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A GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL SMALL BUSINESS BLOGGING

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SUCCESSFUL SMALL BUSINESS **blogging**

By Jo Lynn Deal APR

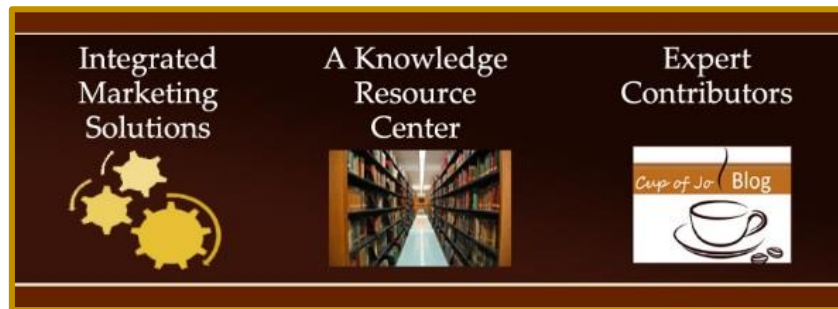
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INTRODUCTION

Integrated small business marketing by myMarketing Café

myMarketing Café is a company devoted to exceptional small business marketing. Our company focuses on building mutually beneficial relationships with our clients, suppliers and business partners. We combine integrated marketing solutions, a resource center, and expert contributors, to help entrepreneurs achieve profitable growth through a supreme customer experience.



A Guide to Successful Small Business Blogging

A small business blog is one of the most important and versatile channels for marketing a business. A *Guide to Successful Small Business Blogging* was designed to provide the tools needed to create, launch, and grow an engaging, lead generating small business blog.

A blog provides the ideal content marketing platform, perfect for storytelling, compatible with visual content, and powered by a long life cycle.

About the Author

Jo Lynn Deal is the founder of myMarketing Café, a small business online resource center, entrepreneur community, and professional marketing blog. The café team is dedicated to helping small business owners reach their business goals and experience business growth. Cited as an outstanding business leader by *The Business Journal*, Jo Lynn uses her leadership experience to help corporations build partnerships and greater collaboration with their customers.

She is an Integrated Marketing Communications strategist and a contributor to some of the industry's largest publications including PR News, Social Media Today, and Project Eve. Jo Lynn's strategies include discovering the product marketing fit and leveraging big data to improve the customer experience.

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SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is the process of affecting the visibility of a website in a search engine's organic or unpaid search results. The ranking is based on the website's or webpage's relevance to the term being searched. Search engines use many different, ever-changing algorithms to determine website rankings. Some key factors include the information on the site, images, video, local search information, number of links to the site, number of visits and other criteria.

A business blog can boost the overall website search engine rankings and the rankings for each individual post. For the business website, each blog post attributes an additional page of information to the business website. Business blogs that focus on the industry of a business therefore attribute information to the website. To illustrate the benefit of blogs for SEO, consider a simple five page website. Where do you think a five-page website will rank in search engines compared to a website that has a robust business blog of several hundred posts? Each post, rich with industry information, is linked to the company website. In addition, the more robust the content of the blog, the greater the number of other websites that will link to the blog or specific blog posts, which increases the number of inbound links to business website.

“Companies that blog have 97% more inbound links.” --HubSpot

Blogs are conversational and currently algorithms for search engine ranking focus on conversational content found from organic searches. Blogs tend to have higher rankings with long tail organic searches. Look at the example below. Because the Internet is so massive as an information storage center, users are leaning more toward what is called long tail searches because they add more specificity to their search and can narrow down the results to a more focused and manageable list. Where we used to enter keywords like those shown in the short tail search example below, we now enter full thoughts or conversational questions.

Short Tail Search Example: Small Business Marketing Plan

Long Tail Search Example: How to write a small business marketing plan

A business blog is conversational in nature, so it has a greater chance of appearing in search results than a landing page on the website, or a download. In this section, we look at tactics for optimizing blog posts. To begin, the best SEO strategy is to focus on keywords that are important to your industry and business. When optimizing a blog post, begin by developing a list of 15 to 20 keywords related to the post. Then review the components of a blog post below and optimize each area.

