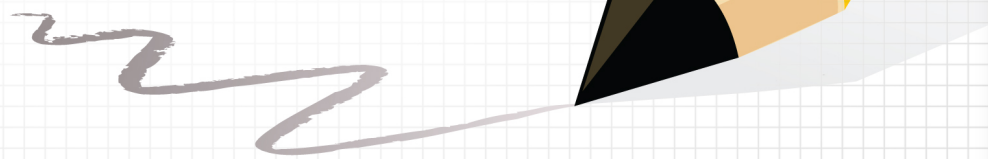


HOW TO WRITE  
**BLOG POSTS**

*that go*  
*Viral*



ROCKIN' YOUR WEB MARKETING WITH  
*Beth Hayden*

Bloggers all seem to be asking the same question right now.

*And that question is:*

*“How do I write a blog post that will go ‘viral’?”*

What exactly is “going viral”? One useful definition of “going viral” is the phenomenon that occurs when a particular post or article on a site gets an extremely high number of visitors and social networking shares (compared to the average number of shares and visitors for previous posts). “Going viral” usually results in a substantial traffic spike to a particular post.

Why would you want to go viral? Because if you’re publishing content online, you want people to read your content. And the more people pass your post on to their friends, family and social networking contacts, the more people will read your stuff. Going viral can often lead to big professional breaks and new opportunities, too.

Most bloggers want to go BIGGER with their blogs. So “going viral” is seen as the holy grail for bloggers in today’s competitive online world.

### **Viral Posts Change Lives**

I know firsthand that getting a huge amount of traffic to one of your blog posts can completely transform your life. I wrote a blog that went viral in February 2012, and my life hasn’t been the same since.

Let me back up a little.

At the end of 2011, I was feeling a little stuck in my business. My consulting practice was humming along, and overall, things were going okay, but I had a mostly local audience (and local clients). I was getting small but steady traffic to my blog, and I was adding subscribers to my mailing list VERY slowly.

I really wanted to break onto the national stage as a blogging expert, but I wasn’t sure how to do that. Then I discovered the power of guest blogging through my mentor, Jon Morrow (of BoostBlogTraffic.com). Jon is a brilliant writer and businessman who knows how to use his skills to attract traffic and build a loyal, engaged community.

The course was expensive for me at the time, but something told me I should sign up and really concentrate my full effort into learning the best practices of guest blogging. That meant learning how to find gigs, discovering how to really make them pay off in terms of traffic and subscribers, and knowing what to do AFTER I got a writing gig on a popular site.

My dreams came true that winter, when I landed a series of guest posts on Problogger.net and Copyblogger.com, two of the largest and most popular websites in my field. I experienced big traffic spikes from my guest posting efforts, and I started adding substantial numbers of subscribers to my mailing list.

My second Copyblogger post was called *56 Ways to Market Your Business on Pinterest*, and it was published on the site on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

The morning it was published, I watched as the number of retweets, Facebook shares and comments grew and grew and GREW. I was in total shock.

Long story short – ***the Pinterest post went viral***. Within a week, the number of social media and shares was huge – higher than anything I'd ever published before (on my site, or anywhere else). As I watched the numbers grow, I had the feeling something BIG was going to happen – I just didn't know exactly what it was going to be.

One week later, I got my answer when I received a short email from an editor at the business division of John Wiley & Sons, asking if I might be interested in writing a book on Pinterest marketing.

I signed a book deal with Wiley shortly after that, and started working on the manuscript that would become my book, *Pinfluence: The Complete Guide to Marketing Your Business with Pinterest*. Immediately after signing the book deal, I quit my dead-end corporate job and launched my full-time consulting practice. I also accepted a staff writing position with Copyblogger Media.

To date, that Pinterest post has received over 4,600 retweets, 3,000 Facebook shares, and over 200 comments. I am still more proud of that post (and the fact that it comes up as the second result when you Google "Pinterest marketing") than I am of anything else I've ever written. And I am profoundly grateful.

Viral posts can open doors, attract extraordinary opportunities, and change lives. It is absolutely worth putting our time and energy into getting as much traffic as possible for our blog posts.

As a direct result of the book (and the authority it helped me establish), I've brought in thousands of dollars of consulting work and have booked many speaking gigs (both nationally and internationally). I have a thriving business, and I absolutely love what I do.

And I can trace all of that back to one blog post that went viral in February 2013.

**“Can I learn how to do that?”**

So, is there a trick to writing content that goes viral? Is there a secret formula that popular bloggers know? Is there a special kind of magic pixie dust for viral content?

