

# 31 Days to Build a Better Blog



## Transcript of the Bonus Podcast for Workbook Owners

The following is a transcript of a bonus recording by Darren Rowse from [ProBlogger](http://www.problogger.net) for 31DBBB workbook owners.

**Reminder:** if you've found 31DBBB helpful please consider passing on word of it to your network. You can make 50% of any sale you refer by signing up for our Affiliate Program at:

<http://www.problogger.net/31dbbb-affiliates/>

Hi this is Darren Rowse from ProBlogger and welcome to the 31 Days To Build A Better Blog Question and Answer Pod cast. And I promised on ProBlogger last week that I would spend an hour answering questions from people who had bought the 31 Days To Better Blogging Work Book and so that is what I am going to do now.

I have had over 120 questions submitted and I have only 1 hour so I apologize now for not getting through everything but I will try and motor through as many as I can. I am going to do this in hopefully an unedited fashion. I haven't really done much preparation for each question so a lot of it is off the cuff. I wanted this to be as much like an interview as possible so as if we were speaking face to face. So I hope this is helpful for you and I hope I get to a question that you have asked. So I am going to do this in pretty much a random order and hope that this is helpful.

**Let's get into the first one. *The first one is from Seth W. I would like to ask you what is the single greatest tip you would offer for bloggers who are trying to go from part time blogging to becoming a professional blogger?***

The first thing I would say to those who want to go pro is to take your time. I semi regularly get emails from people who email me and tell me that they are about to quit their job and go pro and go full time as a blogger and that always scares me a lot, particularly when I look at the blogs they already have and sometimes they don't even have blogs at all they have this delusion in their mind that they can just go pro whenever they feel like it and the reality is that it takes a long time to build a successful blog. So please don't just quit your day job unless you have got some savings that you could well burn through. That would be my first tip and I guess after that is to pick a topic that is something that you can see yourself writing about for the long haul. I have talked about this numerous times on ProBlogger in the past but a successful blog takes years to build up so you need to be willing to think and write and interact around a certain topic for that long. And then it's about working really as hard as you can to build that blog into something that can sustain you on a full time level. A lot of people start with the goal of a certain amount of money, "I need to earn \$20,000 a year, I need to earn \$50,000 a year" or whatever it might be.

My own strategy in the early days of blogging was much more about setting myself traffic goals and trying to increase traffic by 10% or 20% a month. That was really I remember probably about a year into my blogging and that was my goal 10-20% extra a month I wanted to have in terms of traffic because I knew if I could sustain that kind of growth over 2/3 years that I would have quite sizeable traffic. So instead of setting massive goals set yourself those types of goals and see how you go.

***Ok. Vincent Sparboom asks***

***There is something that I am curious about, now that you have reached 5000 posts, he is talking about ProBlogger and managed multiple blogs, what was your biggest mistake/misjudgment involving blogging?***

As I look back there have been a number of mistakes. One of them was starting my first blog that was on a .org.au domain. I live in Australia, as you can probably tell from my accent, and so started a .au blog and really that was a mistake in some ways in that when you try and find advertisers for a blog and you present them with a

.org.au, if those advertisers are from outside of Australia and most of my readers were from outside of Australia I was trying to find advertisers to match. They don't tend to look too well at that type of domain and so that was one of the mistakes I started, did early. Not securing ProBlogger.com early enough, I do have it now but I did have to pay a lot more in the end for that because I had already built up the brand of ProBlogger and so the guy who was squatting that domain was able to charge me a lot more for it because I made that turn into something. So that was some of the mistakes but a lot of those came about simply because I didn't know where things were going to end up and I guess I would say even despite some of those mistakes I have still managed to get where I am today and then have some success so no matter what mistake you make there are I guess ways to overcome them.

***Josh asks, "Is there any evidence to suggest that doing different blog post types for example review posts or list posts scheduled on particular days and advertising this fact is any better."***

This is one of the things we talked about in 31 Days To Build A Better Blog, is setting yourself an editorial calendar where on each different type/ day of the week you might set yourself a different type of post to write. Now this isn't something that I personally do but it is something I have seen and a number of bloggers do, particularly in those dry times when they are struggling to come up with ideas to write about on their blog. I haven't seen evidence that promoting you know Tuesdays is review day and Wednesdays is rant day that that actually helps your readers in anyway. I guess it depends a little bit upon your particular type of reader. For me that type of thing is more about you as the blogger and sustaining yourself as a blogger rather than doing something on your particular blog but I guess you could brand yourself in that way and have different types of posts on different days and actually let your readers in on what you are doing. I can't see why that would hurt. Perhaps you would lose a little bit of the spontaneity of your blog but I don't think that that's a massive problem.

