



every
woman
WORKBOOK

BLOGGING
HOW TO BEGIN,
HOW TO BE
GREAT

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About this workbook

At everywoman, we deliver a range of innovative products and resources that unlock the potential and talent of women in business globally. For those women starting out or looking to progress their professions, or build and develop their own enterprise, the everywomanNetwork provides a wealth of personal development resources, advice and inspiration to address the challenges faced at key stages in business. We produce workbooks on topics that matter most to our members and we're constantly listening to your views to give you the tools you need to propel you through your life's work, at a time and place that suits you.

Welcome to our new workbook, *Blogging: how to begin, how to be great*

Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter: social media has become a key player in the business world – and it's here to stay. With so much being invested online, your internet presence is likely to play a role in your career. A well-crafted blog can be a great way to use your voice and express your opinions as well as raising your profile and getting you noticed by the right people within your company and industry. It's the modern form of networking and is important if you want to be considered for inclusion on teams and committees outside your role, press interviews and project work. Regular blog posting can also hone your writing skills and help you think through issues logically. American writer and businesswoman Penelope Trunk was once asked why she blogged. She replied ““Blogging is good for your career. A well-executed blog sets you apart as an expert in your field”. And she's right - regular blogging can strengthen your authority in a particular area. You may well also find it both enjoyable and therapeutic!

By the end of this workbook you will have learnt about blogging's history and how it has developed over the decade. You will understand the three different types of blogging, the different objectives they fulfil and determine which one is right for you. You'll learn how to focus your blog, choose a name and set it up. We then take you into the fun part - coming up with ideas for your posts, top tips on writing and SEO and guidance on how to create a content strategy that works with your life. Finally you'll learn how to share your blogs - from simple social media sharing to pitching for your own *Huffington Post* account. Whatever your writing passion or objectives, this workbook will help you learn to use blogging to establish your authority in your particular area and help you reach your goals.

By undertaking this workbook, you're learning how to blog to enhance your personal brand and strengthen your authority. We hope you enjoy it and we'd love to know how you get on - email us at karenmax@everywoman.com or tweet us [@everywomanuk](https://twitter.com/everywomanuk).

Maxine & Karen

and the everywoman team

Before blogs, it was all about physical presence. We used to send out videos and audiotapes to communicate. Blogging and the Internet allow us to engage in a lot more real time conversations as opposed to a one-way dump of information or a message. ”

INDRA NOOYI CHAIRMAN PEPSICO '

Blogging – what it is and why you should do it

Blogging is just for supercool online gurus, trendy fashionistas or beauty experts, right? Wrong. Today, blogging is not only part and parcel of the modern digital landscape – it is a core element of developing your personal brand and making opportunities happen.

“**B**logging increases your visibility with your bosses, your colleagues and rival businesses, so if you are ambitious you can’t afford NOT to be blogging,” says Natasha Courtenay-Smithⁱⁱ, founder of Bolt Digital, Facebook-accredited trainer and author of the highly acclaimed *The Million Dollar Blog*.

“Gone are the times when you stayed in a job for life, or even got guaranteed promotions. The Internet and digital working has changed everything.

“You can’t just work hard and wait for someone to hand you your next career opportunity or ask you to take on the company’s latest multi-million-pound project.

“There is no excuse for not making yourself really visible, the platforms are there – from social media to LinkedIn to setting up your own website. It’s never been simpler – or more important – to raise your own personal brand within the workplace.”

A recent survey of recruitment specialists showed that 95%ⁱⁱⁱ of those polled agreed that having a competitive personal brand was a real differentiator as to who won the best positions in the jobs market place. Over half those questioned revealed they used social media platforms to research new job candidates.

It’s not just employees who need to raise their personal brand through Internet visibility – research in the States has shown^{iv} people have higher trust values in companies with senior leaders who are active on social media.

Even more compelling is that 77%^v of consumers are more likely to buy from a company which has a CEO who is active and visible on social media. What these statistics demonstrate is that being visible online is key to success, whether you are looking for your next career move or driving your company to its next commercial milestone.

EXERCISE



This section is for you to record the kinds of career-orientated content you consume:

1 What was the last non-fiction book you read?

2 How often do you read work-related content?

3 Is this in print or online?

4 Where do you find work-related content e.g. magazines, Facebook, LinkedIn?

5 Do you have regular work-related discussions with colleagues, friends or family?

6 If yes, what are the usual topics of these conversations? Tick which one applies to you the most:

	OFTEN	RARELY	NEVER
NEW IDEAS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
THINGS THAT INSPIRE YOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
YOUR NEXT CAREER STEP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OTHER COMPANIES YOU ADMIRE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What do you want to change about the above statements?
(This should be one bullet point per question answered)

1

2

3

4

5

EVOLUTION OF THE BLOG

Before the Internet arrived, if you wanted to be famous, super-successful or have any kind of real impact on society you needed to somehow get coverage in a newspaper, on the radio or a TV show. Not anymore.

All you need is a keyboard, an Internet connection and some time and dedication to start blogging and you can be in control of your own brand and your own commercial destiny.

So, how did we get here? Blogs didn't exist until 1994, the first one is widely acknowledged to have been called Links.net and was an online journal launched by American college student, Justin Hall.^{vi}

Three years later another American, John Barger, coined the phrase weblog which was eventually shortened to 'blog' by 1999.

