



FRANK VIOLA

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BEFORE YOU READ THIS BOOK

This book is an introduction to something far more valuable.

Go to the **BuzzSeminar.com** for an in-depth course that trains you on how to earn income from your writing passion, conquer online obscurity, write a best-selling book, and create an A-list blog.

The Buzz Seminar Master Class contains a robust workbook and over 9 hours of audio teaching from the four authors of this volume.

You can work through the course in the comfort of your own home and from anywhere in the world. There is an online edition and a home edition (which is a physical product).

If you find this book to be valuable at all, you'll definitely want to check out the Buzz Seminar Master Class.



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INTRODUCTION:

The Art of Creating Buzz – Mike Morrell

Thank you for picking up *Buzz: The Book*. I hope you'll read it because, honestly, I believe it can change your life.

Einstein remarked famously that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

For many people, this year is going to be a repeat of the past.

Is this you?

You aren't going to progress in your career...calling...vocation.

You will face the same struggles you've been facing, in the same way you always have.

With the exact same outcome.

Unless.

What makes the difference is to do something different . . . to move out of your comfort zone and take a shot at learning something valuable.

Making great connections, and investing in new skills that could give you a whole new way of living.

That's not hype. It happened to me and my three co-authors, who have contributed to this book and the upcoming Buzz Seminar.

As you begin to dive into *Buzz*, let me ask you:

- Do you want to start a blog that people actually read and that earns monthly income?
- Do you have a blog that has plateaued in its ability to build a consistent audience?
- Why do some bloggers succeed at generating income from their blogs while others don't?
- Do you have a business (life coach, real estate agent, etc.) and want to build a strong and loyal audience for your work?
- Have you ever thought about writing a book and want to learn the highest-impact, most lucrative options for publishing it?



- Are you an existing author and frustrated that you can't get your book in front of the readers you *know* are out there?
- Do you want to save time and frustration by avoiding the key mistakes that bloggers and authors routinely make?
- Do you want to learn how to build an audience that consumes and spreads your message?
- Would you like to discover the secret of seeing your book hit a best-seller list?
- Would you like to network with and be connected to experienced bloggers with large platforms, a publisher, and people who are on the same exact journey that you are on?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, read on.

One of the keys to getting your message heard above the static that clutters the online and offline worlds is to build *buzz* around your blog or book. That's what *Buzz* – and our companion Buzz Seminar Master Class – equips you to do.

Unlike branding approaches that promise – implicitly and explicitly – that they will “get rich” off of blogging or writing books, *The Buzz* shows, in practical detail, how to get your message out to as many people as possible and to earn a decent income in the process.

We call it *blue-collar blogging and writing*.

The Buzz removes all the fluff, distilling a proven formula that will help your blog or book spread to thousands of new readers.

Frank Viola, Michelle Shaeffer, David Hancock and I aren't arm-chair philosophers. The lessons we share – in these pages and even more in-depth in-person – have come out of hard-won experience.

Frank is a professional blogger and has written 6 best-selling books to date.

Michelle has no college education or marketing education and she makes a six-figure income every year through her blog.

David Hancock is Publisher of a thriving publishing house and steward of the Guerilla Marketing movement. His publishing house has hit the NY Times Best-Seller List over 20 times.

I've been part of the launch teams of some of the past decade's most-loved and best-selling books.

If what you read in these pages resonate with you and you want to create a roadmap to put these strategies into practice, you will want to get the Master Class course. Especially if you're:



- An established blogger
- Just starting out in the blogosphere
- Traditionally-published
- Self-published
- A new and inspiring author
- A social media manager
- An author
- Speaking
- Publicizing
- Marketing
- Publishing
- Podcasting
- Pastoring
- Teaching
- Life coaching
- A Real Estate agent
- A film producer
- A business owner

If you're someone who has a message you want to release into the world, congratulations. We need you and your message. But let me highlight what you're up against:

- There are over 300 million blogs on the Web today, all vying for people's limited attention.
- There are over 3 million books published each year in the USA.
- The average book in the USA sells less than 250 copies per year.
- The average book in the USA sells less than 3,000 copies over its lifetime.
- A book has less than a 1% chance of being stocked in an average bookstore.
- For every available bookstore shelf space, there are 100 to 1,000 or more titles competing for that shelf space.



With Great Opportunity Comes Great Challenge

It's increasingly difficult to make your blog or book stand out today. New titles are not just competing with three million recently published books; they are also competing with more than seven million other titles currently available for sale. And a plethora of other media outlets are also vying for your hive's time and attention.

The Buzz is designed to help you beat these odds . . . because we've done it ourselves through our blogs, books, and networks – creating the hives and cross-pollination needed to thrive in a crowded ecosystem.

What you'll learn in these pages is an excellent start.

Suppose you enrolled in college or a trade school to learn a new skill. You would spend thousands of dollars on your education, it would take years to complete, and when you graduated, there would be no guarantee that someone would hire you.

Now imagine that you attended a two-day intensive training that equips you to begin earning money immediately through your writing talent. The Buzz Course won't cost you anywhere near the cost of a college or trade school education, nor would it take you years to acquire the strategies that you need to earn income.

Will you do something different this year? Will you solve the problem of lower levels of creative fulfillment and income by learning the skills needed to transcend? If so, read on.

Learn more about the course at **BuzzSeminar.com**



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Frank Viola has written 10 books carried by major publishers, six of which have hit bestseller lists. Frank is intentional about building his blog audience, transforming his personal blog into a multimillion-page view hub that's become a full-time living. His blog ranks in the top 10 of all blogs in his genre.

Mike Morrell has coached dozens of authors and their teams in the art and skill of personal branding, helping books like the 18-million bestseller *The Shack* and the NY Times bestsellers *A New Kind of Christianity* and *Crazy Love* connect with “hives” of avid readers. Through Speakeasy, Mike has cultivated a hive of over 1,000 avid faith and spirituality bloggers who cross-pollinate quality books and ideas. Mike uses his movement-building social media strategies to catalyze events, including one he grew from just an idea to 1700 attendees in its first year of existence. (Editor)

Michelle Shaeffer learned how to blog from scratch. And in a short period of time, she has become one of world's leading entrepreneurial bloggers. Michelle has mentored over 5,000 bloggers through her “Ultimate Blog Challenge,” creating a powerful online business and showing others how to do the same. She's written over 1000 blog posts – and once wrote 42 blog posts in a single day.

David Hancock is the Founder of Morgan James Publishing and chairman of Guerrilla Marketing International. He has co-authored twelve books including *Guerrilla Marketing for Writers*, *The Entrepreneurial Author*, and *Performance Driven Thinking*. NASDAQ cites David as one of the world's most prestigious business leaders and is reported to be the future of publishing.



CHAPTER 1

How I Became a Professional Blogger – Frank Viola

My regular readers are aware that I don't profit from my book sales. As I've explained elsewhere, the money earned from my books is given to those in need and used for ministry expenses. Part of my *personal* income comes from my blog at FrankViola.org. And today I can say that I'm a "professional" blogger in that most of my personal income is derived from the blog.

Since my blog is free to read and subscribing is free as well, how do I generate income from it?

The answer: from advertising and affiliates.

Specifically, if you look on the right hand side of the blog, you'll see a number of advertisements. Those are all paid ads.

In addition, when someone buys a book that I feature on a book review or on my Top 100 Best Christian Books Ever Written, Amazon gives me a commission. I also receive commissions from other products and services I personally recommend and promote.

Anyway, here are the steps I took to become a professional blogger:

1. **Get a reliable, inexpensive hosting service.** I recommend BlueHost for this. Most professional bloggers I know use it. You can't go wrong with them. If you already have a blog, I recommend switching over to their hosting service.
2. **Use WordPress for your blogging platform.** If you click on this link, I show you how to start a WordPress blog in less than 10 minutes using BlueHost. This covers both #1 and #2.
3. **Get a beautiful blog theme.** I've used two kinds of themes. The Standard Theme and Studio Press. Studio Press is better in my view and less expensive. Click here to check it out. When you're on the page, click the blue "Shop for Themes" button to see all the awesome themes they carry.
4. **Post once a day for a year.** I did this all throughout 2012 and it made a huge difference in my traffic.
5. **Make most of your posts 800 words or less.** You can exceed this sometimes, but don't make it a pattern.



6. Participate in the comments. Be gracious, non-combative and non-defensive when people disagree with you. How you handle disagreements, criticism, and personal attacks are a measure of your spiritual stature. See [Three Types of Critics & How to Respond to Them](#).

7. Moderate comments yourself or have someone else do it. Never approve a comment that slanders another person or trashes them in any way. Your blog must be a safe place for people where civil dialogue is rewarded. If you allow gossip and slander on your site, you devalue your site and you'll lose your smartest readers as a result. (If you're a Christian, [giving a platform to the sins of slander and gossip is participating in those sins yourself](#).)

8. When your blog gets over 25,000 pageviews per month, start receiving advertisements. In my observation, if you have less than that, it will be difficult getting advertisers. Not impossible, but difficult. So work on building traffic first.

9. Write content that is thoughtful, unique, inspiring, encouraging, and challenging. If you tear others down, you lose credibility and very few people will pay attention to what you have to say. The same if you're constantly lifting yourself up above others. Usually, those who tear others down lift themselves up at the same time. Be encouraging, inspiring, and edifying.

10. Promote others on a regular basis and lead readers to valuable resources. I seek to do this regularly (see the "Reviews" section in the [Archives](#) for examples). Because I feature so many authors and books, the blog was rated #4 in the [Top 100 Book Related Blogs](#) recently.

11. Make it easy for people to subscribe. For example, you can see my subscribe button on the top right of the blog. You can't miss it. [Give them a choice of Email or RSS subscription](#).

12. Use social media wisely. Leverage social media to share your posts, but do so *without* exclusively promoting your own work. See [10 Twitter Mistakes That Make You Look Clueless](#). You can get by with posting on Facebook about twice a day. For Twitter, 3 to 12 times. But again, make your posts edifying, inspiring, and encouraging. Never abuse the platform (see #9).

While all the above suggestions will not guarantee that you will become a professional blogger, it's how I was able to do it. So at whatever level you are at in your blogging journey, these recommendations can start you on your way. At the very least, they will improve your blog.



This is a taste of what you'll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. [Learn more here.](#)



CHAPTER 2

10 Things I've Learned from Blogging – Frank Viola

I've been blogging since June of 2008. Since then, I've written over 700 posts.

I remember as far back as 2001, some of my friends encouraged me to start a blog. And I kept saying to them, "I don't have the time."

Well, I didn't . . . and I still don't. But here I am, blogging. (If I could explain the above sentence to you, I'd be three-fold a Solomon.)

So here's my list.

1. **Blogging allows me to pre-test my ideas and writing.**
2. **Blogging allows my readers to get to know me better.**
3. **Blogging helps me clarify my thoughts on a particular topic.**
4. **Blogging gives me a way to engage my readers beyond my books and podcast.**
5. **Blogging has made my ministry more visible and far-reaching.**
6. **Blogging gives me a sounding board for future ideas and projects.**
7. **Blogging gives me a venue to push the limits on the blogosphere by experimenting with various innovations.**

Examples: the one word monologue - the two word monologue - the \$25,000 give-away

8. **Blogging gives me a venue for showing how all of my work is tied together.**
9. **Blogging has helped me answer my critics with the graciousness of Christ.**
10. **Blogging gives me an opportunity to learn from others.**



CHAPTER 3

How to Lower Your Alexa Ranking – Frank Viola

Alexa is a blog ranking service that some advertisers look at. In late 2011, my main blog stood on a free WordPress.com platform. At that time, my Alexa score was 28,347,335. When I moved over to WordPress.org and used a custom blog theme, my Alexa score dropped below 1 million.

On in February of 2012, my Alexa score was 577,531. Then in June 2012, it broke the 100,000 mark.

Kudos to Michelle Shaeffer for being one of the people who taught me how to lower my Alexa score.

How I Lowered My Alexa Ranking

1. Get on a self-hosting WordPress.org blog. I recommend BlueHost for this.
2. Use Studio Themes on your blog.
3. Install the Alexa toolbar. You need to use Chrome, Firefox, or Internet Explorer as your browser. I'm not a fan of toolbars, but this one is neat.
4. Register for an Alexa account. It's easy and free.
5. Claim your site on Alexa.
6. Install the Alexa widget to your blog.
7. View your blog and all other blogs using the browser where the toolbar is installed. So if you installed it in Chrome, then view all blogs in Chrome. The same for Firefox or Internet Explorer.
8. Write a review for the blogs you like on the Alexa review system and give them high scores. The word on the street is that if you write negative reviews or give low scores, it hurts your blog ranking. So only review the sites and blogs that you like. The more reviews you write, the better.
9. Ask the people who like your blog to write a positive review for it on Alexa.
10. Blog consistently (at least once a week) and write quality content that people want to share. Don't beg or ask them to share your posts. If what you write is valuable and edifying, people will share your posts naturally.
11. Be patient. The following will you give an idea of the pace by which my Alexa score dropped.

3/6/12 – Alexa global rank = 564,234

4/4/12 – Alexa global rank = 262,700



5/5/12 – Alexa global rank = 135,307
6/6/12 – Alexa global rank = 99,870
7/6/12 – Alexa global rank = 88,092
8/6/12 – Alexa global rank = 87,392
9/6/12 – Alexa global rank = 79,324
10/6/12 – Alexa global rank = 75,133
10/20/13 – Alexa global rank = 66,367
11/20/13 – Alexa global rank = 63,869

How popular is frankviola.org?

Alexa Traffic Ranks

How is this site ranked relative to other sites?



This is a taste of what you'll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. [Learn more here.](#)



CHAPTER 4

5 Mistakes I've Made in Writing – Frank Viola

I've been writing since the early 90s, though I didn't get published until 2005. I've learned quite a bit about how to be a better writer since I first began. And with each new book, I'm still learning.

What follows are five pointers I've learned through mistakes. Incidentally, a mistake remains a mistake unless you learn from it. If you learn from it, it becomes a lesson. Thus learning from your mistakes transforms them from being blunders into builders.

If you are a writer of any sort (from blogs to books), you may find these of help.

1. Use exclamation points rarely, if ever. I'm 100% Italian. So I'm a passionate person by nature. When I preach about the Lord Jesus Christ, I can get very passionate. In my earlier writing, I used exclamation points to communicate passion and emphasis. Last year I was talking to Francis Frangipane. I mentioned in passing that I used to use exclamation points profusely, and he said, "That's funny; I recently noticed how often I used them in my earlier work." He also happens to be full-blooded Italian.

The problem with exclamation points is that some people misinterpret them as communicating anger. Instead of passion, they interpret the author as being mad. In addition, too many exclamation points can be a distraction to the flow of thought.

For that reason, you'll find very few exclamation points in my published work. Pagan Christianity contains more than my other volumes, but not nearly as many as my earlier work had. Barna and I didn't want *Pagan* to read as a sterile, heady, boring history lesson. Instead, the book was written with the fervor of the prophets of old. And you cannot write a book like that without some emphasis. At least not if you want to see people impacted and changed by it.

So if you are a writer who is passionate, beware the exclamation point. Use them few and far between.

2. Use short sentences wherever possible. In my pre-published work, I gave no thought to how long my sentences were. I later discovered that the shorter the sentence, the easier the read. If you want to broaden your audience, you must write in a readable manner. And shortening your sentences lowers the reading level. So I often break long sentences into two or three shorter ones. Hemingway was a master at this. That's why his books were so accessible.

I personally struggle with writers who use long sentences. One British New Testament scholar, who is quite well-read, will sometimes use 60 words in a sentence! (I thought



that was a nice place to put an exclamation point. :-)) With those never-ending-sentences, you have to catch your breath when finished. I often have to re-read such sentences two or three times to understand what he's saying. I'm not sure who his editor is, but he'd have far more readers if he strove for an average of 7 to 12 words per sentence.

3. Don't use fancy, difficult words. I'm fond of obscure, snazzy words. A fancy word is okay now and then, as long as the reader can understand it via the context. But I used to use them far too often. What alerted me to this mistake was that some readers of my pre-published work would complain that they had to read my writings with a dictionary in hand. Sigh.

4. Break up your chapters into sections with sub-headings. I started doing this early on. But when I first began writing, I didn't. Using sub-headings makes a chapter more digestible. It's easier on the reader, and it also makes it easy for them to bookmark long chapters for later reading. I'm a slow reader, so I always appreciate it when an author breaks up her or his chapters into smaller sections.

