

Making Sales Stick

***A Simple Strategy Guaranteed to
Increase Your Success***

and

5 Critical Tactics for Business Blog Success

Your Bonus Gifts from
Denise Wakeman & Kathleen Gage

Part I
from Kathleen Gage

Part 2
from Denise Wakeman

Bonus Gifts from Denise Wakeman and Kathleen Gage

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Making Sales Stick

***A Simple Strategy Guaranteed to Increase Your Success
by Kathleen Gage, the Street Smarts Marketer***

Introduction

One of the most frequently asked question I receive about making money on the internet is

How do I make sales stick and minimize refunds?

It's something that everyone who is making money online wants to know in order that they can keep more of what they make in the first place. Selling someone a product or service is one thing. Making it stick is something else.

In this special report you are going to discover how to have a higher retention rate and minimal refunds.

So let's get started...

If you've been doing business online for any length of time, you know that making your sales stick and minimizing refunds is essential to your success and your profit margin.

Some experts have very few refund requests, while others have a high number.

What we are going to talk about in this bonus report is how to make sales stick thus minimizing refunds. We are not going to talk about credit card charge backs. That is for another discussion.

Over the years I have had only a handful of refund requests. I can actually count them on one hand. And that is after thousands upon thousands of men and women buying something from me.

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I will share the reasons I believe my refunds being so minimal in this report. Before I do, I want to let you know that not everyone concerns themselves with high refund rates.

Years ago I heard a very, very well known expert say, "If you're not getting a lot of refunds, you're not selling hard enough."

To say I was disappointed with this advice is an understatement. Being pushy, aggressive and not caring how many refunds you get is what has given sales a bad name. You will not find that type of advise ever coming from me. I believe in selling with influence and integrity.

Guarantees

A great way to increase sales and have them stick is to add a guarantee. Offering a guarantee minimizes the risk in the consumer's mind. It lets them know you believe in your product and/or service and it makes their decision process considerably easier.

Many people are very hesitant to offer guarantees for a number of reasons. They are concerned they will get too many refund requests, they aren't sure what type of guarantee to offer, they think people will take advantage of them and they are not sure what type of guarantee to offer.

If you are getting a lot of refund requests, chances are you are doing the one or more of the following:

- Selling to a market that is not a good fit for your product or service
- Your product or service is of very poor quality, thus the high refund requests
- You have overpriced your product or service.

Guarantees encourage people to buy, even if they never use the guarantee. In reality, most people rarely take advantage of guarantees, so you really have nothing to fear if your information products and your services are of high quality.

Offering a simple to understand guarantee and minimizing the risk for the buyer, the better they will feel about their purchase.

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Depending on your industry, you may be required by law to offer some type of guarantee. I cannot give you any legal advice on this, so you need to make sure you know what the requirements are in your industry and state.

K.I.S.S. – Keep It Simply Simple

Keep your guarantees simple. The more difficult you make guarantees, with a bunch of stipulations, the less valuable they are. Thus, you are defeating the purpose of the guarantee in the first place.

Various Types

There are a number of types of guarantees you can offer. Don't be afraid to offer guarantees. Again, you reduce the risk with a solid guarantee thus equating to increased sales.

Limited time guarantee: They must ask for a refund within a specific time period.

Long-term or no time limit guarantee: Amazingly, with lower priced the information products, long-term guarantees tend to minimize refund request.

You would think it would be just the opposite, but when someone doesn't feel the pressure of having to make up their mind within an unreasonably short period of time they tend to feel better about their decision to buy.

Guarantee based on specific actions: In order to request a refund, the buyer has to have done certain things before they get their money back. For example, if you they bought a home study course, they have to do the first three lessons before you will refund their money.

This type of guarantee can be more trouble than it's worth.

100% Money back guarantees: With this type of guarantee you are promising to give all their money back if they are not satisfied. Don't be petty by making them pay a handling fee. For the few dollars you will collect, you risk hindering a potential good client/vendor relationship.

Results driven guarantee: The guarantee is valid when you do X you get Y. This is a difficult guarantee to know if in fact the buyer really did do what you asked.

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Service guarantees: You are guaranteeing a particular standard of service.

More than your purchase price back guarantee: These have been used very effectively when an online expert is hosting a live event. It often is worded in such a way that the person attends the seminar and if at the end of the first day they don't feel they got more than their money's worth, they get all their money back and some due to expenses they incurred such as flight and hotel.

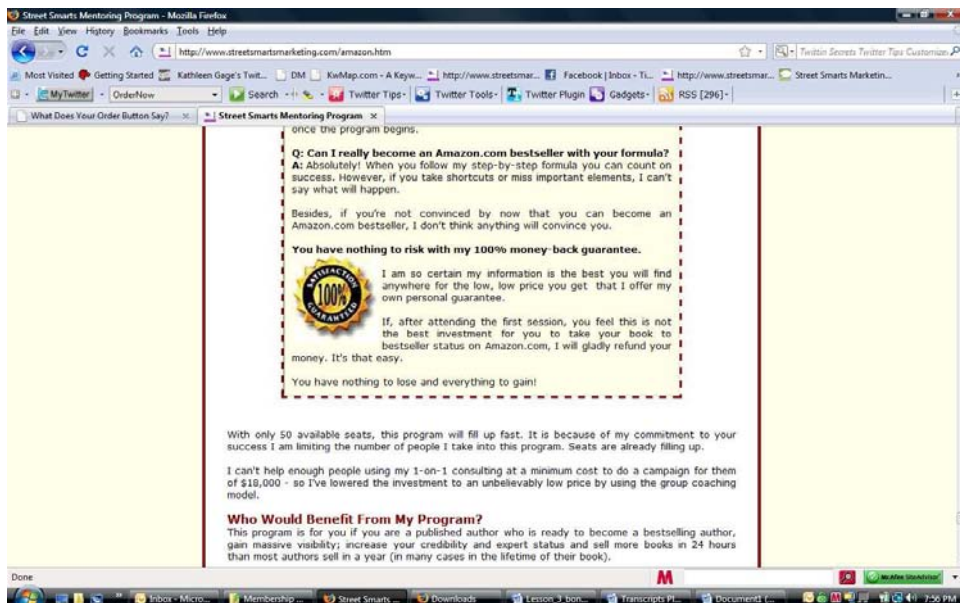
Give a Reason Why You're Giving a Guarantee

Let the consumer know why you are offering a guarantee. Here's an example of one I have given with information products such as an eReport or eBook is, *"I know when you read this information and apply the information you will get so much value, you will agree it is one of the best investments you could have made. So much in fact, I guarantee your satisfaction unconditionally."*

Guarantees for services versus downloadable products

The guarantee you offer for a service such as a mentoring course in which you have coaching sessions included will likely need to be different than for a low priced product.

Here's one I have used effectively. "If after the first session you feel this course is not for you, I will gladly refund your money, no questions asked."




The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://www.streetSMARTSMARKETING.com/amazon.htm>. The page content includes a question and answer section:

once the program begins.

Q: Can I really become an Amazon.com bestseller with your formula?
A: Absolutely! When you follow my step-by-step formula you can count on success. However, if you take shortcuts or miss important elements, I can't say what will happen.

Besides, if you're not convinced by now that you can become an Amazon.com bestseller, I don't think anything will convince you.

You have nothing to risk with my 100% money-back guarantee.

 I am so certain my information is the best you will find anywhere for the low, low price you get that I offer my own personal guarantee.

If, after attending the first session, you feel this is not the best investment for you to take your book to bestseller status on Amazon.com, I will gladly refund your money. It's that easy.

You have nothing to lose and everything to gain!

With only 50 available seats, this program will fill up fast. It is because of my commitment to your success I am limiting the number of people I take into this program. Seats are already filling up.

I can't help enough people using my 1-on-1 consulting at a minimum cost to do a campaign for them of \$18,000 - so I've lowered the investment to an unbelievably low price by using the group coaching model.

Who Would Benefit From My Program?
This program is for you if you are a published author who is ready to become a bestselling author, gain massive visibility; increase your credibility and expert status and sell more books in 24 hours than most authors sell in a year (in many cases in the lifetime of their book).

Here's a different type...



Go through the full course and if, after applying the information as taught, you do not get a result, I will gladly refund your money, no questions asked.

In the copy of your sales page, make sure your guarantee shows. Make it bold, add a graphic, spell it out clearly.

**satisfaction
guaranteed**

Try Us 100% RISK FREE!

Mention it a few times throughout your sales copy to assure potential buyers see it.

