"The Ultimate Blogging Blueprint"

2009 Version

By: JC Dawkins

General Disclaimer

Although every attempt was made in the writing of this ebook to provide the most helpful, in-depth advice as possible, neither I, JC Dawkins, nor the company I represent (JCDawkins.com), can or will guarantee that you will be successful in any way after reading this material. Individual results will be determined by the individual's ability to comprehend the material and take action on what is explained therein.

Product Support

Please direct all questions, complaints, compliments, testimonials and any other inquiries you may have in regards to this product to **JC Dawkins** I strive to reply to all emails within 48 hours, but in certain circumstances I may require longer.

Table of Contents

Introduction

It is said that a new weblog (blog) is created every second of every minute of every hour of every day. Everyone from large Corporations and small businesses, to your average Joe are using blogs these days to get their message out. Although this information seems a little intimidating, it's relatively easy to reach the top 10% within your niche and it's not extremely difficult to reach the top 1%.

6 months ago, I didn't know a thing about blogging. To be quite honest, I didn't even know what an RSS feed was. I did know that everyone was talking about the effectiveness of blogs and how many people are even bringing in a full-time income as "professional bloggers." That's when I decided to learn everything there is to know about blogging and to start my own blog.

I installed WordPress into a subdirectory of an established site of mine and began blogging with absolutely no traffic. I posted only quality information and did very few promotions for other products. The blog quickly began to gain RSS subscribers, search engine traffic and referral traffic. At the time of writing, the blog is averaging 840 RSS subscribers and 400 unique visitors every day after only a few months of blogging and there is a good chance that number is much higher right now, as you read this.

After several months of successfully maintaining my own blog and helping others turn their blogs into a success, I decided to write an in-depth ebook on exactly how I do it. Not so much a case study, but an in depth guide on how to effectively create and maintain a blog for maximum exposure.

"The Ultimate Blogging Blueprint" will teach you absolutely everything there is to know about creating and maintaining a successful blog. From choosing your domain and installing the software, to writing effective posts and marketing your blog, "TUBB" tells all. So grab a cup of coffee, print it out, relax and get ready to start your own profitable blog.

Choosing your Blogging Platform

Choosing the software in which your blog will run is extremely important. If you choose the wrong one you will be missing out on a great deal of useful features and it will be a nightmare to switch over to another once your blog is established. You basically have 3 options; WordPress, TypePad or Blogger.

Each platform offers two different options to use their software. You can host it on your own domain or you can get a free blog and they will host it. The quickest and easiest option is obviously to get a free blog that is hosted by them. However, I HIGHLY recommend that you host it on your own domain. Here are a few good reasons for that:

1. You have complete control over your blog. No one can suspend your account etc. It's your blog, you're just using their software!

2. If you ever decide to sell your blog, you're out of luck if you're not hosting it on your own domain ... you don't own it so you can't sell it!

3. Are people really going to take you serious if you're using a free blog that you're not even hosting yourself? You may lose credibility, as many people may think you're not serious enough about your own blog.

4. Free blogging platforms restrict you from accessing files like the .htaccess file, which is a very important file to control when your blog becomes popular!

If you're going to make a serious effort at this, you should pay $9 or so each year for your own domain. As harsh as this may sound you should stop reading this ebook right now if hosting your blog on its own domain is too big of a step for you. It's THAT important, and if you don't know how to do it there are people out there who can help!

All 3 platforms are very good, but one stands out **_WordPress_** (http://www.wordpress.org/) The reason WordPress is so incredibly popular and effective is because it allows you to easily install plugins. There are LOADS of plugins that will do just about anything you want and most of them are free.

I go into detail about WordPress plugins further on down the page, but I wanted to be clear as to why WordPress is so much better. I highly recommend WordPress and that's the software I'll be referring to throughout this ebook.

Getting Started

Choosing a domain - There are a few things you need to think of when choosing a domain. If the possibility of selling your blog at some point in the future is there, you don't want to use your actual name or brand in the domain name (i.e. johndoe.com) Instead, think of a good keyword phrase to target and use that in your domain name for Search Engine Optimization (SEO) purposes.

If you are out to brand your name however, you may want to think about using your name in your URL. This is all dependent on your goal with the blog. Just keep in mind, if you use your name in your domain name, it will most likely be extremely hard to sell the blog if there ever comes a time in which you decide to do so.

The option I chose was to register my domain name and simply 301 redirect it to my blog. This way I won't lose the traffic from direct visitors of my name domain and I can still sell my blog in the future if I decide to do so. I can even market my name domain if I choose and since I'm using a 301 redirect all of that "link juice" aka authority will go to the actual blog. I'm still building my "brand" as the header image has my picture and the title includes my name. When a new visitor lands on the site, he or she immediately knows that the blog belongs to me.

Installation - Installing WordPress is very easy. If your hosting provider offers Fantastico it's absolutely effortless. If not, you'll have to do a manual installation, which is pretty easy as well.

Installing with Fantastico – This is very simple. If you're not sure whether or not your webhost provides fantastico, give them a call and ask. If they do, you should see a small icon called "fantastico" once you login to your hosting account. Just click on that and under "blogs" you should see "wordpress." Once you're there you will just need to define a directory if you're installing into a subdirectory (i.e. Yoursite.com/blog and not

the root folder ie. Yourblog.com) Insert an admin nickname and password as well as an email address. If you want to use the "blog by email" function you'll need to insert some info about your email account. This function allows you to post to your blog by simply sending an email. This is not mandatory; I've actually never used it. Once you've filled in all the info, click "install wordpress" and your blog is now installed.

