



# Blogging Boot Camp

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YOUR MARCHING ORDERS FOR A  
**KICK-BUTT BLOG**



ELEMENT  
THREE

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# INTRODUCTION

You're reading this eBook for one of two reasons. Either your company's blog hasn't been performing up to your expectations, or you're looking to create a new blog from scratch and you want some pointers. In either case, you're not alone. Check out these stats.

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## STRUGGLING WITH CONTENT

Just 30% of B2B marketers surveyed in the 2016 Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends—North America report said they were effective in their content marketing, a strategic approach that includes tactics like blogging, webinars and case studies.

### EARLY STAGES

About one-third of B2B marketers that took part in this sixth-annual Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs survey said they were in the early stages of content marketing maturity. These stages are characterized by the growing pains involved in having a consistent process, cohesive strategy and measurable plan. Only 8% of 1,521 surveyed North American marketers described their content marketing efforts as “sophisticated.”

### WHY THE STRUGGLES?

Part of the problem is that we’re overwhelmed by the sheer possibilities – and the challenge of reaching (let alone engaging with) our audience amidst the staggering amount of content that’s being created.

Marketers have more channels than ever before when it comes to reaching our audience, and we’re confronted by an astounding number of choices when it comes to marketing technology, or “martech.” How should we allocate our time to areas like blogging, social media, email and interactive content? And how do we even decide which areas are the most effective use of our time, money and talents?

Martech guru Scott Brinker, who spoke at *Element Three’s 2015 marketing conference*, has been tracking the increasing complexity of marketing for years. You might have seen his Marketing Technology Landscape Supergraphic for 2015 that listed a *whopping 1,876 companies* that cater to different aspects of martech.

Only 8% of  
1,521 surveyed  
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marketers  
described  
their content  
marketing  
efforts as  
“sophisticated.”

- 2016 Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends - North America report

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## I'M DIZZY. SO WHY INVEST IN BLOGGING?

Let me count the reasons. As you publish posts, you'll be:

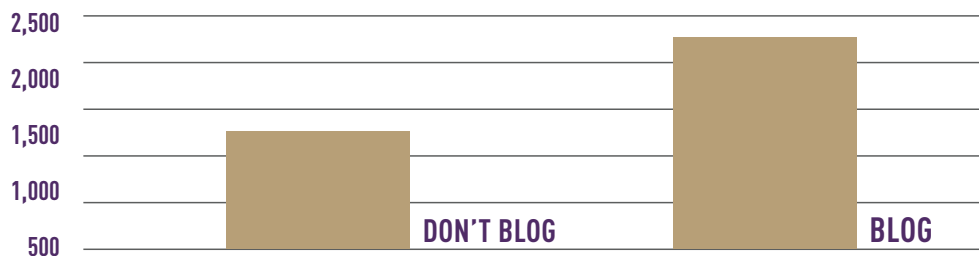
- Showing your industry expertise
- Building your online brand
- Demonstrating value in answering relevant business questions

You'll attract new website visitors and convert them into leads. You'll build a library of relevant posts that get indexed by search engines like Google and help you increase organic search visits to your website. And as you build your blog, people will start to share your posts on social media networks like Twitter, further helping your site in search.

None of this happens overnight, but the potential benefits can be dramatic. HubSpot, the marketing software company, has published plenty of data about the *effect of monthly blog posts on website traffic*.

**55% more  
website  
visitors for  
companies  
that blog.**

### WEBSITE TRAFFIC COMPARISON - BLOG VS. NO BLOG



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## CEO: WHY YOUR MARKETING TEAM NEEDS TO BLOG

Tiffany Sauder - Element Three President

### WHAT ABOUT MY BOSS?

Maybe you're all about blogging, but you're wondering how to get your boss on board. It's easier than you think. Check out this post by Dustin Clark called *"Four Surefire Ways to Convince your CEO that you Need SEO."* Much of Dustin's post relates to user experience, and the value of great content to both human readers and search engines.

"Content that keeps users interested and engaged," Dustin writes, "is the type of content that Google wants to serve in search query results, since this type of content is ultimately answering user questions and thereby providing the correct result for search."

### MAKE YOUR CASE

Hear Element Three President Tiffany Sauder's advice on how to discuss the value of a business blog with a company executive in the above video.

Your audience is spending time online, and searching for answers to their specific problems. In all likelihood, your competitors are sharing their expertise through blogging. It's time you did the same.

Content that keeps users interested and engaged is the type of content that Google wants to serve in search results.

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I'm going to explain step-by-step how to build an engaging blog, encourage social sharing, and increase your company's overall online visibility.

