Ten Easy Ways to Attract Readers to Your Blog ...

... And Keep Them There

Introduction

I'm hoping you've had a chance to read *Ten Powerful Ways to Make Your Blog Posts Stronger*. I've written this follow-up ebook to address one huge question:

Why is no-one reading my blog?

I'll give you the good news first. It's probably not because your posts aren't good enough – if you've been implementing the tips in *Ten Powerful Ways* then you'll have some great, attention-grabbing pieces on your blog that really deliver value to readers.

So far, so good.

But ... however awesome your content is, readers might need pointing towards it. And once they're on your blog and reading, you want them to stick around.

We're going to begin with five ways to get your blog into great shape so that it encourages readers to stick around and then we'll look at five ways to get those readers coming in.

If that seems a bit backwards, think of it this way: we're tidying up your house first, *then* inviting the guests over...

#1: Make Your Blog Easy to Read

We covered readability in terms of formatting and conversational language in *Ten Powerful Ways to Make Your Blog Posts Stronger*.

Here, though, I want you to think about how easy your blog is to physically read.

The Text Itself

Some common problems which I've seen crop up again and again are:

- **The font size is too small** – bumping it up slightly can encourage readers to stick around, rather than clicking away

- **The font itself is difficult to read** – sans-serif fonts (like Ariel) are best

- **The background makes the text hard to read** – stick with a plain background behind the text itself (you can do something fancier down the sides of the page, if you want)

- **The text is white on a black background** – a difficult combination for readers' eyes

- **The lines of text are too close together** – this can be tweaked by setting the "line-height" in your blog's stylesheet. It'll probably be called "style.css" or similar.

Too Much Clutter

Blogs can also become difficult to read if they get cluttered. Perhaps you've got every widget known to mankind in your sidebar, making it hard for readers to spot the relevant information (like your list of popular posts).

Be especially careful with adverts. Yes, your Google AdWords box might be converting well because you've jammed it in the middle of every post – but it could be annoying readers and driving them away from your blog. Instead of making pennies on AdWords, think long-term: loyal readers will often become loyal customers.

Is Your Blog Attractive to First-Time Readers?

If you really want to improve your blog, find someone who's never seen it before and ask them to take a look. (You're welcome to ask me, if you want – ali@aliventures.com.)

Get them to tell you whether there's anything which makes it hard for them to read your posts – and be prepared to make some changes based on their feedback.

> **Exercise #1:**
>
> Increase your font size. (With most Wordpress themes, you can do this in the style.css or stylesheet.css file – look for "font-size".)
>
> If your background makes the text hard to read, change that too.

Further Reading

Make Reading Your Blog Easier: 3 Tips by Amy on Blogging with Amy

This post goes through three simple tips – limiting your header image height, avoiding light text on a dark background, and creating more space on your blog. All simple suggestions which can make a huge difference.

#2: Update Your "About" Page

When did you last update your About page?

Many bloggers set up an About page when they first start their blog – and never touch it again. But the About page is often the most-read page on your site, and it's crucial that it draws readers in.

You'll want your About page to:

- **Explain the purpose of your blog**, in an engaging way
- **State who the blog is for** (e.g. "entrepreneurs", "writers", "women")
- **Tell the reader a little bit about your own story** – make it clear why you have the credentials, experience or skills to write this blog
- **Give links** to encourage the reader to check out some of your best posts
- **Mention any services or products** that you sell on your blog (or elsewhere)

It's fine to write about your personal life – perhaps your hobbies, or your family. But try to keep this towards the bottom of your About page. New readers don't have any particular reason to care about *you* – what they're interested in is how you can help them, through your blog or your services.

How Much Detail Should You Include?

Your About page doesn't need to run on for ages. Try to stick with interesting, useful information which will (a) help readers figure out whether your blog is for them and (b) help to build up a personal connection with the reader.

When it comes to personal details, you may or may not want to include:

- Your real name (some bloggers use a pseudonym)
- A photograph of yourself (some bloggers use a cartoon-style drawing or similar)
- The names of your family members (some bloggers use initials or nicknames)

Updating Your About Page Regularly

Many bloggers find that, as time goes by, the purpose of their blog shifts slightly. For instance, my blog Aliventures started off with lots of posts about personal development, goal setting and so on. It took months before I decided that I wanted to focus on writing advice and aim the blog at writers.