EXHIBIT 4: BLOG POST CHECKLIST

BLOG POST OPTIMIZATION - CHECKLIST	
✓	Blog Headline
✓	Blog URL
✓	Anchor Text
✓	Blog Tags
✓	Images
✓	Subheaders
✓	Social Sharing
✓	Integrated Calls-to-Action
✓	Meta Description

Blog Headline

The blog headline, or title, holds the most power because it is what visitors use to determine if they will click on the link and read the material.

 Add New Post

The Value of a Headline Section on page 10 shows strategies for structuring headlines to boost engagement. Well written headlines attract clicks! Don't get sidetracked with SEO and keywords, because it's not *all* about keywords--it's also about relevance, and that derives from the number of **shares of** and **links to** the blog post.

Let's look at an example. A recent blog post focuses on ways to improve your pet's health. The post offers five important steps pet owners can take at home, to keep their pets healthy and ultimately help them live longer. Keywords include pet health, at home remedies and pet lifespan. Below are possible headlines or titles. Which would you click?

How to keep your pet healthy with simple at-home strategies

Pet Health: Five tips to help your pet live longer

Chances are you chose number two, and the reason is, it appealed to an emotional trigger. Pet owners love their pets like any other family member and headline number two touches on that important relationship. Some writers find it easier to write the headline first and then the content. We recommend using an editorial calendar as a post storyboard. A free sample editorial calendar is provided on page 12.

HEADLINE WRITING TIPS:

1. Test headline structure to see which structure gains the most exposure and activity
2. Place keywords at the beginning of the heading
3. Keep headings under 12 words, ideally under 65 characters

Blog URL

If your blogging platform allows writers to create a customized URL, take advantage of this important SEO benefit. The URL is the webpage title and should match the headline, if possible, and include the most important relevant keywords.

www.petcarecenter.com/blog/pet-health-five-tips-to-help-pets-live-longer

Blog Anchor Text

Anchor text are words or phrases used to link to other important information. They may be linked to inbound pages, meaning pages on your website, or outbound pages, meaning pages on other websites. Using anchor text helps to tie the blog post content to other relevant information and improves the reader experience.

Sample anchor text:

Follow these five steps to improve pet health supported by your pet's [healthy diet program](#).

Search engines look for anchor text when determining the content of the post. They also typically rely on the first occurrence of a link, so if you plan to link to the same page a few times throughout the post, ensure you optimize the first occurrence of the link.

Note: When determining what inbound pages to link to, remember that anchor text can hold additional weight when linking to a webpage that already ranks high on search engines. It will help to further advance the search engine ranking of that page.

ANCHOR TEXT

This text is hyperlinked to other information relevant to a "healthy diet program."

Blog Tags

Blog tags have not been proven to directly affect search engine ranking for blog posts or websites, but they do help organize the content and direct readers to other relevant content, thereby lengthening their engagement with the website. Tags should be created using the top keywords of the post.

Tag warnings: Some experts argue that having too many posts with similar tags can show up as duplicate content and hurt the page SEO ranking.

