How I Launched, Marketed, and Promoted a High-Traffic Blog in Under 15 Days

'There are 126 million blogs out there. How is mine ever going to succeed?'[1]

I can't help but think that every blogger, whether successful or not, has thought something like this at some point in their career. There's a truly staggering amount of blogs out there, most of which sit dormant and unread. Thanks to the ADD-style attention span of the internet and the vast amount of competing content out there, I was understandably scared before I launched my first serious blog.

I was scared of launching it to an audience that didn't care. I was worried that it wouldn't go down as well as I'd hoped. I was afraid of technical difficulties, of readers that wouldn't pass the message on, and of the crowd of haters that would inevitably amass if the blog took off. Simply put, I found myself in the same situation that many other would-be writers do: scared of *every* possible outcome.

But unlike most other would-be bloggers, I wasn't going to publish a blog that failed purely due to a lack of interest or effort from myself. *That's* the number one killer for a website – a writer that lacks the interest to make it decent. It's depressing, and somewhat typical, to see a website deserted after a couple of posts, all because it didn't grow right from the minute it was launched.

When I launched *AddToDesign* in 2010, I was determined to run things a different way. Instead of the same old bland design content, we would have articles that inspired would-be designers to get out there and start working. Instead of lame 'inspiration' posts that were made up of flashy images and little to no substance, we'd have write-ups that actually offered value to graphic designers.

More than anything, I wanted to make a stir in a niche that, excuse the language, is filled with utter crap from almost every direction. Alongside a steady supply of [great](#) [design](#) [blogs](#), there's a cheaper underbelly that's made its name by reposting the same uninspired content and 'inspiration' images. I couldn't stand it, and I saw *AddToDesign* as a way to push readers towards content that really helps.

I put this eBook together to do two things. The first is to convince you that it's *not* impossible to start a high-traffic blog. The second is to eliminate the fear of failure from your mind, either as a blogger or as an all-round online entrepreneur. These two things bugged me before I launched my blog, and looking back it's fairly easy to see that they were obstacles that I'd created entirely by myself.

Before I begin, let's clear one thing up. I'm far from a star blogger. I'm no Robert Scoble, no John Chow, and certainly no Shoemoney. I'm not a hype-filled salesman and I'm not a persistent online marketer either. What you're going to get is my experience launching a high-traffic blog, my ideas on how the process can be carried out, and my findings on the best strategies for doing so.

Ready to start? *Let's go.* From picking a *reason* for your blog to finding the best *traffic and promo sources*, this eBook will explain how you can get your first blog off the ground. Before we get into the theory of blogging and the metrics that you should follow, let's look at the most valuable reason for *any* blogger to keep writing: their motivations, long-term plans, and perceived benefits.

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[1] http://royal.pingdom.com/2010/01/22/internet-2009-in-numbers/ – This figure is from 2009, so the total amount of blogs may be even higher now.

Why start a blog?

If there's one thing that quickly kills an online business, it's a lack of motivation. Webmaster forums are flooded with threads detailing and cataloguing failures that happened purely because of a lack of effort or interest. It's the reason for so many failed marketing projects, far too many one-post blogs, and a great deal of the web's half-finished community projects.

These five motivators are, to my understanding, the biggest reasons for bloggers doing what they do. They're the reason that post archives span multiple *years* instead of a couple of weeks, and the ultimate reason for most blogs' success. If you're planning on starting a blog, it's likely that you're doing so for one of these reasons. Take a look and consider which motivation is yours.

Money

Now *this* is a reason that all bloggers are familiar with. The *make money blogging* world is vast and difficult to navigate, with new faces popping up quickly and seasoned gurus offering advice to their followers. If you're a would-be entrepreneur, it's fairly likely that your reasons for blogging line up with currency and financial success, particularly success due to online marketing and product sales.

Given the scalability and lucrative nature of internet advertising, this certainly isn't a bad reason to start a blog. There are thousands of advertising programs and affiliate networks out there sending a sizable check to their blogger publishers – one that tends to grow on an exponential basis. If you're interested in turning your hobbies into an income, blogging can often be a good way to do it.

However, it's worth considering this slightly depressing statistic: *over 90% of bloggers fail to make a single cent from their writing*. Most blogs, spam and auto-generated content aside, aren't the best money makers out there. Given the huge amount of success stories in the blogging world, however, it's fairly clear that the 90:10 failure ratio doesn't apply to every blogger on the internet.

Recognition

Everyone wants to be famous. Well, not *everyone*, but the vast majority of us would appreciate a bit more attention, whether online or in our offline lives. Blogging allows anyone to share their thought streams with the world. While this has resulted in some ridiculous levels of narcissism (see: a fairly large portion of Twitter's user base) it's also resulted in a few famous faces and blogger 'celebrities.'

It's also resulted in a massive amount of mini-celebrities, or as many people call them *'niche stars.'* These are bloggers that have gained cult or iconic status within a certain subset of the greater online population, allowing them to use interviews and other outlets to further their star power. The classic example is [Tynan](), who's capitalized on his blog and become a fairly well known online celebrity.

Finally, there's the burning desire in many people to use their blog as a springboard for greater fame and acknowledgement. Given that some major celebrities have spawned from *YouTube* and *Blogger* fame, it's certainly not impossible. Building a huge blog eventually allows you to become an expert or celebrity in the public eye, which is rarely a bad thing.

Access

Here's a great reason to blog that's consistently skipped over: access. Instead of blogging with aims of generating cash or becoming a major celebrity, write your blog with intentions of using it to gain access to special events and interesting people. Simply by being a semi-public figure (which is the most accurate description for most popular bloggers) you'll gain access to hundreds of cool events.

Ironically, blogs that are started to gain access to events tend to grow into the most commercially successful and influential. People *love* to live vicariously through the internet, and if your blog can offer an experience that the public otherwise lacks access to, it adds to your influence. Blogger and über-popular author [Tim Ferriss](#) has repeatedly stated that he blogs for this reason above any other.

Whether you want to network with leaders in your industry or eventually set the bar for investments and other joint ventures, starting a blog is a great way to get the attention of people that matter. That said, it's worth mentioning that despite the overwhelming amount of attention given to the bloggers, an annoying, needy blog can often do more damage to your access than it can improvement.

Security

For job security, financial security, or the security of your business, maintaining a popular blog is a good way to keep your important life processes in order. A blog that's updated often can add power to your search-based website, add longevity and consistency to your online earnings, and even give your status as an online expert, consultant, or entrepreneur a little more credibility and security.

