

Step 6

Create great web content

Why is content so important? Well, firstly, your visitors want great content. Without it, they won't stay long, they won't come back, and you're unlikely to convert much of your traffic into revenue.

And secondly, great content attracts backlinks. Webmasters will *want* to link to it. And as you now know, backlinks are the single biggest factor you can manipulate to generate a high ranking.

What's more, when webmasters voluntarily link to your content because of its quality, those links tend to:

- come from related sites;
- come from quite a few trusted, important sites (it's quality content, after all);
- point at the page containing your content (which may be quite deep in your page hierarchy), not just your Home page;
- be keyword rich, because webmasters naturally use the anchor text to describe the content of the target page; and
- have varying anchor text, because each webmaster will describe your content differently.

And *whatdyaknow*? These are exactly the sorts of links that the search engines like to see, because they prove you're part of a credible network of related sites. When a search engine sees a link that satisfies most or all of these conditions, it gives it a lot of weight. A handful of links like this is worth hundreds of links from low-ranking / spammy sites, all with the same anchor text.

Link baiting

This process of creating great content to attract links is known as 'link baiting'. The two key components in link baiting are:

1. **lots of great content** - something people will want to link to ('Bait the hook')
2. **social media** - your avenue for letting people know about your great content ('Cast the line')

Of course, your content also needs to be optimized for your target keyword phrases so that the search engines know how to index it.

This chapter discusses how to create great content. The next chapter discusses how to optimize that content (see 'Optimize your web content' on p.116). And the chapter after that discusses how to leverage social media to get people talking about, and linking to your content (see 'Generate 'buzz' about your content with Social Media' on p.128).

Creating great content & lots of it ('Baiting the hook')

Great content can mean virtually anything. Anything that you think your readers would absolutely love to link to. (They'll do this because they want to be useful to their own readers and they'll gain credibility through their association with your site and its content.) It might be any of the following:

- Useful, unique, intriguing, exciting, humorous, controversial or subversive blog posts or videos
- A useful tool that's only available at your site (e.g. a theme, plugin or web application)
- Industry / niche news (e.g. An announcement about a newsworthy event or tool)
- Research results
- Free stuff
- Something entirely different – it all depends on your subject matter and audience, and you're only limited by your imagination, business intuition and industry awareness

For most businesses, great content means useful, unique blogging

While it's true that many forms of content can attract links, the reality is that most companies don't have the skills or resources to produce videos, make the news, develop tools, engage in research, or give away free stuff. Nor are most of those options relevant to their audiences.

What's more, most of us work in fairly ho-hum industries, so it's difficult to make our posts intriguing or exciting. Controversial / subversive is equally as difficult, and far riskier. And humor is very hit-and-miss. It's not always appropriate, it's one of the hardest things to write, and if you get it wrong, you'll alienate customers.

So for most companies, 'great content' boils down to 'useful blogging'.

TIP: Although your corporate copy (Home, About Us, Products, Services, etc.) is integral to SEO, it's not what we mean when we talk about link bait. Part of the appeal of link bait is its rapid rate of update, its topical nature and its informal style. Corporate copy must be compelling and engaging to persuade visitors to act, and it must be optimized, so that the search engines know which searches your site should be listed in. But it's not usually the sort of thing that bloggers would link to. Similarly, we're not talking about articles. Articles and blog posts may seem very similar, at first glance, but blogs are far better for link baiting. There are dedicated, free tools that make writing, optimizing, publishing and sharing your blog posts easy, and most people don't go fishing around on article indexes looking for stuff to link to. They look on blogs. (See " on p.128 for more information on sharing your blog posts and encouraging links back to them.)

Writing useful, unique blog posts

The key to a useful and unique blog is writing about what *you* know and what *you* think. No one else in the world knows exactly what you know, so leverage that uniqueness and expertise.

Why? This [quote from Nick Arnett](#) says it all:

“ This is supply and demand - when people have access to lots of facts, the value of facts drops and the value of point of view about those facts rises. The Internet has created enormous amounts of data, and as a result, value is shifting to viewpoints about the data. The big challenge is figuring out how to organize, filter and prioritize all these points of view for people to get the most value out of them.”

So write stuff that you think your readers won't already know, and will want to know. Or stuff that they may already know, but would be interested in hearing your take on. Things like trade secrets, handy hints, news, products, white papers, instruction manuals, and so on...

And do it often. Partly because this keeps readers engaged, and partly because it keeps the search engine bots coming back more often. Also, as a general rule, search engines equate lots of content with usefulness.

20 types of blog posts

In his book, [ProBlogger: Secrets for Blogging Your Way to a Six-Figure Income](#), leading Australian blogger, Darren Rowse, discusses 20 types of blog posts that are often successful:

1. Instructional
2. Informational
3. Reviews
4. Lists
5. Interviews
6. Case studies
7. Profiles
8. Link posts
9. 'Problem' posts
10. Comparison posts
11. Rants
12. Inspirational
13. Research
14. Collation posts
15. Prediction and review posts
16. Critique posts
17. Debate
18. Hypothetical posts
19. Satirical posts
20. Memes and projects

For a full discussion of each of these types of posts, I recommend you [buy Darren's book](#). He dedicates nearly 5 pages to this discussion, alone.

For more information...

