

HOW TO NEVER STRUGGLE WITH BLOG TOPICS AGAIN

FOR CONSULTANTS &
ENTREPRENEURS



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How to Never Struggle with Blog Topics Again

*A guide for building a blogging strategy for your
consulting business*

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Table of Contents

Forward	3
Introduction	4
Blast off with frequently asked questions	5
Homework	6
Never, ever, completely write from scratch	6
Homework	9
Extra extra, read all about it!	10
Homework	11
Go crazy with Lists Posts	12
Homework	14
Executing the Skim 'N Spire technique	15
Homework	17
Finding more resources	18
Wrapping it up	19
Bonus Material	20
Templates	20
Popular Blog Post Formats	20
Roundup	20
Expert Roundup	21
Q&A with industry expert	21
List Post	22
My format - Hook Book Took	22
Workflow	23
Ideation/ Research	23
Outline	24
Draft	24
Images/Graphics	25
Edit/Proofread	25
Optimize	25
Schedule to post	25
Copywriting Services	27

Never Struggle with Blog Topics Again

Forward

I initially wrote this material as part of a short email course I created. I really was testing creating an email course. I liked the material and decided to turn it into a short ebook. I dropped in the bonus material to add even more value to the ebook. The idea is to make it as valuable as I can.

I want to give thanks to many people who helped me learn along the way. Brian Clark at Copyblogger began my journey of learning more about copywriting and online writing. Joanna Wiebe at Copyhackers has taught me a ton more, and I compiled the document in their fantastic tool Airstory.

Kristi Hines is someone I greatly admire and looked up to while working on the projects that eventually lead to this ebook.

My friend Sophia Dagnon who always encourages me and spurs me to be a better writer and business person.

I appreciate the support I get from The Copywriter Club on Facebook. Fantastic community of folks who encourage and helps celebrate wins.

Kim Doyal and her community on Facebook, Content Creators, are the same for me. I appreciate all that she does to run this group.

Also, thanks to my friend Davinder Singh Kainth who always pushes me to keep grinding.

Introduction

Face it. It can be hard to come up with blog posts. Everyone is telling you that you need to have a blog and you need to keep it updated, and it is something else that you have to add to your plate.

I mean, you are supposed to be doing content marketing, and, you actually want to do content marketing. You have seen others be successful, but writing isn't a skill you claim.

You stare at a blank page and wonder, "what next?" If only you had a way to start. Once you get going you will be fine, right?

Well, today is your day! You have downloaded a resource, my friend, that help you through the process. This resource will help you come up with blog topics, find a format you can use, and finally, help you develop a workflow which will allow you to save time and execute your blogging strategy.

Blast off with frequently asked questions

“I was feeling like we had lost control of our marketing as a company.”

With these words, Marcus Sheridan decided to launch a website. And, he began to [write content](#).

“We started writing,” he said. “We wrote about what people wanted to know. So, I took all the questions I had ever learned over the previous seven years, and started answering each one.”

Sheridan’s website exploded, and his company became known as the go-to place for pools. Now, Sheridan spends his time training others to do inbound marketing.

I tell people to do this every time they start a business blog. They always say it is a good idea, but they never implement.

You are a business, and you have customers, and customers ask the same questions.

You probably have anywhere from 10-20 questions they ask.

You don’t have to pay for Hubspot to implement this strategy. All you need is a business blog, time, and patience.

Answer your customer’s questions.

Homework

1. Gather at least ten questions you hear regularly from potential buyers.
2. Talk to your sales team and others to find out more. (Don't have a sales team? Talk to your best clients)
3. Increase the questions to twenty if possible.

Never, ever, completely write from scratch

Never write from scratch. . . completely. Scratch is good for cake, but why do so many people buy a cake mix. Okay, now I want cake.

Back to our thoughts here.

My granny (yes, we called her Granny; Arkansas thing) used to make something she called "coffee cake." Now, when I go to [Blue Sail Coffee](#) (here in Conway), I can get something called a coffee crumb cake.

That is not what my granny made. She made a scratch cake where she threw in the leftover coffee! It didn't matter because it was good.

She still had a formula. You can call it a template if you wish.