While this isn't likely to feature high on the priority list for personal bloggers and writers, it's worth remembering that a great deal of blogs are business focused or written for a certain industry. It takes continual effort (and, in this case, continual writing *output*) to stay at the top of the game, which can often mean maintaining a popular blog to keep your audience and influence secure.

Passion

Finally, there's passion. While thousands of bloggers are motivated by money, thousands more by the potential to gain an audience, and even more by the ability to access new events, none give as much content to the world as those that are truly passionate. Passion has created the foundation of some of the world's most popular blogs, online journals, and content-based websites.

When you think about it, it's fairly easy to see why. People love to write about topics that they're interested in. From keen golfers maintaining websites about their favorite equipment to artists in other countries using the internet as a platform to share their work, most non-commercial bloggers are motivated not by exposure or by the potential for fame, but by their passion for their subject.

Sometimes, passion and money overlap, which can lead to potentially large returns. If you've got a passion for finance or another potentially lucrative online topic, think about how this combination of dedicated action, knowledge, and ability to produce content could work in your favor. From top authors to political bloggers, thousands of high-traffic blogs have been driven by passion alone.

Building an audience *before* you launch

The age old belief that building an audience *after* you launch your product is, simply put, entirely wrong. From [Bloomberg writers](#) to one of the [world's most well known marketers](#), the majority of successful businesspeople will tell you that building your product *after* identifying its ideal market is the way to go. For bloggers, despite lacking a product per se, the rule still stands fairly true.

Building an audience before launching your blog allows you to quickly and easily make changes to it based on their reaction. It's the same line of thinking that's behind successful product advertising campaigns and focus groups – gaining data as quickly as possible. Treat your blog as an experiment in its early days and you'll quickly discover what works, what doesn't, and what's worth doing right.

I had success using the following four techniques for AddToDesign's launch and early days. Not all of them are appropriate for every blog, and not all of them have the potential to build you a sizable audience before your launch. However, they *all* can help you build a promotional asset before your blog launches, which can come in very handy for initial promotion and word of mouth marketing.

'Coming soon' opt-in pages

Do you already have a following on *Twitter*, *Facebook*, or another leading social media site? Use it to create pre-launch opt-in subscribers to your blog. Before I launch a blog on any topic, I make use of my biggest social media outlets to build a base level of subscribers. While these subscribers aren't enough to spread word of your blog far and wide, they're *very* helpful for launching smoothly.

For *AddToDesign*, the biggest social media platform – at least in terms of opt-in subscriptions that preceded the launch – was Twitter. Using my own account, I briefly mentioned that we had a new blog on the way to my followers. Provided you have a reasonably large audience and a trust level that's fairly high with them, you'll have very little trouble converting followers into subscribers.

I should clarify this, since given the marketing antics that are often pulled on Twitter it's important to weed out the potential for misinterpretation. If you have a Twitter account that's loaded up with spam messages, endless self-promotion, and mindless marketing, you're going to have difficulties converting your followers into opt-in subscribers or blog readers.

There's a trust that needs to be maintained over social media, and every time you send out a link that's forwarded to an affiliate offer or a mindless sales page, you lose some of that. I was able to convert my Twitter audience into readers not because it was particularly large or powerful, but because the account had rarely been used for anything overly promotional, spammy, or flat out annoying.

This runs somewhat against the 'quantity is everything' Twitter credo that many marketers believe in, but it's *essential* to maintain authority if you plan to build a high-traffic blog. Short-term tricks just don't work in the blogging world, and an account that's loaded with direct marketing tactics is likely to cause more damage to your blog before it launches than it could possibly cause in benefits.

Your core audience

Here's an interesting phenomenon that I, and I'm sure most other marketers have noticed: regardless of where you're publishing or what you're writing about, a small (although not always) few will find it and market it *for* you. Even if it's an insignificant batch of ten to twenty people, almost every blog or guest post writer is going to find themselves attracting *some* kind of audience over time.

In the case of bigger bloggers, this audience eventually grows to the point where it acts as a buoy for their other content. An interview or guest post on an unrelated site attracts comments that will turn attention in another direction, often towards your main blog or website. When combined with your new blog's launch, this can eventually prove to be quite a valuable promotional asset.

I'll come back to this later, once we begin talking about converting one-off readers and temporary visitors into long-term subscribers. Just like marketers are familiar with the landing page – a pre-sales page that convinces consumers of a product's value – bloggers need to be familiar with their core audience, as they effectively do the same thing for their blog, albeit in an organic manner.

Avoiding 'pushy' emails

Effective mailing lists, particularly lists that have been generated over several years, are incredibly valuable for marketing a new blog, product, or service. While I didn't have a large mailing list that could be used for the AddToDesign launch, I can understand how valuable they are from past mail and subscription-based projects I've been involved in.

There's one golden rule for sending email, particularly email that has a non-sale goal attached to it: *don't be pushy*. Andrew Warner, the founder of *Mixergy* and several other high-value websites, put things fairly well in [this](#) interview. When he founded his business in the late 1990s, receiving email was a monumental occasion for one of his subscribers.

Today, it's something most of us *don't* want to see, particularly in a niche as crowded with messages and technology as web design. While pushy email marketing can work in some fields, those with an urgent need for solutions especially, it's not the best way to market a blog to tech-savvy readers and high-value customers. Be persuasive when email marketing, but *never* be needlessly pushy.

Offer an incentive to join

Incentivizing your blog is a fairly risky move. On one hand, it's incredibly effective at grabbing the attention of potential readers and contributors, yet on the other it can become quite a costly process, both in the amount of time required for a good promotion and the cost of running one. In launching AddToDesign, I ran a couple of promotions, although all were *after* the site had officially launched.

If you're completely new to the blogging world and lack any form of audience, running a promotion or competition is a fairly good way to generate subscribers and long-term readers. The standard 'buy a product for opt-in' readers is fairly overblown and dull. Instead, it's worth offering a service that's related to your blog's content, or providing some sort of professional value for your readers.

For AddToDesign, that value was in an autographed copy of a well known designer's book. Instead of the standard prize, try to come up with something unique to your audience as an incentive to join your community or subscribe to your blog. I'll come back to this strategy in detail later in the guide, along with examples of how effectively it's worked for me in the past.

Converting your audience into a subscription base

Having an audience isn't enough. Blogs and content-driven websites are often subject to *temporary audiences* – a flood of traffic that disappears as quickly as it shows up. With AddToDesign, we saw this in the blog's earliest days. After promoting our work on other design blogs and crafting articles for *Digg*, *Reddit*, and other social communities, we were inundated with temporary readers.