5. If you use endnotes, make sure each section contains the chapter number listed along with the chapter title. For example, you want your endnotes to read something like, "Chapter 10: Beware the Naked Man Who Hands You His Shirt" and then the notes will fall below the heading. Notice that set of notes begins with "Chapter 10." That's very important.

I learned to add the chapter numbers in the endnotes because of my own frustration with trying to navigate endnotes when reading someone else's work. When the heading is present without the chapter number, it makes it very hard to find the endnotes for that chapter. I prefer footnotes myself because it's less work for the reader. However, most publishers don't like to use footnotes. Cosmetically, it doesn't look as nice. And some books that aren't scholarly will appear scholarly just because of the footnotes. That alone will drive some readers away. So when using endnotes, mark each set of notes with the appropriate chapter numbers.

This is a taste of what you'll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. [Learn more here.](#)



CHAPTER 5

A Word to Authors – Aspiring or Actual – Frank Viola

If you are the author of books, blogs, or articles that are “edgy” or that challenge mainstream/traditional thinking . . . or you’re aspiring to be such . . . you must get used to a few things. In fact, you must learn to live with them.

Here are eight that come to mind. They are in no particular order:

1. **Expect some reviewers of your work to completely misrepresent what you believe, what you have said, and engage in masterful straw-man argumentation.** Some of them will falsely accuse you of writing the very *opposite* of what you have written and stand for. Do not expect these reviewers to have the spiritual sensitivity and integrity to show their reviews to you first to ensure that they are accurate before they’re published in some public venue.
2. **Expect some people who read these reviews to believe the misrepresentations and begin the bashing machine without ever reading the work themselves to find out if the review was accurate or not.** People still believe what they read despite that they know in their hearts that “not everything you read is true.”
3. **Don’t expect those who have read your work and understand it to know about these reviews.** In other words, don’t expect them to respond to and refute the misrepresentations. And if some of your supporters do happen to see these inaccurate reviews, don’t expect them to rise to your defense. It’s a rare person who will stick their neck out for another person. Most people shrink back from doing this out of fear of rejection. Selfishness usually reigns in such situations.
4. **Don’t expect any of your critics to challenge you privately to a public debate or discussion on your work.** (Whenever this does happen, you will be pleasantly shocked.) Instead, expect them to criticize, attack, and misrepresent you in public, never coming to you privately to ask open and honest questions that think the best of your motives. In other words, *don’t expect them to treat you the way they would want to be treated if they had written something you disagreed with or didn’t understand.*
5. **Always remember that all things come from God’s hand — both negative and positive — so never defend yourself.** But learn to trust the Lord with all of it. If what you have written carries His anointing, it will stand, and He will use it to change lives, despite any opposition from the gainsayers. (Answering someone’s question is not the same as defending yourself. Defending yourself is getting angry, attacking back, and responding when not specifically asked.)



6. Remember that if you have something worthwhile to say, you will attract disagreement, hostility, spin, and opposition. The servant is not greater than his or her Master. Over-sensitive people will say things to and about you that are hurtful, and they will “read into” your words, thinking the worst of what you meant. Some people are so unwilling to believe the best of others that they will still misrepresent you or something you said even after you have explained your meaning to them. Sometimes the attacks will come from people who are your supposed “fans” when you say something they don’t like. Expect this.

7. How you respond to your critics speaks volumes about you and the message you carry. If you get defensive and attack them back, you reveal just how small a person you are. Be willing to answer questions about your work if they are posed to you with a right spirit, but do not engage in defensive, angry argumentation (there’s a big difference between the two). A soft answer turns away wrath. Refrain from giving people what you think they really deserve. Take the higher road.

8. Always be open for correction, adjustment, and more light. Never entertain the delusion that you have “arrived.”

In this connection, a few years ago, I read an article by my friend Brian McLaren. He crafted an excellent letter to his critics. I’m not sure if you’ve ever had this experience or not (no doubt many of you have), but I’m speaking of the feeling that while you are reading something, you resonate with it so profoundly that you feel that you could have written it word-for-word. It’s almost like *deja vu*.

I felt that way when I read Brian’s letter to his critics. He put into the letter so many things that I’ve said in the past ... almost verbatim ... and he thought so many of the same thoughts that I had thought ... almost verbatim ... that it was a little scary.

Here’s the letter. I wish every person who reviews the work of others would read it and take it to heart.

~ Frankie V.

A Friendly Note to My Critics

by Brian McLaren

Summer 2006

You would think after 24 years of serving as a pastor I would get used to it. You would think I would get a thick skin so that criticism wouldn’t bother me. But I confess that I am disheartened by some forms of criticism. Obviously, I am aware of the fact that some of my ideas are controversial. I believe that all controversial ideas need plenty of scrutiny – as do many non-controversial ones. I do not in any way think I am above scrutiny, and I



have been wrong enough times in my life to be sure that I will need ongoing correction for the rest of my life.

I struggle more whenever a new book comes out. Books are like kids, and the release of a new book is like sending your child off to school for the first time. You don't want her to get made fun of for her thick glasses and braces. You know she's a little clumsy and overweight, but you don't want her to be chosen last for the team or called mean names. You don't want her to get pushed around on the playground by the local bullies. You see her potential, and you hope that others will, and it hurts when they judge her by her looks, or when they make her the focus of their faultfinding mission. Of course she's not perfect, but you know she has value and you hate to see her treated badly.

Thankfully, some criticism comes in a truly constructive way – it helps me, informs me, and helps me be a better person, writer, and Christian. In my most recent book, for example, *The Secret Message of Jesus*, a few readers pointed out a few small factual errors in the text. Thankfully, those mistakes were not substantial, and they will be corrected in future editions.

So it's not the helpful pointing out of factual errors that disheartens me; it's the unfair, inaccurate, unreflective, and mean-spirited responses – especially when they are done in the name of God. I imagine that some fair-minded people who deeply disagree with my books also wince at the way less fair-minded people critique me or my work.

When people who claim to love the Bible launch unfair, inaccurate, unreflective, and mean-spirited attacks, especially when they do so on a public and international forum like the internet, they are not only hurting me and sometimes my readers (which they may not care about) – they may also be hurting the cause of Christ (which they do care about). After all, the Bible clearly says we must not bear false witness, spread rumors, or indulge in uncharitable or unwholesome speech. It says we should do to others as they do to us and act justly. It asserts that our love for one another reflects on the credibility of our message. It tells us we should examine ourselves and look at obstructions our own eyes (which would include flaws in our own viewpoint or perspective) before we try to perform eye surgery on someone else. This kind of behavior among people who claim to love the Bible, Jesus, Christianity, orthodoxy, and truth brings dishonor on these very things.

So, in a fraternal and hopeful spirit, I would like to make several requests of my critics.

1. Accuracy: I repeatedly read people claiming, "McLaren says..." or "McLaren believes..." when I have either never said what they claim or explicitly denied it. Or they make exaggerated statements like, "McLaren doesn't believe anything," or "He questions everything." Even though you think I'm wrong, may I ask you to accurately represent me, and not push what I say to an absurd extreme that any sane person would reject?



2. Fairness: Sometimes people accurately quote one sentence, or part of one sentence that I have written, and then use it to claim I am being imbalanced or dualistic or reductionistic, and so on. I often go back and check the sentences or phrases they quote, and then I notice that in the very next sentence or paragraph, I qualify or balance or add nuance to what they have quoted. If you are on a fault-finding mission, you will quote the first sentence and ignore the second, but if you are pursuing fairness – as an expression of your own integrity and good character, can I ask you to seek to be more fair?

As well, may I politely ask you in the interest of fairness to avoid guilt-by-association? This works two ways. First, I read and quote a wide variety of people. More than that, I try to build friendships with people with whom I disagree. With increasing frequency, I find that people are attacking me because I keep company with certain people (and even speak with them) or I quote someone who we would both agree is wrong on many counts. Since Jesus was a friend of sinners, and since Paul quoted “pagan” poets on more than one occasion, can I ask you to refrain from using guilt by association in your critique? Second, I find critics attacking other people merely for keeping company with me or listening to me. Be assured, people often are kind enough to speak with me or quote me on occasion even though they disagree with me on other points. I hope you won’t criticize them for doing so. Perhaps they’ll have a good influence on me!

3. Judgmentalism: There is a difference between truthfully reporting a statement and uncharitably inferring a motive. So when people say, “McLaren shows contempt for the Bible,” or “McLaren is a coward because he didn’t answer my question directly,” or “McLaren thinks he is better than everyone else,” that seems less like an act of reporting or analysis and more like violating Jesus’ command not to judge. In Paul’s famous love passage, he says that “love believes all things,” which seems to mean that love believes the best – it tries to interpret other people’s behavior not cynically, but charitably, graciously giving the benefit of the doubt. Similarly, Jesus sums up the law and prophets by teaching us to treat others as we would be treated. Unless you would like others to jump to conclusions about your motives and assume the worst about you, may I ask you to fairly and accurately engage with my ideas, but try to avoid making judgments about things you simply do not know – my heart, my motives, my intentions?

4. Rumors: It is quite distressing to see inaccurate or unfair or judgmental things said about my writings or my own character. But it is even worse when these rumors are passed around as facts. Recently, I’ve read a number of reviews by people who admit they have never read my books, but are working from hearsay. Please don’t spread rumors, and please don’t believe unsubstantiated claims.

5. Lack of Self-examination: Those who attack my ideas often do so in a way that shows they haven’t really examined themselves. For example, someone recently criticized some of my writings in ways opposite to what I’m requesting here. Then he quoted a Bible verse to refute what he claimed to be my position. (Sadly, he had misinterpreted



my actual position, so he was attacking a straw man.) Interestingly, the Bible verse he referred to actually contradicts the position he claimed to hold. Even if I am wrong in my view, this kind of unreflective reaction is a bad reflection on the Christian faith. So please, if you use a Bible verse to try to refute me, first see if it actually supports your own position.

6. Name-calling. Words and phrases like “liberal,” “heretic,” “of the devil,” “Satanic,” “fundamentalist,” and so on are very effective in discrediting someone, but they are also rather childish and unhelpful and divisive. Those of us who are parents don’t like our children calling each other names in this way, and I am quite certain God has similar feelings when we resort to name-calling.

7. Harshness: In 2 Timothy 2, Paul advises his younger associate to use gentleness when he seeks to correct people in error. I’ve noticed that whenever I am harsh with people, I am less likely to gain a hearing for my message. In fact, some of your frustration with me may come exactly from times when I have been harsh, which I sincerely regret. If you are hoping to correct me or people who feel they have been helped by my books, may I ask that you do so with gentleness? That way, if you’re completely right in your correction, you’ll increase the chances that we’ll listen. You’ll allow us to respond to the truth of your corrections rather than drive us away with the spirit in which you express them. And if you are not completely right, you will have made it easy for there to be constructive dialogue so that we can all grow through our interchange – instead of filling the body of Christ with the toxins of attack, defense, counterattack, and so on.

8. Disharmony: I’ve noticed that intelligent people often use a “but” when they could more profitably use an “and.” For example, I might make a statement that is true and accurate and needed as far as it goes. But obviously, that one statement still doesn’t say everything that needs to be said. So, someone else can wisely and helpfully add the word “and,” and build on what I’ve said, contributing balance, depth, nuance, and so on. This is how good conversation progresses. But if she instead implies I am stupid or wrong or dishonest for not saying both what I said and what she wishes to add, that strikes me as unhelpful. She has a chance to work in teamwork with me for the common good, but instead she chooses to set us up as enemies. I love Paul’s words in this regard in 1 Thessalonians 5: “Therefore, let us pursue what makes for peace and mutual upbuilding,” or his words in Ephesians 4: “Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

In that light, I want to say again that wherever I have been harsh in any of my writings, whenever I have come across to you as divisive and disrespectful, I am truly sorry. These eight requests are communication practices to which I aspire, but sadly, I fail to practice them at times. So of course I will endeavor to be gracious to those who fail to meet these ideals, since I stand in need of grace myself. I have made it my policy to avoid name-calling or even naming individuals in a negative light. I have tried to present



my ideas with humility so that others do not feel shamed or insulted in any way. But I am sure that I have failed on more occasions than I realize. I have many regrets in my life, many of which relate to the way of I have critiqued others. Looking back, I have never been proud of even one time when I have been harsh, sarcastic, or disrespectful in my words or attitudes to other human beings.

So I want to assure you, if you find yourself among those who deeply disagree with me, that I mean you no harm. I repeatedly tell people, if they are happy and confident in your approach, that they stay with it and ignore me, my work, and my friends entirely. I am not here to steal any of your “market share” or do you harm in any way. Instead, I’m here for all the people who can’t survive following your way of thinking and your way of doing things. These people, many of them, are about to leave the church and the Christian faith entirely. Many have already left in disillusionment. Many are seekers with lots of issues, the kinds of people for whom your churches aren’t ready, nor are they ready for you. You may consider them apostates or pagans or whatever, but these are the people I feel some calling to help – so they can be connected to Christ and his mission even though they can’t function in the religious settings over which you preside or in which you are yourselves sincerely satisfied and blessed. I am not your enemy. I see myself as your colleague, just as Paul, who consented to work with Gentiles at the margins, was the colleague of the apostles in Jerusalem, who continued to focus on serving the Jewish community.

Paul wisely said in Galatians 5 that we must be careful. If we bite and devour one another, we will consume one another. Jesus similarly said that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Yes, there is a place for mature and direct debate, but a person’s attempt to correct another’s errors can in some cases create more trouble than the original person’s errors. I hope we who disagree on some matters can agree to work together to avoid that sort of vicious cycle.

Whenever I am shown to be wrong, I pray that my love for God and God’s truth will lead me to side joyfully with my critics against my own writings. But until I am convinced that I am wrong, all I can do is seek to tell the truth as I see it, and raise questions that I believe must be raised, with appropriate humility and openness to correction, while pleading with those who disagree to do so in ways that will not harm the communities and values we all cherish.

Whether or not you agree with these requests, be assured that I am committed to prayerful self-examination in light of all critique, and I seek to learn from all attempts to help or instruct me, even if those attempts come out in a less-than-ideal way. When critiques are obviously unfair or intentionally malicious, I hope I can receive them as opportunities to grow in my Christian character and follow the example of Christ, whose gracious response to mistreatment is one of the ways he fully and perfectly revealed the gracious character of God.



So in summary, I hope that if you are among my good Christian critics, you will aspire to be a good Christian in the way you respond to my writings, even if you think I am a bad Christian for what I write or the questions I raise. We have a chance to model constructive dialogue rather than the religious bickering which has too often characterized all our religious communities. Even if I am as wrong you think I am, what good would it be to prove a wrong person wrong if in the process right people prove themselves mean-spirited, unfair, unreflective, inaccurate, dishonest, or hypocritical?

One final request. I hope that none of us will spend so much time in internal debate about our beliefs that we neglect putting our beliefs into action. It would be tragic for both you and me if our differences distracted us and others from what religion is supposed to be about: helping widows and orphans and others in need, and keeping ourselves “unspotted from the world,” as James says.

There is much more that could be said, but I fear this is already far too long. Please feel free to link to this note or pass it on to people for whom you believe it would be helpful.

This is a taste of what you’ll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. Learn more and register [here](#).



CHAPTER 6

How to Start a Blog from Scratch – Frank Viola

In 2012, I took some new steps to increase the reach of my blog. I did this for two reasons. 1) I wanted to get the messages that are on my heart out to more readers, and 2) I wanted to increase the income that this blog generates.

While my blog and podcast are completely free, I earn income from advertising and affiliates. I never knew that becoming a professional blogger was possible, but it is.

In a future post, I'll talk about some steps you can take to becoming a professional blogger (for those of you who are interested). But in this post, I want to sketch out how to start a blog in less than 10 minutes. Just follow each step and you'll have a brand new blog by which to reach the world.

I suggest you open up this post on your browser in one screen and then open up a new screen to follow each step, point by point. If you have friends who are interested in blogging, please share this post with them.

You can also watch the video of these steps by clicking here.

15 Easy Steps for Creating a Blog from Scratch – Demystifying the Process



Step 1. Click BlueHost and click the **SIGN UP NOW** green button. BlueHost is the only web hosting service I recommend. It's inexpensive and the support is awesome. You can also get domain names from them at great rates.



Step 2. If this is a brand new blog, type in a domain name in the **I NEED A DOMAIN NAME** box to see if the domain name is available. If you want to transfer your existing blog to BlueHost, click your domain name in the **I HAVE A DOMAIN NAME** box.

Step 3. Once you've settled on a domain name that's available, fill out the registration form.

