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Metrics that matter for bloggers

*How to measure your progress
and success as a blogger*

Blaz Kos

by Blaz Kos, agileleanlife.com
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Blaz Kos



I am on a life mission **to make the world a more organized, innovative and transcendent place** by helping individuals, organizations and communities achieve their peak potential and an entirely new level of performance.

I have helped many individuals, companies and organizations create, deliver and capture real value by becoming lean, agile and data-driven.

I am obsessively passionate about **hi-tech start-ups, mass media, personal development and making the world a better place**. I have spent the past ten years of my career developing the start-up, entrepreneurship and venture capital ecosystem in Slovenia and Eastern Europe. Here are some highlights from my previous work with startups and startup ecosystems:

- Helped to establish the university incubator (600 m2) at the biggest university in Slovenia
- Established the first and biggest angel network in Slovenia with 40+ investors and 12+ investments
- Helped establish the first business angel network in Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia
- Was an investment manager at a 6,000,000 € seed VC fund
- Advised the Slovenian government on business and start-up environment development
- Was in the management board of the biggest technology park in Slovenia – 66,000 m2
- Established the first franchised co-working space at 7 locations in Slovenia – 7 x 200 m2
- Running my own consulting company Venturelab Ltd.
- Co-organizing one of the biggest two day CEE conferences for entrepreneurs, PODIM
- Established and running two start-up accelerators with a 4,800,000 € public-private fund – Start:up Geek House and Go:Global Slovenia
- Author of the Agile and Lean Life Blog / ALL Movement

Over the past 10 years **I have lectured at more than 600 events across the Central and Eastern Europe and mentored over 300 start-ups**. My lectures used to be on traditional business topic like business planning, financial forecasting, analyzing the market, raising funds etc., but today I lecture mainly about new techniques such as lean and agile startup and how these techniques can be used in our lives as a personal development and productivity enhancement strategy.

By organizing the big regional conference PODIM, **I got the chance to get to know “lean start-up” authorities** such as Ash Maurya, Robert Fitzpatrick, Gregory Bernarda and others. Besides the PODIM conference, there are many other cool events I helped organize; events like Startup Weekend, mini Seedcamp, Wayra CEE tour and so on.

Besides hi-tech start-ups I am also a personal development enthusiast. I was born in a broken-up family without any help, and the only way to a brighter future was for me to begin developing my skills and competences with no mercy, including changing my inherited mindset and attitude towards life.

I have a long way to go, but I am still very passionate about helping others achieve their personal and professional goals. I have no difficulty with sharing my struggles and what I have learnt along the way, with no deceitfulness/and taboos. Thus **I can add around 100 workshops and a few hundred consultations to totally different people on personal development topics** like career planning, time management, goal setting etc.

As a part of my social responsibility, I had initiated and **co-founded a network of 150 most talented and socially proactive representatives of Generation Y** (the Ypsilon Institute), with a mission to give as many opportunities to young people as possible.

My consulting clients at Venturelab Ltd. were: Educational institutes, such as universities and research institutes, start-up companies, small and medium enterprises, investors, governments, chambers of commerce, sometimes big companies and individuals who need help with achieving their goals.

In my everyday life, I am a productivity freak, always working on two monitors. I cannot imagine my life without technology, gadgets and creating new cool products and services. I feel at home in Zen Buddhism, but find it incredibly difficult to practice as I am drawn to extremes. **Therefore I prefer to spend all my free time thinking, analyzing, creating, innovating or hiking high up in the mountains.** I don't like watching TV, shopping, small talk, parties and any kind of clutter.

I 2016 I decided to go full-time blogging.

You are always welcome to visit my blog:

www.AgileLeanLife.com

Foreword

I'm obsessed with metrics that matter and **measuring things in order to manage them better**, in professional and personal life. My blog is no exception in this, especially now that I went full-time blogging.

I learned very early on in the startup world that if you treat your business as a hobby, it pays as a hobby. So **if you're going to treat your blog as a hobby, it's going to pay like a hobby**. If you want to make money out of blogging, you have to treat it like a business.

In the same second as your blogging becomes a business, you have to know your metrics; and you have to know them really well.

Why are metrics that important? **Even though it may sound crazy, writing is quite a small part of blogging**. Quality content is important. Very important. But you have to take care of many technical things like page speed, security, site uptime, user experience, attractive graphics and, most importantly, the distribution and monetization of your content.

Distribution and monetization are by far the greatest challenges in the picture. Most metrics that matter are therefore directed to measuring distribution and monetization. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter how good the content you're creating is if nobody is reading it.

It's kind of a big paradox. Distribution and monetization are the biggest challenges, although **there are many different channels for content distribution you can engage** – from organic to paid ones (search engines, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, SlideShare, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat, Merkant, you name it). Next to that, new and new channels are becoming available all the time.

But here is the catch. It's easy to post things on social networks. **Understanding what happens afterwards and what works and what doesn't in your chosen niche is the hardest part**. You have to understand markets (your niche) extremely well to write content that people are going to really consume and share.

And you must have **the necessary market insights to create products that people are going to buy**. The only way to achieve that is with testing, metrics that matter and validated learning.

In this eBook, **you will learn:**

- Why metrics really matter
- The difference between vanity and actionable metrics
- Which metrics you should measure as a blogger (complete overview)
- How you should measure your metrics
- Which actions you should take based on metrics and insights

The eBook is **divided into seven chapters:**

- Chapter 1: Metrics that matter for bloggers – understanding the basics and theory behind
- Chapter 2: How to make money blogging and financial metrics
- Chapter 3: Website analytics
- Chapter 4: Search Engine Optimization (SEO) metrics for bloggers
- Chapter 5: Email marketing metrics for bloggers
- Chapter 6: Social media metrics for bloggers
- Chapter 7: Validated learning and dashboards for bloggers

Don't forget to also **download all the free accompanying files to apply theory in practice:**

- Dashboard - Metrics that matter for bloggers (Excel template)
- List of the most popular affiliate programs and ad networks for bloggers (PDF)
- List of 70+ rank tracking solutions
- Facebook Advertising definition
- Other documents

