



# The Blog Masterplan



HOW LINKEDIN GREW  
ITS BLOG AT HYPER SPEED



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## Introduction

In the movie *The Big Lebowski*, it's the rug that famously ties the room together. As my colleague, **Jason Miller**, is fond of pointing out, in the big room that is the content marketing landscape, your blog is that rug.

At LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, our blog touches every aspect of our content marketing. We use it to promote our 'Big Rock' assets like eBooks, videos, podcasts, and more. It's a conduit for LinkedIn news, where we can announce new product launches and other information that we want to get out to people. However, its most important role is providing useful content to a loyal audience of digital marketers, on a regular basis. It's doing this well that enables it to do everything else successfully.

And when our blog does well, our content marketing strategy does well.

This is a very exciting time for our EMEA blog. Over the last year, we've grown our number of blog subscribers by 21x from under 1,000 to over 10,000. We've created this eBook to share how we did it and why it matters to us. Most importantly, we wanted to provide a blueprint for growing your own blog in the same way. That's why we're sharing our successes and failures, the lessons we've learned, and the customer-focused, data-driven approach that we've discovered works best.

Your journey to giving your blog the audience it deserves starts here.



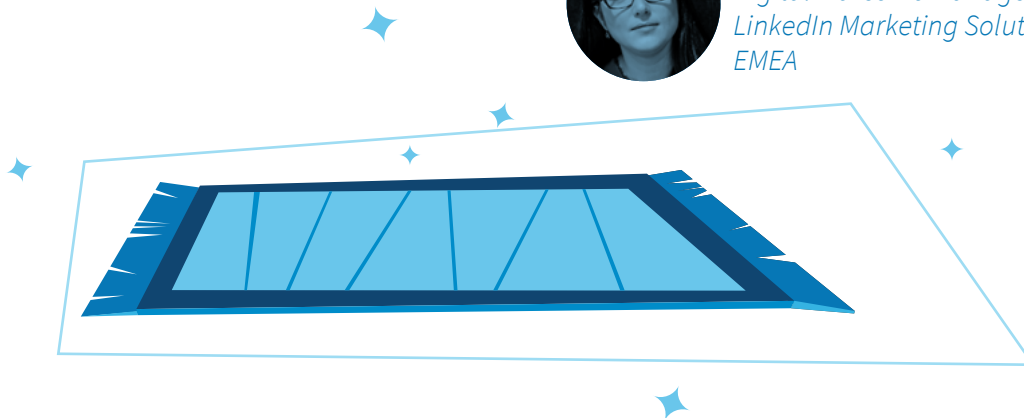
**Jane Fleming,**  
*Digital Marcoms Manager,  
LinkedIn Marketing Solutions  
EMEA*



“The blog is the social media rug that ties the room together.”

**Jason Miller**

*Group Manager, Content Marketing at LinkedIn*



# Why a Blog Is Essential

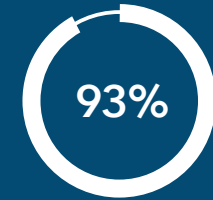
Content has taken its place as a core component of B2B and B2C marketing strategies – but in a fast-changing, competitive environment, that raises lots of challenging questions. How do you know what content to create? Where should it live? What if it doesn't work? Whilst there are huge opportunities in emerging social channels, there are also inherent risks. It's easy to find yourself wasting budget on bespoke content experiences for different platforms, without really knowing if it's delivering the engagement you need.

Your blog is your familiar port in this social media storm. It's a stable environment where you can test different content formats, lengths and styles, and see how different messages resonate. It will build a loyal audience on a platform that you fully own and control – and it will improve your visibility by delivering immense search engine marketing benefits in the process.

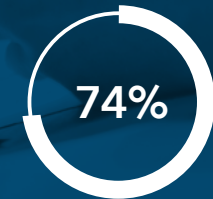
The chapters of this eBook explore the five strategic pillars we used to grow our blog:

1. [Serving Your Audience](#)
2. [Creating Useful Content](#)
3. [Leveraging SEO](#)
4. [Implementing Demand Generation](#)
5. [Promoting Your Blog](#)

We'll explore how a data-driven approach can grow your blog, generate subscribers, drive increased traffic and leverage those things to deliver real business benefits.



**of Marketers use blogs -  
making them the most popular  
content tactic<sup>1</sup>**



**of marketers say blogs will be  
most critical to their content  
marketing in 2017<sup>2</sup>**

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a pen, poised to write on a document. The hand is positioned over a laptop keyboard, which is visible in the lower portion of the frame. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter, giving it a professional and modern appearance. The text '1 Serving Your Audience' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

1

Serving Your Audience

## Serving Your Audience

Our core blogging philosophy is centred on our readers; there's simply nothing more important. We have a strict rule that all content we publish should serve marketers by either sharing news they're interested in, providing practical knowledge – or entertaining them.

Today, this focus on our audience is the responsibility of me – **Jane Fleming** (*Digital Marcoms Manager*), plus my colleagues **Christina O'Connor** (*Associate Marketing Manager*) and **Jason Miller** (*Group Manager*,

*Global Content and Social Media Marketing*). However, we don't do it alone. We work with our agencies **Cream Publishing** and **TopRank Marketing** to generate excellent, relevant content about the issues our audience cares about – and to optimise that content for search engines. We focus on the topics marketers care about and are fighting to master: from measuring ROI for content to making sense of programmatic, aligning sales and marketing more effectively, going global with content, and more.

### Key blog post types:

#### Knowledge:

*“12 marketing books everyone pretends to read – and why you should read them for real”*



#### News:

*“LinkedIn launches programmatic buying”*



#### Entertainment:

*“Are these the 15 most over-used stock photos in B2B marketing?”*





## Serving Your Audience

This focus on always providing valuable content for our audience has provided the foundation for increasing our number of blog subscribers by more than 21 times in just over 12 months – from 469 in November 2015 to 10,112 in December 2016. At the same time, the number of sessions when people visited our blog increased by 150%.

Our blog audience isn't just bigger – we can also be confident that it's the right audience. This is where that data-driven

decision-making starts to come in. When we analyse our audience, we're able to see that 4% are already customers, meaning the vast majority are prospects who could help to grow our business through acquisition. About 75% work in marketing and advertising, 6% in Information Technology and 4% in PR and communications – all very relevant to our business. Using data this way confirms to us when our blog is on the right track – building the right type of loyal audience, and proving the value it can add.

