13 Steps to Fail Miserably at Blog Writing by @ronlieback

ADVERTISEMENT

Kelly sat there with this miserable look on her face.

The blog’s title in the search results was spot on, and the tiny description backed it up. But when she got to the content, her excitement quickly drained.

Everything she had just read within that single minute made her want to go outside and walk in front of a bus.

That was one of 1,440 minutes she couldn’t get back that day.

Kelly clicked back to the search results, and continued reading through the other titles and descriptions. She was on a simple journey, searching for just the right information about (insert your content here).

You don’t want to make Kelly mad.

The ideal situation?

After Kelly clicked to your website because your title and meta description drove curiosity, she got to content that answered all of her questions, and then some.

She purchased your product or services and continued to engage with your brand through the frequent and authoritative content that you produce.

As for that first entry, the title and description excited, but the content quickly drained Kelly’s interest. This was a huge miss for that company because ready-to-buy Kelly went elsewhere.

With more than 40,000 searches happening on Google every

second, these types of situations are endless.

The problem is many fail miserably at blog writing.

Most don’t follow the absolute basic rules of digital content creation.

If you do any of what the following subtitles say, you’re wasting your time. But don’t worry – the solution resides right below the subheading.

Remember, also, that these solutions will work best when a website’s technical platform is sound, meaning all tech SEO from loading times to CSS are optimized. Without a technically sound platform, these blogging efforts won’t produce the results a website needs to truly stand out.





1. Who Needs Keywords?

Those who don’t complete keyword research are missing out. Even minimal keyword research to check out monthly volumes and who’s ranking for what can have great results.

I truly learned this last year when optimizing existing content for not one but four of my clients in 2017/2018. Two of those clients had exceptionally written content, but the posts were not optimized with keywords in mind.

One client’s rankings for a few blogs went from as far back as Page 4 to Page 1 for the target keywords we had optimized each blog for.

Unless you want your blog content to fail miserably, get some keyword research completed – even if it’s minimal.

Another part of my business strategy is only using writers with expertise and passion within my client's verticals. I rely on an army of freelancers, each one matched to my client's vertical because they:

- Have a grasp on the vertical.
- Will naturally use many high-volume and converting keywords related to that industry.
- Write with more authority and efficiency.

Some of my writers don't even know what SEO means – but I provide them with the proper keywords and related keywords, along with other SEO guidelines to write each article, which makes all the difference.

2. Craft Boring Titles

Don't do it.

Spend as much creativity on creating a catchy title tag as you would on an article. By catchy, I mean one that stimulates interest or curiosity.

Some tend to write the titles first, and then the article. I do this about 10 percent of the time; the other 90 percent of the time I have my topic in mind with a target keyword or two, and create my exact title after writing my piece.

As per best SEO practices, a title should be kept between 50-60 characters to prevent them from getting truncated in the search results. This can cause creativity issues for some, but you can always say more in less.

As Walt Whitman says, "Simplicity is the glory of expression."

With that Whitman quote in mind, remember to get creative, but don't overdo it. Worry more about stimulating interest and curiosity.

Sometimes you'll spend so much time on creativity when a simpler title would have been more effective. This is the genius of A/B testing titles – a tactic Search Engine Journal uses.

3. Forget About Meta Descriptions

The title tag is the first thing that will naturally attract interest in the search results. But sometimes it's not enough for a click.

This is where the meta descriptions need to enhance the energy created by the title tag.

Don't let search engine auto-generate meta descriptions.

Also, remember best SEO practices – you only have about 160 characters before truncation begins.

This is your chance to further excite a prospective reader. Remember: we're talking blog writing here.

If it was a product or service page, the focus would be special offers or what's truly unique about that product or service. For blogs it's a much tougher sell; make those 160 characters count!

Though keywords are not a ranking factor within meta descriptions, still include your target keyword(s). These will be bold in your meta descriptions when a search query occurs for that keyword, further attracting attention in the search engine results pages (SERPs).

