

How to Generate Sales Leads with B2B Blogging

A guide for technology companies



CTOsOnTheMove

Effective Tips on B2B Blogging



Why B2B Blogging?

If you are still not 100% sold on the value proposition of B2B blogging, here are a few reasons you may consider:

- Blogging is excellent for SEO. If you sell cloud storage and blog on that topic, over time Google will see you as an authority on anything related to cloud storage and will rank you higher for these search terms. If nothing else mattered, this reason alone is worth investing time and effort into B2B blogging.
- You become an expert in the eyes of the community of your prospective clients. People trust experts because they know better and can give advice. Start blogging and you will become that expert.
- Blogging leads to other marketing opportunities – speaking invitation, business partnerships, free editorial media and more.
- It will give you content to share on social networks and increase your following on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. Trust me, a valuable “how to” blog post is infinitely more viral than a generic “look how awesome we are” article most companies are promoting.
- Blogging is good for lead generation. “Liked the blog post? Want more? Here is the link to a free ebook...” and now you have their email address and can start a lead nurturing campaign.

It All Starts With a Headline...

Time Tested Headline Strategies That Can Sell Anything



There are an infinite number of ways in which headlines can be written. However, journalists and writers have over the years come up with certain formulaic headlines, that have proven their worth time and time again.

These ‘magic bullets’ have been extensively field tested and using them effectively, can help you compose copy so persuasive that your readers

Given below are NINE of the most effective headline formulas that you should definitely include in your creative arsenal:

1. Straight and Simple

No fluff and no jokes – the direct headline works because it gets right to the point. Such headlines work best when you’re writing for known brands or promoting really strong offers that need no hype. For example:

Dell’s Clearance Sale... 30% off
Free 1 Year Subscription to CIO Magazine

2. The Winning Proposition – The Big Sell

If consumers are being benefited by an offer in a clear cut way, then that ‘benefit’ has to be included in the headline. This would ensure that even if

your readers don't read through the rest of the copy, they won't be able miss the big 'benefit' that you have to offer.

**Win Free Trip to InterOp Forum!
Savings of Up to \$30,000 Every Year!**

3. We all Love Exciting News

We're a curious species and the easiest way of perking our interest is to share the news that's exciting and interesting. Cloaking your ads headline by crafting it like a news story will help you grab the right eyeballs.

**Finally, Scientists have Come up with a Way to Repel 100% of
Hacker Threats!**

4. The 'How-to' Headline

The how-to headline works because of its inherent promise of enabling your readers to improve their lives. It works best for offers that if purchased and used can help your consumers fulfill a want and or a need.

**Learn How To Become More Confident and Assertive Sales
Person within 30 Days.**

5. A Provocative Question or a Command!

Both work great – a question get the readers to think and a command gets them to act.

Question:

Is your time management getting in the way of your success?

Command:

**Look More Confident Today and Get Your Dream Client
Tomorrow!**

6. Nuggets of Wisdom

People don't want information. They are already drowning in facts and figures. What they will appreciate are useful nuggets of wisdom they can use to make their lives happier and more meaningful.

Do This for 5 Minutes to Feel More Energetic Throughout the Business Day.

7. An Honest, Heartfelt Testimonial

When someone vouches for your product, your reader will feel far more inclined to try it out. Third party endorsements work because they create an environment of trust, an emotion you should always capitalize on.

**It's by far the Easiest Design Software I have ever Used!
I couldn't believe my eyes, but I closed 5 new clients in a week!**

While there are several more ways of fashioning a 'buy me now' headline, the ones mentioned above have consistently worked for me and a lot of successful copywriters. You don't have to take my word for it but this is what Elis Cooper, a college Freshmen had to say about my methods...

By following your tips on writing effective headlines, I increased the overall traffic to my blog by 50%!

Tell a Story ...

"Let me tell you a story..." Notice how you tuned out everything else and prepared to be entertained once you read these 5 simple words?

Now compare this to: "Let me tell you about our state-of-the-art capabilities to deliver software development projects for a range of industries..." "

I bet you tuned out before “state-of-the-art”, didn’t you? So tell stories in your emails, or get your happy clients tell stories for you.

Tell a Story – What can B2B bloggers Learn From Popular Fiction



There’s so much we bloggers can learn from the traditional storytelling structure found in fairy tales, folklore and other works of fiction.

The common elements used by storytellers to shape their narrative from beginning to end can help you turn a drab business or brand related story into a poignant narrative that would mesmerize your readers.

