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Blogging & social media document

Blogging and social media guide

This 'how to' guide is designed to show you how to create blog content for your website and then translate that content into social media posts.

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Writing blogs

1. Writing blogs

If you follow this simple process for creating blogs, you'll be able to pinpoint the information you need from both a customer and a search point of view to create interesting, relevant web content.

The most important thing to remember when you're writing – for blogs, but the lesson applies anywhere – is who you're writing for... And it's not you! Make sure you think about your reader at every stage of the process.

Writing – Key Points

1. Know your audience
2. Five Ws
3. Simple SEO
4. Pyramid structure or listicles?
5. Keep it short
6. Structure – bullets etc.

These are mainly geared towards writing blogs and online content, but these rules will serve you well in structuring your writing for any audience.

1.1 Your audience

Who are they and what's your connection with them?

- Existing clients
- Potential new clients
- Potential future employees

Additionally, consider **HOW** you address your audience

- Remember that the blog is for them, not you. Turn content around so that it's relevant, eg:
 - *Deals and offers that will make their lives easier (or cheaper, more comfortable, etc.)*
 - *Tips to solve a particular problem*
 - *Analysis that will inform their knowledge of a situation*
- Why do they care? Does your content pass the 'so what?' test? We'll explore this in more detail in a moment...
- There's no reason why 'business' writing should be dull. Correct? Yes. Factual? Yes. But you're still talking to people...

We've talked about where your information comes from, including:

1. Supplier's sites
2. Google news

-
3. Construction (or other sector-specific) websites
 4. Google alerts
 5. Stock lists from suppliers, etc.

To start with, put all of your information together in one place and we'll pull out the key details...

1.2 So, what do you need to tell them?

There are five things everyone needs to know to get a story across:

“Who?... What?... Where?... When?... and Why?”

Marketing people will always tell you to talk about the ‘benefits’ of a product: why do you want it? What does it do better? How is it an improvement? The WHY section answers this part of the question. You’ve given people all of the factual details – the who, what, where and when – so they know it’s for them. But the WHY is the best bit – that’s when you can really sell an idea to them. It’s the answer to why they should buy it/ pick up the phone/ book a demo etc.

If you can get the answer to all of those questions together in your first sentence or two then you’re on to a winner! Go through all of your info and highlight the answers to those questions, then put them together in a sentence or two.

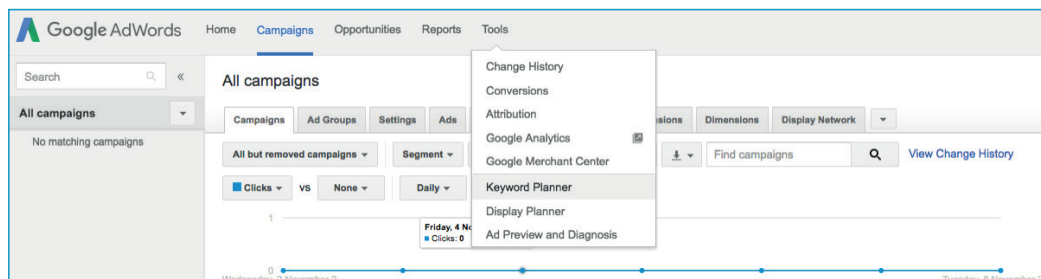
What next?

Alongside all of your core info, you’ll want to include some keywords and search phrases to give Google a hand...

Google Adword’s keyword tool is a really nice way of finding out what people are searching for to help them make a purchase. This could be technical information, price comparison or related searches, such as ‘how to insure plant equipment?’ These factors might form a full blog or section of one.

To do this, login into Google. Your Google account can be accessed with: Email & password.

That’s the same login for all your Google products. It’s then a case of searching for ideas. Here’s an example of the Google Adwords page:



Some keyword searches

Add some of the most popular keywords into your blog content and use them to give you a steer for future blogs. If people are searching for finance, think about writing a blog about finance; if they're looking for 'how to' guides, include one of those in your blogging plan. (Of which more, later!)

Keyword	Currency	Avg. Monthly Searches	Competition	Suggested Bid
Manitou forks	GBP	1900	0.8	0.34
Manitou Telehandler	GBP	1300	0.49	1.7
Manitou dealers	GBP	210	0.26	1.02
Manitou suspension forks	GBP	70	0.89	0.25
Manitou dealer locator	GBP	20	0.06	1.09
How much to rent a Skid Steer	GBP	90	0.63	3.38
Skid Steer financing	GBP	90	0.93	3.63
Used Skid Steer buckets for sale	GBP	70	0.99	1.54
Skid Steer door	GBP	50	0.96	2.2
Used Skid Steer attachments sale	GBP	30	0.85	1.44
Skid Steer price comparison	GBP	20	0.83	1.98
Used track Skid Steer loaders for sale	GBP	10	0.95	1
Skid Steer backhoe attachments used	GBP	10	0.87	2.15
Largest Skid Steer on market	GBP	10	0.37	1.99

1.3 Now, some structure...

The pyramid structure

The beauty of the pyramid is that, even if people don't read right to the bottom, they've got the gist of your information.