Unfortunately, no. There are no tricks, secret formulas, or pixie dust.

But there are some things you can do as a blogger that will help you get more exposure for your posts.

But this is not for the faint-hearted. Publishing popular blog posts requires hard work and dedication, as well as the willingness to do your research and take risks.

Are you ready?

Great! Then let's dig into my best tips and ideas for learning how to write viral blog posts.

## Step 1: Write content that connects.

If you want your posts to attract a lot of traffic, you need to write content that resonates with your readers. Lots of different kinds of posts will fit that definition – it might be a post that is incredibly useful to your audience (like an epic post that explains how to do something your readers are **dying** to learn how to do) or perhaps your content rings true on a deep emotional level.

But you can bet that a post that attracts thousands of social media shares is one that *people feel strongly about*.

Strong emotion attracts action (like reading a full post after scanning a headline) or hitting that Facebook “Like” button. And action is exactly what you want.

Here are some ways to create connection with your audience:

1. Fulfill one of your audience’s desires (this requires knowing your audience or customers very well)
2. Create an incredibly useful post by teaching them how to do something that is valuable to them
3. Tell an inspiring or incredible story
4. Add your voice to a debate by voicing an opinion that might be unpopular (don’t overdo this one – use sparingly and don’t disagree just to make waves)
5. Give your readers an interesting way to relieve a pain point in their lives
6. Evoke strong emotion

Try experimenting with different kinds of compelling content, and see what your audience likes reading (and what makes them share the post on social media). If you find something that really works, that you KNOW is really landing with your audience, don’t be afraid to use that kind of content on a regular basis.

### Think about making your content “awesome”

We throw the word “awesome” around a lot in popular culture. *But as* Inigo Montoya says in the classic film, *The Princess Bride*:

*“You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”*

We use the word **awesome** to describe something that is spectacular, remarkable or outstanding. But the true definition of **awesome** is “inspiring awe” or “causing feelings or wonder.”

It turns out that people like to feel awe and wonder. We love it, actually. And remembering that fact can help us be better (and more successful) bloggers. It might even help you go viral.

University of Pennsylvania researchers recently did some in-depth research by examining New York Times articles and looking at which articles were being shared most often (via email and social media). They made some surprising discoveries. As it turns out, articles that inspired a feeling of wonder or awe were shared more often.

Articles that inspire “...that awed feeling that the world is a broad place and I’m so small” were more likely to get passed from reader to reader – so in the end, they often ending up getting more traffic than other kinds of articles.

The Penn researchers described the feeling these posts elicited as an “emotion of self-transcendence, a feeling of admiration and elevation in the face of something greater than the self.”

Need examples?

“... seeing the Grand Canyon, standing in front of a beautiful piece of art, hearing a grand theory or listening to a beautiful symphony may all inspire awe. So may the revelation of something profound and important in something you may have once seen as ordinary or routine, or seeing a causal connection between important things and seemingly remote causes.”

What are the practical lessons from this research, for the bloggers of the world? I think we can take our cue from the journalists of the New York Times (and the Penn researchers) and see if we can infuse a little more awe and wonder into our posts.

Are there ways of putting a little awe into your posts, in ways that fit with your readership?

Try experimenting with adding a little wonder to your writing – the results might just be...(ahem)...*awesome*.

## **Step Two: Create more posts by writing faster and more efficiently.**

There's no doubt about it – prolific bloggers are more likely to hit the viral jackpot than bloggers who only post once every six months.

It's a numbers game – the more often you post, the higher your chance of eventually hitting the viral jackpot.

There is a lot of information on the web about how to crank out more work in a shorter time.

Here are some of my favorite posts about the subject (you will need to copy and paste the links into your browser):

### ***A Fool-Proof Formula for Easily Creating Compelling Content***

<http://www.copyblogger.com/content-creation-formula/>

### ***7 Tips for Busy Bloggers on Finding Time to Blog***

<http://www.problogger.net/archives/2013/04/25/finding-time-to-blog/>

### ***The 11 “Secrets” of Prolific Content Creators***

<http://www.copyblogger.com/prolific-content-creation/>

### ***Super-Efficient Writing: How I Consistently Write Over 1,000 High-Quality Words in Less Than 60 Minutes***

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/super-efficient-writing-how-i-consistently-write-over-1000-high-quality-words-in-less-than-60-minutes.html>

You will become a better, more efficient writer with practice. The more you write, the better you will get at it.

And read the tips above for fantastic advice on cranking up your output of amazingly good blog posts.