Manual Installation – [Download the zip file](#) and extract its contents. Once you have the files, use their "[famous 5-minute installation guide](#)."

Getting around the admin panel - Once everything is up and running you can login to your blog by going to yourblog.com/wp-login.php or yoursite.com/blog/wp-login.php if you installed in a subdirectory. You're admin panel should look something like this:

note: *It may look different, depending on the version of WordPress that is currently out.*
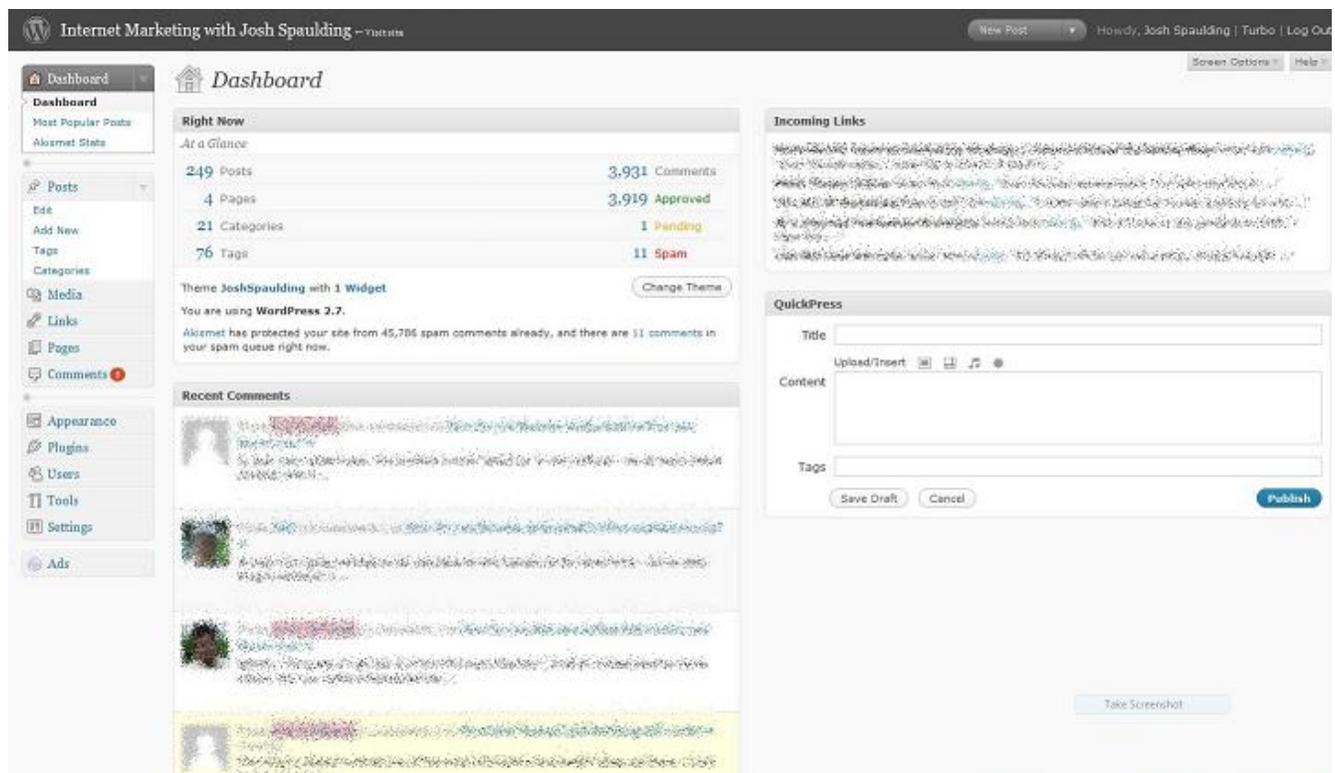
The image on the previous page is of the first screen you will see when logged in to WordPress, it's called the "Dashboard." As you can see, there is a list of links to the left (basically your control panel,) a list of incoming links to the right (will obviously be empty if you just installed WordPress) an area where you can make a quick post (QuickPress) below the incoming links, some stats and the recent comments made to your blog posts, which will also be blank at first, obviously.

You can basically ignore everything except for the column of links on the left side of your screen for now, which are basically your command and control links. This column is where you control everything.

As you can see, the first link is "Posts" and if you expand it (click on the arrow to the right) you'll see there are four options under it:

Edit – This is where you can edit posts that you've previously written.

Add New – This is where you can write a new blog post.

Tags – This is where you can manage tags. Tags are basically separate landing pages, which target very long-tail phrases. I am personally not a big fan of tags and I do not use them, this is optional.

Categories – This is where you can manage the categories in which your posts will fall under. If you make a category it will not appear on your blog until at least one post is assigned to it. Every post must be assigned to a category from within the "Add New" section.

Now let's skip the "Media" link and the "Links" link for now and get into pages. The reason I want to skip them for now is because I want to explain the difference between "posts" and "pages" while posts are fresh on your mind.

As you can see, the fourth link down is "Pages." Posts and Pages are two different things. A post is your normal blog post that will work its way down the page as you write new posts and is part of your ongoing musings, while a page is "static" and will remain linked to on the front page and every other page in the sidebar, or wherever your theme places links to pages (more on themes later,) and is not necessarily part of your ongoing musings. A good example of a page would be "About us" or "Contact." You can also include articles that would contribute to the overall theme of your blog.