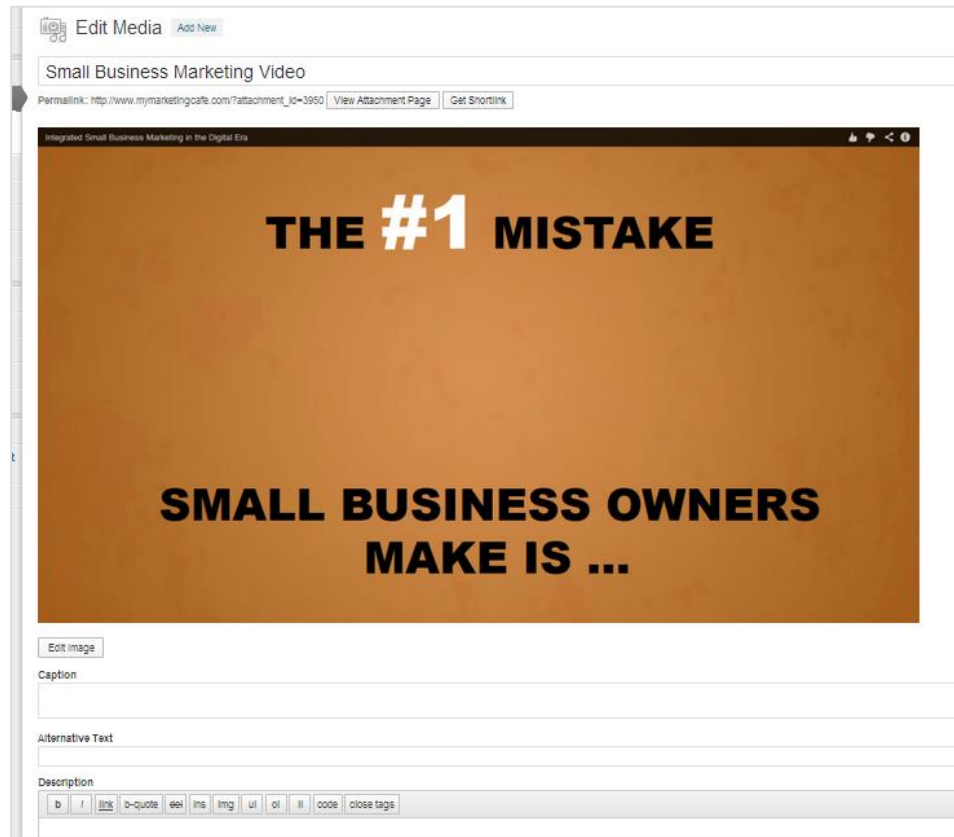
Blog Images

Blog posts that use relevant images have proven to rank higher in search engines. This may be because the image captured the reader's attention and it is what encouraged them to click on the link in the first place. When adding images to a blog post (and you always should) follow these tips.

Most blogging platforms allow writers to enter information about the image when it is uploaded into the media folder. Some of the fields are very important for search engine optimization but also for the reader experience. Optimizing blog images begins before you even upload the image. It begins when you save the image and create a file name for the image.

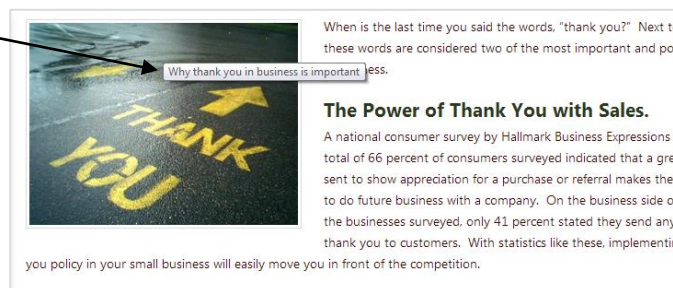
1. Before you upload an image to your blog media file, create a name for the image that is relevant to the blog content.

2. When uploading the image and saving it to the media file, include an **Alternate Title**. This field is what search engines use to determine what the image is about, because search engines can't see images.
3. Include text in the **Caption**--if you want a description to appear under the image on the blog post.
4. When inserting the image into a post, include an **Image Title** if you want a box to appear when a reader's mouse pointer hovers over the image. This can be used in place of a caption and give the reader additional details about the image.



Example when Image Title field is used: When the reader's pointer hovers over the image, a title is displayed. This is especially useful in posts that share about a product or service.

Use the Image Title field to share information like where the photos was taken.



Example when image Caption is used: A descriptive caption appears below the image. This is useful for drawing the reader's attention to the image, and is a great place for a call-to-action.

Using Online Marketing Content for Offline Purposes

By Guest Contributor | November 14, 2013 |



Have a signature look—online and in the real world.

Today's Thursday Connection post is compliments of the creative and talented writer J Weiss-Roessler.

With fast Internet connections and easy access to the web from mobile devices, online now at the forefront of most marketing professionals' minds. If you want to stand out pack, it's an absolute must to have good online content that puts you at the top of search rankings and ensures that potential customers can locate your business.

