How to Get 100,000 READERS For Your BLOG

THE BLOG

Introduction

Owning a business blog is like being a member of a gym; you have all the right tools at your fingertips, but it's the hard work and self discipline that will make you truly successful. Consider this ebook your personal trainer. Whether you're trying to increase your daily or monthly blog visits, turn random visitors into dedicated subscribers, or start a blog entirely from scratch, this guide will help. We'll lay down the strategy for you and break the framework into tangible next steps so you can successfully reach 100,000 readers.

Every time you publish a blog post, it's a new opportunity for someone to find your business' website and learn who you are. By investing in creating content that helps answer questions for your target customer, you're establishing a trusting relationship that makes them more comfortable investing in you as a business partner or solution provider. Of course, before you can jump in and start raking in the customers, you need to actually grow your readership.

HERE ARE THREE THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN GROWING YOUR READERSHIP:

1 First, determine who your audience actually is. Ideally, these would be your potential customers and they are reading your blog to find helpful industry content.

2 Always write quality stuff. This includes optimizing each post for search engines and a pleasant user experience.

3 Once you've gained some casual readers, convert them into dedicated subscribers who will share your content and keep coming back for more.

Of course, going from zero to 100,000 readers won't happen overnight, which is why we'll go into these three strategies in detail throughout this ebook. You'll have to do extensive research about who your personas are and what they care about reading. You'll have to get some manpower behind actually writing the content and patiently optimizing each post for optimal success. Once you've gained a few readers, you'll also need to figure out a strategy and a conversion path to get those readers to build trust with you and keep reading. Most importantly, you'll have to be disciplined about creating a schedule for yourself and sticking to it.

Ready to get started? Let's hop over to the first step of growing your readership to 100K; building or enhancing your target buyer personas.

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Chapter 1:

DETERMINING WHO IS

(Or Who Should Be)

READING YOUR BLOG

DON'T EVER <u>ASSUME</u> WHO YOUR READERS ARE OR WHAT THEY CARE ABOUT. INSTEAD, FIND OUT THE TRUTH THROUGH INTERVIEWS.

*T*arget personas are fictional, generalized representations of your ideal readers, which should ultimately turn into your ideal customers. Creating target personas helps you visualize and understand your readers better, and make it easier for you to tailor content to the specific needs, behaviors, and concerns of different groups.

The strongest personas are based on market research as well as on insights you gather from your actual reader base. Depending on your business, you could have as few as one or two personas, or as many as 10-20. If you're just getting started, focus on one or two of your main personas first and move into the more niche personas later.

It's also important to think about your negative or "exclusionary" personas. These are representative of who you don't want as a reader or customer. Perhaps these negative personas are too advanced for your product or service, too expensive to acquire as customers, or only engaging with your content for research or knowledge. If you take the time to create negative personas, you'll be able to segment out the "bad apples" from the rest of your contacts, which can help you achieve a much healthier database.

Personas are created through research, surveys, and interviews of your target audience. This includes a mix of prospects, current customers, and those outside of your contact database who would be your ideal readers or customers.

HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL METHODS FOR GATHERING THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO DEVELOP PERSONAS:

Interview readers (these would ideally also be your target customers as well) either in person or over the phone to discover what they like about your content.

During the interview, look for:

- Vocabulary, puns, references, tone, gestures, etc.

- What makes them light up, what they hate discussing.

- Their outfits, style, accessories, personality.

Look through your contacts database to uncover trends about how certain leads or customers find and consume your content.

When creating forms to use on your website, use form fields that capture important persona information. (For example, if all of your personas vary based on company size, ask each lead for information about company size on your forms. You could also gather information on what forms of social media your leads use by asking a question about social media accounts.)

Take into consideration your sales team's feedback on the leads they are interacting with most. (What types of sales cycles does your sales team work with? What generalizations can they make about the different types of customers you serve best?)

Already have your target personas picked out? Don't be afraid to revisit them! It's possible that as the industry changes, your target personas have also changed their minds about what they read, what motivates them, or how they compare themselves to their co-workers.

PERSONA INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Who are they?

How old are they?
Where do they work?
How long have they been in their current role?
How large is their team?
Why do they do what they do?

What do they do?

What motivates them?
What is the end game for them?
What are their aspirations?
Why did they change from company A to company B?

