



How to Grow Your Blog by 30X or More

LinkedIn Shares the Tactics That
Grew Its Blog at Hyperspeed





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Introduction

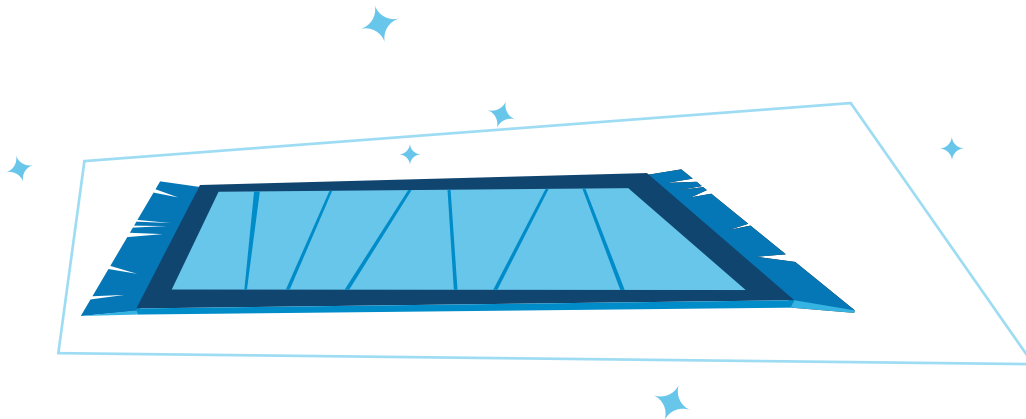
“The blog is the social media rug that ties the room together,” **Jason Miller** is fond of saying — paraphrasing “the Dude” in *The Big Lebowski*. What Jason means is that the **LinkedIn Marketing Solutions Blog**, as it is for many companies, is a focal point in our overall content marketing strategy.

We use the blog to promote our big rock pieces of content — that is, our eBooks, videos, podcasts, and more. The blog is also a conduit for LinkedIn news, such as product launches. But most importantly, the blog enables us to provide useful content, whether that content has to do with LinkedIn or not, on a daily basis to our audience, which in our case is primarily digital marketers.

This eBook examines our successes and failures in growing the LMS blog over the past 18 months. In the pages that follow, we’ll uncover the lessons we’ve learned and provide checklists you can use to grow subscribers and traffic for your own blog. Our hope is that by sharing our customer-focused and data-driven approach to growing our blog, you can likewise generate growth for your own personal or company blog.

Sean Callahan,

Senior Manager, Content Marketing at LinkedIn



“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

Whether you work in the B2B or B2C sphere, a core component of your marketing strategy should be creating relevant and engaging content in order to attract customers over time. But how do you know what to create? And where it should live? And what if it doesn't work? As technology, platforms, and social media evolve, these questions continue to plague marketers.

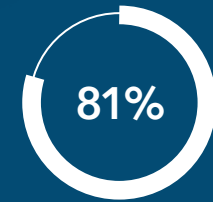
Your blog is like a port in a social media storm. Or a rug in a very eclectic living room. And while there are huge opportunities in emerging social channels, there are also inherent risks that threaten to dash your marketing dollars into the rocky shores of the online landscape.

Blogging offers a stable port where you can test content types, messages, length and attract customers to a property that you fully own. And as you'll discover in the following pages, there are immense search engine marketing benefits to blogging, when done right.

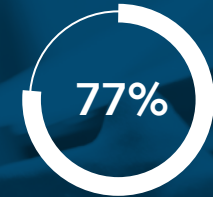
This eBook will explore five main elements of our growth strategy which we have broken up into chapters, including:

1. **Serving Your Audience**
2. **Creating Useful Content**
3. **Leveraging SEO**
4. **Implementing Demand Generation**
5. **Promoting Your Blog**

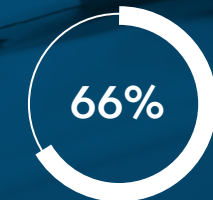
Read on to learn how you can leverage our data-driven, customer-focused approach to grow your blog, generate subscribers and drive increased traffic.



of B2B marketers
use blogging¹



of B2C marketers
use blogging²



of B2B decision makers say
they rely on blog posts to make
purchasing decisions³

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 entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text '1 Serving Your Audience' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

1

Serving Your Audience

Serving Your Audience

In our first chapter, we're going to look at how we serve our audience. Our core blogging philosophy hinges on our readers; there's simply nothing more important. From the time the blog was launched three years ago, one of the guiding tenets has been: All content published on the LinkedIn blog must serve marketers by either providing practical knowledge, sharing news, or delivering entertainment. Knowledge, news, entertainment. It's simple, right?

Alex Rynne, *Associate Content Marketing Manager*, **Megan Golden**, *Senior Content Marketing Manager*, **Meredith Anderson-McDonald**, *Social Media Coordinator*, and myself (**Sean Callahan**), have continued this focus on serving the audience. We rely on our agency, **TopRank Marketing**, to help us create excellent content and optimize it for search engines. We focus on the topics marketers care about and are fighting to master: content marketing, account-based marketing, and social media marketing, to name a few.

Key blog post types:

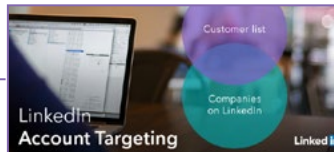
Knowledge:

"20 Books Every Marketer Should Read in 2016"



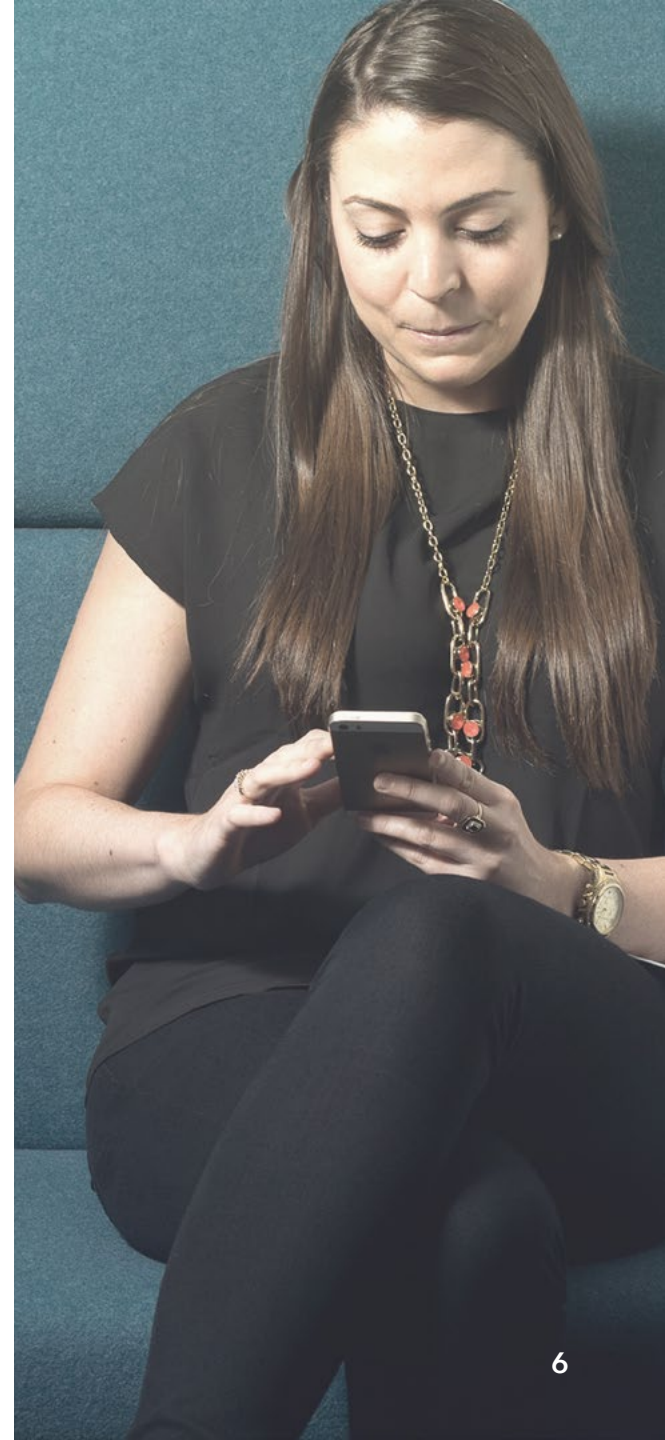
News:

"Introducing LinkedIn Account Targeting"



Entertainment:

"The George Costanza Approach to Content Marketing"



Serving Your Audience

In part because of this relentless focus on providing useful content to our audience (and tremendous help from our demand generation team), we've seen our subscriber total increase by more than 31 times over the past 18 months. And in the first quarter of this year, sessions on our blog increased by 48.9 percent compared with the same period in 2015.

