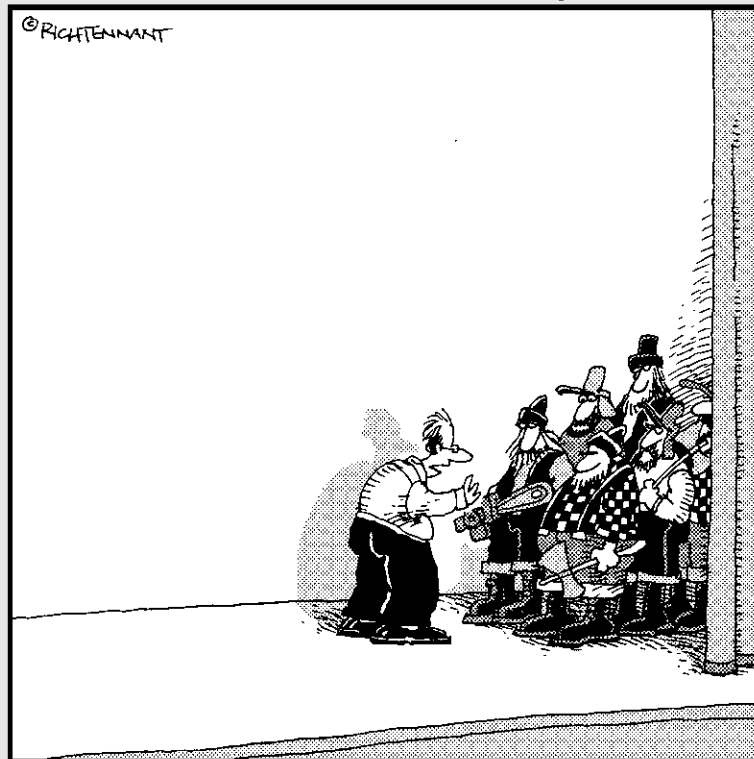


Part VI

The Part of Tens

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"No, we're here to introduce Google Bloggers.
Bloggers. Not loggers..."

In this part . . .

This part provides ten ways to promote your blog, ten ways to grow your audience, and ten ways to re-ignite old content. You'll find some simple bullets to improve your blog, grow readership and build on the content you've already written. These aren't meant to be one-time efforts, so you should turn to this part of the book every month or so.

Reviewing and deploying the steps in this part of the book will continue to improve the results that you are getting from your blog. Remember, blogging is not a matter of simply pushing content out to the Web — it's a long-term marketing strategy that requires ongoing effort. Writing compelling content is the basis of any great blog and the business it attracts — but if you want get great business results and reduce the time it takes to get them, you need to leverage blogging for all its features and benefits.

Chapter 16

Ten Ways to Promote Your Blog

In This Chapter

- ▶ Targeting networks and leading people to your blog
 - ▶ Syndicating your feed in other communities
-

If your company is investing resources into a corporate blogging strategy, getting your blog found outside the search engines can jumpstart your blog's return on investment. Sitting and waiting for your great content to be discovered isn't going to help you. Promotion is a necessary requirement in a corporate blogging strategy to help your blog accelerate growth and, ultimately, impact your business positively.

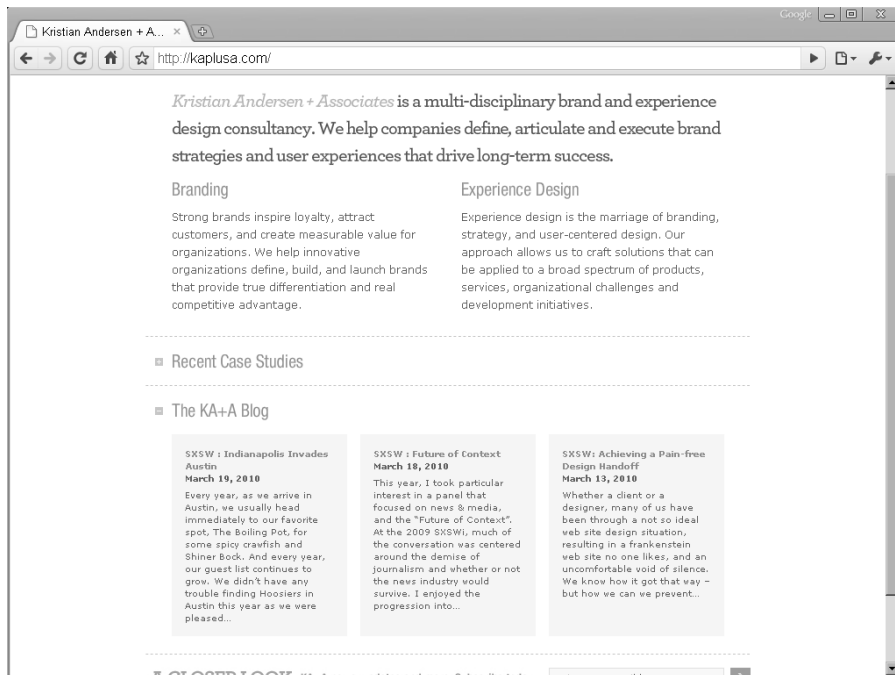
Publishing Posts on Your Home Page

One way to ensure your prospects know about your blog is to publish excerpts and articles on your company's home page. In Chapter 11, we provide resources on how to syndicate your blog's content on other pages. Be sure your home page is one of them. Adding a blog to your home page is a brilliant strategy to connect with consumers, build authority in your industry, drive traffic from search engines and social media, and ultimately, drive more business.

Premier agency and consulting firm, Kristian Andersen + Associates (<http://kaplusa.com>), incorporated its latest blog posts on its home page using a toggle to display or turn off the preview of the latest posts. The most recent posts can be seen by toggling the KA+A Blog section, as shown in Figure 16-1.

Promoting your corporate blog on your Web site will not only provide a human touch for your visitors, it can also provide some search engine goodness for your corporate site. By publishing your blog's feed, the search engines will constantly re-index your Web site and see changes occurring. That means they'll index your site often, which can help your overall site with search engine placement, not just your blog.

Figure 16-1:
Kristian Andersen + Associates promotes their blog in a toggled divider on their home page.



Don't use a JavaScript or Flash aggregator. You won't fully realize the benefits of search engines because those both load client-side and the search engines may not see the content.



Don't stop on your home page! If you have category sections on your site, you can also publish category level feeds that are specific to those category pages. By providing relevant, frequently changed, and compelling content on your category pages, you can drive their search engine traffic significantly.

Publishing Your Blog's Link in E-Mail Signatures

Your blog is your personal voice, and e-mail is a personal communication medium. Writing and responding to e-mails each day is an opportunity to promote your blog to the network of people you communicate with.

Be sure to post a link to your blog. You can simply write that it's your blog or you can sum up the goals and vision of your blog by writing a small blurb expressing why your recipients should check out the blog.



