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BloggingZen

35 Best Practices for Bloggers

Get More Readers, More Comments, Make Real Money With Your Blog!

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7 Ways to Write Great Blog Headlines

Writing great blog headlines can be difficult, which is why many bloggers simply don't bother to do it. However, if you're willing to learn how to get better at it, you'll be surprised by how much a good headline can improve your results.

So what's the secret to writing good headlines?

It's a combination of things.

But most importantly, it involves thinking like a copywriter. This means that you must understand your audience, think like them, and then make a conscious effort to persuade them using every strategy available to copywriters.

Below, you'll learn 7 ways you can use to write great blog headlines:

1. Make a Big Promise

Your blog post may provide very large benefits to your readers.

Example: It might tell them how to use a new Internet marketing technique that is not explained well elsewhere.

However, if you do not communicate this information to your viewers, then they won't see the benefit and won't bother to read your entry.

Example: As an example, consider using a headline like:
"Do _____ 3 Times Faster."

For all readers, this is a simple and tangible benefit and if this is something they want, then there's a good chance they'll read the entry.

2. Arouse Curiosity

Another strategy you can use to improve your headlines is to arouse curiosity.

By doing so, you will make it difficult for the reader to leave without having first satisfied that curiosity by at least skimming your entry.

Again, using our Internet marketing example, you might say something like this:

Example: "Find Out How The World's Strangest Marketing"

3. Use Trigger Words

If you've ever read a guide on copywriting, you've probably noticed that the term "trigger word" is thrown around quite frequently.

If you're not familiar with the term, it refers to any word or phrase that triggers a psychological response on the reader's part.

These are very useful, as they can compel people to take action and make decisions when an alternate choice of words would not.

The following is a short list of some "trigger words" that you may want to use in your blog headlines:

- free
- news
- introducing
- new
- announcing
- explosive
- proven
- shocking

4. Get Specific

Blog readers need a story that they can visualize if you want them to be compelled. If visitors cannot visualize the story that your headline suggests, then they won't bother to read further.

One way in which you can make it easier for them to visualize your story is to *be more specific*. As an example, compare the following two claims:

Example #1:

"Make as much as \$200 with this strategy in your first week"

"Make as much as \$197.83 with this strategy in your first week."

Example #2:

"Lose 20 pounds in one month"

"Lose as much as 19 pounds in one month."

In each case, the second option provides a higher degree of detail than first and signals to the reader that the blogger is communicating the exact story, rather than embellishing or being vague.

5. Speak Directly to Your Target Market

While it's true that the people you target have other interests, it's NOT true that you know what they are. All you know about the people who visit your blog is that they have an interest in your niche.

This is precisely why it is vital to target these interests specifically, rather than a person with generic interests.

This is something you should keep in mind when writing headlines.

Example: If you have a weight loss blog, then your headline should not work equally as well on a gardening blog.

That is—it should not appeal to general “human interests,” but instead, the interests of those who want to lose weight.

6. Draw Inspiration from Successful Bloggers and Tweeters

One of the best ways to learn how to write better headlines is to copy the style and approach of those who are successful at it.

One way in which you can do this is to watch the Digg.com front page each day. If a headline makes it there, then it has received hundreds or thousands of votes, indicating that the technique was successful.

Another place you can draw inspiration from is Twitter.com. Since tweets are limited to 140 characters, you can think of them as you would an unusually long blog headline. As you did with Digg, look for frequent re-tweets and analyze what it is that makes them unusually salient.

7. Test, Track... Test, Track!

In addition to employing good headline strategies, you must also test them.

Otherwise, you will have no means of determining whether a strategy was successful or not. The best way to do this is to monitor your traffic statistics to see whether a

certain headline technique increased the clicks to the post and amount of time the average visitor spent on your blog post.

Note: You see, it is NOT enough just to test and track your click rates. It is relatively easy to deceive your visitors and make them click to a specific blog post; but what matters is how relevant is the headline to the content of the post.

