

5

REASONS

Your Business Needs a Blog

(and Tips on Getting Started)

PLUS!

The Anatomy
of a Winning
Blog Post

An e-book by:



Why start a blog?

Business is good. You're working your marketing plan, sending press releases, advertising and getting your name out there.

But you don't have a blog.

Why bother with a blog?

Blogs are a form of content marketing. Many businesses use them as marketing tools and skip the expense of advertising.

With some creativity, talent and time, you'll have a new outlet to communicate with your customers.

IS CONTENT MARKETING WORTH THE EFFORT?

Do you want to ...

- ☐ constantly talk with customers?
- ☐ give your customers easy ways to recommend you to their friends?
- ☐ share news about your company and your industry?
- ☐ establish yourself as the go-to company for your target market?

If you answered YES to these questions, your business will benefit from content marketing.

Why start a blog?

What is Content Marketing?

con•tent mar•ket•ing *noun*

A marketing technique that involves the creation, publication and distribution of content in various media formats for the purpose of attracting and acquiring customers.

Got that?

The simple way to understand content marketing is this:

Business marketers create content
—blog posts, newsletters, emails, videos, podcasts, webinars—
and distribute it to engage their audience and gain customers.

Why start a blog?

One of the easiest ways to begin content marketing is with a blog.

With a blog, you can:

- ✓ Build a community.
- ✓ Establish your expertise.
- ✓ Increase brand awareness.
- ✓ Boost your site's search engine ranking.
- ✓ Control the conversation.

Why start a blog?



Is a blog worth the effort?

Getting started can be hard.

- Coming up with ideas
- Writing clear and useful posts
- Finding time to keep it updated

But with the **reach** it can add to your marketing efforts, a blog is **worth the investment**.

First, let's talk about **why** you should do it.

Then, we'll talk about **how** you should do it.

WARNING

Before you go all **willy-nilly** writing a hundred blog posts and slapping them up on your site, you have to **understand what your blog is all about**.

In every single post you write, tell your readers:
“This is all about **YOU**.”

A blog is a community-building method of content marketing. It's a way to engage your customers with information they care about. They want to know how **you're making their lives better, easier or more fun**.

Keeping that in mind, let's talk about why your business needs a blog and how you can **get it started TODAY!**

Build a Community

Chapter 1 Summary

In this chapter, you will learn:

-  How to start a conversation with your audience
-  What types of blog topics will appeal to your readers
-  How reading blog comments can guide your post ideas
-  How to know which types of posts are your readers' favorites
-  How you can earn social proof from your blog
-  How to handle a complaint on your blog

Build a Community

Start a Conversation

A blog encourages your customers to interact with you. Your posts get the conversation started. Give your readers a reason to engage with you—and share your posts—by **writing relevant, interesting and helpful content**.

- Teach them how to do something.
- Explain a new trend in your industry.
- Solve their problems.
- Make them laugh.

**TIP:
READER
REACTION**

Make sure your blog provides readers with new knowledge, a warm fuzzy feeling, or a giggle.

Build a Community

Instant Market Research

A blog gives readers a place to voice their opinions, to tell you what they like and don't like. Use the opportunity to **learn about your customers**.

Take note of quality comments—those that provide an honest opinion about your post (either positive or negative). **Use those comments as a guide** for what interests your readers and what doesn't.

Then **adjust your posts** (and possibly your products or services) to fit your community's needs.

WHAT DO THE COMMENTS TELL YOU?

Evaluate blog comments and social media shares to discover:

- the biggest problems your customers are having
- the best ways you can continue to serve them and satisfy their needs
- which type of posts are the most popular (hint: count the comments and shares on social media sites)

Build a Community

Instant Social Proof

A blog provides a place for readers to learn about you.

Picture this: Someone Googles the product or service you provide. That person **clicks on your blog**. After reading a helpful post and a few positive comments—**voilà**—that visitor has some social proof that you're worth getting to know.

People trust satisfied customers, so assemble a community through your blog. You'll have pages full of testimonials in the comments.

HOW TO HANDLE A COMPLAINT

If someone posts a complaint on your blog:

- Address the problem right away.
- Be positive and helpful.
- Apologize if necessary.
- Take the conversation offline.

