



Twelve Steps to Launching a Successful Station Blog

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Broadcasters can pull together all of their digital tools into one revenue-generating strategy called Content Marketing. Content marketing involves the creation of online content and then using three channels — social media, search engines, and the station's airwaves — to drive traffic to that content. Once visitors come your station's website, you encourage them to complete goals, such as signing up for your station's email list or registering for an event. These goals should connect back to revenue.

At the heart of the content marketing strategy, of course, is the content and the blog where it resides. The first step in any station's content marketing strategy is to create a blog and get it the habit of consistently producing high quality content. This guide will show you how.



Content Marketing for Broadcasters

1. Create a Blog Section for Your Website

First, you will need a blog on your station's website. The blog is slightly different from your normal webpages. Most pages on your site are static. In other words, they don't change very often. But the blog is designed to be constantly updated with new content. To do this, you need a platform that is specifically designed to be a content management system (or CMS).

Here are the features you want in your blog:

- Content can be placed into different **categories**
- Content can be **tagged** with different terms
- Blog entries display the **author's name** and the **publication date**
- Blog entries have **social sharing buttons** that make it easy for people to share the content over their social networks
- Blog entries can be easily **optimized for search engines** like Google
- The blog can be set up for an **editorial process** involving multiple people in different roles, such as writer, editor, and publisher
- The blog is **searchable** so people can find the content that they want

If your station's website does not already have a blog, we recommend that you use a self-hosted Wordpress blog. Wordpress is a powerful platform. It is designed for content management, which makes it an ideal choice for media outlets. It is open source, which means that you can build a website inexpensively. And it is widely used — over 25% of the world's websites are built in Wordpress — so that if your current webmaster leaves for another job, you will have no problem finding somebody else who knows how to use Wordpress. You can either build your entire site in Wordpress, or you create a subfolder on your site, such as [wkrp.com/blog/](#), where your blog resides.



TIP: Do not use software that hosts your blog someplace other than your own domain, such as Blogger or Wordpress.com (which is different than the self-hosted Wordpress site you can install from Wordpress.org). These sites will not give you full control over all aspects of the blog.

2. Envision Your Audience

Once you have the technical structure for your blog in place, turn your attention to the blog's readers. Sketching out personas for typical audience members can help you determine which content will be of most interest to them. (You may have already performed this exercise for your listeners or viewers; the same personas can be used here.)

Draw up at least four personas to represent segments of your audience. Here are some characteristics you may want to assign to each one:

- Age
- Gender
- Where they live
- Marital status
- Number of children
- Type of job
- Hobbies
- Annual income
- Musical tastes
- Allegiance to sports teams
- Political leanings
- Other interests



Sample Personas



Donna

Age: 32

Gender: Female

Residence: East Hills Neighborhood

Marital Status: Single

Children: 0

Job: Accountant

Annual Income: \$45,000

Hobbies and Interests: Outdoor sports, restaurants



Luke

Age: 47

Gender: Male

Residence: Downtown

Marital Status: Married

Children: 2

Job: Mechanic

Annual Income: \$32,000

Hobbies and Interests: Books, travel

Personas



Name: _____

Age: _____

Residence: _____

Marital Status: _____

Children: _____

Job: _____

Annual Income: _____

Hobbies and Interests: _____

Musical Tastes: _____

Sports Allegiance: _____

Political Leanings: _____

Other: _____



Name: _____

Age: _____

Residence: _____

Marital Status: _____

Children: _____

Job: _____

Annual Income: _____

Hobbies and Interests: _____

Musical Tastes: _____

Sports Allegiance: _____

Political Leanings: _____

Other: _____

Personas



Name: _____

Age: _____

Residence: _____

Marital Status: _____

Children: _____

Job: _____

Annual Income: _____

Hobbies and Interests: _____

Musical Tastes: _____

Sports Allegiance: _____

Political Leanings: _____

Other: _____



Name: _____

Age: _____

Residence: _____

Marital Status: _____

Children: _____

Job: _____

Annual Income: _____

Hobbies and Interests: _____

Musical Tastes: _____

Sports Allegiance: _____

Political Leanings: _____

Other: _____

3. Write Content Guidelines

With the audience in mind, write a list of content guidelines to establish a shared vision for the writers who will be contributing to the blog. These guidelines should outline both *what* topics the blog will cover, but also *how* it will cover those topics.