Buttons

On the order button, try using this →

Try It Now Risk Free »

Rather than this →

Order Now »

Conversion rates are usually higher with the Risk Free Button.

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Honor your word

If someone does ask for their money back, don't make them jump through a bunch of hoops; honor your guarantee to a tee.

Several years ago a woman who registered for one of my 4 week mentoring courses took advantage of my guarantee. I was offering a full refund if someone requested it before the second session.

The day after the first session, the woman called me and said she felt she had gotten in over her head; she wanted her money back.

When we cleared up that she wasn't financially over her head, but rather with the amount of information she would be learning I proceeded to ask her why she had registered in the first place. From what she shared, I knew the course would be a great fit for her.

Prepared to refund her money, I decided to ask her if she would be willing to complete the course and if she still felt the same way upon completion, I would gladly give her money back.

She agreed and thanked me for being so flexible.

I was correct in my feelings that the course was a great fit for her. When the training was finished, she wrote to thank me for encouraging her to stick it out. She said it was one of the best investments she had ever made.

In essence, what I did was extend the time period to minimize her risk. It worked and turned out to be a win/win.

Protect yourself

To avoid getting into any financial trouble, put aside a percentage of your sales for refund requests. Chances are you won't need to make refunds if you follow the rest of the recommendations in this report, but if you don't have money put aside and a request comes in, it could put you in a financial bind; especially for start up businesses.

If you get a boatload of refund requests from one product, it likely means you need to up the value and quality of what you are selling.

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Time is of the essence

When a refund request is made, don't ignore it. Act in a timely fashion to respond to the request. You will gain the consumer's trust.

Several years ago my business partner ordered a \$17 report. Normally, she would not bother with asking for a refund, but the product was total garbage.

When she requested a refund, she was directed to some small print in the guarantee that indicated she could not request a refund for 90 days and only on the 90 day mark could the request be made. All this for a \$17 refund.

Talk about a cheesy refund policy. All this did was assure she would not buy from this person ever again and likely tell others what a rip off the product and guarantee were.

It also indicated the product developer didn't have much long-term vision for his business.

The fact is, you will have more success if you see what you do in the long-term. This is about building trust and credibility with your market.

Honor your refund policy

Again, if you say no questions asked, that means no questions asked. However, you can say, "I will gladly refund your money, and I know I said with no questions, but if you wouldn't mind telling me why you are requesting your money back it would help me to improve my products."

I had a situation some time ago from a woman asking for a refund because a word in a nearly 100 page learning guide was misspelled. I thought she was joking, but she wasn't.

Wow! Talk about a poor reason, this one takes the cake. But, it was a 100% money back guarantee and I honored the request.

Quality information

The number one way to make sales stick and minimize refunds is to always give more quality than people pay for. Simple as that.

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It's a matter of giving more than the consumer expects. A great example is my recent Amazon.com course book marketing course. People who joined in on the program were promised four 1 – 1 ½ hour sessions, with a bonus session on Virtual Book Tours with a leading expert. Actually, the expert I contract when I am doing a campaign is who facilitates the course.

The sessions went longer than the time promised, which people appreciated so they could get even more quality information.

After the first week, I added in a bonus eProduct that I created. I also added in another bonus session with my social marketing expert; how to use social marketing to market a book.

The added value of the eProduct and extra session was worth well over \$225. The bonuses were given as a surprise so participants would continually realize what a great investment they made by joining my **How to Become an Amazon.com Bestseller Mentoring Course**.

Follow up after the sale

Regardless of what you are selling, whether it is a \$10 report or a \$1,000 mentoring course, you need to follow up after the sale.

Buyer's Remorse

Like it or not, many buyers may have initial feelings of regret, wondering if they made the best decision.

The higher the price point the more you have to address the issue of buyer's remorse. Buyer's remorse can happen the minute they make that financial decision.

The internal dialogue goes something like this, "Did I make the right choice? Am I going to get my money's worth? Will the information I learn work? I wonder what else I could have spent the money on."

What you do after the sale is essential to minimize any regrets a buyer has. The mistake I see some people make they don't respect the decision that the customer made. Nor do they put themselves in the buyer's shoes.

A way to avoid this is to buy other experts products and services. You should be doing this as a regular part of your business model for a couple of

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reasons. One, you can see how it feels to make a financial decision. Two, you should constantly be learning to stay on the leading edge.

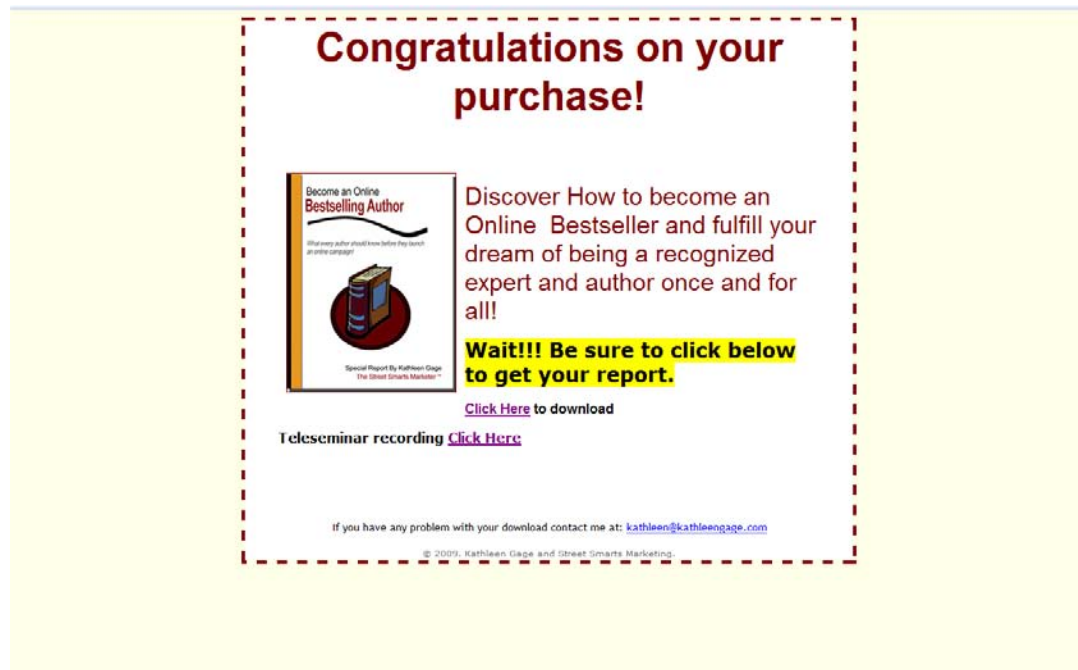
The after the sale process depends on the customer investment. If you are selling a \$20 ebook there's a whole different process than if you are selling a multi thousand dollar program.

With lower priced products, an immediate thank you email response via your autoresponder is sufficient. A day after the purchase send another thank you message with the download link. You do this in case the first message got caught in their spam folder.

Plan to have a series of messages delivered to buyers that are pertinent to the topic of the product or service they purchased.

Often we have a download page that comes up as soon as the purchase is made. This prevents problems with spam filters.

Here is a screen shot of one of our redemption pages. Notice what is highlighted and how obvious we have made the download information. It's amazing how many people may not realize that they have landed on a download page and click out of it if it isn't really obvious. Make their process as simple as possible.



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Personal Touch Works Wonders

With higher priced programs, say over \$500, a phone call by you or your virtual assistant within a few days of the sale works wonders. You can simply say you are calling to welcome them into your program and to make sure they received the initial information.

The majority of people I have made “after sales calls” to have been pleasantly surprised.

If they have bought a physical product that will be shipped, do so in a timely fashion. Depending on fulfillment would determine whether or not you can add in a personal note.

A few months ago, I purchased a home study course on a topic I was very excited to learn more about.

I can remember the excitement I felt each day as I would go to the post office to see if the package arrived. It arrived about 5 days after I purchased it. The packaging was fabulous, the welcome letter a very nice touch and the quality of information beyond compare.

I was very pleased with my decision for the very reasons I mentioned above as to why you need to purchase products. One, you need to know what your customers experience when they buy from you. Two, you need to stay on the leading edge with your skills and studies.

Welcome Package

With one program I offer with an investment of nearly \$1,000 a month for a minimum of six months, I send a welcome package. The package includes a cover letter, a leather binder, books I have written and other fun surprises.

The response I have received when my Platinum Clients receive the package is fabulous. They say it’s like having a birthday surprise.

If you don’t have any of your own books, you can pick up copies of books that tie into your course material to add in. Remember, the buyer made a big decision and you need to minimize their fears.

