

THE  
**PHOTOGRAPHY**  
**blog**  
HANDBOOK

an educational guide from



**PHOTOSHELTER**

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# About PhotoShelter



**PhotoShelter is the leader in portfolio websites and business tools for serious photographers.**

With PhotoShelter, you also get powerful features and resources to market your photos, such as SEO and social sharing capabilities, in addition to the most options for licensing photography, selling prints online and pro-strength file delivery tools to please your clients.

Visit [photoshelter.com/tour](http://photoshelter.com/tour) and let PhotoShelter power your business online!

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**Try PhotoShelter**  
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Build a stronger photo business with a PhotoShelter website. You can now try PhotoShelter free for 30 days if you join by July 15, 2012.

Launching your new PhotoShelter website is so simple, you can get it live in a matter of minutes.

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Offer only valid for new PhotoShelter users.

# PART ONE:

## Blogging for Your Photo Business



# What the Blog?

Although Microsoft Word's Spell Check tool is a little behind the times, even most Internet newbies recognize the word “**blog**.” The blogging community commonly uses the word as both a noun and a verb. For example, one can *blog* on their *blog* about a topic. The word can also be modified to describe a **blog's** proprietor as a “*blogger*.” On their **blog**, a **blogger** can create a **blogroll**, which is essentially a list of links to other **blogs** they recommend. Simple, right?

By standard definition, a blog is an active log of entries or “posts” containing thoughts, links, opinions, information, and other elements of personal interest published chronologically on a website, starting with the most recent entry at the top.

But the benefits and uses of a blog have changed significantly over the past 10 years. And this evolution has had a direct impact on how photographers market their brand and grow their business. A direct outgrowth of the online journal world, blogs have become an excellent marketing resource, an impactful search engine optimization (SEO) tool, and an extension of business branding. As a photographer, blogging is not only an impactful platform for showcasing your work in-depth, but also a tool for engaging a wider audience and prospective clients. With an active blog, you have the potential to drive traffic back to your portfolio site that may not have ever found you otherwise.

As blogging has proliferated around the Internet, so too have the platform options (more on that later). Blogging platforms continue to evolve both in visual sophistication and ease-of-use, increasingly blurring the traditional line between blog and portfolio website. Blog software and the surrounding community are consistently creating new plug-ins, “skins,” and short cuts to enhance the functionality and appearance of blogs.

[UK wedding photographer Lisa Devlin](#) speculates whether photographers will even need to have a static website in the future. She already has colleagues who just have a blog, a strategy that has so far worked very well for them.

The process is so automated now that almost anyone with 30 free minutes and Internet access can start a blog. As a photographer, the crowded marketplace should not deter you from joining the fray, but should motivate you to do it better. In this guide you'll find tips for beginners just getting started as well as experienced photographers looking for some new ideas to invigorate their blogs.

## Microblogging vs. Blogging

The online marketplace is not just crowded with users, but also options. You can write a long blog post about an amazing shoot you did over the weekend, or you can **microblog** about it as it happens. Much like the name implies, a **microblog** is a type of blog to which users publish **micro posts** – typically short text or small file updates. One of the most well known examples of a **microblog** is **Twitter**, where users can post updates of 140 characters or less.



But if you have ever posted a status update to Facebook, Twitter, or any other kind of social platform – technically, you have microblogged. You are already more Internet-savvy than you thought! But is one form of blogging better than the other? Not necessarily.

Though a blog and microblog both share a fundamental chronological function, their use does not have to be mutually exclusive. Microblogging offers a quick place to record thoughts, share concise ideas, and promote your brand. Interaction tends to be live and in real time, allowing you to instantly engage with your audience. On the

other hand, a full-scale blog gives you the opportunity to not just tell the full story but illustrate it with images, videos, supplementary links, and an unregulated word count. With a wealth of sophisticated plug-ins, installable software components that enhance software capabilities, and blogging software readily available online, it is actually quite easy to integrate microblogging with your blog. All of the photographers consulted for this guide use microblog outlets in some capacity to promote new blog posts. Each time they publish something new, they will Tweet it, share it on Facebook, etc.

[Editorial photographer Robert Caplin](#) frequently microblogs by tweeting to his large Twitter following. He also posts photo status updates using Instagram, and then shares those photos on Twitter.



The blogging world may seem to have an overwhelming number of avenues into the online community. But when it comes to starting a blog, don't waste time familiarizing yourself with every single platform out there. Instead, focus on who your audience is, what they are using, and why.

The ultimate key to a great blog? You must create content worth sharing.

# Why Blog?

We are becoming a culture of over-sharers, due in no small part to the wonderful world of blogging. So if you aren't in the market to share your innermost personal thoughts online or you don't have tons of opinions you think everyone in the world should agree with – why blog?

Let us answer your reasonable question, with another reasonable question: Why not blog? Blogging plays such a large role in the online space that having one to share your own voice is no longer an act of vanity, it's just expected.

For photographers, a blog offers unprecedented freedom in self-publishing and promotion. Here are a few key reasons why blogging is plain old smart business:

## 1. Free of cost

Most basic blogging platforms are 100% free. The only thing setting up a basic blog will cost you is a few hours of your time. Max.

## 2. SEO

A blog is a search engine optimization machine, meaning it functions to bring your site all kinds of traffic via search engines. As editor-in-chief of your blog, you determine the topics you will write about and can consciously choose keywords, phrases, titles, and descriptions that will build your SEO. Great content with appropriate keywords helps the search engines – and everyone using them – find you. For more tips on how SEO will change your online life, check out [PhotoShelter's SEO for Photographers Bootcamp and Guide](#).

## 3. Online presence

When people are searching the Internet for photo-related products, services, and topics, you want them to find you. By diversifying your online portfolio (website, blog, microblogs), you can maximize not only your exposure, but also maintain more control over your brand name, because your diversified properties will appear in search results.

## 4. Audience

There are only 365 days in a year – you can only go on so many shoots, can only post-process so many images, publish so many editorials, and attend only so many conferences. You're one photographer, one collective, or one studio. But the beauty of the Internet is that it provides an exponentially larger captive audience than face-to-face interaction can. It's not just a place to establish what makes you unique; your blog will help you find like-minded professionals, fans, collaborators, and potential clients.

## 5. Story

Your portfolio site showcases the very best images you have captured thus far in your career, hopefully underscoring your unique style as a photographer. Your blog helps you tell the story behind those images. Your tone, your sense of humor, and the style in which you write can all indicate to a potential client the kind of person you are to work with. They also help affirm the story of your brand.

## 6. Relevance

A blog keeps you in the conversation. By consistently engaging with your commenters and community, you remain tapped into the industry conversation. It allows you to stay on the radar of potential clients and prospect customers, while appearing constantly active even if you are not booking shoots every week.

## 7. Money

Writing a blog can help you generate new work both indirectly and directly. Touch a nerve with one of your posts, and that maybe what get you hired.





# Choosing the Right Blog Platform

The life of your blog starts with choosing a blogging platform. A blog platform is a content management software (CMS) system that simplifies the creation and maintenance of a personal blog. They typically allow a user to write, edit, and publish posts, as well as modify the appearance, moderate comments, and manage the RSS feed through different functions. Many of the most popular platforms have app versions for smart phones and tablets, making it even easier to blog from virtually anywhere with Internet access.

The blog platform you choose should make the overall process of blogging as easy as possible; the platform that accomplishes this for you will depend on your needs, your personal preferences, and your technical knowledge and ability. There's no "correct" platform to use – it's what is right for you. Each platform does have pros and cons, which we go into below. These are important to consider before making a decision.

Here's a quick guide to some of the most popular blog publishing software.

## Blogger

Founded in 1999 and bought by Google in 2003, Blogger was one of the first blogging services. The platform requires a Google account, which is free, and due to the Google affiliation there are a few choice tie-ins with other Google products. For example, Blogger makes Google Ad Words integration easy, and allows you to edit and publish blog posts through your Google Driver. Blogger's main draw is being so user-friendly.

**Pros:** Very easy to get started; Google association allows for faster web crawl/indexing of your blog articles (read: SEO).

**Cons:** Customization capabilities are not as robust as other platforms; audience tends to be more tech; appearance not as high quality as competitors.

**There's an App for That?** Yep, and it's free.

[iTunes](#)

[Android](#)

## Wordpress.com

WordPress.com is one of the most widely used blogging platforms, which has led to a robust developer community that supports the production of plug-ins that can enhance potential functionality of a blog. Furthermore, WordPress.com is highly customizable, which has spawned a whole industry of third party templates and designs.

**Pros:** Hosted solution; no technical knowledge required to use.

**Cons:** Social media community not as robust as other blogs.

**There's an App for that?** Yep, and they even have it for Blackberry.

[iTunes](#)

[Android](#)

[Blackberry](#)



## WordPress.org (self-install)

If you host your own server, you can download the WordPress.org software and install it yourself.

**Pros:** You can use your own domain name; allows you to create a nested directory for the blog to enhance SEO potential for a single domain.

**Cons:** Requires your own, or leased, server; you will need to have some systems administration knowledge, or pay someone who does have it; no automatic updates.

\* [PhotoShelter](#) has partnered with [Graph Paper Press](#) to bring photo-centric WordPress.org themes that can easily integrate into PhotoShelter websites.

## TypePad

Generally easier to use than WordPress, TypePad makes it relatively seamless to share and cross-post within the community. The biggest downside is the monthly fee to use the platform.

**Pros:** Paid hosting generally means the service is more reliable and better customer service; simple interface.

**Cons:** Not free; also, not as many options for customization as some of its competitors.

**There's an App for That?** Yep, and the app is free (though you still have to pay for the service).

[iTunes](#)

## Movable Type

Similar to WordPress.org self-install, Movable Type requires your own server and some technical knowledge to install. It's a flexible platform used by thousands of companies and popular blogs, like *The Huffington Post*. However, it is not recommendable for individual photographers because it requires a higher level of technical knowledge to maintain and might be too complex and time consuming for a one person shop.

**Pros:** Free; robust and configurable

**Cons:** Requires installation on a server, as well as a fair amount of tech savvy.

**There's an App for that?** Nope.

## Tumblr

Tumblr is an incredibly popular platform, due in no small part to its ease of use, as well as extensive customization capabilities – owing to a robust programming API. It integrates the “follow” and “repost” aspects of microblogging platforms like Twitter, so as to feel more like a social media platform as well.