### Key Blog Growth Stats

**21X**

**Subscriber Growth in just  
over 12 months**

**150%**

**increase in visitor sessions  
Q4 2015 versus Q4 2016**



## Serving Your Audience: The Checklist

Just like top magazines, newspapers, or websites, the best blogs serve a specific audience and strive to give them exactly what they want. You can only do that effectively if you focus on knowing who the members of your audience are and what they need. The following activities and checklists will help you to stay focused:

### Activity #1: Identify Your Audience

- ✓ Who is your audience? Customers? Prospects? Channel partners? Get specific and write down at least two distinct segments that you want to serve
- ✓ Map each audience member's needs (not your company's). What makes their work lives difficult? What are common problems they wish to solve?
- ✓ Document three blog post ideas for each audience, which address these specific needs.
- ✓ Give your audience what they're looking for: practical advice, news they can use, and entertaining posts about their industry.

### Activity #2: Track Your Success

There are several ways to confirm whether the people visiting and subscribing your blog are the people you need to reach:

- ✓ Using the email addresses provided by your subscribers, survey them about the industry they work in, what role they have, and other characteristics.
- ✓ LinkedIn also has a pixel that you can place on your blog pages (and other pages of your website). This pixel provides aggregated insight into the industry, job titles, company size, and seniority of your visitors. No information about individuals is exchanged, but you'll have a good sense of the audience you're reaching.
- ✓ Use analytics packages like Google Analytics, to track your growth.





A man and a woman are looking at a laptop screen. The woman is on the left, wearing glasses and a bow tie. The man is on the right, wearing a denim shirt and a bow tie. They are both looking at the screen with interest. The image has a green tint.

# 2 Creating Useful Content

## Creating Useful Content

At LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, we have big, audacious goals for our blog. We want to create content that our audience wants, needs — and loves. Here's the approach we've arrived at for doing it:

### Being Useful

Our audience of digital marketers faces constant upheaval. Over the past two decades, the rise of the Internet, search, marketing technology, social media, and mobile have transformed the marketer's role.

In this climate of change, marketers crave knowledge, and information above all else. When **LinkedIn asked B2B buyers** what they most wanted from potential suppliers, the top four answers were:

- 26% “Understands my company's business model”
- 25% “Provide valuable consultation, education, or tools”
- 25% “Are a subject matter expert/ thought leader”
- 25% “Know my company's products/ services”<sup>3</sup>

These answers all revolve around knowledge and the useful application of that knowledge – not least in helping buyers to learn more. This finding helped to reinforce the importance of being useful to our blog strategy.

3: [https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/marketing-solutions/global/en\\_US/campaigns/pdfs/rethink-b2b-buyers-journey-v03.09-eng-us.pdf](https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/marketing-solutions/global/en_US/campaigns/pdfs/rethink-b2b-buyers-journey-v03.09-eng-us.pdf)



# Creating Useful Content

## Being Useful – Topic Selection

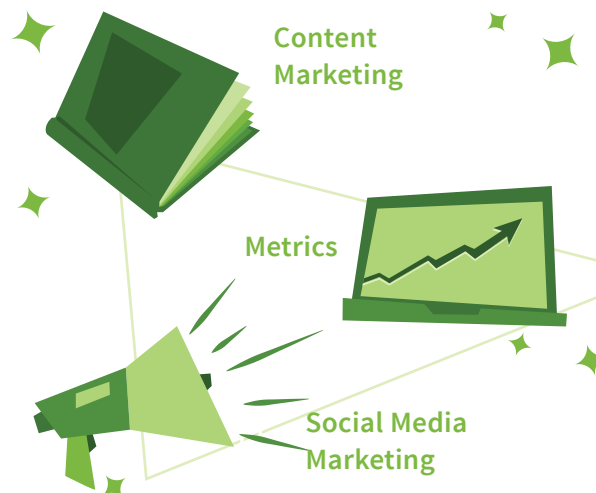
We've chosen to cover topics on our blog that we know marketers are required to master – and which they are therefore seeking useful knowledge about. Here are just some of the subjects we've covered on our blog in the last year, which are rooted in our understanding of what our audience needs to know:

- Account-based marketing
- Using metrics and analytics
- Aligning sales and marketing efforts
- Content marketing strategy and tactics
- Lead generation and lead quality
- Balancing paid and earned media
- Inbound marketing
- Programmatic
- Mobile marketing strategies
- Search engine marketing
- Global content marketing
- The role of purpose in branding

Most of all, we've concentrated on subject areas where we feel LinkedIn can offer the most help, and has the most expertise.

Has it worked? We have had immense success with this approach. Some of our highest performing posts **highlight new resources** to help marketers expand their skills and keep pace with the latest thinking. Knowledge is certainly power these days.

## Some Key LinkedIn Marketing Solutions Blog Topics





# Creating Useful Content

## Being Useful – Using Search Engine Data

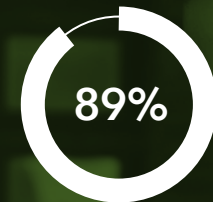
Search engine data is an immensely valuable tool when it comes to aligning what we cover on our blog with the subjects audiences are seeking information around. We evaluate the specific terms that users type into search engines like, “what is content marketing” or, “how is social media changing in 2017” and then create content to answer the questions implied by the search queries. This enables us to own the keywords that our audiences are using to search information – and help them find the content on our blog.

The chart below shows a few sample keyword rankings, which we track using TopRank. These are keywords we have sought to own over time. They show how developing content specific to search intent has contributed to boosting our position in Google search rankings. Developing content at the crossroads of relevant user topics and search engine data is a prime example of our data-driven approach to blogging.

Keyword Query	Google Search Queries Report							
	January				November			
	Avg. Ranking	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Avg. Ranking	Impressions	Clicks	CTR
b2b content marketing	17.40	381	0	0.0000	15.40	576	1	0.0017
best time to post on linkedin	1.50	232	59	0.2543	4.33	1 274	203	0.1593
data is the new oil	7.51	117	3	0.0256	8.10	1 137	23	0.0202
b2b advertising	16.71	122	0	0.0000	22.92	892	4	0.0045
b2b branding	30.39	98	0	0.0000	27.20	486	0	0.0000
content marketing solutions	10.34	92	0	0.0000	7.34	402	1	0.0025
best b2b marketing campaigns	6.81	86	8	0.0930	6.28	500	23	0.0460
content marketing articles	15.70	69	0	0.0000	25.01	269	0	0.0000
content marketing b2b	14.38	106	0	0.0000	12.13	56	0	0.0000
content marketing research	25.64	45	0	0.0000	29.29	382	0	0.0000
best times to post on linkedin	1.80	56	16	0.2857	4.62	402	51	0.1269

4: Fleishman Hillard, 2012 Digital Influence Index Study

5: Accenture, 2014 State of B2B Procurement Study



of consumers use search engines for purchasing decisions<sup>4</sup>



of B2B buyers research online for purchase decisions<sup>5</sup>

# Creating Useful Content

## Delivering a variety of content

The concept of the Blogging Food Groups was first developed by Rick Burns of HubSpot back in 2009. We've shamelessly leveraged it to help plan our editorial calendar – and ensure that we're delivering a mix of content that's good for our audience but can also keep them engaged. Here are the five 'food groups', representing different types of posts, that we try to include each week:

## Meaty Posts

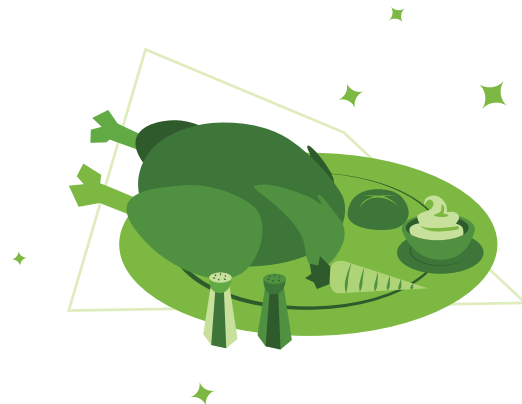
These are big, original pieces of research and analysis that our audience will want to digest at length. One of the advantages of having 467 million members, is that we've got a great source of relevant insights. When we translate this into posts like ***“Lessons from Europe's Most Influential Luxury Brands”*** or ***“The Most Valuable Skills to Have on your LinkedIn Profile this Year”***, we get great engagement. We're certainly not alone in having sources of data that can be turned into real value for our audiences – ask yourself what potentially valuable assets you have available.

## A Side of Vegetables

These are the posts that both you and your audience know are good for them – serious thought leadership posts that are essential reading. We try to deliver a healthy dose of vegetables through posts like ***“6 Reasons why you Need More Mobile B2B Content”*** and ***“Keyword Research for SEO: A Quick Crash Course”***.

## A Serving of Whole Grains

These are the building blocks of your blog – content that's easy to roll out regularly, but valuable and filling nonetheless. How-to guides and guest posts are great examples – like ***“How to Generate a 95% Open Rate for your Next Campaign”***.



## Creating Useful Content

### Some Tabasco to Spice Things Up

Nothing engages attention like strong, confident opinions – and there's great value in a blog taking a stand on current marketing issues, or taking on myths and established opinions when we believe them to be wrong. Posts like ***“It's Time to Stop Blaming Content for your Content Marketing Problems”*** and ***“The Great Goldfish Attention Span Myth”*** have generated some of our most wide-spread sharing – and helped set the agenda for our industry.

### Chocolate Cake to celebrate the end of the week

We always try to end the week with a post that's a bit more light-hearted and can bring a smile to people's faces over the weekend. It's a great way to show our human side and give our readers a different type of reason for visiting. Posts like ***“The Most Notorious Marketers in Movies”*** and ***“6 Tech Moments that Changed the Marketing World”*** weren't exactly required reading for marketers – but they were a lot of fun.

### Plus: Unique Content

The blogging food groups are a great framework for weekly content planning, but we give ourselves the freedom to explore beyond them as well. It's always worth trying to produce regular content that competitors will have a hard time replicating – our regular round-up of ***“The Most Effective Sponsored Content Tactics on LinkedIn”*** for example, or our ***“Content Marketing Toolkit”***.

We also use the blog as a platform for new products, such as our ***Programmatic*** offer and ***Conversion Tracking***.

### And Finally: Evergreen Content

To drive organic traffic to the blog, we regularly produce evergreen content that will rank high in the search engines for months or even years to come. Our post following the Cannes Advertising Festival, ***“5 Great B2B Campaigns that Won Cannes Lions Last Week”***, wasn't just timely – it was designed to rank highly in searches for creative B2B campaigns going forward.



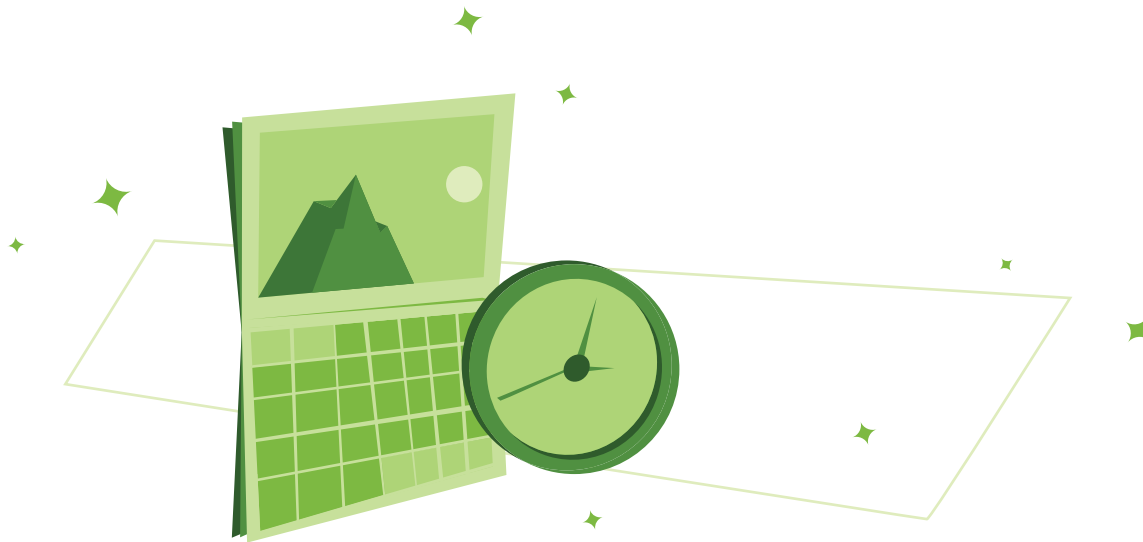


## Creating Useful Content

### Variety of Content – Content Frequency

It's crucial to post fresh content at a frequency that encourages your audience to rely on you as a regular source of knowledge – and gives them a reason to keep visiting. Determining the right frequency for your blog can be a challenge, though. A recent Content Marketing Institute study found that only 55% of content marketers in the UK are producing their content consistently .

When you pick a blog post frequency — whether it's posting daily, a few times a week, or a few times a month — we recommend sticking to it. We've found a cadence of one post per day works for our audience – and although we sometimes pause for a day, we make sure we are regular enough to be relied on.



6: Content Marketing in the UK 2017: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends: Content Marketing Institute

55%

Only just over half of UK content marketers are succeeding at producing content consistently<sup>6</sup>

## Creating Useful Content

### Variety of Content – Repurposing Content

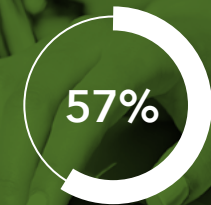
Producing blog content on a daily basis is a big task for a small marketing team. Our editorial calendar helps us to keep a handle on workflow and workload, but we also have a secret weapon when it comes to maintaining a consistent frequency – and that secret weapon is repurposing content.

