

What to blog about

Perhaps you're reading this guide and thinking: "Well, this is all very well for some businesses but no one wants to read a blog about my industry." You're very wrong.

Okay, so if you manufacture pesticides then your blog may never make the Guardian's Most Recommended Blogs 2010 as it's unlikely to have widespread appeal.

However, you don't want your blog to have widespread appeal, you want it to contain very specialised information and analysis that those interested in your services or operating in your sector would read.

Think about some of the questions you had when you first moved into your industry and then answer them. List off advice you share with clients and flag up interesting case studies - the opportunities are endless.

By freely giving out advice and information you will become an online repository of specialist knowledge and this will attract the specialist, relevant audience you need.

How to write for search engines

When blogging, the most important thing to do is write for people and not search engines alone. Google et al have become far more sophisticated and keyword-stuffed content is not what they're after. There's no point having brilliantly optimised copy that visitors click away from once they get there. Those all-important inbound links will only come if a blog's content is interesting.

However, there are some other key ways to make a blog even more attractive to search engines, here are the key ones:

Keep going

There will be times when updating the corporate blog is so low down in your list of priorities that you just discard it - but that's dangerous. Search engines want regular, fresh content - it keeps them coming back to your pages more often and gives greater visibility to any changes you make on your site.

If you don't have time, ask another member of staff to contribute, or even occasionally use a professional blogger to create an article for you. If you allow your blog to slack off, the search engines and your readers will lose interest.

Consider your keywords

Keep keywords in mind throughout the content and use them naturally. Talk to whoever is managing your wider SEO campaign and find out what the long-tail keywords being targeted are i.e. the more specific and lengthy search terms, for example 'car insurance for women' instead of just 'car insurance'. Since you'll be writing about the industry

anyway, these should flow seamlessly into your content.

Make your headlines work hard

The headline is the hook that will entice the reader into clicking on the story, so don't stuff it with keywords. However, if you can use them then do and aim to use H1, H2 or H3 headings.

Inside your content, break up the post into sections and use subheadings, again preferably in H2 or H3. It will be easier to use your keywords in these subheadings and it also breaks down the copy for your reader and makes it easier to digest.

Don't be afraid to link out

Many people don't want to link out of their blog posts, for fear the Google spiders will zip off to other pages and never return to you.

However, links are an important aspect of the online community and by linking to relevant pages and resources you're enhancing your readers' experiences and also building useful connections to other websites. They may well link to you in return, especially if you've written a response to a blog post of theirs.

Make your meta data unique

Avoid duplicated content like the plague and give each blog post its own meta description. Spelling it out for the search engines never hurts.

URL

Don't just use a unique number as a URL, for example 'yourdomain.com/blog/00012345' isn't going to get anyone's attention. Use your headlines as the latter part of your URLs - it's better for the reader, easier to keep track of and it will make the search engines happy.

Internal links

Your website's internal links will keep the search engine crawlers zinging around inside your site, so it's worth adding them wherever appropriate.

Link to your site throughout your blog and consider adding a 'recent blog posts' fragment to your home page or somewhere on your pages. This will also encourage your readers to click through. Use your keywords as the hyperlinked text where you can.

Blogging do's and don'ts

Writing for the web is different to writing for print, an offline brochure or email, and it's a new skill you'll need to work at.

People read differently online. Most importantly, they are much less committed to the content. They haven't paid for it (usually) and have probably just clicked through to it. Bore them or offend them and they'll easily click away again.

That means the most essential 'do' is 'do

be interesting'. Don't worry, industry-specific blog posts don't have to be interesting to the wider community, just to your target audience. Make sure they are!

Be snappy

Online readers are lazy. It's much more difficult to read something on a screen and crowded paragraphs and crammed text is hard to read and unappealing.

Write snappy sentences and keep your paragraphs short. Each paragraph should only be one or two sentences long.

Readers will often only scan the first few paragraphs (newspapers call this the pyramid effect - they read all of the first paragraph, then a little less, even less, and then barely anything by the end of the article) so make sure any important points or links are made early on.

Grab them

Make your headline and introduction exciting. Pick the most relevant point and outline it - tell the reader what your article is going to do. This is essential if you are going to encourage your readers to click through to the full post.

Avoid punctuation

Now, obviously, don't avoid punctuation that you need, but do limit the amount you use. Once again, remember that the online reader is very lazy - unnecessary punctuation crowds the copy and makes them less likely to read it. Keeping sentences short will mean you don't need to cram it full of commas and semi-colons, so bear it in mind.

SP&G

Remember your spelling, punctuation and grammar - get them right. Online readers are a little more blasé about what they're reading than they would be with a newspaper or magazine, but that doesn't mean you should be complacent.

Do check your copy for grammatical errors and typos, or ask a colleague to scan your content. Your blog is an extension of your corporate persona so errors could damage your authority and appeal.

About SEOptimise:

SEOptimise is a leading search engine marketing agency that helps businesses increase their website's visibility on the internet. SEOptimise also runs one of the top English Language marketing blogs in the world, ranked on the AdvertisingAge Power 150 List. The blog has more than 6,500 RSS subscribers and is followed by more than 9,000 Twitter users.

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