Specifically, you'll find some helpful guidance in:

- Performing a competitive blog audit
- Creating a strategy
- How to get people amped up
- Managing your blog
- Gamifying your efforts
- Reaching out to guest bloggers
- Finding the right production level
- Promoting your blog
- Maintaining your momentum

## BEWARE

This process will be intensive and you won't see overnight results, but to the victor go the spoils. If you're willing to invest the time and energy to create a solid blogging strategy, communicate your vision and allow your employees to unleash their creativity, you'll reap impressive benefits when you stay the course. Think of your blog as an annuity – an ongoing source of leads that will pay long-term dividends.

Ok, now let's get down to business.

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## Drill 1

# RESEARCH YOUR COMPETITION

In order to create an effective blogging strategy, you first need to understand your starting point. Even if you don't have a blog, you need to perform some competitive research to get a sense of the current level of blogging competition in your space.



## RESEARCH YOUR COMPETITORS

What you'll compare:

- Blogging frequency
- Number of bloggers
- Topic selection
- Number of social shares
- Number of comments
- Blog categories
- Social media strategies

Start your blog audit with a key competitor's blog, and then repeat the process for each of your other direct competitors. Starting with your competition gives you a rule to measure your blog against.

## SETTING THE STAGE

To perform the blog audit, you need to select a date range to use for each blog you visit. You'll select the previous month to compare a full month of blog production.

Once you select the date range, open a spreadsheet (at Element Three we prefer Google Sheets because they make team collaboration so easy) and create the following columns: Post, Date, Author, Total Shares, Likes, Tweets, Google +1s, LinkedIn Shares and Comments.

**Starting with competitor blogs will quickly give you a sense of how your competition stacks up.**

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Then start your blog audit by taking inventory of your targeted competitors' blogs for your selected date range. This could take anywhere from 30-90 minutes per competitor, depending on the number of posts, but you'll glean plenty of insights to make it well worth your time.

Here's an overview of what you'll record in each column:

- Post: Title of each post
- Date: Date when each post was published
- Author: Author name (even if "admin" or "guest blogger")
- Total Shares: Total social shares for each post
- Likes: Facebook Likes for each post
- Tweets: Tweets for each post
- Google +1s: Google +1s for each post
- LinkedIn Shares: LinkedIn shares for each post
- Comments: Reader comments for each post
- Notes: Observations like competitor use of media

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## TIME TO TALLY

When you've taken stock of all of your competitor's posts, it's time to tally what you've recorded in your columns. Here's what to tally and why it will be valuable as you start to compare blogs:

### TOTAL POSTS

This is a number that's easy to compare. It's valuable because it shows you which of your competitors are most active in blogging and which are blogging more than you are.

### DATE

Recording the date gives you a sense of how posts are distributed over the course of the month. Are your competitors posting once a day or twice a day? Focusing on certain days? Posting a weekly summary of industry trends each Friday?

### AUTHORS

Recording the blog authors allows you to see how many people are contributing to your competitor's blog. Is one person contributing the lion's share of posts, or is it evenly divided? You'll want to consider how many people are involved with competitor blogs compared to yours as you determine the resources you need for your own efforts.

### TOTAL SHARES

This is simply a total of all the social shares (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, etc.) for a given post. Analyzing the social sharing trends of your competitor can show you which of their posts are resonating with readers and which networks they're using to promote their blog.

Analyzing social shares can show you which posts are resonating & which networks they're using.

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## DECIPHERING THE DATA

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Which topics on the competitor's blog have been shared the most?
- Are these hot industry topics we should write about?
- Which networks does this competitor appear to be targeting for social promotion?

Often, you'll be able to easily identify this because you'll see that a competitor is getting the vast majority of their shares from one network. If so, this indicates that they view that network as important. You'll take this into account as you develop your company's blog promotion strategy.

## TOTAL COMMENTS

Comments are an important indicator of engagement. If a competitor is consistently generating a large number of comments, it means they're effective in reaching their audience with relevant content. Read some of the comments and see what's generating the most discussion. Also observe whether your competitor is responding to comments to encourage further discussion.

## NOW AUDIT YOUR BLOG

Once you've audited the blogs of your key competitors, repeat the process on your own blog. As you do this, you'll have your competitive observations fresh in your mind so make notes on what you should change or add to your blog as a result of your research.

When you present your completed blogging strategy, you'll have the research to back up your recommendations. Asking for more resources is one thing, but providing a bar chart that shows your most important competitor is blogging twice as much as you can really open some eyes – and serve as convincing proof you've done your homework.

