

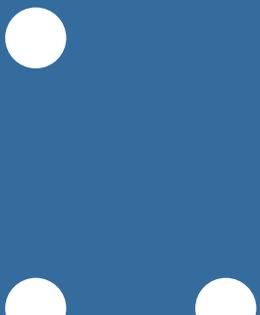
10 QUALITIES
OF

SHAREABLE
BLOG
POSTS



The days of creating content to just publish it and hope for the best are over. Since millions of pieces are shared online each day—a majority of them that are created and published by brands—it's never been harder to rise above the competition. However, like many savvy content marketers know, the best way to stand out and reach a relevant audience is by creating shareable content. Shareable content is the kind that evokes emotion and encourages readers to share it with their friends and networks. It's the modern day form of word-of-mouth marketing. And as marketing expert Seth Godin says, "Ideas that spread, win."

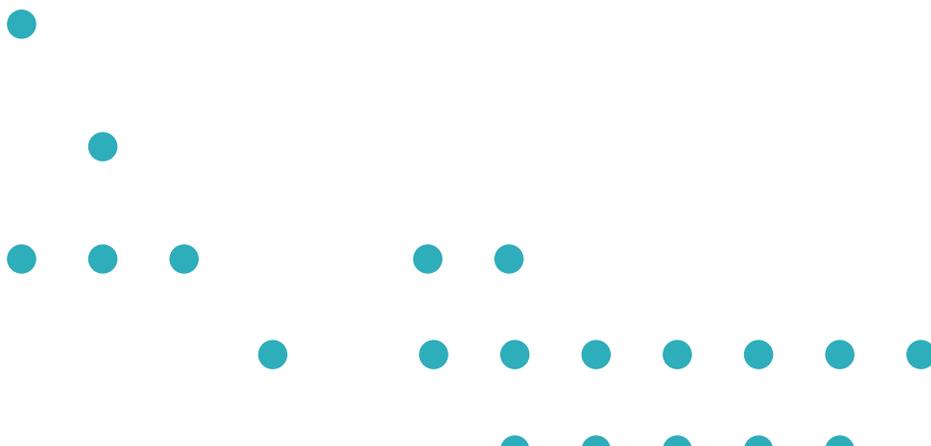
How exactly can you get your ideas to spread through the art of blogging though? While there's no existing formula that guarantees you a successful result every time, there are several best practices you can follow to ensure each blog post you publish can live to its fullest potential. But first let's take a look at what exactly makes content shareable.





THE SHARING SOCIETY

Understanding the psychological reasons behind why we share blog posts can help create a blogging strategy with a big impact. When a person shares content, he or she is doing more than just clicking a button. One of the primary motivations behind sharing content is creating emotional connections with others. The audience wants to engage with those in their social networks through interesting content they find online. They want to appear well-informed and impress the people they're connected with online. The action of online sharing is relatively new and has led publishers, marketers, and psychologists to research more around the subject.



The New York Times conducted a study called *The Psychology of Sharing* where they researched the motivation behind sharing specifically to help marketers. What exactly did they find?

PEOPLE SHARE
TO STAY CONNECTED

78%

of the people they surveyed said they share content online because it's a way to stay in touch.

PEOPLE SHARE
TO ENCOURAGE ACTION

49%

of the people they surveyed said they share content to inform their networks of products they care about. The hope is that they can potentially change the opinions of those in their networks.

PEOPLE SHARE
TO SHAPE THEIR ONLINE IDENTITY

68%

of the people they surveyed said they share to "give people a better sense of who they are and what they care about."

As you can see, sharing content is a very personal experience and something people don't take lightly. It's a form of self-expression for your audience, which is why it's essential you understand what makes them take action.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Your audience is who you communicate with through every medium of your business; they're your fans, potential customers, and current customers. When your audience connects with your content, they can be your biggest advocate.

Before you embark on the journey to creating shareable content, it's important to do your homework and get to know your audience. A few general best practices include:



LISTEN

Pay attention to who's commenting on your blog, tweeting at you, and contacting you online. Follow search query trends through keyword research to find out what people are interested in.

SURVEYS

It never hurts to just straight out ask your audience who they are and what they want.



