



How to Be a
ROCK STAR BLOGGER
to Grow Your Business
and Make Money

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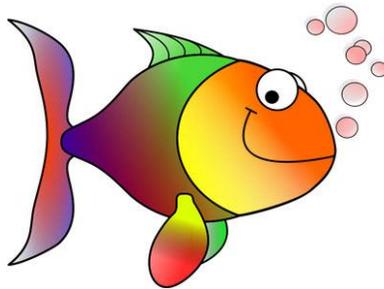
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Table of Contents

Module 1: Quality Blogging in 2014 and Beyond	4
What Makes a Rock Star Blog?.....	4
“SEO is Bad”.....	5
What Really Works on Google?.....	6
Seven Rock Star Blog Qualities.....	9
Guest Blogging – Should You or Shouldn’t You?	9
A Word of Caution	11
Module 2: How to Get Expert Bloggers as Your Guests	12
Giving your Blog a Personality.....	12
Branding your blog and its content with repetition	13
Content Curation vs. Opinion Blogging.....	16
How Do You Attract Quality Guest Authors?	16
Claiming Google Authorship.....	19
Module 3: How to Make Your Blog More Interactive	21
Adding Rich Media	21
Why You Should Consider Podcasting.....	24
Taking a podcast and creating content from it.....	26
But Wait, There’s... ..	32
Module 4: Ways to Monetize Your Content	34
Your “About” Section and Contact Information	34
When is monetization “too soon”?	35
Starting Small and Planning Big	36
Building Your Community	38
Repurposing Your Content	40
Remember Your Affiliates!.....	41

Module 1: Quality Blogging in 2014 and Beyond

Blogging is not what it used to be. Even those with the most fervent intentions are starting to discover their blogs are suffering in Google page rank and general searchability. Trends have changed, and Google has become even more ruthless (and rightfully so) in weeding out any blog that smacks of artificiality.



By “artificiality”, we mean blogs set up strictly as vehicles to house affiliate links and sell products. These blogs pretend to care about an audience, but they “care” the way an expert fisherman loves fish: He studies them to see which fly or lure to use; what their habits are; where they feed; when they are most active near the surface of the water.

And then he reels them in...and eats them.

It’s not even a question of “duplicate content” any more. You can have the most original content in the world, but if it’s part of a batch of posts to pad your affiliate or product links, Google hates you. With a passion all of its own (the sort that can smell links six miles away).

What Makes a Rock Star Blog?

If using your blog to house affiliate links or drive business to your products is what you want to do, this means you’re in trouble. But wait – not necessarily.

Let’s take a quick look at what makes a rock star blogger – one that Google loves and who is universally quoted, accepted and revered in their industry as a top authority – one whose blog is always well worth making time for.

First, realize that Google is not the be-all and end-all of the universe (though they certainly do wield a lot of power). The main point in all their dos and don’ts boils down to this: You can’t trust Google algorithms because (a) they miss the all-important **context** of the very links and

content they are penalizing and (b) Google is one-hundred percent out for **itself, Google** – not for you.

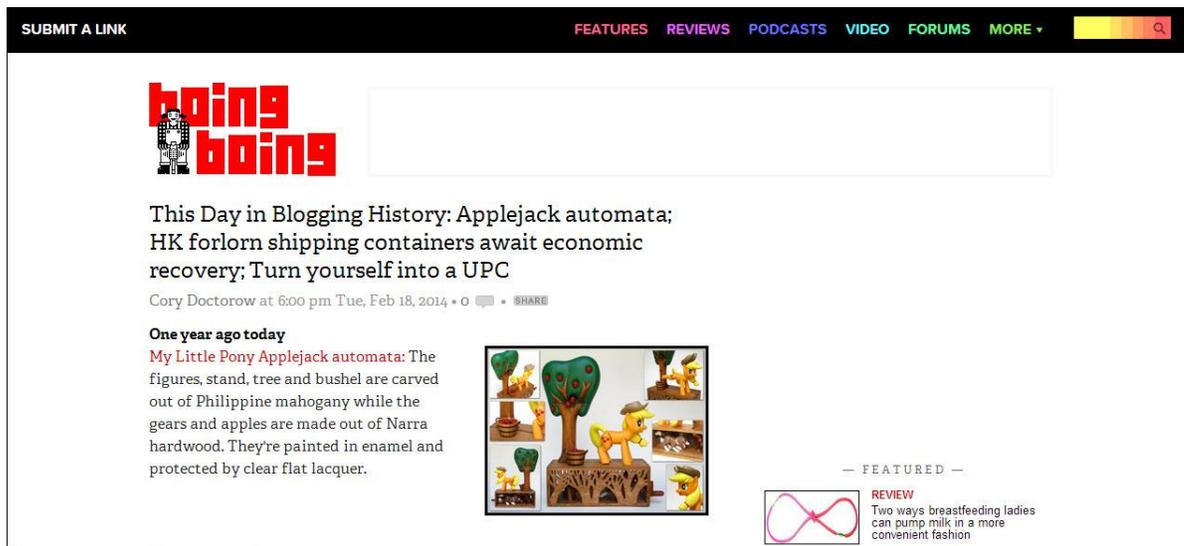
Matt Cutts, head of Google’s Webspam division, wrote a blog post in January, 2014 – [The decay and fall of guest blogging for SEO](#) – demonstrating this in spades. He starts out by stating “if you’re using guest blogging as a way to gain links in 2014, you should probably stop” – his reason being that to guest blog for backlinks is “spammy”.

And he’s right.

“SEO is Bad”

One almost gets the message that SEO is “bad” – but when SEO is logical and organic and the result of good strategies and consistent practices, the Penguin penalty risk seems to drop way down. But if you try to follow Google’s [webmaster guidelines](#) too closely, you risk inadvertently violating these guidelines even more simply by attempting to follow them to the letter. (Read the guidelines, and see what we mean!)

Boiled down to its essence, it seems at first glance as if Matt Cutts wants everyone to put “no-follow” links in their blogs, simply to prove good intentions. But in the midst of his complaints and criticisms about “spam”, he seemingly contradicts his own demands by pointing to content curation blogs such as [Boing Boing](#) as a shining example of the exceptions to Google’s own rules.



The screenshot shows the Boing Boing website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for "SUBMIT A LINK", "FEATURES", "REVIEWS", "PODCASTS", "VIDEO", "FORUMS", and "MORE". The main content area features the Boing Boing logo on the left and a large empty box on the right. Below the logo, there is a blog post titled "This Day in Blogging History: Applejack automata; HK forlorn shipping containers await economic recovery; Turn yourself into a UPC" by Cory Doctorow, dated February 18, 2014. The post includes a "One year ago today" section with a link to "My Little Pony Applejack automata" and a description of the automata. To the right of the text is a grid of images showing various automata figures. Below the grid is a "FEATURED" section with a "REVIEW" link and a small image of a pink infinity symbol.

Right-clicking on this website and choosing “View Source” shows link after link – and not one single “nofollow” command.

What Really Works on Google?

To blindly attempt to follow every contradictory Google guideline is as simplistic as thinking that “good content” (and good intentions) will automatically help you rise to the top of Google’s search rankings, like cream.

A much better bet is to **approach your blogging like a total professional** and combine that with **strong social media cross-platform integration** and other key strategies. Yes, you want to sell things, generate leads, gain subscribers and more. Yes, your blog is a vehicle for your sales marketing. But a blog is above all a communication platform – and it should feel like one. It should be focused, planned and all promotion expertly integrated.