**If a competitor is consistently generating a large number of comments, it means they're effective in reaching their audience with relevant content.**

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Drill 2

# CREATE YOUR BLOGGING STRATEGY

So you've taken the time to audit your blog and those of your key competitors. Now it's time to take what you've found and craft a strategy.

## ASK YOURSELF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- Does my company need to increase our blogging output?
- Do we need more resources?
- Do we need to make better use of media?
- Do we need to create a coordinated promotion strategy to extend our reach on social networks?

Let's take a look at each question individually.

### INCREASE BLOGGING OUTPUT

When it comes to output, do you see a major gap between your company and your competitors? If so, you can create a strategy to close that gap over time, gradually increasing your production as you get more colleagues involved and reach out to guest bloggers.

Let's say you're posting twice a week and your key competitor is not only posting twice a day, but getting significant comments and social shares. Knowing this, you can create a strategy to bridge that gap over time; part of this will involve convincing your colleagues to start writing posts, which I'll discuss later.

### BLOGGING RESOURCES

This question is closely tied to the previous question. If your blog research identifies a significant content gap, you can make a legitimate case that you need to dedicate a larger amount of your marketing budget to blogging. Be aware that you'll need to communicate the value of blogging because taking the time to write a blog post could decrease an employee's capacity for completing client work. So this trade-off consideration will be part of a larger conversation about your company's policy for employee blogging.

### BETTER USE OF MEDIA

Consider whether your competitors are using video to engage their blog visitors. If not, you've identified a great opportunity to distinguish your company. You can even make a case for creating a series of video blogs that answer common questions from your prospects or tell them more about your business.

If your research identifies a large content gap, you can make a case that you need more resources.

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In the online marketing space, Moz has done a fantastic job over the years with their *Whiteboard Friday* videos. Each Friday, “The Wizard of Moz” Rand Fishkin or one of his colleagues gives a timely take on a topic like blogging, keyword research or link building.

Many online marketers watch the series religiously each week, and each edition is sure to generate scores of shares and comments. The series is an awesome example of a company making a commitment to consistent, engaging video content. Their marketing team goes as far to cater the blogging experience for users by transcribing the videos.

Wistia also does a great job with their *Learning Hub*, which provides all kinds of helpful information about video marketing – everything from editing basics to analytics to how to build relationships with video.

“We’re big fans of that adage from high school English classes: show, don’t tell,” says Kristen Craft, Director of Business Development at Wistia. (LINK) “If there’s something you can show your audience, rather than just explaining it in writing, use video to do it. Thanks to video, we have a high time on site, a strong lead gen machine and a great conversion rate. Much of the credit goes to the videos we share in our Library.”

Wistia saw a 25% increase in their click-through rate when they A/B tested video against non-video elements like buttons and other call-to-actions.

Here at Element Three, we have a series called Tactical Thursday that are weekly videos on topics like how to identify and engage industry influencers, how to create a marketing budget and how to develop a creative process. If you compare this video series to all of our other posts over the same time period, our Tactical Thursday videos generated nearly as much blog traffic with 425% fewer posts!

**“Thanks to video, we have a high time on site, a strong lead gen machine and a great conversion rate.”**

- Kristen Craft  
Director of Business Development  
Wistia

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## COORDINATED PROMOTION STRATEGY

As you create your blogging strategy, think about the main aspects of your business and consider your existing blog categories.

- Are there categories you need to add, or that aren't really relevant?
- Are there categories that need more content?

If necessary, go back to competitor blogs and look at their categories as you consider your blog's framework. Establish some written objectives for what you think you can accomplish with your blog in the next three months.

This could involve an initial production level such as one post per day or a certain traffic threshold. Make sure these objectives will challenge your company yet aren't unrealistic. You're going to track and report on these objectives over time.

Once you've written down your specific blogging objectives, you can create a PowerPoint presentation that shares the high-level findings of your competitive research. Now it's time to light a fire.

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## Drill 3

# SPARK EMPLOYEE EXCITEMENT

You're going to encounter all kinds of different attitudes from your colleagues when you start talking about your blog. Just think about all the different personalities in your company – introverts and extroverts, analyticals and creatives, writers and non-writers. Get all these people to buy into your vision and you've made some major strides!



## BE POSITIVE

Frame your initiative as an opportunity for people to share their expertise – not an unwanted productivity killer.

## BE SUPPORTIVE

Different people are going to need different kinds of help. Make it clear your company will give people whatever support they need.

## BE TRANSPARENT

Take time to answer whatever questions people ask. If you don't know the answer, don't just make something up. Tell them you'll get back to them, and go find the answer. (Check out the resources list at the end of this guide.)