So, as much as you keep track of your "most popular posts" also be sure to track the readership level of these popular blog posts.

Of course, for SEO (Search Engine Optimization) purposes, you will NOT want to alter the headlines of blog entries after you have already posted them. Instead, you will want to look at the results for many different headlines and blog posts and then see if you can determine which techniques are consistently yielding better results.

Conclusion

Writing good blog headlines is an essential part of retaining blog visitors and encouraging them to read more.

There are many ways in which you can do this, but I have listed some of the best strategies above. In addition to writing good headlines, it is also important that you test your results and make modifications accordingly.

7 Ways to Get Great Ideas for Blog Posts

You might wonder how some bloggers manage to stay inspired and to find new topics effortlessly while others (like you) struggle to find new ideas.

However, the truth of the matter is that many of those prolific bloggers didn't start off that way.

Just like you, those prolific bloggers had periods of time when they couldn't come up with great ideas and when they no idea where to look for inspiration.

The difference between you and them is that they figured out how to overcome this problem.

If you want to overcome this problem, all you have to do is find reliable sources of great ideas and then tap them periodically to make sure you don't run out of material. Below, you'll learn [7 useful strategies](#) you can employ to get great blog post ideas:

1. Ask Your Readers

Not surprisingly, your readers know what they want to read about more than anyone else. This is precisely why any attempt to generate new blog topics should begin with a frank discussion between you and your blog readers.

If you use WordPress or a blogging platform that permits it, consider using a plugin to conduct two different polls.

- The first poll should ask what direction readers would like your blog to move towards in the long run.
- And the second should ask which topic they would like you to discuss in an upcoming feature piece. You might consider creating a new poll for the second question on a monthly basis.

In addition to soliciting readers' advice through polls, you may also want to explicitly ask them to tell you what you should write about through comments or in an email. This will give them greater freedom to explain what they would like to see on your blog.

Finally, if you do not already own a blog, you should start by soliciting this type of advice on relevant niche forums or through your email list. Explain what you plan to do and then ask what people would like to read about.

2. Listen to Your Readers

In many situations, you don't even need to solicit your readers' advice! There's a very good chance that simply paying attention to the comments section of your blog will yield all of the information you need.

Example: Was there a rigorous debate in the comments section over one of your previous topics? Or was there a blog entry that was accompanied by a flurry of questions that you never addressed explicitly?

Have you started to realize a new blog post opportunity?

These are all things you may want to come back to in the future by creating a second blog post on the topic.

3. Lurk on Forums

Lurking on forums can be a great way to generate blog entry ideas. If you don't already visit forums regularly, you can find some in your niche at the following URL: <http://www.big-boards.com> or by searching like "[your keyword] forum" at Google.

Example: "golf forums" or "internet marketing forum".

When you're on the forums, look specifically for hot topics.

For instance, if a thread has received hundreds of replies and has remained at the top of the forum for a sustained period of time, then there's a good chance that it will prove popular on your blog, too.

Also, if a post proves to be controversial and draws a lively debate between forum members, it may also be something you should consider importing to your blog.

4. Read Newspapers and Magazines

When reading online media, it's all too easy to jump around without getting an in-depth overview of a topic.

Sitting down to read a magazine or newspaper can often be a better way to get a more detailed, detached perspective of current events and hot topics.

So, grab a few magazines and newspapers of choice and take notes as you read through them.

Look for topics that have the potential to be funny, exciting, useful, or controversial. And then use them to stimulate discussion on your blog.

5. Check Out Article Directories

As an Internet marketer, you've probably submitted many articles to directories. What you might not realize, however, is that these directories can be a goldmine for ideas when you need them most.

Next time you're struggling to come up with an idea for your blog entry, visit EzineArticles.com, locate the category that best describes your niche, and begin

browsing. Look for headlines and topics that catch your eye and then consider posting on the idea if it looks promising.

6. Use Keyword Tools

One way to understand your blog readers better is to find out what they look for on the Internet. You can do this by using the Google AdWords Keyword Tool:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>.

