

NA: Hi, everyone. This is Nina Amir, the Inspiration-to-Creation coach and the author of *How to Blog a Book*, *The Author Training Manual* and three ebooks – all bestsellers.

I am here today talking about blogging for authors. Really, I'm talking about blogging, what it takes, how to set up a blog, the best practices and how authors can create the best websites to help them write, promote and sell their books. I'm really pleased today to be speaking with Robert Peters. He's my website developer and he's an SEO expert, which is search engine optimization if you don't know that term. He's also my business coach and partner in many, many ways in my business and with all my websites, and I have quite a few. Before we get going and before I actually welcome him, let me tell you a bit about Robert.

Robert has been in and with small businesses for over 15 years. He knows first hand both how difficult and how exciting business can be. When clients work with Robert, they get a partner in building their business. A partner they can talk to whenever they need to about whatever they need to and I know this first-hand. Robert helps small business owners focus on what's important, telling their story and getting their message heard, what they need to do in order to get results and then he helps them every step of the way. He sure has been helping me every step of the way.

So, welcome, Robert.

RP: Hi. Welcome, Nina. Thanks very much.

NA: Robert is all the way in England. I'm in California and he is in Great Britain. This is a lot of fun to be chatting from across the ocean.

RP: That's right. It means I have a strange voice as well.

NA: Not strange. I like it.

RP: Thank you.

NA: We have a lot to cover today.

RP: Yes.

NA: And I'm sure everyone's going to be very interested. Let's start out, Robert, with talking about what a blog is. Writers and authors don't necessarily realize that a blog is a website. Can you explain how and why a blog source is a website or a content management system, which is really what a website is?

RP: Sure, yes. I think there's quite a few different phrases that I use interchangeably. A few years ago especially in the corporate world, the word “website” really define something that was quite static, that a company would have to probably go out to get a developer to make each small change, whereas a blog would seem as something that came later that was much simpler, that you might just have at home, that you might be able to update and carry on yourself.

That was almost a time, I think, when the two were separate and they were business websites, corporate websites and then there was blogs, which tend to be not really focused on design, but focused much more on content. Then with the advent of Google and the more people started focusing on bringing an

audience to their website, getting traffic and publishing content in order to attract that audience to merge much more. It wasn't useful for smaller businesses and independent authors and entrepreneurs to have static websites that they had to pay someone to make every small change, but equally it wasn't any good for them to have a blog, which really just look like a daily journal on the web.

So the two merged and that was really the space where not necessarily WordPress filled initially because I think where really WordPress came in, it was that journaling tool that bloggers used. It was really the advent of I guess what we call the “premium theme market” where people started coming in, taking WordPress and then putting a skin on the front of it and saying, “Okay, this is a blog. You can change it as much as you like, but look, magic. If we do this to the front of it, it now looks like a whole corporate website, or it looks like a dance studio website, or an accountant's firm website. But you can still change it yourself and publish as much as you like.”

Now those terms really have all come to me one thing. And content management system is in some ways just a name for a website that's easy for the user to update. You can decide when you want to make changes, how often you want to publish new content and getting and do that yourself. I think that's been an incredible step forward for the internet and for business, and especially independent business, to be able to do that themselves.

NA: Yes. I think it has been a big step forward.

We're speaking mostly to authors and aspiring authors. Why do they need a website, do you think?

RP: I think the really important thing for authors especially with a website is you have to have home ground. You have to have that kind of “my house, my rules.” Wherever you talk about your books, wherever you talk about your message and your ideas, you need to have somewhere to send people back to. I'm a really strong believer that has to be something that you own. It mustn't be someone else's ground. You shouldn't be sending people for instance to your Facebook page or your LinkedIn profile.

Sure, those are if you like “outposts” and you can point people from those places back to your website. But you have to have somewhere where ultimately, you set the rules. You decide what you can say there, what is okay, what isn't okay and you can have it look however you want to have it. You can move it around, you can add and remove functionality. I think that's really important. It has replaced the physical location for some businesses. There are some massive companies now on the internet that really don't have any physical location and their whole entity, if you like, that people focus their audience and their following on is their website.

I think it's really, really important to have that.

NA: Yes, I agree and I think also because authors don't do physical tours anymore, they're not going to as many bookstores, their website is where they're sending people. The book is online in stores, but the events that they're doing are really primarily on their website.