We think of repurposing content as getting maximum value from your Christmas Turkey. Once you've created a big, juicy content asset ('Big Rocks' as we call them), you can slice it up and turn it into the equivalent of turkey sandwiches, turkey stew, turkey curry (if you're feeling really creative) and more.

Any eBook, white paper or sales collateral can provide the foundation for a stream of blog posts and a wide variety of different formats. Use each post to explore a different angle in a different way, and you'll keep giving value to your audience whilst making sure all the important points come across.

***The Sophisticated Marketer's Guide to Global Content Marketing*** that Christina and I wrote last year has so far generated seven blog posts and a webinar – and we've got new video content on the way.

Webcasts, video interviews, podcasts – they're all great content that can be re-used on our blog. The golden rule of business blogging is to never let any great content go to waste – if there's value there for your audience, don't be shy about putting it out there.



of B2B content creators  
say finding better ways to  
repurpose content is a  
top priority<sup>7</sup>

## Creating Useful Content: The Checklist

The most effective blogs build a loyal audience by consistently delivering the right content for the people they value. Here are five ways you can ensure you're creating the content your audience needs and wants:

### 1. Be Useful

LinkedIn's customer journey research clearly shows what B2B buyers want. Use your blog to provide:

- ✓ Knowledge
- ✓ Thought leadership
- ✓ How-to content

### 2. Track Your Keywords

Break your search engine keywords into two groups:

- ✓ Keywords your audience is interested in
- ✓ Keywords your company has the capability to own or rank highly for

Develop useful and entertaining content around these keywords, and watch your search engine rankings climb.

### 3. Create a Variety of Content

Use the blogging food groups to create tasty mix of content that gives your audience the variety and nutrition they need:

- ✓ Meaty posts with research and insights to digest at leisure
- ✓ Vegetable posts with a healthy diet of thought-leadership and serious content
- ✓ Whole grain content that can be served regularly to fuel development
- ✓ Tabasco content to stir things up and grab people's attention
- ✓ Chocolate cake content to entertain, entice and delight





## Creating Useful Content: The Checklist

### 4. Find the Right Frequency

You want to stay top of mind for your audience, but you also don't want to strain your resources by creating content at a pace you can't maintain. Posting every day is ideal for some companies; posting a few times a month works for others. Pick a frequency and stick to it. Regularity and dependability are important. Here's how you can find the right frequency:

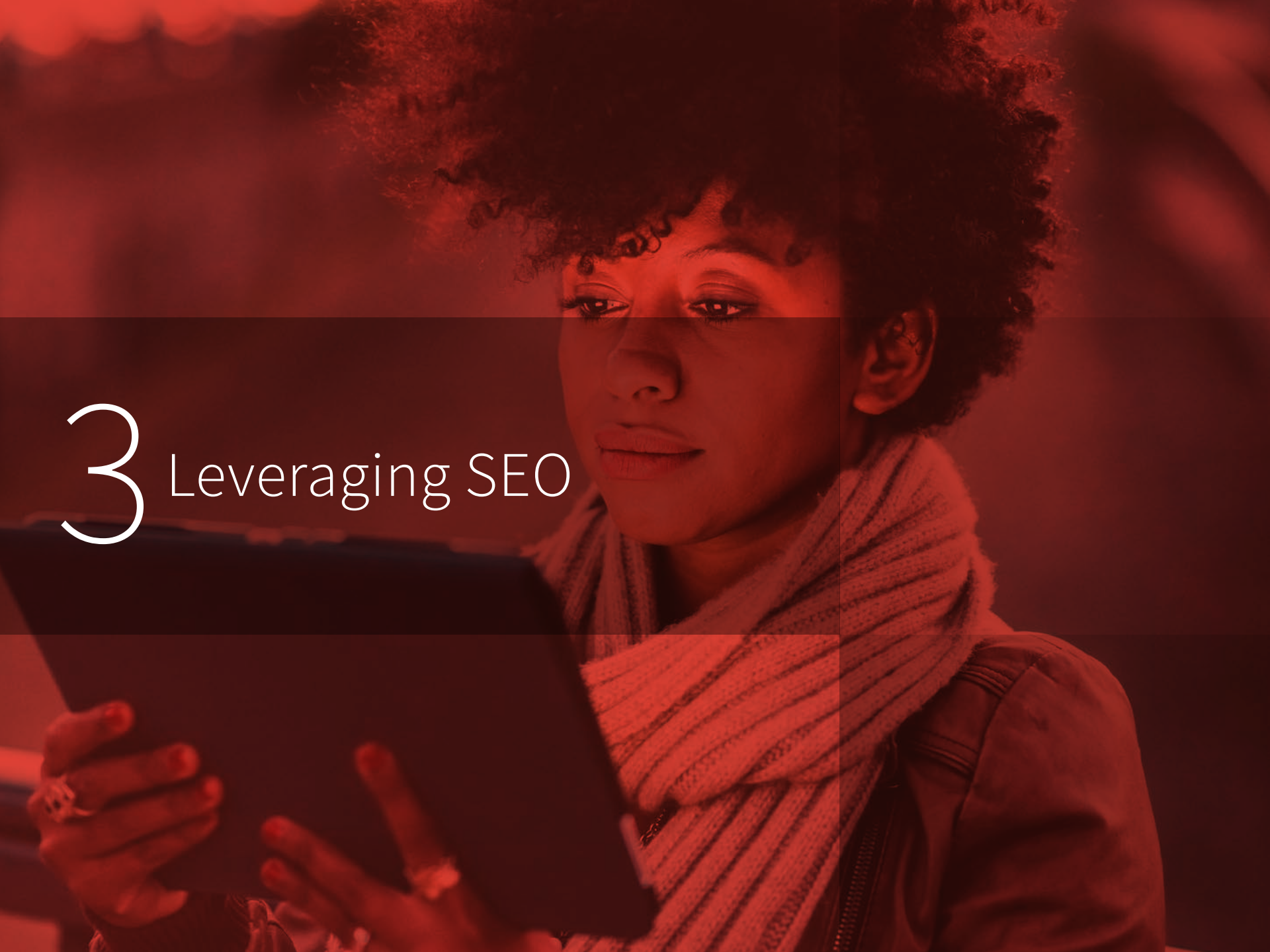
- ✓ Focus on regularity
- ✓ Start small and prioritise quality: better to post two quality posts a week versus ten run-of-the-mill ones
- ✓ Repurpose topics: it's okay to blog about the same concept twice if you're bringing out a new angle or perspective

### 5. Repurpose Your Content

Marketers get tired of their own content and campaigns long before their audience does. Repurposing content from eBooks, videos and presentations can help you maintain a regular frequency:

- ✓ Turn a blog series into an eBook
- ✓ Video interviews with thought leaders at conferences, and use it as blog content
- ✓ Use presentations and slide decks as the framework for blog posts
- ✓ Curate your top 10 blog posts at the beginning or end of the year as a greatest hits collection





# 3 Leveraging SEO

## Leveraging SEO

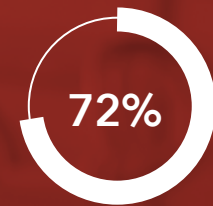
As the first search engines began taking shape in the early 1990s, few knew how dramatically they would change the world. Fast-forward to 2017 and many of the same players are manufacturing driverless cars and building Artificial Intelligence technology. More significantly for your blog, they are dominating how audiences find the information they are looking for.

