

Momentum

Playbook 16

Bring Sexy Back to Your Blog

By Maria Rass

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Playbook 16:

Bring Sexy Back to Your Blog

Blah, blah....BLOGGING.

If you just sighed in disgust, overwhelm or sheer panic at simply reading the B-word, this week's lesson is just for you.

Blogging is, in my opinion, one of the single best ways to grow your business, boost your brand and hustle up some thought leadership street cred. Think of it like you are the editor of your own little magazine: press releases and pitching be damned! You have the ultimate "in" with the editor of You.com--YOU.

But before you write off this assignment by telling me you'd rather dance on hot coals than write anything, please stay with me....you're in for a surprise!

Hello? Is Anyone Home?

My business, Red Slice, was named after a personal blog where I waxed poetic on all things wine, food, film and culture.

It was personal and fun, so I just updated it when I felt like it. It's not like I had a lot of readers. It was just a way to express myself and do what I love most: writing. This random inconsistency was fine, because it wasn't done for money. Just passion.

When I started my consulting business, I also blogged on my business site....inconsistently. When I felt like it. And no one cared.

No one cared about reading my blog and learning about my expertise because it was clear from my commitment that I didn't care either. People were busy. They weren't proactively checking my website every week to see what amazing things I had to say. They had crap to do!

But they also didn't get to know me or my expertise. Who knows how much business I lost out on that first year?

And of course, in the beginning, I didn't care too much about this. I was getting my name out there and booking clients. I was getting my entrepreneurial feet under me, giving presentations and submitting articles online (to boost up *their* website traffic, I might add).

What kind of brand impression was I leaving for new visitors who had never met me before? Would they think I was out of business? Or worse, did they think I didn't care enough about my business to keep my own website updated?

Had I realized early on how much good I could have done my business if I would have devoted even one hour a week to my blogging, who knows? I might have gotten much farther, much faster.

Here's the thing: **This is not a hobby.** You run a business of some sort and net-net, you need to attract customers, clients, donors, art patrons, readers....whomever. **That means you are building a brand.**

And building a brand for that business (or blog, or author platform, or non-profit, or whatever) requires that you gain trust and offer value. And you can gain trust and offer value by sharing your expertise. And you can share your expertise by....blogging.

How Blogging Helps Your Brand and Business

Here are six reasons why a blog does your brand good:

1. It gives you a forum to promote your expertise and point of view. On your terms.
2. It's SEO-licious, meaning you can write about your core industry using lots of sexy keywords and search engines will develop huge crushes on you.
3. It provides your target audience with information, advice, and entertainment—all great things to build community and nurture future sales and customer loyalty.
4. It offers you content to share in social media (for those days when you're like, "What the heck should I Tweet about?").
5. It gives visitors a reason to keep coming back to your site. Ah, smell that fresh, new content!
6. It provides the press with examples of your expertise in case they are writing a story for which you'd be perfect. **BONUS:** It can act as writing samples when you pitch contributed articles to media outlets.

I could go on and on.

Stop Whining! Three Tips to Make Blogging Easier And a Helluva Lot More Fun

“But I hate writing, Mariiiiiiaaaaa!” (enter whining) “I don’t have time.” “What should I blog about?”

I will admit that I have it a bit easier, as writing is my joy—it’s my favorite form of expression. But, yes, even I have days where there’s just a blank page and a blinking cursor mocking my lack of creativity. We all do.

The muse does not always show up when it’s convenient for us. Sometimes she’s out grabbing a caramel macchiato and surfing One Kings Lane for fun household furnishings. Well, here is a quick three-step backup plan and we’ll dig into each of this more later in the lesson:

- 1. Jot down every question someone has ever asked you about your line of work.** Seriously, the [juicy ones](#), the silly ones, the obvious ones, the annoying ones. Are you a knitting store? How about “How can I learn to knit?” “Where can I find fashionable patterns?” “Isn’t this something just old women do?” Or are you a personal trainer? “What are the best super foods I should be eating?” “How can I start on Day One if I’m overweight?” “Don’t I need to be wealthy to have a personal trainer?” Perhaps you’re a social media consultant: “How do I start on Twitter?” “Which platforms should I be on?” “When are the best times to post on Facebook?”—or even “What questions should I ask to find a good social media consultant?” Got your list? BOOM. You just came up with three months’ worth of blog post topics.
- 2. Riff on trendy topics:** Let’s say the Grammy Awards are coming up. Can you relate something about your business back to music, a Grammy winning star or even something controversial that happened at the show? New movies come out all the time. Can you relate some tips about your products or services back to a [popular film](#)? These kind of posts are as much fun to write as they are to read—and you can take advantage of trending topics when promoting the content on social media. For example, if #Grammys are hot, hot, hot the day after the event, you can use that hashtag to promote your post.
- 3. Interview interesting people:** From whom would your target audience (or you) love to hear or learn? Are there related experts who complement your business that your readers would find valuable? You don’t have to come up with all your blog post ideas yourself—sometimes the best thing to do is feature another interesting person with juicy nuggets of wisdom to share. Not only will your audience love it, but you’ll have a built-in promotional partner; plus, you get to be generous and support someone else’s great brand so perhaps later, they may support you.

If You're "Not A Writer" Or You "Hate To Write"

Here's a little secret: Creating consistent and valuable content is not just about words. It's not even about a lot of words. If a few sentences or one-paragraph musings are easier for you, by all means, do that. It works for [Seth Godin](#) and [Bernadette Jiwa](#), who both rarely publish super-long blog posts.

If writing is still not your jam, as we've talked about in *Playbook 14: The Art of Seduction*, try podcasts, images or video. The point is to offer fresh content that showcases your style, expertise and point of view and to do it regularly. I personally define a "blog" as consistently updated content you post **on your own website**, before you share it in social media. It lives on your digital hub, not just on Facebook or LinkedIn. Amy Schmittauer of Savvy Sexy Social, is a friend of mine and a video queen with a robust YouTube channel. But she [posts her videos with a simple teaser of copy](#) on her own website as well. She's not into writing long missives (like I am) and simply lets her videos do the talking.

You could go this route and take it a step further by hiring a transcription service to offer folks a written version of your content, if you like.

My point is that you should always post your core weekly (or whatever time interval you use) content on your website first and then share it out in social media. This is your digital hub and all traffic should lead to it.

"But I post on social media all the time, Maria! Isn't that enough?"

If you're not into writing but more into imagery, it's still perfectly fine to bet everything on an Instagram or Pinterest account. But you are still showcasing your expertise and content in those channels, so make sure your website is very clear that THOSE are the places where you update your latest and greatest on a regular basis. Place the social connection buttons front and center so people will click there to follow you. And always, always, guide them back to your main site from those places so they can learn more about your products and services.

The visual-social-media-only approach can work really well if you sell retail products or you're a lifestyle brand. But remember, you still need to string some words together. **It is my firm belief that service providers who want to be authorities in their field, such as coaches, consultants, trainers, or authors, need to have their latest, updated content located on their website first.** People need to get to know you and discover more about your services and your website is the perfect place to ultimately guide them. I'm not convinced that simply offering up visuals on Pinterest with no deeper explanations and points of view helps a prospect understand the breadth or style of your expertise. Plus you won't get many of the other blog benefits we talked about above.

Hate writing? Think you're "not a writer?" You can hire a ghostwriter to add polish and shine. Simply record yourself talking about the topic and hand it over, or have the writer interview you over the phone talking about it so they can fashion it into a lovely post. And when money is no object? You can hire a marketing manager or virtual assistant to write blog posts based on topics you choose.

Seven Blog Post Ideas To Tickle Your Fancy

Try your hand at brainstorming seven topics to write about right now! If any of the questions below do not resonate for you, just skip it. The point here is to come up with new ideas in a fast and furious way!

Pssst....BONUS ALERT! Any of these can easily be turned into your free email opt-in incentive we talked about in a previous lesson, a lead magnet for your next course, an eBook, a podcast, a video...you get the idea. **Recycle!**

Oh, and the **numbers below are arbitrary**. It's up to you to pick how many you can create—but play around with short and sweet (*Three quick tips...*) versus long and in-depth (*64 ways to....*). Up to you!