***Rob B asks, "What tool or method do you use to keep notes or jot down ideas for blog posts." He suggests do you use a notebook or a smart phone.***

I do have notebooks. I am one of those people who I am sitting here at my desk at the moment and I can see 4 notebooks around me. I tend not to use the same one everywhere. I always try and have one with me. I am not talking about an electronic notebook, I am talking about pen and paper here. I also have an iphone so I am able to jot notes on the go with that but a lot of the things I do really I am on my computer so much that I just use blank text documents on my computer and just write down my ideas there or quite often actually will write down an idea as a draft of a post and so I will save that into the drafts area of WordPress if it's a post idea. You know I will write an idea for a title and I will write a few ideas for points in that post and then I will just save it as a draft and I will come back to it later. That's if I think that the idea is actually worthy of a post. So yeah, I don't really use too many programs. I have tried Evernote on my iphone a bit and that's ok it sinks quite well with computer and iphone but I am probably a little bit more impulsive and chaotic than that.

***Menshu asks, "What is the right way of creating a newsletter and can you point to some refills as they give a little guidance on creating newsletters for bloggers."***

Let me start by saying that I think newsletters are a fantastic way of building a readership. They have been one of the biggest drivers of traffic for my own blogs, particularly my photography blog. I have had a newsletter there for a couple of years now and I have 170,000 subscribers to it and every Friday I will send out a newsletter which is basically a summary of the posts that have gone up on blog over the last week. You can go to Digital Photography School and actually sign up for it for a week and just see what I do if you like. I find that that sends significant traffic the day I send that. It is always the biggest day of traffic on the site. So it is really crucial and there are some posts of ProBlogger about why newsletters are great. The resource that I use for that is a paid one. It is called Aweber.com or if you search on ProBlogger and you find the affiliate links you can sign up with those there if you like and earn me a \$1 or 2. It's a great tool, very feature rich. You are paying for the products so you need to expect something that is quite good. I find deliverability of the emails to be very good in comparison to a free service I used to use called Zookoda, which had a lot of problems. I don't even know if you can use it anymore. So yeah I found that particularly useful. For me the newsletter can be a number of things. I know a lot of bloggers use newsletters more to promote products and affiliate products that can work if the expectations with those that are signing up are going to get promotions. For me it's more about driving traffic. I do have an advertisement or an occasional affiliate ad in there but for me it's more about driving traffic back to my blog and I'll monetize that blog rather than the newsletter.

***Marcus Goodyear asks, "I'd like to know what process and human resources you use to manage online communities, especially as they grow. How can a blogger continue to be accessible as a community grows larger or is a blog just a media outlet with a little sense of community?"***

Yes there are 3 questions there but they are kind of related. Yes it is one of the struggles that I have with my blogs as they have grown larger and in particular having 3 blogs. All of which have their own communities on them. Yeah it is hard not to be able to interact with every comment and every reader like I used to be able to when my blogs were smaller. I guess one of the things I have tried to instill into each of my blogs is that I'm not at the centre of it. Whilst I know about the topics I write about I strongly believe that we as a community on the blogs know a lot more than me and so I am always inviting people to share what they know in the comments and as guest posts and I find that helps a little bit to dispel the myth that the blogger has to answer every question. I'd rather my community be a part of that process. Having said that I have someone now, Lara Kulpa who helps me to administrate comments on ProBlogger and she alerts me to comments where I need to make a particular answer if I miss it myself and she answers a lot of the questions herself and tries to build that community too. And that's one of the things I am able to do. She works a couple of hours a day helping in that particular area. Other than that it's just a lot of work and I guess that other thing I would say on my photography blog I have a team of volunteer moderators who help me run the forums there and a paid administrator, Simon, who is my brother-in-law. And again they help to run the community on that particular site. So I guess there does come a time for many blogs and many forums and sites that you do need to bring in help and get support in different ways. I hope that answers your question Marcus.

***Clara Matthews asks, “My question relates to privacy policies and disclosures and how and when a blog needs to publish them. My blog is 7 months and I have less than 100 subscribers and I am just starting to use affiliate ads. Do I need a disclosure statement?”***

In terms of disclosure I am not sure on the latest in the terms of the law on this but I personally have a page on my blogs which is I guess is a disclaimer/disclosure where I talk about the fact that help get the blogs running. I run advertising and I promote affiliate products. I used to have a little affiliate link/disclosure next to every time I had an affiliate link. In the end I found that readers were more annoyed by those more than anything else so I don't I guess proclaim it loudly from the rooftops but I have a site wide disclosure policy. In terms of privacy policies one of the things you need to do if you are an AdSense publisher is to come up with a privacy policy. They are requiring that now and I think a lot of advertising networks now are so you might want to look at that. It's something that I have got on my to do list at the moment. In terms of disclosure really there are, again I don't know the law on this, you need to talk to a lawyer about that, but bloggers have a whole heap of different stances. Some disclose every affiliate link they mention individually. Some have site wide ones, some don't have any at all and I guess really that comes down to your own ethics and style and approach as a blogger.