Eventually, this traffic got to the point where my low-cost hosting account just couldn't deal with the traffic any more. Visitors were flooding to the blog at a rapid speed, largely due to it being on the front page of *Digg.com*. Thousands of readers were appearing on an hourly basis, but without any stable hosting, AddToDesign eventually disappeared temporarily under the strain.

What surprised me about the visitors, though, was that they weren't long-term blog readers or the type of people that stick around. When you market a blog using social media, there's rarely much 'sticking power' to its content. Without obvious measures in place to capture email addresses and build long-term subscribers, it's unlikely you'll see a single reader turn into a long-term follower.

This phenomenon – dubbed the *Digg effect* or *temporary audience* – can actually end up hurting

webmasters more than it helps them. With thousands of visitors at a time, many of which have no interest in providing your blog with revenue (through advertising clicks) or long-term help (using RSS or email subscription), many bloggers and website owners actually *fear* social media.

That said, the Digg effect can be reversed somewhat with an intelligent strategy for turning readers into long-term followers. These tactics were used over the course of AddToDesign's lifespan to turn temporary readers from websites such as Digg, Reddit, and Delicious into long-term converts and a valuable asset for promoting the blog further.

Email subscription lists

Adding an email subscription list to your blog is a fairly simple process that can pay off massively over a long period. It's a great way to eliminate the short-term readers that so often appear on high-traffic blogs without ever planning to return. It's also a surprisingly effective way to market services (in most design blogs' cases) or products to your readers without seeming overly pushy.

There are two primary ways to *'build a list'* as a blogger. The first is to sign readers up into an email list that's essentially a truncated version of your RSS feed. Instead of seeing new posts in their RSS reader on a daily basis, they see a summary of your blogging activity every couple of days. This isn't the best way to *market* to your readers, but it's an excellent way to keep in touch with them.

The second is to use your own mailing list software, rather than the software included in your blog itself, to push custom messages to your subscribers *when* and *how* you want to. This allows you to make the most of email marketing (which is incredibly underrated by bloggers) to market your own tools, products, and services to your blog's readership base.

I like Aweber, although it's by no means the only software for managing a mailing list. Other good options include Mailchimp, which offers free packages for new users, and Mailman, a popular open source alternative to the two paid options above. As your list grows in size and value, these services make it fairly easy to upgrade your mailing capacity and audience management options.

The most effective way to generate email opt-in subscribers is with a dialog box that's triggered to appear on your blog, allowing users to enter their details after reading through a post. Be cautious when implementing this, however, as readers in web-savvy fields (design, development, and make money online industries in particular) aren't exactly enthusiastic about seeing these repeatedly.

If you'd prefer to take the less intrusive (albeit less *effective*) approach, adding a small opt-in form to the side of your blog can be equally effective. While you'll generate less opt-in subscribers, the smaller amount that you do generate will be of a higher value as they took the additional effort to subscribe, even when your form wasn't triggered by ending a post or visiting a specific page.

Adding these assets in the early stages of your blog's life may seem like an unnecessary addition to your workload, but it pays off massively down the road. I regret ignoring email marketing when we launched AddToDesign, as it would have given us a significantly larger audience to promote posts, and eventually *products*, to over the first year of the website's existence.

Social media audiences

Social media audiences are notoriously fickle, particularly when it comes to committing their email or RSS subscription to a fairly new blog. We saw a fairly high bounce rate from social media traffic in the blog's early days, cementing the idea that social media audiences just aren't *that* dedicated for blogs and other content-driven websites in my mind.

There are exceptions, no doubt, but for the most part it seems fairly difficult to turn a flood of social traffic, particularly traffic from a social bookmarking website like *Digg*, into long-term readers and committed followers. There's a lower attention span that's almost always present in social audiences which can make it much more difficult to generate multi-page visits or long-term email opt-ins.

That said, a small amount of the social media visitors we received stuck around as RSS subscribers, particularly those from websites such as Digg and Reddit. This is an area I'd like to focus on for any future blogs and content-driven websites that I launch – getting them featured on large social media websites and converting the traffic into long-term opt-in subscribers through some new tactics.

RSS and blog readers

RSS is one of the best ways for maintaining contact with your audience, particularly for blogs that publish several articles daily. While I never hit that mark in terms of content – AddToDesign posts were generally published on a twice or thrice-weekly basis – I definitely saw the effects of having a fairly large RSS subscription base on the website's return traffic and repeat readers.

Setting up an RSS feed for your blog is an incredibly simple process, and one that often doesn't call for any special software or skills. Most blogs, particularly those using *WordPress*, have a feed built in and require little customization. However, it's best to syndicate your content through *FeedBurner* or another similar website to ensure that your readers are directed to new content straight away.

While there's definitely value in a large RSS subscription base, consider investing in email lists as a better primary subscription tool. Email, despite being labeled as 'outdated' by some bloggers (which is a completely inaccurate claim) has some major advantages over RSS in terms of subscribers' read rates, the ability to link people to ad-supported posts, and the ability to market directly to readers.

'One step' audiences

'One step' audiences aren't exactly a long-term subscription asset, but they're still an audience that's within your reach. Simply put, a one step audience is your readership that doesn't visit your blog on a daily or recurring basis, but *has* visited before and will check out your blog when they see it on an aggregator, social bookmarking website, or when it's recommended by a friend or online contact.

While this type of audience is obviously less valuable than a dedicated email list, it's nonetheless a fairly useful asset for bloggers and marketers. There's value, particularly for bloggers, in building a brand out of their blog. With AddToDesign, this 'one step' audience was the readers of other design and development blogs that I had networked with and guest posted on.

Here's why this type of audience is valuable: when you run a promotion, post a really breathtaking article, or create controversy in your niche, they're the first people to congregate on your blog. It is *very* tempting to focus on email subscribers and RSS readers, all the while ignoring the amount of people that like your blog enough to visit when it's in the news *without* subscribing on their own.

Why networking and connections are essential

I'm going to be completely clear about this: I don't think it's possible to make it online without some form of connection with other high-value bloggers. I don't think it's even possible to make a stir as a blogger without a link to another high-traffic blog or aggregator website. Whether you're linked to a Digg power user or another blogger, *anything* is better than going at it alone with your own blog.

In 2005, starting and marketing a blog was relatively simple. While there were millions of blogs out there, the vast majority weren't competing with one another for audience share. Being featured on a leading website in your niche was a two-email process, and generating a subscriber base was fairly simple due to the relative freshness of RSS, high-traffic blogs as a whole, and online communities.

