



10 Tips to Launch Your Blog

■ A quality content strategy is a great way to bring more sales to your business and generate more leads. Rather than using rehearsed sales pitches or cold-calling an endless list of potential customers, a content strategy allows you to position your knowledge and products in the path of those people already searching for them.

If you're looking to develop your content strategy with your own signage or graphic design blog, it's never been easier to start. These 10 tips will help you successfully launch and optimize a blog to generate business leads.

Snap Up Your Domain Name ASAP

Picking a domain name requires a lot of thought and planning. Once you've found the perfect one, you'll need to snap it up immediately. The last thing you'd want is a prospective competitor to have the same great idea and beat you to the punch!

There are multiple ways to buy a domain

name. You can purchase one through website hosts, such as Squarespace, WordPress, Wix or GoDaddy, which let you search a prospective domain name and notify you if it's available. If the domain isn't available, the hosts will offer a list of similar alternatives, or you can simply search for another.

There are a few important factors to keep in mind, however, before finalizing your purchase. Taking each of these into account before purchasing will save you time, money and maybe even the loss of your domain name.

Research your domain name carefully. If the phrase or term you're using is copyrighted or trademarked, you could be in a world of legal trouble. To find out, search copyright records on the U.S. Copyright Office website (copyright.gov).

Make it relevant to what people are searching for. While you may be tempted to use a turn of phrase or funny joke

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By Brandon Stapper, CEO, Nonstop Signs & Graphics



Recent Posts

A First Time for Everything

by Mike Wagner posted at Wednesday, January 23, 2019 3:52 PM

For nearly a decade, I have been directly involved with the programming for several SGIA conferences, from the Membrane Switch Symposium to the more recent

SGIA's blog, The SGIA Printing Press, can be found at SGIA.org.

as your domain name, consider using a phrase or keywords that people are actually searching. For example, if you're a wide-format printer in San Diego, try SanDiegoWideFormat.com.

Keep it short and sweet. Web surfers are far more likely to either search partial company names or keywords or type them into the URL bar. If your domain name is lengthy, contains stop words or long phrases, it will rank lower in search engines and never appear to potential clients and readers.

Choose a Theme that Showcases Your Content

Once your domain name is secured, invest time — and perhaps even money — into a quality website and theme. Many blog-hosting platforms offer ready-made themes, sorted into categories according to what kind of sites they are designed for.

You'll want to select a theme and website look that complements and showcases visuals. Your business is visual communication, so pictures and videos — not long text blocks — should immediately catch the eye. Try to find a theme that incorporates large image frames with overlays and minimizes white space. This will give your visitors plenty to look at and interest them before they click on a post image to read your content.

Create Content Before Marketing Your Blog

You may be tempted to write one blog post and then aggressively market your blog. I'd strongly advise against this. Oftentimes when a potential customer or lead clicks through to your site, you have just one shot to really make a great impression.

If your blog looks empty or unfinished or lacks enough content, chances are that potential lead will leave, never to return again. What happens when a consumer reads your initial post, likes what they see and searches for more? If there's nothing else available, that consumer will not only lose interest, they may click away feeling downright unsatisfied! A negative association with your content — and your business — is hard to reverse, and chances are you will have lost that potential client forever.

Take the time to add meaningful content and make sure every corner of your blog is finished, polished and ready for each page to be searched. All links should be working, areas of text filled and images optimized. Find a few willing friends to lend some fresh eyes and read some of your posts before it goes live.

Write and Receive Guest Posts

One of the best ways to climb search engines and gain easy exposure for your company is to write and receive guest posts. When another site links to yours, it improves the metrics of your site and helps boost its ranks in search engines.

Another benefit of writing blog posts for other websites in your industry is that you'll establish yourself as a thought leader. Readers who like your unique take in a guest article may click through to your site. If they are met with additional content they like, you've turned another lead into a potential sale.

This works in reverse as well. When guest post contributors link from your site to their own, your search engine optimization (SEO) score will still climb. Plus, you'll ask the contributing writer to share the article with their social media networks, exposing your content to a wider audience than you would have previously reached. Guest posts and articles are a win-win scenario for everyone.

