

The 120 Day Wonder: How to Evangelize a Blog

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Guy Kawasaki

I know a fair amount about evangelism and a little bit about blogging, so I've combined the two in order to provide some insights into the evangelism of a blog. Granted, I've only been at blogging for 120 days or so, but marketing is marketing, right?

1. Think “book” not “diary.” First, a bit of philosophy: my suggestion is that you think of your blog as a "product." A good analogy is the difference between a diary and a book. When you write a diary, it contains your spontaneous thoughts and feelings. You have no plans for others to read it. By contrast, if you write a book, from day one you should be thinking about spreading the word about it. If you want to evangelize your blog, then think “book” not “diary” and market the heck out of it.

2. Answer the little man. Now that you're thinking of your blog as a product, ask yourself if it's a good product. A useful test is to imagine that there's a little man sitting on your shoulder reading what you're writing. Every time you write an entry, he says, “So what? Who gives a shiitake?” If you can't answer the little man, then you don't have a good blog/product. Take it from someone who's tried: It's tough to market crap, so make sure you have something worth saying. Or, write a diary and keep it to yourself.

3. Collect email addresses. The first piece of advice that I give authors who want to evangelize their book is to accumulate email addresses. (The second piece of advice is to start blogging before the book comes out.) When I launched *The Art of the Start*, I sent out email to 95,000 people who had made contact with Garage in the past nine years by attending our conferences, submitting business plans, ... whatever. Also a team of student interns compiled a database of every entrepreneurial organization on the planet for me.

When I started my blog, I sent out 10,000 email announcements. (I didn't use the entire Garage database because I thought that was too tacky even for me.) You may not have the ability to collect email on this scale but collect them nonetheless. For example, when a bozo includes you on a large carbon-copy email, mine the addresses. However, don't buy address lists or spam people (I define "spam" as sending email to someone who has never sent me one) because for email promotion to work, you must know the recipient--or be known by the recipient.

Two more email related recommendations. First, when you answer an email, stick in a “by the way” that mentions your blog. (The only email responses that I send that don't make reference to my blog are the ones that are responses to an email about my blog.) Second, your email signature should contain your blog address.

4. Collect links for blog rolling. This is something I wish I had done on day one, but I was totally ignorant of this linking thing. If I had to do it over again, I would look for all the interesting blogs that cover similar topics to my blog. Then, on day one I would have blog rolled them all and ensured that Technorati pinged my blog, so that the bloggers might find out that I existed. I use Blogrolling.com to create my current blog roll.

Now that I understand how linking works, I use [NetNewsWire](#) and [Endo](#) to look for new links to my blog, and I find sites that I would have never seen were it not for their links to my site. Basically, you want bloggers to find out about you because you linked to them. You never know what they might do for you.

5. Scoop stuff. There's a very interesting honor system in blogging. Suppose Blogger A finds an obscure article and posts it to his blog. Blogger B reads about it on Blogger A's blog and links to it. However Blogger B doesn't link only to the article; she also links to Blogger A to give him credit for finding the article.

This means that if you hustle and scoop stuff, other bloggers will link to you. For example, when I found and publicized the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* [article](#) by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Bob Sutton, many other bloggers linked to my blog, not just the article itself. I was surprised by this. Bottom line: if you want lots of people to link to you, read voraciously and find cool stuff first. As a Japanese philosopher once said, "Eat like a bird, and poop like an elephant."

6. Supplement other bloggers with follow-up entries. Read the blogs of the top fifty or so bloggers (using Technorati's ranking is fine) and see if you have in-depth knowledge about their topics. Then instead of leaving the typical, dumb shiitake comment ("I think you're an orifice who shouldn't make money recommending products that you've invested in."), craft a real essay that complements the blogger's entry.

When someone does this for my entries, I want to get down on my knees and thank God because it's less stuff that I have to write. Look at this example that was a [follow-up for my entry about recruiting](#). I don't know about other bloggers, but one of the biggest challenges I face is feeding the content beast. If you can help me feed it, I'll gladly link to you and give you publicity.

7. Acknowledge and respond to commenters. Only good things can happen when you read all the comments in your blog and respond to them. It makes commenters return to your blog. This, in turn, makes commenters feel like they are part of your blog's community, which makes them tell more people to read your blog.

(I'd like to do this better, but I've created a monster. I don't have any quantitative evidence, but it sure seems like I get large volume of comments to my entries. There are days that I simply can't keep up, so forgive me.)

8. Ask for help. If you are providing value in your blog, don't hesitate to ask for your readers to help. If you don't ask, you don't get. You don't have to be as blatant as I am in the desire to climb Technorati's ranking, but in a perfect world, you provide something in your blog and your readership will want to reciprocate by helping you spread the word.

9. Be bold. I'm not saying you should intentionally piss other bloggers off, but if you can't speak your mind on your own blog, we might as well all give up and stay on the porch. This is a fascinating thing about blogging: Even when people torch you, they link to your site. I would have thought that you don't link. My logic was: Why give someone you torched any exposure?

10. Make it easy to join up. A blogger named [Steve Nipper](#) showed me the list about this. I had no idea what [Feedburner](#) and [FeedBlitz](#) did until he told me about them. The bottom line is that

you should enable your readers to get to your blog in multiple ways. It's no different than distributing physical products through multiple channels.

May you use this knowledge to rise in Technorati and make the A List. Just say hello as you pass me by--someday I'll be sucking up to you. :-)

PS:

Here are some other resources that I found:

1. From reading [*Christian Blog Evangelism*](#):

- [*How to Build Traffic to Your Blog by Priya Shah*](#)
- [*Promoting Your Blog*](#)

2. From readers:

- <http://www.squidoo.com/blogstarter>. The author of this, Rajeesh Setty, also has a very interesting (and free) [ebook here](#) about personal branding.

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Guy Kawasaki is a managing director of [Garage Technology Ventures](#), an early-stage venture capital firm. Previously, he was an Apple Fellow at Apple Computer, Inc. Guy is the author of eight books including *The Art of the Start*, *Rules for Revolutionaries*, *How to Drive Your Competition Crazy*, *Selling the Dream*, and *The Macintosh Way*. He has a BA from Stanford University and an MBA from UCLA, as well as an honorary doctorate from Babson College.

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