***Jason James asks, “I have just set up a new blog and I have spurts of traffic, like 550 yesterday and I only have 75 today. What is the secret to sustained day-to-day traffic.”***

Well Jason, partly I would say it comes down to blogging consistently over the long haul and building traffic slowly over time you will have spikes in traffic as people link up to you or as a post might do well in a social networking or social bookmarking site. That is perfectly natural but what you should be looking at is the overall trend, try to ignore these spikes to a certain degree or at least convert those spikes of traffic into regular readers but you should be looking at is, is your traffic trending up or trending down or is it plateaued on an average sort of basis. In terms of building that trend in a positive direction, there is a post on ProBlogger, I think it's got 21 ways of building a sticky site. I would recommend that you search for that and read it. It's about creating a site that is sticky and by sticky I mean a site where someone comes for the first time and they want to come back the next day or they are stuck to that site. One of the big ways of doing that is by getting people to subscribe either via RSS or email or on a newsletter and that actually helps to drive someone back to your site again tomorrow who might have arrived there today. Getting people to read multiple articles or your site rather than just one actually increases the chances that they will come back because every time they read something of yours your brand is reinforced in their mind. Posting everyday and one of the things a lot of bloggers will notice on the days they post the traffic is up and one the days they don't post it goes down. So if you can be producing a post on a regular basis, whether it's daily or every second day but that regular posting and even increasing the frequency of your posting can help to just keep that traffic steady and on the rise and really it comes down to being as useful as possible. If you produce a post that is helping people, solves a problem or meets a need for them you are going to build some anticipation in their minds that you will write something tomorrow that might be like that as well, so they want to be a subscriber or a member of your site. So yes it's about being

consistent in your writing, that is also often reflected in the consistency of your traffic.

***Jeff asks, “Darren, 31 Days is great”, Darren: Well thank you. Jeff “I am really enjoying it and learning a lot. I may have missed it but what is your criteria for affiliates and advertisers. How in depth are your background checks and do you continue to screen them as time goes on to ensure they are maintaining a level of service your aspire to.”***

Yes, well this is a good question because the advertisers and particularly the affiliate programs that you recommend actually say something about you as well. I’m probably a little less strict on the advertisers. I occasionally reject an advertiser because it is a product I completely disagree with philosophically but I am very careful about the affiliate programs that I recommend. I like to see them first and have a sample of them or I like to know the person behind the product that I am recommending and trust who they are as a person. The thing is if you are recommending dodgy products people then associate that dodgy product with you. Even though you might not have produced it, you’ve recommended it then that says something about who you are as the blogger as well, so you need to be particularly careful about the affiliate programs that you’re recommending. One of the dangers of running AdSense on your blog is that sometimes people target your blogs with dodgy products. Yesterday I had someone email me on my photography blog and they had sent an AdSense ad to a product that they’d had a bad experience with and they had assumed that that was my product and so I had some work to do there to I guess save my brand in the eyes of that person. So that’s an illustration I guess of how what appears on your site, whether it’s an ad or whether it’s content actually can have an impact. So yeah something that I do from time to time, particularly with the affiliate products but yeah it is something to be aware of.

***Ed Mercer writes, “What is the process if I want to use a post from someone else’s blog on my blog. Do I need to get in touch with them and get their permission or do I just make sure I credit them in a bio box at the end of the post?”***

Ed this is a question I get asked a lot and there is a lot of misconceptions about this and there is probably some differing of opinions but in my opinion, and it is a strong opinion, is that you should not use other people’s content on your blog unless you have their direct permission, particularly if you are using the full post. If you are using someone else’s post in full, I would actually argue that you should really never publish that. There really is no need to publish that. What I do if I like something that someone has written, I would take a quote, a paragraph usually at the most, I would put quote marks around it, making it really clear that this is a quote. I would always link back to that page and I would always try and add something to that post myself of my own. So introduce the quote. Say why you like it and add some of your own thoughts to it. This makes that quote unique and it gives something of yourself to it. If all you are doing is republishing other people’s content you are kind of just cluttering the web with the same content that is everywhere else but you also partly risk copyright violations but you also risk being penalized in Google for having duplicate content. When Google sees the same content on multiple sites it basically makes a decision about which is the original and it usually ranks the original higher and it penalizes or takes out of the index the content from the other publishers and

really ranks it quite lowly. So you actually run the risk of hurting your own SEO (Search Engine Optimization) by using other peoples content. So I would really advise you against republishing other people's work that appears elsewhere online. You could get yourself into legal trouble by republishing other people's content, particularly if it's copyrighted and I would argue that it doesn't give your readers much value if all you are doing is republishing other people's stuff. Add some of your own content. Produce something that is unique and useful to people and you will build readership. I am happy to talk more about that but it is something that I feel quite strongly about.