If you're using e-mails formatted in hypertext markup language (HTML), you can add a campaign query string formatted for your analytics application. If you're using Google Analytics, that link might look like this:

```
http://marketingtechblog.com/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=signature&utm_campaign=blog
```

This allows you to view how much traffic your blog is getting directly from your e-mail signature. You may want to try publishing a link to your corporate blog and each of your posts. The majority of blogs have a unique Web address that points directly to posts, similar to the address shown in Figure 16-2.

If you incorporate FeedBurner, as discussed in Chapter 15, FeedBurner supplies a dynamic footer image to place in your signatures that pulls and circulates your latest blog posts on a rotation. You can find out more about using FeedBurner by going to www.feedburner.com/fb/a/publishers/headlineanimator and www.google.com/support/feedburner/bin/topic.py?topic=13244.



Figure 16-2:
Viewing
a unique
author
page on the
Marketing
Technology
Blog.

Promoting Your Blog in Business Cards

Business cards are an accepted means of marketing your business — take advantage of this and promote your blog on them. Put your blog address on your business card and a note on why the person should read it. Folks may throw your card away as soon as they get back to their desk and add you to their customer relationship management tool and LinkedIn, but they may also subscribe to your blog.

Publishing Posts to Twitter

Twitter has exploded in popularity. It's simple to use and the information is easily digestible in small chunks of 140 characters. It's a permission-based medium as well, meaning that you must follow people in order for them to market to you.

Your company can have an effective presence and participation in social media by joining Twitter and adding to the conversations about your industry, your business, and your products and services. Combining those conversations with your blog is an effective way of grabbing attention and leading prospects to your blog where you can try to convert them to customers.

In Chapter 11, we provide examples of how to syndicate your blog to services like Twitter using Twitterfeed. If you're publishing content from your blog to e-mail, several e-mail service providers have incorporated tools to retweet articles to Twitter.

Follow industry leaders, prospective clients, vendors, and customers when you find them on Twitter. These connections extend your network and anything noteworthy you publish is promoted throughout their networks and yours. If you have ground-breaking news, don't be shy about asking connections to promote you as well. Just don't do it so much that you irritate them. Be sure to return the favor every chance you get.

For additional tips, pick up *Twitter Marketing For Dummies* (Wiley). Author Kyle Lacy has many tips on how to leverage Twitter effectively for your business.

Publishing Your Blog in Facebook

In Chapter 11, we also share how to publish your blog to Facebook. Facebook has Fan Pages that you can incorporate on your blog, converting traffic to and from the social network.

As well as adding your blog's feed to your corporate Facebook Page (see Figure 16-3), encourage your bloggers to add their blog to their personal profiles to reach a much wider network. This is a bit like word of mouth marketing — people are much more likely to make a purchase from companies within our network of friends and colleagues.

Like Twitter, leveraging feeds throughout Facebook is a great corporate blogging strategy. Be sure to participate and respond to comments within Facebook when they arise, though. Followers and readers in social networks will quickly ignore your presence if they feel it's only automated.

For additional tips, pick up *Facebook Marketing For Dummies* (Wiley). Authors Paul Dunay and Richard Krueger have many tips on how to leverage Facebook effectively for your business.

Find industry leaders, customers, and vendors on Facebook and become fans of their pages as well. Cross-promotion of businesses is an effective way to promote within social networks like Facebook.

Figure 16-3:
Brand
swag's
Facebook
Page
syndicates
excerpts
from their
corporate
blog.

Facebook has also added a social plug-in called the Like button. Integrating the Like button on your blog offers another opportunity — to publish your blog posts on other peoples' walls. Users who appreciate your content can then click the Like button. See <http://developers.facebook.com/docs/reference/plugins/like>.

For additional information on how to integrate the Like button in WordPress, detailed information is available at www.marketingtechblog.com/wordpress/facebook-link-and-wordpress-integration.

Publishing Your Blog in LinkedIn

LinkedIn may be the easiest and most relevant tool for businesses to market their events, personnel, and latest blog posts. LinkedIn is an incredible tool intended to help you find people or companies to do business with. By having a blog presence there (see Figure 16-4), you're not just providing your resume; you're also providing your voice and expertise.

Figure 16-4:
Michael Reynolds publishes his blog on LinkedIn by using WordPress.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a LinkedIn profile for Michael Reynolds. The browser's address bar shows the URL: http://www.linkedin.com/profile?viewProfile=&key=75453&authToken=ok-b&authType=OUT_OF_NETWORK. The profile is integrated with WordPress, as indicated by the 'WordPress' label at the top left of the content area. The main content area displays a feed of blog posts from WordPress, including titles like 'Don't send me "e-news"', 'Facebook friending etiquette', 'So you think you're in a ROWE?', and 'Stop making excuses and start blogging'. The right-hand side of the page features a navigation pane with sections such as 'Methodology Engineering Professional', 'Other (500+)', 'How you're connected to Michael' (showing a connection to Michael Reynolds - Internet Marketing Speaker), 'Groups you share with Michael:' (listing 'Indiana Google Technology User Group (GTUG)' and 'Rainmakers'), and 'Michael Recommends (52)' (listing recommendations from Karen Koziatsek Casey, Aubrey Fearnow, and Chandy Weber).

LinkedIn also promotes network updates that are customized to your network. Status updates can also be integrated with Twitter or Ping.fm so that your latest blog posts are published in those updates. You should set up both syndication and status updates to fully leverage this network.

Unlike Twitter and Facebook, LinkedIn doesn't really promote conversation — only internal messaging. That means that you need not spend time monitoring LinkedIn for conversations, those messages will come to you.

See Chapter 11 for more about syndicating your blog on LinkedIn.

Publishing Posts in Company Publications

Every publication your company publishes, either online or in print, should reference your blog. Educating your customers about your blog can significantly reduce the number of customer service calls your company receives. In recent years, it's become commonplace to publish your Web site address — don't forget to publish your blog as well.

Whether it's an invoice, an envelope, a visitor badge, or a prospectus, your customers, investors, prospects, and the media should be informed that you publish a blog.

Promoting Your Blog in Other Blogs' Comments

When writing content on your blog, search for and identify other blogs with perspectives on the same topic. Not only should you mention the blogs within your blog post, visit their blog and in a comment, provide a synopsis of the post that you just wrote, state why it's applicable to their post, and insert a link back to your post.

When you write fantastic comments on other blogs that are relevant to your business, you'll be surprised at the attention that your blog receives in return. Blogging was one of the original social mediums to provide a means to publish content, have people react to that content, and communicate with one another.

Although search engines don't weigh comments heavily, bloggers and visitors pay closer attention. When the opportunity arises for you to thank a blogger for a great post, add some detail to that post that may be valuable to their readers or provide a different opinion of their post. Comments are the perfect forum to do this. Bloggers appreciate comments and love responding to them.