Initially most bloggers were of a certain tribe – early Internet adopters and technical experts sharing opinions and experiences of tech online. A blog was purely a word-based online musing. There was no set format as such, apart from being an article written in either the first or third person.

Within a few years blogs had evolved from basic online journals to rich and engaging articles housing text, imagery, animation and videos that rivalled traditional publishers and broadcasters.

Many successful businesses and personalities started out as bloggers, people who were truly passionate about something in their life.

Ella Woodward launched the *Deliciously Ella* blog in 2012. This started out as a wholefoods and plant-based recipe blog, created to chart her road to living differently and to help cure a health issue^{vii}. She began charting her story, including the foods she ate and how she ate them, on her blog.

Her story and passion resonated through her blog with growing numbers of followers. Today she is the author of two best-selling books, has opened a successful deli in London's Marylebone and employs 70 people.

Here's her advice on blogging success:

“
WHEN I FIRST STARTED
BLOGGING, I KEPT IT A
SECRET FROM MY FRIENDS
AND THEN STARTED TO
SHOW A FEW PEOPLE AND
IT SNOWBALLED FROM
THERE. I'D SAY MY GOLDEN
RULE IS STAY TRUE TO
YOUR OWN SELF AND
VOICE.... AUTHENTICITY
IS HUGE, IT'S IMPORTANT
TO MAKE PEOPLE FEEL
A PART OF THE JOURNEY.”^{viii}

In just a few years blogging and bloggers have changed how the world works. Just take global news phenomenon *Huffington Post* – the brainchild of Arianna Huffington. It started as a news provider powered by bloggers and is now one of the biggest names in global publishing.

Not everyone is like Arianna Huffington and wants to revolutionise an industry but most of us want to achieve our full potential.

You can use a blog purely as a personal branding exercise to raise your own profile and, by doing so, raise your promotion game.

The key to doing this well is to ensure you blog with realism and authenticity. In her TED Talk on *Why Authenticity Matters in the workplace*,^x Karissa Thacker explains that being authentic is the keystone for three critical skills in the 21st-century workplace – for building relationships, innovation and creating both meaning and purpose in an office environment – and these core pillars should underpin your blog's purpose.

Why do people blog?

The bigger question is, in an age where social media and communication is stronger than it has ever been, why don't they blog?

There can be a misconception that you must be a writer to be a blogger. In fact, the most engaging types of blogs are those written by people with a genuine drive and interest in their subject.

"Blogging is content and that can be anything – words, pictures, video," says Natasha Courtenay-Smith. "But what it does need to be is interesting and valuable to others and that can be anything from interesting opinion to an experience."

Bloggers, whether they are businesses, global brands or individuals, must have authenticity and honesty at their heart or they will fail to make any meaningful connection with their audience. Faking it won't cut it.

Let's put the focus on what blogging can do for you in the workplace:

1

TO GENERATE INTEREST

"Blogging is about visibility, it's about making people realise you have valid opinions, experience and a value that goes beyond the person they see sitting at the desk in the office," says Natasha Courtenay-Smith. "Careers can still be stifled by a hierarchy where the best people aren't always the ones called upon to do the project, but the ones that are the most visible. By blogging you can show colleagues and seniors that you have an opinion without being asked for it."

2

TO STIMULATE THE DECISION-MAKERS

"Blogging also attracts the attention of the decision makers in the business who may not have naturally thought of you for a new project or position, but making them aware of your personal brand through blogging changes all of that," says Natasha.

3

TO TRIGGER EXTERNAL INTEREST

"And finally, blogging and being visible attracts prospective employers, which can introduce career-changing opportunities," she adds.

In summary, writing and sharing your thoughts, opinions and passions around your working life, experiences and ambition can help raise and strengthen your current position and help advance you to the next level.

Having a blog can be the most authentic form of personal marketing. In a way, it's like having the best types of conversation with interested colleagues, potential new employers and like-minded individuals on your terms.

The modern working landscape has changed – with more women in the workplace than ever before and very few 'jobs for life' having a strong presence. An online blog can keep you better placed to take the next career step.

Despite huge leaps forward for women in the workplace we can still lag behind men when driving ourselves forward for both promotion and recognition.

"The default human setting is

to wait for opportunities rather than go looking for them. We are such modest creatures and seem to want someone else to point their finger at us and say: 'You are amazing!' However, the Internet has changed everything by giving us a tool to create opportunities for ourselves," says Natasha Courtenay-Smith.

Why social media isn't enough

To underpin any social media profile, you need to have a consistent and relevant blogging presence on your own website. Your social media profile is probably very different from your LinkedIn profile.

Having your own site means you can stay in total control over what you publish, when and why. And, of course, you have your own distribution network through your own social media channels and LinkedIn.

"You need to get people to

read your blog, but you need to be prepared for no-one to read it," says Natasha Courtenay-Smith.

"You're not writing a blog for instant gratification, it's a long game and it's a worthwhile one as the process of researching and clarifying your thoughts and opinions is in itself hugely valuable.

"Simply by writing interesting content you will be improving your skill set and, by publishing content and sharing it on LinkedIn, your social media channels and where relevant with your work colleagues, you will increase your professional visibility."

Using these digital tools to further our careers plays to the female stronghold – empathetic communication.