This eBook **seven chapters are also blog posts** at www.agileleanlife.com:

- Chapter 1: <http://agileleanlife.com/metrics-that-matter-for-bloggers/>
- Chapter 2: <http://agileleanlife.com/how-to-make-money-blogging/>
- Chapter 3: <http://agileleanlife.com/website-analytics/>
- Chapter 4: <http://agileleanlife.com/seo-metrics/>
- Chapter 5: <http://agileleanlife.com/email-marketing-metrics/>
- Chapter 6: <http://agileleanlife.com/social-media-metrics/>
- Chapter 7: <http://agileleanlife.com/validated-learning-for-bloggers/>

1. The theory behind and understanding the basics of metrics that matter for bloggers

There is one simple reason why metrics matter. **Metrics should tell you where to focus your attention and efforts, and which actions to take first.** Metrics must help you prioritize. But the only way to focus your efforts is knowing what works and what doesn't. And metrics that matter tell you a story about that.

You should get inspiration for what to try as a blogger based on your instincts. Machines validate whether something really works or not. Data is proof if you were right or not.

Let's start with a few basics. From the lean startup (www.theleanstartup.com) and lean analytics theory (www.leananalyticsbook.com), we know two different types of metrics: vanity metrics and actionable metrics.

Vanity metrics are all the different metrics that **look good on paper and give you a nice feeling about yourself and your work**, but aren't action-oriented. They can also be easily manipulated and don't necessarily correlate with metrics that matter. Vanity metrics make you feel good, but they don't show real progress.

Here are two examples of vanity metrics that may give you a feeling of being on the right track, but can also be completely misleading:

- *You buy 500 new likes for your Facebook page on Fiverr. It looks great to have 500 new likes, but how does it help if most of them are fake accounts or not interested in what you're doing?*
- *You manage to get your blog post on one of the popular sub-Reddits, not connected to your niche. You get thousands of visitors, but none of them subscribe to your mailing or buy your products or even click on ads. It's called junk traffic. They come, and they leave forever.*

If a metric only strokes your ego, it won't help you a lot. So you have to focus your efforts on actionable metrics. Like the name suggests, actionable metrics are the ones that lead you to take action.

Actionable metrics not only lead you to what you should do next, but also measure success at the core of your blogging business (and track your individual customers at some point). They directly relate to revenue.

There's a simple question that tells you if your metric is a vanity metric or an actionable metric:

What will you do differently based on the piece of information you call your important metric?

Besides vanity and actionable metrics, there are **two more important types of metrics (data): qualitative and quantitative data.**

Quantitative data is information that can be measured with numbers. Quantitative data, on the other hand, are insights you get about your target markets and your product. If quantitative data are more exact, qualitative research helps you gain an in-depth understanding of something. As a blogger, you have to focus on both types of data. So we will talk about both kinds of metrics.

1.1. Focusing on the metrics that matter as a blogger

A blogger drowning in data is only a little better off than a blogger without any data at all. The easiest thing to do is to install a few analytical tools on your website and start gathering data; and, as you know, you can gather an extraordinary amount of data online.

With a few clicks, you can gather an amount of data that is completely overwhelming for any blogger that isn't a hacker or a mathematician. Especially if you don't know how to structure and connect all the gathered data.

Therefore, one very important rule exists regarding blogging metrics. **Capture everything, but focus on what's important.** You should focus on metrics that:

- Correlate strongly with your blogging goals (revenue, brand building etc.)
- Are connected to the riskiest parts of your blogging business
- Inspire you to experiment with new things more and more
- Completely focus your efforts, but also force you to see the bigger picture

1.2. The one metric that matters

In the lean startup and lean analytics community, there is a popular concept of the one metric that matters (OMTM). The one. **OMTM should focus all your energy and efforts into a single goal you have for your blog** in a certain phase. It changes over time as you pursue different goals.

Your OMTM especially changes **as you enter different stages of your blog development and website maturity.**

The important thing to understand is that in a specific stage, **you always do things that contribute to more stages** (for example, if you're in the empathy stage, you will of course set up social share buttons for virality, even if you're still looking for the right problem/solution fit), but the purpose of a stage is still to maintain your main focus and measure your real progress.

Here are the five stages of business growth (remember this is just a framework, not a magical solution):

1.2.1. Empathy

In this stage, you have to **find a problem on the market that you can solve by producing content (and infoproducts).** You have to know and feel the pain of your targeted readers as well as know how to solve it. The picture is completely different if you have a foodie blog, a humor site or a professional blog.

You're looking for signs of interest in your readers by experimenting with different topics, style, content length, hypermarks etc. **It's the phase where you decide for your chosen niche, targeted readers** (personas) and the general style of your blog and writing.

1.2.2. Stickiness

You gained interest of your targeted readers and now they assume you have something smart to say and are therefore **coming back for more content.** What matters in this phase is engagement followed by retention.

The main question in this phase is: **are people regularly consuming your content and getting enough value from it?** You want to build your blog in a way where readers stay with you for as long as possible. Interest definitely declines with time, but there is always something you can do to get their attention back.

In the stickiness phase, it's also often a good idea to **do different things that are completely unscalable and help you understand your readers better.** You may want to gather as much quantitative data as possible about your first readers and people who are early fans of your blog. Trust me, you will know who they are, because they will like your every piece of content, write emails to you to congratulate you etc.

You can ask your early fans (so called early evangelists) things like:

- Which of your content they like best and why
- How your content helped them solve their problems
- Whether they have any recommendations for you to improve your writing, and so on.

1.2.3. Virality

Your main goal in this phase is **to bring huge amounts of traffic to your site with the virality effect**. The best way to do that is by using your current reader base.

Readers should be sharing your content and recommending it to friends (by using email, social networks, word of mouth etc.). **You focus on experiments and metrics that increase the virality of your blog.**

1.2.4. Revenue

Your main focus in this phase is **monetizing your content and building a sustainable business model**. Based on your quality content produced, people know that they can trust you.

