

How To Use Your Blog To Generate Leads

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WHY A BLOG CAN GENERATE LEADS

A blog is a fantastic tool. Think of it as a tool, a tool you can use to get leads to any type of business you may have. Blogs are tools that need to be in use regularly to keep them working for you. They do not do the work for you, but they do help you to accomplish some of the hardest aspects of your job: getting leads and getting sales from them.

No matter what you may be selling or promoting, a blog is a tool to enable you to get those leads. Since there are millions of potential customers available to you online, you likely want to attract as many of them as possible to your website, where you can promote your product or service and get sales.

Websites can be difficult to manage and they often leave the customer with an impersonal feel. Here are a few problems with websites, in general:

- Most websites are not changing

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The home page gives great information and the rest of the pages help to sell the item. This is usually a good thing, but can keep search engines at bay and limit the personality of the website.

- Websites make it difficult for you to communicate with your readers

You can only communicate through email, rather than the easy and helpful communication of comments.

- Websites can only be bookmarked so many times

One time on each page is not enough to help with most social ranking.

- Websites are expensive

Yes, expensive to manage - especially if you plan to have many pages of content available to the consumer.

- For many, blogs are more enjoyable and even easier to manage than a standard website

Even if you do not know any HTML, you can run your own blog.

For all of these reasons, it is often a good decision to incorporate the use of a blog to help you with lead generation.

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Any type of business can use a blog. You can even start out with a free blog, one that you do not have to invest any money in whatsoever.

HOW TO GET STARTED

If you have never used a blog in the past, it may be best to start a free blog from one of the popular blogging resources available online. The two more popular options are Blogger.com and WordPress.com Both of these are very easy to use and they allow you to get started literally in minutes. Later, you can invest in paid blogging programs once you learn a bit about how to use them and how to personalize them for your business.

The benefits of blogging are many. Keep these things in mind when you set out to establish your blog.

- Blogging gives you constant new pages that search engines like Google love. This is a fantastic reason to incorporate a blog into your business because it is an easy way to get regular search engine ranking benefits that websites often keep limiting.

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- While blogging is easy enough to do, keep in mind that it does take a regular commitment. If you do not have the ability or time to manage your blog, there is help available. Many professional bloggers ghost write blogs for individuals. You can hire someone to do this type of work rather inexpensively.
- Communicating through a blog is essential. It is a much less formal way of speaking to others, and it does require a lot of commitment on your part. Not only do you need to keep posts going, but you also have to keep the dialogue going too! This can be rather difficult to do in some respects. Getting to chat with consumers is not something many people like to do.

Now that you know a few of the important aspects of blogging, it is time to get it in place. Once you have registered your blog and you have established a web presence for it (depending on the method you will be blogging on, you may need to have hosting set up) it is time to start posting.

What will you talk about? To generate leads to your website, you will want to create blog posts that somehow, even indirectly, relate back to your website's topic and overall goals.

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For example, let us say you have a website selling dog products. Your blog should be dog (or at least pet) related.

When you do this, you display your skills in this way and you establish yourself as an expert in the field. Do you need to be an expert to get sales and traffic? In most cases, the answer to this is yes simply because people look for people they can count on to buy from. If you are not an expert, why would they want to buy from you?

Start planning a few posts!

HOW TO DRIVE TRAFFIC WITH A BLOG

With your blog in place, the next step in the process is simple: get traffic to the blog so that you can move the traffic to your website. If people get to your blog, they are already highly targeted leads. When they get to your website, they are often times ready to buy. This is, of course, only if you can get traffic to the blog. Here are some of the most important ways to increase traffic to your blog, and in exchange,

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get traffic to your website where you are selling or promoting items.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Throughout your blog, you will need to invest in search engine optimization. This does not have to be labor intensive, hard to do or something you have to research extensively to get right. Like any other website, a blog needs to have the most appropriate keywords placed throughout it, so that search engines can find the site and rank it appropriately.

Keywords are the words you (and those interested in your topic) are most likely to type into a search engine to get to your website. These words most accurately describe your website's topic. To learn which words are most appropriate, use a free keyword research tool to help you. These are available throughout the web, including at Google's website and WordTracker.com.

