BlogSuccess
COMPLETE Solutions for the SERIOUS Blogger

AUTHORITY BLACK BOOK
All New Edition - 2014

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Revision History

Originally authored in 2008 by Jack Humphrey, CEO at Brick Road Media http://jackhumphrey.com/, the Authority Black Book was a revelation at the time.

The book was then revised in 2011 and focused on social media, specifically Web 2.0.

With major advancements in the Internet, content marketing and blogging industry, we have seen a lot of development. We felt the Authority Black Book needs to be made current again and this time we chose to align it to the lifecycle of a blog.

This edition of the Authority Black Book is a complete re-write, authored by Raj Subramanayam, with guidance from Jack Humphrey. This book is also based on responses from a survey conducted in April/May 2014.

Please direct any questions to support@blogsuccess.com
FACT: More than 80 million blogs are inactive*

*Source: Technorati

Blog Success Survey, May 2014 also confirmed this fact. Out of a sample size of 375, only 0.27% were successful.

Our analyses discovered TWO main reasons for this appalling low success rate!

1. First-time bloggers are not aware of what ALL it takes to build a successful blog – they assume blogging is only writing

2. Bloggers tend to do it ALL on their own. They buy training material, spend time learning and then do everything on their own. Prioritization does not seem to be a strong-point
Reason # 1 - Blogging isn’t just writing

Most people take to blogging thinking all one has to do is write!
The following 4-point BlogSuccess framework shows ALL the activities associated with a successful blog.

Blog set-up, hosting, website design, WordPress & plug-ins install, social media setup, all technology support

Grow content, traffic, mailing list build, featuring your blog, guest posting, image repository, editorial services

Google Adwords, affiliate program, campaigns, landing pages, conversion rates, product promotions

Data analytics, advertising, tracking, distribution, customer engagement, launch product
Reason # 2 – Bloggers need to prioritize

Bloggers grind themselves into the dust doing EVERYTHING and not applying the 80/20 prioritization principle!

Most bloggers train themselves and try to do 80% of the tasks (non-critical) on their own.
How does one build a successful blog?

You need a solid idea to begin with. The first module lists the tasks involved in the “ideation” phase.

Then you process the idea through our proven 4-point framework. Each module starts off with a Summary Tasks slide, and then breaks downs the activities for each task in the pages following.

An estimated timeline shows the minimum time to be spent in each module by the serious blogger.

For complete details on each activity and for the 80/20 categorization, check out the BlogSuccess book. The book also contains a bonus module on how to leverage a blog to write a bestseller book!
Lifecycle of a Successful Blog – minimum estimated timelines

Blog Idea: spend at least 4-8 weeks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Estimated Duration</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setup</td>
<td>10-12 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow</td>
<td>6-8 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convert</td>
<td>4-6 wks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realize</td>
<td>8-10 wks</td>
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Onward to end-goal

Four-point proven BlogSuccess framework
Module 1 → IDEA

The next eight pages contain all the activities that should take place in this module.

Important to note: there is no system or technology requirement during this module.
Converting your idea into an executable strategy

Take your idea from the shower to execution. An abstract concept that struck you while showering can be converted into a concrete strategy, ready to execute.

Think and make notes on the following:

- Define success
- How important is your blog to you
- Will you be excited talking and writing about this
- Come up with a few subjects for your blog
- Do you have knowledge and experience on this topic
- Work out the economics of the venture
- Identify friends that will support you in this blog venture

Your blog content should reveal passion & excitement
Define Success for your blog

How would you know that your blog is a success?

- You need to know why you are blogging
  - Publicity, online presence, passive income, to earn a living, to leave a legacy, to store your knowledge, self-esteem
- Define success: make it specific, measurable and know how much time you give yourself
- Consider your next goal, once your blog is a success
- How will this blog help you get to your next goal?

You must have a vision for your blog
How important is your blog to you?

Consider the following as you start a blog

- Why you want to blog
- What sacrifices you prepared to make
- Patience – this is a marathon, not a sprint
- Know your personality – be yourself
- Get organized early
- Accept that this is a continuous learning process
- Be disciplined and trust your strategy

Start early, build a strategy, be disciplined
How passionate are you about your blog

Your blog, your passion

Once your blog is up and running, you will be living it on a daily basis. Writing, marketing, and thinking about it all the time should be an invigorating, satisfying and pleasurable experience. So pick a topic that really excites you.

