



Ultimate Blog Discussion

Written by Deborah Anderson, but brought to you by Basic Blog Tips.

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Introduction

We all want to get ahead, right? Or maybe we simply want to reach our dreams? Whatever your goal in life is, somehow you have found yourself thinking about blogging. Am I right?

Great, then you have come to the right place for a two-part “Ultimate Blog Discussion.” Whether your goal is to start a blog for the first time, enhance your blog and make some money, or get some help in making your blog something that goes higher than the clouds, as far as your dreams go.

But, no matter what the objective, we need to start some place and that is with a discussion.

To help us do that, we have broken down the topics into chapters or modules. There are three in this article and two more in the next article, for a total of five. Let’s start with the first three, shall we?

Chapter 1

Creative Considerations for Your Blog

Chapter 2

Are Digital Agencies For You (Including YouTube)?

Chapter 3

Understanding the Concept of an Income Generating Blog (Includes How-To Steps!)

Chapter 4

Start Blogging in Four (Relatively) Easy Steps

Chapter 5

Essential Tool(s) for Do-It-Yourselfers: Comparing GetResponse and Constant Contact

So, when we have finished this article will have accomplished the following:

1. We will have some philosophical, yet important considerations;
2. Understand what is involved in getting help to reach our dreams (digital agencies); and
3. In addition to realizing the easy aspect, also realizing that this blog can make us money from the start (and it doesn't have to be hard, even according to the experts!).

As a final note... Remember, you don't have to read all three chapters in one sitting. Grab your favorite drink, ice tea, soda, spring water, and come back and continue. :)





Chapter One

Creative Considerations for Your New Blog (Or New Life for an "Old" Blog)



Creative Considerations for Your New Blog (Or New Life for an “Old” Blog)

Going way back in history and blogging was once considered only a platform for fashionistas to show off their latest outfits. Now blogging is considered instrumental when developing one’s online presence and branding. As the creator of your own story, you need to design a marketing strategy that is going to get you (and that story!) noticed! If you don’t accomplish that level of success, you will go out of business before you even start. So, let’s increase your odds of success and making the splash that you deserve, eh?

So, what do we know about this whole blogging thing?

Blogs have become the best way to engage with your target audience and drive traffic to your website. Blogging helps clarify your audience. It draws in readers who are interested in what you are writing about, and when you are successful in engaging them, that blog may keep them coming back again and again.

Still not sure where to start? Or, maybe you are an experienced blogger and looking for a way to breathe new life into that blog (or blogs). Either way, let’s start at the beginning, the foundation, and aim for that success, shall we? Here are some tips. And, if you are a newbie, fear not... Take a look below and see how easy it is to set up your business blog (or even a blog just for fun, that makes some money on the side). Not sure that this is an easy task? I have some information on that step-by-step process, again, in part two. So, relax and remember to breathe and hold on tight for part two (the next article).

A photograph of a person's hands typing on a black laptop keyboard. The person is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. The background is a light-colored wooden desk with some papers and a yellow sticky note. A blue semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the top left of the image, containing the chapter title and subtitle. A white rectangular box is positioned below the banner.

Chapter Two

Are Digital Agencies For You?

Are Digital Agencies For You?

Before we discuss the topic of digital agencies, let's take a look at a relevant episode of Marketing Momentum with Charles and Deborah:



In this episode, Charles and I (Deborah) talked about Digital Agencies, which is somewhat of an elusive definition, as it could encompass several different types of agencies. Rather than trying to figure out what the definition is, exactly, let's talk about some agencies or companies that may help us to hit our dreams with all confidence and possible assuredness, as far as blogging (creation) and business (generating income) goes.

I started out the process by attempting to break down agencies by categories, but what I found were quite a few full-service agencies, just like Charles and I were discussing on the topic of Digital Agencies. So, even though there is not a precise definition that fits all, there is definitely this common thread of "full service." Let's see for ourselves, with this list of four popular agencies.