4. No Exciting Lead to Grab Attention

Once the keyworded title and meta description attract attention and reward your website with a visitor, your writing

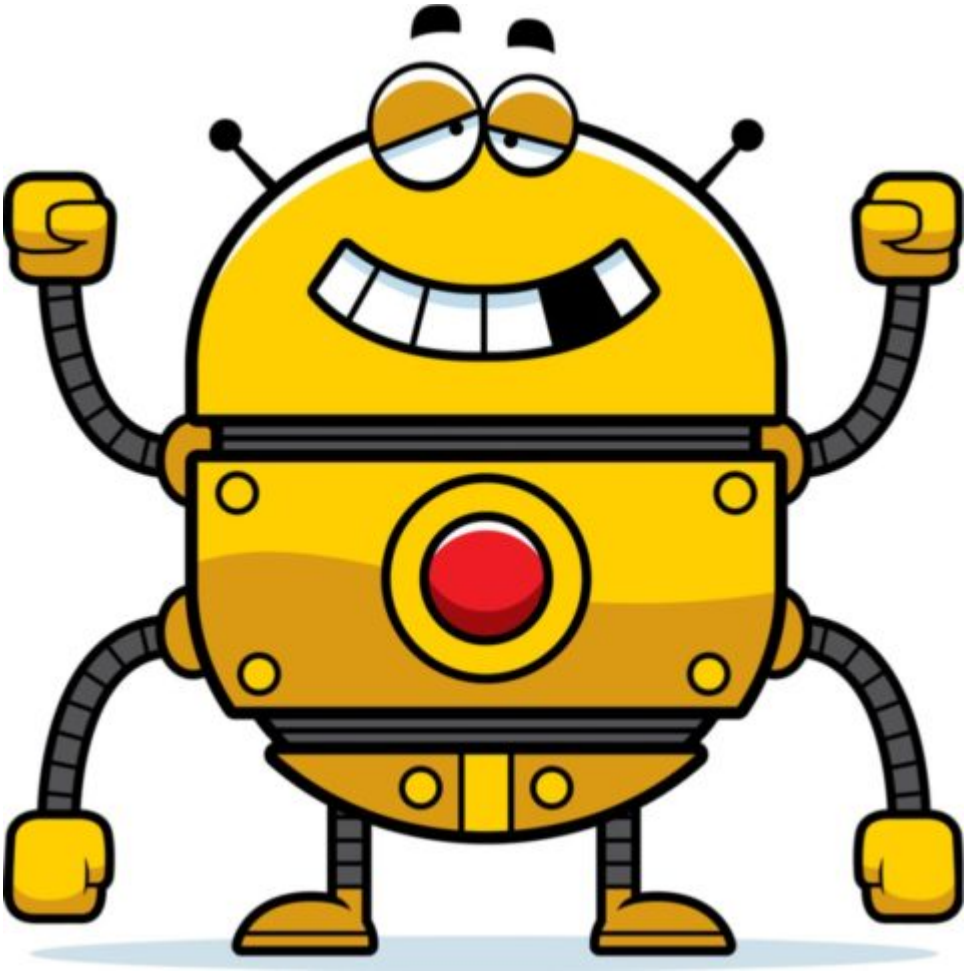
must immediately engage. And we mean immediately, since the average attention span of people is now eight seconds – something that relates to, of all things, bull riding.