Even if your blog doesn't change direction, you'll find that you write new, better posts which you want to link to, or you release new products to promote.

Your life will move on, too. You might graduate from a degree, have a child (or another child), get married, move to a new city ...

It's worth making a note to revisit your About page on a regular basis, maybe once a month. That way, you can make sure it's always up to date.

Exercise #2:

Look at your About page. Does the first paragraph clearly explain what your blog is about? If not, rewrite it!

Further Reading

[How to Write the Perfect 'About' Page (by Numbers)](#) by Skellie

This post is geared towards bloggers who have a particular service to sell – but you'll still find it useful even if that's not you. Skellie goes step by step through the structure of an About page.

#3: Offer Multiple Means of Contact

An easy way to engage readers is to build a personal relationship with them. Obviously, you won't be able to do this with every single person who comes to your blog – but you can make sure that readers who want to get in touch can do so easily.

That could just mean putting your email address in the sidebar – but if you have a little more time, I'd highly recommend setting up a specific Contact page.

Your Contact Page

By convention, the Contact page is generally the right-most link in your navigation menu – or the bottom link if your navigation runs down the side bar. You don't *have* to put it there, but doing so makes it easy for the reader to find it at a glance.

Your Contact page should include, at the very least:

- **A form** which readers can fill out to get in touch (I like the Contact Form 7 plugin for Wordpress, which makes it easy to create nice-looking forms).
- **Your email address,** preferably in an easy format for the reader to copy and paste.

Why both?

Some readers like to use contact forms – it saves them opening up their email account and writing an email.

Other readers prefer to have your email address so they can email directly – they might not trust that the contact form will get their message safely to you.

If you have them, **include a link to your Twitter, Facebook and/or LinkedIn accounts.**

If your blog supports your small business, you may also want to include a phone number.

Exercise #3:

Create a contact form for your About page. Allow fields for readers to give their name, email address and message. You might also want to include a field for the subject line.

Further Reading

Why Your Blog's Readers Should be Able to Contact You by Darren Rowse on Problogger

This is an older post – but one with extremely relevant points about *why* it's important to give readers some way to contact you (other than leaving a comment).

#4: Add a "Tweet" or "Like" Button

How easy is it for readers to share your posts with their friends?

If their only option is to copy-and-paste your post's URL into Twitter or Facebook, then they might well not bother.

By including a "Tweet" button (for Twitter) or a "Like" button (for Facebook) on every post, you allow readers to easily share your work with a single click.

Here's an example of how it works:

The reader enjoys the post, and sees a button to share it:

The reader clicks the button, which instantly generates a Tweet – it can be modified, or sent as-is. There's no need for the reader to copy out the title. The link is automatically shortened for Twitter, too:
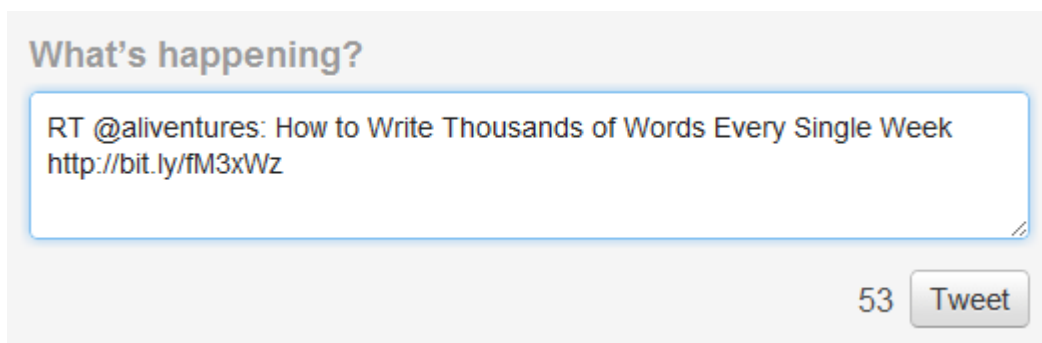
The other great advantage of having a button on your posts is that it provides social proof. If a reader sees that a post already has 20 tweets, they might well be encouraged to retweet it too.

There are several plugins which will let you add a "Tweet" button to your posts. I use the Topsy retweet button, available here: http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/topsy/

Facebook or Twitter?

