

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL UPDATE

Writing Blogs for Your Business - How and Why



Rachel Bray BA PGDip

Copywriter

www.rachelbraywriting.com

rachel@rachelbraywriting.com



Your practice website, whether you are a single practitioner, several professionals working out of the same premises, or a company operating in multiple locations, offers opportunities for you to attract and retain patients. It can be used as a valuable marketing resource. If you do not already have a website, please refer to our continuing professional update issue 11 ^[1] for how and why having a website can benefit your business.

Your website can and should include a blog page, where you can answer your patients' questions, give advice and information, and show how you and your practice care about and can help your clientele. A blog, done properly, should bring more traffic to your website and can reduce the amount of paid marketing you need to do. There are many reasons to have a blog page on your website, and various ways in which blogs can help your business. Research ^[2] found that "the average company that blogs has: 55% more visitors, 97% more inbound links (links from other websites to your site), and 434% more indexed pages (pages visited by a search engine and subsequently used by the search engine to direct traffic)".

What is a blog?

A blog is a dedicated website or page on a website that is regularly updated, rather than being a 'fixed' page like most business web pages tend to be. You don't often need to change your "home", "about" or "contact" pages. Changes are more often made when something in the business alters, or to keep your website fresh. A blog, on the other hand, contains articles, or 'posts', that are added on a regular basis. Like your social media feeds, the most recent will be at the top. Unlike your social media feeds, however, your posts are always available and you control what gets seen.

One of the elements search engines look at in relation to websites is how recently they have been updated. If a website is regularly updated it indicates it is still active and likely to contain up-to-date, relevant information. Posting blogs is a great way to ensure your website is regularly updated for the search engines, as well as keeping it front of mind for you too.

How does a blog benefit a business?

There are numerous compelling reasons for starting a blog for your business. They can help improve your business reputation by allowing you to show a trustworthy and expert side, as well as saving you time and money. They can also make you more visible online, helping you grow your brand and your business. Your brand ^[3] is how you come across professionally and should encompass the basic values your business stands for. It needs to be consistent and professional. Relevant, well-researched, informative, and engaging blogs help build this profile.

How a business can benefit from blogging:

1. Blogs build expertise, authority, and your reputation

A blog provides a platform from which you can showcase your knowledge and expertise in your profession. If you share valuable insights, tips, and advice with your readers, you can establish yourself as an expert. This helps your practice build trust and credibility with both your current patients and people who are considering using your services.

Key Point: A blog allows you to prove the expertise you have and gives potential patients more reasons to trust you.

2. Blogs can inform and educate

You can use your blogs to explain your products or services in more detail and address common customer questions. You might want to solve problems your patients have or talk about healthcare trends and best practices, for example. You can help your patients understand how they can make better informed decisions. Patients who feel they have been educated about their options and understand them are more likely to feel confident about their decisions.

Key Point: Educating your patients can help them feel more empowered and in charge of their own health outcomes.

3. Blogs can help save your practice time and resources

You and your staff might spend a lot of time and effort responding to the same questions or explaining common

procedures or practices. If you post blogs addressing these issues it is easy to direct your patients to all the information they need in an easily accessible format.

You can also pre-qualify your patients in certain circumstances. For example, you might discuss the various paths for treatment of certain conditions, giving potential patients a greater understanding of where they might be within a range of symptoms. They might find all the information they need at that stage rather than calling or emailing the practice to discuss their concerns. If it comes to it, they will also know who to come back to.

Key Point: Blog posts can address many issues that patients are keen to discover more about online, without a member of staff needing to deal with them.

4. Blogs can increase engagement and build community

You can enable commenting on your blog posts and share them on your social media. This allows for a two-way conversation. By leaving comments and engaging in discussions, readers can feel more of a sense of belonging to a community that cares. Patients who feel engaged with your practice are more likely to become loyal customers and brand advocates.

Key Point: Creating a sense of community can help build your brand.

5. Blogs can be repurposed

Blog posts can be repurposed for other marketing channels and objectives. You may send out newsletters or post on social media sites; you can write about your latest blog post, share snippets of it, and link back to older blogs when they become relevant. Not only does this give you ready-made content for your social media pages, but it will also help to extend your reach and drive traffic back to your website. Sharing valuable content on social platforms can also help with brand awareness.