Step 4. As you can see, you can set up your blog for 12 months at \$7.95 per month or get a lower rate for a longer period of time. I pay \$4.95 a month for 3 years. Select **Confirm** for the Service Agreement and click the blue **NEXT** button at the bottom

Step 5. When you are taken to the next page, click the blue **CONTROL PANEL** button at the top.

Step 6. When you see the welcome message, scroll down to **Software / Services** (heading) and click the **WORDPRESS** button.

Step 7. Click the green **INSTALL** button at the bottom.

Step 8. When you get to the next page, go to **Step 2: Advanced Options** and give your new site a name in the box.

Step 9. Create your own password in the **Password** box.

Step 10. Check both boxes under **Step 3: Legal Information**.

Step 11. BlueHost will now create your new WordPress blog (you'll see an "In Progress" time stick).

Step 12. Your blog is now ready to go! Open up a new window on your browser and type in the name of your blog. Example: www.mynewblog.com

Step 13. Click the **Log In** link on the right and enter your username and password. (Admin & Your Password). You can save the password if you want by clicking on the box that prompts you for this.

Step 14. Click on **Appearance** on the left-hand panel and click **Add New Themes** to change your blog theme. When you find a theme you like, click on **Install** and then **Activate**.

Step 15. Click on **Posts** on the left-hand panel and click **Add New**. Type out the title of your new blog post in the top box and begin typing the post in the large middle box. When finished, click the blue **PUBLISH** button on the right.



You're done!

[Click here to see these steps in a video and see my six reasons why I recommend BlueHost over every other hosting service.](#)

If you want to add a KILLER theme to enhance your WordPress blog, I recommend [StudioPress Themes](#). They are beautiful, inexpensive, and very powerful.



P.S. Here are 6 reasons why I recommend BlueHost.

Ever since I became [a professional blogger](#), readers have asked me what blog platform I recommend as well as what blog hosting service I endorse.

The answer for both is [BlueHost](#) . . . hands down.

As I argued in [this podcast episode](#), I believe every Christian should have a blog. Even if you're not a writer, having a space online is important in our day.

Here are the reasons why I recommend [BlueHost](#) over other hosting services:

1. [BlueHost](#) uses WordPress, which is my preferred platform. I won't use anything else. It's much better than Typepad and Blogger.
2. The price is incredible. You can get a 3-year hosting service for as little as \$4.95 a month.
3. It's reliable. I've used other hosting services and was frustrated to find that my sites were down often. Since I've used BlueHost, I've not had one problem.
4. The customer service is as good as it comes. The folks at [BlueHost](#) are very helpful should you have any questions.



5. They have an amazing affiliate program. They give you \$65 for every new account that is referred by you.
6. They have an easy to use step-by-step process to start a blog in 5 minutes. In this post, I give you all the steps.
7. I also highly recommend Studio Themes to get your blog looking stellar.

This is a taste of what you'll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. Learn more and register here.



CHAPTER 7

Eight Reasons I Don't Read Your Blog – Frank Viola

Recently I offered a balancing caution to the almost deafening emphasis today on building a platform. If you have a unique message to share with the world, platform is essential. And I've spoken on it before myself, especially with respect to authors.

But while building a platform is important for anyone armed with a message, we must also be aware of the dark side of social media and the temptation to obsess over statistics.

As a supplement to my Advice to Bloggers chapter earlier in this book, here are 8 reasons why I don't read certain blogs. This post could have also been titled "8 Reasons Why We Don't Read Your Blog" since I speak for countless others. There are other reasons why I won't read your blog, of course. I don't read blogs I've never heard about nor blogs that are dedicated to subjects in which I'm not interested. The same is true for everyone else.

But these 8 reasons have to do with things that you can correct . . . if you want to. So if you're a blogger, you may want to consider these points. We don't read your blog because . . .

1. The design is horrible and it's a distraction from what you write. Sometimes a blog design is so bad that it's difficult to read the text.

Solution: Install a nice-looking theme and your problem will be solved. I recommend StudioPress Themes. They are beautiful, inexpensive, and very powerful.

2. Your posts are filled with misspelled words and grammatical errors. Typos are inevitable. I have a Ph.D in Typo. I'm incapable of seeing my own and rely on you all to let me know when you spot one. But posts that are *full* of misspelled words and grammos are a big distraction. And (right or wrong) they give the impression that what you say isn't reliable.

Solution: Find someone who knows grammar to proof read all of your posts before you publish them.

3. Your blog has nothing unique or interesting to say. Time is precious for all of us, so readers must be choosy. Many of us will only read things that we find fresh, challenging, encouraging, or insightful.



Solution: Rethink the purpose of your blog. Find new material.

4. You never promote, feature, or lift others up. The blog serves you all the time.

Solution: Do some interviews with people who are doing something interesting and edifying. Review a few books, audios, albums, songs, etc. that you want to promote. Consider having some people guest post.

5. Your posts are way too long most of the time. Once in awhile a long post is fine. But writing a mini-novel constantly on a blog is way over the top.

Solution: Shoot for less than 1,000 words for most of your posts and don't exceed 3,500 in the longer ones.

6. You misrepresent other people and their writings. In this way, your blog does a disservice to the body of Christ and grieves the Lord Himself.

Solution: This is a heart problem. Oftentimes envy is the root of it. Get before the Lord and have Him search your heart to the point of repentance in this area. Treat others the way you want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Never misrepresent another human being, especially another child of God.

7. You don't moderate your comments and allow readers to slander and gossip about others. The sins of slander and gossip are alive and well even among those who name the Name. To allow your blog to be a platform for these sins is to participate in them yourself.

Solution: Moderate your comments and never approve something that personally attacks another individual. To put it another way, never approve a comment that you wouldn't want approved if it was about you or your family members. Remember the words of your Lord and "do unto others."

8. You are negative and most of your posts tear down. You rarely build up. You rarely magnify the Lord and bring Him into view.

Solution: Learn what it means to build up and give Christ. Even when you write a post that challenges or questions the status quo, be sure to build up and offer positive solutions.

The above list is meant to sharpen and improve. So if any of it applies to your blog, consider it as constructive criticism to help you do better. I'm still in school myself, learning every day.



This is a taste of what you'll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. Learn more [here](#).



CHAPTER 8

What Led Zeppelin Can Teach Us About Writing – Frank Viola

Once in a while we bloggers will get someone (virtually never a regular subscriber) who'll flip out over one word or sentence in a post, completely missing the big point we're making.

Soooo . . . for those of you who will read what follows hot-under-the-collar with smoke blowing out of both ears and eyes blurred by rage *just because* I dared mention a “non-Christian” rock band as an illustration, hold your fire.

Comments like “Led Zeppelin is demonic” or “Haven't you ever played *Stairway to Heaven* backwards?” benightedly miss the point. (The point of this post has nothing to do with the band's personal life or beliefs.)

That said, if you're an artist of any kind – whether an author, blogger, speaker, musician, painter, etc. – there are three things you can learn from Led Zeppelin:

1. Don't sell out to pop culture. Zeppelin didn't compromise their values for the sake of pop culture. Consequently, they refused to cut singles (at least in the UK). Their feeling was that if someone wanted to get into their work, they had to buy their albums.

An album is a body of work. So take the whole thing or leave it, they felt. In this regard, Zep went against the grain of all other bands during their time. They stayed true to their art. They wanted to be an underground band, thus they seldom did interviews. *Rolling Stone* (the voice of the music establishment at the time) was brutal to them.

Take Away: If you want your book, blog, music or other art to be a bestseller, then make it “pop.” But if you want to stay true to your message, conviction, and vision, go for depth. Refuse to go “pop.” Refuse to appease the establishment and leave the sales to God.

Ironically, Zeppelin is regarded by many experts to be the most popular hard rock band in history. Their influence was seminal, changing the face of modern music. All this despite the fact that they refused to go “pop.” Sometimes staying true to your art grabs the multitudes. But more often it does not. Staying true to yourself and faithful to your calling should always be the goal (1 Cor. 4:2; Luke 16:10-12).

2. Don't be afraid to debunk the conventional wisdom. For their fourth album, Zep decided to do what had never been done before or since. *They gave the album no title.* And they didn't even put their name on it!



Their record company said that this was “commercial suicide.” Yet Led Zeppelin IV (which fans called it) went on to sell over 32 million copies and has been hailed as one of the greatest albums in music history.

Take Away: Don’t be afraid to go against the conventional wisdom. Dare to do the unthinkable and that which has never been done before. Not for shock value, but if it’s in your heart to do so. Follow your convictions, not the praises of mortals.

3. Speak well of your competitors. In 1970, Zep surpassed *The Beatles* in popularity. When Zeppelin was asked about this, they only had good things to say about “The Fab Four.” The last part of this interview doesn’t appear on YouTube. But at the end of it, Jimmy Page is asked, “How do you feel about *The Beatles*?” His answer: “I think they’re great . . . they’ve made some fantastic statements.”

This kind of well-speaking about one’s peers (and competitors) is profoundly admirable. But among Christian ministers it is so rarely seen today.

We more often see the opposite . . . such as Elvis’ alleged posture toward *The Beatles*. According to Ringo Starr, while Elvis was nice to *The Beatles* in person, the rock and roll “king” tried to have them deported because he was so threatened by them.

What makes this even more disturbing is that *The Beatles* idolized Elvis, regarding him as a distant mentor. Tragically, in the Christian world, it’s not uncommon for mentors to turn on their mentees when they excel them.

Take Away: Always speak well of your competitors and even your enemies. (I read the New Testament once and Jesus had something to say about this in Matthew 5:44 and Paul in Romans 12:14, 19-21 – “bless” means to “speak well of”.) You can always find *something* complimentary to say about another believer – without “damning them with faint praise.”

Ironically, whenever I’ve publicly spoken well about someone who was throwing spears at me, I’ve gotten flack from some Christians. They felt it was wrong for me to respond this way. They wanted me to attack them back. Sadly, they had no idea what I was doing or why. Taking the high ground almost seems to be a lost art in the Christian world today.

As Benjamin Franklin so beautifully put it, “I resolve to speak ill of no man whatever, not even in a matter of truth but rather by some means excuse the faults I hear charged upon others, and upon proper occasions speak all the good I know of everybody.”

Now . . . for you artists (and Zep fans) out there, check out these clips:



Eddie Cochran 1: Come on Everybody

Eddie Cochran 2: She's Somethin' Else

Now compare those to this one:

Eddie Cochran ZEPPIFIED: Zep Performs both songs back to back – Note that this is early Zep. The electrifying energy, extraordinary talent, and emotional power of the band bleeds through, as well as their ability to take old tunes and make them uniquely their own.

Btw/ you may want to watch these clips soon because YouTube will probably pull some of them after the amount of hits to each video that this post will generate. I hope I'm wrong, but we'll see soon enough . . .

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CHAPTER 9

8 Creative Ways to Build Big Buzz: See Them In Action – Michelle Shaeffer

Have you ever wondered how some authors (or speakers, or anyone looking to get noticed!) manage to build incredible buzz around what they're doing?

Author Frank Viola just launched a new book on Wednesday that has ranked in the top #15 on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) for the last 3 days. Right now it's at #13 which means it's the 13th bestselling book out of Amazon's 7 million books.

And he's shooting to hit #1. (If you want to help with that effort, I'll tell you how at the end of this short post.)

How did Viola get his book in the top 15 on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) on the very first day of the book's release? He did 8 important things:

1. Create Something Quality

Frank wrote an amazing book. [God's Favorite Place on Earth](#) combines novel-like fiction with nonfiction, drama with principles, narrative with teaching. It's a unique look at the story of Jesus and his encounters in Bethany.

If you want to get others on board to share what you're creating, then make it the best you can.

2. Understand the Struggles & Feelings of Your Community

In telling the story, Viola addresses 18 big struggles that people of faith face. The struggle against fear, doubt, discouragement, and handling rejection are among them. He also talks about what to do when God doesn't seem to meet your expectations.

Do you know what the biggest challenges are that your community and clients face?

3. Get Authority Endorsements

He was able to get 47 top authors to read and recommend his book. Among them are John Ortberg, Mary DeMuth, Jack Hayford, Tricia Goyer, Jon Acuff, Brant Hansen, and many others.

Start now and work to build the relationships and connections to help you.



4. Encourage Sharing

He made it easy for his readers to share the book with their friends. Just look at this page he created with ready-made tweets, Facebook and Pinterest updates.

Don't just ask your community to help you spread the word, give them the tools they need and make it as simple as possible for them.

5. Provide Incentives

Viola is giving away 25 eBooks & audios by 19 different authors to everyone who buys his book this week! How can you resist that?

Think about who you know that has a complementary message or service that you could team up with and reach out to them.

6. Promotional Creativity

He had a professional make a gripping video trailer for the book that looks like a movie trailer. You can view it here.

What can you do that's a little more creative to get the word out?

7. Create a Sample Giveaway

Instead of creating the traditional (and very boring) "sample chapter," Viola went further and put 20% of the book into a neat looking PDF so readers could sample the book. He also made it easy for people to share it. Click here to check out the sampler.

Can you create something similar that gives people a "taste" of what you're offering and encourages them to share?

8. Community Engagement

Viola is a best-selling author who refuses to be a celebrity. That means he's accessible. You can contact him on his blog. And unlike many authors of his caliber, he leaves comments open. I've emailed back and forth with Frank many times, and he's always approachable and kind.

Don't forget the benefits that come with building relationships and being an engaged part of your community.



This is a taste of what you'll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. Learn more and register [here](#).



CHAPTER 10

43 Powerfully Simple Fill-in-the-Blank Blog Post Headline Templates – Michelle Shaeffer

Do you stare at that empty “Enter title here” box on your blog post, struggling to come up with a good headline that will compel people to click through and read your latest post?

Are you wondering just what makes a good headline, anyway?

Never fear! Your answer is here in the form of fill-in-the-blank easy templates below. But first...



The biggest thing you’ve got to understand is that your headlines are promises and you need to promise something that your readers want if you want to get their attention.

Your readers need to know exactly what they’ll get when they click through to read your content. What are you promising and why should it matter to them? What do they get out of giving you their attention and time?

That’s why it’s so important to start everything you do from the perspective of WHO are you writing for... what are their goals... dreams... fears... challenges... secret fantasies?



Which of these is more interesting to you?

- **Five Good Types of Headlines**
- **How to Write Better Titles for Your Blog Posts**

Or...

- **Read This Now: The Secret Triggers Behind 43 Powerfully Simple Fill-in-the-Blank Blog Post Headline Templates You Can Use to Get Slightly More Rich and Famous Starting Today**

Both describe the same post (the one you're reading right now). The second has action (read now!), intrigue (secret triggers?), specificity (hey bloggers, this is for you), implied "ease" of results (it's got fill-in-the-blank templates included), and a believable result promised (get slightly rich and famous).

The Secrets Desires You Must Stay Aware of to Write Great Headlines

We all want enough money to live our dreams, to create loving lasting relationships, and to be healthy and experience life fully. Health, wealth, relationships and wisdom/spirituality are triggers that grab our attention.

I can't promise writing good blog posts will get you the relationship you want (well I could but I'm not sure that's realistic, unless you pen a poetic ode to your spouse or partner about how wonderful they are and share it with the world, that could work to win you brownie points) but I can tell you it will help you make money (get slightly rich) and build a platform (get slightly famous).

Know which of these desires you're playing to when you write your headlines and work it in where it fits.

How to Really Get Good at This "Headline Thing"

How do you get good at writing headlines (your blog post titles are headlines) that grab your readers attention and get them to click through and read?

1. Write lots of headlines.

Some will bomb. Others will rock. Do it enough and you start to get a better feel for what'll work.

Test your headlines. Try split testing and experiment with different headlines when you share your content on social networks to see what gets attention.



Run headlines by your team, colleagues or mastermind group for their feedback and specifically ask them “what can I change to make you more likely to read this blog post based on the title?”

Like writing blog posts or anything else in life, experience makes a difference so practice lots (and then move to step 2 and learn from experienced writers).

2. Read and dissect lots of headlines.

Don’t just read headlines, but take time to ask, “Why did this grab me?” Notice what gets your attention and dissect why.

Browse the magazine aisle at your supermarket or meander through your local bookstore. Look at the bestsellers on Amazon. Why did you stop and look at the magazines or books you did?

If you want to *really* learn what works in headlines, study direct response copywriting and books like The 100 Greatest Advertisements, Influence, Scientific Advertising, and anything Dan Kennedy’s written.

3. Model what works.

Use templates. Watch the most popular blogs in your niche and see what they’re doing that’s working well.

Bookmark blog posts like this one (yes, I’m shameless!) that give you both fill-in-the-blank templates AND tell you why they work so you understand what it is you’re doing.