[Photographer Sam Phelps integrates his Tumblr seamlessly into his website](#), maintaining his website's overall style while also benefitting from the Follow and Share functionality of Tumblr.

The interface easily integrates multimedia without requiring additional HTML coding.

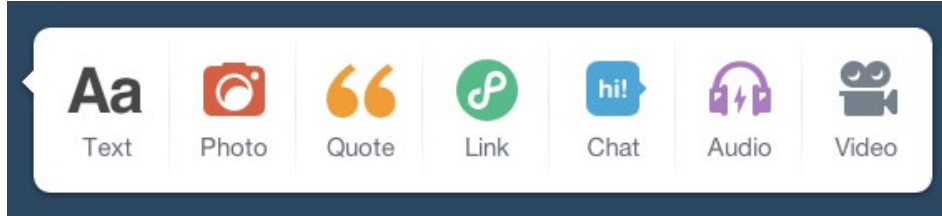
**Pros:** Very active community; unique blog networking tools; no knowledge of technical coding required.

**Cons:** Few options to organize overall information architecture beyond tags; not as easily customizable as WordPress; social media sharing model creates a higher risk for uncredited use of your images.

**There's an App for That?** Yep, and it's free.

[iTunes](#)

[Android](#)



## What Is a Plug-In?

You may have noticed us throwing around the word “plug-in” as a means to enhance your blog. Sometimes blogs can start to look a little generic, even if you use a free template. Many photographers think it is in their best interest to personalize their blogs as much as possible in order to visually stand out. One way to do this is to install plug-ins via your blogging platform.

Plug-ins are tiny pieces of software that extend a blog’s functionality. If you do not know how to go into the HTML code and make changes manually, plug-ins are a much more user-friendly alternative. If you can dream it for your blog, a plug-in probably exists for it.

There are over 9,000 plug-ins for WordPress alone, [which you can access via their Plug-In Directory here.](#)

If you aren’t sure what you are looking for, it might help to start with [WordPress’s compiled list of the current most popular plug-ins.](#)

Some popular ones include plug-ins like [Contact Form 7](#), [Broken Link Checker](#) and [NextGen Gallery](#).

# Blogging as a Marketing Tool

You can't be everything to every single one of your blog readers. You wouldn't make an ice cream sundae with every possible flavor and topping; similarly, you can't try to cram in the preferences of every possible audience member into your blog. Better to find the readers who like your flavor and tailor content to them, rather than mix so many flavors that people have no idea what they are even consuming.

For a photographer, your blog is not just a place to dump links and post photos. Your blog is a marketing tool, and can be a very effective one at that. The captive online audience is vast, comprised of prospective clients, photographers looking to learn, gear enthusiasts, and many other consumers who are actively searching for services like yours.

To maximize the flavor potential of your blog, you need to reach people with similar tastes. Connecting with the right audience starts with a targeted content strategy.

## Establishing Your Brand

Your portfolio site design, how you communicate with clients, your logos, your deliverables, your lighting technique, your field of photography – all of these elements define your personal brand. Your blog's #1 purpose should be to extend this brand.

For example, if you frequently work with corporate clients, your community would not respond well to profanity-laden rants. As a general rule of thumb, your blog probably should not contain profanity-laden rants – unless they support the brand you are selling.

There are multiple points of entry for building a successful blog. Whether you choose the provocative route, the educational route, the anecdotal route, among many others, your strategic choices should reflect your brand.

## Targeting Your Audience

Your brand can also help identify your target audience. Like any marketing push, it will pay to know who the readers are. You should always strive to create content that attracts and sustains the attention of this audience. Not only will this help focus the content strategy, but also the needs and practices of your targeted audience will inform how you blog.

When establishing her company, Major Multimedia, [photographer and multimedia producer Lauren Major](#) wanted to target the nonprofit and social good sector. Once she narrowed her target audience, she was able to research their online activity, and create content that would specifically appeal to the social good user.

Photographers who run workshops will often cater the writing on their blog to other photographers. This helps establish them as “experts,” as well as speak directly to prospective attendees and students. A blog can also help photographers continue a dialogue with current and former clients, as well as attract potential new ones.

The more targeted your marketing efforts, the more successful you will be at converting behavior.

## Generating Sales

Your blog functions quite well as an indirect marketing tool for your brand. It can also directly translate to sales.

If part of your business includes selling workshops, your blog content should target the consumer who might be interested in your specific workshop. Blog posts should emphasize your expertise in your field, and show who you are as a teacher and a photographer. [Nature photographer Greg Basco of Deep Green Photography](#) sells nature photography workshops in Costa Rica through his website. The “Behind the Lens” series on his blog shows images captured in the field, and explains the technique and story behind getting the shot. Greg's tours now sell out within a month of being announced.



## Behind the Lens — Green Hermit



## BEHIND THE LENS

tech notes & comments on selected images

It's been a while since I updated this section, and I apologize for that. The past few months have been a bit crazy for me with workshop tours and photography trips for the new coffee table book on which I'm working. But, I'm back and have introduced a video complement to the Behind the Lens section. I hope you enjoy it.

As always, a little reminder that I work hard on the site. So, if you're in the mood, consider buying your next gear through the affiliate links on this site; you pay the same, and I make a little something to keep the site going. Check out the [Support the Site](#) page for more info. Gracias!

The green hermit is likely the coolest hummingbird in Costa Rica. The long, curved bill coupled with the slender body and the fanned tail make them a sight to see. They are also very hard to photograph because of their non-territorial feeding behavior. They are trapezoiders, meaning they have a regular route through the forest but only come by occasionally to feed on select flowers. Upon approaching a flower, they exhibit erratic flight patterns that are much less predictable than those of many other species. So, I was psyched to capture this female with a good pose and at an attractive *Heliconia* flower.



You may also want to sell products through your website, or directly on your blog. The content should support why a consumer should buy this product from you, and even show the value of the product.

[UK wedding photographer Lisa Devlin](#) has spun off her popular wedding photography business into a side business selling Photoshop actions. On a separate blog specifically geared towards actions and workshops, she sells one action a week, gives away one basic action a week for free, and posts recent images with explanations of how she implemented the specific action.

## ACTION of the Week

Woah! Today we're putting **Silverback** on sale for just **£5!** Lisa used it last week on **Christine and Padi's** wedding pics and it's a firm favourite of ours at Devlin Photos Photoshop Actions. Enjoy this simple but very classic action...

Lisa and Amy



## What's the Takeaway?

If you treat your blog as a marketing tool, then the optimal end result will be an increase in sales of your services and/or products. A frequently updated blog shows current and prospective clients that you are staying active and engaged as a photographer. A client may find a particular blog post interesting, and ask you to write a proposal based solely on the post. It happens more often than you might think.

# Managing Your Blogging Workflow

After you choose the best platform for you and identify your target audience, you may find yourself about to hit the “Now what?” panic button. If you do not have a plan for your workflow, a blog can quickly become a burden. But you can easily skip ahead of the whole overwhelming part of blogging by developing an effective workflow system.

Here are seven tips to help tailor a system for your workflow.

## 1. Recognize your strengths and weaknesses

Wouldn't life be grand if photography skills translated seamlessly into writing skills? But even as a photographer, you have your strengths and weaknesses – the same is true for maintaining a blog.

Are you great at project management, but struggle with creating topics? Are you a creative writer, but terrible at self-editing? Recognizing where you may need help or what challenges you about blogging will help you create a system to accommodate these shortcomings. Premeditate the problems, and you can premeditate a solution.

## 2. Identify your resources

When she started her blog, Lauren Major knew she was a masterful editor, but writing was not her strength. However, her target audience responds favorably to storytelling so there was no getting around needing copy for her blog. She decided to invest in freelance bloggers to draft posts that she could then edit and massage into her own voice.

Once you know where you might need help, it's a good idea to brainstorm your options. If you can afford to hire a blogger or a copy editor, it might be worth the investment. If you need help with project management, you may want to invest in workflow software or invest your own time. If you are a one-man show, anywhere you can cut corners will help you sustain a realistic blogging workflow.

Photographer Matt Brandon, known for his site [The Digital Trekker](#), is admittedly not a fluid typist, nor a great speller. When composing blog posts, he will actually record what he wants to write using dictation software, then edits the transcription.

## 3. Keep a rolling list of ideas

An effective content strategy relies on careful planning. If your blogging strategy is to wait for ideas first, you will likely end up with an inconsistent blog and a constant feeling of pressure to come up with new topics. If you blog every thought that pops into your head, you risk burying the quality content with the extraneous stuff – and confusing your audience.

Start a spreadsheet, Google doc, or journal devoted exclusively to ideas for potential blog posts. If you have a moment of inspiration, jot it down or type it up. You may never use half of the ideas, or may take one thought in a totally different direction, but keeping a list of thoughts will take the pressure off coming up with something to write about on the spot – and it will help you manage your workflow.

## 4. Create topic categories

Have an understanding of the areas that you want to cover on your blog. Think through questions like:

Do you want to write at least one gear review a week?

Do you want to feature an interview with an industry professional once a month?

Do you want to have a video blog series?

You don't have to decide every area of interest before you start your blog, and based on your audience's response the topics you write about may evolve. Having a few target areas in your pocket will help you focus your idea stream, and keep the blog clear and on brand.



## 5. Make a calendar, and stick to it

Is it realistic for you to blog everyday? Probably not, and it might not be smart for you to do it either. Just make sure you have a plan for when you want to blog. It does not necessarily have to be a set number, either. The key is to be consistent so your followers can expect and look forward to your posts. If you're a wedding photographer, your blogging strategy might involve doing a post after every wedding. Even if your blogging pattern follows gigs, having a set deadline will help you stay consistent (i.e. never wait more than 72 hours to publish a post about a job), and meet audience expectations.

The best way to stay on top of your self-made blogging deadlines is to keep a calendar exclusively for your blog. It could contain upcoming shoots and personal events, or you could plan each month out specifically based on what you will be posting about on a given day. Looking at an upcoming calendar will help you manage the time you need to complete each desired blog post, and may also provide you with new or thematic inspiration. Here's a look at the [The PhotoShelter Blog](#) editorial calendar from December.