RP: Yes and you see some authors, both nonfiction and fiction authors really, really grasp that and go to town on that. People like – I'm thinking of J.K. Rowling. She has turned her website into a real experience – I can quite remember when she stopped writing Harry Potter series – but quite a few years after now, people are still going to that site and forming a foundation around it and she's still publishing new behind the scenes ideas. I think that's great. It builds up an element of community and especially then for an independent author who might have other things like speaking, agreements, or

arrangements, or the need to develop other ways to make money by courses or other things. Then the website then gives them something to do with that community that build in up in a place to focus that in.

NA: Right. I typically recommend that both aspiring or published authors set up their websites on WordPress – and you mentioned WordPress. I don't typically want them on Blogger, or on Typepad, or Tumblr. Do you agree and can you explain why?

RP: Yes, absolutely. For that same reason about it being your home ground, if you imagine that you're there in lovely area of California and a friend comes to your house one day and he says, “Look, I've got this big field behind my land and it's not doing anything. You can lend it.” You might do different things in that. You might walk in it, you might play games in it with children, you might even put horses to graze in it. You're unlikely to build a house in it because it's not yours. If you build a massive house in it and someone comes along with the guy who lends the ground, comes along in a couple of years time and says, “You know that field I lend you? Well, I need it back now because I'm going to do something else with it.”

People wouldn't do that. You just wouldn't build on rented ground. That's really the message with [WordPress.com](http://WordPress.com) and also those other types of places like Tumblr, Typepad. You don't own the ground, you don't set the rules. If they decide to change the rules or worse, they'll close, then your whole platform is gone in a second. You just can't build a business on that kind of basis. You have to have the only ship. There are a lot of large international companies that don't even like renting physical property. They like to know if they set up a business in a country, they own the property so again, they can set the rules. I think a website for an author or an entrepreneur is exactly the same. You've got to have complete ownership of it so you really say what goes on there and no one can have any impact on that.

NA: Yes, I totally agree.

For those who are newbies to blogging and to websites, what's the real difference between what we call a free – or not what we call free – but the free hosted [WordPress.com](http://WordPress.com) site and the paid self-hosted [WordPress.org](http://WordPress.org) site? Can you also explain hosted versus self-hosted?

RP: WordPress itself is not the [WordPress.com](http://WordPress.com) site as it were, WordPress is a piece of software. It's a free piece of software so technically in software licensing we refer to it as “opensource.” Anyone can take it even if you download it and install it somewhere, no one will come along like they would if it was Microsoft Word and say, “Oh well, hang on a minute. You've stolen that software.” It's free to use, but in order to give people a single entry to blogging and really just that, the blogging element – a few years ago the guys at WordPress set up [WordPress.com](http://WordPress.com), which is where you can go create a free account and you can just start writing.

Now I've worked with clients that have done that and then they needed to move off that platform and it can be a little bit of a pain because you built up your audience in one place. Some people, you can get your own domain name at [WordPress.com](http://WordPress.com) and then you can move it, but it's quite a bit of hassle. It's actually a little bit more expensive to get your domain name and do that. It's certainly more expensive to come along and then get someone to move you off it afterwards. Again, there's that whole thing of, “it's not your place so you don't own it and you can't set the rules,” but also certainly I'm sure anyone following your blog will learn about certain tools that we refer to as plugins, which are little bits of very often free software – some are premium paid plugins, which you can add to your website, which allow you to fulfill certain tasks and do certain things.

An example would be the little buttons at the bottom of the blog page where you can click to share it on Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, etc. Now if you have your own version of WordPress, which is where you just get the software, you can install as many of those and do it however you want. [Wordpress.com](https://wordpress.com), they just stipulate the functions that were available on what you can do. So I don't think it's that greater place to start if you're serious about building a platform and you've got any business, or author's intent.

If you were wanting one Saturday afternoon to have a really quick look at WordPress, perhaps even a couple of hours, see what it was all about before you went and signed up for your own host and you did it properly, sure. You could create an account, you could play around for a few hours, you could close the account a couple of hours later. That's okay, but I wouldn't start any business on [Wordpress.com](https://wordpress.com) or building up your platform.

Now, [Wordpress.org](https://wordpress.org) is more the kind of corporate site of WordPress and that's where you can go to download version of WordPress that you can install on your own hosting. However, very, very few people do that. I haven't had to do that for years because most hosting companies now have what they call a one-click install. You go to a hosting company, you set up your hosting, which is the piece of real estate that you own that you're going to point your domain name at, and they will have in whatever control panel you log into, probably a little button that says "WordPress." You press that and it installs it for you. You don't have to download it and worry about all the technical elements.

