



MWANGAZA BLOGGING GUIDE

(Published by Mwangaza)

MODULE 1; WHAT IS BLOGGING?

In order to discuss what blogging is, we'll need to define what a website really is and how it works.

What is a website?

Websites are nothing more than a bunch of computer files. Like any other computer files, they need software to open them. The software to open website files is called a web browser. Examples of web browsers are Internet Explorer and FireFox, Opera, Google Chrome etc

Website Hosting

Websites are stored on servers. Servers are simply computers that are set up to store (or host) websites so people can visit them. They are not very different from your computer at home, other than they are designed to run continuously and usually have features that help prevent failures and downtime (such as redundant hard drives, backup power, multiple Internet connections, etc.).

Therefore, hosting basically means the process of storing your website files so that they are always accessible to someone who visits your website at any time, day or night. This is done using computers which are called servers.

Hosting is usually done by various companies including SasaHost and KenyaWeb Experts among others.

Domain Names

A Domain name is simply the name of your website. For example mywebsite.com

A domain name has two parts; Your website name, (in our case above, mywebsite) and the extension which is .com

Choosing a domain name is a thoughtful task. Below are some of the things you must consider while creating/ choosing a domain name:

1. Keep it simple and short:

Create a domain name that is simple, short and easy to read and remember. It enhances the chance of users typing your website address correctly on the browser. Don't go for a 'mywebsitenameisverylong.com'

2. Suitable for your website content:

Make sure that your domain name is relevant to the content you are going to put on the website. That is, it should relate with your brand.

3. Choose an appropriate domain extension:

A Domain extension is the suffix such as .com, .net, .org, .edu etc. which is added at the end of web addresses. They have specific meaning such as .com for commercial, .org for Organizations, and .net for network. These three extensions are the most used extensions which you can use as per the nature of your site, however, .com is mostly preferred.

TIP: A domain name containing .org extension is not the same as another containing a .com extension. For example mywebsite.com is not the same as mywebsite.org If you interchange the extensions, you will not get your required results.

Putting It All Together

Whenever someone types your website address on a computer, this request is sent to a server containing your web files. These web files are then sent to the computer which requested them and the person is able to see your website on his/her computer.

See the picture below.



WHAT IS BLOGGING?

A blog is basically a journal that is available on the web. It is the short form of web log. The activity of updating a blog is “blogging” and someone who keeps a blog is a “blogger.”

Blogs are typically updated regularly using software that allows people with little or no technical background to update and maintain the blog. Postings on a blog are almost always arranged in chronological order with the most recent additions featured most prominently. A blog comprises text, images, and links (to other web pages and to video, audio and other files).

WHY BLOGGING IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR BRAND

Drive traffic to your website:

Your blog gives you the opportunity to create relevant content for your customers. Use this as a marketing tactic to drive traffic back to your website.

Make the blog on your website the foundation for all of your social media platforms.

Your business might be on Facebook , Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn , or even offline. Post links - with relevant visuals - of your blog articles to your social sites. Give your social followers a

reason to click through to your website.

Position your brand as an industry leader:

Well written articles demonstrate your company as an industry leader. By posting topics which resonate with your market and show your knowledge, you are marketing your skills for your business, service or product too.

If you are a retailer, for example, write blog posts about your products. Your customers will get to know you as the knowledge source for the products they want.

If you are in B2B (business to business), post articulate, well researched articles about your service. Become the hub, or the place to be, for your industry.

You are building trust, too. The more you can show that you are well-versed in your field, the more likely your consumer will trust you to supply what they need.

Your customers additionally benefit from the learning you provide them.

Develop better customer relationships:

Blogs provide another source to deepen the connection with your customer. By connecting directly on your website, your clients are able to get to know your business or product from the comfort of your online home base.

Use this. Again, build trust by being a source of information. Consumers like to be informed, and appreciate that you are the one teaching them.

Additionally, just as on your other social sites, respond to comments and interact with your consumer. If they have questions about a product you are writing about, respond to them directly on your website. Unlike many social sites, a blog is generally searchable on your site for some time. Your website comments last longer than on a Twitter response or Facebook post. Other customers will see your interactions too.

MODULE 2; HOW TO SET UP YOUR BLOG

A blog/website can be set up in 3 ways;

1. HTML (HyperText Markup Language)

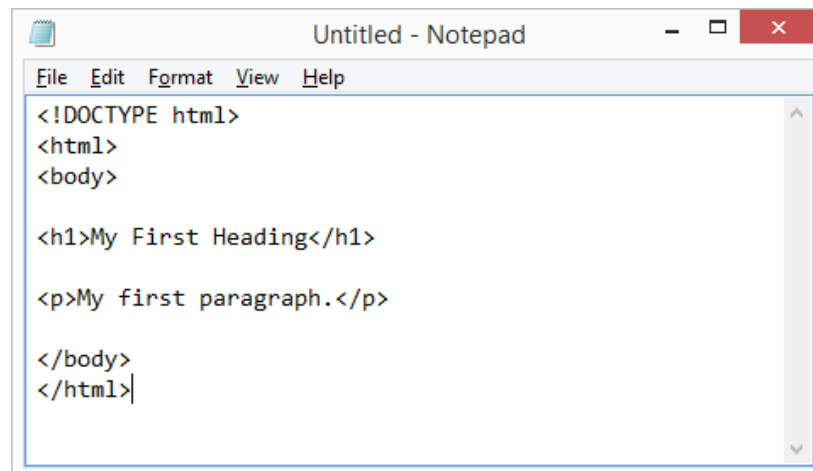
It is the language for describing the structure of Web pages. HTML gives authors the means to:

- Publish online documents with headings, text, tables, lists, photos, etc.
- Retrieve online information via hypertext links, at the click of a button.
- Design forms for conducting transactions with remote services, for use in searching for information, making reservations, ordering products, etc.
- Include spread-sheets, video clips, sound clips, and other applications directly in their documents.

Examples: `<h1>Here's a picture of my dog:</h1>` (the `<h1>` tag will bold the text in the middle i.e Here's the picture of my dog)

``

`<p>His name is Meiko. As you can see, he is quite awesome.</p>` (The `<p>` will italicize the text in the middle.