Writing a blog is the truest form of expression – think of it as a direct way to share your innermost ideas, passions, opinions, thoughts and ambitions.



"SOME PEOPLE CAN BE SCARED TO HAVE AN OPINION, BUT THEY SHOULDN'T BE. YOU DON'T NEED TO BE CONTROVERSIAL WITH WHAT YOU BLOG ABOUT, BUT YOU DO NEED TO MAKE IT INTERESTING OR RELEVANT," SAYS NATASHA.



TAKE AWAY

Having a blog helps to raise both your personal brand and your visibility. It can be highly beneficial for both employees and employers as it raises awareness of your profile and gets your name out into the public domain.

The different types of blogger

As the world of blogging has evolved there were over 6.7m people blogging in 2016,^x this number expected to reach 31.7 million by 2020.

There are three defined types of blog and blogger:

WHO THE BUSINESS BLOGGER

WHY: to raise awareness of the business and to drive sales.

Business/brand bloggers can be anyone - from the people behind a kitchen table selling hobby products online, to a digital start-up, or a large company founder and CEO. Their aim is the same - to blog on topics that their customers, both old and new, will find interesting, engaging and purposeful. This kind of blog keeps the business relevant and front of mind with its customers, colleagues and with competitors.

PRIORITY: commercial success.

WHO THE CAMPAIGNING BLOGGER

WHY: to raise awareness and get support for a specific cause.

Campaigner bloggers can be anyone with a cause and a keyboard. Any cause can potentially get noticed and get traction online which can quickly result in a groundswell of public support leading in turn to pressure groups being set up, campaigns being launched to enforce law changes, huge charitable donations, government U-turns and, in some cases, saving lives.

PRIORITY: to raise social awareness and inspire change.

WHO THE PERSONAL BLOGGER

WHY: to raise an individual profile to gain professional recognition, increase connections and improve career possibilities.

A well-researched, consistent and authentic blog delivered with genuine insight, integrity and learning can help establish the author as an expert or a sharer of relevant professional experiences. This, in turn, acts as shared professional learning, and helps develop professional kudos, respect, visibility and improved connections.

PRIORITY: personal progression, financial gain.

EXERCISE



Make a note of six blogs you read regularly (if you don't read blogs then research six for the purposes of this exercise). They can be on any subject:

Using the three definitions on the previous page, determine which category these bloggers fall into.

DEFINITION	BLOG					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
THE BUSINESS BLOGGER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
THE CAMPAIGNING BLOGGER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
THE PERSONAL BLOGGER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In your opinion do they achieve any of the blog priorities listed on the previous page?

IF YES, DETAIL WHY HERE:

IF NO, DETAIL WHY HERE:

When you start to write your own blog, use these comments as pointers to help clarify what you should and shouldn't do to engage your audience.

Think about and answer:

Author and blogger Joshua Becker, of *The Minimalist*, claims that being a blogger improves your thinking processes and is highly motivational. He says ^{xi}

“

Blogging is a selfless act of service to invest your time, energy, and world view into a piece of writing and then offer it free to anybody who wants to read it. Others will find inspiration in your writing... and that's a wonderful feeling."



Take this quiz to find out what kind of blogging is suited to you:

Do you enjoy using the Internet?

- A) YES, I'M ALWAYS ONLINE
- B) I ONLY USE IT FOR SHOPPING TO MAKE MY LIFE EASIER
- C) NOT REALLY, I DON'T FIND IT EASY

How often do you use social media?

- A) EVERY DAY
- B) TWICE A WEEK
- C) WHEN I REMEMBER

Do you enjoy socialising online?

- A) YES, DEFINITELY
- B) I DO, BUT I FIND IT TIME-CONSUMING
- C) NOT REALLY, I PREFER FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT

Do you enjoy discussing topics with friends and colleagues?

- A) YES, ALWAYS
- B) WHEN I AM IN THE MOOD
- C) NOT REALLY, I'M NOT CONFIDENT ENOUGH DELIVERING STRONG OPINIONS

a) SUPER BLOGGER

You have the ability to start a blog of your own. See later for tips to get you up and running.

b) ALMOST THERE.

Start sharing and commenting on relevant discussion forums on LinkedIn and any work-related forums or blogs you follow.

c) YOU NEED TO BE MORE DIGITALLY COMFORTABLE.

Start participating in webinars and online discussions and work your way up to commenting on LinkedIn articles that interest you.

EXERCISE



Now you are going to give blogging a try. Use this exercise as a tool to help you keep focussed on what and why you want to blog.

What gave you the initial idea for your blog?

What's the purpose of your blog?

How do you feel about launching your blog?

How much time are you willing to spend on your blog?

Once you launch your blog you should revisit this list to see how your blogging has changed your answers.

The benefits of blogging

In this workbook personal branding and blogging go hand in hand – whether the company you work for is large, medium or small or whether you own your own business, using a blog to raise your personal brand is a modern necessity. Here are some of the benefits . . .

it raises
your/your
company's
profile

gives purpose
to self-motivated
self-improvement

encourages
collaboration
through conversation
with others in your
field or interested
in your field

opens you/your
company up to
opportunity

showcases you/your
company's expertise

In essence, having a blog can be a gateway to improving your career through your initial self-motivation, followed by contact and collaboration with your peers and colleagues.