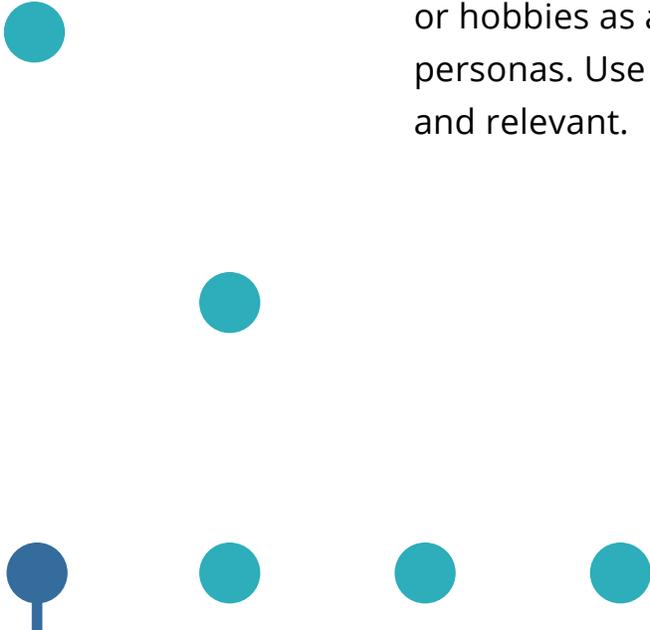
SOCIAL MEDIA

Leverage it to learn about the interests of who you're speaking to. Take a look at who's sharing your content and understand why it's being shared.

DEVELOP BUYER PERSONAS

A buyer persona helps you create audience blueprints, which are useful for segmenting your customer base so that you can target content properly.

To develop buyer personas, use audience research through first and third-party data, social-media engagement and other data points to create buyer personas. These personas define everything from the typical daily life of a customer to their core values. Look at predominant demographic trends, such as specific geographic locations, incomes, age ranges, or hobbies as a starting point for building buyer personas. Use this information to stay appealing and relevant.



QUALITIES OF SHAREABLE BLOG POSTS

Blog content gives your audience pre-sales information, post-sales education and everything in between that's important for customer acquisition, retention and building brand awareness. Frequently shared blog posts also contribute to your brand's authority within your industry. Uberflip found that **41.67%** of a blog's audience looked at social shares to determine whether the information presented is trustworthy.

Blog posts come in all shapes and sizes, from bite-sized and humorous thoughts to long-form posts that take a critical look at essential industry topics. There's no foolproof formula for creating amazing blog posts because each industry and audience has their own unique needs. However, quality blog posts that are more likely to be shared have some common characteristics.

1

RELEVANCY IS QUALITY

When a reader comes to your blog—whether it's from search engines, another blog, or through your main site—delivering relevant content is key. You build an audience by delivering content pertinent to their needs. If a piece of content is relevant to that person's interests, they will be more likely to share it.

2

UNIQUENESS MATTERS

The Internet has millions of blogs, many of them repeating the same common themes. You have a unique selling proposition for your products or services, so create one for your blog. Address industry topics no one else wants to touch, approach an old topic in a new way, or you can create a tie-in between popular culture and important industry issues.

3

BE OPINIONATED

No one wants to sit through a dry topic. Let your voice and personality show through by having strong opinions on a topic. Engage your audience and show them your core business values. Opinion pieces are often shared when the reader strongly agrees or disagrees on a specific topic. These are great pieces of content to create that will guarantee shares.

4

EXPRESS POSITIVITY

Incorporate a positive view or tone in your blog posts. You don't have to post solely about positive topics, but approach potentially negative topics with a tone that won't bring down your audience's mood.

5

BECOME AWE-INSPIRING

Create content that makes your audience sit back and go, "Whoa." Storytelling is a great way to accomplish this, especially if you poll your customers for inspirational stories involving your products or services.

6

EVOKE EMOTION

People historically make buying decisions emotionally—so it stands to reason you need to evoke the right emotions to motivate them to share your content. After reading an article, if you have managed to make them feel happy, sad or anywhere in between, you can bet they will share it with their networks too.