Content, marketing and engagement

- Make sure you pick a topic that fires you up
- Understand how you gained expertise on this topic
- Consider what your continuous education program would be on this topic
- Make sure you understand your competitive advantage and what makes you different from other experts in this space
- Think about who can give you rave reviews/testimonials
- Start building a list of folks who would be interested in the topic

Your blog should reflect your expertise & confidence
How do you pick a subject for your blog

**Topic selection**

Passion, appeal, and sale-ability

- Shortlist a few topics that interest you. You should be excited when the topic comes up, be able to read about it, think and debate it and be able to easily talk/write about it.
- Out of this list, narrow down those idea that would appeal to a large cross-section of people. An exception to this would be a topic which you simply want to document for posterity.
- Then pick that one topic which you think people can be expected to pay for, if making money is a success factor.

*Spend sufficient time and thought in selecting your blog topic*
Enhancing knowledge and experience

Becoming an expert

Your knowledge and stature as a subject-matter expert in your chosen topic can be gradually enhanced as you begin posting and finding creative ways to bring high value to your readers.

Continuous learning enhances knowledge

- Determine what makes you a subject-matter expert or one who can talk about a certain topic in your blog.
- Your site could very well be an effective “aggregator” site.
- You can interview sufficient number of other experts and increase the value you provide on the blog.
- You can add your own meticulous research insights.
- You can pick strategic guidelines from one industry and use in another.

Knowledge and expertise can be continuously developed.
What will your blog cost you?

**Main costs are time, effort and money**

- Once you begin, plan on setting aside at least two hours of work each work day (assuming you have a day job).
- Dedicate at least four hours each day of the weekend. This does not include the time you devote to thinking.
- Real dollar costs such as subscription to sites, domains, hosting, payment services, etc. can be easily quantified.
- Non-quantifiable costs include battling with writers' block, frustration with technology, spending time on non-core blogging activities, meeting people, etc.

Your blog will require time, effort and dollars.
You need support

Identify up to three people to support your initiative

- Let the three closest people to you know you are embarking on this initiative
- Let them know as soon you have chosen the topic for your blog
- Talk to them, express your goals and aspirations to them
- They will keep you on the straight and narrow
- You should be guilty of facing them when you slack
- This is a key success factor that will help you stay on course

Tap into the power of your close network
Module 2 → SETUP

The next nine pages contain all the activities that should take place in this module.

This is also the first of the 4-point BlogSuccess Framework, and covers all setup and infrastructural components of a blog. A strong foundation is very important for a healthy blog.
Systematically setting up your blog

Setup involves the following broad activities

- Finalize the subject for your blog
- Build content for at least 10 posts
- Choose domain and have your hosting setup completed
- Setup Wordpress and mandatory plug-ins
- Setup your website and decide on the brand
- Have a social media strategy and sites set up
- Have content for mandatory web pages
- Set up mailing list manager

You have one chance to get your setup right
Finalize the subject for your blog

Settle down on the subject of your blog

- Your topic must interest and excite you
- Ensure that a wide section of the population has interest in the subject of your blog
- Ensure that folks would be willing to pay for your expertise, eg. product marketing tips, weight-loss, child-care secrets, organic cooking tips, etc.

Consider three things before you finalize your blog → your passion and expertise, wide demand for the topic and willingness of people to pay for knowledge on this topic
Initial content line-up

Have at least 10 posts ready to go

- Begin with bullet points for posts
- Write as if you are addressing one person
- Develop the art of timeless writing as much as possible
- Practice including sub-headers and write in the form of lists
- Have a blog-posting schedule with topics and publish dates
- Do include your opinions, judgments, recommendations and expert advice
- Include a call to action, comments sharing, buy, etc.

Content is the life-blood of any blog
Domain name and hosting

How to pick a domain name, and hosting

- Either pick a short, catchy name (Tumblr, Roku, Mashable) or use one that has your blog topic / keywords in it.
- Ensure you buy a .com name and do not include dashes. Numbers are fine if they blend in easily (like 99designs).
- You must buy the domain that contains your full name.
- Hosting is easy → sign up with GoDaddy or Hostgator. NameCheap or GoDaddy can provide domain names.
- Connect the hosting provider to your domain name.

Domain/Hosting is the basic technical setup you must have.
Setup WordPress and mandatory plug-ins

Google’s Matt Cutts has gone on record to say if your blog is hosted on WordPress you’re are already set up for Google Search. What the iPhone is to smartphones, WordPress is to blogging. And this comes from the vast array of WordPress plug-ins available.