In an ongoing, extremely high priced program, an occasional handwritten card, a CD or DVD that is an added bonus that they are not expecting, a book that ties into the course.

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There's something that happens to your energy when you send a gift to a client. At least that has been my experience, as well as the experience of my clients who have implemented this strategy.

During one mastermind call in which my Platinum Members were discussing buyer's remorse, one client commented, "There were a couple of things that came to mind about dealing with the buyer's remorse. It came from the way that you've handled this course so far. The first one is the idea of under promise and over deliver."

He continued on with this, "Early on when you encouraged us to do the teleseminar series and you liked the content of it and volunteered to host it- host the first one and then actually had a couple of special sessions with us where we worked on it. That really showed us that you were committed to our success. I was really blown away by that."

They Need To Feel They Made A Great Decision

People need to feel and think something like the following, "This is far superior to what I thought I was going to get."

Of course, it has to be consistent with the price point. If you are selling a \$100 product you don't want to give \$10,000 of your time, knowledge or products for their investment. However, if you are selling a \$5000 product you want to make sure that you are going far beyond that.

The end result is you want people to feel, know and think they made the right choice. After all, buying is about choice.

Regardless of what you are selling, people need to feel like they've made an intelligent decision.

Mindset

Above and beyond anything, you absolutely have to have the right mindset. What this simply means is you cannot live in fear of refunds. The more you believe in what you are doing and the benefit your products and services bring to the end user, the fewer refunds you will need to give.

Believe in what you do and you create a level of trust like none other. Think long-term, quality, and high value and you will be a leader in your field. Guaranteed!

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Kathleen Gage aka The Street Smarts Marketer, CEO and founder of Turning Point, Inc. and Maxwell Publishing is a bestselling author and an internationally recognized Internet marketing and publicity advisor. Known as the "Street Smarts Marketer, Kathleen works with spiritually aware speakers, authors, coaches and consultants who are ready to turn their knowledge and expertise into money making products and services.

With more than 25 years of experience in sales, marketing, management, public relations and promotions, Kathleen has worked with organizations such as the U.S. Marine Corps, Novus Corporation and AT&T. She has acted in leadership and advisory capacities for many organizations, non profits and associations.

With an appreciative awareness that she is blessed with a life of abundance, prosperity and significance, Kathleen has dedicated herself to assisting others in unleashing possibilities to create a life rich in spirit, passion, prosperity, self-assurance, and success.

Services offered:

- Publishing and marketing of anthology books
- One-on-one mentoring
- Group coaching
- eBased products

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<http://www.facebook.com/streetsmartsmarketer> (Facebook Fan Page)

5 Critical Tactics for Business Blog Success

Denise Wakeman, Founder of The Blog Squad

LIZ: Hello, Inner Circle members and guests. This is Liz Lynch of Networkingexcellence.com, and I'd like to welcome you to the expert call we do every month as part of the Smart Networking Inner Circle. I'm very happy to have you all on the line. Normally, this call is only for members of my Smart Networking Inner Circle coaching group, but from time to time, we do hold an open house to give folks a sense for what goes on in the group – it's not so mysterious. And one of the things we do is every month, we host great experts – fabulous folks – from my network that I handpick based on their highly popular and relevant expertise in areas that can help you accelerate your business growth.

So let me get to tonight's guest. On the line with me, I have business blogging guru Denise Wakeman. Denise is an online marketing advisor and founder of The Blog Squad with two decades of business and online marketing experience. She started when she was ten. (LOL!) She helps authors, speakers, service professionals, and small business owners optimize and leverage great blogs as well as strategically use social media to boost online visibility and get more traffic, leads, clients, and opportunities.

Denise has been using the Internet as a marketing tool since 1996. She writes for three blogs and has co-authored many blogging programs and frequently speaks at conferences and workshops about business blogging and how to boost online visibility as well as gain expert status through social marketing. You can learn more about Denise at www.DeniseWakeman.com. So Denise, welcome and thanks for joining us in the inner circle.

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DENISE: Thank you so much, Liz. I'm really excited to be here with you today. We've been connecting on and off for quite some time, so I'm glad we finally made the connection.

LIZ: Exactly. I think we've connected on Facebook and Twitter. We've communicated on Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and emails, but this is the first time on the phone, so it's kind of fun.

DENISE: Exactly.

LIZ: Well, it's a pleasure to have you, and I have tons of questions for you, and hopefully we'll have a little bit of time at the end to answer some questions from the audience. Everyone has questions for you. So tonight, we're going to talk about what you call the five critical tactics for business blog success, but before we get to that, would you answer just a basic question for us and tell us why should we be blogging in the first place? We all have websites and stuff, so why should we be blogging as well?

DENISE: Well, that's a great place to start, and I really want to emphasize a point that I've been focusing on for quite some time now. And you probably know because you read my blog at buildabetterblog.com, and we've connected on Facebook and Twitter – and maybe others have, too. So what my primary message around a business blog is that it should be – and I use a word that a lot of people don't like – but **should** be your hub or your home base for your online activity. And though the reasons for that could take up the entire hour, I just want to make a couple of points.

Using a blog as your hub not only provides a presence on the Web where you can go deep and intimate with your prospects and customers; it's also a money-saving tool. A blog is far, far less expensive to build, design, and maintain than a traditional static website that's more brochure-like that can cost thousands of dollars and tie you to a webmaster who holds you hostage. I've heard so many horror stories. Not all webmasters are bad, so if there are any out there, I apologize. But I have heard horror stories of webmasters charging for

every update, making you wait, et cetera, and a blog gets you beyond that.

As I said, a blog really is about being your home base. It's where you create your point of distinction in the marketplace. It's where you have the opportunity to demonstrate your expertise, expose your personality, and that gives your audience the chance to get to know, then like, and finally trust you as you share valuable, useful content that ultimately will make their life better, whether it's business life or personal life. So really, a blog is a forum that fosters interaction through commenting – because they are interactive – and can help guide the public conversation towards becoming a private conversation.

And what I mean by that is the public would be on the blog commenting about what you're writing, and it can lead to private emails between you and a reader and that ultimately can lead to engagement – you know, a client-vendor relationship. And finally, really, my third point flows from the second. When your readers like and trust you, **they start to take action**. They subscribe to get updates for your blog because they don't want to miss anything that you're writing. They trade their email address for a free report or to get your electronic newsletter.

And then when you have something to offer – a product or a service – they're now much more inclined to buy from you, to make that leap of taking their credit card out of their wallet. My business really exploded when I started blogging because I was attracting more traffic effortlessly, really. More readers were getting involved with me. They liked what I had to say. They trust me enough to actually hire me or pay me money to take a teleseminar, buy an e-book or whatever. So this is really the power of blogging. And as you said at the outset, anyone can set up a blog, but not anyone could set up a well-optimized business blog.

There are a lot of best practices that can make a blog really sing and really work for you. And when it does, it helps create

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what I call **massive visibility**. It can help reverse the client chase, which means you're reaching a new audience who's coming to you versus you going out and trying to find them. It helps engage your customers, it helps you get feedback through the commenting feature, it helps you hone your writing and your voice – your personal unique voice – because blogs are search engine magnets. They end up marketing for you 24/7, and a lot of people have used this acronym for blog, B-L-O-G: **Better Listings On Google**.

LIZ: I like that.

DENISE: I always forget about that, and I saw that written again somewhere. But essentially, a blog can help attract clients to call you that are already prequalified and, in some cases, pre-sold. So that's why I think blogging is essential for a business. It can really boost your marketing results, and it can pay off big time when it's done right.

LIZ: That's what you taught me. There are so many benefits, and you listed a bunch that I hadn't even thought of. And so I want to get into the tactics of how to actually get our blog optimized and things, but before I go into that, I want to set the stage for people let them know what's possible with their blog in terms of the success that they can enjoy. Can you share a success story or two from your own experience or that of your clients of how having a blog has really made a difference in attracting the right kind of clients and getting business without having to chase people?

DENISE: Sure, sure. One client in particular is a chiropractor in San Francisco, and his blog...actually, I was going to mention it a little bit later, but I'm glad you brought it up. His blog's at sfbackpaindoctor.com, and I worked with him for a couple of sessions to tweak his blog. He already had it set up, so he wanted a makeover and a critique to figure out what would make it better. And after that, what he found is that most of his clients are getting better results because they're better educated – or patients, I should say, not clients. In his case, they're patients. But the patients who read his blog and then

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are attracted to contact him, and he told me that probably 80 percent of his new patients are now coming as a result of his blog.