Create a Newsletter by Adding an Email List

Before you make your blog live or begin marketing content in earnest, it's important you have a method to capture leads. The most common way is including

a front-page widget that allows the page viewers to subscribe to an email list.

If you find visitors are hesitant to join your email list, you can add a downloadable "freebie" that will be sent to their email when they input their contact information. A freebie usually includes content your viewers want to know in the form of a guide, how to or infographic. It also enables you to further establish your authority as an industry thought leader by showcasing skills and knowledge.

Capturing emails is important so that you can follow up with potential leads or use an email campaign to continue sending them worthwhile content to inevitably close future sales.

Learn SEO and Readability

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a term that many blog and website owners have become familiar with, but don't fully understand. It is a measurable, repeatable process that signals search engines such as Google that your pages are worth showing, and the art of honing every word on your website to improve your searchability. A higher score pushes your site up in the search engine so that when people search similar or relevant keywords, your content will appear first.

Constructing sentences under 20 words, limiting passive voice phrasing and using headings are just a few of the many small rules for optimizing content. Because SEO and readability are incredibly involved, it's worthwhile to take a course in it or practice until you have at least a passing knowledge when constructing web pages.

There are also many plugins available on website platforms, such as Yoast for WordPress, that analyze the SEO and readability of your page. Yoast lets you know whether you have the green light to publish or remaining issues to fix, and even highlights problem areas in your text. A tool like this is indispensable if you aim to take your content strategy to the next level.

Invest in Content-Optimizing Tools

After you tackle SEO and readability, consider investing in tools that help you search the best keywords to use. Google Keyword Planner is a popular tool, as is Moz Explorer. Ahrefs is an all-in-one tool that allows you to monitor your competitors' page scores and SEO, indicates your own website's top pages and helps you determine top keywords.

Planning keywords for your content is important; you'll want to include those words and phrases your potential readers search for most. Most keywords are

nonspecific fragments. For example, more people will likely search “affordable vehicle wraps” than “cheap vehicle wraps in the greater San Diego area.”

You should always make a point to search prospective keywords and phrases to see which ones are getting the most traffic. Incorporating these keywords means your content will be seen by more potential leads, increasing the chance for your blog to be found.

Spend Time on Your Headlines

You’ve heard the saying, “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” However, web surfers tend to do just that when looking at an article headline. If your blog or article post title is dry and lifeless, chances are you’ll experience less click-through to your post. On the other hand, if you make your headline catchy and interesting, you’ll inspire curiosity in your readers, prompting them to click to learn more.

You should always link related articles on your blog to each post so that readers have the opportunity to get drawn in by another catchy title and stay on your page.

The longer a reader stays on your page and reads your content, the more likely they will visit again or even subscribe to your email list!

Format for Mobile Devices

A common oversight when starting a signage or graphic design blog is formatting the site for a mobile screen. Most people surfing the internet these days are viewing web pages and search engines on their mobile phones.

This means that even if you spend a lot of time optimizing your website with tons of impressive widgets, graphics and formatting, you will lose every lead who visits your site if it isn’t formatted for cell phones. Make sure you view every page on your site from a mobile phone browser before marketing each page. This way, you can catch any awkward formatting or text before your potential readers see it. If you need help, check with your website host.

Be Prepared to Spend Money

The last tip for creating a successful blog is pretty simple: Understand that this is an

investment and you will most likely have to part with some cash to create a quality blog. Whether it’s paying website designers, purchasing the domain name, promoting posts or even paying fees for guest posts, most quality blogs aren’t free.

Although there are plenty of ways to keep costs low when producing a blog, don’t get caught up in the assumption that it should be free. Being unwilling to pay for aspects of your blog construction or publicity might mean you miss a valuable opportunity to build a return on this investment.

At just 20 years old, with no formal education and only a few hundred dollars, Brandon Stapper turned a \$400 custom decal machine in a garage into a printing powerhouse. Nonstop Signs & Graphics has made the Forbes Fastest Growing Companies Award four years in a row and services 10,000 clients yearly. The San Diego-based printing company still makes custom decals, but they’ve expanded their offering to all manners of printing, from signs and displays to specialty items like car wraps and vinyl appliques.

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