Plug-ins make a blogger’s life easier, a lot easier

- Wordpress is the most popular blogging platform, used by more than 60 million sites. WordPress is FREE and open source.
- Once you have the platform, you can then pick a “theme” to provide structure, look and feel to your site.
- Within WordPress you can perform ALL your blogging activities such as:
  - Building site pages, blog-posts and side-bar
  - All social media sharing and interaction buttons
  - Sign-up form and advertisements (when you are ready)
- With 26,000+ plug-ins, you can find a plug-in for almost any blog activity.

Even Google recommends WordPress!
Your Site and your brand

Build a consistent, recognizable brand

- Your site should exhibit a consistent look, feel and color scheme.
- A strategic brand also extends these to products and emails. Think branding from the first post.
- Choose three colors, preferably related (such as black, grey and blue) and a consistent font for the body. Stay with two/three sizes of text.
- Consider space and color usage. For financial, expertise and other “trust” building sites, you want a white/light background with lots of empty spaces (less clutter). For music, creative and action sites, consider adding more color.
- For older and experienced readership, have a less busy site.

Branding adds value to your blog
Social Media – the world we live in!

You must have a social media presence

- I recommend NOT more than four social media sites for your blog for the following three reasons:
  - From an 80/20 perspective, you will reach 80% of your target market through three effective social media sites
  - Too many social media sites mean one or more sites will suffer from lack of maintenance and this will show
  - Your readers will be subjected to redundant information
- Connect these sites to your mailing list manager
- Engage the audience on each social media with a different strategy

Marketing is incomplete without Social Media

WordPress

You want social media presence to grow traffic to your site and to have a wider reach. Your social media strategy must be aligned with your business strategy – these two cannot be separate. Make sure your social media sites have the same look/feel/color as your site.
Mandatory web-pages

**Pages vs Posts**

Pages are more static than posts, i.e. they are updated less frequently. Pages form the structure of your site. Home, About Us, Contact, Testimonials, etc. are important pages that help make your site complete.

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**You must NOT outsource page content writing**

- ALL content for your mandatory pages must be either written or reviewed and approved by you, since you know your audience.
- The About Us page is an important page that is frequently visited. Use this to project your self, your interest and why you have chosen to blog.
- Other important pages to have are Privacy Policy, FAQ (frequently asked questions), Contact Us, Products (when you have them).
- Based on your product, service or blog topic, you can have another page or two.
- The blog page is important for that is where you post on a regular basis.

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*The blogger is responsible for the message conveyed by the blog.*
Mailing List Manager

Your mailing list will be your most valuable asset

- Build a mailing list strategy right from the beginning; choose a professional service such as AWeber or MailChimp for this
- Mailing list services also provide sign up forms that you can place on your site to get readers to subscribe to your list
- You can send out emails every time you post or to announce certain events
- Most importantly, you can get data on what interests your users, over time, through your mailings
- List manager helps “segment” your readers for better communication

Having an engaging list adds value to your blog

Mailing List

Everyone checks emails – universal truth. Right from the beginning you must start building a mailing list. This helps you to push out communication and reach your readers whenever you choose. It helps you build a bond with your readers and also sell to them.
Module 3 → GROW

The next nine pages contain all the activities that should take place in this module.

This module encompasses all activities required to grow the blog from three main angles: content, traffic and awareness. These activities are highly-essential to ensure your blog is publicized and slowly transforms into a platform for subsequent activities.
Growing content, traffic and awareness

Your confidence grows along with your blog

- Have a publishing schedule for your posts
- Understand on-site SEO and on-page SEO
- Leverage the power of autoresponders
- Monitor traffic activity and understand reader behavior
- Understand the best content form for your site
- Product build and launch → understand and perfect it
- Social media strategy → imperative for new-age marketing
- Marketing plan → focus on traffic, conversion & revenue

Strategic customer engagement is key

As you add valuable content to your blog, you will see an increase in traffic to your blog. More people in different countries will start accessing your blog and awareness will grow.
Always be publishing

Publish posts

Content is the life-blood of blogs and consistent publishing of blogs is key to reader engagement

Consistently engage your readers

- Have a publishing schedule; it is possible to start aggressively (say 2-3 posts a week) and then settle into a weekly routine
- Your readers should expect to see a post from you in the frequency that you have conditioned them. This shows activity and a lively, engaging blog that someone maintains
- Based on where your readers are located, you can even have a predetermined time for publishing. Mailing List and WordPress enable you to auto-schedule your publishing weeks in advance

Condition your readers’ expectations – it’s highly motivating
On-page SEO – key to high Google rankings

Google is important!

