



An expert guide to blogging

FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES BUSINESSES

LOVELETTERS
THE FINEST FINANCIAL CONTENT

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Foreword

In the age of digital and content marketing, blogging has fast become an essential communications tool for financial services businesses and it is a critical part of a [content marketing strategy](#).

Regardless of the area of financial services that your business operates in, publishing a regular blog serves a number of marketing purposes, from improving your relationship with clients and raising your business profile, to generating leads.

While most organisations have embraced this area of content marketing, not all of them get it right.

In this expert guide, we explain how you can make the greatest impact in the blogosphere.

From creating a blogging strategy to common mistakes to avoid, we look at how you can produce a regular stream of blogs that enable you to both inform and engage with clients.

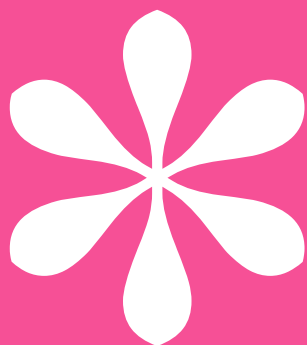


Why write a blog?



The simple answer is that you have thoughts, ideas and information that can help existing and prospective clients with their businesses.

Writing a blog helps to showcase your expertise and promote your services using a method that isn't an overtly hard sell.



Business-to-business companies that blog generate 67% more leads

THERE ARE MANY WAYS IN WHICH A BLOG CAN HELP TO PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS:

A BLOG PROMOTES YOU AS A THOUGHT LEADER

The finance sector is constantly changing. Whether you are calling for industry innovations yourself, or commenting on upcoming reforms, having a channel through which you can publish your thoughts will let your clients and peers see that not only do you have a voice, you are at the vanguard of change in the industry.

A BLOG CAN RAISE THE VISIBILITY OF YOUR WEBSITE

Regularly updating your company website with unique content improves search engine optimisation (SEO). If you are regularly updating your blog with industry insight, it will help your business appear higher in the search engine rankings when potential clients are using search terms related to your area of finance.

A BLOG CAN HELP TO INCREASE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE

If you are creating useful, engaging content that solves specific business questions, readers are likely to share that content with peers. Not only will more people hear about your business, they will also visit your website. This will help to improve your website's SEO since the more traffic your site receives, the more authoritative it will appear to Google and other search engines, leading them to rank it higher in their listings.

A BLOG CAN BRING IN MORE BUSINESS

While it's nice to improve your company's profile, the end result is that you want to boost the bottom line. As explained above, writing a regular blog will help potential customers to find your website more easily. Data shows this invariably leads to an increase in business. According to Social Media B2B, [business-to-business companies that blog generate 67% more leads per month than those that don't.](#)

Furthermore, blogs can be a lot more effective than other forms of marketing. According to online publication Search Engine Journal, [customers who find you through a generic search are more likely to use your business](#) (14.6%) than those who found you as a result of direct mail or a print advertising campaign (1.7%).

What should I write about?

Blogging can be highly effective in helping to grow your business. Yet this effectiveness depends on the quality of the blogs you are producing.

And blogs, like any great piece of writing, start with a great idea. So how do you come up with a great idea?

Evergreen content versus topical blogs



THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF BLOGS...



EVERGREEN CONTENT

As the name suggests, evergreen content is a blog that will be of interest to readers long after it was written. It may occasionally need updating and tweaking but the core premise and content will remain relevant for, quite literally, years. As a result, it should generate a steady amount of traffic over the long term.

A typical title might be: *Should my growing business continue to use freelancers or take on full-time employees?*

and...

NEWSWORTHY PIECES

Newsworthy content will be more topical, but will have a shorter shelf life. You will probably see a spike in traffic when the blog is posted, but the numbers will dwindle over time. A piece that discusses how changes in the Budget or Autumn Statement will affect your clients is a typical example.



WE RECOMMEND A MIXTURE OF BOTH EVERGREEN CONTENT AND MORE TOPICAL PIECES TO DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE.