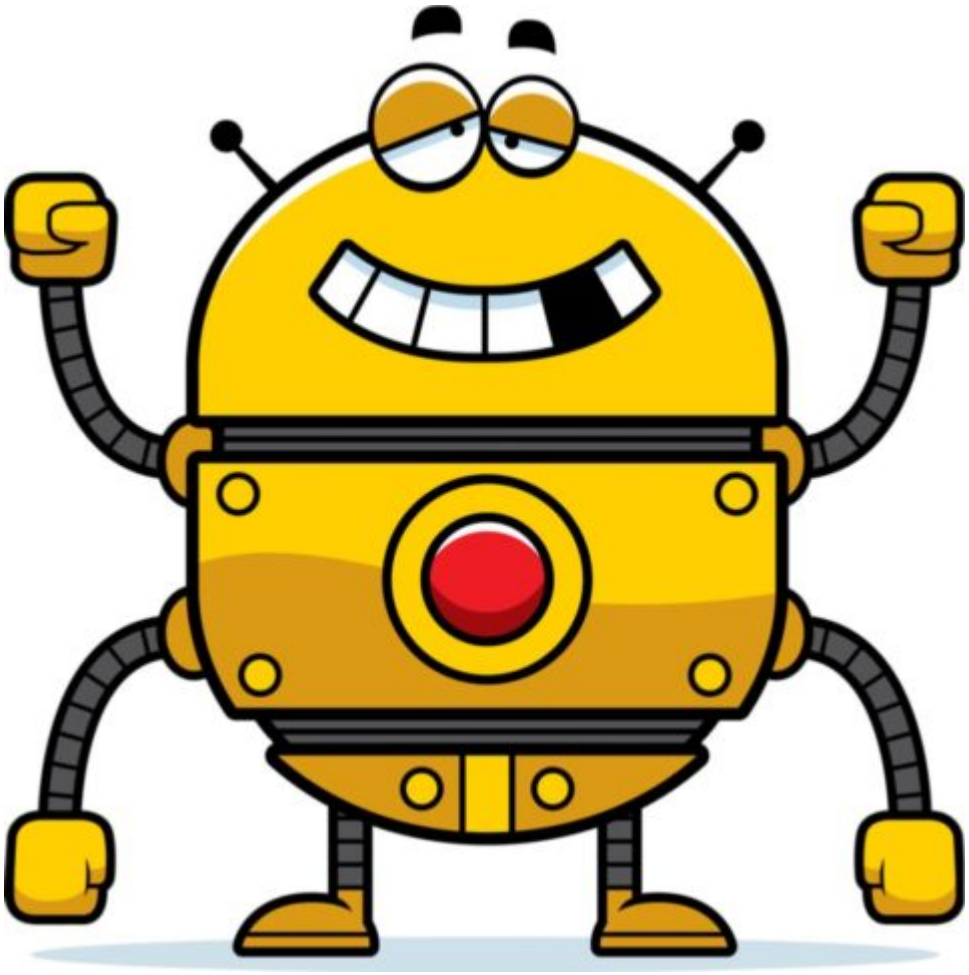
In professional bull riding, riders must stay on a bull for eight seconds before they can garner points. It’s a brutal eight seconds for sure, and the same goes for the first eight seconds of content. If it bores within eight seconds, that visitor will leave as if thrown off a bull.

Once again here’s where creativity reigns.

Each writer will have drastically different processes when generating their attention-grabbing lead paragraphs. I use a hybrid of techniques all based on my creative energy at the moment.

Sometimes I’ll write the middle of the blog, then the beginning and conclusion. Other times I’ll start with the lead and ending, and then fill in between. Sometimes I write it from top to bottom; it all depends on the creativity at the time.





5. Sound Like a Robot

The lead is one thing, but so is the remainder of the article. Work at continuing to entertain and hook your audience from sentence to sentence.

If you sound like a robot, people will get bored and leave. And quickly.

Boring content is a bucking bull.

Keep your language snappy and use engaging anecdotes when needed, even if they involve fictional characters like Kelly above – a girl that represents anyone searching for anything.

6. Use Cliches

Cliches dilute writing.

Here’s my case in point. Don’t get caught between a rock and a hard place by using cliches. From sea to shining sea and all four corners of the earth, your blog writing will have readers thinking they got the short end of the stick.

Cat got your tongue? Good.

Don’t use cliches. They are written suicide.

7. Create Long Paragraphs

The longer the paragraph, the faster a reader will lose interest.

Long paragraphs look complicating to the mind on a PC or Mac – and these complications are raised 100X on mobile.