Key Point: Blogs are useful sources of content for social media posts and other marketing materials like newsletters.

6. Blogs help drive organic traffic to your website

If you are posting high quality blogs with all the right ingredients on a regular basis, they will help attract more visitors to your website. Valuable, relevant, and well-written content is more likely to show up in search engine results. This will bring more organic traffic (traffic that you have not paid to attract). The more people you have visiting your website who are already interested in the services you offer, the more potential patients you will have.

Key Point: Blogs can be an excellent way to get more visitors to your website and increase your patient base without incurring additional advertising costs.

7. Blogs improve your search engine optimisation (SEO)

Online search engines like Google are looking for websites that are updated regularly and feature high-quality content that are likely to fulfil a searcher's needs. Blogs enable you to continually update your site. Using relevant key words and phrases will help the search engines understand exactly what it is you offer and how you can help. If you are posting well-written, informative content you may find other websites will link to your posts too. These so-called backlinks from other websites will further improve your website's SEO and domain authority, and how likely the search engines are to return it in a search.

Key Point: Blogs are a useful tool to help the search engines find and return your website in searches ahead of your competitors.

8. Blogs generate quality leads

When people come to your website to read your blogs it means they are already looking for something you

have. They are therefore more likely to eventually use your services than if, for example, you cold called people or distributed flyers. You can also use your blog to capture these so-called leads by offering them the opportunity to download or sign up for other resources like e-books, webinars, or newsletters. This can help you build your email list for future marketing efforts.

Key Point: People visiting your website to read your blog are more likely to become future patients because they are already interested in what you have to offer.

9. Blogs drive long-term results

Blogs can continue to attract visitors to your website and generate leads for years. The longer they are on your website and the more visitors they attract, the more value they have. In contrast, other marketing efforts like handing out flyers or advertising in local magazines are likely to have a short-term impact on your business growth.