Building things almost always require a formula, a template or a framework. Don't believe me? Try to build a house without plans.

It's all good.

The secret to making a good blog post is to use a template.

Joanna Wiebe, one of my favorite web copywriters, [says](#), "*Because only rookies write from scratch...*"

She continues,

You should be using copywriting formulas whenever you write anything. They eliminate the guesswork that makes a lot of bad copy bad copy.

"They will help you face the Blank White Page without cowering. They'll help you generate A/B test ideas faster. They'll help you pinpoint what's going wrong in a button... in a headline... or even in a video script."

Follow me by following her.

How can you use templates to come up with blog post ideas?

Well, traditional copywriting formulas do very little to help facilitate ideas. However, blog template types do.

Take a look at this list from [Hubspot](#):

- The How-To Post
- The List-Based Post
- The Curated Collection Post
- The SlideShare Presentation Post
- The Newsjacking Post

These are templates (they say), but even more, they are a type, and they give you a framework for a blog post AND facilitating ideas.

So, Todd, how do I get started?

Start with the list above from Hubspot. It's a great place to start. (Hint: If you go their page you can download the templates, but I think you can figure it out)

Homework

Your homework assignment is to choose at least 10 post types from the articles below that you can use on your blog.

- <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/12-types-of-blog-posts/>
- <http://www.prologger.net/archives/2011/09/03/52-types-of-blog-posts-that-are-proven-to-work/>
- <http://optinmonster.com/73-type-of-blog-posts-that-are-proven-to-work/>
- <http://neilpatel.com/2015/10/06/grow-your-search-traffic-9-types-of-blog-posts-proven-to-generate-organic-visitors/>

Extra extra, read all about it!

Headlines have certain qualities. Headlines can tell the reader what the article is about, but even more, it prompts a response. The response, of course, is actually to read the article.

A well-written headline can be the difference between in beginning the sequence that leads to reader response, and, potentially a potential customer becoming a customer.

Headlines are indispensable in the digital world.

Consider this from internet marketer [Neil Patel](#):

"Why? Because 8 out of 10 people will read your headline, but only 2 out of 10 people will read the rest of your post. By crafting a magnetic headline, you'll increase the number of people that will actually read your content."

Also, a list of quality headline formulas can also prompt the writer to ideas that he or she can use to create a series of posts.

The longer I began to look at headline formulas, read articles on great headlines and look at sample headlines, I realized, you can take these formulas (there are literally dozens of them) and use them to prompt a blog topic.

You simply take the formula and fill in the blanks. You can mix and match topics and keywords you already write about on your blog.

Of course, it has to make sense. You have to think about context.

Another thing you can do is take blog title generators and combine them with the [keywords](#) you have collected during your research.

Homework

Your homework is to choose up to six to eight headline formulas to use. Put them in a document so that you can refer back to them from time to time. This is another blog post framework you can use!

Below are some excellent resources you can use to research.

- <http://www.copyblogger.com/10-sure-fire-headline-formulas-that-work/>
- <https://blog.crazyegg.com/2011/11/09/headline-formulas-that-convert/>
- https://smartblogger.com/headline-hacks/_blank - *ebook to sign up for*
- <http://www.enchantingmarketing.com/headline-formulas/>
- <https://blog.bufferapp.com/headline-formulas>
- <https://sumome.com/stories/headline-formulas>
- <http://nichehacks.com/copy-and-paste-headline-formulas/>

Go crazy with Lists Posts

List posts are some of the most shared posts on the internet today. It really has gone to crazy levels.

The word for a list post is listicle.

My friend [Henneke wrote](#):

"How could we take something named listicle serious? It reminds me of popsicles.

But the truth is: list posts work."

[Listverse](#) posts only list posts, and they pay folks to write them.

[Buzzfeed](#) has become popular with these kinds of posts.

In addition to these two posts, there is listicles.com and listicles.net.

In fact, many of the posts who write about blog post ideas (the subject of this e-course) are long lists of ideas.

List posts are fun to read and fun to write. They are often more casual and less in-depth. The longer the list, often, the more it is shared.