You'll want to create an "about me" page and a "contact me" page right away, as it's very important for credibility purposes, as your readers need to have the ability to learn a little about you right away and to also contact you for any reason. Don't worry; any posts/pages you create now will still be there when you install your theme in a few minutes.

Now that we've cleared that up, let's go back up to the "Media" link. This is very quick and easy. This is where you can quite simply upload images, videos and/or music from your computer to use on your blog. Just click "Add New" and it's basically self-explanatory from there.

Next we have the "Links" link. This is where you can add a link to other blogs that you follow and/or sites that you just enjoy. This could be sites that you own or sites that you just like. It really doesn't matter. You can link to any site you want here and it will be displayed on your blog, usually in the sidebar and usually titled "Blogroll" but the location and name will be determined by the theme you choose.

Since we already went over pages, we'll skip that link now and move on to the "Comments" link. Once again, this is pretty self-explanatory. Here you can manage all comments left by readers on your blog posts. You can edit them, delete them, approve them, deny them etc.

Next is the "Appearance" link. When you upload new themes, this is where they will appear. As soon as you upload a new theme, it will appear here, but it will not become

active until you click on it in this screen. You can have as many themes as you like in there and to switch between installed themes all you have to do is click on the one you want to display.

You can also modify the themes by clicking on the link in the drop down menu titled "editor." This is where you'll add to or take away from the sidebar(s) etc. You can also do it through your own ftp client or html editor, but this is a quick and easy way to do it. Just select the file you want to edit and the raw code will be displayed, very easy.

I'll show you exactly where to find themes for free later on, now I want to continue the "walk-through" of the admin panel. Just know that once you do select a theme, which we'll go over later, this is where you'll go to activate it and/or edit it.

The next link is "plugins." A plugin is simply a file or folder, created by developers, that does a specified action. There are plugins out there that will do just about anything to your blog that you want. In this section you can activate, deactivate and edit your plugins.

Each plugin that you upload will display here. A newly uploaded plugin will not work until you activate it here. It displays the name and description of the plugin followed by the "activate" or "deactivate" option and there is also an editor for those of you who are code junkies and like to modify things to your liking.

This is also where you will modify the options of some plugins. Whether or not the options will appear here under "Plugins" or elsewhere will depend on how the plugin creator set up their plugin to work.

As I mentioned above when explaining the "Appearance" section, I'll go into where to find plugins and what plugins I recommend later on in the ebook. Right now I just want to continue the walkthrough of the admin panel.

The next link is "Users." Most likely you will be the only user, but if you allow others to post to your blog (I don't recommend this unless you know them) this is where you will manage their details. There is also a link in the dropdown menu titled "your profile." Some themes, such as Cleaker, draw information from your profile to display in the sidebar so it's important to fill this in with good information.

Next is the "Tools" link. This is where those who started blogging on a different platform can import their posts etc. It looks easy, but it's a paid. You don't have to worry about that though because you're starting off with the best platform!

This is also where you upgrade your WordPress installation, as WordPress comes out with a new version very frequently.

You will also see the options for some plugins here. You'll notice after time that some plugin developers will put their plugins options in here, others will put them under settings and others will actually appear in the main configuration column.

And last, but not least is the "Settings link. This is where you can set important things like the title of your blog, subtitle (tagline) email address etc. so WordPress knows what to display. In the dropdown menu you'll see 8 different links:

General – Here you can change the title of your blog, the description (tagline) and your admin email address.

Writing – Here you can change little things like the default category, but there is also one very important thing here, which is the "Update Services." This is where you add URL's to all services that you want to alert when you publish a new blog post. I use the following list:

List of Pinging Services

http://blogsearch.google.com/ping/RPC2

http://www.bloglines.com/ping

http://api.feedster.com/ping

http://api.moreover.com/ping

http://api.moreover.com/RPC2

http://blog.goo.ne.jp/XMLRPC

http://blogdb.jp/xmlrpc/

http://coreblog.org/ping/

http://ping.blo.gs/

http://ping.bloggers.jp/rpc/

http://ping.cocolog-nifty.com/xmlrpc

http://ping.syndic8.com/xmlrpc.php

http://ping.weblogalot.com/rpc.php

http://pinger.blogflux.com/rpc

http://rpc.blogrolling.com/pinger/

http://rpc.icerocket.com:10080/

http://rpc.pingomatic.com/

http://pingoat.com/goat/RPC2/

http://rpc.technorati.com/rpc/ping

http://rpc.weblogs.com/RPC2

http://topicexchange.com/RPC2

http://www.blogdigger.com/RPC2

http://xping.pubsub.com/ping

http://api.my.yahoo.com/rss/ping

http://ping.feedburner.com/

http://pingqueue.com/rpc/

Reading – Here you can configure what will be displayed on the front page of your blog. If you want a standard blog, like most people do, you can leave this at default. The rest can be left at default as well unless you have a good reason to change it.

Discussion – Here you can change several options. These options are self-explanatory and it's up to you where you leave them at default or change them. These options should be tailored to your own comfort level. In other words, there is not "standard" when it comes to these options.

Media – Here you can change the site of images that are uploaded through the "media" option.

Privacy – This should be left as is. "I would like my blog to be visible to everyone, including search engines and archivers" should always be checked, unless this is a personal blog that you don't want the world to know about.

