

Blogging for SEO Guide: **How to Create, Optimize, Publish & Socialize Your Blog Posts**



Introduction

In November 2011, Google launched the Freshness Update that gives priority to fresh, timely content such as press releases, blogs, news and events. Why? Because fresh content is more relevant. That is why corporate blogging is more important to search engine optimization (SEO) than it has ever been, and it is now a critical component of any **optimized content marketing strategy**.

Regularly publishing blog posts on topics that are relevant to your audience keeps the content on your website fresh and interesting for your readers as well as search engine robots. Sharing your blog posts is also important because it accomplishes the following goals for your SEO campaign:

- Backlink building
- Indexing by Google so it can ultimately be found
- Social signals creation (likes, shares, tweets, +1s, views, pins)
- Beginnings of a sales conversation with prospects

Overview

With this Blogging for SEO Guide you will learn how to create, optimize, publish and socialize your blog posts for maximum SEO advantage, in four easy steps:

1. Choosing Your Blog Post Topic and Keywords
2. Writing Your Blog Post
3. Publishing Your Blog Post
4. Distributing/Socializing Your Blog Post

1. Choosing Your Blog Post Topic and Keywords

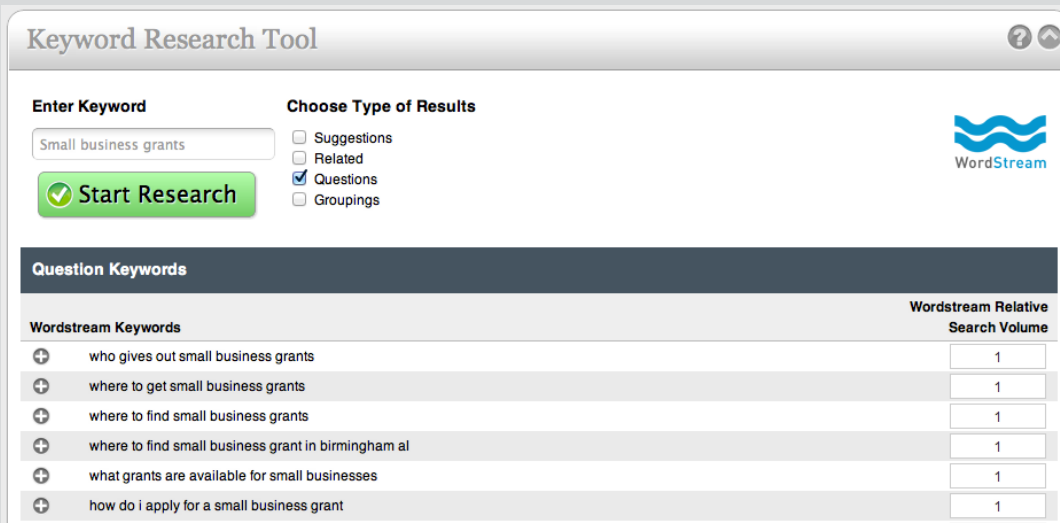
When choosing a topic for your blog post, be sure to choose a topic that will educate, inform and entertain, while still including *two to three focus keywords*. Build your article from the ground up, where the topic of the blog post is determined based on the keyword research you have conducted.

To select your keywords, be sure to review your website's performance in [gShift Labs' Web Presence Optimizer™ \(WPO\)](#). Look for keywords that are:

- ranking on Page One, but could be ranking higher
- not yet ranking on Page One or have lost rank
- already driving targeted traffic and/or conversions to your website regardless of where they are ranking

Tips for Choosing A Blog Topic:

- Take a stance on an issue by comparing two items.
- Write about/respond to something topical within your industry.
- Think about developing a topic that will elicit a response/comments from your audience and ask for feedback at the end of your post.
- Introduce a new concept and/or angle on a subject, where possible.
- Focus on creating content that your audience will find valuable enough to share.
- Consider using the “Questions” function in the WordStream Keyword Research Tool in gShift Labs WPO to identify questions based on your focus keyword phrases. These represent actual questions used to search the web and by answering them in a blog post you can potentially attract the same long-tail traffic.



The screenshot shows the 'Keyword Research Tool' interface. It features a search bar with the text 'Small business grants' and a green 'Start Research' button. To the right, there are radio buttons for 'Suggestions', 'Related', 'Questions' (which is selected), and 'Groupings'. Below this is a table of 'Question Keywords' with a 'Wordstream Relative Search Volume' column.