For good businesses like yours, a **swift answer** to a complaint on your blog is social proof that **you value your customers**.

Establish Your Expertise

Chapter 2 Summary

In this chapter, you will learn:

-  How a blog can position you as a leader in your industry
-  Why offering free advice benefits your business
-  What a blog has to do with customer service
-  The chain of events from a blog post to a new customer
-  How a blog extends your marketing reach
-  Why the focus of your posts is crucial to a popular blog

Establish Your Expertise

Show, Don't Tell

Don't just say you're an authority in your industry.

Prove it with your blog!

Offer solutions, tips and advice relevant to your customers' needs. Helpful blog posts show readers you know what you're talking about and that you're willing to offer advice with no commitment on their part.

You're now likely to **convert that site visitor into a customer.**

{ Not only will your posts prove you're the go-to business for solving your readers' problems, your blog will show you're willing to invest time and effort on outstanding customer service and support. }

Establish Your Expertise

HOW A GOOD BLOG POST PAYS OFF

Let's say you're running a garden shop.

On your blog, write a post on eco-friendly ways to get rid of insects and parasites. Now, thanks to your blog, anyone wanting to eradicate backyard pests in an environmentally conscious way will appreciate your expert advice.

What happens next:

- Your visitors browse other tips in your blog archives.
- Your readers share your post with their gardening buddies.
- You attract new followers and customers because of your expertise.
- People know you're an expert, and they like doing business with experts.

Establish Your Expertise

Create Your Own Variety Show

Write about a variety of topics that demonstrate your expertise. You can also toot your own horn, but your **messages must be meaningful to your customers**. Make the blog focused on fulfilling your customers' needs.

For example:

If your company wins an award, write about it and focus on what it means for your customers.

- Does the award assure the customer of receiving the best possible service?
- The most up-to-date products?
- The most experienced staff?

TIP:
ADVICE, NOT ADS

A good blog
doesn't focus on
self-promotion.

Increase Brand Awareness

Chapter 3 Summary

In this chapter, you will learn:

-  How to share your company's mission through your blog
-  Ways to get started with topic ideas for your brand
-  The process from blog post to brand awareness
-  What types of posts will be most relevant to your target market
-  The one piece of information you must include in every post

Increase Brand Awareness

Brand awareness tops your business game plan, and your blog is the perfect place to establish and extend your brand.

How to build brand awareness with a blog

Start with a list. Write down:

- ➡ Why you shine in your field.
- ➡ Reasons your customers love you.
- ➡ Real-life examples of your company's mission.
- ➡ Ways you've met or exceeded your goals.
- ➡ Reasons you started your business.

That's a list of potential blog posts to build brand awareness. **Now what?**

Increase Brand Awareness



Increase Brand Awareness

Blog Topics that Help Customers Remember Your Brand

Don't limit yourself to these ideas!

Give an insider scoop

Let your blog subscribers be first to find out what's new, or offer a discount if a customer mentions your blog post when making a purchase.

Share heartwarming stories

For example, your pizza business gives \$2 to a local charity for every pizza sold on a particular day. Blog about why that charity is important to you.

TIP: THEM, NOT YOU

Always explain why your brand matters to your customers.

Lead your industry

Explain the latest trend or discovery in your field. Tell readers how it's going to affect them.

Give kudos to employees

Earn a reputation for being a great place to work. Don't forget to explain how your employees impact your customers' lives.

Boost Website Search Ranking

Chapter 4 Summary

In this chapter, you will learn:

-  An introduction to Search Engine Optimization
-  Three things to help your website rank high on search engines
-  How a blog simplifies accomplishing those three things
-  How writing blog posts gives you double-duty ROI
-  How to avoid getting penalized by Google

Boost Website Search Ranking

Search Engine Optimization

Add your keywords, refresh your website, share your links, get customers in the door.

That's SEO in a nutshell.

Search Engine Optimization can be complicated, but one of the easiest ways to boost your ranking is to add a blog and post regularly.

So how does having a blog help your website's SEO?

It's as easy as 1, 2, 3.