	A	B	C
1	<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Topic</b>
2	12/1/2011	Thursday	Holiday Gift Guide (Under \$500)
3	12/2/2011	Friday	Holiday Gift Guide (No limits!)
4			Happy Hour
5			
6	12/5/2011	Monday	Crappy gifts for photographers
7			
	12/6/2011	Tuesday	Selling Photo Services at Christmas
8	12/7/2011	Wednesday	SI video - Steve Fine
9			
	12/8/2011	Thursday	What Internet Photo Celebs Want for Christmas
10	12/9/2011	Friday	Happy Hour
11			
12			
13	12/12/2011	Monday	Lisa Smith: Target Photo Editor
14	12/13/2011	Tuesday	PVN Cool Print Ideas for the Holidays
15	12/14/2011	Wednesday	Tutorial: Jim Jordan (?)
16	12/15/2011	Thursday	PhotoShelter Holiday E-Card
17	12/16/2011	Friday	
18			
19			
20	12/19/2011	Monday	Best blogs posts of the year
21	12/20/2011	Tuesday	Charity Photography
22	12/21/2011	Wednesday	Stock guide pitch
23	12/22/2011	Thursday	Roundup - the year in pictures

## 6. Have an RSS feed

Your idea diary not cutting it for you? Keep an RSS feed, like Google Reader, of photography blogs that inspire you, blogs of prospective clients, the musings of your competitors, and/or the Twitter feed of your favorite vendor. An RSS feed consolidates all of the sites and accounts your go-to for inspiration into one place, which will help cut down on time spent going between each site – and the distractions Internet surfing can bring.

## 7. Manage your own expectations

If writing does not come easily to you and you cannot invest the resources into outsourcing the work, travel photographer Matt Brandon advises setting boundaries for yourself. Writing can easily consume your day, and setting unreasonable expectations as to what you can accomplish is setting yourself up to fail.

Set goals you know you can meet. The great thing about blogs is they are totally malleable. If you discover you love blogging and can ramp up your production, as long as it's in-tune with your target audience – go for it! But if you try to do and say too much right out of the gate, you may be shooting yourself in the foot. Building an audience can take time, so set up a sustainable workflow system for yourself that can support the process.



# Integrating Social Media

Using social media to market your photography business should also be a major part of your blogging workflow to help drive eyeballs to your content regularly and ultimately convert potential clients into buying customers.

In addition to Twitter, Facebook, and Google+, new image-heavy social media platforms like [Instagram](#) have transformed the way people consume visual content and media on the Internet. When crafting an online presence to promote your business, it can be difficult to know how social sharing can help – and which avenues are in your best interest to take.

Now more than ever, you not only have the ability to create content, but also the means to distribute it across large channels. Social media better connects your audience to your content, and the relevance and quality of your content on your private channels keeps the audience coming back for more.

Understanding the online social and consumption habits of your target audience will also help you determine which social media platforms you should focus on using.

As a general best practice, you should always be wherever your audience is. You may find that different groups within your audience user different platforms, and there's no harm in adjusting your communication accordingly.

UK wedding photographer Lisa Devlin has high visibility with clients on Facebook. Brides tend to share their photos with friends most there, and her communication on Facebook tends to be more client-oriented. Meanwhile her Twitter community tends to be other photographers and professionals, so her engagement is usually more industry-oriented.

## Social Media Workflow

If blogging is starting to sound like a full-time job to you, you're not totally off base. Crafting a clever post takes time, and so too does responding to a Tweet or promoting on Facebook or Google+.

There are social media dashboard programs like [HootSuite](#) that can help streamline all of your social media accounts into one place. However, the downside is sometimes these programs can feel like a PR bot is running your social media, instead of an individual. You should choose a social media system that makes sense with your brand, voice, and marketing strategy. You can also install plug-ins that enable readers to easily share your post across all different platforms. In other words, this allows your more devoted readers to shoulder some of the promotional load for you.

Many of the tips mentioned in the Blogging Workflow section apply here as well. The most important thing is to maintain a consistently engaged presence on the platforms. If you only Tweet once a month, you won't see much traction when you do.

We asked four photographers including [Todd Owyong](#), [Kendrick Brinson](#), [Craig Holmes](#), and [Andrea Wilson](#) how they managed their social media workflow and although they all had slightly different approaches to social media, as did the professionals interviewed for this guide, they each developed a system that they could execute and repeat.

Here's a sample workflow:

1. Shoot assignment.
2. Blog images from assignment.
3. Link blog post on Twitter and Facebook.
4. Monitor for blog comments, @mentions, and Facebook posts.

After developing a social media routine, it now only takes 15 to 20 minutes to publish and promote a photo for [freelance sports photojournalist Jared Wickerham](#).

For more tips on how to maximize social media to your advantage, be sure to download [PhotoShelter's Photographer's Social Media Handbook](#).



# Blogging to Build a Community

You may target an *audience* with your content and marketing strategy, but you will want to build a *community* once they get to your blog. An audience applauds to show positive reinforcement; a community comments, reblogs, likes, and tweets. If you're lucky, the community you build around your blog and social media platforms will become your biggest advocates. A strong community translates to free, targeted advertising and promotion.

Building a community is much easier than you may think. Much like in real life, most people socialize in the online sphere for the purpose of finding engaging conversation. If someone complimented your image in person, you would say thank you. If a colleague sent you a helpful tip on a new camera technique, you would thank them and perhaps return the favor with a suggestion of your own or an image you shot using their suggestion. Conversing in the virtual world is quite similar, except sometimes you start sentences with an @, and often you may have never actually met your conversation partner in person.

Even if someone comments on a post with a critique, offering your personal, thoughtful response tells not only that user, but your entire community that you're listening. By acknowledging readers' part in the conversation, they are much likely to return to see what else you have to say.

How you interact with your blog followers and social media community yet again reflects the kind of person you are to work with. That same thoughtful response to criticism that shows your community they are heard also shows a potential client that you are willing to listen to other opinions and react maturely to being challenged.

If you are pitching yourself as a provocateur, then the community is the perfect place to really fan the flames. However, communicating in a positive, productive voice is the best practice.

Here are quick tips to build your community:

## Participate

Jump into the conversation, whether on your own blog or on external platforms. If you never comment, never respond to questions, never answer Tweets, then all of the work you put into giving your blog a personality is wasted. You never know when a potential client may be the one asking the questions.

## Encourage interaction

Don't wait to jump into the conversation, start it! Ask readers questions and encourage them to respond in the comments section. Post a link to your latest blog post on Facebook, along with a question for your followers.

## Comment

Comment on other people's work. If you follow a blog similar to yours, or just think is interesting, make sure to leave a comment of your own. Don't always use your platforms to promote your own work. People will only get tired of that after awhile. Take the time to make intelligent observations on other content and conversations. Potential clients and followers can find you this way, too.

On all social media platforms, and many blogging platforms as well, you have the ability to follow people. This is a great way to engage your target audience and other people who you want to engage in conversation. Following or friending is an effective way to pay it forward in the community.



# Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Your Blog

While it's true that blogging is a great way to share new work and connect with clients and fans, one of the main objectives of your blog should be to help build your search engine optimization (SEO). This means establishing your keyword hit list and putting some of those SEO best practices to use. Always keep in mind that the bottom line is this: the more people who visit your blog, the more opportunity you have to increase your online presence and compel clients to buy your photos or commission new work.

## The Basic Building Blocks of SEO

SEO is often projected as a complicated marketing strategy that's better left to the experts. But the truth is that if you know a few basic principles of SEO, then you can handle it on your own. So don't get intimidated by the fancy technical language and algorithms; instead, focus on mastering your understanding of these basic building blocks.

### Universal Search

When you go to Google (or any other search engine), you are executing a "universal search." The search engine result pages (SERPs) returns a list of websites matching your query. Note that the websites and blogs that appear on the first page of results for nearly any search aren't there by chance – in most cases, the website owners worked on their SEO to ensure that they occupied a top position. The reason you want to rank higher on search engines is simple: 60-80% of the click traffic goes to the top three search results, and people are more likely to refine a search than to go to page two if they don't find what they're looking for.

Keep in mind that searching for your own name and finding your website or blog isn't SEO. The real goal is to drive unsolicited traffic, and you want people to find you by searching for your products and services, not solely your name.

### Keyword Hit List

Your keyword hit list is a list of top terms that describe your work and services, and that you want your website to rank for. It should contain 20-50 words and phrases, and should range from the general to the more specific. Remember, your brand name is not a keyword.

### Backlinks

Backlinks are links from other websites to your own website or blog, and they're of crucial importance to building good SEO. Think of backlinks like a vote of confidence from the Internet community - they effectively tell the search engines that your site has good, reliable content that's worth sharing. There are two main categories of backlinks: those you build yourself and those from other people.

### Anchor Text

Anchor text is the visible, clickable text in a hyperlink, and is usually blue and underlined. It's really important to understand that there are links, and then there are GREAT links. A great link is one that uses anchor text that matches or is related to the terms on your keyword hit list.

### On-Page Factors

The judicious use of keywords in the text of your website or blog's pages helps reinforce the words and phrases that are most important to your business. Places that search engines pay particular attention to include the page title, header tags, meta description, and your images' ALT attributes and filenames.

For a more in-depth look at these building blocks and more, check out PhotoShelter's [SEO for Photographers Bootcamp & Guide](#).



## Why Blogging is Important for SEO

With the above basic principles in mind, it's time to start thinking of your blog as a place to build backlinks, create content around your keyword hit list, and build a following that regularly posts your work to social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. We're not saying that these should be your only goals in blogging – your SEO efforts should never interfere with posting good, valuable content – but you should always be conscious of SEO in order to get the most out of your blog.