Full-Service Agencies

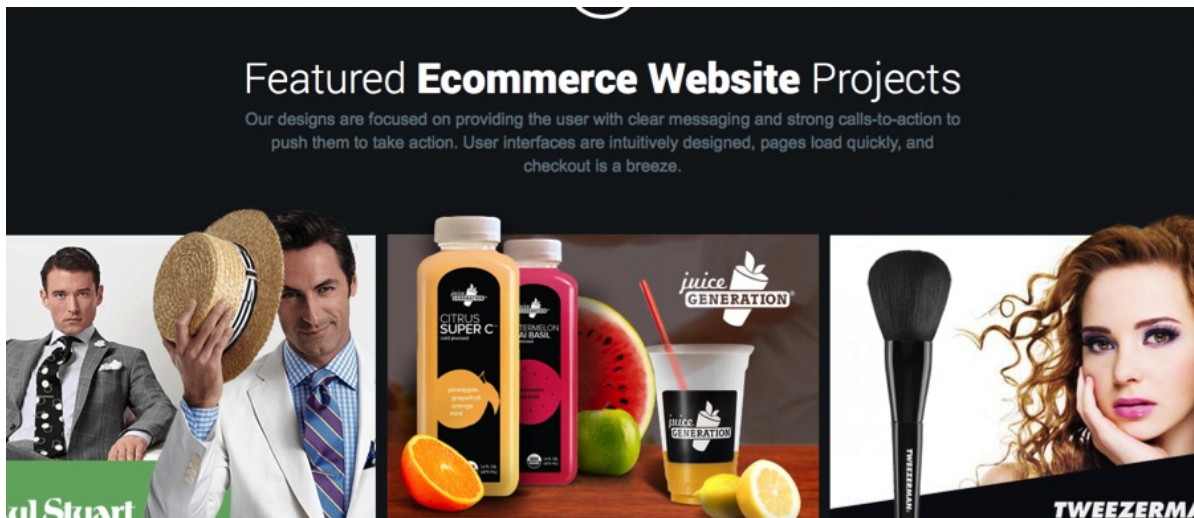
- [Web.com](#) – Full service including "website creation; Organic search optimization, Lead generation; Pay-per-click advertising; Facebook Marketing."
- [Marketo](#) – "Lead management; Email marketing; Consumer marketing; Customer base marketing; Mobile marketing (each with additional services in these "bundles")."
- [HubSpot](#) – "Content creation and optimization; Email marketing; Social media suite; Marketing analytics dashboards; Marketing automation; Goal based nurturing; Custom workflows; Salesforce integration; Smart content; Attribution reporting; User roles;" and the list continues.
- [BuzzSumo](#) – "10 trending feeds; 50 exports; Unrestricted searches; Language filters; Content analysis reports; Domain comparison reports; Outreach lists; Facebook analyzer; Top author reports; Trending RSS feeds; Advanced trending filters; Audience building;" and the list continues.

Analyzing What They Have to Offer

As you can see, there are quite a variety of services, from optimal topic identification to content creation, to content promotion, to the analysis of what is working (and what is working for the competitors). It is easy to see that with any of these plans, there is a good chance for you to be successful and possibly reach your dreams, assuming you have the money to pay the fees, and you are committed to any steps that you would need to do on your end. If you are constrained by time, but not by money, then choosing a Digital Agency seems to be a good choice or at least considering one. The key thing is finding the one that suits your particular objectives. That is where the free trials, or opportunities to speak to a representative really come in handy in making that type of choice.

While we are on the topic of agencies, we need to consider some of the other needs of a blog. One such need that doesn't come up in the first layer of lists of services provided by full-service agencies is that of graphics and design (even web design). There is no comparison, when it comes to design, to works of art creating by graphic designers. They are gifted individuals who understand what appeals to audiences when it comes to the visual representation. This may be another area where you want to budget for an agency.

An example of where you can see the excellence in design, as it meets 1) web design; and 2) specifically the functionality of e-commerce web design is at [Blue](#)



Just looking at the images in Blue Fountain's exceptional web design makes you realize how inferior some other designs are, in comparison. The images are vivid, and the composition is compelling and intriguing, making one want to click on the images. If we are talking about e-commerce website design, what do you think happens as someone clicks on one of these compelling images?

When evaluating your "image and design needs," this is another case where you may find that you need the best and are limited on time and skill set and it is time to hire someone who can help you reach your dreams.

