

@amyafrika's tips on boosting sales and leads from biz blogs

Taken from July 26, 2009 #blogchat

I think the first thing we should discuss (till we get questions) is what the user sees when they look at your website.

So, as the host, you need to figure out what you want the user to do on your site. What's the action you want them to take?

You need to display your contact info ABOVE THE FOLD (and below it too) SEVERAL times.

A user sees four quads on a website. If you want to collect e-mails. Do it it at least 3 quads.

Bloggers like to say that users see web sites and blogs differently. They don't. They see views of web sites.

The limbic system actually perceives blogs to be a bit "riskier" than ecommerce sites.

I get 1,183 (yes, we count) e-mail sign-ups for every RSS feed.

Active user session is difficult to get on blogs UNLESS you tell the user SPECIFICALLY what you want them to do.

Your call to action should be in at least 3 of the 4 quads. 4 out of 4 is best, of course.

So, as a blogger, you could have: poll/survey, free e-mail sign-up, tips sign-up, podcast sign-up, webinar sign-up.

Lead forms should be one view (no more than 1.5 or break it up and add a temperature bar.)

They should use vertical fields. City, state, zip should be on 3 lines not one so if they screw up, they can fix it.

They should ONLY ask questions that are relevant to the user. (Meaning ask no more than you have to.)

@loisgeller Your content rocks but you don't sell yourself at all. You want \$, you need to ask for the order.

I'm not saying that you need to be as aggressive as I am but I do think everyone needs to ask for what they want.

@mackcollier You are a good example of changing the way you do things by being a TEENSY bit more aggressive. How's it working?

Some of the best content in the world is lost in blogs with less than 1,000 readers. Even just adding an e-mail sign-up is good.

@zkellyq: So your "ask" is on the site itself, not in the blog post?

@amyafrika: Good question. It should be at the bottom of your post & several places on your site.

You like yellow & want your site to look like a yield sign. That's fine but bright yellow engages the limbic system in a BAD way.

Another point from a user perspective. Users see things in pictures, not in text. You need visuals on your blog.

After the second page, the user will only look down the middle column.

Huge fan of analytics. If you're not looking at yours, you may as well not have a blog.

I am a huge fan of video, especially on blogs. Statistically, it captures an entirely different reader.

Drills would be one of the first. If you can't calculate drills, use page views. (Drills = # of actions user takes.) You also need to look at feedback. This is conversion to whatever you are measuring (several things.)

The key to online video is to keep it between 2-4 minutes with call-to-actions at beginning & end.

Video typically captures a different user. That's what YouTube is the second largest search engine.

I agree that a mix-up is best because everyone responds differently. @chrisbrogan does the mix-up well.

When you look at getting actions on a blog, think BUTTONS, not just links. Buttons are graphical. Links are not.

Another tip is to remember that embedded commands work. Click Here Now gets more clicks than just Click Here.

Nice comments on the video -- do NOT auto-start it with the sound on. Make sure the user engages to activate.

Compelling content is compelling content but what's compelling to you may not be compelling to me.

@walshmuse: one would think that ppl who sign up for email updates to the blog are more interested in ur product, but followup?

@amyafrika: I thought that before I started blogging & looking at other's results. It's really just a different user.

Some people like e-mails. Some people like RSS. When I write a post, I get no comments & 100's of e-mail replies.

Just because you like or don't like something that doesn't mean that your user/reader has the same feelings.

If you want to learn what's working online, visit some adult content or gaming sites.

@BethHarte: Amazing that you get that many email replies. I have yet to have anyone email me a response, it's all in the comments.

@amyafrika: I get no comments & only e-mail replies. Of course, a lot of times people don't want to be associated with my posts!

Short surveys & polls are an excellent tool for bloggers. Do them often to see if your audience is changing.

Contact information should be on all blogs. People look for it in the righthand column & on the bottom.

Blogs should have a clear way to e-mail you and NOT just a form. If you use a form only, you will lose 1/4 of the people.

We use Trigger E-mails. There are many good services out there. I'm a huge e-mail proponent.

If it's a survey, e-mail addresses should be optional and the last thing you ask for.

Navigation accounts for over half the success of any blog. (More on ecommerce sites.) You get what I give you.

For those of you who want people to increase your AAUS (active average user session), 1st try to improve your navigation.

No. I suck at all things social and when I say suck. I mean I am the world's worst. I like controlled ROI.

@copyblogger, @probblogger & @unmarketing all use a good mix.

@wilsonellis: What's the top 3 things we should check on our site/blog?

@amyafrika:

- First, what action(s) you are getting. If you're not getting actions, what you're doing may not be right.
- Blogs should have several different actions & they should be put in a pipeline. Then find out where the rat is stuck.
- Passalong rate (this is best if calculated manually.)