So How DO You Write Great Blog Post Titles Without Spending All Day Brainstorming?

I’ve blogged a few times about [how to kill boring blog post headlines](#) and [the process I go through to write and test headlines to find the real firecrackers](#).

But sometimes I’m a slacker. (Shhhh.... you’ll keep that just between us right?)

I don’t want to sit here and think... think... think... That’s where headline templates come in SUPER handy. Just fill in the blanks with your topic and what you’re sharing, and ka-pow! instantly excellent blog post headline!

So, to the best part of this guide — if you can fill in a blank or two, you can write snappy, attention-grabbing headlines with the templates below.

Note: Some of the examples cross between categories and combine more than one of these styles.



1. “How To...”

“How to” headlines are attached to some of the most popular posts on many blogs.

Why? Because you know right from the headline exactly what you’re going to find out how to do. Boom—simple, obvious promise of results!

Check out the most popular posts here and you’ll see that (at the time I wrote this post) the headlines of 4 of my top 10 most popular posts begin with “how to.”

The Templates:

- How to _____ (Straightforward, just exactly what you’re sharing how to do)
- How to _____ and _____ (If you can do the first, you’ll get the second)
- How to _____ Even If _____ (End with what’s stopping people so they know why that isn’t an excuse anymore)
- How to _____ in _____ (Add a time qualifier to how long it will take to achieve)
- How to _____ so that you can _____ (What happens when your readers can do what you’re showing them how to do?)
- How to _____ Like _____ (Who do your readers idolize?)
- How to _____ Without _____ (What do your readers want, and what do they NOT want to do or give up to get that result?)
- How to be _____ (What do your readers want to become?)

Quick Imaginary Examples:

- How to Decorate Your Bedroom Like a Pro Even if You Can’t Tell Red from Purple or Silk from Chiffon
- How to Write Better Blog Post Headlines in 10 Minutes Without Becoming a Sleazy Used Car Salesman
- How to Learn Enough French in Less Than 10 Days to Survive Paris with Style
- How to Write Blog Post Headlines that Go Viral
- How to Re-Enter the Limelight and Create Your Own Comeback Like the Clintons
- How Dozens of Smart Men Screwed Up a Country by Ignoring the Sage Words of Thomas Jefferson
- How Focus Groups Deliver the Worst Possible Guidance and What to Do Instead When Testing Your Advertising
- How a Stay at Home Mom Lost 50 Pounds and Got into Shape—Without Cutting Calories or Fat From Her Diet



Real Life Examples:

- *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie (You've heard of this super best seller, right?)
- *How to Get Your Alexa Ranking Under 100,000* – [here](#)
- *How to Create Pinnable Image Quotes* – [here](#)
- *The Science of Instagram: How to Get More Followers and Likes* – [QuickSprout](#)
- *How a “no name” mom in Portland catapulted to a six-figure business* – email subject line from [Kristin Thompson](#)

Two Cool Twists:

- Turn the “How to” into a personal story and increase curiosity with a “How I...” or “How (person) (achieved results)”
- Twist this into “How NOT to... like...” and go with someone they really don't love or aren't impressed with

2. “I’ve Got the Answer to Your Question”

Your readers have questions. Do you have answers? Tell them right in the headline by ASKING the questions in their heads or showing them the answer.

You want to ask a question that triggers one of these responses in your readers mind: “Yes!!”, “No!”, or “I’ve Gotta Know!”

What do your readers struggle with and really want to fix or understand?

The Templates:

- Are You Making this Mistake When _____?
- Is This Why You Aren't Succeeding With _____?
- Do You Struggle to _____? Read This Now. (Or, “Don't Miss This” or some other action phrase at the end)
- Stop _____ with _____ (First blank, the problem or challenge; Second blank, the solution)
- End Your Struggle to _____
- Little Known Secrets to _____
- Do You Wonder How _____ Almost Always _____? (First blank, group of successful people; second blank, their results)
- One Quick Way to _____
- If You're Frustrated By _____ Try _____ (First blank, problem; Second blank, hint at your solution but don't give it away yet!)



- You Can _____ even if _____ with _____ (First blank, big problem; Second blank, why it's been a problem; Third blank, strategy/secret/formula/tip/etc.)
- What You've Got to Know About _____
- Do You Know These _____ to Avoid _____? (First blank, something like "three keys" or "five secrets"; Second blank, big scary problem)

Quick Imaginary Examples:

- Are Your Blog Posts Boring Your Readers to Sleep?
- Do You Struggle with Confidence? Don't Miss this Guide to Finding Your Hidden Inner Rockstar
- Do You Wonder How Some Bloggers Get All the Attention (When Your Content is Just as Good)?
- One Quick Way to Write a Rockin' Blog Post in Half the Time
- If You're Frustrated by Your Frizzy Hair in the Summer, This Quick Fix Worked for Me
- You Can Get Clients With a Blog, Even if You Hate to Write
- Revealed: Little Known Secrets of Accountants that Make Tax Time Painless for Entrepreneurs

Real Life Examples:

- *Can Honest Copywriting Succeed?* – Shel Horowitz
- *How Far Should You Go to Make a Sale in Your Copy?* – [Mind Valley Insights](#)
- *5 Ways You Might Be Driving Your Readers Crazy (Without Realizing It!)* – [here](#)
- *Can you REALLY Make Money Blogging? [7 Things I Know About Making Money from Blogging]* – [ProBlogger](#)

3. "You Can Be Successful, Too!"

If You Can Fill in a Blank, You Can Write Great Blog Post Headlines that Get Readers to Your Blog — that's the promise of this post, right? Did it grab YOUR attention?

The Templates:

- If _____ Then _____ (First blank, simple action or skill; Second blank, result your readers want)
- _____ Like _____ (First blank, big goal or dream; Second blank, someone famous who's done it)
- Create _____ You _____ (First blank, something people want; Second blank, why they want it)
- Why _____ Always _____ (First blank, group of people; Second blank, results they get)



- The _____ Guide to _____ (First blank, adjective that describes how your readers see themselves or what they wish for – “A-List Blogger’s” or “Lazy Blogger’s”; Second blank, result)
- Become _____ Without _____ (First blank, what your readers want; Second blank, the obstacle or challenge that stops them)

Quick Imaginary Examples:

- Create the Dream Business You Want So You Can Travel the World and Work From Anywhere
- The One Secret Workout Twist that Will Help You Sculpt a Body You’ll Love
- The Stay at Home Mom’s Guide to Making Money from a Laptop
- If You Can Write an Email, You Can Build a Profitable Blog
- How to Brand Yourself Big Like (Insert Currently Cool Celebrity Here)
- Why Smart Bloggers Always Test Their Headlines (And How to Test Yours in 3 Simple Steps)
- The 5 Steps to Build a 6 Figure Consulting Business Without Working 7 Days a Week

Real Life Examples:

- _____ for Dummies (the Wiley brand that covers everything from Computers to Dating and Beyond)
- The Complete Idiot’s Guide to...
- *A Cheatsheet for Optimizing Your WordPress Blog for Search Engines Without Cheating* – QuickSprout
- *Risk Reversal: My Favorite Jay Abraham Technique for Kick-Starting Your Online Sales* – Mind Valley Insights

4. “Watch Out! Protect Yourself! Warning!”

Grab your readers’ attention and jar them out of complacency with a big ol’ warning headline.

Tabloids and sensationalist news publications use this technique frequently, as in: “Deadly Poison Shooting Insect Creature From Venus Invades Small Town—This Common Household Item is Your Only Effective Defense!”

You can do it without the alien references (or with, if your readers are sci-fi fans).

Make it “us” against “them” — what others in your industry or profession won’t tell your readers that you will.

The Templates:



- Are You Making These _____ Mistakes When You _____? (Fill in with a number or action word, then your topic)
- The _____ Biggest Problems with _____ (First a number, then your topic)
- _____ Massive _____ Mistakes You're Probably Making Now (Start with a number then add your topic)
- _____ Ways to Avoid _____ (Number, then a big fear)
- The Secret _____ to _____ (Share a Secret Formula, Strategy, etc.)
- Avoid _____ When You _____ (First blank, "looking stupid" or an equally undesirable result; Second blank, process/action)
- The _____ Hoax (or Hoodwink or another "hey they fooled you!" phrase)
- What _____ Won't Tell You About _____ (First blank, authority figure; Second blank, your topic)
- The Real Truth Behind _____
- Lies _____ Tell About _____
- _____ Warning Signs of _____ (What "ailment" might your audience be suffering from?)

Quick Imaginary Examples:

- 5 Massive Mistakes You're Probably Making that Scare Readers Away from Your Blog
- What You Absolutely Must Know to Use Pinterest Safely
- What Your Doctor Won't Tell You About the Real Risks of Hormone Replacement Therapy
- 7 Ways to Avoid Buying Gifts that Get "Re-Gifted"
- The Client Attraction Hoax: What Most Marketing Consultants Aren't Telling You
- Avoid Looking Stupid at the Club: Simple Dance Moves Anyone Can Pull Off

Real Life Examples:

- *It's 10 o'Clock: Do You Know Where Your Credit History Is?* a press release title by Shel Horowitz (notice this one is also a question)
- *ObamaCare Survival Guide* by Nick Tate (haven't read this but it's on Amazon's bestseller list for 2013)
- *Don't Believe What Politicians Say About Your Uterus* – Cosmopolitan (which is worth browsing just for the headlines)
- *15 WordPress User Errors that Make You Look Silly* – Copyblogger
- *The Myth of Focus & Why Many Great Entrepreneurs Pursued Multiple Projects at Once* – Mind Valley Insights
- *How Clutter Affects Your Brain & What You Can Do About It* – LifeHacker

5. "Easy Button: List Post, Checklist, Template, or Step by Step Guide"



Ah yes, the mythical easy button... but is it always mythical? If you've been struggling to write your blog post headlines, doesn't having simple templates like the ones in this post make it easier?

We don't want yet more information but we do want simple solutions and easy buttons that make us feel like a result is achievable.

Promise your readers a helpful list, checklist, template, or step by step (often in a post starting with a number) and they'll be breathing a sigh of relief before they've even read your post!

The Templates:

- _____ Ways to _____
- _____ Tips to Help You _____
- Avoid _____ in _____ Easy Steps
- The _____ Guide to _____ (Fill in the first blank with popular words like Ultimate, Zen, Minimalist, Lazy Person's, Smart Person's, etc.)
- Learn _____ Step by Step and _____
- _____ Shortcuts to _____ Success

Quick Imaginary Examples:

- Avoid that Speeding Ticket with these 5 Magic Words
- The Ultimate Guide to Looking Stylish on a Shoestring Budget
- 5 Shortcuts to Monetizing Your Blog Quickly
- 10 Tips to Help You Attract the Right Clients to Your Next Paint Your Toenails Tiger Striped Purple Workshop
- Three Simple Ways to Get Noticed by the Media Using Unique Holidays

Real Life Examples:

- *31 Days to Build a Better Blog* – ProBlogger (You own this, right? Go buy it today if not.)
- *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts* – Gary Chapman
- *The Hotel Room Workout: 5 Exercises When You Can't Get to the Gym* – Entrepreneur.com
- *109 Ways to Make Your Business Irresistible to the Media* – Copyblogger
- *56 Ways to Market Your Business on Pinterest* – Copyblogger
- *6 Ways to Spice Up Your Copywriting and Sell Without Even a Dash of Hype* – [Marcia Yudkin at The Word Chef](http://MarciaYudkin.com)

Boost Your Results with These 7 Bonus Tips



1. Weave in controversy or curiosity.

Spend a few minutes browsing a news website or two and watch how they use controversy and curiosity to keep you clicking through to read one article after another.

Strong opinions get attention. Are you willing to go out on a limb and be controversial?

And while curiosity might kill the cat, it breathes life into a blog! Write headlines that make the reader say, “Ooooooh I need to know what that’s about!” Try headlines with mystique that leave a little bit to the imagination and attract clicks.

2. Use trigger words to boost the power of your headlines.

Certain words trigger our minds and grab our attention.

Learn to use those words in your headlines. Action words. Descriptives. Interjections!

3. Ask yourself “why does this matter”...

Keep asking that question, and then rework your headline to include that why/result/goal.

What do your readers really want? Using this article as an example: you don’t want to write great headlines... you want to attract attention and get readers to your blog... and why do you want that?

4. Call out your tribe/peeps/ideal readers.

Don’t make your headline so general it could apply to anyone, but say specifically who your post is for.

Instead of “The Guide to Beautiful Landscaping” try “The Cheapskate Home Seller’s Guide to Creating Million Dollar Curb Appeal” or “Three Smart Steps to Creating a Beautiful Outdoor Space on a Tiny Budget.” See how those call out specific audiences? The first, those on budget who are selling their homes and need to create a great first impression for potential buyers and the second, those looking for budget friendly landscaping ideas.

5. Add specificity and numbers.

Instead of “5 Ways to Write Better Headlines” try something like “5 Super Fast Ways to Write Blog Post Titles that Get 500% More Traffic in 5 Minutes or Less” (but keep it honest and achievable...).



This is why headlines like “Give Me 10 Minutes and I’ll Give You...” work so well.

6. Make it believable.

Almost nothing works ALL the time or EVERY time.

Consider words like “some” or “almost” in your headlines to keep them credible. Make your headlines stand out from the craziness and unbelievable promises (especially on social media) by being realistic.

7. Make it easier—or harder!

Instead of “How to Build Your Own Freelance Business” try “Three Easy Steps to Making Money From Home with Your Computer & Internet Connection.”

Or... just be honest about the hard work that’s going to go into what you’re teaching. I bought into Insanity (and then Combat, and the Beachbody obsession continues) in large part because they were honest about the fact that their workouts are killer tough and I’d better be dedicated to getting results and changing my body. Their honesty and lack of hype created trust for me.

Your turn!

What headlines have worked well for you? Would you share your best headline (or the headline from your most popular post) in the comments?

Are these templates helpful for you? Let me know if this is the type of post you’d like to see more of from me, help me help you!

Oh, and if you found this blog post helpful, you’d love my home study workshop [Make Your Blog Famous](#)... just sayin’. You should check it out if you want to find out how to get readers and get noticed.

This is a taste of what you’ll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. Learn more and register [here](#).



CHAPTER 11

103 Creative Business Blog Post Idea Starters (Plus 50 Places to Find Inspiration) – Michelle Shaeffer



Ideas for blog posts are endless, but sometimes it helps to have a little spark to get your ideas flowing.

In this post you'll find 103 “sparks” for you along with 50 more places to look for inspiration.

These ideas range from serious to silly and you'll find some are a better fit than others for your style of blog and your goals.

But before you choose any of these ideas, stop to answer these two questions:

1. How can I make this post valuable for my readers?

Your audience is exchanging valuable time they can't get back when they stop to read your post. Is it worth it?

Ask these questions to help you focus on the value for your reader:

- What action can my reader take after they read this post?
- Does this solve a problem or provide helpful information?



- Have I gotten straight to the point and cut out unnecessary fluff?
- Am I using stories and visuals to illustrate the point?
- Will this make my reader's life better in some way?
- Is there a "next step" action I've suggested to encourage them to apply this?

Remember that value is defined in many different ways. Value might be a step by step video or guide that offers a solution. It might be the smile you bring to someone's day with your wit and humor. It could be the insight you offer into a problem and the perspective shift you guide your reader through that helps them to think differently.

2. Will this post create value for me?

Creating blog content is an investment of YOUR valuable time and it should be worth it.

Ask yourself:

- Why am I writing this specific post?
- How does this build my business and/or my community (does it lead to opt-ins, offers to work with you, generate engagement)?
- Does this content do a good job of positioning me the way I want (are you shooting for authority, expert, trusted adviser, regular guy or gal, someone you'd want to have coffee with)?

And Now... On to the Ideas!

These are creative writing prompts. Ideas to get things going in your brain so your fingers are happily inspired and typing away.

Some might seem crazy or boring. Not all will be a great fit for you. But I dare you not to find at least one idea that sparks something for you in this list!

If Keyboards Could Talk

What would your keyboard say if it could talk?

Would it share your process for writing and editing your posts (or emails or ebooks or other content you create)?

Whisper a few secrets about the challenges that happen in your home office and how you deal with them?

Share how you've grown and evolved over the last few years?

Give away the secrets of your schedule and productivity?



My Favorite Thing About Facebook

Are you a Facebook (or other social network) fan? Why? What's the value in it for you? How do you interact there?

Or, flip it around and share what's your least favorite aspect or biggest challenge and how you compensate for it that your readers might be able to learn from.