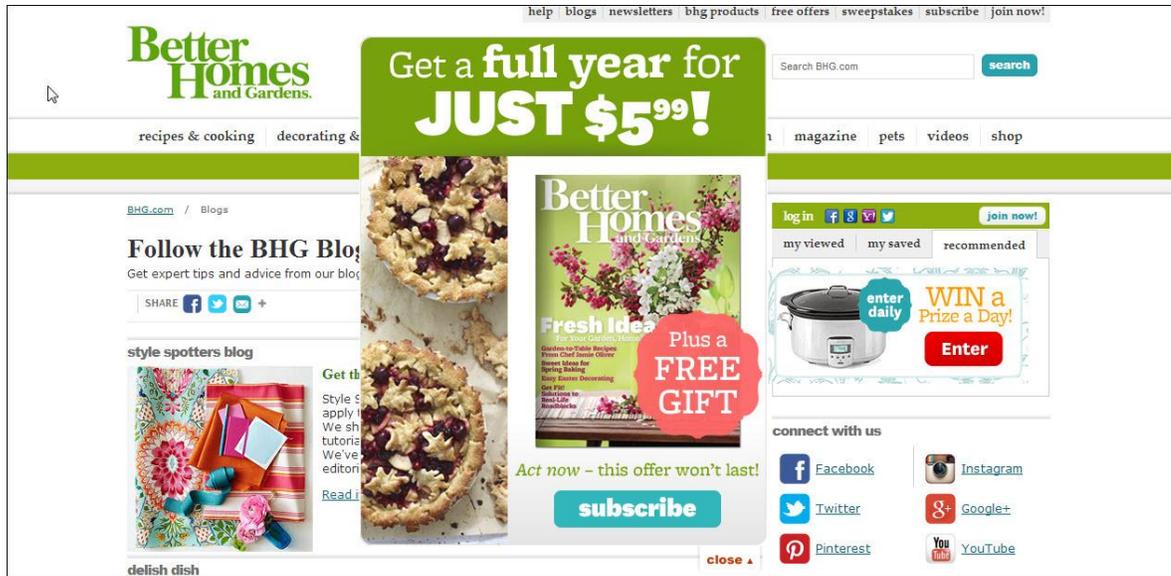
Any “marketing” should feel like a natural, helpful offshoot: Your blog should never feel like an excuse for your links.

Let’s put it another way: If you were a national/international magazine – for example, [Better Homes and Gardens](#) – you would not be focused on pleasing Google; you’d be focused on:

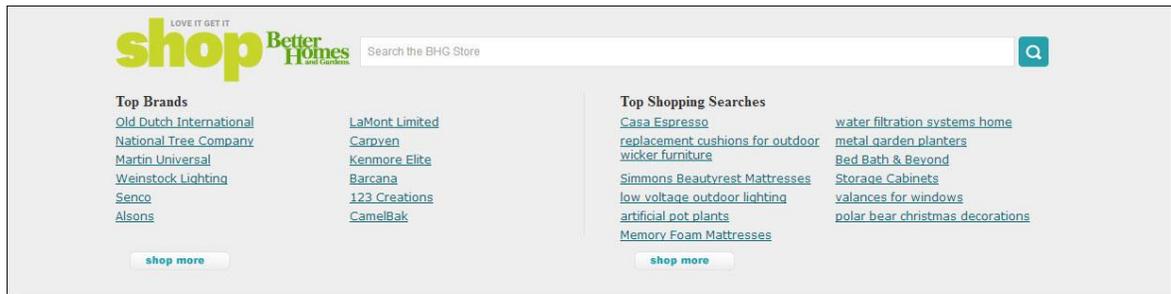
- a) Pleasing your readers
- b) Cementing your brand
- c) Being the best magazine you can be

You don’t have *time* to Google-proof every single article (you would have done that at the planning stage). Once your online blogs are active, you’re too busy meeting deadlines, going to press – and keeping a stream of relevant, planned and polished seasonal content appearing in your multiple BHG blogs.

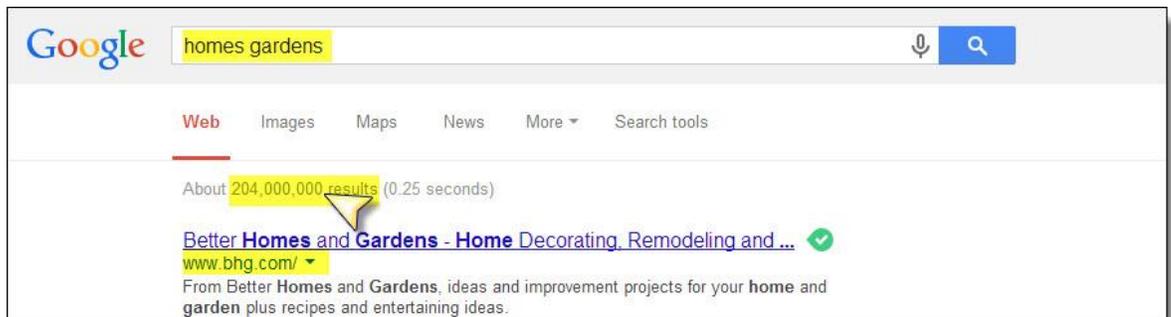
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As you can see, Better Homes and Gardens is chock-full of everything Matt Cutts seems to deplore: In-your-face marketing, offers, contests, calls to actions, advertising, links – and even *more* links.



If you type the keywords “homes” and “garden” in your Google search bar, behold! It’s not penalized at all. In fact, BHG turns up *at the top of your results*.



When we strip away confusing Google “instructions” and Matt Cutts’ own “no-we-don’t, yes-we-do” vacillating, the only constant we’re really left with is Google’s hatred of spam. (It affects their own popularity and monetary worth by obstructing people who try to conduct quality searches, leaving them potentially turning to other search engines and systems, such as Bing and Yahoo).



So what Google actually hates are people who try to game the system – those who follow “black hat” SEO – and that includes marketers whose tunnel-vision focus is links-first, with content a mere tactic for sales and lead generation.

Well, okay: We’re trying not to say this, but Google hates “marketers”. And it will be interesting to see – even while “content marketing” is being re-

discovered and lauded as the next best thing – **if the term “content marketing” itself becomes a red flag to Google.**

One more obstacle: Google’s Penguin algorithm isn’t able to discriminate between the spammer and the spammed when other marketers leave irrelevant (i.e. “spammy”) links in comments or guest posts.

(We’re also left with Google’s often-contradictory inconsistency: Which makes it twice as hard for people trying to rank well with their blogs to know if what they are doing is actually effective and allowed.) It’s good to be aware of this, but there’s no need to spend all your time looking up Google prohibitions. There are genuine “rock star” blogs run by individual marketers, as well as unashamedly commercial but Google-successful ones like the BHG blogs. They focus on what they want to achieve for their readers and goals, rather than on what Google says they shouldn’t be doing.

In Module 2 we will turn our attention to these shining examples and use them to create a model to follow.

But first, here’s a shortlist of rock star blog qualities you will consistently see when you’re checking out successful, top blogs...

Seven Rock Star Blog Qualities

Let's take a look at the main qualities these blogs exhibit. Your blog may of necessity and age not currently be able to embrace all of them – but you can aspire to this and build it in, right at the planning stage.