For example, you can:

### 1. Use relevant anchor text when building backlinks to your website.

Let's say you create a stellar online portfolio on your website, and then people link to it from their own sites. Great news, right? Not if people link to you with "click here" as the anchor text. True, the backlinks are still valuable, but not as great as they could be. The best backlinks are those that have anchor text infused with terms from your keyword hit list. For example, if you're a Miami-based wedding photographer, examples of good keywords for your hit list could be:

"Miami wedding photographer", "wedding photographer in Miami", "wedding photographers near South Beach", "best Miami wedding photographer"

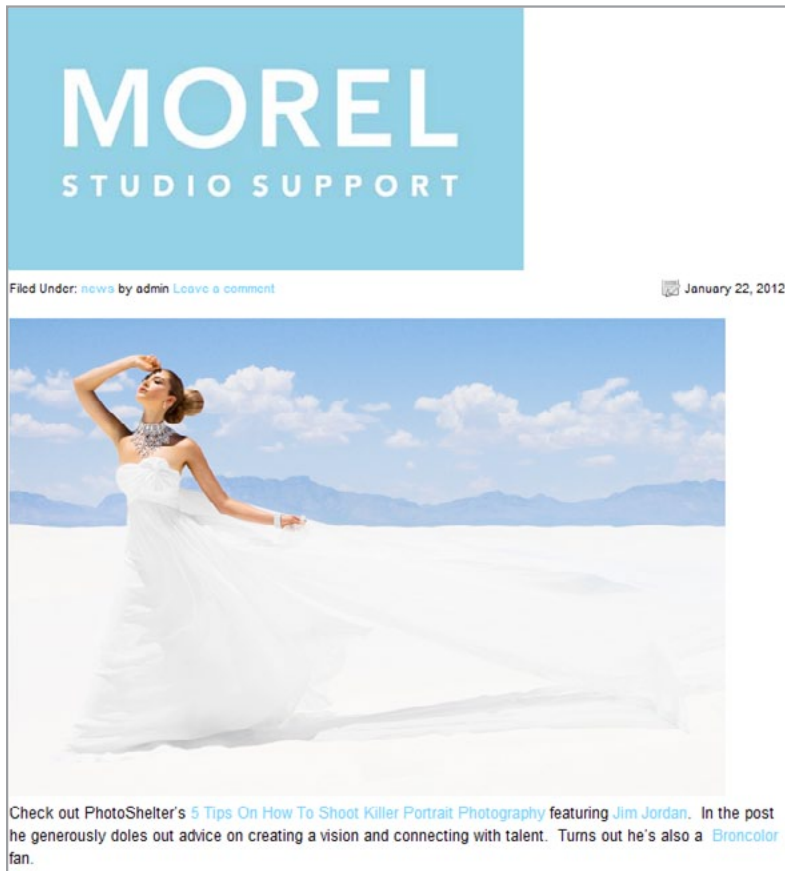
But guess what – with your blog, you're in the driver's seat. You have total control over what webpages you link to and what anchor text you use. With a blog, you can post about your work and say something like, "Here's a story about my latest gallery, Underwater Caribbean Stock Photography" and link "Underwater Caribbean Stock Photography" to your gallery for much more descriptive and therefore valuable anchor text. You're in charge of your blog, so take advantage and put those anchor text best practices to use.



*PhotoShelter makes an effort to link to photographers' website and blogs with relevant anchor text.*

### 2. Give people something that they naturally want to link to.

Although it's totally possible to email someone about your website and score a backlink, people aren't typically motivated to write about and link to your site unless there's a story to go alongside it. It's much easier and more natural for people to link to your blog post about how you shot those photos. They can quote a paragraph from your post, provide a link, and then they're done.



*Morel Studio Support reposted PhotoShelter's blog post featuring Jim Jordan – an easy backlink.*

So next time you have new work to share, consider writing a blog post about it – tell some funny story from the shoot, talk about the beautiful scenery, or even run through how you actually got the shot. For more ideas on what to post, check out [9 Ways To Blog More In Less Time](#) and just remember to use anchor text that complements your keyword hit list.

### 3. Encourage people to “socialize” your work.

When you regularly publish posts, you have more content to share with your network via social media and drive traffic to your blog. Plus, if you have social sharing tools installed on your blog, it's an easy one-click of a button – and ease is key in getting people to share your work. Once someone has shared your post, then it get shared with their network, thereby increasing its reach beyond your own personal network.



*[New York music photographer Chris Owyong](#) includes social sharing buttons on all his blog posts.*

How is social sharing related to SEO? Google takes socialization into consideration for its ranking algorithm, especially from Google+, so it might actually help your blog and website move higher up in the rankings.

#### 4. Increase traffic to your website & build a following.

Assuming that you post engaging content that presents value to your readers, they'll probably spend more and more time on your blog, share it with their friends and colleagues, and continue coming back for more. And if you're frequently linking back to your website, then your blog becomes a tool to drive traffic to your main site.

Another likely outcome of building a following for your blog is that you'll get found by new clients and customers. If enough people are sharing your posts and your blog is moving up in the SEPRs, photo buyers are more likely to stumble across it. When they do, be sure that links to your contact information and website are obvious so that they can see your portfolio and get in touch.

#### 5. Play nice with Google's Freshness Update.

In the fall of 2011, Google announced that it had altered its search algorithm to provide users with fresher, more recent search results. Dubbed the [Google Freshness Update](#), the intended purpose was to place greater emphasis on returning the most up-to-date web content. Said Google:

“Search results, like warm cookies right out of the oven or cool refreshing fruit on a hot summer's day, are best when they're fresh. Even if you don't specify it in your search, you probably want search results that are relevant and recent.”

Although this was meant to help ensure that when you search for something time sensitive – like recent events or hot topics – you get the most recently updated webpages, it ended up affecting about 35% of all searches.

What does this mean for bloggers? SEO experts largely agree that Google's update means that fresh content can boost your blog or website in the SERPs for a certain period of time. Keep in mind that on most blog platforms, every time you publish a new post you're also creating a new page. That means bloggers have an advantage because they continuously signal to Google that their blog is fresh and thus deserves a higher ranking.



#### DO THIS

- **Infuse your keywords throughout the post.** You want to provide as many keywords in context as possible – in other words, write like a human being, not a computer-generated list of terms.
- **Pay attention to your post title.** Most blogging platforms take your blog post's title and use it for both the URL and the page title, so choosing an SEO-friendly title that includes your keywords is critical.
- **Input the ALT text.** When you upload an image to your blog, there's usually a place for you to input a caption, alternate (ALT) text, and link. Because Google can't read images, this all helps to tell the search engine what your image is about.
- **Utilize social sharing buttons.** Find a widget or plugin that's compatible with your blog platform, and use it to install social media sharing buttons on your blog.
- **Strive to post frequently.** Make a commitment to posting at least once a week. The more you post, the more you can positively impact your SEO.



# Blog Analytics

So how can you know whether your blogging strategy is actually working? The answer is analytics. For a creative professional like a photographer, the word “analytics” sounds like something thrown around by accountants and MBA’s only. But if strategy is what’s going to open your blog to success, then analytics are the key.

Analytics programs measure all of your blog metrics. A program like [Google Analytics](#) can tell you how many visits your site received each hour of each day; how many of those were unique and how many were returning visitors; the average length of time people spend on your site; which posts drove the most traffic; where the traffic came from; what countries view your content the most; and a myriad of other highly specific data that can tell you how effective your content strategy truly is.

Metrics help you understand user consumption habits. If you notice a spike in traffic around 6 PM every day that tells you:

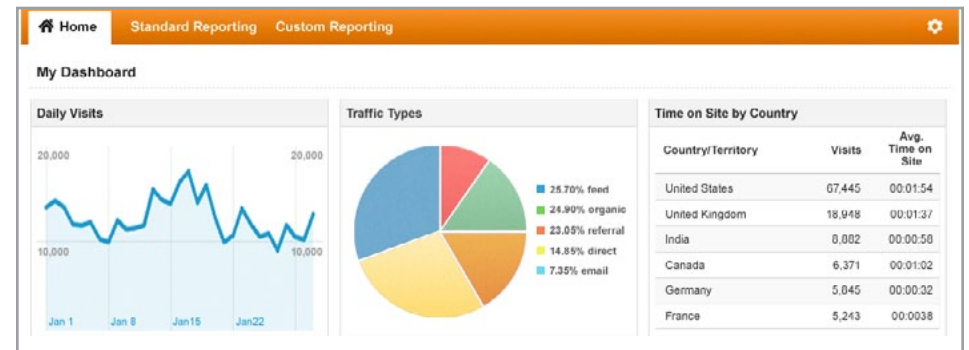
1. You might want to start posting your content that time of day.
2. A large portion of your audience probably works a 9 to 5 job and is checking out your blog after work.

Knowing that, you may want to write content geared towards that specific audience to connect with them even further. Maybe you notice that Twitter drives twice the traffic that Facebook does. This might lead you to invest less energy in promotion and community on Facebook, or to determine how you can better engage on the underserved platforms.

In a perfect world, you will create a blog strategy, it will work well, and you will never have to change your system ever. In reality, analytics programs can help draw conclusions for you that will help you make smart strategic changes to your blogging habits.

## Google Analytics

We strongly advocate installing [Google Analytics](#) on both your blog and website for increased fidelity and detail. Depending on your goals, you’ll want to focus on specific features in Google Analytics and check how they do over time. There’s a lot of information available, but we suggest focusing on two major reports: “**Site Content**” and “**Traffic Sources**”.



**Site Content** helps you understand how people are interacting with your blog. One metric that should pay close attention to is “Pages”, which ranks your webpages (or in the case of a blog, posts) by number of visitors so you can see which are the most popular. Looks for trends to help figure out what makes them popular, and make that part of your overall blogging strategy.

**Traffic Sources** tells you how many people are visiting your blog and where they’re coming from. You can use these metrics to see if your current efforts are driving the kind of traffic you expect, and where you can improve. There are four types of traffic sources: *search traffic*, *referral traffic*, *direct traffic*, and *campaigns*.

### 1. Search traffic

Search traffic includes the people who visit your blog via search engines like Google. Use the data from organic search to see which keywords people are searching for

that end up leading them to your blog posts. It's a good idea to use this list to refine your SEO keyword hit list. Also, increasing the number of posts that use these words might help your blog climb even higher in search results for those terms.

## 2. Referral traffic

Referral traffic is traffic that comes from other websites. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are often the top sources for referral traffic, especially if you are actively sharing links to your blog on these platforms.

## 3. Direct traffic

Direct traffic is simply people who type your URL into their web browser and come directly to your blog. These are likely people who know you already or have your blog bookmarked.

## 4. Campaigns

Campaigns can be set up to track your specific marketing strategies – for example, using Google's URL builder to track if posting a link on a forum leads to any traffic to your blog.