## Step Three: Leverage someone else's platform (especially when you're just starting out).

One of the reasons bloggers and other content producers get frustrated and stuck (especially in the first year of blogging) is that they're writing great content, *but no one is reading it.*

There's very little in the blogging more aggravating than feeling like you're shouting into a very large, totally inhospitable void. You publish a post, and then you hear nothing but crickets. No comments, no shares – just silence. Maddening, soul-crushing silence.

Here's the secret that very few bloggers really know and understand:

To really get huge traffic coming in to your site, you need a large platform. And it's totally acceptable to borrow someone else's large platform if you don't have your own (yet).

That's why you need to ***share your best content on other people's blogs, as guest posts.***

There is a system you can use to land guest posts on popular blogs on the Internet, and I teach that system in details during my upcoming Traffic School program.

But the foundation of the system is simple:

1. Reach out to a popular blogger who write for the same audience as you.
2. Submit several topics/headlines for posts you'd like to write and guest post on his/her site.
3. Write the post with a link to your own blog in a short "bio" paragraph at the end.
4. Reap the rewards.

Your chances of writing a post that goes viral are *profoundly* bigger if you post your article on a large site with an established audience, rather than on your own site (if you're small, or still struggling to get a loyal readership). So think about saving some of your best posts – the ones you think have a real shot at going viral – and offer them to popular bloggers.

## Step Four: Write killer headlines.

Learning to write better headlines is one of the all-time BEST things you can do to increase the likelihood that one of your posts will go viral and attract the massive numbers you're trying to draw in.

Copyblogger.com says, "On average, 8 out of 10 people will read headline copy, but only 2 out of 10 will read the rest. This is the secret to the power of your title, and why it so highly determines the effectiveness of the entire piece."

You can learn to write headlines by getting advice from some of the folks on the web that are doing it best – the Copyblogger.com team. Get the powerful e-book, "How to Write Magnetic Headlines" by signing up for a FREE MyCopyblogger membership here:

[www.copyblogger.com/magnetic-headlines](http://www.copyblogger.com/magnetic-headlines)

### Got formulas?

If you need some formulas that will give you tons of ideas for powerful headlines, grab a copy of Jon Morrow's free report, *52 Headline Hacks: A Cheat Sheet for Writing Posts That Go Viral*.

Jon has written a truly incredible guide to writing headlines that will increase the amount of traffic you'll attract to your website or blog. If you read and implement the advice in this report, you will get more traffic to your site (and vastly increase the chances of having one of your posts go viral).

I thought about trying to write a summary of Jon's report (because it is long) but I knew that I would be doing you a disservice if I did that. You really need the full report in order to get all the benefits of it.

And I realize that some people may balk at having to give Jon your name and email address in order to get this report. If that bothers you, you can feel free unsubscribe right after you download the report. You can do so at the bottom of any of his emails.

**Here's the link to download the report from Jon Morrow:**  
**[www.boostblogtraffic.com/headlinehacks](http://www.boostblogtraffic.com/headlinehacks)**

Here are my tips for using this report:

1. First, read it cover to cover. I want you to read the whole thing so that Jon's ideas on writing great headlines really sink in.
2. After you read it, pick a type of headline that appeals to you and start a little brainstorming session. Write down 5-10 headlines that you think might work for articles or blog posts on your site (or for a guest post for another site).
3. After you start brainstorming, keep a running list of your own great headlines for various posts. If possible, keep the list with you at all times. Keep it on your computer, a smart phone or a notebook. You'll want to keep it within arm's reach, so you can continue adding to it when inspiration strikes. And trust me – inspiration will strike. You'll be seeing headlines (and blog post ideas) **everywhere** once you implement the ideas in this report.
4. Refine and nurture your headlines. Add to them when you can, then tweak, refine, reword and rework. Come up with the best final headlines you can.
5. Use one of these headlines for an upcoming blog post or article. See how it feels (and how the audience responds). Did you get more targeted traffic to your site? Did you get more shares on social media? Take note of what works and what doesn't.
6. Repeat steps 1-5 every week (or every month) depending on how much time you have to write posts.

Get your copy of *Headline Hacks* here:

[www.boostblogtraffic.com/headlinehacks](http://www.boostblogtraffic.com/headlinehacks)

## **Step Five: Promote your posts and make it easy for your readers to share.**

Sorry, Kevin Costner.

“If you build it, they will come” is no longer a viable way to attract people into your life – especially if you’re a blogger.

You need a content promotion strategy so you can get the word out about your blog posts. If no one knows you exist in the online world, there’s no way they’re going to go viral. It’s just the facts.