The truth is, we love hearing about someone's opinion. We also love hearing about someone's summation of a topic, a list of tools, a list of processes, etc.

Here's how to make a list post generate ideas.

Have you written a list post?

Great. Start there.

You have something like "10 ways to being [subject/verb]." Now,

Never Struggle with Blog Topics Again

look at each of those "ways." Can you write a blog post about each one of those ways? Can you write one on several of those ways?

A list post with 7, 8, 9, 10, or more ideas can be a catalyst for more posts. Simply, go more in-depth for each item in your list.

Easy peasy.

Homework

Take a recent list post you have written and think of an article for at least three of the items where you can go more in-depth on the subject.

There is a way, a good way, to write list posts. Below are some resources.

Resources:

- <http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/08/17/10-steps-to-the-perfect-list-post/>
- <https://www.elegantthemes.com/blog/resources/how-to-write-a-compelling-list-post-for-your-blog>
- <https://www.quicksprout.com/2014/10/08/10-reasons-why-your-list-post-suck/>
- <http://www.copyblogger.com/better-list-posts/>
- <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/32105/The-Top-10-Qualities-of-High-Quality-List-Posts.aspx#sm.004k4m6s1930dcz10zc1gt440cpdb>
-

Executing the Skim 'N Spire technique

I am not really sure if this is a thing - or a word. Maybe I made it up, not sure.

When I was a little guy, my grandparents still lived on the farm. They had skim milk. This kind of skim milk is not what they have in the store today. What they would do is take whole milk, directly from the cow, and skim the cream off the top. Thus, you had skim milk.

In this **content hack**, *Skim 'N Spire*, Skim refers to skimming article titles. You do that, don't you There are a couple of ways to do this, but I want to go over a couple of ways.

First, you can use [Feedly](#), add relevant blogs that touch on the topics and keywords you use, and spend some time, maybe a 25-minute block, of skimming the headlines.

While skimming the headlines, you are looking for an article that is relevant to your audience. Pick some those articles, maybe five, and store them in a document or spreadsheet.

The **second** way you can skim is by using [Alltop](#). You are looking to do the same thing that you may have done with Feedly.

These tools are quick ways to see article titles at a glance. Pick up to five articles that make sense for your audience and curate them in your favorite writing tool or spreadsheet.

Now comes the second part, 'N Spire. Here is where you spin an article using inspiration from one of the articles you saved.

When I say Spin, I am not talking about all of the "evil" ways to spin an article. We aren't using a robot or some software to spin it slightly differently. That is flat out plagiarism. (Read more: [Search](#))

[Engine Journal](#))

I want to be clear about this, I am not talking about plagiarism.

Spinning in this space has a couple of different ideas.

First, you spin the article from a different angle. You might take the main subject of the article, and you choose to look at and write about it from a different angle. You may want to include new research, but you certainly want to write different content.

You are using the article to be an inspiration (hence, 'N Spire) for a new article on a new or an adjacent subject.

The second thing spinning refers to in this hack is creating sub-articles or a new article.

I do this with list posts I write sometimes. I will choose one of the lists and create another post on that particular topic.

You are, essentially, selecting a sub point to spin a new article. The article can be one you gathered from your resources or one you have written yourself.

Read the article at [Sumo](#) to learn more about how to spin a new, original post.

Homework

Choose five articles using one of the two methods to skim and then find a way to use them to 'N Spire you to spin a new, unique article.

See if you can do one per article.

Finding more resources

I wanted to finish our time together Friend, by giving you a list of links with more ideas about finding ideas for your blogging.

I hope this ebook helped jump start your ideation, but I know you will need more info and resources to keep going.

There are many more ways to come up with blog post ideas, and I am going to share some of the best articles available to help you find blog post ideas.

You should bookmark these posts or save them as a pdf and store them in a folder.

Keep in mind, some of these ideas are more advanced, but they can be implemented by anyone with a little practice and patience.

Kristi Hines is, hands down, one of my favorite writers. Here post is top on the list. The rest are from some very respected blogs and bloggers.