Therefore your own infoproducts, recommended products (affiliate links) and other ways of monetizing content are also credible and people start buying them. Much like you experimented with your content in the beginning, **you now have to experiment with different monetization options.**

1.2.5. Scale

In this phase, you focus all your efforts on scaling and reaching as many people as possible with all the tactics that work now. **Your blog with all the different monetization strategies becomes sustainable and scalable.** It exists in a healthy ecosystem of readers and partners with the right products and margins.

1.3. OMTM and different stages

As a blogger you will always have time issues. **You should know which phase you're in and select the OMTM for you in that phase.** *For example, in the empathy phase, the OMTM may be the applause rate, in the stickiness phase the number of your newsletter readers, in the virality phase amplification rates, in the revenue phase conversions and in the scaling phase the reach you have with your blog with keeping minimum conversion rates necessary.*

The OMTM should be quantitative and simple (a number); you should be able to track it on regular daily level. It should be actionable and comparable with your past data, meaning that you can track it over time. And you should become obsessed with it. You should also know which metrics are connected to your OMTM and have the biggest influence on it.

Here are **additional recommendations for choosing your OMTM** from Lean Analytics:

- OMTM answers the most important question you have regarding your blog
- It forces you to draw a line in the sand
- It completely focuses your efforts every day

1.4. Expanding the number of tracked metrics

Let's start by repeating the basic rule – capture everything, but focus on the OMTM and a few other key metrics that have the greatest influence on the OMTM. **Don't focus your attention and actions on too many metrics, because you'll only get confused.** And the most important thing to remember is that the metric is only valid if you change your behavior afterwards.

In the beginning, focus yourself on a few key metrics as a blogger. Then add metrics as your website develops and gains maturity together with your competences. But always have the OMTM.

As you and your site grow, you'll also be regularly expanding the metrics that you follow, analyze and focus on. Alongside different development stages, you should change and expand your metrics based on the following elements:

1.4.1. Building up your conversion funnel

When you post your first blog post, you usually have an **almost zero conversion funnel set**, besides "subscribe to our newsletter" that doesn't bring any conversions.

As you build your site with all the goodies and paid products, you also **develop your conversion funnel** (we will talk about the AARRR conversion funnel soon) and based on that, you can expand the metrics you measure.

1.4.2. Engaging new distribution channels

There are many distribution channels online and mastering them is complicated. **Every distribution channel has its own best practices and tricks** that relate to volume, price and performance of that channel.

You have to make sure you **master channel by channel**, otherwise you will get overburdened by everything. It's much better to master one or two channels really well than to be a complete amateur at ten different channels. By adding new distribution channels, you also add new metrics.

1.4.3. Getting more competent

It's easy to capture data and it's easy to focus on vanity metrics. **It's extremely hard to focus on actionable metrics and really understand what's going on** with the traffic on your site.

As your blog develops and as you acquire new knowledge, **you become more and more competent and capable of focusing your efforts on the right metrics**. Unfortunately, it usually takes months or even years to really see the right kind of progress in your knowledge and your blog. So you have to be patient. But you have to start somewhere. Unfortunately again, those are usually vanity metrics.

1.5. You will definitely start with vanity metrics

If you're a newbie blogger and you aren't a growth hacker by profession, **your start will definitely be vanity metrics**, for reasons mentioned earlier – not having your conversion funnel set, not understanding distribution channels, and a lack of knowledge. You also often need vanity metrics to calculate actionable metrics.

And that's completely okay, if you take *a few important things into consideration*. I know how good it feels to get new Facebook likes or see a big spike in your traffic, even if it's junk traffic and there are no conversions.

- **Know when you're dealing with a vanity metric**
- **Don't lie to yourself** about your real progress based on vanity metrics
- **Don't brag to others** about your vanity metrics
- **Always have the OMTM** that is not a vanity metric, no matter how green you are
- Make sure you **slowly focus more and more on actionable metrics** based on the maturity of your conversion funnel, distribution channels engaged and competences

If you start more or less completely with vanity metrics like 99 % of bloggers do, make sure you **build up your way to more actionable metrics with time**. *I started with complete vanity metrics and now I'm slowly building my funnel, actionable metrics, competencies and regularly engage new distribution channels. One by one. Many people ask me why I don't engage more distribution channels, just to get out there. I want to stay focused and master a distribution channel one by one.*

1.6. How many times should you check your metrics that matter?

I don't have the right answer for you. Here is what I do:

- I have a dashboard open and **check my main stats daily** for any spikes and deviations.
- I additionally check my metrics **after every campaign and experiment to understand what's going on** and learn as much as possible while everything is still fresh.
- I especially take **one day per month** (1st day of a month) to gather and analyze all the metrics and take a really deep dive into validated learning, analyzing and reflecting. Based on the analysis, I write down what works for me and what doesn't.

Based on the extensive analysis I decide:

- What I will continue doing
- What I will stop doing
- What new experiments I will try

It's probably one of the best way to do valuable retrospection and decide **how to adjust your strategy and tactics**.

I use several tools to track my metrics, but once per month, I copy all the metrics into an Excel file (available for you to download completely for free) and I analyze them extensively. **Copying data to Excel forces me to really look at all the important metrics and analyze what's going on**, where I'm progressing and where I'm not. It also makes sure that I don't leave anything out.

To sum things up, before we go to another chapter, here are the main reasons why your blogging metrics matter. Metrics matter, if you use them in the right way, because they:

- **Show you (the often cruel) reality** of where you stand with your blog
- Help you **avoid the fake feeling of progress**
- Help you **focus on things that really matter** in different stages of development
- Give you an answer about **what really works and what doesn't**
- **Drive your behavior**, decision-making and help you focus your overall efforts
- Help you **test your assumptions** and bridge the gap between the objective and subjective reality
- **Reduce any arguments** with other team members based solely on opinions

If a metric doesn't change your behavior and the actions you take, you aren't data-driven at all.