So make sure you promote your stuff! Create a blog promotion checklist, and follow the same promotional steps every time you publish a new post.

John Jantsch of DuctTapeMarketing.com calls his blog promotion checklist a “content amplification system” and I love thinking of it that way. It’s like putting a megaphone up to your blog, so more people can “hear” you.

I highly recommend reading this short (but uber-useful post) by Jantsch, in which he spells out each of the steps he takes after publishing a new blog post.  
[www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog/2011/08/16/my-content-amplification-system/](http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog/2011/08/16/my-content-amplification-system/)

### **Other tips for letting the world know you’ve published something fabulous**

1. Have easy, clear social media sharing buttons on your posts, so people can easily share your article when they feel inclined. Do NOT make the mistake of making your buttons annoying (examples: buttons that flash, move, cover your content, or otherwise distract).

I think bloggers do this in the hopes that drawing attention to the buttons will encourage readers to share their stuff. Instead, it just makes people curse, grind their teeth, and leave your site. Make your sharing buttons clear, easy, useful and non-distracting.

2. At the end of the post, ask your readers (nicely) to share the article if they liked the content. You’ll be surprised what a difference this makes – sometimes it doesn’t occur to people that they can/should share a post – until you actually ASK. So don’t be afraid to suggest they share.

3. Put an attractive, interesting pinnable image in each post (so Pinterest users can easily share your content). Pinnable images are often just simple photos/images that feature text over the image. Pinterest users go crazy for these, and if you want to increase the amount of traffic you're getting from Pinterest, include one in every post.

Example below (credit: Nester Smith, thenester.com – read more about her below, in the “examples” area).



## A little bonus for you: Some real-life examples of viral blog posts

Want to see some posts that have found that viral holy grail? Check out some of my favorite examples from different corners of the blogging world:

1. **Jon Morrow** wrote one of ProBlogger's most popular posts EVER with this insanely useful (and totally inspiring) post about making money online: [www.problogger.net/archives/2011/05/18/how-to-quit-your-job-move-to-paradise-and-get-paid-to-change-the-world/](http://www.problogger.net/archives/2011/05/18/how-to-quit-your-job-move-to-paradise-and-get-paid-to-change-the-world/)

The post is on track to draw 1 million total visits (since its original publication date). But here's my favorite part – Jon used this post to attract over **9,000** (!) subscribers to own mailing list, and those subscribers formed the foundation of his community when he launched his (paid) guest blogging course. Jon has become a HUGE success, and it's because he's an incredibly smart writer and blogger.

2. **Andi O'Connor** writes a blog about her experiences in Boulder after she lost her house in a devastating wildfire. One of her most popular posts on the site, *How to Survive a Minus Tide*, gives poignant advice to those who are going through difficult times. This beautiful post pointed a huge number of new Facebook visitors to her site, as her readers shared the post over and over. [www.burningdownthehouseblog.com/minus-tide](http://www.burningdownthehouseblog.com/minus-tide)

3. Nester Smith's interesting, useful post on tackling home furniture painting has been shared **489,000 times** on Pinterest. That means a HECK of a lot of traffic back to Nester's site.

Nester is the ultimate Pinterest success story, and I want you to make note of the beautiful, Pinterest-friendly photo badges that she embeds in many of her posts. [www.thenester.com/2010/07/how-to-paint-furniture-like-a-real-pro.html](http://www.thenester.com/2010/07/how-to-paint-furniture-like-a-real-pro.html).

4. Benny Lewis, travel and language blogger, wrote a post called *29 Life Lessons Learned from Traveling the World for Eight Years Straight*. The post drew 220,000 visitors to his site in just three weeks, and it was eventually shared on Facebook 46,000 times. It also garnered over 750 comments, and led to a TV appearance on Australian national television for the intrepid writer. Yowsa! [www.fluentin3months.com/life-lessons/](http://www.fluentin3months.com/life-lessons/)

## Over to You

What I want you to remember is this: **There are still a lot of things about the Internet that you cannot control.** You might check off every item on this list when you're publishing a particular post, and that post STILL won't take off and go viral.

But that's okay. If you keep working, good things are going to happen with your blog. You will get a break. And the trick is to keep working and keep writing.

There's an old quote floating around (sometimes attributed to Thomas Jefferson, sometimes to Samuel Goldwyn). The quote says, "The harder I work, the luckier I get." I want you to remember that when the going gets tough with your blog.

Keep working, keeping writing, and do everything you can to put your writing in the best possible position to take off like wildfire and make you incredibly rich and famous.

Luck favors the prepared, my friend. Go out there in the world and make your own good fortune.

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