***Donald asks, "I am trying like crazy to get my bounce rate down. It seems that I have a lot of people hit the site but go no deeper than a page or 2. Are coming in with good key words but it's almost like they don't know there is more content there?"***

It's a great question and again I mentioned earlier How 21 Ways To Make Your Site Sticky, a post I wrote earlier on ProBlogger. Again it's a post I would recommend that you read because it's all about capturing that first time visitor who arrives on your site having typed something into Google and who leaves a minute later or even worse a couple of seconds later. You want to capture their attention. You want to give them a reason to subscribe; particularly search engine traffic does tend to bounce if people don't find what they are looking for in the first moment or 2. They quite often will leave. One of the reasons though I see quite a few bloggers will probably have that problem is that they put so many ads above the fold on their site which is above that point where you need to scroll down. That the content itself is sort of buried. You want to have your content front centre. You want to have captivating titles that grab people's attention and you want to have useful content and then you want to give people a way to connect, to read more, to subscribe, to keep coming back. One of the great plug-ins that most bloggers have with WordPress at least is related posts, so you can suggest some posts that people might want to read for further reading. Linking/interlinking your post from within the post is really important so that people as they're reading will naturally be clicking around your site. All of these things but yeah again 21 tips for sticky sites or something along those lines, you will find it on ProBlogger.

***NeedMoney.com asks, "What would you do differently if you were starting your blog for the first time tomorrow."***

This is again a question I get asked a bit and it's a good question because one of the advantages is that now having been blogging for 7 years, is that when I launch a new blog I have got the advantage of being able to leverage my old blogs and send traffic to it. And so if I was to start a new blog from scratch without any of the profile or the traffic that I already have, what would I do to get that blog going. Particularly around finding traffic, I guess one of the things that I really encourage new bloggers to do is to 1 get your blog up and running and have some quality content on it, having a professional design and get it looking good. But then in terms of promoting it you want to put yourself out there and start building relationships up with other bloggers. I guess the question that many of you will have heard me ask before is where is your potential traffic. Where are you already potential readers gathering online and to think about the other blogs that are already out there that have the type of reader that

you want. I would really advise guest posting and giving other blogs some of your best content, to give their readers a taste of what you can do. Even consider some advertising on your blog. You can pick up pretty cheap advertising with StumbleUpon, FaceBook, even My Space ads and quick disclosure My Space ads are an advertiser on ProBlogger, so take that into consideration. But those 3 options have relatively cheap ways of putting an ad out there that you don't have to spend thousands to advertise on those sites. Yeah, look I guess they would be some of the things I would do if I were starting a new blog for the first time tomorrow. If I were doing things differently from what I did previously it would be getting good domain names as I mentioned earlier. Starting with WordPress rather than Blogger. When I first started I used Blogger, which at the time had very few features and I quickly upgraded to Moveable Type and then to WordPress. So getting the right platform really and those are some of the things I would do differently.

***Chip Loan asks, "I've only been blogging 6 or 7 weeks and I love it. Darren: Great Chip: But I do run into problems. The blog I run is centered around gaming news. I report important stories, write reviews and opinions. What advice do you have for folks like myself? People who are passionate about a niche that may be bloated, very competitive and news driven."***

One of the things that you mentioned you are doing, which I think is really great is giving opinions. Particularly in news driven niches. People actually like opinion. They want to know what you think about the news that you are writing about. Helping people to make sense of that news can be really important. A lot of bloggers just report the news and they don't actually add anything of themselves to it. So yeah next time a news story breaks actually introduce it with some ideas about why this news is important to people and how it might apply to them and extend those ideas. Do prediction posts on the news that might happen in the future. These can be fun and they can also be good for your search engine optimization because you are starting to anticipate events that might happen in your niche. It also shows that you are a thought leader, that you are not just reacting to what's happening but you are actually thinking positively about your industry. Yeah, I would keep going with those opinions and reviews, particularly a lot of people search the web for reviews and yeah doing things a little differently and perhaps using some different media. Use video if you can. Show people what you are talking about rather than just talking about it. Give a little bit of humor into your posts. Perhaps in a gaming area industry it can be a little irrelevant and you know actually get a few laughs and be a bit entertaining as you write. They would be some of the things. I guess it's finding your own voice and your own style and seeing what your readers do react well to and then doing more of that.

***Luna K M asks, "How do you tell someone that the question that they are asking for advice with is one you don't have an interest in, inexperience with or is not in a scope of the blog without them feeling like that you just don't have time to answer their questions. I don't like letting people down."***

That is a good question; I guess that is something that I struggle with as well. I am a bit of a people pleaser so I like to be able to answer everyone's questions but the reality is I don't know everything and my expertise doesn't go to all areas. One of the things I have found helpful on my photography blog, particular with this is that I



started a forum. So I started a community area where people could post questions where they could share their advice, they can interact with one another. So if I get a question now that I don't know the answer to or I just don't have the time to answer because I get a lot of emails, I quite often send people an email back saying thanks for your question. I would love to be able to answer it but it's not something I can help with for one or another reasons but I have got this forum area where our community is really smart and they will answer your questions. That forum now over the last few years has got something like 50,000 members so there is someone in that forum that knows the answer to the question. So I refer people there and the benefit of that is quite often people not only get the answers but they actually discover a community who is on a similar journey to them. So it increases that, I was talking about it before, the community of knowledge, together we know a lot more and actually shows people a way to get an answer but also become a part of a community. So that is something that I actually, one of the side benefits I guess of having a forum. I hope that's helpful. Or you may actually refer them to someone else's forum that perhaps covers your niche in a wider way than you are able to.

