

# Blog Success Manifesto

*Thirty tactical tips to help you gain your next  
1000 subscribers in record time*

*By Erica Douglass of Erica.biz*



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## Why 1000 subscribers?

One of the first questions that may pop into your head when you read this is, “Why 1000 subscribers?” What’s so important about that number?

Besides being psychologically important (going from 3 digits to 4 digits of blog subscribers is significant), 1000 subscribers was, for me, where I really started to feel the impact of having my own community:

**1000 subscribers was where I really started to feel the impact of having my own community.**

- People emailed me to talk about my latest blog post or to ask questions about their business or financial life.
- Book authors, PR companies, and other businesses emailed me to pitch their latest products.
- People would email or Tweet me asking why I hadn’t posted in a while.

Also, 1000 subscribers was where I could publish a blog post with a link to a product and feel confident that I would make at least one sale. (And let me tell you – it’s such a huge accomplishment to make a sale just from writing a blog post!)

Finally, I think it’s fairly straightforward to gain 1000 subscribers to your blog. It took me about a year; it would take me far less time were I to do it again now in a new blog.

These 30 tactics are content-filled, in-depth, and specific. In some cases, you can put them into action today and start seeing more new subscribers tomorrow.

# Introduction

## Who am I?

My name is Erica Douglass. I founded a technology company at age 20 and sold it at age 26 for \$1,100,000.00. You can read about the six years I spent building my business, including all the pitfalls and the story of the worst day of my life, in my post [The End of An Era](#).



Having sold my business and not needing to work for many years, I went on a journey of self-exploration, which ultimately led to many personal growth experiences.

One of my growing interests was Internet marketing. I was fascinated by the psychology of what gets people to buy products. My voracious appetite for reading led me to blogs like [Problogger](#).

I became interested in blogging for a few reasons; mainly, because I love writing. Also, many people were asking me questions like “How did you become so successful at a young age?” I thought that perhaps one of the best ways to document my success would be to start writing about it.

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## *Why am I writing this?*

My interest in buyer psychology led me to a fervor of tweaking and testing my blog in various ways. I decided early on that the most interesting metric I wished to optimize was the number of subscribers.

*My blog has led to countless interesting experiences that I would not have had otherwise.*

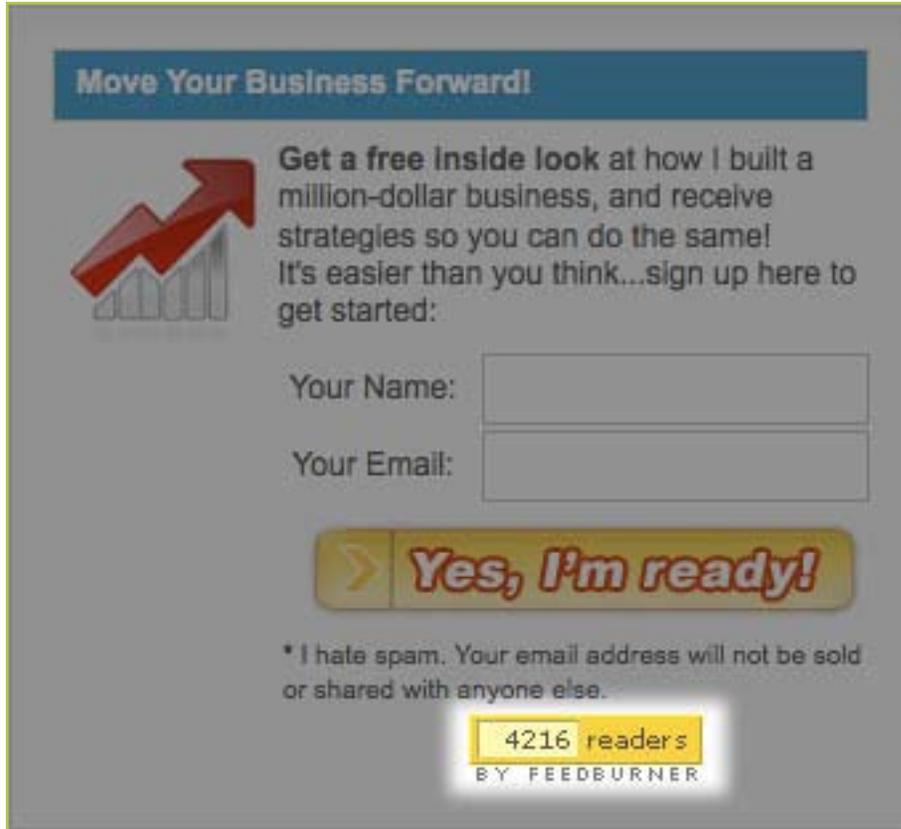
Pageviews and unique visitors were interesting from advertisers' perspectives, but I wasn't that interested in having ads on my blog. I wanted to sell my own products and develop a loyal following that would grow over time; thus, I used subscribers as my metric of choice.

My blog has led to countless interesting experiences that I wouldn't have had otherwise. I have accepted offers for speaking engagements, sold products, created my own products, and learned how to shoot, produce, and edit video and audio – and much more.

As my blog grows, I expect it will help me write and produce a best-selling book, as well as more easily sell my own products.

My blog will be instrumental in the creation of my next million-dollar business.

## Why am I writing this?



**Move Your Business Forward!**

Get a free inside look at how I built a million-dollar business, and receive strategies so you can do the same! It's easier than you think...sign up here to get started:

Your Name:

Your Email:

**> Yes, I'm ready!**

\* I hate spam. Your email address will not be sold or shared with anyone else.

4216 readers  
BY FEEDBURNER

You may not have such lofty goals for your own blog, and that's okay. However, whatever your goals are for your blog, having more subscribers will help you achieve them.

**These thirty tactics are the culmination of a year and a half of testing and study, during which I have grown my blog from 70 subscribers to over 4,000, while only posting on average once every 10 days.**

Without further ado, here are thirty tactics to help you gain more blog subscribers!

# STEP 1

Figure out your voice and angle

## 1: Choose a topic

Your blog needs to have a topic, but it can be loose. I define my blog as a “business success” blog, but, even more loosely, every post I write about relates to either how to make money (in business, or by investing), or how to save money.

**More subscribers will help you achieve any goals you have for your blog.**

I never tire about writing about economics, money, investing, saving, and running a business. Those topics are pretty broad, though...don't you agree? My blog is broad enough that I don't get bored, but not so broad that my readers don't know what to expect.

My topic keeps me in line, as well. I could write about my cat bringing a dead bird into the house, but that wouldn't fit what my readers expect. I also enjoy eating out and reviewing restaurants, but that's not why my readers subscribed. Knowing what my readers expect helps me understand what to write every week.

## STEP 1

Figure out your voice and angle

## 2: Demonstrate why your readers should listen to you

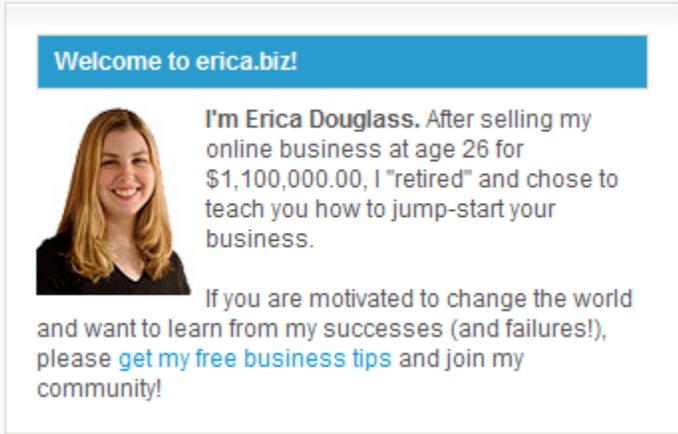
There's nothing I hate more than going to a blog that appears to be well-written where I can't find out anything about the author!

I always want to know who wrote a particular post. Who are they? What life experiences made them decide to write this? That's where an About Box and an About Page come in.