Permalinks – It is very important that you change this for SEO purposes. The permalink structure is the way in which URL's on your blog are structured. By default WordPress uses an extremely SEO Unfriendly structure, which looks like this:

```
http://www.yourblog.com/?p=123
```

You want the title of the post to be included in the URL, so Search Engines give that post a little more weight for those keywords. In order to do this you just need to select the "Custom Structure" option and insert the following:

```
/%category%/%postname%/
```

Once you've done that click "Save Changes" and your permalink structure will be updated to a more SEO friendly URL that looks like this

```
http://www.yourblog.com/post-category/post-title
```

Depending on whether or not your .htaccess file is writable, you may need to copy and paste some data into it once you update the permalink structure. If this is required you will be provided the data on the same page. Just copy it and paste it into your .htaccess file, which you can find in your remote folder (usually under public_html.)

Once you start posting to your blog, do not change the permalink structure. If you do, all the pages will still work, but they will no longer be indexed by the search engines, as the URL has changed and the old structure will be broken and no longer work. If you did change the permalink structure after having content already published, you would have to do 301 redirects for every single page pointing to the new page.

Miscellaneous – Here you can tell WordPress where to store files that you upload through the "Media" link.

That's the basics of your admin panel. There are a few less important features I skipped over, but you'll become familiar with them after time.

Sending and Receiving Trackbacks and Pingbacks - Blogs have a unique function in their ability to alert other bloggers when they have been linked to. These are called "trackbacks" and "Pingbacks," both are very similar.

Unless the theme you're using separates trackbacks and pingbacks from comments, or you have a plugin installed that does so, they will appear within the comment section of a post.

In a nutshell this is what they do: If someone links to your post from their blog, a trackback or pingback will be sent to the post on your blog, which was linked to. To someone who doesn't know what a trackback or pingback is, they can appear to be a bit "spammy." That's why it's important to understand what they look like.

When you receive a trackback or pingback it will be held for moderation if your blog is set to moderate comments (highly recommended.) If someone links to your blog post from their blog the title of their blog post, which they are linking from, will appear in the "name" field and an excerpt from the post will be inserted into the comment field.

One thing to look out for is trackback and pingback spam. Many "splogs" (spam blogs)

will link to loads of blog posts, with hopes of them getting approved and building links to their blog and/or gaining exposure. That's why it's very important to click on each trackback/pingback and actually read the post where they linked to you from.

Most blogs are set to automatically detect when other blogs are linking to you and to automatically send an alert when you link to another blog (Pingbacks.) But that's not always the case, depending on the technology being used of any given blog. It's always a good idea to insert the trackback link into your blog post when linking to another blog post.

To find the trackback URL, you'll need to go to the post which you are linking to. Somewhere on that page, normally after the post, there should be a "trackback" link. Just right click that link and select "save link as" in FireFox or "copy shortcut" in Internet Explorer.

Not all blogs display their trackback link and that's fine. If they don't have one, don't worry about it, as their blog is most likely using Pingbacks, which will automatically detect you linking to them.

After writing a post you'll see a section below the post in your admin panel labeled "send trackbacks."

Now that you have the trackback URL copied to your clipboard, you can paste it into the trackback field for your post. If you're linking to more than one blog post, just separate the URL's with a space.

Once you publish the post the trackback will automatically be sent to the blogs in which you linked. Most people moderate their trackbacks/pingbacks so it may not show up immediately.

Choosing and Installing a WordPress Theme - Your theme is the template of your blog. However, unlike most Website templates WP themes are extremely easy to integrate. You can literally have a theme up and going on your blog 2 minutes after downloading it; it's really that easy.

First you'll need to find a theme that you like. There are hundreds, probably thousands, of WordPress themes online. Here are just a few links to get you started:

- http://themes.wordpress.net/
- http://www.wpthemesfree.com/
- http://www.wpthemespot.com/

Just browse through the themes and pick one that you like. Once you find a winner just download it and unzip it. Upload it to your server under wp-content/themes then login to your blog's admin panel i.e. Yourblog.com/wp-login.php

Under "Appearance" you should see a new screenshot of the theme you just uploaded. Just click on that screenshot and your new theme is now installed and displaying. Be sure to leave the default theme on your server so you can simply switch back to it if you see any problems with the new theme.

If you would like to use the theme I use for my blog, click here to learn more about Socrates.

Controlling your "Link Juice" - As with any Website, a good internal linking structure is very important. Something that is equally important is controlling the "link juice" that you obtain.

Every Webpage on the Internet is given a certain amount of authority, which mainly comes from the quality and quantity of links pointing to that page in particular. While

retaining that "authority" each page then spreads an equal amount of that authority to each of the links within that particular page. This means that ALL links on ALL of your pages are getting "link juice." Your contact us, about us, bookmark, affiliate links, etc. are getting link juice that could be going into your "money pages."

To preserve the link juice that your blog attains, it is very important to utilize the rel="nofollow" attribute when linking to pages that do not need to be indexed by search engines. Here is an example of how to implement the rel="nofollow" attribute into your links:

Link code *without* nofollow:

Your Keyword

Link code *with* nofollow:

Your Keyword

You can insert the rel="nofollow" attribute into sidebar links by simply going into your sidebar file and finding that link. Inserting it into your contact/about etc. pages will be determined by the theme you use. If you're not sure where to insert it, just contact the theme creator or ask at the [WordPress Support Forums](#) and you should find your answer.