TAKE AWAY

It's important to assess the kind of blog you want to create as this will determine the kind of blogger you become. It's important to have in mind your personal brand and what you are looking to achieve – so for example if it's a business blog it's best to stay professional and present your professional side but with a personal blog you can be more relaxed and open.

Setting up a blog

Now you know what kind of blogger you are and have got an idea for your blog, it's time to get started. And it's quite simple to do.

Getting started

Setting up a blog may seem like an overwhelming and confusing process but it does not require coding or programming skills so the world of blogging need not be quite so daunting.

Two main ingredients are critical to having the chance to be a successful blogger. The first is to have a passion for your topic; there are millions of blogs online and readers can quickly see through a lack of authenticity, so you need to find a niche area that you are passionate about. Secondly, you must have time to devote to it. "Successful blogging requires time, dedication, and some strategic planning,"^{xii} points out Brittany Watson Jepsen, a successful American blogger behind the DIY craft blog, *The House That Lars Built*. "I wouldn't plan on doing it if you don't have sufficient time to devote to it."^{xiii}

CHOOSING A BLOGGING PLATFORM, DOMAIN NAME AND HOSTING

If you are looking to start your own blog you'll need to figure out how to choose the best blogging platform. It's a difficult choice since there are several different blogging platforms out there but as a beginner, you'll most likely want a blogging platform that's easy to set up and use and that's where WordPress comes in.

Not only is WordPress the world's most popular blogging software, it is free to use, you can install plugins, create your

own design, and, most importantly, make money from your blog without any restrictions as you are hosting it yourself.

"WordPress is by far the most popular blogging platform and for good reason,"^{xiv} explains Australian blogger Darren Rowse, who has become so successful with blogging that he now makes a living out of it through blogs such as Digital Photography School.^{xv}

"It is free to use. It is easy to set up, it has been

around for many years and is a robust and secure system (although you do need to keep it up-to-date)."

"It has a whole industry of tool providers, designers and developers around it that will help you to customise your blog in many ways."

As well as WordPress, have a look at other free blogging platforms such as Blogger.com and Tumblr – both, however, are slightly more technical than WordPress.



*PUT YOUR
BLOG OUT INTO
THE WORLD
AND HOPE THAT
YOUR TALENT
WILL SPEAK
FOR ITSELF.* ^{xvi}

Domain name

The first thing that comes to my mind when setting up a blog is getting a good domain name which is what people type to get to your website. Basically, it will be your blog's address on the Internet and you will have to pay for it but it is unlikely to cost much for a basic registration.

You will want to pick a good domain name for your blog from the start, because most likely you will be stuck with that domain name for the rest of the blog's life.^{xvii}

The domain name should suggest the nature of what

your blog is about, your product or service. It is important for a visitor to get an idea of what the website is about just by looking at the domain name.

For example, if your site is about retro furniture then try to get a domain name that features words such as retro or vintage but be prepared to play a mix on words and to be creative as it is very possible the domain name you have in mind might already be taken. Keep in mind too that it's likely to be advantageous if you can keep the domain name short, easy to spell and memorable.

EXERCISE

Gather a group of colleagues together and brainstorm five ideas of domain names based on popular hobbies, such as yoga, baking and skiing. Think of the most obvious choices and then get creative and play with words to come up with different descriptive versions.



CHOOSING A HOST

You'll need a hosting provider for your blog. This is the company that provides the space on its servers and equipment to store your blog and allow everyone to see it. Unsurprisingly, the host provider charges a small fee for this service.

The first step in choosing a blog host is to decide whether you want to create a blog with free web hosting or invest in a paid blog host provider. If you are creating a personal blog which you are just sharing among family and friends, then a free blog hosting service is probably all you need.

You can still benefit from things such as templates but that's just about it. For those more serious about blogging or who are doing it to enhance their business and make money then it makes sense to pay for an upgraded service.

A host allows you lots of added extras, such as running ads, creating your own template designs and providing a faster and more-efficient server. This, in effect, will drive more traffic to your blog. You may be able to purchase hosting when you register your domain name so this should be considered at that stage.

Design

The design of your blog can be as important as its content; after all you need to be able to attract visitors. Design can add tremendous value to a blog. By making it visually stand out it draws the eye in and may make a visitor want to hang around for longer.

When creating a design, it can be tempting to go crazy. After all, you want your blog to stand out and for people to remember you. However, less is more seems to be the case.

Attracting over 35,000 page views a month on her *Not Another Mummy Blog*, award-winning UK blogger Alison Perry has some valuable advice when it comes to design^{xviii}.

"I'd say look around at the blogs you like the look of and either work out or ask

them which theme they used or which designer they used. Often it will say at the bottom of the site. Keep it clean and simple. Don't be afraid to experiment – try a theme and if you don't like it six months later, change it."

"Also, keep in mind that you can have the nicest theme in the world but if your images are terrible, it won't look good. So, either teach yourself how to take a decent photo or use cheap stock image sites like Unsplash and Death To The Stock Photo."

As well as using strong imagery on your blog, keeping an eye on your colour themes is just as important.

When it comes to creating a successful design, Alice Judge Talbot – the creator of *More Than*

Toast; a lifestyle blog that has acquired over 60,000 monthly readers – points to colour as a top factor in making a blog attractive.