Wordstream Keywords	Wordstream Relative Search Volume
+ who gives out small business grants	1
+ where to get small business grants	1
+ where to find small business grants	1
+ where to find small business grant in birmingham al	1
+ what grants are available for small businesses	1
+ how do i apply for a small business grant	1

Content Curation

Already existing content can also be a great source of blog material. Press releases, white papers, and articles written about your organization all lend themselves to great blog content. Review previously successful blog posts for new opportunities, including updated articles and sequel posts. Be sure to refer and/or link to the original content when creating the new post and vice-versa.

2. Writing Your Blog Post

Once you have decided on the blog topic and keywords, sketch out your post. Ensure that your keywords appear at the beginning of your blog title and subheadings (if appropriate and where possible).

Your first paragraph should be a quick summary of the overall blog topic and include a few key points you plan to discuss. This intro paragraph should also include a call to action - and don't forget keywords!

Break up your next points by using properly formatted subheadings. Search engine robots crawl heading tags and assign each a level of importance, therefore write clear, descriptive and keyword-rich subheadings.

Use bulleted and numbered lists to make the post quick and easy to read for both your human and search engine audiences.

Conclude your blog post by again including a call to action. Provide clear direction as to where the reader should go next (i.e. should they contact you, sign up for your newsletter, provide feedback in the comments section below, read another blog post or article, download a whitepaper, watch a video, etc.).

Images

Try to include a featured image in every blog post. Image-based social networks have increased in popularity as a social bookmarking tool. Readers may share your content on a social network like Pinterest, so a well-chosen image can help drive traffic back to your website. Without a relevant image on the web page, there is no opportunity for people to share your content with their Pinterest followers. Content shared on other social networks like Google+ and Facebook will also typically default to displaying whatever image you have featured.

Images do not need to be ornate or specific, but rather can be basic stock photography that simply illustrates a concept. [Free Digital Photos](#) offers blog-sized images for free with a reciprocal link.

Infographics, charts and graphs are also very good images to add to technically or statistically oriented posts.

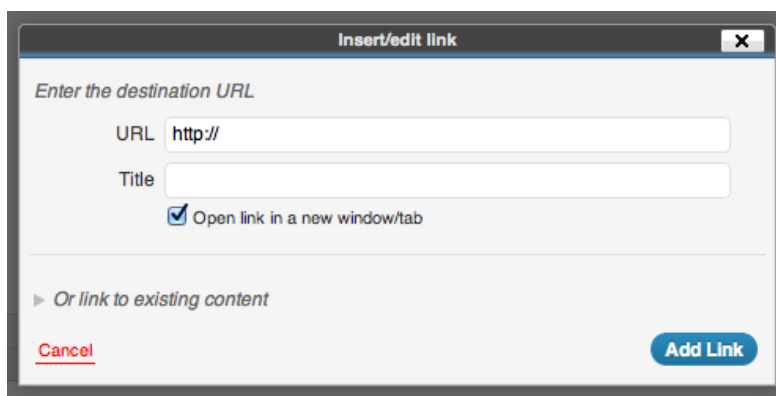


When attaching images to your blog post, always do the following:

- Properly name images to include your keywords (e.g. *funding-small-business.jpg*).
- Use keywords in your alternate text while making it legible for the reader. Tip: You can use the post title for inspiration.
- Make use of the caption field. Captions will appear underneath the image in your blog post. This section tends to draw the reader's eye, so write something effective such as your article hook or a pull-quote.
- Large, original images included in your article should always be watermarked. If your images are ever separated from your content, the watermark will credit and hopefully refer traffic back to the original source.

Hyperlinks

When including links to external sources (including your own), ensure the web page will open in a new window by checking the *Open Link in New Window* checkbox in your content management system. You do not want to drive people off your website without a point of return other than the browser's back button.



Insert/edit link

Enter the destination URL

URL

Title

Open link in a new window/tab

► Or link to existing content

[Cancel](#)

Hyperlinking Keywords

Review your post for your selected keywords. Ensure each keyword is hyperlinked to an appropriate and relevant page and one that is preferably optimized for the same keyword. For example, if your blog post uses the keywords “*SEO Software*”, make sure you link from those keywords to a page that's specifically about or discusses SEO software (e.g. www.gshiftlabs.com/seo-software/). By doing so, you're signaling to Google that the “*SEO Software*” page is linked to the “*SEO Software*” keywords, and should therefore be indexed for that phrase.

There is no need to hyperlink keywords that appear in your heading or subheadings as they are already being prominently featured and tagged.

