



# LEVEL UP YOUR BLOG

**PROVEN METHODS TO GROW  
YOUR BLOG TRAFFIC**

# Introduction

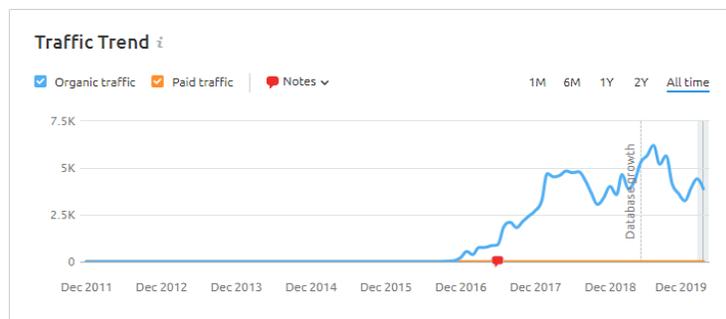
Blogging has exploded over the last 20 years or so. In fact, in 1999 there were only 23 blogs on the internet. Today, there are over half a billion.

Blogging takes many forms. It can be a simple journal of sorts, the kind you see many world travelers creating. Or it can be a forum for company updates. In fact, adding a blog to your existing website can increase your traffic by as much as 434%.<sup>1</sup>

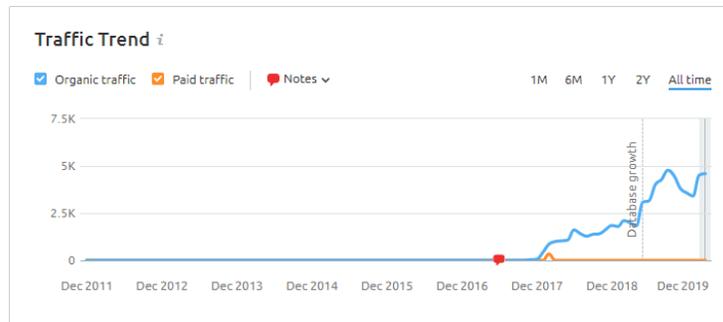
I have started multiple blogs on many different topics over the last 15 years including anime, personal finance, musical instruments, and title capitalization ([Capitalize My Title](#)) of all things. I would not call all these blogs successes, but collectively they generate millions of page views per year.

Even though the subjects varied widely, I learned through the process that there were common approaches to growing them that can be applied to almost any other blog, big or small. The core of the strategies is knowing what my audience wants to read about.

As you can see in the [SEMRush](#) snapshots of some of my blogs below, once I unlocked the power of knowing what my audience was looking for my traffic took off. You can see this indicated by the red speech bubble indicating an annotation.



<sup>1</sup> <https://techjury.net/stats-about/blogging/#gref>



I wrote this book to document the strategies I've used to grow my blogs and hopefully equip you with some tools to grow yours. We'll walk you through several steps that will help you know how to analyze your audience, how to grow your blog traffic through SEO and other traffic drivers, how to make time for writing, and a bonus section on how to make money from blogging.

This book won't teach you how to start blogging. There are plenty of articles, books, and online courses to do that. We even have [a post on this topic](#). Instead, **we make the assumption that you already have a blog (big or small) and you want to grow your audience.**

We'll cover the following topics in each section. We recommend not skipping ahead since the guides are mostly sequential:

## Guide 1: Understanding what your audience wants to read

- Understanding your audience
  - How to use the "Ask" method to know what your visitors want to read
  - How to conduct interviews with your potential readers
- How to create blog personas
- Techniques for brainstorming ideas for new article topics
- The easiest way to generate 100s of blog article ideas

## Guide 2: Growing your blog traffic

### Part 1: How to use organic search to grow your blog

- What is SEO?
- How SEO can help you
- What factors affect search engine rankings?
  - Backlinks
  - Keyword usage
  - Article length
  - Why how long a website or post has been live matters

### Part 2: Using keyword research to find topics to write about

- Your audience already tells you what they want. They search for it.
- Introduction to keyword research
- How to use KWFinder for finding keywords and blog article ideas

### Part 3: How to prioritize which articles to write

- Using KWFinder to score your articles from Guide 1
- Understand needs of your marketing channels
  - Video: length, professional vs amateur
  - Writing: long form, editorial, reviews, faqs, etc.
  - Instagram: lifestyle photos and videos
- Using SEMRush to spy on competitors
  - You can get a free account
  - Look up traffic, top keywords, ranking over time

#### Part 4: Building a content calendar and publishing schedule

- Finding seasonal content
- When to post content
- Tools for managing your content schedule

#### Part 5: Other ways to grow your blog traffic

- Paid marketing
- Social media
- Guest posting
- Email marketing

### Guide 3: How to make time for writing

- Block off time in your schedule
- Stream of consciousness writing
- How to use the Pomodoro technique
- How to hire freelance writers to exponentially grow your content creation