Bonus Section: Marketing that Ecommerce Site through Images (and Gaining Credibility)

You see what I am seeing, right? These vivid images that are drawing the audience in to click and purchase. Now, let's grab those images and get them out in the social networks to draw the clientele over to the e-commerce site!

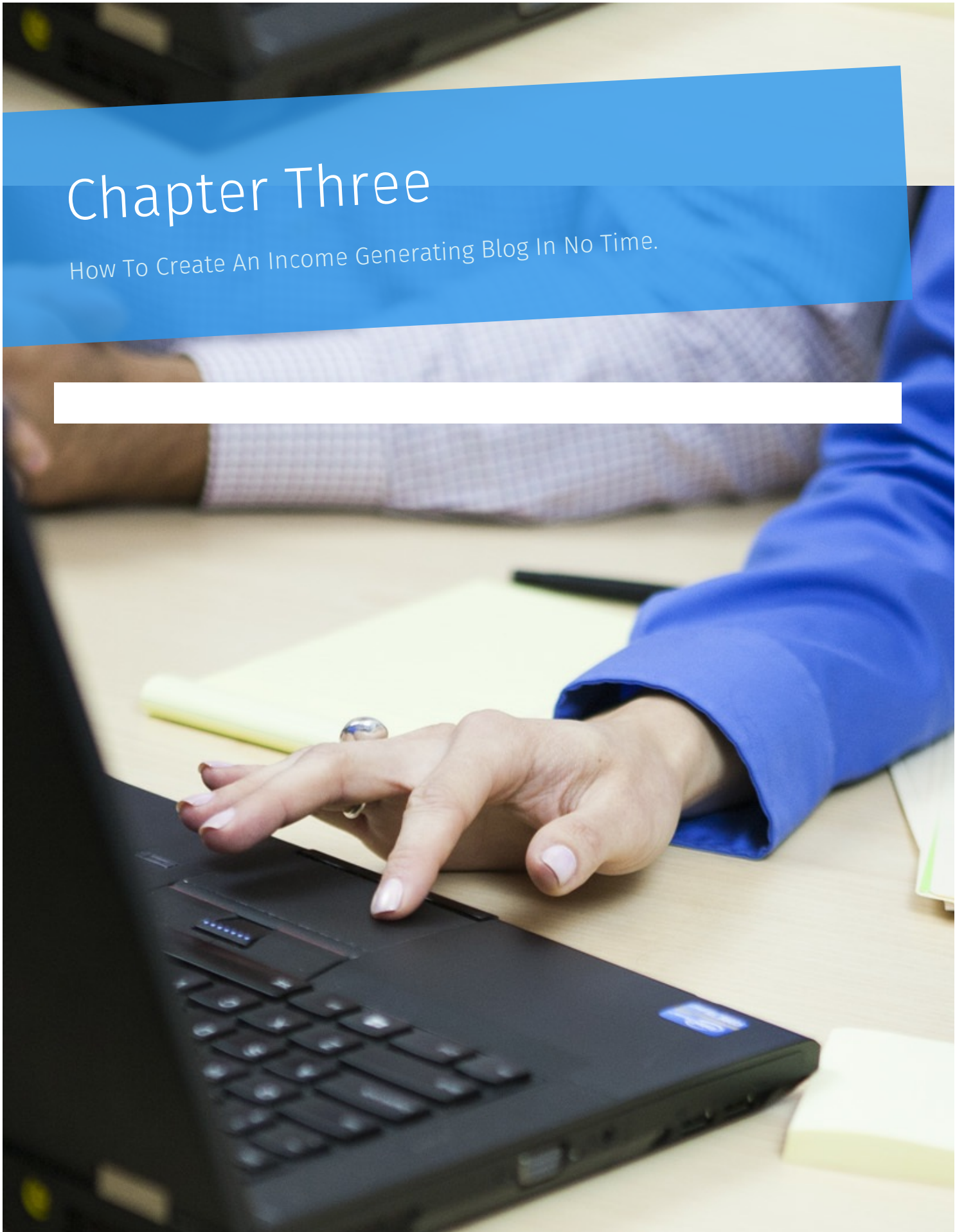
There are many different image-focused sites that we could consider. Two of them are:

- Instagram
- Pinterest

Knowing that there are sites out there that cater to images (and videos) is one thing, but understanding how to utilize it in a way that benefits us (especially when we have hired an agency to create a stunning e-commerce site) is another thing. To build credibility, one has to build a following (and engagement) on sites like [Pinterest](#) and [Instagram](#). This is especially the case when it comes to e-

Chapter Three

How To Create An Income Generating Blog In No Time.