What do they want?

What are their hopes and dreams?
What content are they attracted to or read now?
What do they think about all day long?

How do they see themselves?

How do they compare themselves to co-workers?
Do they think there's more to learn about their profession?
Do they spend time with their co-workers outside of work?

How do they spend their day-to-day?

What do they read? What do they share?
How do they learn about new stuff? New tools? New articles?
What do they hate about their day?
What do they love about their day?

Printable tip sheet!

PRODUCING POSTS THAT ATTRACT & SCALE TRAFFIC

THE BLOG

Your buyer personas should define everything about your content -- the form, the style, the substance, and, most importantly, the topic. If you want to get organic traffic from your blog, you need to write about topics your audience is actually searching for. Here's what that looks like:

1) Your target audience searches for a specific term or phrase.

2) You write posts based on the keywords they're searching.

3) You get organic traffic to your blog.

Create a Persona-Driven Keyword List

Based on your knowledge of your buyer personas, choose a few long-tail keywords or topics that your audience searches for most. These should be relatively specific. For example, "Instagram" is not a good keyword -- it's too general and too widely searched for. You need to be much more specific and write posts for a more niche group of people. "Instagram hashtags" would be a more niche topic. Within that

specific topic, you could have long-tail keywords such as "Instagram Hashtag Tracking" or "Branded Hashtags on Instagram." These search terms could be used as fodder for new blog posts.

Using these Instagram-specific topics as an example, here are a few different blog topic ideas:

- 10 Sports Teams Who Are Rocking Hashtags on Instagram (topic: Branded Hashtags on Instagram)

- Top Ten List of Hashtag Tracking Tools for Instagram (topic: Instagram Hashtag Tracking)

- 15 Nonprofits Who Are Using Instagram Hashtags For Social Good (topic: Branded Hashtags on Instagram)

- How to Measure the Amplification of Your Hashtags on Instagram (topic: Instagram Hashtag Tracking)

When you find a topic your buyer personas love, start digging deeper and writing more blog posts about that specific topic. For example, the long-tail keyword "Branded Hashtags on Instagram" can give you a lot of great ideas for additional blog post topics.

Identify the Blog Post Types Your Personas Like Best

The reason you should create buyer personas at all is to determine the kind of content your target audience wants. Make sure you experiment with different forms of content on your blog, but also choose one that your audience really loves and get really good at it. You'll find, through measuring post views and shares, that your buyer personas will prefer a certain type of post -- and it's this type of post that you should focus more of your blogging efforts on. Maybe your audience really loves list-based posts. Or perhaps they're more interested in visual blog posts. To get your creative juices flowing, here are some types of posts you could test out and see how your audience reacts:

- Infographic
- SlideShare
- Podcast
- YouTube video
- Original data
- Inspirational quotes
- Controversial discussion
- Timely, news-related & informative piece
- Industry examples
- Entertainment

As you're experimenting with your blog posts, remember to keep these questions in mind:

- What are your buyer personas actually searching for?
- What is the intent behind these searches?
- What problems are they trying to solve?
- Which type of blog post makes them click, read, or comment?

Remember, your buyer personas should ultimately decide what types of blog posts you produce. You may have a preference for one type over another, but you are not your own target audience. Your readers will help you decide which style your posts come in, and the proof is in the pudding. If every time you post a SlideShare your posts get significantly more views than a list-based post, you might want to continue testing visual content on your blog.
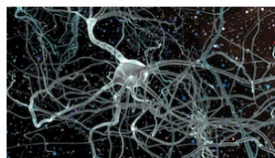
How Your Brain Processes Logos [Infographic]

by Lindsay Kolowich

October 17, 2014 at 12:00 PM

Take a second to sit back and think about your favorite brand.

Perhaps it's a consumables brand, like Ben & Jerry's. Or maybe it's a fitness brand, like Under Armour, or a car brand, like Mercedes or BMW.

Read More

Develop a Personality That's Appealing to Your Personas

Every successful brand has their own unique style and personality. Although immeasurable, it's one of the most important aspects of a brand. Why? Because people tend to gravitate towards brands they can relate to. For example, in your own life, you probably find that you gravitate towards people who are like you. Likewise, the people who are similar to you tend be drawn towards you as well.

