ADVANCED BLOGGING:

9 CHECKS TO MAKE ON YOUR PROFESSIONAL BLOG

by

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INTRODUCITON

If you've already set up your blog and have been working on it for a few months (or years) you might now be wondering why it isn't going to the next level of traffic, exposure and income.

This checklist is designed to show you some of the things I regularly look at with my blog to make sure it is moving in the right direction, as well as maintaining integrity from a technology point of view.

They aren't in any real order, rather, you'll want to check on each item and see whether it is something that you have completed or whether there is an equivalent step that you've already taken.

ADVANCED BLOGGING CHECKLIST

Most of the items on this checklist are assuming that you blog is set up on a self-hosted environment and your goal is to get a large amount of traffic and eventually earn some kind of income.

1. **Are your conversions improving?**
   One thing I regularly check is whether or not my various conversion rates are improving. If you aren't seeing a regular increase (even a small one) it is worth looking into some advanced testing tools like http://www.vwo.com/ or checking to see whether your traffic sources have changed to become less relevant. It's also important to be very clear that conversions should be your *number one priority* for a successful blog. All the traffic, subscribers, etc. in the world are pretty useless if you aren't converting.

2. **Is your traffic varied?**
   As your blog becomes more and more valuable and matured you need to ensure that your traffic isn't coming from a singular source, especially Google. If your traffic pie chart is become more skewed towards one source you need to actively work on building more backlinks and finding new ways to get in front of people.

3. **Is your email engagement consistent or falling?**
   Your email list is a good way to gauge whether your brand is remaining strong and on target. Checking your open rates and email sign ups can give you information about whether you need to change your article direction or content strategy "behind" the blog. Open up all your stats and see whether the open rates are trending up or down. *Hint:* Brands like ViperChill get between 50% and 70% open rates on mail outs.

4. **Is income growing?**
   This seems extremely simple but at some point you need to stop setting your

blog up for future income and start actually making an income. This allows you to invest in staff, advertising and future product development. If your income hasn't grown each more (excluding any seasonal variations or development phases) then you need to ask some serious questions.

5. **Is your blog loading in under 2 seconds?**

   Site load time is now one of the most important conversion elements that we can focus on and considerable time should be given to getting it as low as possible. A slow loading site will affect Google rankings, sign ups and sales. Implement server-side caching, GZIP and minimise as much of the site as possible. Consider using a Content Deliver Network (CDN) and migrating to a Virtual Private Server if you want to dramatically upgrade to professional-level speeds. [Pingdom Tools](#) is a good benchmark to check load times around the world.

6. **Are you launching in new verticals?**

   It's very important to keep adding your brand presence to new and related verticals. This can mean something as simple as launching a book, or something more complicated like building a plugin, app, membership site, forum, etc. Try to be adding new features to related markets at least every few months.

7. **Are you building a contingency?**

   Once a blog starts to become successful it's important to make sure that you still diversify with other assets. If something were to happen to your blog do you have another site or project that is already ready to go or earning? This is something to consider regularly.

8. **Is your server-side management up to date?**

   If your blog is growing you will be forced to become more aware of the server management aspect of the business. This means creating a good relationship with your provider and support staff, and ensuring that updates are performed, security holes plugged and so on. It can be quite intimidating so good to start gradually learning a bit more about your platform as you go.

9. **Is your backlink profile growing?**

   Backlinks are still the most key indicator to Google of a quality blog. You can use tools like AHREFS to check whether your backlinks are growing, and whether they are coming from quality referrers. Even if you aren't actively interested in SEO it's vital to keep growing backlinks because it shows you are building connections, quality content and getting in front of new people (as mentioned above).

If you feel like you are lacking in any one of these areas it might be worth looking at the next page to make a plan of action.

WHAT TO DO NEXT?

If you feel like maybe you are stagnant on a few of these points there are some steps that I recommend bloggers take.

- **Each day allot one hour to a threat/problem**
  One very powerful method for moving forward is to set aside a relaxing hour each day to go over a threat or problem that is facing your blog. Make it a different topic each day. For example, on Friday afternoons I spend lunch at a local cafe and go through all my tricky server stuff that I don't really like. On Saturday I look at my email list. Try and put aside one hour each day and gently start looking at the areas you know are lagging behind.

- **Start engaging with more people**
  Again, every day there should be a bit of time spent reaching out to connect with new bloggers, industry experts and staff. We should always be trying to outsource difficult tasks to trustworthy people and that often means setting up test projects on demo servers and giving people small jobs before you hand them the bigger stuff. I'm at a point now where one other person has full time access to my servers (a big trust factor!) and it took almost 5 years to find the right person.

- **Analyse the competition to measure progress**
  This isn't a good idea if you're the kind of person that gets crippled with guilt and feelings of inadequacy. But if you're motivated, it can be a very good idea to look at your main competitors and see what they are up to in terms of article success, content direction, product launches, collaborations, etc. Sometimes you'll be able to find your next successful release with just a quick 30 minute browse.

- **Ask questions of your chosen technologies**

  One of the hardest challenges that I find with online business is that you get very attached to the software and service providers that you are accustomed to. The problem is: often these aren't the best solutions. It's very important to as questions of your email management provider, hosting services, plugins, and even your banks and money handlers to see if you're getting the best technology and the best deal.

- **Start tracking these key elements closely**

  There are so many stats that a blogger can get distracted with but, in my experience, there are actually only a few that really matter. Track these and compare them month to month to ensure progress is made: *bounce rate (changed to time on site for some blogs), search visibility in Google, CTR from SERPs, email open and click rates, opt-in rates and confirmations, unique visitors, conversion rates on sales/affiliate pages.*

I hope some of these items give you ideas for ways you can start improving your blog. If you feel like I've missed something important, or you have some questions, feel free to Tweet me on @BlogTyrant or leave a comment on the post.

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