1.7. Understanding the conversion funnel for bloggers

We've looked at the different stages you can be in with your blog (empathy, stickiness, virality, revenue, scale). Depending on the phase, you should choose the right things to focus on and one the metric that matters (OMTM) to you in that stage. **You should respect every phase and make sure you successfully complete it before focusing on the next stage.** But remember, phases only show where your main focus should be.

Parallel to that, you should always be developing other core metrics around your OMTM and building the conversion funnel as your blog matures. **I don't want you to get confused here.**

The moment you start your blog and publish your first few blog posts, put ads and maybe affiliate links on your site, gather email subscriptions and share your content, you have a basic conversion funnel set. As you develop new strategies, apply new distribution channels, build your own products etc., your conversion funnel develops.

If you do what 99 % of new bloggers do, you will start with the basic AARRR conversion funnel that we will analyze extensively in a moment. **Phases should only help you decide on which parts of the conversion channel you're focused the most.** Where you're doing most of your hacks and new tricks to progress faster.

- Stages = Where your main focus should be
- AARRR funnel = Metrics breakdown based on different online purchasing stages

The main purpose of the funnel for bloggers is **to track actionable metrics in different purchasing stages.** It helps you measure the health of the customer base and consequently optimize your sales funnel. The funnel for bloggers is a five-step conversion funnel. It's a slightly adjusted funnel based on Dave McClure's Metrics for pirates, measuring the following:

A — Acquisition: Acquiring new readers via different marketing and sales channels

A — Activation: Convincing people to subscribe to one of your distribution channels

R — Retention: Making sure people are coming back to your blog for more content

R — Referral: Making sure people are spreading the word about your blog

R — Revenue: Generating money with your blog (selling infoproducts, advertising etc.)

In each of the five steps, **you have to optimize your funnel and overall achieve results that lead to a viable business model.** The phase in which you are determines where your main focus should be.

A table below shows one of the ways how phases could determine your focus on the acquisition channel.

Stage	Focus in the funnel	OMTM	Example of action
Empathy	Acquisition, Activation	Applause rate	Experimenting with content type, UX, design
Stickiness	Acquisition, Retention	Newsletter CTR	Experimenting with banners, channels
Virality	Referral	Amplification rate	Building new connections and partnerships
Revenue	Revenue	Conversions	Building and testing different products
Scale	Acquisition	Reach	Engaging paid channels

Important fact: As I mentioned, this is just one of the examples. The most important thing is that you **understand the framework, and then decide what your strategy will be.**

I know many bloggers who focused on revenue from day one and succeeded. And others that took several years before monetizing their blog. If there were a simple formula for how to succeed with blogging, everyone would be a successful blogger.

Now let's take a closer look **at each step of a conversion funnel.**

1.7.1. Acquisition and interest level

Acquisition simply means acquiring new users via different marketing channels. To get new users, you have to send your marketing message (content headlines, excerpts etc.) to potential customers by one or several marketing channels. Marketing channels can be either online or offline, but most bloggers use online channels, of course.

Here are examples of **popular online distribution channels for bloggers:**

- Personal contacts (Email, Facebook friends etc.)
- Search Engine Optimization for organic traffic
- Social Media Marketing (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat etc.)
- Partnerships (guest blogging etc.)
- Pay-Per-Click Campaigns
- Display advertising and others

Every channel has different performance levels. Logically, when acquiring new users, you look for acquisition channels that have the **largest volume, the lowest cost and perform the best**. As you will see later, every channel gets quite complicated with metrics. Therefore, an important rule exists: master distribution channels one by one.

1.7.1.1. Love it level – Applause rate

As a step between acquisition and activation, you can already measure **how interesting your readers find the content you publish on your blog**. One way to measure it is the applause rate (likes, hearts, stars etc.).

There are also **other metrics that show how interesting your content is**. For example, how many pages every visitor clicks, how much time they spend on your blog (especially specific blog pages), and so on.

Based on those metrics, you should also see which acquisition channels bring in those readers who are interested in your content the most. It's about **analyzing data of where your target audience actually lives**.

1.7.2. Activation

The best second step after acquiring a reader would be that s/he buys a product you're selling and becomes your long-term customer and loyal reader. **But that rarely happens**. It's even impossible for it to happen if you don't have a complete conversion funnel set (in other words, if you don't have your own products yet to sell). Therefore, the most probable second step that can happen is activation.

The purpose of activation is to establish **a more serious relationship with your reader**. A reader is so interested in your content that they want to be reminded to read it again and again.

It's kind of self-evident that **if you don't regularly remind them to come back (retention strategy), they'll probably forget about your blog forever**. Even if they don't want to. You're competing with millions of websites after all, and the attention span on the internet is measured in milliseconds.

Activation for bloggers are **usually micro-conversions that establish the first more serious relationship between a blogger and a reader:**

- Subscribing to your newsletter (the most intimate and valuable way)
- Downloading a digital asset and subscribing to your mailing list
- Subscribing to one of your social media channels
- Bookmarking your page
- Subscribing to RSS
- Sending you an email to stay in touch and send more content
- Creating an account on a forum etc.

1.7.2.1. Other kinds of engagements - conversation rate

Now you know where your targeted readers live online. They like your content and are establishing a serious relationship with you. **In this phase, you're also looking for other kinds of engagements.** An example is how much people are commenting on your blog. You can, for example, measure the commenting rate.

The stickiness of your product is always determined by **engagement, followed by retention.**

1.7.3. Retention

In a flood of billions of blogs and millions of posts every day, the attention of readers is very limited. It's measured in milliseconds. **Readers find a new blog they like and quickly forget about it.** That's why at some point, you must have a retention strategy if you want your blog to be successful.

Retention is nothing but a strategy of **getting a user to regularly use a service or a product. In your case reading your blog (or using your infoproducts).** Retention can be achieved by sending emails, posting on social media where you have followers, and so on. If you have a good retention strategy, you will always have a loyal base of readers who will come back to your blog.

There's a whole science behind retention metrics. But the basics are pretty simple. If customer retention concerns the percentage of readers who come back to your blog, **the better the percentage, the better your blog sticks with your readers.**

Probably the most important thing to understand about retention is that **you have to be really aggressive with your retention strategy.** Once you have a reader on your site, you have to do everything in your power to obtain their email or get them to subscribe to one of your channels.