***Katrina asks, "Does blogging have it's own limitations?"***

Yeah, well blogging isn't for everyone. It does have some things I guess that can be difficult about it. One of the things I struggle with as a blogger is once you have been blogging for a few years is that you can end up with thousands of posts. ProBlogger has 5000 posts in it and in it's natural default way of being set up the blog only shows the last 10. Whilst you can use categories and tags and some of those things to highlight some of your older posts, sometimes when you get to a point where you have been blogging a few years it can be difficult to show people what else you have written previously on the topics that they might be interested in. That's why I redesigned the front page of ProBlogger to be more like a portal that shows some of the key content and shows some of the popular posts and some of the most commented posts. And so that's probably some of the limitations of having a blog and I guess one of the challenges to overcome as your blog gets bigger is how to get people into your blog.

***Molly W asks, "Besides commenting on other people, commenting other people putting your blog in directories and such, are there other good suggestions for increasing blog traffic and getting more comments?"***

Getting more comments. One of the key things that I really recommend you do is ask questions to get comments. The more direct questions you can ask in your post and even asking those questions in the title of your post, I find that triggers more comments. In terms of getting traffic I think I have covered this a little bit already but guest posting, advertising a little bit, engaging in forums that are on your topic and actually becoming an expert in those spaces. Getting in social media, getting a twitter account and interacting with other people who are talking about your type of industry. On twitter those are some things I would encourage you to do there.

***Amanda writes, "Should you mix personal posts, like it's my child's 13th birthday and here's the photos, with business advice, info posts on a single blog or should you have a personal blog to do this?"***

This is one of those questions that can be answered in different ways and different people will have a different standard on it. I personally like to keep my entrepreneurial blogs, for a lack of a better term my professional blogs, professional and on topic but occasionally deviate. Or occasionally find ways to inject some personality and even a glimpse at my personal life into them. One of the ways I have done this is, there's lots of ways. Just telling stories that actually relate to your topic but include something from your personal life or just the occasional announcement post. So when my 2 boys have been born I actually did a post saying I just had a boy. I think that's important enough and I can actually break with the topic. But there are other creative ways, actually weaving some of your personality and personal life into your blog. For instance, on ProBlogger I wrote a post almost a year ago now in the voice of my son who is 2 and it was about what you don't know about my dad the ProBlogger. Or something along those lines. It had a little picture of him sitting at a computer and actually wrote a post that was very relevant to the topic of ProBlogger but in his voice. In doing so I was amazed at how many people actually commented upon that and found that I guess insightful. 1 for the content but 2 it was a more personal post. Yeah, I would personally keep you know 99% of what I do on my blogs on topic and occasionally inject something else in. Other people would take a different approach and do much more personal and make that part of their brand. Really it is up to you but I think in most cases you would want to stay on topic as much as possible.

***Eric Cummings asks, "For my website my fellow blogger and I write our posts way in advance of when we publish, so we set up an upcoming articles widget that shows our visitors what we will be publishing a week ahead of time. I haven't seen anything else like this on the Internet. Is there some negative side effect that I haven't thought about or is it a good idea. What do you think?"***

Erm, that is actually not a bad idea. Builds a sense of anticipation. Gives people a reason to subscribe to your blog. I guess it may frustrate some readers that they can't read what's coming up next straight away but I think most people would have experienced that when they watch advertisements on the television of upcoming programmes or episodes. I actually think that that's quite a good idea. I'd like to see the widget that you have built. I might actually have to check out your site. Yeah I actually like that. That is one good way of building some anticipation and building a sense of momentum on your blog and giving your readers some insight into the fact that you actually write posts ahead of time and you have some sort of editorial content. I think that's a good idea for lots of reasons. Good idea. Thanks for sharing it.

***StockTradersBlog asks, "I read much advice on blogging. One of them is to use your real name for you blog. I have seen many successful blogs, including yours do that. Me on the other hand, I am always posting anonymously on my blog. Do you think this is going to cost me a lot of readers?"***

Again this is one of this when there is no real right or wrong on this. There is a lot of successful blogs out there which are anonymous and probably more blogs using their real name. So I think you can do either. If you have a good reason to stay anonymous then I think that is good. One of the reasons people stay anonymous is to actually build a character or build a sort of alter ego and to write in that style or in that

voice. That can work as part of your brand. I personally don't have a problem with an anonymous blogs. I probably do connect more with people who I can relate to. So a name, a face, a voice but really it is up to you. Yeah again I probably would lean more towards doing it in a real name but that could just be my style.