However, while many people are caught up in the fervor of online marketing, it's important not to neglect your offline efforts. One [survey](#) of marketing professionals found that, while 62% of respondents were increasing their spending for online marketing, 49% of that same group of respondents said that live offline events were their most successful channel for connecting with customers.

Blog Subheaders

Subheaders are very important for on page SEO. In addition to the post headline and URL, they tell search engines about the topic of the content. The most important line on your blog post is the heading or headline, followed by subheaders. A common example of subheaders include posts following a list format, such as in our earlier example.

Pet Health: Five tips to help your pet live longer

The subheadings in this post would list each of the five tips, and subheadings should be formatted in H2 formatting. Most blog platforms offer H2 formatting capability. This is as easy to choose as it is to choose a font. The exhibit below shows the WordPress version. The post in this example covers *Seven ideas for Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday*. For each of the "ideas," we used a subheading and formatted it as H2 or Heading 2.

In the WordPress Blog platform, this area is where you format the subheading text.

Seven ideas for Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday

Permalink: <http://www.mymarketingcafe.com/seven-ideas-for-black-friday-small-business-saturday-and-cyber-monday/> Edit View Post Get Shortlink

Add Media Insert SlideDeck Add Contact Form

Visual Text

B I ABC [List Icons] [Link Icon] [Image Icon] [Video Icon] [Audio Icon] [Code Icon] [More Icons]

Heading 2 U [Text Icons] [Font Icons]

Before you begin, take the time to clearly define your audience. What is most meaningful to them? What needs do they have that pertain to your business? How can you help them? Reach out to members of your audience for ideas.

Hold an Off-Black event.

While 307 million Americans shopped Black Friday last year, there are many of us who just won't go there. It's been known for [death's and disasters](#), and that's enough reason to steer clear for many. Take advantage of this group of non-shoppers and the power of the

Blog Social Sharing

We've shared several times how search engine ranking is now directly linked to the social value of a website. This is true for blog posts too. Search engines now consider a reader's social network when

determining how to display results of a search query. Content that has a social connection to the reader is prioritized at the top of the results. Whether or not the content is widely shared by other users is also a factor.

Blog posts should include social sharing icons. We've found that icons to the left of the text perform best. But, specific social sharing calls-to-action positioned directly in posts perform well too, especially when the post shares a statistic relating to the topic. Below is an example of these tactics.

EXHIBIT 5: BLOG SOCIAL SHARING STRATEGIES

Sample of Social Sharing Sidebar

Social Media ROI: What is the value of a business blog? [INFOGRAPHIC]

By Jo Lynn Deal | November 22, 2013 |

Example of in post Social Sharing Call-to-Action

Traditional marketing places a key message in front of your audience, content marketing begins a discussion with that audience. One of the most versatile and beneficial tools as to content is the business blog. It should be noted...this statement is true **when** the blog is used to its fullest advantage.

The facts speak for themselves, blogs serve as a critical tool for inbound marketing but the value goes far beyond marketing. Below is an infographic outlining [27 strategic uses for a business blog](#). [\(Tweet this\)](#) The information explores organizational and operational opportunities, customer acquisition, business branding, lead generation and data analysis. The graphic also shares recent statistics highlighting the return on investment of a business blog.

In this era of content overload, businesses must focus on identifying strategic ways to reach their audience. [\(Tweet this\)](#)

There's more to it than content! Content brings only a percentage of the value to your business blog. The remaining value derives from blog promotions. If you write a blog post—and enhance it with visual aids, statistics, relevant links, keywords, and calls-to-action—there is still no guarantee your audience will ever see the content. Reach your audience by developing a blog promotions strategy that is followed with every post. Need a tool to help build a promotions strategy? Try the [Guide to Boost Blog Traffic](#). This tool offers a useful overview of the promotions process.

The Social Sharing sidebar serves as a form of currency and shows the social validity of the post. The greater the shares, the more likely new readers will read and share the content. The other sample social sharing call-to-action above gives readers specific instructions directly within the text of the post. It points out valuable information and tells the reader what action to perform (ie: Tweet this!)

