

Templates for blog posts

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Important: To get the most out of each template, compare it to the sample blog posts provided in the other handout you received from Lori. That way, you'll see how the steps of each template "play out" in real life (in a real-life blog post, that is).

1. Expert Advice blog post

The most important thing I can tell you about this kind of post is your expertise will speak louder than anything you say about yourself. Yes, you may come across as confident and knowledgeable, and that's fine.

But tread lightly on your credentials, your experience, and your track record. *Show* your reader how much of an expert you are by sharing a small nugget or two of truly valuable information in a short article.

How will you know if it is "truly valuable?"

Simple.

If something has gotten an "aha," a "wow," or a "I'm really glad you told me that" from two or more candidates when you've shared it with them in the phone or on person, then you can be reasonably certain that it's a "keeper."

Here's a short template/outline for how to put together an Expert Advice blog post:

- Start with an attention-getting title.

Keep it short and concise. Don't give away the whole story, but make an enticing promise of what's ahead. Like, "3 Questions To Ask Before You Choose A Franchise"

Avoid being clever or otherwise too entertaining. Be straightforward, but leave a few questions unanswered in your title... so people will feel compelled to read on.

- Use your opening sentence to connect your title with the main content of your article.

Find a thread of similarity between the title and the main content. Think of your opening sentence as an interesting "hallway" the reader can mentally "walk down" to get into the substance of what you have to say.

- Make 1-3 key points.

Don't give away the farm. Give away a bushel or two of delicious produce!

Your points could be: statements; questions; action steps; interesting facts; quotes from famous or knowledgeable or interesting people.

Discuss each point briefly in a few sentences; no more than a couple paragraphs apiece.

- Give a firm yet friendly call to action.

Invite your reader to call or write you. Depending on your style or your business practices, you may want to ask them to qualify themselves beforehand. Or, you may want to limit your exposure (in terms of time) on the first call, so if the person isn't qualified, you can end the conversation quickly enough.

2. Success Story

It's tempting, but if it comes up, avoid the temptation:

Don't steal the spotlight from your client, in the telling of a success story. It may in fact be more your success than theirs, but, how are you ever going to attract clients to your blog if they get the uncomfortable impression that everything that happens in your world is *all about you*?

Let your client take the starring role. Meanwhile, be a great supporting force for good in the story.

- Start with a title that hints about the success of the person you will be telling about.

Make it intriguing. Tell just enough to keep them reading. And keep it simple. Straightforward, yet curiosity-inducing.

- Use your first sentence to "set the stage" for the story to come

In your role as "best supporting actor," it's perfectly OK to talk about how you supported this great person (your client) to achieve this awesome goal (their success).

Your opening sentence should give them another "taste" of the story, and make them hungry for more.

- Tell just the high points of the story.

Blog posts are meant for quick reads, so pick maybe two or three points and elaborate *briefly* – a few sentences at most on each point.

- End with a call to action *or* an inspirational uplift.

You want to have some calls to action in your blog posts, but not every single time.

But don't end your story with an emotionally flat equivalent of "the end" or "(s)he lived happily ever after."

If you're not going to invite the reader to call or email you, which is fine, then make an inspirational statement. It could even be a quote from the person you're writing about.

Like in the Michael Firestone story in the sample blog posts. Let's say he said to you, "Hey — if I can do this, anyone can. Franchises make it easy. I'd recommend this to anyone who's not happy where they are now."

People love to feel inspired after they read something.

3. Warning

By the way, don't confuse giving a warning with being an alarmist. These are two entirely different things! Being an alarmist means being like proverbial boy who cried "wolf," or Chicken Little, who was always running around scared, bleating, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!"

A warning, on the other hand, is a reasonable, common-sense "heads up" to help people you care about, or people you are responsible for, to stay out of trouble. Again, look at the article on the other handout: "My Advice To You: Don't Just Pick 'Any Old Franchise.'"

- Start with a title that indicates there might be a danger or a problem that you want to help the reader avoid.

The trick, as always, is to be specific without giving too much away — so they'll feel virtually *forced* to keep reading.

In your title, share "just enough."

- Make sure you announce what you are warning the reader about in your first paragraph.