Some questions to consider:

- Which topics will your blog cover? (music, sports, local events, pop culture, parenting, etc.)
- Which topics will the blog avoid? (politics, religions, negative reviews, etc.)
- What will the ratio of topics be? (50% music, 25% sports, etc.)
- Is there a minimum or maximum length for posts?
- Is cursing permissible?
- Should blogposts use a consistent tone? (positive, snarky, etc.)
- How should the text be formatted? (punctuation, addresses, abbreviations, etc.)
- How should links be incorporated?

Make sure that every person who is contributing to your blog has access to and has reviewed the guidelines.



4. Establish an Editorial Process

Next, establish a workflow for the blog. Start by defining the different roles needed to produce the blog. For example, it's always a good idea to have a second person review a blogpost before it is published, not only to check for spelling and grammatical errors, but also to ensure that the content meets the editorial guidelines. So you will want to split the role of writer and editor into two different positions. If you want a second pair of eyes to look at each blogpost before it goes live, you may want to establish separate roles for writers, editors, and publishers.

Draw up a list of expectations for each role. Some questions to consider:

- Who is responsible for which tasks?
- What is the expected turnaround time?
- How should people communicate to each other about the state of various blogposts?
- If somebody has a question, who should they turn to?

If you are using Wordpress as your blogging platform, it allows blogposts to be saved as different statuses: Draft, Pending, Published, and Scheduled. These can be very helpful when designing your editorial process. For example, a blogpost that is saved as a “draft” could be a work in progress only meant to be seen by the author, while a blogpost that is saved as “pending” could be ready for review by the editor. Use these different statuses as a way to communicate between the different people who are working on the blog.



TIP: There are a number of Wordpress plugins that can assist with your editorial process. These can automatically email staff members when a blogpost changes statues, allow contributors to leave notes for each other, or drag-and-drop posts on a calendar for easy scheduling.

5. Develop a List of Potential Topics

There's nothing worse than being assigned to write a blogpost and not knowing what to write about. Help your bloggers by creating a list of turnkey formulas that can be used to create content. Of course, they can always write about other topics if they are so inspired, but this fallback list can prevent writer's block.

Here are some ideas:

- **Album Review:** When an artist on your playlist releases a new album, write a short review. Include an affiliate link to purchase the album and embed a YouTube video of the album's single.
- **New Songs:** Write a post about the songs that were added to the playlist this week. What is the song about? Who was it inspired by? If it's a collaboration, how did the artists come together?
- **Concert Preview:** Is there a big artist coming to town? What can we expect from the setlist? What are people saying about previous stops on the tour? How can people win tickets or hear an interview on your station?
- **Concert Recap:** Did a big artist just come to town? What was the setlist? What are people saying about this stop on the tour? How can people hear a recording of your interview with the artist. Include your street team's photos from the concert.
- **What to Do This Weekend:** Tell people what's going on around town: concerts, festivals, plays, sporting events, movies, station events, etc.
- **Movie Preview:** What movies are opening this weekend? Write about the ones you are excited to see, and embed YouTube videos of the trailers in your posts.
- **Movie Review:** See any good movies over the weekend? Write a review. Include the YouTube trailer.
- **TV Show Recap:** Have a show that you're addicted to? Whether its *The Voice*, *Scandal*, or *Dr. Who*, write a recap of every episode. Tell us what happened, and inject your own opinion.
- **Sports Preview:** Is there a big game or sporting event coming up? Write about it!
- **Sports Review:** What happened in last night's game? What did you think?
- **5 Questions:** Email 5 questions to a local public figure (musician, sports star, chef, etc.) and ask them to send back their answers, along with a photo and a two-sentence bio. Publish it as a Q&A.
- **Holiday Ideas:** When a big holiday approaches, use it for inspiration. Where should people go? What should they eat? How should they dress? Etc.