- <http://kristihines.com/blog-post-ideas/>
- <http://www.digitalmarketer.com/blog-post-ideas/>
- <http://coschedule.com/blog/blog-ideas/>
- <http://www.getspokal.com/i-challenged-myself-to-create-100-blog-post-ideas-in-30-minutes/>
- <https://blog.bufferapp.com/blogpost-ideas>
- <https://mention.com/blog/blog-post-ideas/>
- <http://www.enchantingmarketing.com/blog-post-ideas/>
- <http://www.bloggingwizard.com/blog-post-ideas/>

Wrapping it up

Really, having blog topics is all about a little preparation. Following this blueprint, you can easily have 25-30 blog post topics in just a few hours. Then, it comes to creating the blog posts.

Will you ever have problems finding topics again? You very well may have problems with finding topics, but each time you have that problem, just run back through these exercises and dig a little deeper.

Another option, if you have the budget, is to hire an experienced freelance writer to help you with your blog. He or she will have the skills and knowledge to plan, create, and execute a blog writing strategy.

Do you need help coming up with topics for your blog? Book a coaching session with me, and I'll walk you through this ebook and help you pull out topics for your blog.

Bonus Material

Templates

Do you wanna know a secret? Most good writers rarely, ever start writing a blog post from scratch without any kind of outline or format. This really isn't a secret, but it is the truth.

Writers all have a format they like to use. I do too, and I will share it with you in a bit.

Writers use a structure or a format to write their article. It might be called a framework, and some people may call it a template, and sometimes it is just a type of post. I'll elaborate in a moment.

Popular Blog Post Formats

Roundup

This is a roundup of resources. It might be a [roundup](#) of blog posts in an industry in the past month, it could be a roundup of favorite tools, favorite websites or some other kind of favorite resource. You choose as many as you can write about and you write a short paragraph on each one (approximately 100-200 words). Depending on the length you need to write, a minimum of five is a pretty good number. If you write 100 words for each one, that is about 500 words not counting your introduction and conclusion.

Example: [31 Public Relations Definitions](#) - Heidi Cohen

Expert Roundup

This is the same as the roundup, only here you are [asking experts](#) their advice or opinion on something. Some expert roundup posts can gather information from several experts and turn the post into an "epic" level post. I wrote one on teamwork (included at the end of the book).

Example: Robbie Richards recently did one on SEO tools. He included 143 experts. The post at 108 comments and was shared over 10K times.

[The Best SEO Tools: 143 SEO Experts Cast Their Votes \(Plus Leaderboard\)](#) - *Robbie Richards*

Q&A with industry expert

This is a fun type of article to do. I have written quite a few of these over the years. Many experts will participate if they aren't too busy. All you have to do is ask.

It will depend on the direction you go, but come up with 8-10 questions to send them and let them answer. The more in depth the answers, the better. It is a bit of a risk because it depends on how good of a job the expert will do. Most realize the importance of having their thought leadership in as many places as often and are willing to answer the questions.

My Entrepreneur Stories series was a Question & Answer with entrepreneurs.

Example: [Entrepreneur Stories](#) Series at *grafixcat media*

List Post

Many people look down on list posts because they are rarely very deep, nevertheless, they can be done well and they convert because people just can't resist seeing what your list is going to be.

Example: [11 Best WordPress Mailing List Plugins For List Building Magic \(2017 Edition\)](#) - *Bloggng Wizard*

My format - Hook | Book | Took

This blog post formula is more like a framework than an actual template, but it is something you can easily implement.

Hook - A Hook refers to something you write to hook the reader. It might be a story, a song, or something else such as mentioning a pain point.

Book - Book refers to the middle of the blog post. If you chose one of the formats above, you would put that in this section. It is designed to contain the middle, or the meat, of your blog post.

Took - Took is the idea of a conclusion which should contain a call to action. In the Took section, you are wrapping up the post and offering a call to action to challenge the reader.

Workflow

What good is it if you have a number of blog topics, a format but no workflow to help you execute your plan? This simple workflow will help you write, post, and promote your articles with precision.

After having written blog posts for over seven years, I realized I have a blog post workflow. This isn't scientific, and it has mainly developed in the past few years.

Do you have a blog post workflow? It really helps. Otherwise you wander aimlessly trying to decide what you are doing and where you are going to go with your blog post.

