



Episode 24: 10 Tips for Writing Blog Posts

E24: 10 TIPS FOR WRITING BLOG POSTS

00:17 Justin Johnson: Hello everybody, and welcome to the Neon Noise podcast, where we help you decode marketing and sales topics. This is Justin, and with me, I have my co-host, Ken. Ken, I hope all is going well for you today. How's everything?

00:30 Ken Franzen: Great, great. How are you today?

00:32 Justin Johnson: I am doing fabulous. We're gonna be talking about creating killer, awesome blog posts, so it's exciting.

00:43 Ken Franzen: Absolutely, absolutely.

00:45 Justin Johnson: All right. So, we talked a lot about creating content back in, I believe it was episode seven. We talked about creating remarkable content. Today, what I think that we should do is just dig a little bit deeper, let everybody know exactly how they can create this content. So, I think that it would be cool to create a 10-step blueprint that they can use for writing awesome blog posts. How's that sound?

01:17 Ken Franzen: No, that sounds fantastic. Yeah. This 10-step blueprint is one that we follow when we write our posts at Neon Goldfish for clients, for ourselves. And you wanna create a blog post, it's not just any blog post you wanna create; you wanna create something that's gonna stand out from all the others. As we mentioned in the past, there's over four million blog posts published every single day. So, what can we do? How can we make our blog post stand out from the others? How can we make our information, our voice be heard, our message be received? So, before we get started, I think it might be safe to assume... I'm just bring this out that many of our listeners aren't currently publishing blog content on a regular basis and they might say, "Hey, this might be an episode I might check out for because I'm not a blogger." And I want you to think again about this because, one, if you're not creating content for your business, you're missing out big time. You really should give it some consideration. In the blueprint we discuss today, we're gonna apply a lot of this to blogging, but the framework of it can really be applied to any content creation process.

02:42 Ken Franzen: So, bear that in mind. Stay with us. I think that even if you're not a blogger or the person that blogs for your business, you're gonna find a lot of value here in these steps we cover. It can be applied, I think, to more areas. So let's just touch on a couple of the main benefits of blogging, and if you're not, why you should make this a priority in your business. So give me some ideas. What do you think, Justin? What are some of the main benefits you can think of?

03:13 Justin Johnson: Alright.

03:13 Ken Franzen: Reasons that they should blog.



E24: 10 TIPS FOR WRITING BLOG POSTS

03:15 Justin Johnson: Some of the main benefits as a blogger, I would want to be recognized as a thought leader in my industry. I would definitely want to start creating some unique content that educates, provides my opinion, feedback, just share successes or failure stories, and just gives them ideas or a path to become an industry expert.

03:40 Ken Franzen: Yeah. The industry expert is... It depends on what your preferences are, but that's an important one. It's really being recognized as the authority. 'Cause it's not so much to have your other peers say, "Oh, well you know your stuff," but when your customers start coming to you, and they see that you are the one bringing these ideas, this knowledge, helping them during their research, during the buyer's journey, you're gaining that credibility with them, and that's gonna lead to a higher close rate for you, conversion rate for getting the opportunity, and then furthermore, a close rate for you to close the business.

04:22 Justin Johnson: Sure.

04:23 Ken Franzen: What else?

04:25 Justin Johnson: All right. So, big one, how about generating more traffic to your website?

04:30 Ken Franzen: Sure.

04:30 Justin Johnson: Blogs are... They're indexed by the search engine, so they can be found by those searching for answers or whatever it is for their favorite search engine. They're also shareable content for your audience that can share with their audience via social channels. So, I think that gaining and generating additional traffic for your website is a big, big, big benefit.

04:54 Ken Franzen: Absolutely. It's the first step in the whole marketing funnel that we talked about, so another great benefit, definitely to look at. One of my favorites, I think, and this is where I really found a lot of joy or happiness in creating content, especially for the blogs, is it keeps you on top of your game. Right? You're thinking about all the knowledge you have bouncing around in your head is there, and you get to bring it out to surface when clients ask you questions, when you're working with a paying new customer, but there's that challenge there to keep those skills sharp and to exercise those muscles, because sometimes they sit dormant for a while. So, this passion that's likely your business, it's going to evolve, it's going to continue to change, especially if you're in anything related to tech... If you're not even related to technology, I think technology is finding your industry, whether you like it or not. And so, your industry is definitely changing, and so there's lots that you can share that you already know, and there's lots that you could provide insight and have conversations about with your audience going forward, but really, to keep you on top of your game, so that you are the... You always know what's the latest, greatest, new, and like I said, if your business is your passion, like most is, like it is for us, you're completely invested in knowing, and learning, and understanding as much as you possibly can.