But they're getting better results because they're better educated because he uses his blog as an education tool, and that's his primary purpose is to educate new patients. So that, to me, is a pretty profound result is that not only is he getting more patients because of his blog, but they're getting better results because of the content that he shares with them.

LIZ: Wow, that's fantastic. I had never thought about that because we actually had a question come in on the webcast from Wendy in Sydney, Australia who said that she runs a counseling business and wants to know how she could use her blog because she doesn't have a product to sell, like most of us do. And that's a fantastic story of how you can really use your blog to educate...

DENISE: Right.

LIZ: ...your prospects and your patients before they become one. Fantastic.

DENISE: Exactly, exactly. If you'd like another example...

LIZ: Yeah, please.

DENISE: ...another client I work with, helped set up a blog for him, spent a few hours training him how to use it, how to optimize it – that sort of thing. It's been a couple of years. He checks in about once a year to give a report on how he's doing with his blog, and each report gets better and better. I don't have the quote in front of me, but the last time he said that the blog has generated...it's called Thailand Golf Zone, it's a golf blog. He runs a golf tourism company in Thailand and also in other countries in Southeast Asia. He's an American expat doing that. And he says he can directly attribute over \$800,000 in new revenue to his blog...

LIZ: Whoa.

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DENISE: because most of his new customers are coming after reading about golfing in Thailand. His blog is very basic; it's not fancy; it's almost too busy, I would say, if I were to give him my critique right now because once somebody goes off on their own, they do whatever they want to their blog.

LIZ: Right.

DENISE: It doesn't always look the same as when we passed it off to them, and that's fine. The point is that he writes about his passion, which happens to be his business and he posts a lot of pictures, he's always giving reports and updates about new golf courses in Thailand. He talks about golfing in Thailand when he's personally golfing, and that's what's attracting new business to his company.

LIZ: Wow. \$800,000 dollars. I could get into that. That's fantastic.

DENISE: Well, I mean, luxury travel is a little bit harder to get...

LIZ: Yeah.

DENISE: I mean, adjust that for your own ticket price.

LIZ: Right, right. Exactly. Well, it seems like a blog can work for just about any business. Have you seen it where it hasn't been so effective? Are there types of businesses where it might not be so great?

DENISE: The only reason that I see a blog not being effective is that people aren't blogging optimally.

LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: I haven't seen it not work except for that reason.

LIZ: Okay. Good. So no one has an excuse if they put your strategy in place.

DENISE: Yeah, well, that's what you'd expect. You might expect that from me.

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LIZ: Right, exactly. Well, you know, I set you up for that. All right. So why don't we jump into the tactics then? And actually, before we do, [Ben] in Brisbane – whoa, we have a lot of Aussies here tonight, which is fantastic. Hello, everybody, or good day, I should say. Yeah, wanted to know why would blogs get better listings than your website, and you had mentioned that earlier.

DENISE: Okay. Well, that's because if you're blogging optimally, you're writing keyword-rich content on a frequent basis, so you're publishing content onto the Web. Every blog post creates a new Web page. A blog is basically a website – it's a content management tool. And every time you publish content, you're creating a new page, and if you're writing about your product, service, business niche, you are creating content that is keyword-rich around what you do.

And the more frequently you post content on the Web, the more frequently the search engines index that content, which means when people are doing searches on Google, MSN – wherever they do searches – that content is more likely to come higher in the search results because it's fresh as opposed to a website that hasn't been updated in six months. That is not fresh content, and so it falls in the rankings.

LIZ: Oh, okay. Okay. Good. So that's a really simple way to get...to make sure you get highly-ranked is just to blog.

DENISE: Right. And of course, there are lots of tricks for using keywords, but that's a whole SEO conversation and I don't know if we're going to have time to talk about that.

LIZ: Okay. Well, why don't we jump in then to the five tactics that you talk about? So let's give people the roadmap to success. What's the first tactic they should be focused on?

DENISE: Well, the first tactic is the most obvious, and that's content. Really at the core of blogging, it's all about the content and it's as easy as writing an email. Now, some people will probably say, "Yeah, right," but your content is where you have the opportunity to really penetrate your niche market and

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dominate, to become the de facto authority. So you want to look at your content, whether you started a blog already or you're about to start a blog because I know everybody on the call, if they don't have one yet, they're going to go home and start one after this.

You want to look at your content and ask yourself: "Do I have the right kind of content that showcases my expertise and connects with readers and visitors?" And these are the questions you want to ask yourself: "Does my content build relationships? Does it get readers to subscribe so that they're going to come back over and over again?" Because that's really key right there is that you don't...there's so much content on the Web that is demanding our attention that you want to make sure people like what you read enough so that they want to get updates from you, otherwise they're not going to remember to come back.

Does your Web presence, your blog presence, your blog site – does it create trust with prospects? Is it easy to navigate? Does it look good? There are aesthetics involved in here so that people are confident that they want to work with you. You know, they like your content, but does it look professional? Does it represent you? And also, you want to look at it from the perspective as: Do you make it easy for readers to hire or buy something from you? So you also have to look at your content in terms of is it building confidence, but does it also have a call to action? Does it convince people that they want to actually engage you?

So some of the things you want to keep in mind around your content is what I call the four E's, and they are **educate, entertain, engage, and enrich**. Does your content do those four things? Now every blog post might not necessarily do all four of those in one post, but you want to keep those in mind when you are writing your content. So in terms of education, I talked about Dr. Davis, the chiropractor. He's an educator. He uses his blog to teach prospective clients and his current...or patients. I always want to call everybody a client. He teaches

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new patients and current patients what he does and how the body works and why they might need help or how he can solve their problem.

So when you're thinking about educating, you want to think about writing a post that teaches or it's a how-to or you're explaining something or it's a case study or doing some kind of Q&A because I'm willing to bet that every professional business person, entrepreneur, you get questions from your prospects and clients, and those make great blog fodder. You don't have to divulge names or details, but you can bet that if one person is asking you a question, somebody else has that question, too. And that's one of the reasons I say blogging is as easy as writing an email because how many emails have you written to clients or prospects answering a question?

LIZ: Yeah, that's true.

DENISE: So again, that's Dr. Davis, and he's at sfbackpaindoctor.com if you want to look at his style. The second E is entertain, and that's a little bit...can be trickier if you're not a natural entertainer. I'm not personally. I don't consider myself very entertaining per se, but there are ways to be entertaining. And some of those are by using a different media like video because video inherently is more entertaining than text so you can use video to tell a story – stories are often entertaining. One client I work with, John Trosko at organizingla.com, he's a professional organizer and he is...oh, I won't use the word obsessed, but he pays attention to what's going on in the celebrity realm a lot. And he will often post stories about celebrities as they relate to organizational issues.

So he's piggybacking on topical content that is entertaining in and of itself, yet tying it back to what he does for a living. He's very good at that. He's very clever. So you want to check out his style. It's at organizingla.com.

LIZ: Great.

DENISE: The third E is engage. That's how do you get people to actually connect with you and participate with you? So ways to do that

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are with polls that you can post on your blog asking for comments. A lot of people complain, "Nobody ever comments on my blog." And I say, "Do you ask them to? Do you tell them how to?" People need to be told what to do. We're all moving so fast, we've got so much going on in our heads and in front of us.

LIZ: Yeah.

DENISE: Twitter and Facebook and all this stuff. You might need to say at the end of your blog post: "Please let me know what you think about this. Click on the comment link below." You might actually just have to tell them what to do in order to get more comments, so engage people. And some of the polling sites – free polls – vizu.com and polldaddy.com. Very simple one-question polls, and that's a great way to get people to actually do something on your blog. And just keep in mind that when somebody actually clicks on something – they click a link, they post a comment, they take a poll – they stop being a passive reader, and now they're actively engaged with you, and that can help bring them one step closer to becoming a client or a customer. So that's engagement.

And the next one that can be a little bit tricky is enrich. So how do you make your reader's life better? How do you help them save time or save money or conserve energy or add value in some way? One person who is quite well-known – David Meerman Scott – does this quite well on his blog webinknow.com, and so you might want to go over and take a look at his blog or copyblogger.com. Also, that's a very not only does it educate, but it totally adds a ton of value to your business. So I highly recommend those two. But a couple of ways to enrich your post: Add history, find out the background of whatever it is that you're writing about and tell readers how it used to be, what happened, how it is now.