If you don't do that, a reader will probably be lost to you forever, because too many blogs are competing for attention.

1.7.4. Referral

You usually buy and use things that your friends are also using and recommending. That's the reason behind why you should have **a strategy of letting your readers bring in new readers.**

For example, Facebook wants you to invite people to their platform, apps want to have access to your phonebook, and so on.

Referrals are a very efficient and inexpensive way of virally spreading your content.

The more referrals (new readers) you get from one of your readers, the more viral your blog content is. The metric that measures referral success is the so-called "viral coefficient", which shows the number of new readers that each user brings. Speed with which one user invites another is also important, and it's called the viral cycle time. You may also measure the amplification rate on your social networks in this phase.

As a good blog strategist, you have to **make it easy for your readers to spread the word** through referral mechanisms. Some of the most popular referral mechanisms are:

- Social Media Sharing
- "Invite a friend" type mechanics
- Partnerships, interviews and guest blogging
- Affiliate partnerships
- Word-of-mouth, Contests
- Forward emails

Of course you'll have social media buttons on your blog from the very beginning. But after you pass the empathy and stickiness phases, you may focus your efforts exclusively on virality. You may want **to innovate and experiment with hundreds of different things** to really increase the virality of the content that readers are already liking.

BTW, applause rate, comment rate and amplification rate are metrics set by [Avinash Kaushik](#).

1.7.5. Revenue

The last step is generating money – revenue. **You measure the percentage of your readers who become paying customers and, of course, how much money you make.** If you want to be a full-time blogger, you have to make enough money out of blogging to cover all your living costs. There are several ways of doing that, and we will look at them in the next chapter (along with proof that it can be done).

At this point, it's important to understand that we have another two sets of metrics. One type of metrics is **the financial one and the other is the non-financial one.**

When you start blogging, **you have to be careful that financial metrics don't mislead you.** You can be making progress, even if you aren't making money yet. You can be making progress if you're learning about your market and your readers.

In the empathy phase, you probably won't be making a lot of money. But you can really learn a lot about your market and your readers, and shape a superior strategy for your blog.

Nevertheless, if you're a full-time blogger and live out of your savings, you have to know your runway and how much time you have. You have to know **when is the last chance for you to achieve the break-even point** – that is the time when you have to make enough money to cover your expenses. And you must have a superior strategy of how you'll do it.

1.8. Metrics that matter also depend on the type of your blog

I hope it's not getting overwhelming, but there is another important aspect that greatly influences which metrics that matter you will be measuring and focusing on. **The type of your blog strongly determines your core and actionable metrics.** Here are the main different types of blogs with examples of how they influence your attention to metrics that matter.

1.8.1. Media blog

In the case you have a media blog, you have to give more of your **attention to the traffic, churn, page views, ad inventory, ad rates and CTAs** or impressions turned into money. You have to adjust the design and UX of your blog to maximize impressions.

1.8.2. Niche blog

Niche blogs are usually very targeted blogs for a specific problem, trying to sell visitors the solution for this problem. The main focus is usually not **on the quantity but rather the quality of traffic**. The most important metrics are usually conversion-related metrics.

1.8.3. Authority blog

I think an authority blog is somewhere between a niche and a media blog. You want to build your personal brand online, but also make sure you sell products in your chosen niche. Authority blogs are usually blogs of professional bloggers and business owners.

1.8.4. eCommerce blog

In the case of an eCommerce blog, you have to **additionally focus your attention on eCommerce metrics** besides conversions, like the number of purchases in a year made by each customer, the average shopping cart size, abandonment percentage etc. Because eCommerce is a whole new world of metrics, we won't focus on them separately in this eBook.

The type of your blog usually also **determines how fast you can build your conversion funnel**. If you're building an eCommerce or Niche blog, it makes sense to have a product you're going to sell in mind already and build the blog around your product. In this case, you can apply the phases (empathy, stickiness etc.) specifically to your product. If you're building a media or authority blog, you have to attract some attention first and, in the second step, build products for your audience.

Play with the frameworks and different types of metrics to find a solution that works best for you. Here is the summary of metrics that matter for bloggers theory:

1.9. Metrics that matter for bloggers summary

Now we know all the different types of metrics. For every metric you measure, **you have to know why you measure it**, what type of metric it is in your case and how it's going to influence your decision.

Again, please remember that this is **just a general framework you should adjust to your own goals**. Here are all the categories of different types of metrics:

Metrics relevance – your focus should be on actionable metrics and the OMTM

- Vanity metric
- Actionable metric
- OMTM

Different type of data – you should gather both types of data

- Qualitative data
- Quantitative data

Blog development stage – influences your OMTM and your focus on different parts of blogging conversion funnel

- Empathy
- Stickiness
- Virality
- Revenue
- Scale

Blogging conversion funnel – Framework to help you optimize your funnel as your blog matures

- Acquisition
- Activation
- Retention
- Referral
- Revenue

Blog type metrics – Greatly influence the metrics you will generally focus on in the development of your blog

- Media blog
- Niche blog
- Authority blog
- eCommerce blog
- Other type of blog

Financial and non-financial metrics – Before you enter the revenue stage, non-financial metrics can show your real progress and how fast you're learning about what works and what doesn't

- Traditional accounting (profit & loss statement, balance sheet)
- Innovation accounting (non-financial metrics)

1.10. Innovating

To conclude this chapter, I want to emphasize another important fact. **If you want to be really successful with your blog, you'll have to innovate a lot.** You'll have to come up with creative ways of making your content better than the competition, creative marketing ways and new ways of using distribution channels.

All the top bloggers were innovative at something or engaged a new channel really early on. It's hard to innovate once you begin blogging, especially if you aren't from the industry, but I would still suggest you start early. **If you're a really eager blogger, the best thing is to brainstorm and write down ideas on a daily level.** Try to brainstorm at least 20 ideas. Among many bad ones, you'll definitely find jewels.