## BE ITERATIVE

Attitudes are going to shift over time. Some people will lose their initial excitement, while others may get more enthusiastic as time goes on. Realize this isn't a one-shot deal. You'll need to be flexible and persistent.

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Start by describing the current blogging landscape you've researched. Speak with enthusiasm as you describe your strategy, including the blogging objectives you've established. You're going to create an environment of shared accountability where employees understand that everyone must work together to reach your objectives (which you'll track and report on going forward).

In all likelihood, you're going to be recruiting new bloggers from your audience, so it's crucial for you to describe the value of individual contributors.

Here are the four ways your colleagues can help you:

- Writing posts
- Contributing ideas
- Serving as a blog champion
- Sharing posts on social networks

Let's examine each type of contribution in turn. First, someone can contribute by writing blog posts. If they're an experienced writer, writing a post might not take more than a couple of hours. But for someone else, writing a post might be a daunting proposition. You'll need to give these people encouragement and support them with writing workshops, mentoring, feedback and editing.

You can even tell non-writers that they can just get their rough thoughts down on paper, and then a more experienced writer can complete the post and share their edits; this will decrease the pressure on the non-writer to become a writer overnight, while allowing them to observe how a post is written and polished.

## CONTRIBUTING IDEAS

Second, your colleagues can contribute blog post ideas. You can even encourage idea sharing by setting up a central area on your intranet where employees can post ideas for blog topics or titles.

Create a system so that everyone can see at a glance what ideas are new and which ones have already been taken. Encourage friendly competition among employees in coming up with the best blog ideas; you can even encourage a friendly rivalry between departments.

**Encourage friendly competition among employees in coming up with the best blog ideas.**

Share with your peers





Third, an employee can be a blog champion – serving as an advocate for your blog through their contributions and encouragement of others. Blog champions are simply passionate about writing and sharing your company’s value to your target audience. You might even want to create a bloggers’ club that meets once a week to encourage each other, discuss industry trends/ writing ideas and find ways to get others involved in the collective effort.

Finally, an employee can contribute by sharing your posts on social networks (more on this later).

Now that you’ve presented your blogging strategy and explained how people can get involved, it’s time to ask who wants to contribute to the writing cause. Have them write down their name next to a date for the following month; you’ll use this information to fill out your blog calendar (Drill 4).

You also need to designate someone as your blog manager; this person will not only coordinate production but also serve as an internal contact to answer questions and concerns (also in Drill 4).

**Blog champions  
are simply  
passionate  
about writing  
are simply  
passionate  
about writing  
and sharing your  
company’s value  
to your target  
audience.**

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## Drill 4

# MANAGE YOUR BLOG

Okay, so you've communicated your blogging vision and people are excited. Now you have to manage production as you capitalize on the buzz.



This responsibility might fall to you if you're the one who has done the legwork to create the strategy. Or you can designate someone whom you trust to follow through in implementing the strategy.

In any case, your blog manager will serve a crucial role in making sure you meet your production goals.

After your presentation at the company meeting, you'll need to fill out your blog calendar and manage your day-to-day production.

Perhaps you already have a blogging calendar in place and all you need to do is add the names of the people who just volunteered at your company meeting. If you don't already have a calendar, just create a spreadsheet that lists each of the weekday dates for the month.

**Your blog manager will serve a crucial role in making sure you meet your production goals.**

Share with your peers



Let's say you're aiming for one blog post a day during the workweek. Then your task will be to fill out the calendar with names for each weekday.

Once people have volunteered to write and know their date, you need to hold them accountable for getting their posts written on time. If they're going to be late, they need to let you know in a timely fashion so you can react appropriately. Again, blog production is a shared responsibility.

You're going to experience production lulls at times when people get busy or struggle to complete their post, so you've got to plan ahead and have contingency plans for times when posts don't come through.

Here's how to prepare:

## WRITE YOUR OWN POSTS AND USE THEM TO FILL HOLES

Schedule your own posts for days when you don't have a post scheduled. (You're writing more than one post a month because you're leading by example, right?)

## EXPERIMENT WITH SHORTER FORM CONTENT

Not every post needs to be 1,000 words. Allow people – especially newbies – to gain confidence in writing shorter posts. Also, don't be afraid to cut down longer, rambling posts to make them more concise; just pay the writer the courtesy of explaining why.

## REACH OUT TO GUEST BLOGGERS

Spice up your blog with some posts from influencers in your industry (more on this Drill 6). You can plan ahead to schedule guest posts that will help you reach your production goals.