Within each post you can manually add the attribute pretty easily. When you create a link just insert the attribute as I explained above. Be sure to do this for all useless links, i.e.

- Affiliate Links
- Social Bookmarking Links
- Search Result Links
- Email or Contact Links
- About Us Links

- Sites that will do just fine without your link. ie. Wiki, Google, Yahoo, .gov sites, etc.

Control your blogroll! *Do Not* fill your blogroll full of links! Your blogroll displays these links on every single page of your blog. This means that every single page is giving these links a portion of its own link juice that could have went back into your own pages. It's fine to put a few links in there, but you really need to control it.

The rel="nofollow" attribute is added to all comment links by default in WordPress. However, many people, including myself, believe that if someone is contributing to a blog, they deserve a followed link. This is why plugins such as Lucia's Linky Love were created to strip the nofollow attribute from regular contributors. This increases blog comments by giving people more of a reason to contribute and take part in the conversation.

Your RSS Feed - RSS (Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication) is a relatively new technology that plays an extremely important role in any successful blog. In a nutshell, RSS is used to share content such as news and blog posts.

Of course with its ease of sharing, there is spam, but overall it's a very useful technology. With blogs, RSS is used to update curious readers of new blog posts. More and more people are using RSS readers such as Google Reader, BlogLines etc. to keep up with their favorite blogs without having to visit each one separately. I think of RSS feeds as Web 2.0 newsletters. People voluntarily subscribe to your RSS feed, as they do newsletters, and every post you make goes directly to their reader, as newsletters go straight to their email. The popular saying "the money is in the list" is correct and because of their similarity, one could say the same about RSS!

Burning your Feed on FeedBurner - FeedBurner (free) is the industry standard when it comes to publishing your RSS feed. WordPress produces a default feed (yourblog.com/feed/) but that's it. With feedburner you can track your feeds stats, get

widgets and buttons etc. You can also view the total number of subscribers with a simple plugin, which I've included in the plugins section below.

"Burning" your feed is very easy. Just go to http://www.feedburner.com/, enter the URL to your feed (yourblog.com/feed/ for WordPress) along with your UN, PW and email, and choose your blogs title and click "activate feed." It's that simple. Once you've burnt your feed, FeedBurner will provide you with a new feed. This is the feed you will display on your blog. Many people will find a nice looking RSS button and link it to their feedburner feed in their sidebar.

It will take some time to gain regular RSS subscribers so I don't recommend displaying the subscriber count right away. Most people, including myself, wait until they are around 100 daily subscribers before displaying that count.

WordPress Plugins - As I stated above, the main reason WordPress is far better than any other blogging platform is that there are thousands of plugins you can use to tweak your blog and make it more user friendly, SE friendly etc. Developers are constantly releasing new plugins and there is a WordPress plugin for just about anything you can think of and the best part, most are free.

Start off by browsing through all the plugins on WordPress' list at http://codex.wordpress.org/Plugins If they don't have a plugin that does what you want just do a Google search. You're sure to find a plugin that does whatever it is you need.

Plugin installation is just as easy as theme installation. You simply download the file(s), which will normally be in a zip file. Unzip the file(s) (could be a single file or a folder) and upload it/them to your server under wp-content/plugins. Now that the plugin is uploaded, login to your admin panel and click the "plugins" link. The plugin should now appear there with a short description and the option to "activate."

Some plugins are good to go after you activate them, but some are not. It all depends

on what the plugin does. For instance, if the plugin you're installing displays something in your sidebar or in posts, you'll most likely need to paste some code wherever you want it to display. Just be sure to read the instructions, which should be provided with each plugin, thoroughly before installing and you should be told exactly what to do.

Recommended Plugins - The following are plugins that I use and highly recommend!

- [Sociable](#) - Sociable provides a list, of which you choose, of social bookmark sites at the end up each post.

- [Subscribe to Comments](#) - This nifty plugin was created by Mark Jaquith. It inserts a little box after the reply field of each of your posts, which when ticked will send an email reply to each commenter when a reply is made. I definitely saw a rise in participation when I started using this one and I always use it when participating in other blogs that offer it.

- [CommentLuv](#) – Andy Bailey created this plugin to show a link to the last post from the commenter's blog by parsing the feed at their given URL when they leave a comment. Rewards your readers and encourage more comments.

- [Lucia's Linky Love](#) - Lucia Liljegren created this awesome plugin to replace the [DoFollow plugin](#) created by Denis de Bernardy. Denis' Dofollow plugin removes the rel="nofollow" attribute from all comment links, while Lucia's plugin makes it more selective. With this plugin you can set a number of posts, which your readers must reach before their links get "do followed". Great for restricting link love from spammers and rewarding frequent comments.

- [Related Posts](#) - This plugin created by Alexander Malov & Mike Lu adds a list of related posts at the end of each post or in your sidebar, anywhere you want it really. Great for deeper linking and internal link attribution. It's also useful to readers, which is the most important thing!

- [Popularity Contest](#) - This plugin created by Alex King puts a percentage rating on each post, which is calculated by several factors of which you can adjust to your liking. You can also paste a small code into your sidebar and display the most popular posts. This is a great feature to guide your users to content that others liked. It's also another great way to get the SE spiders deeper into your blog.

- [HomePage Excerpts](#) - This plugin will show only a teaser of each post you make, causing your index to be much more user friendly and easy to navigate. It's also great in reducing the amount of duplicate content WordPress blogs create.