2. CSS (Cascading Style Sheets)

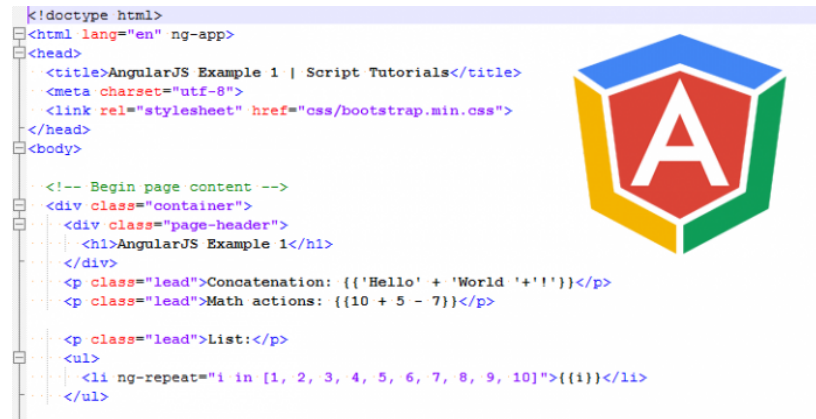
A simple mechanism for adding style (e.g., fonts, colors, spacing) to Web documents.

p

{

color:red;

text-align:center;}



(Ok, I know we don't understand each other upto there. That's why we'll focus on the third way!)

3. Content Management System

A content management system (CMS) in simple terms, is a platform of sorts or a mechanism which permits you to create your content and publish it on a website.

It is software that is installed on your host's server. Your host provider will likely have a one click installation process to help you get your CMS installed. Once it is installed, you can log in to your site as the admin and add photos, text and other content. You can use the content you've added to create blog posts and other forms of content like a product page or display a work portfolio on your website.

A CMS is way more than just a means to an end, you can install a theme which is a modified template to suit the specific niche and purpose of your site. With the template added, you can customize the appearance of your site. You can add plugins to add function to your site, for example a social sharing plugin to help spread the word about your site via social networks.

All of this and more can be accomplished with a Content Management System.

Which CMS is best for you?

An overwhelming majority of websites use WordPress. The other two options that lag way behind in comparison to WordPress (certainly in popularity) are Joomla and Drupal.

HOW TO INSTALL WORDPRESS ON YOUR WEBSITE

There are two versions of Wordpress (WP) you can have on your site;

- A Wordpress.com version which you get when you open a free account on Wordpress

and you are given an address like myname.wordpress.com This basically means that you have created your blog on the Wordpress website. Which is like renting a house. You may have the room but you don't own the house and you cannot collect rent.

Similarly, a wordpress.com site gives you limited options in terms of functionalities and you can lose your myname.wordpress.com website any time. Think of this, what if Wordpress fails to pay their hosting fees as required? They lose their website and you lose yours too. Just like a landlord who fails to clear his loan and the bank comes for the house, you are thrown out of your room, right? Now, we are on the same page.

- A Wordpress.org version whereby you install the Wordpress software on your website. This is after you have bought your domain name and hosting. You are now the landlord of your website, and you have all the freedom.



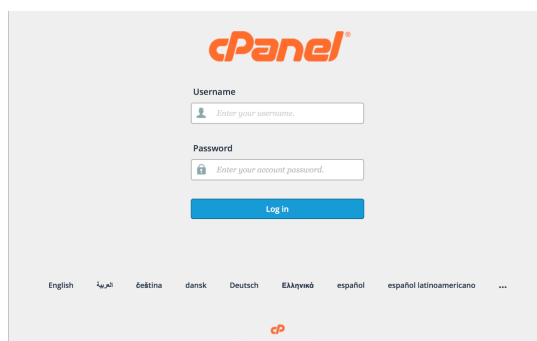
Similarly, a wordpress.org version lets you customize your blog as you want without any restrictions.

How to Install Wordpress on your Website

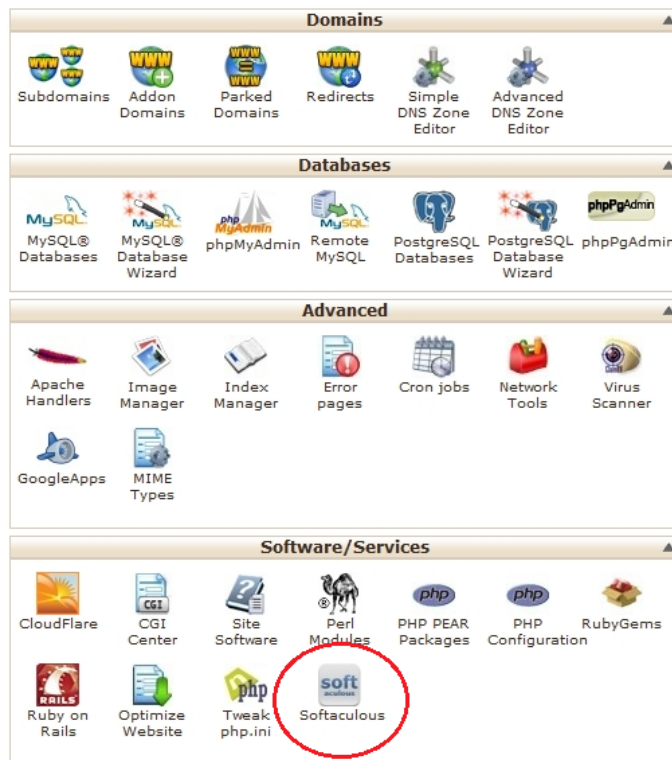
Once you have bought your domain and hosting, you will be given access to your **Control Panel (cPanel)**. The cPanel is like the CPU of your website. It is where you can create your website, check on your web files e.t.c. You will, thus, receive an email with your login credentials (username and password) to access the cPanel.

To access the cPanel is very simple, you add /cpanel at the end of your web address. Something like www.mywebsite.com/cpanel

A page like this one below will appear. Enter your username and password provided in the email from your web hosts.



Upon successful login, a page like this will appear. Scroll down to the 'SOFTWARE & SERVICES' tab and here you'll find either Softaculous, Installatron or Fanstastico. These are basically installation programmes.