Special Cases: Rich Snippets for Events, Contacts and Business Organizations

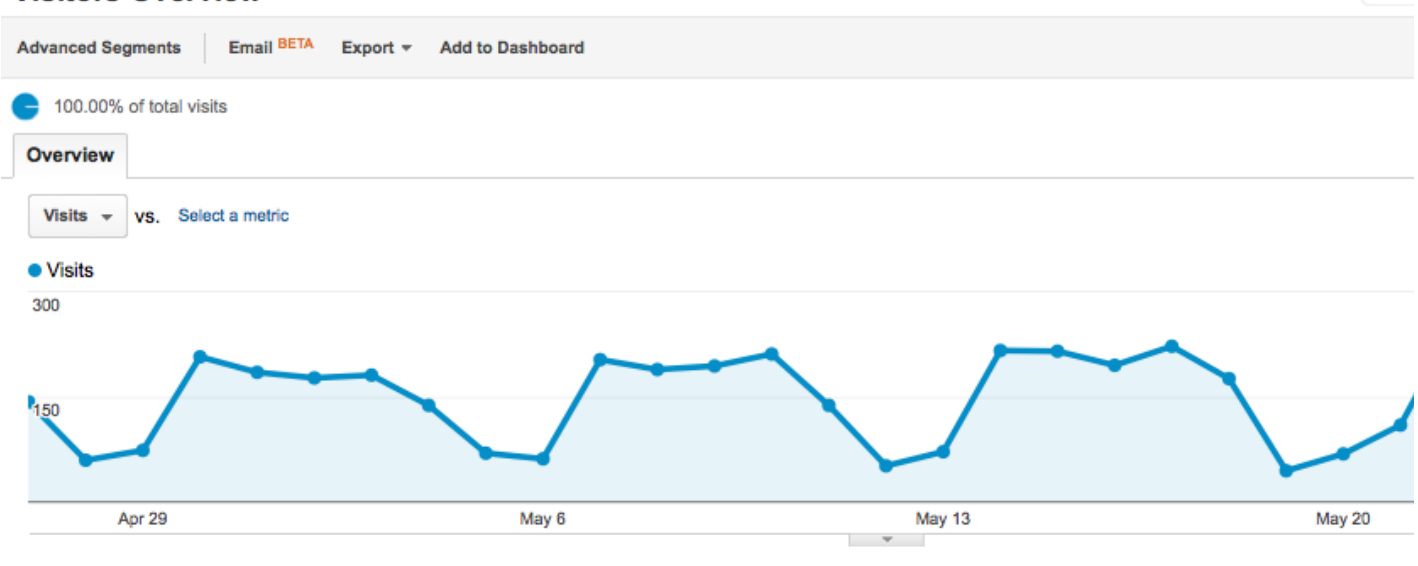
When your blog post mentions or lists a person's contact information, a business organization, an author or an event, make use of rich snippets. Rich snippets help Google assign context to the abovementioned snippets of information. This is achieved by adding specific HTML to your content.

3. Publishing Your Blog Post

Be mindful of traffic patterns to your website to gain a better understanding of when you should publish your new content for the largest amount of traction. Google Analytics offers a grid view of traffic patterns where you can easily identify trends in online visits. Most websites tend to experience more visits during the week, with peak times on Monday and Tuesday. Plan the release of your post accordingly; if your traffic follows a similar pattern, schedule the publishing of your new blog post on Monday morning rather than Friday afternoon when people are less likely to view it.

Visitors Overview

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Format your content to make it easier for the reader to digest. Be consistent with your use of bold text and italics. Always make sure your article is properly edited by another set of eyes before going live. People can often be dissuaded from reading a post that is littered with common spelling or grammatical errors.

Finally, if you use WordPress, optimize your blog post using the *WordPress All in One SEO Pack* plugin before publishing. Consider the following:

- Ensure your permalinks are descriptive, yet easy to remember.
- If you haven't already, ensure your title is keyword-rich. The SEO title will also be that page's title tag, which is an important step in your website optimization process. This field should match your already keyword-rich blog post title.
- Craft a keyword-rich meta description that is unique to the blog post and includes a call to action. The meta description is your opportunity to further entice people who come across your blog post in search results.

Now that your blog post is finished and published, the hardest part is over. The next steps focus on distributing/socializing your new content to reach and grow your audience as well as extend your overall web presence.

4. Distributing/Socializing Your Blog Post

It's time to draw attention to your blog post by sharing it and getting it re-shared on major social sites. Google+, LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter should always be a part of your socializing process.

Once your article is published, be sure to share the link on all of your social sites. This can often be automated to some extent by using a WordPress plugin such as *WordSocial for Facebook and Twitter*. If you post to your social accounts manually, always include an interesting and descriptive introductory sentence about the shared link that includes your keywords.