Depending on your blog's audience, you might find that Facebook is more effective than Twitter – or vice versa.

I prefer to just use a Tweet button, as I currently have a lot more Twitter followers than Facebook fans for Aliventures. If you want to try out a Facebook like button, though, you can get a plugin here: http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/facebook-like-button/

Most Tweet/Like plugins will let you either put the button automatically on every post, or include it using a special word or two of code.

> **Exercise #4:**
>
> Install a Tweet button or Like button so that it appears on every post on your blog. Next time you write a post, encourage people to "click the button" to Tweet/ Like it.

Further Reading

15 Useful Twitter Plugins for WordPress by Tomas Laurinavicius on WebDesignLedger

A good, recent list of WordPress plugins which let you do various things with Twitter – like displaying your recent tweets on your blog, or showing your Twitter follower count.

#5: Run Your Feeds Through FeedBurner

FeedBurner is a free and very useful piece of software – and it's extremely popular with bloggers. It takes your blog's feed (that's the stream of new posts which you produce) and adds some extra functionality to it.

By using FeedBurner, you can:

- **See how many readers have "subscribed" to your blog** (that means they're getting your new posts into their feed reader, or to their inbox)

- **Track the increase of subscriptions over time** – so you can see which promotional strategies are working

- **Give readers an email subscription option** – because in most niches, your readers will be more comfortable with email than with using an RSS reader

- **Create a badge for your blog which shows how many subscribers you have** – this is great social proof, once you've got a decent number of subscribers

Setting Up Your FeedBurner Account

You can get started with FeedBurner by going to: www.feedburner.com

This is what my blog's feed looks like, when you click on my RSS icon. (You can see the feed for yourself: http://feeds.feedburner.com/Aliventures)

It doesn't take long at all to set up a FeedBurner account, and it's well worth doing to add some extra functionality to your blog's feed.

Once you've got your account, you can click on the "Publicize" tab, then on "Email Subscriptions" down the side, to create the option for your blog's readers to subscribe by email.

Note: Copywriting experts recommend that you *don't* use the word "subscribe" unless your audience are very tech-savvy – say "get free updates" or "get posts straight to your inbox" instead.

Exercise #5:

Go to www.feedburner.com and "claim" your blog's feeds.

Update your "Subscribe" link or RSS logo to point to your new FeedBurner feed.

Further Reading

How to Use FeedBurner to Maximize Your Blog – Part 1: The Basics by Paige on LaurenWayne.com

This is a great, straightforward post which explains how to use FeedBurner with three popular blogging platforms – Wordpress, Blogger and TypePad.

So, your blog is in great shape to welcome lots of new readers. Now you just need to throw open the doors and encourage them to come in.

In this section, I'll start with the easiest, quickest suggestions and work up to the harder, more time-consuming ones.

#6: Add Links in Your Signatures

A "signature" is the piece of text which appears at the bottom of every email that you send, or at the bottom of your forum posts.

It takes seconds to create or update your signature – but doing so can bring in thousands of new readers over time. You can make every email you send – and every forum post you write – a chance to gain readers for your blog.

In your email account, create a signature (or update an existing one).

Ali Luke
Web: www.aliventures.com
Twitter: @aliventures

Writing coaching: www.aliventures.com/coaching

You'll almost certainly want to include the direct URL of your blog. As you can see, I also include my Twitter username and a link to my coaching page.

You might choose to add extra interest for potential readers by:

- Including the tagline of your blog

- Linking to a specific post, a free ebook or other valuable resource

Signatures on Forums

If you're a member of any online forums, check whether you can add a signature to your account. If the functionality is there, it's probably okay to use it – but read the forum rules to find out whether or not it's okay to include a URL in your signature.

Your forum signature will appear under every post you write, so keep it short and straightforward. You'll want to include:

- Your name or pseudonym (as this won't be obvious from every forum post)

- A few words about who you are/what you do

- The link to your blog, or to a specific post or resource

You can even use a forum signature to run a special promotion: I've done this to good effect by giving forum members a custom discount code for my ebooks.

Exercise #6:

Go into your email account and create a signature. Don't worry about making it perfect. Just put in your website name and URL, and perhaps a link to your Twitter account or Facebook page.

