

Building Your Blog's Audience

Author : lauren-shufran

Categories : [Business Blogs](#)

In one sense, the phrase "if you build it, they will come" is applicable to your blog and its audience. If you're offering consistently solid [content marketing](#) and following our best practices for [search engine optimization](#), your blog posts will eventually start showing up in search results, your content will start getting shared, and your visitors will start subscribing.

But "eventually" is the crucial word there. SEO is a practice of patience; and the project of blogging is a long-term one.

What's more, even once your posts start rising on the search engine results pages, you'll still be missing out on part of your potential audience—whether that's searchers who aren't using the keywords you've built your content around in their inquiries, prospects who aren't yet aware that they're in need of your content, or those who are looking for answers in industries tangential to yours. *So step two, after you begin growing your content, is a deliberate promotional strategy that reaches those peripheral prospects.*

Here are some methods worth considering in that strategy:

Guest blogging

A great way to generate traffic to your own blog—and to establish authority as a leader in your field—is to write guest posts for other bloggers in, or tangential to, your industry. Reach out to the hosts of other authoritative websites and give them suggestions about what you could offer them in the way of content.

Even contributing one guest post a month to another recognized website can benefit you in several ways:

- It gets you backlinks to your blog, website and social media profiles. (The hosts of the blogs you contribute to should include these links in your author bio.)
- It grows your reputation and your prospects' confidence in you and your business.
- Assuming you choose websites with large followings (and you should!), it offers you a large and willing target audience who'll click into your site if your post is compelling enough... and

who may very well subscribe if they discover your guest post wasn't just a one-off.

- Assuming you choose websites with *engaged* followers (and you should!), it means valuable feedback in the comments section of your post.
- Beyond a community of readers, guest posting helps you broaden your *personal* network by connecting you with other influencers in your industry or niche. Ideally you'll choose a blog that already has a dynamic community of engaged contributors: a ready-made network that you can begin sharing ideas and collaborating with.
- It encourages social media shares—particularly if you submit a guest post to a blog that has a lot of social media activity. Of course, you'll make it as easy as possible for your readers to share by: 1) [Adding a "Click to Tweet" link](#) to some of your best quotes, and 2) Including easily shareable content, such as infographics, in your post.

On the other side, inviting guest bloggers to contribute to *your* blog is a way of collecting visits from their followers—not to mention a way of establishing important relationships with the experts in your industry.

Outbound links

The golden rule of blogging goes like this: *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you... by linking out from your post to their website.* When you insert outbound links into your blog posts, send those businesses or the hosts of those blogs a note letting them know that you linked to them. We bet they'll be grateful for that shoutout—and we won't be surprised if you eventually get a link back in return.

Syndication

Content syndication is the process of republishing a post, a video, an infographic, or any other piece of content from your blog on a third-party website. The idea, of course, is that the website you choose to syndicate your content on has a *much* larger readership than your blog does... which means your target audience increases exponentially with that single act of republishing.

You might syndicate your content on another—more popular—blog, or on a news website. As you can imagine, the benefits of syndication look a lot like the benefits of guest blogging. The best way to begin the syndication process is to identify sites that republish blogs in your niche, take a look at their following (How big and broad is their readership? Are users actively engaged, sharing, and commenting?), and send the editors of those sites a note with your ideas for syndicated content, along with the reasons they should consider promoting your content.

Encourage sharing...

Each one of your blog posts should include social share buttons, and you shouldn't be afraid to ask your readers to share if they enjoyed the post and think others would find it useful. Most CMS platforms have plugins that make it easy for readers to share on social media.

Our recommendation is to keep the share counters on—no matter how low those numbers are. Even a single prior share will serve as social proof for a reader considering sharing: The fact that someone else has already done it will make them more likely to hit the "share" button.

... and do some sharing yourself

Your readers shouldn't be the only ones promoting your posts: [You're the other half of that equation](#). Social media is a great place to start, not only because of its broad audience reach, but also because it only takes interested readers a single click to re-share it to their own social networks. What's more, many social networks are crawled and indexed by search engines.

Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Google+ are social platforms to consider ([LinkedIn is particularly valuable for B2B companies](#), while Facebook still leads for B2C companies.) Leverage hashtags to increase your visibility and your following. Feature images in your posts to make it more compelling for users who see you on their feeds to click in.

The point is to stop thinking like a mere blogger and to think, instead, like a publisher. You're not just hitting "publish" on a post once a week. You're perpetually considering the best avenues through which to publicize that content and improve reach.

Comment on others' blogs...

Hopefully you're already subscribed to the most popular blogs in your niche. If not, we recommend you start hitting those "subscribe" [CTAs](#) right now.

Keep up on these blogs and begin commenting on the posts you find compelling. Don't just compliment the authors. Post meaningful, thoughtful comments and you'll suddenly be on the radars of your industry's most influential bloggers. What's more, their followers will take notice of you, and start wondering whether you have your own blog. This is a crucial way of scoring some prominence points in your industry.

... and respond to comments on yours

Don't disable the comments feature on your CMS. Rather, encourage readers to contribute their thoughts after reading your posts. Check back on your blog regularly to see if there are any new

comments to respond to. Your CMS should give you the option of receiving alerts when someone has commented.

And here's the key: Respond to *everything*. If you're asked questions, give thorough answers. This will underscore your—and your business's—credibility and authority. If you're complimented, thank the people who left those comments and see if you can't contribute anything further.

Respond to the negative feedback as well. If you're wrong, admit it. If you were misunderstood, gently explain your point a second time, but be open to other points of view. If you think you might be misunderstanding what your commenter has said, ask for clarification.

Respond to each commenter by name. These people are responsible for driving your blog traffic, after all. They're all either customers or prospects whose thoughts and opinions deserve attention.

Additionally, comments are crawled and indexed by search engines, so they can help bring your published posts traffic. Searchers who discover your post through a SERP because of a comment thread that matches their query will want to see that you properly and thoughtfully responded to the comments offered—no matter the tone they were offered in.

Create communities

In some ways, each of the above strategies is helping you do precisely this, but this final strategy is the catch-all. It goes beyond encouraging engagement and conversation on your blog by posing questions to your readers (though that's important!).

Explore ways to exchange ideas and collaborate on content with your followers, fans, and other business bloggers you respect. Attend conferences where those bloggers are speaking. Send them emails ahead of time, letting them know you'll be there and asking if you might buy them a coffee and take a few minutes of their time to chat.

Create an online forum, or host a webinar or meetup. Join or start your own Facebook or LinkedIn group. The opportunities to commune and communicate with your audience and other business bloggers are countless—both online and off. The more ardent and sincere you are, the more quickly your audience will grow.

Have patience for the process

Finally, while some of the above strategies may get you a handful of followers (or more) very quickly, remember that a blog following is not an overnight development. The one thing both SEO and prospect trust have in common is that they both take time. Do the work you can... but then let the process *be*.

Building your blog's audience is a bit like that proverbial watched pot of not-quite-boiling water: It'll take patience, but it'll also do its own work when you're not looking.

Of course, if you're willing to put in the work, building your blog's audience is something you can do on your own. So is writing all those posts while learning the tricks of the content marketing trade. But there may come a point when you decide to hire a blogger who knows how to [write killer blog content](#), implement [SEO best practices](#), and build an audience. In that case, we've got you covered in the next section with our [steps to hiring freelance bloggers](#).