According to Christopher Booker, the author of the Seven Basic Plots, all stories fall under one or more of these basic plots:

- The Quest
- Rags to Riches
- Comedy
- The Voyage and Back
- The Killing of a Monster (Revenge)
- Tragedy
- Rebirth

Each plot then gets subdivided into a series of common stages. ‘The Quest’ for example has the following stages:

The Call – The hero currently trapped in an unfulfilling situation gets a rare opportunity to take up a life renewing goal.

Arrival: However, when he reaches the final destination, he’s again forced to do battle against the forces of evil.

The Ordeals: There are numerous tests and challenges that prepare him physically and spiritually to go on a final battle which would be the most dangerous of them all.

The Goal: After numerous near death escapes, the hero finally achieves his goal and claims his prize. He and his progeny live happily ever after.

There are several variations of these stages that can be woven into your business narratives. The five step structure that I am particularly fond of are:

1. The Reality Check
2. The Conflict
3. The Struggle
4. The Resolution
5. The New Reality

The Conflict

Stories without uncertainty and conflict would be boring. In fact, no story can ‘hook’ its readers without dangling the ‘conflict’ bait.

In B2B blogging any conflict that results in a struggle with the company vanquishing internal and external foes to emerge victorious makes for a good story.

In order to align your brand with the interests of your consumers you can also slightly tweak your strategy. While crafting your story make your customers the hero.

Start with the trouble (the conflict) your hero faced and how your company (like a mentor) helped and guided the hero to overcome the odds and emerge victorious. For example:

- What You Can Do to Solve a Common Problem Faced by Your Potential Client
- How Your Product or Service Helped a Customer Find Fulfillment

Now that you have figured out how to compose an eminently readable B2B blog, really make it click with your readers by avoiding some common mistakes that even experienced business bloggers make:

6 Cardinal Sins of B2B Storytelling

1. The story is only about YOU
2. The story isn't serialized – too much information to digest in one post
3. The story isn't consistently told across all channels
4. Addressing and solving a wrong trouble
5. Missing the 'conflict' factor
6. Trying to sound important by addressing your brand in the 3rd person.

In order to write B2B blogs effectively, you need do to more than just empathize with the needs of your buyers.

The content you create should instead focus on the buyers needs and relevant solutions (your products and services) you're providing to help them overcome the problems they're facing.

This would help your brand find a distinct position and articulate a distinct value.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words...

Pic Me – How to Get the Best Free Images For Your Blog



this is a
**ROYALTY
FREE
ZONE**

obey little  resist much

Whether you're blogging for business or for pleasure, a beautiful and relevant image always enhances the impact of the written word piquing your readers interest and egging them to the read through the post.

You will rarely come across a content rich blog or website that doesn't make extensive use of images.

While you might be a good enough photographer and may have even purchased and used a Canon SLR, it can be difficult to find and shoot pictures relevant to your topic.

So, it's just common sense to use images of professionals uploaded on various free-to-use sources for your convenience.

I recently discovered an interesting tool that helped save precious time looking for a particularly difficult image for an article. It all started with the **PROBLEM**.

Every time I wrote an article finding that elusive perfect image proved to be an exhausting affair. A perfect image is of course one that

- Complements the Content
- Is of decent size and quality and...
- Is free to use and share

So I had to set up numerous search criteria and sieve through several resources to find the perfect picture. A lot of pictures which I would have loved to use either had to be paid for, or were copyrighted or were just too small in size.

The solution came in the shape of a search tool provided by Creative Commons. This marvelous tool provides search services for a variety of content. In addition to images, you can also search for free to use videos and music. Any returning item labeled for reuse can be found on this site.

For writers like me, it can be a proverbial gold mine...

How it works

Once you have entered the search term, choose the resource that's relevant for you and press Enter. Creative Commons will search (with relevant privacy filters applied) from its vast library of content and its results will all be free to use.

In case you're not happy with the results just use a different resource.

Image Search Services available

Now that you know how easy it is to find free images, let's find out more about the three biggest search services that Creative Commons allows you to access:

Flickr

The photo management service owned by Yahoo! has more than 5 million pictures, all of which are free to use. The images are usually of a high quality and portray real people in real situations.

Fotopedia

A photo encyclopedia that helps photographers from around the world to showcase and promote their content. There are more than 700,000 images on Fotopedia.

Google Images

Google images are not a repository of pictures but as a search engine it returns image results from the millions of sources its spiders crawl on a daily basis.

While there are various other search services that that can be combined with Creative Commons, these by far will yield the most relevant results for your image searches.

As a side note, it's always polite to appreciate the work of a professional and is considered good practice to give credit to the photographer whose images you've used in your articles.

