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## 5 Tips to Get More Leads from Your Mortgage Blog

Your future clients are online all the time. If they're at the beginning of the home buying process, they are probably researching mortgage lenders. But have you made it easy for them to find you when they search on Google? Or to learn about who you are, how you differ from other lenders, what your specialties are and how you might help them?

A mortgage blog is one of the most effective ways mortgage lenders can put themselves out in front of potential borrowers today. It can greatly increase your online profile, keeping you top of mind with existing clients and helping new clients discover and learn more about you.

Do you need a blog if you already have a website? If you're hungry for new prospects, yes. Most mortgage lender websites are primarily online brochures, with a bit of information about the company and the most updated rates. While mortgage websites can be quite effective, they usually don't help set you apart from other lenders the way a blog can.

A mortgage blog gives you a voice and identity. It can help you connect with potential clients to let them know who you are, what your values are and what you're most knowledgeable about. With a blog, you can serve as a valuable resource to potential clients, offering your take on the current market conditions, tips for homebuyers or those looking to refinance, and more. This kind of useful content is often shared over social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter, which can help put you in front of even more prospects. Also, each mortgage blog post is its own webpage — which means every post gives you one more opportunity to be found in Google search results, particularly if you've optimized the post with keywords.

Ready to start your mortgage blog and start capturing leads? Here are five tips to help you create and optimize your own blog.

## Take time to plan and research

While you can quickly and easily set up a basic blog, planning the right blog for your goals and needs can save you time and frustration later on.

### Decide what your blog will – and won't – be

To begin, you should have a clear vision for your blog. How will it differ from all the other mortgage blogs out there? What can you add to the discussion about mortgages and the state of the housing market in your area? What topics do you feel passionate about? How can you share your expertise and knowledge? What kinds of information do you want to offer — and not offer? How interactive (or not) do you want your blog to be, in terms of encouraging reader comments? How will your blog reflect your personality and voice? What are your goals for the blog, aside from generating new leads?

**Tip:** A great way to develop your vision is to read a half-dozen other mortgage and lender blogs. Take note of what you like and don't like. You don't want to imitate them; you just want to learn from them.



## Decide which blogging platform to use

If you already have a mortgage website, is it possible to add a blog to it? If so, that's the ideal, as your Web presence will be consolidated and you'll be regularly updating your website — and Google tends to reward frequently updated sites with higher search result rankings. If your site has been around a while and a designer set it up for you, adding a blog now might be a challenge. Don't worry; you can always create a blog on a dedicated blogging platform and link to your website (and vice versa).

There are plenty of blogging platforms available, some free, some not. Among the most popular options are Blogger, Wix, Medium, Ghost, Squarespace, Tumblr, WordPress.com and WordPress.org. WordPress.com is easier to set up but lacks WordPress.org's wealth of useful (and mostly free) plug-ins, such as WordPress SEO by Yoast, a free plug-in that makes optimizing each blog post easy.

### Tips:

- org is one of the most popular blogging platforms. A lot of website designers are experienced with WordPress.org and can customize WordPress templates (called themes) for you.
- org is open-source, meaning the blogging software is free. You'll need to host your blog on a server, however. You can use your own computer as a server, but most people opt for a hosting provider. Bluehost is inexpensive (currently \$4/month) and WordPress-recommended. It eliminates some of the manual setup steps you'd need to take with some other hosting services. Another WordPress-recommended option is DreamHost, currently \$8/month.

## Choose a design template

Each blogging platform offers design templates, which give your blog a certain look and feel as well as navigation structure. As previously mentioned, one advantage of WordPress.org is that you can hire a designer if needed to customize a theme. That way, your blog won't look like any other blog. Some WordPress.org themes are highly customizable, even for those with no website design experience.

**Tip:** If you plan to showcase any photos on your blog, pick a photo-friendly blog template or theme.

## Pick your domain name

A blog is a website, and every website needs a unique address, called a URL. Some blogging platforms will insert themselves into your blog's URL. For example, with Blogger, you end up with a URL like this: [www.yourname.blogspot.com](http://www.yourname.blogspot.com). Don't like that? You can buy a domain name, such as [www.yourname.com](http://www.yourname.com), from services like GoDaddy and Bluehost, then set up a redirect to [www.yourname.blogspot.com](http://www.yourname.blogspot.com).

**Tip:** Though SEO rules are changing all the time, a good bet is to include your name or desired keyword in your blog's URL. It can help your blog rank higher in the search results for your name or keyword.



## Organize for search and feedback

Your blog should reflect your niche and personality, but it should also be easy for visitors to use, navigate and connect with you.

### Set up tags and categories for your posts

Blog categories are fairly broad, such as “San Francisco mortgage rates.” Think of categories as entries in a table of contents. They make it easy for visitors to sort your blog so they can see all posts in a given category.

Tags are more specific than categories and are usually just one or two words, such as “mortgage.” So if you write a post about the current market in San Francisco, you’d apply the category, “San Francisco mortgage rates,” then add any appropriate tags such as, “rate hike,” “refinance,” and so on. The combination of categories and tags can make your posts easier to find.

**Tip:** You don’t have to come up with all your categories and tags in advance. You can simply create them as you go along and apply them as needed. However, you shouldn’t have tons of categories; it can make it more difficult for visitors to browse your blog.

