

"Holy Cow! You Can Actually Make Money By Keeping An Online Journal..."

For several weeks now we've been talking about the importance of creating **quality content** on your website in the shape of **keyword-optimized articles** to boost your search engine rankings.

What if I told you that there was an **automated solution** not only to **manage** your articles, but also to do your basic **optimization**, internal linking, as well as provide you with an interactive platform for communicating with your visitors? And all this without the expensive content management solutions you see being offered online?

I'm talking about starting your own **blog**.

What's in a blog anyway?

In 2003 blogging was a novelty. In 2004 it became a trend. Today, having a blog is a business necessity. Whether you are looking to voice your opinion on an issue you feel strongly about, or you're looking to explore your creative side, or promote yourself as an expert in your field, having a blog has fast become one of the prime markers of status and business nous.

While most people tend to think of blogs as being personal online journals, the power of the Web allows you to convert something as simple as a '**web log**' into a powerful business and communication tool. Perhaps the best way to understand the power of blogging is to go on the Internet and browse a few blogs. Instead of randomly browsing through personal blogs (which are quite varied and do not always show the true power of blogging), try Allen SAYS's Instant Guru Blog (<http://www.instantgurublog.com>) or Google's own blog maintained by their employees (<http://www.google.com/googleblog/>).

The concept is quite simple; to provide users with an **easy-to-use** and publicly available **self-publishing platform**. Plus the beauty of having a blog is that you can keep it as simple, or make it as complicated and advanced, as you want.

But why do you need a blog?

That was my first reaction as well. Why do I need a blog? What would I ever write? How will I maintain it? Who will read it?

Why you – and your business – absolutely need a blog

Let's talk about what are some of the most important factors in building a successful Internet business. Do the following mean anything to you?

- Establish yourself as an **expert** in your field.
- Give your visitors **quality** information.
- Make your business interactive – allow for and listen to **feedback**.
- Increase **niche-specific**, properly optimized content on your website to rank higher in search engines.
- Maintain good **internal linking** within your site for easy indexing by search engines.
- Communicate with your visitors at a **personal level** and they will respond to you more positively.

These are some of the core values that every single Internet Marketer swears by. And guess what?

With a blog, you are automatically accomplishing ALL of the above! And a lot more!

A blog can be easily understood as a **series of articles**. Just as having well-written, issuespecific articles can help your prospective customers trust your judgment and project you as an expert. Additionally, if you keep your blog relevant to important issues, you will be giving your visitors quality information and they will be more likely to come back to you for buying your product or service.

Hint: present solutions to common problems in your field and discuss complex issues on your blog

You must have heard this quite a lot:

The customer is always right.

That phrase can be much better understood if you translate it to:

Make SURE that you hear what your customers have to say.

All blogging services and software include a highly useful (yet often misused) feature called comments. Readers can leave their comments and opinions about your blog, a particular post, discuss an issue or ask you a question **directly** on your blog. Blog comments are very easy to manage, and can provide valuable insight into how your customers think about problems (and very often, their different point of view will help you develop strategies to serve them better, and hence increase your sales!).

A common theme throughout this series of articles, and supported by Google's recent search engine patent as well, is that you need a lot of relevant (niche) content on your website in order to rank well in the search engines (the other thing is links, and we get to that in a little while). Blogs are uniquely organized as a series of individual posts, which are in fact individual pages of their own.

So basically, when you write a post in notepad and post it on your blog (and give it a topic relevant title), it is automatically converted into an optimized page (the page's title forms its name) that is ready to be spidered as valuable content. A blog will act as **content management system** for you, making it ridiculously easy to post, edit and remove posts (read articles) from your blog.

Along with automatically optimizing your pages, blogging services automate the process of internal linking as well. Each post is automatically linked into at least three areas – your most recent posts, your main blog page (which usually shows your most recent posts) and the archives section. In addition, some blogging softwares allow you to add **categories** into your blog as well, so that your posts are also linked to as part of one or more categories. Even better; the archives act as a site map. Usually the archives section is listed on your main page, and since each post is also linked into the archives (usually separated on a monthly basis), you now have an **automatic site map**.

All in all, a blog provides excellent automated internal linking that would otherwise be a manual (and tedious) task for you as a webmaster.

Your blog is your space on the Internet. As such, without the trappings of a company or real doors to separate you from your customers, it is a much more personal level of communication. This will not only help your visitors understand you more (as you will be speaking to them on a one-to-one level), but this also supports the principle of building trust.