Type in a few words associated with your website. In our earlier example of dog products, you may have keywords like: dog accessories, dog clothing, dog training, dog collars, pet clothing, house training dogs, and so on. You will receive words that people most often punch into the search engine

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when they are looking at this information. It is essential to have appropriate keywords throughout your website since this helps Google and other search engines to find your website and to rank it well.

HOW TO USE KEYWORDS

Once you know what these keywords are, what do you do with them? Here are some ways you will want to include keywords in your blog to attract search engines appropriately.

- Use keywords in each of the blog posts you put up. Keywords should not have overuse in any post. Try to keep keywords under 2 or 3 percent of any post.
- Use a keyword in the title of each blog post: this is key to search engine ranking!
- Try to incorporate a keyword in the first 90 characters of the blog post you are writing.
- Use keywords in the "tags" and "keyword" functions of the blog. These are often asked for when you are posting the blog

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- Use keywords in your tags, when creating pages in your website, too or in the blog's set up
- Pick two to four keywords to use per blog post. Too many keywords make each post sound strange and limit your overall ability to communicate a message.

In addition to these items, there are other aspects of search engine optimization. For example, did you know that the search engines like to see short paragraphs? It is often best to include at least one set of bullet points in your posts, even if it just lists a few items at a time.

POSTING OFTEN

From the beginning, you will need to post regularly to your blog. One of the key benefits of using a blog to get leads is that you can get many of those leads directly from search engines, if you show the search engines your blog is active. Giving the search engine spiders, as they are often called, regular "food" to eat will allow them to come back to your

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page time and time again. Your blog will see great growth in traffic if you just post often.

How often is often, at first, you may not have the time to post every day, but this is what you want to work towards. Your posts do not have to be very long, but they should be unique. Here are some additional tips to help you with setting up a blog that ranks well.

- Post basic information

Information to help educate readers who are looking for something to learn. They are often looking for answers to their questions above anything else.

- Blog posts can be short, as short as 300 to 250 words
Keep your keywords in line with the length of each post, going for under 3 percent. Too many keywords can cause the search engines to notice this and negatively rank you because of it.

- Do some research to find unique items to talk about in your posts

What are people really looking for? Do they want to know what options they have for potty training their dog? Are they looking at the wide assortment of invisible fences and are unable to make a choice? Use blog posts to

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identify questions your consumers may have, as a learning tool for them.

- Enable comments, with approval

Most blog posts do allow for individuals to post comments.

You should have these monitored so that you can avoid spam comments, or even worse, profane ones. But, allowing others to post comments can give you many benefits. It may give you ideas for new blog posts. It may help you to answer their questions and therefore gain their respect. It may even help you to get the sale!

- Keep blog posts engaging!

Make them interesting, as this will attract a range of different people who may be more willing to book your blog to come back to repeatedly. You want this regular readership to be possible!

Now that you have an idea of what to speak about in your blog posts, and you know that you need to post at least most days of the week, what is next? There is more to do to get your blog posts to translate into leads. Again, to get the leads, you have to ensure that your blog is attracting the

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right type of visitors who want to head over to your website to make a purchase.

GET SOCIAL

One of the keys to getting traffic to your website is to be social. Get out there and talk to others. Encourage them to come and visit your site, but in an indirect manner. What you won't want to do is to spam people or otherwise push them to visit you. Rather, you want to position yourself as:

- Interesting
- An expert in the field
- Someone that is fun and cool to talk to

When you do this, chances are good people will want to follow you back to your blog to learn more about whom you are. You want them to click on that link that will bring them to your blog and eventually on to your website. However, how do you create this type of attraction? The first thing you need to do is to get social!

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Social bookmarking and social networking has become one of the easiest, most enjoyable parts of the Internet marketer's business. All you need to do is to help others to learn about you, about your blog and even about your website, by putting it all out there.

Social bookmarking is a good place to get the process started. Many fantastic websites you can visit for this. Here is the rundown of how to get social active with your blog through bookmarking websites.