E24: 10 TIPS FOR WRITING BLOG POSTS

06:41 Justin Johnson: Yeah, absolutely. Those are some good benefits, what are the steps to get started?

06:49 Ken Franzen: Yeah, the steps that we're gonna go through is really going to... It's a 10-step process, 10-step framework and what we're gonna really focus on here, as mentioned before, is we want to create an awesome blog post that someone's going to read, they're going to enjoy, they're going to share, they're going to learn. If you're gonna take the time to create something, create a masterpiece rather than just doodle and so the doodles are... I see lots of people create blog posts that are...

07:28 Justin Johnson: There's lots of doodles out there, that's the four million posts. Lots of doodles.

07:32 Ken Franzen: Sure. The four million is composed of mostly doodles and very few masterpieces.

07:35 Justin Johnson: Doodles. [chuckle] 3.9 million doodles.

07:38 Ken Franzen: Right, so no one remembers the doodles, but people remember the masterpieces.

07:42 Justin Johnson: There you go.

07:43 Ken Franzen: Let's keep that in mind while we're going. Let's jump into step one. Step one, is a lot of the step ones in the things we talk about, but it still needs to be continually revisited, I think will always be a step one. Focus on your buyer persona.

07:57 Justin Johnson: Yeah.

07:58 Ken Franzen: Your blog posts needs to be written for a specific audience. That audience needs to be your defined buyer persona. If you haven't yet created your buyer persona yet, or you're not sure exactly what a buyer persona is, go back, listen to episode four. We cover it completely, there's a downloadable template. It's important that you have your buyer persona created and identified. Once you have that established, then you're gonna know who to write the blog post for. You'll be able to structure a message that is completely tailored to who you're trying to send it to, and you can focus on the things that matter most to them. You're gonna make a connection. If you try writing content that applies to everyone, you're gonna connect with no one. Step one: Focus on your buyer persona.

08:54 Justin Johnson: All right. Step two: Figure out your topic. This is where so many people get hung up, right out of the gate, "What do I write about? People don't care about what I have to say. Everything that I could write about has already been written, right?" Just take a minute, and let me clear this up. There is plenty that you can write about. The knowledge and experiences that you possess are really second nature to you, but gold, they're absolute gold to someone else. You can easily cover topics that have already been

E24: 10 TIPS FOR WRITING BLOG POSTS

written about. The blog posts you create should be about your thoughts on this topic, include your insight, your personality, your story. What's going to make it different and better is you, is absolutely you. The sea of topic options are simply endless. The low hanging fruit, here, is writing about the most common questions your customers ask you. Just think about that, think about what they ask you on a regular basis. What is their pains? What are their challenges? What problems do they face? And if you can answer that question 10,000 times, you're gonna do this all on paper and be able to nail it.

10:19 Ken Franzen: Absolutely. Now that we have our topic figured out, the next step that we want to do, is we want to create an outline of our post. This is a pretty short step, but really, what we want to look at is just some general framework of our blog posts. It's gonna be the general structure. Its purpose, some people skip this, and I like to really include this. Why? I need that foundation. I need to make sure that I'm covering all the bases that I really want to cover and that, in the end, my words have this path, this logical path to follow, that's gonna take the reader to the destination, whatever the title ends up being, and the focal point of the article itself. That there's something that's being followed there, 'cause if not, then you might end up having this random talk track that travels down different rat holes different ways, and so, definitely, step three; create an outline of your post.

11:32 Justin Johnson: All right, this is another one that's kinda short, but very important is step four; conduct your research. Depending on your topic, you might have some research to do, and the research that you conduct will be a collection of support for your topic, it might be the expert opinions from others that support your point of view. And perhaps it's data from one of your customers that you are using in the showcase of the effectiveness of your strategy, or teaching others how they can achieve the same results.

12:09 Ken Franzen: Yeah. And so, the research that you conduct is really going to be the support items for your entire posts. How much research you want to collect, I think, depends on the type of post you're writing, and... But definitely start gathering your research. Have your sources, your reference points, and things along those lines, done as that fourth step. The next step, the fifth step, is my favorite step.

[chuckle]

12:46 Ken Franzen: It's get started on your first crappy draft, or first shitty draft, as we mentioned in previous blog posts. But...

12:55 Justin Johnson: You have to get started somewhere, right?

