



Bloggging Basics

**Twenty questions on how to build community and
real estate relationships with blogs**

By Natalie Danielson

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Clockhours by Mail

1. You will be provided with a booklet of with the class material here in a pdf format. It is a **THREE CLOCKHOUR CLASS FOR \$30.00 TUITION.**
2. The course has been divided up into sections. In Washington State a "clock hour" is 50 minutes. There are questions about each section. They can be answered while reading the material, at the end of the session, or at the end.
3. **Answer** the questions on the quiz sheet.
4. If you have any questions regarding the material or the questions, don't hesitate to call or email Natalie Danielson.
5. **E-Mail** Scan your Quiz and Evaluation and email to Professional Direction.
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Disclaimer.. the course materials and questions are not to be used for legal advice. Information can change over time. Real estate transactions are handled different ways in different regions in the State of Washington. If you have any comments or concerns about the material contact Professional Direction.

Thanks!

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Blogging Basics

Twenty Questions on how to build community and real estate relationships with blogs.

Curriculum

Session Hours	Major Topics	Objective
1 ¼ hour	1. What is a blog? Introduction to blogging. 2. What is the history of blogging? 3. What is the blogosphere? 4. What is the difference between a blog and website? 5. How much does it cost to blog?	Understand the history and definition of blogging.
2 ½ hour	6. Who publishes blogs? 7. What are some blogs to read? 8. Why should you blog?	Identify some different blogs and discuss advantages for a real estate agent to blog.
3 1 hour	9. What do you write about? 10. What if someone else has a blog on a topic I like?	Discuss topics that a real estate agent might blog about.
4 ½ hour	11. How can you write a quick blog? 12. What does it mean to “find my voice?” 13. What should you avoid in blogs? 14. What about commenting on blogs	Learn about how to write blog quickly, blog etiquette and commenting.
5 ¼ hour	15. When do you blog? 16. How much time does it take? 17. How long will your readers spend on your blog?	Answer the most common questions real estate agents have about blogs.
6 ¼ hour	18. Who will read your blog 19. What is SEO and do you need it?	Identify how to get your blog read.
7 ¼ hour	20. How can I get started and create a blog!	Know the steps to get started blogging.

Blogging Basics

By Natalie Danielson

1. What is a “BLOG?”

When I say “blog” in front of an audience of real estate agents it is almost like I am speaking another language. The expressions on the faces of participants vary from complete lack of understanding to a kind of glassy eyed look. Yet, when I read blogs from real estate agents and trainers, I hear sometimes that blogging is old news and dead. Your blog is your website and vice versa. It is a website that gives you the ability to interact with and change regularly. You can easily make your thoughts available to hundreds and maybe thousands of people. This can get you more exposure than you could ever dream of getting by throwing a photo of a listing in a Homes type magazine. We used to go knock on the doors of the neighbors to introduce ourselves... but today we can blog. Here you can put your personality right on the page. You can also get exposure for your real estate business and listings. You blog to create a community around you and communicate with that community to build relationships.

Blogging can be compared to being a columnist for the “internet times.” Also, blogging can be your journal that you share with a few people or the world. A blog can include text, letters, photos, video’s or links to other websites. Just about anyone with access to the internet can create a blog for free.

Real estate agents now have an opportunity to connect with family, friends and prospects giving them current information and sharing their interests. We used to send out newsletters and then emails. But, a blog can be interactive, easily accessible, include photos, videos and links, and it can be forwarded to others easily. It can be updated daily or weekly without feeling like you are harassing the prospective real estate client or your friends with extra mail. They can read it when they want and as often as they want. Blogging builds community.

Course Objectives:

As a result of taking this class the real estate agent shall be able to:

- Understand the history and definition of blogging.
- Identify some different blogs and discuss advantages for a real estate agent to blog.
- Discuss topics that a real estate agent might blog about.
- Learn about how to write blog quickly, blog etiquette and commenting.
- Answer the most common questions real estate agents have about blogs.
- Identify how to get your blog read.
- START A FREE BLOG.

2. What is the history of blogging?

According to Wikipedia the history of the name weblog dates back to 1997.

“The term "weblog" was coined by Jorn Barger^[55] on 17 December 1997. The short form, "blog," was coined by Peter Merholz, who jokingly broke the word *weblog* into the phrase *we blog* in the sidebar of his blog Peterme.com in April or May 1999.^{[56][57][58]} Shortly thereafter, Evan Williams at Pyra Labs used "blog" as both a noun and verb ("to blog," meaning "to edit one's weblog or to post to one's weblog") and devised the term "blogger" in connection with Pyra Labs' Blogger product, leading to the popularization of the terms.”