- on **optimizing your blog posts**, i.e. the mechanics of SEO copy, see 'Optimize your web content' on p.116.
- on **writing compelling, engaging copy**, please read [Successful websites don't set out to sell](#), [Web copy – How much is enough?](#), [Writing benefit-driven web copy](#), [Engage your customer – Write about benefits](#) and [Writing helpful help](#).
- on **social bookmarking and Twitter**, see 'What is social media?' on p.129.
- on **hosting and optimizing a WordPress blog**, see 'Host and optimize your own WordPress blog' on p.67.
- on **how to blog successfully**, please visit [ProBlogger](#) – a great blog run by Darren Rowse. Or buy one of Darren's excellent books: [ProBlogger: Secrets to Blogging Your Way to a Six-Figure Income](#) or [31 Days to Build a Better Blog](#).

Write relatively lengthy posts

While long posts aren't necessarily better than short, you'll probably find yourself writing lengthy posts, simply in an effort to be useful to your readers. So long as they're easily scannable (headings, bullets, numbered lists, etc.), this is absolutely fine. Write as much copy as you need.

What's more, the search engines like to see a lot of content. This is one of the things they consider when assessing the relevance of your site. Their logic: there's a good chance that a site with a lot of copy is going to be helpful and informative. And that's precisely the sort of site they want to include in their SERPs. In [the words of Aaron Wall of SEOBook](#):

“ Longer and more authoritative documents are better than breaking articles into many shorter pages.”

So aim for around 250-500 words per post, and you'll be right on the money for visitors and search engines, alike.

NOTE: [According to Darren Rowse, at ProBlogger](#):

“ ...research shows that longer articles can have a pretty steep drop off rate in readers after the text gets below the 'fold' or to the end of the first screen of article.”

However, it's important to note that it's not all about traffic. You may get fewer readers, but those you do get will probably perceive your article to be high value, so they'll be more likely to become loyal readers (and advocates) of your blog.

Write in a style that suits your audience

Whatever your subject matter, write in a style that your audience will be comfortable with. If they're from the old school, don't write like I am. Don't use contractions, don't end sentences with prepositions, and don't start sentences with “and” or “but”. But if they're not old school, just use conversational English. In fact, the more of yourself you include in the post, the more engaging it will be. The key is to make it readable.

Stuck for ideas?

Coming up with new content on a daily – even weekly – basis isn't easy. And it's not just the time; it's also really difficult to keep thinking of new things to talk about. If you're committed, you'll find ways around this. Here are three to get you going.

1. **Monitor the 'Most Popular' and 'Up-and-Coming' pages** on some social bookmarking services (like [Del.icio.us](#) & [StumbleUpon](#) – which has a [downloadable toolbar for Firefox](#)). Also try some niche-specific services. (e.g. [Sphinn](#) is a great Internet related social bookmarking service.)
2. **Check out some news services** (like [Google News](#) & [CNN.com](#)). Also, look for some niche-specific news services (e.g. [InternetNews.com](#) is an Internet related news site.)
3. **Sign up to Twitter.** Twitter conversations cover an amazingly diverse range of topics, including the news. In fact, I find I usually hear the latest news first on Twitter.
4. **Think of all the questions you get asked** by customers and prospects. These questions show you what people are interested in. Once you start thinking about it, you'll probably find there are hundreds of topics you could write. You may even have some of them partly written, already, in your instruction manuals or installation guides, etc.

When you do get a little stuck for ideas, remember how it feels. And when you find someone on a social bookmarking service who consistently bookmarks pages you really like, remember that feeling too. This is exactly how hundreds of thousands of bloggers feel every day. And it's what makes your intelligent, helpful participation in social media so effective. But more on that on p.107 - 'Link baiting'.

Remember to link

Internal links help the search engines figure out what pages you consider important. And external links (links to other sites) can show Google that you're intent on directing visitors to helpful, relevant content. So do both where relevant. And make your link anchor text keyword rich.

Also, when you link to someone else's blog post, quite often, a snippet of your post and a (nofollow) link to your post will be automatically added to their comments. This is known as a 'pingback'. The pingback link doesn't pass on any PageRank, so it's of no direct SEO benefit to you, but it's certainly beneficial in terms of building your social media presence. It lets the original blogger know you linked to him or her, and it puts your name and link in front of that blogger's audience.

Link Bait versus Flagship Content

Some social media practitioners distinguish between 'flagship content' and 'link bait'. For instance, in his ebook, 'Killer Flagship Content', [Chris Garrett](#) (professional blogger, Internet Marketing Consultant, new media industry commentator – and someone I really respect), says:

“First, Flagship Content is stuff you are proud to tell people about. Content that is so compelling it draws visitors like a magnet. A resource that people love to talk about, perfectly tuned to your audience. While you might find truly incredible resources that were created as link bait I think most people would agree a lot more link bait has been about creating more buzz than is necessarily deserved.

“Secondly Link bait can be very much like attention seeking for the sake of it, just to attract attention and links. Flagship content is about long term value. Providing something truly useful and original that will stand the test of time. A concrete base that you can build your blog upon.”

Now, although I agree that this distinction exists, when I use the term 'link bait', I actually mean the same thing Chris means when he says 'flagship content'. It has to be great content that will stand the test of time and always reflect well on you.

Chapter summary

- Create great content.
- People will want to link to it.
- Leverage social media to generate buzz around your content.
- For most businesses, great content means useful, unique blogging.
- Write relatively lengthy posts.
- Visit social bookmarking & new services if you're stuck for content ideas.
- Include internal and external links as appropriate.
- Make every post something people will want to link to.