

Blog Writing and Content Marketing

Is there a difference?

Points for Discussion

- * You **MUST** have engaging content on YOUR website/blog! **WHY?** You need a place to send (and **KEEP!**) people from social, etc.
- * Types of content: different types of **blog posts; lead magnets; key pages; sales/lead pages;**
- * Create the key pages: home, blog, about, contact. landing, products/services, etc.
- * Content upgrades
- * Social media posts: what to post, why, and how to automate. Have a “goal” with every post, even if it’s only “engagement.”
- * Quora, Medium, LinkedIn Pulse, etc. Other forums and social blogging sites.
- * Guest posting; Backlinks (write about your core topic, link to the relative opt in offer)
- * Consistency of message! Be recognizable!

Technical Elements of Writing a Blog Post

WordPress Visual Editor

Important data and tools:

- URL/Permalink/slug
- Keywords
- Title (H1)
- H2, H3, etc.
- Anchor text
- Categories and Tags

Word count: 1109 Last edited by Rick on December 26, 2015 at 8:08 pm

Content: ● Kindle Publishing

Snippet Editor

Lessons from Kindle Publishing - Simple Digital Branding
simpledigitalbranding.com/lessons-from-kindle-publishing
Kindle publishing lessons learned and applied to overall branding strategy.

Focus Keyword Kindle Publishing

Content Analysis

- The focus keyword doesn't appear in the first paragraph of the copy. Make sure the topic is clear immediately.
- The keyword density is 0.2%, which is a bit low; the focus keyword was found 2 times.
- No outbound links appear in this page, consider adding some as appropriate.
- The meta description is under 120 characters, however up to 156 characters are available.
- The page title contains the focus keyword, but it does not appear at the beginning; try and move it to the beginning.
- The copy scores 63.1 in the [Flesch Reading Ease](#) test, which is considered ok to read.
- The text contains 1127 words, this is more than the 300 word recommended minimum.
- The focus keyword appears in 1 (out of 3) subheadings in the copy. While not a major ranking factor, this is beneficial.
- The images on this page contain alt tags with the focus keyword.
- The focus keyword appears in the URL for this page.
- The meta description contains the focus keyword.
- The page title is between the 40 character minimum and the recommended 70 character maximum.
- You've never used this focus keyword before, very good.

Categories

All Categories Most Used

- Digital Publishing
- Writing
- Advertising
- Branding
- Content Marketing
- Email Lists
- Social Media
- Technical

[+ Add New Category](#)

Tags

Separate tags with commas

- Amazon
- ebooks
- KDP select
- Kindle
- publishing
- writing

[Choose from the most used tags](#)

Featured Image

Yoast Plug-in for “on-page” SEO

- Focus Keyword
- SEO Title
- Meta Description
- Photo alt tags with the target keyword

Google's Crawlers can't "read" images*... but they can read the metatags.

*This is changing.

The screenshot displays the WordPress 'Insert Media' interface. The main area shows a grid of media items, with one image of a Kindle device selected. The 'ATTACHMENT DETAILS' panel on the right shows the following information:

- Attachment Name: kindlepub.png
- Date: December 24, 2015
- Size: 1 MB
- Dimensions: 1200 x 628
- URL: <http://simpledigitalbrandii>
- Title: kindle publishing
- Caption: (empty)
- Alt Text: lessons from Kindle publi
- Description: My biggest lessons from Kindle publishing experience
- WP Smush: Already Optimized

The interface also includes a search bar, filters for 'All media items' and 'All dates', and a sidebar with options like 'Insert Media', 'Create Gallery', and 'Featured Image'. The bottom of the screen shows the Windows taskbar with various application icons and the system clock indicating 5:22 PM on 1/23/2016.

Linking

- Internal (ex. Wiki)
- External/Outbound
- Anchor Text

The screenshot displays the WordPress admin dashboard for 'Simple Digital Branding'. The main content area shows a post titled '5 ways to increase brand awareness with Instagram'. A modal dialog box titled 'Insert/edit link' is open, allowing the user to add a link. The dialog contains the following fields and options:

- Enter the destination URL:** A text input field containing the URL `http://premium.wpmudev.org/blog/12-instagram`.
- Options:** Two checked checkboxes: 'Open link in a new tab' and 'Add rel="nofollow" to link'.
- Or link to existing content:** A dropdown menu currently set to 'All posts'.
- Buttons:** 'Cancel' and 'Add Link'.

The background shows the WordPress editor with a dark theme. The left sidebar contains navigation menus for 'All Posts', 'Media', 'Pages', 'Comments', 'Appearance', 'Plugins', 'Users', 'Tools', 'Settings', 'SEO', 'BWS Plugins', 'Pretty Link', 'WP Edit', 'JM Twitter Cards', and 'Collapse menu'. The right sidebar shows 'Categories' (with 'Branding' and 'Social Media' selected) and 'Tags'. The bottom of the screen shows the Windows taskbar with various application icons and the system tray displaying the time as 5:28 PM on 1/23/2016.

Structure of Your Posts

Just as we discussed overall website design, your posts should also have a visual design that appeals to the reader's eye.