The blog audience is not only bigger; we are certain it is the right audience, too. The data supports this assertion. Our analysis of the audiences indicates that 5 percent are already customers. Another 25 percent are prospects poised to be customers, because they score a 90 or above on our predictive lead model.

Our analysis also shows that we're reaching the right demographic mix of people in digital marketing and in digital infrastructure. About 62 percent of our audience is in marketing and advertising, 14 percent are in information technology, and 7 percent are in public relations and communications.

We believe the customer-focused, data-driven approach is the only way to operate a blog — and the only way to operate any business, really. Our team has focused on delivering relevant, useful and entertaining content to grow our readership. And we've used data to not only prove this growth but also to analyze whether it's on the right track or not.

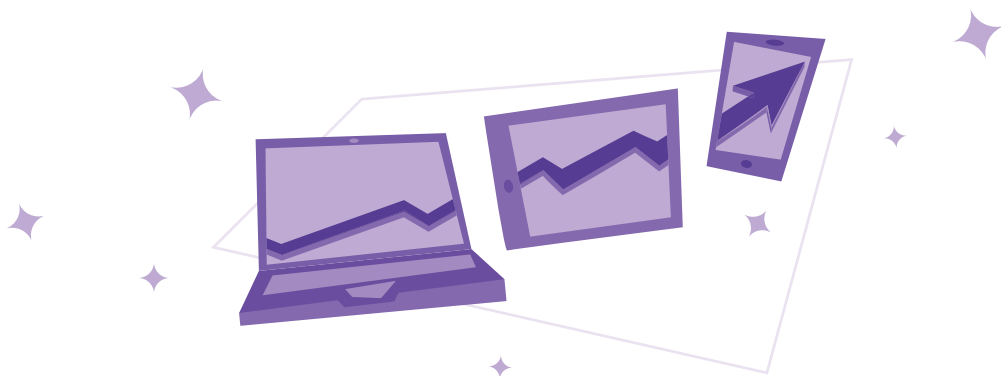
Key Blog Growth Stats

31X

**subscriber growth over
the past 18 months**

48.9%

**increase in visitor sessions
Q1 2016 versus Q1 2015**



Serving Your Audience: The Checklist

Just like top magazines, newspapers, or websites, the best blogs serve a specific audience; striving to give them exactly what they want. To deliver the content your audience is looking for, you must understand who they are and what they need. The following activities and checklists will ensure you have a sharp focus on your audience:

Activity #1: Identify Your Audience

Who is your audience? Customers? Prospects? Channel partners? Get specific and write down at least two distinct audiences.

- ✓ 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 that meet these specific needs (for each audience).
- ✓ Give your audience what they're looking for: practical advice, news they can use, and entertaining posts about your industry.

Activity #2: Track Your Success

There are several ways to confirm whether the subscribers and the traffic to your blog comprise your target audience. Try the following:

- ✓ Using the email addresses provided by your subscribers, survey them about their industry and other business demographics.
- ✓ LinkedIn also has a **pixel** that you can place on your blog pages (and other pages of your website). This pixel provides insight into the industry, job titles, company size, and other business demographics of the visitors to that page.

Utilize analytics packages, such as Google Analytics, to track 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 intently at the screen. The image has a green tint.

2 Creating Useful Content

Creating Useful Content

At LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, we have big, hairy, audacious goals for our blog. We want to create content that our audience wants, needs — and when the stars align — content they love. Here's how we do it:

Be of Use

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. **Recent research from LinkedIn** found that

when B2B buyers defined what they wanted from vendors, the top four 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”⁴

What do these answers have in common? They each hinge upon learning. Which is exactly why being of use is what we strive for with all LinkedIn Marketing Solutions content. Marketers are required to master account-based marketing, analytics, branding, content marketing, digital marketing, ecommerce, inbound, martech, metrics, mobile, native advertising, SEO, social media marketing, and so much more.

4: https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/marketing-solutions/global/en_US/campaigns/pdfs/rethink-b2b-buyers-journey-v03.09-eng-us.pdf



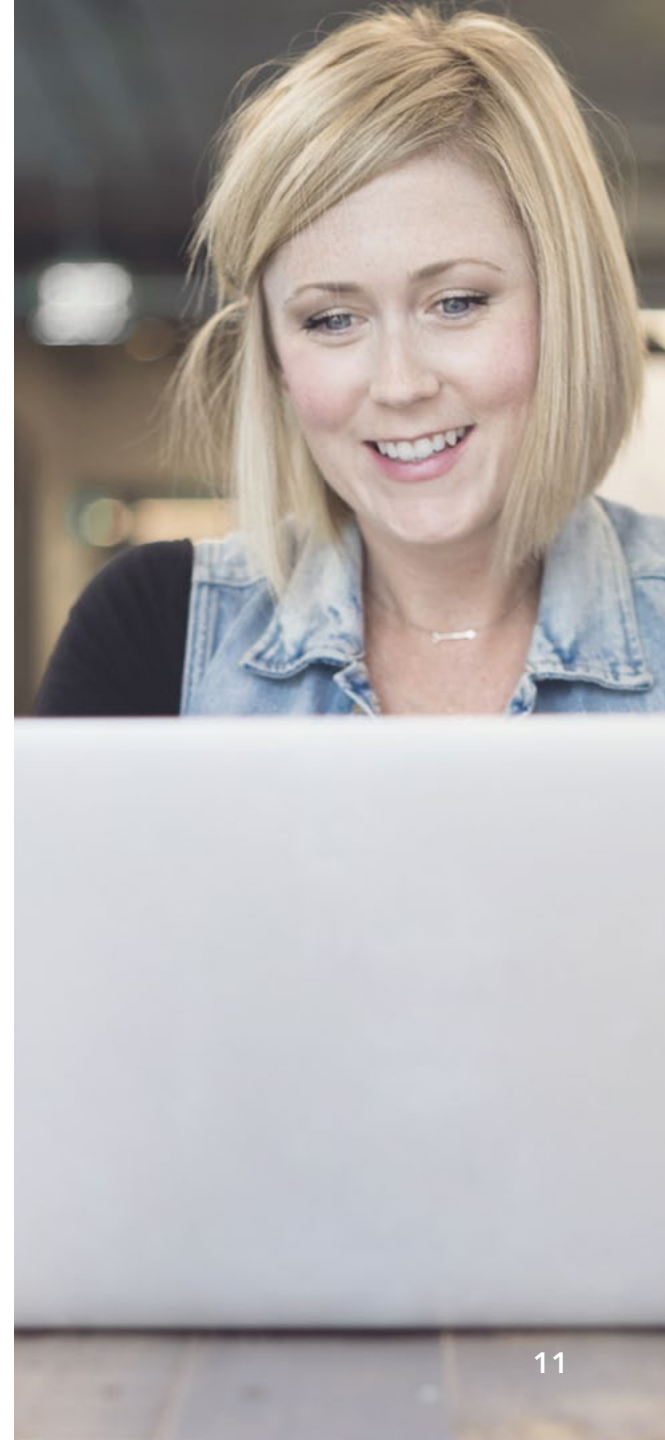
Creating Useful Content

Be of Use – Topic Selection

We've covered each of these topics on our blog – some more than others. Most of all, we've concentrated on subjects we feel LinkedIn can be of the biggest 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 marketing books** to help marketers expand their learning and keep pace with the latest thinking in our industry. Knowledge is power, as it always has been.

Some Key LinkedIn Marketing Solutions Blog Topics







Creating Useful Content

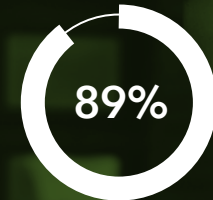
Be of Use – How We Use Search Engine Data

Knowing what our audience craves and ensuring they can find it online are two separate challenges. To make sure we're delivering the right content, we evaluate the original search engine intent of our audience. Which means, we evaluate specific words users type into search engines like, "what is content marketing" or, "how is social media changing in 2016." We then map these keywords to their correlating topics, and create content to answer the questions asked (or implied) by our audience's search queries.