7

STAY TRUSTWORTHY

Establishing yourself as a trustworthy figure and authority in your industry through your blog is incredibly beneficial to your long-term business growth. Provide fact-checked information backed up by your own data, recent studies or quotes from other industry leaders to grow your audience's trust levels.

8

INCLUDE VISUALS

Include visuals. Visual content, such as infographics, get plenty of shares. When used correctly, visual content can help keep your audience engaged.

9

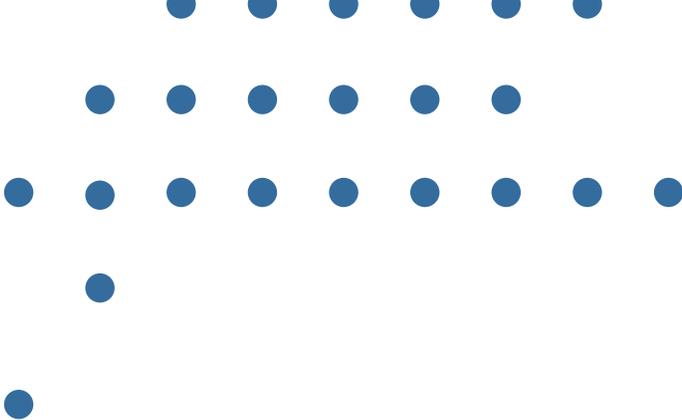
USE EFFECTIVE HEADLINES

Your audience sees your blog headline first before any visual or text content. Grab them with an engaging or compelling headline.

10

INTEGRATE PROBLEM SOLVING

Explain how the audience can solve their day-to-day problems with the solutions you present through your blog posts. Blogging is an excellent way to educate customers on how your products and services fit in their everyday lives.



WHAT A BLOG POST WITH 30 MILLION VIEWS TELLS US ABOUT VIRAL CONTENT

Now that you know the top ten qualities of a viral blog post, let's take a look at one that went viral and which qualities it possessed. In November 2014, blogger Seth Adam Smith wrote a blog post titled *Marriage Isn't for You* and posted it to [ForwardWalking](#) after a fight with his wife. It took off, to say the least—by mid-2014, the post had garnered more than 30 million views. It also landed Smith on **CNN**, **Good Morning America**, and **NBC's Today Show**.

Smith now has 110,000 Facebook and email subscribers to his personal blog, [SethAdamSmith](#). He speaks at events around the country, including an upcoming **TEDx** event. He also writes regularly for **Huffington Post** and earned multiple book deals. He's now living the writer's dream, which seemed to have sprung from a single blog post. Despite Smith's admission that this post was quickly written and the seemingly crazy fortune of that post getting 10,000 times more views than Smith expected, the post in question actually nails nearly every aspect of good blog writing practice.

AN ENTICING & COUNTERINTUITIVE HEADLINE

The headline “Marriage Isn’t for You” is not only divisive, powerful and interesting, but it also creates an expectation –namely, that this post will rationalize the author’s fear of commitment (or perhaps their ideological disinterest in the institution of marriage). However, Smith lays out a clearer, more subtle argument that doesn’t argue against marriage, but instead proposes that marriages are not designed to fulfill one’s own life. Smith writes:

“With a knowing smile he [Smith’s father] said, ‘Seth, you’re being totally selfish. So I’m going to make this really simple: marriage isn’t for you. You don’t marry to make yourself happy, you marry to make someone else happy...Marriage is about the person you married.’”

The headline is granted new meaning. Not only does this turn surprise and delight readers, it actually allows them to go through the same epiphany that struck Smith: Why are you, the reader, so selfish as to assume a that a post titled “Marriage Isn’t for You” would be a post about marriage not meeting your needs?

THE LESSON

Not every post lends itself so perfectly to a multi-layered, four-word headline. That said, our example definitely shows the power of a good headline.

IT'S TRUSTWORTHY

Smith told **Forbes** that *Marriage Isn't for You* was one of the fastest things he'd ever written. The idea had been brewing for a long time, but until he had the argument with his wife, nothing fell into place.

Smith didn't try to crack some kind of viral blog post formula. He wrote something from the heart and delved as deep into his emotional life as he could go. The post's sincere tone—and Smith's sincere motives—earned his readers' trust.

