

THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

Top 5 Reasons to Blog

Running a small business has rarely given me much free time. So, when my search engine optimization company approached me about starting a blog, I wasn't very excited about the idea of adding yet another responsibility to my plate. However, after some careful research, I discovered that — not only should I be blogging regularly — but you should be, too. Here's why:



Attract a larger audience to your store's site by creating a blog

1. BLOGGING ATTRACTS AN AUDIENCE

Unlike your business' website, which is primarily factual or promotional, your blog can consist of personal opinions, product reviews, discussions about your favorite albums or performances, and “insider tips” for your clients. Create good content and you will quickly build a loyal audience of potential customers, referral sources, employees and friends.

2. BLOGGING ESTABLISHES YOUR AUTHORITY

Consistently post honest and meaty content and your prospective customers will come to trust you in the same way they trust people who aren't “trying to sell them something.” It's not uncommon for a customer to walk into my store and ask for me simply because they read something I wrote online.

3. BLOGGING BUILDS RAPPORT & ENCOURAGES ENGAGEMENT

Watch carefully when customers walk into your store for the first time. Those who are “uninitiated” (or unfamiliar with your products or environment) often come in with a face full of caution, confusion and even fear. A good blog can significantly reduce the friction of a first-time visit and give you the opportunity to address questions or concerns before it threatens a potential sale. You might even consider inviting your blog readers to a special “meet and greet” with their favorite content providers. It doesn't cost you anything, and it gives your staff another chance to personally engage.

4. BLOGGING IMPROVES YOUR GOOGLE SEARCH RANKING

Though Google Search ranking is a product of several elements, two key pieces to appearing “at the top” are good content and Web authority. One great way to build both is through your blog. For

example, if you want to encourage more people to take lessons at your store, why not write a blog about the cognitive, emotional and physiological benefits of taking music lessons? NAMM has great resources and statistics for you to use and you can post links to your blog on your social media sites. You can even ask your teachers to post the blog on their social media pages — creating more links to your blog and showing Google that you're an authority on music lessons.

5. BLOGGING SELLS

Of course, the litmus for any business-related activity in our hectic world has to be, “Can this make me money?” You might be thinking that the above ideas are great and they certainly make a case for blogging as a marketing tool, but did you know that, with the right plug-in, your blog can actually become an effective and very inexpensive e-commerce portal? When I first setup the e-commerce portal on my website, I was thrilled to pay less than \$150 a year to have an online store. Now, after a couple of years of healthy Web sales, I can say that my website — or more specifically my blog — has become a profit center for my business. Unlike staff, my blog can sell 24/7! **MI**

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