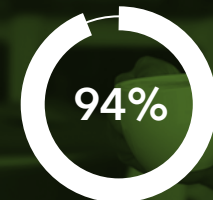
The chart below shows a few sample keyword rankings which we track, using Moz. These are keywords we have sought to own over time, and offer a glimpse of how developing content specific to search intent has contributed to boosting our Google search position ranking, sometimes by as many as 45 positions, in less than a month's time. Developing content at the crossroads of relevant user topics and search engine data is a prime example of our data-driven approach to blogging.

linkedin sponsored content Branded	National	 	#3	▲48+
linkedin marketing Branded	National		#3	
linkedin strategy for b2b Branded	National		#3	▲3
linkedin b2b marketing strategy Branded	National		#3	▲8

5: Fleishman Hillard, 2012 Digital Influence Index Study
6: Accenture, 2014 State of B2B Procurement Study



of consumers use search engines
for purchasing decisions⁵



of B2B buyers research online
for purchase decisions⁶

Creating Useful Content

Deliver a Variety of Content

We use the concept of food groups to help plan our editorial calendar. Using the five food groups listed below, we ensure our audience gets a wide range of content:

Meaty Posts

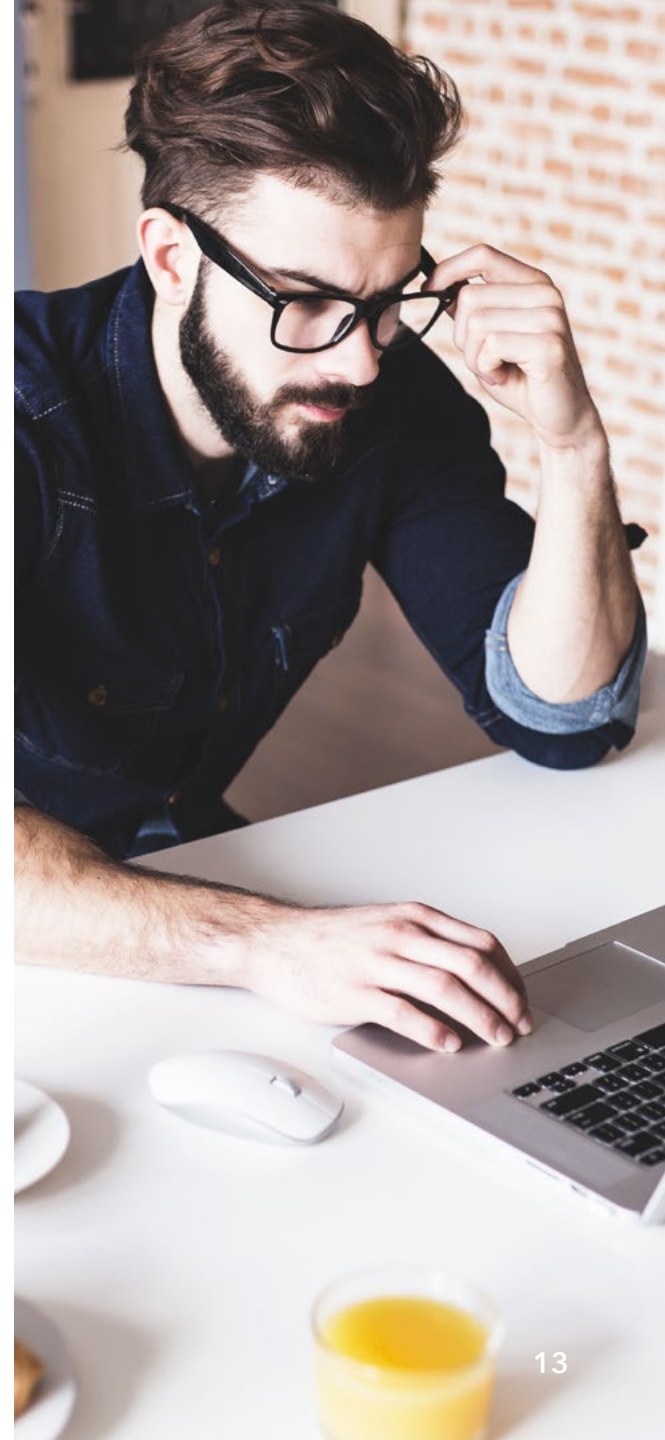
These posts consist of research and analysis. With data on our more than 400 million members, LinkedIn has exceptional data on professionals around the globe and on how marketers interact with our platform. One of our best performing posts is our annual look at the **10 Most Influential Brands on LinkedIn**.

A Side of Vegetables

Thought leadership is the vegetable of blog posts. The LMS blog strives to deliver thought leadership with posts such as this one, **“The Tech Marketer Difference: How Tech Marketers Differ from Non-Tech Marketers and Why It Matters.”**

A Serving of Whole Grains

These are how-to and influencer posts. We want a variety of strong voices on our blog, and we regularly provide a forum for the best minds in the digital marketing business. Here’s a guest post, **“5 Rules of B2B eCommerce,”** that was written by Mark Lavelle, the CEO of Magento Commerce.”



Creating Useful Content

Deliver a Variety of Content

Some Condiments to Spice Things Up

A blog needs to take a stand every once a while. We heat things up occasionally with what's known as a Tabasco post. Making bold predictions falls into this category. Check out the following, **"The B2B Marketing Trends That Will Define 2016."**

Every Now and Again, Some Chocolate Cake

Man does not live on bread alone. He needs a little sugar sometimes, too. We develop light-hearted posts to boost engagement and let our audience know that even though we're a professional network, we're not all business all the time. See our April Fool's Day post, **"Black is the New Orange: We Mourn the Death of Content Marketing."**

Plus: Unique Content

The blogging food groups concept provides excellent guidelines for producing content, but we obviously expand beyond that framework. In trying to woo your audience, we recommend regularly producing content that other companies will have a hard time replicating. Using LinkedIn data, our

Asia-Pacific team was able to produce a unique post showing **the power of content marketing on LinkedIn for small and medium-sized businesses.** We also use the blog as a conduit to introduce new products, such as **LinkedIn Account Targeting.**

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. The marketing book post mentioned above is an example. So is **"55 Quotes to Inspire Marketing Greatness"** and **"What Is Content Marketing: Definitions from 25 Thought Leaders."** Each of these posts introduces our blog to new marketers who may eventually turn into new subscribers.



Creating Useful Content

Variety of Content – On Frequency

Producing content at a frequency that will allow your audience to rely on you as a regular source of knowledge is crucial. Determining the right frequency for your blog however, can be a challenge. A recent Content Marketing Institute study found that 57 percent of marketers said producing content consistently posed a problem for them.

When you pick a blog post frequency — whether it's daily, weekly, or monthly — we recommend sticking to it. At the LMS blog, we've found a cadence of one to two posts per day (including Saturday and Sunday) works for our audience, and for us.

At one point, we experimented with three posts per day, but the effort to produce that many posts didn't generate more traffic, engagement or marketing-qualified leads, so we returned to our current frequency. (**Hubspot** and **Moz**⁷ conducted a joint study about frequency, and we recommend their posts on the subject as required reading for every business blog editor).



57%
of marketers say producing
content consistently is a
top challenge⁸

7: Moz: Raising the Bar: A Publishing Volume Experiment on the Moz Blog

8: Content Marketing Institute: B2B Content Marketing 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, Trends – North America

Creating Useful Content

Variety of Content – Repurposing Content

For the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions staff of four content marketers in North America, producing content at our frequency is akin to producing a daily newspaper. We borrow from the newspaper world by having an editorial calendar, which helps us get a handle on the workflow and the workload. But the three main secrets to producing blog posts at a consistent frequency are as follows:

- Repurpose
- Repurpose
- Repurpose

We use the turkey slicing analogy to explain our philosophy of repurposing. View your content as a **Thanksgiving turkey** that you can carve up and turn into turkey sandwiches, turkey stew and turkey a la king. If you create an eBook, a white paper

or any sales collateral, you can use pieces of that content to create a handful of blog posts. For “The Sophisticated Marketer’s Crash Course in Metrics and Analytics,” an eBook we produced last year, we developed a number of blog posts including, **“10 Marketing Metrics, and the Sophisticated Marketers Who Swear by Them,”** and **“NPS, Lifetime Value, Churn: Are You Using the Right Customer Retention Metrics?”**

Beyond eBooks, we at LinkedIn Marketing Solutions produce a wide variety of content, such as **webinars, videos, and podcasts**. We never miss an opportunity to promote this useful content via the blog, because it is a focal point in our overall content marketing strategy.

The bottom line for business bloggers? Don’t let great content go to waste.