1. **3 Crucial Tips for... (YOUR SUBJECT AREA HERE)**. ...*Building a Website, ...Finding Inner Peace, ...Choosing a Killer Date Outfit, ...Buying the Right Engagement Ring*. Whatever your business does, surely there are three basic tips that you always seem to share with prospects or customers. This worked well for me when sharing [4 Clever Ways to Make it Easy for Others to Promote You](#) and [3 Tips for Smarter Small Business Marketing](#). Don't fall into the trap (as I once did before a wise woman slapped me upside the head – with love) of assuming “everyone knows this.” They don't. It's why you have a job.

Quick! Write down one (just one!) tip list idea you could share about your subject area. Use any number you like: 3, 5, 15....

2. **6 Questions to Ask When... (YOUR SUBJECT AREA HERE)**. People love to read articles that guide them when making a decision. And, heck, no one says you can't choose questions that would immediately point them to your products or services if it's a good fit – just make sure you're being unbiased, or people may feel like you're being slimy instead of helpful. So how about *6 Questions to Ask When: ...Choosing the Right Accounting Software, ...Picking the Perfect Executive Coach,...Creating Your Social Media Strategy*.

Quick! What questions should people ask themselves when choosing offerings like yours?

3. **5 Powerful (YOUR FIELD) Lessons from (POPULAR NEWS TOPIC/CULTURAL REFERENCE)**: This one is super fun, because it allows you to be timely (and show up in what people are searching for right now) and clever by relating your expertise to a current hot cultural topic. One of my

most popular blog posts was [4 Powerful Business Lessons from James Bond and Skyfall](#). The other form this can take is “*What (POPULAR TOPIC) Can Teach You about (YOUR FIELD)*.” Relate key lessons or tips you always talk about to something timely and hot and give it a fun spin (if the topic allows for it) or simply analyze a current news story through the lens of your expertise, as I did in popular posts about [Lance Armstrong’s](#) and [Susan G. Komen’s](#) epic brand fails.

Quick! Write down your favorite movie or an upcoming cultural event (The Super Bowl, the Grammy Awards) that you could tie into your work. Has something relevant happened in the news lately, like a women’s leadership survey or a health craze? How could you spin this to be relevant to what you offer?

4. **7 Lessons I Learned From.....:** You have wisdom to share based on your experience (See #1 above) and your audience is thirsting for it. What can you share about mistakes you’ve made, challenges you’ve faced, unique things you’ve done, or clients with whom you’ve worked? What can they learn from your story? Remember, share your lessons but ensure you make the post about how your reader will benefit. I loved sharing [7 Lessons I Learned While Writing a Book...and What They Can Teach You](#) as well as, yes, the [7 Lessons That a Brain Injury Can Teach You about Your Brand](#).

Quick! Write down a pivotal life moment, costly mistake or big achievement that you could relate to your work.

5. **Pose a question related to your subject area:** Think about the most popular questions you get asked about what you do and turn that into a single-threaded blog post. *How Do I Write Good Sales Copy? How Do I Work with a Stylist? How Long Does a Website Take to Build? [What Is a Brand Strategy?](#)* This helps you showcase your expertise, offer great advice and even make it easy for new people to join your tribe and not feel like they don’t know some inside joke. Remember, your audience may be at different phases of the buying cycle and are only just now getting to know you and your brand.

Quick! Write down the one question about your work that you get asked over and over. Even by your grandmother who may not understand what you do.

- 6. Interview another rockstar expert:** Are there folks related to your field from whom your audience would loooooove to get the inside scoop? You don't have to be the expert in everything. But you can be the go-to resource for curating that info and bringing those guests to your community. Are you a health and wellness coach? Interview a stylist to help your clients showcase their brand new healthy bods. Are you an Etsy store selling handmade jewelry? Interview a party planner on how to throw the perfect jewelry party for your friends. Do you sell customer management software to small businesses? Interview a branding expert to give them tips on how to build their brand online and create compelling content. These can be super easy to create. In my [Slice of Brilliance column](#), I interview experts in related fields that are of interest to you and send them a three-question form to fill out. I get a great blog post, my audience gets great content, and I get the added bonus of that rockstar also promoting my post!

Quick! Write down one person you know (personally...let's start there first!) who complements your work. If you're a life coach, perhaps a nutrition expert or money guru. If you're a website designer, perhaps an SEO expert. If you're a stylist, perhaps a professional organizer. Write down that person's name and email address here now!