STEP 1: WRITE NEWSWORTHY POSTS

These posts should have writing in such a way as to allow you to book mark them. Most of the social booking sites are interested in something that is newsworthy, interesting and unique. You may have to think a bit harder on this to make it happen, but it is worthwhile. Going back to the bed products, you may wish to write a blog post about a new product or a discount that's offered. Be sure to keep it from being too promotional though.

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STEP 2: SIGN UP FOR A VARIETY OF THE SOCIAL BOOKMARKING WEBSITES

There are many of these, but the following are some of the most important to join:

- Digg.com

Here, you can just "Digg" posts that you find are interesting. Other members of the website can also "digg" them and this ends up helping more people to read the post. Over time, you can develop a good base of friends on these websites to help push your posts farther.

- MySpace.com

Do you have a MySpace.com page? If not, you may wish to do so. Get friends there and anytime you publish a new blog post, send out a message to everyone to let them know about it. These hits from MySpace.com to your blog post will help with search engine ranking, too.

- StumbleUpon

Here is a great website. All you need to do is to "stumble" any article that you find is interesting and unique.

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Those who use StumbleUpon are then able to read your post, too, as they stumble their way through sites.

- Facebook

Facebook can serve as a fantastic tool for building your clientele. If you are selling those dog accessories, you can use Facebook to help you to network and find other people who may be interested in buying them. Create a relationship with them and be sure to send them links to your new blog posts.

You can do this with many of their social bookmarking and networking websites as well. Twitter.com, YouTube, and plenty of others are very easy to use websites. The goal there is the same. Meet other people that you may know and new people you do not. Develop a relationship with them by just chatting. Then, when you do post a new blog post, you can promote the link to it using these websites. People get back to your blog, read your post and then head over to purchase items from your website.

STEP 3: USE THESE WEBSITES

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In order for any type of social networking to work, you do have to use them and use them frequently. No one likes a person that shows up to do nothing more than to push their product or sell their link. Rather, they work best if you develop a relationship with people and then network with them regularly.

Once you get the hang of using these websites, it becomes far easier to do. It only takes a few minutes to drum up quality traffic to your website just through these resources.

PROMOTING YOUR BLOG

The goal of getting people to your blog is to have them head over to your website or buy from you directly through the blog. In order to get this to happen, you need to have enough people coming to your website on a regular basis. You can do this by simply networking with others, as described, but there are other ways to get results, too.

Networking is essential throughout the blogging world. Therefore, your first order of business is to find those businesses that work close to your own, but may not be direct competition. With the example used here, you may want to

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collaborate with someone who is promoting healthy dog food, or perhaps even cat accessories. This way, you can both work together to cross promote the blogs. Often times, you just need to email the other individual and you will have plenty of good response since most blogs need this type of promotion.

What can you do with other bloggers? There are several things to do:

1. Write a guest post

You write a post on their blog, they write a post for your blog. In turn, your readers get something new and interesting to read (which you will socially promote of course). In addition to this, you gain some readership from the other blogger's readers. The same works for the other blogger as well.

2. Comment on posts

You will want to be active in these individual's blogs. To do this, all you need to do is to leave a few positive, yet informational comments on their blog posts. When you do so, you will be able to leave your website's link. This does several things for you. You are likely to get some added traffic from individuals who read your

comments and want to learn more about you. Another benefit is the back link.

3. Benefit from back links

Your link on other websites is crucial to the well being of your website and blog. This is why your website's link should be on your blog, too. Google loves to see links to various websites on their pages. If five other websites have a link to your blog (and hopefully it grows even higher than this), it shows Google that your website is useful, interesting or something good. They rank you higher for this.

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PULLING IT TOGETHER

Now that you have done all of this work, what now? The results will start to happen. Here is an example of what is likely to happen once you start to get traffic coming into your website.

You put up great, information and well designed website. You want to market this blog as a tool to getting customers to buy from you. You set up and manage your blog. The blog includes direct links to the website and may even be sharing the same space.

The blog is something you manage on a daily basis. You put up great posts that are informational, interesting and newsworthy. You Digg your posts, you Stumble them and eventually you are Tweeting them to all those you have come to know on Twitter.

You keep promoting your blog and posts in this way. Your readership grows. More people are coming to your website. Since you have done a good job with search engine ranking, you also see great improvements in terms of search engine ranking. All of those visitors are finding you, just like they should be.