57%

of B2B content creators
say finding better ways to
repurpose content is a
top priority*

Creating Useful Content: The Checklist

The most effective blogs deliver the right content to the target audience. Here are five ways you can ensure you're creating the content your audience needs and wants:

1. Be Useful

LinkedIn's research about the customer journey clearly indicates what the B2B buyer craves. Use your blog to provide the following:

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

2. Track Your Keywords

Break your search engine keywords into two groups:

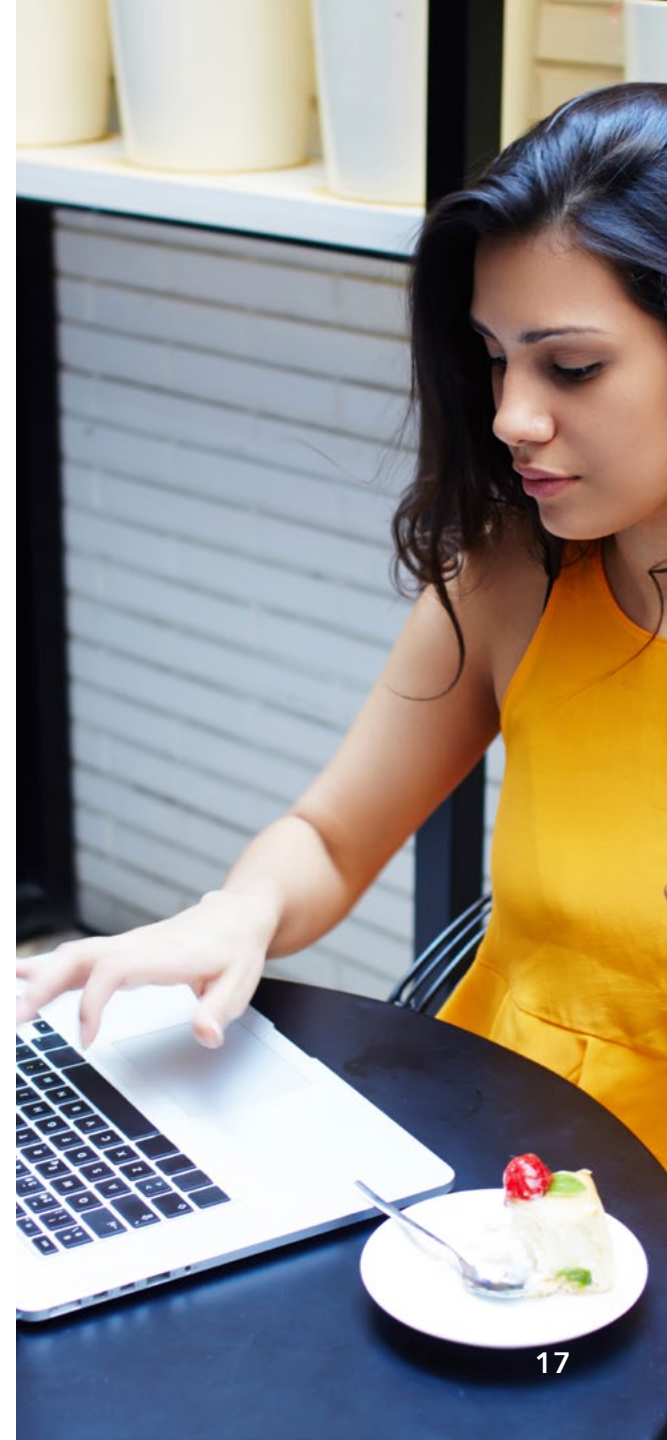
- ✓ Keywords your audience is interested in
- ✓ Keywords your company has the capability to own or rank highly for

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

3. Create a Variety of Content

Your audience is hungry for a variety of content. When you're creating content, use the blogging food groups to create tasty posts. Offer your audience the following:

- ✓ Meaty posts that contain research and other big bites
- ✓ Vegetable posts that contain thought leadership and necessary learning
- ✓ Whole grain content that offer how-to advice which truly fuels development
- ✓ Chocolate cake content to entertain, entice and delight your audience



Creating Useful Content: The Checklist

4. Find the Right Frequency

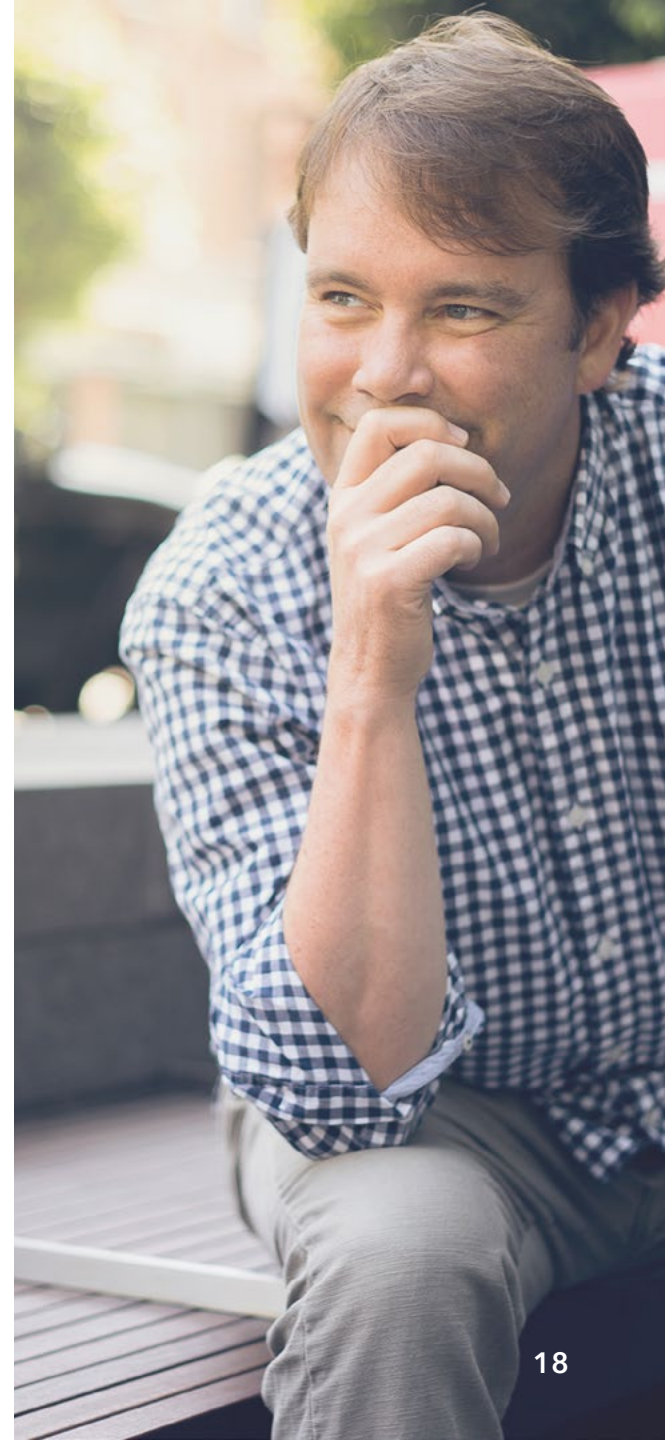
It can be difficult to strike the right balance. You want to stay top of mind for your audience, but you also don't want to strain your resources by creating content at a pace you can't maintain. Posting every day is ideal for some companies; posting a few times a month works for others. Pick a frequency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

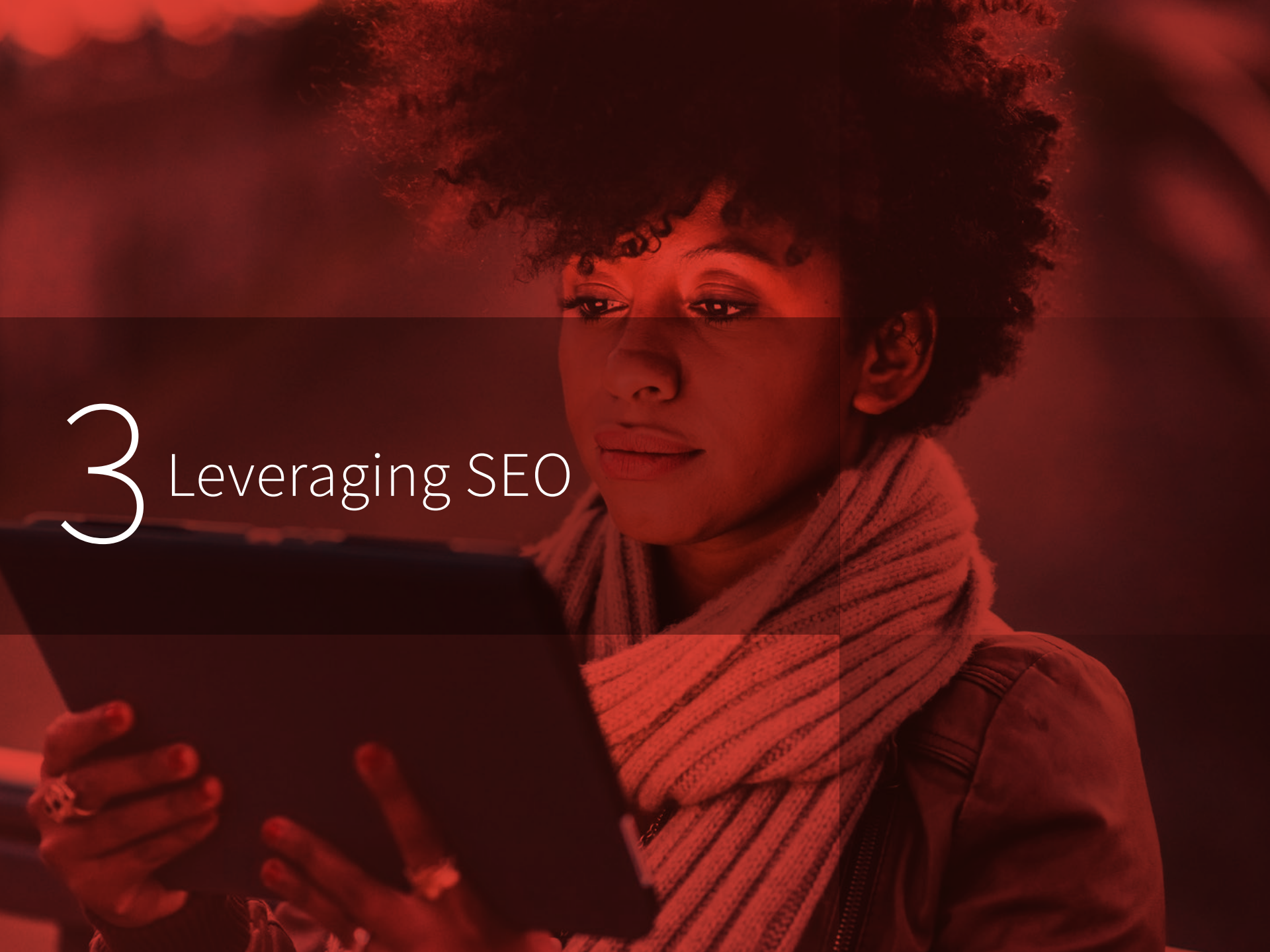
- ✓ Focus on regularity
- ✓ Start small: better to post two quality posts a week versus ten run-of-the-mill ones
- ✓ Repurpose topics: it's okay to blog about the same concept twice if you're adding a new wrinkle