The second best thing is to have **regular brainstorming sessions at least once a week or once a month.** I write down ideas as they come, but after every monthly metrics analysis, I also extensively brainstorm for new ideas. All the new data helps spark creative ideas. Once more, if you want to be successful with your blog, you have to innovate.



2. How to make money blogging and financial metrics

In this chapter, **we will cover all the financial and conversion-related metrics you should be following** as a blogger and how to make money blogging.

When you start your blog, there is an obvious painful thing. **The traditional accounting part of your blogging and measuring your financial metrics is extremely simple.** They're all zero or close to zero. Your revenue, margins, free cash flow etc., they are either zero or incredibly low. And usually, they stay low for a long time; it can be months or even years. Some bloggers generate revenue pretty soon, but they're usually from the industry (internet marketers, bloggers etc.).

So there are **two important angles regarding financial metrics** you have to be aware of when you start building your blog.

The (1) first angle is, as already mentioned, that it usually takes a lot of time before you start making money online and it's usually much tougher than it seems at the first glance. **It's not that easy to make money online.** You shouldn't believe people who are selling you infoproducts, claiming that they'll teach you how to get rich by blogging overnight.

Consequently, **making any accurate financial forecasts for how much money you're going to make after you publish your first blog post doesn't make any sense.** Accurate forecasting requires a long and stable operating history. The longer and the more stable the history, the more accurate your forecasts can be. When you have your funnel set and you're ready to scale, you can focus on traditional accounting measures.

The purpose of tracking financial metrics in your spreadsheet at all isn't to forecast how much money you're going to make with you blog, but to:

- **Force you to create paid products or, even better, MVPs as soon as possible** in order to start learning what people are willing to buy from you. Seeing all the zeroes in revenue somehow hurts and it reminds you that your blogging isn't a hobby.
- **You have an overview of your costs** and how much money you're investing in your blog. Usually, costs are much higher than you think and they start to pile up.
- You have to know **how much runway you have if you're living out of your savings** and don't have any other income.

Even if revenue is quite a late phase in blog development (empathy, stickiness, virality, revenue, scale), it doesn't mean you shouldn't test what people are willing to buy from you from the very beginning. Revenue stage only means that you completely focus on maximizing revenue, once you've figured other things out.

As I mentioned, many experts will even recommend you to start building at the end of the funnel. Know your products and then build the blog around them. That can also be viable strategy, but it greatly depends on your creative ideas, domain knowledge, marketing skills, long-term goals, type of blog etc. I am only presenting you a framework, but it's up to you what your strategy will be.

Now let's focus on (2) the second angle about revenue. If the first angle is slightly discouraging and pessimistic, **the second angle is full of optimism and shows that you can earn money with blogging.**

Before anyone tries to convince you that there's no way to make money blogging and you can't live as a full-time blogger, **look at these income reports I found online (next page).**

There are hundreds of other bloggers who live from blogging and don't publish income reports. So it can be done. It may not be easy, but it can be done. Encouraged and excited, let's now dive deeply into financial metrics.

Going through all the income reports, **I found 170+ sources of how bloggers are making money besides having their own products** (having your own products is far the best monetization strategy), and these sources are predominantly affiliate programs and ad networks.

I gathered all the sources in a document that's available for you to download for free among other files. I hope the document will help you get additional ideas for how to make money with your blog. Now let's systematically break down how bloggers are making money.

Blog	Monthly Income Report – Dec 2015*
Entrepreneur on Fire	\$154,890
Smart Passive Income	\$71,757
A Little Slice of the Pie	\$58,009 (g)
Pinch of Yum	\$53,168
Becky & Paula	\$39,847 (g)
Making Sense of Cents	\$37,392 (g)
Authority Website Income	\$31,525
MatthewWoodward.co.uk	\$31,286
Fat Stacks Entrepreneur	\$28,198
So Over This	\$24,162
Just a Girl and Her Blog	\$17,427
JohnnyFD	\$16,741
Human Proof Design	\$14,811
Untemplater	\$13,361
Shout Me Loud	\$10,554
Digital Nomad Wannabe	\$8,725
Her Online World	\$8,120
BrendanMace	\$6,790
Single Moms Income	\$5,564 (g)
One Little Project	\$4,928
Miss Bizi Bee	\$3,421
Daniele Besana	\$3,258
True Valhalla	\$2,986 (g)
Gen Y Girl	\$2,416 (g)
Income Bully	\$1,981 (g)
Travel Blog Breakthrough	\$1,721
My Path to Passive Income	\$1,276
One Hour Professor	\$904
Income Mesh	\$845
Dumb Passive Income	\$562
Living Off Cloud	\$542
Kate Moving Forward	\$473
Eat Pray Run	\$388 (g)

* Numbers may not be completely accurate, because bloggers use different ways of reporting income (which costs are included etc.). Some of them report only gross income (g). In a few cases, the numbers are from a Nov 2015 income report or a few months older (but from H2 2015), because up-to-date data wasn't available. For additional data of how income was made, please visit the links.

2.1. Revenue

As mentioned before, there are several ways for you to make money blogging. It's simple math. You sum up the revenue for all the different monetization tactics you use and you have your total revenue.

Here are the main ways of how you can make money blogging:

- Infoproducts (eBooks, Webinars etc.)
- Advertising
- Affiliate income
- Services (consulting, freelancing ...)
- Sponsorships
- Managing community and subscriptions
- Selling physical products
- Other ways

Below is a mindmap with all the ways of how you can make money as a blogger:



At this point, it may also be worth to mention **a few other important facts regarding blogging revenue:**

- **Don't have all of your eggs in one basket** (ways of monetizing and driving traffic)
- **Advertising requires a lot of traffic** if you want to get decent income
- With services, you can earn quick money, **but they don't scale**
- No matter your monetization options, your **number one goal should be to build an audience**
- No matter your monetization option, **you'll have to become a leader in your niche if you want to make big money** out of full-time blogging

For many of your own infoproducts, like webinars, **you can separately track metrics based on the AARRR funnel to measure your success.** Now you have the frameworks and you have to adjust and apply them so they work for the best.