- **Pop Culture Topics:** What pop culture events are coming up? Whether it's the Oscars, the Kentucky Derby, or the James Beard Awards, give us your opinion.
- **Current Events Listicles:** Everybody loves a good list. Write about your "Top 5 Scary Movies for Halloween," or your "5 Favorite Superbowl Moments"
- **Musical Listicles:** Reach into your station's musical library and write a list, like the "Top 5 Country Guitarists," "The Top 5 MTV VMA Moments," or the "Top 5 Local Bands to Watch."
- **Video Game Review:** Have a big gamer on your staff? Have them write about what they're playing.
- **Stand Up Comedy Preview:** Do you have a comedy club in your area? Write about the performers who are coming soon. Embed a YouTube video of their act.
- **Great Causes:** Find an upcoming local charity event and write about it.
- **Cool Kickstarter Projects:** Find a Kickstarter project that you love — ideally one from somebody in your market — and write about it.
- **Advice Column:** Have listeners pose questions (or fake them) and answer these questions in the style of Dear Abbey. You can focus on a particular area (parenting, cooking, music, etc.) or leave it wide open.



6. Implement a Content Calendar

A content calendar is a spreadsheet that maps out all of the upcoming posts to be published on your station's blog. When you are working with a blog that involves multiple authors, it is helpful to keep all of this information in a single document where everybody can see it. This document lays out the author, due date, and status of each blogpost.

[Email our Digital Dot Connector, Seth Resler](#), if you would like a content calendar template to get you started.



TIP: Don't email the content calendar back and forth as a spreadsheet; blog contributors won't know if they're looking at the latest version. Instead, host your content calendar in the cloud using a shared drive or Google Drive.



7. Set Achievable Goals

If you set the goals for your station's blog too high, you run the risk of missing them and getting discouraged. It's better to set the bar low in the beginning, and slowly raise it as you clear each goal. For example, start by asking each of your blog contributors to write one blogpost per week. Once they are able to do that consistently, aim for two, then three, then more. Once you have achieved the frequency you want, then turn your attention to the quality of the blogposts. Allow your team to build the blog output up slowly over time, and you will increase your odds of success.



8. Set Up Your Analytics

Measure your blog's performance to see which content is producing results and where there is room for improvement. There are many analytics services available to help you. We recommend starting with Google Analytics and then supplement it with additional services if you feel the need.



1. To install Google Analytics, you'll need to add a few lines of tracking code to the header of your website. [Follow these instructions.](#)
2. Give the appropriate staff members access to the Google Analytics data. [Find instructions here.](#)
3. Set up some custom dashboards to make your most important statistics easy to see. Here are some dashboard configurations you can install (create a Google Analytics account, sign in, and then click each link below):
 - [Traffic Sources Template](#)
 - [Content Dashboard Template](#)
 - [Bounce Rate Template](#)
4. Set Google Analytics up to automatically email you weekly reports for each dashboard. [Here are instructions.](#)
5. Set up Google Analytics to track your website's goals. [Find instructions here.](#)

There are several key metrics you will want to track, including:

- **Total Unique Visitors:** How many people came to the site?
- **Total Unique Pageviews:** How many different pages were viewed?
- **Traffic Sources:** Where are people coming to the site from?
- **Top Pages:** Which blog entries are people most interested in?
- **Bounce Rate:** Are people leaving the site without visiting a second page?
- **Conversion Rate:** Are people completing the goals (email signup, ad click, etc.) when they come to the site?

9. Adopt a Social Media Strategy

Be proactive about sharing your blog content over social networks. Don't just post a link; actively engage — especially on Facebook and Twitter.