Some blogging platforms don't actually allow you to enter links in comments. In that case, refer to your blog post by title and put it in quotes. This allows the blogger or readers of the blog to search for your post.



Even if you vehemently disagree with a blogger, don't make the mistake of being disrespectful. Your comments are a record on the Internet and controversial comments will always come back to haunt you. Defend your position logically and unemotionally.

Avoid responding to attacks on you posted on other blogs. If someone talks negatively about your company, bring the conversation back home to your site where you have advocates, can moderate, and can better control the conversation. Countless companies have made the mistake of responding to attacks on blogs in detail. This only gives that blog the spotlight and perhaps greater search engine ranking on searches for your company.

If you must respond to a comment, simply point the person to your blog or ask them to talk about it offline. Any public response should drive the attention and the traffic to your blog where you can better control the conversation.

Another tactic is to simply ask your company's advocates and fans to respond for you. If a blog post is spreading mistruths about your company, the best response may not be from your company at all, but from a customer who is an avid fan of your business.

Publishing and Distributing Your Corporate Blog in Print

Your blog is a collection of case studies, industry information, frequently asked questions, and countless other pieces of content that are valuable. Using that content in user guides, whitepapers, case studies, and books is an incredible way of repurposing the content to further promote your blog.

When Walker Information, a customer intelligence company, held its regional conference, it surprised its customers with a Blog Book — a collection of the most impactful blog posts that the company had published online.

The book was inexpensive to print and provided a gift to attendees that they could see and touch. They could write notes, earmark pages, and keep it on their desk for information and references.

Be on the lookout for other industry sites, social media sites, and tools you can use to publish your blog. Some companies, such as Connective Mobile, even offer a mobile text messaging club to instantly alert their readers when there are new blog posts. If you're the kind of company that posts big news, specials, discounts, or coupons via your blog, having a text club can drive a lot of traffic to your storefront.

Submitting Your Blog for Awards and Recognition

Guerilla marketing is alive and well in the blogging industry. A great way of attracting traffic to your site is to get your blog onto a list of top blogs for a given industry. When someone makes a list of best blogs, they often promote that list, and the blogs on that list get exposure.

When you catch wind of an industry award, blogging award, social media award, or list that you're eligible for, attack the opportunity with everything you have. Invite customers to vote for you. Pass the voting links on social media sites, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Write blog posts and send them to everyone you know. Ask for their support.

Winning an award or getting ranked on an industry "best of" list can drive relevant traffic to your blog. Technorati and PostRank both rank blogs based on their popularity. Technorati allows users to "favorite" their blogs. PostRank allows users to "follow" blogs. Continue to promote links so people will favorite you on Technorati or add your feed on PostRank.

When bloggers find they're on a list of top industry blogs, they typically publish the list on their blog. If your blog is on that list as well, they're going to mention your blog, too. Not only are you accumulating links from relevant sites, which improves your search authority, you're also going to be visited by the audiences on other relevant blogs. Making rank on industry lists is an effective way to promote your blog and get a lot of attention!

When you are awarded, be sure to promote the award in a blog post and elsewhere on your blog — perhaps in a sidebar, as shown in Figure 16-5. Letting new visitors see how your blog has been recognized in the industry shows that your blog is trusted and has authority.

Recognition from third-party sites provides your readers with a sense that you are an authority in your industry, in your region, or across social media.

and publishing. ChaCha has got an incredibly sophisticated full question and answer system via SMS that answers up to a million questions a day, they've got a site with 17 million pages of Questions and Answers scored, categorized and indexed. They've got an iPhone application. They've got an open API with access to 400 million questions and answers. They've got a Droid application on the way. They've got a Facebook application. They've got plugins and widgets. They've got Facebook and Twitter integration. They're expanding into local search.

That's what I know about ChaCha.me. I carry some of the responsibility for an early release - before all the features and functionality of the application were fully realized. Instead of getting fired for it, I was thanked - that's pretty awesome. I owe a lot of people at ChaCha a thank-you for the hard work they did to launch ChaCha.me early.

So - do me a favor and support this great company and their newest application. Ask me a question on ChaCha. Or you can ask a celebrity, the first of many... David Guetta, some questions.

There are many more exciting changes coming!

Related articles by Zemanta

- ChaCha Turns To Facebook To Socialize Questions And Answers; Rolls Out API (techcrunch.com)
- Is ChaCha now #1 mobile search, ahead of Google? (venturebeat.com)
- ChaCha Launches ChaCha.me For Social FAQs, Businesses And Celebrities Welcome. (techcrunch.com)
- ChaCha Gets Into The Local Business Listings Game (techcrunch.com)

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20 Comments

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- » Dropbox is a Requirement
- » The Chimp is In!
- » Perfect For Small Blogs
- » SEMrush Unlocks the Secrets
- » Woopra Blog Analysts Rock!

OUR COMPANIES

- » Connective Mobile

16 Comments 283 Members

Figure 16-5:
Blogging awards and recognition on the Marketing Technology Blog.

Chapter 17

Ten Ways to Grow Your Audience

In This Chapter

- ▶ Marketing to target readers for your blog
 - ▶ Luring new visitors to your blog with incentives
 - ▶ Using viral tools to get the word out on your blog
-

While your blog's profitability shifts from a plan to a reality, you begin to recognize how many new visitors you need for your blog to sustain growth in your business. If you need additional qualified leads or purchases from your blog, you can predict how many new visitors you'll require to get those leads or purchases.

A number of strategies to drive new visitors to your blog are available to you. When you launch your blog, budget some money for applying resources across multiple strategies. Trying each strategy and measuring the impact of those results helps you fine-tune your blogging strategy to grow your traffic.

The following sections describe eleven strategies, not ten. Consider that last one a bonus!



The goal isn't more eyeballs, it's more business! Beware of the get-rich-quick methodologies of growing your blog audience. A lot of get-rich bloggers out there have tons of advice on building readership, but they're not trying to grow a sustainable business — they're actually counting on your one-time purchase of their get-rich-quick information.

There is momentum in large numbers, however. When people scour the Internet looking for resources they can trust, the first thing they look for are resources that already have a large following. After all, if your blog has thousands of readers, you must be a reliable source of information. You can take advantage of this by proactively promoting your numbers.