Today it's completely different. Just like people grew distrustful of email opt-in forms in the early years of last decade, users grew less trustworthy of bloggers some time at the *end* of the decade. A blog that once generated opt-in subscriptions at record speed, particularly amongst the tech-savvy crowd capitalizing on RSS, may have significantly less luck with the same strategy today.

But with a connection to a blogger that's trusted, highly regarded, and thought of as an authority in their space, you can cut through the nonsense and generate an audience that's more trusting of your work straight away. It's the same psychology that's behind the massive amount of jobs that referral candidates pick up – purely because of a connection, they're given a much greater amount of trust.

There are other advantages to networking, many of which I've outlined below. Whether you prefer to connect with people online or offline, think of these networking advantages when contacting an online leader, prominent blogger, or webmaster in your field. I've included some examples of how *my own* connections helped make AddToDesign's launch a smooth and successful process.

Networking for direct promotion

Direct promotion is the most obvious advantage of having a reasonably large online network. With a network of online publishers and other bloggers to promote your website, it's inevitable that some traffic is going to make its way to your new blog. This is one of several strategies I used to make the most of my network during the AddToDesign launch, as I've explained further below.

First, I connected with other bloggers in my niche *in advance* by writing guest posts and other items of value for them. This is the essential element that so many would-be bloggers miss – as they're too busy 'simplifying' their workload and optimizing everything, they reach out to other bloggers with a one-sided pitch that pushes the benefits almost entirely in their own direction.

It's unrealistic, it's rude for the bloggers, and it's annoying. If you're going to use a network of other blogs for direct promotion, you need to offer value first. I used guest posts to open the door to blogs and resources that would otherwise be out of my reach, but there's no rule saying you have to do the same. Find something you're good at and use it as a way to offer value to other bloggers.

Note: I'll come back to this topic in the *'How to reach out to other bloggers'* section below. If you're struggling to think of a way to offer value to bloggers, don't worry about it. *Everyone* has something that can help a blogger or webmaster get things done more efficiently or improve their website. The most important part of this process is identifying yours and workout out how to pitch it to someone.

The inspirational power of connections

There's a power to connections that goes beyond promotion and direct marketing. It's *inspiration* – a potentially huge force behind your blogging endeavors. Working with other bloggers, or even being in touch with high-value bloggers and online personalities, really changes the way you look at what is possible from your own blog.

Here's a quick example. When you start your own blog, every visitor is valuable to you. I remember old blogging experiments that resulted in one or two visitors per day. They weren't much, but seeing

that tiny trickle of traffic really meant something. When you speak with a big blogger, or even a big online publisher, you quickly realize how much greater the potential to reach people truly is.

It raises your sights, significantly raises the bar for deeming your own blog a 'success,' and rapidly changes the way you look at things. I would recommend reaching out to other bloggers purely for the massive benefits it can have on your own outlook and inspiration level. Surround yourself with people that have achieved success and it doesn't feel quite so foreign or unachievable for yourself.

How networking improves your work

Along with improving your work ethic, networking with like minded bloggers can also help you improve your writing and topic selection skills. I mentioned earlier that I built the 'pre promotion' connections with many bloggers through guest posts. Not only did those posts let me learn about their blogs and their interests, they allowed me to gain valuable feedback on my writing.

Before a blog post is published, it's generally read over by an editor searching for any grammar and spelling mistakes. These editors (often they're the blog's owner) also check up on sources to double check that your quotes and figures are accurate. The feedback that I received on my early posts as a guest blogger (which are admittedly rusty when I look back on them) helped me with my own blog.

Having a third party critique, and in some cases flat out criticize, your work isn't for those with thin skin and a self-imposed reputation to maintain. It *is* for people that want to improve their writing to eventually become much better at what they do. I have very little doubt that if I hadn't honed up on my writing skills before launching the blog, it would have been passed over and forgotten.

The other advantage of this, beyond improving your grammar and writing style, is that it teaches you how to write *for the web*. A lot of bloggers are fantastic writers, both from the technical side *and* in the way they can tell a story. Despite this, their writing just isn't great for internet users and the web itself. It's a trapping of print-style writing that can often bring a blog's popularity down.

So there you have it: networking can help you improve your work both grammatically, structurally, *and* in its ability to connect with the right audience. With so many blogs out there competing for an audience, knowing how to write effectively for the internet helped me cut through the crowd and hit it relatively big in the design blogging world right from the start.

Networking for SEO

There's a final obvious benefit to networking with other webmasters and bloggers: gaining access to their websites, many of which have a fairly high *PageRank* value. While I didn't guest post for SEO alone (although many bloggers do), the posts that I made in the months leading up to AddToDesign certainly helped me improve the rankings of several of my other design-related websites.

Posting on supporting websites regularly can give your own blog a noticeable boost in the search engines, not just for its target keywords but for those that benefit from the overall boost. While it's not a good idea to post with SEO as your primary goal (we've all seen the keyword-stuffed articles that are made for SEO), writing search-friendly blog posts can certainly help with your traffic.

The final advantage of networking for SEO is that it allows you to *eventually* speak with bloggers about *blogroll* and *resource page* linking. If you're connected with a high-profile blogger, a single blogroll link can dramatically boost your website's PageRank and search exposure. This is a long-term strategy that many people ignore, but it remains *very* valuable for generating search traffic.

How to reach out to other bloggers

Here's the hard part – breaking down the initial wall of contact and getting in touch with some big bloggers. It's a task that immediately seems difficult, not due to the email you plan to use itself, but because the most important bloggers seem to be stuck in a perpetual state of busyness. They're hard to get in touch with, and even harder to get a worthwhile response from.

That said, there are several ways to improve your email answer rate when contacting high-profile blogger and busy online publishers. I've listed a few below that have been successful for me, along with a brief summary of how each tactic can improve your answer rate and the best way to use it in your own emails.

1. Keep your emails short, to the point, and descriptive.

A well-known marketing blogger once wrote to Seth Godin with a lengthy series of questions. In return for his hours of crafting a fantastic email, he got a single sentence back. Top bloggers don't have much in the way of free time, especially if their blog is only a side project for a bigger empire in real life. Keep things short and you're more likely to connect than with a lengthy essay email.

Here's a good tactic: try to keep your email request, no matter how complicated, shorter than five sentences when you pitch it to a major blogger. The hottest bloggers consistently have to deal with two, three, or even five-hundred emails appearing in their inbox daily. Save them the time of going through a lengthy email by keeping things short, simple, and incredibly easy to respond to.