Formatting

Hard to Read

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Duis ultricies lobortis dui, ac interdum nisl tempor ut. Sed diam leo, rhoncus pretium faucibus quis, rutrum ut augue. Nulla mattis sapien at lorem varius ornare. Fusce sed aliquam sapien. Vestibulum eget enim tortor. Maecenas scelerisque imperdiet tortor et pulvinar. Aliquam commodo luctus massa, rutrum placerat dui pretium a. Proin semper orci ut ligula posuere at tincidunt sem gravida. Nunc euismod magna ut dolor consectetur porttitor. Nullam tincidunt tincidunt massa, ac rutrum erat tincidunt eget. Cras eu leo massa, a scelerisque turpis. Nam a ante ac nisl imperdiet gravida quis quis lacus. Aliquam eu enim nec leo adipiscing condimentum et at turpis. Mauris aliquam mauris ac diam mattis hendrerit. Aliquam bibendum ipsum vitae justo pulvinar quis elementum neque posuere. Maecenas mollis

Easier to Read

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Duis ultricies lobortis dui, ac interdum nisl tempor ut.

Sed diam leo, rhoncus pretium faucibus quis, rutrum ut augue. Nulla mattis sapien at lorem varius ornare. Fusce sed aliquam sapien.

Vestibulum eget enim tortor

Maecenas scelerisque imperdiet tortor et pulvinar. Aliquam commodo luctus massa, rutrum placerat dui pretium a.

Proin semper orci ut ligula posuere at tincidunt sem gravida. Nunc euismod magna ut dolor consectetur porttitor. Nullam tincidunt tincidunt massa, ac rutrum erat tincidunt eget.

What's interesting is that all three of these links go to different pages. That means that on this website we have no less than 3 pages filled with testimonials.

The first link goes to the "reviews" page. On this page, Marie Forleo uses snippets of testimonials to address objections. You can see the different questions people might ask themselves before buying Bschool and each of the questions has been answered by multiple testimonials.

The next page is the "in their own words" page. Here you can notice that the focus is much more on the person and on their personal story. The goal is not that much to answer specific questions but rather to show relatable people. Showing different students from different backgrounds is a smart way to get people to think "If she or he can do it, so can I". You can also see that the snippets that are highlighted are all specific benefits these students experienced following the program.

And then there is a third page, with video testimonials. When you look at the video you'll immediately notice the quality. These are not simple webcam videos but high production value professional footage. Marie Forleo and her team actually travel the world to meet students and shoot this videos.

Now you can imagine how much time, money and effort goes into this so they probably wouldn't be doing this if they didn't believe this would bring in sales.

Now the high production video testimonials might be out of budget for you for the moment but you can easily apply some of the same techniques with you written testimonials.

You might have noticed that Marie Forleo has tons of testimonials and you might be thinking that it's easy for her, she has thousands of students. But still, to get this amount of testimonials you need a strategy to get them. You need to be very deliberate about them.

Let me show you the emails Marie sends to B-school students to get testimonials.

Yes you heard that right, emailS with an S as in no less than 3 messages to ask for a testimonial.

The first email asks for feedback and promises a bonus when you submit the feedback form.

This is pretty smart, people love bonuses and an extra incentive for giving a testimonial will always get you more of them.

4 Days later she sends a reminder email and finally 6 Days later the final reminder.

Doing this is very expensive, so I'm guessing they wouldn't be doing it if they weren't sure this would bring in more sales.

Key Takeaway

Don't shy away from long testimonials, people who are interested in your product or service will take the time to read the whole story.

Be Consistent and Deliberate in Asking for Testimonials

By now, you might be thinking:

"This is cool stuff but I don't have thousands of testimonials like Marie to choose from..."

While it is true that she now has tons of testimonials and can cherry pick the best ones, this didn't happen overnight, nor on accident.

It's the fruit of a well thought out strategy to get as many testimonials as possible because to state it in her own words:



Marie Forleo

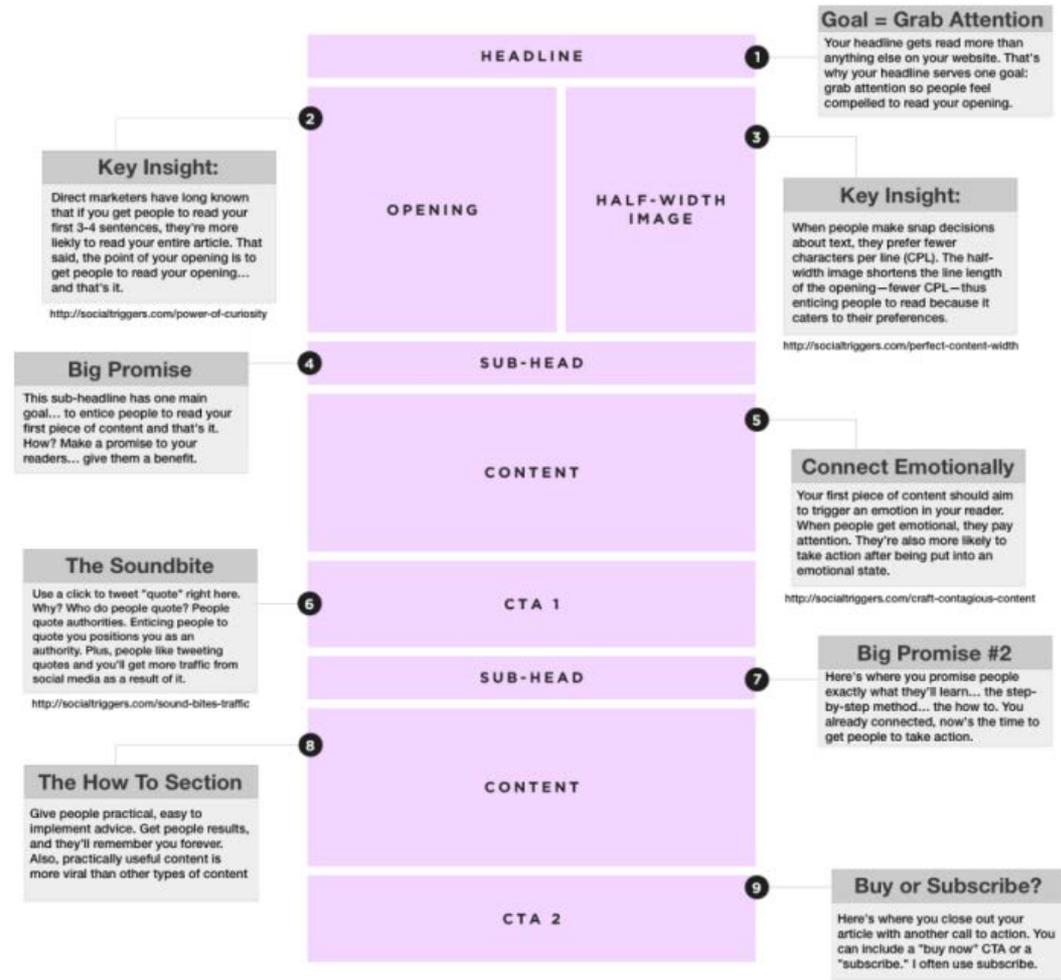
"Success doesn't come from what you do occasionally, it comes from what you do consistently"