Every year we face major changes to the “rules” of SEO. The algorithms behind search engines are in constant flux, which means optimising blog content for search engine performance requires more steps than many B2B marketers realise.

Optimising our content, with some help from **TopRank Marketing**, has played a big role in growing our blog subscribers by 21 times in a little over 12 months. Wondering how we did it? Here are the five SEO principles that fueled this success:

### Identify the Blog Strategy

The first principle is deciding how the blog fits into your broader marketing strategy. In our case, for example, the blog isn't the platform we prioritise for talking about our products, or sharing company announcements. We've got other channels for doing that – and we don't think our audience want to read post after post in which we talk about ourselves. Instead, the role of the blog is to give marketers the knowledge they're hungry for.



of marketers report relevant content creation is the most effective SEO tactic<sup>8</sup>



# Leveraging SEO

## Identify the Blog Strategy

As discussed in the previous two chapters, we pay particular focus to areas where LinkedIn has the most expertise – and the most value to add. A key benefit of this is that it positions our blog at a point where business objectives and audience needs intersect. We can build a relevant audience who are interested in what we have to offer by focusing on the following audience needs – and these are the types of topics we want to build our SEO approach around:

- Specific advice and information on ***how to be a better marketer***
- Advice and info on ***specific B2B marketing tactics***
- ***Conference updates*** and learning opportunities
- Advice on how to ***move up the ranks*** in an organisation
- Book reviews and ***reading recommendations***

## Remaining Relevant

Of course at some point our readers might also want to know how Sponsored Content, Sponsored InMail, or Text Ads can help them reach customers – and we'll write posts on these once in a while. However, we'll always do so in the context of solving our readers' problems. That's the guiding strategy for the blog.



**Jesse Pickrain**

*Content Marketing Manager,  
TopRank Marketing*

“As Jason Miller likes to say, ‘People invest time on LinkedIn.’ Since day one, LinkedIn and TopRank Marketing have tried to get marketers to associate the blog with an investment in themselves as professionals. That said, there are tons of topics marketers care about, and we can’t own them all. Not even close. So together, we use data and discussion to decide which conversations we can and should lead. When we’re not leading conversations, we’re facilitating them — we provide value by connecting our audience with the people, places, and stories they care about.”



# Leveraging SEO

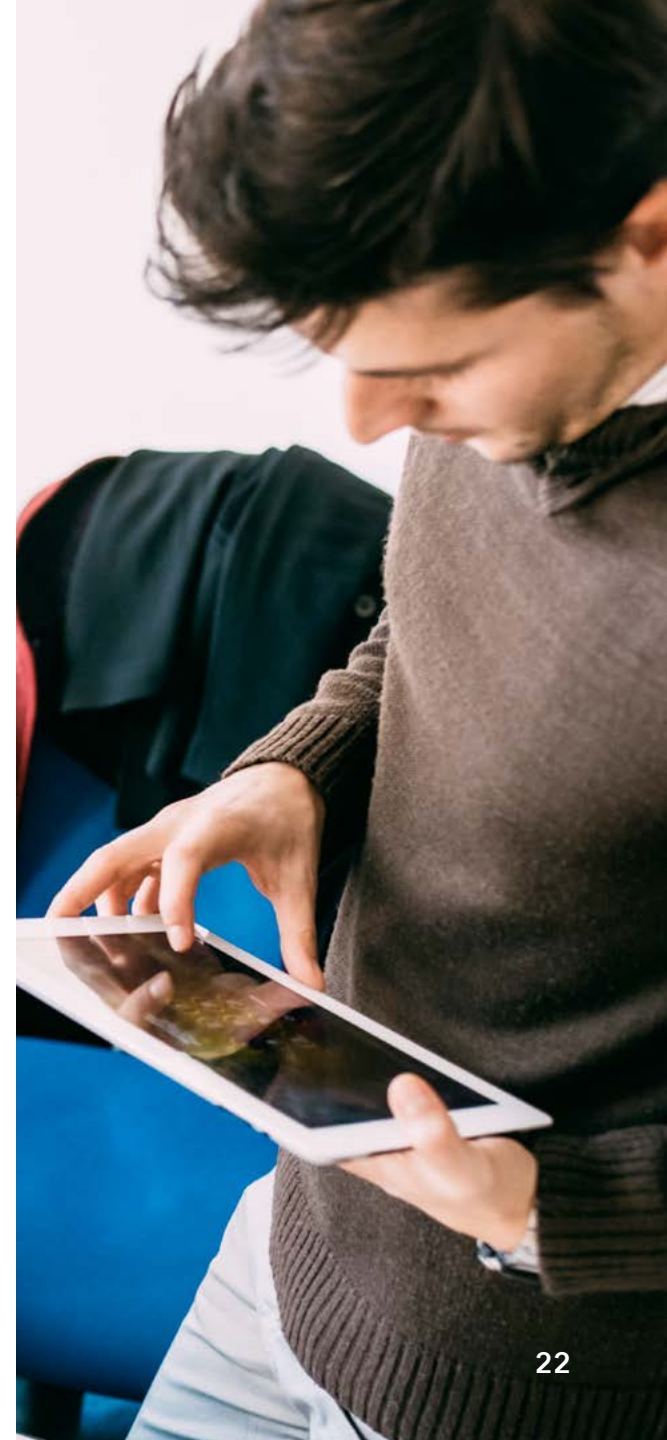
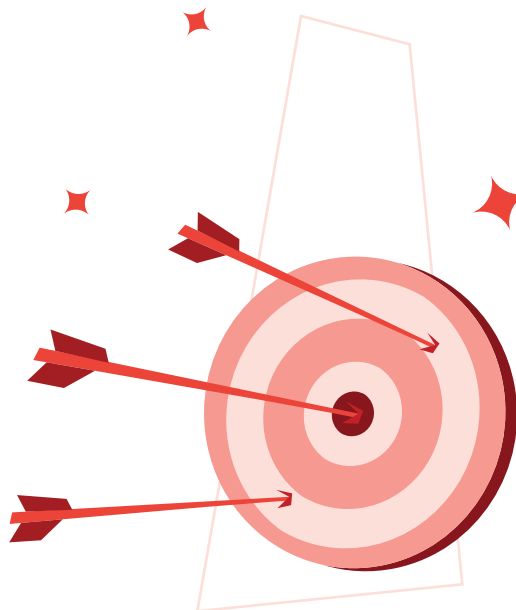
## Conduct a Gap Analysis

Our second principle for achieving blog growth is to make regular use of keyword gap analysis. While defining a blog strategy answers the why of what we need to achieve in SEO terms, the gap analysis offers a framework for how.