You can add quotes. Quote other authors and books. This can help add to your credibility as an expert because it alerts your readers that you know what you're talking about, that you study, that you read. It helps build your credibility. Quoting

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respected authorities gives you credibility by association as well. Add your own perspective, experiences, and stories. Illustrate concepts that you're trying to teach in a personal way that brings things to life. And another way is to add a future prediction – How will this concept play out in a year, five years, ten years? So those are all just samples of ways that you can enrich your content so that it adds much more value for your reader.

And finally, around content, I would just like to stress: Find the way of communicating that really supports you the best, too. Not everybody is a writer. I struggle with writing, but I tend to write most of my blog posts. But if you're a performer, maybe video's better – maybe a video blog is going to be easier for you to do. So experiment with different media. You can do audio blogs, video blogs. You can use a site called like, [Utterli](#) to do audio posts blog posts. So there are a lot of ways to mix it up to keep it interesting for both you and your reader.

And just the bottom line is: Keep it conversational, keep it thoughtful, and be authentic and personal.

LIZ: Wow, that's fantastic because I'm always struggling to figure out what to write about. And I write for a third-party blog called Personal Branding Blog, and I purposely took that assignment on to force myself to write a blog post every week because I can repurpose that. Well, one, they get tons more readers than my blog does, but then I can repurpose that post for my own blog. But I'm always sitting there like, on Sunday night trying to figure out what to write. But you gave some terrific variety of things that we can pull from. So that's fantastic. Thank you. So how long should a blog post be?

DENISE: The perennial question.

LIZ: As long as it should, right?

DENISE: There are no rules. A blog post can be a short or as long as you want it to be, really. My recommendation is to mix it up.

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LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: I would try to avoid writing long essays every time you write a blog post. Maybe occasionally do a two or three hundred word blog post, and then maybe once a week, do something that's longer and more in-depth. But a blog post might be a list of ten links of great things that you read that week.

LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: Yeah, so as I said, there are no rules.

LIZ: Okay. Okay, good. So basically, what feels right for you and your audience and your topic.

DENISE: Exactly.

LIZ: And I do kind of like mixing it up because if I do see a blog where every entry is six pages long, then I kind of get overwhelmed.

DENISE: Right. And unless you're writing only once a week that six-page blog post, readers aren't going to stay for that long. But if every three days, every couple of days you've got something short, you've got a list, you've got a how-to, you've got an opinion, you mix it up for people. One day, it's a video. They'll keep coming back.

LIZ: That's fantastic. All right. So gosh, let's move on. So the first tactic is really to focus on the content. What's the next?

DENISE: Well, time management is something that some people...

LIZ: Oh, good. I'm glad you brought that up.

DENISE: I've polled my readers a couple of times in the last year, and most people say that their number one challenge around blogging is that they don't have time to write on their blogs. And I think that this is a false problem because you make time for what's important. And I try to reframe that or I suggest reframing "I don't have time to write a blog post," and change that to "I make time to market my business," because blogging is a marketing tool.

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A blog is a tool, and it's one of the best tools out there for extending your visibility across many, many platforms because, as I said, it's the hub. So it's about making time to create content that you post on your blog that's your home on the Internet that then can reach out into many other areas. So you've got to make time, and I can get kind of crazy about this because I don't really buy into this "I don't have time" thing. If you set aside 30 minutes a day, it's not too much to ask for marketing your business.

LIZ: Yeah, really, that's nothing.

DENISE: It really isn't.

LIZ: Yeah, you're right.

DENISE: You should be spending more time than that marketing your business anyway, ultimately. I mean, I hear people say, "80 percent marketing, 20 percent serving your clients."

LIZ: I've heard that, too, yeah.

DENISE: So 30 minutes a day in the course of a business is really not that much. Now, to that end, okay, how do you make time? Well, I can't give you time, so you've got to schedule it. That's really what I strongly urge my clients to do is **schedule your blogging time**. Create an editorial calendar and put blogging in time slots. My advice is to write on your blog two to three times a week minimum. So block that out – Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 9:00 to 9:30 in the morning is blogging. And that's where you write. Write your blog posts, link out to other blogs. Maybe once a week, spend 45 minutes and you write that longer blog post.

Then two days a week – you're not off the hook yet – you spend those 20 to 30 minutes cruising around reading other blogs in your field and leaving comments. And that helps give you more visibility, more exposure, and also can drive traffic back to your own blog. It sets you up to be somebody who is

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out there who knows what they're talking about, who is active and brings you to the attention of other people that you might not have known before. Now the other thing is so you want to make it as easy as possible for using your time. So this kind of ties in with content, too, is usually when you set up a blog, you set up categories for your blog.

So take a look at your categories and make a list of five to ten topics that relate to each category and then slot them into your editorial calendar so that you're not facing a blank page. And keep a running list of blog topics. I have a running list of ideas, and 90 percent of them never become blog topics, but at least they're there. My mind is always...I'm always connecting things to what I'm doing and reading and seeing to what could be a good blog post. Most of them never get written, but if I'm stuck, I've got my list.

The other thing to be more efficient of your time is to write several blog posts at one time. Maybe you really do only have one hour a week to deal with blogging, so write three blog posts and then queue them up to publish later.

LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: All blogging software that I'm aware of has that ability to post-date your blog posts.

LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: And then if you're really stuck, find guest bloggers to help you out.

LIZ: I just discovered that strategy. It's very, very cool.

DENISE: It's very cool. I wouldn't do it all the time, but maybe once a week, you have a guest author. And there's a great service out there – it's really underutilized – it's called Blogger Link Up, bloggerlinkup.com. You submit your request of what you're looking for, and people who write on that topic can contact you and provide blog content for you.

LIZ: Wow.

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- DENISE: And another great way of creating content fast is doing interviews.
- LIZ: Yes.
- DENISE: So a lot of people do this. You create a list of maybe five interview questions and send it to 20 experts in your field. Not all of them are going to take the time and answer it and do it for you, but some will. Now you have blog posts. And maybe every Friday's an interview post. So those are quick ways to generate content to be more efficient around your time. But really setting it up on a calendar is going to really help you be much more effective with your time.
- LIZ: Yeah, and I think you're right. It is a two to three times a week because if you go to someone's blog and they haven't posted like, in a month or two, you kind of don't want to go back.
- DENISE: Exactly. You won't go back, and it's like going to a store that's got broken windows.
- LIZ: Right, or like when you go to a restaurant and there's one loaf of bread on the shelf kind of thing.
- DENISE: Right, exactly. Exactly.
- LIZ: Okay. Great. So it's really just making time to blog. And you're right, 30 minutes three times a week or an hour and a half just one day shouldn't be that bad for you.
- DENISE: Just do it.
- LIZ: Yeah, just do it.
- DENISE: It's marketing your business; it's not writing on your blog...
- LIZ: Right.
- DENISE: ...and getting content that is marketing your business for you.

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- LIZ: Absolutely. And it's out there. I mean, there are times when someone will come to me because they read a blog post from like, a year ago that they found somewhere on some search engine.
- DENISE: Exactly. A journalist found me from a blog post I wrote four years ago.
- LIZ: Oh, my gosh. Wow.
- DENISE: Some of it was still relevant, and I was able to update her on some of the ideas. And I was quoted in an article that went out to an audience of 400,000 people.
- LIZ: Wow. That's fantastic.
- DENISE: It works for you ongoing.
- LIZ: Exactly.
- DENISE: It doesn't go away.
- LIZ: It's an asset that's constantly working, and...
- DENISE: Exactly.
- LIZ: ...you know, how many things can you say that about? All right. So you gave us a lot of great stuff for content and trying to build out our blog and making time for it. So how do we actually get people to come to our blog and read it?
- DENISE: The other big question.
- LIZ: Yes.
- DENISE: Traffic – how do I get traffic to my blog? Well, the same way you get traffic to any website, really. You've got to promote a blog just like you promote your products, your services, your website, your programs. You've got to constantly be letting people know that you've got a blog. Now, that being said, there are some ways that are very, very effective for driving traffic and with the evolution of social networking over the last couple of years, this has exploded the ability or the amount of traffic that you can generate to your blog.

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So really, to maximize your traffic, which is, of course, important for building your business – I mean, if you don't have anybody reading your blog, it's like you're writing for yourself, and that doesn't really work.

LIZ: Yeah.

DENISE: In a business context. So you want to make sure that you're set up and active on multiple social networking sites, and I'm sure you've talked about these different sites in your other Inner Circle calls. But one thing I want to talk about before I talk about the big three is make sure that you have your Google profile set up. This is not something that's real obvious, but Google now has what they call a Google profile, which means when somebody does a search on your name – so if somebody put in "Denise Wakeman" on Google, they're going to get the top ten results, which are going to all be me. And at the bottom of that first page, it's going to have [a link to my Google profile](#).