Your about box should be on your home page. Assuming you don't wish to remain anonymous (I strongly suggest you use your real name, as it helps readers gain trust in you), your picture should be in it.

There should also be an easy-to-find link to an About page in your top header – preferably right next to your Home link.

**About the Author:  
Who are you?  
What life experiences made you decide to write this post?**



Welcome to erica.biz!

 I'm Erica Douglass. After selling my online business at age 26 for \$1,100,000.00, I "retired" and chose to teach you how to jump-start your business.

If you are motivated to change the world and want to learn from my successes (and failures!), please [get my free business tips](#) and join my community!

Here's mine

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# STEP 1

## Figure out your voice and angle

Your about box and your about page are your chance to demonstrate credibility in your subject. Don't worry if you haven't yet achieved what you set out to do – but if that's the case, set goals. Your readers will be fascinated by your regular updates on your progress toward \$10,000 a month of online income, setting up your new business, or your goal of writing from 300 different cities in the world.

***Don't worry if you haven't yet achieved what you set out to do—set goals and make your key goals interesting.***

Whatever it is – make your key goals interesting. Reading your goals will draw people in who are like-minded. Don't just say “Start a business,” say “Start a business making at least \$10,000/month by July 2010 so I can quit my day job.” Then blog every week about your progress – or lack thereof! Readers love getting a personal glimpse into your life.

End both your about box and your about page with an invitation for readers to follow you as you progress along your journey by subscribing to your blog. (I get about 10 new subscribers a day just by doing this.)

## STEP 1

Figure out your voice and angle

### 3: Own your accomplishments

Don't be shy about tooting your own horn in your About page. It's perfectly all right to let people know why they should listen to you.

"I juggled raising four kids while paying off over \$76,000 in debt by building my own on-line business," one of our [Inspiring Innovators](#) told me. What an amazing story! And she chronicled every week of paying off that debt on her blog.

***"I juggled raising four kids while paying off over \$76,000 in debt by building my own online business!"***

Some of the best blogs are "journey" stories. When you win, everyone will celebrate with you. And when you struggle, you will have a built-in audience encouraging you to persevere.

Blogging is a great tool to help you accomplish any big life goal.

## STEP 1

Figure out your voice and angle

### 4: *Have your own domain name; make it memorable*

Many new bloggers who are not sure whether they want to stick with blogging start out with a free blog on a platform such as Blogger or wordpress.com. They get theirname. [blogging service name].com.

The problem comes when you need to grow and/or make money from your blog. Wordpress.com, for instance, has restrictions on which themes you are allowed to use, and you are not allowed to place advertising on your blog. This severely limits your available ways of making money from your blog.

*Your own domain name gives you more ways to make money from your blog.*

Finally, if things come to a head with your web host and you have your own domain name (which I recommend registering someplace other than with your web hosting company), you can pack things up and move elsewhere. Should you have issues with Blogger or Wordpress.com, you are trapped in their system and unable to leave.

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# STEP 1

## Figure out your voice and angle

This was made clear by a friend of mine, Jen, who runs the popular blog [Millionaire Mommy Next Door](#).

Her Google account was hacked and Google froze her entire account—**including her entire blog!** Locked out, and with no way to contact Google support, she had to start completely over.

**Don't let yourself get held hostage by a blog provider.**

She now has her own domain name with her own Wordpress installation on it, but she lost many of her subscribers and had to re-import all of her old posts by hand.



Let Jen's lesson be yours, as well—don't let yourself get held hostage by a blog provider. Start with your own domain name.

You can change your domain name later much more easily than you can change a free blog provider.

## STEP 1

Figure out your voice and angle

### 5: Figure out why you want to blog

What are your goals? There are no right or wrong answers here; figuring out why you really want to blog, though, can help motivate you to continue.

Pretty much every blogger has, at one point, had that sinking “Ugh, I haven’t posted in…” feeling. What motivates you to log in and create a post instead of just flipping on the TV or browsing the Web?

For me, there are several motivations. I really enjoy the emails and Tweets I get from people who enjoy my blog’s content. I want to become a famous author and speaker and having a blog is a good way to build my expertise and become a recognized authority in my industry. And, finally, blogging is a decent source of income for me.

**What motivates you to log in and create a post?**



You will likely have various motivations, too. But make sure to define why you’re doing this in advance to carry you through the inevitable dry spells.

## STEP 1

Figure out your voice and angle

### 6: *Envision your ideal audience*

This may be tricky if you're just starting a blog, but once you have been blogging for a few months, you may have a feel for who is finding and reading your blog. That's the time to really deepen it and reach out.

Don't be afraid to exclude people—if you want to blog to other moms with toddlers, and you write well about that, you will build a receptive and loyal audience. Not only will they stand by you through thick and thin, but they may also buy products you love, review, and recommend.



*Soon, you'll have a feel for who is finding and reading your blog. Reach out!*

Remember that those who comment on your blog are a small minority—and some of your commenters are bound to be trollish (especially if you allow anonymous comments.)

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# STEP 1

## Figure out your voice and angle

Your ideal audience isn't likely to be the same people who comment on your blog.

Instead of only listening to your commenters, try adding a survey to your blog.

You can do this for free; my post [How To Survey Your Customers for Free Using Google Docs](#) will have you up and running with a working survey in about 15 minutes.



Offer a small bribe for taking the survey. Maybe it's a copy of an ebook you've written. In my case, I held a drawing and mailed books I loved (hard copy!) to a few lucky winners. This helped me get many more responses to my survey.

## STEP 1

### Figure out your voice and angle

In your survey, ask your readers what type of posts they want to see more of, and then repeat that question for types of posts they would like to see less of.

Ask relevant demographic questions—for instance, I asked my readers whether they owned a business, and whether that business was a physical bricks-and-mortar business, an online business, or a physical business with an additional web presence.

**Ask your readers what kind of posts they do and don't want to see.**

I also asked basic questions like gender and age (which is helpful for advertisers). Finally, I found the real gold mine: I asked my survey respondents, “Do you have a question you'd like to see me answer on [erica.biz](http://erica.biz)?”

Nearly a third of the survey respondents answered this question, and I used several of their questions as future blog post fodder!

# STEP 1

## Figure out your voice and angle

I also asked “Do you have a particular post idea or type of blog post that you would like to see me post?” 38% of the respondents answered, which helped me formulate a general direction for my blog.

Answering your readers’ questions and understanding your readers’ needs are key components of a successful blog. After closing the survey, I felt more confident knowing who was in my audience, and I reformulated many pieces of my blog to cater specifically to online business owners.

If there is one thing I can stress, it’s that **you will never make everyone who visits your blog happy**. Be okay with the fact that you have a niche.

### **Know your audience and ignore the haters.**

Don’t try to be everything to everyone. Focus your content, and announce your niche loud and clear right in your blog’s tagline.

Ignore the haters, whiners, and complainers, and enjoy the fact that your audience grows every day—because you know exactly who to reach out to!

## STEP 2

### Design your blog

## 7: Put your topic in your blog header

Too many blogs only have their blog's name (which can be cryptic) in their blog header.

Instead, tell potential subscribers why they are reading your blog. It doesn't have to be catchy, but it should give them an immediate incentive to stick around. Yaro Starak, on his blog [Entrepreneurs-Journey](#), does an excellent job of this:

His tagline immediately defines who his audience is ("bloggers and Internet marketers") and what you will get from his blog ("Down-to-Earth advice and tips.")