1. **Longevity** – Blogs that have already built up a good reputation well before Google's Penguin algorithm have generally reported seeing no drop in targeted traffic.
2. **Viral appeal** – People fall all over themselves to quote from these blogs, gain guest spots or share links.
3. **Original content** – Articles and posts unique to that blog – and totally consistent with the blog mission, theme and readership interests.
4. **Valuable content** – Articles and posts people refer back to, review in a genuine and positive way; and that are totally relevant to the blog readership's needs.
5. **Timely content** – Often a rock star blog is known for its cutting-edge information, releasing important industry news or changes ahead of the herd.
6. **Rich resources** – FAQs, job boards, apps, videos and resource lists and links spring instantly to mind as present on top blogs.
7. **Professionalism** – Above all, Rock Star blogs exhibit professionalism and quality in every aspect: Design, focus, content, identity, consistency and more.

And there's one more practice that rock star blogs may or may not indulge in. (Most of those with strong followings do.) And that is guest blogging – the main thing Matt Cutts has slammed in his most recent posts. This is so pivotal to successful blogging, we're going to tackle that issue right now.

Guest Blogging – Should You or Shouldn't You?

Again, we're going to turn to the big magazines for our example before taking a look at top authority blogs.

Now, according to Matt Cutts, he seems to be saying that no one should ever guest blog again: Yet the very nature of real, online magazines depends on contributing editors, staff writers and authors. Just imagine a news magazine where the only point of view was the editor's and no one else ever contributed. Not only would the editor go insane trying to put out a magazine AND write every single piece of content, people would get tired of that magazine more quickly. They would either love the editor's voice – or hate it.

(Tip: If you want to see “how to do it”, look at well-established top blogs – and offline magazines.)

1. Whether or not you should **become** a guest blogger depends on two things:
 - Your degree of expertise, accreditation and/or celebrity status in a field
 - Whether or not you're a darn good writer
2. Whether or not you should **accept guest posts** presents a few more variables:
 - Are you writing your blog as a celebrity/personality or is it an “opinion” blog?
 - Does your blog focus on an industry or niche or does it focus on you or your product?
 - Is your blog able to attract quality guest authors?
 - How widely-faceted is your niche? Is there a need for your audience to hear from experts in different areas of the one niche?
 - Is yours a magazine-style or content curation blog, with the industry or niche at center stage?
 - Is there a strong “how to” focus in your blog that naturally begs for guest experts?

A Word of Caution

Even if you decide you need guest bloggers, there are some serious prohibitions you need to observe:

- **Never, ever accept a post that is not 100% aligned with your blog mission and your audience's interests.** (Translated, that means no articles from Suzie Prootlinger-Geroffit because she is a buddy in the Content Marketing forum you both belong to, if she specializes in calligraphy while your blog deals strictly with architecture.)
- **Never, ever accept an article – no matter how well-written – until you have thoroughly checked out the author's background.** This includes references, status, background, blog or website, and written body-of-work.
- **Never, ever accept a post from someone who wants backlinks in exchange.**

When you offer your own services as a guest blogger, the same restrictions and principles apply.

And finally, even though Matt Cutts started out his latest guest-blogging post by saying that “guest blogging is done. It’s just gotten too spammy”, he was forced to update that post after protests by Brian Clark of Copyblogger and others.

Cutts changed his tune to amend this: “I’m not trying to throw the baby out with the bath water. There are still many good reasons to do some guest blogging (exposure, branding, increased reach, community, etc.). Those reasons existed way before Google and they’ll continue into the future. And there are absolutely some fantastic, high-quality guest bloggers out there. I changed the title of this post to make it more clear that I’m talking about **guest blogging for search engine optimization (SEO) purposes.**”
[*Emphasis ours.*]

Your best bet is to **focus on the people you want to serve or entertain and the outcome you want for your blog.** Then add everything else to build one that fulfills your shining purpose.

And as long as you’re writing for your readers and not as a backlink “strategy”, you shouldn’t have to worry.

Module 2: How to Get Expert Bloggers as Your Guests

When it comes to attracting or accepting guest authors, you need to ensure they will enhance your blog's reputation – both among your readership and with Google. To paraphrase something Google's Matt Cutts said in his response to a comment on [The decay and fall of guest blogging for SEO](#), when you are starting out, people approaching you to guest blog can make you feel validated, when in fact you're being targeted.

So check them out thoroughly before saying "yes".

Giving your Blog a Personality



A huge part in attracting the right guest authors – and one people rarely talk about – lies in making sure your blog has a **strong identity and personality**. (Think of it as a real-world example: People are not attracted to

someone bland and wishy-washy; mostly because they don't notice that person – he or she doesn't stand out from the crowd.)

People are attracted to – or repelled by – people with **clear identities** (especially those with outgoing personalities).

You've heard it said that you should give your blog an identity – which goes a little beyond branding. Giving your blog an identity may start out with tricks such as deciding on its mission, its focus and your goal, but what setting and observing these planned parameters really does is help you give your blog a **personality**, so that it really stands out from the crowd – and people have a good idea exactly what it's all about.

Let's try a little experiment and say that the two people caricatured above represent two separate blogs. If you were a young, male, computer game developer, you wouldn't be drawn to the old lady on the right – you would

naturally and instantly gravitate to the young man on the left. You have instantly and naturally pre-qualified yourself as a reader of the young male blog and disqualified yourself as a reader of the old female blog.

On the other hand, if you were a crabby old lady all about finally speaking up after a lifetime of repression, the “Crabby Granny” blog on the right would suck you right in (probably with a feeling of delight). And if the **content** bore out the identity presented – in its **title, header graphics, post titles and sections** – you’d probably subscribe (providing the blog owner was smart enough to provide a web contact form with a big call-to-action saying “Subscribe to Crabby Granny” on it). Or at least bookmark it for a return visit.

So it is with your guest authors. If you present your blog with a strong identity and focus, you will attract people who identify with your blog’s focus and interests – and who have expertise to contribute. Who want to contribute.

That’s your basic canvas. Now you have to build on that before your content can truly be appreciated.

Branding your blog and its content with repetition

Another “trick” that helps brand a blog with personality lies in making use of the human brain’s need for (and appreciation of) **repetition**.

- **Creating repetitive structure** is another great variation on this – the perfect example being a Review blog where reviews are always presented using the same template, with all items reviewed presented in the same order.

A great example of this is Top Ten Reviews.com, a blog that allows you to review the top ten of any online product or service, but which always presents your results in the exact, same graph chart format, ranked in the same order of features.

The screenshot shows the TopTenReviews website interface. At the top, there's a navigation menu with categories like Software, Electronics, Services, Mobile, Appliances, Business, Auto Tech, Science Tech, and Video. Below the menu, there's a video frame showing a presenter in a dark sweater pointing towards a whiteboard. The whiteboard has a diagram with 'Action' and 'Knowledge' written on it. To the right of the video frame is a 'Sponsored Advertisement' placeholder. Below the video frame, there's a call to action: 'LIKE OUR REVIEWS? SUPPORT OUR SITE BY LIKING US ON FACEBOOK OR GOOGLE PLUS'. The main content area is titled '2014 Webinar Service Comparisons' and displays a table with 10 columns representing different services. The table includes columns for Rank, Overall Rating, Monthly Price (100+ Attendees), and Ratings. Below the table is a bar chart showing the overall ratings for each service. The services listed are MegaMeeting, Adobe Connect 8, Cisco WebEx, Infinite Conference, ClickWebinar, GoToWebinar, InstantPresenter, Video Seminar Live, iLinc, and Microsoft Office Live Meeting.