LISTEN TO YOUR CLIENTS

The main purpose of a business blog is to create added value for your customers. A successful blog is one that helps clients to solve a problem, so a good place to start is by addressing common queries you receive – whether those arise by phone, email or face to face.

You can also use ‘social listening’ to find out the kinds of issues your target customer base is discussing on social media. You will then be able to write blogs on subjects that are of most importance to your clients. Once again, blogging will help the SEO of your website. Why is that?

Each year, Google makes 500 - 600 minor alterations to its algorithms to improve the way it searches for the most relevant content. This is because it is trying to become more intelligent in its responses. Typically, when using a search engine, users will ask specific questions, such as ‘How can an accountant help to grow my business?’

Google now attempts to find the most relevant content that answers those questions rather than searching for content that includes certain keywords (although the use of keywords and phrases in your blog is still important). So, writing blogs that answer your clients’ regular and specific business questions will help your business to rank higher in search results.

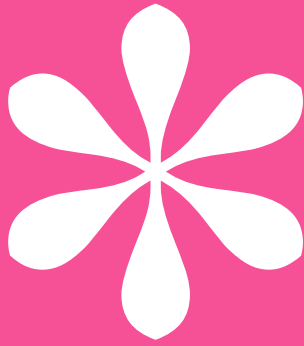
COMMENT ON THE NEWS, BUT MAKE IT UNIQUE

One of the ways that Google ranks web pages is through the uniqueness of the content. If you’ve seen an industry news article that you think will interest your clients, offer your own insight rather than repeat what’s already been reported. By simply regurgitating a news story, you will be fighting against national and trade publications that will already have written articles on the subject.

If you tackle specific parts of the story from your clients’ point of view, you will make it more relevant to them and differentiate your blog from the hundreds of others out there.

SEE WHAT YOUR COMPETITORS ARE BLOGGING ABOUT

Other organisations in your industry are highly likely to be engaged in some form of content marketing. While plagiarism is certainly not advised, you can quite easily borrow a theme and put your own personal slant on it. You might even disagree with what your competitor, or entire industry, is saying about a particular subject.



49% of B2B marketers rated blogging as the most important form of content. Just 27% rated visual content as the most important

If a major industry study has produced findings that do not seem to represent what your customers have been telling you, then say so.

Taking a slightly different view will help to establish you as a thought leader as well as give you new ideas for content.

REPORT FROM CONFERENCES

The financial services industry loves a good conference so the chances are that you or someone else in your organisation will attend several during the year. Giving an overview, or concentrating on one specific aspect, of a conference in your blog is a great way to show your clients that you are keeping up with the latest industry thinking.

Perhaps two separate seminars at two separate conferences gave conflicting views on a given subject – who do you agree with and why?

PULL BACK THE CURTAIN ON YOUR ORGANISATION

One of the main reasons for writing a blog is to give clients and customers a more human angle on your working environment. A good way to emphasise this is to [write a blog about your office environment and the people who work there](#), which can help to change perceptions of your business.

Does the actuarial team have regular karaoke nights? Is the risk management team the most feared five-a-side team in the area? Financial advice is largely based on relationship building and this type of blog helps to give clients a great insight into the personality of your organisation before they've even met you.

Blogging is the most important form of content for B2B marketers. In a 2016 survey, 49% of B2B marketers rated blogging as the most important form of content. Just 27% rated visual content as the most important.

(Source: Social Media Examiner 2016)

These are just a few examples of the different approaches you can take to a blog. Once the blog has been written, you should be using analytics software to constantly monitor how much traffic the blog generates. This way you can assess which types of blogs generate the most traffic and take your inspiration from them.

A word of warning, however. If you are returning to a subject that you have covered in the past, be careful not to repeat too many words, phrases or statistics. Google and other search engines are not huge fans of duplicate content. Repeated or similar content will have a negative impact on your site's SEO, pushing the site down the search rankings onto lower pages.

The logistics of writing, posting and sharing a blog



Coming up with regular, innovative, relevant and engaging ideas is only part of the battle in a blog strategy. You also have to consider how often to post your content, what length it should be and how to make sure it is being read.