2. Use a proven email template for reaching new bloggers.

If you're struggling to think of a good email template, this example from the Four Hour Workweek blog could prove useful. I've had the most success with emails that are both personal and primarily professional, as they allow you to make a connection with the blogger in question while still using the email as a platform for talking business.

3. Link to an example of what you can provide.

A successful connection is all about reducing liability and risk for both parties. Just like investors ask for career and company history, influential bloggers will want to see your past work before a guest post or other blog-related content. Remember that *they* have a brand and image to maintain, and that a guest post needs to keep in tune with their blog's main topics, post ideas, and style.

4. Don't suck up, sound desperate, or accidently insult them.

Sound overly complimentary in your email and you'll immediately trigger the salesman radar – an internal filter that pushes your mail into the trash bin. Sound desperate for the chance to guest post and you'll come off as annoying and unable to provide value – again, this is likely to push you into the trash bin.

Finally, swing too far in the opposite direction and you risk insulting the blogger you want to get in touch with, or even sounding a little smug and arrogant. Write an email just like you would to your friends or colleagues – don't be smug, don't sound too desperate, and explain *clearly* what you need.

5. Avoid self-promotion and other cocky annoyances.

Here's another potentially risky area – coming off as too self-promotional in your emails. Whenever

possible, you want to give the recipient an idea of who you are. This may not be your public face or your 'blogging personality,' but you in the terms of how you can provide something useful for their blog.

At the same time, you need to avoid coming off as someone that endlessly toots their own horn and promotes themselves. If you're cold emailing a fairly popular blogger, it's best to list a few relevant achievements and move on, as an endless resume-style list is likely to make you seem like a bore.

6. Contact bloggers that *aren't* involved in extensive PR.

There are two types of 'hot' bloggers. The first is constantly in the news, battling PR requests all day and online interview inquiries all night. The second is a more stable authority, having occupied their position for several years with a stable flow of traffic backing it up. You want to target the second in your quest for guest posts, as they're generally less bogged down with other requests and emails.

Not only that, they generally have a website that's more valuable for driving traffic. There's a weird paradox with online 'buzz' and actual results. Some of the biggest and most valuable pages are often *not* those that feature in the news all that often, while others that draw massive amounts of exposure offer very little in the way of value for a guest blogger.

7. Whenever possible, find a solution that *isn't* email.

I know, *I know*, suggesting to avoid email in an email guide isn't all that useful. However, if you can meet a blogger offline, connect over the phone, or even chat on instant messenger, chances are good that it'll end up being more valuable than an email conversation. Email is crowded and hard to stand out on, making it a fairly poor way to contact people that you can really offer value to.

In contrast, a meeting in person comes with an expectation of conversation, not an *obligation*. Find conferences and meet ups in your area that could expose you to top bloggers and online publishers, and use *them* as the first step for building connections. Email is a great follow-up tool, but it's rarely the best way to get in touch with new bloggers, publishers, and webmasters from the get-go.

Social media: What's important and what isn't

Social media is a topic that's frequently and easily misunderstood, particularly amongst bloggers and marketers. The endless string of *'Get Rich With Social Media Marketing'* products have made the field itself seem like a guru's wonderland, even though it often isn't. There *are* ways to build a social media-friendly blog, but most are significantly more difficult than they initially appear to be.

Firstly, it's important to understand that social media promotion tends to be *very* ineffective from a clickthrough and interest percentage standpoint. There are millions of users on the standard social bookmarking website, and most just aren't *that* interested in clicking through to your blog. There's also very little commitment amongst social media readers – most read your blog for about a minute.

If you can get past the high bounce rate, the massive amount of indifference towards content, and the annoyance of being called a 'spammer' purely for promoting your blog, then social media could be a worthwhile promotional method. I've had huge amounts of success with driving social media visitors to a new blog, having sent over 150,000 visitors to AddToDesign in 15 days using social media websites.

However, it's important to point out that these results aren't typical for someone without advance knowledge of *how* social media works and *what* it can provide. If you walk into the social media

world thinking that it's going to generate thousands of visitors per day *straight away*, you're going to end up disappointed. Social media *is* powerful, but only for those that understand it.

The following are my tactics for getting the most out of social media websites, the best ways to use social bookmarking communities to promote your blog, *and* the drawbacks that social media can have as a promotional method. If you're planning on promoting your blog through a social media outlet, it's essential that you understand these key points about how the format works for bloggers.

Social media is mostly hype

There, I said it. While social media has huge potential as a marketing platform for major brands and corporations in need of an online customer service presence, it's almost completely worthless for an independent contractor or small business. The *'social media marketing'* crowd has avoided speaking about its value for direct sales for some time, instead talking about 'connection' and 'engagement'.

Why? Because they're subjective and unable to be measured. Because they're not a succeed-or-lose figure like a sales receipt is. In short, the entire social media marketing stratosphere has been made to remove any responsibility from the people that tout its value. I think social media is valuable for bloggers like *me*, but I seriously question its value for businesses and industry blogs.

This section is all about social media – what you *should* do, what you *shouldn't* do, and what figures and metrics you should be paying attention to. While I personally don't think that social media is an immensely valuable marketing platform for businesses, it can result in *huge* traffic for bloggers. It's all about checking *the right* metrics – hopefully this will explain which of these are for you.

Which metrics should you look at?

As I discussed in *'Why start a blog?,'* there are five major reasons to start your own blog. The social media strategy that you use, and in fact *all* promotional strategies that you use, should be built to do what *you* want from your blog. There's no single metric to follow when you're a blogger, as the total purpose of your blog could be completely different from your peers' and from the community itself.

If you want to be popular, you should measure how your social media promotional efforts increase your readership. If you want to make money through display and content-based advertising, give a thought to social media's effect on your ad clickthrough rate and impression count. If your blog has affiliate links or its own products to sell, monitor social media's effect on your total conversion rate.

The most important metrics are those that are *directly* related to your end goal. Some bloggers use a social media promotion to build links to their website. Others use social bookmarking websites for a traffic boost. What you monitor depends entirely on what you want to get out of social media – look at the metrics that you're interested in, not those that are irrelevant to your blog and your goals.

For me, it was audience size, subscription rates, and traffic that mattered. I monitored AddToDesign and checked its traffic sources, the bounce rate of social media visitors, and the amount of time that was spent on the website to see who was interacting and who wasn't. These metrics were my bar for success or failure. Although they may not be *yours*, there *are* metrics out there for you to follow.

Is it all about size and scale?