So, remember to include:

- **MOST NEWSWORTHY**

What's most going to catch their attention? Is it a deal? Why are they interested in it?

- **IMPORTANT DETAILS**

Five Ws – this is the key info!

- **THE BENEFITS**

Why are your customers interested in this news? What's in it for them?

Does it make something quicker? Or cheaper? Or easier?

TIP: If you're not sure what you should include, try the 'so what?' test. Start writing, but imagine you're a child and ask yourself 'so what?' at the end of each sentence. That'll help you get to the crux of the information!

- **GENERAL AND BACKGROUND**

Include quotes from clients or staff members, eg.

'X Managing Director XX says: '.....'

You're aiming to move from the 'good stuff' down to the 'fluff' – the info that's nice to have, and can help build up your profile, or search, for example – but that isn't as crucial to the reader.

Listicles

Listicles are a great way of getting examples and ideas across. BuzzFeed has made us all fans of lists – think '52 things to do before you die', 'seven ways to cook your Christmas turkey' or 'six uses for a vibrating plate'. They're a really easy way to get across your top offers or to focus on the benefits of a specific piece of equipment.

Don't feel obliged to pick a top five or ten. Your numbers can be as random as you like and random numbers are even seen as more genuine and authoritative. Doing this is much more effective than trying to make up 'fillers' to get to ten.

If you're writing general blogs about a new piece of equipment or a supplier deal, you

can follow it up with a blog that looks at uses of that piece of kit. This is a great way to get in some good keywords from Google Adwords.

Listicles are easy: they only need a one liner as introduction, or even just a good title, and then you can start writing your list. Keep them simple, factual and informative.

1.4 Keep it short

A few general tips for writing your blog:

- Use every day spoken language and avoid jargon, slang and words that you wouldn't use in everyday language. If you would never say a certain phrase or word, why would you write it? If what you write seems stuffy and officious to you then it will feel the same to your audience.
- Use shorter words. Long words will not impress your reader or help to get your meaning across – use words that are precise and colourful
- Write short simple sentences; on average 15 – 20 characters long. Re-read everything you've written. The easiest way to check how something sounds is to READ IT OUT LOUD – try it, even reading it to yourself. You'll soon realise if a sentence is too long or doesn't quite make sense.
- Use short paragraphs to avoid large blocks of text. For example, try to keep your paragraphs to three sentences.
- Don't keep repeating info.
- Make sure you ask readers to do something specific, for example you could give them a 'call to action' at the end. Do you want them to call the office? Do you want them to email for more info? Do you want them to sign up for newsletters? Say so!!
- Look for opportunities to link with your product pages and other relevant pages, such as the hire page. This helps drive customers to key pages, but also helps the search engines follow your website links. Search engines look for natural contextual links, so don't force a link for the sake of it.

1.5 Structure

Write for scanners, not readers

Online readers are different. This is why you should keep paragraphs and other blocks of copy short and tight. Make sure there are plenty of 'entry points' for readers, like:

- headlines
- subheads
- bullets
- captions

Check how it looks online. What looks efficient in a Word document might look dense and inaccessible online so, if you can't physically check, err on the side of caution.

You'll soon get a feel for it...

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Social media

2. Social media

Once you're on a roll with the blog writing, you need to make the most of it on your social media accounts.

If you're writing a blog every week or two, we need to find four or five bits of content to go with each blog for social media. So, have a look online for things related to your blog – they could be images of film clips, or different uses for this week's deal.

We've created a blogging and social media template for you, so that you can feed in blog ideas as you have them, and keep track of which posts you're going to put live and when. It also means that you can plan your social media content in advance and then schedule it using Hootsuite, so that you can spend, say, half a day each week on it, rather than constantly having to go in and out of Facebook, Twitter, etc.

We're focusing on your current three accounts:

1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. Plus Hootsuite – your social media management tool

Here's the link to your Google doc: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1RX7VMDk_FUa8i3-qzso5lHG28gMYWaqcTsmP4lMo5ZY/edit?usp=sharing

2.1 Facebook

Facebook works best when you've got a variety of different content. You don't have to post on Facebook constantly – every two or three days is fine – but try and mix up your content.

You can use different angles of the blog content on Facebook, for instance:

1. The deal or piece of news itself
2. A short list of benefits of a piece of equipment
3. A quote from Dave
4. A video of the equipment in action
5. Use the hashtags in the spreadsheet and join in on #mondaymotivation or #throwbackthursday – #ThrowbackThursday might seem irrelevant, but it's a good opportunity for you to show how much experience you have in the area. #MondayMotivation is a good way to show your product expertise.
6. Have a look at the 'social ideas' page and see what different angles you can pull out of a blog.