Coming out of the gate and promoting your blog as the best, the industry leading, or the favorite blog may be a declaration that's worthwhile. It's also impossible to disprove. Online marketers John Chow (<http://www.johnchow.com>) and Jeremy Shoemoney (<http://www.shoemoney.com>) have an incredible following on the Internet from promoting their blogs as the top

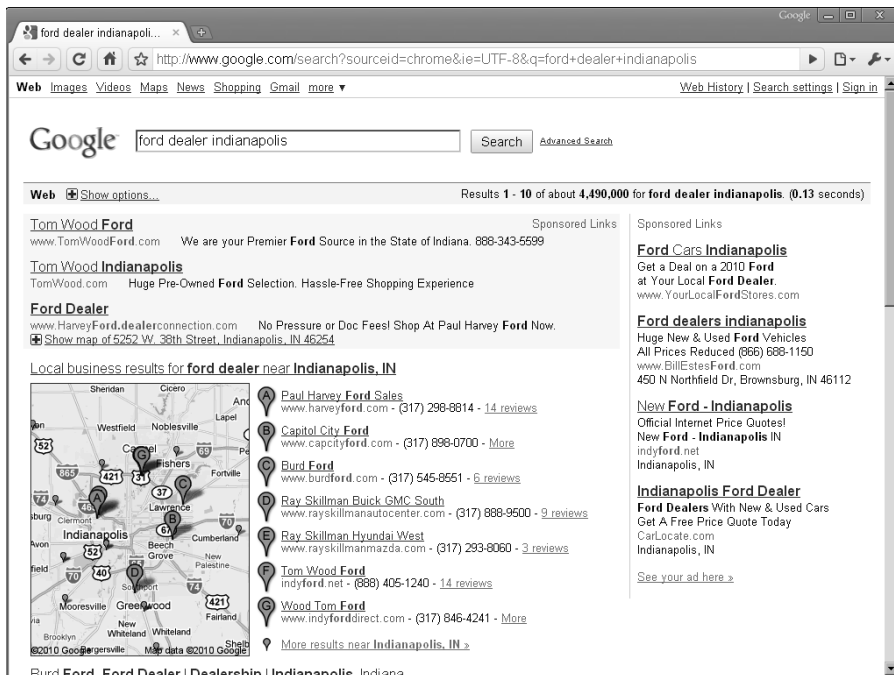
resources for making money online. Along with their bold statements, they've crafted great personas of wealth and influence online. You can argue whether John and Jeremy are the best resources, but their influence in the industry is clear and they both are now very successful. By promoting their blogs this way, they continue to grow their following because readers believe it. Be bold when promoting your blog!

Is this deceptive? If you don't believe in your company, your products, and services, this would be deceptive. Hopefully, that's not the case! Do not be deceptive in promoting your blog, but don't shy away from bold statements that promote your blog.

Buying Visitors with Pay-Per-Click

When you view a search engine results page, sometimes the organic search results aren't even visible unless you scroll down the page. Google, for example, has paid search results on top of the page and in the right sidebar. With a local search, a map is displayed with regional results. Figure 17-1 shows you what I mean. Now, where did those organic search results go?

Figure 17-1:
A search engine results page with paid and local search results. Organic search results are further down the page.



If you discover that you can't beat the paid search placement, why not join 'em? Paid search placement may actually be an appropriate solution for highly competitive organic search terms. The advantage of paid search results is that you can absolutely measure your return on investment because you understand what each click costs and how many conversions you achieve. The disadvantage is that paid search, or pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, can clean out your budget without results if you don't know what you're doing.

Pay-per-click advertising agencies, such as Imavex, Hanapin Marketing, and EverEffect, can manage your account for you and determine where the ads run, keywords to avoid, when the ads run, and optimize your advertising message and landing page. In many cases, these agencies can turn pay-per-click campaigns that generate zero leads into one with several leads with very inexpensive acquisition costs.

Targeting your paid search keywords, in addition to the terms *blog*, *news*, *training*, *professionals*, *experts*, *articles*, and *advice*, can lead relevant, timely visitors directly to your blog. You want to keep a very close eye on your blog's growth versus conversions when executing paid search campaigns.

In many cases, you won't see a great return on investment, but it will jump-start your readership.

Paying for Blog Reviews

You can find organizations online where you can pay people to write about your blog in their own blogs. Pay Per Post (see Figure 17-2) is one such marketplace. Advertisers can sign up and search for bloggers to write about them. Pricing is based on the blogger's ranking and overall authority. If you use a service like this, you work with bloggers who have the largest and highest-ranking blogs (relevant to your audience) who have a good following of their own.

You may also wish to target bloggers directly. Believe it or not, although industry publication blogs get a ton of exposure and traffic, they typically don't make the blogger a lot of money. Offering a sponsorship to a blog in return for a single post or series of posts is a great way for the blogger to make some additional income.



Always ensure that the blogger discloses that the post was sponsored or the company is a client. New federal communications laws in the United States actually demand it.



Figure 17-2:
Pay Per Post is a marketplace for advertisers to find bloggers.

Regardless of the service you decide to use, be prepared for positive and negative reviews! Bloggers are an interesting group — just because you're greasing their palm doesn't mean that they won't be honest about your blog, your company, your products, or your services.

If you're overly concerned that a blogger might write something negative about your company, request to see the post and approve it prior to it being published. This will allow you to fix the problem. It's also great to respond to a blogger's opinion or advice and let them know that the problems they saw were resolved.

Rest assured that there's nothing unethical about reviewing a paid post before it's published. It's your responsibility to ensure you have the right to review a paid post before it goes live. Let your blogger know up front that you would like to have a right to refuse the post. If your paid post can do damage to your brand, then pay the bill and decline the post. Let the blogger know that you had to decline it because it could hurt your business. No ethical blogger should *want* to hurt another business.

Commenting on Other Industry Blogs

By following and interacting with other industry blogs, you can see how others are blogging, and even promote your own blog. Start by finding industry blogs through Technorati, PostRank or BlogCatalog, and then target the blogs with high ranking and large followings. You can also use Google Blog Search (<http://blogsearch.google.com>) and type relevant keywords to see who ranks highest.

After you find blogs with products and services that are complementary to your company, interact with those blogs by writing compelling comments that add to the conversation. A comment on a highly trafficked blog may bring direct visits from curious readers of the comments. You may also capture the attention of the blogger. Typically, bloggers write about other bloggers who are in the same industry and produce quality content.



Adding additional links within the content of a comment or writing content with no value that simply tries to push visitors to your blog is comment spam. You could actually drive traffic away from your business by spamming comments on other blogs. You'll get blocked and, chances are, you'll get called out for it and lose credibility in your industry.

Trading Posts and Guest-Blogging

Leverage existing networks by offering to write guest posts for blogs that have audiences similar to the readers you have or want to have. Blogging is time-consuming, so bloggers love to get a break once in a while. You might also want to do a trade of posts, where you offer a guest post on your blog in return for a guest post on theirs.

The ability to tap into each others' audiences is a great opportunity. The conventional wisdom might be that this poaches audiences. That isn't the case at all. If your blog is relevant to the other blog, you both will benefit from new readers. People don't mind reading more great content!