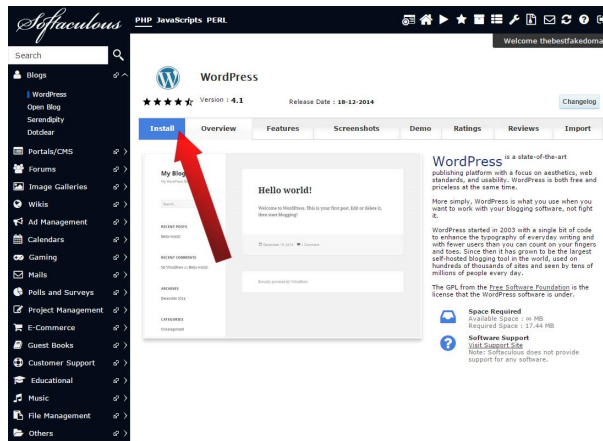


After clicking on the Softaculous icon, you'll be taken to the tool's installation dashboard. On the left hand side of the page, you'll notice a list of different categories to choose from. Click on the "blogs" category and then choose "WordPress". Once you click on "WordPress", find and click the blue "install" button on the bottom of the page.

The next page will require some basic information about your installation preferences. Fill in the "In Directory" field with the domain that you want WordPress installed on. If you want it installed on your main domain, leave this field blank. Next, pick a name for your WordPress database by filling in the appropriate field. You can also modify the security and change the prefix of the database if necessary.

Then enter a basic description for your website in the relevant box. Leave the WPMU box alone unless you have extensive experience with WordPress installations. Choose your login details and enter a valid email address into the "email" field.

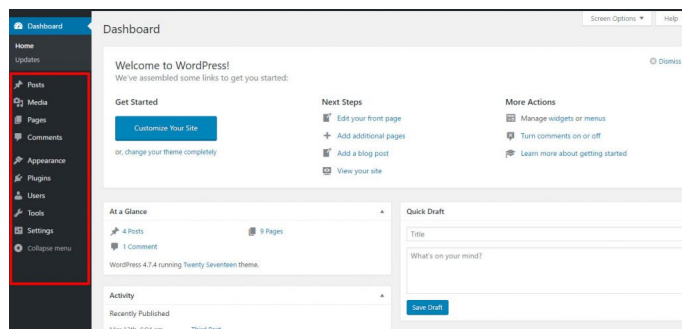
Once you've completed this form, click on the "install" button and you should be ready to go in a matter of minutes. You can login to your WordPress account by going to `yourdomain.com/wp-admin` and logging in with your details.



HOW TO CUSTOMISE YOUR WORDPRESS WEBSITE

WordPress Dashboard is the backend of your WordPress website from where you can access your site's content and customize the website. You will see the WordPress dashboard after you login to your WordPress website (mywebsite.com/wp-admin) with the user details that you set during WordPress setup.

WP Dashboard is simple and user-friendly which highlights the useful options. The image below is the screenshot of how your WordPress dashboard looks at the beginning.



Now, let's have a quick look at the major parts of WordPress dashboard.

Home : Home is where you are now. It is the default page for the WordPress dashboard.

Updates: WordPress has frequent updates in the core software along with the themes and plugins. You can check the available updates and operate if available.

Posts: You can add general posts or blog articles from here. Most of the content on your WordPress website are posts. Additionally, add post tags and categories from there. **Pages** : You can add pages like ' Home ', ' Contact Us ', ' About ' etc. from there.

Comments: All the comments from the site users will be available here.

Appearance: Appearance in the WordPress dashboard is the vital menu. You can make complete control the design of the website via this menu. It includes themes, Customize, widgets, menus, header and CSS editor.

Plugins: Plugins are the handy tools for adding functionality. You can see the installed plugins and also add new plugins via this menu.

Users: WordPress supports multiple users. You can manage all the website users from this menu.

Tools: By default, it has 'import' and 'export' tool in this menu.

Settings: Another very important section in the WordPress dashboard is 'Settings'. You can see all the site configuration options here as general settings, writing, reading, discussion, media, and permalinks.

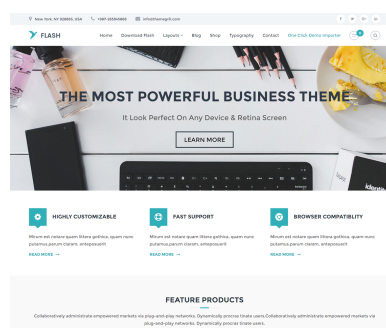
Collapse menu: Well you can collapse the menu if you want to have the full-width for managing content.

WordPress Themes & Templates

WordPress design mainly depends on the WordPress themes and templates. A theme provides the overall outlook and design of your WordPress website along with various customizing options and functionalities. It works as the skin of your WordPress website.

Official WordPress website defines a WordPress theme as 'a collection of files that work together to produce a graphical interface with an underlying unifying design for a weblog.'

Examples of themes include Flash, Zerofite, OnePress, VMag and many more.



Installing a FREE WordPress Theme

Just go to *Appearance > Themes* in your WordPress admin panel. You will see the default WordPress theme activated and some other default WP themes pre-installed (default themes may defer according to the hosting).

Then, click the “ Add New ” button at the top.

Now, just browse through this directory to find a suitable theme for your new website. You can sort the themes by: Featured , Popular , Latest, Favorites , etc. You can also search for themes by the names or keyword. And you can also preview these themes i.e. theme demos.

Once you find your favorite one, just click on the “ Install ” button. It takes a while to install and then click on “ Activate “. Now, your new theme is live. Next, you can to ‘ Customize ’ in the Appearance menu and start customizing your theme/ website.

WORDPRESS PLUGINS

WordPress plugins are great tools for adding and extending functionality to WordPress.

Official WordPress Codex states that WordPress Plugins offer custom functions and features so that each user can tailor their site to their specific needs.

WordPress plugins let you add additional functionality to your WordPress website. They are very helpful as you can add the features not provided in the theme.

Examples of plugins include: Easy Share for social media promotion, Ithemes for security of your website, Contact Form for receiving comments and messages and many more.

How to Install a Plugin

In your WordPress Dashboard, go to Plugins > Add New and search for the plugin that you need. You can also filter the plugins by Featured, Popular, Recommended, etc. You can search the plugins by names.

When you find the plugin that you need, click on the “ Install Now ” button. After that click on the blue “ Activate ” button.