Key Point: Posting blogs is part of a long-term strategy for business growth

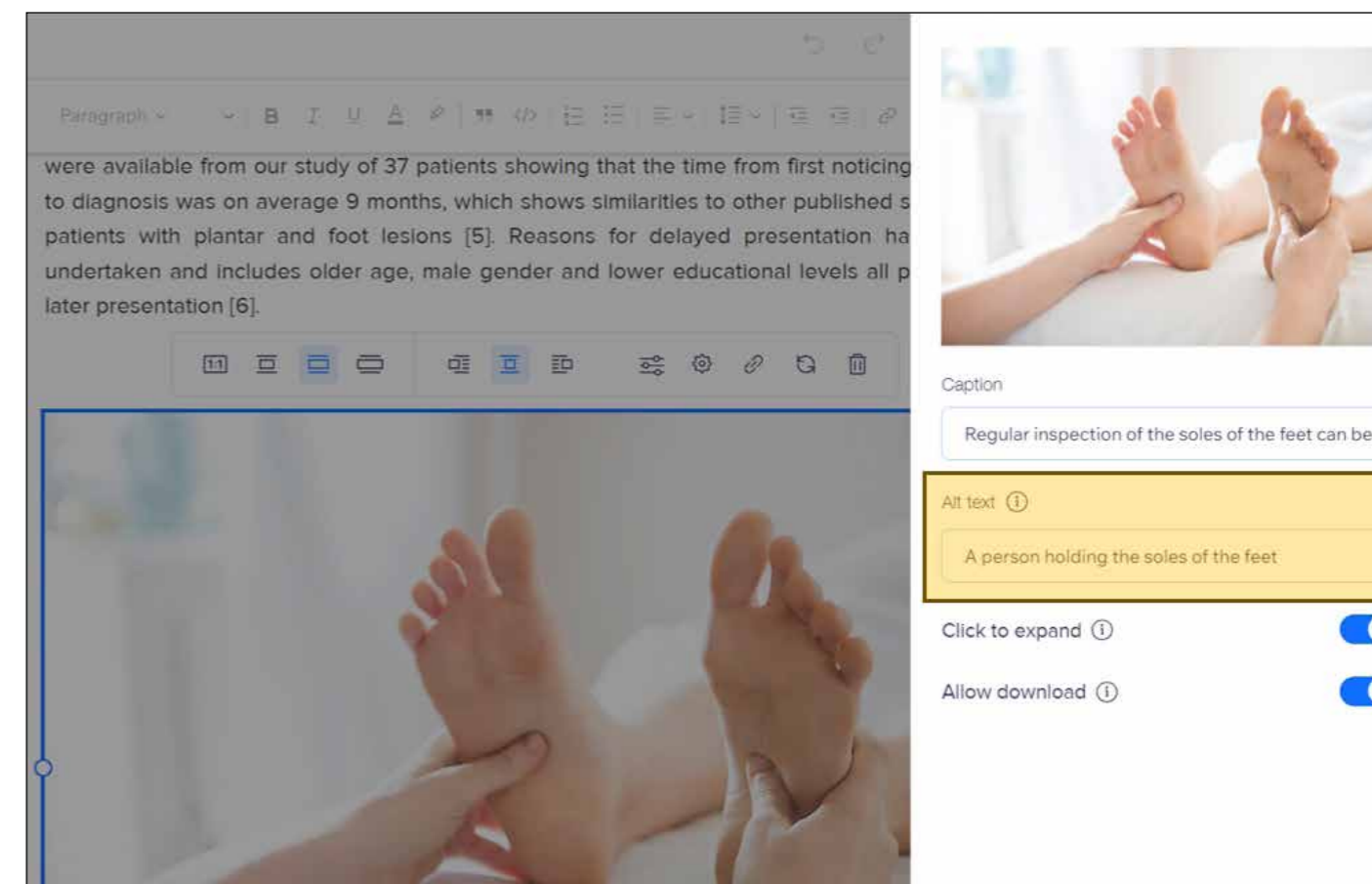


Figure 1: Alttext tells search engines what is actually in the picture

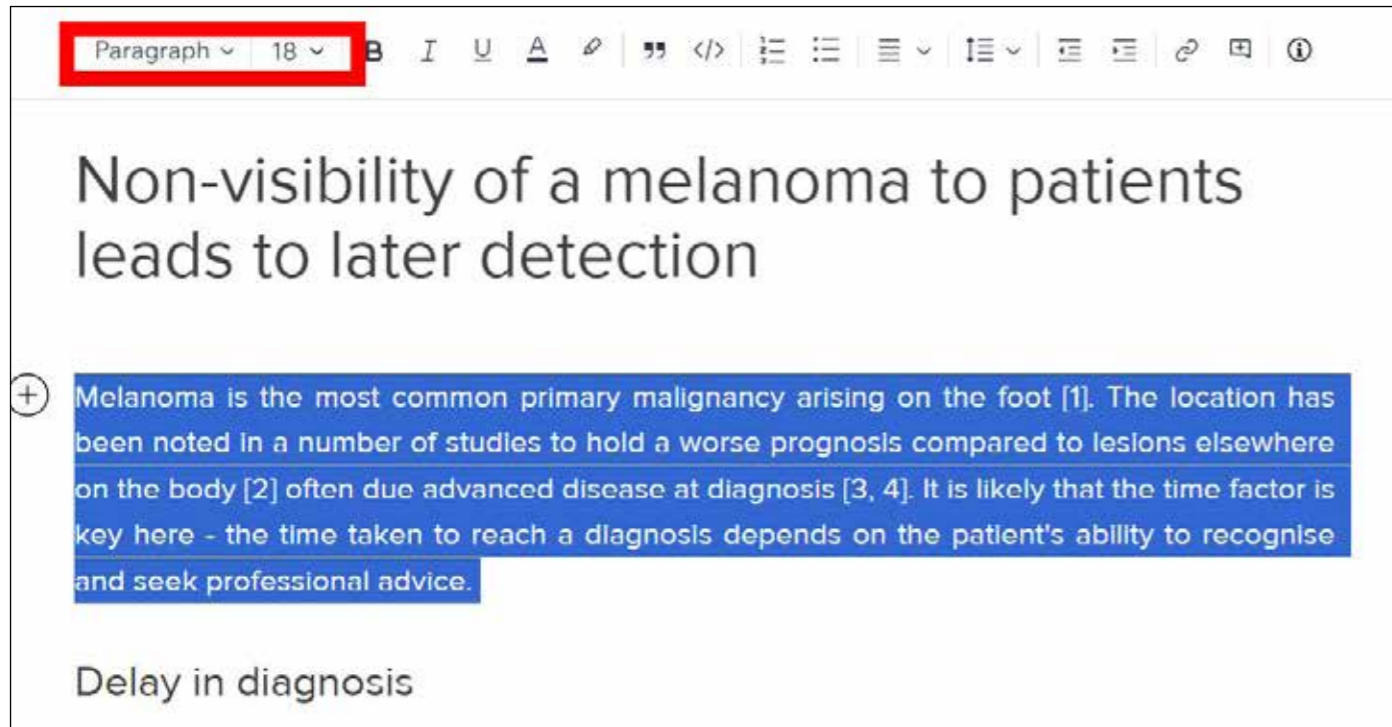


Figure 2: Ensure your headings & sub headings are formatted to ensure google can easily recognise and index them

10. Blogs can be a more cost-effective way to market your practice

Compared with traditional advertising, blogging can be a cost-effective marketing strategy. There is an initial investment in writing a blog, either of your time or the cost of outsourcing to a copywriter. However, blogs should continue to attract and engage patients long after they have been published. Blogs are likely to work out as less expensive than many other marketing initiatives. You will also be able to track metrics, like page views and click-through rates. These analytical tools will help you gain insights into your audience and in turn can help you refine your marketing strategy.

Key Point: *There are cost advantages to blogging over other marketing strategies.*

11. Blogs can give you a competitive advantage

Not all businesses have a website. Only 71% of businesses in the UK currently have a website^[4] and posting blogs can give you more of an advantage. If your competitors post blogs, you are at least competing on a level playing field. If they don't, you are one step ahead.

Key Point: *Blogging for your practice, if it is done properly, should only have upside.*

What do you need to consider before you start blogging?

Blogging, unlike an advertisement, for example, is

unlikely to give overnight results. Page authority is built up over time. Consistency and frequency are both key drivers of how successful your blogging will be, so it is important to start as you mean to go on. Many people begin enthusiastically and with good intentions, planning to blog regularly. You will notice that many company websites have not featured a new blog for a long time or only do so very sporadically. A lot of people will give up just weeks or months into the process.

To avoid this, begin by considering what a realistic commitment looks like for you. It is far better to begin with monthly blogs and then increase them to fortnightly, for example, than vice versa and there is nothing wrong sticking with monthly. Quality is more important than quantity and so is consistency. It is better to consistently post once a month than to produce a weekly flurry of blogs every now and then, interspersed with periods of nothing.

