Lesson 1: Writing the Perfect Blog

The perfect blog is not produced by a creative genius trapped in a state of enlightenment. Having said that it also is not the result of certain ingredients mixed the same way each time.

Yes, there are key elements that need to be optimised. Yes, there is a science behind the perfect blog. And, yes there is a touch of creative flare involved in those that are shared far and wide. But, ultimately anyone can write a stellar blog piece.

This is exactly how it is done.

Competitor Analysis

The first place to start writing your perfect blog is to see what your competitors have been producing. Look at:

- The headlines they have used
- The content they have chosen
- The number of shares and likes each post has received

This information will tell you areas that get serious traction so that you can write a bigger and better piece on that subject matter. It will also show you what audience your competition is targeting and whether they are chasing a niche or targeting the same crowd you are.

This is all valuable information. You do not have to be at odds with your competition. If they are writing material for a particular niche you could share this and hope to build a relationship that will see your work shared by them in the future.

You should conclude your competitor analysis with an idea of what topics would be a strong base for your perfect blog. **Social Crawlytics** is a great tool to use for competitor research (For a blog specifically on Social Crawlytics go to: **http://www.seotrafficlab.com/blog/guide-creating-great-content-will-work/**.

Keyword Research

Keyword analysis is always a good idea. There is no point writing the perfect blog post around the word SEO for instance. You have to cut a niche into your subject matter, link to something trending, or blow people's minds with come truly original content. Chances are though that someone will have been there before you no matter how much creative genius you have brimming up inside of you.

A good way to compare your ideas to those that have done extremely well socially is to open a free **Buzzsumo** account. Buzzsumo takes a keyword and shows you what posts containing it have gone viral. This gives you a good idea of what users want from their content and will help you create a post from that angle.

Adwords Keyword Planner is the tool we use to research keywords so we know exactly how much traction they could potentially pull. However, it is important to note that you should not change the structure of message to suit your keyword analysis. Yes, bare it in mind and try to gravitate towards keywords that will help your post rank but if you are promoting it via social media this is not paramount. The pull of the piece can overcome keyword disadvantages if it is written well and put in front of the right audiences.

The Layout

As discussed in the video now that your blog post has been thoroughly researched it is time to plot your layout. It sounds strange but often if you can see your blog piece in boxes you will have an overview of the big picture and then you can work on creating strong components from there. Think about what you want to achieve with the finished article and then work back to each strand in meticulous detail. Here is an overview we like to use to remind us of the importance of:

- Images
- Heading
- Sub-headings
- Calls to Action
- Introduction/Summary

BLOG CONTENT MAP

A Mega Attention Grabbing Title

A Clear and Engaging Introduction. Short stimulating summary of the piece.

IMAGE (alt tagged)	First piece of insightful info that will make your reader want to read on and cements where the piece is heading

SUB HEADING

CONTENT

Educate, entertain, inspire, or convince

CALL TO ACTION
Tweet this quote

SUB HEADING

CONTENT Educate, entertain, inspire, or convince	**IMAGE** (alt tagged)

SUB HEADING

CONTENT

Educate, entertain, inspire, or convince

CALL TO ACTION
Buy now or subscribe here

This is not a one size fits all plan. It can be extended or reduced in size but the general principle is that blocks work best. The perfect blog will be made up of lots of segments (bite-size chunks) of information. The sub-headings mean that readers can take away one segment, read them all, or scan the whole blog for snippets of advice to use in tweets/posts. The more accessible the piece the more likely people will read all of it and share it.

Headline/ Title

The ideal length of a headline is six words. These six words are the most important ones you will write because it will determine whether your audience clicks on the link or not. All your hard work will be for nothing if they do not leap over that first hurdle! Here are some of ours as examples:

[6 SEO MISTAKES COSTING YOU VISITORS](#)

[GETTING TO GRIPS WITH GOOGLE HANGOUTS](#)

[HOW TO OWN ADWORDS THIS CHRISTMAS](#)

[10 TOP TIPS FOR YOUTUBE VIDEO](#)

[SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY: EXPLORING THE BASICS](#)

It is not always easy to produce a concise title that says everything you need it to say and many of ours go over the ideal six word headings. The reader will entertain more words but they still need to be snappy, catchy titles that grab your audience's attention and get to the point without hesitation or waffle.

Your sub-headings then need to be in the right font and size to attract attention and break up your blog post into bite-chunks of accessible information. Here is our guide for optimal heading fonts/sizing:

- H1: post / page title
- H2's and H3's: Subheadings
- H4: Your blog's name and possible widget placements
- H5: same as above: sidebars etc.

I sometimes use H4 for sub-sub headings or list titles. There is no fixed rule just make the piece aesthetically pleasing and functional.

Hook them

It goes without saying that once someone has clicked on your link their attention needs to be captured by your introduction instantly. They need a reason for staying. The hook is usually delivered via a storyteller format because that is what people like. They don't want to be sold to, jargon filled language will be a huge turn off and too much hype will have them leaving in their droves. People like an honest humanised introduction that tells them what they are going to find out about in a straight talking, energetic, and entertaining way.

Just keep thinking: have I hooked them? If I landed on this page would I want to stay and read more?

