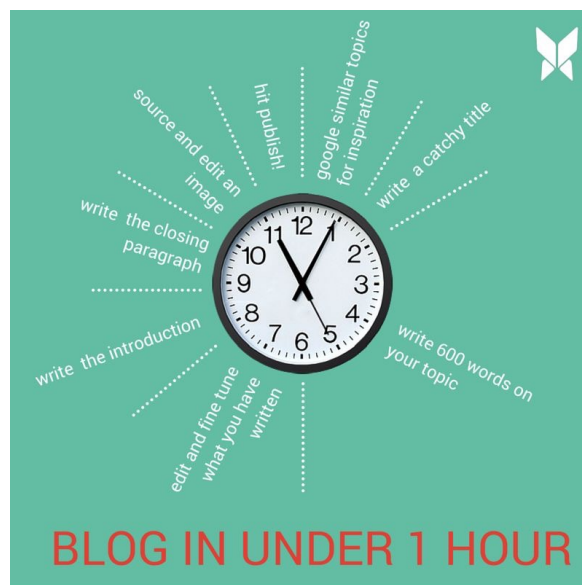
Headline/Title

This is going to determine whether or not people actually click on your blog post and read it further, so make it interesting, captivating and intriguing!

- Use social media and globally popular news sites for inspiration.
  Hint: use Quora to research topics in your field and rework those questions into compelling titles.
- The ideal headline is around 60 characters in length, or about 12 words.
- Think about your keywords and incorporate those early into the headline.

➢ Let's look at this example:
  ✗ *Blogging for small businesses.*
  ✔ *The best blogging secrets for small businesses that you haven't heard of yet.*

Keywords

A successful blog post is not only one that is read, but one that is found! Determining keywords in advance will help keep your writing on topic.

There are 2 types of keywords: long tail (short phrases) and short tail (single words). Blogs perform best with long tail keywords and the good news is that you are more likely to come up with a niche combination that will rank better than highly competitive words like wedding, recipe, blogging or baby.

Tools like Google's Keyword Planner and SEMrush can help determine exactly which terms people are searching for and which will be easier or more difficult for your new blog post to rank for. However, saying this, don't spend too much time on this – being a small business owner, your target audience is likely a lot smaller than large global corporations so getting good quality out to your readers is more important that reaching the millions ☺

Sub-headers

The average person has an attention span of 8 seconds. Sub-headers are a great way to get your message across without the reader having to invest many minutes in reading something that may not answer their questions.

Lists and step-by-step tutorials are the perfect way to use sub headers. Alternatively, break up your paragraphs by inserting 2-3 key factual statements/big promises/distinct personal benefits as sub-headers – make sure you follow the same steps as the headline to ensure that they are engaging and that they lead smoothly into the actual content.

Sub-headers are also a great on-page SEO tool to get your page to rank well with Google. When uploading your blog post to your site, ensure your sub-headers are either H2 or H3 (never H1 as this signals a blog title). When in doubt, use H2 for 3 or less sub-headers and H3 for 3 or more, or lists/how-to's.

Introduction

If your reader gets through the first 3-4 sentences then they're more likely to read the whole blog post - a cliffhanger is an excellent way to immediately engage the reader's attention. If you're not sure what this is, think about your favorite drama series and how they always cut to a commercial break right before a crucial point! Now do the same with your introduction and pose a suspenseful question or statement before continuing onto the body where you will eventually answer this pertinent point.

Body

Use this an opportunity to connect emotionally with your reader – this means avoiding highly factual Wikipedia type content in favor of more personal anecdotal stories. It is the meat of your blog post so give your readers something to chew on and think about!

> ➢ TOP TIP: if it's boring to write, it's probably boring to read!

A good way to define the body of your blog post is to insert an H2 sub-header (see above). You can also use sub-headers to regularly break up lengthy text every 3-5 paragraphs or insert media (see below).

Multi-Media

Just like sub-headers, visuals are a great way to break up big chunks of text. Apart from images and infographics, podcasts and video are excellent tools to summarize your blog content (and they are excellent to share on social media to increase your reach too!).

To help improve you SEO ranking, label your images with keywords BEFORE uploading to your blog, and insert an alt-tag describing what your image is – Google cannot "see" images so they rely on alt-tags to be able to understand context and content.

> ➢ P.S. don't forget to set a featured image! This will be used as a thumbnail whenever your blog post is shared on social media, and usually it will also display on the top of your post (depending on your blog's theme template).

Conclusion

Short, snappy and to the point – use your conclusion to sum up your entire blog post in 1-2 sentences. It's also an excellent idea to insert a strong call to action or link to other content on your site that might be relevant for the reader.

You always want the reader to leave thinking that they've learned something new and valuable.

Good luck, and remember done is better than perfect so long as you keep learning and evolving!