**Entrepreneurs-Journey.com**

*“Down-To-Earth Advice and Tips  
For Bloggers and Internet Marketers”*

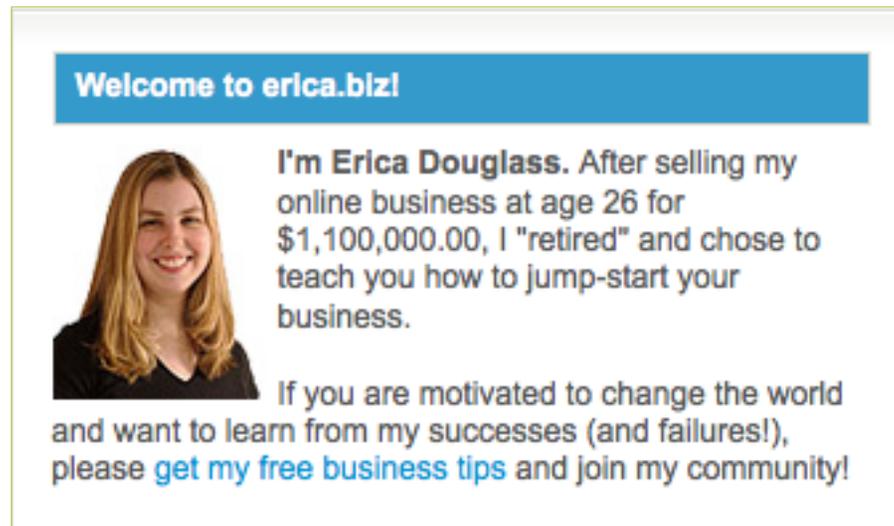
What do you have to offer? What topics do you blog about? Take some time and consider your blog from a reader's perspective. Then incorporate a simple, one-sentence description of what readers will get into your header image as a tagline.

## STEP 2

### Design your blog

## 8: Tell readers about yourself on your home page

In Step 1, you figured out why you wanted to blog. Now, it's time to put that into action—right underneath your blog header. Write 2-3 sentences describing who you are and why you started your blog. This is also where your picture should go (see below.)



The image shows a screenshot of a blog's 'About' section. At the top, there is a blue header bar with the text 'Welcome to erica.biz!'. Below this, on the left, is a portrait of a woman with long blonde hair, smiling. To the right of the portrait, the text reads: 'I'm Erica Douglass. After selling my online business at age 26 for \$1,100,000.00, I "retired" and chose to teach you how to jump-start your business.' Below this text, there is a call to action: 'If you are motivated to change the world and want to learn from my successes (and failures!), please [get my free business tips](#) and join my community!'. The entire content is enclosed in a thin green border.

Place a call to action underneath your about box. What would you like people to do? Sign up to receive something? Read your most popular posts? Whatever it is, put a link to it right below that. If your reader feels comfortable with you, he or she will likely follow your call to action.

## STEP 2

### Design your blog

## 9: Have a great About page

Your About page isn't necessarily your life story—it's a way to succinctly emphasize your personal experience in your niche. Explain who you are (a few personal details are always appreciated, like where you live) and talk about why you started your blog.



Your About page is also an excellent place for a larger picture of yourself.

Go into an overview of what your readers can expect from you. What types of blog posts do you typically write? Where do you see your blog going in the future? If you don't know the answers to these questions, now would be a good time to sit down and think about them.

If you have any posts that your readers responded to well, that go into detail about how and why you are blogging about your topic, definitely pull out excerpts and link to them here, as well.

If you're intimidated by writing about yourself, start with this tactic, and fill in details you think may be important to your readers.

Links from your About page should go to your contact page, your subscribe page, and any products you have personally created that are related to your blog.

## STEP 2

### Design your blog

## 10: Set your permalinks properly

This is hugely important for search engine credibility.

When you are just starting out, and you have a Wordpress blog with a paid hosting company, links to your individual blog posts look like this: **http://[your domain name]/?p=1**

But search engines prefer that you have keywords in your post URL.

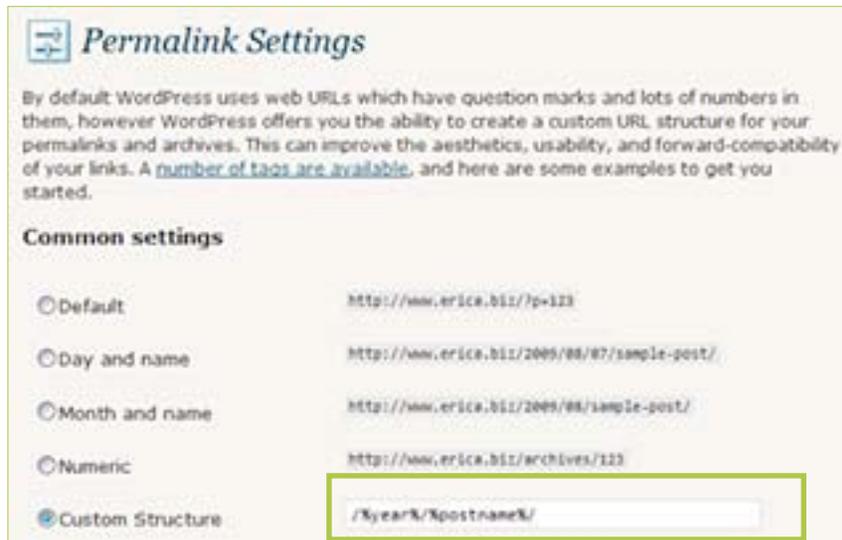
To change this in Wordpress, go to your wp-admin directory, log in, and go to Settings->Permalinks.

You should see something like this:



## STEP 2

### Design your blog



Change this from “Default” to something else.

As you can see here, I have a custom setting that shows the year (like 2009) followed by my post name. You can also use the “Day and name” (especially useful if you post daily) or “Month and name” options.

This is critical if you want search engines to rank your blog highly (and trust me, you do!)

Another tip for search engines – Wordpress automatically creates a permalink when you write a post title. Removing filler words like “and” and “the” from your

permalink may also improve your search rankings. As a general rule, the only words in your permalink should be the words in your title that people will actually search for.

## STEP 2

### Design your blog

## 11: Put your picture on your blog

Assuming you don't want to blog anonymously (and I recommend, if at all possible, using your real name when you blog), your picture should be a key element of your blog. Pictures help your audience connect with you. Don't worry; you don't have to be a supermodel. Your blog readers will identify with you as a "regular person" as well!

At the very least, put a quality photo of yourself on your About page. I like putting my photo on my home page as well, but that's optional.

If all your photos of yourself are grainy or poor quality, it is worth getting a professional photo done. I've traded photographers for these several times; I typically barter my tech skills, but many good photographers accept gifts of cookies, etc. as well. If you only need one or two images, it can't hurt to barter for it. Just make sure the photographer knows you don't need or expect an entire studio setup.

Once you have the photo, use an image resizer to get it the right size for your blog, and then upload it. Voila—instant professionalism! (Don't have image resizing software? Try the free image resizer at <http://webresizer.com/>)



Welcome to erica.biz

**I'm Erica Douglass.** After selling my online business at age 26 for \$1,100,000.00, I "retired" and chose to teach you how to jump-start your business.

If you are motivated to change the world and want to learn from my successes (and failures!), please [get my free business tips](#) and join my community!

## STEP 2

### Design your blog

## 12: Convert your feed to Feedburner

Feedburner is Google's service that handles your RSS feed for you. (It also handles email subscriptions, but in Step 5, I explain why I don't use their email service.)

I like Feedburner for several reasons. Here are a few:

**It keeps track of your subscriber count for you.** It isn't completely accurate, but it's the best method anyone has to track your subscribers, and it's what everyone else uses.

There are many blog ranking services out there that will rank your blog, and **you will need a Feedburner subscriber count to rank higher.**

**It allows you to add Google AdSense to your RSS feed,** so people who are reading in a feed reader see relevant ads. I don't use this service, as I try to keep ads to a minimum on my site, but many other bloggers swear by it.

**It contains useful graphics that you let advertise how many people are subscribed.** This is useful for social proof, especially when you have more than 100 subscribers.

If you are currently using a version of Wordpress installed with your own hosting account, but are not using Feedburner, make sure to [redirect your old feed to Feedburner](#). This ensures that all your subscribers will be counted.

## STEP 2

### Design your blog

## 13: Put related posts on each of your posts

There are plugins that will “automatically generate” related posts for each blog post you write, but to me, this is missing an opportunity. The “Recommended Reading” links I put (manually) at the bottom of each post I write are some of the most-clicked links on my blog posts.

