

While not all of these tips are restricted to Authors, Authors will certainly benefit from thinking of their book in a more entrepreneurial, marketing-focused light. Once you've completed your blog-startup research (Rule #1: *Know Thy Reader*), you're ready to implement the following.

1. Limit your blog title to 30-35 characters, and your first paragraph to 160 characters or less.

I limit my blog post titles to this length because it can be read in (almost) a single glance. It also keeps the permalink to the blog post (the URL that will always link back to that particular article), which contains whatever you type into the title field, from getting too long to manage.

I tweak the first word of these 30 characters to be the single "hot" word that summarizes the post. For example, I wouldn't use "marketing", as it's too general. But I might use "eMail Signatures", as that's quite a specific way to market.

The idea of limiting the length of the first paragraph is to ensure that you are fitting into the number of characters that most search engines will display when your link comes up in their results.

When I'm first writing my introductory paragraph, I just write normally. But, when the post is more or less completed, I copy the first paragraph, and paste it into the appropriate field of one of my favourite plugins, [All-in-One SEO pack](#). This field counts the number of characters just for the purpose of making it search engine-friendly. I then tweak the content in that field to the correct number of characters, and make it as to-the-point as possible, and then copy and paste it back into the body of my post, replacing whatever was there before. This is also an excellent writing exercise in general, and ensures that your first paragraph is a real grabber.

2. Use podcasting frequently.

Podcasting is not difficult or expensive. (For the basics on one page, download my other article, [7 Steps to Your First Podcast](#).) It simply requires commitment and a simple, fun approach. Audio and video content is a great way to make a real connection with your readers, and to invite feedback. Engagement is the name of the podcasting game, and enriching the reader's experience with media-rich content is the fastest way to their hearts.

3. Offer instant downloads.

Taking the time to create something of real value that a reader can take away from your blog will let them know how much you value their visit, and how special they are to you. Receiving an instant download of either written (PDF) or multimedia content is very rewarding, and has become a general expectation of many internet users. A great tool for this is 1shoppingcart.com, which creates a unique download URL for each individual who requests a document. PDF's are easiest to produce, and anyone can print out a couple of pages for reading at the office, in a taxi, on a plane, etc. Blogging is custom-made for this type of engagement with an audience.

4. Build your list.

The value of this cannot be understated. When a person asks for a free download (see item 3) or if you meet them in person, or when speaking, or for anyone who subscribes to your site's feed, you will always want to do your best to get their actual email address, so that you can communicate with them directly. Building a list of people interested in your book should happen before the book is even finished being written. This list allows you to make special offers, discounts, events, and a rainbow of other things available to your most special readers.

5. Make your blog the website, not a static site that links to your blog.

Blogs are created to please search engines, to keep content fresh, to engage readers, to be wildly flexible, to work with a variety of 3rd-party tools and resources, and to hold some static content that doesn't change. Considering all of what a blog is capable of doing, why would we even consider a static website? When designing your blog's theme, make sure that people don't have to click around so much to find what they need. The most recent content should be immediately visible – people sometimes only want what's new. That's why the blog should house everything, not the other way around.

6. Make very calorie count: no wasted posts, no wasted words.

Remember who you are writing for: what are their needs? In every post, serve the reader, and the content best. Don't deviate from what your loyal readers are there to hear about - stay on topic. Shorter posts get read more than longer posts, but judge this based on your audience. It's hard to say what's necessary in fewer words, but a good writer makes it happen.

7. Keep to a classic “3-act play” format.

Not every post has to be a Greek tragedy, but having a clear introduction, discussion / main points section with your clearly-stated facts, and a firm closing statement, orients readers and gives them a greater level of understanding of your point. Close with a “call to action”, or with a motivating statement that suggests what their next step should be, such as to implement your suggestions, watch the related video, buy the products, read the book, attend the event, etc.

8. Make at least one outbound (“Good Karma”) link, and up to 3, in each post.

There is a huge debate about whether to choose these links with the best possibility of cross-linking, or to simply link to things based on the needs of your readers, and not based on how it will come back to help you. I believe there is a happy middle, knowing that if you are meeting the needs of your readers, it will always come back to you regardless. Find other bloggers to link to, and you may get some cross-traffic. Use Technorati.com (a search engine just for blogs) to find articles that illustrate your points.

9. Try using a weekly pattern.

Again, there is controversy about whether or not this is a good practice, but many claim tremendous success when they control what day and time their blog content posts on the blog. Some set posts to automatically publish at (for example) 10am on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Some swear by using (again, for example) intriguing facts for Tuesday, inspiration items on Wednesday, and tips/tricks on Thursday. You should watch your own stats and judge for yourself. At the very least, if you're trying hard to build traffic, set an objective to post at least 3 times a week with high-quality content.

10. Re-purpose your existing materials.

If you've saving your writing for a while, pulling good stuff out of your bottom drawer can have several advantages. This longer draft-and-edit process can make your posts more refined and easier to read. If you're an author working to promote a book (or past books) this strategy can easily draw attention back to your other work as well as current content. Not to mention, it saves time.

11. Be sure to offer them a reason to come back.

Using the final “call to action” mentioned in item 7, try to direct traffic back to your own blog, by offering “more coming soon...”, two-part posts (which are more readable for intense topics anyway), or by inviting feedback from the users and promising to post their feedback at a future date. Make it easy for them to come back by making your feed subscription service easy to access and use.

12. Use the active voice in your writing.

It's OK to use 1st person references, “I did, I saw, I went...”, and be sure to eliminate wishy-washy language. You as the subject taking the action gives people a feeling of reading a first-person account, or a front-row seat – the special seat that your loyal readers deserve. Writing that makes people feel energized will keep them reading. This goes nicely hand-in-hand with keeping posts short and to the point, and by providing adequate engagement for readers to keep them interested and motivated.

And one more...

Bonus: Take your blog on the road.

Don't just stay in your office writing in isolation: get out into the community, and I don't just mean the virtual one! Wherever you go, take your audio recorder or your camera (video or stills), and be constantly on the lookout for stuff that will be meaningful for your audience. (You'll start to see it everywhere – trust me!) Speak about your blog and your topic in the community, even if it's only at the local Rotary club for lunch. Approach your local paper about writing a column, which can allow you to re-purpose some of the content from your blog, or at least get a double-whammy out of your research work. Talk to community business organizations about your book, and interview people to create multimedia or written content for your blog. Remember: the blogger that gets out there, *gets out there!*

IT'S THAT SIMPLE!

Contact me through HumanusPublishing.com with your questions.