LIZ: Oh.

DENISE: And on that profile, you're going to see what I want you to see about me. You're going to see my bio; you're going to see my picture; you're going to see links to every single social networking site that I'm available on; you're going to see links to photos on my Flickr account. So this is Google.

LIZ: How cool. I'm looking at your site right now. How cool.

DENISE: So you want to make sure that you have a flushed-out bio or profile on Google. So I think if you go to google.com/profile, you'll be able to find it. Or if you just go to my profile at...look at Denise Wakeman on Google, and then scroll to the bottom and click on my profile. I think there's a link in the top right. I can't see it right now. I don't want to distract myself, but I think there should be a link that says, "Set up your own profile" or something like that.

LIZ: Yes, there is.

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- DENISE: Okay. Perfect. Make sure that you have your profile on Google because everybody now does searches on Google.
- LIZ: Yes, they do.
- DENISE: So you can link your blogs from there. You can put whatever you want on that profile.
- LIZ: Oh, my gosh.
- DENISE: So you want to make sure your blogs are linked. I say blogs because I have multiple blogs, but your blog, your website, your products, your free reports – everything – you can link on that profile. And everybody does searches on everybody else on Google now. If I meet someone at a networking event and I want to know more about them, I Google them.
- LIZ: Yeah, me, too.
- DENISE: So make sure that's there.
- LIZ: Wow, that's fantastic. I mean, it's kind of like having a Squidoo, which I don't even know what that is. But people talk about having...there's kind of one place for all the things that you want to know. I had no idea that Google did that. That's fantastic.
- DENISE: Exactly. Well, that's something I discovered a few months ago.
- LIZ: Wow.
- DENISE: We're talking about Google here, you know?
- LIZ: Yeah.
- DENISE: It's the most used URL on the Web.
- LIZ: Well, and the other thing I learned from you is to always hook up my blog to Twitter through Twitterfeed, and I feel like I get tons of people who are re-tweeting me and it becomes very viral. So can you talk a little bit about that part of it in terms of social networking?

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DENISE: Yeah, that's actually very, very important to do. So I mentioned get set up and active on multiple social networking sites. Well, the big three are Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. So one of the reasons you want to do this is that at the very minimum, after you set up your profile because don't just set up an account and then don't do anything with it. Put your picture, put your bio, put your links – all that stuff.

But you can feed your blog content into these networking sites so people who are your friends on Facebook may not know you have a blog until they start seeing your blog posts pop up. And if you have compelling headlines in your blog post titles, they're going to click through to read your blog, and that's what you want to do. You want to take them off Facebook because Facebook doesn't belong to you. Facebook belongs to Facebook, so you want to bring them back home to your home base.

So in Facebook, there's the notes application that will pull in your blog feed. On LinkedIn, there is an application called Blog Link. And on Twitter, there are a lot of different plugins, depending on what kind of blog platform you're using that will automatically do this. But there's also a site called twitterfeed.com, and you set up the feed for your blog, and then every time you publish a new post, it will push that blog post into your Twitter feed.

What I've noticed over the last six months or so is that probably 30 to 50 percent of my blog traffic is now coming from Twitter and Facebook.

LIZ: Wow. 30 to 50 percent?

DENISE: Yes.

LIZ: Wow.

DENISE: And that's pretty huge, really. The other thing that's really cool about this is that people who visit my blog from those social networking sites are much more inclined to comment

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because they're used to chatting on these social sites. Excuse me. My throat's a little dry.

LIZ: It's okay.

DENISE: So what I'm finding is that I get a lot more comments now, too, and that's a good thing because now they're interacting with you because remember, I said as soon as somebody clicks on something to do something on your blog, they're that much more connected to you. Now you have an opportunity to engage with them on a much deeper level.

LIZ: Right, right. Absolutely. Right, and they're probably more likely to share the link and re-tweet you. So that's fantastic. So actually...

DENISE: That's right.

LIZ: ...if your blog posts are getting fed into Twitter, then that means you should probably have headlines that fit the 140 character... Actually, it has to be less because you have to leave room for the link and everything, right? So it's that kind of... Is that important?

DENISE: Most of the software that is feeding your blog posts into Twitter will automatically use URL shorteners.

LIZ: Okay. Good, good.

DENISE: So you don't even have to worry about that. It's all built into the system. If your blog post title is really long, yes, it will get cut off, so try to be mindful of that definitely.

LIZ: Right.

DENISE: Use your most powerful keywords at the beginning of the blog post title so it makes sense instead of like, "On the day before yesterday, I went and did this," and you've got the big reveal at the end of the blog post. That might get cut off and people will go, "Yeah. So what?"

LIZ: Yeah. Exactly, exactly.

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DENISE: It's an art, but it can be mastered.

LIZ: Right, and if you go look on Twitter and kind of see what the other posts... Actually, if people [follow you](#), they can take a lot of the things that you're doing and apply it to their businesses, too.

DENISE: Yeah, I'm not 100 percent consistent. I'm lazy, but I admit it.

LIZ: Yeah, well, you're human.

DENISE: But for the most part, I do try to pay attention to that.

LIZ: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. Okay. So social networking is a key strategy for driving more traffic to your blog. So you have to get involved in those sites and build your followers and things like that.

DENISE: Right.

LIZ: Okay. Fantastic. Oh, gosh, I can't believe how quickly the time's going. So we've covered three of the five strategies of the basics: content, time management, and traffic. Why don't we cover the next two? What is the fourth tactic then for success?

DENISE: The fourth tactic is what I call listen, and that is about paying attention to what other people are saying – not only what they're saying about you, but what they're saying about your niche, your industry. What are your readers saying? What do they want? So there are a couple of tools that I recommend using to do this I'm sure most people know about at this point is Google Alerts. You put in your keywords, your name, whatever, and Google scours the Web and sends you an email with links to wherever those words have shown up in blog posts, on news sites, anywhere on the Web.

But the minimum, you need to have Google Alerts set up to find out what people are talking about. I see things all the time that people write about me that I would never have found otherwise. And that's real important because then you can engage with them. Like I, this morning, found somebody had

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written about an initiative that I'm doing, and she had written a whole long blog post about it. She hadn't told me, but because I had a Google Alert, I found it and I was just blown away because she was helping me.

LIZ: Right.

DENISE: She was helping promote something that I'm doing, and I thought, "Whoa. Okay. That's really cool."

LIZ: Yeah.

DENISE: So I can connect with her around that. Another one for listening and finding out what people are talking about – like Google Alerts – is called TweetBeep, that monitors Twitter for keywords.

LIZ: Oh, okay. TweetBeep.

DENISE: TweetBeep. Another one is what used to be called TweetLater and has now got the name SocialOomph.

LIZ: Yeah, exactly. I like TweetLater. I don't know. That's what it would do.

DENISE: Me, too. I thought it said what it was, but anyway, you can monitor keywords and your name and that sort of thing through Twitter using a tool there. Another way to listen I mentioned before is doing polls and surveys, and these tools help you find out constantly and fast what's being said about you on the Web. It helps you find out what your readers want. It helps you find out what's being said by your colleagues, your competitors in your industry.

So it's really important to integrate some of these tools into your daily activities part of your blogging marketing rituals.

LIZ: Yeah, and that's great because it can also help you find content and also find people to network with and engage with. I mean, if they're writing about that you should probably know them.

DENISE: Exactly, exactly. And you bring up a great point because it helps you find content. This is content fodder like crazy –

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“What are other people talking about? I don’t know what to talk about. What are other people talking about? Oh, I can comment on that.”

LIZ: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. All right. So...

DENISE: And then the last one – because I know we’re running out of time, so I’ll try and go through this quickly because know there’s probably some more questions – is that it’s real important to participate.

LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: It’s really important not to be isolated and posting content on your own blog, but to actually participate. This is the way business happens. It comes in many ways, but first and foremost, **you need to be visible to your ideal client.** So not only do you need to have that blog and be consistently and constantly active on your own blog, but you need to participate in the online world because business comes from unexpected places and the more visible you are, the more opportunity you have.

So setting up alerts not only helps you find fodder for your own content and keep tabs on what’s being said about you and save you time, it also alerts you to the content that you may want to comment on, as I mentioned, and it helps you keep tabs on your colleagues and other things happening in your niche. So you want to do what I call outreach through social networking and commenting and reading others and sharing research sources. You want to participate. You want to read and comment on other blogs, which does a couple of things. It keeps you apprise of what other people are writing about, but it also makes you visible to your colleagues.