A solid gap analysis will reveal what content your target audience is currently looking at, how you fit in, and what you need to do to improve your position:

- Which sources are ranking highly on Google for specific keywords?
- What type of content is ranking?
- How often is new content created around specific keywords?
- How competitive and challenging will it be to achieve the rankings you want?
- What related keywords or search opportunities exist?

We fill in our content calendar with the answers to these questions in mind. Our focus is on giving our target audience the type of content they want, in a style they desire, at a frequency that will keep them happy. We optimise for readers, not search engines. That's because search engines will ultimately follow our audience's preferences, not the other way around.

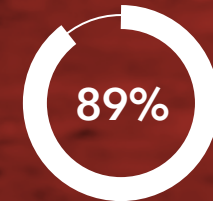


## Leveraging SEO

### Best B2B marketing campaigns

For example, gap analysis showed us a huge appetite amongst B2B marketers for creative inspiration. They were seeking ideas that could help them cut-through, but also affirmation that there was room for innovation and original thinking in B2B marketing, as well as in B2C. When we looked at our own content, we dealt with a lot of the practical issues around B2B, but there was an obvious gap in providing this bigger creative picture.

My colleague Christina wrote a post specifically to fill that gap: **5 great B2B campaigns that inspire me (and should inspire B2C marketers too)**. It's consistently been one of our top performing posts ever since – because it provides the type of inspiration that our audience keeps looking for.



of B2B researchers use the internet during the B2B research process<sup>9</sup>



# Leveraging SEO

## **Make Data-Driven Content Decisions**

The gap analysis provides us with a regular target for improvement – a sense of where we want to get to in SEO terms. Our keyword glossary keeps us focused on what it will take to close that gap in the form of a list of keywords that it's most important for our content to rank on.

We are constantly challenging ourselves to come up with ideas for posts, eBooks, interviews and video series. And while it's fun to throw ideas out and see what sticks, it's even more fun to create blog content that we know our audience loves – and that we can be confident will drive engagement.

## **Our Data-Driven Process**

### **Monthly concept meetings**

We get together every month and throw fun, crazy, wild, and sometimes terrible ideas against the wall. Then, we compare the ones we really like to our keyword glossary and prioritise them based on which target keywords we are trying to rank on that month (and which conversations matter most to our business).

### **Monthly dashboard meetings**

In these get-togethers, we go through the most important performance metrics like views, time on site, subscribers and shares. We also review specific posts and evaluate whether they met broad objectives, or could be improved upon.

### **Create a healthy concept backlog**

We don't start from scratch every month. During our concept meetings, we log all the viable ideas and store them in an archive for future use. Ideas beget ideas. Take the pressure off by making sure you capture all of them.



## Leveraging SEO

### Embrace a Data-Driven Culture

Being data-driven also means taking risks and trying new things – and you can only do that within a culture that's open, supportive and honest. Embracing a data-driven culture doesn't mean crushing ideas.

Our approach is to be very open with ourselves and our readers about what works and what doesn't. We have a ranking of our **top-performing posts** – so at the end of the year, why not share it with our audience? It gives them an insight into how our content performs – and it also provides them with a shortcut to our most popular posts.

#### Revealed – the Marketing Solutions blog's Christmas Number 1

Our countdown of the posts driving the highest number of views on our blog this year



“By leveraging the right data, LinkedIn and TopRank discover what the target audience is searching for online, and together create content to help them solve the specific problems illustrated by that search intent. We then monitor and adjust our content plan based on the overall performance of posts. It's that simple.”

**Jolina Pettice**

Vice President, TopRank Marketing

## Leveraging SEO

### Be Open to Experimentation

The rules of online engagement are in constant flux. Many SEO practitioners would have us believe there are hard and fast formulas for success: put the keyword at the beginning of the post title, make sure you have three links to relevant internal pages, alt-tags, meta description, backlinks, the list goes on. The truth is, the relative importance of these things changes all the time.

The problem with remaining laser-focused on SEO “rules,” is that you end up taking your eye off content quality and originality. A big part of our blogging success has been a willingness to experiment with post types, titles, on-page elements, content length, and cadence. We break and bend rules to find new rules that work. We use SEO best practices, but we prioritise getting creative and crafty too – there’s no point doing one without the other.





# Leveraging SEO

## Never Stop Getting Better

SEO is a hugely competitive sport – and if you stop trying to improve, even for a moment, you will lose ground. Whether we're striving for higher quality content, more social shares, views or mentions – our mantra has been to get better every single month. No going backwards. No holds barred. No backing down.

It's easier said than done. When it comes to SEO, you must remain obsessed with the nitty-gritty details. The rules are always changing. Someone will always be gunning for your keyword rankings, and the internet is getting more crowded every day. Here are three ways we have wrapped continual SEO improvement into our process:

## Post-mortems

On a semi-regular basis, we look at our lowest performing posts and try to understand what went wrong. No sweeping things under the rug!

## Team training

We try to expose ourselves to as much new SEO thinking as possible – for instance, by putting in time at relevant industry conferences and events.

## Data-driven culture

A commitment to optimising content has to start with a data-driven culture. As we've discussed here, data doesn't need to crush creativity – but it does need to have a meaningful voice within your content planning process.



“The wealth of data available today is a double-edged sword. After all, when we can track anything, how do we decide where to focus? We help LinkedIn define clear, impactful, measurable goals for their blog content. This allows for benchmarking, an honest assessment of performance, and continual improvement.”

**Evan Prokop**

*Digital Marketing Manager, TopRank Marketing*

## Leveraging SEO: The Checklist

Building a blog is not just about creativity and right-brain thinking. It's also about cool, calculated left-brain SEO. Here are the approaches that can help:

### Define Your Blog Strategy

- ✓ Find the nexus between what your audience wants to know and the information your company can most credibly deliver. The intersection between the two should be at the heart of your blog strategy.

### Analyse Your Keyword Performance

- ✓ Identify the keywords you want to own, and then create the content that speaks to those topics. Track your search rankings for those keywords and adjust your strategy accordingly.

### Listen to the Data

- ✓ Pay attention to which content is working and do more of it. Just as importantly, take note of content that consistently doesn't work, and do less of it.

### Don't Be Afraid to Take Risks

- ✓ Try different post lengths, give video a try, read other blogs to gather ideas. Explore how these posts perform in SEO compared to your standard approach.

### Embrace Continuous Improvement

- ✓ To make the most of SEO, you must constantly pay attention to how your keywords are performing. Don't be afraid to challenge yourself – or others will.