5. Repurpose Your Content

A key way bloggers can maintain a regular frequency is by repurposing content from eBooks, videos, presentations at conferences, product data sheets, and more. It's a fact that marketers get tired of their own content and campaigns long before their audience does. Here are a few key repurposing ideas:

- ✓ Turn a blog series into an eBook
- ✓ Shoot interviews at a conference with thought leaders and use the audio as blog content
- ✓ Use presentations and slide decks as the framework for blog posts (or SlideShares)
- ✓ Curate your top 10 blog posts at the beginning or end of the year (e.g., 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 2016 and many of the same players are manufacturing driverless cars and building artificial intelligence technology. In case you're wondering, the answer is no. Google does not know what you ate for lunch.

Every year we face major changes to the "rules" of SEO. The algorithms behind search engines are in constant flux. Which means optimizing blog content for search engine performance requires more steps than many B2B marketers realize.

With some help from **TopRank Marketing**, our content optimization efforts have played a big role in growing our blog subscribers by 31 times in just 18 months. Wondering how we did it? Read on to discover the five people-centric SEO principles that fueled this success.

Identify the Blog Strategy

The first principle is deciding where the blog plugs into a broader marketing strategy. LinkedIn Marketing Solutions offers B2B marketers a **variety of tools** for reaching customers. But, will folks want to read post after post about LinkedIn Sponsored Content or Sponsored InMail? Probably not. There's a place for that, and it's not the blog.

We know that B2B marketers need more than product information or company news. Mostly, marketers are hungry for knowledge. Hungry to know what tools are available, which tactics will ensure success, what books they should read, which trends are legitimate and how to remain relevant in an evolving digital world.



of marketers report relevant content creation is the most effective SEO tactic¹⁰

10: Ascend2, 2015 Search Engine Optimization Survey Summary Report

Leveraging SEO

Identify the Blog Strategy

So, long before performing keyword research or running a gap analysis, we created our blog strategy. The strategy stands right at the corner of our business objectives and audience needs. These included:

- 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 organization
- Book reviews and **reading recommendations**

Remaining Relevant

Of course at some point our readers might also want to know how Sponsored Content, InMail, or Text Ads can help them reach customers. Will we write about that? Sure, once in a while. But the vast majority of content we produce remains focused on solving our reader's marketing problems.



Jesse Pickrain

Content Marketing Manager, TopRank Marketing

“As Jason Miller likes to say, ‘People invest time on LinkedIn.’ Since day one, LinkedIn & 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

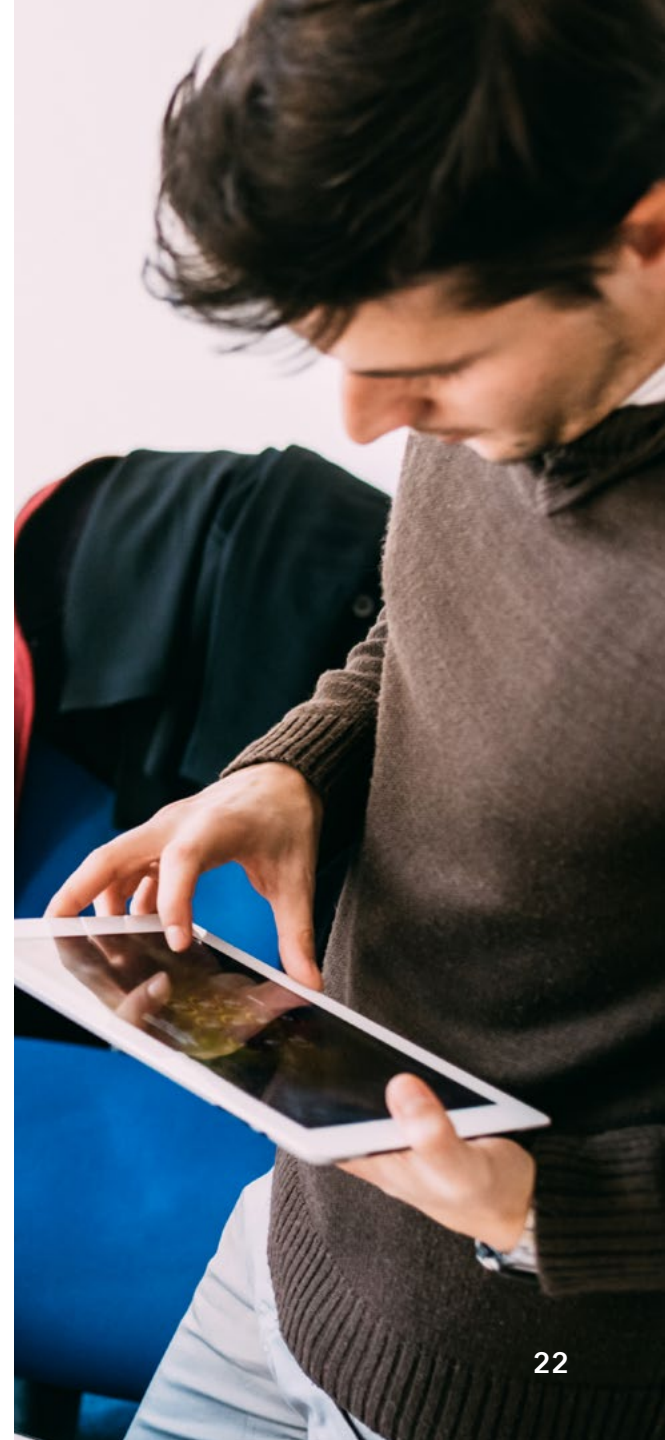
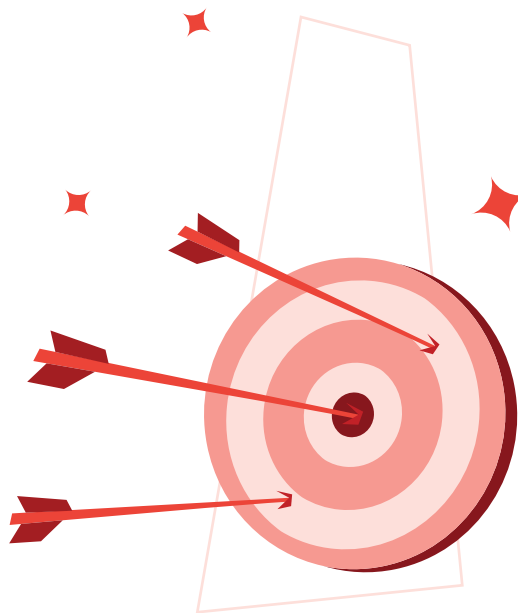
The Gap Analysis

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

Quite literally, a solid gap analysis will reveal whether your content is getting seen by your target audience. Here are some questions an ongoing gap analysis can answer:

- Who is currently ranking 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 optimal rankings?
- What related keywords or search opportunities exist?

With the answers to those questions in hand, we fill in our content calendar to meet our audience's needs. To boil it down, optimization is about giving our target audience the type of content they want, in a style they desire, at a frequency that will keep them happy. We optimize for readers, not search engines. Search engines will ultimately follow our audience's preferences, not the other way around.