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Since the tools you are using here are all tools to help you to get only qualified leads, people who are interested in what you have to offer to them, chances are good that they will continue to come to your website and buy from you. Since they like what you are offering, they are likely to click on your website link and learn more about the products and purchase them. It does not matter if you are selling your own products or those through an affiliate program. You have done all of the hard convincing already. These leads are qualified.

MAKING LEADS WORK FOR YOU

Now that you have people coming to your website through all of your hard work managing your blog, you may think you can just sit back and relax. This is not always the case. You may need to do a bit more to get the most you can get out of those leads. After all, you want and need sales to happen.

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Several ways you can get leads to buy from you; traffic coming in that is high quality, is a good start. What you do with them when they arrive is another story, though.

SIGN THEM UP

One thing you will want to do is to have an opt-in list for any and all of your website visitors to sign. This list is crucial to the overall well being of your business for several reasons. First off, it allows you to collect the email addresses, and potentially the names, of those people who have visited you. This information is then use to regularly promote your website or business to them.

To accomplish this, you will want to set up an email marketing campaign. This simple process allows you to send regular messages to those who visit your website and sign up for you opt in list. You can use this email marketing campaign in various ways:

- Use it to help promote your business sales and new products by sending an email to your visitors letting them know about these changes.

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- Share knowledge and tips with your subscribers. For example, you may want to send an email newsletter about the best ways to accessorize your dog for the winter months, in the fall, so that you can draw people back to your website to purchase these items.
- Use these email marketing campaigns to encourage individuals to visit your blog, to read the latest messages and posts that you have there. Keep them updated!

When you have and use an email marketing campaign, the result is that you have yet another way to pull leads that once came to your website back to your website. Prior to setting up and using this type of marketing campaign, you will want to invest some time in learning how to do so appropriately, to avoid any spam violations and to help you to get the best results overall.

LANDING PAGES

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Landing pages, or sales pages, are another way you can take advantage of the leads that come to your blog. Often times, Internet marketers will use landing pages to help them to sell their products and services. You likely know what these are. They are long, sales like pitches that convince individuals that they need to purchase from you.

Landing pages can be an ideal investment if you do not have many products to sell. If your website does not have a catalog full of items to sell and promote, chances are good that you will do well using a landing page. These are great for those who sell promotional items or who will use their blog to promote affiliate links and programs.

If you are planning to use landing pages, one of the most important elements is getting the layout and overall tone right. Professionals who have experience with copywriting often do these. The reason for this is simple: those without this experience are likely to write a sales page that does not get results.

The job of the sales page is to get results. Results are nothing more than sales. Invest in a professional to have these pages written for you. Be sure they are accurate, detailed and convincing.

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Once you have them up and running, you can then use your blog to promote your landing page. Again, your blog should not be one large sales pitch, but a variety of enjoyable and interesting blog posts, items that get the reader involved to help convince them to click on your link to find out what you have to offer to them.

SUM IT UP

In order to ensure you are using your blog to get the most leads you can, be sure you are incorporating each of the following items.

- Have you set up a blog that is information based and original?

You want to ensure that individuals come to your blog are interested enough to stick around and read what you have to write so that they click on your link to get to your website where your products are.

- Is your blog conversational and personal?

Blogs do not intend to be rigid or boring. They should not just be one sided, either. You will need to communicate

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with your readers through comments and through your blog posts. In addition, most blog owners receive a good amount of email from readers.

- Post frequently or hire someone to do the work for you
You need this for search engine optimization, which will drive more traffic to your website and in turn gets you more sales.

- Create blog posts that are teasers for what your website or landing page has to offer

For example, review a product sold at your website, honestly. This is a great way to show you are being thorough and fair, and that you have the backs of your readers!

- Offer a contest or otherwise encourage participation in your blog posts

One of the keys to a successful blog is encouraging individuals to get active in it. You may want to give away a product every now and then or you may wish to talk to your readers about their needs.

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Using a blog to promote your business is a goal you should have. It does not have to cost a great deal, but it can be one of the best marketing tools.

You may want to consider your blog a banner ad for your website. It is just enough information to draw readers into what your website has to offer.

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