Of course, this is no different with business blogging either. Consumers of blog content will be more inclined to read content from a brand personality that resonates with their own personality, lifestyle, and interests. It's not enough

to know simply what kind of content your audience wants -- you also need to figure out how they like it styled. This could include tone of voice -- whether they like a more professional or a more casual tone, or this could involve posting cat memes vs. professional stock photos as your blog feature image.

An excellent example of a successfully developed style and personality would be Red Bull. This company's personality caters to an audience who is active, excited, extreme, and eager to show off their experiences, so it intentionally adopted a style of content that's suited towards this audience. Their popular blog displays content of people doing a lot of active, exciting things -- often involving biking, skiing, skateboarding, or other extreme sports. All their content is high energy and intense, which makes sense considering they're an energy drink.
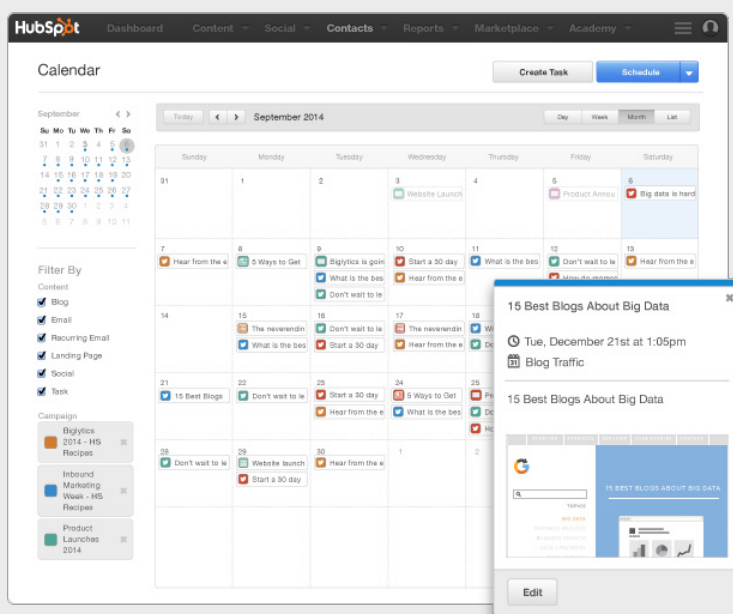
Maintain a Routine Publishing Calendar

So far in this ebook we've talked about who your target personas are, what they want from your blog, and how they're going to get it. Now, you need to determine how often that's going to happen.

The frequency of which you schedule blog posts will probably be different from the frequency of your social media updates, and maybe even your emails. Generally speaking, the more time and resources you put into a blog post, the less frequently you'll be publishing. It's perfectly fine to spend time and money on a high quality blog post, because what really matters are the results you get relative to the amount of effort you put in. If you spend 10 hours on a post but get 10X the traffic from that post than you'd normally get, I'd say your efforts have certainly paid off. You'll need to figure out how often to post based on the type of posts you're publishing and how long it takes you to actually create that content.

You also need to keep your buyer personas in mind. When will they be accessing your blog? In the morning? At night? How frequently? When will they be most likely to see your posts?

Once you've determined the frequency of your blog posts based on post type and your audience, you need to start routinely scheduling it. Planning your publishing schedule is the best way to execute your blogging efforts successfully, and the right software can help you get it all done efficiently. For example, HubSpot's Calendar allows you to organize, schedule, and publish all your content in one place:

Without a consistent and strategic schedule, you can't expect to attract potential customers and gain 100,000 readers.

"WE DON'T JUST REPORT THE BUSINESS NEWS -- WE HELP PEOPLE IN BUSINESS UNDERSTAND WHAT'S IMPORTANT AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THEM."

HBR

How Harvard Business Review Does It

"No matter what, we specialize in getting the 'expert take' on every subject we publish on. It used to be that that expert was also the author of every piece. When we wanted to do something quickly, it meant finding the right management thinker who had the time and way of thinking to be able to respond very quickly. But that was really difficult to manage because sometimes the person with the most relevant idea can't turn around a piece quickly, and researchers aren't always sure how to

articulate what is relevant about their research to people outside academia.