Ideation/ Research

I usually begin my blogging with ideation. Simply put, ideation is coming up with ideas to write about and then ideas on how to go about writing them. In other words, idea generation:

Ideation is the creative process of generating, developing, and communicating new ideas, where an idea is understood as a basic element of thought that can be either visual, concrete, or abstract.[1] Ideation comprises all stages of a thought cycle, from innovation, to development, to actualization.[2] As such, it is an essential part of the design process, both in education and practice.[3] [Wikipedia](#)

I am much better at creating blog posts when I do this. Simply firing up WordPress, or a word processor and start writing doesn't help me much. Free writing is viable, but for blog posts, I do better when I can engage in ideation.

I have multiple ways I do this. One, I get a notepad, and a pen go to a local coffee shop or restaurant, and I begin with a topic, and I

start creating lists and possible outlines. If I can, I try to flesh out that outline. Then, I can add the research to it and compile it into Google Docs or [Evernote](#). Both are excellent for saving ideas.

Research helps with sparking ideas, or simply adding to the credibility for links and such. One thing that helps with ideation is searching blog posts on the web for the topic at hand. The same is true for ebooks, podcasts, presentations and other digital content.

With research, I start by thinking topical, once the first draft of a blog post is written, I can begin to think in terms of keywords. I can get some help for keywords from [Ubersuggest](#) and my [Yoast SEO plugin](#) in the WordPress dashboard.

Outline

Ideally, I craft an outline from my ideation stage. Sometimes, during ideation, I will make the outline, and I simply clarify or tweak the outline during this stage. Sometimes the outline is created “on the fly” as I write the blog post (not the best practice).

My thought is to keep the outline simple and not too complex. If the outline is longer, there is a great opportunity present the content differently. Longer outlines can lead to what I call “epic posts,” possible e-books or a series of blog posts. All are good to do and can be repurposed in different ways. I am actually turning a blog series into an e-book in the next few months.

Draft

Simply, this is where I write the first draft. It is usually a little rough around the edges (okay, maybe a lot). If I’m not sure of an individual thought, I put something down and come back later to polish.

Images/Graphics

This is the next in the process, although, sometimes it is accomplished after the editing. I find an image I can use, or a graphic. I rely on Flickr (Creative Common images), [Morguefile](#) and [Death to Stock](#) for images. I have also purchased stock images and taken my own pictures as well. Kim Herrington from Bear & Beagle Creative takes a lot of [her own images](#) and has some great tips. It's a good practice to get into because you always own your images and there isn't any conflict with permissions.

Edit/Proofread

This is a no-brainer, right? I'm not sure I do a very good job with this, but I do try to edit or proofread my blog posts. I'm not the best speller, so, it doesn't turn out very well sometimes. In a perfect world, I'd have an editor standing by to take care of those things for me. I do find it best to save it as a draft in the WordPress dashboard and then preview the post. This helps me read it like I am a visitor and find mistakes and such.

Optimize

This is where the Yoast SEO plugin comes in handy. I use it to [optimize the post](#) for SEO (search engine optimization) using the plugin. This is a part of [on-page SEO](#) and it is an important part of the process.

Schedule to post

The final piece of the puzzle is scheduling the post to publish. Sometimes I publish the post immediately, and sometimes I set it for a certain time on a later date. With Conway Scene, we will often schedule for a certain time at a later date.

This is the end of my blog post workflow, However, there is one final thing to accomplish, the blog post promotion.

Simply taking the time to tweet, share on Facebook and even email the post to promote it is a basic part of blog post promotion. In fact, some think you should [promote your blog post 80%](#) of the time.

In conclusion, I find having a kind of workflow helps me greatly with writing and publishing blog posts. Indeed, many of these kinds of blog posts can take up to a couple hours or more to write and publish.

This is my blog post workflow. I don't know that it is the best workflow, and there might be better ones, but it is what I use.

Copywriting Services

Are you a creative or tech consultant or a Software as a Service provider that needs copywriting services such as email copywriting, landing page copywriting, or other copywriting services?

Contact me and let's chat.

Visit my website for more information:

www.grafixcatmedia.com/contact-us/