## MajesticSEO

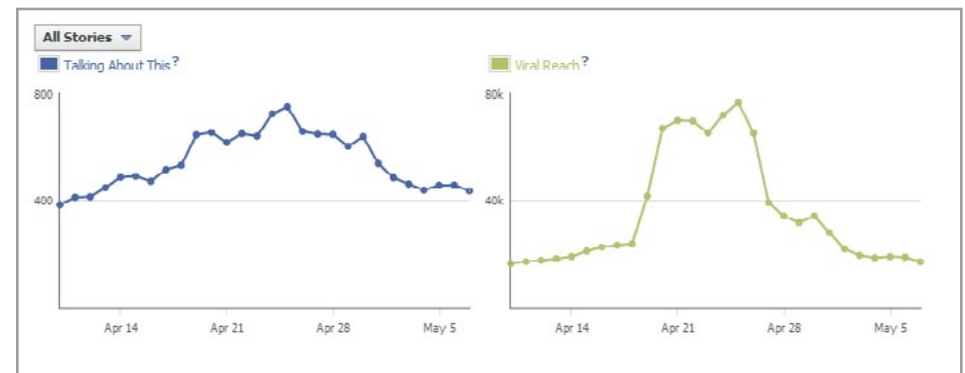
[MajesticSEO](#)'s free "Site Explorer" tool lets you track the number of backlinks to your website or blog. When you input your URL into the toolbar, it spits back the total number of referring domains and external backlinks. This tells you the number of websites and also the number of links that link to your website, respectively. You can view "Top Backlinks" to see what specific sites are linking to you.

A good way to see if you could potentially displace the sites above you in the SERPs is to input their domains into Majestic and see how many backlinks they have. The goal is to get more backlinks than the sites above yours in order to move up in the ranking and get more organic traffic to your blog. Also check out other sites' top backlinks to help brainstorm ideas where you might be able to score new links.

## Facebook Edgerank

In September 2011, Facebook redesigned the News Feed to show you the most interesting and engaging posts from your network. But how does Facebook decide what content is interesting or engaging enough to show up in your News Feed?

That's where "Edgerank" comes in – Facebook's latest algorithm that now determines what items appear in your News Feed, based on a number of factors like "Likes," "Shares," and "Comments." According to Facebook, the more that people interact with a post of yours, the more likely it will appear higher on people's News Feeds. This provides the greatest opportunity to expand your reach and engage new people. To improve your Edgerank and your chances of getting to the News Feed, research shows that you should include links, relate your posts to a current events, and interact with those who post on your page.



*You can track your "edge" in your Facebook Insights and tracking the "Talking About This" metric.*



# Frequency and Consistency

To effectively grow an audience for your blog you must be, above all things, consistent!

Every time you post a blog, you are entering an unspoken contract with your audience that you will blog again some time in the near future. If you announce a series like Photo Friday, you should plan on posting a relevant photo every Friday. The fastest way to lose eyeballs is to not fulfill your promises. Take a month off, and some followers will be mad, while others will simply move on with their lives.

On her workshops and actions blog, Lisa Devlin gives away a photo action for free on Friday. (See *example to the right*.) Her followers have come to expect that at the end of every week they will be able to download a freebie, and at the beginning of the week they will see her work.

The example of Lisa's actions blog brings up the point of expectation: a promise to your audience sets a certain level of expectation. This is why it is so important you have a plan for your workflow before you even start blogging. Once you start blogging, maintaining a level of consistency in your content, your frequency, and your promotion will convey to your audience what they can rely on you to deliver. This also helps potential clients become familiar with your photography services.

So do you need to you blog every day? Absolutely not. This circles back to determining what's realistic for you. If three posts a month is all you can do, then make sure you always do three posts a month. If you can always post them on the same day of the week at the same time – even better! Your audience takes their cue from your actions – you want to make it as easy as possible for them to continue to find your personal content.

[Canadian photographer Jennifer Squires](#) uses her blog to post both professional and personal stories and photos. She consistently posts at least once a week, and often two or three times a week. The result is a highly personal, friendly feel to her blog, as well as a reliability for new content.

**FREEBIE Friday!**  
yay! free stuff

Happy Freebie Friday everyone!  
Our gift for you this week is 'Basic Haze'. A handy little tool we've cooked up to give your pics a nice soft light, very simple and very effective. Use it over the top of other actions or on its own to add a subtle dreamlike quality...

Lisa and Amy

original      basic haze

DOWNLOAD  
BASIC  
HAZE  
FOR FREE  
NOW!

yes please!

# Blog Topics for Photographers

We've given you the keys to unlock the kingdom, now all you have to do is figure out how to populate it. Compelling content will drive traffic to your blog and help drive clients to spend money on your services – but what the heck makes content compelling?

Start by setting aside your literary ambitions and remembering your blog is primarily a marketing tool. You want views, clicks, links, likes, and other sharing mechanisms that will spread your brand visibility the farthest and widest. To that end, a successful blog entry should be total linkbait – content people will want to link to on their platforms and channels. Backlinking builds SEO, good SEO bumps you up higher in search engine results, ranking at the top of the search engine results pages brings even more eyeballs, and will lead to more clients.

Time for a reality check. If we knew the secret formula for what makes something go viral on the Internet, we would be relaxing on the private beach of our millionaire island right now. A 100% success rate of content dissemination is impossible in the virtual world.

However, time and practice has taught us a few blog topic areas that tend to hook the audience:




## Top 10 Lists

Top 10 (or really any number of that matter) lists are the bread and butter of news blogs like *The Huffington Post*. That's because lists are highly clickable, and for sites that need clicks to generate ad revenue, they can be a gold mine. But for a photographer seeking to boost their search result standing, lists are also highly useful.


A list of any number over 5 provides quick, easily understood context for exactly what a reader will find in the blog post. It also forces you to organize your content in a way that's easy to understand. Added bonus: lists don't need to be copy-heavy. Go ahead and give your own opinion on the 8 female photographers who changed the industry, and watch the hits roll in.

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 19, 2010

## 10 PRINCIPLES OF BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGRAPHY

 31
  Like 572
  Tweet 218

by Trey Ratcliff – note: this article appeared in [Smashing Magazine](#).



*The backside of the Taj during a summer sunset*

*Top 10 Lists*

Examples:

[Top 10 Tips On Google+ For Photographers](#) - Thomas Hawk

[11 Simple Things You Can Do To Grow Your Photography Business](#) - Rosh Sillars

[10 Principles of Beautiful Photography](#) - Trey Ratcliff

## Stir the Pot

Causing controversy, whether you're tapping into something that's already happening or inventing one from scratch, is a tried and true way to generate some heat online. If you're not afraid to ruffle a few feathers, bucking tradition or authority with a controversial statement is a great way to get the community buzzing. However, don't just say something provocative for the sake of getting a rise out of people. It is better to put forth your opinion on a topic about which you genuinely have something to say, and back that statement up with facts and illustrative examples.

Prepare yourself for a helping of haters, and make sure to respond to naysayers with the same intelligent clarity with which you crafted the article.

Examples:

[Mini-Rant: Screw The Critics](#) - David Hobby, Strobist

[Photography: What's Real, What's Not and Does It Matter](#) - Matt Brandon, Digital Trekker

[Raw Perfection: The Photoshop Disclosure Manifesto](#) - Greg Basco, Deep Green Photography

## Offer Tutorials

The Internet is a DIY paradise, and “how-to” articles are their own cottage industry. If you have a creative and, even better, inexpensive method to completing a task or technique people will take notice, usually in the form of buzz and backlinks.

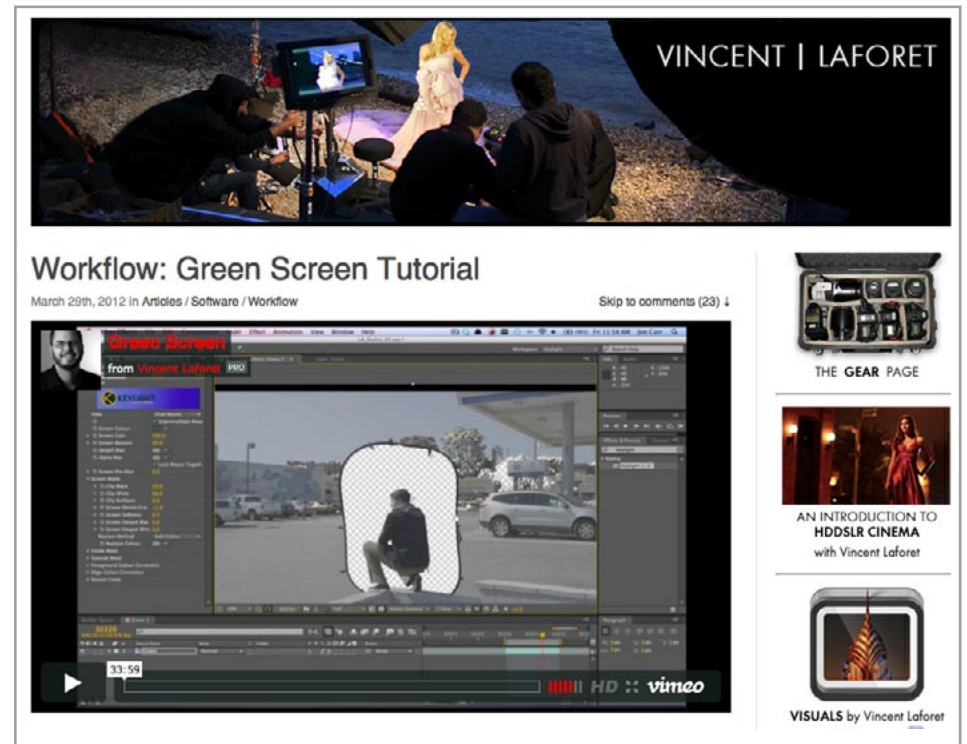
Don't have a cheap, novel approach? Think about your specialty and the services you offer, and explain how you do what you do best – you will likely still find an interested audience.

Examples:

[How to Photograph Grizzly Bears](#) - Robert Berdan

[Adorama Learning Center](#) - Adorama

[Workflow: Green Screen Tutorial](#) – Vincent Laforet



*Tutorial*

## Write a Review

There is no shortage of photography gear reviews on the Internet. That should not discourage you from throwing your hat into the ring. Many photographers carve out a niche for themselves based on their reviews. It might be what you say, it might be how you say it, but if you write a gear review, someone will definitely be reading.

[Should I buy An f/2.8 or f/4.0 Lens?](#) - Travis Lawton, The Phoblographer

[Fuji X100 Review: The Greatest Digital Camera Ever Made](#) - Zack Arias

[“Heaven, Earth, Tequila” by Doug Menez](#) - Miguel Garcia-Guzman



## Compile Resources

Everyone loves to discover that all the information they need on a topic already exists in one place. If you don't mind doing a little legwork, then try assembling a specific, relevant list of links to resources online. This may be a particularly useful option for photographers who do not consider themselves strong writers – a resource list is more about supporting the topic, and writing need not be heavily involved.