The Coolest (or Weirdest) Thing I've Found in Google

What's the most interesting blog post, web page, book, resource, tip, strategy, tool or other search result you've come across by searching Google (that would be of interest to your readers, of course!)

Why I Do (or Don't) Write Poetry, Paint, Sketch...

What do you do to stay creative? Do you write poetry to exercise those brain muscles? Or paint? Sketch? Play the piano or another instrument?

Share a glimpse into what you do outside blogging to sharpen your writing or creativity.

If I Were Writing a Screenplay

You've been commissioned to write a screenplay. Go!

Would you share your own life story? What events and why?

Would you create an alternate reality? Cast yourself as the hero or heroine?

What moments or stories from that imaginary screenplay could you share to inspire or teach your readers?

A Turning Point

We've all had those moments.

One of mine was sitting on the floor crying and feeling completely powerless as I hugged my crying hungry toddler (we had nearly no food in the apartment), promising myself that we'd never be in that situation again and that I would figure out how to build a business for myself that would support us.

Another was getting on stage to speak and realizing that I could survive it and with a little more practice I might even have some fun with it and have something valuable to share with an audience.



What have your turning points been? What led you to what you do now in life?

My Love Affair With...

If your business were in love, what product, service, strategy or tool would it be madly in love with? Have you shared that with your blog readers?

Interview With...

Choose someone who's no longer living to create a fictional interview with. Be clear it's fictional and share the answers or advice you think they've give based on what you know about the person.

Share a Charity or Cause You Care About

What charities or causes do you support? What's close to your heart and why?

Does your team sponsor events or volunteer with charities? Could you showcase that on your blog with photos or a video?

Could you create an opportunity for your readers to donate or get involved with a cause you care about, or ask them what causes matter to them and choose one of their suggestions to donate to as a company?

If I Ran the World

If you were suddenly in charge of the world, what changes would you make?

You can look at this on a grand scale, or you can bring it closer to home... what do you see in yourself, your company, your hometown, your state, your country, your industry, your circle of colleagues, etc that you'd like to change?

Consider a post about sharing why change is needed and what steps individuals can take to encourage that change.

5 Books You Need to Read

Create a recommended reading list for your clients.

Share the top 5 books they need to read and for each book on your list include a summary of what you found particularly valuable or why it made your list.

The One Thing I Do Every Day



What are the key elements in your routine that lead to your success, or success for your clients? Choose one and share it with your readers along with ideas on how they can create the same habit and see results.

Or you could share a habit or action that you realized was a mistake or wasn't supporting your goals and how you shifted to a better choice.

Thoughts Winter Brings to Mind

Winter in Alaska winter brings a lot of cold, snow, ice... and along with it hot chocolate, sledding, snowmen and beautiful views of falling snowflakes.

What lessons could I share based on those thoughts?

- What I've learned from driving on ice and snow and how those lessons apply to blogging or business
- What Starbucks or local coffee shops are doing right (or wrong) to get me to venture out in blowing snow with my children to enjoy drinks in their shops (customer service, environment, etc)
- Watching my children work together and learn the process to create a snowman and how we go through a similar process as adults in business – or how even when it falls apart they focus on having had fun, learning what didn't work, and they just go for it again

Think about your winter experiences – what have they taught you, what do they illustrate?

Creativity Lessons from Children

Somewhere in that “growing up” process so many of us lose our fearless creativity. What can we learn from watching children and how can we apply it to get that adventurous, resilient spirit back?

What did you learn as a child that you held on to and has served you as an adult in your business or life?

Magazine Cover Story

If you (or your family or business) were to be on the cover of a magazine, which one would it be and why?

Interview an Interesting Friend/Colleague/Client



Just ask a few interesting questions and share the answers them in a blog post. You could do a written interview (just send the questions via email) or schedule a time to record audio or video.

Need ideas? Check out the questions in this great list and see which might be of interest to your readers: <http://storycorps.org/great-questions/>

Interview Yourself

You could approach this a couple of ways:

- Choose questions from the [StoryCorps link](#) to answer
- Invite a friend or colleague to interview you (audio, video, or written)
- Open it up to your subscribers, readers, or social media followers and invite them to send you questions then choose which to answer in an “interview” on your blog

Technology I Can’t Live Without

What are the core pieces of technology you use, and why?

Some blogging ideas around this:

- What’s one piece of tech that’s made you more productive or saved your sanity?
- Do you have a top 5 list of recommended apps for your clients or industry?
- Is there technology that makes compliance easier for your industry?
- What’s a required task (like bookkeeping) that your clients may not enjoy that you can offer a solution to (check out Wave accounting)?

How I Overcome Obstacles

What process do you use when you run into an obstacle? How do you deal with it?

What type of support do you find most helpful when you’re dealing with obstacles?

Or, what obstacles do your clients most frequently run into? Can you choose one and offer a few tips to your readers to help them see how they can overcome it?

What I Do When I Fail

How do you pick yourself up and keep going after a failure? Public failure? Private failure?



Is there a client case study you can share of how together you as a team with the client turned around a failure into a big success?

Could you write about a big company or celebrity and break down either how they dealt with a failure beautifully and rebounded or offer some advice to them about how to do that?

If I Were My Mother I'd Tell Myself...

It's the voice in your head. What's it telling you about business, life, or chirping in the background?

Whether you want to give it a hug or ask it nicely to be a little quieter, it can inspire a range of blog posts from how to accept or ask for wisdom and guidance, to how to deal with those who don't support your dreams.

What I Wish They'd Invent

What's a "missing piece" for you or or clients that someone should invent? What's the closest that's out there today and how could it be improved?

What X Will Be Like In 10 Years

Predict a specific element of the future. You could write about your industry, or some element of it, and share how you think it will change and how best to prepare for that change.

Business Tools Worth the Money

What are some tools, services, etc you've invested in that were worth every penny?

You could create a "top 10" list, or review one or two on your blog.

Be sure to alert the company you're recommending – they may share your post or use your testimonial if you give them permission.

My Favorite Free Tools/Resources

Have you run across cool free tools or resources your clients would love?

You could...

- Create a step by step guide of how to use one
- Shoot a quick screencast video to show how it works



- Make a checklist of free tools

If I Could Only Visit One Website Today...

You wake up and your computer and internet are restricted to ONE website for the day. Which would you choose?

If you could only use one website for a specific task (like to connect with potential clients, do research, etc), which one would that be?

Best Bumper Sticker I've Seen Lately

If I wrote a political blog, this one idea could be an endless source of inspiration!

What are some great (or not so great) bumper stickers you've seen, and why do you feel that way about them? What lessons or ideas there relate to your readers?

Search Pinterest, Amazon or Google Images to see what comes up, or just take a quick drive, and you might run into some that say things like...

- Question Authority (who are the authorities in your industry and are they right?)
- Practice Random Acts of Self-Kindness (how about writing on life balance and your thoughts around it?)
- If you can read this, you're too close (got "safety" tips to share with your readers?)

How to Reinvent Yourself

We change and grow both personally and in business. How do you approach those times of reinvention? What ideas can you share with others who are in transition?

What types of transitions do your ideal readers/client struggle with? Could you write about some ways to make those transitions easier and faster?

A Product or Shift That Changed My Business

I used to code websites by hand in HTML. WordPress completely changed my business.

What big shifts or new products have changed things in your business or your industry? Why? Who were the winners and losers in the change? What's coming next?

One Person I'm Glad I Met



Alive or historical, who's made a difference for you and why? Share how you connected with the person and lessons you've learned from your relationship with them.

What Others Said

What quotes motivate, inspire or even anger you?

Blog about why and ask your readers to share their quotes.

Lessons I Learned Starting Out in Business

What lessons did you learn when you first went into business for yourself? What do you wish you'd known that would have made that curve easier?

Did you make mistakes that could have been avoided? Did you skyrocket to success in an area that you can explain how others can duplicate?

A Tale of Two Clients

You've had "perfect fit" clients... and you've had clients that were... not so perfect...

Blog about what makes a great client vs. not-so-great client. What characteristics do your ideal clients have that allow them to get great results in your programs?

How to Know You're On The Right Path

What are those "road signs" to watch for to know when you're on the right (or wrong) path that you can share?

How about a checklist for readers with 10 warning signs that they need to make a change because they're headed right into a disaster?

Intuition and Business

Do you run your business or make decisions based on facts and numbers, your intuition, or a combination of both? Why or why not?

Is there a time you could share that intuition saved you from a disaster? Or you didn't listen to your inner voice and disaster ensued?

Where to Find Support for Your Ambitions

Being an entrepreneur can be a big challenge and sometimes it can be lonely when others around you don't understand. How do you deal with that? Where do you look for



support? How have you learned to enlist others in providing the type of support you need (how do you get them “on board” with your dreams)

Who Are You and Why Do You Blog?

How about a post to introduce or re-introduce yourself to your readers. Share who you are, why you blog and what you enjoy most about blogging. You could share what prompted you to start your blog, too.

Lessons Learned in Tough Times

Write about a challenging time or circumstance you succeeded in spite of and how you got through it or where you found the strength to get past it.

Or twist this idea around, what’s the most difficult part of the journey your clients face? Write a post about how you’ve solved that challenge or survived it.

Create & Share a Quote Graphic

There must be millions of inspirational quote graphics. You can share these (or make your own) and then share a few of your own thoughts about the quote or idea.

Not the “inspirational” type? Don’t think you’ve got to write something motivational or inspiring. There are plenty of humorous and sarcastic quotes out there, too.

Here are some great places to find quotes:

- <http://quotegarden.com>
- <http://quotelicious.com>
- <http://heartquotes.net>

And think outside the box on this one — there’s more you can do with a quote style image than just quote someone famous. Check out this post for [6 Smart Ways to Use Branded Quote Graphics \(and Easy, Quick Ways to Create Your Own\)](#).

Who Do You Admire & Why?

Pick a friend, family member, colleague, business, or whatever/whomever and write a blog post about the quality you most admire in them. Or write about the qualities you most admire in others or aspire to in your own life.

If you’re blogging for business, choose someone you consider an authority, mentor, or thought leader and share them with your readers. You could tell how you connected with them or why you’d recommend them.



Resolutions

Do you make resolutions? You could share why or why not. Or, share what's worked for you in setting and achieving goals.

What I'd Do Differently if I Were (Insert Big Brand Here)

Be a backseat driver.

If you were in charge of a huge brand what would you do differently and why? What are they doing right that you love or appreciate?

The One Thing I Wish I'd Known Before...

You know that moment when you realize if you'd only known...

A few weeks ago I put together a portable closet. I was SO proud of myself (I am not a "handy" person and generally put things together in... creative... ways because I didn't quite "get" the directions or couldn't find the right tool) until I realized that I'd put it together in my living room instead of my bedroom and there was no easy way to get it through my hallway and around the necessary corners to put it where I wanted it. Oops. If I'd stopped to think that out a bit more...

What are some mistakes or oversights you might be able to save your readers from? Can you offer some wise words of "been there, done that, learned my lesson" advice?

The 5 or 10 Websites I Visit Most Often

Check out your bookmarks to find some great websites to share with your readers.

This can become multiple posts if you choose a theme for each:

- 5 best websites to find potential clients
- 3 websites that will teach you X
- 7 online tools to save you X hours a week

Things I've Learned on Twitter

What have you learned from your favorite social network? Can you share some big takeaways?

Maybe you've watched some companies do things right and can share those lessons? Or share some cautionary tales?



Share a Resource

Share a resource that you've found useful, like a website or book. Got a favorite recipe website? Craft site for family time? Gaming site? How about a book that made a difference for you or that you really enjoyed?

Share a Book Review

This one can work for any blog. For personal bloggers, review a book your readers would connect with. Maybe it's a cookbook, a novel, or a non-fiction book like an autobiography. For business bloggers, choose a book that shows you keep up with your industry and it'll help build your credibility.

A review doesn't have to be long, so forget everything Mrs. Smith taught you in 5th grade. Just share what you learned or why you fell in love with the book.

This is a great opportunity to try video blogging, too. If you want to see me on camera reviewing a book, here you go: [Are You Missing This Essential Ingredient for Success?](#) or here's another one: [What to Do When You Don't Feel Creative](#)

For even more ideas on how you can leverage reviews on your blog, check out this post: [8 Ways Writing Reviews Can Get Your Blog Noticed & Make You Money.](#)

One Piece of Advice

What's a subject or activity you've got a lot of knowledge around?

If you were giving your 1 best tip to someone brand new to that subject or activity, what would you tell them?

What do you wish you'd known when you were new to the subject or activity?

First Jobs

What was the first job you held? Or, what was the first business venture you created? Have you shared that with your readers before? You could write about what you learned, what you loved, or how you got from there to where you're at today.

Take a Survey

Find out more about your readers – set up a survey somewhere like Survey Monkey and introduce it with a link to the survey in your blog post.



You can create a research type survey for your business (what products do they use, colors they prefer, sizes, etc), or you could make it more of a fun, personal survey, or something in between.

Or, a fun twist on this is a one question survey where readers answer in the comments for an entry into a giveaway or chance to win a prize.

Your Ideal Reader or Client

Share with your readers who the perfect blog reader or ideal client for you is and why (what are their big goals and how do you help them achieve those). Invite your readers to share your blog with any friends or colleagues who fit the description.

For businesses, you might offer a description of who you work best with, or try profiling a client (with their permission) who's been a great fit and got great results from your product or service.

Spy on the Bestseller's List

Books can provide all sorts of inspiration for blog posts. How about these blog post ideas:

- share your favorite fictional character from a book
- create a "top 5" required reading list for your clients/industry
- write about the book you most remember reading as a child (anyone else love the Ramona Quimby series?)
- feature a book that taught you something or changed your perspective
- if you're an author, highlight your own book

Hop over to Amazon.com and go to the best seller list — either the best sellers, or top sellers in a particular category that fits with your blog. You'll find lots of inspiration just waiting for you.

Borrow a Page From Letterman and Go "Top Ten" Style

You can write this one in many different ways and it doesn't necessarily have to be 10, just using a list format can get our brains thinking creatively sometimes.

You could share...

- Top 10 Reasons You Should (fill in the blank)
- Top 3 Reasons You Shouldn't (fill in the blank)
- Top 5 Reasons I (fill in the blank)
- Top 5 Blogs You Should Be Reading



- The 7 Web Tools You Can't Miss
- 5 Ways to Succeed at (fill in the blank)
- The 10 Coolest Places I've Visited
- 5 Blogs I Discovered Recently
- 10 Random Things About Me
- My 3 Favorite (fill in the blank)

A Bit of Online Window Shopping

For inspiration, go browse an interesting online retailer and see what pops into your head.

Here are some to try if you aren't sure where to start:

- www.amazon.com
- www.thinkgeek.com
- www.etsy.com
- www.hyenacart.com
- www.indiebound.org
- www.soul-flower.com

“Pin”spiration

How about creating an image to share on your blog with a quote or a few thoughts?

Here's a quick video showing how you can make your own, free: [How to Make Image Quotes](#)

Or, some even QUICKER ways to make these (and tips on how to use them to promote your blog or business): [6 Smart Ways to Use Custom Branded Image Quotes \(And How to Create Them Quickly\)](#)

Reprint a Portion of Your Book or Ebook

Have you written a book or ebook? Pull out a portion or chapter that can stand alone and provide value. Be sure to let readers know that it's an excerpt from your book or ebook and let them know how they can get their full copy.

Do Something Nice

How could you use your blog to do something nice for someone else?

- If you've been somewhere that had great customer service or products/services lately, why not write a review? If one particular employee was wonderful, send a



link to the review to their employer. Employers often deal with complaints about employees, but most people don't take time to stop and honor the ones who do their jobs well.

- Why not share a testimonial about someone you've worked with or a small business you've purchased from? Send it to them directly as well as posting on your blog.
- Put someone else in the spotlight. Is there another blogger who you've enjoyed connecting with or learned something from? Share a few links and let your readers know. This can be a great "round up" list post (just share 4, 5, or 6 links to recent posts on different blogs or websites that you've enjoyed with a little summary of each).
- Share a post about your favorite charity, how they make a difference, and how others can get involved.

What other ways can you do something nice for others with your blog?

What's Working Now?

What's something that's working really well for your clients right now?

Create a blog post sharing that strategy or tactic and give a few tips to your readers to help them get started implementing it, too.

Childhood Teddy Bears

Brainstorming around a teddy bear in my office leads me to these ideas:

- Share a childhood story (my teddy bear was my best friend until I lost it in a store... my mother warned me not to bring it in but I did anyway...)
- Take a photo of your desk space and share it
- Talk about the things that "comfort" us as children (or as adults)
- Share what natural wildlife lives in your area (I live near bears)

What comes to your mind when you think about a teddy bear?