# 4 Implementing Demand Generation



## Implementing Demand Generation

You can't earn a loyal audience for your blog without great content – but great content alone won't be enough. Building your blog audience requires some demand generation skills as well.

Don't underestimate the importance of subscribers to the health of your blog. They are your lifeblood. As a group, subscribers believe your content is relevant and valuable enough to share their email address, and be reminded whenever a new post is uploaded.

In a **recent post**, Content Marketing Institute founder Joe Pulizzi, called subscribers the “one metric to rule them all.” In that same post, he wrote, “When you go to sleep at night, you should be thinking of attracting subscribers. When you wake up in the morning, you should have subscribers etched into your brain.”

How do you get more subscribers?  
By applying the principles of demand generation. Here are some of the methods we've used to increase our number of subscribers by 21x in just over 12 months:



“When you go to sleep at night, you should be thinking of attracting subscribers. When you wake up in the morning, you should have subscribers etched into your brain.”

**Joe Pulizzi**  
Founder, Content Marketing Institute

# Implementing Demand Generation

## The Scrolling Subscribe Button

We've opted to place our subscribe button in the lower right hand corner of our blog pages. Other blogs go for the top right. What really matters is that it's never out of the reader's sight. The subscribe button scrolls as the readers scroll through the content. It's constantly in view, and clicks on this button have made an important contribution to our surge in new subscribers.



Subscribe to Blog

## Offering Daily and Weekly Blog Subscription Options

We usually post content to the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions blog five days a week — and we email subscribers to let them know when new content is available. This daily communication is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it definitely drives traffic to the site. On the other, too many updates can be annoying — and potentially lead to people unsubscribing. In fact, the most common reason for unsubscribes to our blog is “too many updates.”

To counteract this potential issue, we've drawn subscribers' attention to the option of a weekly email summarising all of the updates that week. Today, weekly subscribers make up around 20 percent of our subscriber base.



# Implementing Demand Generation

## Thank-you Emails

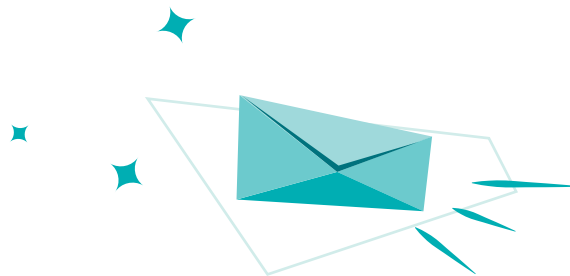
Prospects who download your eBooks and white papers, or register for your webinars, demonstrate that they're interested in your point of view. We send these prospects an email thanking them for their interest and pointing them to similar content — such as our blog. This simple approach is a very effective technique for driving new subscriptions.

## Quarterly Emails

Every company has an email database of prospects that are nurtured via email. We email our database of prospects every three months, to encourage them to subscribe to our blog. It's another simple yet effective tactic, and it accounts for about 30 percent of new subscribers in the past year. Our prospects crave information, and the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions blog is one way they can get it.

## Investing in LinkedIn Sponsored Content and Sponsored InMail

We drink our own champagne here at LinkedIn, by which I mean we use many of our own solutions to drive blog subscriptions. Our use of LinkedIn Sponsored Content, LinkedIn Sponsored InMail, and email nurture streams have driven the large majority of our new subscribers. Our latest Sponsored Content campaign had a 0.4% click-through rate (CTR), and 200,000 impressions. Our Sponsored InMails promoting the blog have been some of our best performing, with a 6% CTR.



<sup>10</sup>: Source LinkedIn.

30%

of overall new blog subscribers came from quarterly emails to our database this year<sup>10</sup>



## Implementing Demand Generation: **The Checklist**

Building a blog is not just about content creation. It's also about calculating opportunities to generate targeted demand. Here's a three-part checklist for making sure your demand generation efforts are top-notch:

### **Make It Easy to Subscribe**

- ✓ Make the subscribe button extremely visible throughout the blog, from the home page to the individual post pages. Visitors to the blog have already shown an interest in your content. Encourage them to take the next step and become subscribers.

### **Don't Overlook the Power of Email**

- ✓ The people in your email database have indicated an interest in your company. Send occasional emails to those with similar demographics to your blog subscribers, encouraging them to give a subscription a go. We speak from experience – it works.

### **Show Your Faith in Advertising and Paid Media**

- ✓ Target your audience with paid messages on social media (we've found LinkedIn to be highly effective), industry websites, and elsewhere. The most effective advertising of all may be a pop-up ad asking your blog visitors to subscribe.





# 5 Promoting Your Blog



## Promoting Your Blog

There's little point spending time, effort and resources creating great content for your blog, if you don't also spend time, effort and resources promoting that content. We are true believers and passionate practitioners of marketing to marketers – and we certainly don't publish a blog post without a plan to promote it for all it's worth.

Here are some of the promotional tactics we've used to grow our blog traffic by almost 150 percent in the last year.





## Promoting Your Blog

### Email Promotion

Email may be a traditional channel, as far as digital marketing goes, but it remains an effective one. We email the bulk of our blog subscribers daily to alert them to posts that were published that day. We launched a weekly digest option in 2015 and it immediately became popular. It now accounts for nearly 20 percent of our subscriber base. Putting useful content in front of an audience that you know are interested is a powerful thing.

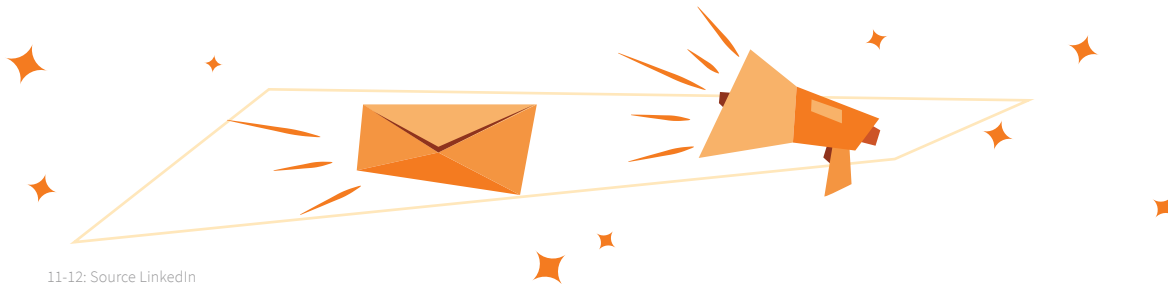
### Social Promotion

Social promotion is critical to driving traffic to the blog. At LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, we use our Twitter handle — @LinkedInMKTG — to make our followers aware when we post new content. We're not happy just Tweeting about each post once. We Tweet several times, because we're confident that our audience will benefit

from our blog posts (and we're not confident they'll see all of our Tweets).