### Guide 4: How to make money from blogging

- How to use affiliate marketing to sell products others have created
- Best platforms for advertising
- How to get brand sponsorships and sponsored posts
- Selling digital products

#### **IMPORTANT: Earnings and Legal Disclaimers**

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Before I begin with how to grow your blog, I wanted to first share a bit about the approach I take in this book. Over the last eight years, I have explored many different paths to growing traffic to my blogs. There have been many approaches that have failed, but through the failures I have found techniques that have led to incredible growth on my sites. I wanted to share with you one of the main techniques that has proven to work, time and time again, for my websites, growth through **content marketing and SEO**.

Content marketing is a form of marketing that involves creating online material such as blog articles, video, and social media posts. I will primarily focus on blog articles in these guides, but the concepts can be applied to other content mediums. SEO is one method to drive traffic to this content you created through content marketing.

While I have seen great success with content marketing, there is no guarantee that these methods will work for you the same way they have for me. Even once you have established the process to generate content as outlined in these guides, growing your blog will require a great amount of work up front. It took me several years of testing and learning before I saw any significant traffic to my blogs. However, once I mastered the process of content marketing, I was able to start new blogs and quickly get traffic to them.

My goal is to provide you with the fundamental tools to implement content marketing for your blog so that you can grow your blog to new levels.

## Guide 1: Understanding what your audience wants to read

In this first guide, we're going to **focus on teaching you how to understand your audience** so that you can understand what kind of content your audience likes to consume. **We think one of the best ways to grow your blog is through content marketing; generating rich content that your audience will want to consume.** Not only does this attract new readers who want to learn more about your topic, but it will also encourage readers to come back to keep consuming the engaging content that you will now produce.

### Part 1: Understanding your audience

Understanding your audience is the first step in growing your blog. You won't be able to attract a larger audience unless you know who you're trying to attract. In this section, we'll walk you through several ways you can learn more about your audience.

#### The just "Ask Method"

A few years ago, I was listening to my favorite podcast, Smart Passive Income, and heard an interview with Ryan Levesque, who wrote the book [Ask](#). The [Ask](#) method is a way to deep dive on what your customers really want. It walks through building a "deep dive" survey you can build to better understand your audience. In your survey, you can tailor your questions depending on which stage of building your business you're at (no audience, existing audience, or building a new audience for a different product).

The main question you should ask is **“What is your #1 problem with [FILL IN YOUR TOPIC HERE]?”** You can ask several other questions, but you should lead with this main question. I recommend using survey software that saves responses as your customers go in case your customers don’t complete the survey.

Once you’ve run the deep dive survey, you need to analyze the responses. Ryan recommends looking at the longest responses since these are the most committed respondents. However, there are insights you can glean from analyzing key term frequency in all responses.

From these responses, **you should know exactly what the pain points of your audience** are and you can start to brainstorm ways to solve those problems either through your content, a product you can build for them, or some other way.

I highly recommend reading the full book, but you can quickly get started today by creating a poll or survey asking that one question about your customers’ pain points.

### **Tools You Can Use to Deep Dive**

- **Hotjar:** Hotjar is one of our favorite tools to understand your audience. It has many features including polls, heatmaps, feedback widgets, and user session recordings.
- **Email:** If you have an email list, you can send your questions to your email list which will allow you to easily ask follow up questions as well.
- **SurveyMonkey:** SurveyMonkey is a free survey tool that you can use to quickly create surveys that you can share on your blog, through email, or on your social media channels.

### **Interviewing your customers**

Another way you can learn about your audience is to interview them. This will allow you to deep dive on your assumptions by talking with your target customers face-to-face or over the phone. It will allow you to ask a lot more questions and ask follow up questions about the answers your interviewees provide.

### **How to Find People to Interview**

One of the hardest parts about interviewing people is finding people to interview. **You should aim to go to where your (potential) audience is.** If you are looking to interview people about movies or their movie viewing experience, go to a movie theater. If you are looking to build a travel blog, go to an airport, bus terminal, or even a travel agency. Get creative.

Then start asking people if they would be willing to be interviewed. It will be awkward at first, but ask a few people and then ask more. If you get to interview one person out of ten, that is great. **Try offering an incentive, like a gift card, if you get too many rejections.** Most people will be happy to talk about themselves even for a \$5 Starbucks gift card.

When I was a product manager at a large bank, we literally asked customers who walked in to our branch if they’d be willing to be interviewed in exchange for a gift card so that we could gather insight about a new product we were hoping to build.