Ranking high in Google search results enables your blog posts and site to be found by interested readers who are searching online. Write for your readers, but make it easy for search engines.

You will not need any other SEO strategy

- Ensure you install the free WordPress SEO plug-in by Yoast. This is a very simple, yet highly-effective plug-in. Hit publish only when you see the green ball for SEO check from the plug-in.
- The plug-in also shows you the importance of writing simpler sentences and the use of images.
- You will get to know the focus keyword concept and how to utilize that. As you write in this fashion, you will see consistent high ranking and frequent index visits by search engines.

Write for human beings – but also write for Google
Get the most out of your mailing list manager

Grow email list

Mailing list manager systems are very sophisticated. You can use them to drip steady content in sequence, at pre-arranged intervals and even link it to reader activity.

Understand the power of autoresponders

- MailChimp, AWeber, Infusionsoft, etc. allow you to drip solid, valuable content in predetermined intervals to your readers.
- They will get the next email in the pipeline based on activity (opened email, clicked link A, clicked link B, etc.). The list manager tracks this for each email recipient.
- Make use of autoresponders to engage and retain your subscribers. This can be used to convert them into customers.
- Reader activity also enables you to segment readers into effective categories for use during product sales or mailing.

Not all customers are the same – segment them.

Idea Setup Grow Convert Realize Advanced
Understand your business through your data

Data Analytics

Your blog is now set up to collect TONS of data on your traffic, readership and their behavior. Dig deep and draw meaningful insights from these data to get business value out of your blog.

Data is everywhere – extract information from it

- Look into at least three places for reader behavior:
  - Google Analytics, your hosting account and mailing list manager
- Find out the age, and other demographics of people who sign up. Know when they engage with your blog or open your emails. Know where they exist and what they like
- Set up goals in Google Analytics (campaigns in Infusionsoft) to know which customer segments are profitable
- Don’t assume; send out surveys to confirm your hypotheses

Data analytics can improve your blog profitability
Text, audio, video → readers have preferences

Media for posts

For audio posts, you need to list on iTunes. For videos, YouTube is a must. When you understand your readers' preferences, you will know which medium to focus on more. You can also segment your readership by their media preferences.

Give readers your content in the form they prefer

- Once you have valuable content, consider converting the text into audio and even video posts.
- Tweak your messages to see which readers click on audio and which ones prefer video. Then segment readers into such media lists.
- Content, once written, can be packaged in different forms. You can then bundle all three into one packet and offer it during the holiday season.

One hit product → multiple forms → multiplies revenue
Products ➔ your revenue channel

Build/Launch products

If monetizing your blog is one of your goals, then you MUST have products. The sooner you put out a product, the sooner someone can buy it and hand some dollars over to you. A portfolio of solid products enhances the value of your blog-business.

Info-products – limited only by your imagination

- Start off with an e-Book that you give away for free in exchange for an interested person’s email
- Make sure you provide value in all your products
- Practice the build-up to a product release. Whether it is an e-Book, audio-book, software, mobile app or your own seminar, build a level of expectation using all available avenues
- Don’t release something that is not ready yet. But don’t delay the release date in the quest for perfection
- Improve your product offering with follow on updates or fixes

Your blog is ultimately an e-commerce site
Social Media strategy

People = Profits

In a world driven by social media, people gather around Facebook groups, discuss in LinkedIn groups and meet in Google+ hangouts

Internet scale is largely driven by social media

- Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube – for image-oriented sites
- LinkedIn is more professional and a company page can cater to a business/career oriented topic
- Google+ cannot be ignored since a visible and high-activity Google profile can influence search engine results
- Liberally use Facebook for engagement, discussions, contests and surveys – you cannot beat the reach of Facebook
- Also put up a sign-up form everywhere – an email is an email

Leverage social media creatively for marketing your blog
Your blog marketing plan

Focus on traffic, conversion and revenue

- Build a three-pronged marketing plan that increases traffic, improves conversion rate and enhances revenue
- Tailor the message or the advertisement to the audience
- Do not ignore traditional advertisements such as radio, TV and even newspaper
- Always have a tracking method to know which ads are working and which are not yielding the desired results
- Translate your marketing plan into a CRM campaign
- Issue press releases and distribute your sites to other aggregate sites, to widen your outreach

Once your product is ready, then it’s all marketing
Module 4 → CONVERT

This module covers all activities required to convert traffic into potential sources of revenue. A healthy and growing blog needs to set up campaigns, enhance reader interest, launch products and position itself to convert all the assets into revenue.