Formatting 2.0

Make it “Scanable”

- Short Sentences, Short Paragraphs
- Shareability: implies shorter, or at least “quotable.”
- F (or Z) – Pattern
- Images mixed with text
- **Bold** and *Italic*
- Bullet Points
- Numbered Lists
- Two Colors, Maximum
- Total Word Count: Short (400-500) or Long (1,000+)?

THE PERFECT BLOG POST

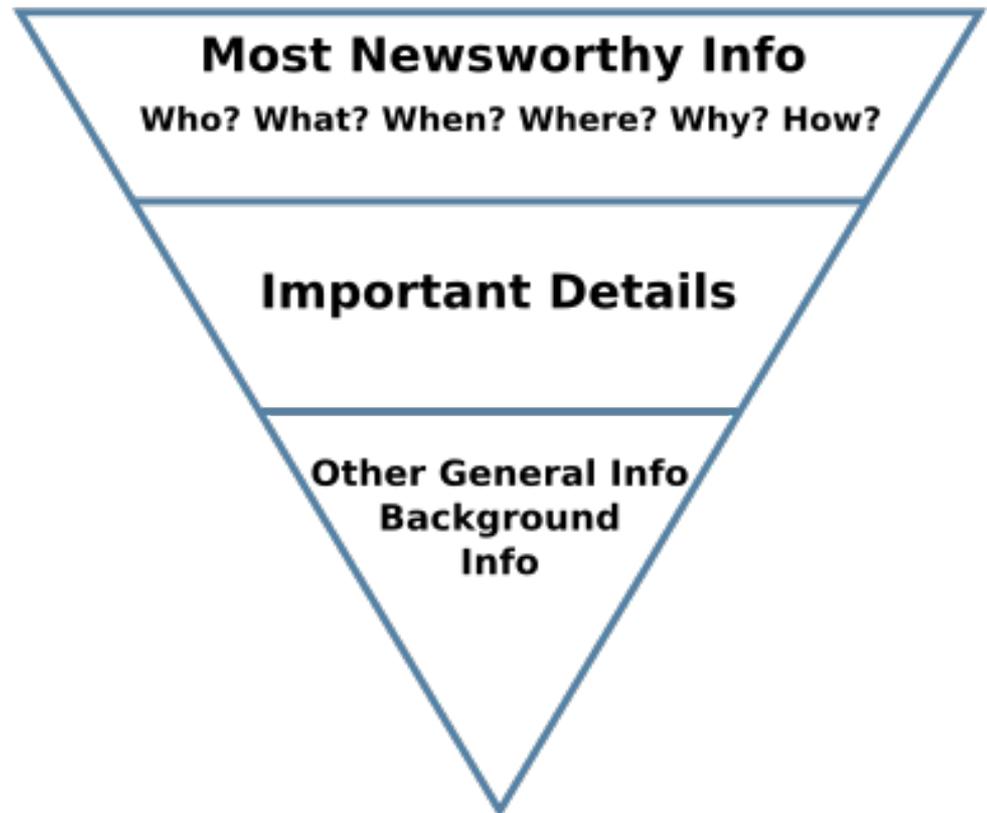


Like this? Learn more about blogging, psychology, and marketing by subscribing to:
<http://socialtriggers.com/newsletter>

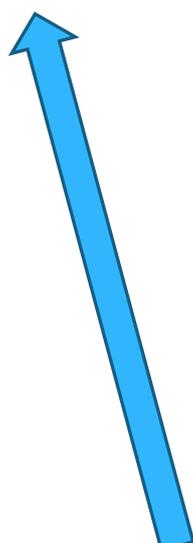
Inverted Pyramid

Borrowed from traditional journalism in order to:

- Grab readers' attention
- Grab Google's attention
- Get the most important information, especially keywords, near the beginning.
- Only about 10% will read the entire post.