For these reasons, and others too numerous to mention here, a blog is the ideal tool for attracting search engine traffic and communicating with your visitors. The question is not whether you need a blog or not, but the real question now is:

Are you blogging yet?

What to write

Write what you know. Write what is relevant to your niche. Write about common problems and their solutions. Just like you would add articles to your website based on specific keywords, write posts to your blog according to your keywords list and maintain standard keyword density (3% to 5%).

When wondering what to write on, treat your blog as your **list of articles**. Do you need to add a new article on a particular keyword? Then write about it!

Zero maintenance – almost

As we saw earlier, a blog automates everything from internal linking to creating optimized pages. As such there is not much need for maintenance of your content . Other than that, there is no set barometer for how much, or how little, you want to customize your blog. Tools like BlogRolling (<http://www.blogrolling.com>) allow you to automate the process of maintaining links on your blog. Blogging services like Blogger let you automatically change blog templates through selecting a few options – all without actually changing the actual content. Similarly, there are many automated tools available for free that can help you maintain your blog.

Grow readership at will!

Yes, that's the best part about maintaining a blog. All the link-building and traffic building techniques that I've been telling you about throughout this series applies directly to your blog, and like a website, it is quite

possible to achieve high search engine rankings for your target keywords (provided, of course, that you follow all the right steps).

Creating your own blog

Setting up a blog, just like setting up a website, comes in different flavors, depending upon how much time (and money) you are willing to invest in it. Unlike the commercialization of websites, however, it's still possible, and insanely popular, to create a blog using a **free blogging service** such as Blogger (<http://www.blogger.com>), Xanga (<http://www.xanga.com>), Msn Spaces (<http://spaces.msn.com>) and BlogStudio (<http://www.blogstudio.com>), to name a few.

There are also paid services such as TypePad (<http://www.typepad.com>) and some blogging softwares such as WordPress (<http://www.wordpress.org>) can be hosted on your own website. The trade off in terms of time and money is the control you have over the design of your blog, the ability to add categories and to manually edit individual pages (thus allowing you to tweak their Meta description tags) as well as to add other pages such as a newsletter sign-up form.

Start Blogging in 10 minutes!

Yes, it's that easy. In fact, I'm going to show you step by step how to create your own blog right now. All you need is an Internet connection and 10 minutes. Ready? Let's go.

Step 1:

Go to Blogger (<http://www.blogger.com>) and click on the 'Create your blog now' button on the right in the middle of the page.

Step 2:

Sign-up

This includes standard sign up information such as entering a username, password and your email address. It also includes your 'signature name' – for example if you entered 'John Smith', at the end of each post there would be a line saying 'posted by John Smith' or something similar. So enter a name you want to use on your blog (of course, it can be a nickname or an alias instead of your actual name).

Tick the checkbox title 'Terms and Conditions' and click on 'Continue' to proceed.

Step 3:

Enter blog information

Enter your blog title. For example, if you were creating a blog that would be a guide to landscaping, you could use a title such as Joe's Landscaping Guide, or Landscaping Tips.

Enter your blog URL. This will form your blog address that you and your visitors will use to visit your blog. Continuing with the previous example, you could enter 'landscaping-guide' or something similar. This will make your blog address: <http://landscaping-guide.blogspot.com>.

Continue.

Step 4:

Select a template

There are over two dozen templates that Blogger provides for free. In addition, you can customize them to your heart's content, or enter your template. For now, select a template (you can preview a template as well) by clicking on the template image and selecting 'Continue'.

Step 5:

Make your first post.

From here, you are directed to the Blogger 'Dashboard', an intuitive control panel for your Blogger account (you have one blog now, but you can add any number of blogs to the same account). Use this to create your first post, maybe something as simple as a welcome message or even your first article. And then,

publish the post and congratulations! Not only have you created your own blog, but you've also got it started with a brand new article in less than 10 minutes.

And that's it. It is this simple to start your own blog. The important thing is to take action and get started. Whether you are providing a service or selling products, you will invariably be targeting a select niche market. Use your blog as a mouth piece to talk directly to your potential customers, and as you keep adding posts and building links, you will soon be able to dominate your niche by a free resource that takes almost no time for you to maintain.

If you're serious about blogging for profits, I would recommend you check out "[Blogging Bonanza!](#)" by John Barbour. John does a very good job at explaining a step by step process he uses to bring in thousands of visitors to his blogs daily and make a VERY nice income doing so.

So, where's YOUR blog?

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brad Callen', with a stylized, cursive script.

Brad Callen
Professional SEO
<http://www.seoelite.com>