

## Advice for a Returning Blogger



A friend of mine returning to blogging asked for some advice on getting back into the swing of things. Here's what I shared with her.

### **SEO: Don't Worry, Be Happy**

First, regarding SEO: as you may or may not know, in this last year Google rolled out two significant changes to their ranking algorithms (Panda and Penguin, respectively) that really altered how a lot of people's pages rank in Google. The bottom line of these changes as far as bloggers is concerned is that writing for SEO is less effective now than it used to be, and if one is writing articles stuffed with keywords, or striving for a certain keyword density, that is much less effective in ranking now than it was in the past. The other thing is about backlinks: one of the best ways to get content to rank well is to have others link to it, but for that reason Google now has the genesis of backlinks under very close scrutiny. Links from "link spam" and paid-for link directory sites can now torpedo your page rankings. Basically, if the backlink is not from a quality site (a real blog or other site that really has content in a related subject area), then it hurts rather than helps rankings.

### **What's Your Shelf Life?**

Finally, there is Google's new evaluation of how "fresh" content is. Posting infrequently hurts one's site now more than it did in the past. No one knows exactly how often Google is hoping to see new content, but the consensus seems to be that posting weekly is the baseline smart effort to make; two or three times a week is probably even better, but that also depends of course on the nature of your content.

### **End-Run Around the Search Engines**

## Notes From the Lizard Lair

Fulmination, Ruminations, and Snacks from a Resurgent Author  
<http://www.debraheramischristian.com>

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All that said, because Google (and other search engines, like Yahoo and Bing) can and do change their algorithms frequently, it is no longer smart to be as SEO-focused as we were in the past. Rather, the alternative (better? certainly more secure from Google changes) way to drive up rankings and build audience is to:

- a) create high quality, high value content, original content.
- b) post (relatively) frequently
- c) concentrate on getting content out into **social media**. People-connections are immune to Google ranking antics, and once people start to follow, Like, +1 content and so, this in turn affects how a blog ranks on the search engines.

I also think that's just basically a sound approach to building audience and connecting with your readers. If you don't have a Facebook author page, create one. Ditto with G+, you should at least have a personal profile as well as business page (if you're doing business or you **are** the business). Note that the reports about "G+ is a ghost town" are based on engagement with public posts; however, it appears that the majority of users on G+ post **privately** to circles, so the cross-pollination there is much more fervent than you would think. It is just going on behind the scenes and out of sight of web metrics, which can only access the public-facing posts.

## Repeat Yourself

Find a few places in the blogosphere where you can repost an intro paragraph to your newest blog content and include a link to it. Open Salon, Reddit, forums that discuss things in the subject areas you write in, are all good candidates for this. It both builds legitimate backlinks and draws more eyeballs to your work.

## What's Your Line?

Regarding the content of your blog: stay focused. People remember a place that deals with a single topic area, or brief array of topics, and will come to it again and again to see what the author has to say in those subject areas. But dilute your message too much, and you lose the dedicated readership that would otherwise follow you weekly. Narrower is better in terms of what you intend to cover. Make your blog be **about** something--something specific.

## Speak to Your Ideal Reader

And my final word of advice: forget rankings and appearances and everything else. Imagine that you are talking to your one IDEAL, "like-minded other" (or potential client, if you blog in relation to a business). Give him or her a name--even tape up a picture of "that person" from net surfing, right by your monitor, and when you write--speak to him or her. Just have a conversation with this One Person who really wants to hear what you have to say because it will give them good food for thought. Then just talk to that one. This will help you stay focused (you're not worrying about an audience), while at the same time, it will magnetize to you everyone who's on your wavelength, because they'll feel you are speaking just to them in your writing.

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Give it a try. It can be a great technique.

Oh, last thought: sign up for the newsletter at Yaro Starak's blog ([The Entrepreneur's Journey](#)). He is one of the first hugely successful professional bloggers (emerging about a decade ago), and has marvelous insights into the process and also the business of blogging.

Good luck! And if anything in this post helps you return to blogging, please do share the url of your blog so we know where to go read. :)