Examples:

[Taiwan Photographers – Resources](#) - Craig Ferguson

[13 Resources for DSLR beginners](#) - Mandy Jones

[50 Free Resources that Will Improve Your Photography Skills](#) - Andrew Gibson, Smashing Magazine

## Crack a Joke

If your friends say you're the funniest gal/guy they know, why not test their theory on your blog? More often than not, when something goes viral it usually involves either comedy or a kitten. The animal thing might be more of a stretch for a photography blog, but there's lots of fun to be plowed in pictures, words, and film.

Examples:

[Video: Nikon Girl](#) - Joey Lawrence

[The Battle at F-Stop Ridge](#) - The Camera Store

[21 Signs You're a Real Photographer Now](#) – Peter Phun, Blackstar Rising

## Infographics

Move over Top 10 lists, infographics are the new linkbait. If you are any good at designing charts or graphs, an infographic is a great copy alternative to dissecting a topic, concept, or issue. You don't necessarily need to be a skilled designer to present information in a clever, visual way. Flow charts usually require little design prowess but are a great way to illustrate a linear idea.

Examples:

[“Yahoo! Reader on Facebook”](#) – The Oatmeal

[Should I Work for Free?](#) - Jessica Hische

[40 Useful and Creative Infographics](#) - Jacob Gube

## Crowdsource Commentary

In our community section we suggested you engage your community by starting a conversation. Why not use this same conversation as a blog post? PhotoShelter's Grover Sanschagrin asked the photography community what their favorite Digital Point and Shoot cameras were. [The result was one of the most highly trafficked posts of the year, and a numbered list at that!](#)

You can source your colleagues, pose a question to your readers, or blast your social media platforms. No matter the route, you will end up with content created for you that also proves to your community that you value their opinion.

Examples:

[15 Digital Point-and-Shoot Cameras Used By Pro Photographers](#) - Grover Sanschagrin

[Portfolio Updates and Crowdsourcing](#) - Craig Ferguson

[18 Great Examples of Humor in Street Photography](#) – Eric Kim

This week's street photography assignment was **“Humor”** and many of you submitted great submissions to my [Facebook fan page](#). Thanks to everybody who took the time to post, and here are 20 of the best images that stood out to me. Keep reading to check out the rest of the images!



*Crowdsource Commentary*

## Interview People Smarter Than You – or Better Yet, Prospects

The world is full of smart, interesting people with an experienced viewpoint. An interview with them can add depth to an issue and will likely bring new people to your blog that might not have found it otherwise.

You could also email a photographer whose work you admire or a prospective client that you'd love to work with one day. As long as the interview is not a thinly veiled request for work, promoting them with an interview on your blog will at least get you on a few radars.

Examples:

[Q&A With GSD&M Senior Art Producer Shannon McMillan](#) - Jasmine DeFoore

[Future of Photojournalism Interviews](#) - Gerald Holubowicz

[How charity: water changes lives through multimedia](#) - Lauren Major, Major Multimedia

### How charity: water changes lives through multimedia

CATEGORIES: [ADVOCACY](#) · [AFRICA](#) · [CAUSE MARKETING](#) · [DIGITAL STORYTELLING](#) · [MULTIMEDIA](#) · [NGO'S](#) · [NONPROFIT](#) · [SOCIAL GOOD](#) · [SOCIAL MEDIA](#) · [SOUTH AFRICA](#)

With more than [1.3 million Twitter followers](#), [210,000 Facebook likes](#), and an extremely accessible and interesting blog called the [charity: water log](#), the organization **charity: water** has successfully tapped the social media well, so to speak. We wanted to feature charity: water here because it is a nonprofit leader in social media and also because it embodies what it means for an organization to embrace all things multimedia.



*Interviews*

## Go Behind-The-Scenes

Behind-the-scenes content usually resonates well with an audience, especially photographers who love to learn the story behind an image. Practically any photo assignment you've done has the potential to become a behind-the-scenes blog post.

Examples:

[Behind The Scenes Part 2 – Time Lapse/Live Action & Sliders](#) - Vincent Laforet

[Behind the Lens Series](#) - Greg Basco, Deep Green Photography

[The Making Of A Modern Wedding Video](#) - Visual Masterpiece

## News

Newsworthy content can create short bursts of link-building and discussion. However, these posts tend to be less evergreen. A relevant topic today is yesterday's news tomorrow. However, if your particular field gives you exclusive access to breaking news, or even just an assignment, don't discount the potential to generate buzz. Buzz is still buzz, and you want to generate as much of it as possible.

Examples:

[Bunny Ears](#) - Mary F. Calvert

[End of the Show: May 2012 Annular Eclipse](#) - Jim Goldstein

[Al Davis Dies at 82](#) - Brad Mangin

## Invite a Guest Blogger

Invite industry or relevant professionals to do a guest post on your blog. They get exposure to a new readership, you get a break from writing, and your readers get a fresh perspective. You will also get links aplenty from the guest blogger and his/her community.

Examples:

[Guest Blogging Food Photography #12 with Soma of ecurry](#) - Yummy Food Blog

[Guest Blogger: Pro-photographer Joseph Prezioso and shooting film](#) - 1000 Words

[Setting up your new Canon 7D by guest contributor Doug Brown](#) - Deep Green Photography

## PART TWO:

# Profiles: Photographers Who Blog



# Blogging to Showcase Your Services: Greg Basco

Greg Basco is an internationally published nature photographer specializing in the Costa Rican rainforest, with credits including *National Geographic* and *Newsweek* magazines, and numerous promotional ventures with Canon. His images have been honored in the BBC/Veolia Wildlife Photographer of the Year and the Nature's Best Windland Smith Rice competitions. His latest project is a coffee-table book of artistic images from Costa Rica's national parks.

Although stock sales for nature photography have gone down in recent years, Greg Basco has found new income opportunities from workshops and tours, [which he posts about regularly on his current blog](#). He also discovered that a blog was a great resource for finding new customers and building an online audience of future clients.

When conceiving his blog, Greg set a two-pronged goal. First, he wanted to use his blog to create buzz for potential photo buyers. Secondly, he hoped to attract potential tour clients for the tours he runs in Costa Rica. He knew he would also get visitors simply looking for cool rainforest pictures, but some of these same people may also be looking to do a rainforest trip somewhere down the road.

Integrating his blog and PhotoShelter archive with an overall polished brand gave him a professional look his ideal customers would naturally expect. The gear reviews and photo tips featured on Greg's blog also attract people who may not be actively seeking a rainforest photography website otherwise. Since re-launching his blog and website in 2010, this overall strategy seems to be working for him.

Greg always knew he wanted to post his images with tech and shooting specs, but about six months ago he decided to create a running series with this kind of feature. He called it "[Behind the Lens](#)", and it has since yielded some of his most popular posts. It has also led to the most tour sales. He has found when people see a



Websites:

[www.deepgreenphotography.com](http://www.deepgreenphotography.com)

[www.deepgreenphotography.com/blog/](http://www.deepgreenphotography.com/blog/)

[www.fotoverdetours.com](http://www.fotoverdetours.com)



good image, accompanied with an explanation of how you envisioned it in the field and the technical strategy you used to achieve the look, they are more likely to sign up to learn with you. These days, [Greg's tours usually sell out within a month of getting announced](#).

A professed gearhead himself, Greg also recognized photographers' propensity for arguing endlessly about gear. He knew having a gear component on his blog would drive amateurs and professionals to his site, and create an instant conversation. One of his most popular posts to date was [a guide to setting up the Canon 7D](#). At the time, the camera was a huge seller for Canon and lots of people were looking for educational guides. Although this kind of post did not necessarily lead to direct sales for Greg, he still built awareness for his blog.

His [Rainforest Gear Guide](#) has also successfully drawn people to the site, along with earning him extra money. The guide is part of an affiliate relationship with B & H Photo: if people buy gear linked from his Rainforest Gear Guide, it generates him a little extra money. However, Greg maintains absolute transparency about this agreement with B & H, choosing to openly inform visitors of the financial benefit he receives through these links. His honesty is reinforced by the integrity of his gear reviews, as well as the quality of his photos. Based on his other blog posts, visitors know they can trust his recommendations because he would not link to a product he would not use for himself.

When initially formulating his blog content strategy, Greg thought about the kind of content he wanted to produce and share. While he didn't want to be the guy who posts every time a battery goes on sale at a gear shop, he also knew he should post more than three long treatises a year. In the end, he decided to strive for a happy medium with enough content to retain his audience, and meaningful enough to satisfy them.

Though he generally only posts a few times a month, he keeps a calendar with ideas of what he would like to write about throughout the year. He will still try to space out the order of content, so that he doesn't publish two "Behind the Lens" posts in a row, or inundate his readers with gear reviews. Given the popularity of gear reviews, he always tries to track new gear coming out that he believes will trend among photographers – or he would want to use.

His daily work life provides ample inspiration for his blog. He may find himself optimizing some image in Lightroom he plans to print, and discover a lot of noise. Experimenting with different methods of noise reduction is probably something a lot of people will be interested in reading about, so he'll use his own experience to compose a new blog post. When he is in the field, he finds inspiration all around him. Leading



tours has also proven inspirationally advantageous. He is consistently surrounded by people taking photographs, and thus sees lots of different types of gear – sometimes new and relevant. As a tour and workshop leader, topics and questions often arise in the field that might interest other nature photographers and make for a good blog post.