After activating the plugin, it is ready to use. Depending on the function of the plugin, settings will be provided. Some plugins have settings right in the plugins page whereas some don't have them there. Some plugins just do their work and have no any settings. And some plugins have their settings located in your WordPress menu, other can have them located under the “ Tools ” menu.

TIP: Every Theme or Plugin comes with a how-to-operate guide. This can be found in the 'DOCUMENTATION' link on the website of the theme or plugin.

Further reading: [Wp Beginner- How to create a Wordpress Website](#)

BEST BLOG DESIGN TIPS

Here are some useful tips when designing your blog;

Choose a blog design layout that is easy to read

If you want visitors to read your content, optimizing your font and blog design for readability is important.

Here are some simple principles to increase readability on your blog;

- Use font that is big enough for readers to consume, 12-point is the optimal size .
- Break up your posts with sub-headings and dot points so readers can scan your copy and quickly consume the key points.
- Make headlines much larger than the body of your text. Typically headline fonts will be between
- 17 and 25 point .
- Have a light background with dark text – 98% of the best blogs use this combination as it increases the users ability to comprehend what you are talking about.

Start with your home page

People are busy, they have short attention spans and are flooded with a sea of content every day. Emails, blogs, Tweets, sales pages, Ebooks... So first impressions matter more than ever. You only have about 3 seconds to draw a website visitor in, tell them what you do and make them take action.

That's why the design of your home page is integral to the success of your blog, most people are landing here first.

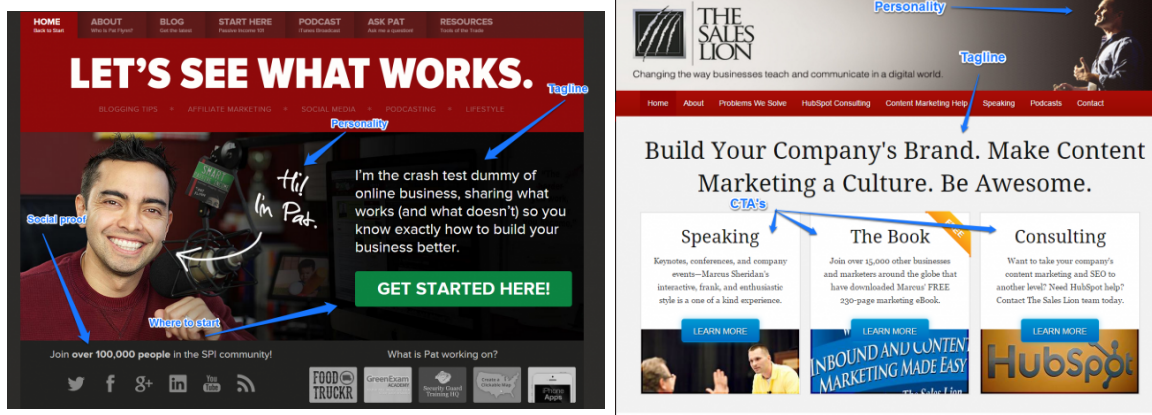
Instead, here are six essential blog design ideas the best homepages include;

- **Graphic header image** – A header image or professionally designed banner can exponentially increase the perceived credibility of a blog.
- **Catchy and informative tagline** – The idea of the tagline is to inform your visitors about what you do. It needs to be short, sharp and punchy so the visitor automatically understands what it is your site or business is designed to achieve.
- **Call-to-action** – Your home page is a prime opportunity to capture an email address or get your new visitor to take action. Don't miss it!
- **Guidance on where to start** – When someone new comes to your site it is your job to

guide them exactly where they should go next. You'll see what I mean in the examples below, but a common way to do this is to create a 'Getting Started' page so new visitors know what content to start with and where to find it. You can take them on whatever journey you want.

- **Social proof** – if you have worked with any significant brands, contributed to some well known publications or have any amazing testimonials; include them on your home page! The quicker you build your credibility with a visitor the better.
- **Show off your personality** – Let your personality shine through. If you're an individual blogger, include a photo. If you're a business, create a home page that shows off everything you are about, and depicts your value set.

To help you understand what I mean by these six elements, let's have a look at a couple of examples.



Nail your 'About Us' page

The 'About Us' page is one of the most visited pages on any website. If someone goes to your 'About Us' page they are eager to find out more about what you do and who you are. It is a great opportunity to turn these visitors into community members and eventually customers – something that many sites fail to capitalize on.

So what should you include on your 'About Us' page?

Must-have's

- **Communicate only a few key things**- the page should be easy to navigate and straightforward to understand.
- **Show off your personality** – Use imagery to put a face to your brand, or use images of your employees and office environment. Tell a story about why you exist and how you got to where you are. Help people connect with you by being human, not a superhero.

- **Make it about them, not you** – Why should a visitor care about what is on your site? What challenges are you helping them overcome?
- **Forget about the jargon** – Use a unique tone of voice and writing style, make it conversational and strip back all the buzzwords and corporate jargon.
- **Include a 'Contact Us' link** – It is essential that visitors to your 'About Us' page have a direct way to contact you after reading. This may be a link to another contact page, or it could simply be your contact details or a form capture.

Additional Choices

- **Use humor** – If you've got it in you, include a joke or two. Readers will resonate with your willingness to not take life too seriously.
- **Include social proof** – Let your customers or readers do the talking for you by including testimonials, case study snippets or embedded social media commentary about your brand.
- **Values, mission or purpose** – What unique purpose are you pursuing? – This usually takes the form of a catchy tagline (the same one you used on your home page). What values underpin the way you and your team work together?
- **Calls-to-action** – Don't miss the opportunity to capture an email address on your 'About Us' page, it can be a huge converter.
- Let visitors know where to go next by including links to recent blog articles, media releases or a 'Start Here' page on your site.

WEBSITE SECURITY

The security of your website should be your top most priority. Your site is vulnerable to various attacks, which may take the form of;

Hacking

This is whereby someone illegally accesses your website's backend, without your permission, using a computer programme. The hacker modifies content in your website, changes password and often ask for ransom in order to have you access your website. There are companies which specialises in this.

Brute Force Attack

This is whereby a programme tries to access your website backend, severally. After accessing your login page, they guess your login credentials (username and password) until they make a successful attempt.

This method is usually a 'kill-me-slowly' technique as it slows down your website speed such that webpages take long to load. It also eats on your bandwidth (that is your website's network capacity) In the end, your website fails to function properly.