Rank	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
10-9 Excellent	MegaMeeting	Adobe Connect 8	Cisco WebEx	Infinite Conference	ClickWebinar	GoToWebinar	InstantPresenter	Video Seminar Live	iLinc	Microsoft Office Live Meeting
8-6 Good										
5-4 Average										
3-2 Poor										
1-0 Bad										
Reviewer Comments	Read Review	Read Review	Read Review	Read Review	Read Review	Read Review	Read Review	Read Review	Read Review	Read Review
Monthly Price (100+ Attendees)	Buy Now	Buy Now	Buy Now	Buy Now	Buy Now	Buy Now	Buy Now	Buy Now	Buy Now	Buy Now
Ratings	9.23	9.18	8.65	8.38	8.32	8.32	8.03	7.63	7.28	7.03

Type “top ten reviews” plus the type of item or service you want to review (e.g. webinar services) into Google’s search engine and who rises to the top of the search results?

That’s right: Top Ten Reviews.com – a perfect result of:

- A strong, simple domain name containing the exact keywords many people search with
- A template/format that is used over and over for every type of product or service reviewed
- Honest, objective, straightforward content, providing the reader with exactly what she asked for
- **Creating a regular series** where the first part of the title is repeated week after week can help make that series “stick” in people’s minds. The result? When someone mentions your blog’s name, your reader immediately thinks of your “Behind the Scenes Hockey Tips for Parents” series.
- **Creating a regular section** can be even more effective than a limited series (which people expect to end after half a dozen

episodes or so).

A perfect example of this can be found in Nicole Dean's blog, [Nicole on the Net](#) – namely, her “Expert Briefs” section (and it may well incorporate use of a template too: Notice how each post begins with the same sentence; then continues with that month's unique question present to a panel of experts or peers...)

Balance During the Holidays
DECEMBER 14, 2013 By NICOLE 7 COMMENTS

It's another Expert Briefs, where I ask really smart business owners to answer your burning questions. Before we get too late in the month, let's find out how my friends juggle it all. I asked them this. "The holidays are such a busy time of year, so it got me thinking about balance. Between shopping, [...]"

How to Reduce Your Taxable Income
NOVEMBER 25, 2013 By NICOLE 4 COMMENTS

It's another Expert Briefs, where I ask really smart business owners to answer your burning questions. This week I asked our panel of experts the same thing I asked last year and the year before (since 2008) ... "If you made more money this year than last year, your quarterly taxes probably won't be enough [...]"

What's Working Right Now to Get Traffic?
NOVEMBER 22, 2013 By NICOLE 9 COMMENTS

It's another Expert Briefs, where I ask really smart business owners to answer your burning questions. This week I asked our panel of experts... "What's something that's working right now to get you traffic?" I think you'll find the responses interesting as everyone's answers were so varied. Terry Dean of My Marketing Coach says: I [...]"

Search
SEARCH THIS WEBSITE... SEARCH

FREE!
Sign up for Updates and You Will Instantly get the Following 3 Reports:

- Where to Find Images for your Blog Posts
- 104 Blog Title Ideas (printable list)
- List of the Tools that Power My Business.

Your Email

SIGN UP NOW!

Notice also that Nicole Dean doesn't just please her readers: She also provides a **web contact form** with the **call-to-action** “SIGN UP NOW!” offering three free reports designed to appeal to her preferred audience – right beside the repetitive summaries detailing her “Expert Briefs” posts.

And do take special notice of the fact that she speaks in clear language and a tone her audience relates to when she describes her guest experts – not as “ten top CEOs” or “award-winning designer, Cornpone Candy” but as “really smart business owners” – language her practical audience might use themselves.

(Hint: Also, who does she market to? Really smart business owners!)

Finally, note how expertly Nicole Dean uses this summarized format. The four lines of text that appear per article slug:

- a) Let the reader know it's an "Expert Briefs" post
- b) Provides the topic and the "hook" – the information that makes the reader want to read more

All this is what we mean by making sure your content isn't just unique and original, but presented professionally and integrated with other tactics – including attracting guest authors.

Content Curation vs. Opinion Blogging

Give your blog a strong voice – especially if you are branding yourself (e.g. "Jill Krill, Life Coach") – and doubly so if you plan to have a large percentage of guest posts. Blogs with multiple voices (e.g. "guest authors") should never feel like a miscellaneous babble.

Instead, think of yourself as the "host" – the "constant" that introduces and closes your "show", every time you present an "episode" (i.e. guest post). But do decide at the planning stage whether or not guest authors are going to be a key strategy. Think of what would work best for your audience:

- A weekly or monthly Guest Post (your own version of an "Expert Brief")
- A true magazine format, with both regular and freelance contributors – and you providing the equivalent of an "editorial"?
- Out and out content curation, where you gather articles, infographics and other media on a specific topic from multiple sources, and present them as curated?

Whatever you decide works best for your audience, set this at the planning stage – and stick to your format consistently.

(Doing so will help build your online reputation quickly.)

How Do You Attract Quality Guest Authors?

If you want to attract quality guest authors, there are some basic tenets to uphold.

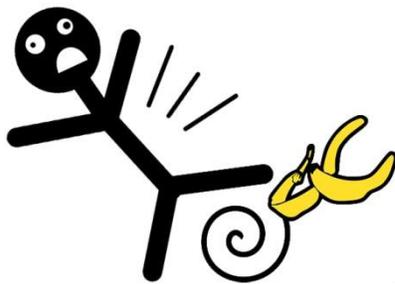
1. **Start with people you know.** Most of the guests Nicole Dean interviews are her peers. She has joint ventured with them, met them at conferences and interacted online with them. They are also people with **impeccable business reputations** and strong Google authority themselves.

Who among your niche have you actually interacted with? Did you take a workshop from Cornpone Candy or did Maybelline LeGrue prepare your taxes? Did you provide a free report for Merx Plunk?

And finally – would your preferred audience find these guests appealing – even irresistible?

If the answers are “yes” – ask!

2. **Make sure your own reputation is spotless.** If you have been uploading dozens of spammy articles to dubious directories, you’ll get a “no” from almost everyone you approach (except other spammy marketers).



If your own online reputation needs some rehabilitation, the quickest and easiest way to do it lies in building strong, complete profiles on a variety of top social networks such as **LinkedIn,**

YouTube, Google+, Twitter, Pinterest and **SlideShare** – add directories such as Yelp and FourSquare, if you’re blogging for a local business.

Doing this helps ensure your well-optimized social media profile links are what will show up on the first page of your Google search results: *Not* your part in the Great Banana Scandal of 1998.

3. **Show what’s in it for their own readers or audience.** If you want to attract a guest author – especially an expert you don’t yet have a strong connection with – you need to show, pretty quickly, what’s “in it” for them – namely, for their unique audience. You have to be able to recognize a strong reason why appearing on your blog is going to help your own guest and/or

her readers!

- 4. Pay them.** Is an expert really out of your reach? If so, consider paying that expert. Ask yourself: “Would it bring a strong return on investment if I simply paid them to write a guest article?”

In the “real world” (a.k.a. offline magazines) any seasoned author would be astonished if you asked them to take their valuable time and write a free guest post for you. (That’s something culturally more acceptable, it seems, online.)

Occasionally professional journalists do get such requests – but unless it comes from someone they know well and can exchange favors with or represents a truly worthy cause the writer can personally identify with, such requests are laughed at incredulously and tossed in the waste paper basket.

As one journalist put it: “Would you ask your mechanic to fix your car for free, as a favor to you – and expect him to say “yes”?”

Check out your preferred expert’s website. He or she might even have a section detailing their rates and indicating availability. But do be sure to thoroughly check them out first, to make sure they are searchable by Google; that they are validated by Google web authorship (more on that shortly) and that they are not also spammers.