***Perish asks, "I am reading your book. I am working through the workbook. My question is I am struggling to find enough resources on UK affiliate programs?"***

I think that is what you have asked. I think that this is a problem that people in different locations have. The majority of the affiliate programs that you will find on the web are perhaps a little bit more focused on the US market but there are affiliate programs in different regions. I know in Australia there are a variety of affiliate programs. They are not as big and perhaps not as developed as in the US but they are there. So if your audience is from a particular region it is worth doing some searching around. Even doing some searches. Say your key word 'affiliate marketing' and then UK or doing it in the UK. You know the .uk search engine. On Google it may help you to find those. Have a look at some other UK sites and see what affiliate programs they are promoting. That's a great tip for anyone wanting to get into affiliate marketing is actually look at who your competitors are promoting. If there is another blog or website or forum out there and they're doing a promotion on an affiliate product there are chances are that you could sign up for that same product. So see what other people are doing and you know click on those links and follow them and find out if they have got an affiliate program that is public.

***Dr Dave Hale asks, "Being a fledgling blogger, I want to know what is the best strategies to drive traffic to my blogs?"***

I think we have kind of covered this above but it really comes down to really great content on your site. Putting yourself out there in different forums, websites, blogs and social networking. I guess it's about finding where your potential readers are gathering and participating in them there.

***Dave also asks, "What are the first and easiest ways to monetize my blogs?"***

Good question. Again it depends a little on your blog, your topic, your niche but in general most bloggers tend to start out with an ad network. Whether that be AdSense, Chitika, Shopzilla. Some of those ones which it's just a matter of adding a little bit of code to your website and being paid per click quite often. If you want to start with affiliate marketing, a good one to start with is good old Amazon, who will pay you between 4 and 6 or 7 or 8%, depending on how much you sell. Where people buy a product after clicking on your links. So there are some good starting ones just to get a bit of a feel for them but as your blog grows you need to be thinking about how could you build direct advertising relationships with advertisers or sponsorship arrangements. You don't need masses of traffic to be able to do that and small deals can be good over the long haul. For example, on my first photography blog I would quite often ring up camera stores and say hey would you like to advertise on my site. I am only doing a few hundred visitors a day but I'd be able to do a deal for you know \$20 or 30 a month. It wasn't much but it got me started. So to get those sorts of ad sales deals you need to be proactive. Put yourself out there. Approach companies that you think might be interested. Yeah, you would probably want to start with

something a little bit more automated than that. Like Adsense or Chitika or Amazon's affiliate program.

***“Are there opportunities on the web to blog for companies who advertise?” – Dave again asks that.***

I think you mean getting jobs as bloggers. Yes, there is increasingly a lot of companies starting to hire bloggers and again not to self promote too much but if you go to [jobs.probblogger.net](http://jobs.probblogger.net), you will see a whole heap of ads there for people advertising for bloggers.

***Mark asks, “What suggestions would you have for a site that has no peers. It seems that my idea has no or little competition. I am curious how one would market such a site?”***

Well that's kind of good in some ways but it's difficult in others. It's good that you might not have too much competition. You might be first to this niche. It may also be an indication that really there is not too much to write about on that topic or that you have chosen a very, very, very narrow niche. Yes, so there are some goods and bads there. The challenge I guess is for you to work out where your readers are gathering online if there is no direct competition. I would probably be looking at larger sites. For instance, if it's a technological niche and for instance, if there was a new product that's just come out, a new gadget, I would be looking at sites like Engadget or Gizmodo or some of those big sites that have an overlap with your niche. They may not be exactly the same niche but they may have the same type of reader. You know. Sites like LifeHacker. They cover a lot of topics in the one place and there may be some overlap and that's probably where I would be spending time trying to build a presence. It's a little bit hard to answer without actually knowing the niche but I guess you'd also be thinking about the type of demographic you wanted to reach. You might not have another site out there with the exact same topic but you might have another site out there with a similar sort of demographic or an interest or age group or whatever it might be. So I am not sure I have answered that question as well as I could without knowing the topic but I hope it's helped.

***Selmon asks, “How do I get backlinks?”***

Backlinks. Let me just explain what a backlink is for those of you who are new to blogging. A backlink is really a link from another website and the reason they matter is that they actually help to grow your site's search engine ranking. Each link to your site is like a little vote in the eyes of Google and that helps for them to think your site is valuable in some way or another. How do you get those backlinks? Well really it comes down to a number of things but ultimately it's about writing a link worthy posts. The type of content that people want to tell other people about. So if people's first reaction when they read your post is, well I really need to tell someone else about this, you'll get links. And that's one of the objectives I have in mind as I am writing posts. How can I write something here that people would want to pass onto their friends? Whether that be on their blogs or on Digg or on StumbleUpon or on Twitter. That's part of it. Another part of it is about promoting your work so if you write a post that you think is particularly relevant for other blogs in your niche you might want to send them a quick email with the link to your post. This might seem a little

spammy or a little pushy but if you do it in a polite way. In a way that doesn't beg for links or assume that you will get a link, it can actually pay off. I know I am linking to other people in my niche on twitter in particularly all day and a lot of them come from people who say, "Hey I wrote this, take a look". Sometimes I link, sometimes I don't. I guess the other part is building the relationships with other bloggers in your niche, so they are actually aware of you and they following your RSS feed. Linking to other people's sites can get you a return link. People come to check out you know who's linking to me. Or this is a site that's relevant to me and they might subscribe and that relationship might grow.