Blogs are not just words on the page for the sake of it. They need to be well researched, written^[5] and contain all the necessary elements. While AI-writing tools can be useful, it is not a good idea to use them to write your blogs in their entirety^[6]. If you do not have the time, inclination, or ability to produce high-quality blogs yourself, outsource them to a copywriter with experience in blog writing and SEO. Commissioning a copywriter to write your blogs will ensure you have a steady supply of professionally written blogs that are fit for purpose and the return you will get over time

should cover the cost and more.

Finding suitable topics can be time-consuming and stressful. Creating a content calendar^[7] helps you focus on what you will write about in advance, instead of trying to come up with an idea at the last minute each time. It can also be helpful to pick a date and commit to posting on the same day of each month, or every other Monday, for example. A realistic hard deadline is easier to commit to and execute than a vague assertion that you will start blogging regularly.

How do you start blogging?

If you have a website, you may already have a blog page on it. If not, you should be able to add it yourself or ask your web designer to do it for you. Most websites are set up to make blogging easy.

How to write a blog post

Blog writing can be broken down into three parts. Firstly, there are the things you need to know and do before you start. Then there is the writing process itself, followed by publishing and marketing your blog.

Before you start

Consider who you are targeting with your blogs so you can write to appeal to those people

If you are not sure who your target audience is, it is a good idea to sit down and really think about who you want to appeal to. Maybe you have a specialism or preference for the types of cases you deal with or patients you see. For example, perhaps your ideal patient is diabetic, or an athlete. Maybe they tend to be a certain demographic. You may have more than one ideal patient in mind and if you can create customer personas for these different target patients you can gain more clarity on both what you should be writing about, and how to write to appeal to them.