Back in the year 2002 Rebecca Blood wrote a book, [The Weblog Handbook](#), which is still available on Amazon. She covers the history of blogging and how to write a blog. She writes that Cameron Barrett started collecting a list of weblogs in 1998. First there were a dozen and then more. He wrote an essay in January 1999 called “Anatomy of a Weblog.” Shortly later the abbreviation “Blog” was used.

Though it has been over a decade, the technology has grown exponentially. The ability of anyone with a computer in front of them connected to the internet can create content in a matter of minutes that can be available to readers all over the world. Communication has never been that powerful in history.

We used to get our news from “trusted news sources” consisting of major TV networks, radio, and newspapers. Our world has changed. In this new millennium, most of our news comes from individuals on the internet. Even major news media rely on bloggers. Open the front page of any newspaper and there will be lists of blogs on news, sports and entertainment.

So from a few people that wrote blogs a decade ago to millions of individuals, businesses, and media that write them daily and in some cases by the minute blogging is one of the most used forms of publishing ever in history.

3. What is the difference between a blog and a website?

A website is typically static. It changes rarely. There are often links to important information, tabs on the owner’s biography, directions, maps, articles. Most real estate agents have a page on the corporate website. On that page is a bio, contact information and maybe a link to the agent’s personal website. Many real estate agents have their own websites. The site has information on the agent, links to the MLS, articles on buying and selling, maybe information on a lender and contact information. Often the websites are not changed often.

A blog is like a newsletter or a daily/weekly email to your sphere of influence often including your family. You might be sitting with everyone in your world in a coffee shop talking or doing it online in your blog. A blog changes at the whim of the author. It does not stay the same. Most blog posts are dated unlike websites that have no dates. A blog is like a column. It can be on a website or stand on its own as a website.

Many websites now are “blogs.” They have the capacity to be updated at any time by the owner/author. In the past every change to a website had to be done by the webmaster. Now, if your site is a blog, you can change the content anytime. When you go to a website, you often won’t know if it contains blog technology or not.

4. What is the blogosphere? What is a Vlog?

The collective community of all blogs is known as the *blogosphere*. All blogs are basically connected by the internet. When you have your blog, you may list and link to other blogs which would be called a blogroll. People can comment on blogs if that is available. There can be links to other blogs and other media on the internet.

A Vlog is just a word for a video Blog. You can have an account on YouTube.com which is owned by Google. Then you can post videos. You can post them also on your own blog.

5. How much does it cost to blog?

Blogs are free on the internet on a large number of sites. You can go to Wordpress.com, typepad.com, Tumblr.com and Google's blogger (blogspot.com). There are real estate sites that host blogs including ActiveRain.com. And, there are hundreds of other sites where you can get help, blog templates and hosting for free or for a minimum charge. **Start with free blogs and find your voice.** Experiment to see what feels comfortable for you. You don't have to even tell anyone you started blogging until you are ready to share your blog.

After you have been blogging, then you might want to consider moving up to your own custom hosted blog and purchase a domain name which can cost less than the price of your first cell phone. A custom blog will require you to purchase the domain name, a host and a theme. You will also have to have a techie person to help create the blog. But, You can do it all for free.

6. Who publishes blogs?

Thousands of blogs are published every second of every day all over the world. From politicians, news media, entertainers, sports fans, stores, doctors, artists, attorneys, writers, lenders, real estate agents and people who want to share information on everything from dog training to boating. Some blogs are widely read and some are just ignored. You will see blogs that change by the hour and some that change once a year. They will be beautiful with photos and art or they can be simply text. The authors can be transparent or they can be ghost writers and anonymous.

Most importantly for real estate agents is that other agents are writing blogs. Blogging takes the place of direct mail marketing pieces like newsletters and emails about some new finance program. Blogging is the primary way real estate agents will be marketing themselves and their business in the next few years. Who publishes blogs? YOU... You need to start a blog.

7. What are some blogs to read?

Now is the time to review some blogs.

Are you reading real estate blogs? The best national real estate industry site that I have found with blogs is www.activerain.com. It is based in Washington State, but the members numbering in the tens of thousands are from across the country. Every day there are dozens of blogs posted by agents from around the country on all kinds of topics. You can get inspiration and ideas as well as learn what hot topics are being discussed from marketing ideas to lending. The site charges for hosting a real estate blog, so I suggest that you start with a free blog and if you decide later you can pay for hosting.