Using this tool, you can simply enter a word or phrase, such as “golf equipment” and the tool will return a massive list of related keywords, including such things as “golf umbrella” and “new golf clubs.”

Here, you’ve tens and maybe hundreds of keywords that you can easily turn into ideas!

You can also sort these results by the search volume they received, which will allow you to isolate the most popular keywords.

7. Continue an Interesting Conversation

Sometimes you won’t even need to come up with a fresh idea by yourself!

Here is how:

Next time you encounter a hot conversation on another blog or in a forum, continue it on your own blog. Mention briefly where you found the conversation, give an overview of the arguments on each side, and then support one or the other.

Since blog readers in your niche are likely to have strong feelings about such topics, you can expect a strong response.

Conclusion

Coming up with new blog entry ideas can be difficult. However, it doesn’t need to be impossible.

All you have to do is create a list of places where you can reliably find good new ideas and then tap them as needed.

Using the 7 strategies I’ve shared with you above, you may find that it is much easier to recover from your next spell of writers block.

7 Ways to Get More Comments at Your Blog

Comments are the lifeblood of any truly successful blog. They keep the discussion going well after the blog entry has ended. And they signal to new visitors that other people find the blog interesting and worthwhile.

If you want to ensure that your blog becomes successful, retains visitors, and encourages visitors to stay longer and to become more active, then you should do whatever you can to try to draw more comments.

Below, I will discuss 7 different strategies you can do get a lot more comments at your blog.

1. Repost or Reference Comments

One great way to draw in readers and to encourage them to comment more frequently is to reward them when they do it.

Example: If someone makes a particularly insightful remark about your post, then it may make sense to comment on it explicitly.

You can do this by quoting part or all of the comment, mentioning the poster by name, and then saying something complimentary or funny about his or her post.

Tip: Remember to check you type the commenter's name correctly. If you've international blog readers, you'll easily type their names wrong - and that can only make an impact in the opposite direction.

If you do this in a way that makes people feel involved and recognized for their effort, then they're more likely to contribute in the future. Others, seeing this, will also contribute.

2. Hold Contests

Another good way to encourage readers to become commenters is to hold regular contests.

In these contests, the entry fee will simply be making one or more comments. And the prize can be a number of different things, including merchandise from your niche or store; or the opportunity to make a one-time guest blog.

As far as picking winners goes, this is up to you. You could either select them yourself by picking the “best comment” or you could randomly select a comment using <http://www.random.org>.

The first method is entirely subjective; however, the second method may lead you to select someone who only put in a nominal effort, perhaps by writing “good post,” which could anger other participants.

Tip: If you make a random selection, in order to optimally take advantage of this opportunity, you may also want to screencast the selection process and post it on your blog at a pre-determined date and time.

Feel free to make real-time voice-over while you’re screencasting and add excitement to the video.

This could draw a lot of interest from participants and give your blog a healthy traffic spike.

3. Be Controversial

Another good way to encourage readers to comment is to occasionally post something highly controversial, but not ethically objectionable.

Example: You might cite a famous Internet marketer who has claimed that creating an email list is a waste of time; and that you should instead always send traffic directly to your salespage.

When it comes down to it, you don’t even have to take a side. You can simply introduce the controversy and then let commenters jump it and flesh out the debate.

This can be an excellent way to draw readers in and prompt them to get involved.

With all of this said, I cannot stress enough that you should not post controversial topics that could be construed as morally or ethically objectionable material. This is more likely to turn off readers, rather than get them involved.

4. Create a Poll

Polls have many virtues. One virtue is that they allow you to capture information about your visitors that you might otherwise not be able to get. Another virtue is that they prompt involvement on the part of those who feel that their preferences were not well-represented in the poll.

I want you to use polls for the second (and lesser-known) virtue. That is — create a poll that is incomplete — and then allow commenters to chime in by arguing that you should include additional categories and explaining why that is the case.