And then you've got your own place. The difference and the reason we call it self-hosted is because that version of the software, you own and you've set it up in your own place whereas at [Wordpress.com](https://wordpress.com), the guys at WordPress will actually automatic, which is the company that owns WordPress, owns that system. It's not the same as it being yours.

NA: Right and they're providing their hosting and all that other stuff. You're not making the choice.

RP: Yes. That's right.

NA: Yes. In my experience also, it is harder to switch over later because I have done that. I can't even remember what exactly it's for, but I pay a fee every year to keep a couple of my sites just there because there were so many photos and things like that, when we moved it all over it was just better to actually keep the site there and have a redirect. That's why I'm paying every year to just have it there and not just delete it. It's a mess. It's just much easier to start on your own with hosting.

RP: Yes definitely. My wife gets bored at me using a phrase over and over again in lots of different aspects of life, but I can't kind of help it and that's if you pay cheap, you pay twice. I think that's definitely true when it comes to WordPress especially if by paying it, it's [inaudible] free, it will cost you at some point. It might cost you in time, it might cost you in services to get the content lifted off and taken somewhere else. It's the same with other free website providers. I've had lots of clients over the years that have come to me and said, "Well, I set up this website with this company that said I could have the domain name for free and now I'm trying to move and I have to give them \$200 for the name, but the name is only 5 pounds if you go and register it."

Well, yes. That's because when that company registered it, they did it in their name, not yours, so you've got to get the ownership and everything sorted right at the start, do it right the first time.

NA: Right and just as on the side, also with [Wordpress.com](https://wordpress.com) you can pay to upgrade and they'll say that

you're going to get the premium themes and all kinds of things, but you pay for that and that's what gives you the URL of your own, but if you don't renew on time, they charge you much more. Plus, you still really are not choosing your hosting company or any of that. You're still living by their rules.

RP: Yes, exactly. That's true. It's exactly the same when it comes to other systems like Microsoft's Office 365. It can seem simple and quick to go and host a business website, but ultimately it will prove more hassle further down the line.

NA: All right. So how does somebody pick a hosting company? You're saying that it's pretty easy, they can do the one-click install, but how do they know? I've had lots of problems with hosting companies. How do you pick a good hosting company?

2; Yes. Hosting is one of my bugbear [ph]. What people normally do when they start a business is go out and spend lots of money on the low-go, lots of money on design, lots of money on great photos and things like that, and then quibble over spending \$5 a month on hosting. Then six months down the line when they've got more than 10 visitors a day, the website keeps crashing, all the visitors get errors and they're kind of saying, "This is hard!"

I've always said, "If you've got a limited budget at the start, spend it on hosting." Because if you write good content and you build up a readership, people will forgive the fact that you don't have an amazing logo yet. They'll forgive the fact that you're using a free WordPress theme, but they won't forgive the fact that they can't get to your site or when you've got two visitors at the same time, it's too slow.

Now, I'm not a believer. Coming from a technical background, I'm not necessarily a believer that you should not go with the company that has negative reviews because in the real world, problems happen and as soon as you put a plugin to the wall with anything that's got technology into it, it will go wrong, crash at some point and it's normally nothing to do with the technology. It's the engineers that are working on it, or someone's had a hard afternoon and they've forgotten something – these things happen. For me it's all about how people resolve stuff.

I'd rather work with a company that's just had a major problem, but I could see that they were on it and they dealt with it really quickly and they were open in that communication about it rather than a company that says nothing has ever gone wrong. Because that makes me skeptical and think, "Well, sooner or later, it's going to." It either hasn't and frankly you are due, or it has and you're trying to cover it up and that concerns me.

Yes, I think in terms of hosting, if you're an author or you're an entrepreneur, you need to look for hosting that's business-class. When you look at the website of the hosting company, if all of the example WordPress websites they have are things like Aunty Mary's Cupcake blog and stuff like that – it's not like there's anything wrong with that at all – but if that's the kind of sites they are suggesting and you are just about to open a site for your book that you think is going to go viral and you're going to have a thousand visitors a day, well it's probably not the hosting company to go with. You want to look out for hosting companies that look like they're up to the job, companies that mention the type of science they have and they look like yours.