Choose three blogs and give us their name and topic. What did you learn from the blog?

What information do you want to have on a daily basis? News? Real estate news? Community information? Restaurant reviews? Coupons? Health? Then type in one of your major hobbies in Google and the word blog and see how many come up!

Make a list of three of them. _____

Here are a few blogs that I write.

<http://www.clockhours.com/>

<http://nataliereviewsbooks.wordpress.com/>

<http://natalielaughing.blogspot.com/>

<http://clockhours.blogspot.com/>

<http://natstop3.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.findingfinechocolate.com/> This is a blog on blogger by Barbie van Horn who is an Account rep with a title company. Chocolate is one of her passions and she shares it with the real estate agents she is in contact with.

<http://renefabre.net/> This is a blog by another Account Rep for a Title company, Rene Fabre. It is his ramblings and photos using a Tumblr.

<http://kirklandweblog.typepad.com/> This is just a blog about Kirkland on Typepad. The editors do NOT identify themselves. They sell ads on the blog but that is not, of course, required. You need to build a following. Blogs on communities are popular because people want to know what is happening!

<http://www.kirklandviews.com/> This is another example of a Kirkland blog with news and a calendar. It is just an independent blog that also sells advertising.

<http://sethgodin.typepad.com/> Seth Godin is a bestselling author of numerous marketing books. His blog gives me ideas.

<http://jacobgrant.com/2015/03/best-real-estate-blogs/> This is a property management company that creates this annual list. You will find some fascinating information on some of these blogs.

<http://www.zillow.com/blog/> Of course.. it is important to follow what the top real estate website in the world is blogging about! It includes tips and advice, current market information and fun facts including celebrity homes for sale.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/washrealtors/videos> This is the REALTOR video blog... You could consider just a video blog!

8. Why should you blog?

People want to work with people that they know, like, respect and trust. A blog gives you the opportunity to connect with people in your sphere of influence in a way you never may have before. The only way you can sell real estate is to connect with people. It is not necessary to connect with them exclusively on a business level focusing only on real estate. But, you can blog about real estate and set yourself apart as knowledgeable in one area.

In a few years, all content and information will be accessible on the internet. Our challenge will be to find and filter that information. Consumers can get on information overload and not even find what they want to know. You can provide a filter and information that is personable and informative.

You can educate your prospective clients, keep your name in front of them, and establish yourself as a successful real estate agent. Your blog will help you create a relationship with prospective buyers and sellers. It will help you generate leads from them. You will build a community around yourself. This will enhance your reputation.

The public and your sphere are overwhelmed with information. If you can give them information that is accurate, up to day and interesting they will turn to you with their questions. If you can make a connection with your community, then they will rely on you for help in their real estate purchases.

Most importantly, you will learn. Every time I teach a real estate class I come away with knowledge I didn't have. I learn from the agents in the class when they share their experiences and challenges. And, every time I teach I have to do some research. I have to keep up to date on the issues. It is the same when you are blogging. It keeps you on the edge. You will start reading other blogs and news reports and statistics to find topics to write about. Blogging will keep you on the forefront of the market trends in real estate, on community information and on any topic of interest.

9. What should you blog about?

Many real estate agents feel compelled to write about real estate topics. You can choose one topic that interests you or you can have a general blog on real estate. Do not pay for content. The internet is full of content on any topic. Make sure your blog expresses you... your ideas, interests, opinions.

Real Estate Blog topics

Educating the Consumer.

- The closing process in explained
- How does the MLS work?
- How long does it take to close a transaction

- What is a Short Sale?
- How does the lock box work?
- Where to find housing information on my website

Financial Info

- Interest rates have been relatively stable
- What is a closing cost?
- Get the best mortgage rate

- Who benefits from the \$8000 Uncle Sam money?
- Explain the A.P.R.
- Can I lock in the interest rate?

Listing Information

- 5 things you can do to stage your house
- Most popular marketing tool is the MLs
- How can you get top dollar for your house
- Video of your listings

- Anybody can give their house away
- Is your Zillow Zestimate close to the real value of your house
- What website will feature my listing
- Animoto.com video of your listings

Buyer info

- How to get information on any house on the market
- Advantages to buying over renting
- 3 things to know before you write an offer

- How do you know if it is a "good buy?"
- Now is the time to buy
- Is the neighborhood safe?

