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November 6, 2014 8 min read

## When Is a Blog the Right Form of Content Marketing?



You've heard the wisdom:

"Your business should have a blog."

## "Blogging helps your SEO."

"Why aren't you blogging yet?"

According to the experts, a blog will solve all your Internet woes. **Blogging will increase your traffic, expand your audience, improve your engagement, position you as an authority, and allow you to shape the message in your space.**

In fact, blogging is so hyped as a panacea, you'd think that simply adding a blog to your site would also help you find the perfect spouse, cure the common cold, and even turn lead into gold.

While I won't deny the power of a good blog on the right site (seriously, as a writer, I'm pro-blog in general) to do all of those good things and more, you should always question anything that's touted as the right answer for everyone (and everything). So should you blog?

### **When a blog is NOT necessarily the right form of content marketing**

Now that you're asking whether all that time and energy you're putting (or planning to put) into your blog is really the right investment, let's look at a few examples of when blogging is a bad idea (or is simply unnecessary).

#### **1. You own your market**



**Some brands  
have the benefit  
of already being  
a household name**

Johnson & Johnson. Amazon. Target. Google. These companies have already captured the hearts and minds of so many consumers that their names are nearly synonymous with their products. Here's why blogging would only offer each of them a marginal benefit.

#### **Traffic**

Does Johnson & Johnson really care about traffic to its site when you already have Band-Aids (and all their other name brand products) in your medicine cabinet? Sure, they produce [infographics](#), but there's no real blog, and you were going to buy their products anyway, right?

#### **Audience reach**

Ordering anything from books to pet-waste bags online? You didn't need a blog to discover Amazon, it's so ingrained in your Internet history that you probably went straight there and those products will be on your doorstep in two days or less.

#### **Engagement**

Target mastered engagement when Oprah and Tyra started referring to the store as Tarzhay and shoppers only got more loyal as they added designer labels at discount prices. It didn't matter that most of their products weren't even available on their website, let alone that they didn't have a blog. Their site has gotten a lot better in the past decade, but they still don't need a blog to get customers in the door.

### **Authority**

And Google... Sure they have a blog, but Google is such an authority for search queries that most of the consumers of their search results have no interest in, or need for, the blog. So if you have little or no competition or your business is (and you expect it to remain) the top-of-mind brand in your market, you can skip blogging.

### **2. You have a better way of getting customers into the top of your funnel**



**Blogs aren't  
the only way  
to expand your  
audience**

A blog is only one way to attract new customers. For example, I live less than a mile from the nearest grocery store, and I can get there and back with a spare stick of butter before my oven even warms up. If the next nearest store had the most amazing blog ever, I'm still not going to go there when I'm missing an ingredient. But if they send me a coupon in the mail, I might just try them out when it's less of an emergency.

The point is that different types of businesses require different types of tactics to get customers to notice them.

My mom, a small-town accountant who knows all of her clients by name, doesn't blog. She's much more likely to get recommended by a neighbor than to be found on the Internet. If paid search brings you \$50k in conversions every month and your blog contributes to \$10k, it's easy (and fair) to prioritize paid search. If you find that readers of white papers are the hottest leads for your SaaS company, offering a 50:1 ROI over blog readers, write those white papers. And if your customers are sharing your deals across email and/or social at a rate that your blog has never seen, give them more of what they want.

None of that means you'll never have to create a blog. Instead, a blog might be something to reassess when your rate of growth slows in any of those channels, but if you've crunched your numbers and a blog just doesn't pan out for now, use the tactics your customers are already responding to.

### 3. The most interesting things about your business are strictly confidential (or highly complicated)



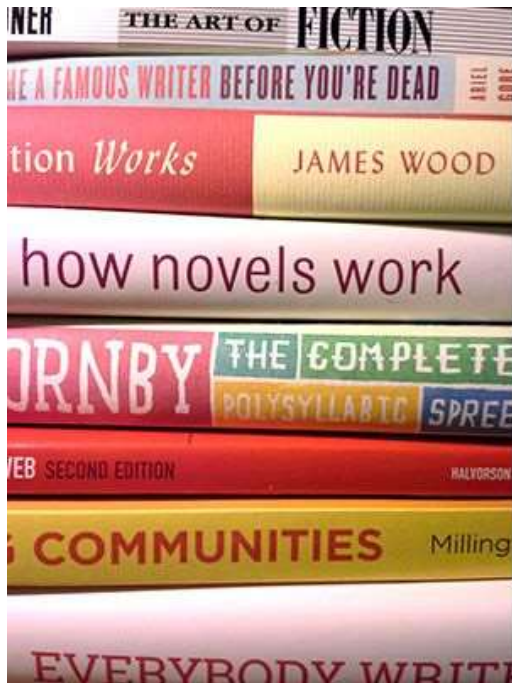
Sure the CIA has a [blog](#), but with posts like "CIA Unveils Portrait of Former Director Leon E. Panetta" and "CIA Reaches Deep to Feed Local Families" it reads more like a failed humanizing effort than anything you'd actually want to subscribe to (or worse, read). If you're in a business where you can't talk about what you do, a blog might not be for you.