## MAINTAIN FLEXIBILITY IN YOUR CALENDAR

Plan your editorial calendar at least 4-6 weeks ahead. That will help you stay aware of upcoming industry events and give you plenty of time to assign and produce posts – and move things around when the need arises. If someone can't meet their writing deadline, perhaps someone else can complete their post early. You and your blog manager should review the calendar each day and look ahead at the following week on Fridays can help you anticipate production problems and react accordingly.

You've got to plan ahead and have contingency plans for times when posts don't come through.

Share with your peers



## Drill 5

# GAMIFY

Still having trouble getting enough employees involved in your blog production? Gamification can help.

Gamification means making a game out of it – creating a contest where employees are rewarded for their participation in some way, or rewarded for getting the most pageviews or social shares for the month.



## CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

People might not like it when you dictate what they write about. So give them latitude in choosing their own topics – within reason – if they so desire.

## DEADLINES CAN BE SCARY

Especially if you're not used to writing. Give less experienced writers more time to craft their blogs, even if they need a deadline extension. It's better to push back a post than to publish something that's not ready for the light of day – and maybe anger someone in the process.

## SHARE, SHARE ALIKE

Encourage people to share posts on social networks (more on this in Drill 8), especially the work of budding bloggers. It's encouraging to see that your colleagues are sharing your work, especially if you're just getting your feet wet.

## LONG LIVE KEYWORDS

If someone is interested in learning related aspects like how to do keyword research, teach them or direct them to online training resources (see the resources section).

## GIVE THEM A SHOUT

Taking just a few minutes to acknowledge contributors in your monthly company meetings can go a long way in keeping people pumped about writing. It can also fuel friendly rivalries between peers and departments.

**Taking a few minutes to acknowledge contributors can go a long way.**

Share with your peers



Basically, you're getting people involved by making it really fun and encouraging those friendly rivalries. The best thing is that you don't have to break the bank to gamify your blogging. Sometimes bragging rights alone are enough (i.e. "I had the most pageviews for June.") Here are other ideas that go beyond bragging:

## CAFFEINE CARD

Give your winner a \$20 gift card to Starbucks™ or a local coffee shop.

## PROFILE ICONS

Gamify your blogging by creating a system of digital rewards such as icons that signify a threshold of some sort (i.e. 10 blog posts, 50 blog posts, etc.) that you can put on the profile pages of individual employees. It might seem silly to honor someone as a "Blogging Ninja," but remember the whole idea is to make it fun and spur competition.

## PARTICIPATION INCENTIVE

You can reward your entire blogging team for meeting strategic goals over a specified time period. For example, tell them you're going to buy lunch for the team every month in which they produce a given number of posts, or that your company achieves a certain threshold of website traffic for the month.

## ANNUAL AWARDS

At the end of the year, recognize those employees who have contributed the most to your blogging effort. Give awards for the most prolific blogger, the blogger who achieved the most social shares, the blogger who earned the highest number of pageviews, and the like. Small trophies are appropriate.

The best thing is that you don't have to break the bank to gamify your blogging.

## Drill 6

# REACH OUT TO GUEST BLOGGERS

Guest bloggers can give your blog a breath of fresh air because they bring an external perspective. They can also write about their specific expertise, and their writing can serve as a nice complement to your other posts.



## REACH OUT TO GUEST BLOGGERS

An important note about expectations: Experienced guest bloggers will expect a link to their website in return for contributing a post, and that's perfectly fine as it's a generally accepted practice.

However, never pay a guest blogger money to write a post. Google considers that treating links like a commodity, and you'll get penalized if you get caught paying for posts.

So, how do you identify and engage potential guest bloggers? Let's start with how to identify the right influencers in your industry.

**Never pay  
a guest  
blogger  
money to  
write a  
post.**

## IDENTIFYING INFLUENCERS

If you're just getting started in reaching out to guest bloggers, we suggest you start with your industry partners.

Think about your partners and about which of them have someone like a marketing manager who's known as a prolific blogger. In all likelihood, that person will be quite used to writing for other blogs.

Reach out to that person and try to get a guest post scheduled. Then once you've got that post on the calendar, start looking for another guest blogger.

## BUZZSUMO

Buzzsumo is an awesome tool for helping you identify specific influencers. You can use it to find the authors that generate the most engagement for a specific topic of interest. And you can drill down to see their most popular posts to identify topics that really resonate with their audience.

With the help of Buzzsumo, create a list of industry influencers in a spreadsheet that you'll use as a running list of guest blog candidates.

Then once you contact an influencer, make a note of the outreach in your spreadsheet so you'll have a snapshot of your outreach efforts each time you open the file.

Also keep guest blogging in mind as you meet people at conferences. Keep in touch with them after meeting them in person and develop that professional relationship over time.