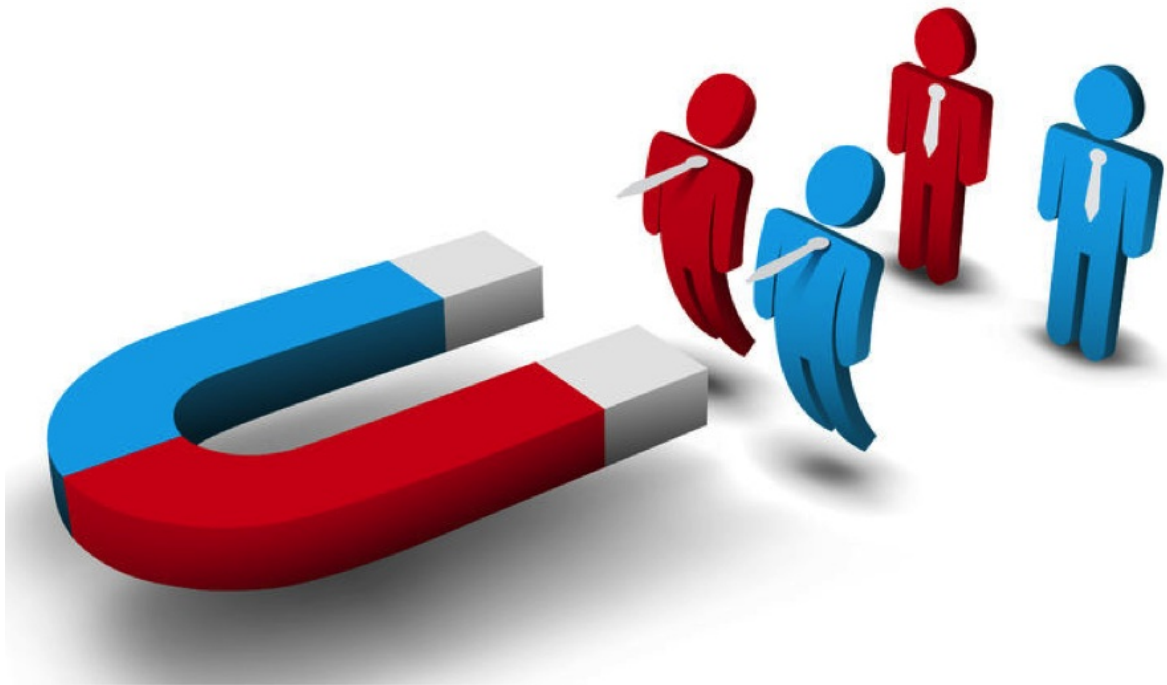
How To Create An Income Generating Blog In No Time

Ok, with all of this talk about hiring agencies that may be well above our budget, I wanted to give you hope (as we lead into part two of our “Ultimate Blog Discussion”). That is, hope that you can do this on a smaller budget and still have phenomenal results! Hiring the agencies can send you to success that is beyond the clouds and do it fast enough that you may feel like you traveled on a rocket to get there.

However, there is also fulfillment in building your success one block on top of the next, and pretty soon you have built your own skyscraper with your own two hands. With that in mind, let’s talk about building a blog that generates income... One that YOU build yourself! Note: we will also talk about building blogs in our part two, so you are in for a treat with all of the information coming your way.

So, let me ask you this... When you tell someone that you are a professional blogger, what is their response? Do they look at you as if you have three heads? Incredibly, there are people who think blogging is just a joke. They think it is not a career or a way to make real money. They may tell you that it's just a hobby or simply a diversion from the daily grind.