Or, choose a random item that's on your desk or in your office space and brainstorm around it to see what ideas pop into your head.

Share a Great Video

Find a YouTube video or one from TED Talks that you like (and that would be interesting to your readers). Share it along with your own comments.

Here's [how to embed a TED Talk in a blog post](#).



Dear Abby...

Write your own advice column.

You can make up your own questions for this or invite subscribers to send you their questions.

Choose a question that you get asked frequently, or one that your customers should be asking and answer it.

Seasons

There are so many different things you could blog about around seasons. What season is it where you're at? Do you love the current season or prefer another? What's your favorite thing about the "season of life" you're currently in? Or what "season" is your business in right now (start up, growing, established, etc)?

How about a video sharing what it's like this time of the year in your area? I shared that on my YouTube channel last summer and sent it to my list as just a fun little "getting to know me" diversion. (Alaska's Midnight Sun)

Create a Resource List

Brainstorm a topic your readers would be interested in and then offer a resource list. For example...

- If you sell cloth diapering products your readers most likely have young children, toddlers, or babies. How about a list of links to your favorite websites for fun activities to do with children?
- If you sell makeup or personal products you could do links to sites with makeup tips or spa day ideas.
- If you sell plastic food storage products you could do food saving tips lists or great recipe blogs.
- If you're into social media you could list your favorite tools.
- Bloggers could list favorite posts or plugins.

Brainstorm a bit and you'll come up with something fun and useful for your readers. If you get a large enough list of links, divide it into a part one and part two, and you've got your next two posts done!

Infographics Rock



Take a bit of a break from writing and share something fun like an infographic. You can find infographics about everything from marketing to The History of Doctor Who. Something for every blog!

Here's where to start your search: <http://michelleshaeffer.com/find-infographics/2012/07/28/>

Review a Product You Are an Affiliate For

Why not write a blog post and get paid for it? Are you an affiliate for any online marketers, online services, autoresponder programs, etc.

Be sure to use your affiliate link in your blog post (and let readers know you are an affiliate for the product/service you're recommending).

Need something to recommend? Just look at what you've recently purchased and loved, then check to see if they've got an affiliate program.

Share Positive Feedback

Choose a product you've purchased and share your feedback about it. To make this super useful for your reader, also give them tips on how to get the best results or most out of the product.

If you purchased it from a smaller online business (like an Etsy or Hyena Cart shop) be sure to link to the seller — they'll appreciate it.

Dreaming About Changing the World

If you could change something in the world, what would you choose to change? Share that with your readers. If you're taking steps to make a difference, tell your readers how and invite them to join you.

You can use this several different ways. For a personal blog you might share something in your own family or town that you're working to change or help with. For a business blog you could share your "big picture mission" or a social cause you've committed to.

A Photo Journal

Create a photo journal of your product process.

For example, if you're a knitter, start with a photo of your yarn. Share where you got it, why you choose the colorway, and what you find inspirational about it. Then share a photo of your pattern and why you're choosing to create that item from it. Take periodic



photos as you work on the project and share some details. Then take a photo of the finished item and share your thoughts.

This allows your readers to really connect with your processes and appreciate the effort and passion that goes into each of your creations.

_____ is like _____

Compare two unrelated things or tasks.

Might be how blogging is like cooking (I have no idea – you tell me), or how it's not at all like cooking.

Some very interesting blog posts can come out of comparing two different things.

Take a Deep Breath

What do you do to relax and unwind? Share a few tips and strategies with your readers.

Or write about the hobbies you enjoy for relaxation.

Hot Topics!

What topics or posts have worked to get your readers talking?

Write about the 3 or 4 blog posts that you have received the most comments on. Were those comments positive or negative? Were the posts controversial? Is there a theme of some sort? Will you be writing more on that subject?

If your blog doesn't have a post you'd consider "most popular" yet, then check out Facebook or Twitter to see what's a hot topic and blog about that.

Your TV "Identity"

What TV show, sitcom, or movie is most like your life or your business and why?

Which character do you most identify with? What strengths do you admire in them?

If your team were the cast of a sitcom, who fills what roles, and how do you make that work in your business (team dynamics)?

If you were replaced tomorrow by (insert STAR here) what would he/she change in your business? Would it work?



Determination

Sometimes it just takes hanging on a little bit longer to reach a big achievement and we've got to push through the moments of discouragement that happen right before success.

What do you do to help you stay motivated and boost your determination?

Imagine the Future

What will your life/family/blog/business/town/state be like in 1 year? 5 years? 10 years?

Think it'll be like the Jetsons? Or more like Star Trek?

What positive changes do you predict will happen?

Speaking of Dreams

Dreams can provide lots of blogging inspiration—both the sleeping kind and the awake kind.

What dreams did you have as child growing up? Have any come true? What dreams do you have for the future?

Share Your Top Five

Write a top 5 list.

What are your top 5 favorite TV shows, candy bars, or places to visit?

How about the top 5 lessons you've learned about a particular topic or from a specific experience?

A Pitch from Your Product (or Service)

Write a sales letter or interview from the perspective of your product (or service). For example, grab a photo of your favorite craft creation. Say it's a gorgeous mermaid Waldorf doll. Now, from her perspective write what she's looking for in an owner. Describe what an ideal play date for her would be, and who she'd like to snuggle to sleep.

If you're a service provider then write from the perspective of an embodiment of your solution or give your computer or your process a personality you can write from. Explain why it wants to help and how it can be of service in delivering great end results.



Tell a Story

What kind of story could you share on your blog? True tales can be compelling. Pretend ones can be fun.

For a business, how about a parable of what happens when people make the biggest mistake you see your clients make, but wrapped in allegory?

Share Your Two Cents on the News

On any given day there are *thousands* of topics in the news. Share what you think about one of them.

You don't have to get controversial or go into politics (unless you know that's something that your niche would be drawn to and react well). Look at the business news, or one of the happy news sites for something inspirational to share.

The Best Dessert

What's the best dessert you've ever eaten? If you're a cook, share a photo of it on your blog! And share the recipe, too.

You could take this idea and talk about your favorite restaurant, cooking show, or something food related.

Or, you could go for allegory and talk about what the "icing on the cake" is for you in a particular experience, like the best customer service you've received, best gift you've purchased or received, etc.

Note: The "best dessert" prompt is one that Cathy Jennings from No Pressure Networking shared at an event I attended last year. If you've ever struggled with networking, go connect with her and get on her ezine list—she rocks.

An Evening at the Movies

How about sharing your favorite movie of all time and why you love it? Did it teach you a lesson, or just tickle your funny bone? Do you have a favorite fairy tale or fable?

Or, take a page from Copyblogger and try something like this:
<http://www.copyblogger.com/mesmerizing-marketing/>

Not a movie or actor fan? I'm sure you've got some thoughts on Hollywood you could blog about. Or, just share what you or your family does instead of TV.



It's Like Cookies and Milk

What goes great with your product or service? Brainstorm a list of what works with what you do, and then share it. Recommend other vendors or service providers. By introducing your readers to options that work with what you offer, you gain several benefits:

- you're helping them find other useful services/products
- you're building goodwill with the vendors/providers you refer to in your list
- you've associated your own business with others that will plant ideas in your customer's heads and motivate them to use your particular item/service in connection with another item/service – and if they've already got the other they may decide they need yours, too

Share Some “Behind the Scenes” Photos

Let people in on your life with some photographs.

Of course your website includes photographs of your products or virtual images of your products, but how about some photos of your hometown, the wildlife or scenery near you?

Troubleshoot It

Consider the most common challenges your target market faces, around the product/service you deliver. Pick the top 3 or 5 and address them with the solutions. People appreciate problem solvers!

Or, what solutions have you found that worked well for you or your family? Do you have a great strategy for couponing, housekeeping, juggling kid activities, staying organized, communication with your spouse... or something else?

Celebration Lessons

At the last celebration you attended (wedding, birthday, etc) did you take away any lessons you could share? Anything interesting or funny happen?

Travel Back in Time

With the help of Wikipedia you can find all sorts of interesting things to write about based on the day in history. Just go to www.wikipedia.org and search for the date. For example, October 28...



- 1538 – The first university in the New World, the Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino, is established.
- 1886 – In New York Harbor, President Grover Cleveland dedicates the Statue of Liberty.
- 1919 – The U.S. Congress passes the Volstead Act over President Woodrow Wilson's veto, paving the way for Prohibition to begin the following January.
- 1922 – March on Rome: Italian fascists led by Benito Mussolini march on Rome and take over the Italian government.
- 1942 – The Alaska Highway (Alcan Highway) is completed through Canada to Fairbanks, Alaska.
- 1948 – Swiss chemist Paul Müller is awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his discovery of the insecticidal properties of DDT.
- 1962 – End of Cuban missile crisis: Nikita Khrushchev orders the removal of Soviet missiles from Cuba.

It's also International Animation Day and the Day Czechoslovakia celebrates it's independence as a country.

Be a Myth Buster

What is something that many people assume about your business, industry, geographical area, family/heritage, or religion?

Write a post about the assumption and whether it's true or not. You could talk about why people make the assumption and then share facts to support or counter it.

Get it Out

Blog about whatever's on your mind today. With the thousands of thoughts that go through our heads, I'm sure you've got one or two rattling around in there that's worth sharing? Did something brighten your day today? Or do you need to rant about something?

Tip: do remember everything you write reflects on you (and your business if you're an entrepreneur or small business owner).

Reprint an Article

Go to www.ezinearticles.com and search for a topic that your blog readers could use help with. Once you've found a good article, reprint it on your blog (be sure to keep it just as it was including the resource box at the end). At the beginning or end you can



add a “Note from (your name here):” and explain what you found valuable about the article, any additional tips or thoughts you’ve got on the topic.

Here’s a step by step of the process I use to do

this: <http://michelleshaeffer.com/speedy-fast-blog-posts/2011/07/12/>

Achieving a Goal

Share a celebration post! Blog about a goal you’ve achieved — the motivation, the challenges, and how you felt or what benefits came with reaching your goal.

What are the benefits for your readers or clients now that you’ve achieved this goal?

Monthly Wrap Up

Got a couple of favorite posts from this month? You could do a “wrap up” where you share those, and add a few of your favorite posts you’ve run across this month on other blogs.

Honor Those Who’ve Helped You

Contributed by Roy A. Ackerman, <http://cerebrations.biz>

One of the best blogging ideas, and a way to honor someone who made a difference in your life, who/why they helped you be who you are today.

Growth

Contributed by Nancy Hagan of Effective Day, <http://effectiveday.com>

Blog about the stages of growth to recognize as one progresses in the subject you offer: the newbie mindset, the intermediate, the sidetracked mindset, how you can recognize when you’ve “arrived”, how to stay fresh, not stagnant, etc. Help them step back and ponder so they can then go forward.

Learned by Experience

Contributed by Kimberly Losavio, [Gypsy Treasures](#)

Try sharing a personal experience that directly influences your decision processes about either continuing or closing up shop (quitting your business) and how you worked through it (advice, mentors, friends, family, etc.)

When I Grow Up...



Contributed by Melanie Kissell <http://www.melaniekissell.com>

If you had made a career out of whatever you were passionate about when you were ten... what would you be doing?

Humorous Happenings

Contributed by Leanne Chesser

Write a “humorous happenings” post. For personal bloggers, you could write about funny things your kids say or something funny you saw today. It could even turn into a series on your blog. For business bloggers, it could be a video blooper or something funny from your business.

Sounds Like a Blog Post!

Contributed by Lisa Rothstein, <http://www.davincidilemma.com/>

My co-author and I just got off the phone and now I have four new blog posts — every time I complained to her about a thorny business or creative problem she said, “Sounds like a blog post.”

So that’s my idea — blogging as therapy and problem-solving. Got an issue or pet peeve? Grousing about something? Ask yourself if it “Sounds like a blog post”. Andy Rooney made a 30+ year career out of it.

Listen To Yourself!

Contributed by Melanie Kissell, <http://melaniekissell.com>

Describe a moment when you ignored your intuition. What happened?

Or... I told you so! Write about a time you felt validated.

Historical Events

Contributed by Melanie Kissell, <http://www.melaniekissell.com>

If you could witness (or take part in) any event in history, what would it be? Why?

Kids Say the Darndest Things

Contributed by Benecia Ponder, <http://www.beneciaponder.com/blog>



Make a list of the unexpected lessons you've learned from the kids in your life and how you've applied them to your life.

Be Inspired By Someone's Writing

Contributed by Linette Daniels, <http://empoweringyouthforsuccess.com>

Taking a book and writing your thoughts chapter by chapter will give lots of blog posts. Take your favorite poems or quotes and write your thoughts. Share what they mean to YOU.

Answer a Question

Contributed by Lorelee Hutton, <http://loraleehutton.com>

Browse through your Facebook or email inbox and capture questions people have asked you, and your ready-made answers for a Q&A blog post.

Social Media Rocks... Most of the Time

Contributed by Sharlene Santana, <http://socialbeejunkie.com>

Share a story or a list of social media pet peeves. I know we've all got some. I personally hate when people use social media for personal arguments or feuds. No need to air out in social networks.

Still Need More Ideas?

Here are 50 easy places to find inspiration for your next blogging idea:

1. Your Favorite News Website
2. The News Website You Hate
3. That Gossip Blog You'd Never Admit to Reading
4. The Fansite for Your Favorite TV Show
5. YouTube Random Search for a Random Word
6. Your Blog RSS Reader
7. Your Email Inbox
8. Your Email Spam Folder
9. The Stack of Magazines Hiding Somewhere in Your Office
10. The Book You're Currently Reading



11. The Book You Bought But Haven't Read Yet
12. What's Playing On Your iPod/MP3 Player
13. The Last Advertising Billboard You Saw
14. The Yellow Pages
15. Your Local Newspaper
16. The Items on Your To-Do List
17. The Last Movie Your Kids Made You Watch
18. TV Shows or Movies You've Watched
19. The Celebrity That Drives You Crazy (Good or Bad Crazy)
20. A Quotes Website like QuotesGarden
21. Social Networking (Ask a Random Question)
22. The Last Website that Linked to You
23. The Comments Section of Your Blog
24. The Items on Your Desk
25. The View of Nature Through Your Window
26. The 7 Wonders of the World (or whatever landmarks fascinate you)
27. The Last Vacation/Trip You Took
28. What's Coming Up On Your Calendar
29. The Catalog That Came in the Mail This Week
30. Your Favorite Cereal Box
31. The Sunday Comics
32. Something That's Changed Recently in Your Life
33. Those Things That Never Seem to Change in Your Life
34. Late Night Shows / Stand Up Comedy
35. Your Favorite Recent Work Project
36. The Last "Disaster" Project You Worked On
37. Wikipedia
38. Digg, Reddit or StumbleUpon
39. Yahoo! Answers or Quora
40. Facebook Groups
41. Forums



- 42. Clickbank or Lulu
- 43. Amazon.com
- 44. Billboards
- 45. Flickr or Stock Photography Websites
- 46. YouTube or Vimeo
- 47. Library or Bookstore
- 48. Your Vision Board
- 49. EHow or Buzzle
- 50. Blog Posts with Blog Post Ideas

Your Turn! Let's Discuss...

What's your favorite strategy or tool for getting inspired with ideas to write about?

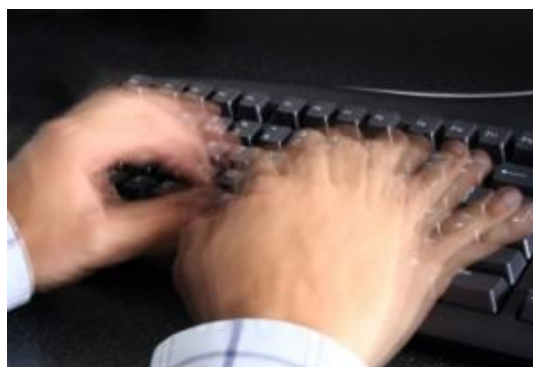
Is your head buzzing with ideas? I hope so! I'd love to hear which of these sparked something for you, at The Buzz Seminar.

This is a taste of what you'll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. Learn more and register [here](#).



CHAPTER 12

10 Ways to Blog Better, Faster – Michelle Shaeffer



What would your day be like if you could write better blog posts in half the time?

Does it take you an hour (or longer) to write a blog post?

Do you sit down to write and end up frustrated at how much time you're putting into your blog?

Blogging doesn't have to be that way.

You can blog well in less time if you know how to approach it and have a few of these strategies in your bag of tricks.