(Moral: Before asking, remember that you always have to show there is going to be something “in it” for your guest author!)

- 5. Follow up!** Once they’ve agreed to guest post and uploaded or submitted it, promote their post to your readership. (Tip: Telling a guest author what promotion you provide can sometimes be an expected incentive.) Let them know you welcome their responses to reader comments. Provide them with limited Admin access to your blog, if you’re comfortable with that.

Make it as easy as possible for your guest author to write and submit her article, respond to comments and deal with you.

Always send a thank you letter, detailing some specific point of their post that your readers particularly enjoyed or that you really appreciated.

And don't worry too much about letting them know you're available: For one thing, Google doesn't like reciprocal guest posts.

And your guest author who has just had an easy, painless or even wonderful experience writing for you does know where to find you.

Claiming Google Authorship

You may have noticed we use the term “guest author” rather than “guest blogger”. We already know that Google dislikes “guest blogging” intensely, according to Matt Cutts, because of the negative connotations brought about by spammy, black hat SEO techniques.

What you may not know is that it not only helps to use Google-verified guest authors; if you are planning to do any guest blogging yourself, it helps to validate yourself with “Google authorship”, so that you appear as an author in Google search results.

Nowadays, according to Google, the “easiest and most reliable way to enable authorship information in Google search results is to provide a **verified email address** on the same domain as your content.”

(I.E. If your blog is TenTopBananas.com, you will want to provide your Google+ Profile and blog Author Bio or About section with **an email address from that domain** – e.g. “brideymurphey@tentopbananas.com”.)

Google explains that linking your authored content to your Google profile is “a two-step process”:

1. Add a link from your website or page to your Google profile.
2. Update your Google profile by adding a link back to your site.

You can find complete instructions on how to claim full Google authorship in Google's [Webmaster Tools](#).

1. Link your content to your Google profile

Create a link to your Google profile from your webpage, like this:



```
<a href="[profile_url]?rel=author">Google</a>
```

Replace `[profile_url]` with the your Google Profile URL, like this:



```
<a href="https://plus.google.com/109412257237874861202?rel=author">Google</a>
```

Your link must contain the `?rel=author` parameter. If it's missing, Google won't be able to associate our content with your Google profile.

So, you see, creating great blog content *isn't* just about content! It's about planning, set up, keeping abreast of Google prohibitions, algorithms and requirements (without going off the deep end about them).

It's never, ever about using content to generate backlinks.

Creating rock star blogging content focuses on providing strong, honest, reader-slanted content **in a framework that includes a fully professional, quality set up** that includes:

- A strong domain name that people are likely to either (a) remember or (b) search with
- Professional-quality graphics (and colors) that support the blog's identity and mission
- Quality guest authors (if you use guest authors)
- Quality posts that give your reader exactly what they (a) expect (b) want

And if you're planning to do any guest author spots yourself, claiming Google authorship!

Even then, we've just laid down the groundwork. In our next module, we'll take a look at **making your content highly interactive**, and our final module will conclude with **ways to monetize your content**.

Module 3: How to Make Your Blog More Interactive

“Interactivity” is another buzzword flying around today – and we can thank mobile phones for that. Watch any mobile user in action and you will see her hit buttons or swipe screens with the precision of a neurosurgeon. If she has to scroll down to find a button, ninety percent of the time she won’t: She is “outta there” – and on to the next website.



But what she is really looking for is not just the “best deal” on a local restaurant or a fun game to pass the time while under the hair dryer at the salon: She is looking for a **reward**.

(Kind of like those county fairs, where you shoot at a balloon or throw a ball in a hole, and get a toy rabbit: Only the modern day mobile

user will often get hopping mad – no pun intended – if she misses that balloon!)

Interactivity is also a great way to boost your rock star blogger status and attract a more dedicated audience.

Interactivity **makes it easy for readers to help themselves to your message**.

And for mobile users, that can be a reward in itself.

Adding Rich Media

When people talk about adding rich media to blogs, they usually mean **video** – and that is certainly a great way to add interactivity. All you need is your YouTube channel – and remember, YouTube is now Google-owned and linked, so there’s an extra bonus for you there – and a plugin or blog theme optimized for video.

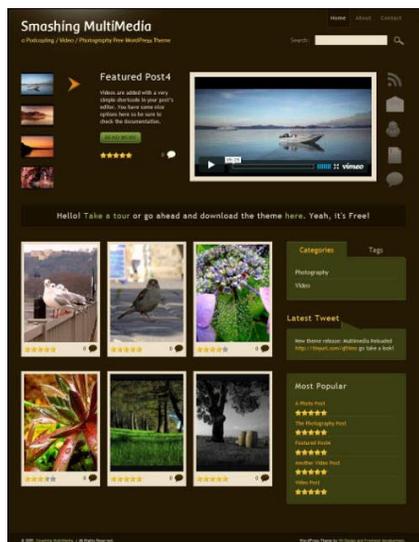
It’s a good idea to embed your videos right in your blog, as well as hosting them on YouTube.

And don't neglect other popular video platforms.
You can add a video as:

- Entertainment
- Instruction – for example, a “how to” video or a series of lessons
- An alternative, visual method of learning
- Perks of a membership site you host on your blog
- A change from your regular, written content
- Augmentation to a regular blog post
- Part of a 100% video blog or “vlog”

But whatever reason you embrace for adding video to your blog, make sure you test it out first to see if that's what your audience wants. One big clue: If your readers actually *ask* for videos – not necessarily on your blog but asking you or each other in your post comments or on social media if there's a video link “anyone knows about”.

You can also visit YouTube and check to see if your topic is searched for. And although YouTube does have strong ties to Google – definitely something to think carefully about – adding video from other platforms should also be considered.



For example, if you are a film-maker or a musician, you may actually find that having an all-out, dedicated video blog is the best medium for getting your message out. In that case, your best bet would be to choose a WordPress theme dedicated to and optimized for video entries – such as Smashing Magazine's (free) [Smashing MultiMedia](#) theme. (And on that page you'll also find all the parameters and tips you'll need to know for using a video blog.)

Smashing Magazine's [Smashing WordPress](#) section (or sub-blog)

provides you with a powerful search engine for WordPress themes – both free and paid – that have been vetted out by their knowledgeable staff. You can also simply embed or link to videos that behave like animated, looping .GIFs through Twitter’s answer to Instagram - Vine.co – which allows people to create and upload 6-second loops, much like the one made popular by Olympic athlete, Travis Gerrits in which he “eats” a miniature ski jumper for breakfast.



Instagram will give you longer videos at 15 seconds – as well as more editing capabilities. Both are meant for capturing something “as it happens”. Use both of these video types sparingly and wisely, unless you are unabashedly curating that type of content – and always obey copyright laws, contacting the site or original poster for permission if

there is any doubt. (The best strategy is to **make your own mini** Vine or Instagram videos!)

If you are selling high-quality, big ticket coaching or making actual movies you might want to check out Vimeo.com.

A screenshot of a Vimeo video player interface. The main video shows a purple, alien-like character with large eyes and a small mouth, standing in a field of colorful flowers. The video title is "CANDICE GORDON | Sound of Horns" and it is from "conorfinnegan". Below the main video is a row of five smaller video thumbnails with their titles and sources: "Neighbors - 'Wild E..." from neighborsmusic, "M.o.M" from InkyMind, "JACKPOT: A Film By ..." from Adam Baran, "CANDICE GORDON | ..." from conorfinnegan, and "Open Door to Solitu..." from Filson. The player includes a play button, a progress bar showing 03:46, and HD quality options.