So, we've been working hard to come up with other formats -- other ways to translate experts' ideas in different ways. The result is faster turnaround and access to more of the good ideas out there. We've also begun focusing more of our content around themes. Some of these themes are the big shifts changing management. Others are the perennial challenges managers and businesses face -- managing relationships, creating sustainable business models, and so on. We're always looking for different ways to frame those problems, and for new ideas for our readers to try in their own businesses. So we balance our content across these three horizons of importance: what's important to our readers this week, this year, and all the time."
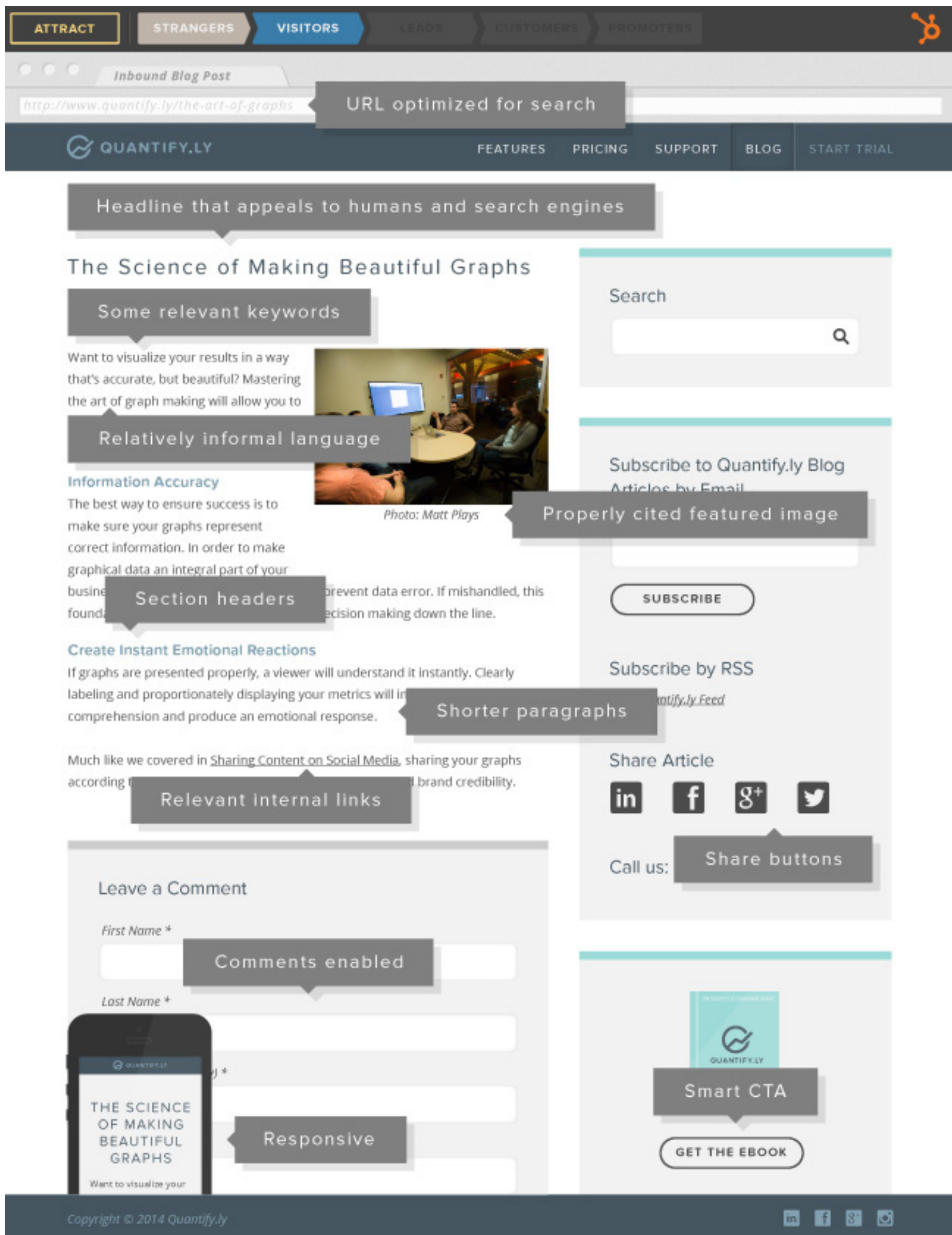
- Katherine Bell, Editor, HBR.org at Harvard Business Review