Tip: Alternatively, you'll offer a complete list of choices but rather explicitly ask them to comment why they chose it. People will start a discussion on why X is better than Y or the vice-versa.

This should stimulate some interesting comments, which could lead to a discussion between blog readers.

5. Give Readers Less Time to Comment

As with many things in life, it's all too easy to put off blog commenting and tell ourselves that we will do it tomorrow instead. And, not surprisingly, this is something that many would-be commenters do.

They decide to put comments off until later, but when they go to do them at another time, they find a new blog post and lose interest in placing the original comment.

One way to get around this is to put a cap on the amount of replies you allow or the amount of time people have to post replies.

When they see this cap and realize the implications, they will be prompted to post now, rather than later. While it may seem counterintuitive at first, it can work quite well in practice to bring in additional comments.

6. Show the Carrot

Instead of threatening to prevent people from commenting, you may want to consider giving them a positive incentive to comment.

For instance, you could put some lower bound on the number of comments you must receive before you will create another post.

Example: You might say that you will only post after you have received at least 30 comments from readers.

With this said, it is important that you follow the response to this policy over time. Make sure that readers aren't simply posting "good work" or "nice post," but instead are actively participating. Otherwise, this system will not work and you may need to switch to something else.

Note: I can't stress enough the importance of the "carrot" principle in place for this strategy:

You need to show people what's next.

Tease them about the next blog post and make it clear that you'll post this new exclusive post right after you reach a certain amount of comments.

7. Make a Typo

Similar to tip #4, which involved creating a poll that purposely excluded certain categories of responses, you may want to consider drawing comments by intentionally making a mistake.

You can do this by occasionally making a typo, which will incite those who cannot accept typos to comment.

Of course, with this strategy, it is critical that you do NOT go over-board. Frequently making typos on your blog will make you look unprofessional and will hurt your chances of long run success.

Conclusion

If you want to have a successful blog, then you need to convert readers to commenters.

Fortunately, if you want to do this, all you have to do is use one or more of the seven strategies I've provided above.

In a matter of weeks, you should see significant improvements in your reader involvement, commenting, retention.

7 Ways to Make Money from Your Blog

Initially, finding high-quality content for your blog and then getting people to see that content is the most important thing you can do with your time.

However, as your blog evolves and your readership grows, you have to put some time into monetizing the blog correctly. Otherwise, the entire enterprise will be for naught.

Below, I will explain 7 ways in which you can monetize your blog, so that it goes from being a drain on your financial resources to an asset.

1. Use Google AdSense

For starters, you should consider putting up Google AdSense ads. The advantage to this approach is that it is simple.

Tip: If you're using Blogger.com, the Google AdSense is already built in. After all, it is one of the Google services. However, there are many plug-ins and themes for WordPress and other platforms, which only needs you to insert your Google AdSense code.

All you have to do is create an AdSense account, generate some lines of code, and then place those lines of code in your website. From there, the script will generate ads that are contextually-matched to your site; and will generate revenue whenever they are clicked.

This means that you don't need to talk to advertisers; and you don't need to draw up a contract. All you have to decide on is what type of ads to use. You will have a choice between a half dozen types, including banners, image ads, and text ads of various shapes and sizes.

It's important to note that there are also downsides of using Google AdSense. For instance, you will probably earn less on banner ads and you will also have less control over what ads are displayed on your site.

Tip: Having said that, Google AdSense allows you to block some kinds of ads, keywords or domains from showing up on your blog.

2. Sell Advertising Space

In general, this won't work well for low traffic sites. However, if your blog receives a lot of traffic and you can back this up with documentation, such as traffic records, then selling advertising space may be a lucrative option.

When it comes to selling ad space, you will have a few different options.

You can choose between text ads, banner ads, and image ads. You can also choose whether you want advertisers to pay per click or to pay per view.