- [Akismet](#) **–** This is one of the most popular anti-spam plugins out there. It's effective in blocking 99% of all spam from my own experience. Unfortunately, it does block some good comments as well. But it has the option of checking those comments that were blocked so as long as you do that, you're good to go and spam free.

Content Factors

Quality - Just like everything else that you publish to the Internet, your blog posts must be of quality. You don't have to hold a Master's Degree on the topic, but if you're just posting rehashed, boring content, you're not going to retain visitors.

Your blog should be on a topic that you have a good deal of knowledge on in the first place. If this is the case, and it should be, you shouldn't have any trouble coming up with good info. There will definitely be times, no matter how much knowledge you have, when you just can't think of anything good to write about. This is when sites like [EzineArticles.com](), [Digg](), [StumbleUpon]() etc. come in. They are all full of articles and you can see what articles are popular and what articles are not popular. Find articles in your niche that are popular and you should be able to come up with some interesting ideas.

The Power of Viral Marketing - You've probably heard the phrase "viral marketing" here or there. Viral marketing is a type of marketing where something (a piece of content, video, audio etc.) is so interesting, cool, useful etc. that everyone wants to link to it. One good blog post has the potential of going "viral," which is then considered "link bait."

Can one create a good piece of link bait without trying? Absolutely! But one can create several more pieces of link bait when they actually try to do it.

I, nor anyone else, can tell you exactly "how" to create something that goes viral. It's all about coming up with something unique and exposing it to your readers. Even the newest blog can have something go viral because all it takes is one "plug" from a blog, newsletter, social network etc. which exposes your link bait to many more people, who in turn will link to you again and on and on.

"link bait" comes in a variety of different forms

- Informational blog posts
- Breaking news
- Free software/scripts
- Free ebooks and reports
- Royalty free images
- Free WordPress themes, plugins or Firefox addons
- Contests
- Controversial opinions on high-visibility bloggers/products

You'll hear a lot about "link baiting" as you begin to participate more and more in the blogosphere. Your main concern should always be to provide good, solid content to your readers as often as possible. Doing this will naturally provide link bait. However, you should constantly be pondering what you can offer that has the potential of going viral, as every single post you write will not be "ground-breaking."

Building a reputation - Blogs provide an excellent opportunity to build a reputation and "brand" your name. A "static" Website can do this as well with solid information, but it's extremely hard to build a relationship with your readers because you simply don't interact with them.

Possibly the most valuable thing that blogs provide is the ability for the publisher to actually interact and get to know the readers through comments. This provides a solid opportunity to build relationships and brand your name. This means you need to reply to each and every comment in a friendly, but professional way.

Come up with something that makes you stand out. For instance, I'm well known for "ethical marketing" and I'm very much against those who do things strictly for the money. I have a very strong belief in providing good information and only promoting services and products that I've tried and honestly recommend. Because of this the few

products that I do recommend convert VERY well among other things.

Maybe your "thing" is your ability to distinguish time-wasters from good resources, or simply your personality. Maybe you can simplify complicated things. Maybe you're good at finding hot news stories and being one of the first to release them. Whatever it is, be sure to provide personalized content that is not rehashed and/or boring!

Video Blogging "Vlogging" and Audio Blogging "Podcasting" - Using audio and video as marketing tools are two of the newest and most effective forms of online marketing. You can create video and/or audio and syndicate them all over the web, providing loads of exposure. Why? Because video and audio both provide a personal means of communication opposed to just text.

With that in mind, it should come as no surprise that using audio and video within your blog is extremely effective.

There is one catch though. If you're a horrible public speaker, like me, or your appearance leaves much to be desired, it's possible to do more harm than good with video and/or audio within your blog! However, if you have somewhat of a speaking talent you can easily maintain an "edge" on your competition by providing a more personalized experience with audio and video. Your readers will feel closer to you because they actually hear your voice with audio and they both see and hear you with video.

Marketing and Network Building

How many times have you heard the term "blogosphere?" Many I bet. The "blogosphere" truly is a different world than the Internet marketing world. This is why marketing a blog must be done differently than marketing a normal Website. The same basic principles apply, ie. Quality content, link building etc. but the process of marketing is much different.

Of course you can do the same thing to promote your blog as you do your other Websites i.e. article marketing, link exchanges, directory submissions etc., but the true power of the blogosphere is in networking.

There are two extremely powerful ways to go about networking in order to make your blog a success – actively participating in social networks and B2B networking. Not Business to Business, but Blog to Blog :)

Social Networks - There are LOADS of social networks out there and many of them are effective. However, it's nearly impossible to join every one and actively take part in order to get the full benefit. Instead of listing them all, I've listed the top 6 social networks, some blog specific some not, in my eyes. Every one of these networks has sent me loads of visitors. StumbleUpon alone has sent me over 6,000 unique visitors in the past month and they all consistently send traffic my way. I highly recommend you sign up to each of these networks and actively participate.

FaceBook, Twitter, Digg, StumbleUpon, MyBlogLog, Technorati

Blog to Blog - While social networks are primarily good for loads of direct traffic, blog to blog networking is good for direct traffic, link building and fresh content in the form of comments. Blog to Blog networking can be simplified as simply linking to and commenting on other relevant blog posts as frequently as possible.