2.2. Cash flow

One thing you may also pay attention to is **the difference between revenue and cash flow.** You make revenue when you send out an invoice. You get the cash in your bank when someone pays your invoice.

You want to make sure **you're working with partners that will pay your invoices in the agreed-upon timeframe.** You may especially run into problems with bad affiliate partners or networks.

In the same way, some people **will want their money back for your infoproducts** (if you have money-back guarantees) and a percentage of the deals you make won't be respected in some other ways.

Be prepared for that kind of misfortune and make sure you have a good strategy for managing accounts receivables and cancelations.

Cash is king. So put a smile on your face when you receive cash in your bank account and there are no more cash-back options, not when you send an invoice to your customer.

Other revenue related metrics you may follow:

- Customer Lifetime Value (LTV)
- Average Order Value
- Number of Transactions

2.3. Non-monetary value

You must also **not forget about the non-monetary (indirect) value you get from blogging**, especially if your name or business name appears on the blog.

Blogging is absolutely **one of the best ways to build your personal and business brand**. It's hard to measure non-monetary value, but you must definitely consider it as one of the benefits of the efforts you invest in your blog.

One possible way to measure the non-monetary value you get from the blog is your [Klout score](#). The other possibility is maybe to measure number of brand mentions.

2.4. Costs

On the other side of revenue, we have costs. **You can definitely keep you costs extremely low when you start blogging**. A domain name and cheap hosting will do. But as your blog grows, so do the costs.

With all the different tools you want to try out sooner or later (and you have to pay for all of them at some point), outsourcing some of the low-value work and technical optimization, **costs do start to pile up**.

The most typical costs for bloggers are:

- **IT infrastructural costs:** Domain, Hosting, CDN, Theme and Plugins
- **Content production:** Proofreading, Copyediting, Translations, Ghost writing, Stock Photos
- **Tools and software:** Email Marketing Service, Social Media Management Tools, Accounting tools, Link building tools, Writing tools, and all other different kinds of tools
- **Marketing:** PPC Advertising, Social Media Advertising, Banner advertising, Affiliates etc.
- **Competencies development:** Online courses, webinars, books etc.
- **Services and Staff:** Assistants, Designers, Tech support etc.
- **Administrative costs:** Accounting, Mobile phone, Coworking space, Transaction fees (Paypal, Gumroad etc.)
- **Other costs:** Taxes, Legal costs, etc.

Costs are easy math. When you sum up all the types of costs, you get total (monthly) costs for your blogging. **An important advice is to track your costs from day one**.

2.5. Profit - Net income

After deducting the costs from revenue, you get your net income (profit or loss). Don't forget to track your cash flow statement in addition to your P&L (Profit and Loss Statement). If you deduct all cash outflows from cash inflows, you get net cash that is (almost) left to you.

There are **many different accounting solutions out there** that can do all the math instead of you, when your blog grows and there are simply too many numbers to deal with. But in the beginning, it may make sense to enter everything manually into an Excel spreadsheet, in order to really understand the business aspect of blogging in depth.

Now of course net income is usually not what you've earned. **You also have to pay all the different taxes.** You may not be the sole owner of the blog and you have to share the income. Your corporation may be the official owner of the blog, so you pay yourself a salary and income separately etc.

But that is additional math that you have to **do yourself based on the country you live in and the legal and tax structure** you established for your blogging business.

2.6. Hours spent on your blog

It's a non-financial metric, but here's the best place for it. One metric that you definitely should follow is **how much time you spend on your blog.** Much like you may be surprised how your blogging costs can start to pile up, so do the hours you spend on your blog.

Of course **in the beginning, you have to view your blog as an investment,** but time is the most important asset you have in life, so you must manage it wisely.

There are many tools you can use to track the time spent on your blog. I suggest you follow different types of activities that you're doing, besides tracking the number of hours you spend on your blog, so you will really have a clear picture of whether you're following the strategy you set for your blog development.

Here is one suggestion for categorizing your hours:

- **Content production** – Writing, editing, brainstorming ideas etc.
- **Content administration** – Finding stock photos, WordPress editing, linking etc.
- **Marketing and distribution** – General blog marketing, content distribution, partnerships, time spent on distribution channels etc.
- **IT Infrastructure** – Hosting, domain, CDNs, technical issues and updates etc.
- **Competencies development** – Acquiring new knowledge and skills
- **Administration** – Paperwork and all other administration
- **Other** – All other costs

Probably the most important piece of data you get from tracking your time is: **are you spending enough time on content distribution.** As the most successful bloggers suggest, you should spend at least 50 % of your time on marketing and distribution channels promoting your content. In the right kind of way, of course.

For example, a time-tracking app may not only show that you don't spend enough time on marketing. Your tracking solution may also clearly show that you're spending a little time on five different distribution channels, instead of spending it on the one that you decided to really focus on; that can easily happen, because it's much easier to be an amateur on ten different channels than the master of one.

Here are **the most popular time tracking solutions** for freelancers and bloggers:

- [Harvest](#) – it's the tool I use
- [Klok](#)
- [OfficeTime](#)
- [SlimTimer](#)
- [Tick](#), [Timely](#), [TimenEye](#), [Toggl](#) etc.

Most of the listed time trackers above have **free plans you can use as a freelancer.** If you don't want to use another app in the flood of apps you're already using, track your time in Excel or on paper.

But trust me, **tracking your time will show you the honest truth of whether you're following your strategy.** We often do things differently than we plan and say.

Dividing your profit/loss by the number of hours you had spent on your blog gives you a nice overview of **how much you've earned with your blog per hour.** At this point, I would like to emphasize the long-term view. You are building an asset with your blog, and that usually takes a bigger investment in the beginning.

2.6.1. Opportunity cost

At the end, you mustn't forget about opportunity costs as well. Opportunity costs **show the loss of potential gain from other alternatives when one alternative is chosen**. So you've decided to blog. What would be your next best alternative?

Let's say the highest paid job. Now calculate how much you would earn if you did full-time paid work instead of blogging. Or paid work on an hourly basis for all the time you spent blogging.