Guest blogging is not guaranteed, though. Many bloggers are suspicious nowadays that you'll simply spam their readers. Bloggers get deluged with offers every day. Rather than simply asking for the opportunity, propose an actual topic to write on. You may even want to supply an excerpt or point to some of the blog posts you've written.

Promoting Other Blogs

Promoting other industry blogs and bloggers on your blog will draw those bloggers' attention, which can be very helpful to you. Through the use of Google Alerts, many bloggers track any mention of their blog and monitor their reputation by seeking out those posts and responding to them. Be liberal in your promotion of others! Bloggers appreciate getting promoted and often return the favor.

This view is shortsighted and doesn't take the goal into consideration. Your blog is there to build credibility and authority with your readers. When you find an incredible resource via a blog, the blog you found it on becomes more valuable to you! Some blogs, like Chips Quips (www.chipsquips.com) do nothing except collect great resources for readers!

You're not actually giving away anything by promoting a great resource to your readers. In fact, you'll build credibility with them quicker. Many bloggers never link to other sites for fear that their audience will follow the link and not come back.

Driving Traffic from Social Media

Social media is a broad definition that refers to all the interactive sites where people have the opportunity to publish, network, share, and discuss topics of interest. Blogs are a social medium, but sites such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are the common target of social media discussions. Social media is a fantastic way to extend the reach of your blog.

Twitter can be a highly valuable social media tool. Here are some ideas for incorporating Twitter:

- ✓ Automatically post your blog posts to Twitter using Twitterfeed.
- ✓ Automatically post your blog posts to Facebook by enabling your blog's feed integration with your Facebook profile or Facebook Page. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 16, you can integrate the Facebook Like button so that anyone who likes your posts can publish the link to their wall.
- ✓ If you're already publishing your posts to Twitter, you can automatically post these Twitter updates to Facebook using the Facebook Twitter integration (<http://www.facebook.com/twitter>).

- ✔ If you belong to any Ning social networks, integrate your Twitter account with the network (<http://blog.ning.com/2010/01/integrate-twitter-with-your-ning-network.html>). Your Ning administrator may need to turn Twitter integration on as an option within the network's administrative settings.
- ✔ Use tools like Tweetmeme so that readers can automatically retweet your blog posts.

You don't need to stop at Twitter, though. Here are some other social media options to consider:

- ✔ Try a tool like ShareThis. ShareThis integrates with your blog and allows people to share the link through a multitude of social media services or by e-mail. ShareThis also provides statistics on how your blog post was shared.
- ✔ Automatically post your blog posts to LinkedIn by enabling the integration in LinkedIn settings.
- ✔ If you have posts that are timely, such as coupons or discounts, try starting a mobile text club. Connective Mobile has a text club WordPress plug-in that automatically posts text messages to the club.
- ✔ ChaCha.me and FormSpring.me are a new wave of social question and answer services. Unlike Twitter or Facebook, these applications allow your users to publically ask you questions that you can respond to. Both services offer widgets you can publish on your blog that solicit questions from your audience. This is a great way to connect with your audience and, perhaps, write about some common questions that you hadn't thought of.

ChaCha.me offers several integrations to publish the responses directly to Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, or WordPress.
- ✔ Ping.fm posts your post title and link from your RSS feed to all major social media sites and mobile devices. Instead of integrating each social media site to your blog, you can integrate with Ping.fm and then use Ping.fm's service to automate the updates everywhere else.

Link Baiting Traffic to Your Blog

Link baiting is the use of highly remarkable post titles to address attention to a specific audience. If your company makes air cleaning systems, a title for a blog post named "Improving Air Quality for Your Children" could be made more dramatic with a title such as "How the Air in Your Home is Hurting Your Children."

People will click on that headline because it's so controversial and attention-grabbing. Link baiting is a common practice and can draw a lot of attention and traffic to your blog. Figure 17-3 provides an example from The Marketing Technology Blog.

Many bloggers write false story headings about search topics that are trending as well, resulting in high bounce rates, abandonment by subscribers, and raising the ire of other bloggers in the industry. You should never write false headings or try to manipulate your readers with link bait.

For post titles, humor or controversy tends to drive the most traffic. Trending news is also an effective means of link-baiting because you can use keywords that are gaining a lot of attention publically and put them to use in your post titles. If you're using WordPress, install the ChaCha Answers plug-in and you can identify trends on ChaCha, Twitter, and Google from your WordPress dashboard.



Link baiting takes some talent. If it's done well, you can really get a lot of attention. Some of that attention may not be relevant, though, so don't be surprised if your spike in traffic doesn't lead to a spike in conversions. If it's not done effectively and people are visiting your blog and don't find a relevant story, you could upset them. Using trending topics incorrectly could lead to increased traffic, but will also lead to higher bounce rates — this isn't going to help your overall corporate blogging strategy or drive business.



Figure 17-3:
Meetings - The Death of American Productivity is a link bait post title.

Holding Promotions and Giveaways

Create a buzz to increase your audience engagement and recruit new followers with promotions and giveaways on your blog. Giving away money, prizes, gift cards, or books, as shown in Figure 17-4, will attract a lot of people. A giveaway doesn't even have to be to your readers: If you provide gifts for those who blog about your company, product, or service, you'll not only get some traffic from those blogs, you'll also get some search engine authority.

Promotions and giveaways are also good for converting frequent visitors that have never interacted with you. Sometimes all you need is a little incentive to have someone click the purchase button, submit the form, or sign up for a newsletter.

Giveaways don't actually have to cost you anything. Sometimes you can partner with vendors or industry coalitions and organizations to provide you with some gifts.

Figure 17-4: Lydias Uniforms' blog runs promotions on the sidebar to attract traffic.



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Lydia's Uniforms Blog. The browser address bar shows the URL <http://blog.lydiasuniforms.com/blog/lydias-uniforms>. The page header features the blog's logo, "Lydia's Uniforms Blog", with the tagline "Nursing news, uniform fashion, and our best offers." Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "Our Website", "About Liza", "Contact Us", "Lydia's Signature Scrubs", "Follow this Blog", and "Blog Roll".

The main content area displays a blog post titled "Our New Web Team Specialist" dated Wednesday, March 24, 2010, by Mandy Lovell. The post text reads: "We are so thrilled to welcome Lindsay to our Web Team. She has been a valued employee at Lydia's for over three years as a customer service representative. (You may have even spoken with her on the phone before). Lindsay is looking forward to working in the Web Department and answering all of your questions through email and live chat." Below the text is a small photo of Lindsay. The post continues: "What most excites you about new position? I am looking forward to helping customers navigate our website and answer any product questions they may have. Whether they are looking for plus size nursing uniforms or the ever so popular Barco Grey's Anatomy Scrubs, I will be there to help them find their favorites! I also love doing live chat because I can provide customers with all of their answers instantly." Further down, it says: "You can speak with Lindsay or any of our web team specialists Monday through Friday 8am to 10pm or on Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6pm." and "Also, don't forget you can email us at csr@lydiasuniforms.com and we will get back to you within 4 business hours!"