The next nine pages cover the activities required to establish a framework for high conversion of traffic into paid customers.
Converting traffic into subscribers, and subscribers into customers

Conversion is key to improving profitability

- Launch contests, surveys and Q/A sessions
- Have a webinar strategy and invite experts
- Start building affiliate relationships
- Generate reports and understand your own data
- Set up marketing and conversion campaigns
- Review and test your site performance
- Sell the first affiliate product to your list
- Plan your first for-sale product – build and launch

Between traffic growth and conversion, choose conversion
Converting traffic into subscribers, and subscribers into customers

Engage subscribers

Reader engagement is a huge part of conversion. You can post a survey, answer questions raised by your readers and even set up contests to keep the interest in your blog alive. Survey responses also help enhance product features and give direction to your business.

Engage customers as often as possible

- You can use social media for publicizing a competition such as a guest post or a logo design.
- Use surveys sparingly and with few questions. Mostly, a survey should be used to confirm or refute your hypotheses.
- Anonymous surveys are effective. But if you want real names and solid responses, then establish prizes.
- Question of the week: get a guest expert once in a while to answer reader questions. Prizes = more questions.
- An Amazon gift card prize always works!

Survey responses breed ideas for blog posts
Webinar with guest experts

Video is highly engaging

- Caution: you really need to step out of your comfort zone to engage in video. The good thing is the more you practice with video, the better you will get.

- You can take any topic and turn it into a webinar. You can take five to six questions and turn it into a webinar. You can also invite one or more of your active readers to the webinar - the publicity is their reward, and you get content for your blog. Win-win!

- Strategically position one of your products during the webinar. You may also want to position your expert’s product.

- Grow from recorded (rehearsed) webinars initially to real-time

Internet users love webinars and videos
Build affiliate relationships

Affiliates = business partners

- Keep looking for products that interest your audience. You cannot build every product that your audience needs.
- Parting with your customer’s email is compensated in two ways:
  - You get commission for the product that your subscriber purchases.
  - Your subscriber now trusts your recommendation and will buy more from you.
- The reverse is also true. When your affiliate sells your product to their list, you part with affiliate commission (lower revenue), but get to add another email to your list.
- Maintain a list of all your affiliates in one place and be ready to pull it out during your new product launch.

Your blog is ultimately an e-commerce site.
Data Analytics reports

Mine your data for gold nuggets

- Your mailing list can tell you subscriber stories. Rate of enrollment, rate of unsubscribes, list growth, email open rates, link click rates and other important information.

- Your hosting site can tell you your traffic location, number of visitors, page views, search engine activity, page view details, etc.

- Google Analytics gives your FREE and voluminous data on visitor flow, website engagement, time spent on each page and even revenue data.

- Then you have information from your audience’s social media activities.

- All marketing must be based on insights from your own data.

Follow the data
**Set up Campaigns**

**Controlled conversion**

A campaign is a series of actions and information intended to drive anticipated reader behavior. Setting up a series of autoresponder emails that trickle valuable information is one example of a campaign.

**“If, then, else” conditions**

- Campaigns are conditions that lead a visitor to your site to your goal through a series of “forks in the road.” They get different information based on their response to an email, advertisement or call to action.
- You can let your free user sample the full version of your product for a trial period of 10 days, with effective autoresponder emails built-in.
- At the end of the 10-day period you expect the subscriber to purchase the full version of your product (campaign goal). If this does not happen, then you relegate the subscriber to the free/minimal version.
- At each step of the campaign you must measure results.

*Use campaigns to extract maximum customer value*
Continuously monitor Site performance

High-performing site

With stiff competition amongst websites for most keywords, you need to have a fast-loading site to keep your readers engaged. On-site content, placement of key information, clear calls to action, all contribute to keeping the reader on your page and on your site.

Keep your reader on your site

- When a reader navigates off your site, your bounce rate goes up – not good. They go away for various reasons – the information wasn’t what they were looking for, the content didn’t appeal to them, there was too much clutter, the pages loaded slowly, there were confusing messages and a lot of other reasons.