HOW TO RANK HIGH ON GOOGLE

Search engines don't pull results at random. The highest ranked websites usually have these three things:

- Fresh content
- Frequent use of keywords and phrases matching the search terms
- Lots of links back from other sites, proving the site's authority on the topic

Boost Website Search Ranking

1. Fresh content

Post **a couple times a week** (or month) to keep your site updated.

2. Frequent use of keywords matching the search terms

The more times Google finds those keywords on your site, the better chance you'll rank high in search results. Add your keywords to your blog posts, **especially in headlines**.

3. Links from other websites

Post great information and **share links** to your blog on social media sites. Besides getting in front of new customers, you're building links back to your site. Google likes that!

TIP:

WRITE FOR HUMANS

Google penalizes websites for "keyword stuffing" – when your content sounds like a robot wrote it.

Control the Conversation

Chapter 5 Summary

In this chapter, you will learn:

-  How having a controlled conversation benefits you
-  How you can create your own publicity with your blog
-  Why publishing your own media content is important
-  What a blog can add to your social media engagement
-  Ideas for social media promotion
-  How to handle a negative comment on your blog

Control the Conversation

Your blog is your turf.

Maintaining a blog ensures your message is constantly being publicized in **exactly the words you choose.**

You also have a controlled environment to address customer concerns, paving the way for an **immediate improvement** in communication and customer loyalty.

But how do you get your message out to the public?

Promote your blog online!

A DIFFERENT KIND OF PUBLICITY

Leaving your message entirely for the media to report leaves a lot to chance and human error.

Unlike getting your story in the media, a blog is dependent on you alone.

But it's your responsibility to **share the info!**

Control the Conversation

Social Media Promotion

If you have a social media presence, a blog gives you **additional content** to promote to your followers.

You're not only **spreading the word** about your business, you're giving your followers a reason and a place to interact with you.

Even if you don't have a social media presence yet, your customers do. **Give them something to share** with their friends.

WHERE TO PROMOTE YOUR BLOG CONTENT

Here are just a few social sites where you can promote your content. Don't limit yourself!

- Twitter
- Facebook Page
- Pinterest
- YouTube
- Google +
- LinkedIn
- Manta
- Email newsletters

Control the Conversation

Monitoring comments

Gauge how your customers feel about the content you post. If you're getting a lot of positive feedback, **keep up the good work!** Be sure to reply to commenters and thank them for reading.

How to handle a negative comment

Remember, you control your message, which means you get to **craft a careful – and prompt – response** to address customer concerns. Be positive and helpful, and they'll appreciate your attention and **commitment to customer satisfaction.**

TIP:
DON'T SWEAT IT

Future blog commenters will see how you solved another customer's problem – proof that you're a great business to work with.

Anatomy of a Blog Post

Chapter 6 Summary

In this chapter, you will learn:



How to write a great blog post



The first step to a first-rate post



How to get started writing



Keys to a winning blog post



Pitfalls to avoid

Anatomy of a Blog Post

Writing Your First Blog Post

Let's get started! First, come up with an idea using the tips you learned in the first 5 chapters. **Don't be intimidated by the blank page.** Just write what's on your mind. You can edit your post later.

Steps to write a post:

- Outline your idea.
- Write each section including your keywords.
- Edit for clarity and flow.
- Proofread for grammar and typos.
- Write an amazing headline.
- Review the blog post anatomy checklist (on the next page).

**TIP:
START SMART**

All first-class blog posts begin with a great topic idea.

Anatomy of a Blog Post

Keys to a Winning Blog Post



Anatomy of a Blog Post

Guarantees Your Post Will Flop



Who Should NOT Have a Blog

Chapter 7 Summary

In this chapter, you will learn:

-  Which businesses shouldn't waste their time with a blog
-  How to get the most return on your investment
-  How often to post to get the most benefit from your blog
-  Why you must promote your blog
-  Why you should respond to comments

Who Should NOT Have a Blog

For some businesses, a blog is a waste of time. If you fall into any of these five categories, I advise you not to start a blog.

You have nothing to say.

Without interesting, meaningful posts, no one will share your content, and you'll get little ROI for your time. For you, a blog is not worth the effort.

You don't update your blog regularly.