If a reader finds a related post that he or she likes, that reader is much more likely to subscribe to your blog. So put some time into developing related posts after each of your blog posts.

I typically link to three posts, then write a short 1-sentence description about the post. If possible, I tie it in to my current post.

While this may sound like a lot of work, it's fairly quick to write this bulleted list, and the dividends are enormous. I have also used this spot to quietly advertise paid products that the reader may be interested in. You'd be surprised how many sales it generates with basically no complaints.

## STEP 2

### Design your blog

#### 14: Put a picture in each blog post

A picture on each of your blog posts livens up your blog and makes it easier on the eyes.



I really felt the impact of having pictures on my blog when I went to a conference and showed a screenshot of my blog's home page in front of the audience. I hadn't thought anything of it when I made the screenshot, but my most recent post at the time had a picture of a guy with his head buried in his laptop. The audience laughed!

It took me a second to figure out why they were laughing. Then it hit me—these pictures weren't just "cute", but they were really pulling people into my blog and making them read!

That was a real breakthrough moment. Having realized the value of photos, I now place a picture in every blog post I write.

## STEP 2

### Design your blog

I find my images at [istockphoto.com](http://istockphoto.com). I buy the “extra small” images, which cost 1 credit per image. You buy credits in bulk. Use coupons at [retailmenot.com](http://retailmenot.com) to bring down the price a bit. Keep in mind that credits expire 1 year after purchase. I buy 50 credits a year for about \$56, and find this to be a remarkable value for the quality of the images I get.

If you really can't afford to spend even \$56 on images, try a search on Flickr. You must search for photos under a Creative Commons license; others are not legal to use. Conveniently, Flickr has set up a page where you can [view and search for Creative Commons-licensed photos](#).

If you choose to use a Creative Commons-licensed photo, remember that although it is free of charge, you must properly attribute it. Generally, this means specifying the person's Flickr username and linking back to the photo's web page on Flickr. Don't abuse this or disregard it; photographers put a lot of effort into posting their photos and deserve to be properly credited.

If you don't want to clutter your blog with links back to Flickr, pay for istockphoto credits and use those photos instead. It's your choice – but either way, it's worth it to find a perfect photo for every blog post.

## STEP 3

### Write great content

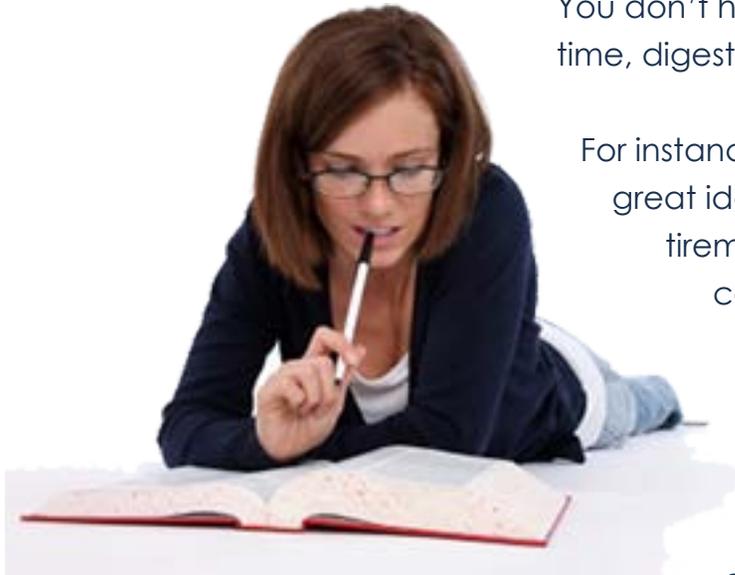
## 15: Read a book; apply one idea from it to a blog post

One of the keys to becoming a great blogger is to become a voracious reader. Too many people make the mistake of only reading blogs and newspapers. Books offer a fantastic source of content that is often overlooked. Read 10 books in your subject matter and you will likely know more than 98% of your readers.

You don't have to do this all at once, however. I recommend reading one book at a time, digesting its information, and then regurgitating it into a blog post.

For instance, in March 2009, I read the book [Made To Stick](#). I thought it had a lot of great ideas, but it wasn't until I read another blog post on people not saving for retirement that something clicked in my head. Maybe retirement wasn't an easy concept for most people to digest. *Made to Stick* explains how to make non-sticky ideas stick, so I applied their concept to retirement, and wrote a blog post titled "[Why You Don't Save for Retirement](#)."

The post caught on and got a lot of social media traffic. It won an Editor's Choice in the [Carnival of Personal Finance](#) (selected from hundreds of other blog posts), and was picked up by several other blogs.



## STEP 3

### Write great content

One of the rules I have is that I really don't favor doing just a "book review." Instead, after reading a book, I try to apply a tenet or two of it to my life or a societal problem.

Another success came when I was reading a book called [Bowling Alone](#). It's a tough read, and I will admit I didn't get all the way through it. However, that didn't matter – what caught my eye was the statistics about what people were doing with their time.

You see, I knew that there are two main obstacles people throw out when it comes to starting a business: "I just don't have the time" and "I don't have any money." I had addressed starting a business with no money, but I couldn't figure out where people were spending their time. I borrowed *Bowling Alone* from a friend to figure it out, and figure it out I did: on average, people spend over two hours a day watching TV!

I found the book [Time, Goods, and Well-Being](#) on an inter-library loan, which was cited by the author of *Bowling Alone* as his reference for figuring out where people spent their time. This was a hefty reference book, but I didn't have to dig far to find the statistics I wanted. I referenced both books in my blog post, lending credibility by citing sources other than myself.

**Key tip:** Find multiple statistics that support your ideas, then reference and cite them in your blog post, to help lend credibility to any point you decide to make. Even if it takes you a few hours of reading, it's worth the time.

## STEP 3

### Write great content

## 16: Write great guest posts for popular blogs

I formulated a post called “Finding Time To Pursue Your Dreams: Free Up 750 Hours A Year With One Simple Change”, and submitted it to the largest blog I knew of in the personal finance world, J.D. Roth's [Get Rich Slowly](#). I figured if he didn't accept it, I would email other places, or at the very least, post it on my blog.

Not long after that, I received the following email from J.D.:

“ **WOW.**

**I spent the morning slogging through sub-par guest submissions, grouching about what I'm going to put up in tomorrow's guest slot. Either people can't write a coherent sentence, or their logic is hard to follow, or their posts lack substance. Then, on a whim, I read your post. (Normally, it would have gone to the bottom of the stack.) I'm impressed.**

**I'll be putting this up tomorrow.**

**Note that there's very little editing, however. It's great as is.**

**Thank you. You have an open invitation to write for GRS any time. (And are one of just a few people who have such an invite.)**

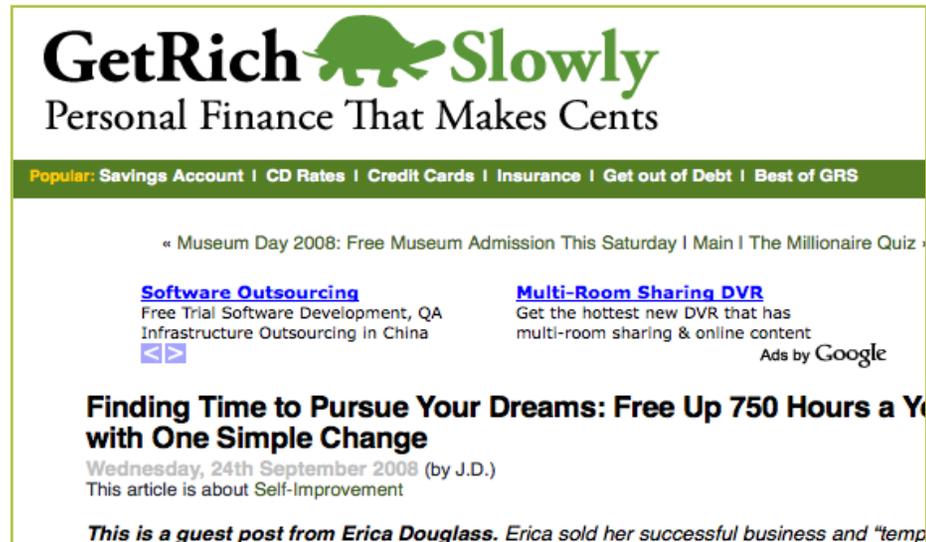
**--j.d.”**

# STEP 3

## Write great content

Here's the post I wrote:

[Finding Time to Pursue Your Dreams: Free Up 750 Hours a Year with One Simple Change](#)



In that post, I laid out the problem—most people claim they would definitely do something they want to do, if only they had more time.