For example, while a CPA who handles individual tax returns might have success blogging about tips to avoid a big tax bill at year end, a big four accounting firm that specializes in corporate audits might want to think twice about that blog. Do you really have someone on hand who has something new and interesting to say about Sarbanes Oxley *and* has the time to write?

The difference is engagement. So if you're in a hush-hush or highly technical field, think about what you can reasonably write about and whether anyone is going to want (or legally be able) to publicly comment on or share what you're writing.

Instead, you might want to take the example of [Deloitte](#) which thinks beyond the concept of your typical blog to create all kinds of interesting evergreen content. The result is a host of interesting case studies and podcasts that could have been last updated three years ago for all it matters. This puts content on your site, but it also allows you to carefully craft and vet that content before it goes live, without building any expectation associated with an editorial calendar.

### 4. You think "thought leadership" means rehashing the news



**The world is filled  
with thought leaders.**

**Do you have time to  
expand our thinking?**

There is a big difference between curating information and regurgitating it. True life confession: As much as I hate the term "thought leader," I used it many a time in my agency days as a way to encourage clients to find the best in themselves. But the truth is, most people don't have the time, energy, or vision to really commit to becoming a thought leader.

A blog *can be* a huge opportunity to showcase your company's mastery and understanding of your industry. But if you can't find someone to write blog posts that expand on (or rethink) the existing knowledge base, save your ink.

Some people curate and compile information in order to create "top 10" type posts. That kind of content can be helpful for readers who don't have time to source content on their own, but I wouldn't suggest it as the core content strategy for a company's blog. If that's all you have time for, focus on social media instead.

##### **5. Your site is all timely content**

**Happening now**

*It's election day in America. Voters head to the polls from coast to coast today with polls already open in Vermont. The big question nationally is...*

from Election Day in America - Don't Forget to Vote!

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**Wallace Watch**

*Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) said in hindsight there are always lessons to be learned and that applies in the current instance for the GOP as it moves...*

from Senator Rubio Give His Take

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**GERALDO**

*Being back here with the last of our troops exiting Iraq reminds me that the courage and skill shown by our GI's in this long and bitter conflict was...*

from Geraldo: Back In Iraq With U.S. Soldiers On The Journey Home

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from

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from

**Hey Fox:  
What's the  
difference  
between a  
blog and a  
news story?**

**And did you  
run out of  
commentators?**

A blog can help you shape the message around your industry and your brand, but what if your brand is built entirely around messaging? The BBC doesn't need a blog because any reader would expect what they're reading to be timely content and to adhere to the BBC's standard voice. If readers want to engage with the content by commenting on the articles, they can.

If you can explain the value that [blogs.foxnews.com](https://blogs.foxnews.com) adds to the Fox News site, you've got a keener eye for content strategy than I do. My guess, from the empty blog bubbles here, is that this is a failed (or abandoned) experiment and will soon disappear.

## 6. Your business is truly offline



## Some businesses still operate offline

There's one final reason that blogging might not fit your business model, and that's if you have chosen not to enter the digital realm. I had lunch with a high-end jeweler in India recently where he was debating whether to go online (he was worried that his designs might get stolen) or continue to do business in person the way his family had done for at least three generations.

If you are successful at selling your products offline, especially if your product has as much variation as a gemstone, an argument can be made for staying offline entirely.

### When you should be blogging

Now that we've looked at some times it's okay not to have a blog, let's take a quick, expanded look at five reasons you might want to blog as part of your content marketing strategy (just in case you thought you'd gotten off scot-free by almost fitting into one of the boxes above).

#### 1. You want traffic to your website

Conventional wisdom goes that the more pages you build, the more chances you have to rank. Heck, the more (good) content you create on your blog, the more collateral you have to showcase on your social channels, in email, and anywhere else you want to.

#### 2. You want to expand your audience

If the content you're creating is truly awesome, people will share it and find it and love it. Some of those people will be potential customers who haven't even heard of you before. Keep up the excellence and you might just keep them interested.

#### 3. You want to connect with customers

That blog is a fantastic place to answer FAQs, play with new ideas, and show off the humanity of all those fantastic individuals you have working for you. All of those things help customers get to know you, plus

they can engage with you directly via the comments. You might just find ideas for new campaigns and even new products just by creating that venue for conversation.

#### **4. You have something to add to the discussion**

Do you really have a fresh perspective on what's going on in your industry? Help others out by sharing your interesting stories and thoughtful commentary. You're building your authority and the authority of your company at the same time.

#### **5. You're ready to invest in your future**

Content is a long game, so the payoffs from blogging may be farther down the road than you might hope. But if a blog is right for your company, you're giving yourself the chance to start shaping the message about your industry and your company the day you publish your first post. Keep at it and you might find that you start attracting customers from amongst your followers.

#### **The gist**

Don't blog just because someone told you to. A blog is a huge investment and sustaining that blog can take a lot of work. But there are a lot of good reasons to dig in and blog like you mean it.

What's your decision? Do you have a good reason that you've decided to abstain from blogging? Or have you decided that a blog is the right thing for your business? Help others carefully consider their investment in blogging by sharing your story in the comments.

*The author's views are entirely their own (excluding the unlikely event of hypnosis) and may not always reflect the views of Moz.*

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Written by

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