12:57 Ken Franzen: Your first draft. You do. And I think what happens too often is, we get hung up on how we're supposed to write. And rather than just getting started, and some activity is better than no activity. So your first draft is not gonna be your final draft. So you might as well get it out of the way. We get hung up on trying to make the writing perfect.

E24: 10 TIPS FOR WRITING BLOG POSTS

13:19 Justin Johnson: It just prolongs the process.

13:21 Ken Franzen: It does. There's reach for perfection, the strive to be perfect, prevents us from getting the post sometimes even started, more or less completing it. So whatever platform that you decide to use, whether it's Microsoft Word, or Pages, or I use Evernote. There's lots and lots and lots of different things, options. If you wanna use pen and paper, start there. But open it up.

13:47 Justin Johnson: Start somewhere.

13:48 Ken Franzen: Drop in your outline, wherever that outline that you set up there in step three. And start writing. Don't worry about sentence structure. Don't worry about spelling. Don't worry about formatting right now. Don't even worry if you're making sense. The goal here is to do a brain dump. Everything that you can think of, that pertains to that portion of your outline, get it on paper. And all this, that you put on the page, can be molded later, which we'll get to. So I have a particular order I like to write in. You don't have to follow this particular order, but I find this to be the easiest. I first like to start with the body of the content. This is the guts of the post. It contains all the main points that are gonna be discussed. And I like to start here, because this is where the value lies. This is the content that's gonna deliver what I've presented in title, and what I've promised in the introduction. It really is the message, the takeaway that I'm trying to drive home.

14:51 Ken Franzen: So the body's where I like to start. And then after I've written, I've done my first shitty draft of the body, I like to move to the conclusion. I think that the conclusion needs to be fitting. And I think that it needs to have a call to action. So the conclusion, itself, I think it's important. I read too many blog posts that just stop. They do The Sopranos finale, fade to black, where it's just like, "What the hell happened to Tony?" [chuckle] And you get pissed off. And you think, I thought when that happened, I thought my cable cut out. I'm like, "You've gotta be shitting me right now. My cable just went out, and I don't know if Tony got whacked."

15:25 Justin Johnson: Well, it's 'cause they've got that specific amount of words that they're trying to hit. And when they hit it, they're done.

[laughter]

15:30 Ken Franzen: Perfect. That could be it, too. But they did a great job, grabbing my attention. And the body was interesting. But then they roughly come to an end and I'm scratching my head. So, the most basic close? Just recap what you've talked about, what you've covered. I say, include a call to action. Tell the reader what they should do once they've finished reading the post. Should they read another post that's closely related to the one that they just finished? Is there a content upgrade, resource that they could download? Or

E24: 10 TIPS FOR WRITING BLOG POSTS

is there a series of steps, like these 10 steps we're talking about here, that they could follow? Let them know what they need to do, and identify that in a clear call to action.

16:20 Ken Franzen: And then, the next thing. So, we've done the body, we've now done the conclusion. The next step I like to go to is the intro. And the intro has to be captivating. It has to be good. It needs to come right out of the gates. It needs to have impact. I always, when I'm writing my intros, think, I don't know why I do this, but I picture a rodeo.

16:39 Justin Johnson: A rodeo. Okay.

16:40 Ken Franzen: A rodeo. So you think about the rodeo, and you've got this bull that's behind this gate, and these things come out; they just explode. As soon as that gate comes open, they explode. And these are the exciting ones to watch. Ones that just look like they're about ready to burst with anger, because this poor cowboy voluntarily got on this bull's back, and just gonna see how long he can stay on this thing. And you just want that bull to be as pissed off as he possibly can. 'Cause that makes for good entertainment. Nobody wants to see the dud, right? And for the cowboy, he gets scored based on how hard the bull is, how angry, how hard he bucks, I guess that's the word I'm looking for so. But here's the thing. Your intro should be along the same lines. I don't say they all should be angry, or anything else of that nature. But it needs to come out of the gate. It needs to have immediate and noticeable impact.

17:40 Ken Franzen: So storytelling works great here. Tell a story that'll connect with your topic and your buyer persona. This is an opportunity to really stage a setting, a scene, for them to place themselves, they can relate to this story, whether it be a real story about your past, or something that you... Maybe just fabricate a story, or an instance, or scenario that you can place them in to set the tone. But that story's gonna grab their attention out of the gates, and it's gonna make your post more memorable as well. So storytelling with a captivating intro is... I like to resonate the story throughout the post as well. Even though that body's already been written, I gotta go back and brush that up. So when I come up with my story, if I find fitting spots for that story to touch on examples or such in that blog post, that body, I like to insert those there as well.