Further Reading

Website Traffic Series Part 6: Using Forum Signatures and
Part 10: Using Email Signatures by Daniel Scocco on Daily Blog Tips

These are both clear, straightforward posts which explain what to do (and what not to do!) when you're promoting your blog via forum or email signatures.

#7: Ask a Blogger to Link to You

This approach is worth using with a little caution, because there's a risk of annoying other bloggers. It's a great one to try, though, because a few strong links can make a huge difference to the amount of traffic which you get – and to your position in the search engine rankings.

When you've written a post that you're really proud of, ask someone to link to it. All this takes is sending a brief Tweet or email.

How to Pick a Blogger to Ask

You'll want to choose someone who:

- Has a blog related to your topic

- Has a reasonable number of readers

- Links out to other blogs (not all bloggers do)

Avoid the A-Listers

Don't email the biggest blog in your niche asking for them to link to you. In most cases, you'll be ignored.

It's nothing personal – they just don't have space to link to *everyone* who asks. You'll get better results by targeting bloggers who're nearer your own level.

Ask Bloggers Who You're Connected To

Ideally, you'll want to request links from bloggers who you already know.

You might even want to link to one of their posts and wait to see whether they drop you a comment to say thanks; if they do, that's a great chance for you to respond and ask if they'd like to link to one of your posts in return.

Not Getting Any Links? Try Asking for Retweets Instead

Note that asking for a retweet is generally much less of an imposition than asking for a link from a blog, though a single retweet isn't as effective as a single link.

Simply adding the words "please retweet" has been shown to increase retweeting rates – so don't be afraid to ask!

> **Exercise #7:**
>
> Ask one blogger to link to you. Approach a blogger who you already know (either personally or just through reading their blog) and make sure your post is on-topic for their readers. Keep your request friendly and concise.

Further Reading

[11 Ways to Increase Your Chances of Being Linked to By a Blogger](#) by Darren Rowse on ProBlogger

I can only imagine how many link requests Darren must get! This post is packed with simple, effective tips about asking bloggers to link to you.

#8: Leave Comments on Other Blogs

One simple way to get your blog known is to *leave comments* on other blogs.

Whenever you leave a comment, you'll be able to link your name to your blog by entering your blog's URL in the "URL" field.

If your comment – or even your name! – is interesting, you'll find that some readers click through to check out your blog.

Here's an example from a comment left on my own blog:

Lorna Fergusson   April 29, 2011 at 12:42 am

The best piece of advice I came across during last year's NaNoWriMo was to have a calendar on which you mark each day on which you've done some writing with a big red cross: it becomes crazily important to keep that chain of red crosses going. It really worked for me!

Lorna's name is a link to her website, www.fictionfire.co.uk.

When you're using comments to build traffic, there are a few things to steer well clear of:

- **Don't use your blog's name or a keyword** – this comes across as spammy, and bloggers may even delete your comment. For instance, I leave comments as "Ali Luke" not as "Aliventures" or (worse) "Writing Tips".

  It's OK on most blogs to use your name *then* your blog's name, e.g "Ali Luke | Aliventures"

- **Don't rush to leave a comment just to be first** – read the actual post!

- **Don't pick a fight just to try to persuade readers to click on your name** – it's going to get you the wrong sort of attention, and your comment might well get deleted.

- **Don't leave comments unless you have something to say**. "Great post!" is nice to hear – but it won't add anything to the discussion and it's unlikely to get many readers to click through.

To make your commenting more effective, look out for blogs which have the "CommentLuv" plugin. This is a clever little bit of software which will link to your most recent post, underneath your comment.

You can see it in action on my own blog:

It's also a good idea to add a photo of yourself which will appear beside your comments on many blogs (the image is also a link to your URL). You can do this on Gravatar (http://gravatar.com).

Relationship Building

Leaving comments will bring in some quick, short-term traffic – but it's also a powerful way of building up relationships with other bloggers (which makes it easier to ask for a link or a retweet).

Exercise #8:

Pick three blogs – ideally, ones you're already reading. Leave a comment on the most recent post on each blog.

Further Reading

[Are Blog Comments a Source of Referral Traffic?](#) by Lorelle VanFossen on BlogHerald

A great, practical post from Lorelle which will help you develop some real strategy around your blog-commenting.

#9: Write a Guest Post for Another Blog

Many big, popular blogs won't link to you just because you ask them – but **there's an easy way to get a valuable link by creating a win-win situation for you and for them.**

Write a guest post.