If you decide to go this route, you can use the following sources to find ad space buyers:

- <http://www.webmaster-talk.com/buy-and-sell-advertising-space/>
- <http://www.sitepoint.com>
- <http://www.warriorforum.com>

3. Seek Out Sponsorship Opportunities

In addition to (or as an alternative to) selling ad space on your site, you might consider seeking out sponsors.

The sponsors could agree to provide a free prize for your contest in exchange for being mentioned on your blog in the days leading up to the contest.

Alternatively, you could have long term sponsors for the blog, who make a monthly donation in exchange for your promoting their products periodically and for including a banner on your site that references them as a sponsor.

4. Sell Your Own Products/Services

Another way to generate revenue through your blog is to create your own products or to sell existing products.

If you don't already have products, you might consider creating an ebook, a short report, or video or audio content. If you don't feel comfortable creating these products yourself, then you can hire a freelancer at <http://www.elance.com> or <http://www.guru.com> to create the product for you.

Once the product is ready, you can sell it on your blog by accepting payments via PayPal.com or ClickBank.com. You might want to start by introducing your product

through a blog entry; however, at a later point, you may want to relegate it to a permanent position on your blog, such as in a top banner or in the sidebar.

5. Promote Affiliate Products/Services

An alternative to actually creating products to sell or selling existing products that you own is to promote products as an affiliate.

Regardless of what niche you are in, you should be able to find affiliate programs to join with lucrative and timely payments. In fact, even if you have your own products to sell, it may still be a better idea to sell affiliate products.

For starters, you should visit ClickBank.com, which has a wide variety of different electronic affiliate products. Among these, you can look for ones that have high “gravity” scores, as well as high commission percentages.

If you want to promote services and physical products, you have additional options, including the following:

- <http://www.cj.com>
- <http://www.linkshare.com>
- <https://affiliate-program.amazon.com>

6. Post Paid Reviews

Another way in which you can monetize your blog is to join a “pay per post” program. These will allow you to post positive reviews about products in exchange for monetary compensation.

At first, you might think this is unethical to pretend a product is good in order to get money in exchange. But, in fact, you don’t need to do this at all.

Instead, what you can do is focus on products that you have already used and would recommend to your blog readers. You can then recommend it as you would, but you’ll now receive compensation for doing so.

You can find site that facilitate pay-per-post exchanges at the following URLs:

- <http://www.payperpost.com>
- <http://www.loudlaunch.com>
- <http://www.reviewme.com>
- <http://www.smorty.com>

- <http://www.blogsvertise.com>

7. Offer Freemium Content

The term “freemium” refers to a business model where the basic content or service is free, but the advanced features require visitors to pay.

This approach can be successfully extended to blogs in the following way:

- ➔ First, let your usual posts and content make up the “free” part.
- ➔ Next, add some “premium” content, such as a exclusive posts, graphic design items, cheat-sheets, coupons, reports, or WordPress themes. Anything that your readers want so badly can be premium.
- ➔ Only allow paid subscribers to access your premium section.

From there, you should make attempts to promote your paid section to your free members, so that more and more of them move into that group over time.

Additionally, consider making entry fee very low (perhaps \$5/month), so that visitors don’t need to think very hard about the decision.

Conclusion

No blog can experience true success if it isn’t monetized correctly.

It doesn’t matter how much traffic you’re getting and how good your content is, this will always be the case. Without monetization, you won’t have profits and without profits, there will be no reason to maintain the blog.

7 Ways to Improve Your Blog Design

Design plays an important role in determining how your visitors will view you and your blog. A sloppy, poorly-organized blog will convey to your visitors that you’re either an amateur or that your blog is very low-budget.

Either way, this is a bad signal to send to visitors who are seeing your blog for the first time.

For these reasons and others, it is important that you work to improve the design of your blog.

Below, I will consider 7 tips you can use to improve your blog design.

1. Choose Your Theme Wisely

If you use WordPress or another popular blogging platform, then you will have access to hundreds or possibly thousands of different blog templates. Instead of picking any old theme, spend some time to find one that matches your niche and looks clean and professional.

