

ADCOMMUNICATIONS

Owned media: Why blog?



A company blog gives businesses and brands a flexible and cost-effective platform to share information and engage customers. This not only gives you a means to publish your own educational, informative or thought leadership content, but also gives site visitors a reason to return to your website again and again. Moreover, blogs can improve your website's search rankings, something that is vital for ensuring that potential customers are aware of your products and services before they even need them.

In summary, some of the benefits of blogging as part of your B2B marketing efforts include:

- Bringing new and repeat visitors to your website
- Keeping your website fresh
- Demonstrating thought leadership in your areas of expertise
- Pre-emptively addressing customer questions

Yet despite this, many UK businesses do not use a blog as part of their sales and marketing activities. And amongst those that do, many have not updated it recently.

How effective is B2B blogging?

Blogging can contribute significant improvements to website traffic, social media sharing, SEO ranking and website dwell times, all of which are among the most common metrics used to measure content marketing success in B2B.

In addition:

- Companies that blog have 55% more website visitors, 97% more inbound links and 434% more indexed pages (Hubspot, *Study shows business blogging leads to 55% more website visitors*, 2009)
- 46% of people read blogs more than once a day (HubSpot, *Science of Blogging*, 2010)
- 82% of marketers who blog daily have acquired a customer using their blog, as opposed to 57% of marketers who blog monthly (HubSpot, *State of Inbound*, 2013)
- 79% of companies that have a blog reported positive ROI for inbound marketing in 2013 (HubSpot, *State of Inbound*, 2013)
- 62% of B2B marketers believe that blogs are effective, but 79% of best-in-class B2B marketers (i.e. who rate their marketing efforts as highly effective) rate blogs as the most effective content marketing tactic (Content Marketing Institute, 2014)
- Marketers who have prioritised blogging are 13 times more likely to achieve a positive ROI (Hubspot, *State of Inbound Marketing*, 2014)
- Blogs produced a new customer for 43% of marketers in 2013 (Hubspot, *State of Inbound Marketing*, 2014)
- In a survey of SEO professionals, 46% reported blogs in their top-5 social platforms (Moz, *The 2014 Industry Survey*, 2014)

The market is a conversation

The digital communications landscape has completely transformed the way in which both consumers and businesses buy products and services. The online information that decision makers have available when making purchasing choices is almost limitless and the growth in popularity of third-party review sites, social media and digital publications means that

businesses no longer have full control over information about their products and services. As a result, traditional sales processes are rapidly becoming a thing of the past.

Whether we're B2B or B2C customers, we don't respond to one-way marketing that broadcasts messages to us. Why? Because it doesn't answer the questions that we have or tell us what we want to know. If marketers want to reach us, they need to talk to us about our particular needs, demonstrate that they understand them, and then help us find the right solution for our specific set of circumstances.

Understanding the new customer journey

Long gone are the days when the customer's path to purchase was a linear one in which they contacted several potential suppliers to gather information before kicking some metaphorical tyres and making a decision. Today customers spend a great deal of time looking for information via search engines and in their social networks before they even begin researching specific solutions.

This 'discovery' phase is a crucial part of the customer journey and if your business isn't present at this point of the purchase cycle, you will miss out on potential customers. However, the point at which you begin communicating with your target audiences should ideally be before they are aware that they may need your product or service.



This is why B2B marketers' priorities have shifted to focus on building brand awareness (83%), generating leads (84%), nurturing leads (85%) and engaging customers and potential customers (91%)¹.

¹Content Marketing Institute, December 2014, <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2014/12/uk-2015-content-marketing-research/>

Blogging and thought leadership

Your company blog can be the perfect platform from which to demonstrate your expertise and knowledge within your industry or areas of specialisation. In order to ensure that what you publish is credible and not viewed as promotional material, it is vital to keep your posts as objective and free from sales messages as possible.

Blogging on particular subjects can have wider benefits than simply demonstrating your expertise to those who visit your blog. By regularly sharing credible blog content on particular topics, you will help search engines to associate your brand with those topics.

Moreover, research published by Econsultancy in 2014² demonstrated that knowledge-based and instructional blog posts perform better for building long-term blog traffic than topical and promotional posts. This is because people tend to search the internet for information on how to do things, as well as because this type of content will have a longer 'shelf-life'.

Once your thought leadership in a particular area is being demonstrated on your blog, you may be able to submit guest blogs to third parties such as industry bodies or trade publications. This can have benefits beyond the immediate increased publicity, in the form of building inbound links to your website or blog, which in turn boost performance on search engines.

² Econsultancy, March 2014, <https://econsultancy.com/blog/64505-which-type-of-blog-post-is-best-for-ongoing-traffic>

Blogging and your search ranking

Getting 'found' online is absolutely vital, and because regularly publishing relevant new content to your website can enhance your search engine ranking, the creation of digital content has grown in importance for marketers. In order to be effective from a search optimisation point of view however, the content needs to be original and relevant, as well as written in the right way.

For this reason, blogs written by relevant guest contributors can be an effective way of generating inbound links to your website. In the same way as guest articles by celebrities attract readers to national newspapers, if you were selling colour management software for example, a guest post from a well-known photographer about the role of colour management in their business could demonstrate thought leadership and attract new blog visitors too.

Blogging and social media

Social media has revolutionised the way that brands and businesses communicate with their audiences. Communication is no longer a one-way, broadcast-style interaction, but is instead an ongoing, customer-centric conversation. One of the pillars of social media activity is content sharing, so a regular stream of interesting or educational blog posts relevant to your social media audiences can help you both attract new followers and drive traffic back to your website.

Blogging and your customer

Do you have a series for FAQs on your website? How many of these are questions that your customers frequently ask? What about potential customers? Often company FAQs don't cover

all of the information that people are actually looking for when they visit a website. This can be a big mistake that can sometimes turn a previously happy customer into a disgruntled one, simply because you have made it difficult for them to find the information they need.

A company blog can be an ideal platform from which to address the questions that customers are asking. If several customers seem to be asking questions about how to use a new product feature for example, you could pre-empt a flurry of calls to your call centre with a 'how to' blog. If your product solves a particular problem, then a blog giving advice about solving that particular problem without promoting your product could attract a lot of website visits from people searching for such a solution.

The key lies in thinking about your blog from the point of view of your customer.

For case studies and examples of blog content we've created for clients, and to find out how blogging could fit into your marketing strategy, contact Helen Tolino at htolino@adcomms.co.uk call her on + 44 (0) 1372 464470.

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