Choosing topics to write about

Blogs can be used to inform, educate, and entertain. You may find there are frequently asked questions you can blog about, saving you the time and effort of having to explain the same things repeatedly. Think about what matters to your patients and what they would like to know more about.

- Why are people seeking out your services and what questions do they need answered?
- Do they want practical tips and advice on common problems?
- Can you put new patients at ease and give them peace of mind by explaining how a visit to your

practice will work and what they can expect?

- Are there things happening in your sector or practice that are interesting?
- Is there new technology or research that is making a difference in your field?
- What are your competitors blogging about?

If you understand your target audience, you should be able to write blog posts that will interest them. Thinking up content ideas can sometimes feel overwhelming but there are places to look to find inspiration. You can ask an AI-writing tool for help with suggestions; this often serves as a good way to quickly come up with multiple ideas. Some will resonate or spark new thought processes that will work for you.

Search engine optimisation and using keywords and phrases

Keyword research^[8] is an important part of planning your blog and can also help you find more ideas for things to blog about. This is one aspect of search engine optimisation, or SEO. As the name suggests, it optimises your webpages for the search engines to find them and return them in searches. Search engines send out "bots" to crawl the internet and index all the pages they find. They use the key words and phrases on webpages to organise this information and match the terms that people are searching online. The algorithms used are incredibly complex and include a myriad of factors for returning results. However, having the right keywords in your blog posts will go a long way to ensuring the search engines can find you.

For example, if someone has a problem with their feet and a friend has told them they should see a podiatrist, they might not be sure what that entails. They might type 'what does a podiatrist do?' into a search engine. The search engine will then look at its indexed pages to see where they can find the best answers to that question. If your blog post is called 'What does a podiatrist do?' or mentions this phrase in the body of the text, it indicates your webpage might have the answers the searcher needs. This, along with all the other things the search engines look at, will enable them to form a picture of how trustworthy, authoritative, and relevant this page on your website is.

Researching your blog posts

How much research you will need to do for your blog post will depend on various factors. You may already be an expert on the subject, or it might be something

you need to read up on. It will also depend on your target audience and their knowledge of the subject as well as how long your blog will be. If you are planning to write 500 words you would expect to do less research on a topic than if you were writing 2,000 words about it.

Even if you are an expert, it is a good idea to find reputable, authoritative sources of information, data, or statistics to back up your points. It also helps with your SEO to have good-quality links to external sources in your blogs. You should also link to other blog posts or pages on your own website where relevant if this is possible too. This helps the search engines crawl from one of your pages to another and encourages people to stay longer on your website and find out more about you (which also improves your SEO). As healthcare professionals, you may be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council or another regulatory body, it is important to make sure your topics, advice, and resources conform to their set standards.

The writing process

Once you have your topic and have done your research you can plan an outline for your blog. This will help you structure it properly and ensure it is the right length. If you are planning to write 500 words, for example, you will know you can't spend 400 words on the introduction. Ensuring your points flow well from one to the next is key for keeping the interest of your readers.

SEO and writing your blogs

The search engines are looking for content that is easy to read, clear, concise, skimmable, and well written. The reason they are looking for all these things is because this is the content people enjoy and engage with. People tend to have a limited attention span and will often skim-read online content. They will keep scrolling if the look of your blog does not look and sound interesting. Layout, style, structure, and language are all important.

When you are writing blogs you therefore need to be mindful of the various factors that will keep your audience – and the search engines – happy. Your blogs will then have more impact and do the job they are designed to do.

Top tips for writing blogs people will read

- Know your target audience and write on subjects in a manner that will appeal to them.
- Avoid or explain jargon or technical words and

phrases your audience may not be familiar with.