18:35 Ken Franzen: And then the last thing I like to do, is I like to write my blog post title last. I used to do this first; I'd come up with like four or five different ideas, options, and then once the blog was written and I was done with my first draft, I wouldn't end up sticking with any four or five of those, because what I originally thought was going to be...

18:56 Justin Johnson: Completely different [chuckle]

18:58 Ken Franzen: Yeah. It's completely different.

19:00 Justin Johnson: Right.

E24: 10 TIPS FOR WRITING BLOG POSTS

19:00 Ken Franzen: It changes. And so, I just started to wait until the end. It made complete sense to just, "This is what this is called." I know at the end what it's called. By the time I'm all done with it, I know exactly what it's called.

19:10 Justin Johnson: You have four options.

19:11 Ken Franzen: Before I start, I'm guessing. Yeah. I'm really just thinking about four options. So, step five, get that first shitty draft out of the way. And, like I said, you don't have to follow my order. That's just the way I do things in my crazy brain that makes sense.

19:27 Justin Johnson: I like it. Gets everything on paper and... Cool. Step six is proofread and edit your post. So now that you're finished writing your first crappy, shitty post, it's time to circle back and polish everything up. At this point, you might be re-reading some of the things that you wrote and questioning what the hell it means. That is okay, and should make for some entertainment. What you want to do here is take the content, the brain dump you did, and turn it into an easy-to-read blog post. Just remember, just keep your sentences short and simple. Try to write to the reading level of your buyer persona. You'd be shocked that it is likely lower than you think it is. We've been taught by teachers that we need to write like we're William Shakespeare, that our words, they should be brush strokes for our masterpiece, and that's just complete bullshit. Write like you talk. If you talk like Shakespeare, then by all means, bore the hell out of your audience. But [chuckle] that's unlikely. This is where content... It should take on its own personality. Your personality is what it should take on.

20:43 Justin Johnson: This is where your content, it's gonna become interesting and different from anything else that has been written about, this very same topic. This is where you shine. This is your story. It's told by you. Don't write like somebody else. Write like you. It's so much easier to write like you talk anyways, and it'll make it a heck of a lot easier.

21:07 Ken Franzen: Definitely, without a doubt. That's one thing, I feel, happens too often, is, we have flashbacks of what our grammar class was...

21:15 Justin Johnson: You have to do it like this, Kenny.

21:16 Ken Franzen: That we need to create this... And you'd [chuckle] end up with this mind-numbing, boring piece of content, and no one talks like that. Nobody wants to read like that. And it's not the case. Be conversational. Pretend like you're talking to your buddy at cocktail hour, and you're telling him about this 10-step blueprint for writing off a blog post.

21:41 Justin Johnson: Right.



E24: 10 TIPS FOR WRITING BLOG POSTS

21:42 Ken Franzen: That's how you should write. So, for sure, proofread, get that first dump-all, that brain dump-all into a nice moldable format. And then move on to step seven, which is adding images and links. So images are important. Definitely include a powerful image at the very top of your posts. Let's call this your "featured image." It'd be what it's considered commonly throughout the blogging world. And if possible, overlay the title of your blog post, or some type of text, on this image. So, this powerful image, it's at the very top, it's likely gonna be one of the first things that your reader consumes when they arrive at your post.

22:28 Justin Johnson: Yup.

22:30 Ken Franzen: So it has to have immediate value. It has to engage them. And it has to follow suit with the topic or the story you're trying to tell. We've mentioned this before; when possible, use your own photos. If you're not good at taking pictures, find a friend that is good at taking pictures. Everyone has a friend. If you don't have that friend, hire someone that can. Use your own photos. Now, sometimes it's just not possible. Sometimes, the image you need doesn't exist. Maybe that you're talking about the beach and you don't live near the beach, and so you need to get a picture of the beach. So use a stock photo, and make sure you purchase the rights to use that stock photo. Don't steal photos. We've covered that ad nauseam.

23:14 Justin Johnson: No stealing is allowed. We don't recommend it.

23:17 Ken Franzen: No stealing is allowed. But lots of photos you can purchase rights for at a very affordable price. Use those. And then, in this stuff, I also like to drop in links. Link to anything external that you want to or you really should reference. If you reference, use somebody else's...

23:33 Justin Johnson: Give them credit.

23:34 Ken Franzen: Work, give them credit.