The sidebar on the right contains several promotional elements under the heading "Lydia's Uniforms":

- A "Get \$5 Off Your \$25 Order" promotion with a "SIGN UP NOW >" button.
- A "Win a \$50 gift certificate" promotion with an "ENTER TO WIN >" button.
- A "Better than Reality T.V. Nurses in action." promotion with a "SHARE YOUR STORY >" button.
- A "nurseconnect" logo with the text "VISIT NurseConnect TODAY!" and a "SEARCH THIS BLOG" button.



Giving away a series of gifts (for instance, a month of giveaways) is sometimes more effective than doing one big giveaway. Each day, pick a visitor who commented, promoted your blog in social media, or wrote about your product and service — and you send them something inexpensive but thoughtful. As they begin to tell their network about their winnings, you'll see more opportunists take advantage. Keep in mind that this can draw traffic but not necessarily conversions.

Steeply discount or giveaway your own product! If you have a great product or service, why not promote your business by giving it away on your blog? It will draw attention and will be especially relevant.

Offering E-books, Whitepapers, and Case Studies

Providing gifts and promotional items on your blog is an effective technique to grow your audience — but the traffic you attain may be opportunists rather than potential customers. Do not underestimate the power of well-written publications to draw relevant visitors.

E-books, whitepapers, and case studies are often publicized and promoted across industry blogs and Web sites. Underlying in each is the opportunity for you to promote your products or services. Take advantage of this opportunity.

Combine the promotion of your blog, e-books, whitepapers, and case-studies along with training, Webinars, and conference events to maximize the impact. Cross-promoting all of them will grow your audience, grow attendance and, as a result, grow your inbound leads to your business.

Syndicating Your Blog Everywhere

The more places your content can be found, the more people are exposed to it, and the more new readers you find on your blog. *Aggregation blogs* throughout the Internet pull from blogs and push aggregate content.

As long as these aggregation sites are fully providing credit and backlinks to your site, you may want to join them. Test and measure the traffic that is coming from them. LinkedIn and Facebook are fantastic social networks that offer applications to syndicate your full blog posts directly into their platforms, extending your blog beyond your site.

Don't forget to syndicate your blog across your own Web pages, internal publications, and even vendor and partner sites! The more places your posts are, the more opportunity to attract new readers to your blog.

You can even create a custom iPhone application to publish your blog in an application that is easily readable and customized to your brand. iSites (<http://isites.us>), shown in Figure 17-5, allows you to create a personal iPhone application using your blog's feed. The cost of the service is inexpensive, only \$99 per year!



Make sure that you are keeping up with each of the locations you are syndicating your blog to. For instance, if your blog content can be found on your Facebook page, make sure that you are answering questions and listening to feedback and comments that are made on Facebook about your blog.



Figure 17-5: iSites allows you to build an iPhone application with your blog's feed.

Integrating Word-of-Mouth Widgets in Your Blog

Word-of-mouth marketing is a marketing technique in which your customers, readers, and followers spread the word on your behalf. Word-of-mouth marketing is one of the most trusted and effective means of marketing because it doesn't come from the company but from your network of friends and colleagues.

Widgets allow you to aggregate, publish, and share your blog content with a variety of different potential visitors. Widgets for blog promotion can draw traffic and allow for additional communication. Here are some useful widgets:

- ✔ Facebook Fan Pages (www.facebook.com/facebook-widgets) are a great way to cross-promote your traffic on Facebook.
- ✔ Facebook Like buttons (<http://developers.facebook.com/docs/reference/plugins/like>) allow your blog's visitors to publish a link to your post within their Facebook Wall, extending the reach of your blog into your readers' networks. The widget also keeps count of friends you know who click the button.
- ✔ Tweetmeme has a Retweet Button widget (http://tweetmeme.com/about/retweet_button) you can add to your blog that allows Twitter users to publish the link directly to Twitter. Tweetmeme keeps track of how many clicks Web pages are getting and ranks them on their site. It's an effective means of measuring your blog's reach across Twitter.
- ✔ Google Friend Connect (www.google.com/friendconnect) offers a community widget that can be embedded in your sidebar or footer that promotes your content through a network of followers.
- ✔ BlogCatalog (www.blogcatalog.com/widgets) offers a series of widgets to connect with relevant followers through the BlogCatalog system. These are typically bloggers, too!

Running these widgets is a great way to get your blog's readership off the ground or get some increase in traffic, but you'll want to pay close attention to how they impact your bounce rates and conversions. If people are coming to your blog and then leaving by way of these widgets, you may want to remove them.

Chapter 18

Ten Ways to Reignite Old Content

In This Chapter

- ▶ Optimizing previously written content
 - ▶ Modifying material to improve search placement
 - ▶ Promoting old content in new networks
-

Most companies look at a blog and only envision their latest posts being read and driving sales. This is a huge misconception about blogs. Although a blog is optimized to display the latest content first, there's no reason why every post in your blog couldn't be working hard for you long after it's been written.

Most companies don't ever think about returning to old posts to tweak content, but it's an incredibly powerful method for acquiring search engine traffic. Your old posts are like undiscovered treasure. You just need to unbury it and reap the benefits!

Search engines *do* discriminate on content by its age. Content is only old if it's never been changed, though. Change a few elements on a five year-old blog post and you've got fresh content again! And you have a number of ways to do this.

Promoting Old Content in New Blog Posts

As search engines analyze your blog, they're not just looking at the content, they're analyzing the structure and formatting of the page and also taking the site's hierarchy into consideration. Important elements are the home page, navigation, and the internal links promoted throughout the page.

When you write your post, think about referencing other relevant posts within the body of your content. Not only does it provide additional content to support the post you're writing, it also provides a *deep link* internal to your blog. Deep linking is a methodology often used by search engine optimization professionals to increase the impact of other pages within the site.

The first step of promoting old content is to identify whether the content is even found within search results. The easiest method for doing this is to use an online service like SEMRush. SEMRush captures the top 40 million searches on the Internet and the associated results. If your blog post is buried on page two or beyond, you have a great opportunity to increase the ranking of that page for the keywords it's already indexed for.

Another means of doing this is to add a plug-in (such as the WordPress Related Posts plug-in from Fairyfish.net) that lists other relevant posts associated with the same content that you've just written. (See Figure 18-1.) These plug-ins analyze the categories and tags associated with your content and find additional content that has overlap.

When you write blog posts, consider the content you are writing about. Do you have an old blog post you can refer to? Use a few of those links within (or following) your content.