If you're not updating the blog, you're not getting the SEO ranking boost for fresh content. If you can't post regularly, you won't get the full benefit out of your blog.

**TIP:
KEEP IT UP**

Aim to post at least
every couple of weeks.

Who Should NOT Have a Blog

You don't promote your content.

If a blog is posted online, but no one is around to read it, does it still have an impact? Nope! If you don't share your posts, don't bother writing them.

**TIP:
THE 80/20 RULE**

Spend 20% of your time writing and 80% promoting your content.

You don't respond to blog comments.

No one likes to feel ignored. If your readers take the time to post a thoughtful comment, respond! And if they have a concern that you don't address, you could damage your customer service reputation.

Your customers are not online.

If your target market never, ever looks online for your type of product or service, a blog isn't worth your time.

Convinced?

When you write thoughtful blog posts, customers will know you're thinking about their needs and concerns. Give them what they want, and they'll keep coming back—with their comments and their wallets.

Be funny. Be exciting. Be serious. Be personal. Be helpful. Be relevant.

Above all, be in front of your customers with great content.



Need help?

Does the task of keeping up a regular blog seem **daunting?**

Don't have the time, passion, ideas or ability to write it yourself?

Did you start your blog and then **run out of steam?**

If you want a blog but can't do it alone,
contact me at ashley@ashleyfesta.com for a **free** consultation.

About the Author

Ashley Festa is a freelance writer and content marketer specializing in blogging and creative marketing materials. She also writes case studies, feature stories, annual reports, advertising and brochure copy, grocery lists, and notes on the back of her hand.

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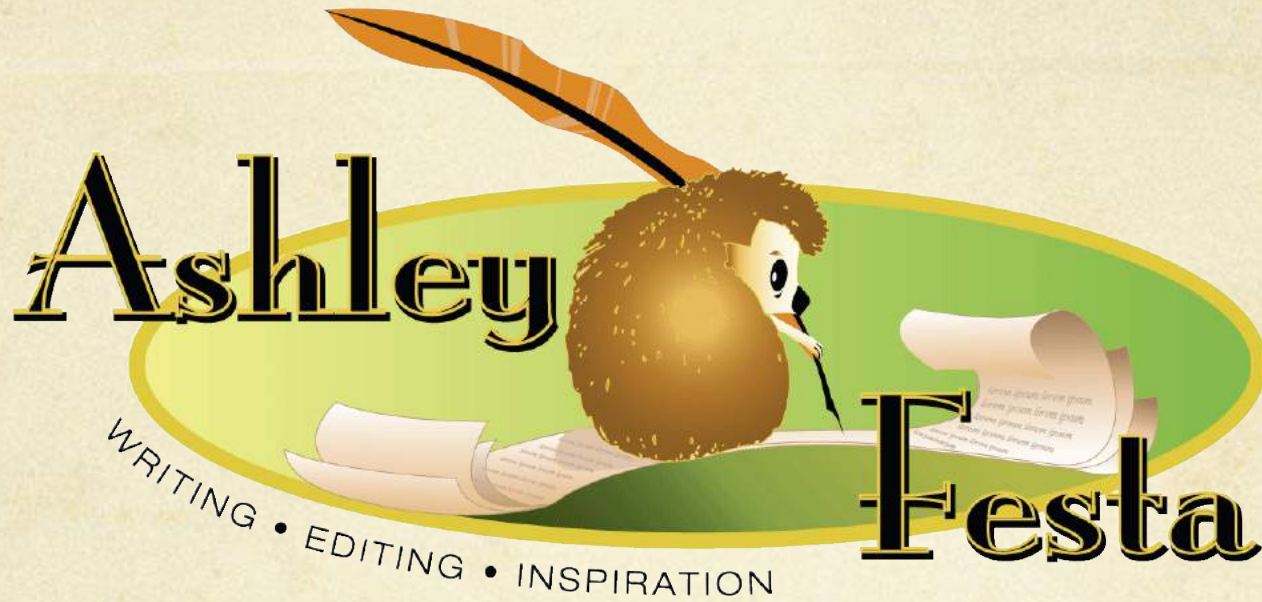
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