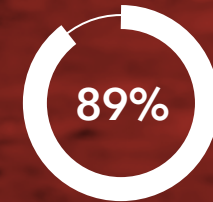
Leveraging SEO

The Gap Analysis

As an example, we recently published a post on **account-based marketing** that would have looked completely different without first using a gap analysis. We had known for weeks that ABM traffic was beginning to spike, and it was time to get in on the conversation. Without the gap analysis, our knee-jerk reaction to the trend would have been to post an in-depth article about how to make use of several ABM tactics. Sounds useful, right?

But the gap analysis revealed confusion in the marketplace. People weren't ready for "how to" content. They weren't even sure what account-based marketing was at that point.

Which is why we published a simple post, in which industry experts weighed in on the definitions of this elusive term (see below). Did it perform well? Yup.



of B2B researchers use the internet during the B2B research process¹¹

11: Think With Google, The Changing Face of B2B Marketing, 2015

Leveraging SEO

Make Data-Driven Content Decisions

Another crucial component to our blog growth has been creating **data-informed content**. While the gap analysis provides us with a regular target for improvement, our keyword glossary keeps us honest about whether we are closing that gap with data-informed content development.

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 more fun to create blog content that our audience loves. So, how do we come up with fun content that's also data-driven?

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 map the ones that are really great to the keyword glossary and prioritize the posts based on which target keywords we are trying to rank on that month (and which conversations matter to us).

Monthly dashboard meetings

We get together and 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 a backlog for future use. Ideas beget ideas. Take the pressure off by keeping a solid backlog.



Leveraging SEO

Embrace a Data-Driven Culture

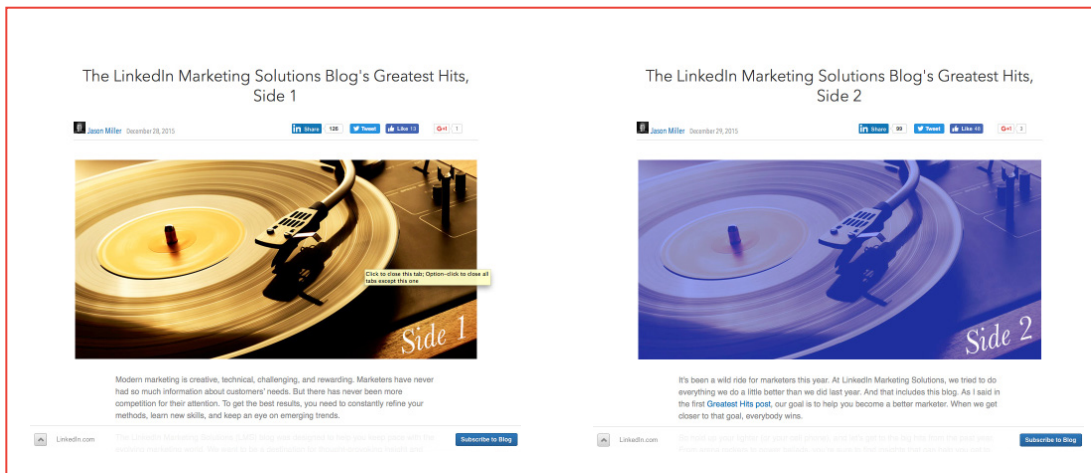
We're honest with ourselves and everyone on the content team about performance. But we know that being data-driven also means taking risks and trying new things. So we foster an open, supportive, and honest data-driven content culture.

We're also very open with our readers about what works and what doesn't. For example, we created two “**greatest hits**” blog posts that featured all of our top performing content. This helped boost performance of these posts, and offered new visitors a taste of our best content without having to scroll too deep into old content.



“By leveraging the right data, LinkedIn and TopRank Marketing 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. And 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 descriptions. Backlinks. And on and on it goes.

The problem with remaining laser-focused on SEO “rules,” is content quality typically suffers as a result. Which is why a big part of our blogging success has been a willingness to experiment with post types, titles, on-page elements, content length, and cadence.

Sure, we utilize SEO best practices. But we also get creative and crafty too. In a recent **video series** spearheaded by Jason Miller, we tried gating some amazing videos featuring top marketers riffing on digital trends. We assumed offering this much rich video content would incentivize our user-base to fill out a quick form. Did it work? Not at first. Did we give up? Heck no. We had some amazing video content on our hands. We needed to make use of it.

So, we broke the videos up into **bite-sized chunks** and delivered them one by one via the blog along with some additional content and insights. In the end, it worked out wonderfully, especially from an SEO and metrics perspective.



Leveraging SEO

Never Stop Getting Better

The final and most important aspect to our continued blog growth is a dedication to always getting better. SEO is a combat sport. If you stop fighting, you lose. Whether we're striving for higher quality content, more social shares, views or mentions – our de facto mantra has been to get better every single month. No going backwards. No holds barred. No backing down.

But that'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. We might even remove these from the blog, or revise them altogether. No sweeping things under the rug!

Team training

We're at all the big content marketing events. We are thrust into more SEO learning opportunities every year than nearly any team around.

Data-driven culture

You can't make data-driven content if your organization doesn't fundamentally adopt a data-driven culture. There are tons of tools and resources online (including our blog). Read them all.



“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. To keep your SEO cool and calculated, utilize the following:

Define Your Blog Strategy

- ✓ You must find the nexus between what your audience wants to know and what information your company can most credibly deliver. At this intersection is the information you should write about on your blog.

Analyze 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 what the data says about what content is working, what content your audience is reading, what content is driving engagement, and what content is driving sales. Do more of the content that works. Stop creating the kind of content that doesn't.

Don't Be Afraid to Take Risks

- ✓ Try different post lengths, give video a shot, read other blogs to gather ideas. Gauge 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 to make sure your SEO is truly doing what the "O" stands for: optimization.





4 Implementing Demand Generation

Implementing Demand Generation

Great content is table stakes. You can't bluff your way with poor content into building an audience that returns regularly to your blog. But great content alone isn't going to be enough.

Building a lasting audience for your blog is a team game. To drive subscriptions to your blog, you're going to need help from your demand generation team.

Do not 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 daily (or weekly) that new posts have been uploaded to your blog.

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."

At the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions blog, the demand gen team played a huge role in our increase in subscribers. Here are some of the methods we've used to boost the number of our subscribers.



"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

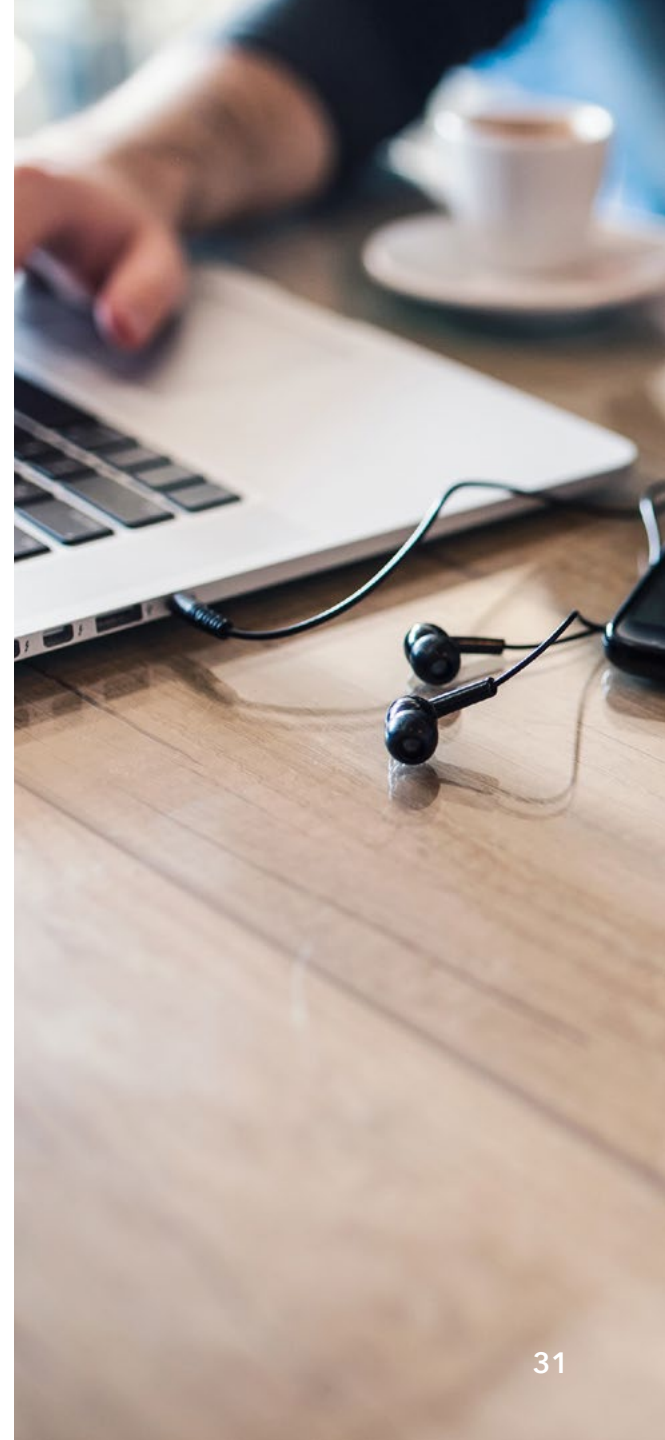
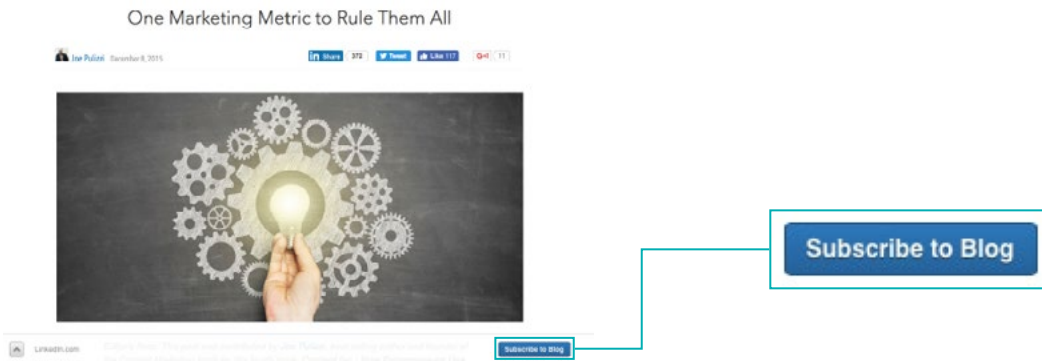
The Scrolling Subscribe Button