- Readability is key [9], both for your audience and the search engines. Write for a reading level of the average 14-15 year-old. A person's reading level is generally two years below the age they finished full-time education and using this as a guide helps ensure you will not alienate people.
- Write in an engaging and conversational style; use 'you' when possible.
- Use a compelling and interesting title that reflects the content of your post and includes your keywords. Avoid using 'clickbait' titles as tricking people into reading your content will not serve you in the long run.
- Include links to authoritative sources and other blogs or pages on your website where relevant.
- Use shorter sentences and paragraphs.
- Using shorter paragraphs and leaving a blank line between them gives more white space: "the blank areas around blocks of text help guide the visitor through the flow of the site and encourage them to keep reading" [10].
- Create skimmable posts. People tend to scan in an F-shaped pattern when they are reading online [11]. Using headings, subheadings, bullet points, and numbered lists helps break up the text and allows people to skim read more easily. They can quickly see whether a blog covers the information they are seeking and pick out the relevant points.
- Remember to use key words and phrases in the title, headings, and body of the text, but only use them in an organic, natural way; avoid 'keyword stuffing' [12].
- When you have finished writing your blog, do not publish it immediately. Leave it, preferably at least overnight, before going back to edit it. You are more likely to find errors and see better ways to structure or phrase things the more distance you have.
- Use spelling, grammar, and punctuation checkers but remember they are not always right and will not find all the mistakes. Use common sense and check anything you are not sure about.
- Use a read-aloud function, if you have one, or read it out loud yourself.
- Make your blog more visually appealing with photos, diagrams, infographics, videos, and other media. They add interest and break up large blocks of text.
- Publishing and marketing your blogs

- Your blog should end with a clear 'call to action', or CTA. This could be something like encouraging people to engage by commenting, or to book an appointment. Your CTA could be to buy a product but remember blogs are not designed to be advertisements or heavy sales pitches.

Inputting your blog into your website

When you put your blog into your website, it is important to ensure the search engines can also read it as you intended. Do not create headings by changing the font, increasing the font size, or making them bold or italic, for example, as you will be undoing all your hard work. Make sure your headings are tagged as headings. Your title will be tagged 'H1', or heading one. Lower-order headings, or subheadings, can be tagged from H2 to H6. You will notice they get progressively smaller in font size; they give a visual indication as to how the content is structured and what relates to what. Paragraphs should be tagged as paragraphs, images as images, and so on. Most websites are relatively intuitive, but you may need a lesson on how to input your blog into yours.

Make sure you fill in the alt tags or descriptions for your images. This helps your SEO and is necessary for accessibility as visually impaired readers will hear a description of the image through their screen reader. You may be able to add a meta description for your blog with your keywords and what your blog is about via an SEO plugin, or you may find it is done automatically. Make sure to fill in the field for an excerpt or snippet as this will show up in the search result. If you do not write your own the search engine may take one from your blog and this may not provide a good overview of what your blog is about.

Publishing your blog

Check how your blog looks in the preview screen before you publish it; how it seems in your inputting screen is not always how it appears when published. Fonts, spacing, alignment and so on can alter so always double check. Always check that all your links work too.

You may be able to schedule publishing your blog or you may need to do it manually. Try to be consistent on when you post and ideally post it when you are likely to get the most engagement. This might be at 9am on a Monday, or Fridays at 9pm; it will depend on your audience. You will also want to promote your blog as soon as possible, ideally immediately after you have published it. The more engagement you get straight away, the better it is for your SEO.

Your Title: What's Your Blog About?

Sample Titles: *Welcome to My Blog!* or *Welcome to My World* or *Welcome to (Blog Name)*

To boost the post's SEO, include a keyword in the title.

Now that you've said hello to the world, it's time to introduce yourself. Your first blog post is a chance to tell readers who you are with a short bio, as well as share what your blog is about and why you are blogging. You can include something personal or funny, or add a photo of yourself or your business. Give your readers an idea of what to expect in upcoming blog posts.



Format each of your headings below to Heading 2 to keep your post neat and SEO-friendly.

It might help to break up your introduction into 2 or 3 main points, so it's easy for your readers to follow. Each paragraph or two should focus on one point.

Check Your Post Settings

Explore the sidebar on the left. You can add media to add color to your post. You can also change the cover image, optimize the SEO Settings, add categories or tags, and much more. Spend some time discovering each tab and learn how you can enhance your future posts.

Add a Closing Message

Figure 3: Some platforms offer customisable blog templates (wix.com)

It might be useful to publish your blog around the same time as you send your email newsletter out, if you send one. It gives you something to talk about and you can add the link to your newsletter so people can click through to your website and read it there. Enable social sharing on your website too so people can easily post and share your blogs to their own audiences.

Marketing and repurposing your blog

When you have published your blog, you can link to it in social media posts to help drive traffic to your website. You can also use snippets of it as talking points in further posts, again linking back to the original webpage. If you belong to online communities, you may be able to share it in these.