Consider this passage in which Smith humbly admits his selfishness, showing how his admission and understanding of his weakness improved his relationship (and his life):

"Some time ago, my wife showed me what it means to love selflessly. For many months, my heart had been hardening with a mixture of fear and resentment. Then, after the pressure had built up to where neither of us could stand it, emotions erupted... But instead of matching my selfishness, Kim did something beyond wonderful—she showed an outpouring of love."

THE LESSON

When you're writing, unleash your authentic voice instead of trying to write what you think readers will like. If your content is good enough and you honestly express emotional truths, your audience will respond.

IT'S OPINIONATED

By the end of 2013, the blog that he edited —*ForwardWalking*— was getting 200- to 300-page views per day. He figured that his marriage post would get about 3,000 views. He had no idea that it would earn 30 million views and ultimately land him a book deal.

His small readership in the beginning might have contributed to his honesty and candidness, but it eventually worked out in his favor in the end. His opinions and truth on marriage resonated with millions of people. Not only was the post opinionated though, it was also relevant to a lot of people.

THE LESSON

Have a voice and never be afraid to use it to share an opinion. It was Smith's brutal honesty that drove so many people to read and share this single blog post.



WHICH BUSINESSES ARE DOING BLOGGING RIGHT?

Now it's time to look at some business blogging inspirations. These companies spend time educating their customers, showing their personalities and revealing their core values in entertaining, compelling or downright inspiring ways.



HUBSPOT

Anytime someone asks about a marketing, sales or agency blog, Hubspot's name comes up. This marketing-software company delivers a wide variety of useful content for a B2B market. It segments its blog audience between its three core markets, delivering customized content that's likely to become more relevant to the reader than one primary blog. HubSpot is often praised for consistently publishing relevant and consumable content. They are a good example of a brand that creates shareable content because they know how to communicate with their audience.



BUFFER

This social media sharing platform is also a great example of a brand that knows how to blog. Their articles' share-count ranges from the hundreds to thousands per blog post. Typically, their most popular posts are about how they're doing content marketing at Buffer. It's their honesty, opinions and fearlessness to have a voice that keep their audience coming back for more.

OKCUPID

OKCupid, one of the largest Internet dating sites, found itself with a wealth of user data. Pairing this data up with other demographic information from user profiles gave OKCupid all the information it needed to fuel plenty of content marketing. By sharing the insights of their business through their blog they created truly unique and fascinating content.

AMERICAN EXPRESS OPEN FORUM

American Express took content marketing to a new level for brands when they started their own media hub. From interviewing notable thought leaders to providing insightful tips for small businesses, they developed an impressive content marketing strategy that is often pointed to as an example of top-quality content. American Express Open Forum has earned their audience's continued engagement by consistently producing content that has key shareable qualities.

MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF YOUR BLOG

You've heard the term "viral" used when referring to content and social media, but what impact does that actually have on your business? Today, there are countless metrics to determine the engagement, return on investment, and shareability of your content. Here are some of the most essential metrics to help you optimize your blogging efforts:

TRACK SOCIAL SHARES

How many people are sharing your blog posts? Which platforms are they sharing these posts on, and how else are they engaging with the content?

NOTE AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS

How many people view your blog posts? Are they coming from search engines, another website, social-media sites or other referrers?

RECORD CONVERSION NUMBERS

How many visitors are turning into potential leads or customers?

MONITOR EMAIL "CLICK-THROUGH" RATES

Are emails effectively driving traffic to your blog posts?