What should you do?

- Do not share your website login credentials (username and passwords) for cPanel and Wordpress dashboard.
- Stay away from free, public Wi-fi (where you don't need a password to use) They allow the Wi-fi owners to access your browsing history and login credentials.
- It is advisable that you change your default Wordpress login address. The default address is usually adding a /wp-admin to your website. Example www.myname.com/wp-admin. Using a plugin like WP Hide Login you can change the login address to one of your liking and unique to you. Example you can use /enter or /account or any word of your choice. So that it becomes www.myname.com/enter

If a hacker tries to access your website through /wp-admin, he will get a 'PAGE NOT FOUND' error.

- Install security plugins like Wordfence, Sucuri, Ithemes. These plugins make your website more secure. Be sure to check on the guide on how to install each plugin so that you don't lock yourself out of your own website! Wondering how? Look at this..

If you are a landlord and you instruct your tenants not to open the main gate for anyone past 10pm. Then one day, you reach home at 11pm, will the tenants open for you?

Thus, go through the installation guide so that you can familiarise yourself with the plugin settings.

- Back up- Always make sure that you back up your database and web files at regular intervals, to a cloud storage, like Google Drive. Plugins like Updraftplus and Backup Buddy help you do so. This is to ensure that incase anything happens, you don't lose everything and start again from scratch.

MODULE 3: CONTENT IDEAS FOR YOUR BLOG

Clearly document your strategy

Just having a blog doesn't cut it. To create a successful business blog you need to spend time documenting a strategy. Do you have a documented blog strategy?

Many businesses fail to document their blog strategy, and it is a common reason for the gap between positive intention and successful execution. There are 9 sections on the blog strategy, with each of them playing a vital role in the success of your business blog. They are;

1. Purpose – Why does your blog exist?
2. Customers – Who are your ideal readers?
3. Competitors – Which of your competitors have blogs?
4. Keywords – What keyword groups will you be targeting?
5. Platform – Where will you distribute your blog content?
6. Promotion – How will you promote your blog content?
7. Resources – Who is accountable for executing your blog strategy?
8. Rhythm – How many blogs can you commit to scheduling every week?
9. Metrics and Goals – How will you measure success for your blog?

Become a storyteller

We engage more with content that tells a story. It's natural. We have grown up with stories, our ancestors have shared history through story, and the most successful modern bloggers are expert storytellers.

Seth Godin, one of the world's most prolific writers, marketers and entrepreneurs wrote a book called; "All Marketers Are Liars". (If you haven't read it yet, I would highly recommend it!)

In his book, Seth tells us that great stories are;

- True because they are consistent and authentic
- Make a promise to the reader
- Are trusted and subtle
- Appeal to our senses and experience
- Are rarely aimed at everyone (Pick your audience)

- Don't contradict themselves
- Agree with the readers' worldview

So how do you tell a great story? You may like to use the “5C’s of Storytelling” as a story structure.

- 1. Connect: Create an emotional connection with your audience*
- 2. Challenge: Highlight a common pain point or challenge your audience is facing*
- 3. Conflict: Establish the opposing forces that contribute to a less than favorable outcome. Use vivid details at this stage so the audience connects with your characters*
- 4. Conquer: Show the audience how the characters overcome the struggle presented from this conflict. Give them the hope and belief that a positive outcome is possible*
- 5. Conclude: Provide a resolution to the challenge, ending on a positive message the audience can take away. This is usually one part, of one part. A small cog in a bigger solution.*

Write for sustainability not virality

Viral content is everywhere. Videos, images, graphics and blog posts all of a sudden catch fire and spread to an audience much greater than the creator could ever imagine. But we are becoming too obsessed with it.

If you want to create viral content, film a cat jumping into a wall, don't blog!

Blogging isn't about creating content that goes viral, it is about creating content that will help your customers. It is about fueling the fire of a unique group of followers that believe in what you have to say and nurturing them into advocates for your work. If you write content with the sole purpose of sending it viral, you will start to forget about your core group of readers and slowly whittle your audience away to nothing.

Instead of writing content for virality, write content to build a sustainable audience.

Here are a few tips on writing content with a long-term mindset;

- Write evergreen content . Evergreen content is as relevant today as it will be in 6, 12 or even 18 months.
- Make your content useful. Useful content helps your readers overcome a very specific problem or challenge they face.
- Don't let your quality slip. Consistently high quality blog content will keep your readers

coming back for more, don't sacrifice this for quantity.

- Attract influential guest contributors to your blog. A diverse set of authors makes your audience feel like they are gaining a different perspective on topics.
- Create different forms of content. Try and use video, presentations, infographics or podcasts on your blog. A diverse portfolio of content will keep your readers engaged.

Don't forget visuals

Visuals increase engagement with your blog content. They break up the text and create a more complete experience for the reader by tapping into different emotional cues in their brains.

Some examples of visuals you can use within your blog content;

- ★ Feature images appearing with the snippet of the blog, that is on the main blog page.
- ★ Header images on the blog page at the beginning of the text
- ★ Screenshots throughout the text, informing the reader in more depth what the text is referring to
- ★ Infographics
- ★ Embedded videos
- ★ Visual call-to-action buttons
- ★ Embedded SlideShare presentations
- ★ Block quotes with different font size and styling than the blog text
- ★ Moving images such as GIFs (animations)
- ★ Embedded Tweets

MODULE 4: SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION (SEO)

Guess how many blog posts people publish each day. Any ideas?

Well, WordPress users alone publish over 2 million posts every day . That comes out to 24 blog posts every second. That means that users published around 216 blog posts while you were reading these five sentences. And that's only counting WordPress users. If we were to count all blog posts, that number would surely be higher.

This makes it kind of tough to stand out. But you have to if you want to make your blog a successful one.

On any given day, people conduct more than 2.2 million searches. And that's just on Google – to say nothing of the other search engines. Therefore, showing up on the front page of Google can be the deciding factor between a business that's thriving and one that's, well, bankrupt.

But what does SEO even mean? You probably know that it stands for search engine optimization, but what do you need to optimize?

Is it the design? Or is it the writing? Or maybe it's the links. Yes, yes, and yes – it's all of that and more.

But let's start from the beginning.

Definition:

According to Wikipedia, SEO is “the process of affecting the visibility of a website or a web page in a search engine's unpaid results.”