Facebook

Facebook's recent redesign allows page admins to "pin" specific blog posts to the top of their Facebook feed for a period of seven days. When someone visits your **Facebook Business Page**, the pinned post will remain at the top regardless of any updates to the stream. Use this new feature to draw attention to new blog posts. Attach an image to your stream, caption it with a brief description of your blog post, and then link to the post. If possible, tag any Facebook users who may be associated with or relevant to the blog post.



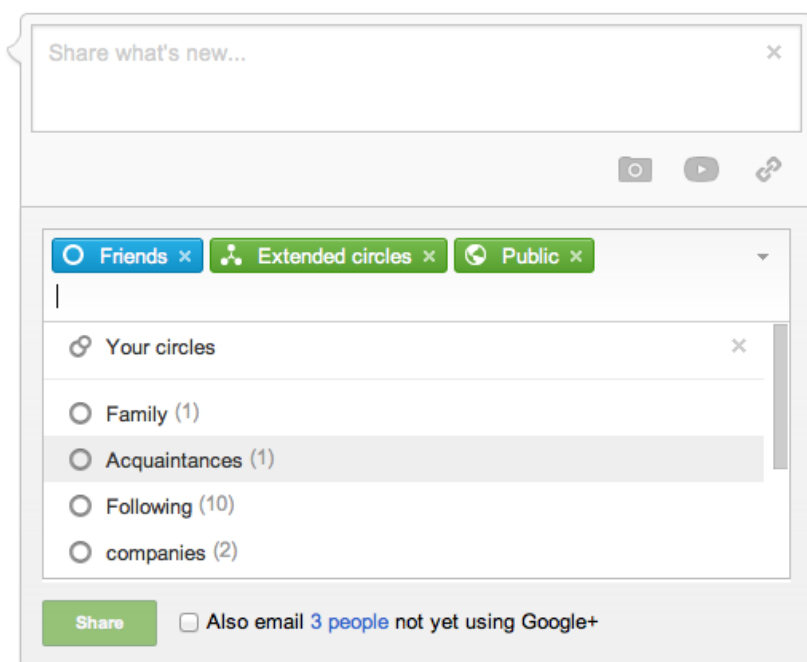
If you prefer to link directly to your stream (i.e. not in an image's caption field), simply add the link to your status update. Once the post has grabbed the link and it appears as a preview, you can remove the image from the status box altogether, if necessary. The link preview should grab the page's title tag and meta description. If not, edit this content as appropriate.

Google+

Google+ is similar to Facebook in that it allows you to share multiple pieces of content into your stream with virtually no character limitation. Make use of this allotted space to thoroughly promote your shared link (for example, offer an excerpt of the article or a quote). Your Google+ status can also be formatted:

- To bold text, enclose it with asterisks (*) e.g. I want ***this text*** to appear bold!
- To italicize text, enclose it with underscores (_) e.g. I want *_this text_* to appear italicized!
- To include a strikethrough, enclose the text with dashes (-) e.g. I want ~~-this-~~ to have a strikethrough!

Google+ also allows for the use of hashtags (e.g. #keyword) to enhance searchability and highlight keyword phrases, so be sure to include relevant keywords to appropriately categorize your content to the right audience. If you're uncertain of which tags to use, visit www.hashtags.org for some popular options.



When posting an update to your Google+ page be sure to share it with the "Public" group.

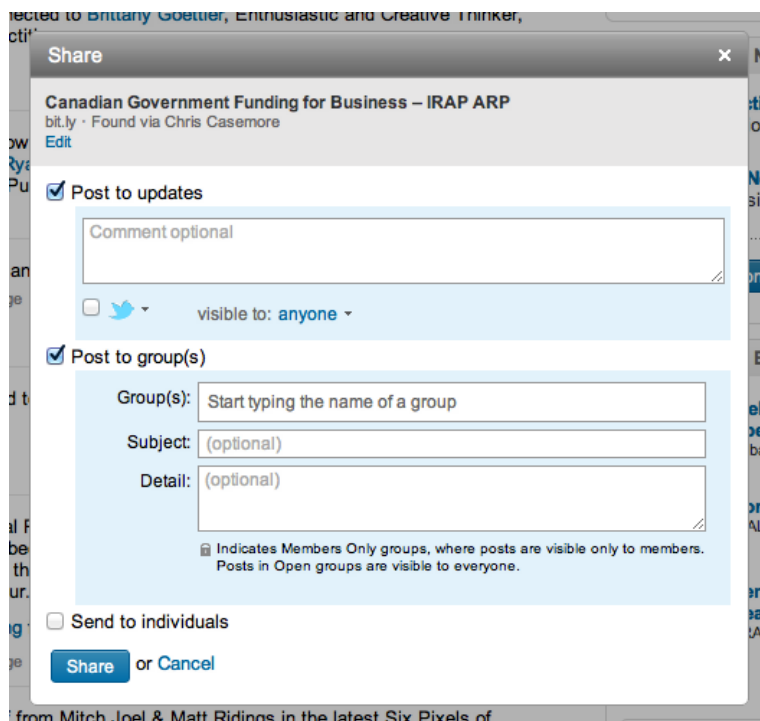
Once your link is posted on your Google+ company page, use your personal Google+ account to share the content with the Public and your circles. When sharing with your followers, be sure to share with your Extended Circles. Extended Circles include people in your circles' circles, and can be a great way to publicize your content to a new audience.