It's not just about building a big blog. As AddToDesign's traffic grew, I eventually realized that our audience wasn't spending equally long amounts of time on the website. Some would stay for hours at a time, soaking up the content and reading away. Others would spend mere seconds on an article

before closing the window, boosting the bounce rate and quickly switching to another website.

Seth Godin, one of the world's most well known marketers, has a post about keeping [1000 true fans](#) in your company's life. There's a more detailed write-up on the concept [here](#). It amounts to a mobile group of fans that appreciate your writing and spend a great deal of time either consuming or taking part in promotional efforts for it. *That* is the audience you should be building, not just a big one.

Once you've got that audience, promoting your blog via social media becomes significantly easier to manage. The biggest hurdle in social media, at least in my experience, is the initial push. Taking your blog from a no-show to a small success is difficult, but scaling that small success into a much larger traffic source isn't as difficult as many social media marketers make it out to be.

'True' connections vs. social media

Here's another social media distinction worth remembering as a blogger: not *all* of your followers are really interested in your blog. For various reasons, be it curiosity or feelings of guilt, you may find that followers are appearing but not resulting in a noticeable increase to your blog's traffic. It isn't a *lack* of interest, but merely the realities of maintaining a large social media following.

What's significantly more important than this half-half committed and non-committed fan base is a small group of people that really care, *and* have the influence to help your blog out. As I mentioned in the previous section, this could very well be a group of high-traffic bloggers. In my case, in terms of traffic alone, long-term connections and close friends contributed as much as social media.

They also contributed higher value traffic, since the major blogs that I used to promote my own all existed within the design and development space. While social media can be incredibly effective at delivering lots of traffic, it falls apart when it comes to *specific* traffic. For a lot of blogs, it's worth more to use your close friends to help with traffic than to utilize unreliable social media sources.

Why spam sucks (if you're a blogger)

Being labelled as a spammer hurts, especially when you aren't one. When promoting AddToDesign on social bookmarking websites, I had to ensure that the blog was always submitted under someone else's account name to avoid being branded as a spammer. It's a little ridiculous when you look at it on its face – Why should a blogger ever be called a spammer for promoting their own writing?

Nevertheless, it's something that most bloggers have to live with. The huge amount of traffic that's available on social bookmarking websites contributed substantially to our total readership, making it a fickle source that was worth pursuing. By teaming up with some power users and close friends, I managed to use *Digg* and other social bookmarking websites for traffic without being a spammer.

For the most part, blogs are a long-term project. I can't imagine someone starting one without at least a couple of blog posts planned into the future. As such, you can't use the same old strategies for promotion. Think long-term in both your content and your marketing approach and you save yourself from being locked out of valuable communities and social media websites.

Guest blogging: How it can build a promotional network

More than any other tactic, it was guest blogging that set the foundation for AddToDesign's early success. Over a year before the blog launched, I posted hundreds of articles to a variety of design blogs and online resource centers, each designed to provide value to the community *and* give the design world greater awareness of myself, my business, and my potential future plans.

Not many bloggers think about this – the long-term effort that's required to build a promotional network that's actually worth something. I see guest posts on other blogs on a daily basis that do absolutely nothing to inspire. For the most part, they're instantly transparent as something purely promotional in its nature, written by an author or marketer with aims of selling their product.

That's guest posting done *wrong*, and it's not the way you should be doing it. While lazy marketers only ever guest post (and in the process, contribute value) to directly drive sales, valuable bloggers will think months, even years ahead, in creating a network of bloggers to work with. My first posts are a little embarrassing, but they're still a record of me having invested in other blogs for years.

The long-term effects of guest blogging

This is what I'm talking about – the *long-term effects* of building a large network. When I started posting on other people's blogs, there was no instant value for me. I didn't latch an affiliate link to the bottom of each post, I didn't excessively promote my business (although I did sometimes talk about it), and I didn't go out of my way to make the post different to the blog it featured on.

The long-term effect of this is that I've built a promotional network of bloggers and other website owners that know I'm not just in it for short-term gain. They know I'm not going to use their sites for outbound links and promotion, and they're largely people I chat to about topics outside of tech quite frequently. In short, it's a *real* network, not the false network that's so often present online.

Be in it for the long term, especially if you want your blog to grow into a stable asset. The value of creating *real* relationships online is huge, and it's consistently underestimated by those in this game for the short term. There are also other slightly less long term benefits to guest posting, which I've explained in the sections below.

Guest blogging for SEO

There's a secondary benefit to guest blogging: its immense power for your link diversity and search engine optimization power. Before I launched AddToDesign, I had used guest posts primarily as an easy way to generate high-value links back to my website. Since I had no financial incentives for a post otherwise, adding a link made an otherwise unprofitable activity quite worthwhile.

While there's no shortage of debate about link value, IP diversity, and anchor text variation in the SEO world, almost everyone agrees that more links is a *good* thing. If you want to start your blog off on the right foot in search, creating high quality backlinks with guest posting is a good way to do it. It's not spammy, and the small amount of effort required can give the backlinks a high value.

That said, it's important to remember that the immediate goal of guest posting isn't to build links to your blog. That's a convenient side effect that shouldn't become your motivation. Write articles that improve and add to the communities they reach, not just keyword-filled search garbage. This way, you'll be able to reach readers *and* market your side slowly through search at the same time.

Guest blogging for short-term connections and authority

Here's the final key benefit to guest posting: it establishes you as an authority in your field. In many ways, it's similar to how *Google* judges your website's quality. With links pointing at it from a wide variety of sources, you're viewed as trustworthy and reliable. In just the same way, a large collection of guest posts can give you the wide authority and coverage to be seen as a leader in your niche.

This is one of the benefits that I particularly like about guest blogging, as it allows you to spin into a new field fairly quickly. With a network of posts – preferably posts that provide value to readers – it isn't quite so tough to be accepted in a new niche or industry. Build short-term connections and you can eventually build major long-term connections with leaders in the particular niche you like.

What are the best traffic sources for bloggers?

I'm hesitant to suggest any *one* traffic source for a blog, since the huge amount of potential topics for bloggers to write about means that not all traffic sources will be equally effective. Most of my traffic, at least for AddToDesign, was generated through social media and social bookmarking. In two weeks, around 150,000 visitors were delivered through those two outlets alone.

The biggest social bookmarking resource for our website was *Digg*, the über-popular community website that's recently been overhauled. Using the connections I built over a year of guest blogs, AddToDesign managed to make it to the website's front page using a savvy combination of great content and conversation-style comments. We'd hit it big, or so I had thought.

