



HOW TO BE A WELL-PAID BLOGGER

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Make a Living Writing blog

If you've been wondering what successful bloggers are doing that you're not, and you'd like to start or improve your own blog and turn it into a really useful tool for growing your business, I'm going to tell you 20 things that in my experience top bloggers are doing that most bloggers are not.

I have reviewed scores of writers' blogs through my own [Make a Living Writing](#) blog and in my writer community [Freelance Writers Den](#), and it's given me a good look at what bloggers are doing, and where they're going wrong.

I also draw from my own experience with my blog, which began in 2008. In 2010, when it had just 300 subscribers, it was a winner in the 2011 Best Blogs for Writers contest held by Write to Done.

Over the past 18 months, it has evolved from earning a small sum to generating a full-time living.

There are two basic ways to earn from your blog – you can use the blog as a sales platform, or you can use the blog as an audition piece to get paid writing work from others. The good news -- you can often do both at once.

But before you can make any money off your blog, it has to be an inviting place that feels trustworthy. Once visitors arrive, it has to deliver useful information to make them want to stick around. Here are the basics of design and usability that go into making a blog that is ready to earn:

You choose a monetizable topic. When you're considering creating a blog to earn money, ask yourself if the audience you have in mind would buy things. Do you solve one of the primal problems of life – you help people earn money, save money, or feel more fulfilled? When you research this niche, do you see other blogs selling? If so, you're probably in a good niche.

You deliver useful information. Most bloggers write about whatever's on their minds – their blog is like an online journal. Bloggers who earn write to help readers solve problems. Don't know what readers want? Ask questions, take polls, hold essay contests, and find out.

Your blog has a great name, tagline and URL. Your URL matches your blog name, and between the name and tagline, it's easy to understand what your blog is about.

You write great post headlines with key words. Work hard on your headlines – they are your hook for luring readers to your site. Learn how to write compelling ones by reading the Psychotactics report Why Do Some Headlines Fail? (Available here: <http://www.psychotactics.com/>) or the Headline Hacks report from Copyblogger's Jon Morrow (<http://boostblogtraffic.com/>)

You write strong opening paragraphs. Remember that many search engines will show the first few sentences of your post – so make them catchy and include key words. Don't use a long, "throat-clearing" opening, as readers may not stick with you until you finally get to the gist of your topic.

You understand blog style. Blogging truly is its own format. It's different from a magazine or newspaper article. Blogs need to be scannable, short, informal, and to the point. Good blog posts use short sentences and paragraphs. Using bulleted or numbered lists is a great way to get your post read.

You understand blog mechanics. There are some basics to how to enliven links properly (rather than having naked or dead links), find and place photographs, code images to link to sales carts.

You make it easy for visitors to subscribe. Ideally, your subscription form should be simple and visible "above the fold" – ideally, right at the top of your sidebar. Don't make readers hunt for it.

Your design is uncluttered and inviting. You don't have a black background, tiny typefaces, a lefthand sidebar or multiple righthand sidebars.

You have a great About page – and/or a great About mini-profile on the home page. Typically, your About page will be the most-visited page on your site. Tell a compelling story there about who you are and why you're blogging.

You have a "Hire Me" page. If you want gigs, don't be shy – let visitors know you do work for others. Have your clips well-organized on your blog site on a static page, and make sure clips are clickable links to your stories. If they're not online, get your clips turned into PDFs and load them onto your site. Be sure to include your contact information – NOT a fill-in contact form. Nobody trusts those, so we don't want to fill them out. If you don't have contact information that's easy to find and use, you may be losing prospects who give up in frustration.

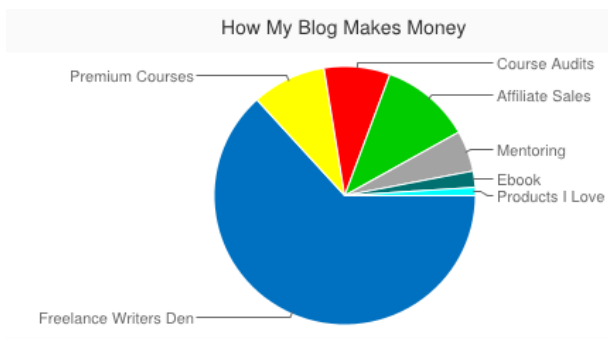
You guest post. To spread the word about what you do and connect with other bloggers, you post on other blogs – ideally, major blogs with big traffic. These posts send you new subscribers.

You have social proof. Your social-media share buttons for Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc. are easy to find and use. You also use them yourself, promoting your blog posts in social media. You note prominent places you've guest posted, and have your popular posts on view so new visitors immediately see you are well-known and have an active blog.

You persist. It takes time to build a following, often several years. Keep at it and don't give up before it pays off.

With these steps, you should have a blog that's valued by readers and growing an audience. This is the first step because if no one visits your blog, you can't sell anything to anyone.

Once you start to attract an audience and build a small list, you're ready to start experimenting with ways that blog might bring in income. There are really only a few basic ways you can do that, and not all of them will work for every blog, so as you look over this list, think about whether each earning option would be welcomed by your audience. My own blog currently has 7 different revenue sources, as you can see here:



Now that you know how to set up a blog so that it's welcoming, trustworthy, and useful to readers, you're ready to look at how you might make that blog earn.

Here's the key to the whole blog-monetizing picture: Figure out what your blog's audience wants to buy. What do they need that they will likely purchase in the next year or so anyway? Then, offer it.

Now that you know how to put a money-earning program together for your blog, here's a look at all the ways you can earn:

Ads. This is where many new bloggers start, often with [Google AdSense](#) ads or an [Amazon cart](#) that sells books or products. Ads pose many problems, though.