Notice how I do this in the sample blog post:

“Franchisees are among the happiest people I have ever met. But you run the risk of being less than satisfied if you don’t follow this simple advice:”

First, you know you’re about to be warned about something — and your entire future happiness might depend on it!

Second, you have no idea *what* I’m going to warn you about... so, you have to keep reading!

- Make your point and back it up.

What you say doesn’t have to be elaborate or detailed. But it had better be believable.

Use facts, or logic, or common sense, or stats, or examples from real life. But use *something*. Your opinion with no factual or logical backup is going to hurt your credibility.

Take notice: All the most persuasive people have the facts at their fingertips. (They may not always *say* what is the most factual... but they could if they chose to. And that’s another story for another day...)

- End with a call to action or an inspirational uplift

With a warning article, you can even end on a reassuring note — mentioning that everything will be OK (if it will) AS LONG AS your reader heeds your warning and avoids the trouble you made such an effort to point out.

4. Slice of Life

Slice of Life blog posts can be the most fun of all to do! This is where you get to share some of your personal observations and you don’t have to be so rigorously *practical*, the way you do in the other four kinds.

The only catch? It still needs to be *relevant* to what your reader might be interested in. A quick shortcut to check this out is think of some of your favorite candidates and clients.

Imagine them reading what you wrote. Would they find it interesting?

If yes, then you’ve got a winner!

- Start with an intriguing title

The key thing, especially with a Slice of Life blog post, is to arouse curiosity.

The more you can make it about something that is probably already on your reader's mind, the better off you are.

- Grab your reader with your opening sentence

It actually takes three sentences to fully “set the hook” in the example I gave you in the Sample blog posts:

“The other day, after a club meeting downtown, I went to a busy Starbucks for a cup of coffee.

“My old friend Joe, who still works at the large company I left five years ago, stopped in. Every move he made and every word he spoke seemed like he was on a stopwatch.”

By now, there's a lot of tension in the reader's mind.

Why was Joe acting that way? The reader wonders.

That's the effect you're going for.

- Put an unexpected twist in your story

In the sample blog post, the contrast between Joe's uptight manner and Alex's easy way of being, creates surprise. And surprise is one of the things that makes writing interesting!

- End on a hopeful note

In my sample for you, I ended with “I'd like to see my old friend Joe happy again.”

People can relate to this very human reaction to a situation like the one I described. When you do something like this, it increases your reader's desire to get to know you.

5. News story

When you can find something in the news that relates to franchising — *especially in a very human way* — people almost become hypnotized by reading it.

The Fox Business Channel news story is such a story.

A word about copyright and fair use: Things are fuzzy as to what you can and can't do on the Internet so as to avoid violating copyright.

Stay on the safe side. Don't post other people's or company's images, and at most use 200 of the same words as you found in the original story.

Give attribution to the source of the news, and link to the original article.

- Title: Sum up enough of the story so people know what it's about, and that it might have something to do with franchising, that they'd be interested in.

The words "second career" are exactly what many of your prospects are thinking about. The fact that the subject of the story is a vet adds widespread human interest. People like to read about vets. Most people honor and respect vets. Some feel otherwise. But almost everyone's interested, no matter how they feel.

- Opening sentence: make SURE you show some relevance to franchising.

In the sample blog post, the opening sentence reveals that Mr. Adams recently bought a franchise. Relevant. The fact that Fox News Channel originally reported this must mean that it's news!

- A few facts to keep them reading

Quotes from a news article always work. Quotes are "facts," even if what the person being quoted isn't being factual. That they actually said something makes what you are reporting, a fact.

Mr. Adams compares the systems nature and high level of support in the military to the same things in franchising. That makes this story especially interesting.

- End with a Web link to the source (original) story.

That's the way of the Web — link after link after link after link after link... ☺

It's also common courtesy. Not only to the original provider of the information, but also to your reader. They would probably like to read "the rest of the story..."

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So that's it. These five templates can be your "training wheels" for months or years. And you'll be able to churn out as much high-quality content as you want to build your brand and attract quality leads to grow your business.

I wish you much success and fulfillment with what you have just learned.

Remember — practice, makes mastery!

David Garfinkel

San Francisco