- Ensure your pages load fast. Google Analytics can tell you which pages keep readers engaged, and which ones make them drop off.

- The longer readers stay on your site, the higher your Google rankings.

- You can also send readers to other sites consciously. This improves rankings as long as they get value and you send them to authority sites.

- A clear, single call to action can make the interested reader buy.

Google records the length of time a visitor stays on your site.
Sell your first affiliate product

Every product you sell must have value to the buyer

- Browse through ClickBank, Amazon, Commission Junction and a host of other affiliate programs to pick the products that most interest your list.
- Only send those products you have tried and tested and feel would add value to your list. You need to continuously build and enhance trust.
- Sometimes you can also add your review on the product and enhance sales.
- Track your affiliate sales to know which products to sell.
- Do not treat your list like an ATM machine, simply selling. Ensure that you keep “value” in mind.

Only market those products that provide value to your customer.
Plan your first “for sale” product

Your Product

Nothing smells of success like your own product when it is ready for release. You get to give trial versions, price the product, set affiliate commissions, talk about it and market it to your list. Savor the moment when you get your first sale. You have arrived – your blog is now a success.

Build a solid portfolio of quality products

- Spend time in creating a quality product that will provide great value to your membership.
- Don’t get into perfection mode. Ship it when you think it is ready (set yourself a timeline) and tweak and revise it based on customer feedback.
- Carefully plan the product launch including advertisements, landing pages, connectivity to shopping cart and bank/PayPal account.
- Ensure affiliate commissions are properly managed, the support system is in place and refund policy and period are clearly stated upfront.
- Multiply product revenue: geographies, channels, formats.

Product portfolio directly correlates to site value
Module 5 → REALIZE

This module kicks in after the initial revenue starts trickling in. Activities required to boost revenue streams, increase distribution channels and multiply product forms are covered in this module.

The next eight pages cover the activities that belong in this module.
Realizing value out of your blog

More quality products and big marketing push

- Set up Google AdWords on your site
- Market affiliate products to your list
- Build a campaign with measurable goals
- Understand and build effective landing pages
- Examine conversion rates and improve CRO (conversion)
- List your products on ClickBank, Amazon, iTunes, etc.
- Start building more products, and understand bundling

In this phase, with the set up in place and the growth having gained momentum, you are all set to generate more value out of your blog.

Increase revenue & traffic and improve conversion
Displaying advertisements on your site

Advertisements generate revenue – ask Google

- Monitor SEO for a set of critical keywords: own vs. advertised
- Place your ads on Google for that very important focus keyword that is captured by your competitor
- Consider purchasing ads on sites such as ClickBank
- Consider retargeting advertisements
- Work out partnership deals with other sites where you can exchange advertisements; like-minded audience is key

Utilize the power of advertisements
Do’s and don’t for affiliate products marketing

Affiliate revenue

Affiliate commission is a huge revenue opportunity. They supplement your product offering and at the same time they act as your extended sales force. The trade-offs have to be recognized and accepted.

Do pick out the best affiliate products for your list

- Come up with your own criteria for selecting affiliate products that you’d like to recommend to your list:
  - Appropriate keywords (that your list responds to)
  - Volume of sales and rate of conversion (higher is better)
  - Unit price (depends on your list’s preference) and return rate (lower)
  - Check out their sales page and be comfortable
- Ask for a test version you can review
- Set up a series of mailings, allowing for vacation time and odd-hours
- Space out affiliate product marketing and don’t market too many products from the same affiliate

Understand deeply the reason why your customer is on your site
Setup Campaigns

Control Center

Campaigns are control centers. They relay important information to you. You can then modify your strategy. Measure everything and keep your incoming lines of communication open. This will allow you to be highly flexible and extract full potential from your blog.

Measure, control & improve

- Implement a CRM system such as Infusionsoft and set up campaigns with strategic goals such as increase revenue, traffic or conversion.
- You can have multiple branches in your campaign. The branches are alternatives that kick in based on subscriber behavior.
- Ensure your campaign statistics tell you about what worked.
- Also ensure you know which ones did not work, so that you can tighten up those areas.
- Recognize that there will be unsubscribes. Endeavor to get feedback from unsubscribers.
- Your blog is a serious business - focus on a few, KEY metrics.

Know your blog/business metrics
First impression – control what the visitor sees first!