Also, companies that specialize in WordPress and those that actually do not just the ones that say they do, you can look on Facebook and never be afraid to check out some of those case studies and reviews. One of the great things with hosting case studies is people will say, "Well, Nina@Howtoblogabook.com hosts a website." If that was me and I was looking around for hosting, I'd

go to your site, find your contact form or drop you a note and say, “Hey, Nina. I saw that ABC Hosting Ltd are using your name as a case study. What's really your experience with them? Are they as good as they say in the case study?” I've done that and I found sometimes they'll come back and say, “Yes, well, I wrote that case study about five years ago. Since then, well, they've had some issues.” It's worth investigating. It's likely when you get to builder for your house, you should always ask them to talk to the last three jobs they've done to make sure that it turns out really well.

Yes, there are some really good hosting companies. Look for specialists, look for people that are definitely not the cheapest. There are a wide variety and there's quite a few to name and there's probably such a wide variety of prices. In US currency, I would say you definitely want to be looking above \$10 and \$15 a month, but just a really rough guide. If you're looking at hosting that's like \$5 a month, then you're probably looking at the wrong type of company if you're going to build a business on it because you might think that, “\$55 or \$60 a year is quite cheap.” Trust me, when you have to then pay a consultant \$300 or whatever to take your website off that company and put it to another one where there you have to start paying another year's worth of hosting, it will start getting expensive real quick.

Yes, I pay a little bit more upfront to get it there. With hosting, you want to just be able to put it somewhere and forget about it and focus on the content because building an audience online is hard enough without having to worry about your hosting everyday.

NA: Yes, I agree. Having to move it is not fun because I've had to do that a couple of times in the last year because I wasn't happy with my hosting. Definitely paying more is better, I think.

RP: Yes and also, don't ever be too worried about having hosting that feels like it's too big for you. I remember I moved my own site to hosting that said, “Wow, this hosting is okay for 10,000 visitors a day.” Well, I certainly wasn't getting 10,000 visitors a day, but I just have this feeling that I didn't want to get 500 visitors a day one day and afraid to fall over. I rather move it now and know that I've got the capacity and then well, if it happens one day, great. But if it doesn't, well, I'll just leave it there and I can forget about it. It's really difficult to move a website in the middle of it being really famous.

There's all kinds of horror stories on Twitter, I remember especially a couple of years ago. These viral things would happen where a big marketer would hear about a little company or a one-person or blog who have written a really great post and without telling them, they tweet it 400,000 followers and say, “Hey, just read this. It's really cool.” Straight away, bang! Website went down because the hosting couldn't cope with 20,000 visitors and that person will probably never tweet that link again. It was just a moment in time. The whole reaction to that tweet was simply lots of people saying, “Oh well, we couldn't read it because it went down.” You want to get to that point where you can handle that before you need it.

NA: Right. Definitely the customer service because that's so important.

RP: Yes, absolutely. That's right.

NA: Okay, so what are the primary elements of a blog or a website? The things that every author needs on his or her website?

RP: Okay. You have to think about certain conventions and you especially need to think in terms of – there's a really good book by a guy called Steve Krug called *Don't Make Me Think*. In that book he

talks about conventions and says, “For quite a few years now, when you ring someone up and you get their answering machine, it still says on their voicemail, 'leave your message after the beep.’” But it doesn't really need to because we're all pre-conditioned now that we know when you hear the beep, you talk afterwards. No one really needs that lesson anymore.

It's a bit the same as your website. If you are on a website and you get lost, you look for what? The home button; if you're on a website and you don't really know who the person is who's writing, you look for the about button; if you're on a website and you want to contact the person with a question, you look for the contact button. I think those are free conventions that are really important: home, about and contact.

I get people all the time who say, “Yes, I want to do something different. I want to be different and I don't want it to say 'about,' I want it to say...” Yes, but you don't need to because people understand the convention of the about page and they expect to learn about you. In most people's analytics and website stats, you'll find that the about page is always the second most-visited page on the site after the home page. The about page is there for a reason and I would never try and be too artistic with it. Just call it “About” and make that page really compelling about why you're doing what you're doing and the message and the story behind it.

The other thing that's really important with a website is actually to have a point to it, which I know sounds a bit rhetorical, but a point as in, “What is actually the next step from it?” If you're an author and you're writing a book, or you've written a book and you're promoting it, well, people might come to the site and then they might ask about or they might want to read about the background, but still think, “What's actually the point?” Is there something out there that you have? Do you sell speaking engagements? Well, talk about that and give people an opportunity to get in contact and ask you to come and speak, or if you have the course or a workbook that you sell to go in line with the book, well, make sure that it sells that. If you literally have nothing other than the book, but you really want to get people's feedback, then have forms for them to fill in feedback and send you so you can collect it and put it inside the next book or on your next marketing things. But always think about what's the next step.