***Hamilton Wallis asks, "My blog is part of my website. I am a consultant and my goal is to convert more visitors into leads. My question revolves around conversion. What 2 or 3 mistakes do bloggers make that hurt their conversion rates or what 2 or 3 things do you find yourself recommending bloggers do to increase their conversion?"***

Ok, so if I understand correctly you have got a business and you have got a blog associated with your overall business site and you are trying to convert readers into customers for your business or get people across to your website. One of the mistakes that I see bloggers doing is running advertising on their blogs. If their primary goals is actually to sell themselves. So I would avoid that. Really it is about seeing your business as an advertiser to your site. So you want to place the calls to action in strategic positions. Above the fold, you might want to create a little banner ad of your own to run on your site to actually drive people across but ultimately it's about showing your expertise and showing why people would want to hire you or why people would want to buy something from you. So they type of blogging that you do needs to be blogging that showcases your talents, that showcases your abilities. The other thing I would recommend is to teach on your blog principles. What I found, particularly with ProBlogger, I used to offer consulting on that blog and what I did on ProBlogger was talk about general principles on making money from blogs and then I would have people come and say can you help me to apply this to my situation as a consultant and I will pay you for that. So you might want to just talk more in general principles about your topic. Showcase your worth in your expertise and drive people across that way. The other thought I had was that you might want to do some case studies and actually show what you can do. Again I did this. I can remember I wrote a post a number of years ago now on ProBlogger. It was a post on how Jeff Jarvis, from Buzz Machine, who is quite a large A list blogger, could make more money from his Adsense ads. And I actually showed people without his permission. I mean he had his site up there anyway. Anyone could see what he was doing with Adsense and I basically did a walk through his site. A free consultation for him without even knowing I was doing it. Just with general advice on how he could improve his Adsense performance. The next day I had requests from people saying "hey could you do that with my site and I will pay you to do it". So showcasing what you can do, sometimes doing a public consultation if you like could help.

***Fay Asks, "Do we only leave comments on recent posts of other bloggers and use old posts to link to it."***

I think that, well I am not really sure what you are asking there. But if it's about promoting yourself as a blogger and engaging in other people's comments you could

probably the most logical place to do that would be on their more recent posts because there would be more people coming. So what you are really wanting to do there is to actually showcase again your expertise. So leaving comments that actually help people and engage with people on their blogs, that will actually highlight who you are to the other readers. And so do that in a more active comment space rather than on old posts is probably better.

***Aruna asks, “I just got your book. My question is about organizing blog posts and using categories. Do you recommend using many specific categories? Now I probably have at least 30. When narrowing it down to a small number. How many?”***

Again this is something I see a lot of different approaches on, my personal preference is not to have 30. I think on ProBlogger I probably do have quite a few these days and I need to cull a few. But I find if you have too many they kind of lose their significance but then if you don't have enough you just end up with these mega categories. It's a tough one, it depends partly upon the topic but I would probably aim for 10 or so and then maybe have a catch all one, which has always been my approach. It's not something I have put a lot of time and effort into thinking about for my own blogs. Similarly with tags, I haven't really used tags too much either and I probably could improve my own blogs but thinking more about how I do that, I don't know if I really helped with that one. I'm sorry.

***Ok. Chris asks, “I would like to know if you have any design layout lessons to maximize ease of reading. I am specifically interested in column layout and sidebar suggestions?”***

I'm not a designer Chris. I have not designed a blog since 2002, so it's not my area of expertise. However, I know my own personal preference is to try and keep things as simple as possible. You may not think that looking at the front page of ProBlogger, which is quite cluttered at the moment but on posts, particularly I think you need to keep your content front and centre. Keep as much of it above the fold as you can. Personally I like blogs with two columns. One sidebar and one content area. I know at times it's just impossible and you need to have more than that. I like wider and more open, clean layouts personally. I think anything that takes focus away from the content can actually really hurt your sites stickability and getting people to subscribe. So I guess the other thing I would say on that is you know you have got to really think about what is your prime objective with someone who comes to your site for the first time. Is it to get a subscriber or is it to get a click on a link. Or is it to get them to buy a product. Whatever that first thing that you want people to do needs to be in the hot zone on your site. So you really need to think carefully about your priorities. What do you want people to do and then start with that, in putting that in a prime location. And what do you want people to do next if they are still there and then put that in the secondary position. So really thinking about it in that sort of way, rather than just, is it pretty. I think it can be helpful.