Integrated Calls-to-Action

For every blog post, consider the action(s) you want the reader to take while reading the post or after reading. Actions might be educational and awareness driven, where you want them to share the information. The social sharing examples above will facilitate that action. However, most of the time, we want our audience to do something more meaningful and move them to a specific stage in the sales cycle.

Below are a few sample calls-to-action.

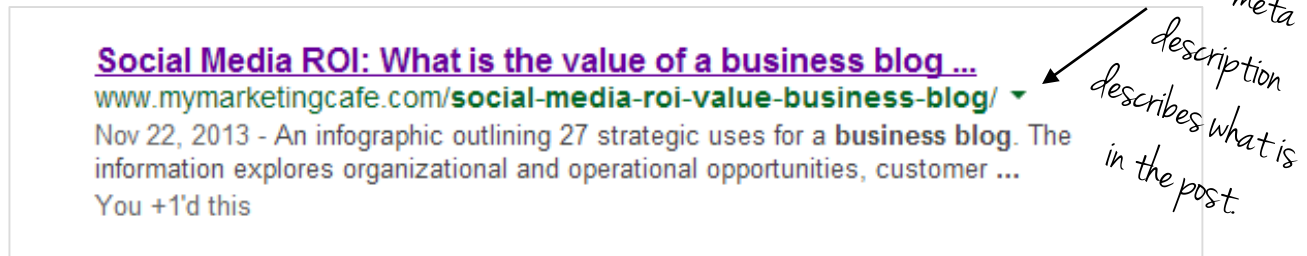
- Call for your free assessment.
- Download your copy of the (resource related to post).
- Was this information helpful? Signup to this blog.
- Link to your online resource center or new eBook related to the topic.
- Check out what's new at (your business).
- 1-month free trial. Click here.

Calls-to-action will increase the number of shares of the content and will increase reader engagement. Both activities have a direct impact on the search engine ranking.

Meta Description

The meta description is the short one to two sentence description of the webpage content. With most blogging platforms, there is a section where writers can enter the meta description. Some SEO strategists believe that the meta description is losing its SEO value. This might be because writers used to stack keywords in the meta description in order to manipulate search engine rankings, and this rendered the meta description less valuable. But, the meta description does still affect SEO. While the article headline is the most powerful link to readership, the meta description gives a little more detail about the post content and helps attract clicks.

Example:



Social Media ROI: What is the value of a business blog ...
www.mymarketingcafe.com/social-media-roi-value-business-blog/ ▾
 Nov 22, 2013 - An infographic outlining 27 strategic uses for a **business blog**. The information explores organizational and operational opportunities, customer ...
 You +1'd this

The meta description describes what is in the post.

The meta description is also what appears when you share the blog post link on your social channels like LinkedIn and Facebook.



The meta description appears in social media updates.



Google Authorship

Google has implemented Authorship which allows writers to receive attribution for their work across many domains.

Six tools to create visually stimulating content - myMarketing Cafe



www.mymarketingcafe.com/six-tools-to-create-visually-stimulating-content

by Jo Lynn Deal

Aug 26, 2013 - The attention span of our audience is shrinking, making visually stimulating content critical for marketing success.

There are several benefits to obtaining Google Authorship for a business blog.

1. Higher click through rate
2. Higher visibility
3. Higher page views

With Google Authorship, content is imperative. The longer a user stays on your page after clicking through an "authorized" link, the more information that will appear once the user hits the back button.

An authorship bonus

If a user returns to the search results after reading an author-tagged search result for a certain period of time, Google will add three additional links to similar articles from the same author below the originally clicked link. Additional links are contingent upon how long the user remains on the first click through.

Was this information helpful? Grab the complete *Guide to Successful Small Business Blogging* using the link below and save 25% off the original price of \$9.99. Order through this link to redeem offer.



Want us to Tweet about your blog or share it on our Facebook page? Send us a link to barista@mymarketingcafe.com.