The other thing is any one listing definitely, you've got to have email list and you've got to have somewhere and pretty much everywhere on your website where people can sign up for that list. If you can't think that you have a next step or a point to your website, it is get people on an email list. Even if you don't know why you're doing it, just get them on a list. Because when you come to write the next book or come to promote something, or talk about something else, then you'll soon realize why you've got that email list and it's never too early to start building the list.

If you've got a seed idea for a book and you're just writing a bit about it on the blog to try and get the idea formulated even in your own mind before you start writing and proposing it, then start getting people on an email list because sooner or later, you'll want feedback, you'll want testimonials, you'll want something and ultimately you want to sell copies.

And all of that sounds technical and it sounds complicated, but it's not. There's places like MailChimp where you can sign up for an email list for free. I know you use AWeber and AWeber is really good service also and it's easy to link up your website with an email list. It's not too complicated and you can just get people on that list. You don't have to have a massive strategy for emailing people every second quarter of the day. You can just build them on a list and send them a note just every little while so they know that you're still there just to keep it warm in the background. Yes, home, about and contact, having a real point to it and definitely having a way to collect email addresses. I think that's one of the

big points of having your own site.

NA: Great. I'm glad you mentioned the email list, which you can't do on the free [Wordpress.com](https://wordpress.com) by the way. That's a big detriment.

RP: Exactly.

NA: So since we're talking about WordPress and having a site on WordPress, there is of course the blog. So how do we use the blog to build our platform maybe before the book, or to promote and sell books? How does blogging work? How can we use it and how does it work?

RP: Yes, blogging is a great thing. On a site like WordPress, there's basically two types of content. There's pages and posts. Pages are a static content that you kind of keep going, tweaking, changing and publishing the change like the about page. Then a blog is more point in time. Every time you publish, if you like a page, then it goes in date order into an archive and the newest post then comes in front of that one and you can typically see them in reverse. They order going down on the blog on the archive.

A blog is a really good place to get your message out. If you're writing about a particular topic like – we mentioned cupcakes earlier – if you're writing or blogging about cupcakes, then what I would do is I would get a sheet of paper and I'd think around that topic and what are the aspects about the cupcakes. Well, I guess there's the whole issue of baking them, then there's the issue of decorating them, then there's probably something in there about different forms like gluten-free and then there might be perhaps something about savory cupcakes. I'm starting to guess now...

NA: Flavors?

RP: Yes, that's right, flavors. There you go. There are five areas. For me looking at that I'd say, “Okay, those are categories.” So in our blog, we can have in WordPress something called “categories” and I tend to look at those, it's almost like buckets of content and then that helps me schedule out the types of things I might want to write about. I'm talking to someone I know, you know this of course because you write about this, but I know that some people get a little bit worked up about how you're going to find these ideas for everything to write about.

But if you start breaking it down and you think, “Well, okay one category is decoration.” Well, how do you decorate your cupcake? Well, you put icing on it, or if you could put chocolate stars on it [inaudible] now, but you could then start separating out. I bet if that was your passion, you could quickly come up with 20 decoration techniques in the decoration category. You could come up with 20 different flavors, you could come up with all of the different things that you can take in and out of them, gluten and all these kind of stuff. Before you know it, you're going to have 50 post ideas and you can start writing about those. If you start sharing them on Facebook and building up some community, people are going to start coming back to your site.

The one easy way to bring people to your website is write something that people want to come back and read. I've always thought one of the best types of websites to emulate as an author or as an entrepreneur is a gardening website because gardening websites, just have it made, because the seasons change, there are different things to do each season and a gardening blogger can just blog through those things. “It's this time of year you need to get out to your roses, bush and you need to trim it back. Then in a few weeks' time we're going to talk to you about how you're going to do that. In between that, we're going to talk about what you're going to do on grass, and then we're going to talk about different



types of seed.” It must be great to be a gardening blogger because it's just laid out for you.

You have to do that with whatever topic you're in, break it down into categories, get all that content and then start blogging through that and also look for the feedback. When you write the gluten-free cupcake post and put a recipe on, if that's the one that people share lots and lots and they email you and say, “Wow, that was great. I didn't know you could even make cupcakes without gluten and that's fantastic.” Then we think, “Well, okay. I'll write a little bit more about that. I'll build up that audience a bit more.” Get those people to understand that if they're on your email list, you'll get your next post available. Cupcakes without gluten and [inaudible]?