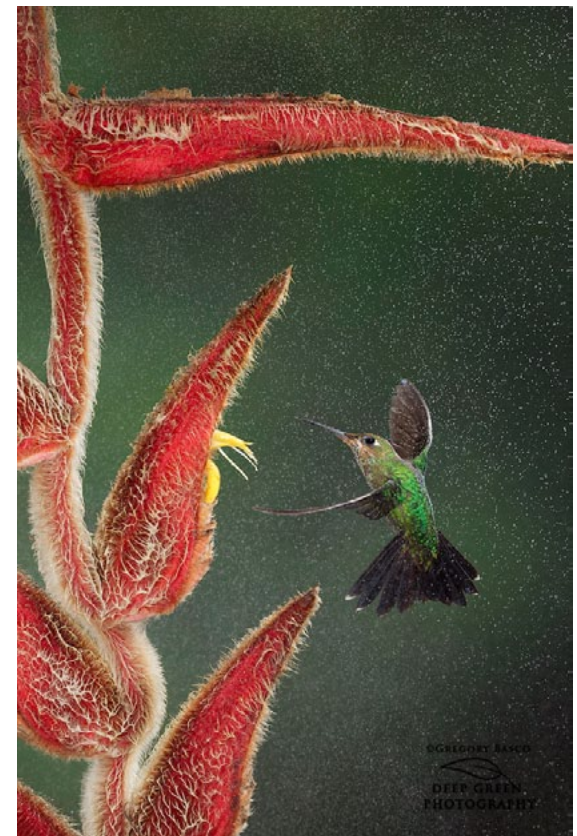
Though initially quite reluctant about putting it all out there on a blog, Greg has since come around to acknowledging his blog as integral to his overall brand. He hopes his blog serves as a reflection of his personality and the kind of employee he is. His honest, easy-going personality is also an extension of his brand. He wants to convey to clients and customers alike that he's a guy who takes good photos, is interested in new gear, forthcoming with his knowledge, enjoys sharing it with others, and ultimately very easy to work with. He feels his blog encompasses all of these things – and that makes it invaluable.

**Another Popular Post from Greg's Blog:**

[Top 5 Tips for Quality Image Files on Deep Green Photography](#)

**Takeaways**

- Practice honesty and integrity with your audience. If you are so lucky to have the opportunity, there's no shame in using your blog to sell products and services as long as you are upfront and clear about the terms of the arrangement.
- Pay attention to current and upcoming gear trends in the photography world. If there's a lot of buzz around a new product, try to get your hands on it and write a review.
- Only create the kind of content you would want to write and share for years to come. You are ultimately responsible for sustaining your blog – it is vital to choose topic areas and content you care about, and would feel comfortable sharing with clients, readers, etc.



# Using Your Blog to Attract Your Ideal Client: Lisa Devlin

UK wedding photographer Lisa Devlin has shot weddings, engagements, and couples for over a decade. Her work has been featured on the top wedding blog in the UK, Rock N' Roll Bride, and almost every other well-known blog in England, as well as the U.S. In addition to shooting nearly 40 weddings a year, she teaches workshops and sells Photoshop actions. Her quirky, unique brand usually brings her quirky, unique clients – and her blog is a centerpiece for continuing to attract like minds.

When Lisa decided to rebrand her website nearly two years ago, she decided her blog should play a more central role on the site. At the same time, business was picking up significantly, and Lisa found herself shooting more pictures than ever. She wanted the homepage to visually reflect her busy schedule. To accomplish both of her goals, she created an image-heavy homepage where all of the different elements blend together seamlessly. Her new website was meant to be a place where someone could lose themselves. At first glance, or second even, one might not know which part of the page is the blog and which part is the website. With the increasingly blurred line between a “blog” and a “website,” Lisa’s redesign has proved both progressive and effective.

Particularly in the competitive market of wedding photography, Lisa knew how important it was to differentiate her business from every other wedding photographer out there. More and more she noticed photographers were using the same templates, or hiring the same designers to modify a similar template, or just mimicking the look and branding of bigger, more famous wedding photographers. With her own design, Lisa tried to think from her client’s point of view. Knowing most brides will look at several different sites before choosing a vendor, she formed a design strategy based on what would make her site unique in the eyes of the bride.

An image-heavy, yet quirky blog has really done the trick. Through her unique voice and blogging style, Lisa continues to find clients with whom she really connects. She considers her specific voice to be an extension of



Websites:

[www.devlinphotos.co.uk](http://www.devlinphotos.co.uk)

[www.devlinphotospsactions.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.devlinphotospsactions.blogspot.co.uk)

Twitter: [@DEVLINPHOTOS](https://twitter.com/DEVLINPHOTOS)

Facebook: [LisaDevlinPhotography](https://www.facebook.com/LisaDevlinPhotography)



the overall brand, and the blog an extension of her branding. She has also managed to attract the eyes of many popular wedding blogs, a connection which continues to bring her ideal clients.

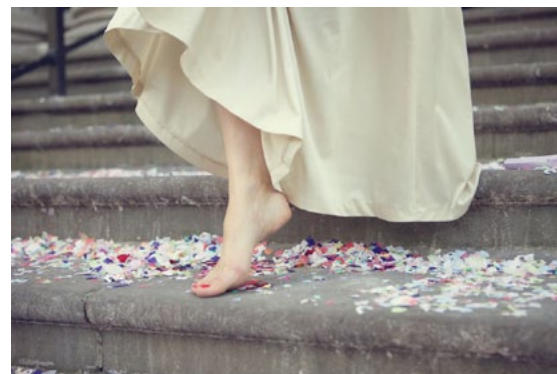
Building relationships with other wedding blogs did not happen overnight, but rather through research, diligence, and focus. Around the time of her redesign, Lisa set a few major career goals for the years ahead. One was to get a feature on the biggest blog in the United Kingdom: [Rock N' Roll Bride](#). She was not targeting this blog merely for the scope of its audience, but rather their makeup. Many readers of Rock N' Roll Bride tend to be quite alternative, an aesthetic with which Lisa really connected. Instead of hoping the blog's editor would magically stumble upon her own alternative work, Lisa took the initiative and emailed the editor directly. To her surprise, Rock N' Roll Bride not only responded, the editor took a look through Lisa's work and found a wedding she wanted to feature. Ironically, it was a civil partnership between two men – so Lisa's first feature on a wedding blog didn't actually feature a bride at all.

Since then, other UK wedding blogs have picked up on her work, and Lisa began educating herself on their different styles. These days, she has such a tight-knit relationship with these blogs that she will actually send them images before she posts them on her own blog. Wedding blogs appreciate this “first look” approach, and because Lisa is very targeted with pairing weddings with appropriate blogs, the strategy often pays off in a feature. Whether featured elsewhere or not, Lisa always blogs all of her work, posting upwards of 100 photos to satisfy her image-heavy branding.

These days, it is not uncommon for new clients to already have a specific wedding blog in mind that they want to feature their wedding photos. In addition to discussing what the clients want for their photos, Lisa also factors in determining where they hope to have these photos published. It's just another way Lisa makes sure to satisfy her clients – she understands how thrilled her bride will be to be featured on the same blog she used to plan her wedding.

Lisa began blogging as a preview for clients who did not want to wait for the film prints. Over the past year or two, she has noticed a significant change in how clients engage with the blog. It has become less of an afterthought, and more of a destination. One of the first things clients ask her is how they will be featured on the blog. Not only are clients paying attention to their own weddings, they are also following and commenting on all of her work. In fact, she has had a few faithful followers who have booked her before their boyfriends have even proposed yet.

To ensure client satisfaction and retention, Lisa pays close attention to trends and analytics. For example, when blogging a wedding, she tries to post photos at 9 AM. This gives the bride and groom all day to look over their photos, send them around to friends, and get excited. If she posts these at night, the day is almost over and the excitement has no time to grow.



Recently, Lisa launched a new blog with the help of a colleague living in Los Angeles, through which she now sells Photoshop actions. The two women have a very similar voice, and strive to make the blog feel personal and conversational – a friendly place to hang out.

They have noticed that a regimented structure to has helped maintain and grow traffic. On Mondays, they will always feature work Lisa shot the week before and which actions she used on the photograph. On Wednesdays, they post an action for sale, usually for about \$8. Then on Fridays, they give something away for free, typically a basic action, though still quite useful. Based on analytic trends, they found these three days were when people purchased the most. They also discovered the highest traffic and sales occurred in the evening, indicating that the majority of their client base is photographers who may still have a 9 to 5 job. All of this information continues to inform the growth and strategy of the blog.

Lisa does not necessarily choose blog topics to generate traffic, but is fortunate that weddings generally get a lot of traction on the Internet. The more visual, the better. One of the more successful blog posts in recent years featured a bride who didn't wear any shoes. By giving the post the intriguing title of "[The Barefoot Bride](#)", Lisa gained a lot of attention and traffic to her blog.

Lisa may get attention by blogging outlandish, alternative, and visually interesting weddings, but by doing so, she gets clients who want that, too. Which is exactly the kind of client she wants to hire her. Having a blog that tells prospective brides exactly who she is continually guarantees Lisa gets exactly the work she wants.

### Other Popular Blog Posts on Lisa's Blog:

[After the Rainbow at Photography Farm](#)

[Las Vegas Lovers Fashion Shoot](#)

[A Modern Day Miss Havisham](#)

### Takeaways:

- Building strong relationships with like-minded industry blogs can help enhance brand awareness and directly market to your ideal clients.
- Be as specific as possible when building your relationships and marketing for the blog, especially if you are in a highly saturated industry. Make sure the branding and content is as accurate a representation of you as possible, and that the relationships you build enhance that.
- Understand your bigger goals before you start. Blogging is an ongoing cycle of small decisions, but setting out how you ultimately want blogging to help you will help you make smarter decisions to get you there faster.



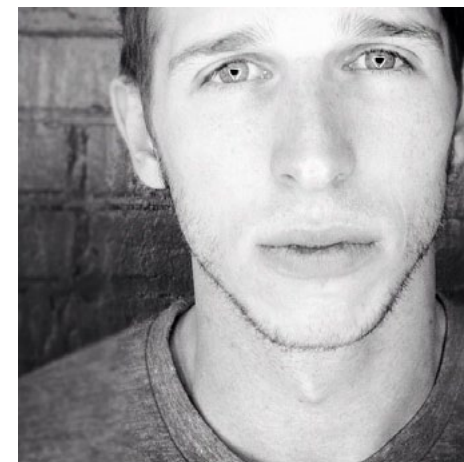
# The Advantage of Blogging for Others: Jared Wickerham

Pittsburgh-based sports photographer Jared Wickerham shoots high school, college, and professional sporting events worldwide. His clients have included *The New York Times*, ESPN, *Sports Illustrated*, Coca-Cola, and *USA Today*. A recent photojournalism graduate of the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, Jared draws from his experiences as a freelancer to write “The Art of...” column for The Photo Brigade, a community resource for freelance photographers. Today, he also shoots full time as a staff photographer for Getty Images.