1. Be Yourself & Write What You Know

Trying to blog like someone else usually just causes frustration. Not only will it take you longer, but it will destroy your own creativity and voice if you try to fit yourself into someone else's mold. It's okay to "sound" like you!

Part of being you is writing what you know. If you're blogging about a topic you know little or nothing about, expect it to take a while since you'll have to research everything thoroughly before you publish. If you pick a topic that you know about you'll find it much easier to write quality content quickly.

2. Let Go of Perfection

That crazy impulse that drives you to proofread and edit your post for the 37th time... you have to get control of it. Stop at the 36th proofreading run, okay?



It'll save amazing amounts of time if you accept now that at some point you're probably going to accidentally publish a typo, say something you need to edit later, or even change your mind about a stance you've taken. You don't have to get it all right all the time. The world will not end if your blog isn't perfect, I promise.

3. Practice Short & Be Flexible

Some posts might hit 1,000 words because the topic demands it and some posts will necessarily take more time and research than others. But not every post needs to be that long. Sometimes short and sweet can get your point across best. Practice writing shorter posts.

This will also free you to jump in and write a blog post when you've got the inspiration and a few minutes, instead of waiting until you've got an hour or two blocked off for blogging.

Allow yourself room to try different post lengths and styles.

4. Use Templates

This is a "Top 10" or "10 Tips" style post. I chose the headline and format before I started blogging. And it made this post much easier to write.

Here are some free blog post (and article writing) templates you'll find helpful:

- <http://remarkablogger.com/?s=post+templates>
- <http://blog.ezinearticles.com/category/article-templates>
- <http://www.fuelyourblogging.com/five-possible-blog-post-templates-to-follow/>
- <http://www.mirnabard.com/2010/07/10-instant-blog-post-templates-to-help-you-write-articles-in-30-minutes-or-less/>

5. Be Inspired by Others

Are you reading other blogs? Choose at least a few successful blogs to subscribe to and read regularly — it'll help you generate ideas and give you a model of what works that you can learn from.

6. Keep a Notebook

Ideas are everywhere. Start paying more attention to what's around you and you'll soon find that you "see" blog ideas in everything from your cats to the mailman to the plant on your desk. Write them down as soon as they come to mind and then you'll have a constant list of content ideas to draw from when it's time to write.



7. Don't Limit Yourself to Text

Video, audio, graphics — there are lots of options for blog posts. Don't limit yourself to writing text, especially if you aren't a fast typist. Maybe video blogging or audio blogging is a better option or a good way to give your fingers a break from time to time.

8. Improve Important Skills

Identify what takes you the longest when you blog, and work to improve on it. For example:

- **Type slow?** Improve your typing speed with a typing class. Or try voice to text programs that type what you speak.
- **Too much time researching?** Speed up your research by bookmarking the best sites for it so they're at your fingertips.
- **Challenged to come up with ideas?** Keep a list of brainstormed blog post ideas.
- **Frustrated by no comments and it's got you feeling like not writing anything new?** Join a comment tribe, blogging group, form a comment circle with friends, comment on other blogs.
- **Not sure how to promote your posts?** Research once and create a promotion plan, then follow it for each new post.
- **Don't understand WordPress (or your blogging software)?** Take a class or find a mentor and learn it.
- **Can't find perfect photos?** If you're spending 20 or 30 minutes searching free photo sites, consider just using royalty free photos instead from StockFresh or Dreamstime – if it saves 30 minutes, it's worth the \$1 or \$2. Or look at plugins like [Zemata](#) or [PhotoDropper](#).

All of these present an upfront investment of time, some a few minutes and some longer, that will more than pay off in the long run.

9. Blog in Series/Batches

Instead of brainstorming a new idea every day, try choosing a theme and writing a series on it.

If you write 5 posts on the same topic in one writing session, you'll find it's usually a lot quicker than if you were to write 5 posts on different topics on 5 different days.

Series are a great way to draw readers back and add subscribers to your blog, too.



10. Use a Blogging Calendar

A blogging calendar can help you get organized. I tend to go old fashioned and brainstorm out my posts ideas on a printed calendar. Here's how I plan mine: <http://michelleshaeffer.com/how-planning-your-blog-content-can-make-blogging-easier-and-draw-more-regular-readers/2010/10/05/>

I use the [Editorial Calendar Plugin for WordPress](#). It allows me to see on one screen what posts I've got coming up and easily move them around.

Bonus Tip: Drink More Coffee.

Okay, I'm not totally serious on that one. But do reward yourself! My reward of choice is usually Starbucks. Yours can be whatever you want.

Your Turn!

What helps you blog better, faster? Do one of these tips work for you, or got another tip to add? Let's discuss this at The Buzz Seminar!

This is a taste of what you'll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. Learn more and register [here](#).



CHAPTER 13

Why One Equals Four – David Hancock

As an author, you are an entrepreneur. Every book you write is a separate enterprise, a business with its own fate and its own reckoning that balances income against expenditures.

Every business is four businesses:

- An enterprise that creates a product or service
- A marketing business that sells what it produces
- A service business that understands that service is whatever customers want it to be
- A people business that makes the first three possible

The larger the business, the harder it is to establish and maintain personal relationships with customers, suppliers, and employees. Although they may be poor in capital, guerrillas can be rich in human capital through their relationships with the people in their networks.

One advantage you have over big businesses is that you can establish and maintain warm personal relationships—online and offline—with your readers and other allies in your assault on the citadel of fame and fortune. In the age of multinational conglomerates, consumers appreciate more than ever relationships with businesses that provide them with impeccable service and personal involvement.

According to Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos, one of Amazon's goals is to be the world's most "customer-centric" company. They want to establish relationships with customers that are so satisfying customers won't be tempted to start from scratch and build relationships with competitors. For an Entrepreneurial Author, being the world's most "reader-centric" writer is a worthy goal.

Although Entrepreneurial Authors are committed to the success of their businesses, they value people more than sales. They pursue their goals ethically, and whenever possible, by providing more than what they promise.

This article has been excerpted from *The Entrepreneurial Author: Achieving Success and Balance as a Writer in the 21st Century* by Jay Conrad Levinson and David L. Hancock (Morgan James 2010). For more information visit www.TheEntrepreneurialAuthor.com.



The Goals of The Entrepreneurial Author

Welcome to the dawn of a new revolution. And congratulations on even considering becoming an Entrepreneurial Author in a new, rapidly changing world. It's challenging, but you're in for a lot of fun. Of course, there is a lot of work—but fun, too. Lots of fun if you do it right.

The first thing you'll notice about being an Entrepreneurial Author is that your goals will be different from the old-fashioned goals of a traditional author. The Entrepreneurial Author is flexible, innovative, unconventional, dependent, interactive, generous, enjoyable, profitable, and has low overhead costs. The goal is to stay that way.

Look at the authors all around you. If you can't see many, it's because they are not Entrepreneurial Authors; instead they're buried in work, rarely coming up for fresh air or free time. The goals of The Entrepreneurial Author allow them the freedom to pursue interests beyond work—while amassing an income beyond that of their workaholic ancestors.

You can always tell Entrepreneurial Authors by their goals. They are not as money-minded as the authors who came before them. They seem to be happier with the work that they're doing and appear to really care about satisfying the needs of their readers. You've never seen follow-up done the way these people do it. They stay in touch *constantly* with their readers. It's not as if they are working at their business, but rather demonstrating *passion* for their work. Their goal is to express that passion with excellence and transform it into profits.

Not surprisingly, Entrepreneurial Authors achieve their goals on a daily basis. Their long-term goals are lofty. Those goals exist in the future. Their short-term goals are even loftier. Those exist in the *present*—because that is the domain of the entrepreneur. That is where their goals are to be found in abundance.

Your ability to plan for the future and learn from the past will determine your level of comfort in the present, in the here and now. Being an Entrepreneurial Author means realizing that these can be the good old days and that you don't have to wait for the joy that comes with success. It's right here in front of you.

This article has been excerpted from The Entrepreneurial Author: Achieving Success and Balance as a Writer in the 21st Century by Jay Conrad Levinson and David L. Hancock (Morgan James 2010). For more information visit www.TheEntrepreneurialAuthor.com.



This is a taste of what you'll learn from The Buzz Seminar course. Learn more and register [here](#).



CHAPTER 14

Six tactics of thinking like an Entrepreneurial Author—David Hancock

Six tactics of thinking like an Entrepreneurial Author:

1. Think new. Try to come up with fresh ideas that haven't been done before. People like to try new things. New ideas can excite people more than ideas that have been done before, even if they were successful. If you and your networks can't dream up something new, use your creativity to give old ideas a new twist.
2. Think inclusively. Create ways to bring people together in a way so enjoyable they will tell friends about it before and after the event.
3. Think big. Look at the promotional opportunities your books create with the same breadth of vision you use to look at your books in the largest possible way. Then pare your ideas down to what you can accomplish. Promotion, like politics, is the art of the possible.
4. Think ideas through. Balance the time and energy you need to execute ideas against the potential gain in sales and publicity.
5. Think of a way out. Set benchmarks in time and energy to see if you're making the progress you need to make an idea worth implementing. If in the course of trying to follow through on an idea, you become convinced that the payoff won't justify the effort, let it go and move on to the next idea.
6. Think of ways to be a giving enterprise, not just a taking one. Make a virtue of commerce by helping your community while you promote your book. Schools, libraries, and charities always welcome help raising funds. You will feel better about your efforts and so will others involved with them. And the media is more likely to cover a charity event than a purely commercial one.

One reason now is such a great time to be a writer is that you can use the books you love and the authors you admire as models for creating your books and your career.

You can bring your vision, passion, and creativity to promotion—your unique ability to do the same things differently and better than they've been done before. One way to know you're succeeding: Other authors use your ideas.

The more skills and interests you have, the more possibilities they will create for promoting your books—so develop your skills, knowledge, and creativity as much as you can in as many fields as you can. They will serve you well.



*This article has been excerpted from *The Entrepreneurial Author: Achieving Success and Balance as a Writer in the 21st Century* by Jay Conrad Levinson and David L. Hancock (Morgan James 2010). For more information visit www.TheEntrepreneurialAuthor.com.*

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Chapter 15

Why You Must be a Guerilla Marketer – Jay Conrad Levinson, David L Hancock

“The book didn’t sell because I didn’t promote it.”

—THE MOST VISIBLE HUMAN BEING ON THE PLANET (President Bill Clinton, author of *Between Hope and History. Meeting America’s Challenges for the 21st Century*)

The United States is in the midst of an entrepreneurial explosion, one of the most hopeful signs for the country’s future. As an author, you are an entrepreneur. Every book you write is a separate enterprise with its own fate and its own reckoning that balances income against expenditures. For guerrillas, the only business criterion that counts is profits.

Marketing is anything done to sell a product or service and maintain relationships with the people who make the business possible. Fortune 500 companies spend millions to market their products.

But like most entrepreneurs, authors don’t have millions to spend. They have to be guerrilla marketers. They have to use unconventional weapons and tactics that substitute time, energy, and imagination for money. That is the essence of guerrilla marketing.

The Difference Between Gorillas and Guerrillas

What are the characteristics of guerrilla marketing as opposed to traditional marketing? Guerrilla marketing differs in twelve ways:

1. Traditional marketing uses as big a budget as possible; guerrilla marketing substitutes time, energy, and imagination for money.
2. Traditional marketing is geared to big businesses; guerrilla marketing, to owners of small businesses with a big dream but not a big bankroll.
3. Traditional marketing measures effectiveness with sales; guerrilla marketing, with profits.

WAR STORIES



“On October 26, 1809, the *New York Evening Post* carried the following announcement, ‘Distressing—Left his lodgings some time since and has not since been heard of, a small, elderly gentleman, dressed in an old black coat and cocked hat, by the name of Knickerbocker.’

“Then, two weeks later, an item appeared saying that a man fitting that description had been spotted on a stagecoach heading for Albany. Ten days later, the paper carried a news story that the Columbian Hotel had found a handwritten manuscript believed to be written by the mysterious Knickerbocker. Seth Handaside, the hotel manager, decided to sell the manuscript in order to settle the bill the elusive boarder had failed to pay.

“Months later, the book, a two-volume set, appeared in bookstores (selling for \$3), bearing the title *The History of New York*, by Diedrich Knickerbocker. It was a huge success. The author of the book and the elaborate hoax was Washington Irving, who wanted to create a unique publicity campaign for the book and have a little joke on the reader. The name (Died/rich) Knickerbocker was his private joke.”

—*The Writer’s Home Companion*, James Charlton and Lisbeth Mark

Jay started teaching guerrilla marketing for the University of California at Berkeley Extension in the seventies, but Washington Irving had perfected it long before him.

4. Traditional marketing is based on experience and then judgment that involves guesswork. Guerrilla marketing is based on psychology—the laws of human behavior that determine buying patterns.
5. Traditional marketing recommends that businesses increase their production and then diversify by offering allied products and services. Guerrilla marketing recommends that you maintain your standard of excellence by focusing on writing your books, and diversify only if you can create synergy that helps sell your books without lowering their quality.
6. Traditional marketing encourages linear growth by adding new customers. Guerrilla marketing also encourages attracting new customers but recommends that you grow your business exponentially by using service and follow-up to create more transactions, larger transactions, and referrals from your present customers.
7. Traditional marketing advocates destroying competition; guerrilla marketing urges you to cooperate with competitors and create win-win opportunities with other authors.
8. Traditional marketing believes that one marketing weapon alone can work; guerrilla marketing believes in the synergy created by a combination of weapons.



9. Traditional marketing urges businesses to count their monthly receipts to see how many sales they've made; guerrilla marketing recommends that you count how many relationships you make each month because each relationship can generate many receipts.
10. In the past, traditional marketing didn't encourage using technology because it was too complicated, expensive, and limited; guerrilla marketing has always embraced technology because it's simple to use, reasonably priced, and limitless in its potential.
11. Traditional marketing identifies a handful of marketing weapons that are relatively costly; guerrilla marketing begins with a base of one hundred weapons, more than half of which are free, and urges you to create others.
12. Traditional marketing intimidates small-business owners because it is enshrouded in mystique and complexity; guerrilla marketing removes the mystique and puts you in control.

The Fifteen Most Important Marketing Secrets

I have no fans. You know what I got? Customers.

—MICKEY SPILLANE

Just by learning the following words ending in “*ent*,” you will be 80 percent of the way to success with your marketing.

You must create your books with the understanding that your promotional efforts can only be as effective as the content of your books enables them to be.

1. Content: Publishers waste millions of dollars a year buying and promoting books that fail.

No amount of money or marketing can overcome a book that doesn't deliver. So your first challenge is to write a book that your networks assure you is as good as you want it to be. The content of your books will determine how you sell them to publishers and promote them to book buyers. Content precedes commerce.

2. Commitment: You must make a commitment to your marketing program.

Talent isn't enough. You need motivation—and persistence, too.

—LEON URIS

Once you decide on the best promotion plan for your books, and your networks agree with you, make the commitment to stick with it.



The only time you can safely stop promoting your books is when you're ready to stop writing them. Before then, commit yourself to **the Rule of Five**: do five things every day to market your books. Think of it this way: A diamond is a piece of coal that stuck to the job.

3. Investment: You must think of marketing as an investment in your future.

Most best-selling authors don't strike gold with their first book. Their sales grow with a succession of books until they write the breakout book that catapults them onto the best-seller list, where they stay for the rest of their careers.

Until your promotional efforts pay off and you become a successful author, consider the money you spend on promotion as an investment that will pay for itself many times over.

4. Consistent: Your marketing must be consistent.

You must make your promotion consistent so that, over time, the media and your readers become more receptive to you and your books. One of the weapons in chapter 18 is the marketing calendar that you will create and tweak as needed every year. But once you're convinced about the most effective way to promote your books, don't change your approach. Make your promotion, like your books, consistently first rate.

Also be consistent about the frequency with which you write your books and when they are published. One book a year is the usual pace.

5. Confident: You must make potential readers confident in you.

Consistency creates familiarity, familiarity builds confidence, and confidence is the most important factor in determining what makes consumers buy. It's more important than quality, selection, price, and service.

6. Patient: You must be patient with your marketing.

If you're doing all you can for your books, take two more steps:

- Follow up on your efforts.
- Have patience with your promotion plan, the sales of your books, and the development of your career.

7. Assortment: You must use an assortment of weapons to ensure the success of your marketing.

Small businesses shouldn't try to use all the weapons in their arsenals at once, but should unleash them over time with a well-thought-out plan. Unfortunately, this is a luxury writers don't have. Unless publishers make a commitment to a book, they test-market it with the first printing. To sustain your publisher's belief in your book's future,



you have to create maximum promotional firepower for it during the crucial four- to six-week launch window when it's published.