Neighborhood information

- Top 5 coffee shops within walking distance
- Historic neighborhood home on market
- Photo a day in our neighborhood

- New stop sign at 5th and Madison
- Crossing Guard needed for school
- Guess the location of my weekly photo

Top Three List

- Top 3 favorite listings this week
- Top 3 books I've read
- Top 3 condos for sale
- Top 3 most important things to look for in a house you buy

- Top 3 blogs I read
- Top 3 first time buyer's houses
- Top 3 reasons to buy in this market
- Top 3 problems home inspectors find

Fear Factors

For sale by owners beware at open houses
Three reasons why buyers need a home inspection
The dangers of overpricing your home
Sellers that wait can increase risk of foreclosure

Ten ways homeowner can sabotage sale
Is your assessment too high?
Are agents using your home to sell your neighbor's house?

My stories

My last buyer moved from Australia
Sold my listing at an open house
The most interesting home I have sold
My listings sold right away

How I helped a seller from foreclosure
How my new buyer went green after getting power bill
My first day in real estate

Real estate news stories

Tax break for first time buyers soon to expire
Have link to local real estate article
Going green articles

Quote paragraph from news and write your thoughts
Write about rezone of the area and a link to county site
Uncle Sam giving tax credit to homeowners

Other Blog topics

You can also choose to write a blog on other topics and highlight your real estate info at the bottom! Topic areas can include:

Theme days. Can be luxury house, something blue, holidays

Photo blog. Can include photos of area or even a quiz about where it was taken

History of area. Can include some historical fact

Video. Can be one your record

Quote of the day. There are millions, billions of quotes. Some move us more than others.

Humorous jokes. There is nothing better than laughter

Poll of your readers. Take a poll of their opinion once a week

Top 3 blog. List top three of something

Knitting or sewing blog. This can have a quote or photo or a tip of the week

Fantastic Fishing Blog. You might love to fish or have another hobby and have info to share

Weekend Blog. What is happening each weekend in town.

Tie your blog to your real estate business

Tie any blog to something about your real estate business. If you are writing about an area then let the reader know what your connection to that area is. If you are writing about finance, then make sure your signature or last lines talk about you as an agent can refer them to qualified lenders.

If you are writing a blog about a personal interest then try to tie each blog to your business.

For example:

I have been fishing for more clients this week.

My last buyer inspired me to choose this quote today.

This historical house was sold last year.

10. What if someone else has a blog on a topic I like?

You need to be connecting with prospects all the time in order to build your business. By getting yourself online with current information, you can connect with others in a way you never could in the past with a phone or by knocking on doors.

There are literally millions of blogs. Think of the city of Seattle. I went in search of the blogs about the city.

You can't be intimidated by other people who are doing some of the same marketing tactics. There are thousands of real estate agents competing for business, yet you are still out there selling. You need to find your niche. Your audience is your sphere and it will grow from there.

Find a niche. Instead of blogging about Seattle, you can zoom in on an area and write a "hyper local" blog. That is one that is on a specific neighborhood.. or even a condominium complex. The advantage to a niche is that you can position yourself and you will learn about an area more than you ever did before.

Find a topic that interests you and just write, take photos or do a video about it. It can be real estate related or it can be about a passion.

Twitter.com (which is a whole other class) is often referred to as "microblogging." On my cell phone I can see by GPS who is on twitter in my neighborhood. I can see right there on the map on my phone if a fellow twitterer lives nearby. I wonder if the same will be true with blogging?

"You have something to give them that without you, they can never get!" Leo Buscaglia.

11. How can you write a quick blog?

Quoting others in your blogs can be one quick way to write a blog entry. Often we think that it is imperative to write all of our own information.

Seth Godin, author of many bestselling books on marketing including [Meatball Sundae](#), writes in his blog:

“On July 4, birthday of the USA, we're supposed to blow off fireworks, eat hot dogs and buy a Chevrolet.

On Columbus Day, birthday of an early imperialist, we're supposed to shop and march in a parade.

On Martin Luther King Jr. day, marvelously, we're supposed to participate in a national day of service.

So, what should we do on your birthday?

With all due respect to Hallmark, the idea of sending people cards and presents on their birthday seems both selfish and small-minded. It seems to me that we could think bigger.

On the birthday of your company or brand, what would you like your customers to do?