Typography

- Use simple, web standard fonts; **not fancy**
 - Black or dark gray only, with the exception of hyperlinks
 - Consistent across your site
 - Make it **bigger**
 - Adequate line spacing
 - **Bold** (yes), *Italic* (rarely), Underline (never) Why? See above...
- 

TOO MUCH Styling

Even though we had never met, she took the train in from **Pistoia** and we spent most of a day together. She ushered me to her favorite *caffès*, showed me some of her favorite shops and we enjoyed lunch at the Mercato Centrale. **Her energy, enthusiasm, and deep love for her home is boundless!**

Of course we stayed in touch and when a few friends and travelers asked why I didn't take guests to Tuscany, it was a natural to launch a collaboration with **Miky, certified tour guide and shopper/foodie extraordinaire**.

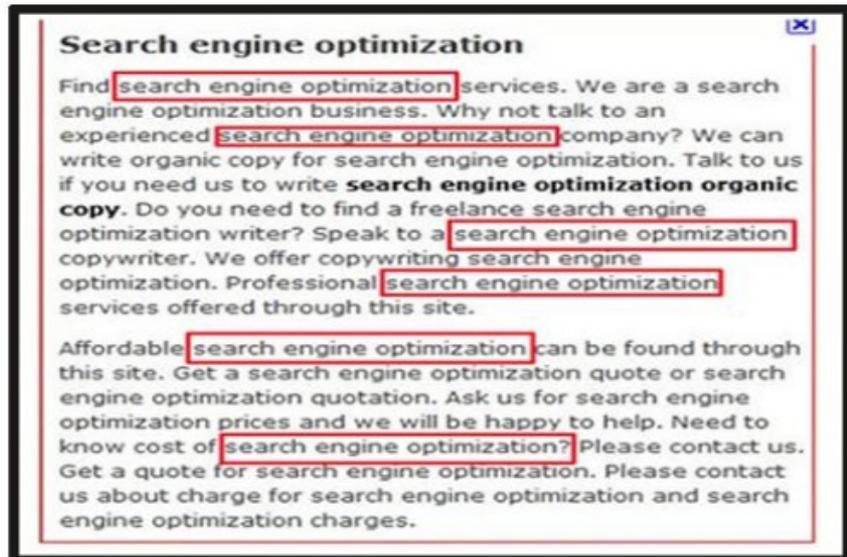
Together we have designed a magnificent and unique experience, Let's DiZcover Tuscany's Treasures...Together! which includes stays in Florence and, of course, Miky's nearby home town of **Pistoia**. **I can promise that you'll LOVE Miky's Tuscany!**

Pistoia was recently designated **Italy's 2017 Capital of Culture** – quite an honor and, needless to say, the city's biggest fan is ecstatic...

Keywords

Old School Thinking

Search Engine Manipulation| in the Past (Keyword Stuffing)



The Current Approach

Variations of a long-tail keyword.

A more natural style that doesn't appear "forced" to human readers.

Long-Tail Keyword Variations

Example: best Tuscan red wines

- Best Red wine From Tuscany
- great wines of Italy
- affordable Italian wines
- wine pairing with Tuscan food
- best **white** wines from Tuscany
- best red wines from **Piedmont**
- visiting wineries in Italy
- traveling to Tuscany for the harvest

Writing

(Yes, as in, “**What**” to write about! But also, “**Why**” are we writing in the first place?)

WHEN CREATING CONTENT, KEEP IT EDUCATIONAL.

Not educating your buyer personas on who *you* are and what *you* do,
but educating them on their problems and solutions to those problems.

Subject Matter

(Anything in your general niche is fair game, but try to **give readers what they want.**)

OK, so how will you *know* what they want?

Take advantage of a few simple search tools to discover what **topics people are already searching for online.**

- Google's [Keyword Planner](#) Tool (Let's Try it!)
- Amazon: especially good if you plan to sell physical products on your site
- Twitter trends
- Paid apps like LongTail Pro or Market Samurai
- Survey Monkey

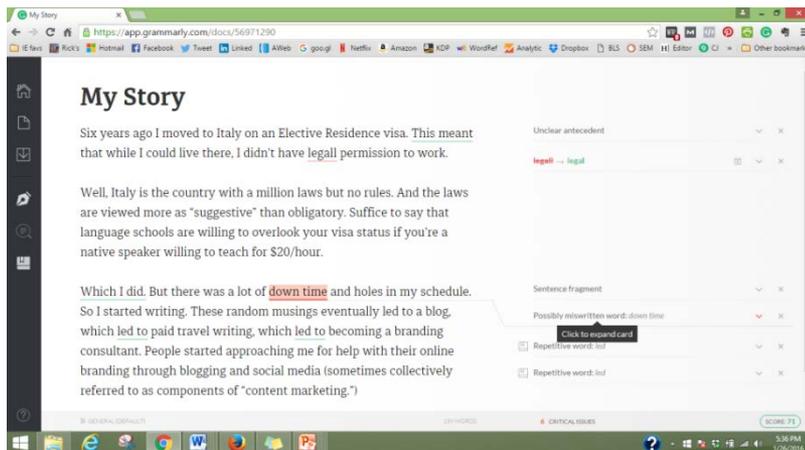
The information that you gather from these searches will become the “long-tail keywords” mentioned earlier.