Firing as many weapons as you can integrate effectively into your plan is the best way to accomplish this. If your book doesn't gain momentum fast enough, your publisher will give up on it and go on to other books.

Make it your goal to use at least sixty weapons. The wider the assortment of weapons you use, the wider the grin on your face will be when your royalty check arrives. However, if you can't use a weapon effectively, don't use it at all.

A Web site alone will not make your books successful, nor will a media kit. Regard every weapon as 1 percent of your promotion plan. The best way to guarantee the success of your books is to use as many weapons as you can.

The more weapons you unleash on publication and the more completely you integrate them, the more powerful each of them becomes. Unity and variety are two of the keys to victory in the publishing wars. The bigger your arsenal, the greater your victories.

A bookseller who was chosen to receive the *Publishers Weekly* Bookseller of the Year Award was using seventy-four guerrilla marketing weapons (and he was still trying to figure out how to use the other twenty-six!).

8. Subsequent: You must base your promotion on the belief that real profits come subsequent to the sale.

The difference between guerrilla marketers and unenlightened authors is that the latter think promotion is over when someone buys their book. The reality is that 68 percent of lost business is lost because of apathy after the sale.

A sale is either part of a never-ending circle of business and communication with a reader, or it is a straight line heading out of your life in the direction of Chapter 11.

Guerrillas know that the sale of their books to new readers is only the end of the beginning. They understand the immense potential value of every reader, so their goal is to create customers for life. Guerrilla marketing is based on the belief that the customer is everything, the sale only chump change.

If readers like your first book, they may create an endless circle that they complete every time they buy something you offer. What your readers buy after reading the first book is what will produce the greatest profits for you.

9. Convenient: You must run your business so it is convenient for those you serve.

Convenience is an advantage you have over the CEOs of the Fortune 500. Thanks to technology, the CEO of your enterprise can be accessible to the people you need and



who need you: your editor, your publicist, the media, speaking bureaus, and the rest of your professional networks—and most important, your fans.

You need all the allies you can find in your quest for success. To benefit from their help, you must make it convenient for them to reach you.

Knowing that they can always reach you fast will be an incentive for people to call you instead of competitors. When your business grows big enough, you will have someone filtering your communications, so you receive only those calls that only you can respond to.

GUERRILLA WISDOM

Life, like art, consists in drawing a line somewhere. Don't fall prey to a hazard of working at home by sacrificing your personal life or your leisure time for the sake of availability. Set hours that are convenient for you and the people who want to reach you, and except for emergencies, stick to them.

10. Amazement: Put an element of amazement in your marketing.

Your marketing has to communicate what will most excite potential readers about you and your book. You can use what excites you about your books and what they can do for your readers.

Make the Amazement Factor one criterion for choosing ideas to write about. What can you use in promoting your books that will amaze book buyers? Guerrilla publicist Jill Lublin calls this “the Ooh-aah Factor.”

What amazes us about *Guerrilla Marketing for Writers* is that there are so many ways for you to promote your books, and most of them are either free or you can get paid for using them. You can get paid for promoting your books by giving seminars, you get paid again for selling your books at your seminars, and then you get paid royalties for the books you sell! Ah, the joys of working for yourself!

And the technology you need to build and run your business keeps getting more powerful and less expensive. If you use technology creatively and effectively, it's like riding a rocket instead of a turtle to reach your goals.

11. Measurement: You must use measurement to judge the effectiveness of your weapons.

If you do a publicity tour, you can measure its effectiveness by how many media interviews you had, how important they were, the responses of your live audiences, and how your efforts affected sales.



When you are creating the promotion plans for your books, establish how you will measure the effectiveness of your weapons. At the end of the year, you will use this information to help you set up your promotion calendar. A preview: Eliminate what fails and double up on what works.

12. Involvement: Create and sustain involvement between you and your readers.

If readers love your first book, you have the opportunity to make them lifetime fans of your work and your related products and services. Guerrillas know that it costs six times more to attract new fans than it does to sell to satisfied readers. So when you add new readers to your network of fans, do whatever you can to enlist them in your publishing network for life.

The real payoff from readers only comes if you can make them lifetime fans who:

- Buy all of your books for themselves and their friends and tell everyone they know that they must read them
- Come to all of your talks and book signings
- Can't wait to purchase whatever you create

You can't pay someone to do that. It can only happen because of their passion for your books and their pleasure at being involved with you and your career. Your Web site is the perfect weapon for staying involved with your readers and for them to stay involved with you.

Every time new readers buy one of your books, they are investing in you. If they invest the time to read your book and like it, you have the opportunity to invest your time in them and start an enduring relationship.

Use your biography or a page in the back of the book to invite them to become involved with you as a member of your literary community by:

- Attending your talks
- Contacting you at your Web site
- Following you on Twitter
- Becoming a fan of your books on Facebook
- Writing you at the address in your books
- Calling you at the (preferably toll-free) phone number in your books

You can show your involvement with your fans by being cordial when you contact them, by being helpful to them, and by asking about them.



GUERRILLA TACTICS

Keep a list of all of the places your contact information appears online and offline, so if any of it changes, you'll know where to send the new information.

13. Dependent: Learn to be dependent on others and encourage them to be dependent on you.

It may seem impossible for you to be an independent entrepreneur but remain dependent on others for the success of your business. But you depend on your suppliers, including your publisher, as they depend on you for something to sell.

You and your readers depend on each other. They depend on you to provide them with good reading and the related products and services you offer. You depend on them for the profits they generate. Guerrillas thrive on the power of teamwork and win-win dependencies that enable everyone to achieve their goals.

If you choose to engage a PR firm to assist you with book promotion, this two-way street also applies. Willy Spizman, CEO of The Spizman Agency, a media and public relations company that specializes in book promotion – (SpizmanAgency.com) – says that you should have a similar relationship with your public relations agency. You should depend on the agency to aggressively promote your book through insightful and targeted media campaigns, while the agency depends on you to deliver a unique product and platform worthy of national press. Ultimately, when everyone pushes and pulls in the same direction, magical things can happen.

14. Armament: You must have the armament of guerrillas—the technology and the skills needed to promote your work.

The growing sophistication of laptops, smart phones (hello, iPhone), toll-free numbers, fax machines, and the Web enables you to take your office with you, so you can work and communicate around the globe. With global wireless services nearly perfected, you are able to reach anyone, anywhere. And now with Google Voice, it doesn't make a difference where in the world you are.

The electronic miracles that keep tumbling out of our high-tech centers will continue to provide you with the arsenal of a twenty-first-century guerrilla.

15. Consent: You must gain the consent of those to whom you want to market.

A guerrilla who operates a camp in New York runs small ads in camp directories and in the classified sections of many magazines. She also takes booths at trade shows. She doesn't sell anything; she just offers a free video. The video doesn't sell anything either; it just asks for a personal visit.



It's at the visit that she sells the camp to the parents, not only for their children, but for relatives and classmates. Gaining consent minimizes her marketing costs and maximizes her profits.

By being a source of information or entertainment through your books, talks, and Web site, you are gaining consent to market to your readers and audiences.

WHY ONE EQUALS FOUR

Every business is four businesses:

- An enterprise that creates a product or service
- A marketing business that sells what it produces
- A service business that understands that service is whatever customers want it to be
- A people business that makes the first three possible

THE GUERRILLA MARKETING HALL OF FAME

Besides being dedicated guerrillas, the following people are sources of information and inspiration to writers. Their ideas and can-do spirit made their way into this book. They inspire writers to launch their careers. Because of their willingness to help writers, they will have a lasting, positive impact on publishing. If you are writing publishable books and you supplement this book with their advice, we guarantee your books will succeed.

We are delighted to give well-earned recognition to:

- Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen, coauthors of the *Chicken Soup* series. They set the standard for what authors can achieve starting with nothing but their goals: creativity, commitment, speaking ability, willingness to ask for what they want, and a book that delivers.
- Tom and Marilyn Ross, cofounders of the Small Publishers Association of North America and coauthors of *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing* and *Jump Start Your Book Sales*.
- Jerrold Jenkins of the Jenkins Group, publisher of *Independent Publisher* and coauthor of both *Publish to Win* and *Inside the Bestsellers*.
- John Kremer of Open Horizons, editor in chief of *Book Marketing Update* and author of *1001 Ways to Market Your Books*.



- Terry Nathan, executive director and assistant director of **The Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA)**, sponsor of IBPA's Publishing University. (*Formerly Publishers Marketing Association –PMA*)
- Dan Poynter of Para Publishing, author of *The Self-Publishing Manual*.

The larger the business, the harder it is to establish and maintain personal relationships with customers, suppliers, and employees. Although they may be poor in capital, guerrillas can be rich in human capital through their relationships with the people in their networks.

One advantage you have over big businesses is that you can establish and maintain warm personal relationships, online and offline, with your readers and other allies in your assault on the citadel of fame and fortune. In the age of multinational conglomerates, consumers appreciate more than ever relationships with businesses that provide them with impeccable service and personal involvement.

According to Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos, one of Amazon's goals is to be the world's most "customer-centric" company. They want to establish relationships with customers that are so satisfying customers won't be tempted to start from scratch and build relationships with competitors. For a guerrilla author, being the world's most "reader-centric" writer is a worthy goal.

Although guerrilla marketers are committed to the success of their businesses, they value people more than sales. They pursue their goals ethically and, whenever possible, by providing more than what they promise.

The Real Dough is Outside of the Cookie Cutter

Your creativity—your ability to use your imagination to create new ways to promote your books—will impress publishers because they show little creativity when they promote their books.

Large houses publish hundreds of books a year, so they can't devote enough time or money to creating the most effective marketing campaigns for every book they publish. Even the big books that receive far more attention than the rest of the list are victims of the cookie-cutter syndrome. As each book winds its way through the publishing maze, it is granted the time and attention warranted by its importance to the list.

You and your publisher will have identical interests but not identical agendas. You both want to make money on your book, but your book will be only one of the hundreds of books a large house publishes. They have to pay attention to the whole list; you don't.

If yours is one of the few big books on your publisher's list, your book will be looked after as well as possible, given your publisher's time, money, and creative limitations.



Authors, like their publishers, are prisoners of the system. The publication of any book is a complex enterprise that, at a large house, involves the fleeting attention of more than a hundred people as the book passes before them on the conveyor belt that connects writers at one end of the publishing process with readers at the other.

Publishers publish far too many books to do all of them justice, even if they wanted to. The skill, creativity, and commitment with which books are published vary enormously, depending on how much love or money (or both) motivate the publishers and their overworked, underpaid staff. The result: cookie-cutter publishing.

Limited by time and money, publishers fall back on the old standbys. Trade promotion precedes consumer promotion to book buyers. Four common tools for trade promotion are:

- Publishers' catalogs, in which big books take up two pages and little ones take up a page or half-page.
- Trade advertising in *Publishers Weekly*, which for most hardcover and trade paperback books consists of being part of a list ad that includes all of the books published during one of the large house's three four-month-long seasons. (This is all the advertising most books receive.)
- For the books with enough potential, sending advanced reading copies (ARCs) with a letter from the publisher on the first page and the promotion plan on the back cover to booksellers, key media people, and subsidiary rights buyers. If it's a fall book, the publisher may give copies away at Book Expo America (BEA), the annual booksellers' convention.
- Inclusion on the house's Web site, which promotes books to the trade.

Some publishers are experimenting with a creative innovation: prepublication tours for their most promising novelists so they can meet reviewers and booksellers.

Publishers' catalogs are free on request. When you go through them, you will see the same kinds of consumer promotion techniques again for a house's big books over and over:

- Ads in *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and perhaps in book-review sections in major markets, possibly supplemented by follow-up ads
- Tours of major markets
- Satellite tours in which authors give five-minute print, radio, or television interviews to media around the country
- Making authors available on publishers' Web sites



The more publishers have invested in a book, financially or emotionally, the more they will try to design a promotion campaign tailored to the book. But they usually fall back on tried-and-true techniques.

Large publishers spend \$25,000 or less to acquire most of their books. This doesn't give them a financial incentive to promote them. So unless they love a book or think they can build it over time, the fate of the book is in the hands of the author.

Unless a publisher pays a fortune for your book, a promotion plan that convinces the publisher about your ability to devise and carry out creative, economical, and effective ideas for reaching your potential readers will impress them. The more impressed they are, the more willing they may be to help you carry out your plans.

The long-term payoff: Everything you do to promote your books also helps sell you, your future books, and all of the products and services that you will have to offer.

The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious.

—THEODORE LEVITT, AUTHOR

GUERRILLA TACTICS

Six facets of thinking like a guerrilla:

- Think new. Try to come up with fresh ideas that haven't been done before. People like to try new things. New ideas can excite people more than ideas that have been done before, even if they were successful. If you and your networks can't dream up something new, use your creativity (discussed in chapter 5) to give old ideas a new twist.
- Think inclusively. Create ways to bring people together in a way so enjoyable they will tell friends about it before and after the event.
- Think big. Look at the promotional opportunities your books create with the same breadth of vision you use to look at your books in the largest possible way. Then pare your ideas down to what you can accomplish. Promotion, like politics, is the art of the possible.
- Think ideas through. Balance the time and energy you need to execute ideas against the potential gain in sales and publicity.
- Think of a way out. Set benchmarks in time and energy to see if you're making the progress you need to make an idea worth implementing. If in the course of trying to follow through on an idea, you become convinced that the payoff won't justify the effort, let it go and move on to the next idea.



- Think of ways to be a giving enterprise, not just a taking one. Make a virtue of commerce by helping your community while you promote your book. Schools, libraries, and charities always welcome help raising funds. You will feel better about your efforts and so will others involved with them. And the media are more likely to cover a charity event than a purely commercial one.

One reason now is such a great time to be a writer is that you can use the books you love and the authors you admire as models for creating your books and your career.

You can bring your vision, passion, and creativity to promotion, your unique ability to do the same things differently and better than they've been done before. One way to know you're succeeding: Other authors use your ideas.

GUERRILLA WISDOM

I will study and get ready and some day my chance will come.

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The more skills and interests you have, the more possibilities they will create for promoting your books. So develop your skills, knowledge, and creativity as much as you can in as many fields as you can. They will serve you well.

Guerrilla marketing can do for you and your books what it does for hundreds of thousands of diverse businesses around the world. How much it helps you and your books depends on how closely you follow this advice:

The Guerrilla Author's Marketing 10 Commandments

1. Create books, products, and services that you can market with pride and passion.
2. Remember that you are in the service of your ideas, your books, and your readers.
3. Establish an annual marketing budget that reflects your belief in the importance of marketing and enables you to carry out your promotion plan.
4. Devote the same time, energy, and imagination to promoting your books every day that you devoted to writing them.
5. Foster and sustain warm, giving relationships with your networks.



6. Maintain the perspective of a one-person multimedia, multinational conglomerate when you make decisions about writing and promoting your books.
7. Be a lifelong learner in your field and in learning to market your business so you remain competitive.
8. Use state-of-the-art techniques and technology to serve your readers better.
9. Recommend competitors' books if they will meet readers' needs in ways that yours don't.
10. Practice "co-opetition" by seeking ways to benefit from collaborating with your competitors.

Of course, give more than your readers expect, which is why I'm going to do the same with ten more ...

1. Always over deliver with the content of your books, seminars, talks, etc.
2. Make your marketing efforts creative and consistent enough to position yourself as one of the top authors in your field.
3. Welcome change as an opportunity to find ideas and improve your business and your life.
4. Make selling your books to new readers the start of a lifelong relationship.
5. Encourage readers to contact you, and regard this as an opportunity to serve them, to help attract new readers through word of mouth, and to publicize everything you can offer them.
6. Welcome the chance to say thank you and reward those who help you.
7. Let your decisions reflect harmonious short- and long-term personal and professional goals that make you eager to get up in the morning.
8. Ask the people involved with your books and your business to help you keep these commandments.
9. Strive to create harmony between what you think, say, and do, without crossing the line between being righteous and self-righteous.
10. Understand that marketing begins once you've made the sale and that a mind-numbing 68 percent of all business lost is due to apathy after the sale.

Add your own commandments to this list, and share them with us at the Buzz Seminar so we can add them to the list. Good luck!



This article was based on a portion of [Guerrilla Marketing for Writers: 100 No-Cost, Low-Cost Weapons for Selling Your Work](#) by Jay Conrad Levinson, Rick Frishman, Michael Larsen, David L Hancock, which we highly recommend you read.



Go to the BuzzSeminar.com to learn about the course
and register!