The major differences with this lesser-known video sharing platform:

- High definition, high quality, longer videos allowed
- Fiction and “art” movies allowed. Creativity is encouraged.
- You can insert a Vimeo [blog badge widget](#) – instantly recognizable as a social network badge -- into your blog, along with your other social network badges
- Makes effective use of categories
- No advertising
- Staff picks

The main similarities:

- You can embed your video right into your blog
- Searchable database

Vimeo is not linked to Google the way YouTube is – but depending on your goals, and your audience and video type, it may be the better choice for your blog.

You can also “vlog” – video blog – by creating video podcasts.

- a) The difference between a video podcast and a “regular” video – people subscribe to vlogs or vodcasts by RSS feed and you can upload it to platform like iTunes too

Why You Should Consider Podcasting

But what is really picking up steam right now is **embedding podcast episodes on your blog**; either as a blog post in its own right or to augment your written “show notes” or a post summary, as Kendall SummerHawk has done here:

Simple Tips To Stop Fearing Selling Sessions
Written by Kendall SummerHawk | Filed Under: Money and Mindset

Click here if you would rather listen to this article.



Fear. Dread. Panic. Angst. Worry. Anxiety.

The feelings most women have associated with getting on the phone and speaking with a potential client are anything but positive or life-affirming.

And yet, in our hearts, we women entrepreneurs LOVE talking with people. We love sharing what we do. We delight in connecting with someone's needs and exploring if we can help them. And we genuinely enjoy feeling the special fulfillment that comes when we're being of service.

So why the emotional drama at the prospect of signing on a new client?



She writes a short article on her headline topic that features everything she wants to say in the article summary/slug except for the actual tips. The reader can then choose whether or not she wants to:

- a) Click on the podcast icon to listen to the tip
- b) Click on the “Read more” anchor text, which takes them to the text version of the tips

which mindset YOU resonate with the most so be sure to post your comments on my blog.

Read More



SummerHawk **gives her reader a choice**. They click on the method of accessing the tips they prefer, and are “rewarded” by having the tips presented in their preferred format.

Not only does including (limited) choice empower your reader, it also allows her to choose different formats on different occasions.

For example, say she just wants to chill and listen. Perhaps she has a headache from staring at a computer screen all day or perhaps this is a choice she's made for her “Self Development Hour”. She then chooses the podcast for a more personal and intense experience.

But say she's dashing out the door to pick the kids up from school and she only has five minutes – but she really wants to read those tips. That's when she would select the text option, if she is the type who can skim and

speed read (especially when each tip is “helped out” with nice, numbered, bold sub-heads).

Mindset Shift #2: Loosen Your GRIP

Yes, I understand. Money is the fuel that runs your business. We all need it but you need other things too, such as air, food, water and shelter and you don't seem to be running around in a desperate panic saying, "I need to breathe!" You just...breathe.

The money is there for you. I promise. Creating money is a system and a skill that anyone can learn. I've taught it to thousands of women so I know you can learn it too. 😊

Mindset Shift #3: Thank God For This OPPORTUNITY

As entrepreneurs in service-based businesses, we have the truly extraordinary ability to make

So how does SummerHawk create this? By writing a full blog post and turning the key take-aways into audio format.

Taking a podcast and creating content from it

Of course, the inverse of that is creating your podcast first; then turning part or all of it into a blog post.

And you don't need to stop at one blog post: You can also bundle your podcasts together and use their transcripts as a Kindle eBook.

The key lies in:

- Planning beforehand how you are going to present (and repurpose) your content
- Playing to your strengths

So, for example, if you are more comfortable speaking directly to your viewer or listener, like Melissa Ingold in her [Time Freedom Business](#) blog, this might be a more comfortable way for you to create your interactive content.

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) / ARCHIVES FOR OUTSOURCING PODCAST

Time Freedom Business Episode #4: How Carrie Wilkerson is Both Successful Business Owner and Rock Star Mom to 4

BY [MELISSA INGOLD](#) • [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

It's my pleasure to have Carrie Wilkerson, The Barefoot Executive, as my guest this week! I met Carrie a couple of years ago when I hired her as my coach and I just love how she's growing her business without sacrificing any of her family time. Carrie Wilkerson is the voice of experience. From corporate [...]

[Read More](#)

FILED UNDER: [OUTSOURCING PODCAST](#) [PRODUCTIVITY & OUTSOURCING](#)

Free Outsourcing Kit: "Outsource Your Way to a Six-Figure Business!"

Outsource Your Way to a Six-Figure Business Toolkit!

By **Melissa Ingold**

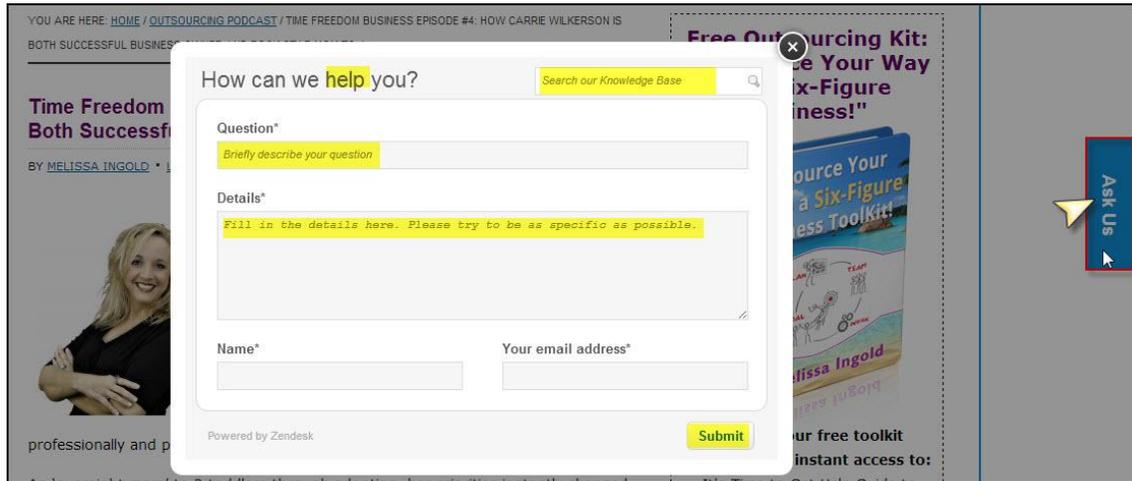
Sign up for your free toolkit

Notice how well-branded Ingold's blog is – and how she makes the most of every interactive and content-creation opportunity. She...

- Offers a dedicated podcast section, easily accessed through a tab
- Uses professional quality promo photos of her guests
- Also provides the option of reading more
- Uses calls-to-action (“LEAVE A COMMENT”)
- Has a strong sign-up box with a high-value incentive, attractively displayed in the “prime” right-hand side widget position, above the fold

In addition, her cheerful and vibrant header epitomizes what her site is all about – having time to enjoy life (it even includes her tag line, so potential readers/listeners will be in no doubt about the blog's mission and focus).

The “Ask Us” tab provides both further instant interactivity and customer service.



The screenshot displays a website interface with a central form overlay. The form is titled "How can we help you?" and includes a search bar labeled "Search our Knowledge Base". Below the title, there are two main input sections: "Question*" with a placeholder "Briefly describe your question" and "Details*" with a placeholder "Fill in the details here. Please try to be as specific as possible.". At the bottom of the form, there are two input fields: "Name*" and "Your email address*", followed by a yellow "Submit" button. The form is powered by Zendesk. The background shows a blog post by Melissa Ingold with a photo of her and a sidebar with a blue "Ask Us" button. The sidebar also contains a promotional graphic for a "Free Outsourcing Kit: Take Your Way to a Six-Figure Business!" and a "Read More" button.