How often should I write a blog?



THERE IS NO SET FORMULA FOR HOW OFTEN YOU SHOULD BE POSTING A NEW BLOG.

If you are producing a new blog every week and it is consistently achieving a high number of shares on social media, generating web traffic to your site and hooking a high number of leads, then it would be foolish to suggest that you are publishing too many blogs.

But if you are [producing lower-quality content for the sake of it](#), and getting diminishing returns in lead generation, then perhaps you are churning out too much.

The resources you have available will dictate how regularly you can create blogs but they do not need to affect the quality. One exceptional blog every two months will give clients and peers a much better impression of your business than four badly written efforts over the same period.

Obviously a larger organisation, with dedicated marketing and [copywriting](#) teams, has the capability to produce quality blogs on a regular basis. But even these types of organisations may find they are producing too much similar content if different departments are not co-ordinating with each other.

To start with, you should devise an overarching content strategy. This should involve planning how often you intend to publish blogs. Including set deadlines for when blogs need to be written as well as a process for signing them off. Even if different members of the organisation are contributing to blogs, it is best practice to appoint a content owner or manager who takes on the role of editor.

As would be the case with any other type of publisher or publication, the editor has a number of responsibilities:

- **Generating blog ideas as an individual or within a group;**
- **Commissioning or writing blogs;**
- **Ensuring all content is grammatically correct; and**
- **Ensuring all content meets a consistent house style/tone of voice.**



REGULAR CONTENT

It is the content owner's responsibility to ensure that a regular supply of blogs is being generated, whether the owner is doing all the writing, getting the input of different members of the organisation, or honing copy produced by someone else. The content owner should also arrange regular content planning meetings with department heads or contributors to discuss potential subjects to write about.

IN-HOUSE RESEARCH

Obviously, any research or white papers that your organisation produces should be shouted from the rooftops (well, from your blog, at least). You could write one blog announcing that you are carrying out some research, publish another giving an early insight into your findings and another to promote your white paper or research when it is finally published.

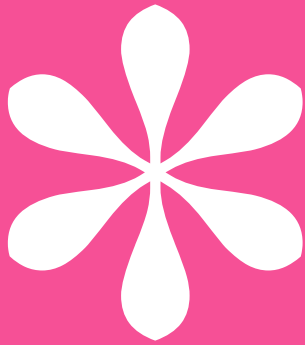
“A mixture of evergreen content and topical blogs helps to optimise traffic and lead generation”

INDUSTRY PAPERS AND DATA

As we have said, a mixture of evergreen content and topical blogs helps to optimise traffic and lead generation. While you may think that it's impossible to predict the news, there are a number of topical events you can plan for. Are there any high-impact [white papers](#) that are due to be published by the Financial Conduct Authority or any other financial bodies? Are there indications that the next set of manufacturing or mortgage approval data is likely to be a big discussion point?

Ensuring a good flow of evergreen content means that during slow news periods, or when official white papers are unexpectedly delayed, you always have content to publish when it is 'blog day'.

Regardless of whether you publish blogs weekly or every other month, you should never find yourself in a position where you publish a sub-standard blog because it has been left to the last minute and you are struggling for an idea.



The average word count of top-ranking content in Google is between 1,140 and 1,285 words

HOW LONG SHOULD A BLOG POST BE?

There is no set answer to the question of what is the 'perfect' length for a blog. One of the most-read marketing bloggers, Seth Godin, often writes blogs that are less than 80 words long. According to keyword research tool serpIQ (2012), however, the most shared blogs number around 2,500 words.

The best approach is to write enough to do the subject justice without becoming verbose. Don't use unnecessary words or repeat information. At the same time, you should not cut out any intrinsic information purely to get the word count down.

Formatting and subject matter are more important than word length, so ensure your blog is broken up with sub-headings, bullet points and images.

And if you're really concerned you're going to send the reader to sleep, break one long blog down into a series of blogs.