On some blogs, the subscribe button lives in the top right corner of the page. On others, the subscribe button is in the lower right hand corner. We've opted to place our subscribe button in the lower right hand corner, but never out of the blog 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 led to 33 percent of new subscribers to the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions blog over the past year.

Offering Daily and Weekly Blog Subscription Options

We post content to the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions blog seven days a week. We also

email our subscribers daily to let them know that 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 — annoying enough that it can lead to unsubscribes. In fact, the most common reason for unsubscribes to our blog is “too many updates.” To counteract this potential issue, we have emphasized to prospective subscribers that a weekly email option is available. We introduced the weekly option in November of 2015, and already weekly subscribers make up 19.8 percent of our subscriber base – up from essentially zero percent six months ago.



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. Our demand gen team sends these prospects an email thanking them for their interest and pointing them to similar content — such as our blog. This simple approach is our most effective technique for driving new subscriptions. More than one-third (36 percent) of our new blog subscribers in the past year have originated from these thank-you emails. (Thank you, demand gen!)

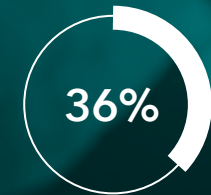
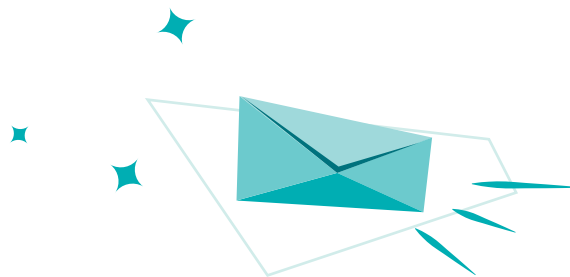
Quarterly Emails

Every company has an email database of prospects that are nurtured via email. Our demand gen team also emails segments of that database — about four times per year — 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. Additionally, it has a click-through rate 87 percent higher than our typical CTR for emails. 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. So we do, to some degree, 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 10 percent of new subscriptions. Our current Sponsored Content campaign, which promotes our top blog posts, has a 167 percent higher engagement rate than other Sponsored Content. And our Sponsored InMail efforts promoting the blog deliver CTRs 33 percent higher than the average Sponsored InMail.

The moral of this story, content marketers, is to make friends with your demand gen team. They can drive blog subscriptions like nobody's business.



of new blog subscribers were driven from thank-you emails this year¹³



of overall new blog subscribers came from quarterly emails to our database this year¹⁴

¹³⁻¹⁴: Source LinkedIn.

Implementing Demand Generation: The Checklist

Building a blog is not just about creation and right-brained thinking. It's also about left-brained math and calculating opportunities to generate targeted demand. Here is a three-part checklist for making sure your demand gen efforts are top-notch.

Make It Easy to Subscribe

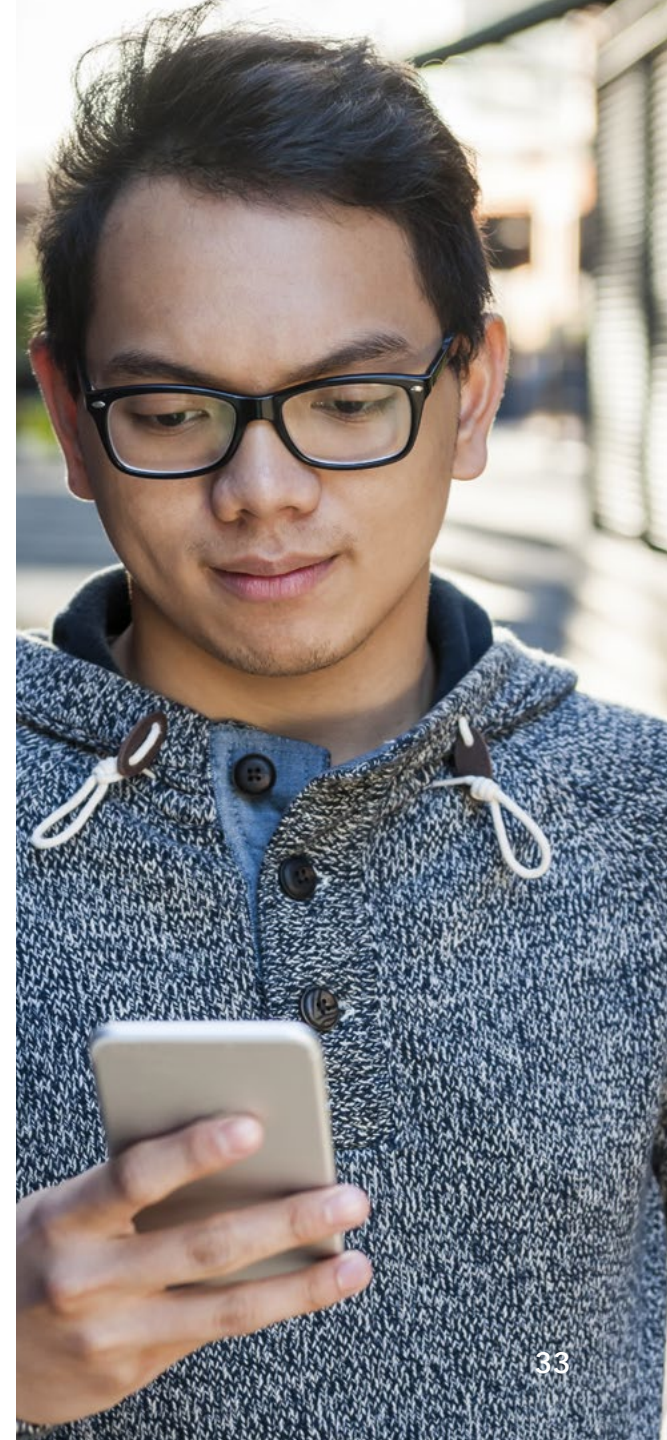
- ✓ Make the subscribe button extremely visible throughout the blog, from the home page to the individual post pages. Visitors to the blog have already expressed interest in your content: Don't miss the opportunity to encourage them to take the next step and convert.

Don't Overlook the Power of Email

- ✓ The people in your email database have already expressed an interest in your company. Occasionally send members of the database who have similar demographics to your blog subscribers an email encouraging them to subscribe to your blog. We speak from experience: It works.

You're a Marketer — Show Your Faith Advertising

- ✓ Here's a simple fact: Advertising works. 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

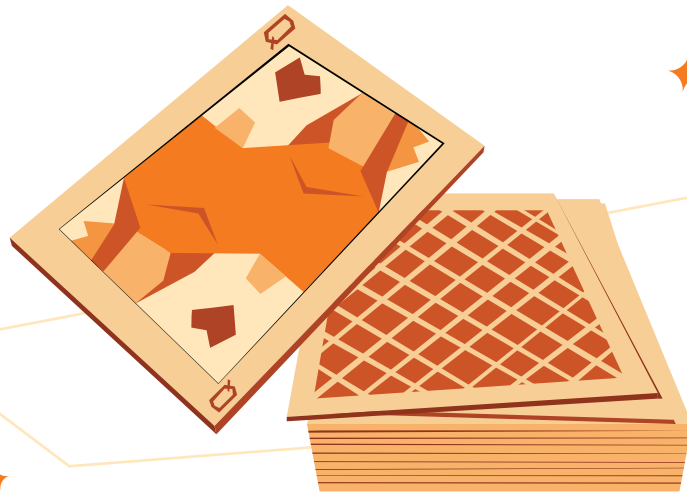
It is said content is king. No argument here.