You can also 'repurpose' your blogs and use them as the basis of a podcast or video, for example.

Case Study



**Gill Gibson, Totally Podiatry,
Langport, Somerset**
totallypodiatry.co.uk

When and why did Totally Podiatry start posting blogs?

Gill started using blogs as part of her clinic advertising strategy about three years ago, when she got a new website.

What does this involve?

The practice consistently posts a new blog twice a month. Gill outsources the writing to a small marketing company who produce the content and manage her social media marketing too. Gill comes up with most of the ideas and has a monthly meeting to agree the content calendar. They look at seasonal issues, themed weeks, and special days to identify new subject matter.

As Gill says, blogging “is a huge investment of your time and energy!”, which is why she outsources.

How has blogging benefited the business?

Although Gill pays for a copywriter, she has found “the



cost of having the blogs professionally written and promoted is easily offset by the new business it brings in”. Gill makes sure her blogs show her character and thinks this helps with the personal touch; new patients “need to know who is going to be touching their feet!”. On average Gill gets eight new patients a month through her website, some of whom say they came to her because they read her blog about a condition they have.

The practice blogs are repurposed for social media posts and printed in a locally distributed community magazine. A community website also picks up the blogs and promotes the practice, free of charge. These are all useful tools for promoting Totally Podiatry and Gill finds that “locally, through the blogs, when I go out in the town I will get stopped by someone wanting an appointment, as I’m recognised”.

Case Study



Stephanie Owen, SO Podiatry, Worcester
so-podiatry.co.uk

When and why did SO Podiatry start posting blogs?

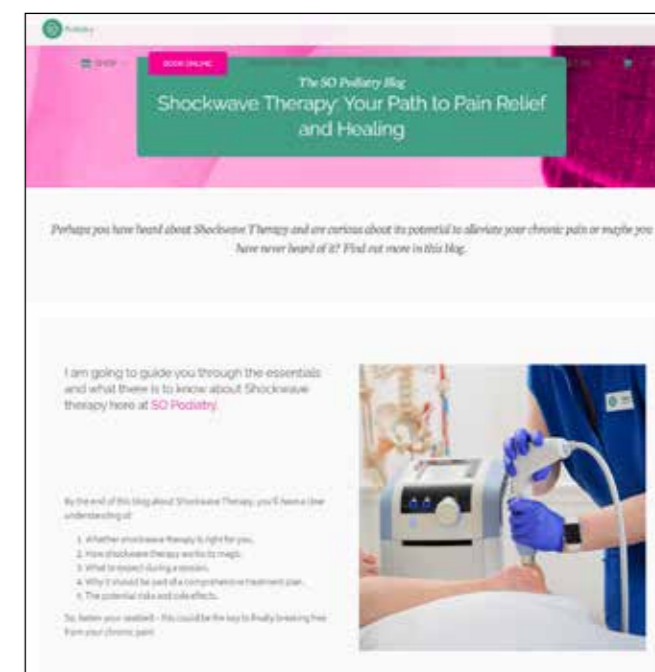
SO Podiatry has been posting one blog a month for over two years as part of their SEO (Search Engine Optimization) strategy and to educate and support patients. Stephanie sees blogging as an opportunity to build a brand, become a trusted and knowledgeable resource, and grow the business.

What does this involve?

Stephanie writes her blogs herself and themes them around services the practice offers or seasonal considerations such as getting your feet ready for summer or sports injury treatments for marathon runners. She also uses keyword research and FAQs, along with AI-writing tools to develop her posts.

How has blogging benefited the business?

SO Podiatry uses blogs for multiple purposes, not just to get new patients to the website. They are used for each month’s content theme and repurposed. They



are “a great source to produce social media and repost again and again”. They provide content for newsletters too.

New practice staff are asked to read all the blogs on the website as part of their training and Stephanie encourages staff members to contribute by writing blogs for the practice too. SO Podiatry also sends links for patients to read when it is relevant to their treatment. Readers give positive feedback and say they share the blogs with their friends and family too.

Stephanie sometimes writes articles for journalists and adds links to her blogs, as well as contacting her local BBC radio station when she publishes a new blog with the aim of getting a slot to chat to the presenters about it.