"I think the best thing to do when designing a blog is to take a look and see what you like about other blogs. I knew I liked colour and strong imagery, so these are large components of mine. I designed my own as I have the skills but many buy themes off Etsy or designers such as Pipdig, it's a great way to get a professionally designed site without the skills needed to build it yourself."^{xix}

On top of that, it should be easy to navigate around your blog if you want people to stick around. If it's tricky and difficult to take in, people won't stay, as anything hard to navigate is a real turn-off.

EXERCISE



Write down three blogs that stand out design wise. Think about what appeals to you in terms of their design and jot down what you like about each:

1

2

3

PLUG-INS

A plug-in is a piece of software code that enables an application or program to do something it couldn't do by itself. They work by enabling you to add on new features to your WordPress sites.

According to Kait Souch, a popular Canadian blogger^{xx} who also works as a branding and marketing professional, plug-in's quite simply can make your life as a blogger easier.

"As a blogger, there are a ton of WordPress plug-ins that are available for free; from increasing your web traffic to helping your site get found on Google."

In total agreement is Alison Perry who believes plug-ins can be essential to your blog:

"Plug-ins-wise, it really depends on what you want to do," she explains. "You might want a plug-in which shows your Instagram photos, you might want one that shows related posts at the end of each blog post – plug-ins do anything and everything you might want so it's a very broad area."

"Some of the essential ones for me are a broken link checker – it flags any links on your blog that are broken – and NoFollowr which allows you to make links on your blog 'no follow' – this is important because Google guidelines say if content is paid for, or gifts have been given for the content, links should be marked as no-follow."

As for other plug-ins, take a look at Yoast which is the most popular when it comes to increasing your blog's SEO (search engine optimization) – this is how it gets found by Google and other search engines.

You can use the tool to assign keywords to your posts, pages and more to maximize your blog's ranking. There is both a free and paid version of the plugin, depending on how advanced you want to get.

Other valuable plug-ins include Recipe Card which is good for food bloggers as it allows you to create custom-styled recipe cards that can easily be printed, saved or shared.

*BLOGS HAVE
BEEN RATED
AS THE 5TH
MOST TRUSTED
SOURCE FOR
ACCURATE
ONLINE
INFORMATION^{xxi}*

Another popular one for businesses is the Google Analytics Dashboard plug-in that pulls your website's Google Analytics straight into your WordPress dashboard, making it easy for you to see your real-time visitors, traffic trends and other important statistics.

Plug-ins are there to make your blog easier to navigate which in effect will attract more visitors to it.

"My favourites are the ones that make my life a little easier," explained Alice Judge Talbot. "I love recipe plug-ins which make writing recipes easier, as well as Instagram Feed so I can easily display my feed on my site."



TAKE AWAY

There are loads of platforms and ways to set up a blog so it can be quite overwhelming but the important thing is to pick what's right for you. It's a good idea to start off on something free and upgrade as you get the hang of it and it's also important to remember to invest time in keeping it up to date.

Working out your content strategy

Blogging is bigger than ever before – as of July 2017, there were an estimated 350m blogs on Tumblr and 75m on WordPress alone. On WordPress, more than 409m people view more than 23.6bn pages each month and members produce 69.5m new posts a month^{xxii}. The blogsphere is busy which is why a content strategy is key...

Here in the UK, most blogs land between one and 10,000 unique visitors per month^{xxiii}.

With mind-boggling stats like that, it's a no-brainer that blogging is a brilliant way to reach new audiences, increase your visibility and boost your bottom line. And don't be daunted by the number of other bloggers out there – there's always room for more. Blogging is the democratisation of opinion so join in the conversation and make your voice heard.

How often should you blog?

The ideal frequency is to publish one blog post once a week, but once a month is fine too. Just ensure that you don't have a blog

page or site that lies dormant for too long – it makes you and your business look sloppy, out of touch, and worse, that you have nothing to say. There's little that makes a website look more shoddy than a blog section that hasn't been updated for six months or more.

Do bear in mind, however, that quality is far more important than quantity – never blog for the sake of it. Authenticity is key. Blogs are a brand extension of you and your business and a brilliant marketing tool – but if you write heaps of low-quality posts, it will damage your brand, not enhance it. Only blog when you have something to say about something you truly believe in.

How long it takes to write a blog post will depend on your muse, but it's much better to spend time, >

COMPANIES WHO BLOG RECEIVE 97% MORE LINKS TO THEIR WEBSITE.^{xxiv}

energy and effort – and time is money after all - into crafting one brilliant blog post a week than it is to churn out five that won't get read or shared. Remember, the whole point of blogging is to increase your visibility and help you fulfil your goals. Also, remember, this is a long game – don't expect overnight success or that every blog post is going to go viral.

Aim to spend at between two and four hours a week on blogging – and make sure you set the time aside in your diary. Otherwise, blogging almost seems to get pushed to the back of the queue when it comes to your to-do list. Make it a regular habit as part of your working week.



THE FIRST THING YOU LEARN WHEN YOU'RE BLOGGING IS THAT PEOPLE ARE ONE CLICK AWAY FROM LEAVING YOU. SO YOU'VE GOT TO GET TO THE POINT, YOU CAN'T WASTE PEOPLE'S TIME, YOU'VE GOT TO GIVE THEM SOME VALUE FOR THEIR LIMITED ATTENTION SPAN. " xxv

ALEX TABARROK

Choosing your topics

Work out who you want to reach. Are you trying to establish yourself as a thought leader in your industry on a particular subject? Are you trying to drive traffic to your business website? In which case, think about your niche in the market. What would people in this area really want to read? What value can you offer them? What areas aren't covered already?