Your family might even think you've gone off the deep end when you tell them that you are becoming or have become a professional blogger. They will probably cackle and say it's impossible to make money that way.



Since your family only wants the best for you, it's understandable that they may not be as open to the idea of blogging as you are. They may even think you need an advanced degree to earn a substantial income. Thankfully, this couldn't be further from the truth.

Yes, if you haven't realized it already, you [create a blog that makes money](#) – excellent money for you and your pocketbook!

Not Just a Blogger

The moment you decided to use your blog to make money, you are no longer just a blogger. At that precise moment, you became an entrepreneur, and your blog became a small business. Think of your blog as one of those free webinars you see online. You are offering valuable information free of charge in hopes of attracting customers.



Want to Enhance Your Blog?

Want to enhance your blog? What's stopping you? You don't have to limit yourself to only information. You can make your blog whatever you want it to be, and you can even add skills that will augment the monetization of your blog. Visiting places like [Udemy](#) or [Teachable](#) may give you ideas of new skills you want to learn. Maybe you want to pick up a couple of classes on SEO (Search Engine Optimization) so that you can become an expert in your own right (who knows, you may be selling SEO resources from your own site once you become an SEO guru!).

The nice thing is you can do WHATEVER YOU WANT. If you just want to blog/write... then do that!

For example, check out how successful Ms. Ileana is, using sites like Teachable to present her courses on YouTube! That is monetization in action!

How Blogs Make Money

Making money with your blog is not as difficult as it seems. Yes, it takes hard work and dedication, but it is really as simple as the following four steps:

1. Attract users with free content.
2. Offer freebies in exchange for their contact information such as email.
3. Build a trusting relationship by continuously providing them with valuable and entertaining information they can share.
4. Offer services or products that are genuinely useful.

In other words, if your primary goal is to make money, your blog needs to be a lead generating machine. In turn, those leads need nurturing until they convert visitors into returning customers. To accomplish this, you need to plan ahead. Simply put, you must know what you want to write about, have taken the time to find out where your target audience hangs out and customized your website with user-friendly landing pages that peak their interest.



All Systems Go

Once you have targeted your niche, brainstormed a few blog topic ideas, and developed an eye-catching website, it's time to get down to business. Profitable blogging takes research and proper execution. Google has a multitude of resources you can read and apply to your blog, utilizing that research to help monetize your content. From optimizing your SEO to creating an editorial

calendar to help you stay on top of your posting schedule, Google is a great place to start to find what you need.