Stephanie sees no downside to blogging and thinks it helps both her business and the profession: “I think it helps improve the image of our profession and helps patients see that we are happy to help them”.

Case Study



Ivan Bristow, podiatrist, New Forest and founder of the Foot Expert website

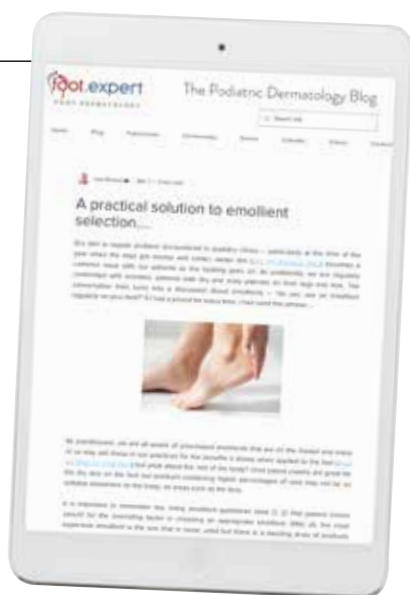
foot.expert

When and why did Foot Expert start posting blogs?

Ivan founded Foot Expert as an online resource housing his academic publications seven years ago and later added a blog on issues relating to podiatric dermatology. It began more as a hobby than a business project.

What does this involve?

Ivan consistently posts two blogs a month which he writes himself, sometimes in collaboration with other experts. He blogs about subjects his patients bring up in clinic and information from new research papers in



the numerous journals he subscribes to. His aim is to educate healthcare professionals in best practice and new research and developments in podiatric dermatology. He has recently begun incorporating keyword research and other SEO practices into his blogging and is beginning to see the impact.

How has blogging benefited the business?

Although not initially intended as a business opportunity the Foot Expert blog has led to various positive business outcomes. Having organically grown his subscribers from a handful to over 3,500, Ivan finds he is approached regularly through his website for speaking and training events. He is now asked to undertake training days at large practices and pharmaceutical companies often get in touch with opportunities too. He also runs webinars and can both turn these into blogs and promote them through his blogging.

Blogging has raised Ivan's profile and shown him as a trusted expert in his field. It has enabled him to grow his business and the opportunities available to him. When he meets people professionally, they "mention the blogs and how useful they are". He recognises that blogging takes time, and it means he now fields a lot of requests for clinical advice from other professionals. However, he enjoys it and would not consider outsourcing; "It keeps me interested and learning and on top of my subject".

References

1. Continuing Professional Update Creating a website for your practice [<https://www.canonbury.com/cpd-october-2023>]
2. Study Shows Business Blogging Leads to 55% More Website Visitors [<https://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/5014/study-shows-business-blogging-leads-to-55-more-website-visitors.aspx>]
3. Brand voice: what is it and why it matters [<https://sproutsocial.com/insights/brand-voice/>]
4. Top website statistics for 2023 [<https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/software/website-statistics/>]
5. Good written communication is essential for your business [<https://rachelbraywriting.com/2022/11/30/good-writing-why-its-so-important-for-your-website-and-your-business/>]
6. The Pros and Cons of AI-Generated Content [<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/ai-generated-content>]
7. Social Media Content Calendar Template [<https://offers.hubspot.com/social-media-content-calendar>]
8. How to Do Keyword Research for SEO: A Beginner's Guide [<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-do-keyword-research-ht>]
9. Fleisch-Kincaid and writing content [<https://www.peoplefirstcontent.com/blog/fleisch-kincaid>]
10. The Importance of White Space in Web Design [<https://www.code23.com/the-importance-of-white-space-in-web-design/>]
11. Explained: The f-shape pattern for reading content [<https://digital-freelancer.org/blog/f-shaped-pattern-explained>]
12. Keyword stuffing in a nutshell [<https://seranking.com/blog/keyword-stuffing/>]

CPU article number: 012

Editorial Team: **Mike Potter, Ivan Bristow, Anthony Maher & Morwenna Potter.**

All articles are selected, commissioned, reviewed and produced independent of Canonbury Products Limited. Canonbury Products Limited kindly provide unrestricted support for the CPU series as a service to the profession.

Copyright remains with the author(s) of the article.

The editorial team welcomes feedback or suggestions from readers via email: CPUtools@canonbury.com