The traffic eventually got to the point where our website went offline – a bizarre 'success penalty' for overloading the cheap server we had purchased. I was livid, and I spent the next few hours on moving the website to a new host. *That* is the power of a good social media campaign, at least in terms of traffic alone for your social bookmarking-friendly blog or content-driven website.

Social bookmarking websites

As I stated earlier, it was social bookmarking websites that generated the majority of AddToDesign traffic. This wasn't so much due to a preference for traffic from social sources (although it *is* worth quite a lot in some situations) but the blog's age and search visibility. Older blogs can afford to take a less active approach to marketing, as their archived posts tend to show up prominently in search.

With a new blog, that isn't possible. Search made up a slither of our traffic, which was made even less valuable by the fact that I didn't apply SEO tactics to our post's titles or descriptions. As such, the early days of AddToDesign were mostly possible because of smart social bookmarking. Some tips on how to use social bookmarking effectively are included below to help you do the same:

1. Team up with a Digg, Reddit, or Delicious power user.

As much as the biggest social bookmarking websites claim to be completely democratic in their approach to ranking and sorting stories, it's *much* easier to break into the community as a power user than it is as a nobody. I've tried submitting stories on a brand new account and had success, albeit at a significantly lower level than I had when I've teamed up with existing power users.

To bypass the slow early stages on a website like Digg or Reddit, work with a power user to get your stories submitted and ranked quickly. I've seen a noticeable increase in involvement for the posts I've submitted through a power user account. Often, this is the difference between a limited success and a front-page ranking, which can result in a *huge* increase in traffic.

2. Avoid paid submissions or purchased votes.

There are services out there promising the front page, the section header, or another top placement on Digg and similar websites for a specific fee. I have no doubt that they're effective, or at least have an influence on your ranking, but they're probably not the best bet for getting your blog out there. Not only does a paid front page ranking result in being marked as spam, it has an opportunity

cost.

For the $3-500 that most of these services require, you could have purchased a reasonable amount of banner inventory on another leading website. You could have hired someone to build a theme for your website that carries footer hyperlinks. You could have spent it in other ways, many of which are worth quite a lot more for your social bookmarking exposure and long-term search visibility.

3. Listen to the community before submitting.

Every social bookmarking community is different. Some are receptive and welcoming to new content, whereas many others prefer to stick with subjects that they know. Others love certain brands and companies, while another may have its own 'favorite things' list to stick to. When it comes to social bookmarking, the only thing websites have in common is that they're all different.

As such, you need to understand the community before you start promoting your blog there. I had greater success on Digg than on Reddit for this very reason – I knew the community better, and as such was able to promote my website using less obtuse and invasive methods. A single look at my traffic shows that the understanding and familiarity I had with Digg resulted in a *huge* advantage.

4. Write a post specifically for social bookmarking websites.

Here's the most important part of promoting your blog using social bookmarking: you need to write a post *specifically* for the social bookmarking website you plan to target. SEOs call these posts 'link bait' and use them fairly frequently, as they're excellent at attracting links from external sources. I've personally seen a significant increase in audience participation when a 'link bait' article is used.

Link bait articles typically have one or *all* of the following attributes:

- They're catchy, interesting, and built around a topic that you needn't be an expert to understand in reasonable detail.
- They use proven headline points styles as *'X tips about Y'* and *'What X Doesn't Want You To Know About Y'* to grab readers' attention and increase clicks.
- They're typically a list, as social bookmarking audiences aren't responsive to large blocks of text. The exception to this is when a block of text is broken up with images.
- They're generally light hearted or funny in nature. However, they could be controversial or political, or even styled in a way that makes them relevant to the community in question.

Word of mouth suggestions

Some of the net's most popular blogs operate almost entirely on word of mouth. Fark, the website and resource sharing community, grew out of conversations on AIM and forums. Seth Godin had a blog for years before it became such a popular online destination, almost entirely through word of mouth that built up over the weeks, months, and years.

Building a blog through word of mouth isn't a short-term strategy, but it is very possible. If you're in this for the long haul (and you should be), then building your blog's readership and subscriber count through word of mouth is a great way to generate long-term readers. Your mileage may vary, as this strategy is *very* dependent on the quality and style of your blog's content.

Guest posting and interviews

As I've mentioned, guest posts can be a hugely useful tactic when used correctly. I originally used

my guest posts to draw traffic to a business website, and switched to promoting AddToDesign for the blog's first few weeks. While guest posts weren't as much of a traffic generator as social media and bookmarking websites, they were responsible for a steady flow of traffic to the blog itself.

From what I can see, it's steadiness and consistency that can make guest posts so valuable. There's an initial surge of traffic similar to that seen with social bookmarking, but over time the value of a blog post on a high-authority blog results in a fair deal of search traffic trickling down to your own website. While this wasn't a *major* strategy for me, it's no doubt a useful source of quality traffic.

Long-term traffic from search

Finally, there's search traffic. While search wasn't a major part of AddToDesign's promotion tactics, it's no doubt one of the most valuable traffic generators out there. Blogs with a reasonable presence in search can bring in thousands of dollars in advertising revenue every week, while entire business websites with a favorable search presence can result in thousands of dollars in *daily* sales.

If I had viewed AddToDesign as a more long-term project, search would have factored in to its blog traffic strategy. However, since I experienced such a strong response from social bookmarking sites, marketing the blog aggressively through search didn't seem like a great idea at the time. Blogs with a focus on long term content should *always* focus on search first, as it's a proven long-term strategy.

The importance of a worst-case content asset

After launching AddToDesign, promoting our content through guest posts, and publishing an article to Digg's front page, I was left sitting at the bottom of a giant wave. Within hours, traffic shot to our blog at a ridiculous rate, taking down the server and pulling the website offline. I was panicking and searching for a solution, all the while ignoring the articles that I'd inevitably need to prepare.

But in actuality, I wasn't that worried. Once the website was switched over to its new server and the traffic was under control, I could look at a large archive of backdated content that could be blogged about at any time. I had avoided the classic newbie mistake – launching with too little content – and come out the other side of a high-traffic blogging disaster without any real setbacks.

Things go wrong, and you need to be prepared for them

Keep an archive of relevant content – sometimes called a *'content asset'* – ready when you launch a new blog through social media. There's a flood out there – one that's waiting to come to your site – and it could potentially bring your server down. With thousands of visitors and no content to dish up, your blog is going to be left in a very difficult position to walk out of with long-term readers.