The “Blogging Style” of Writing

- * Favors an informal style of writing.
- * Write as if you’re chatting with a friend.
- * Worry about refining it later. And you WILL have to refine it if you expect people to actually read what you’ve written. It needs to be sharp and engaging; **not an endless ramble!** Shorter!
- * If we had to roughly define a style of writing that is considered “ideal” blogging, it would be something like, 60% journalism (to give it credibility), 35% creative writing or “diary writing,” (to give it personality), and 5% ad copy (to help the search engines find you).
- * The “ad copy” portion should be mostly reserved for the title of your posts, and maybe a couple of subheadings.

Write More Gooder

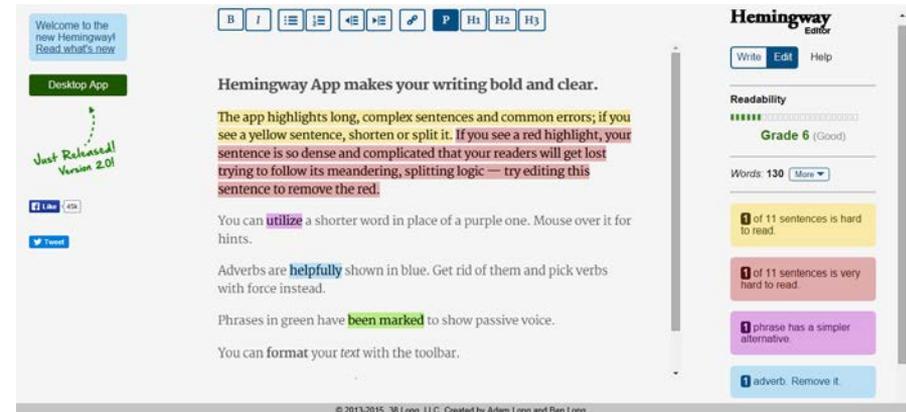
Grammarly



The screenshot shows the Grammarly web interface. The document title is "My Story". The text being edited is: "Six years ago I moved to Italy on an Elective Residence visa. This meant that while I could live there, I didn't have legal permission to work." A suggestion box highlights "legal" and offers the correction "legal → legal". Another suggestion box highlights "down time" and offers the correction "down time → down time". The interface includes a sidebar with navigation icons, a top navigation bar with social media links, and a bottom status bar showing "SCORE 73".

[grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com)

Hemingway App



The screenshot shows the Hemingway App interface. The document title is "My Story". The text being edited is: "Six years ago I moved to Italy on an Elective Residence visa. This meant that while I could live there, I didn't have legal permission to work." The app highlights several issues: "legal" is highlighted in red, "down time" is highlighted in yellow, and "utilize" is highlighted in purple. The interface includes a top navigation bar with a toolbar, a sidebar with navigation icons, and a right sidebar with readability and style suggestions. The readability score is "Grade 6 (Good)" and the word count is "Words: 130".

[hemingwayapp.com](https://www.hemingwayapp.com)

Omit ~~Needless~~ Words

1. Be concise.
2. Get to the point early.
3. Don't babble.
4. When editing, remove as much as possible.
5. Less is more!

“I would have written you a shorter letter, but I did not have the time.”

Be Specific with your Title

“A Handful of Ways to Optimize Your Site”

What’s wrong: *This particular title suffers from an acute lack of specifics.*

If you took a “handful of minutes” to check a few Google searches, you’d find that numbered lists are incredibly popular. 10 ways to comb your hair, 14 secrets to a better smile, 11 dogs that ruled the world; the number is important. It doesn’t matter how many you list, you just need to specify the number. A better title in this case might be:

***12 Ways to Optimize Your Blog for Facebook.**

The lesson to be learned: Be specific!

<http://blogpros.com/blog/2014/05/10-common-examples-bad-blog-post-titles>

Features vs. Benefits

- * **Features** are facts about products or services; they add credibility and substance to your sales pitch.
- * Yeah, but “*So what?*”
- * **Benefits** give customers a reason to buy because they explain how your product or service improves their lives.
- * Benefits explain “what’s in it for them.” It answers the question, “*So what?*”

So what?

The *So what?* trick works in any industry:

- Our doors have strong hinges. *So what?* They won't bend when the door is slammed shut a thousand times.
- We monitor your servers. *So what?* Your servers won't go down, so you and your staff can continue working.
- I write high-converting web copy. *So what?* You can convert more web visitors into leads and business.

Read through your website and ask for each statement *So what?* Keep asking *So what?* to find real benefits.

Real benefits connect to your customer's desires, such as saving time; reducing costs; making more money; becoming happier, healthier, more relaxed, or more productive.