23:35 Justin Johnson: Please give them credit.

23:37 Ken Franzen: Link to the page that you found the material. And when it makes sense, link to other places of your content, other pieces of your content you've created, or pieces of content that other people have created that... You wanna help the reader here. So, I know people that, "Well, I don't wanna put links, they're gonna drive traffic away from my page or my site." But the reader's what's important here, and they're gonna see the value in this, what you're trying to do and what you're trying to help them. So if you reference a resource, let's say it's a PowerPoint slide deck that you've found a ton of value that contains a lot of the components of one portion of your post, put a link into the PowerPoint presentation so they can access that slide deck and really, they'll find ton of value. They're gonna appreciate that a lot more than you

E24: 10 TIPS FOR WRITING BLOG POSTS

holding back and not giving them what they should... What's gonna help them in the long run. So these blog posts are mostly aimed to be helpful.

24:33 Justin Johnson: Be helpful. Alright. Step eight is format your text. We've talked about this quite a bit recently. Format your content so it is easy to consume. Nobody wants to get to a page where there's blocks of text all crammed together. That's the easiest way for people to go bye-bye. So, some tips: Use bullet points. Make sure your subheadings at the beginning of each section have a larger font size, maybe possibly even doing something in a different color. Make sure your font size for your paragraphs is easy to read; 16 point plus, and just limit the width of your paragraphs. The ideal width of your paragraphs is around 40 to 55 characters, which equates to roughly eight to 10 words, depending on the font size. Make sure that your links are easy to identify. They should be a different color than the rest of your text, and I would prefer that it was underlined.

25:42 Ken Franzen: Yeah. I like when links are easy to see. Just sometimes people try to hide them in there, old SEO tactic, trying to place links into text but not make it noticeable. Links should have value. Links should be noted and easily understood that they are links.

25:58 Justin Johnson: Correct.

26:00 Ken Franzen: Alright. Now we're to step nine. Step nine is pressing the publish button.

26:04 Justin Johnson: Alright.

26:06 Ken Franzen: This is the moment of truth. Now it's time that you put your work out there for the world to see. And this is the hardest step, I think, for people to do because...

26:19 Justin Johnson: It's always in draft status.

[laughter]

26:23 Ken Franzen: Well...

26:23 Justin Johnson: It is! It's always in draft status.

26:26 Ken Franzen: We can always make it better. We can strive for perfection, but I gotta tell you that nothing's gonna be perfect. It will never be perfect, so why try making it perfect? Even if you get it perfect today...

26:39 Justin Johnson: I guarantee you that we have blogs that are sitting in draft status right now.

E24: 10 TIPS FOR WRITING BLOG POSTS

26:44 Ken Franzen: So even if we make it perfect today, tomorrow we're gonna look at it, and we'll find something wrong. And that's gonna happen over and over again. So stop trying to go back and make it perfect. Steve Jobs says this quote, some of you might have heard it, "Real artists ship."

27:02 Justin Johnson: Real artist ship?

27:06 Ken Franzen: Ship. Yeah. That real artists, they get over this fear and get it out the door. And so there's always gonna be this fear that something's not good enough, or it's just not ready, but in my opinion, pointless to create anything unless you're gonna share it. So hit the publish button. We can always, always, always circle back and make it better later.

27:33 Justin Johnson: Step 10: Climb a mountain, and yell as loud as you can. You have your work out there to be consumed. Start to let people know about it. This happens too often where people publish information, they don't tell anybody about it. Send an email out to your consumer database. Post a link on your blog. Post a link to your social media platforms. Get the information out there. We won't get into all the strategies that go into content distribution, but just be sure that you're proactive in getting eyeballs onto the content that you spent so much time creating.

28:17 Ken Franzen: Yeah. I think that the strategy of content distribution is probably a whole another topic that we'll cover, but the point that you're making here is just to let as many people know as possible that you have new content out there to be consumed, and let everybody know about it, and be proud of it, because you worked hard on it to this point, and it's likely awesome.

28:41 Justin Johnson: It is awesome. Gotta be shared. Right?

28:44 Ken Franzen: Right.

28:45 Justin Johnson: Sweet. So that is the 10-step framework that we follow for writing blog posts. We hope that this will help you take your blog post from good to awesomeness. If you have any questions about any of the steps here, reach out to us on Twitter @neongoldfish, or send us a message through neongoldfish.com. We will have the show notes available for today's episode at neongoldfish.com/podcast. Thanks for joining us and we look forward to next time.