

RIBBLE VALLEY TOURISM ASSOCIATION BLOGGING BASICS & HOW TO GET STARTED

Blog (noun).

A regularly updated website or web page, typically one run by an individual or small group, that is written in an informal or conversational style.

A blog is another way to communicate and speak directly to your audience in a less formal, more 'chatty' way. It's written from a personal perspective (ie. in your own voice) to attract, connect with and speak directly to your target audience.

WHAT do people even Blog about?

There is literally a blog for every subject – so you can be sure that even if you think you have nothing to blog about, you do! There are blogs on:

- Health and Beauty (many magazines have their own team of bloggers)
- Lifestyle and Travel
- Interior Design, House builds and Renovations
- Family and Parenting
- Food, Cookery, Baking and Restaurants
- How to Guides – from running events to organising weddings
- Science updates
- Political News and Current Affairs
- Diaries – such as 'Life in Lockdown'
- Even Blogging!

... the list goes on.

WHY should I Blog?

Blogging for business should be one of the components of your Marketing Plan. I know you may not want to hear that ("*I haven't got the time!*" ... I hear you shout), but it's true.

Here are some benefits:

- It enables you to reach an even wider audience by providing something of value without asking for anything in return. AND potentially these readers could become your customers, generating sales
- It's a way of building a rapport with your reader. By being honest and open you will gain their trust

- It showcases your business, your brand and your credibility. Think of it like a virtual business card. It's another platform to shout about what you do and promote your products
- Through the information that you share with your reader, it establishes you as an expert in your field / the place to go
- It grows your following
- Unlike press and media features, it allows you to tell your story exactly how you want (doing your own PR)
- And lastly, it boosts your SEO (your Search Engine optimisation) – it makes you rank higher on search engines such as Google and brings traffic to your website.

Did You Know ...

According to UK Web Host Review & Hubspot:

- Businesses with online blogs get 55% more online visitors than businesses with just standard websites
- The majority of bloggers are aged 30-39
- 70% of consumers would prefer to learn more about a company via a blog than an advert
- There are currently over 600 million active blogs globally.

The Basics ...

We've already listed some topics that others are already blogging about. So **what can YOU blog about?** ... Well pretty much anything.

The starting point should be to choose a topic that you are **(1)** knowledgeable in and **(2)** passionate about. This will make the process of writing a successful blog so much easier. But don't panic - you can't do a blog wrong.

Check out what your competition is talking about (don't copy!) Whatever your chosen topic, it's important to keep it about the reader:

- What do you think your audience might need help with?
- What value can you provide your reader with?
- What knowledge can you share?

Picking a subject:

When choosing a topic, something to bear in mind is that a blog ranks better as it matures, so try to pick a subject that will be relevant/interesting for a longer time.

You could think about linking your blog to an overall promotional campaign or your USP (unique selling point). For example “something for everyone” “the great outdoors” or “summer fun.” By doing this you can link your promotions together: your blogs, your advertising and your social media posts.

Topic suggestions:

- A ‘How To’ guide (like this blog) to educate
- Answer a frequently asked question (FAQ)
- Share or write a review or case study
- An interview, meet the owner, meet the team
- A diary blog - going behind the scenes
- Tell your story - what’s the history of your business
- Something simply uplifting to cheer up and inspire your audience
- A fun A-Z series
- A ‘Top Tips’ list to help and entertain.

What to include:

The optimum reading time for a blog is 7 minutes, so between 500-1400 words is recommended. Preferably over 1000.

Top Tips:

- Make it personal and inject your personality. Write how you talk with an ‘easy to read’ style (without waffling). You could even use different people to write each blog in their own style and voice
- Know your key words and phrases to include in the content. Try to predict and use the words and phrases your audience will search for and type into their search engine. These need to be repeated in your content – this is when Google is your friend
- And tell people who you are, where you are, and stay on brand.

The Title:

Pick a catchy, compelling headline BUT keep it quite short (11-14 words). The title needs to grab your reader’s attention and make them self-identify “yes that’s me!”

Some people prefer to write the blog content first and choose a title afterwards.

The Content:

In your opening sentences explain why the reader should read your blog further - what are you going to tell them about, what problem are you going to fix, what question are you going to answer? By getting your key points in early, will encourage the reader to read more. Keep it short and snappy.

It's important to break up the text so your reader stays engaged:

- Use subheadings to highlight important sections and allow your reader to scan the content quickly
- Use short paragraphs to prevent text overwhelm
- Include pictures to make it look pretty. Blog articles that contain images get around 94% more views. Make sure you only use YOUR IMAGES or HAVE THE APPROPRIATE PERMISSIONS.
- Include quotes to 'back up' your content
- Add infographics and bulleted lists to break things up
- Use terms that people can understand (don't abbreviate).

In your conclusion:

- Emphasise the main take-away points for your reader. A summary
- Include a 'Call to Action' to encourage your reader to take the next step - whether that be to get in touch, find out more, subscribe (for a discount code) or make a purchase
- And don't forget to include your contact details with links to your social media platforms.

Where should your blog 'live':

Option (1) You may choose for your blog to be part of your current website.

Option (2) If you're wanting to take blogging to the next level, you may choose for your blog to be on its own mini-site or platform in its own right. You will need to find and register your domain name and hosting package.

Blogging checklist:

Before you hit that 'publish' button ...

	tick	cross
Does it bring value to your reader? Did you answer the question?		
Has it got a catchy title?		
Have you included key words & phrases?		
Have you proofread your blog and checked for spelling mistakes?		
Are your links 'clickable' and working?		
Have you included images & infographics?		
Is there a call to action in the conclusion?		
Is your blog shareable?		
Is there a 'comments' section to enable your reader to interact and engage with you?		
Have you included your contact details & social media links?		

Attracting readers to your Blog:

You now need to spend some time and effort promoting your blog. The best time to launch your blog is a Monday morning (apparently 7-10am over breakfast is the most popular time to read a blog):

- Make your blog shareable (your web wizard can include an area for this). They can also add an area for comments
- Email your existing subscribers/customers (as well as friends and relatives) to tell them about your new blog with a link to your blog's web page
- Promote your blog on all your social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter). Ask followers to share or tag others they think may be interested
- Share your blog to other groups and communities.

Still Not Convinced?

If you still don't want to try it, here's some alternatives:

Why not try a **Vlog** instead? A video blog works great when you go behind the scenes or interview people.

You could even get someone else to do it for you. There are a LOT of local bloggers/influencers for every subject, with already huge established followings (but watch out for false ones just after a freebie). Why not approach some to come and visit your business or sample your product (for free) in return for a blog on their social media. It is essentially a review and, yes you are giving them a freebie BUT compare that to what a printed advert may cost you.

Remember the best blogs are informative and engaging, making your reader want to come back for more.

So get that thinking cap on ... what will your first blog be about?

Jo Ogle

Little Biz Marketing

e: jo@littlebizmarketing.co.uk

t: 0770 949 3042

www.littlebizmarketing.co.uk