Read full interview >>>

OPTIMIZING TO GET THE MOST FROM EVERY POST

Inbound Blog Post

http://www.quantify.ly/the-art-of-graphs

URL optimized for search

QUANTIFY.LY

FEATURES · PRICING · SUPPORT · BLOG · START TRIAL

Headline that appeals to humans and search engines

The Science of Making Beautiful Graphs

Some relevant keywords

Want to visualize your results in a way that's accurate, but beautiful? Mastering the art of graph making will allow you to

Relatively informal language

Information Accuracy

The best way to ensure success is to make sure your graphs represent correct information. In order to make graphical data an integral part of your busine... ...prevent data error. If mishandled, this founda... ...ecision making down the line.

Section headers

Create Instant Emotional Reactions

If graphs are presented properly, a viewer will understand it instantly. Clearly labeling and proportionately displaying your metrics will i... comprehension and produce an emotional response.

Shorter paragraphs

Much like we covered in Sharing Content on Social Media, sharing your graphs according t... ...brand credibility.

Relevant internal links

Photo: Matt Plays

Properly cited featured image

Search

Q

Subscribe to Quantify.ly Blog Articles by Email

SUBSCRIBE

Subscribe by RSS

...antify.ly Feed

Share Article

in · f · g+ · y

Call us:

Share buttons

Leave a Comment

First Name *

Last Name *

Comments enabled

...ly *

THE SCIENCE OF MAKING BEAUTIFUL GRAPHS

Want to visualize your...

Responsive

QUANTIFY.LY

Smart CTA

GET THE EBOOK

$\mathcal{W}$hat does an optimized blog post look like? In this section, you'll find blog optimization techniques that you can reference any time you write. Next time you're about to publish a blog post, take a look at this section and see if you've included each of the elements in your own post.

Optimize Your URL For Search

Your blog post URL is one of the first things that search engines crawl on a page, so make sure to include keywords in it and make it reader-friendly before posting. Here's an example of a post from the HubSpot blog that has been optimized for search engines: http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-optimize-urls-for-search you'll notice that the end of the URL is essentially the title of the post with hyphens in between. This approach is both user-friendly and helps your content rank faster. That's because it's an easy URL for both humans and search engines to read and understand instantly. Note that words that add little or no meaning to the URL -- like "and" or "that" -- can be removed for the sake of brevity and/or readability.

Headlines That Appeal to Both Humans & Search Engines

Your headline is crucial to attracting both humans and search engines, so make sure it's enticing and naturally contains words and phrases that people are searching for. Then, be sure the rest of your article delivers on the headline. You'll want to avoid headlines that are strictly click-bait because social networks like Facebook are now devaluing content that gets high clickthrough rates, but low on-site reading time or low social media discussion.

Some Relevant Keywords

You definitely shouldn't keyword-stuff your posts, but it's wise to create blog posts on topics that people are searching for, and then naturally include commonly used words and phrases on that topic within your posts. Remember to always keep your target personas in mind when placing keywords throughout your posts. Don't bother trying to rank for things that don't matter to your potential customers. The reason you want to rank at all is so more perfect customers can find you.

Relatively Informal Language

No one wants to dig through industry jargon to understand what you're writing about. Use simple language to explain things. (And remember: if someone's reading your blog to learn about your industry, they might not know what that jargon means anyway.)

Properly Cited Images

You should always make sure you have the rights to use every image in your post and that you're properly citing the source. Use images as supporting examples throughout your entire post to increase comprehension and scanability. When you buy stock imagery, it's license free. You bought it, you own it, and you can do what you want with it. But many marketers are trying to find images for things like, say, blog posts, and don't have to pay for a stock photo every single time. If this is the case for you, check out Creative Commons, a site that lets you search for free images that you can actually use.

Section Headers

People love to scan articles on the web. If you want your blog to be skimmable, you should break up sections with large, bolded headers. Headers make even the longest pieces seem easy to read.

Shorter Paragraphs

Also, part of catering to that whole people-love-to-scan-articles-on-the-web thing is writing short paragraphs. It's much easier for people to scan when there are small chunks of content to look over -- so make sure you're keeping your paragraphs short and sweet.

Relevant Internal Links

Blog posts are often the first interaction people will have with your company, but you don't want it to be the last. So make sure you're including a reasonable number of relevant internal links to other pieces of your content throughout your post. These links could be helpful to your readers.