Then, I showed a solution (try a TiVo, and not watching every episode of a show), and overcame objections (“What if I like TV?”—people who watch TV aren't necessarily happier; “I don't watch that much TV”—but brainless Internet surfing is probably just as bad.)

## STEP 3

### Write great content

This is the simple format of every blog post I write – make people think differently about something by finding and showcasing facts and statistics and citing my sources. I include my own relevant experience.

I think of the questions that people might have, and I also ask my friends for questions. Then, I answer those questions in the article. I typically end the blog post with a challenge.

***A great guest post will take time, but the rewards are worth it.***

That one guest post, by the way (my first on a major blog!), earned me nearly 5,000 new visitors and about 150 new subscribers. That's a huge impact!

It should take you a few hours to write a great guest post. I have spent up to 12 hours writing a single post, but the rewards are worth it. Save some of your best posts for other blogs, then link back to them on your own blog.

Try to do this at least once a month.

I wrote a step-by-step video guide called *Guest Post Secrets* that shares all the details of exactly how to get popular bloggers to send you thousands of visitors for free. When you buy it, you help to support my blog. [Check out \*Guest Post Secrets\* now!](#)

## STEP 3

### Write great content

#### 17: *Instead of regurgitating a common theme, ask “Why?”*

Every industry has common themes that float around. In the personal finance world, one of them is “Spend less than you earn.” It’s so common that it’s really boring advice. If you write it on a blog, no one will listen. If you write a story about how you spent less than you earned, that’s marginally interesting, but it still won’t get you huge traction unless your story is incredibly unique.

***The most success I have had as a blogger is digging to find out the answer to WHY people behave the way we do.***

The most success I have had as a blogger, unequivocally, is digging to find out the answer to why people behave the way we do. We all can probably recite the whole “Spend less than you earn” mantra, but most of us don’t do it.

Answering the question “why?” from your own perspective is, frankly, blogging gold. In my example, I had just bought a new car despite recently writing a blog post about how buying a used car could make you \$1 million in your lifetime!

My journey to figure out what was at the root of wanting a new car opened my eyes to the huge role that emotions play in our financial lives. It led to a post called “[Why You Don’t Save Money \(Even Though You Know It’s The Right Thing To Do.\)](#)”

This post hit a huge nerve. My blog had only a handful of subscribers at that point, but a personal finance blog with over 50,000 subscribers, The Simple Dollar, picked up the post and ran with it in a post called “[Emotional Fulfillment and Financial Success.](#)”

## STEP 3

### Write great content

Note that I didn't email the blog owner, Trent. I simply left a comment on one of his earlier posts pointing to the article. The provocative title and in-your-face bashing of personal finance columnists and bloggers hit its mark. I wrote:

**“ We have failed. Instead of teaching kids that their worth comes from within, we've given in to the marketing bandwagon's “emotional blitz” and bought stuff that we thought would make us happy. Yet we're just as depressed as we ever have been.**

**Personal finance bloggers and financial columnists miss the mark when they write, “JUST SPEND LESS THAN YOU EARN!!” It's not about that. Those daily lattes the financial columnists love to target as a key component of being frugal...when we buy them, we aren't thinking about the \$4. We're thinking “This latte will make me more happy (somehow).” Spending less than we earn won't make us happy in the same way, and that's why, despite the plethora of financial advice available, most of us are still in debt. ”**

***I got 40 new subscribers from one blog comment.***

I gained hundreds of new visitors and at least 40 new subscribers from the link from The Simple Dollar—plus lots of interesting comments on my post.

**Key tip:** Emailing blog authors may not be as successful as simply leaving comments on their posts. Write a post that appeals to them personally – maybe, as I did, by telling them how the subset of bloggers you and they are in got a certain thing wrong.

*erica.biz*

blog *success* manifesto • download your **free** copy at [erica.biz/manifesto](http://erica.biz/manifesto)

## STEP 3

### Write great content

#### 18: Write consistently

Many probloggers advise beginning bloggers to write consistently, and then, like clockwork, the beginning bloggers get overwhelmed because they think they have to post every day.

Let me be the one to reassure you, then: **You don't need to post every day.** In fact, I wouldn't personally start a blog where I felt like I had to post every day to "keep up." It will probably take 6-12 months for your blog to catch on and for you to make money from it; posting 360+ times before you make more than a few dollars can be really discouraging.

Beyond that, though, I would rather see more bloggers put 2-3 hours of thought into each post and post twice a week than put 30 minutes of thought into each post and post every day. Many blogs—even some popular ones—have a dearth of good content. They are full of links, marketing rah-rah blah-blah, and "product reviews", but lack really compelling content. I urge you to not go down this route.

Based on my traffic statistics, my viewers are most happy when I post every 2-3 days. That's only 2-3 posts per week. My current goal is to do one post per week, but make it really compelling. I could certainly easily increase my traffic by 20-30% if I posted compelling posts 2-3 times a week, but since very little of my revenue comes from basic page views, I choose not to.

## STEP 3

### Write great content

It's much better for both you and your blog visitors for you to vow post once per week and stick to it than to post 3-4 times in one week and none the next. If you get the writing urge, complete a post and leave it in your Drafts folder. At your discretion, you can also use your blogging software's Schedule Post feature to schedule it for a later date and time.

By writing posts in advance, if you get sick or want to go on a vacation, you can—without worrying about your blog. Many big bloggers write 10 or more posts in this way. It's never a bad idea to have a surplus.

My goal is that every post I write will change or improve my readers' lives in some way. That means I typically don't post "I'm Out of Town for The Next Week", etc. posts. I will send an update to my mailing list and post on Twitter where I am. If people want that detail of granularity about your life, they will follow you on Twitter, subscribe to your list, or ask to be your friend on Facebook. Or they will just call you. ;)

**Key tip:** Work more on longer, more thoughtful posts and less on obsessing about posting every day. Do, however, stick to a schedule. Watch your traffic, and when unique visitors start dying down and comments stop coming in, it's time to write a new post. For most bloggers, this will likely be every 2-3 days.

## STEP 3

### Write great content

## 19: Make every post about your readers, not about you

Blogging about your own experience is great, but it's key to tie it into your readers' expectations for your posts. Too many personal bloggers simply write about what they did last night or the day before without context—"Look! I cooked a casserole!" with the next post "Isn't my daughter cute in her new outfit?"

**Too many bloggers write about what they did last night.**

There's nothing wrong with this—unless you want to monetize your blog. And unless you're an excellent writer who brings humor to even the most mundane situations (e.g. [Dooce](#)), it's unlikely you will succeed by writing solely about your personal life.

Tie in what you have been doing lately with lessons geared for your audience. One of the bloggers I greatly respect for being able to do this is J.D. Roth at Get Rich Slowly. He recently wrote a post about going to a community garage sale, [A Day at the Community Garage Sale](#), and tied it in with lessons he is learning about how to control his urge for Stuff.

## STEP 3

### Write great content

The post was interesting because J.D. took a mundane activity that many of us can relate to (visiting a garage sale) and related it to his readers' goals (purging Stuff, being frugal, and getting out of debt.) It is clear that J.D. knows what will appeal to his readers—because he knows what his readers want, and he shares many of the same goals.

Write about your experiences, but relate them to what you know your readers are expecting. I consider this a challenge and enjoy pondering how many of my daily experiences can be imparted as life lessons for myself and others in the world of entrepreneurship and business.