On your birthday, what should your friends do? Let's say you have a shoe buying fetish. Perhaps on your birthday, your friends could buy shoes--for themselves, not for you. Share the joy, right? Or perhaps buy shoes for *their* friends?”

So this entry made me think about birthdays and anniversaries. What about “your” birthday? What about the “birthday” of the day you started at your company?” What if you send an email to all your friends and clients and as Seth says, “think bigger.” Suggest everyone on your list to pay it forward, to donate to habitat for Humanity, or plant a tree. On my personal birthday, I started calling my mother and thanking her... for if it wasn't for her that day, I would not be celebrating. The same goes for you and your clients.

If you are going to quote another it is important to identify the author and possibly put a link to the original blog post or authors website.

In this way I have gotten the idea from Seth Godin's blog and added my own comments to write a blog post. I could also add a link to Seth Godin's blog.

Use Photos! There is almost nothing more powerful in our world than a photo. On the day that the plane crashed into the Hudson River in NYC, you could have seen it happen and called 911 from a phone booth and tried to explain to the operator that a plane just crashed into the river. She might ask questions about where, when, did it explode, are people in the plane, did it sink, .. etc. Or, you could take a photo like a man did from a ferry in the river and send it out on the internet! A photo and a few words on a regular basis can be a blog that can get you followers! Take photos of your surroundings, your community, your cat, the front doors of houses you preview, views, flowers, fish, traffic, etc. You have a powerful camera within reach at all times in your phone. In a matter of seconds you can upload a photo and description and it will go to more people than you can imagine!

Shoot a short video. Take some videos of neighborhoods. You can take photos and using a site called animoto.com or a Mac computer put the photos to music and make a video about your community for example. You can take a video of yourself in front of your computer and just talk. That is basically what the Washington Realtors video blog is.

12. What does it mean to “find my voice?”

We spend so much time in the real estate industry trying to be “professional.” Some real estate agents feel pressure to look like other agents. They think clients choose them because of their clothes, car, or the years they have been in the business. In reality, people choose to work with you as an agent because of who “YOU” are.

When you start to write your blog, make sure that it is you on the page. The more you try to be like someone else, the less authentic your blog becomes. Often that can lead to a boring blog!

Just creating a blog and uploading links to articles by other people ... national and local... can just be boring.

We are all “busy.” We are sooooo busy. There is no time. But yet everyone you know has their eyeballs looking at that small screen in their hand. Create something that will get their attention. But, make it short and sweet. Most people only read 50 pages of a book, I heard one day. Most people won’t scroll to read paragraph after paragraph. (I’m glad you are reading this!) So make any blog short and to the point.

So many blogs and even news articles start with, for example; 6 ways to become the most productive agent, 5 ways to get leads today, 3 of the home buyers greatest fears. People like lists. The NY Times best selling book list changed bookselling forever!

Find your voice by making sure you include something of interest to YOU!

I heard a quote the other day... but I don't know the author. It goes something like... “You were born an original. Don't die a copy.”

13. What should you avoid in blogs?

There are certain topics that can spark a controversy. Some bloggers enjoy the banter and discussion. But, you do take risks when you write something that can alienate someone.

Avoid blogging about religion and politics unless that is the main topic of your blog. If you strongly lean one way or another, that is great and you can focus your blog on that but know that you may be losing some fans. You just have to know, that even in a coffee shop sitting around a round table, if someone brings up either of those subjects, people will roll their eyes.

Avoid being negative because it seldom ever wins you supporters. It doesn't do much good to complain about even the real estate market, lending problems or about a bad transaction. Don't criticize other people, companies, or newsmakers.

Don't purchase content. There are so many people and companies that want to sell you a blog or blog content. This is not what a consumer wants! It becomes as valuable as junk mail. A blog has to be personable.

Don't plagiarize and take content from someone else. A blog is really your own "column." It is great to link to another or to quote others in a blog. But, do not take content and share it as if it was yours.

Make sure you don't put personal information about clients on blogs without their information. And most of all stick to the laws. We have real estate license laws and anti discrimination laws.

Blogs are not the best avenue for hard sales pitches. Leave those at the office or to the other real estate agents. The purpose of a blog is to create and strengthen relationships by being transparent and sharing yourself with your sphere. People love to buy but they don't like to be sold.