NA: Yes, that's right.

RP: Makes it sound simple, but in a nutshell that's the kind of strategy.

NA: Right. When you write in that way, you're always writing about cupcakes. What happens? Let's say you're doing it three days a week. What is it that happens in terms of the search engine results pages? Those pages, when we put something into the search engine, like we go to Google, we put in “cupcakes,” or “gluten-free cupcakes.” Why is it that then that blog post shows up maybe on the first page? How does that happen for us because that's what we're all wanting. Right? How do we make that happen?

RP: Yes. When they search on Google, everyone is looking for an answer and Google gets a [inaudible]. Google's mission is no different than it was when they started. They want to give the person with the question the best answer. Although this and the one knowing all that because it was not as easy as this, but if you like the essence of the easiness of getting to the top of Google, is write the best answer to the question. There's a lot of gaming to it and some people try and make their website look like it's got a better answer and that kind of thing, but ultimately, you need to have the best answer to the question.

Now sometimes, I mentioned with cupcakes, there could be a lot of answers on the internet and that's where you got to drill down a little bit. In our example, “gluten-free cupcakes,” perhaps even just those that have a strawberry icing on top, well that might be a little niche for us. It might be that no one has quite written the best answer for that yet. We can do that. Sometimes that happens by accident. I've got posts on my own blog that I wrote because I have something to say and I didn't really know. “You should never gone up and say it.” Of course it's all by design, really, but I wrote it because I wanted to say it. Then afterwards you find, “Well, that's interesting. I'm getting 30, 40, 50 people a day googling that phrase and they're coming to my site. Perhaps I'll write about that a little bit more.”

You just need to write really good answers to questions. They can be questions that you've got, or that you found, or that you've got on your own mind like, “How do you make a cupcake and have it be gluten-free? Is it actually possible?” Then write out exactly how you do it and never ever worry about over-sharing. Don't do that thing that people do where they write just a little bit and think, “If people really want to know, then they'll get in contact. I might even then be able to charge them for the whole answer.” No. They'll just go and look somewhere else. That early stage, focus on writing as many good answers as you can and getting as many people to read them as you can and you'll get the feedback on what people really like about what you do with it. Then from there you can judge where your business is.

NA: Right. For me with *How to Blog a Book*, I was addressing an issue, I think that needed to be

addressed, but I also was blogging on the topic in a really focused manner three or four days a week over four or five months. I think that part of that and correct me if I'm wrong was maybe not “clotting” [ph] the web or the space with that content, but there weren't that many people writing about it and I provided the answer. I provided the content on a regular basis and it drove me right up to the number one spot on the search engines.

RP: Yes. One of the things that Google is looking for when it looks at the site is a breadth of content. If you've got a website about gardening and you publish one post about cupcakes, it's unlikely to get to the top of the search engines for gluten-free cupcakes. But if you've got a blog that's all about cupcakes, you've got 50 decent recipes and one of them is a fantastic recipe for gluten-free, well then it might well get to the top of the search engines.

There's lots of other things on there as what we could talk for hours just about how to optimize posts, but having images in that post and making sure that the images are optimized. Take a picture of your cupcake and whatever you do, don't upload it as “img001.jpeg.” Upload it as “gluten-free-cupcake-recipe.jpeg” because you might not write a blog post or your site might not be old enough yet that you can get to the top spot of Google, but you might actually manage to get your image onto the top of the image searches, which might show on the front page of Google and when someone clicks it, they still get through to your site. Then a few people will find it and share it on Facebook and before you know it then, the post is there.

NA: Something I get asked about a lot for those who are blogging is keyword research. They always want to know very basically how do they do it and how do they know whether it's a good keyword or not? Is it good to have at a high number? Low number? Middle number?

RP: Sure. You always want to find keywords that people are using and the first thing I would say is never rely on tools alone. When you're thinking about the keywords to use, also ask people. If you've got any audience at all, then ask them. If you've got friends, relatives and they know something about the topic, then ask them about it. I have to keep coming back to it. If you're googling at something about cupcakes, then go to some people and some moms that you meet at school or something and say, “If you were looking for recipes for cupcakes, can you just have a little thing for me this afternoon? What would you Google?”