To drive a lot of traffic back to the blogpost on your website, you want people to not only click on the link, but also to share the link with their followers. This is how blogposts go viral. To encourage this, follow these steps:



1. Right-click on a link in the published blogpost and open it in a new browser tab.
2. In this newly opened webpage, look for links to the associated Facebook and Twitter accounts; open each of these in a new tab.
3. For Facebook:
 - Make sure that you are posting as your station (click the small icon in the upper right corner of the status update).
 - Post to the page of the organization mentioned in the blogpost. Rave about them and include a link back to the blogpost. For example, “We can’t wait for the art and wine festival! It made our list of the top I’ve things to do this weekend. wkrp.com/top-5-things-to-do.”
4. For Twitter:
 - Post a tweet about the person or organization mentioned in the blogpost. Include the Twitter handle of the subject and a link back to the blogpost. Example: “We can’t wait for the [@ArtsAndWineFestival](#) at [@PaisleyPark](#) this weekend! Read about it here: wkrp.com/shortlink”
5. Repeat these steps for every link in the blogpost.



TIP: When posting to Twitter, use the language of the medium, including Twitter handles and hashtags. When posting to Facebook, use regular English, not Twitterspeak.

10. Optimize for Search Engines

You want people to find your blogposts when they conduct searches in sites like Google, Yahoo!, and Bing. Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is the art of getting your website listed at the top of the organic (a opposed to paid) search results in these sites.



SEO can be complicated — you could hire a team of people to optimize your blog — but there are some basic guidelines that you can follow to improve your rankings:

- Include key search terms (“keywords”) in the post title
- Include keywords, separated by hyphens, in the post url
- Include at least one external link (a link to another website) in every blogpost
- Include at least one internal link (a link to another page on your website) in every blogpost
- Include an image in every blogpost
- Make sure that the image has the proper title, alt text, and description tags

The more often you post blog articles, the more traffic you will see from search engines, so publishing at a consistent frequency is important. Eventually, you want to post at least three blogposts each day to generate sizable traffic from search engines.



TIP: If your website is built in Wordpress, install the Yoast SEO plugin to help you optimize your blog for search engines.

11. Promote the Blog on the Air

Don't forget to use your stations airwaves to promote your blogposts on the air. Set up vanity URLs — short, easy to remember URLs such as wkrp.com/festival — for popular blogposts so it is easy for on-air talent to talk about them and the audience to remember them. Use a mix of live and produced elements to drive traffic to the blog.



12. Hold a Weekly Digital Strategy Meeting

The final — and perhaps most important — step to launching a successful station blog is to conduct a weekly digital strategy meeting. The goal of this meeting is to review the performance of the past week's blogposts and to plan content for the upcoming week.

The following people should be involved:

- The Program Director
- The Webmaster
- The Social Media Manager
- Contributing writers (allow them to phone in if they have another role at the station)

Start the meeting by reviewing your Google Analytics reports, as well as any other metrics you have (from your email service provider, social media management tool, app analytics, etc.). Look for patterns that can guide future editorial decisions:

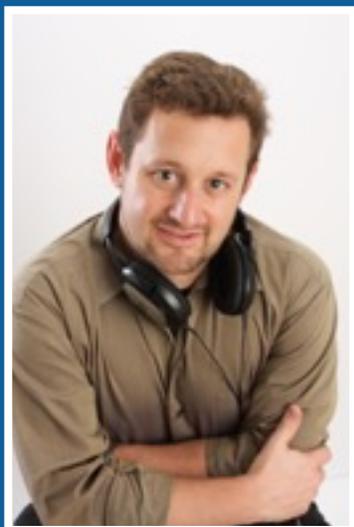
- Which topics attracted the most traffic?
- Which forms of content (lists, reviews, videos, etc.) performed the best?
- Did certain types of content perform better on some social networks than others?
- Did certain types of content leads to more goal conversions than others?

After you have reviewed the last week's performance, turn to the week ahead. Use your Content Calendar to assign blog articles to each writer.



Final Thoughts

Building a successful blog takes months. Don't expect to get it perfect on the first try. Give your team room for errors and the opportunity to learn from those mistakes. Over time, you will see your blog grow into the heart of your content marketing strategy.



Next Step:

When you are ready, I would be happy to guide you through your initial digital strategy meetings. Reach out to me to set up a time.

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