- 7. Make one observation about your industry and present your point of view:** These are the thought leader posts, the ones that inspire, delight, provoke thought – and get shared. There must be something you love or hate about your industry that you have a viewpoint on: your disgust with smarmy sales pitches (if you're a sales consultant), your crush on brands that give back to the community (if you run an advertising agency), your confusion over why contracts can't be written in plain English (if you're a lawyer), your deep hatred of hyperbolic software sales claims (if you run a software company). How can you make this personal commentary interesting and relevant to your audience? Ensure there's a strong takeaway that they can act upon – otherwise it's just a rant. I tried to do this with my observations about [how perfection holds many people back](#) from birthing their great ideas into the world or [why you are called to create something that matters](#), rather than spew more noise into the world.

Quick! Write down one industry rule, trend or "sacred cow" about which you have a strong opinion either for or against. What do you find yourself commenting on over and over?

Your Assignment: And Now, Let's Write

No more excuses. **Do you realize that you just came up with seven blog posts ideas?!** For those of you playing at home, that's almost TWO MONTH'S worth if you blog every week (or THREE AND A HALF MONTH'S worth if you blog every other week!)

Set a timer for one hour, turn off your phone/email and draft a blog post, right here, right now.

I'm a big believer that less is more. Pick the idea above that excites you the most and start writing. Just outline the copy. What are the main points? For a strong intro, can you start with a provocative question, *Picture This* scenario, fun fact or personal story? For a strong closing, how can you sum it up or offer one final bit of wise advice? Remember, getting it down on paper is half the battle! You can always hire a writer to polish it up.

Again, **set a timer for one hour, turn off your phone/email and WRITE.**

Keep this first attempt short. No need to pen *War and Peace*. Just a few paragraphs will do. Some experts say no more than 500 words. Obviously. I break that rule all the time, but if it helps you take the pressure off yourself, go for it.

Start writing your beautiful little blog post draft below:

But wait, you're not quite done....

Now: We'd love to see your brilliant blog post ideas posted on the Facebook page by Friday. And if you're feeling sassy, please post a blog post draft as well! Would love you to add your personal insights or discoveries on this topic as well. We can help you think through it if you're stuck, too. As you know, I'll be rewarding you all year long.

Remember, we are here to encourage you and provide any feedback. If you're like me, often it's fellow collaborators that help me polish my ideas to a glossy sheen.

Again, I'm going to reward you all year long, so don't lose your MOMENTUM: Post it now and keep that train moving!

One Last Thing...

OK, a few last things!

As I hope you've seen, there are many benefits blogging offers your brand and business. That said, it's not always the right move for every company: I just have yet to see a client across any industry that could not or did not benefit from blogging!

We live in the digital world so content is everything if you want to build a body of work and build a sticky brand that people adore. If a blog is not your jam, this lesson will still be useful to further refine your ideas. Then you can find which medium works for you: words, pictures, video, etc.

It doesn't have to be perfect. Just **DONE!** Remember, **"Done is better than perfect."**

Consistency is key. Create a cadence that is realistic for you. Seth Godin may blog every day, but that does **NOY** fly in my world! Once a week works for me and if I have to skip a week, my world doesn't fall apart. The point is that site visitors don't think I'm closed for business because my last post was in 2009!

Batch as much as possible. Carve out a day per month to work on three to four blog posts and then schedule them to post in advance. It's better than scrambling every week. I know some folks who take a whole day or two "workcation" and crank out six months of content in one go.

The best way to counteract any hatred of writing is **PRACTICE!** 9.75 times out of ten, the reason people hate writing is because they don't think they are good at it. But you can become good at it. Or you can hire a copywriter for final polish.

Focus on the story you're telling, not the writing, and I guarantee, with just a little polish, the value of your killer expertise will shine through.

You have knowledge and expertise to share. Share it. We need to hear it!

Maria

Goodies and Inspirations

Not sure what title to come up with? Try these:

[10 Ways to Write Blog Post Titles That Make People Go, “Whoa!”](#)

[Headline and Title Analyzer](#)

[Title Tester](#)

Here’s a special treat to lift your spirits: check out [my boy Justin](#) as inspiration to bring sexy back, not just to your blog, but all your brand and marketing efforts!