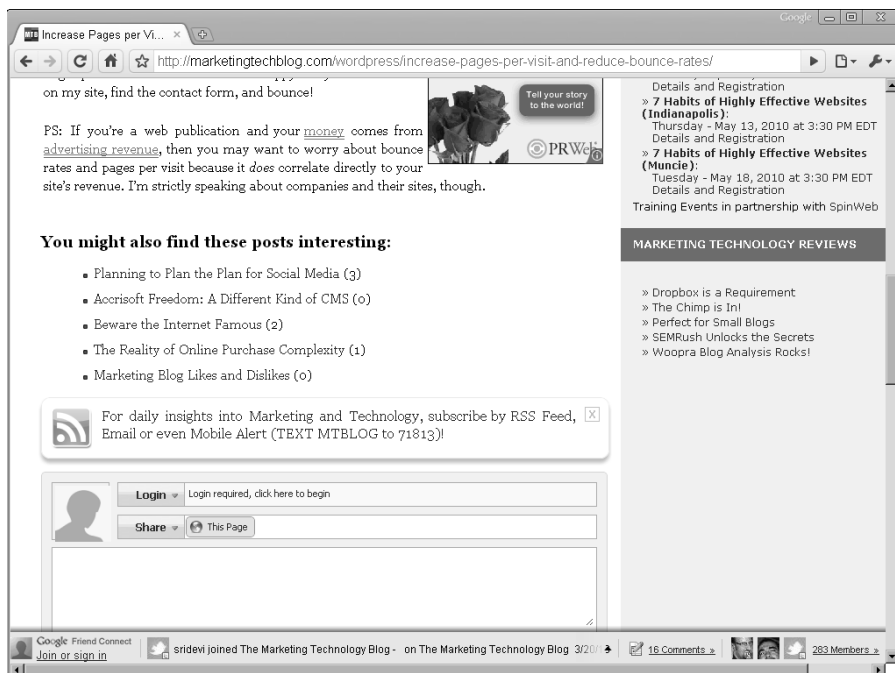


Figure 18-1:
Displaying
additional
relevant
posts after
each new
post.



Many sites take an excerpt of the first few sentences or paragraph of your post and republish it. By including a deep link within the first sentence or two, these other sites may not only grab the link to your post, they may also grab a deep link that's inserted.

Promoting Old Content in Other Blogs' Comments

When you read industry blogs and respond via comments, don't hesitate to include a link to posts that you've written on the same topic. Some blogs won't allow those links, and others may exclude your comment as a possible spam attack. Keep track of the blogs that never publish your comments and don't bother doing it there again — you don't want to annoy the blogger.

Although there's not a lot of search engine authority, if any, passed through a link in a blog comment, it can still revive your content. (Chapters 8 and 9 have more information on search engine optimization.) If nothing else, the readers who are doing some comprehensive research will wind up on those posts. Don't be surprised to see some new comments, or some new promotion of those older links. This can revive the content and improve its ranking because it's already ranking for some relative keywords.

Reviving Old Content with New Comments

Comments are a fantastic gift for a blog. Not only do they provide support or feedback for the posts that you've written, they also change the content of the page, so search engines will come back and re-index the page with the latest remarks. This is another good reason to stay vigilant on moderating comments — you want to ensure the comments add value to your page.

You'll find that it's no coincidence that old blog posts with lots of comments wind up in the top rankings of search engines. This is because their content is consistently changing. There's no evidence that search engines take comments specifically into consideration, but you will find that the additional content helps.

This content is called user-generated content (UGC) and is the best kind of content because it doesn't cost your business anything. Solicit feedback in each of your blog posts for comments. Encourage your readers to write and be sure to respond to them.

You might also want to install plug-ins that display the blog posts with the most discussions. PostRank Labs has a Top Posts Widget (http://labs.postrank.com/top_posts) where the ranking is based on the most referred-to blog posts off-site. These plug-ins put a list in your sidebar or beneath each of your posts. Lorelle lists a number of WordPress plugins for leveraging comments in WordPress at <http://lorelle.wordpress.com/2007/02/26/wordpress-plugins-for-comments>.

Another great advancement in blogging is the use of *universal commenting systems*. Universal commenting systems track comments across all blogs by user and allow people to read and follow that user's comments in a single location. The most widely used commenting systems are Intense Debate (www.intensedebate.com), Echo (www.js-kit.com), and Disqus (www.disqus.com).



If you decide to implement any one of these systems, always ensure that your site's comments are fully imported and synchronized with the system. If you have a lot of comments, this could even turn into a manual import process. It's essential that you synchronize, though, to ensure your comments are both stored locally and displayed for search engines to see.



A couple of commenting systems have gone out of business, so always ensure that you own and store your content in the event the system is unavailable or discontinued.

Modifying Post Titles

Updating your page title is the single biggest change you can incorporate for search engine optimization. By updating page and post titles, you can take a great blog post that's not getting any traffic, and push it up in the rankings significantly with this minor edit.

Using a tool like paid service like SEOPivot (www.seopivot.com) or simply by using Google Webmasters' *Your site on the Web* Search queries, you can see which of your blog posts have potential to rank better for specific keywords if the content in them was better optimized. Download a list of the blog posts where you are not ranking well and make edits to the post title and/or the page title.

Although most blogging applications treat the page title and post title the same, there's a difference between them. If your platform allows you to, you may want to modify a page title rather than the post title. The All in One SEO Pack plug-in for WordPress (<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/all-in-one-seo-pack>) allows you to do exactly that. If you're on a different blogging platform that doesn't allow it, simply update your post title instead.

Modifying Meta Descriptions

Meta descriptions are another overlooked but critical component of your blog. *Meta tags* are HTML tags within the head section of your blog that are not visible to the visitor but are visible to search engines. A *meta description tag* is a tag with approximately 160 characters of text to describe the page. If a meta description is included in the page, a search engine will crawl the information and typically display that information on the search engine results page (SERP).

If you do not or cannot update the meta descriptions of a blog post, the search engine will just grab some text from the page — typically the first few sentences of the content. Many times, you'll find that the search engine really pulls some wacky stuff, though, such as content half-way down your sidebar.

If you have the time, modifying meta descriptions is worth the effort on *every* blog post because it allows you to put some compelling content in the SERP to drive someone to click through on the result. If you don't, however, using a tool like SEOPivot (www.seopivot.com) to identify posts with opportunities to rank better is another alternative.

Modifying Content with Keyword Enhancements

Keywords, keywords, keywords. Search engines today are fairly dumb. You must repeatedly tell them the keywords you should be indexed for; otherwise, they won't do it.

Keywords usage in domains, post titles, post slugs, headings, subheadings, and content is going to make a huge difference in where your content is found. If you truly want to have an impact on your blog's quality, proper usage of keywords ensures that your content is indexed correctly for the keywords you want it to be found for. Images or video related to keyword topics work well also.

New corporate and enterprise blogging platform provider, Compendium (www.compendium.com), has focused its user interface on keyword optimization. Within the content editor, Compendium has incorporated a keyword strength indicator (see Figure 18-2) that turns from red to green when you mention your keywords enough. If you overdo it, it returns to red.