How to Write a Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Blog Post

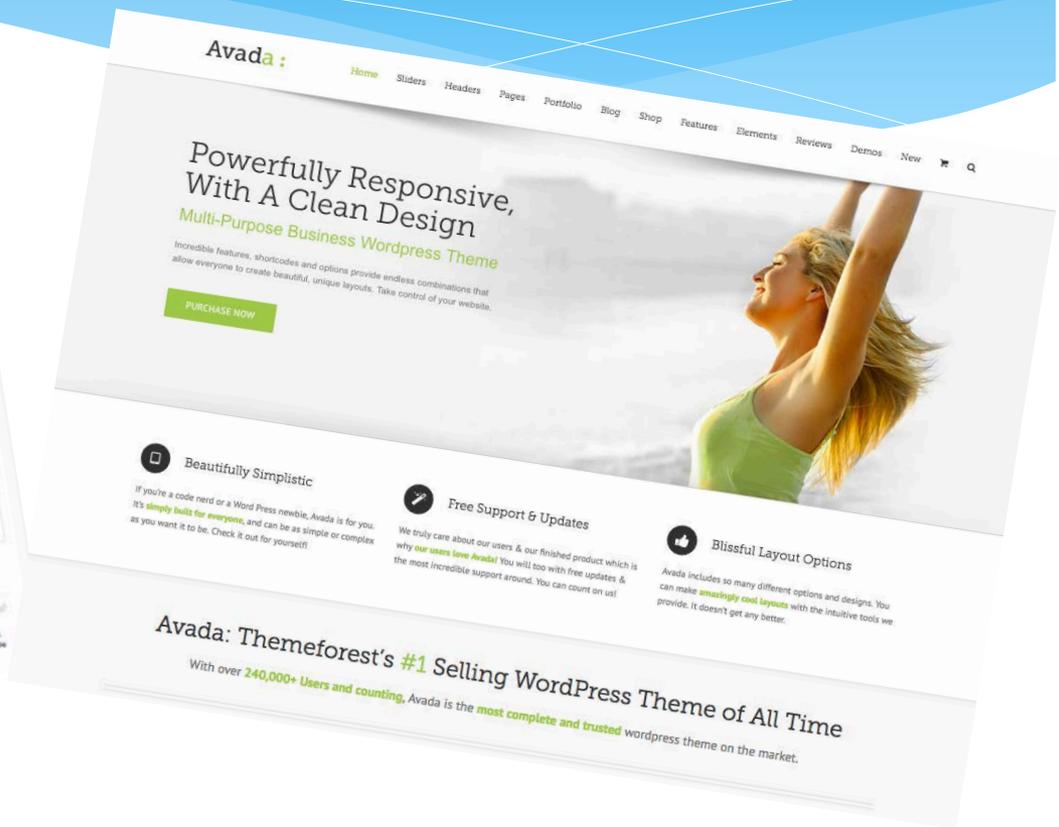
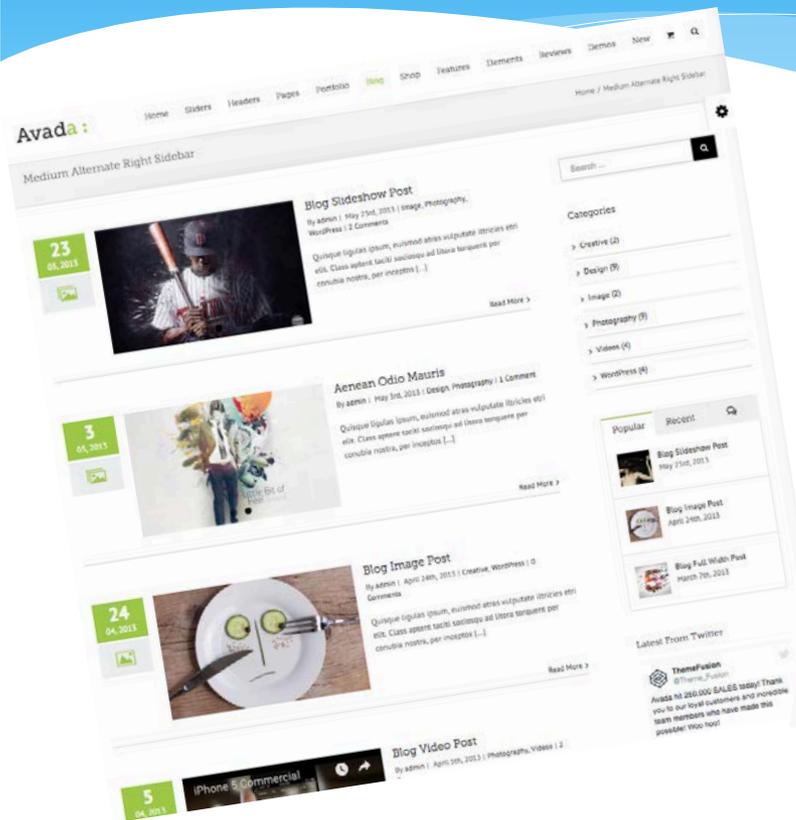
from Hubspot Blog:

1. Write a boring, non-descript headline.
2. Talk only about your products and services
3. Write for someone other than your target audience.
4. Have nothing remarkable or helpful to say.
5. Format it as one big block of text.
6. Include zero in-text links.
7. Forget to attribute your sources.
8. Fail to include a call-to-action.
9. Make a ton of spelling and grammatical errors.
10. Disable social media sharing links and comments.
11. *Exclamation points do NOT replace genuine emotion!!!!

Key Pages

The ones every site should have

“Blog” Homepage or Custom Homepage?



99% of the time, a custom homepage is the correct choice. Why?