I know this can be a pretty intimidating idea, especially when you're new to blogging. You might think that no-one will want a guest post from you.

But the truth is, most big blogs are *very* keen to have well-written, on-topic content from guest writers – and they don't mind whether your own blog is brand-new or well-established. In fact, I've even seen guest posts by writers who don't have a blog at all.

How to Write Your Guest Post

Pick a target blog *before* writing your post. Aim for a large blog in your niche which uses guest writers. **If they have submission guidelines, read them – carefully.**

Write your post, using some of the techniques which you learnt in *10 Powerful Ways to Make Your Blog Posts Stronger*.

I see some would-be guest posters fall down by producing something half-hearted and scrappy – remember that your post will only be accepted if it's good, and readers will only want to come on over to your blog if they're impressed.

Writing Your Bio

You'll normally be allowed a short bio with your post. (Check other guest posts on your target blog to see what the convention is.)

Make sure you include your name, a few words about yourself, and a link to your blog – or, even better, to a specific post or page on your blog.

Here's an example:

> *Ali Luke has just released a (totally free) mini-ebook, Ten Powerful Ways to Make Your Blog Posts Stronger. It's packed with great advice, clear examples and quick exercises to get you to take action. Click here to grab your copy now.*

(This was my bio on my ProBlogger guest post 7 Habits of Professional Bloggers. It might even be the reason why you ended up getting this ebook! ☺)

Exercise #9:

Go through the blogs which you read regularly. Do any of them use guest posts? Get their guest post guidelines and write a plan for pitching them a post of your own.

Further Reading

Guest Posting: Common Questions Writers Have by James Chartrand on Men with Pens

If you've got any niggling doubts or worries about guest posting, there's a good chance that James has addressed them here. This post also has links to a bunch of other articles about guest posting – you may want to make time to read those too.

#10: Create Valuable Content – Regularly

Finally, we're onto one of the hardest – but most crucial – factors in getting and keeping readers.

You need to write valuable content on a regular basis.

Valuable means that it does something which your readers want. That usually means entertaining them, encouraging them or educating them.

Regular means that you keep up your good work. You won't gain much traction if you publish one great post every few months – you need to be working on your blog every week.

A great way to create valuable posts – and to have so many ideas that you can always write something – is to answer this question:

What Do Your Readers Want?

You can figure it out by:

- **Looking at the comments** which they leave on your blog, and on other blogs in your niche

- **Running a survey** to find out what big questions or concerns they have

- **Using Google Analytics** to find out which of your posts are most popular

- **Reading books or magazines** aimed at beginners in your niche, to see what popular topics they cover

- **Installing Lijit** so that you can see what readers are searching for on your blog

Valuable content will get linked to and retweeted by your readers, drawing more people in. It'll also keep your existing readers engaged – they'll be more likely to subscribe to your RSS feed, or to come back to your site looking for new posts.

> **Exercise #10:**
>
> Write down five post ideas, based on questions which readers are asking or posts which have clearly struck a chord with your audience.

Further Reading

Blogging Regularly For Non-Writers by Cache Crew

I personally think that all bloggers are writers – but I know that the label "writer" is an uncomfortable fit for many people. This post is aimed at folks who find writing a bit of a struggle – there's some great tips here that should work for anyone, writer or not, who wants to improve their blogging productivity.

Where Next?

Congratulations on making it to the end of this ebook!

If you're looking to take your blogging or writing even further, check out my ecourses:

- On Track – www.aliventures.com/on-track

- Blog On – www.aliventures.com/blog-on

You can also hire me for one-to-one coaching: you can find out all about that on my coaching page at www.aliventures.com/coaching

And you'll want to check out my blog, www.aliventures.com, for regular writing-related articles. It's totally free – you can even opt to have my latest posts delivered straight to your inbox.

About Ali

I've been blogging for over three years, and I've written for many big sites – including writing/blogging sites like Copyblogger, ProBlogger, Daily Blog Tips and Men With Pens, and personal development sites like Dumb Little Man, Pick the Brain and FeelGooder.

I have a BA (Hons) in English from Cambridge University and an MA in Creative and Life Writing from Goldsmiths College, University of London.

You can contact me at ali@aliventures.com or find me on Twitter as @aliventures