Jared first started his own blog when he moved to New York City for an internship. He made one initial post about moving to a new city, and then did a second post on baseball’s opening day of the next year. He admits that for a while, he was one of those people who was pretty bad about keeping up his blog. Despite sparse beginnings in his blogging career, he always understood the importance of having one. When a tech savvy friend helped him integrate his website, his PhotoShelter archive, and blog into one space, his workflow became much more familiar and manageable. With just one cohesive website to go to now, Jared has found an easier routine that allows him to post much more regularly.

What helped Jared find the motivation to start blogging again was actually a recent opportunity to write a blog post for someone else. [Photographer Robert Caplin](#) sought out Jared to contribute to the website, [The Photo Brigade](#). His first post discussed how to [begin your freelance photography career and what to expect](#). To date, this has been the most popular blog post he’s written for either The Photo Brigade or his personal blog.

Jared experienced a bit of beginner’s luck with his first post, but he also recognized the potential for more posts geared towards common industry questions. His beginner’s luck has since turned into something of a niche for



Websites:

[www.wickphotography.com](http://www.wickphotography.com)

[www.wickphotography.com/blog](http://www.wickphotography.com/blog)

[www.thephotobrigade.com](http://www.thephotobrigade.com)

Twitter: [@WickPhoto](https://twitter.com/WickPhoto)

Facebook: [Wick Photography](https://www.facebook.com/WickPhotography)



his writing. Noticing that photographers, both new and seasoned, were often looking for that intangible content you don't learn in the classroom, Jared developed a column for The Photo Brigade entitled. "The Art of...".

Another popular post he wrote for them was called "The Art of Getting an Internship". Responding to a community demand for experiential advice, Jared struck a chord with advice on how to secure an internship based on his experience interning with high profile names like Getty Images. Being only a few years out of college himself gives Jared a very keen perspective on the struggles of establishing ones self as a freelancer.

Through his blogging for The Photo Brigade, more people have found his work on Facebook and Twitter that would not necessarily have otherwise. Similarly, he has discovered the work of other photographers who have reached out or connected with him, whom he would have no other way of knowing.

The days of infrequent blogging are long behind him, as Jared has found himself blogging more and more often on his own blog. Though he does not work from a set schedule, he tries to always post interesting stories that may go along with an assignment or interesting pictures. He is well aware now that you will definitely lose followers if you do not post regularly, having experienced a bit of reader's anger himself when in the past he would go months at a time between blogging. What he found was that once he worked out the technical kinks – such as correct image size for his blogging platform – and formulated a routine, blogging actually became a lot of fun.

One thing he has noticed on his own blog is that the most popular posts often have more photos. When he started blogging, Jared worried that he would lose people by overwhelming them with images. He was surprised to find the reverse was true, and has adapted accordingly. For example, after rounds 2 and 3 of the NCAA tournament in Pittsburgh, he uploaded a bunch of different March Madness photos and received a lot of positive feedback. In his experience, people like to see a variety of images and see the entire venue. In other words, people want the whole story.

Though his posts for The Photo Brigade tend to be copy-heavy, his personal blog posts are pretty straightforward and simple. His current method is:

- Always lead off with an image.
- Keep words to a minimum.
- Upload 5 to 8 images, per post.
- Publish post.
- Share on Facebook and Twitter.





This whole process only takes him about 15- 20 minutes. Oftentimes, Robert Caplin will share Jared's posts – such as a recent one about opening day of baseball – on The Photo Brigade, which in turn generates a lot more viewership.

Based on Google Analytics, a large number of visitors come to his site from PhotoShelter and The Photo Brigade. High profile and larger events also tend to drive traffic. What Jared has learned is the bigger and/or the more infrequent the event, the more people are going to seek out photos. For example, an AFC championship game will get much more traction than a random Pirates game. Concerts and music event photography often also benefit from name brand; blog posts about national bands he has worked with may receive more views because the band has a large audience. Most of the time, the popularity of the blog topic itself will determine traffic numbers.

He believes the most important thing for a photographer to remember about blogging is that employers, current or potential, can see not only that you are always working, but how you work. Your blog shows your entire take on event, or at least your best take, and is a sample of what a client will get by hiring you. It is crucial to be transparent on your blog, because not only will everyone see your images, they will also see your personality and your writing as well.

**Other Popular Posts on Jared's Blog:**

[Music: My First Passion](#)

[Opening Day 2012 – PNC Park: Pittsburgh Pirates vs. Philadelphia Phillies](#)

**Takeaways:**

- The quickest way to make your audience disappear is to disappear yourself. You don't need to blog every single day, or week even, but if you wait months at a time to update your blog you might not find your audience there when you decide to return.
- Blogging for someone else can be a great way to reach a new audience, and kick-start your own blogging ambitions.
- Standardizing your blogging routine will cut down the time it takes, and significantly ease the stress of maintaining a blog.



# Blogging for Storytelling and Advocacy: Lauren Major

Founder of Major Multimedia, photographer Lauren Major specializes in multimedia storytelling for nonprofits, NGO's, and small to medium-sized businesses in the social good sector. With 15 years of experience in the financial sector, and 10 subsequent years running her own corporate event photography company, Lauren decided to pivot her photography career towards her passion for travel and social change. Created in 2010, Major Multimedia addresses social issues and advocacy for change worldwide through visual storytelling.

In 2010, Lauren Major identified the boom of social media and the advent of high quality, lower cost video production as two areas crucial for photographers to learn in order to remain marketable. She knew she wanted to start a new company, and also knew she wanted to incorporate social media. At the same time, Lauren knew she had a lot to learn.

After attending workshops on best practices both in social media and multimedia, Lauren began researching the websites of different photographers that she liked. She also reached out to several website designers who could help her create a custom site. By the beginning of 2011, she was ready to focus on a direction and refine her website. Luckily she had already chosen her niche, something she believes is essential to have in order to stand out. After decades in the for-profit world, Lauren wanted to do something that felt like she was giving back. It felt only natural for her new multimedia company to focus on nonprofits and social good.

During this refining phase, she started looking at other blogs she enjoyed and admired to get an understanding of what they were trying to convey and how they went about achieving this goal. She felt a good blog should have a personal voice, and it was important to have an understanding of what the tone would be. For her, the best way to find her unique voice was to jump right in and start writing several different posts.



Websites:

[www.majormultimedia.com/](http://www.majormultimedia.com/)

[www.majormultimedia.com/blog/](http://www.majormultimedia.com/blog/)

Twitter: [majormultimedia](https://twitter.com/majormultimedia)

Facebook: [Major Multimedia, Inc.](https://www.facebook.com/majormultimedia)

From the very beginning, Lauren recognized the time intensive nature of blogging. For an independent photographer, maintaining consistency can be a real challenge. To manage her workflow effectively, she studied industry best practices. These involved asking herself not only who her target audience was, but where they were engaging online. Then, she needed to determine the kinds of content that appealed to this community. Instead of putting her energy towards being everything to everyone, she focused on making content relevant for a specific group.

Although her process is always evolving, she has refined her blog content to several topic areas: projects for clients, behind the scenes looks at things she has done and why, video she has shot on a shoot, still photography to show set-ups, training videos, and conferences. She also writes best practices and new features coming out in the photography world. What is most important to her is to not just rehash what other people are already saying. She constantly works on developing new ideas and content that will captivate her audience.

As a multimedia photographer, it was a no-brainer to feature video on her blog. However, she warns against posting videos simply because people like to watch them. It comes down to what your strengths are. If you aren't comfortable with shooting video on a DSLR, it won't do you any good to post a video that may indicate an expertise on your part. When formulating content, Lauren believes it's best to focus on your strengths and what your target market wants to see. You're much better off showcasing and discussing the content you're an expert at creating, and market it to the specific audience interested in that type of content. As a multimedia producer, video blog posts help support Lauren's brand.

A more recent endeavor for her blog has involved determining who her prospective clients are and setting up interviews with them to discuss the latest trends or an interesting topic for a blog post. This keeps her at the forefront of her industry, gives her readers a fresh perspective, and possibly offers a foot in the door with a new client or partner.

One of her most successful blog posts to date was [one in which she interviewed the in-house multimedia producer for the company charity: water](#). The company is one of the best examples of how a nonprofit can effectively use multimedia. Lauren landed on highlighting them after extensively researching who in her industry was doing it well, how she could learn from their methods, and how to share that with her constituency. It was one of her posts that led to several job opportunities.

To stay in touch with what her audience wants, Lauren consistently tracks her blog and social media activity via Google Analytics. Noting which blog posts drive the most traffic back to her site, and monitoring referrals she gets for new business based on a post help her continue to modify her blog strategy to maximize returns.





In her words: “If you manage to strike a chord online and people are buzzing about something you’ve said, it tends to elevate you as an expert in that area, or at least in the blogging world. Clients who recognize this may ask you to write a proposal for them.” While this scenario doesn’t always happen for Lauren, it has happened enough for her to value it.

Staying on top of her workflow is key to the upkeep of her blog, as she opts for a very personal, hands-on approach with each post. She has an editorial calendar and a spreadsheet to chart exactly when she plans to blog, tweet, Facebook, and (eventually) send out newsletters. She strives to work at least 3 to 5 days before the scheduled post date, and makes sure to vary the types of content she publishes. Currently, she strives to blog twice a week, and post once a week on newer platforms like Pinterest.

With such a specific target audience, Lauren has very clear parameters for the kinds of content she should post on her blog. Nonetheless, she still has a robust RSS feed on Google Reader of blogs, Twitter accounts, and websites she admires from which she will check out for inspiration. In general, she feels it’s best to keep your ears open and constantly talk to people in your field and community.

With blogging, it always comes down to what you specifically are trying to accomplish, and who you want to reach.

**Other Popular Posts from the Major Multimedia Blog:**

[Getting Up Close and Personal with Online Advocacy](#)

[The Kilgoris Project: Nonprofit Provides Kindles in Kenya](#)

**Takeaways:**

- Get educated. If you are not comfortable with social media or blogging, take a class, hire a consultant, or read an online tutorial. You should understand what the medium can do for you before you even start designing a content strategy.
- Don’t try to be everything to everyone. Determine exactly what you want your business to be, who your audience is, and the best way to reach them. If you try to do too much, you may end up with much less traction – and business.
- Build a robust RSS feed of the blogs you admire, your competition, and your prospects and clients. This will not only help you keep up with news and trends, it can also be a great resource for blog topics.



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