It is important to identify yourself and your FIRM as the author of your blog. Yesterday I received an email from a friend that had a link to a blog written by "real estate specialists," but it didn't identify who the authors were. You could see that there were two agents that wrote a few articles. There were articles about the city that made it look like a neighborhood newspaper. There was no mention of the real estate companies that the agents represent. Make sure that you are identifying yourself as an agent with the firm name as licensed.

Avoid being boring. A boring blog could be the sleep aid they were looking for. That is not usually your intent, so spice it up. Use metaphors.. Instead of saying how slow the market is. Compare it to something like the time it takes to cook dinner in a crock pot!

14. What about commenting on blogs?

One feature that makes most blogs very interactive is to let your readers leave a comment. There is usually a comment box under the blog that you click. Comments can be read by all the other readers. Some blogs have the author of the blog have to review comments before posted. The blogs author is the one that can delete comments also. Comments can be made by the author in response to a comment creating a conversation.

You can comment on others blogs. It is most important to respect the author and know that your comment will be read by a number of people. Keep comments brief. If you want to write a long retort, put it on a blog of your own. Monitor the comments for spam or are not in line with the spirit of the blog.

15. When do you blog?

“Just do it” as Nike would say. Just start a blog and share your thoughts. Its like having a column in a newspaper or taking the role of a photographer on the street. It’s a way to communicate with those you know in your sphere. It is a way to communicate with those that know who you are. It is a way to communicate with those who don’t know you but would like to.

Writing a blog is like writing a newsletter or an email to your sphere. You can sit there and write and work on it for hours and hours. It can be a “masterpiece!” It can be so well written, have outstanding artwork, and be interesting. But, the idea is not to work forever on a masterpiece. The idea is to create content that is easy and quick to read. So write your blog daily or a couple times a week, or even once a week.

16. How much time does it take?

But, blogging takes time! Yes, it takes time. And compare it to the time you used to spend running around delivering paperwork before email and fax. What about all the time you would spend to make a flyer or create an ad for a listing?

Consistency is important. People need to see new posts when they go to your blog. Add a new post about twice a week at a minimum is a good way to start. Many people post once a day and sometimes more. You can have a theme day that can keep you on track. And example is an “ABC day” where you post something that has to do with the Letter of the week. Some people spend hours and hours working on their blog. It is best that you work on whatever you post in your blog for only 30 minutes. Spend no more than 1-2 hours a week working on a blog or collecting ideas for it. Every agent can fit that into their schedule! Use Facebook as a blog. Get a blog tab on your website. Post on Google+. Again... “Just do it!”

17. How long will your readers spend on your blog?

When someone goes to your blog they will spend only minutes reading and scanning the information you post. Some estimates are an average of less than one minute on your blog. That is it! You can keep the attention of your friends longer than that when you are showing them photos of your last trip!

So, don’t write a graduate thesis on the market trends, for example. Write a short blip with some background information or a link.

Picture your readers opening the mail to a newsletter you sent them. How long before it moves from their hands to the recycle bin. That’s how long they will stay on your blog. The goal is not to keep the reader on your blog for a long period of time, but to get them to come back. You want to give them something that they cannot get elsewhere and then want, look for, get interested enough to come back.

18. Who will read your blog?

It is most important that you connect with your sphere of influence. This includes your family, friends, past clients, prospective clients, and people that you are associated with like in a club. They need to be fans of your blog. You can stand up at a Mariners Baseball game and toss out boxes of business cards to market yourself. Most people will just ignore the cards or throw them away. Some will glance at it. The chance you'll get a call and create a relationship with a prospect is slim to none. You have more of a chance of getting a real estate sale by having a relationship by chatting with the strangers around you sitting at the game.

It is the same for blogging. You can hope people around the world read your blog. You can hire someone for thousands of dollars to improve your "SEO" (search engine optimization) but your blog will be most effective if you are followed by your sphere and people that share similar interests. Then, they might tell someone else who tells someone else. That is the most powerful form of marketing called "word of mouth."

To get people to read your blog, YOU need to market it. Here are some ideas.

- Email your sphere a little note about your blog with a link.

- Add your blog link on Facebook.com every time you post something new. Write a short reason in the status about it.

- Tweet about your blog on Twitter.com. Put a link on twitter and a reason for twitter followers to click.

- Add a link to your Google+ (or use that site for blogging)

- Add the name of your blog to your business card.

- Connect your website to your blog. Have a link and a reason to click it.

- Put a link to your blog on every email you send.

- Put a link to your blog on every listing flyer you print and email out.

- On your profile for your company, Google.com (set up an account free on google and post a profile), Zillow, and other sites with profiles.