Alright, let's translate that to English. Here's my go at it:

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of optimizing your online content so that a search engine likes to show it as a top result for searches of a certain keyword.

Let me break that down even further:

When it comes to SEO, there's you, the search engine, and the searcher. If you have an article about how to cook sweet ugali , you want the search engine (which, in 90% of all cases, is Google) to show it as a top result to anyone who searches for the phrase “how to cook ugali.”

SEO is the magic you have to work on your article in order to make Google very likely to include your post as one of the top results whenever someone searches for that keyword.

Cleaning inside your house and outside: on-page SEO vs. off-page SEO

There are two broad categories of SEO: on-page SEO and off-page SEO.

On-page SEO concerns all of Google's ranking factors that they determine by directly looking at the page you try to optimize, such as your headlines, content, and page structure.

Off-page SEO refers to all variables Google takes a look at, and they aren't exclusively in your own hands. They depend on other sources, such as social networks, other blogs in your industry, and the personal history of the searcher. They're different, but you need to get both right in order to do well with SEO.

To give you a better idea of what that means, here's an example:

Let's say you have a house with a garden at the front and a little pathway that leads through your garden to your house.

Imagine these two scenarios:

Scenario #1: Your house is super clean on the inside, but your garden is a mess.

What happens in this scenario? Well, even if you have the cleanest house on the inside, if your garden looks like the Boni Forest, no one will come into your house in the first place.

It's the same if you haven't optimized your page around on-page SEO. It may have great content and look stunning, but it's likely that no one will give you credit for it or point to your page. No one will ever see your beautiful masterpiece because you won't get any traffic.

What about the other way around?

Scenario #2: You have neatly trimmed your garden, but the inside of your house is a mess.

Turn things around, and they look similar: Having a nice garden will attract plenty of people to come visit your house, but if your living room reminds your guests of a war zone, they'll leave quicker than you can pronounce SEO.

When a visitor leaves your site after viewing only one page, Google considers that a bounce. The higher your bounce rate (number of visitors who leave your site instantly), the worse your page will rank on Google.

That's why you need to do both on-page SEO and off-page SEO.

You can do several things on your page to get the former right and then even more things outside of that (off the page if you will) to ace the latter.

We'll take a look at on-page SEO first.

On-Page SEO

There are three big categories of on-page SEO that you'll need to take a look at. The first and most important is content.

CONTENT

You've probably heard it before: "Content is king." Bill Gates made this prediction in 1996, and it's as true as ever today.

Why? Because a Google search engine customer is happy when he finds the result that serves his needs in the best way.

When you Google "quick and easy homemade ugali," Google will put all its energy into delivering to you what Google believes is the best recipe for homemade ugali (that takes little time and uses less flour) on the entire web.

It doesn't look for just the quickest recipe, just the easiest recipe, or throw out a bunch of online shops for frozen ugali. It tries to give you exactly what you asked for. Google always tries to give you the best experience possible by directing you to the greatest content it can find.

This means that your number one job to do well with SEO is to produce great content. After all, SEO is no different than any other skill: great results will always come from big effort.

Just like the best marketing in the world won't help you sell a bad product, super advanced SEO will be useless if your content is not helpful.

Here are the factors that make up great content in Google's eyes:

Quality– While the times where just delivering the best-quality content would make you stand out from the crowd are long gone, it is still the starting point for any successful SEO effort (and any online business, really).

But coming up with great content is not easy. After all, it means that you have to become a teacher — and a good one at that.

Once you start writing, make sure you include all the important ingredients of great content in your blog post. Even if you're a complete newbie, you can always take a professional approach to great content by simply committing to make writing a daily habit and work your way up in increments from there.

Freshness of content- While it is important to publish regularly, you can still get great results by posting once a month as long as your content is thorough and in-depth .

KEYWORDS

Keywords are ideas and topics that define what your content is about. In terms of SEO, they're the words and phrases that searchers enter into search engines, also called "search queries." If you boil everything on your page — all the images, video, copy, etc. — down to simple words and phrases, those are your primary keywords.

As a website owner and content creator, you want the keywords on your page to be relevant to

what people are searching for so they have a better chance of finding your content among the results.

For example, if you are an NGO that provides humanitarian aid and is based in Kenya, then your keywords should be 'Humanitarian NGO Kenya' That is, if someone is to search on Google 'Humanitarian NGOs based in Kenya' then your website should be among the top search results.

Keywords can include your brand name e.g Washindi Africa, your location e.g Mombasa, and what you do e.g NGO on health and education. These keywords should best define who you are as a brand.

Which keywords define you as a brand?

KEYWORD SELECTION MISTAKES

Here's how smart people make bad keyword decisions.

Common keyword research mistake #1: Picking the wrong keyword

Let's say you sell consulting services. Your service might cost customers Kshs. 100,000 over the course of a year. That's a little less than ten thousand shillings a month, so it's not out of the question. But it's still fairly expensive.

Now, if you're ranking #1 for "free business growth tips," guess what kind of audience you're going to attract?

You'll bring in people looking for free stuff! And that means that they probably won't make any payment the moment they hit your site.

That one keyword could send your site thousands of people each month. However, it's probably the wrong audience. So it doesn't make sense to rank for it! You'd be better off picking a different keyword even if it means giving up 990 visits a month.

Think about it: if just one or two people who read that and paid, you're already ahead.

Common keyword research mistake #2: Ignoring the competition*

You've selected the right keyword from the get-go. It's contextually relevant to what you do. And it better aligns with what you're trying to sell.

But here's the thing you're missing.

Your ability to rank for a keyword often depends more on the competition you're u

How can you possibly find keywords that are:

1. Relevant to your business

2. Not too competitive

3. But still provide enough traffic to be worth the effort?

That's the golden question. The answer is that you have to think outside the box.

Choosing a Focus Keyword

A focus keyword is the main keyword that you are hoping people will look for and find your post. If your blog is in a competitive niche then chances are that you will be competing with many other established and reputable publications for popular keywords. In such situation, you can get more organic traffic by using long tail keywords. Always remember that your audience is humans not search engines. People don't just type one keyword in search engines, they use phrases. Your focus keyword can be a phrase.

WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin allows you to choose a focus keyword for your individual posts. It also helps you find similar keywords as you type your focus keyword.