### Decide how to handle comments

The best blogs are communities over which the author presides. If you write about newsy or even controversial topics, you can expect readers to leave comments. Some blogs don’t allow comments, but that can seem alienating to readers. On the other hand, once a blog develops a readership, it will also attract a lot of blog comment spam, which are attempts by others to draw attention to their own blogs or websites through their (often grammatically questionable) comments.

**Tip:** The best solution is to set up your blog so that you can review any comments before they’re published. If it’s a legitimate comment, great; post it. If it’s spam, mark it as such and delete it.

## Optimize for sharing and viewing

A blog is the perfect vehicle for leveraging the power of social media to build relationships and add potential clients to your email list.

### Set up social sharing and email subscriptions

Blog platforms today offer plug-ins or built-in social-sharing buttons that allow readers to quickly share your posts on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn and other social networks. Make sure you include these buttons prominently at the top or bottom of each post. In addition, make it easy for readers to subscribe to your blog posts via email.

**Tip:** Don’t overlook Google+. While some dismiss it as a social media ghost town, don’t forget that Google owns it. There’s evidence that content shared on Google+ has a good chance of ranking well in relevant Google search results pages, too.

## Make sure your blog is optimized for mobile devices

Your potential clients are probably surfing the Internet on their iPads or Android phones. If your blog looks pretty much the same on a mobile device as it does on a computer screen, your potential client might get frustrated by pinching and zooming and browse elsewhere. So make sure your blog displays well on both mobile device screens and computer screens.

**Tip:** Most blogging platforms offer options for automatically optimizing your blog for mobile device screens. For example, WordPress.org blog users can install the WPtouch mobile plug-in.

## Determine what and when

The key to engaging with potential clients on your blog is posting compelling content on a regular schedule. Showcase your expertise and establish your credibility.

### Focus on your readers

Don't write about yourself, unless you can make it relevant to potential clients. Instead, think about your clients. What questions do they often ask you? What are their fears, concerns and needs? What can you tell them that might surprise them? Do you have funny



stories to tell from your mortgage dealings that might also provide clients with a lesson learned? Tailor your posts to your core audience. Be unique and make sure your content is valuable to them.

If you're writing a blog just to be writing a blog, you're probably not going to get new clients. Have fun with it. Be personable, honest, authentic, funny, engaging and warm. You might even be a little controversial now and then, though you should do that carefully.

### Set a blog schedule

Blogs are like children; they need to be nurtured and fed regularly. Some experts recommend updating your blog at least three times a week to keep your readers interested and engaged. Does three times a week seem like too much, given your schedule? That's fine. Set a realistic goal of how often you're going to blog every week, and when. Having set days of the week in mind helps your readers know when to expect updates.

**Tip:** In the beginning, the first-time blogger is often enthusiastic, blogging four or five times a week.

Eventually, blogger burnout kicks in, you get busy, and your blog starts to look like a Wild West tumbleweed town. Be realistic. Know your limitations. Do your best to keep your blog fresh in a way that's comfortable.

## Create an editorial calendar

There will inevitably be times when you're fresh out of blog post ideas. That's why you need an editorial calendar in which you plot out evergreen topics for the next several months. Certain blog topics, such as mortgage tips for first time home buyers, are called evergreen because they aren't time-dependent.

**Tip:** Using a spreadsheet, list your evergreen topics and assign them dates. You don't have to rigidly stick to the schedule, but at least you have a plan to follow.

## Optimize for search

When starting a blog, one of the challenges is finding readers. Search engines can help with this — they are constantly polling for fresh content. Add keywords to your blog posts so potential clients can find you, and be sure to analyze published posts to see what's working.

## Optimize every post with keywords

After you've written a blog post, but before you've posted it, ask yourself which keywords your potential visitors might enter into Google to find that content. Let's say you've written a post on the biggest mistakes first-time borrowers make. To get a sense of a good keyword phrase to use, go to Google.com and type "first time borrower mistake." Google will automatically show you a list of related search terms. Google is suggesting these phrases because they've been used before by other search engine users — an indication that these phrases might be good for optimizing your post.

**Tip:** Use Google's free Keyword Planner tool to see the search volume for a specific keyword phrase and get ideas for related phrases.

## Set up Google Analytics

It helps to understand your blog's traffic patterns since they show you which posts were popular with readers and which ones got barely any attention. To get this information, set up a Google Analytics account and add it to your blog. Some WordPress.org plug-ins make this simple; otherwise, you may need to post a bit of HTML code on your blog.

**Tip:** For more information, read Google's instructions on setting up the tracking code.

## Think like a publisher

When you start a blog, you become a publisher. So you should start thinking like one. As you go about your day, pay attention to details that might make for an interesting or informative blog post. Use your smartphone to record notes, take pictures or even record short video clips. (Blog posts with images or brief videos attract more readers more than posts without visuals.)

Above all, strive to be a trusted, valuable resource on the subject of mortgages in your particular market or neighborhoods. The more you can serve as a valuable resource, the more likely you'll get social media shares and likes, and perhaps even media interviews. And the more of those you get, the more opportunities you have to stay top of mind with current and future borrowers.