However, this goes back to what I said about "quality." No matter how much support you show to other bloggers, if your content doesn't stand out they aren't going to show you any love. You MUST be posting high-quality content in order for this to work!

Other bloggers do notice this and many will reciprocate if, again, your content is worth linking to! On the other hand, when other bloggers link to you from quality, relevant blogs, and/or frequently comment on your posts, be sure to link back and/or comment on their posts when you have an opportunity IF their content is "link worthy" and you believe your readers would enjoy it!

If you aren't an expert in your niche, instead of linking to very popular blogs, start off by finding other blogs that are relatively new and start leaving comments and linking to them… *develop a relationship*. You're much more likely to get linked to in this case and the more "link love" you get, the higher your rankings will go.

The higher your rankings are, the higher the likelihood of more popular blogs deciding to link to you will be. Think of it like climbing a ladder. You have to take it one step at a time. You can't just reach out to the top bloggers and expect them to pull you up if you aren't very experienced in that niche. You must start with the new bloggers then move up to the somewhat established blogs, then to the established blogs then to the top blogs.

It's not just about linking to these blogs though. Becoming a frequent visitor and leaving frequent comments will get you noticed! It may take 10 or more comments, but I notice everyone who frequently comments on my blog. I take a look at their blog and in many cases I take part there as well. I'm not the only one who does this. There are many, many, many other bloggers who help out their regular readers and contributors.

This section of the ebook isn't very long because it doesn't take a whole lot of explanation, but please realize that it is a very important factor in the growth of your blog!

You can also build incoming links when commenting. Most blogs by default use the rel="nofollow" but many bloggers, including myself, have begun using "dofollow" plugins that strip the nofollow attribute out of comments, giving our contributors a reason to comment. You can find a large list of these blogs at http://www.bumpzee.com/no-nofollow/blogs/

Monetization

The monetization of a blog is something that requires some thought and a bit of testing. Many bloggers do not put any thought into it and because of this they are "leaving money on the table." So many people just paste some affiliate banners and maybe some Adsense ads on their blog and think that's the best they can do; if they don't make money it's just because they need more visitors. Well, there is only one thing wrong with that, it's absolutely false!!

The first thing to realize is that a brand new blog is going to make little to no money anyway, so why even monetize it? When people see a brand new blog with little content that's full of adverts they tend to be irritated. It just makes it seem as though the blog was created just to make money. I highly recommend leaving your blog advert free until you have at least 100 RSS subscribers and/or a few hundred daily visitors.

Once your blog is somewhat established then it's time to start testing adverts. The first thing you need to know is who exactly your target audience is. What is there experience level? What is the majority looking for? A few good ways to determine this is by doing one or more of the follow:

- Run a simple poll on your blog. You can do this in a post and/or leave it static in your sidebar. You can use [this plugin](#) to do that. You can find out a lot about your readers just by running a couple polls asking their experience level, online income, online business model etc.

- Analyze your stats often. You can find out a lot about your visitors such as where they are coming from just by keeping a close eye on your stats. You can use [this Google analytics plugin](#), or just browse your raw web logs in your hosting account, as most hosts offer these stats.

- Pay close attention to what posts get more views and comments. This is obvious, but you can learn a lot about the experience level of a good portion of your audience simply by observing what posts they comment on and what they say.

Once you have a pretty good idea as to what your readers are looking for, you can start looking into what adverts may convert well. You have a few options (below,) but don't go crazy and fill your blog with adverts or they simply won't convert. More often than not, I find it much more effective to find the top two monetization models and stick with them. It always takes from the user experience when they visit a blog and get overwhelmed with Adsense, banners, Kontera ads etc.

No one can tell you which monetization model will work best for your blog. There are a lot of factors that go into determining which is best for you, which you'll have to test and track to figure out. But I can tell you what works for many bloggers. Below you'll find a list of the most common ways to monetize a blog:

Email Marketing – One of the best monetization models on the Internet, let alone in the blogosphere, is email marketing. You need to be collecting names and emails from your visitors. If you're not retaining your visitors you're fighting an uphill battle!

Go with a reputable service like [GetResponse](#) or [Aweber](#) and get an opt-in form up on your blog. Write a small report and give it away to everyone who subscribes. Once you have a few people on your list HELP THEM by sending them to informative blog posts, telling them of new free and paid services etc.

Selling Links and Adverts - Until recently, selling text links and banners was by far the most effective way to make money from your blog. Many people were making thousands of dollars doing so and it was relatively easy with a program called [Text Link Ads](#). Unfortunately, Google recently began penalizing blogs which sold links on their blogs. This "penalty" was only cosmetic, as it only lowered their toolbar PageRank and didn't directly affect their Search Engine Result Page (SERP) positions.

The reasoning behind it, from Google's standpoint, is that when someone purchases links it affects the way that page is served in their search results, making it "unnatural." Their goal is to provide the most relevant, useful information as possible, and when Webmasters are purchasing links it is going against that. Many people don't like that,

including myself, but it's the hard truth.

Does this mean that we can't sell links? Not necessarily. If you own the blog you can do whatever you like with it. Also, since there has been no talk of actually losing traffic, it can still prove to be profitable. It's just something that's "a shade of grey" in Google's eyes so you must be careful. If you don't care about Google, go ahead and sell links. You'll most likely do well, but one day you may find that your site is no longer indexed with Google or you may lose your toolbar pagerank.