Landing pages

A landing page is the first contact a visitor has with your blog. So you get to control it. Make sure the message is clear, singular and there is a call to action. Be strategic so you know the visitor beforehand and can tailor the page.

Landing pages are a gateway to your blog

- Which page would you like your first-time viewers to see first?
- Ensure effective SEO on your landing pages. You can have multiple landing pages for different types of visitors.
- The message on your landing page for a student must be different than that for an experienced corporate executive (even though both seek the same service from your blog).
- Visitors can be sourced from different channel (Facebook share, TV ad, newspaper ad, etc). Have a landing page for each source.
- The landing page should have its own objective: get an email ID, click on an advertisement or a click on the buy button.

An effective landing page “closes” the sale.
Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

Conversion is key

Recognize that you have done a lot to attract traffic. Effort, time, expense have all been sacrificed to set up a great blog and now you are seeing tons of traffic. The more the traffic the greater the cost (ex. sending mails to a larger number of people). You must convert them into paying customers!

Traffic is costly, unless you can convert it

- As soon as you believe you have a critical mass of traffic flowing through your site (page views, unique visitors, mailing list size, etc.), it is time to start thinking conversion.

- Build a set of pipelines which starts from traffic inflow and ends with (ideally, fewer) traffic outflow (unsubscribes). In between you want the “free” traffic to join your mailing list (CR1), and then the mailing list to become paying customers (CR2). Keep measuring CR1 & CR2.

- When your marketing – SEO or otherwise - does its job, you will see an increase in traffic. You must focus on improving CR1 and CR2 to ensure higher profitability for your blog.

CRO improves your blog profitability
List your products in as many places as you can

**Multiple listings**

More listings mean more customers, more revenue

- For informational products list on Amazon, ClickBank, iTunes, etc.
- List products on your own site with a very prominent buy button
- Find out who your best performing affiliates are and build a relationship with them. Perhaps they deserve higher commissions or a heads up on your next product launch
- How about your holiday offer when you bundle products? Know where you would list that offer
- Caution: For non-informational products where inventory is an issue, you may need sophisticated inventory management tools. For one or two items, especially if it’s an auction sale, list only in one place

Once your product is ready, market it to the hilt!
Ways to increase sales with multiple products

Product bundling

For one product, seek out different variations (licenses, features, forms or even packaging). For multiple products figure out ways to bundle the products and provide a discount on the bundle.

Create more info-products, more variations

- Register with Google AdSense and place ads on your site:
  - Consider the positioning of the ads
  - Work out the sizes and number of ads (one big, or many small)
  - What about text vs. image ads
- Always think about varying pricing to match product variations
- Position the products based on your customer preferences
- Think about bundling. Provide e-Book, audio and video in one bundle, or provide a few different products in a bundle
- Consider providing 10 copies of one product in a bundle → this means your buyer will give the other nine away, i.e. more customers

More variations are possible for informational products
Module 6 → ADVANCED

This module is outside of the BlogSuccess four-point framework and covers the activities that one may consider performing AFTER the blog is a success. Specifically, the activities include acquiring other blogs or executing an exit strategy.

The next eight pages cover the activities that belong in this module.
Your blog is now humming – what next?

**Your blog is your business**

- Showcase expertise – seminars, industry expert, consulting
- Membership model
- Contract advertising and partnership
- Re-examine site for redesign, new features & performance
- Understand valuation of businesses and websites in particular
- Know a financial buyer vs. a strategic buyer
- Anatomy of an acquisition

Transition from blogger to business-owner
Different ways of presenting your product/expertise

**Deliver in person**

- Conduct a seminar by inviting customers and guest experts
- As always, ensure there is great value for the paying customer
- Build a solid agenda and give customers access to information and people that their presence has earned them. Record sessions and put them up on your site
- Consider in-person, one-on-one consulting service
- Start an industry newsletter. Draw on your expertise, your blog statistics and your customers’ non-private information
- As you become the industry expert in your subject, you will gain invitations to other seminars

**Showcase your expertise in person**

- Promote your blog at every event you attend

As your customers see the person behind the show, you can convene some in-person events where your customers get to interact with you. These events can provide high publicity and higher customer engagements.
Work towards building a membership model

Membership model = High, stable revenues

- For an effective membership model, your members should get additional benefits every membership period (~ month)
- Compute the period that you’d want your members to stay for (a.k.a. customer lifetime value) and work towards building value for that time
- You can also provide different levels of membership and increase the value provided proportionate to the price.
- Ensure that back-end systems for rebilling, affiliate commissions, credit card expiry handling are all in place
- Ensure that new memberships are always greater than unsubscribes every month

Membership model = consistent, predictable revenues
Advertising and partnership

Niche Advertising

For niche sites where the monthly page views are abnormally high, consider approaching strategic partners for advertisement blocks of a month or greater. Slowly start building synergistic partnerships.