Elements of a Good “About” Page

The most important sections you should include on your **About Page** will answer these questions:

- * [Who's your ideal customer?](#)
- * [What are your values, goals and mission?](#)
- * [What do your existing customers say about you?](#)
- * [What's your story? How did it all start?](#)
- * [Your company in numbers. Why should you be trusted?](#)
- * [Have you been featured on popular sites?](#)
- * [How's the team behind your company? What's it like working for you?](#)
- * [What should the visitor on your page do next?](#)

If you want to see real-life examples and learn from the pros, click on the questions! (Source Credit: Thrive Themes)

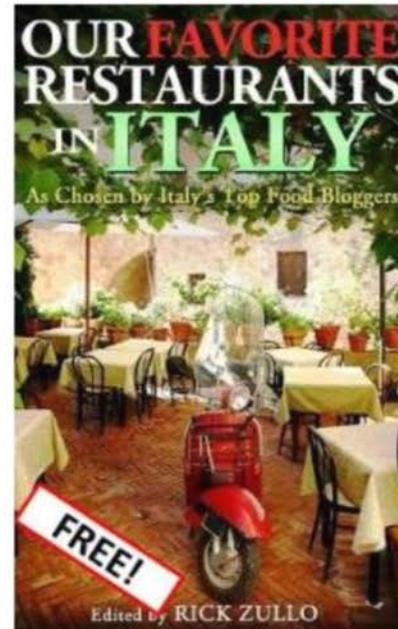
Landing Page or “Squeeze Page?”

- * Technically similar, but a landing page can be any page, whereas a squeeze page generally gives the reader **only ONE** option. Actually, two options: take action or leave.
- * Landing pages (sales pages) are often like short blog posts (400-500 words) with a strong call to action.
- * In any case, the key is to have ONE strong call to action (although **you can repeat the same one** several times). Don't give readers the option to “check out my other posts,” or “follow me on Twitter.” It defeats the purpose.

Don't risk spoiling your Italian vacation by having a bad meal!

Sign up below to download the **FREE** restaurant guide!

GET THE FREE GUIDE



It's not as easy as you'd think to find a good restaurant in Italy. Tourist traps abound, and even if you stumble upon an authentic trattoria, how would you know what to order?

This Italy restaurant guide, written by the country's top English-speaking food bloggers, will help you feel more secure in your choices. After all, what could be more tragic than a bad meal while on your Italian vacation?

(One option, and one option only!)

Content Marketing: it is NOT “just” blogging

I hope now you understand the difference.



Blog posts are **one piece of your content marketing system**. Without all of the other essential components, your investment in writing blog posts will go to waste.

Phase 1 starts before you even write one word. First, you have to do the “avatar” research required to get the topics just right. Then you need to plan this piece of content within your larger editorial calendar.

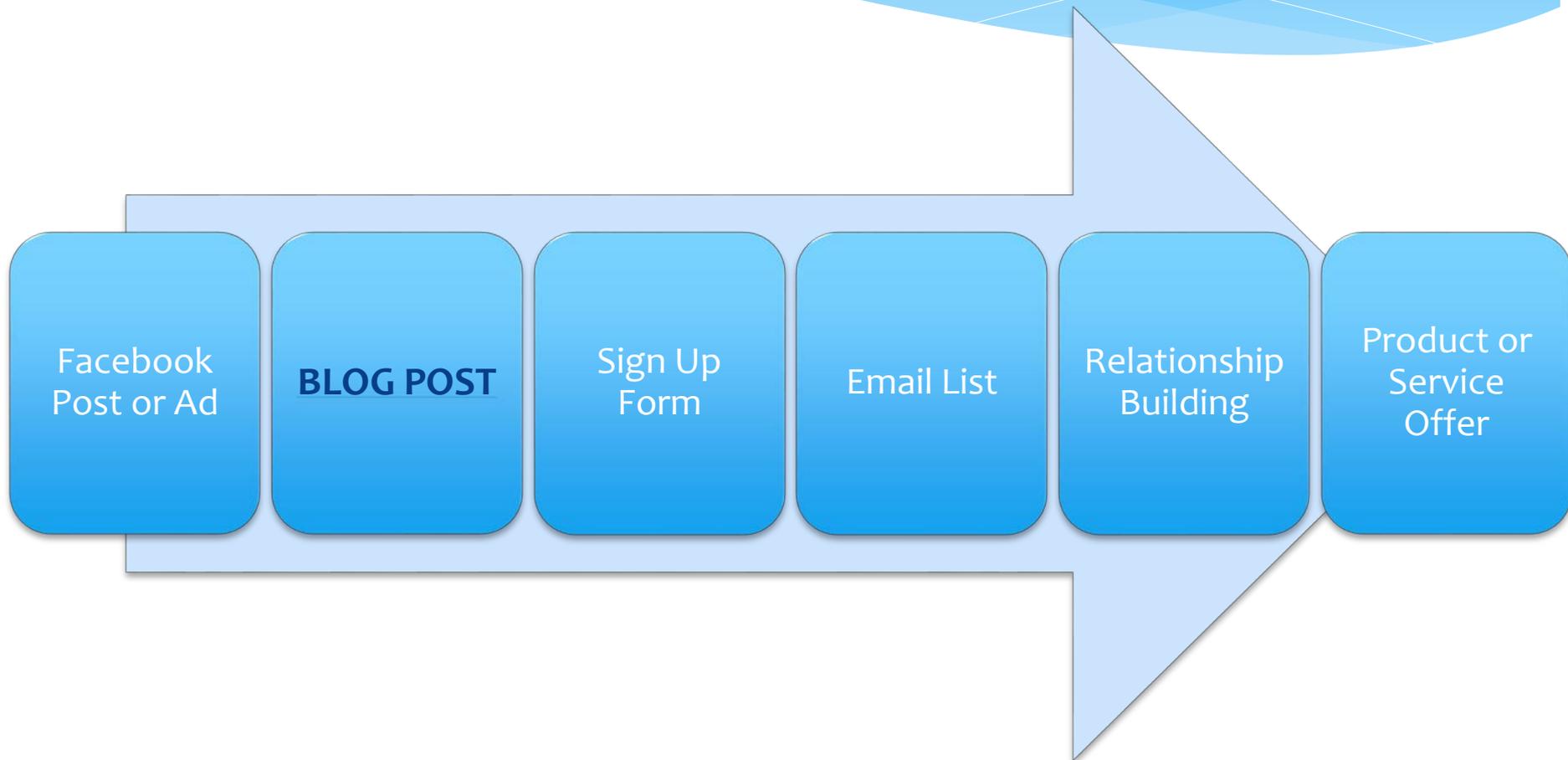
Phase 2 is the production phase. Now is when the writing (and re-writing) happens. It might also involve a copy editor, a graphic designer to create a custom title graphic and some supporting diagrams, and someone to upload your post to WordPress and ensure it's optimized for SEO.