Further reading; [How to install & configure Yoast SEO plugin](#)

Once you have chosen a focus keyword for your post, WordPress SEO will show you how many times you have used the keyword in different areas of your post. The plugin also allows you to customise your post title, meta description and many more.

Writing a Good SEO-Friendly Post Title

A good SEO friendly post title is human readable, contains your focus keyword and is within the 70 characters limit. However, it also needs to be catchy. When your page appears in the search results, a user will decide whether or not they want to click on it based on the SEO title and the description in the search snippet. The description part may change as search engines display the most relevant part of your article as the description. But the title will remain the same. Make sure your SEO title describes exactly what people will get if they clicked on the link. And finally, simplify your title, rather than using "A Comparison between Categories and Tags From SEO point of view" or "My thoughts on Categories and Tags" try something like "Categories vs. Tags – SEO Best Practices for Sorting your Content". This title is not only catchy, it also contains the right keywords that people would be searching for.

Post SEO Meta Description

Some SEO experts believe that Meta description tag on a page has become irrelevant. However, many others would disagree. At WPBeginner, we recommend using meta description for all of your posts. A good meta description can explain a lot more about an article. Meta Description is also shown in social media sites like Facebook, Google+, and in Twitter via Twitter Cards .

Since now you know that people are going to be reading your meta descriptions, you want to make sure that it is helpful. You also want to make sure that you at least mention your focus

keyword in the meta description for search purposes. The character limit for Meta Description is 155 characters. Try to stay within that limit or your meta description will be truncated after 155 characters. Try to use your focus keyword earlier in the meta description rather than later.

Categories and Tags

Categories and tags help you sort your content not only for your reader, but for yourself as well as search engines. Earlier we have written a detailed guide on how to use Categories and Tags in WordPress. Think of your website as a book. Categories are the table of content, and tags are the index part of the book.

Make Internal Linking a Habit

Once you have blogged for a while, you will have enough content that you would want people to read. With internal linking you can send new readers to check out your older relevant posts. Internal linking is a great way to develop context between your new and old posts thus passing relevant link juice. WordPress allows you to search for your old posts right inside the post editor. Press the link button in your post editor and click on "Or link to existing content". This will open a search box. Search for older posts that you want to link to and it will show the results as you type. Select the post you want to link and press Add link button.

MODULE 5: HOW TO PROMOTE YOUR BLOG

Writing great content is often not enough. You need to know how to promote that great content, too.

If you don't promote, you're going to end up wasting a lot of the hard work that goes into the content of your awesome web site. On top of that, people won't be able to take action on the advice provided in your blog posts!

To me, that sounds like a loss.

Because of this, it's important to figure out a way we can stop this from happening to your blog posts. Therefore, today, we're going to cover some of the steps that you can take to promote your blog posts, so that they reach and help your audience.

Social Media.

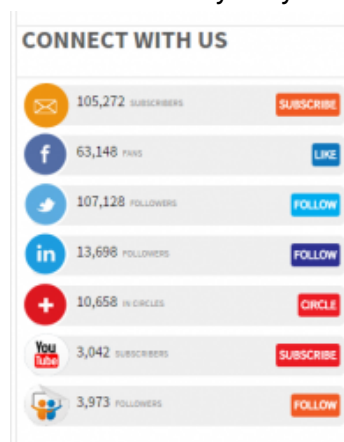
I know you are on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Whatsapp, Telegram. And you let your followers know what you are eating, wearing, where you are at and with whom. No big deal.

Social media is not only a place to showcase yourself but also, a platform you can use to promote your product or service through your blog. It's time you convert all those 'likes, comments' into something beneficial to you.

Promote your blog by sharing links and tag all your friends. Promote. Promote. Promote.

Include Social share buttons in your post.

Social media is one of the core ingredients for promoting your blog content and building your community. Therefore you want to make it easy for your readers to share each and every post.

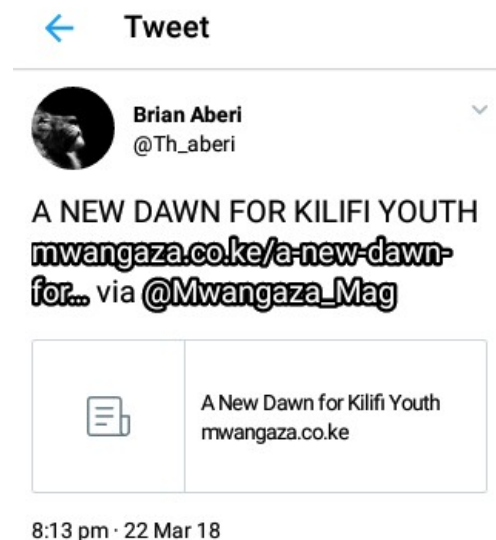


From a design perspective there are a couple of things you can do;

- Use social sharing plugins to encourage readers to share your content on every page. The best type of social sharing buttons are ones that float as the reader scrolls down your page

- Include Click-to-Tweet boxes (There is a WordPress plugin for this!) within your posts that help readers promote bold statements or quotes from your copy. See an example below from Michael Hyatt.
- Show your Twitter or Facebook feed in the right sidebar on every page.
- Have 'Connect on Social Media' links where you think it is relevant. Some examples include your right sidebar or the header or footer of your page.

Furthermore, track all those who share your content on their social media profiles. For us, we use a `via @Mwangaza_Mag` text for anyone who shares our post on Twitter. (A setting provided by the Yoast SEO plugin)



Email

You probably have an option for people to subscribe to your blog (we'll talk about this on our next topic: Lead Generation)

Now that you have created your email account (e.g admin@myname.com) it's time to send out e-mails on your blog to your subscribers. However, make sure that you don't send too much emails, because it can be spammy and irritate your subscribers

Reach out to influencers

Influencers have a huge following on social media. Examples include Janet Machuka, Peter Koima and many more.

Reach out to them through email or DM (direct messaging) for them to promote your blog.

Something like *`Hey, @omenda_ke I know you are busy cooking ugali, but check this out *insert link...'* (That is, if you know that person well)

Make sure that the influencer you reach out to has an interest in the topic.

Make internal linking your habit.

Don't let a reader leave your site after just one post. Link part of your content with previous post.