Joining groups

Groups like this one: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1690015857951923/> offer you the ability to resell, keep an eye on the competition and send your promotions too.

You can also follow a variety of construction sectors, for example: sites, including magazines, contractors etc. and reshare some of their content.

Setting up your own group can even provide better engagement than your Facebook page. This could be a group for a particular event/ product/ promotion rather than something to broad.

2.2 twitter

Spend some time following people on Twitter who are interesting for the business – they could be your suppliers, other dealers, construction/ farming/ agriculture/ etc. magazines, or even the local councils in the areas that you cover. This will give you more of an idea of what's going on.

Make sure that you're following as many of your customers that you can find or other people that you'd like to work with. You can tag suppliers in tweets about their equipment in order to 'piggyback'/capitalise on their huge global following. Obviously, they're not going to retweet everything that you post, but, if you consistently share their products and messages, you'll start to develop a relationship with them.

The important things to remember on twitter are:

The 80/20 rule: Tweet about other people and other things 80% of the time and only tweet about yourself 20% of the time – otherwise you'll sound like a real bore who's heavy on the sales platter.

Try searching hashtags like #gehl and #wackerneuson and retweeting their info...

- People see tweets in real time as they're tweeted, so don't be afraid to tweet the same information/ link/ blog several times (although in slightly different ways is preferable)
- Use hashtags! If you're not sure what hashtags are trending for high profile topics, you can search for them and see what other people are using, such as #wackerneuson #manitou
- Make sure you add a link to the direct blog rather than just your website in general. Copy and paste the URL straight into your tweet!
- Build your Twitter following by increasing the number of people you follow. It's great for research and keeping abreast of topics, so make sure that you're following

your clients, potential clients, influencers and competitors.

- Include a link to your latest blog on your email signature. Then it'll catch the eye of anyone you're communicating with...

2.3 Hootsuite

We recommend <https://hootsuite.com/> to manage the distribution of your social media content, and have created you an account. You can use Hootsuite for up to three different platforms for free, so we've connected it to your Facebook, Twitter and other social media accounts.

When posting content via Hootsuite, you can choose which channels it goes to, or send it to all three of them. It also shortens links for you to give you more space and allows you to schedule content, so that you can post a series of updates and Hootsuite will dispatch them across the day or week.

You can also get basic analytics via the Hootsuite account that will show you which of your updates perform best.

If you want to use more than three accounts via Hootsuite, you'll have to upgrade to one of their premium accounts, which start at £7.99 per month.

2.4 Social media dos and don'ts

- Common sense is the key factor. Consider carefully anything you post – if you're thinking of publishing something that makes you feel even the slightest bit uncomfortable, please don't post it.
- Don't get into an argument online. If someone is complaining, ask them to send you a direct message, and take it away from your Facebook or Twitter page.
- Respect your audience. Avoid speaking negatively about other people, companies or organisations. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that wouldn't be acceptable in the workplace. You should also show proper consideration for others' privacy and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory (such as religion or politics).
- Don't talk about clients or partners without their approval.
- Be inclusive. Talk about 'We...' and 'our'; make people think they're a part of your group
- Make sure you respect copyright laws – don't just use things and pretend they're your own. Make sure you reference the source material, for instance by retweeting it, or naming the place you found it in your post. Don't take images from Google

directly. Instead, consider using a stock image library like Unsplash.com, as you can use for free. Otherwise, check the copyright statement using Google's search filter.

- Even if you act with the best intentions, you must remember that anything you say about your company can potentially harm it. Please act responsibly.

Photos and graphics

Once you've got content ready for your blogs and social media posts, you can use these two handy tools to create and resize graphics.

3.1 Microsoft Paint

Microsoft Paint is like a free version of Adobe's Photoshop tool. It allows you to downscale and resize images so that they fit the dimensions you need for your blogs, which are set at 348x348. For consistency on the hub page, it's good to have a consistent size or create your own graphics.

3.2 Canva

Once you've decided on your Facebook and Twitter posts, you can use Canva to create graphics to accompany them. Canva provides you with automatically-created graphics for each platform – you just slot in your choice of image, add text, a URL or phone number, and then download them. It's an easy way to create content for specific promotions and blogs.

Above all, have fun with your blogging... You'll soon get a feel for what customers respond to, and what works best. The point of social media is to be authentic, genuine and show people a glimpse of you as a business in a digital environment. Make sure you use your expertise and insights – they're what set you apart from the competition!

Thank you

for taking the time to read and
consider our *blogging & social
media guide* for promoting *your*
company

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