Or are you blogging more because you just love writing or you simply want to join in the global blog conversation and boost your bottom line in a less direct manner?

Through blogging on *Huffington Post* about all things to do with careers,

CVs, job interviews and more, Victoria McLean, founder of career coaching business City CV,^{xxvi} has gone on to be featured in the Mail Online in front of 247m readers. She has also been sought after as an expert by the likes of *BBC Radio Five Live*, *The Guardian* and *Cosmopolitan*.

However, you don't have to blog about your specific area of business. For example, Victoria Fox, CEO of leading advertising agency LIDA London^{xxvii}, blogs on a variety of topics on the Huff Post – none of which to date concern the advertising industry.

Most recently, she blogged about the current trend for authentic leadership^{xxviii} and, as a result, was asked to be a guest on a programme on Radio 4^{xxix},

reaching a huge new audience.

Think about where your passions lie. And remember, you can blog on different subjects depending on the platform. What you might blog about on your business website or for a trade title might be different to what you might upload to more consumer-facing platforms like *Huffington Post* or *Medium*.

Keep abreast of news and current trends. Your favourite news websites, trade titles, Google Trends, Facebook and Twitter are useful if you want inspiration for topical or newsworthy subjects that you can put your personal spin on. It's always a good idea to blog around the trends of the day – this can often lead to posts going viral.

EXERCISE



Write down the names of any people, whether peers in your sphere of business or from any walk of life, whose blogs you really enjoy. Think about why you enjoy reading them so much. For example. Arianna Huffington talks engagingly and authoritatively about any topic she's blogging about, whether it's politics, or well-being, or more personally and confessionally about her private and family life.

1 Collate all the keywords that you've written down about why you enjoy each of these bloggers, such as 'engaging', 'powerful', 'funny', 'insightful'. This can be a useful collection of words to inspire you every time you blog.

2 Then write down a list of all the areas in which you have expertise, both in your professional and personal life.

4 Finally, write down a list of your passions – the things you really love, where your interests lie, where you have expertise and what you really enjoy doing.

These three lists should give you inspiration on some topics for your future blog posts, how to go about writing them and how you want your voice to be heard.

STARTING TO WRITE – BE BRAVE!

Your first thought is always your best thought. Have the courage of your convictions. It's often a useful idea to imagine a blog post as an extended Facebook status update.

Time yourself to see what you can bash out in 30 minutes and just brain dump some paragraphs, no matter how stream of consciousness in style they are. Once 30 minutes is up you can go back and flesh out your thoughts.

Keep the length to 400 to 800 words, 1,000 words max. Anything over that won't keep the readers' attention unless it's exceptional. It needs to be more than 300 words at the very least to register with search engines and thus enhance your chances of your post being read.

Lists also work well – for example, '14 Business Trends Set To Hit in 2018'

Including images, videos and even podcasts are great ways to increase engagement and retain your audience.

Keep it punchy passionate, informal and chatty. Remember – a blog post is not a feature, it's not a news story. It's a first-person opinion piece.

Keep it chatty. Don't use lots of business speak, corporate lingo or jargon particular to your industry. You will be instantly reducing the number of potential readers. Some of the best business bloggers write as if talking to the man in the street, not to their peers. You don't want to preach to the converted – you want to get your message read by as many people as possible, then shared by as many people as possible.

The best blog posts say something new, are informative, entertaining, give a fresh take on a topic, are just downright funny, or include truths that chime with the reader – and are, therefore, clickable and shareable. Quality and authenticity are key.

Blog posts should also be packed full of searchable keywords relevant to the topic. Think very carefully about your title and try and get the main searchable keyword at the start of your headline. This is your main opportunity to persuade people to click on your post. The headline should always tell readers what your post is about, and why they should read more. Clear, descriptive headlines work better than puns or short, vague titles – think about what kind of title you would click on.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONTENT

It's a fact often bandied about online that two million blog posts go live every day^{xxx} and there is a huge variety among them when it comes to content style.

1 Blogging on trending topics and news within your industry or the wider world can be a great way to ensure you create engaging blog posts that maximise the number of readers, retain existing audiences and build new ones.

2 Perhaps consider a series of blog posts, which will leave the reader wanting more and eager to click on your next blog post. This idea works particularly well if the posts are a series of explainers of your particular business niche.

3 Live blogging is used a lot by news websites to give rolling commentary on events as they happen in real time. Twitter is an ideal tool to live micro blog from events, conferences and panel discussions, for example.

4 Evergreen content is one of the best traffic drivers. As the name suggests, these are blog posts on topics that never get old. As their subject matter is not

news or trend related they remain relevant long after publication, to deliver long-term results. Evergreen posts can also be shared again at opportune times, so they are useful weapons to have in your blogging arsenal.

A good starting point when considering evergreen posts is to think about the keywords that relate to your business and that you'd like your site to rank on and write around these topics.