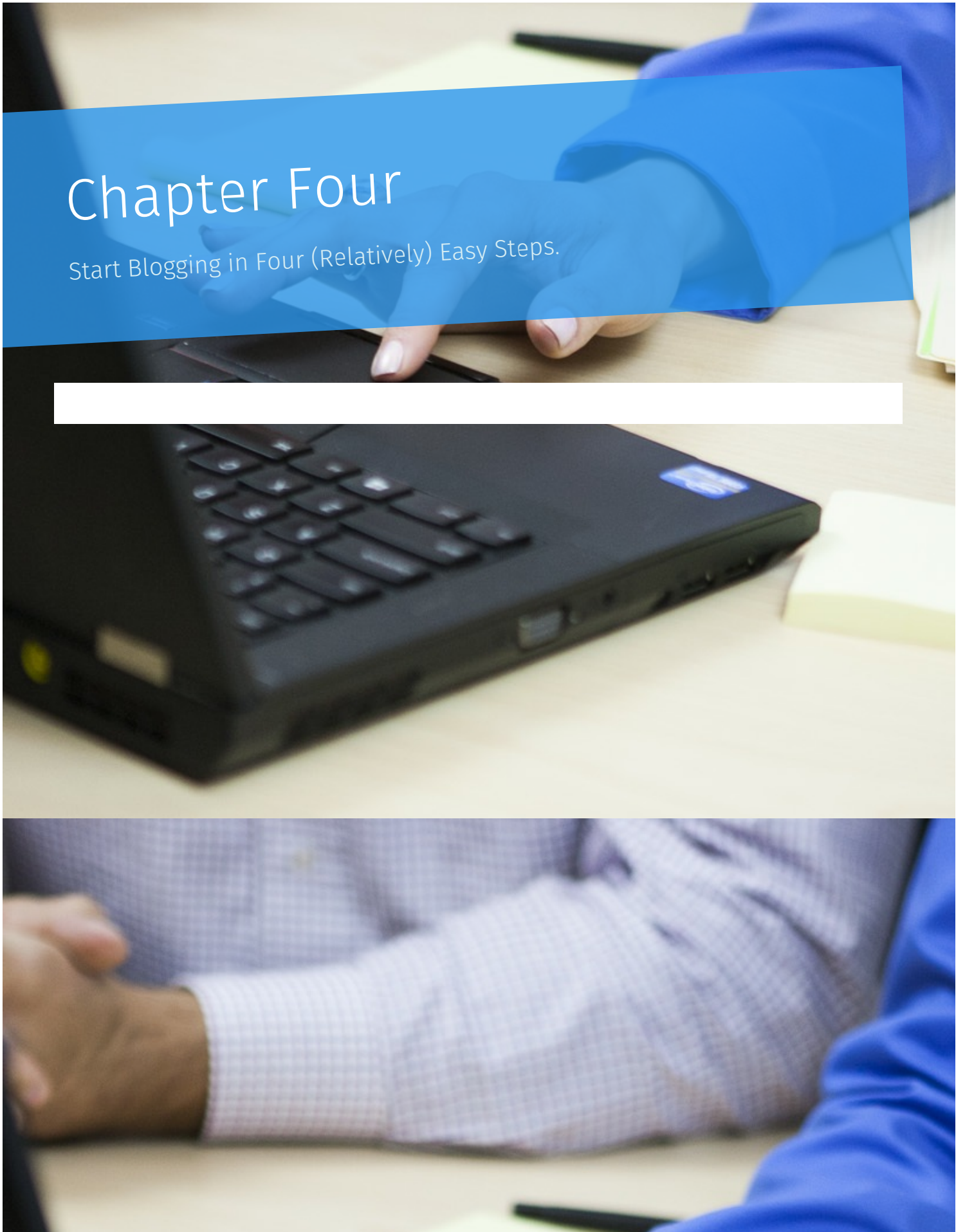
Just like a fine-tuned engine, your blog comprises itself of many different parts that need to work in unison. Although it can be overwhelming in the beginning, you will reap the rewards later. Even the most well-versed bloggers know that to generate income, you need to be present at all times, even if that means they outsource some of the work. By breaking your blog into a series of different steps, you will be amazed at how quickly you can create an extraordinary blog that is generating money for you. After that, it is exponential and a matter of math (the kind that goes into your bank!).

In Conclusion

Ok, now it is time to breathe. Are you breathing? Good! It is also time for the break and to get ready for Part Two of our “Ultimate Blog Discussion.” I have a surprise for you in that Part Two. It is something that I am creating just for Ms. Ileana and just for her BasicBlogTips.com. Maybe, if she would like, she will share it back my way after you all have received it J So, be sure to come back and visit us and share this blog post so others can benefit!

Chapter Four

Start Blogging in Four (Relatively) Easy Steps.



Start Blogging in Four (Relatively) Easy Steps

Step 1: Hosting and Platform

This first step doesn't have to take a lot of time or be difficult, but it is helpful to understand what you are dealing with when making the decision. I've included some tips, below, with the two options, but I have an even better tip, and that is to work through this step with all your cards in front of you. How do you do that? By using a step-by-step guide (walk-through) to consider those options. Here is a great article to get you started, called "[How to Start a Blog.](#)"

Option 1: Choose a blogging platform that comes with hosting

There is no shortage of web hosting companies (vendors that host websites) to choose from when selecting a hosting option for your blog. One of my favorites is HostGator, with their plethora of available features and customer service. I may be technically minded, but most of the world could use some hand-holding, and that is where HostGator is there to help you through the process. In fact, they are so helpful that they have also put together a hosting blog set-up guide that covers some unique features, like the passion that you need to do it right. But, I am getting ahead of myself. Check out the guide for yourself, here on their own site at [HostGator](#).

This hosting selection process may also integrate with a platform selection. Sometimes, the platform also includes the hosting (and vice versa). (Again, an excellent reason to find a helpful host who can walk you through this selection process!) These options can include Wordpress, HubSpot, and Blogger, to name a few.