But does this king have a mate? For blogger **P.J. Feinstein** the answer is an emphatic yes. “Content is king,” she says, “but promotion is queen.”

We subscribe to this way of thinking at the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions blog. We’re marketers, after all — true believers and passionate practitioners of marketing to marketers. We certainly don’t publish a

blog post without a plan to promote the heck out of it. And we’re equal opportunity promoters, telling our audience about our most recent blog posts via email, via social, and in person.

Here are some of the promotional tactics we’ve used to grow our blog subscribers by more 31x over the past 18 months and our traffic by almost 50 percent over the past year.



“Content is king, but
promotion is queen.”

P.J. Feinstein

Blogger & Founder, A Girl Named PJ

Promoting Your Blog

Email Promotion

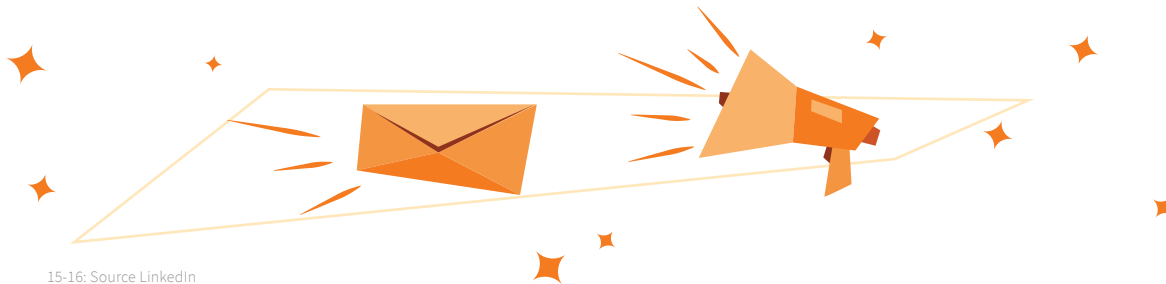
Email may be a traditional channel, as far as digital marketing goes, but it remains an effective one. We email the bulk of our blog subscribers daily to alert them to posts that were published that day. We launched a weekly digest option in 2015 and it immediately became popular. It now accounts for about 20 percent of our subscriber base. Being in front of our audience — people who have shared their email address with us — with useful content on a daily or weekly basis is a powerful thing.

Social Promotion

Social promotion is critical to driving traffic to the blog. At LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, we use two main Twitter handles — @LinkedInMKTG and @LinkedInB2B — to make our audience aware that we have posted new blog entries. We're not happy

just Tweeting about each post once. We Tweet about each post several times, because we're confident that our audience will benefit from our blog posts (even though we're not confident they'll see our Tweets each time).

We also use Facebook, Instagram, and other social networks to promote blog posts, but the cornerstone of our promotion is LinkedIn, which is ideal for communicating with the professional audience we target. Our audience is on LinkedIn, where content has become central to the platform. 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.



15-16: Source LinkedIn

Key Media Stats

9 Billion

The number of impressions
per week on LinkedIn¹⁵

15X

There are fifteen times more
content than job postings in
the LinkedIn feed¹⁶

Promoting Your Blog

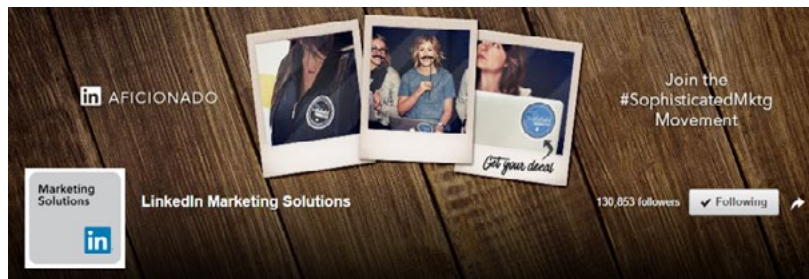
Social Promotion

Central to our reliance on LinkedIn is our use of the **Linked Marketing Solutions Showcase Page**, which recently passed **100,000 followers**. A LinkedIn Showcase Page is similar to a LinkedIn Company Page, except the Showcase Pages are for specific business unit, brands, products, or initiatives. We use our Showcase Page to alert our audience to relevant content.

For instance, we recently promoted Stephanie Sammons' **"4 Tips for Turning Your LinkedIn Profile Into a Powerful Marketing Tool,"** via our Showcase Page. At last count, the Showcase Page had delivered more than 25,000 additional impressions for the post.

We also transform posts into Sponsored Content, which helps boost impressions and performance significantly. Read more about our content marketing approach on LinkedIn in the following post, **"Introducing Your New LinkedIn 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

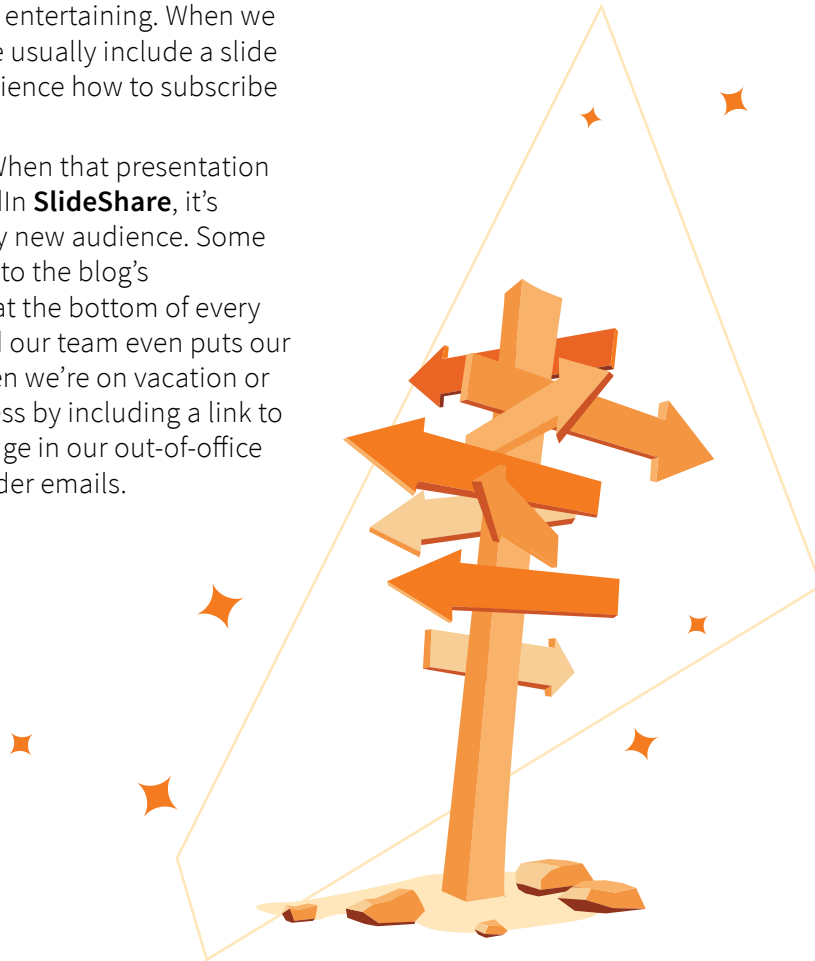


Promoting Your Blog

Promotion Opportunities Are Everywhere

We are not shy about promoting the LinkedIn Marketing Solutions blog, because I believe the content we publish here 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? 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 our team even puts our emails to work when we're on vacation or traveling for business by including a link to the subscription page in our out-of-office automated responder emails.



Promoting Your Blog: The Checklist

When you push a blog post live, your work is not done. It's only the beginning. To drive readership from your target audience, you must vigorously promote your content. Ensure you do the following:

Promote via Email

- ✓ It's essential that you promote your blog posts via email. Your blog should have a regular email cadence to your subscribers. 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 your blog posts on SlideShare. And, as an individual LinkedIn member, you can publish your complete blog posts on LinkedIn.

Embrace Promotion's Vast Possibilities

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



Conclusion

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

- Understanding their audience
- Developing not just great content but content their audience wants
- Understanding and implementing a strong SEO strategy
- Marketing their blog to build traffic and a subscriber base
- Promoting the blog 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 433 million professionals in its network. That's more than one-half 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