Graduate out of Google AdSense

- For your general customers, seek out merchandise providers (e.g., Bike Line, if your blog is on biking, Gerber, if your blog is on childcare or infants/parenting).
- Negotiate bulk-period advertising with such partners. Partners would want to know what your customers spend, number of customers, number of times you engage with your list.
- Support your partner's product launches with discounted offering of your own products. Customers tend to buy when they get bonuses.
- Conversely, seek out your partners for bonuses that you can offer during your product launches.

Partnerships imply greater profits
Once every 18 months or so, review your site for a new look/feel. Keeping the brand intact, look for other creative and engaging offerings that will revive interest in your blog and give your customers a livelier blog.

- Consider a new design for your site. Keeping the brand intact, check out which areas can be redone, just like remodeling your home.
- Use a survey to find out what your customers want to see on your site.
- Look at your products. Which books can do with a new updated edition, what additional features can be added to your site or your software, what new videos and audio files can you add.
- During this redesign you can speed up slow loading pages.
- Make the re-launch an event on its own and introduce a referral bonus.
- Add a second or third blog to your existing site. You can cross-sell to your existing list.

Create a buzz with your redesigned site.
What is the value of your Site

Blog valuation

- How can you place a value on the list of members you have? How do you value your info-products, your affiliate relationships and the potential of your blog? You need to know this in order to strategically respond to a request for sale.

Understand valuation methods

- For traditional “brick and mortar” business, you can value all existing assets. Land, inventory and receivables have a market value.
- For standard websites, the accepted industry norm is 12 to 36 times the monthly net income (net profit, after all expenses).
- Flippa and other sites give you real prices paid for comparable sites.
- Sites such as SiteWorthIt, Webuka and SiteWorthChecker can provide rough independent valuation for your site.
- Historical financials and future projections can help you get a cash flow-based valuation.

There is no one exact method to value a blog.
Who is buying your Site

Strategic Buyer

A strategic buyer is one whose current business has synergies in common with your site. This buyer is looking to grow his products and/or customer base by acquiring your site. Since this buyer faces the same competition as you, a higher price can be negotiated.

Financial vs. Strategic buyers

- A financial buyer is a “flipper” – they buy, fix and then flip it for sale
- A strategic buyer looks to grow their business by adding your site to it
- Strategic buyers tend to pay higher prices for the following reasons:
  - They are afraid their competitor may buy you
  - They want your products and/or your customer base
  - They want your keywords and Google rankings
- Whenever possible, introduce another buyer during sale
- Know why a particular buyer is interested in your blog and position your blog features appropriately

Strategic sale is one way to exit a business
Anatomy of an acquisition

Integration is key

The most important phase of an acquisition is the integration after the transaction. Quick and seamless integration of systems, and company culture is key to an accretive acquisition.

- Lay down the parameters for the business that you’d like to acquire. Don’t be afraid to walk away if the proposed target does not fit.
- Perform due diligence: talk to customers, suppliers, check out blog statistics (hosting, mailing list, Google Analytics and social media).
- Get due diligence reports and solid legal counsel representation.
- Craft deal terms: understand cash payments, tax obligations, company type, etc.
- Look for long-term target potential but price it on current valuation.
- Use an escrow payment service and go for a swift transition.
- Have integration team/strategy in place.

Understand the expected synergies from your acquisition.
Your Blog Post’s ecosystem

- **Product Listing (Amazon ClickBank)**
  - Customer clicks on ‘buy’ button
  - Provides sign-up forms
  - Pulls payment info, to keep track of new subscribers
  - Manages appropriate member level lists

- **Social media, eg. Facebook**
  - Provides content, and various links

- **Mailing List Manager (AWeber, MailChimp)**
  - Manages user clicks to enable segmentation
  - Manages product/role/member level lists

- **Blog Platform, WordPress**
  - Provides large images, videos

- **Membership Manager (DAP, S2member)**

- **Other large online storage, Amazon S3**

- **BANK**
  - Links to bank account
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