You can also show 'Related Posts' at the middle or the end of your post. There are many plugins which help you to do that.

MODULE 6: LEAD GENERATION

We've all probably been through it. You know, the moment you're about to dig into the best pile of food you've ever seen.

Just as you twist your fork, spear a mouth-watering meatball, and go in for the first bite ... the phone rings. "May I speak to so-and-so?" asks the caller on the other end. "This is an important message regarding your car services." You really don't remember when you bought a car because you don't even own one!

Or you are very broke and top up your Kshs. 10 credit on your phone in order to buy some data bundles. As you finish your transaction, your screen flashes 'Your account balance is not sufficient' But you just topped up! Just then, you receive a message from some shortcode 245...bla..bla. The message is a premium one, has snatched your airtime and you really don't remember when you subscribed to such messages!

This frustrating interruption is exactly why we're here to discuss lead generation. What is lead generation? It's a solution that can save your brand or organization from being that annoying, disruptive cold caller who is ruining people's days.

What Is a Lead?

A lead is a person who has indicated interest in your brand's product or service in some way, shape, or form.

In other words, instead of getting a random cold call from someone who purchased your contact information, you'd hear from a business or organization you've already opened communication with.

For example, when you registered for this course, you filled in a form with your contact details. If you received a message from us, I believe it was far less intrusive than if we would have just called you out of the blue with no knowledge of whether you even care about blogging... right?

What Is Lead Generation?

Lead generation is the process of attracting and converting strangers and prospects into those leads we just talked about. It's a way of warming up potential customers to your business and getting them on the path to eventually buying.

When you create your blog, there is a purpose for it. Whether it is to increase customers to buy your product or services or have people donate some amount to your project. Therefore, how do you get that visitor who has just clicked on your link to buy your product or make a donation? How do you know that the visitor is actually interested in your product?

How to Qualify a Lead

Essentially, a lead is generated through information collection. That information collection could come as the result of a job seeker showing interest in a position by completing an application for the job, a shopper sharing contact information in exchange for a coupon, or a person filling out a form to download an educational piece of content, like an ebook or something else.

When you filled in our registration form for this course, you became a lead. You had shown your interest by giving out your contact information. Thereby, it was easier for us to contact you.

How to Generate Leads

Now that we understand what lead generation really is, let's review the actual components of the lead generation process.

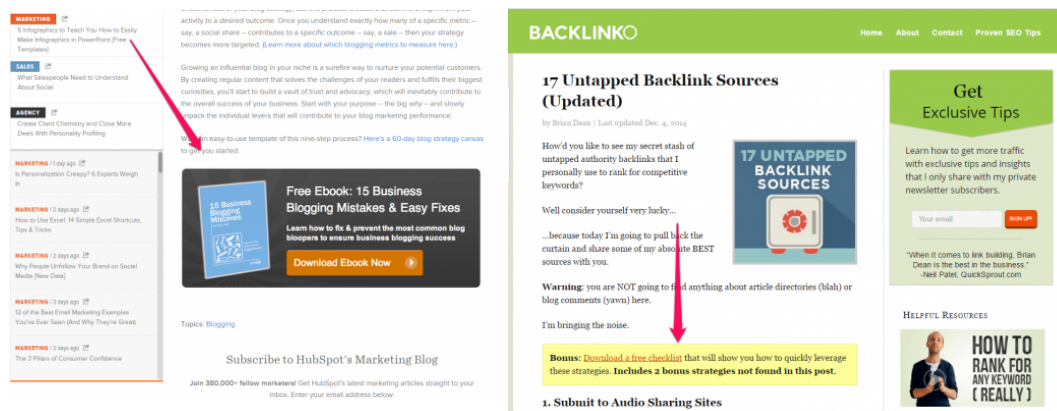
Visitor: A visitor has discovered your brand through one of your platforms, whether that's your website, blog, or social media page. On any of these channels, you'll need to have a ...

Call-to-Action (CTA): A call-to-action or CTA is an image, button, or message that calls website visitors to take some sort of action.

Every single page on your site should have a purpose, and it should be very clear (to you at least) what you want a visitor on that page to do. This is what a call-to-action is, you are encouraging a reader to take action on something specific to the content on that page.

Some common CTAs include:

- ★ Capture an email subscriber
- ★ Encourage a resource download such as; E-book, Template, Checklist
- ★ Get the reader to share on social media
- ★ Offer a free trial for a product or service
- ★ Include an affiliate link
- ★ Ask readers to comment on the blog
- ★ Link to another post on your site
- ★ Link to the site of an influencer in your industry
- ★ Request feedback on something you are doing
- ★ Get readers to participate in a survey.



Most often, your CTA when clicked should lead to a...

Landing Page: A landing page is a web page a visitor lands on for a distinct purpose. While a landing page can be used for various reasons, one of its most frequent uses is to capture leads through ...

Forms: Forms are typically hosted on landing pages, although they can technically be embedded anywhere on your site. They consist of a series of fields that collect information in exchange for an ...

Offer: An offer is the content or something of value that's being "offered" on the landing page. The offer must have enough value to a visitor to merit providing their personal information in exchange for access to it.

For example, if you want people to donate an amount to your project, you will create a CTA (can be a text, image or button) on your blog posts inviting people to donate. When they click on this CTA, it should take them to a page, whereby you share more about your project. In that page, have a form where they can enter their details and make payment. After they complete the form, give them an offer like a free e-book on the project, and so on.

Tips on Generating Leads

1. Offer An Incentive.

Everyone loves a gift, but it doesn't have to be for nothing. Encourage prospects to sign up for your blog, join your mailing list or like your Facebook page by offering them something in return. Maybe the first 50 people that sign up for mailing list receive some airtime or everyone who subscribes to your blog receives a free e-book.

2. Educate your Audience with your Blog.

Think of your business blog as a way to keep visitors up to date on what is going on within the industry, but also your business. Blog often, keeping your content relevant and fresh. This is

your opportunity to educate and establish yourself as a trustworthy and knowledgeable member in your industry.

Don't forget to reply to your visitors' comments and feedback.

3. Give Your Website a Makeover.

When someone lands on your website do they know right away what you are offering? Is it clear where to click and how to navigate around your site?

Consider all these questions when you are looking at your website. If you are answering "no" to some of these then maybe it's time for a facelift. You want your website to be your best salesperson.