It opens up opportunities for collaboration. It helps drive traffic to your blog, and it helps add value to the conversation. And that adds value for your readers and potential clients. Now one of the questions I often get, so I bet you somebody out there asked it, is how you find these blogs to comment on and read.

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LIZ: Yes.

DENISE: So there's something like 150 million blogs out there.

LIZ: Yeah.

DENISE: Now many of them are dead and boring and not relevant at all, but one of the best places to find blogs is Technorati.com, the largest blog directory on the planet – on the Web – so you can do keyword searches around your industry to find other people who are writing blogs on your topic. Another one, which is a curated site – meaning that you have to apply to have your blog listed on it, so it's not just automatic – is alltop.com.

LIZ: Oh, yeah.

DENISE: That's run by Guy Kawasaki. People may know him. And people build channels of their favorite blogs in a niche. And then you can find all the best blogs in health, all the best blogs on blogging, all the best blogs on networking. And so it's all compiled in one place. You don't have to be searching all over the place; you can find the top 100 blogs in your industry.

LIZ: Right. So yeah, it's really easy. Whatever field that you're in, either going through Technorati...well, actually, starting at Alltop and looking at the 50 or 100 top blogs there, and then if you want to expand your search, going into Technorati. And I know there are a few things to kind of look for when you're in Technorati to try to find like, the biggest blogs and things like that. So you have to look at traffic stats and authority and stuff like that.

DENISE: Yeah, they have a lot of ways to slice and dice how you're doing your searches, so you just want to play with the search functions there. There are advanced searches and...

LIZ: Right, and to try to find the ones that are big. And really like, if you focus on the ones that get a lot of traffic, then you can kind of get a big bang for your buck in terms of if you go to comments and stuff like that, right?

DENISE: Exactly.

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LIZ: Okay. So then the five strategies, just to cover it for everybody, were **content, time management, traffic, listen, and participate**. That sounds so easy.

DENISE: It is easy.

LIZ: Yeah, it's making time, but they all seem to build on each other, and if you're doing a few of those things, then it all should kind of come together. I also just want to take a moment here and give a plug for blogging as a platform to facilitate networking because I think that we all think about that too often. We're so focused on how we use a blog to promote ourselves, but I found it's a perfect vehicle to promote other people, too, in terms of like, doing a book review or an interview or shooting a video. I've seen this, on your site where you'll be at a conference and you grab someone for two minutes and ask them something. I love those. So it's really a valuable promotion tool for like, other people's messages and other people's businesses. And at the end of the day, that's what networking is really all about. So would you agree? Have you seen that blogs can really help you in terms of facilitating the kind of networking that you do?

DENISE: Absolutely, because, as you said, you can feature other people – people in your network – or you can...maybe there's somebody you want to meet. Write about them. Reviewing a book is a great way to get the attention of somebody that you might not otherwise be able to meet. And also, interviewing – what it does is it gives you social capital.

LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: You're doing something. You're helping somebody else get visibility and helping them get known to a wider audience, and that's going to come back at you at some point and I wouldn't do it with that in mind necessarily, like, "Oh, if I write about her, she's going to write about me."

LIZ: Right.

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DENISE: But obviously, it's got to be congruent and in alignment with your content and your audience, but definitely, I've had more opportunity from the people I've met through blogging initially than anything else I ever did before that.

LIZ: Yes, it's amazing. Like, where would we be without them?

DENISE: Exactly. That's what I think.

LIZ: Exactly. Well, we're going to take some questions before people go, but I also want to make sure: Where do people get more information about how to improve our blogs because there's so many things that we could focus on, and I know people can get overwhelmed. Do you have something for us that can help us?

DENISE: Yeah, I do, and one of my core services is providing [blog reviews](#) because every day, I hear about challenges from clients about their blogs and social marketing – they don't have enough time, they don't have enough traffic, they don't know what to write about, they don't have enough subscribers, and I'm sure a lot of people can relate to that on this call. And sometimes all it really takes is just a couple of tweaks to your blog to really make the difference.

So when I do a blog review, I often find simple, obvious fixes, but sometimes – you know how it is – we're just too close to our own stuff and we don't see it or we don't know what we don't know. It's obvious to me because I've been looking at blogs for five years...

LIZ: Yeah, right.

DENISE: ...but it may not be obvious to somebody's who's just set up a blog two months ago. So with online marketing tactics evolving just at a dizzying pace, you really don't want to be left behind. So what I offer is a 75-minute one-on-one intense focus on your blog with you on the line, and we do it as a webinar. So we're both looking at the blog, and then it's recorded as a video for you – an audio and video for you – so that you have it afterwards. You don't have to remember, you

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don't have to take notes. So you have that so you and your team can implement whatever we discuss.

I generally cover the four areas of your blog: content, outreach, design, action – how to move your clients to interact with you. And then if there's time, we also do a social marketing review on how to integrate your blog with your social networking sites. And so we talk about things like driving more traffic to your blog, how to optimize your blog posts so the readers stay longer, how to get more comments, how to build up your blog descriptions, et cetera – so a lot of the details.

And every blog is different.

LIZ: Yeah.

DENISE: And the purpose of every blog is different, so I don't have a cookie cutter approach to it. I look at your blog and we do it for what you need to get out of your blog. And you had asked me if I would talk a little bit about this, and so I wanted to just let your Inner Circle members and your guests know that this is something that I do charge for. I get people asking me all the time to take a look at their blog.

LIZ: I'm sure, I'm sure.

DENISE: This is a service I offer.

LIZ: Yes.

DENISE: It is time-intensive because I do review before, we have the webinar, and then there's follow up.

LIZ: Oh, thank you. I'm going to take advantage of that. That's fantastic.

DENISE: I know that people need help with their blogs. They really do. So you can go to [this site](#).

LIZ: That's fantastic. Well, I think that's...it seems like if people are going to put the investment into making their blog work for their business, that it makes sense to spend some time with

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you to make sure that it's all set up and that it's kind of ready to go. So I think that's a great deal, and I think everyone should take advantage of that. I might even look you up on that as well.

LIZ: Yeah, because again, like, if you're going to spend like, two to three times a week, 30 to 40 minutes each week, posting to your blog, you just want to make sure that you're doing all the right things so that your efforts aren't going to waste. I really appreciate that.

DENISE: Right, you want it to work. You want it to work for you.

LIZ: Yeah, absolutely.

DENISE: Absolutely. Yeah.

LIZ: Well, I think that's great. So thank you for that fantastic offer.

DENISE: Yeah.

LIZ: Thank you so much for that.

DENISE: You're welcome.

LIZ: Well, we have a couple of minutes then, so why don't we take a couple of questions from the site.

DENISE: Sure.

LIZ: One thing that a number of people wanted to know is – and some of the Inner Circle people wanted to know – if you have any recommendations for blogging platforms. They want to know is WordPress better, and what's the difference between WordPress.com and WordPress.org or is Blogspot okay. Does it really matter or...?

DENISE: Okay. Yes, this is the other big, gigantic question.

LIZ: Yeah. Okay.

DENISE: Okay. It depends.

LIZ: Okay. All right.

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DENISE: I know people hate to hear that. Okay. For many years, I've been known as a TypePad enthusiast. And I do love TypePad. It's a hosted blogging platform. It's what I started on, it's what I have ten different blogs on – they're not all active and some are private – but it's what I started on. It's a great platform and you don't need to be a techie to use it.

LIZ: Yeah.

DENISE: There is a fee for it. But they have built out the platform so incredibly in the last year, it's just a phenomenal platform now and it's very easy and intuitive to use. So I do recommend TypePad.

LIZ: TypePad.com. And it's only \$5 a month or something for one blog.

DENISE: The basic plan is \$4.95 a month, but I would always suggest that people go to the next level up, which is \$9 a month.

LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: You've got three blogs on your account, and you can customize it. You can't customize the basic blog.

LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: Now, that being said, WordPress is a great platform, too, and it is getting less techie because that's one of the reasons why I never went to it is that I needed to know too much tech stuff. And even though I'm fairly conversant and I can build a Web page if I have to, I don't want to have to deal with all that stuff. I don't want to have to hire someone necessarily because I'm a do-it-yourselfer. Not everybody is, but I am.