Share Buttons

Share buttons should be prominently displayed -- having them next to your post is a little reminder to your readers that they should share your post. Make sure that when you click on a share button you the title of the post automatically populates with the author and/or company's Twitter handle. For additional social amplification, use ClickToTweet links throughout your posts. Don't make it difficult for your readers to share your content -- they won't go out of their way to do it.

Comments Enabled

Even if you don't have comments enabled, people are going to make remarks about your content -- and often, this feedback is incredibly helpful for future content. So why not enable people to have that conversation all in one place?

Smart CTA

Smart CTAs help you show tailored content to people in different lifecycle stages or lists in your database -- and because the content is more relevant to them, they're more likely to convert. If you show the right people the right messages at the right time, those readers are much more likely to come back due to a pleasant and helpful experience.

Responsive Design

Just like your homepage, it's important to have a blog design and elements within the post that look and work great on mobile -- you never know what device your readers are using. **48% of users say that if they arrive on a business site that isn't working well on mobile, they take it as an indication of the business simply not caring** (Source: MarginMedia). Uh oh. If you want to grow and retain your blog readership, you want to make sure the mobile version of your blog is in tip-top shape.

Now that we've gone over general optimization for creating a pleasant user experience and growing traffic, the next step is to take a look at subscriber optimization for a loyal reader-base.

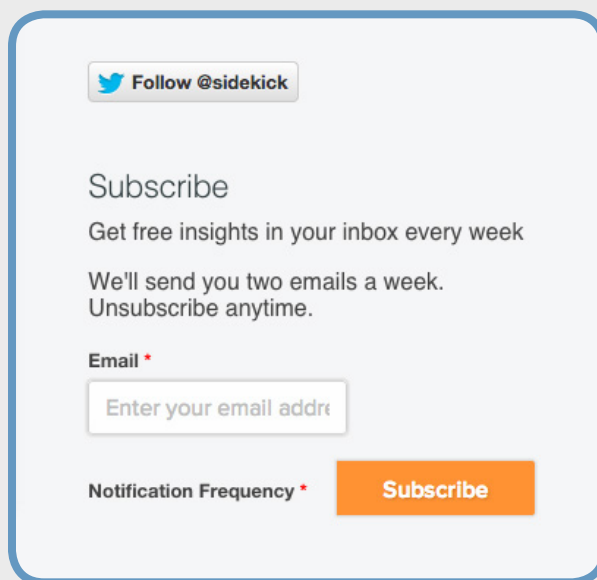# CONVERTING CASUAL BLOG VISITORS INTO LOYAL SUBSCRIBERS

If a visitor is new to your blog, they're likely going to need some convincing that it's worth coming back to time and time again. Just as with any effective call-to-action, you need to clearly demonstrate that value of subscribing to your blog. Explain what the visitor will get from the blog when subscribing. In the HubSpot blog's subscriber call-to-action, for example, we explain what the HubSpot blog covers -- "all of inbound marketing - SEO, blogging, social media, lead generation, email marketing, lead nurturing & management, and analytics" -- so visitors have a clear understanding of what they'll get from subscribing.

You'll need to prove this value in as many places as you ask for someone's email address. Which leads us to a list of the many ways of converting casual blog visitors into loyal subscribers.

Blog Sidebar Opt-In Forms

Don't make it difficult for visitors to your blog to figure out how to opt in to your blog. Display a clear call-to-action module to subscribe to your blog, along with an RSS subscription button and a simple, one-field email opt-in form near the top of your blog -- above the fold. Don't make your visitors search through

all the bells and whistles in your blog's sidebar to subscribe. Put it right in their face, and make it stand out. Here's an example from the Sidekick blog:

Homepage Opt-In Form

Do you have your blog listed in the navigation on your homepage? Do you have a footer with places to follow your company on social media? In the sub navigation under your blog or in the footer near your company's contact information are great places to put a form to subscribe to the company blog. These are very common places to look for subscription options and they do not get in the way of the homepage's main real estate areas that might be used for product-related news or information.

About Page Opt-In

Include a link to subscribe to your blog on other high-trafficked pages of your website such as your 'About Us' page and Press Room. These pages are likely to attract a lot of new visitors to your website, so use the opportunity to funnel them into your blog so they can learn more about you and read all of the awesome blog content you offer.