- Make a separate business card with a photo that captures the spirit of your blog and hand it out with your business card.

Your blog will get read directly in proportion to the number of times you print that link. It will be re-read and forwarded by the quality of information you post and the way it is presented. Most blogs have some kind of analytics. You can almost instantly see how your readership climbs when you link to your blog from Facebook, for example!

You will be surprised at the number of people that will follow your blog! That, in turn, will build your sphere and grow your business. You can create a community around your blog. Start reading the blogs of those that are in your sphere and link to them.

19. What is SEO and do you need it? What is a mobile site?

Search Engine Optimization or SEO is a method that web designers sell to try to get your blog more exposure on the internet.. Then when someone is searching on Google for information on the Fremont Area and you are blogging about it, it should come up near the top in the search engine. Not a day goes by that some web geek will try to get you to plunk down hundreds and up to thousands of dollars for SEO. At this point it is best that you work on your sphere.

Compare it to having a newsletter. If you make a great newsletter and sent it out by mail to your sphere, a certain percentage will be avid readers. You can spend lots of money sending it out to thousands and thousands of people but without any connection to you it is like throwing business cards into the wind.

If your blog is interesting no matter the topic, word of mouth will spread the readership. You have your own database and you meet people daily. Start with self promotion. Then over time see if the dollars for paying a web geek for SEO are worth the investment.

It depends on your goal or purpose of blogging. If you want to have your blog have lots of fans like a bestselling book, it takes time and experience. Hiring someone to make a blog get more exposure is only important when you have successfully created readership and found your voice. It is most important to have your sphere of influence be fans of your blog.

Having "SEO" might lose it's importance over time. People don't often go to search www... dot... as much anymore. The future will probably lie in apps on the desktop of computers or on cell phones and tablets.

You can create a blog and have an app that links directly to that blog that you can provide or sell to others for their phones or tablets. There are app templates like [www. Mobileapploader.com](http://www.Mobileapploader.com) and seattleclouds.com that create templates for apps that can include blogs. You can write blogs using your cell phone today.

20. How can I get started and create a blog?

It is a good idea for agents to start a blog. Write about anything that interests you, post one photo a day, find an inspirational quote or write about real estate. Blogging about neighborhoods is becoming very popular. It will give you presence on the internet and give your clients a way to connect with you. Experiment to see what feels comfortable. You don't have to even tell anyone you started blogging until you are ready to share your blog.

Choose a name. Think of a name to call your blog. Some people name it after a neighborhood, their own full name, or a catchy title. Remember, the title of the blog is like a title of a book. That cover helps sell the book. Think of a name for your blog. "Peter's Ponders," "Fred's fishing follies," "Holly sells homes," "Home is where the heart is" are some examples of names. When you go to a free site the URL will add extra info at the end of your name. For example, "PetersPonders.blogspot.com." many people name their blog after their own name. That is a good idea unless you have a name that is complicated to spell. It is not necessary, though. A cute name may promote readership and not look like an ego boost.

You can get your own domain name. There are a number of places to purchase your own domain name online like GoDaddy.com. Then you own the name. So it might be PetersPonders.com. But, you might just save the name so when the time comes to get a techie and a host etc you can use it.

The blog has to be hosted by someone. The free sites host many blogs. You can also have it added to your own website in many cases. Choose a place to host your blog. You can go to Wordpress.com, Typepad.com and Google blogger. There are real estate sites that host blogs including ActiveRain.com (but I encourage you to NOT pay for blogging platforms or content!!!!!!) And, there are hundreds of other sites where you can get help, blog templates and hosting for free or for a minimum charge. Start with free blogs and find your voice. Free sites are the best way to get started.

Choose a template. The site you choose has templates that you can use for your blog. Choose one you like. It can be changed or even customized in the future.

Put up a profile. Most people use their photo in the profile. Then add a link to your website and a brief bio including their real estate firm.

Then write a post. There is a place for a heading. Make it catchy. Then add some copy. Experiment by adding a link, a photo, a video, or your own words. Choose whether to allow comments or not. In the future after getting used to blogging you will add tags.

Then click "Post" or "Publish."

Do not worry about editing or being a perfectionist. You can edit it anytime. We are not all "fashionistas," yet we put on clothes every day without the advice of a fashion expert!

Free Blog platforms

Google.com (blogspot.com or blogger.com... same thing) With Google + just starting and growing, using a Google product is a smart way to go.