Readers hate ads! The more of them you put, the more spammy your site looks, and the more readers you may lose.

Many of these programs pay very small commissions, so if you don't have huge traffic, you probably don't have enough of an audience for this to add up to much. Meanwhile, you're cutting your audience

down.

Finally, ads encourage visitors to click over to someone else's site and buy something from *them*. It doesn't build your bond with your reader, and someone else makes most of the money.

If you have ads up and aren't earning at least a few hundred bucks a month, take them down. They're probably hurting more than they're helping.

Affiliate sales. A better way to get a cut of other people's products or services is to selectively affiliate sell things you can personally recommend and have used. As you build relationships with other bloggers, you'll likely receive offers from them to sell their products. Commissions here are usually 30%-50% or more, which adds up nicely on a \$300-\$600 class. There are two basic types of affiliate sales – most are for one-time products. But you can also do very well selling monthly-membership programs. My first substantial affiliate success was selling [A-List Blogger Club](#), the monthly-membership community where I learned about blog monetization.

Information products. Writing your own ebooks, print-on-demand books, or ecourses can be a great way to start earning a bit more. There's little cost to developing digital products you write yourself, and once your initial costs for design or proofreading are over, you keep all the profits.

Physical products & software tools. Some blogs have cashed in by developing apps, DVD training programs, or software tools that help readers run their online businesses. For instance, AppSumo sells many apps, and Copyblogger sells software for managing Search

Engine Optimization (SEO) and designing sales pages.

Services. Offering a service – ideally, an ongoing and recurring one – is a proven earning model. For instance, Sean Platt formerly of the GhostwriterDad blog and now a fiction-serial author for Amazon, also runs [OutstandingSETUP](#), a WordPress blog hosting and support service.

Classes. One of my first paid offerings was a series of one-time paid Webinars about freelancing. I know other bloggers who do in-person teaching events as the bulk of their business. Currently, I have two premium courses I teach in partnership with [Renegade Writer](#) blogger and author Linda Formichelli, [4-Week Journalism School](#) and [The Freelance Writers Blast-Off Class](#).

Freelance gigs. If you've got a solid blog and you've put up that 'hire me' tab, you may well find prospects start to contact you to find out if they can hire you to blog for their sites, too. At one point I was earning [\\$5,000 a month as a paid blogger](#) for clients, so there is good money in paid blogging.

Job boards. Prologger is among the blogs that runs a job board where companies that want to post a listing pay a fee. At one point, Darren Rowse of Prologger reported that site's paid job board brought in \$1,000 a month for his blog.

Paid newsletter. If you have highly useful information, you might make your newsletter paid rather than free. An example of a writer's blog doing this is FundsforWriters, which charges \$15 a year for its newsletter.

Mentoring/coaching. Some readers may want more information from you than your free blog provides – they want to know how to apply your useful information to their particular situation. This can pave the way for one-on-one or small-group mentoring or coaching programs.

Public speaking. As you build your reputation online, people may want you to come speak about your expertise at live events and conferences. Actually, that's what happened to me and how I came to be here at SiWC!

Contests. Most of us know how these work – you charge a small fee for each entry, give out some of the money in prizes, and keep the rest. Writer's Weekly, for example, runs many contests.

Text ads. Ever see these double-underlined links? These are text or key-word ads. Mousing over these links will often pop up an ad box, and then earn you a small commission if people click and buy through it. This approach is considered a bit cheesy at this point, but many big sites use it – for a while text ads were featured routinely on US News & World Report online.

Paid community. As you amass content and build your authority, you may build a core following that would like more access to you and all your info. One powerful way to provide that is in a monthly-membership community. A-List Blogger Club and my own Freelance Writers Den are just two examples of paid communities that are springing up. The power of this model: A low monthly recurring fee gets participants all-you-can-eat access to everything you've got, so it's a very attractive, compelling offer for readers. Get a mass of

people to sign up, and you still earn plenty.

Conferences and events. If you become a major thought leader in your niche and you know lots of other top bloggers, you may be able to cash in big by creating an in-person event. Two examples are [SOBCon](#), the Successful Online Business conference, now held twice a year (100 seats only at \$700 a ticket) and started by Successful Online Business blogger Liz Strauss and her partner Terry St. Marie, and [World Domination Summit](#), the twice-yearly event created by mega-successful blogger Chris Guillebeau of the Art of Nonconformity blog.

Sell the blog. Some bloggers create blogs with the express purpose of building them up to sell. Others have an unexpected hit and end up getting buyout offers. One writers' blog that was sold is FreelanceWritingGigs, which was snapped up by SplashPress Media a couple years back.

No matter which earning tactics you decide to try, remember that monetizing is always an experiment. Try things out, raise or lower prices, hold sales, take polls, and keep tinkering until you find the mix of offer types your audience loves.

Thanks for attending my SIWC presentation!

NOTE: A few of the links in this handout are affiliate links of my own. If you buy products or services through them, I'll get a commission. You don't pay a dime more, and it helps support my blog. They're all products I personally have used and highly recommend. You can

read more about them, and my experiences with these products, on my [Products I Love](#) page. For more info, I also did a recent blog post on [How My Blog Makes Money](#).

LEARN MORE:

For more tips on how to earn money from your blog or as a freelance writer, visit my website, **Make a Living Writing** (<http://www.makealivingwriting.com>), where subscribers receive the free 20-week e-course, **Marketing 101 for Freelance Writers**.

I also assist writers in my membership community, **Freelance Writers Den** (<http://freelancewritersden.com>). We aren't always open to new members, but if we're closed you can get on the waiting list and be first in the door when we reopen.