I try to include a summary of lessons learned from the experiences I write about in every post. This has the added bonus of bonding me with my readers, since they know I am learning right along with them!

## STEP 4

### Promote and publicize

## 20: Write for search engines as well as people

This keyword trick is something pretty much all of the top bloggers do. It's important to learn the ins and outs of the [Google keyword tool](#) in order to maximize your chances of appearing #1 in Google search results for searches relevant to your blog's topic.

Try typing in common question words such as "Why" or "How to" plus a generic word that describes your blog, like "business" or "money".



Once you find a term you like, check out how many people are searching for it every month. I usually target terms with 400-1000 monthly searches.

Name your blog post exactly the same as the term people typed in to Google. Avoid extraneous words.

One of the best examples on my blog was when I figured out that a lot of people were typing in "start a business with no money" into Google. I found this keyword by typing "start business" into the Google keyword tool and looking for similar searches that

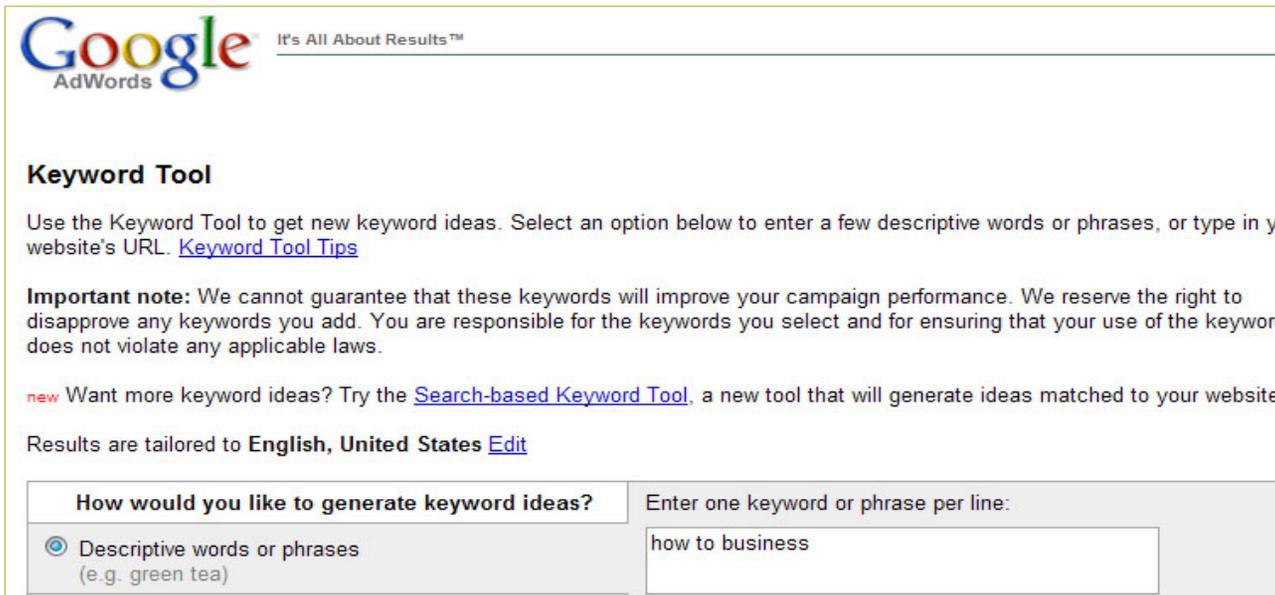
people typed in. "Start a business" itself was too competitive, but "start a business with no money" wasn't horribly competitive.

## STEP 4

### Promote and publicize

I wrote a post which quickly became the #1 result in Google for that search, and I get a steady flow of traffic from that post. Imagine if you wrote two of these every week for a year; you would have 100 posts on the front page of Google for various keyword terms, and you would have hundreds (or possibly thousands) of visitors a day coming to your blog and reading your advice!

Using the Google keyword tool is key. I generally formulate a vague idea of what I want to write about, then start typing keywords into Google to see what people are searching for.



The screenshot shows the Google AdWords Keyword Tool interface. At the top left is the Google AdWords logo with the tagline "It's All About Results™". Below the logo is the heading "Keyword Tool". The main text reads: "Use the Keyword Tool to get new keyword ideas. Select an option below to enter a few descriptive words or phrases, or type in your website's URL. [Keyword Tool Tips](#)". An "Important note" follows: "We cannot guarantee that these keywords will improve your campaign performance. We reserve the right to disapprove any keywords you add. You are responsible for the keywords you select and for ensuring that your use of the keyword does not violate any applicable laws." Below this is a "new" announcement: "Want more keyword ideas? Try the [Search-based Keyword Tool](#), a new tool that will generate ideas matched to your website." At the bottom, it says "Results are tailored to English, United States [Edit](#)". The main input area is divided into two sections: "How would you like to generate keyword ideas?" with a radio button selected for "Descriptive words or phrases (e.g. green tea)", and "Enter one keyword or phrase per line:" with a text input field containing "how to business".

Then I make sure to massage my title, permalink, and content so that the keywords people are searching for are listed prominently. (Don't write like a robot—just include them naturally as you write your post.)

If you write well, and think about your readers first (that is, give useful information instead of just writing a sales pitch for your company or product), you'll quickly develop a happy audience of Google searchers!

## STEP 4

### Promote and publicize

## 21: Comment on other blogs

I recently landed a guest slot on a podcast hosted by [Consumerism Commentary](#). In conversation with Flexo, the owner of Consumerism Commentary, he mentioned that one of the reasons he agreed to have me as a guest on his podcast was because I left insightful comments on his blog.

I never leave comments like "Great post!" If I leave a comment on a blog, I think it through. Sometimes I point out something the author overlooked. Sometimes I question a conclusion the author drew. And sometimes, I leave my own story relating to the same subject.

I find blog authors most often respond to either genuine questions about what they meant in a post, or a well-worded criticism or disagreement. That's not to say that every comment you write should be negative; far from it! Every comment you write should do one simple thing: it should add to the discussion in some way.

## STEP 4

### Promote and publicize

If you can intelligently debate the author without resorting to personal attacks or flame wars, that's part of good discussion. So is stimulating the discussion with a question.

Bringing in additional facts and statistics, or citing a known source that agrees or disagrees with the author, also makes for a great comment. Reading books in the same industry (and other blogs!), will also help you write good comments, since you can make connections between what you have read previously and what you are reading and responding to now.



If you're reading blog posts and never have anything to say, you're missing out on a chance to build a relationship with that blog author. Leaving frequent comments won't guarantee you an "in" with a particular blogger, but if you leave thoughtful comments on a regular basis, you're more likely to be recognized.

If you comment frequently, and want to develop a closer relationship with a particular blogger, you can bring that up as a point of introduction when you contact them via another medium. (Email is probably the most overused medium of contact, however; try Facebook or Twitter to ensure you don't get lost in the shuffle.)

## STEP 4

### Promote and publicize

Developing a relationship with other bloggers helps you build trust. Other bloggers are more likely to link to your posts, highlight your comments with a link back to your site, and recognize you when they meet you in another venue.

This should be obvious, but including a real picture of yourself, and using the same name every time (preferably your real first and last name, and not a nickname), is tremendously important.



**ericabiz** Says:

July 21st, 2009 at 6:38 am

Hi! Thanks for your comments!

@Tyler: Many of these are for people with no tech skills to easily pick up. If you have skills in the tech industry, it will be easier to succeed in this market.

Set up a [Gravatar](#) and you will get your picture automatically next to your comments on many blogs. (Do this now; don't wait!)

## STEP 4

### Promote and publicize

## 22: Connect with other bloggers on Twitter

I wrote an entire blog post, complete with a video, on [how to find people on Twitter](#). I definitely recommend following the instructions in my video to find the bloggers in your same niche.



I have made many relationships on Twitter that helped me become more involved with other bloggers. I have received invitations to guest post, countless links to my own blog posts, links to my Twitter profile, and more.