Unlike SummerHawk, however, Melissa Ingold does not display the actual podcast button until the reader has pressed the “Read More” button – and doing so instantly reveals why she took this approach. For one thing, her tab and anchor text tag make it obvious with each article that there is a podcast – the “prize” – inside (but no actual post). And it also ensures that the reader **sees what will help them** the most (which they might never have discovered, had the podcast audio file player been embedded within the slug/summary).

Her post page is beautifully optimized and visually appealing. It also offers well-presented choices.

In This Episode We Talked About

- Why you need to find a hobby to totally unplug
- There's no such thing as one set formula for balancing life and work
- What tasks she outsources
- Why she prefers to outsource rather than having an in-house staff
- How she blocks off her "power hour" and other work time on her family schedule
- What boundaries she has set for herself
- How she avoids getting distracted

 **AUDIO MP3** Standard Podcast [Hide Player](#) | [Play in Popup](#) | [Download](#)

Or you can [Download and Listen on iTunes](#)



Connect With Melissa



Prefer to read the transcript?

The written version of this interview is [available on the Kindle](#).

Categories

Her short, five-paragraph **bio of her podcast guest** makes up the written "post" part of this page and tells readers **what the guest can offer them** and **has in common** with them. She finishes the bio blurb off with an invitation to "learn more about" and a link to the guest's website.

Learn More About Carrie:

- [Carrie's Blog](#)

And since her guests all have sterling reputations and strong blogs themselves, these link are viewed as highly relevant, passing Matt Cutts' (or should we say, Google's) stringent anti-spam requirements.

Each post also contains true "**Show Notes**" – something podcast listeners look for and are used to accessing.

These show notes tell the potential listener clearly what she can expect:

In This Episode We Talked About

- Why you need to find a hobby to totally unplug
- There's no such thing as one set formula for balancing life and work
- What tasks she outsources
- Why she prefers to outsource rather than having an in-house staff
- How she blocks off her "power hour" and other work time on her family schedule
- What boundaries she has set for herself
- How she avoids getting distracted

Nothing is hidden. Everything is **made as easy as possible** to help the potential listener make decisions. Notice also that Ingold offers not one, but **several options on exactly how the listener can choose to access the audio file**:



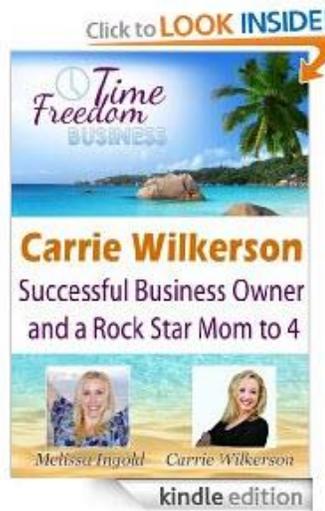
Ingold also includes options for:

- Reading a transcript
- Accessing a Kindle version (with a well-branded book cover photo)

And just for **added value**, she includes tips about a favorite resource she uses and one her guest uses – providing proof that they both are there to **share real tips and help** the reader/listener.

Prefer to read the transcript?

The written version of this interview is available on the Kindle.



[How Carrie Wilkerson is Both a Successful Business Owner and Rock Star Mom](#)

Tools & Resources to Help You Save Time

- [Basecamp](#) - the project management system I use.
- Google Calendar - Carrie's must-have tool for organization.
- [Time Trade](#) - Hands-free appointment scheduling tool.

And let's not forget the social sharing icons, complete with a call-to-action prompt...



Finally, she includes another, very natural-feeling call-to-action, in keeping with her branding:



[Click Here to Subscribe to My Podcast on iTunes](#)

When you are planning your blog content (interactive and static), you also need to make the most of every opportunity to:

- Clarify what your reader/listener will get, if she accesses your content
- Display each component in an appealing visual manner that makes it easy for them to see what choices they have
- Show how you can help them
- Give them guided choices you know will appeal
- Reward them for opening your post, if they had to open it to access your podcast or article

But Wait, There's...

...Always more. But do you need it? That's the question to ask yourself, when planning your blog page design.

You can also include other interactive content, such as **polls**, **surveys**, **photos** and **contests** – but be selective and don't throw interactive elements in there for the sake of adding "more". That's a huge mistake – you want to keep your focus clear and simple, so your high-value options are not obscured.

Putting too much on a blog page is as bad as expecting readers to mind-read. (Think of it in the terms of a Renaissance artist: You're asked to paint a touching moment between madonna and child – only you throw in buckets, piles of straw, multiple shepherds, a chorus of angels, three

kings, their assorted servants, horse brasses on the wall, barn utensils, feed tubs...

In other words, people are so busy being distracted by the goats and the maelstrom of straw, the miss the tender look the mother is giving her child completely.

Finally, keep your tone positive without being bossy – and keep it consistent with your personality, mission and audience. Your blog will need a strong, individual “**voice**” no matter what type of content you include.

Read quality blogs for examples, before you put together your own. Make notes of what you like – and don't like: Of what your readers would likely love – and what will leave them cold.

Be selective – and always stick to your:

- Mission
- Theme
- Focus

And you'll start out miles ahead of many who have been blogging without success for years.

Module 4: Ways to Monetize Your Content

So Google hates “marketers” – and you’re one. How do you monetize your blog in a way that won’t get it penalized in Google’s search results? We’ve covered that pretty thoroughly, but let’s recap:

- Never do anything “spammy”
- Never accept guest authors or backlinks that are irrelevant to your blog’s focus – or that don’t yield a solid reputation in the search results
- Always present your content in as straightforward a way as possible
- Make sure any links feel either like straight up, honest sales links or the natural solution and conclusion to what your post has been talking about

Your actual marketing should feel – and be – totally in keeping with your blog message, persona and readership interests.

Don’t be afraid to be up front, if you have designed your blog to suit your readers – and to the best of your ability. Be proud of it.

Your new blog should be able to use even such dreaded, Google-frowned-upon words as “make money” – and still get to the top of search engines, such as Darren Rowse’s ProBlogger.net.



Your “About” Section and Contact Information

One thing we haven’t yet touched upon is your “About” section. Do create one – it’s vital for Google credibility as well as soothing the fears of any other suspicious visitors.

Explain what your blog is all about, and how it relates to the reader's reason for checking you out. (What you don't want is a list of achievements and awards: Only include the most relevant of these – if indeed any of your achievements and awards are relevant.

Make sure your blog also contains:

- A “Terms and Conditions” page
- A “Disclaimer” page, if you plan to do any affiliate marketing through your blog at all
- A “Disclosure” page
- Your Privacy Policy
- Complete contact information – preferably not a P.O. Box

These can be accessible by small links at the bottom of your Home page (preferably from every page) – but whatever you do, avoid black hat practices like making your link text color the same color as your background. (Doing such things will swiftly get you clobbered by Google.)

[DISCLAIMER](#) | [DISCLOSURE](#) | [PRIVACY POLICY](#)

You need a Privacy Policy on any page subject to the CAN-SPAM act, as well as either a Disclaimer or Disclosure page – better yet, both!