Depending on wants or needs, you can use a free service or go with a paid option. Regardless, this should take no longer than five minutes for your initial selection, and no one says you have to stick with that first choice. If you are brand new to blogging (and still need to travel down the path of building traffic to the site), your objective should be to jump in and make that choice. As you get a feel for what you are doing (and build that traffic), you may want to re-select. Then, again, maybe you will hit gold on the first try. Either way, if you are new (and less to lose), it is ok if this selection process does not take a big chunk of your time.

Option 2: Host your blog on your own domain

Once you've chosen your host, make sure that your blog is on the original domain. If not, you won't be privy to any of the SEO credit coming from your blogging efforts. Keep in mind that this is usually with a paid service, so if you really want to increase traffic, you may have to pay.

Step 2: Defining Your Target Audience | Developing Personas

Who are you trying to reach? What message are you trying to send? For example, does your audience have problems that your business could easily rectify? If you were them, what keywords would you use to search for that solution on Google? All these factors come into play when writing your blog. The key is to use keywords that will help get you noticed in online searches.



Step 3: Develop a Strategy... A BluePrint

My creative input, when it comes to developing a strategy, is to suggest that you have a brainstorming session and write down all of your ideas for your blog. Focus your attention on long tail keyword phrases that are three to four words in length. If your business is in one specific location, try to factor that into your keyword. Try choosing words that are slightly more obscure than those highly relevant keywords. People searching online use multiple combinations to find the desired result and doing well with a less common keyword or keyword phrase will give you a better return on investment (ROI) than getting lost in pages and pages of search engine results (SERPs) that use the more common keywords or keyword phrases.

Step 4: Put Pen to Paper

After you've put your ideas down, it's time to write your first blog post. Even if you are trying to market services or products, it's important not to sound like a salesperson. Almost nothing makes people run more so than an aggressive salesperson. Your target audience wants you to engage with them. They want to be part of the conversation. Give them some information they care about sharing with others. That's how you get the ball rolling in the right direction in the world of online branding >> Shareable Digital Content. Remember to keep your posts educational, yet friendly. Blogging is the best way to open the doors to your target audience and build your online reputation. So, let's start building (and have fun doing it)!



Summary of our Chapter 4

There are many different ways to put together a fruit salad (or any other edible delight, for that matter, eh?). However, we need to keep our objective in mind. What is your objective? Keeping it fairly easy and getting it done in the least amount of time, without sacrificing quality? Well, then you have a few options available to you. Now, just take another look at our five steps and the article that walks you through those technical questions on finding the host and platform. From there, it is all about growth and improvement, just like finding the right ingredients for your salad, improving it over time and gaining more fans as you do so.

A photograph of a person's hands typing on a black laptop keyboard. The person is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. In the background, another person's hands are clasped together, and they are wearing a light-colored checkered shirt. On the desk, there is a yellow sticky note and a black pen. The scene is set in an office environment with a light-colored wooden desk.

Chapter Five

Essential Tool(s) for Do-It-Yourselfers (Automation).

Essential Tool(s) for Do-It-Yourselfers (Automation)

If you are in the market for a new email marketing service, you've come to the right place. As a blogger, small business owner, or digital marketer, the importance of building an email list goes without saying. As a direct means of communication between you and your audience, effective email marketing increases conversion rates, which leads to increased revenue.

In our last article (Part One), we talked about whether to “do it yourself” or hire a digital marketing agency to do it for you. Yes, the “do it” can sometimes be a little bit elusive, as far as definition, but some of that depends on what it is that you need to do for your business or blogging venture.

Thinking "Do It Yourself" and Adding Automation

We have a solution that is sort of on the side of “do it yourself.” Or, at least, more so than hiring a digital marketing agency to do everything for you. It allows you to have some say and to do some of the marketing, and yet the idea is that there is an automation component that makes it more efficient. If you want to hear about the concept of automation, watch the Marketing Momentum video, here:



Now, the concept of marketing automation is something like what is offered by HubSpot or Marketo. However, we are looking for something for small businesses and smaller budgets. We had already heard that GetResponse was coming out with marketing automation (in beta) and went looking for another company so we could make a comparison. If you recall, we did talk about five reasons why GetResponse is the choice to make, a while back, here on [BasicBlogTips](#).