Some of the most prominent influencers probably won't write for you right away; you'll have to spend months or even years building up your blog's visibility first. That's okay. The idea is that you'll work your way up the food chain – starting with partners and more receptive bloggers, and moving up the ladder over time.

Create  
a list of  
influencers  
to use as a  
running list  
of guest blog  
candidates.

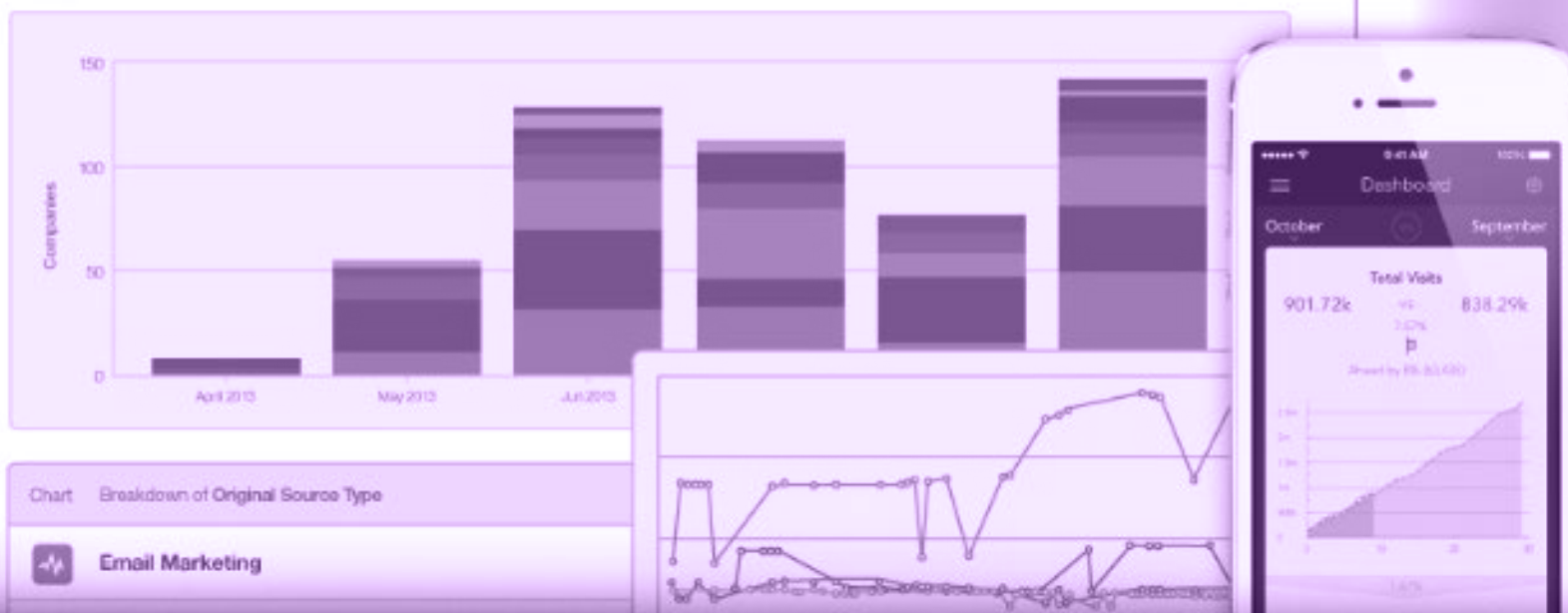
Share with your peers



Drill 7

# FIND YOUR PRODUCTION SWEET SPOT

So one of the biggest questions that people have is: How many posts do you need to write each month? Well, there's no single answer. You're going to need to test your production levels over time to find your sweet spot in terms of production.



Software like HubSpot allows you to easily track metrics like organic search, referral traffic and social media traffic. You can also track which of your posts really resonate with people (through site visits, inbound links and comments) and use those posts to help plan future content.

Sometimes it pays to put your effort into a smaller number of really meaty posts. You're just going to have to test and find your equilibrium.

If you're just now starting your blog, you might want to start with two posts a week and track your success. Then build your way up to five posts a week over time and track the effects on your traffic and leads.

Again, you're always going to have some degree of tension between the cost of blogging and the results it produces; that's why you're tracking results over time.

**Track which posts really resonate and use them to plan future content.**

Share with your peers



## Drill 8

# PROMOTE YOUR BLOG

So you've gotten your company blogging consistently. Your bloggers are writing fresh content that's perfect for your audience, but you still aren't getting the blog traffic you expect. What's the problem?