I had five posts – *long* and detailed posts – ready in advance for AddToDesign's launch, along with several that were published on the website as soon as it went public. Their goal was to act as short-term distractions or instant content that could fix the website after a disaster. Since one *did* happen, they proved immensely useful and have since become something I would recommend for bloggers.

Have an archive of ready-to-post content

Here's another way to use ready-to-post content to your advantage. Instead of keeping your articles in a Word document or other offline file, store them on your WordPress dashboard as soon as you're ready to publish them. *Then*, schedule them for automatic posting or queue them up to publish when you hit the button, saving yourself the annoying task of uploading, editing, and publishing them.

When AddToDesign crashed, this simple tip saved me a lot of time in reposting and republishing its content. Keep your articles here and they'll forever be stored in your database, allowing you to blog from computers other than your own without manually writing out new content.

The first month of any blog is a trial run

Finally, I would recommend keeping content stockpiled purely due to the amount of time required to manage a high-traffic blog. There were hundreds of small issues and microscopic requirements for me during AddToDesign's early days. If I had kept my head down writing new articles or doing my best to find new ideas, I wouldn't have been able to manage the website.

Treat the first month of your blog as a trial run, or consider using an even longer trial period if you aren't receiving a lot of traffic. The biggest problems on any blog tend to appear in the first week or two. Save yourself the trouble of writing *and* problem solving by stockpiling a sizable archive of content.

Why consistency is essential for quality bloggers

There's an interesting disconnection between the most popular blogs and the most influential people in the blogosphere. Blogs that are published by hugely important people (Sergey Brin's [Too](#) blog for example, which has a grand total of five posts) are ignored if they're not frequently updated, while a less influential blogger can build a huge audience out of nothing more than consistency.

About three months after AddToDesign's launch, I stopped posting on a twice-weekly basis, instead choosing to use a weekly or occasionally bi-weekly posting schedule. Our traffic was steady, largely due to the huge amount of visitors we continued to receive through search. However, it resulted in a noticeable change in readers' habits once they arrived at the blog itself.

Consistency as a blogger builds a consistent, reliable audience. The world's most popular blogs, in many cases, didn't make it to the top by being first to a story or by providing the best writing. They made it there by consistently updating and providing content for their readers, without huge gaps in publishing schedules or endless delays in getting a new post out and ready.

The value of a consistent, long-term online asset

The ultimate example of this is [BoingBoing](#), the mega-popular tech and digital lifestyle blog. Is it an example of incredibly high quality content? In my mind, not always. However, it's been consistently updated since it launched almost a decade ago, helping it become one of the web's most dependable blogs. In terms of popularity, it's generally consistency that beats out irregular, occasional genius.

Another example is the ultra-popular [Gawker](#) blog network. Equal parts online gossip and insightful technology coverage (depending entirely on which blog you read), Gawker Media has built its roots on providing consistent, daily content. Its stories aren't always great – occasionally their nothing but flimsy gossip – but they're there day after day, attracting a consistent audience of interested readers.

There's a flip side to this, however. Blogs that focus entirely on high quality coverage are generally more likely to attract high-value readers, even if they're not updated consistently. A great example is the [Four Hour Workweek](#) blog, which is updated irregularly but still attracts a huge audience. Tim's mantra: only ever publish high quality content that his audience is going to enjoy reading.

The value of this, whether routine updates regardless of value or irregular updates with a focus on the important issues, is a blog that's well read and highly regarded. The end result is a unique asset of readers that don't hesitate to read your posts, that respond to your email list, and that take notice of the direction that your blog's moving in instead of mindlessly reading without any focus.

Authenticity, and how it's built

More than anything, consistency and regular posting builds authenticity. There's an endless amount of empty marketing on the internet, particularly on thin blogs purporting to be impartial. When you have a huge archive of content behind you, it becomes significantly less likely for people to think of your blog as a marketing shill, ultra-commercial sales resource, or inauthentic scam.

Simply put, with a large content archive behind you *and* a reputation that's stemmed from it, you're insulated from the risk of being labeled a sell-out. I think that blogs are a fantastic tool for sales and marketing, but *new* blogs rarely are. It takes a certain amount of authenticity and reliability to sell to regular readers – much more so than it takes to sell to a search-based website visitor.

If you plan to turn your blog into a commercial asset, much like I planned to with AddToDesign, it's important for it to appear impartial and unbiased. The TechRadar review section makes hundreds of mobile phone sales on a weekly basis. Why? Because their reviews offer an unbiased look at which phones are worth buying and using, and which are worth ignoring and passing over.

It's that sort of authenticity that builds a long-term asset, particularly if you're a blogger. Writing an archive of biased reviews for search traffic and mistaken clicks gains you an occasional sale and an even greater deal of boredom. Writing about something you're truly interested in with a voice that's unbiased and impartial gives you the interest and ability to build a long-term online asset.

Blogs that are updated regularly don't lose value

Finally, blogs that are updated regularly with good content don't lost value. This is doubly true for blogs that are well known in their field, or regarded as general authorities. *Associated Content* is a classic example of good content attracting value. Their archive of content recently allowed for the company to sell its blog content for well over $100 million – a fairly pricey figure for articles.

Similarly, *Hubpages* sees the value of its content increase over time. The average earnings for any article peaks about three years into its lifespan, cementing the idea that content gets more valuable over the course of its life. In blogging, it's truly about the amount of *effort* required. Blogs that are the end result of hard work attract value, while low-value quick fixed generally aren't worth much.

The lesson here is that it's worth much more to be consistent than it is to be strategic in how your blog is updated. Put in the hours – 10,000 if you're a Malcolm Gladwell fan – and you'll see value from your blog. Skip through the effort and produce lousy content and you'll never see your blog's value increase, as it's built on a foundation that just isn't worth anything.

In conclusion

Launching a high-traffic blog taught me hundreds of tidbits and lessons about writing and online management, many of which I've since applied to other projects. It confirmed my belief in social media's promotional power, while simultaneously showing the relative lack of value that the big

social bookmarking websites provide in traffic *quality*, rather than pure quantity.

At the same time, it's allowed me to see exactly what I've done wrong in the past, which is one of the most important parts of any experiment. I made some fairly large mistakes while launching my first high-traffic blog, many of which have only come to light after the fact. It isn't *hard* to launch your blog, but it *is* quite hard to avoid making simple mistakes and minor errors.

All in all, running a high-traffic blog has confirmed the immense value that I thought they could provide to both bloggers, readers, and advertisers. There's really no excuse *not* to have your own blog, whether as an outlet or a commercial asset. If you're on the fence about starting a journal or information blog, don't fret – get out there, get writing, and start your own blog today.