(The Social Medic has an excellent article on the topic of required pages on blogs: [The Disclaimer and the Disclosure.](#))

Also make sure your personal information is updated at WHOIS – even if it isn't going to appear on your blog. Wrong personal information is another Google red flag. (Update your WHOIS information from your Domain registration account.)

When is monetization “too soon”?

One of the big differences you may find between yourself and a blogger like Darren Rowse is that he has been blogging since November 2002 and has logged a strong, positive history with Google. But if you have planned your blog carefully and done your homework – and particularly if you have a plan set up to integrate and share cross-platform with social networks – there is no reason you shouldn't start monetizing it straight away.

Be upfront and make your monetization part of its mission. One of the disadvantages – namely, that you may be relatively new to blogging – can actually turn out to be an advantage, particularly if you are thinking of

advertising through AdSense or social networks like Facebook. Starting “small” – before you’ve built up a huge list of subscribers – and let you grow into your advertising. If you make a mistake or forget to count a fee, it won’t be as catastrophic as if you suddenly had to handle huge overages or massive sales.

(You also need to plan how you are going to handle orders – you don’t want to be like famed copywriter Gary Halbert back in the latter half of the nineteen-seventies, who was unable to fulfill thousands of mail orders and ended up – after several appeals and seven lawyers – serving time in Boron prison.)

In fact, it’s Gary Halbert who originated three pieces of sound advice people all too often ignore today:

- Acknowledge every order the moment you get it
- Immediately give a refund to anyone who wants one
- Acknowledge every communication from a customer

In modern, online terms that means make sure you can (a) fulfill the demand (b) perform fast, efficient customer service, once you start making sales.

(And never, ever take in more orders than you can handle!)

There are many facets to think of, once you monetize your blog – but the best way to do it is to listen to your audience, follow your instincts and monetize it the way that feels most natural to you – the way the blog itself channels you to create.

Starting Small and Planning Big

Knowing your goals for your business, the gaps in your niche and the products you’d like to create or promote is a good, solid start to monetization. Before deciding, however, do a little brainstorming. Visualize what works with your comfort zone:

- Writing reviews of products you use in your business or hobby?
- Literally monetizing your blog with contextual text ads?
- Having a “catalogue”-style website and selling your crafts?
- Using a third-party vendor site such as Etsy.com and selling your crafts?

- Promoting the products of a niche or industry figure you really admire and enthusiastically support?
- Running a membership site on your blog?
- Providing virtual services?
- Writing a book?

Probably the easiest way is to **create a digital product** and promote it with your blog – only there is a right way and a wrong way to do this. If this idea appeals to you, it's important to realize straight away that you don't blog about your product (not unless you're writing a press release and archiving it in your Media or Press Room section): You blog about the **topic** the product makes easier.

For example, if your eBook is all about making goat cheese, you don't blog about your eBook: You **blog about the primary topic the person who will open their purse to buy your book is most passionately interested in.**



And that might be any one of the following:

- Goat-keeping
- Organic, raw foods
- Cheese-making

Or perhaps even a niche segment we haven't even thought of yet! The trick, however, is to pick one: If your focus is goats and your preferred audience's focus is goats, then blog about goats. If cheese, then cheese. And so forth. Just make sure that (a) you're already passionate about the topic or (b) you can become interested enough to develop a real passion for it.

You need all of these elements (plus a budget, if possible) for blog money-making success:

Your audience (community)	Your passion	Your monetization method
Concentrate on serving and building a strong community around your blog's main topic.	Blog about your community's main passion – which should be yours; or at least you should be able to appreciate it.	Look for ways to monetize this topic naturally. Your emphasis should be on helping your "tribe".

Building Your Community

Monetization without a community – a list of subscribers – won't get you very far, so even before you begin to monetize, you need to start building your email list. Use your posts to attract people to your sales funnel, and make sure you have those calls-to-action set in multiple places on your blog.

Don't bombard your reader with these links: Rather, be aware of good opportunities to insert them naturally, in the most logical place, as Melissa Ingold has done with her Time Freedom Business blog.

Notice that her calls to action and links feel natural, not intrusive or pushy.

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) / [FREE GIFTS & GIVEAWAYS](#) / FREE: 4 TEAM TRAINING DOCUMENTS

FREE: 4 Team Training Documents

BY [MELISSA INGOLD](#) • [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

My team and I are in the process of updating our library of "team training documents", so I decided to give you a taste of what we have and let you download 4 of them for free.

We're going to have a boatload more of these soon, and I'll let you know how to access them when they're ready, okay?

In the meantime, **you can download these 4 team training documents free.**

Here's what's included in this download:

1. How to Pay Affiliates with PayPal's Mass Pay Feature
2. How to Make and Schedule Posts in WordPress
3. How to Add an Image to a Post in WordPress
4. How to Send a Broadcast in Aweber

[Click Here to Download Your Team Training Documents \(.pdf format\)](#)

Want to Train Your Assistant to Make Money for You in One Simple Step?

While we're on the topic of team training, I recently added a ton more stuff to my popular [Train Your VA to Make Money for You](#) program.

You'll get instant access to 10 videos (with lots more being added soon)

- Kindle Book Publishing
- Monetizing Customer Service

Free Outsourcing Kit: "Outsource Your Way to a Six-Figure Business!"

Sign up for your free toolkit and you'll get instant access to:

- It's Time to Get Help Guide to Outsourcing
- 4 Outsourcing Assignment Templates
- 4 Team Training Documents
- 3 Step-by-Step Tutorials for Setting Up User Accounts
- 7 Ways to Get Outsourcing Discounts Guide

Email:

Your privacy is protected.

Common places for calls-to-action and hyperlinks are in your:

- Posts
- Photographs
- Sidebar
- Resource boxes
- Signature
- Side widgets
- Header
- Footer

Notice also that all her comments and posts are focused towards her audience's main concerns.

Repurposing Your Content

Your blog is a rich goldmine of resources. As you build it and build your list, cross-promote its contents with your social media. Carefully observe audience reaction. Which posts, points or products get the most:

- Comments
- Controversy
- Praise
- Questions
- Feedback

Which posts trigger discussion? Reminiscences?

These are all huge indicators that you are connecting with your audience – and it is all about the connection and the communication.



Make sure it remains a two-way street, with you posting regularly and responding to reader or fan interaction.

As your blog grows, understand that a post once written is not dead. As long as there is discussion on the topic, it is very much alive. Update your most popular post as new information becomes available. Write another post on the topic, colored by all the feedback you've received or read elsewhere.

Finally, re-purpose your written material, as Melissa Ingold has done in Time Freedom Business. Present content you've already produced in a variety of formats to suit different types of readers with different learning preferences (but all interested in your main blog topic).

From your posts, podcasts, videos and eBooks, create:

- Podcasts (from posts or eBooks)
- Transcripts (of podcasts, webinars or videos)
- eBooks (from posts, podcasts or videos)
- Videos (from eBooks and posts)
- Infographics (from any of the above)

Beginning to get the idea? You've already done the research and writing or production: Why not get maximum use out of it as great blog fodder (or product fodder from your blog)?

Remember Your Affiliates!

And do make sure you create a private section for affiliates, detailing rewards and incentives, and providing resources. (Why knock yourself out shoveling the snow all by yourself when you can recruit a small force of friends to help you do it – with all of you minimizing the work, maximizing the return and enjoying the rewards.)



But always keep in mind your blog's main mission and goal – to provide your audience with what they crave.

If you make a serious commitment to your blog; plan it, schedule and execute; getting into the habit of doing this on a regular basis while actively tracking and tweaking results, you will build a community that will provide you with income, interaction and enjoyment for years to come.