We also use Facebook, Instagram, and other social networks to promote blog posts, but the cornerstone of our promotion is LinkedIn. As a platform, LinkedIn is ideal for communicating with the professional audience we target.

It's where our audience is – and where they expect to find useful content. There are 9 billion content impressions per week on the LinkedIn platform, and 15 times more content in the LinkedIn feed than there are job postings.



11-12: Source LinkedIn

## Key Media Stats

# 9 Billion

The number of impressions  
per week on LinkedIn<sup>11</sup>

# 15X

There are fifteen times more  
content than job postings in  
the LinkedIn feed<sup>12</sup>

## Promoting Your Blog

### Social Promotion

The **Linked Marketing Solutions Showcase Page** is central to how we use LinkedIn to promote our posts. A LinkedIn Showcase Page is similar to a LinkedIn Company Page, except the Showcase Pages are for a specific business unit, brand, product, or initiative. Our Showcase Page **recently passed 200,000 followers** – all of which can be alerted when we use it to promote relevant content.

We also transform posts into Sponsored Content, which helps boost impressions and performance significantly. You can read more about our content marketing approach on LinkedIn in our post **The LinkedIn Content Marketing Tactical Plan**.

Finally, we use another LinkedIn tool, **Elevate**, to enable employee sharing, harnessing the power of our colleagues and their social media reach. Why? LinkedIn research shows that content shared by individual employees on their own LinkedIn accounts generates click-through-rates twice the average of content shared by companies.



\*The Marketing Solutions Showcase Page (pictured above) is core to our promotion strategy



## Promoting Your Blog

### Promotion Opportunities Are Everywhere

We are not shy about promoting the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions blog, because we believe our content is useful, helpful, and entertaining. When we speak at events, we usually include a slide that shows the audience how to subscribe to our blog. Why? Firstly, because hearing us talk in person is a great taste of what our blog's all about. And secondly, because when that presentation is posted on **LinkedIn SlideShare**, it's reaching an entirely new audience. Some of us include a link to the blog's subscription page at the bottom of every email we send. And we even put our out-of-office messages to work by including a link to the subscription page in the response people get when we're away from our desks.





## Promoting Your Blog: The Checklist

Your work isn't done when you push a blog post live – it's only just getting started. Driving readership from your target audience is all about vigorously promoting your content:

### Promote via Email

- ✓ It's essential that you promote your blog posts to subscribers regularly via email. You should also consider sending links to blog posts via your broader company email newsletter.

### Promote via Social

- ✓ Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and virtually every form of social media provide a platform for promoting your blog posts.

### Promote on LinkedIn

- ✓ LinkedIn provides numerous opportunities for promoting posts from your blog. You can highlight your blog posts on your LinkedIn Company Page and Showcase Pages. You can promote them on SlideShare. And, as an individual LinkedIn member, you can also publish your complete blog posts on LinkedIn, to reach a wider audience.

### Embrace Promotion's Vast Possibilities

- ✓ Use everything from your email signature to your presentations at conferences to your business cards. Be proud of your blog.

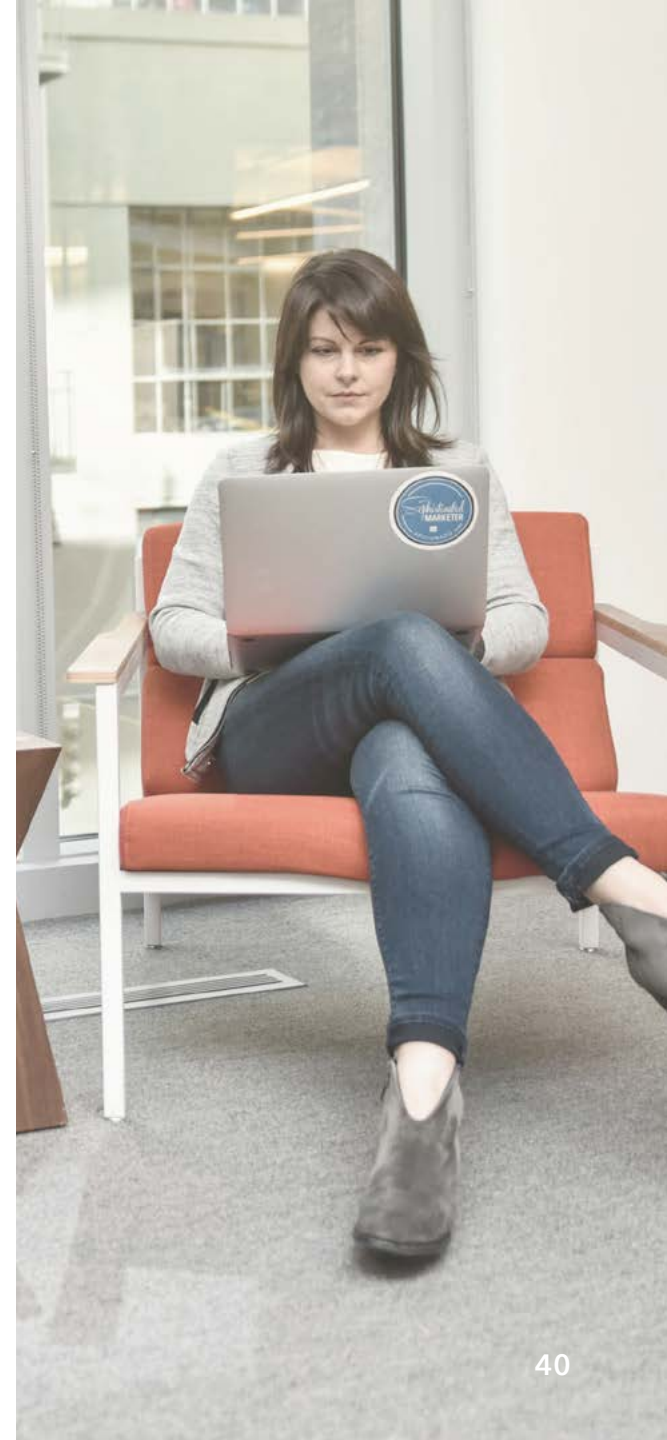


## Conclusion

Developing an effective business blog is not just about writing and creating content. That's at the core of the process, of course, but there's so much more that effective business bloggers must be skilled in as well:

- Understanding their audience
- Developing not just great content but content their audience wants
- Understanding and implementing a strong SEO strategy
- Marketing the blog to build traffic and a subscriber base
- Promoting blog posts via some basic marketing skills, especially on social media

And as business bloggers, we're not going to miss one final opportunity to promote our own blog. **Subscribe now** to the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions blog to keep pace with the latest in digital marketing!





Today, LinkedIn has more than 467 million professionals in its network. That's more than two-thirds of the 600 million professionals on the planet, representing the largest group anywhere of influential, affluent, and educated people.

For more information, visit [marketing.linkedin.com](https://marketing.linkedin.com)