If you want to capture search engine traffic for specific keywords, then you need to write content for those keywords. Compendium has a proprietary engine that automatically categorizes your content by keywords you've used within the blog post. The software also tracks how many times you've written about each keyword.

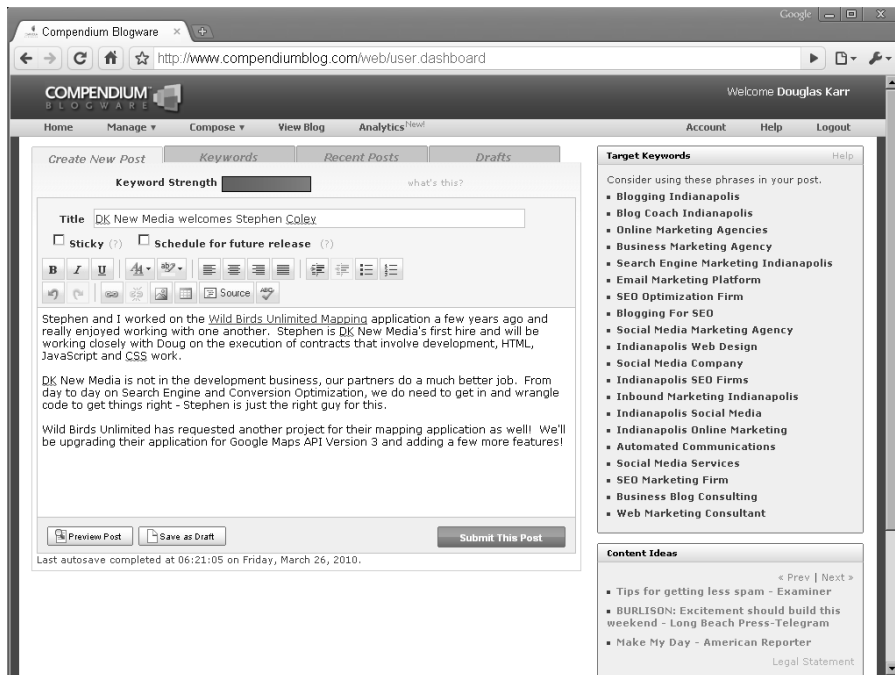


Figure 18-2:
Compendium's
Keyword Strength
indicator.

If you have old content that you're not getting any traffic on, don't give up on it. If it's useful content, optimize the content for specific keywords that have good search volumes.

For WordPress, Scribe (www.scribeseo.com) offers a service to professional bloggers that will provide feedback on the construction of your title, meta description, and post content through a simple interface.

Removing Dates from Blog Posts

Because blogs are timely, people tend to put dates all over them — in the permalink construction and on the interface. The problem is readers prefer new content over old content. Here are a couple ways you can avoid dating your posts:

- ✔ **Remove explicit dates from your theme design.** If you'd like to include a date, add it without the year. There's no reason to expire your content for a reader. A blog post about a product you developed two years ago may still be relevant.
- ✔ **When you design your blog, modify your permalinks so that they don't include the date and time.** To do this with WordPress, use the WordPress Permalinks Migration plug-in. This plug-in automatically adds



a 301 code, redirects both users and search engines, and lets the search engine know that the page has been relocated. Keep in mind that you might lose some search engine authority when redirecting to new pages.

If your blog is already up and running, changing permalinks can have a disastrous impact on your search engine optimization. Do not change them unless you have the ability to redirect readers properly from the old Web address to the new Web address.

Submitting Excerpts to Social Networks

Unfortunately, your blog isn't as important to other people as it is to you. For some people, LinkedIn is where they like to research and communicate with one another. For others, it's Facebook or Twitter. Others appreciate a feed reader or even a daily e-mail.

Through the use of syndication, it's possible for you to reach others where they want to be reached. Even though you may already have your content syndicated throughout these social media sites, don't be shy about reviving older blog posts that are still relevant. Select your most popular posts and publish them out to Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn periodically to revive them.

Tagging Content and Building Tag Clouds

Tagging is the act of assigning keywords and phrases to a blog post so that it's easily found based on that keyword or phrase. Understanding which keywords are going to draw the most traffic allows you to proactively use search terms as keywords. Each time you write a blog post, tag it with those keywords.

Tags are a great element on your blog for reviving old content. If a visitor arrives and is only interested in specific topics, they may either click on a category on your blog or they may try clicking on a tag. Blogging platforms like WordPress incorporate tagging and even *tag clouds*, collections of tags organized and displayed by popularity that allow a visitor to filter the content on the blog to that single tag.

To add a tag cloud in your WordPress blog's theme is simple; they've developed their own function you can call:

```
<?php wp_tag_cloud( $args ); ?>
```

Zemanta (www.zemanta.com) provides additional content and references for all major blogging platforms. While you write your post, Zemanta scours

its resources and brings back suggestions based on the content you're writing. They provide photos, articles, and tags. The plug-in is effective at identifying the words and phrases you should be tagging your blog post with. If you're not sure what words to tag your posts with, Zemanta makes it very easy. (See Figure 18-3.)

Promoting Internal Search on Your Blog

When your blog becomes widely used, more and more readers will use your internal search to find articles and information they're interested in. Monitoring the internal searches can provide you with ideas on what to write about but it can also help you promote the posts that are most searched for.

When you know the terms, you can hand-select the articles for those posts and promote them in your sidebar as the Most Searched For blog posts. By putting links to these posts on your home page, you effectively tell the search engine how important they are.

Along with displaying links to other relevant posts, promote your search form throughout your blog. You may even wish to place it at the end of each blog post with a nice note, "Didn't find what you were looking for?" to prompt the user to search deeper into your blog.

The screenshot shows the Zemanta website homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Download', 'Demo', and 'Learn more' links. The main content area is divided into three sections: 'Write your post', 'Enrich with Zemanta', and 'Get more traffic'. Below these sections, there are four columns of promotional text:

- Download Zemanta, Free!**: Promotes the Google Chrome Extension, available for Chrome 3.0. Includes a 'DOWNLOAD' button and a link for 'Other browsers'.
- Or Just Try it First!**: Lists benefits: 'No signup', 'No install', and 'Plug and play'. Includes a 'TRY DEMO!' button and a link to 'Learn more'.
- We Have For You!**: Lists features: '10M+ pictures', 'Thousands of Blogs and News Sites', 'Over 20 Specialized Sources', and 'Works On All Platforms'. Includes a link to 'Learn more'.
- Testimonial**: A quote from BusinessWeek: "a one-stop shop for bloggers looking to dress up their postings with related content links, images, audio, and video". Includes a link to 'More buzz'.

Figure 18-3:
Zemanta can enhance the content in your blog and help promote it.