Dedicated Blog Subscribe Landing Page

In addition to the subscribe module right there on your blog, create a dedicated landing page that you can direct people to via other channels such as social media, other pages on your website, PPC, or email. This way, rather than saying, "Visit myblog.com, then look for the subscriber option at the top right. You know -- right below the banner CTA," you can say "Visit myblog.com/subscribe to be the first to receive our latest blog content!" You can also use the extra real estate on this page to better demonstrate your blog's value, as we did with HubSpot's blog subscription landing page:

Subscribe to Inbound Hub's Marketing Articles

Stay on Top of the Latest Marketing Tips, Trends, and Best Practices

Join our community of over 300,000 marketers and business owners and subscribe to Inbound Hub's Marketing articles to receive great marketing content delivered right to your inbox.

The Inbound Marketing channel covers everything you need to become a marketing master. Topics include SEO, blogging, social media, lead generation, email marketing, lead management, analytics, and more. Get articles like these and more when you subscribe:

- 12 Things You Should Be Using Your Blog For (Besides Blogging)
- The Ultimate Cheat Sheet for Mastering LinkedIn
- The 6 Marketing Metrics Your CEO Actually Cares About

Complete the Form to Subscribe by Email Today
Or subscribe via RSS.

Subscribe by Email

Email address (privacy policy) *

Email Notification Frequency *
- Instant
- Daily
- Weekly

SUBSCRIBE

Call-to-Action (CTA)

A great way to convince people to subscribe to your blog is while they're actually reading the content. Within your blog posts you can drop little text-based or image-based CTAs to encourage readers to support your blog with an email address if they like what they're currently reading. Calls-to-action are great for nudging people in the right direction without being too pushy.

Optimized Confirmation Page

Do subscribers need to confirm their email address when they opt-in to receive your blog posts in their inboxes? If so, make sure your confirmation page and emails are extra optimized to capture those necessary double opt-ins. Try adding urgency in your confirmation emails or on your confirmation page on your blog so subscribers will want to double opt-in while it's fresh in their minds.
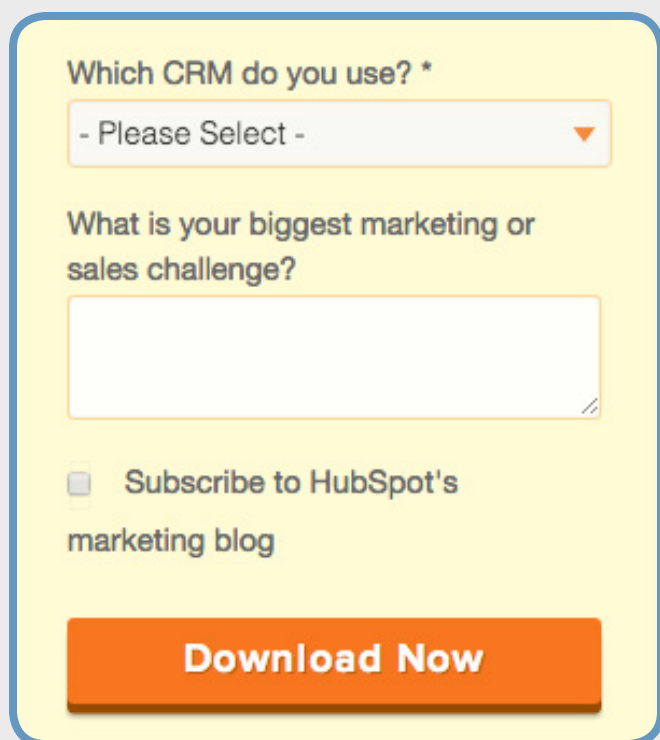
Pop-up or Slide-In Form

Dan Zarrella, HubSpot's Social Media Scientist, found that pop-up subscribe forms didn't reduce his site's bounce rate. In fact, this technique did quite the opposite and increased conversions by more than 100%. If you're looking for a pop-up option that's slightly less in-your-face, you could try adding a slide-in subscribe form that pops up after a reader has already gone through a certain percentage of the content.

Pitch Your Newsletter on Social Media

Are you leveraging evangelists (both internal within your company and external) to gain more subscribers? Are you regularly scheduling messages on social asking for your followers to also subscribe? Have you ever tried using blog content for outreach or PR? These are all great ways to amplify your blog and gain unexpected subscribers.