- **How Google wants you to do it** – Google actually doesn't have a problem with links being sold. As I stated above, their problem is in links being sold which affect the SERPS. Google says there is nothing wrong with selling links, as long as you use the rel="nofollow" attribute. The rel="nofollow" tells the Googlebot not to assign PageRank to that link, eliminating the issue. This can still be profitable once your blog generates enough traffic to actually send a decent amount of traffic to the advertising site, but until then you would not receive many, if any, orders for advertising.

Affiliate Programs - Promoting affiliate programs on your blog can be effective, but you need to be extremely selective and unique in which affiliate programs you choose to promote.

You'll notice that many blogs promote the same affiliate programs. The reason for this is normally because that product or service offers a high paying affiliate program. Granted, in some cases it's simply because that product or service is just outstanding, but more often than not that is not the case.

This is where you need to be unique. Don't promote any affiliate program until you have personally tried it. After you try it, write an in depth review and from then on place the programs affiliate link or banner in your sidebar. If your recommendations are consistently honest you'll start to see much higher conversions, as your readers will realize that you're not just doing it for the money!

Sponsored Reviews - There are several services such as [Reviewme](#), which pay you for sponsored reviews. These services can make you a good deal of money, but there are a few things to watch out for:

1. Writing sponsored reviews involves linking to the sites of which the advertiser owns. This means you're selling links in a way. That means you'll have to be careful or you may see a penalty with Google.

2. Accepting every single offer could lower the value of your blog. When your readers see that you're posting a few reviews every week, they could lose interest fast!

However, if you do it correctly sponsored reviews could actually add value to your blog, while putting money in your pocket at the same time.

The first thing you must get out of your head when doing paid reviews, or anything with your blog for that matter, is how much money you'll make. I know that can be difficult because why are most of us in this industry anyway right? To make money! But when you stop thinking about how much money you'll make and start thinking about how much value you provide to your readers, you'll then start to see more and more money come in!

With that being said here are a few things you need to do in order to successfully write paid reviews on your blog:

1. Only accept offers that are relevant to the topic of your blog. You *will* get offers that pay $10 or more, but many of them will be extremely off-topic. This is where you have to stop thinking of instant money and start thinking about passive income. If you accept these irrelevant offers, you'll end up losing money in the long run because you'll lose reader after reader!

2. When you do find relevant offers, provide a good, solid, honest review. Don't just

plug their link, say "this is good" blah blah Dig into the site/service; provide areas they do well with as well as areas that need improvement. Ultimately your readers should know exactly whether this product/service will benefit them or not.

3. Be sure to have at least 3-4 good content posts between reviews. If you don't do this there is a very good chance you'll be committing blog suicide. Unless you're an awesome reviewer, no one is going to want to keep up with a blog that is full of reviews. Having a good space between sponsored reviews also provides less of a chance that Google will take your toolbar PR for "selling links."

CPC Adverts - [Google Adsense](#), [Kontera](#) and others are all viable options to monetize your blog, but whether or not they will convert into a solid stream of income will depend almost entirely on the niche or topic of your blog. For instance, these programs will normally receive very low click through rates on Internet marketing or "make money online" blogs.

Due to the fact that a good part of your viewers will be, or at least should be, RSS subscribers, these types of programs don't normally convert well. RSS subscribers will be viewing many of your posts in their RSS reader, which doesn't display Google adverts.

However, if you receive much of your traffic from Search Engines, you're in a non-marketing niche and you place your adverts just right, it is possible for them to convert very well. It all goes back to testing, as it's truly blog specific. What does well on one blog may not do nearly as well on another.

Words of Caution

Manual Comment Spam - There's nothing that will detract from the value of your blog more than spam. Using anti-spam plugins, such as Akismet (mentioned above) is effective in blocking most obvious, automated spam, but there are a lot of people out there who leave manual comment spam.

Manual comment spam is created when someone manually submits comments strictly for the link and/or exposure. They don't comment on the actual post because normally they didn't even read it. It will normally look something like this: "Great blog, I love the layout. I've bookmarked it, thanks." Comments like this are flattering at first, but you'll quickly realize how annoying they become after time.

Trackback Spam - See "Sending and Receiving Trackbacks" in "Getting Started" above.

Useful Resources

http://ez-onlinemoney.com/blog/

Josh Spaulding's Internet Marketing blog, where he talks about various Internet Marketing topics.

http://www.thejackol.com/htaccess-cheatsheet/

An awesome .htaccess cheat sheet with examples of how to do some very cool and useful things through your .htaccess file. (always make a backup before messing with .htaccess)

http://www.wpcreations.com/

Sean Lowery's custom wordpress theme service. Sean is one of the most talented graphic designers out there!

http://bloggers-journey.com/blogging-news/51-rss-button-for-your-blog/

51 nice looking RSS buttons to bring in more subscribers.

http://www.quirk.co.za/searchstatus/

See the Google PR, Alexa Traffic Rank, Compete Rank etc. with this all-in-one Firefox SEO extention.

http://www.ArticleMarketingDomination.com/

The #1 article marketing ebook on the market!

http://www.UltimateLinkBuildingReport.com/

The #1 link-building ebook on the market!

JC Dawkins

I honestly hope that this ebook was exactly what you needed in order to get your first blog going, and more importantly, doing it correctly.

As you can see, creating and marketing a blog is much different than creating and marketing a static site. Hopefully you've saved yourself countless hours learning the hard way by purchasing this ebook.

To your Blogging Success,

JC Dawkins
JCDawkins.com