LinkedIn

A feed of your blog should already be attached to your [LinkedIn Company page](#), however, you can also use the status update option to share your new blog post on your LinkedIn company page. Following a similar process to that noted above, make use of your keywords and a compelling message in order to capture your audience's attention. This update can be more professional in tone since LinkedIn's audience is business-friendly.

Once your post has been updated on your Company Page, encourage any employees with LinkedIn profiles to share the update with their followers. Assuming they are following the Company Page, the status update will show up in their stream and they will simply need to share the status.

Lastly, consider joining relevant LinkedIn Groups and sharing Company Page status updates (particularly blog posts) with those groups where there is potential for commenting, liking and following of the post.



Twitter

When publishing a link to your blog post on Twitter, always make use of hashtags to categorize your article, highlight your focus keywords and improve its overall searchability.



If you're uncertain of which tags to use, visit www.hashtags.org for some popular options or conduct your own search via <https://twitter.com/search> using variations of your focus keywords as starting points.

If your article mentions another organization that also uses Twitter, be sure to include their handle with an @ reply. This can often result in cross-promotion, where that organization or person then shares your tweet with their followers.

Pinterest

Pinterest is an image based social network which enables organizations to maintain categorized "boards" of images linked to original sources like corporate web pages or blog posts. Pinterest represents one more point of presence for organizations. While it is primarily a B2C focused social network (like Facebook) there are benefits, including SEO benefits, to be realized by B2B organizations that choose to leverage the network.

Blogs containing images, particularly infographics, charts and/or graphs which are more typically in a B2B environment, can be pinned from blog posts thereby creating a backlink to the post. These pins can then be liked and/or repinned by other Pinterest users who can also choose to follow your organization and boards on Pinterest.

While not a primary focus, we recommend that all organizations remain open to the potential benefits of creating a Pinterest account to leverage now or in the future.

YouTube

YouTube is the world's second largest search engine by volume and therefore is worthy of consideration from a social media and SEO perspective. An organization's YouTube Channel is also one more online point of presence for that organization. A Channel can include both an organization's videos and relevant videos captured as a feed from other sources.



We do recommend creating a YouTube Channel, even just as a placeholder to start, and then creating short, optimized videos around specific keywords when opportunities present themselves. Videos themselves can also become the focal points of blog posts.

More Ways to Promote Your Blog

- Distribute your blog post via email to subscribers using an email service provider like Constant Contact, MailChimp or ExactTarget.
- Include a new or featured blog post snippet in your email signature. The Google Chrome Extension WiseStamp can pull in RSS feeds from your blog to your email signature automatically.
- Don't be afraid to contact relevant connections directly and inform them of your new blog post.
- Include your recent blog post headlines and summaries in your e-newsletter.
- Share your new blog post as a status update on your Google Places page.

Conclusion

Corporate blogging gives Google what it wants – fresh, relevant, timely optimized content. The key to blogging for SEO success is to:

- Commit to a consistent content publishing schedule
- Create relevant and engaging content
- Optimize each blog post for a few target keywords
- Socialize your blog posts via the appropriate channels

Focus on an **optimized content marketing strategy** and you will crush your competitors in organic search.



About gShift Labs

gShift Labs provides Web Presence Optimization Software giving SMBs and agencies control over their organic search campaigns. Companies across North America are achieving top organic rankings in search engines using gShift's Web Presence Optimizer™ (WPO), which simplifies, demystifies and standardizes the way a website gets found on the internet. Organizations of all sizes benefit by reducing the time and resources required to analyze and improve organic search optimization.

For more information, please contact us at [1-866-743-5960](tel:1-866-743-5960) or sales@gShiftLabs.com.