Keep paragraphs short. This creates “air” around your sentences, and they are more pleasing to the eye.

And don’t be afraid of single-sentence paragraphs; they make a point stand out.

8. Forget About Subheadings

Listicles like these work because it allows people to quickly glance through an article and read what’s interesting to them.

Not every article warrants a listicle style, but many sections can be chunked into smaller sections; a subheading notifying readers of this eases their mission to find what’s valuable.

I live an 80/20 lifestyle, and put my energy into the 20 percent of activities that produce 80 percent of my outcomes. This goes for my online reading; with only 1,440 minutes

available each day, I attempt to choose my time wisely.

As many others, I am always on a mission to take the top information that will most benefit me from articles, and this is much easier when subheadings are used to chunk together specific topics of an article.





9. Not Frequently Blogging

Here’s another area where more is better. The more you blog, the more of a trusted authority you will become from both a reader and search engine perspective.

Obviously quality and relevance must be at the forefront of each blog.

Every situation is different, but for my clients that provide services (e.g., financial and energy), a minimum of five per month is a must for gains in readership and conversion. For clients that provide products (e.g., aftermarket automobile parts), a minimum of 10 is a must.

If you are a news- or information-based blog that typically relies on advertising, the minimum amount of blogs needed on a monthly basis drastically increases.

Besides running my digital marketing company, I am also the

online editor at a motorcycling website. I require at minimum 25 stories per week – and I write many of these.

10. Write a 300-word Blog

The longer the better, but every situation is different. Anything as short as 300 words won't do much.

Breaking news stories can be as short as 500 words and do extremely well, but anything evergreen that will continue to add value to readers should be much longer.

For educational pieces like the ones spread across Search Engine Journal, I'd never go below 1,500 words – a number that seems to be a magical mark for doing well in regards to traffic and on-page time – though most of mine are over 2,000.

Longer length is imperative for blogs, and in some cases service pages, though some pages act more like a sales funnel to attract a reader's attention in a simple manner. In those cases, shorter is sometimes better. Most of these short pages typically funnel towards thicker pages, where the more content the better.

11. Forget to Use Internal & External Links

Just like not having a unique meta description, not including on-page SEO elements, such as internal and external links, can reduce the value of your content. Again, this is from both a reader and search engine perspective.

For readers, internal links provide additional resources to learn more. This keeps them on your website longer, increasing your website's SEO value as they increase their knowledge.

Using internal links between service pages and blogs also improves the crawlability of your site. The page that the