If you want a free template for WordPress or another popular blogging platform, you can simply scour Google results for “free WordPress themes.” On the other hand, if you want to browse higher-quality, paid themes, you should look at <http://www.themeforest.net>, where you will find themes for as little as \$10.

2. Customize Your Theme

Now that you have selected a WordPress theme, it is time to customize it and put it to work for you. If you’re using WordPress or another popular blogging platform, you will be able to make the majority of these changes through the administrative panel.

This might include things like re-arranging your sidebar or adding widgets that track traffic statistics.

In addition to this, you can make other changes. For instance, you can limit the amount of posts that will be displayed on your home page; or alter how the comments will appear on your blog.

3. Customize the Icons

Many blog themes will come with a set of their own icons. However, it’s still possible that you can still improve the situation by finding better or less-used icons, so that they stand out more.

The following two blog posts list free, downloadable icons for bloggers:

- <http://www.problogdesign.com/resources/30-best-free-icon-sets-for-bloggers/>
- <http://www.dezinerfolio.com/2007/09/25/top-50-supercool-free-icon-sets/>

Note: If you're not comfortable coding in CSS or PHP, you may want to omit this step, as it will be quite difficult; and may only provide small design gains.

4. Be Social

If you make it hard for people to promote you, then fewer will do it. And if you make it easy for people to promote you, then more people will promote you.

This is precisely why it is important to incorporate social media into your blog. If you make it very easy for people to take content on your blog and refer to it in tweets and on Facebook, then people will do it more frequently.

For this reason, you should be thought when placing your social media icons on your blog.

Note: Here you can find tons of social media icons and icon sets:

- <http://webdesignledger.com/freebies/the-best-social-media-icons-all-in-one-place>
- <http://www.komodome.com/blog/2009/06/social-network-icon-pack/>
- <http://www.blogperfume.com/social-media-icons-pack-in-3-sizes-for-download/>

Make sure it is easy for people to access them immediately after reading a post, so that they can quickly tweet about you or reference your post on Facebook.

5. Keep Your Sidebar Tidy

Many bloggers mistakenly fill their sidebars with all sorts of junk, including widgets, tag clouds, and other items.

What they do not realize is that the sidebar is the gateway to extra income, repeat visits, and increased pageviews. Thus, if it is poorly constructed, then there is profit to be had in improving it.

Extra: For a brief overview of how you might design your sidebar optimally, check out the following blog post:

<http://woorkup.com/2010/02/07/anatomy-of-the-perfect-sidebar/>.

6. Use a Blog Post Image

This may depend on your theme, but in general, using an image to accompany your blog posts is an excellent way to improve the visual appearance of your blog. For starters, you can use free stock photographs drawn from places like the following one: <http://www.freeimages.co.uk>.

Just remember to make sure that the photographs are legal to use and will match well with your posts.

If you find that this process is getting tiresome over time, consider only doing it for important blog posts. In fact, this could even act as a means of signaling when a post is important.

If your blog eventually becomes very profitable, you may even consider hiring a freelancer to create graphics, charts, or cartoons that accompany your entries and are exclusively for your blog.

7. Take Advantage of Your Footer

In the past, the “footer” portion of blogs was often underused or left entirely unused. Today, things are changing rapidly in this area. It is common to find a number of different items in the footer now, including a “latest posts” section or a “popular posts” section.

Additionally, people have begun using footers to add contact forms, so that visitors easily send emails or submit feedback. It has also become common to add your subscription form to this area – so that anyone can subscribe to your email list from any page of your blog.

So, next time you logon to your administrative panel, consider re-vamping your footer (via widgets) to take advantage of this otherwise wasted space.

Conclusion

Blog design is often overlooked as a secondary consideration.

In reality, however, it plays an important role in determining who stays on your blog, what they do when they're on your blog, and who and how many people they refer to your blog.

If you take time to make even small design improvements, you will reap benefits for the remainder of the blog's life.