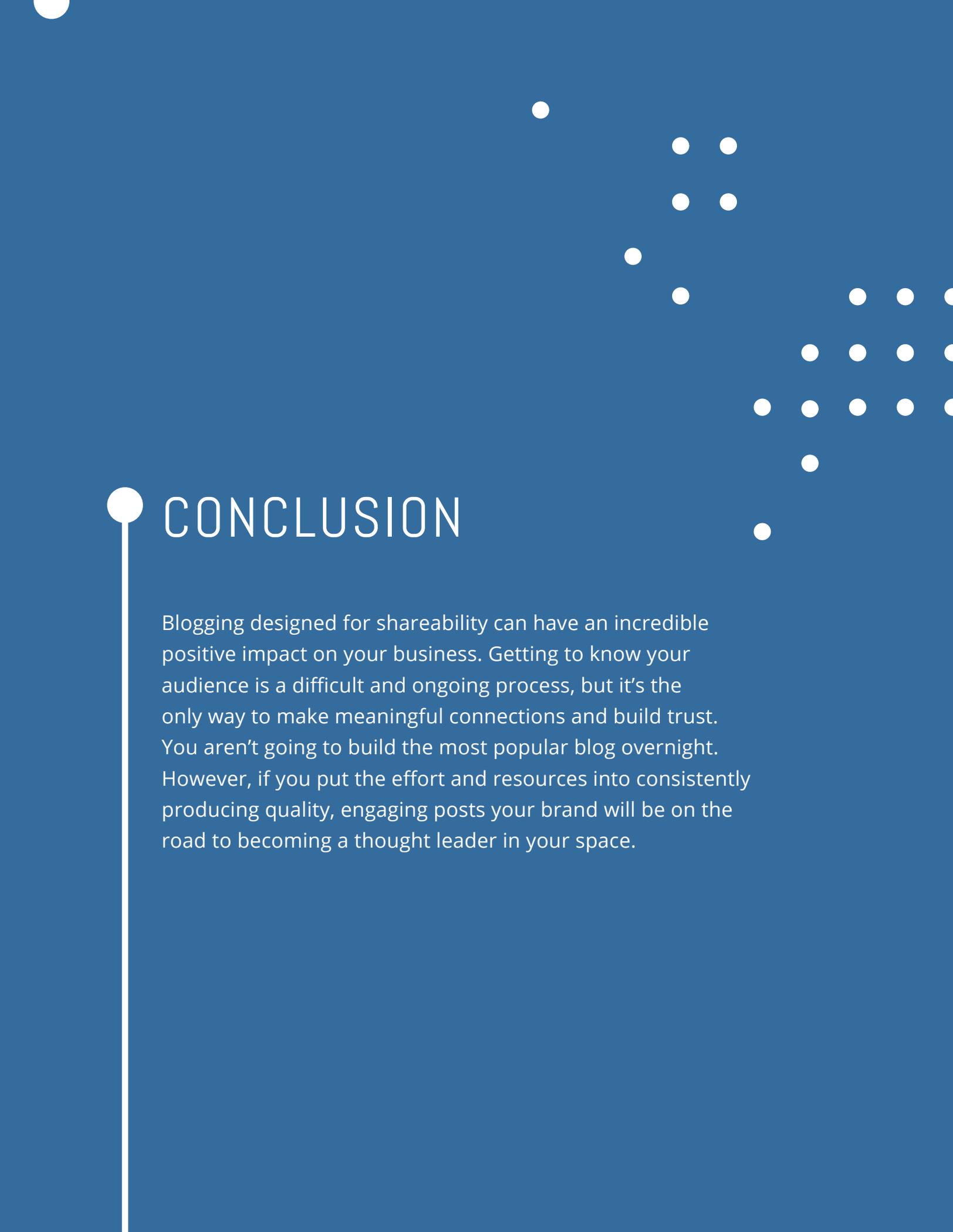
CHECK DOWNLOAD STATISTICS

If you have a download, such as an app or e-book, how many people are downloading the file?

TRACK THE TIME ON SITE OR HOW LONG YOUR AUDIENCE SPENDS READING THE POSTS

Did people only read for a few seconds or were they engaged for longer?



A blue background with a pattern of white dots of varying sizes and a vertical white line on the left side. The dots are arranged in a grid-like pattern that tapers to the right. The vertical line starts from a white circle at the top left and extends downwards.

CONCLUSION

Blogging designed for shareability can have an incredible positive impact on your business. Getting to know your audience is a difficult and ongoing process, but it's the only way to make meaningful connections and build trust. You aren't going to build the most popular blog overnight. However, if you put the effort and resources into consistently producing quality, engaging posts your brand will be on the road to becoming a thought leader in your space.

§ scripted