***Stan D asks, “Which method of following your blog do you consider more viable. Through the RSS feed or via a newsletter?”***

I actually think both. I don't prioritize them really. It probably differs a little from blog to blog. I have put more effort on my photography blog into my newsletter because that's a medium. Email is a medium of that. That readership is much more for me with a RSS. Whilst I do have quite a few RSS subscribers on that blog, I have more newsletter email subscribers and that is simply because that readership is more focused upon email. On ProBlogger the readers tend to follow more through RSS or these days through Twitter. I know an increasing amount of our readers are using Twitter more than they are actually using RSS and they are reading the links that appear in their Twitter feeds. So I guess it's about knowing your audience and focusing in those particular areas. Having said all that I think email is really under rated. A lot of people have written it off but I actually think it is incredibly powerful. I know with the launch of the 31 days to build a better blog work book, the affiliates who have been promoting that, the ones who have converted the best, have been the ones who have email lists who have promoted it via email, rather than via Twitter or as blog posts and to RSS readers. So email is quite powerful in that way. It's about knowing your audience.

OK. I've got 5 mins left in the podcast. Let me try and power through. I'm only half way.

***Melissa asks. Let me get to the actual question here. Melissa O'Connell, "Recently I wrote a post about a modified vegan muffin recipe that my family and I have been enjoying. I gave credit to the book and the authors who I got it from and added their book on Amazon to my site. Do you think this is an appropriate way to introduce it to my readers and give it proper credit, where credit is due?"***

I'm not familiar with the actual law when it comes to recipes, so you will probably want to ask a food blogger that question. My own stance on that is similar to what I mentioned before. I really hesitate to use full posts from other sites or a really long quote from books. I think you will probably get away with it, if you are promoting the actual book in some ways. Quite often authors will give you an excerpt, which you can use. So perhaps you could have actually approached the author of that book to actually ask if you are allowed to do that. I know of food bloggers who actually have done that. They have actually asked authors if they can use recipes and that type of thing. On the legalities I am not really sure. So you will probably need to do a little bit more research on that but I think you have kind of covered yourself a little bit with the credit but wherever possible get permission on those sorts of things.

***Someone called See Asks, "Do you think it is important to have dates on posts. Doesn't dating an article make it less likely to be read?"***

Ah, good one. This is a question I get occasionally and there is always a debate when I talk about it. I'm not someone who says you have to have dates on posts. I have 3 blogs. 2 of the blogs have dates on the posts, the 3rd doesn't. Digital Photography School doesn't have dates. Not on the posts themselves. On the comments it does but not on the post itself it doesn't. The reason for that is the content on Digital Photography School is much more timeless. It's a much more advice that applies whether you are reading it today, in 2007 or whether you read it in 2010. It's more general advise on photography and a lot of that advise doesn't change. Where I write something that is time specific on that blog I will make a note in that post that this

was written on a certain date. On the other hand blogs like ProBlogger or Twitip, they are more time sensitive. I am writing about technologies and those technologies date. I am writing about advice that works today, that might not work tomorrow and so I keep dates on those posts. You're right, when you have a date on a post it can date that post in some peoples minds and so I have done it myself. I arrive on a site. I look at a post that I think, "this looks interesting", aw it was written in 2004. It's old. Sometimes I will get over that and you know I find that post helpful anyway but quite often look at the date and think yes this isn't relevant. So yes there is some of the pros and cons on that you know. It really comes down to what you want to achieve and the type of content that you have.

***Mr I asks, "I have no problem with content. It's fine. But what I lack is a promotional strategy. How can I build a good strategy and stick with it?"***

Talked a little bit about some of the strategies that I would use earlier. In terms with sticking with those strategies, you might think guest posting is something you might want to do. Actual schedule it into your week and if you go to, I think it was day 31 of the 31 day workbook, you'll actually find there that I suggest you do a plan for your month. I think I also did, there was a post one of the days towards the end on actually planning your promotional strategies as well. So you actually need to Ok what's important to me, what do I want to achieve, guest posting. Yes I want to do that. I want to interact in 4 forums in my niche. I want to leave comments on these 3 blogs and build relationships with these 4 bloggers. So you might have a list of 10 things that you think is important to you to promote your blog. Actually get your calendar out and assign yourself 2 of those activities for each of the weekdays of your week. You know, today I am going to leave comments on this forum and this blog. Tomorrow I am going to write a guest post. The day after I'm going to interact more on Twitter and build up relationships with other people on Twitter. On Friday I am going to email all these bloggers just to see how they are doing and perhaps suggest a link that I have written. You actually need to plug those things in, they are important. If you don't do that, I find most of us just do it when we think of it and we quite often don't think of it. So actually if something is important to you, schedule it in to your own schedule.

Well we just reached the 1 hour and 1 minute mark in this pod cast, so I am aware that I have only just got through over half of the questions. I apologize if I didn't get to your question but I hope that this hour has been helpful to you. I'm slowly or quickly loosing my voice here, so I think I have better stop. But again thank you for buying 31 Days To Build A Better Blog. A few people have been asking me, is there going to be another one. I don't know at this point, possibly. To be honest, that 31 Day period and then pulling together the workbook was a lot of work and it has left me a little tired. So I need a bit of a break in terms of producing that type of content again because it was quite labour intensive. But I will let you know. You're on the email list. If you're not on the email list to get more updates for 31 Days, please do subscribe to that but I will let you know if there is another one.

Again thank you for your time today and thanks for buying the workbook.

This is Darren Rowse from ProBlogger, signing off.