Most importantly, though, connecting with other bloggers serves as motivation. I can ask them questions, run post ideas by them, and get an inside look at what they are thinking about doing for their blogs. I really enjoy this simple interaction.

[How to find people on Twitter](#) contains specific details on exactly how to easily find other bloggers who have the same passions as you. The time you invest

in this will pay off in spades, and it's one of the most valuable reasons to have a Twitter account. Put this into action today!

## STEP 4

### Promote and publicize

## 23: Ask readers to Stumble/delicious/retweet/etc

When you write a truly blockbuster post (and if you're anything like me, you will know these when they happen—there is a special spark that occurs!), you naturally want more people to read it.

However, many of your readers don't know how to use social media tools like Digg, StumbleUpon, and delicious to help your blog posts spread.

The ideal way would be to write a page on your blog that shows how to broadcast a page using each of these networks, but that may be overkill for a blog that doesn't focus on social media. In my case, at the end of my best posts, I specifically ask my readers to Stumble the posts to help spread the word.

This post took approximately 6 hours to compile, including research. I'd appreciate it if you would support my efforts by [Stumbling this post](#), [bookmarking it on Delicious](#), and [Digging it](#). Finally, if you are not already receiving my free business tips, jump on board! Every week I'll send you a thought-provoking post about how to build your business and make more money. You won't want to miss what I have in store for you... [Get my free business tips!](#)

## STEP 4

### Promote and publicize

Very few of your readers will take you up on this, but the key here is that you don't need many readers to participate to get a dramatic spike in traffic.

On one of my recent posts, [20 Scam-Free Ways To Make Money Online Fast](#), I asked for a Stumble. Just three people Stumbled it that day – but I received a wave of **700 visitors from StumbleUpon** from this.

Don't overlook Twitter, either. Use the [Tweet This](#) plugin to add a link to your posts that quickly allows people to Tweet it. I have had posts quickly garner 350-400 visitors just by having people retweet them.



*I received 700 visitors  
from StumbleUpon  
from one post.*

## STEP 4

### Promote and publicize

## 24: Try videos for Google juice (as well as a better connection with your readers.)

Google has started putting videos relevant to your search on the front page of search results. If you upload a video to YouTube and its title is searched by people using Google, your video may end up on the front page of Google's search results for those terms.

This is not guaranteed, but is worth experimenting on. It may be much easier to rank for a given keyword using a video than it would be for a regular blog post. You also gain visibility from people who come to your site from YouTube.

How to author a good video could be an entire book of its own, but here are a few short tips:

**Don't ramble.** Make each video short and sweet. 6-7 minutes is long in the video world. 2-3 minutes is best, if possible.

**Stick to one topic per video.** Don't try to cram multiple topics into your video. Create small, short videos for each of your topics.

**Don't read from a card.** If you don't feel comfortable putting yourself on camera, try screencasting software such as [Camtasia](#).

**Try a "how-to" video for the largest audience.** If you can quickly explain how to solve a particular small issue, that's video gold.

## STEP 4

### Promote and publicize

Videos posted on your blog will help endear you to your audience. Your audience is naturally curious about you, and videos give them another dimension of your personality.

Next time you write a product review on your blog, why not do a video product review?

***Videos have a higher  
perceived value.***

Videos also have a higher perceived value. When you create your own product, try adding videos to it; not only will you be able to sell it for a higher price, but if the videos are done well, your audience may more easily learn what you're teaching.

## STEP 5

### Maximize conversions

## 25: Tell people what they get when they subscribe

There is an old joke in marketing that goes like this:

“What is everyone's favorite radio station?”

Answer: “Why, WII-FM (What's In It For Me?)”

That's the question people are going to ask as they scan your blog for the first time. They will be reading every post, asking what's in it for them. They are looking for advice, help, solutions, “cures”, or entertainment (good stories; funny pictures.) It's important to be clear on what you offer to them.

I see far too many blogs these days that just say “Subscribe to my blog and get updates!”, or, worse, a orange RSS button. There are two problems here:

- 1) You're not addressing what they actually get when they subscribe.
- 2) At least half of your potential subscribers have no idea what RSS is, and (worse) may think the word “subscribe” means they have to pay, since they are used to content like magazines.

If you take only one recommendation from this Manifesto, let it be this:

**You need to clearly state exactly what people get when they subscribe.**

## STEP 5

### Maximize conversions

Some good examples of this are as follows:

“Get free advice every week on how to grow your business!”

“Get [whatever you offer] by email”

“Learn how I [did whatever you did] and get a free [ebook, etc.] by signing up”

Copyblogger has an interesting post, [Increase Blog Subscribers](#), that details more about how to increase subscribers, as well as why you shouldn't use the word “subscribe.”

The second part of this tip is to add an email subscribe form on your home page. Allow people to enter their first name and email address to subscribe. I don't recommend Feedburner's email service (see my next tip for why.)

**Offering email subscription can increase your subscriber rate by 50%.**

Offering the option to subscribe via email should increase your subscriber rate by at least 50%. As a point of reference, 46% of my subscribers subscribe through email. That's why it's so key to offer this right from your

home page.

## STEP 5

### Maximize conversions

## 26: Set up an email service to email your subscribers

Feedburner is great, but [Aweber](#) takes the cake. Why? Simple: With Feedburner, you can only send out emails every time you write a blog post, and those emails can't contain any other information other than what is in your blog post.

Aweber, on the other hand, allows you to send out not only emails that contain your blog posts, but whatever you want to your list.

I use my Aweber list to send out special invitations to events I'm speaking at, free teleconferences where you can call in and ask me a business question, videos I don't feel like writing a whole blog post about, and much more.

### Use Aweber to split-test wacky subject lines.

Aweber lists are also great for sending out time-sensitive communications such as reminders. Finally, you can promote products to your list (though I prefer writing blog posts to do promotions.)

Aweber has powerful features, too, like being able to “split-test” emails (send out two different subject lines to your list and see which one gets opened more often, for example.) For every email you send, you can see what percentage of your subscribers opened it and/or clicked on a link in the message. This makes it really fun to send out emails—you can try all kinds of wacky subject lines to see what works.

## STEP 5

### Maximize conversions

I find my email subscribers are more “sticky” because they are getting information that is not available publicly on my blog. They are also more likely to purchase products I recommend than RSS subscribers.

To get your Aweber list members counted in your Feedburner count, you have to enable what Aweber calls “Blog Broadcast.” I enabled this, so my list subscribers show as blog subscribers, but I don’t have it automatically send out emails. Instead, every time I write a blog post, I send out a simple text email talking about a few relevant points in my latest post and encouraging people to click through and read the post. The emails usually take me 15-20 minutes to compose—worth it because of the extra “stickiness” of my list.

An email list in Aweber is an asset; you can promote products using only your email list. Typically, depending on the product and the way you promote it, you can expect 0.5-3% of your list subscribers to buy the product. Considering many products have decent affiliate commissions, this is a substantial income stream.

## STEP 5

### Maximize conversions

I don't promote products often to my list, but the last time I did, I simply added a "P.S." onto an existing email about a new blog post, and I made \$150 in affiliate commissions.

This is income I might have not received had I simply had Feedburner email my blog subscribers.

**I made \$150 in commissions the last time I promoted a product to my list.**

Aweber is a paid service, but it's one you should consider if you are at all serious about making your blog into an income stream. Sending an email or two a month about products you have used and recommend will easily pay it back.

Remember to keep at least 70-90% of your content non-promotional, however; if every email you send is a promotion, you may find your subscribers stop reading your emails.

