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A 5-Step Plan to Improve Every Blog Post You Write



Are your blog posts getting the results you want?

When you're blogging to build or grow your business, you need each post to pull its weight.

That means writing articles that draw readers in. Articles that get shared and discussed and linked to. Articles that keep readers coming back for more.

Articles that [persuade readers to take action](#).

If your posts aren't getting the traction you want, you might think you're not a good enough writer. But the truth is, *every* writer can follow a few simple steps to improve their posts. (And that goes for the old hands, too.)

Here's your five-step plan for dramatically improving every blog post:

1. Create a plan before you write a single word

If you start with a blank page and put down whatever comes into your head, you're not doing yourself or your readers any favors.

Free-flow writing is great as a warm-up exercise, if you're struggling to get your fingers moving. It's *not* a good technique for crafting a well-structured blog post.

Before you start your post, [create a simple plan](#). Jot down the subheadings you want to include (or, for a list post, all the items for your post).

Do it: Spend five minutes planning your next post. If you're not sure where to begin, create a mindmap, and record all the ideas that come to you. Later, you can decide which to keep.

2. Give extra value with examples and/or exercises

You might have lots of great information to share with your readers — but, for your post to be effective, this needs to be presented in a way they can easily grasp and use.

Readers don't want abstract principles or theoretical discussions. Sure, they may be interested in understanding the *why* ... but they also want to know *what* to do.

Examples help readers to “get” what's being discussed. [Here's an example of a example:](#)

He'd search Google with phrases like “[My closest city] [sport] ['Olympian' or 'world champion' or 'world record']” A search for “San Francisco bobsled Olympian” might get him a recently retired team doctor — the perfect lead to start with.

Exercises give readers a specific task, and help prevent overwhelm. (You might call them “Do this,” “Your turn,” “Try it, or even simply “Exercise.”)

Do it: Look at a recent post. Could you add in a short example or exercise for each subsection or point?

3. Include a call to action at the end of each post

When a reader finishes your post, what do you want them to do next? Subscribe to your blog, leave a comment, join your mailing list, buy your product?

Unless you give readers some direction, they're not likely to take action at all. They'll just move on — probably to another blog.

A [call to action](#) is an instruction to the reader. You can work calls to action into the main body of your post — but the most effective place is usually at the end.

Here are a couple of examples of calls to action. Note the difference in length: if you're asking readers to do something big, like sign up for a 20-part course, you'll need to give them a bit more encouragement than if you're simply [suggesting they read another blog post](#):

If you're interested in finding out more specifics on how to do that, I put together a free, 20-part course called [Internet Marketing for Smart People](#) that can give you a solid head start.

It talks about the delicate balance between audience relationship, selling, and traditional copywriting. Go snag it now, and start weaving a net of your own.

Do it: Next time you write a post, add a call to action, and measure the results. You might be surprised how effective they can be.

4. Edit your title, introduction, and conclusion

Very few bloggers can turn out a great post with one draft. Make sure you leave time in your blogging schedule for editing.

Your whole post is important, of course, but you'll want to pay special attention to:

- **Your title** — this alone will make or break your post. A fantastic post with a so-so title isn't going to get seen.
- **Your introduction** — you need to hook the reader and draw them into your post. If your introduction is vague, confusing, or too long, the rest of your post won't get read.
- **Your conclusion** — if someone reads to the end of your post, there's a good chance they enjoyed your writing and liked what you had to say. Don't lose them with an abrupt ending, or a weak call to action.

Do it: Plan time to edit your next post before you need to publish it. If you can, get help from a friend (ask them to choose between several titles, or a couple of versions of the call to action).

5. Format for easy readability

We're all in a rush online. Readers don't want to wade through big, long paragraphs of text — they want [well-formatted posts that are easy to read](#).

Use subheadings, bold text, bullet points, and other formatting features to enhance your writing.

- **Subheadings** act as signposts to the reader. Make them clear, not clever. (This is good for your SEO, too.)
- **Bold text** is a great way to highlight key points, making your post easy to scan.
- **Bullet points** add white space and make information easy to take in.

Do it: Next time you come across a blog post that seems effortless to read, take a close look at how it's formatted — and see what features you could use too.

Over to you ...

Providing great information isn't enough to get your posts noticed in today's crowded blogosphere. By making sure your posts are easy to read and engage with, and you'll see much faster success.

Is one of the above steps a weak point for you? Focus on it this week.

And, if you've got any extra ideas to add, or if you want to share your experiences, just pop a comment below.

About the Author: *Ali Luke will be offering [blogging training](#) in London from September 2012. Come along for a day course and learn more about blogging – with lots of examples, practical exercises and one-to-one support as part of a small group. Book your place now, as numbers are limited to 8 people per session.*