'Subscribe' Checkbox on Landing Page Forms

This one small trick caused HubSpot to increase our blog subscribers by 128% in just 3 months' time. All we did was add a new checkbox field to all our landing page forms so people could subscribe to our blog with just one click. Here's what I mean:

If your blogging software is integrated with the rest of your marketing software, this trick is very easy to implement. At the simplest level, you need to have control over the fields on your landing page forms as well as the ability to export a list of people who opt in to your blog through these forms so you can add them to your blog subscriber list. And HubSpot users will be able to easily start boosting their email subscribers with this little trick without any manual maintenance once it's set up.

A/B Test Headlines, Calls-to-Action, and Button Copy

As you're implementing all these subscribe features on your blog, homepage, in email, etc., make sure you're constantly testing which messaging works best for your target personas. The copy you use has to be relatable, actionable, and must motivate and incentivize a casual reader to continue receiving content on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.
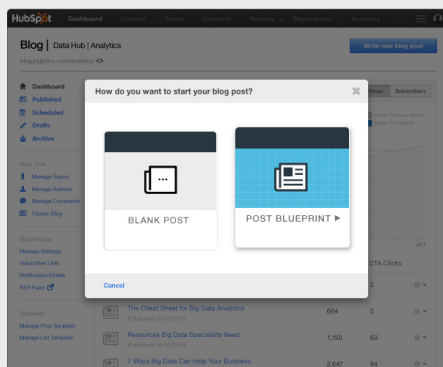
Conclusion

*T*o recap, here's what you should keep in mind as you're growing and scaling your blog readership:

1 Remember to do lots of research as to who your buyer personas actually are, and conduct interviews with happy customers before doing any heavy lifting on your content.

2 Make sure you're carefully optimizing each post to get a high numbers of views and shares. Keep in mind that the niche topics you choose to write about will also help you rank for specific longtail keywords over time.

3 Once you're happy with your buyer personas and your publishing calendar, take the next step and convert those casual readers into hungry subscribers.
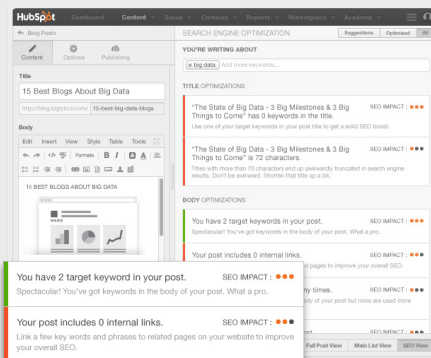
Once you've mastered the three things listed above, start considering your blog for lead generation opportunities in addition to gaining traffic and subscribers. In fact, you should bookmark this blog post: The Business Blogger's Ultimate Guide to Mastering Lead Generation, and revisit it when you're ready for a new blogging challenge.

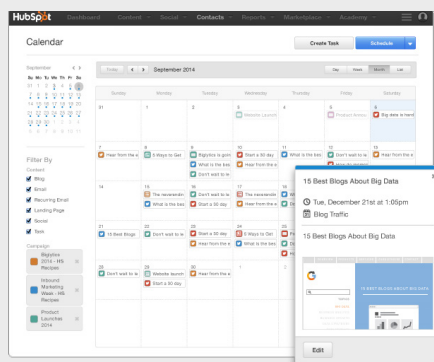# Blogging Built for Business

Blogging Made Easy

Focus on your content without worrying about the structure of your blog post. HubSpot's pre-written blueprints will load different templates for you right into your editor.

Optimize Your Posts

Get the most out of your posts. With built in SEO and social tools plus out-of-the-box mobile optimization, HubSpot helps you make sure your content gets broadly seen.

Manage Your Content

Organize, schedule, and publish content in one place. The Calendar allows you to coordinate your campaigns across your blog, landing pages, email, and social channels.

SEE A DEMO OF HubSpot's BLOGGING TOOL

Rate This Content & Help HubSpot Improve

HubSpot believes in creating content for you (not for us) - so what did you think? Submit a 1-10 rating in a matter of seconds. Your feedback goes directly to our content team.

GOOD

POOR

EXCELLENT

Click to Rate