3. Short and Simple

You're not writing literature and you're not writing to indulge yourself or your readers. Your audience is full of very busy professionals and businessmen who are always pressed for time. So keep your posts short and simple. A to the point post of 500 words with plenty of Subheadings and Bullet points will yield far better results than a 2000 word article that rambles on and on.

4. Make Your Posts Sharable

If you want your readers to spread the good word and promote your services for you, make it as easy as possible for them to do so. People are always keen to share something relevant and interesting with their friends. Email buttons and Social Sharing (like Facebook Like, Twitter Count and Google +) options help readers to quickly promote your blog on their network.

By applying these four easy tips, you'd be able to change completely the way your blogs perform on the Internet.

The Anatomy of a Killer Blog Post



A lot of successful bloggers have perfected the 'template' that they use in their writing. This template includes all the elements they mastered over time and it helps them write better, faster and more effectively because this 'template' is like a well marked racing-track on which they can freely run on.

My personal blogging Template consists of these 5 Elements:

The Lead Paragraph: A strong lead paragraph should be short and full of promise. Moreover, the lead paragraph should assure your readers that they're indeed reading something that's absolutely relevant to them.

Personal Experience: I know that the best way to connect to my readers is by sharing a personal story. B2B bloggers who struggle to find readers should start personalizing their blogs by sharing honest, heartfelt stories about their struggles and victories with their readers.

Main Body: Everything that you have written to this point is simply the introduction. While writing the main body, try to make the content as scannable as possible.

The reader should be able to scroll down quickly and speed read his way through your entire post, instead of reading it word by word. In order to do so, make extensive use of numbered lists and bullet points.

A couple of additional points I keep in mind while writing the main body are:

- **Keep short sentences:** Compound sentences are hard to scan and make it difficult for the reader to digest the content quickly.
- **Provide internal links:** Everything can't be said in a single post. So by providing my readers with relevant internal links I can direct them to previously written posts, that solved an important part of the puzzle my latest article sifts through. This also helps in increasing my session times and page views.

The Discussion Question: Another practice that has helped me get more comments, likes and retweets, is a discussion question with which I have started concluding my posts. Your articles shouldn't be a monologue. The readers should have their say and inviting them to do so by introducing a discussion question at your end of your post is a smart way to engage more and more readers.

Common B2B Blogging Blunders and How to Avoid Them



The reason B2B blogging has become so popular in the recent years is because of the massive traffic it generates for webmasters and online marketers.

This traffic is usually free (no spending thousands of dollars a month on Google ads) and organic, thus results in more value in terms of raising your brand value.

However, there are number pitfalls that a business blogger needs to avoid in order to achieve blogging success. In this section of the eBook I will break down these pitfalls and challenges and offer you with clear cut ways to overcome them:

1. Forgetting that Articles and Blogs are two different Genres:

This is perhaps one of the most common blunders committed by B2B marketers who write their own blogs. Since these people have been conditioned to write long winded white papers and intensively researched factual articles, they find it difficult to write a blog post, which must have a personality and a certain 'voice' that readers can relate to.

The Quick Fix

Understand the fact that blog posts are meant to be informal and conversational in tone. Unlike white papers or articles, blogs are usually limited in their scope of topic – probably one or two points that you would

like to elaborate. So make your posts informative but casual. Add some fun and humor to them by including pictures and videos or perhaps a colorful infographic.

2. Who's my Audience

A lot of bloggers don't know whom they are writing for. They know the keywords that would get them a high ranking on Google but have scant idea about who their prospective readers are. If you are writing without keeping in mind the needs of the target audience, you might get them to land on your blog but will find it difficult to get them to stay.

The Quick Fix:

First, identify the readers you're writing for. Think what motivates and interests them.

Each blog post should be like a dialogue with your readers, wherein you anticipate their questions, empathize with their problems and then provide them with a short succulent answer in a language (voice & tone) that they understand.

3. Using jargon

B2B bloggers often go overboard with their use of industry oriented jargons and complex terminology. You're not only writing for an audience that's already 'in the know' but for also for new prospects who may not understand what half the terms in your blog mean.

The Quick Fix

Don't simply assume that your readers already know about the things you're talking about. If you're in the habit of using a lot of jargons in your post, review your articles and make an effort to explain the term either in the footnote (with an Asterix) or eliminate them all together.

4. Blatant Self Promotion

While blogging can help you win more and more clients, you don't have to sell your company in every post that you write. Your readers would be far more receptive to your content if you simply focus on addressing their needs.

The Quick Fix

Write the intent to provide real value to your readers. It's actually possible to share your experience and expertise without bragging about yourself or your firm in every blog.

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