### **What to Ask Them**

Once you’ve found people to interview, you need to actually ask them questions to learn more about how they engage with your topic. This will be your chance to understand any of their pain points,

questions, or favorite things about the topic that might spark future blog post ideas. For example, if you run a travel blog, you can ask them about recent trips they've gone on or where they'd love to go and what's preventing them from doing so.

I recommend creating a list of potential questions to ask before you go. This will help you fall back to a set list of questions in case the conversation trails off or your interviewee isn't being very forward with their responses. If the conversation is flowing though, don't just switch to a new question because you have to get through the list. Instead listen to what your interviewee is saying and ask related questions to gather more data and really understand who your interviewee, and in proxy your audience, is.

You should aim to ask open-ended questions (questions that don't end in a "yes" or "no") so that they engage in a dialogue with you. Ask for examples when possible and avoid hypotheticals (like "what would you..."). This will help you understand the current behavior of your audience and how your blog can fill any voids they currently have.

Here are some sample questions to get started:

- Tell me about yourself.
- How do you do [your topic] today?
- Tell me about the last time you [your topic].
- How do you feel about your current solution?
- Where do you currently learn about [your topic]? What's your preferred way?

It's ok to ask clarifying questions. Try blending in some of these questions as well.

- Ask Why...? Don't stop at the first "why." Try to dig deeper and ask "why" up to five times.
- What do you mean by that?
- Can you explain that a little more?
- How do you feel about that?

## Part 2: Developing blog personas

Now that you have a better understanding of your audience, it is time to consolidate these learnings into personas. A persona, in our case, is an imaginary character who embodies the attributes, wants, and needs of your audience. Creating personas allows you to encapsulate similar findings from your various interviews and surveys into defined characters (it helps to name them!) that you can refer to anytime you are thinking of new blog articles. I recommend that you create 2-3 different personas for your blog to cover all types of people who may visit your blog.

These personas don't have to be complicated. You can build one as simple as the "Bill Joe" one below where you capture their wants, needs, frustrations, and some other defining characteristics. I've provided a template [here](#) that you can download and use to start creating your personas.

## Bill Joe



Age: 27  
Location: Seattle, WA  
Job: Software Engineer

Bio  
Bill is a software engineer who likes to go hiking with his friends on the weekend. He sometimes likes to plan his hikes ahead of time, but usually finds a great one the day of.

Wants & Needs

- Recommended hiking trails
- Coordination with his friends about which trails and when to meet
- A mix of challenging and easy hikes
- Great trail food

Frustrations

- Traffic going to hike
- Parking at hike
- Sprained ankles

Figure 1: Personas can be very simple

### Part 3: Techniques for brainstorming ideas for new article topics

Now that you've done your research and know what your audience is looking for, it's time to brainstorm new blog articles. There are many ways to brainstorm. Here are several techniques you can use to brainstorm.

#### Post-it note brainstorming

A quick way to do brainstorming, especially if you're brainstorming with a group of people, is by writing your blog post ideas on Post-it notes as quickly as they come. Get a stack of 100s of Post-it notes and just scribble any idea that comes to mind. If you're brainstorming with a group, switch seats every few minutes so that you can read what others have written which might spark new ideas.

Once you've finished idea dumping, try categorizing your Post-its into themes. You can then use these ideas and themes as input for new blog sections or articles.

#### Mind mapping

Mind mapping is one of our favorite brainstorming techniques because it stretches your creativity while giving you an organized framework for your ideas. Mind mapping begins with you grabbing a clean sheet of paper (preferably 8" by 11" or larger) and writing your topic in a circle at the very center of the paper. From here, write anything that comes to mind related to your topic. Jot this new idea or thought near the center topic circle, draw a circle around it, and then draw a line to your center circle. Do this for any new ideas or thoughts that come to mind related to the central topic.



## Recording your ideas

We also recommend using something to keep track of all of your ideas. You may have an idea on your way to work, a walk through the park, or in the car. You need to a way to quickly jot down your ideas so that you don't forget them and can come back to them later. Here are some of our favorites:

- **[Evernote](#)**: Our longtime favorite, Evernote syncs your notes across all of your devices and has multiple "document" types so you safely store text notes, photos, and more. Their premium account even has text recognition that will try to read text from photos of documents so that it becomes searchable.
- **[Google Keep](#)**: Another great on-the-go note taking app, Google Keep allows you to take snippets of notes. It syncs notes across devices connected to your Google account. The great thing about Google Keep is that you can record audio notes as well if you're in the car and can't type.
- **[Trello](#)**: Trello is our favorite task management tool, but it also where we dump all of our article ideas before they're prioritized. We'll discuss this tool more later when we teach you how to organize your content schedule.

## Part 4: The easiest way to generate 100s of blog article ideas

[Purchase](#) the full book to get this part.

## Guide 2: Growing your blog traffic

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## Guide 3: How to make time for writing

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## Guide 4. How to make money from blogging

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