The average word count of top-ranking content in Google is between 1,140 and 1,285 words.

(Source: Searchmetrics 2015)

PROMOTION

Writing the greatest business blog in the world is pointless if no one knows it is there. So you need to use every method available to you to get it read. Social media is a great way of letting the world know about your business blog – although, again, you need to research which platforms your prospective readers use.

There is no point in dedicating all your efforts to Facebook if most of your clients are connected to you via LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a particularly good way of getting extra value from your blogging efforts – you can post your blog once on your website and then repurpose the blog to post on LinkedIn.

Sending out your blog via an email newsletter is another highly effective method of driving visitors to your site.

Writing guest blogs for the trade press or other organisations related to the financial services industry, which then link back to your site, also attracts new prospects to your blog and increases your site's SEO.



Good examples of blogs



As we have explained, blogs can serve a number of purposes and, regardless of your area of financial services, can cover a variety of topics.

Below we have chosen a few examples of individual posts and on-going blogs that engage their audience for different reasons.

Forrester Boyd

This blog is a great example of how blogging can be used to update clients on crucial taxation issues, as well as give an insight into the personality of the firm.

Even bland subjects, such as changes to HM Revenue & Customs' systems, are written in an engaging, easy-to-understand way, helped by attractive formatting.

[View the blog here](#)

Mercer & Hole

Again, a great example of how a blog can be used to highlight the organisation's achievements, update clients on need-to-know information and give insight into the company culture.

Topics range from company liquidations to Shrove Tuesday pancake races!

[View the blog here](#)



7 Secret Business Rules Men Don't Share With Women

We like this post because it is punchy, easy to read and makes some highly valid points in a light-hearted, accessible way.

It helps to give an insight into the personality of the author and raises her profile. While ForbesBrandVoice is a paid-for platform, it does demonstrate how writing blogs for sites other than your own is a good way to raise awareness of a brand or an individual.

[View the blog here](#)

The Finanser

One of the most popular blogs about the finance sector on the internet, and for good reason. Not only is the content written in a highly personable, engaging way, but the author makes even the most technical aspects of finance easy to understand.

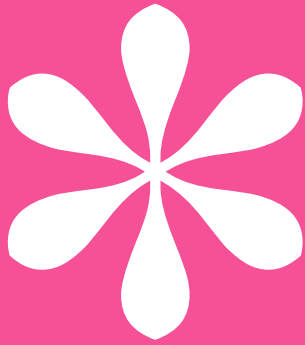
As well as producing original content, The Finanser does a great job of pulling together finance stories from across the web and also produces belly laughs on a regular basis. It is proof that financial content need not be dry and boring.

[View the blog here](#)

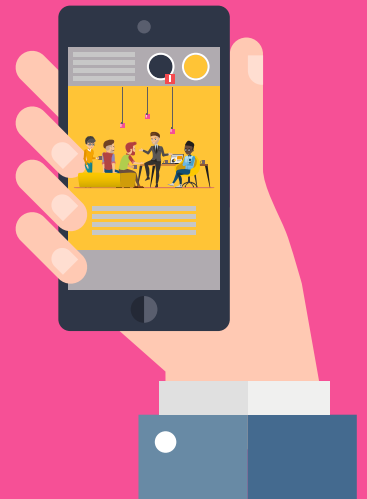
Common mistakes to avoid



Well written, engaging [blogs](#) will put your financial services business head and shoulders above its competitors. But sloppy errors can have a severely detrimental impact. Here is a checklist of mistakes to avoid.



44% of users will tell others about a bad online experience



IRRELEVANT SUBJECTS

It sounds obvious, but you want to be discussing issues that are relevant to your target audience. For example, the Budget is one of the major events in the financial services calendar and one that your clients might want to know about.

The big, headline-grabbing announcements may not be entirely relevant to your area of finance, however. There is no point in writing about the 'Help to Buy Individual Savings Account (ISA)' if your target audience consists of small businesses that want to know about the latest VAT changes.