I've done that with people on lots of different occasions and I found that the answers you get back are not always what you are expecting and they're definitely not always what the tool might tell you. It's always good to get that human interaction. Then I would take that list, I would go to a keyword research tool and I would put some things in and you don't want to look for the results that come right at the top. You start a brand new blog today about cupcakes. Don't think that you're going to be top, page one tomorrow for the phrase “cupcake recipes” because it's just not going to happen because that will be expecting hundreds of thousands of sites out there that talk about cupcakes.

But there could be a chance that perhaps “gluten-free cupcake recipe UK” or, “gluten-free cupcake recipe California,” or “chocolate gluten-free cupcake,” something like that might be something that you have a little bit of chance on. In SEO we call that long tail search phrases. Rather than cupcakes, it's a much longer phrase, which by definition means a lot less people will search for it, but equally a lot less people will be competing by having sites that are optimized for that phrase. So it gives you somewhere to start and it's always good in the back of your mind to have the big trophies like cupcake recipes in your sites and one day you might get there, but in the mean time, focus on the little successes.

NA: Great.

RP: And there are a lot of tools around for using that. Google have their Google Keyword Planner. You can go in there and just type in some phrases and they'll tell you what people are searching for and you can use those. There are also commercial tools on the internet. Then just look at it with some balance. Take an eye on keyword research, but don't let it dictate your strategy at the same time because Google is also getting pretty smart.

Keyword research shouldn't be something that holds you back and stops you. If you can deal with it and you can get some keywords, fantastic. If you can't, don't sit around stressing about it, then just start writing because Google will see and work out what you're talking about and if it's good stuff, then people will start getting there, seeing it and over time you'll learn more about it.

NA: Right. Well, I usually tell people who get overwhelmed and don't even understand what keywords are, which basically they're the search terms we're putting into Google, but I usually tell them if they just stay focused on their topic and write about their topic organically, they will search engine optimize their content.

RP: Absolutely. Yes, that's right.

NA: Okay. So what are the most important things a blogger needs to do today to succeed, which basically usually means to get traffic?

RP: That's right. You've got to get eyes to your website to read what you're writing about so you can do anything. That is the one thing we would have said about building it on your own land. Well, therefore you've got to get people over to your land to actually see what you've got. So number one always, you've got to have good content. Like I said earlier, people will forgive lots of things. They'll forgive design and everything else if what you're writing is really good. But they equally won't hang around on a beautiful website if what you're writing about isn't useful.

Really just try and help people, I would say, in your subject time. Be as helpful as you possibly can and if you help people, give people solutions to problems and answer questions that people are asking around your topic, then you'll start building up an audience. Also remember that most blogs fail early on because people quickly get fed up with the realization that at that early part, you're really shouting into a black hole. We all start with no followers, no fans, no long email list, no traffic, but that is actually a really positive thing because equally, you'll make all of your mistakes at the beginning. I guess like actors that don't like watching early films, a lot of bloggers don't like going back and reading their early posts because then they think, "Oh, who wrote that? I never write by that now."

NA: Me.

RP: I actually think that having that early part of time is quite good. Get your mistakes out of the way before you've got 5,000 visitors a week and people actually then start writing in their [inaudible] to tell you that you've written with a [inaudible]. But it happens. But yes, I think it's okay early on to be like that. Just take it step-by-step and don't get caught up in anything that hold you back. Just write. I've seen this all over the place but a lot of people, I think say that the best way to become a better writer is to write. It's not necessary always to have the better design, or the better tools or anything else. Just write, do more of it and the more and more of it you do, you just get better at it and the better you get at it, then more people are going to come and read what you got to say.

You've got to use social media to some extent. You've got to direct people to what you're doing and go easy on your friends and family. They've been your friends and family for a while because they are. It's your business venture or your book you're writing. It's necessarily theirs. That's something I see quite often people start a new blog and they think, "But I have got audience. I've got 200 friends and I've got my family." Well, if you want them to be friends, don't start emailing them every other day with your blog post. By all means, share a bit on Facebook, but let them take an interest if they want to.

But yes, I honestly think being as helpful as you can around your chosen subject and showing the passion through answering questions in a really useful way is a really good thing. Take your time at that early stage to do that. I think back to when I started this business in 2011 and I used to spend hours every day answering questions in groups on LinkedIn because I have the time to do it. That was how I used to get clients. I'd write really long answer. When someone answered a question, I direct them to a blog post I've written that went into more detail. I'd send them a message to say, "Hey if you want to talk about this in more detail, I can try and help you." That often turned into approaching clients for me. But as you get busier, you don't have time to do that and you lose some of that ability and that can mean that you lose and create a bigger distance between you and people that are asking questions.