When to post your blog

TrackMaven analysed over 4,600 blogs and 1.2 million blog posts in order to find out what trends in terms of social sharing. They produced a **huge report** that highlighted scheduling opportunities that could get your blog seen by more of its intended audience.

They found that there are fewer posts on Saturdays and Sundays so their share potential is much higher. This is still a somewhat overlooked opportunity and since business owners regularly take their work home for the weekend it might be an idea to schedule a post too. That way you can monitor your social media on a mobile device and potentially engage with a captive audience.

Their research also drew attention to the fact that many of us are posting blog pieces at times when people are not hitting social media. Once of the most popular periods for social sharing was in the evening from 7pm at night! There is also a flurry of activity in the early hours between 4-5am and then again between 8-9am. The most interactive audience for content produced are workers. Those who create and share content for a living are doing for other people during the day so they are more likely to share and interact with other people's outside of their working day.

It is an obvious trend and yet still one very few of us are utilising. In reality, if you want to produce great content and make sure it is shared by interest parities you need to be posting it at times when you are sure to have a captive audience. There is the small worry here that you may miss the opportunity to comment or respond to conversations in a real-time way. These fears can be alleviated by two thoughts:

1. Responding to comments the next day is still a speedy response even in our world of instant communication/interaction
2. Many company owners and employees are plugged into their works social media on their mobiles. Depending on what kind of boss you are and what kind of team you have it may be possible to respond to comments via mobiles and really maximise the potential of your content making the right waves

There is an opportunity here to look at blogging differently and start to reach people on their terms rather than those that suit a 9am-5pm working day. If you have a marketing team then perhaps a late start to their working day and the opportunity to work from home on evenings when blogs are going live could be seen as a positive rather than a chore.

I would recommend selecting blocks of time when you actively commit to responding to comments and executing outreach of blogs. Limiting your efforts to those blocks will prevent burn out and that suspicion as an ecommerce business owner that you never stop working and there are constant pulls on your time from every direction.

Word Length

NewsWhip studied the top 10 most shared stories on Facebook and **found**, with the exception of the BBC posts at 721 words and CNN posts at 938 words, most of the posts were over 1000 words long.
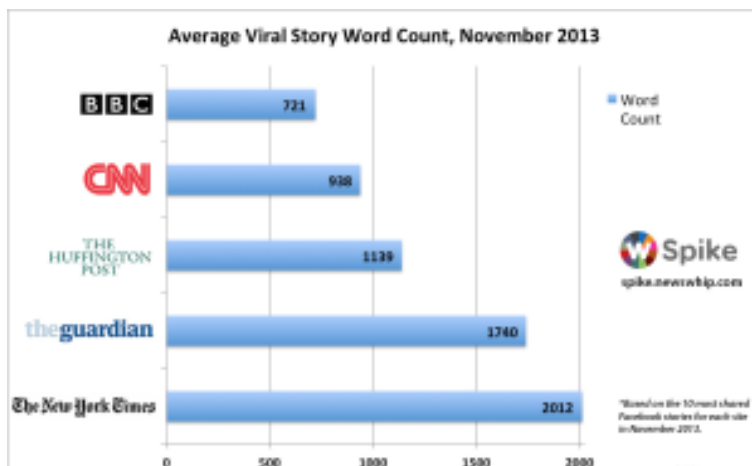
Long posts notably perform better than short posts for these reasons:

- Demonstrate that you know your subject area in depth and are not just summarising someone else's
- More fresh content for Google to scan and feed into searches

- Builds an in–depth catalogue of information on your content hub establishing you as an expert within your field

 If you are truly wanting to create a great resource for your audience then you cannot be skimpy with the wordage. Anything that is worth saying is worth saying right. That means detailed posts with graphs, diagrams, images, and videos to illustrate your points and cater for a varied audience with different learning styles.

The Finishing Touches

The perfect blog post has to have, and I mean has to have:

- Images
- Sound bites

Sound bites to me are key points of the post broken into succinct quotes or sentences that can easily be shared via social media. A twitter plug in on WordPress would give your audience the perfect opportunity to share your content direct to the platform. The images break up the text and make it look inviting. The sound bites (snippets to share) give them something to share with others so they also look knowledgeable through association. I am not going to write tons on these because we all know the importance of images and calls to action. Your post has to have something great to look at whether that is a graph, an infographic or an image. It also has to have something readers can take away from it.

If you want them to buy something you have to put that in front of them. If you want them to subscribe to something you have to put the link for them to subscribe to it on there. Make the calls to action visible and inviting.

So now you have all you need to know to write the perfect blog. Think about it over and over again. Proof read it over and over again. Then when you have checked it is all ticking the right boxes – publish that blog and push push push. There is no point writing superb content if you are not going to spend time getting it in front of the right people!

Your task for this lesson is:

1. Go and write the perfect blog post for your industry and use this checklist:

☐ Snappy title
☐ Intro paragraph
☐ Striking Image
☐ Strong content (potential to go viral/trend)
☐ Call to action (snippet for Twitter/quote/why not read our blog on…)
☐ Strong content
☐ Striking image/quote/video
☐ List of the core takeaways from your blog
☐ Call to action
☐ Proof Read x 2
☐ Posted
☐ Syndication sequence executed