Either you haven't given it enough time or you need to put more thought into your blog promotion strategy. It's time to get your employees pumped up about promoting blog posts on social networks like Twitter and LinkedIn.



## DOES A POST EXIST IF NO ONE'S THERE TO SEE IT?

Blog promotion is more important than many of us realize. We assume it's enough to simply publish a post and then eventually share it on the company Twitter or Facebook feed.

What we tend to undervalue is the power of a coordinated promotional strategy that

involves employees sharing posts to their personal networks of contacts.

In today's hyperconnected world, at least some of your employees likely have 500+ contacts on LinkedIn and hundreds or even thousands of followers on Twitter and Facebook – many of whom might be interested in reading and sharing your content.

## BLOG PROMOTION TACTICS THAT ROCK

Better blog promotion starts with getting your employees excited about how they can personally contribute to the cause (Drill 4). Once you've sold them on the value of blogging, start talking about how everyone can work together in promoting posts.

Here are some high-level tips for boosting your blog marketing:

## SHARE YOUR BLOG CALENDAR INTERNALLY

Encourage your employees to visit your blog regularly so they can view new posts soon after they're published. (This can involve a quick check right when they get to the office if you tend to publish posts early in the morning.)

By going a step further and sharing your blog calendar with your employees, you can maximize their efficiency in reading and sharing posts because they'll know when to expect them. You can also send out an email that asks employees to share especially important posts as a high-profile guest post or a post about a company recognition or new service.

## GIVE YOUR AUTHORS SOME LOVE

It's easy to get so caught up in promoting your company that you neglect to promote the authors who actually write the blog posts. I'm going to focus on Twitter here, but it's important to understand where your audience spends time online and target them accordingly.

**Encourage  
your  
employees  
to visit your  
blog regularly  
so they can  
view new  
posts soon  
after they're  
published.**

Share with your peers



Regardless of the social network, it's easy to include the name or handle of the author when you're sharing the post; that inclusion helps people to associate the writer with your company.

This awareness can pay big dividends for your company over time as people start to become interested in the writing of specific authors. You can spur this interest by configuring your blog so that visitors can view posts by author in addition to viewing by topic.

A tweet that includes the author name might read something like this:



**Include the name or handle of the author when sharing the post.**

Including Dustin's Twitter handle allows viewers to visit his personal feed with a single click. As employees start to include @mentions of their colleagues, they'll be helping each other extend their individual and collective reach over time.

Share with your peers



## HASHTAGS: THE TWITTER TREAT

Another consideration for Twitter promotion involves selecting hashtags that help you get your posts in front of the right people. This starts with viewing conversations that are taking place around specific hashtags. Do this by typing a hashtag like “#digitalmarketing” into the Twitter search bar to view some tweets that include that specific hashtag. Then ask yourself the following questions:

- Are there lots of tweets involving this hashtag?
- Are these tweets recent?
- Are these tweets relevant to our audience?
- Are there actual conversations taking place, or are these just one-off tweets?
- Would using this hashtag help me get in front of the right people?

Continue this process by looking at other hashtags and selecting the ones you think are the most fitting for social promotion. Once you’ve selected some hashtags, you can share them with your colleagues and encourage them to use the hashtags in promoting company posts.

You’ll also want to be nimble by paying attention to trending hashtags that are relevant to your industry as using trending hashtags can help you take advantage of hot topics in real time. As a best practice, just use one or two hashtags in a tweet. Research has found that your engagement actually drops when you use more than two.

**As a best practice, just use one or two hashtags in a tweet.**

## PLAY UP YOUR PERSONALITY

Don’t get formulaic when it comes to blog promotion; you don’t want every employee sharing a post with the same exact tweet. Rather, you want them to express their personality by putting their own spin on introducing the post. Also, don’t dictate when people share posts; you want them organically sharing posts at different points during the day – individual rifle shots rather than a timed shotgun blast.

## TEST AND ITERATE

Continue to test new blog promotion ideas over time and iterate your promotion strategy. Don’t be afraid to try new techniques; keep track of what works and what doesn’t, and then do more of what’s working.

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## Drill 9

# MAINTAIN MOMENTUM

Regardless of how hard you work and how well you plan, you're going to encounter frustrations with your blog production. Employees will occasionally miss deadlines or might complain that it's too difficult to come up with ideas. Guest blogger prospects might not respond to your outreach.

All of these frustrations can be overcome. Here are some tips from the trenches for maintaining your blogging momentum despite setbacks.



## DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF THE BIG PICTURE

Sometimes frustrations like scrambling to fill a hole can drive you and your blog manager crazy. But never let short-term setbacks cause you to forget what you're trying to accomplish in the long term. Stay calm – don't panic or change course unnecessarily.

## MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

You're probably not going to see an overnight spike in traffic. You are, however, going to reap the benefits of blogging in the long term so don't lose heart. Many businesses give up when they don't see quick results but you shouldn't. You're going to tell others (and yourself) to be patient.

## BUILD YOUR BLOG ONE POST AT A TIME

Especially when your blog is new, sometimes it can seem like it takes forever to establish any momentum at all. Remember that you're building a long-term asset by adding one post – one new page – to your site at a time.

**Never let short-term setbacks cause you to lose sight of the big picture.**

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## REGULARLY ASSESS YOUR CATEGORIES AND FOCUS ON THEMES

Let's say you're a full-service marketing agency like Element Three. You're producing regular blog posts about branding, strategy and creative but you realize you haven't written specifically about lead generation.

So make lead generation a monthly theme and encourage employees to write posts that involve it. Some employees will be more suited to a particular theme than others, so never make people feel like they're obligated to write about any particular theme or topic. You want people to be creative and you certainly don't want to deter them from contributing.

## ASK FOR FEEDBACK

Gather feedback from your colleagues and industry peers about your blog. You might hear encouragement or constructive criticism – either one is valuable. Ask specific questions about what topics you might be missing and consider the validity of any criticisms you hear.

## LISTEN TO SALES

Sometimes you just need to listen. Talk to your salespeople about common questions that prospects are asking. Sales questions can be a gold mine when it comes to producing helpful, relevant content, especially when you're struggling to come up with new ideas. Sales guru Marcus Sheridan says the most effective content marketing strategy ever is: "They Ask, You Answer."

## LISTEN TO CLIENTS

You'll also hear great blog fodder in meetings if you listen carefully. Listen to the questions that clients are asking and think about the questions as well as how your team responded to them. Jot down notes from meetings and route good blog ideas to your appropriate office expert.

## LISTEN IN GENERAL

Sometimes we don't realize the value of all the different things we do. Think about some of the things we routinely do that we might take for granted. Tactical blog posts (like how to perform a competitive blog audit) can generate a great amount of interest because they're helpful in explaining how to do something.

**Talk to your salespeople about common questions that prospects are asking.**

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Drill 10

# TAKE A LOAD OFF

Congratulations! You've just survived your blogging boot camp.



You've learned how to:

- Perform research and use it to create a blogging strategy
- Communicate your strategy and get your colleagues excited
- Manage your blog
- Gamify your efforts
- Find and manage relationships with guest bloggers
- Promote your blog on social media networks
- Find the right level of blogging production
- Maintain your initial momentum

Your march to blog superstardom isn't going to be easy, but hopefully you'll have lots of fun moments and learn plenty of new things along the way.

While the tactics of things like blog promotion will change over time, the basic principles of your blog as a content marketing machine shouldn't change. You're creating and promoting quality content that informs and entertains your readers. And you're increasing the visibility of your company brand and personal brands in the process.

Good luck, and stick with it!

**You've  
survived. Now  
march on to  
superstardom.**

Share with your peers







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Derek moved into the marketing world after nine years as a newspaper reporter, where he covered businesses like Eli Lilly and Company, Chrysler and Delphi Automotive. As a writer and strategist, he's worked on campaigns for enterprises in a variety of industries, including two Fortune 100 companies. He has a bachelor's degree in English from Indiana University and joined Element Three as a content strategist before embracing his current copywriting role.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Content Marketing Institute: A treasure trove of content on marketing-related topics

<http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/>

Copyblogger Blog: An excellent resource for online writing

<http://www.copyblogger.com/blog/>

Element Three Blog: Our blog features a range of helpful content

<http://elementthree.com/blog/>

Fishkin, Rand. Why Good Unique Content Needs to Die: In this Whiteboard Friday, Rand explains why good simply isn't good enough

<https://moz.com/blog/why-good-unique-content-needs-to-die-whiteboard-friday>

HubSpot Marketing Blog: Helpful advice from a content superstore

<http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/topic/blog>

Morgan, Beth. How to do Keyword Research the Smart Way: Great post on how to do keyword research

<https://blog.kissmetrics.com/keyword-research-smart-way/>

Moz Blog: In addition to Whiteboard Friday, Moz produces plenty of great posts on blogging

<https://moz.com/blog/category/blogging>

Sullivan, Luke. Hey Whipple, Squeeze This: A classic advertising guide that will make you a better writer

<http://heywhipple.com/books/>

Wistia Blog: Helpful resource focused on video

<http://wistia.com/blog>

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