Phase 3 is distribution and promotion. Writing and sending your email newsletter. Queuing up multiple unique social media posts. Running paid traffic to help this new post gain traction or doing outreach to influencers who may have been mentioned in the article.

Let's Review the Overall Roadmap

Where do the blog posts fit in?

“Typical” Online Sales Funnel



Facebook
Post or Ad

BLOG POST

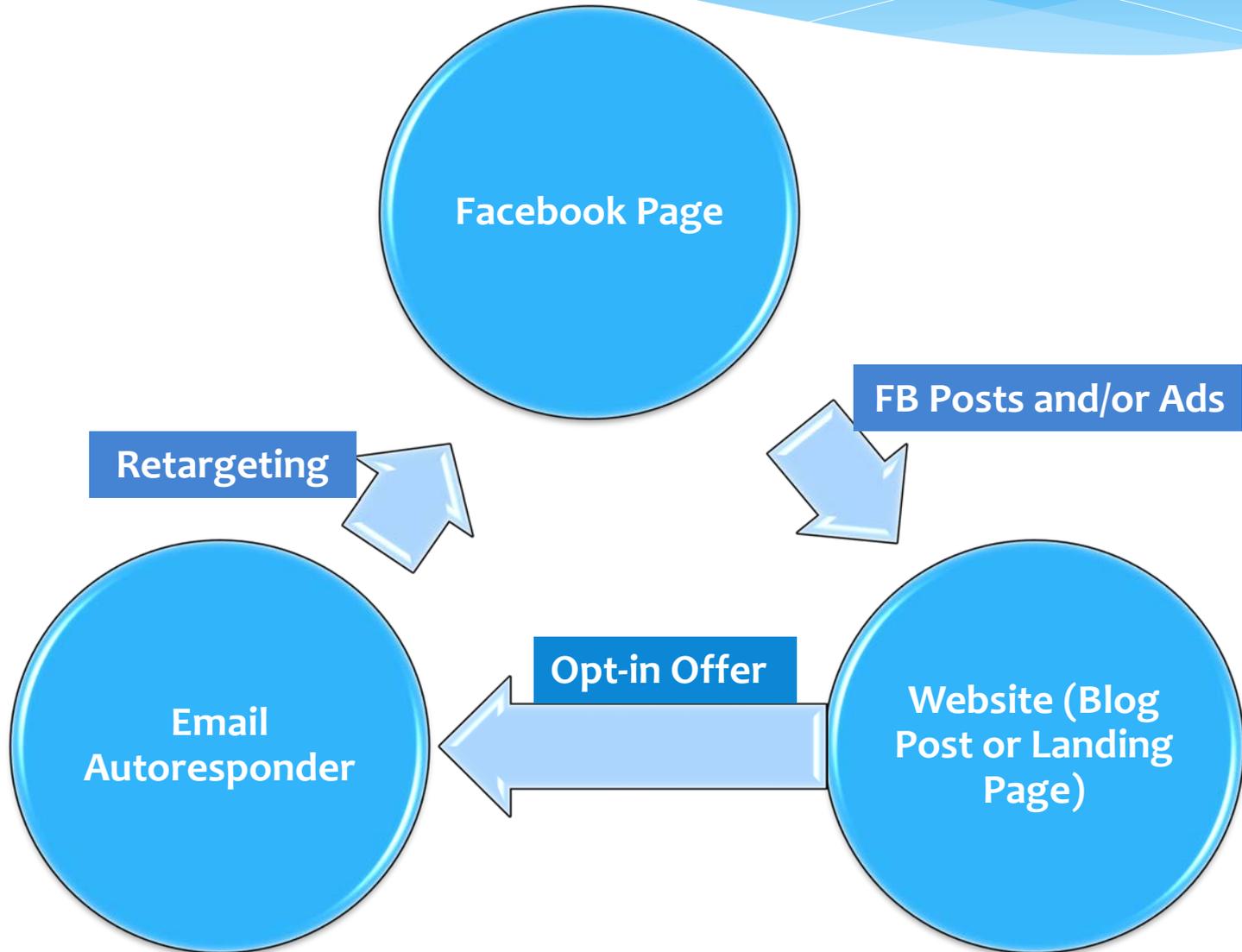
Sign Up
Form

Email List

Relationship
Building

Product or
Service
Offer

“A Loop of Engagement”



Homework

- Read the following article related to writing good blog articles, and post a comment about it. Or better, **post a link to something that YOU have written** so the class can critique it.
- <http://simplifiedigitalbranding.com/writing-like-ernest/>
- **Join our Facebook Group.** This intended to get you started on creating local connections.... But also to force you to create social profiles if you haven't already.
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/794979457296935/>