I think early stages of blogging are a bit like childly. You don't want to rush for it too quick. You want to learn the things you can learn while you're doing it.

NA: Great. You've talked about being in business. I write a lot about the fact that a lot of authors are going to think about creating a business around their books and their websites are a great place to do that. Do you have one or two tips just for doing that, or why WordPress is good for that?

RP: Yes. The good thing with WordPress is and it's probably in such a massive precaution of the web now, there are different figures going around, but some people have said that WordPress is running up to about 22% of all the popular websites on the internet now. That's really good because when you get stuck with things and you need technical help, it will be easier for you to get help and knowledge if you're using a platform that people know. But also when it comes to actually running a business around you, or your website and your book, people have been there before and they've created some great tools for you. It's possible to quite easily even with free tools to get it set up so you can sell little things from your site like workbooks, like tickets to classes, to get together and you can add things on so that people can like your Facebook page without leaving your website and things like this. You can just slot all of that in using little tools, which is great.

And of course we've got things like PayPal nowadays that people have 20 years ago. You can set it with a WordPress website up now and in a few hours, you can be selling something online and you can be taking payments for it, which is fantastic. Still, that email list is the most important thing in all of this. If you've got the list, then you've got somewhere you can go to to promote, but there are other tools, even more advanced stuff like you can run courses on your own WordPress website and they're specialist to always be doing that. WordPress really is perfect for that and there are so many functions out there.

But let your audience lead you a bit in that direction. A lot of smart people have said you can have a great plan and then your audience tells you what they really want and it's good to listen to that. If you start getting people emailing you through your contact page and saying, "Hey, I read your book. I read your blog posts. I'd love to be able to get some kind of course on how I can make those cupcakes just like you make them." If you get a few people to say that, well then that's the time to get the notebook

out and say, “Okay, what would this course look like?” If you do that, then you create something that your audience has already got hunger for.

NA: Right. Super advice. Okay, we're just about out of time. Do you have any final words of wisdom for authors who want to start blogging and how they can succeed at it?

RP: Yes. I think just take your time at the beginning. Like I said, don't get too disheartened and worried about that period when you don't have any likes on Facebook, you don't have any comment on your blog and you don't have lots of people emailing back to you. Because if you keep to it, it will happen. There's much, much too many blogs out there that are sometimes we'd say “orphaned” where someone wrote on them for a few months, got fed up and stopped. They just hang around. If you stick with it, then it will happen.

I'm seeing it happen really quick for some people. Within a period of months, they start getting traffic from Google and understanding that, and the other tip I think would be to learn something about some of the numbers behind it. There's a free tool from Google called Google Analytics that tells you how many people are visiting your site each day, which pages they're looking at and it's never too early to learn the basics of that tool because that will tell you what people like about your site, which pages or blog posts they read most. Those are the ones that you wanted to talk about more to bring back more of the right people and ultimately, that will bring you some traction, momentum and that will lead you where you want to go.

NA: Great. Definitely stick with it. I've been blogging a long time. This is not a short-term endeavor.

Robert, tell us about your services and about how people can contact you?

RP: Sure. I help people create WordPress sites in the first place and actually create these platforms. If you don't want to do all of that technical work yourself and also you want to avoid some of those mistakes, get everything set up right, also have someone work with you to understand that everything is connected upright and perhaps even work with you a bit to understand those figures and the types of things you should be focusing on, what's working and what's not working. I work with entrepreneurs around those areas.

Yes, my site is [Fresheyesconsultancy.com](http://Fresheyesconsultancy.com). If you head over there then I've got a contact page. You can send me questions and get in touch and say hi. I can always talk to you and try just be as much help as I can.

NA: And you've been a ton of help today. Robert, it's always a big help to me and again it's [Fresheyesconsultancy.com](http://Fresheyesconsultancy.com). Robert Peters. I hope everybody will go check it out and tell Robert that you heard about him here on this program and go out and blog.

RP: Yes. That's right. Look forward to reading all of your blog posts about gluten-free cupcakes.

NA: That's right. Thank you very much, Robert. This was wonderful. I appreciate you taking the time and being here to give this great information.

RP: That's great. I enjoyed it. Thanks very much.

NA: I did too and it's nice to see you.

RP: Yes. Thank you.

NA: All right, everyone. This is Nina Amir, the Inspiration-to-Creation coach. Until the next time. Go out and achieve more inspired results.