Google Analytics will help you to discover which search terms are being used to find your site while any interaction with your clients – whether it is by email, phone or social media – will give you insight into the topics that they want to hear about.

JARGON

Just because you use certain industry terms and acronyms on a daily basis does not mean that your clients are familiar with them. Even if you are writing a business blog targeted at fellow professionals, it is a good rule to assume that there could be someone reading the blog who is either on their first day in the job or a student.

Readers will be more impressed, and will share your article, if you can explain a highly technical financial services issue in everyday language. It's also good practice to spell out in full even the most common financial services acronym the first time that you use it. You can then put the acronym in brackets afterwards.

For example, you might write 'Individual Savings Account (ISA)' in the first instance in your blog, then simply refer to it as an ISA after that.

Blog articles with images get 94% more views

(Source: Jeff Bullas 2012)

BAD FORMATTING

If a reader is faced with reams of solid text, then they are likely to click off your blog before they have even read the first sentence.

Breaking text up with bullet points, sub-headings, diagrams and graphics makes it more digestible and also enables readers to scan through to check that it is content worth reading. Paragraphs should just be one or two sentences long.



LINKING

Often your blog is the gateway to your [website](#). Many customers have searched the Internet for some information and found your blog. Once they're on your site, you want to keep them there by providing easily clickable links to other parts of your site, whether that's another blog or the 'Contact Us' page.

Make sure these links are effectively highlighted and that they connect to the page they are meant to, otherwise they could be leads that get away. Also, broken links will impact on your site's SEO because they can prevent search engine spiders from crawling your site and indexing it.

POOR SPELLING AND GRAMMAR

It doesn't matter how experienced a writer or editor you are, it pays to have a fresh pair of eyes to look over your blog. Even using a spell check is no substitute for a colleague's proofread.

A spell check will not pick up US spellings or the incorrect use of a word (for example – there, their, they're). Few things can affect perceptions of your business more than a sloppy spelling mistake or typo, regardless of the awards you may have won or the big clients you have previously worked with.

CONCLUSION

Blogging, as part of an effective [content marketing strategy](#), can raise the profile of your business and, more importantly, generate leads. Putting together a blog is simple but making sloppy mistakes is even easier. By following this expert guide, you should be able to put together an engaging blogging strategy. If you would like more advice on a blogging campaign, or another aspect of content marketing or copywriting, then [please get in touch](#).



About Love Letters



THE BOSS

Love Letters was founded by Sally Percy in 2013. Sally is a well-respected journalist and copywriter, covering the business, finance, banking, treasury and accountancy sectors.

She is a former editor of The Treasurer, the award-winning official magazine of the Association of Corporate Treasurers, and a former editor of Accountancy magazine when it was the official journal of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Sally has made several radio appearances discussing the business and economic environment in the UK.

She has also written for a number of business and financial titles including The Telegraph, The Times, Accounting and Business, Accounting Technician, CFO World, Economia, Financial Risks Today, Professional Manager, Reporting, STEP Journal, Legal Strategy Review, The Acquirer and Upward Curve.

Sally contributed to a white paper that was published by Big Four accountancy firm EY at the World Economic Forum at Davos in January 2016.

She has written a book on getting to the top in finance, published by Bloomsbury Publishing in February 2017.

THE TEAM

Our financial copywriters include trained journalists with a wealth of financial experience, who have worked for some of the biggest consumer and business publications in the UK and the US.

These include:

Financial Adviser
Investors Chronicle
AICIO
Plansponsor Europe
Which?
Which? Money

They can tackle a wide range of topics, from taxation for small businesses through to M&A, wealth management, asset management, pensions and banking regulation.

Our writers write engaging content about the most complex financial products and services and have exceptional knowledge of search engine optimisation techniques to increase the effectiveness of digital copy.

Our clients in the financial services sector include some of the world's largest banks, accountancy firms, professional bodies and recruiters as well as upcoming small and medium-sized businesses. Whether you are looking to produce a white paper, seeking advice on content strategy or hoping to [generate press coverage](#), we would be delighted to help you.

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