DTS. (Days to Sale.) This is a HUGELY important metric and very few bloggers do it. Fastest way to make money.

@MackCollier: Ok for those of us that get plenty of comments, but that's it, how can we encourage jump from that to leads?

@amyafrika: You need to ask for them. That's the thing, you social media people tend to just not ask. YOU know this.

When you have no blog traffic, it sucks. (I know this firsthand.) But whatever you have, you can convert it, if you ask.

@michellegolden: Agree! RT @_djh: @ad_web I guess I'm not with the program. If something says Click Here Now, I'm 99.9% certain to not click ever

@amyafrika: I understand but you may not be your user, that's why you need to ask different ways.

Everyone says they hate billboards. Do we still have them? Everyone says they hate pop-ups. Do they still work?

Highly recommend offering a Twitter feed in the righthand column of your website. (Yes, RH is the right place for it.)

@WriterChanelle: I don't seem to have trouble asking for the visit. More the opportunity that may come from the visit.

@amyafrika: A lot of folks have the same issue. Try adding a softer step before the "sale" -- it usually helps.

Blog headers need visuals and they should NOT take up more than 20% of the first view. This is crucial for eyepath.

I hate pop-ups. I hate video. I hate noisy sites & I use all of them. Why? Because I am not my customer.

@CASUDI: "More and more people seem to be posting twitter comments on their posts #blogchat, is this the way to go?"

@amyafrika: Yes and Thesis is amazing.

Yes, everyone MUST have a home link.

Just because YOU hate it does NOT mean, you should NOT at least test it.

About Us section is a MUST for all blogs and it needs to be interesting, not a flipping resume.

Video for About Us is a good addition but tested, it works better with both.

The righthand column serves as the SAVE column & keeps people from exiting.

Buttons really work. Action buttons (all listed -- and yes, I agree, it's not pretty) outperform SHARE this and/or RSS Feed links.

@rickwhittington: Re: search, subscribe, twitter feed, about, contact, archives, etc. Seems like it's easy to "junk up" a sidebar.

@amyafrika: It completely looks junky but it works. People like visuals. That's the issue. It'd be like TV with all text.

Users want sites to be like grocery stores. When you go to any grocery store in the US, you have an idea how it's going to work.

Folks, you can hate EVERY button & call-to-action, you want. Users make their mind up on ONE screen of your website.

We look to the left when we need help. We look to the right when we are going to leave. Puts things in perspective.

@sherisaid: I always advise clients to follow certain navigational guidelines for that reason -some level of familiarity

@amyafrika: That's fantastic! If the C (top, left & bottom nav) stays consistent (looking), users stay longer.

The more they stay, the more they pay. How are you going to get them to stay longer?

Organized clutter. Eyepath studies are very misleading because if there's nothing there, you can't map it.

Breaking up posts ESPECIALLY with good teasers is such a great idea. Thanks for adding it in.

RT @wilsonellis: How much money do you lose by designing your website/blog to please yourself instead of your target market?

@timjahn: I think clutter of any type is annoying. If it's not needed, why use it?

@amyafrika: The limbic system & neocortex fight when you're online. Literally, you do it to distract the user's brain from leaving.

Look at the blogs that are making money. Are they the most aesthetically pleasing? No, but they engage the user in the right way.

@timjahn: Haha, that's definitely new info to me! Interesting

@amyafrika: It's a complete game of mental manipulation.

@copyblogger has one of the best tracked blogs I have seen in usability. Is it ugly? It's almost perfect for the eye

@timjahn: I think it's on the better side of design. Problogger on the other hand seems a mess

@amyafrika: That's because @problogger's format engages your limbic brain. It'd be like reading a newspaper with 23 columns.

Purpose of limbic system is to protect you from danger. It keeps telling you : "run, run, run, exit, leave, run fast, run far."

If you're not interested in appealing to the user, go the SEO route. (More traffic.) There's always a choice online.

@timjahn: Do you ever find yourself wishing some blogs used images regularly in their posts? Why or why not?

@amyafrika: It says "Am I safe?" Are the colors safe? Are the visuals safe? Do they have contact info? Have other people been here?

Buttons make a difference for the eye. Bigger buttons work better than smaller. Red works better than yellow.

Interestingly enough, usability in other cultures is more similar online than in print.

When designing a client site/blog, I usually keep the sidebar contextual to content and always include contact first.

@rickwhittington: The righthand sidebar can vary because the user doesn't consider it part of their safety net.

@amyafrika: Good! Make sure the stuff that's important has graphics. A newsletter sign-up with a visual gets 8x+ sign-ups.

A BIG thanks to everyone who attended #blogchat tonight & to @mackcollier for daring to have me.