In business, the best-performing evergreen blog posts are often in-depth examinations of your niche – case studies, original research, solutions-based stories, lists, top tips and 'how to' tutorials. They might take more time and effort than a regular blog post, but are brilliant for audience capture and retention, to help you rank higher in search engines and drive traffic for years. They are also the perfect vehicle for you to demonstrate your expertise. It doesn't matter if the topics you write about have been covered before, you can always put your unique spin on the subject.



TAKE AWAY

It's important to have a content strategy in place to make sure that your blog stays up to date. Working out the kind of content you want to publish will make it easier to stick to your goal of how often you want to update and will make writing content feel less daunting.

Getting your blog seen

Once your blog is up and running the next step is to look at how to get it seen. All your hard work creating it will go to waste if no one visits your site. Traffic is expected to be slow once you launch but will a bit of help you can build this to steady visitors.



A BLOG IS NEITHER A DIARY NOR A JOURNAL. MANY PEOPLE THINK OF BLOGGING IN RELATION TO THOSE TWO THINGS, CONFESSIONAL OR PRACTICAL. IT IS NEITHER BUT INCLUDES ELEMENTS OF BOTH".^{xxxI}

LEMN SISSAY

How to use it for different goals

Blogging unlocks the potential of you connecting with some of the billions of people online around the world and is a brilliant shop window for your brand. It is an excellent method of attracting new customers to your business because it offers something of value to them. Once you attract an audience to become loyal and connected, they convert to being customers and the benefits to your bottom line can be huge.

Blogging is also an excellent way of establishing yourself as a thought leader in your field. This could lead to you being asked to give your opinion in the media, raising your profile even more. It can also lead to book deals, to you being asked to appear as an expert on industry panels and at

conferences. Increased visibility is definitely a sure-fire way to snare new customers.

Blogging creates a level of audience engagement that advertising and marketing alone can never achieve – people will often contact you after reading a blog post that resonated with them, saving you the time and effort of having to cold-call to drum up business.

The traffic that blog posts create can be translated into leads and potentially new deals. Well-researched blog posts can also help you better understand your sector and market.

On a personal level, regular writing can be hugely beneficial. Above all, it should be great fun and can teach you an awful lot about yourself and your capabilities.

GETTING VALUE OUT OF YOUR BLOG

It's essential nowadays for every business to have a carefully planned social media strategy. Helpfully, there is a vast array of tools out there to manage your posts and to push them out across platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, as well as via company emails lists and to friends and colleagues.

The more time spent promoting blog posts on a regular basis, the

greater your audience will be. Make sure you reply to any comments on all your social platforms, too.

It's also worth posting your blogs in online communities where your audience already gathers, such as on Facebook group pages that are relevant to your business.

Make sure you know your topic inside out, and include as many searchable keywords as

possible in the body of your blog post to make them SEO friendly.

Google Analytics is a great tool for keywords as is WordStream's Free Keyword tool and Google's Keyword Planner. But don't ever let SEO get in the way of your writing style – posts should still read naturally.

Including properly captioned and tagged photos not only make your blog posts easier

on the eye by breaking up the text, but they also help with SEO.

Make sure you include links to back up any stats and linking to and commenting on other people's blogs can also increase your visibility.

Do remember that this is a long game, however – you're not going to create a massive following or a huge engaged audience overnight.

BLOG ARTICLES WITH IMAGES GET 94% MORE VIEWS^{xxxii}

Using it for LinkedIn

As of April last year, the business networking site LinkedIn had 467m unique users with 106m active every month, making it the world's largest network for business professionals.^{xxxiii}

Blogging on LinkedIn's publishing platform is a doddle and essential nowadays if you're in business – it's the perfect place for you to share your knowledge, increase your network, build your brand and generate leads.

- It gives you the opportunity to share and showcase your professional expertise with the world. By helping potentially hundreds or thousands of users with your advice, the opportunity to boost your business is vast.

- Blogs on LinkedIn can be much shorter and not as regular as required elsewhere, too – a few paragraphs of wisdom once a

month can be enough to get shared.

- Be very selective about what you post and make sure you only post fresh content rather sharing other people's posts.

- LinkedIn is all about building your professional brand, so keep posts focused to your business or niche.

- Think about the value you can offer other LinkedIn users and your business community on the site and make sure your content is unique and targeted to your audience.

- As with all blog posts, make sure your headline is eye-catching, include great images and multimedia where relevant, make sure you are offering value to the reader and, where possible, include a call to action at the end.

- To start, simply visit your LinkedIn home page and click, 'Write an article'.

TECH TOOLS

According to Forbes^{xxxiv} the top 15 social media scheduling tools for business are:

- | | | | |
|----------|---------------------------|-----------|---|
| 1 | Hoot Suite | 9 | A content calendar, e.g. in Google Docs or Microsoft Word |
| 2 | Hub Spot | 10 | Raven |
| 3 | Meet Edgar | 11 | SocialFlow |
| 4 | TweetDeck | 12 | Iconosquare |
| 5 | IFTTT (If This Then That) | 13 | Sprinklr |
| 6 | Buffer | 14 | KnowEm |
| 7 | Sprout Social | 15 | Humans |
| 8 | Google Analytics | | |

Note that Facebook scheduling is best done within Facebook itself.