[Start your free trial with Aweber today!](#)

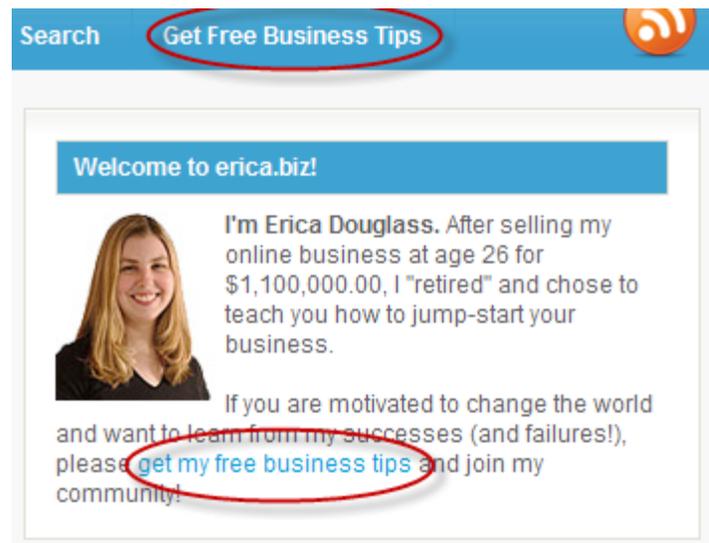
## STEP 5

Maximize conversions

### 27: Don't use the word "subscribe"!

This is, potentially, the most powerful tip in this entire Manifesto.

Here is a screenshot from my home page at erica.biz:



Both links to "get my free business tips" go to my subscribe page.

In both cases, these used to say "**subscribe**". After reading a post on Copyblogger called "[How to Increase Your Blog Subscription Rate by 254%](#)", however, I changed the text to "**Get Free Business Tips**" at the top and "get my free business tips" in the box.

That's all I did...nothing fancy. I was shocked at the results. My new daily subscribers *doubled!*

## STEP 5

### Maximize conversions

I expected a small increase, but a doubling just from changing a few words on my blog? Wow! That is amazing.

That's why I say this may be the most powerful tip in this Manifesto. Wherever you have the word "Subscribe", change it! What you change it to will require some thought.

What do your readers actually get when they subscribe? (Do not say "an email whenever I post a new blog entry"!)

To get to the right wording, you have to know why people are coming to your blog. In my case, "**free business tips**" pulls strongly – it's generic enough that I don't distance readers, but offers a strong value proposition.

Feel free to steal my "free \_\_\_\_ tips" phrasing, or make up your own. "Free \_\_\_\_ advice" or "Free \_\_\_\_ help" may also be good phrasing, depending on the type of blog you run.

# STEP 5

## Maximize conversions

### 28: Have a dedicated subscribe page

Once my readers click on “Get my free business tips”, they are taken to a page I set up that asks for their email address.

Here’s what it looks like:

**Get Free Business Tips**

Hi Erica here. It's easy to get my free tips on starting and growing your business.

Take 10 seconds to fill out the form below, and you'll be on your way to growing your business even faster, with free tips every week!

Of course, I won't spam you or sell your email address. You have my word on that.

**YES! Send me free tips on making money, saving money, and growing my business:**

Your First Name:

Your Best Email:

Once you sign up, you will receive an email asking you to confirm your subscription. Click on the link in the email you receive to ensure that you receive my free tips.

If you prefer to subscribe via your feed reader, use these handy links:

- [RSS Feed for Entries](#)
- [RSS Feed for Comments](#)
- [Atom 0.3 Feed](#)

If you have any problems or questions about subscribing, you can email me at erica AT erica DOT biz. Replace AT with @ and DOT with .

Thank you for reading!

## STEP 5

### Maximize conversions

The title is key. It used to say “Subscribe.” Now it says “Get Free Business Tips.” A huge difference!

In the text, I first overcome an objection: “Will you send me a bunch of crap in my email?”

The signup box is an Aweber form, but I made some minor tweaks:

- **The “Your Best Email:” phrasing is also important. It’s a tip I learned from a top Internet marketer. People tend to put throwaway email addresses in subscription boxes; asking for their “best” email subtly reminds them to put their primary email address. You’re delivering real content, not spam; you definitely want to be in their primary email inbox.**
- **I changed the boring “Submit” button to “Send me free tips!” No one really wants to “Submit”, but they definitely want free stuff.**

Then, I remind them that once they have signed up, they will need to confirm their email address.

Finally, I put the links to subscribe via RSS in case anyone wants to subscribe that way.

The design of this page on your site is key. Don’t make it too long or wordy. Also, always point any subscribe links to this page instead of dumping people directly into a Feedburner link or an RSS feed.

## STEP 5

### Maximize conversions

## 29: Ask people to subscribe at the bottom of each post

At the bottom of each of my posts, I include a quick reminder to subscribe:

Like this entry? You will love [getting my free business tips!](#) No spam, and I won't give your email address to any other company.

It might be even more effective if I put a simple red arrow pointing to it—a common Internet marketing tactic.

Again, here, I don't use the word "subscribe." The link points to my dedicated Subscribe page.

I implemented this by simply editing the single.php template file in Wordpress. You can accomplish something similar with a free plugin like the [Add Signature plugin](#).

I do not recommend manually adding links at the bottom of each of your posts; it's worth it to take the time to figure out how to make this plugin work. That way, you don't have to remember anything when you write a post, and you can easily change the text in the future.

## STEP 5

### Maximize conversions

## 30: Give readers opportunities to follow up and spread the word

There are several free plugins available for Wordpress that will help increase engagement on your blog.

The following are just five of the many plugins available to help your readers interact with you. An engaged reader is much more likely to subscribe and continue to read your blog on a regular basis.

1. **Subscribe to Comments** enables a checkbox that allows people to be notified whenever someone posts a new comment. Absolutely add this.
2. **WP-Print** and **WP-Email** add “Print this post” and “Email this post” links, respectively, to the bottom of each of your post. (If possible, configure your blog to put these below your request for people to subscribe.) I had blog readers specifically request both of these features, and they both get used on a regular basis.

## STEP 5

### Maximize conversions

**3. Tweet This** allows people to retweet your blog post. Definitely recommended if you have a Twitter presence, or your audience does.

**4. Sociable** adds buttons for many of the most popular social media sites, like delicious and StumbleUpon, to your blog post. You can configure which social media sites to show; I recommend showing four or five at the most.

**5. Comment Relish** allows you to email people who have commented on your site. Be careful, though; sometimes the emails have a tendency to look robotic, and this may actually discourage readers. The best technique I have seen is to set the plugin to email people not right after they posted a comment, but on a time delay (a day or two is the best idea.) This time lapse also encourages people to come check out your site again.

# Conclusion and what's next

These thirty tips, put into action, will certainly increase your subscriber count. Implement most or all of them and you are likely to see a noticeable increase in new subscribers in a matter of days or weeks.

In the end, though, it's up to you to produce good content on a consistent basis. Done right, your blog can not only be a source of personal joy, but a huge achievement and even a significant source of income.

Don't get too caught up in the whirlygigs and thingamajigs. Instead of updating your CSS or plugins for the hundredth time, write content instead. Good content will always trump more widgets.

While you are busy tweaking your blog and writing more great content, I will be doing the same. I would sincerely appreciate it if you would support my efforts by [getting my free business tips](#). I send out a great, content-filled email every week about how to build an on-line business. It is thanks to subscribers like you that I can continue putting out these ebooks at no charge.

[Get my free business tips today!](#)

To your success,

Erica Douglass

# Resources

**Guest Post Secrets.** My step-by-step video course on how to get more traffic to your blog. Highly recommended--these same methods have earned me as many as 4,200 new visitors and 750 new email list subscribers in two days. [Check it out now, and use coupon code MANIFESTO to save \\$20!](#)

**Aweber (email service).** Aweber is the way for you to earn money from your blog. With Aweber, you can send out custom emails every time you create a new blog post--and it also allows you to send out notifications of new products, webinars, etc. A true must-have if you plan to earn money with your blog. [Start your trial now for just \\$1.](#)

**Camtasia (video software).** [Amazon.com has it cheapest](#); there is also a free 30-day trial available at [Camtasia's website](#). The bundle at Amazon.com includes their Snagit software, which is also incredibly useful – I used it to make all the screen-shots you see in this ebook.

**Susan Su** helped lay out and produce this ebook. If you want help creating an impressive ebook, [contact Susan](#).