Constant Contact and GetResponse

We heard that [Constant Contact](#) was on the trail of marketing automation, so we started our comparison project with comparing Constant Contact marketing automation to [GetResponse marketing automation](#). The only problem was that we found references to marketing automation for [Constant Contact](#) (even compared to HubSpot!), but could not really find anything that looked like a HubSpot or Marketo type service.

So, how do you compare that? Well, we had to bring it back to a level that was the same playing field, so to speak, in the email marketing realm. After all, even though Google presented us with evidence that Constant Contact was a marketing automation tool, all we could find was maybe automation on the level of email marketing.

Suffice it to say that there would have been a lot of great stuff to compare on the GetResponse side of marketing automation, had we been able to compare the two on that level. For example, GetResponse offers (in REAL marketing automation):

- A post-communication follow-up automation for those who purchase on your e-commerce enabled site;
- Helping with the definition of buying habits of your subscribers;
- A sort of “rate and tagging users” based on what they do when they visit your site;
- Tracking your subscribers and rewarding those who interact with your content the most.

Yes, it's true, some of the items (above) are email marketing related. It is also true that there is a level of automation involved in many of the companies out there who offer email services. Email marketing is a part of that bigger component of marketing. However, where the comparison gets tricky is that GetResponse is an all-in-one online marketing solution, and that is tricky when we are comparing it to an email marketing solution like Constant Contact which does not have the marketing automation features available for a comparison.

So, let's compare email marketing services between Constant Contact and GetResponse's all-in-one online marketing solution. It is a mini "versus" comparison, just to get our feet wet and to help understand the Do-It-Yourself/Automation side of the option for our small business (i.e. blogging business).

Lasting Relationships

One of the things that email marketing helps us to do is to create long-term relationships with potential customers. We want those customers to turn into subscribers and sign up for our email list. Building that email list, hands-down, always floats to the top of the lists of ideas for creating long-term relationships with potential customers.

GetResponse vs. Constant Contact

Before highlighting the positives of each provider, take note that both GetResponse and Constant Contact share common qualities such as:

1. Tracking reports;
2. Social media integration;
3. Image hosting and gallery; and
4. Blog newsletter.

Mobile Templates

With more people using their mobile devices than ever before, mobile responsiveness is a must. GetResponse scores big points by providing over 500 incredible responsive templates that help you build better email newsletters. Since newsletters are the mainstay of direct communication with potential customers, it would be foolish not to utilize responsive templates. Constant Contact has several noteworthy templates, but GetResponse gets the blue ribbon in this category.

Who wins? GetResponse.

Nurturing Relationships

When trying to grow your business or blog, you need to keep the conversation going if you want to convert leads into sales. Building a strong relationship with subscribers takes continuous communication. Use of autoresponders is one of the best ways to accomplish this. GetResponse allows users to send unlimited letters and responses for both free and premium users. On the other hand, Constant Contact only allows up to 100 replies before you need to upgrade to a premium package. For some reason, even if somewhere the prices were equal, the “Unlimited” works for me and sounds better. How about you?

Who wins? GetResponse.

Functionality

In theory, both GetResponse and Constant Contact are easy to use, but when it comes to navigation, Constant Contact can be a tad tricky. Again, another point or two for GetResponse.

Who wins? GetResponse.



Final Thoughts

When trying to decide which email marketing service is best, it all comes down to your specific needs. Both of the providers mentioned above have their good points. There would be no fault in using either one of them. That said, GetResponse, with its all-in-one online marketing solution, seems to have won this mini comparison review. From its mobile responsiveness to its drag-and-drop interface and complete website marketing automation solution, it's worth the look. And, since starting with GetResponse is a free trial, that doesn't hurt either.

A person wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt is sitting at a light-colored wooden desk. Their right hand is on a black laptop keyboard. On the desk, there are several yellow sticky notes, a blue pen, and a white sheet of paper. The background is slightly blurred, showing another person in a checkered shirt.

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