POSTING ON OTHER SITES

To potentially increase visibility of your posts, you should also consider sharing them on sites such as Medium. It's free, signing up is easy and the platform is very user-friendly. It doesn't matter if your blog post has already been published elsewhere – on your company website, for example. Google no longer punishes duplicate content in search rankings.^{xxxv}

A simple line at the end saying “this blog post first appeared here” will suffice to differentiate it from the original.

BLOGS HAVE BEEN RATED AS THE 5TH MOST TRUSTED SOURCE FOR ACCURATE ONLINE INFORMATION^{XXXVI}

If you write more consumer-facing blogs, it is worth pitching to the HuffPost as they are always looking for bloggers who want to share quality content on their platform. However, do bear in mind that they will only accept consumer-facing content – anything B2B, B2C or too niche is a no-no. They won't accept any blog posts that have links to your own business, or that come across as too 'pluggy' or press release-like.

You are free to cross-post blogs from your own site to the HuffPost, as long as they aren't more than a few days old. If you publish first on HuffPost, they actively encourage you to cross-post on as many platforms as possible, as it drives traffic to their site. The more your post gets shared, the more likely you are to be featured on the site's front page or in the relevant sections, such as Lifestyle or News.

Send pitches to UKBlogTeam@Huffingtonpost.com to join their contributor platform.

The HuffPost is still the most linked-to blog on the web so it's definitely worth a punt. Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and Prince

Charles have all blogged on there – so you'll be in esteemed company.

They prefer posts to include images and video where possible as they want to deliver a multimedia experience. All posts need to be submitted as final copy. Once published, you can't make any changes or edits. It's worth bearing in mind that, wherever you post, you should always be totally happy with your content. Even if you can change and edit content after sending it live, someone, somewhere could have a screenshot of the original. So always ensure you stand by every word you write, ensuring it is factually correct and not litigious.



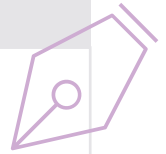
TAKE AWAY

Getting traffic to your blog can be a hard task and is expected to be slow at first, but there are loads of apps and websites, not to mention social media that can really help boost your page clicks. Once you get it started it will get easier to maintain.

Your personal action plan

1

What kind of blogger do you want to be? Workout exactly what it is you want from your blog. Knowing what you want the outcome to be at the start sets you up.



2

Work out how you want your blog to look – play with templates, look at blogs you admire and follow so you can create the perfect blog for your needs.

3

Draft a content strategy – how often will you post? What kind of content will you post? Will you use plug-ins?

4

Plan on how to use your social media to promote your blog – sharing your blog posts is a good start to getting it seen

5

Stick to your content strategy – if you decide to post once a week clear time in your diary to dedicate to your blog. Once you have a rhythm you can increase as necessary.

Your 4 questions


Answer the questions below for the workbook to be CPD certified.



Corporate Member

The CPD Certification Service

To apply for your CPD hours, points or units from this resource, click this link and answer the questions.

1 Who coined the phrase weblog which was shortened to blog in 1999? 

- a Michelle Obama
- b John Barger
- c Justin Hall
- d Hilary Clinton

2 How many different types of blogger are there?

- a 10
- b 7
- c 3
- d 20

3 Which of the following is one of the benefits of blogging?

- a Opens you/your company up to opportunity
- b It can increase your salary
- c You can receive free gifts
- d Gets you invited to more events

4 Companies who have a blog receive how many more links to their website?

- a 16%
- b 5%
- c 23%
- d 97%

everywoman Experts

everywoman creates resources on topics that matter most to our Network members. We draw on member surveys and the latest thinking from the academic and business worlds, as well our own experiences as we navigate our careers. Each workbook offers practical advice, enabling tangible actions for your daily working lives.



MAXINE BENSON, MBE
& KAREN GILL, MBE

Co-founders of everywoman, Karen and Max have spoken to thousands of women about the challenges they face at work. Through their own experiences of starting a business, they uncovered a real need for a network where female entrepreneurs and businesswomen could interact and share experiences. The everywomanNetwork, launched in 2013, serves as a truly global tool to enable members the world over to realise their ambitions through online membership.

EVERYWOMAN WORKBOOK TEAM

Lysanne Currie, Editor

Kate Farrow, Head of Partnerships

Denise McQuaid, Commercial and Strategy Director

Any topics you'd like to see covered on the everywomanNetwork?

We'd love to hear from you: contact@everywoman.com

Further reading

Everywoman network resources

<https://www.everywoman.com/my-development/learning-areas/articles/becoming-thought-leader-4-ideas-elevating-your-online>

<https://www.everywoman.com/my-development/learning-areas/articles/expert-advice-what-personal-brand>

External sources

TED Talk:

Meet the founder of the blog revolution, Meena Trott

Video:

Why personal branding matters

The importance of personal brand and confidence

Personal branding in the age of social media

How to start a blog

How to write the perfect blog post

35 Blogging Tips to Woo Readers and Win Business

How to Write Your First Blog Post on the LinkedIn Publishing Platform

Books

Million Dollar Blog, Natasha Courtenay-Smith (Piatkus)

Blogging Business: How to start a blog that is a business, James Axel (CreateSpace)

Blogging Made Easy, Amen Sharma et al, (CreateSpace)

Blogging: The Ultimate Guide to help you learn how to blog, enjoy and earn from it, Alex Addo (CreateSpace)

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Endnotes

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