Tumblr.com has a great app to use on cell phones. It is easy to post information and a photo right to your blog from your phone in a simple blog platform.

Wordpress.com This is the most popular platform for custom blogs (at wordpress.org) so if you are serious about blogging, start using a free wordpress.com site and free template. You will get to know the dashboard and learn to make posts and edit. It will be the same dashboard as for a custom blog.

Typepad.com but it will cost a small amount.

Instagram.com is one of the fastest growing platforms.

Pinterest.com can be used as a blog.

ActiveRain.com (you can blog for free but it only goes to agents unless you pay. I suggest you do NOT pay and start on a free platform listed above) ActiveRain is a site with a collection of over a quarter million real estate agents blogging. The cost to use their platform is very high. It is a good site to get information on what agents are blogging about. You can search, for example, a neighborhood or condominium complex, and there is a good chance some agent is writing about it. It is a good source of real estate information. But, start using an open platform listed above that is free.

After you have been blogging, then you might want to consider moving up to your own custom hosted blog and purchase a domain name. A custom blog can often bring in your old content.

Conclusion

Sometimes real estate agents are resistant to change. They complain about all the work and the learning curve. The beauty of our business is that we can do whatever we want to build it. We basically “own our business.” Blogging will give you the opportunity to build a community around you instead of the old Farming or knocking on doors.. your community will be online.

Take the next step and get to know your community.. build better relationships. Have a blog meet up at a local coffee shop for readers of your blog!

Write a blog post! You can email Natalie with any questions that you might have about blogging.

Quiz for Blogging Basics

Complete answers on this form. Mail or scan to Professional Direction with Evaluation.

1. Name a blog that you checked out because of this class _____
2. Think of a username to use to for your blog _____ Reason you chose it _____
3. Think of one reason that you, as a real estate agent should be blogging. _____
4. Write the main difference between a website and a blog _____
5. What information do you want to have on a regular basis? Identify three areas. _____
6. What is a VLOG? _____
7. How much does it cost to have a blog on the internet? _____
8. A custom hosted blog requires that the writer pay for _____.
9. Why should you blog? Name one good reason for you to set up a blog. _____
10. Choose three real estate blog topics from the list that pique your interest. _____
11. Go to Google.com and search for blogs in Seattle. How many results? _____
12. What is a hyper local blog? _____
13. If you quote another blogger in your blog, it is important to name that person and possibly provide a link to the _____

14. What does it mean to “find your voice?” _____

Name one 7 things to avoid when blogging.

- 15. _____
- 16. _____
- 17. _____
- 18. _____
- 19. _____
- 20. _____
- 21. _____

17. Have you ever commented on a blog? Why? _____

18. Do you see having enough time as an issue with blogging? _____

19. How much time should it take to write a blog post? _____

20. How much time will your reader spend on your blog? _____

Name three ways to get readers to your blog.

- 21. _____
- 22. _____
- 23. _____

19. What does SEO stand for? _____

20. Instead of going online and typing www. the consumer will probably have an _____ on their cell phone or tablet.

21. The first step to blogging is to create a _____. Make it unique so it identifies you or your blog topics.

22. When you post on a blog it can include a link, _____, or a _____.

23. Have you thought of a name for a blog and started one on a free platform? _____

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Mandatory Evaluation

Did you read the material in the booklet on this date? YES / NO
 Did you complete the quiz and attach answer sheet? YES / NO
 Did you enclose Tuition (\$30 for 3 hrs) YES / NO
 Did you fill out and sign this form? YES / NO
 Paid by Check or Visa/MC # _____ exp __/__/____print clearly... but best and secure is to use payment on website!
 Why did you choose to take this course? Topic? Time? Cost? Ease? Other?
 A "clock hour" is 50 minutes. This 3 hour class should take about 2 hrs 30 min. How long did it take you to complete the course? _____

	No			Yes	
Will the material you learned improve your performance?	1	2	3	4	5
Were the course materials easy to follow?	1	2	3	4	5
Were the course materials relevant to your profession?	1	2	3	4	5
Were your objectives met by attending the class?	1	2	3	4	5

What are 3 things that you learned from the course?
 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Blogging Basics		
Print Name CLEARLY	Signature	Company
Address	City Zip Code	Phone
Blog name	Email	
License Renewal Date		Date class taken

Thanks for taking this class! I really appreciate the agents that take clockhours from my school! I am always working on my classes and writing new ones!
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