I like to be able to figure it out myself. WordPress.org is the one that is recommended if you're going to go with WordPress. That is self-hosted, meaning you install the platform on a server, and then you can customize it with – there's gazillions of themes that you can find – one that's going to work for you. This is a much longer conversation, but WordPress.org is the one that you would want to go with. WordPress.com: same

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company, but dot-com is hosted, so it's on their servers – like TypePad blogs are on TypePad servers, WordPress.com is on WordPress servers. It is free, but they do have very strict terms of service. They've been known to shut down blogs that they feel are too commercial.

LIZ: Ooh.

DENISE: Now, if you're blogging for your business, you're commercial.

LIZ: Yeah.

DENISE: I would say unless it's a personal blog – that you're not going to do any ads on or anything like that – you probably don't want to go that route. Blogspot, also known as Blogger: free, not my choice for a business blog. It's not as professional, not as flexible. If you're blogging for your business, go with a professional platform. TypePad is a very professional platform. They have geared it towards small business.

LIZ: Oh, okay.

DENISE: And WordPress.org. And there are many other blogging platforms, too, but those are the two biggies.

LIZ: Oh, okay. And I noticed on Blogspot, too, there's a menu at the top where you can click over to the next blog, and half the time, it's like a porno site or something like that.

DENISE: Exactly.

LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: A very big reason that you don't want to do that because then you're associated in that person's mind. It's a random blog on the other end there, but if they clicked it from your blog, man, that's you.

LIZ: Right, right, right, right. Interesting. Okay. Well, no good. Thanks for that rundown. I know it can be confusing for people as to which one...

DENISE: Yeah, it is.

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- LIZ: ...to use.
- DENISE: And that's a very fast rundown, but...
- LIZ: Yeah, yeah. Well, just go with TypePad. You'll be fine, basically.
- DENISE: Well, either way.
- LIZ: Yeah, either way. I have a couple more questions. Do you have a minute or two to stay?
- DENISE: Yes, I do.
- LIZ: Okay. Awesome. Marta in Dallas: We're talking about the question as to whether you need a blog if you have a website. What if you don't have a website? Do you need a website if you have a blog?
- DENISE: Great question. You can start with a blog. You can create what most people would think is a website on a blogging platform. Blogging software – the platform, the software that blogs are built on now – is so sophisticated that you can build a site on the blogging platform that doesn't even look like a blog or act like a blog. But you have complete control over it and managing it the way you would a blog. So if you do not have a website yet, start with a blog, and you probably will never need a website.
- LIZ: Well, I noticed on yours, is it at DeniseWakeman.com, that's a TypePad blog, but it looks like a website because you have the menu and stuff.
- DENISE: It's all pages.
- LIZ: Oh, cool.
- DENISE: Yeah, it's all just pages. There's no blog post on that specific site.
- LIZ: And then you have...
- DENISE: It's just pages.

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- LIZ: And you have the links at the top that look like menus and everything.
- DENISE: Exactly.
- LIZ: Wow.
- DENISE: Navigation across the top, and that's something that was recently added to TypePad's platform.
- LIZ: Wow, I haven't been on TypePad for a while. I kind of let my blog there go, but I should go back to there and see what I can do with that.
- DENISE: It's gotten much more sophisticated, yeah.
- LIZ: Well, and also the same price still. That's fantastic.
- DENISE: Yeah.
- LIZ: Very, very cool. I have one last question here. We have time for just one more. Nen in Brisbane wanted to know: How do blogs differ from article marketing as a marketing tool? Do you do anything with article marketing in terms of posting your blog posts there or...?
- DENISE: That's a very interesting question. A blog is basically...that's your home on your domain. Even if your – like mine – are hosted by TypePad, but I have my own domain mapped over it, so it's my domain, my content on my site. Articles live on article sites. Those are not your sites. Those are article directory sites that you use to drive the traffic back to your blog. The other difference is that a blog really should be conversational.
- LIZ: Yeah.
- DENISE: You're writing in first person. You're writing "I" and "you" because one person is reading that, and you are having a conversation with that person and you are encouraging dialogue. Articles tend to be a little bit more formal, not necessarily totally formal, but a little bit more formal. There's an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. And then you wrap

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it up, and in your resource box, you're driving people back to the site, which could be your blog or it could be a landing page or a free report or something.

But they're very different animals, and what I often suggest is that you repurpose blog content into articles.

LIZ: Okay.

DENISE: So you take out the conversational bits of a blog post, rewrite it a little bit – just tweak it a bit – and make it an article and post it on the article site and drive back to your blog.

LIZ: Okay. Yeah, so that makes a lot of sense.

DENISE: I don't know if that answers the question, but yes, I do article marketing – not that much because there's only so much writing I can do, but...

LIZ: Right, but your blog's really meant to be a hub to kind of engage people.

DENISE: Yes.

LIZ: Okay. Got it. So it's kind of a different approach.

DENISE: The article sites don't belong to you. You don't want to get stuck and have all your content on sites that are owned by Facebook and Twitter and LinkedIn and ezinearticles.com. They can change their terms of service; they can shut down; they can get hacked.

LIZ: Yeah.

DENISE: Whereas your blog, I mean, your blog can get hacked, too, but ultimately, you want to drive everyone back to your home that you control where you can go deep where you convert them to become customers.

LIZ: Yeah, I think that's really smart. All right. Well, thank you. I kept you five minutes longer than I promised, and I...

DENISE: It's okay.

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LIZ: ...want to get you going. Well, one last question we had from Ardele who's one of our Inner Circle members: She said that she went to TypePad and tried to sign up for a business account and they wanted \$90. So it's not the business class account that you want; it's the Plus, right?

DENISE: No, no, no. You want to sign up for just a regular account and pick the...

LIZ: The plus, I think.

DENISE: Yes, I think it's plus – [the Plus account](#).

LIZ: Yeah, because I think the business class is for a whole enterprise – if you want like, 25 people to blog or whatever.

DENISE: Yeah. That's for corporate.

LIZ: Corporate. Okay. So Ardele you want the Plus level, which gives you [three blogs for \\$8.95 a month](#).

DENISE: Yes.

LIZ: Okay. All right. I wanted to make sure I get her question answered. So all right. So before we close tonight, I want to strongly, again, kind of recommend to everybody that before you start making tons of changes to your blog – I mean, Denise shared tons of great content here – but really, do take advantage of her really generous offer for a [blog review](#). Tap into her expertise in working with thousands of business owners to perfect their blogging strategy and really get her help in helping you hone in on what you specifically need to do for your blog in your market to capitalize on more opportunities that could be coming your way.

I just want to thank you so much, Denise, for being on the call tonight and for all your great advice to help our Inner Circle members and guests get so much more out of their blogging efforts. I really enjoyed having you here tonight. You shared so, so much. Thank you.

DENISE: Well, it's my pleasure. I'm glad we finally got to connect.

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LIZ: Me, too. Well, thank you, everyone, for joining in.
Signing off for the evening, this is Liz Lynch of networkingexcellence.com, your guide to networking success.
Good night, everybody, and thanks.

DENISE: Blog on!

Links to Sites Mentioned in the Interview

Denise's site: www.DeniseWakeman.com

Build a Better Blog: www.BuildaBetterBlog.com

Dr. Eben Davis' blog: www.sfbackpaindoctor.com

Thailand Golf Zone blog: www.ThailandGolfZone.com

Organizing L.A. blog: www.organizingla.com

Web Ink Now blog: www.webinknow.com

Vizu (poll): www.vizu.com

Polldaddy: www.polldaddy.com

Utterli (audio posts and tweets): www.utterli.com

Blogger Link Up (find guest posts): www.bloggerlinkup.com

Denise's Google profile:

<http://www.google.com/profiles/dlwakeman>

Twitterfeed: www.twitterfeed.com

Google Alerts: www.google.com/alerts

Technorati: www.technorati.com

Alltop: www.alltop.com

Denise's Blog Review Service: www.BlogSquadCritique.com

Wordpress (blog platform): www.wordpress.org

TypePad (blog platform): www.TypePad.com



Denise Wakeman is Founder of The Blog Squad and a highly acclaimed **Online Marketing Advisor**.

Denise was an early online marketer and has been using the Internet with great success as a marketing tool since 1996. She is an expert at helping authors, speakers, service professionals, and small business owners leverage blogs for their business, as well as strategically use social media tools to boost online visibility to get more traffic, leads, clients and opportunities.

Denise writes regularly on 3 marketing blogs, is a contributing author on SocialMediaExaminer.com, has co-authored several blogging programs and frequently speaks at conferences and workshops about business blogging and how to gain expert status through social marketing. She has been quoted in the Wall Street Journal, The Huffington Post, Newsday, Canada's National Post, FastCompany Online, as well as many other online and offline publications.

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