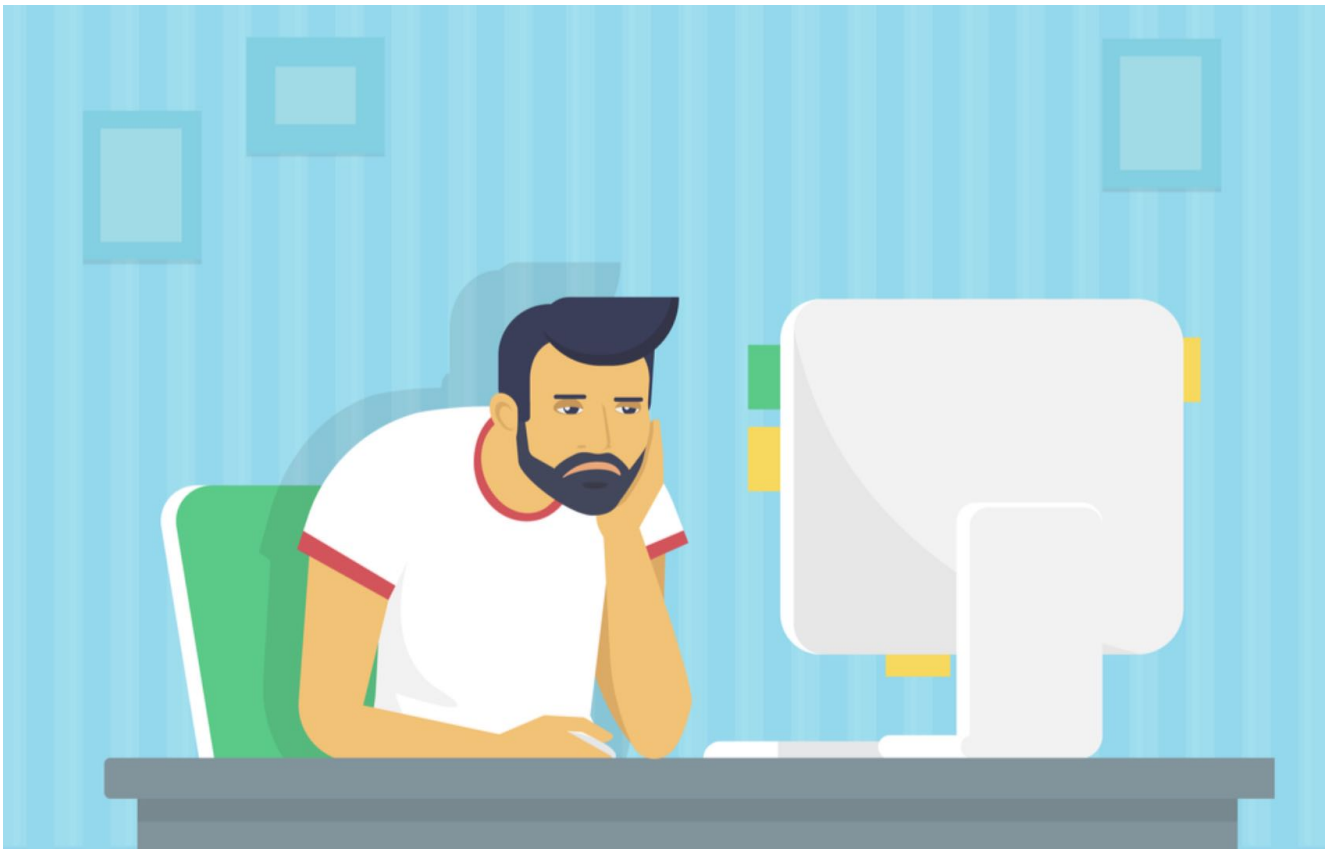
anchor text is linked to also sends signals to search engines that you value the content on that page, helping drive more authority to that page.

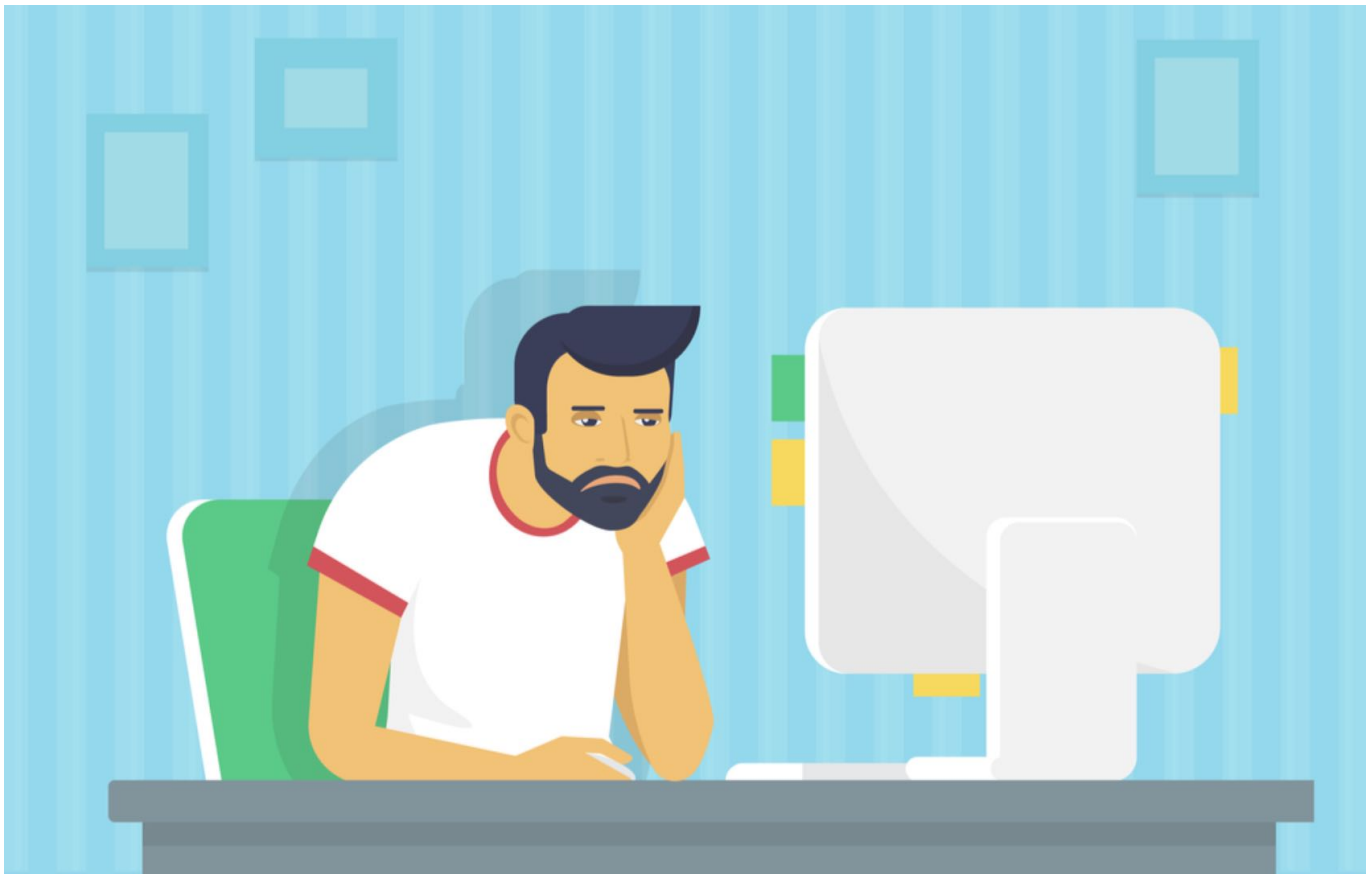
12. Who Needs Images?

Don’t forget about the visual learners. Cater to them with images. Use infographics when necessary.

Images not only help reinforce your content’s message, they also share easily, helping your blog to go viral.

Never forget image SEO best practices here either; make sure all images are compressed for quicker page speed, and feature optimized title names and alt texts (don’t forget to use target keywords here!).





13. Thinking You Can Write It All Yourself

Want to truly make an impact? Whether your blog highlights the latest news of your industry or educates readers about your latest product or services, the more content the better.

But don’t think you have to write it all.

Many people running businesses misjudge their time for writing, and the tasks of updating a blog even on a weekly basis get dethroned by other priorities, such as business meetings or travel.

If you find yourself struggling, don’t worry – you don’t have to do it all. Hire a freelancer that’s an expert within your industry and/or get your internal staff to contribute.

And if you need your name on every piece to establish your

authority, hire a ghostwriter. I continue to ghostwrite for a few CEOs that continually want to increase their brand awareness. Some simply can't write, and others simply don't have the time.

Their solutions are to delegate, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with delegating blog writing – something that has such a huge impact on personal and business brands.

Concluding Thoughts

A blog is the livelihood of your website and the core element that truly strengthens your brand's digital awareness.

Don't make the Kellys of the world click off your website and go elsewhere. Make her your customer through quality blog writing.

Then continue to entertain readers with engaging content on a frequent basis so they remain your customers and spread the word of your blog's value.

Don't fail at blogging by doing one of the 13 above; true online success depends on it.

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