If you subtract how much you made with blogging, **you now roughly know your opportunity costs**. It's actually hard to calculate them exactly, since it's impossible to live parallel lives and you never know what kind of opportunities other options would lead you to. But you have to be aware of the opportunity costs.

If you already exceeded that with your blog income, congrats. There is probably no opportunity cost. If not, again, mind your blog as an investment. And there are many other benefits to a blogging lifestyle, and so on. I'm not trying to discourage you from blogging, I'm just trying **to show you the whole picture of costs related to blogging** (and consider them when you're calculating your ROIs).

2.6.2. Developing your competences

There is another important value added of blogging. **The side-effect of your blogging should always be developing your competences**. With blogging, you should become more familiar with technologies, your writing and language skills should improve, you should become an even greater master in the industry you're covering and you should become an outstanding internet marketer.

These are all the competencies that have big value, besides building your personal brand with your blog. One way to learn the most is by teaching others, because **you have to structure the knowledge and present it in the most appealing and understandable way**. That means that you really have to master the topic and do extensive research behind it. If you're writing quality content, of course.

So every month, don't forget to write down **what you learned and which new skills you developed**.

2.7. Non-financial metrics

The main purpose of all the non-financial metrics is **to help you find your way to the right paid products and market segments before your money runs out.** In other words, non-financial metrics should help you make the right decisions that will lead you to a bright financial future. If the right data can help you find a match between a product and a market segment (the so-called product/market fit), you can enjoy high growth and high demand that also result in high revenue.

Non-financial metrics for bloggers are divided into the following categories:

- Conversions
- Website metrics
- Search Engine Optimization metrics
- Email marketing metrics
- Social media metrics
- Validated learning (Split Testing, Interviews etc.)

Let's start with conversions, since they're directly correlated to the revenue you're making.

2.8. Conversions

Number of conversions directly correlates with revenue you make. **Conversion rate is the percentage of people who achieve a specific goal on your blog.** Conversion (conversion rate, number of conversions etc.) therefore refers to the ultimate metrics that show how successful your blog really is.

We know micro and macro conversions. Micro conversions should lead to macro conversions sooner or later. They're the important first step of someone showing trust and interest in what you do, either by giving you their email, contacting you, downloading your free material and reviewing it, or in many other ways. Macro conversions are all different kind of sales you make.

Micro conversions are usually associated with activation, retention and referral, and macro conversions are directly related to revenue. **You can set different conversion goals in most analytics software**, like in Google Analytics for example.

Here's some simple math that shows how important good conversion rates really are and why you should put a lot of effort into conversion optimization, especially when you have your own products. If you increase macro conversion rates from 1 % to 2 %, your profit doubles.

Here is **a table showing different kind of micro and macro conversions**, categorized by the conversion funnel stages:

Activation/Retention/Engagement	Referral	Revenue
Subscribing to your newsletter	Social Media Sharing	Clicking on an ad
Subscribing to a social media channel	"Invite a friend" type mechanics	Buying your infoproduct
Bookmarking your page	Word-of-mouth	Clicking on affiliate link and buying
Downloading a digital asset	Forwards	Sending a request for consulting
Subscribing to RSS		Sending a request for sponsorship
Sending you an email		
Creating an account on a forum		
Comments		
Reviews		
Micro-conversions	Micro-conversions	Macro-conversions

If you want conversions to happen, you **must have your conversion funnel completely developed** together with different monetization strategies.

Here are a few things you can measure regarding conversions:

- Number of ads on your site and their performance (in connection with size and position and other factors)
- Number of infoproducts you offer to your readers and how many of them you sell
- Number of affiliate links (and number of clicks on affiliate links and number of conversions)
- Number of inquiries (consulting, freelancing, sponsorships) you turn into business
- Conversion rates (the percentage of your visitors who actually click on links and buy)

The summed-up number of conversions and the revenue you get per conversion give you your total revenue. It's probably the most exciting and fun part of blogging metrics. Because that's how you make money blogging. Now you know.

It's time to move on to the next chapter - Website metrics.

3. Website analytics for bloggers

In this chapter, we will cover **different metrics you should follow when it comes to your blog as a website** (or any other site). In other words we will go through basic website analytics. You can get most of the metrics described in this chapter from Google Analytics.

3.1. Author Contribution - Number of blog posts and pages

We can start with **a simple metric showing how much content you publish**. The first rule in blogging is to always keep the quality of your content in mind. Nevertheless, it's obvious that publishing more means more opportunities for traction, more potential keywords to rank, more linking opportunities, and so on. Quality content, besides assertive distribution, is the basis of successful blogging.

Therefore, you **should keep a high pace of publishing new quality content** and measure how much you actually produce and publish in a specific time period. You can track the number of new posts/pages. But there is also the length of each post in question, so you may include that data into your analysis.

The metrics are called Raw Author Contribution (name by Kaushik) and these metrics should **measure the overall content growth of your blog**. Plugins like [GeneralStats](#) can help you calculate some data.

Here are **a few metrics you can follow**:

- New blog posts/pages in a month
- Total number of blog posts/pages
- Total number of new words published
- Number of all posts / Number of Months Blogging
- Number of Words in a Post / Number of Posts

Here are some general directions regarding **minimum amount of content you should create as a full-time blogger**:

- 10 quality blog posts (1,600 – 2,500 words) created per month is probably a reasonable output
- Out of 10 articles at least 1 breakthrough sharing hit
- That should result in at least 5% traffic and email database growth per month

When you're planning your content calendar, never forget to take enough time to produce quality content but also, as I mentioned many times before, to **spend at least 50 % of your time on promoting your content**. There's no point in producing content if nobody reads it.

3.2. Number of other digital assets created

Besides blog posts, in Web 2.0 area you **probably create other type of content as well**. You should measure your content creation rate of all other digital assets, besides texts. Here are a few of them:

- Presentations
- Podcasts
- Videos
- E-books
- White papers
- Templates
- Infographics
- Photos
- Software
- Other types of content

3.3. Number of comments

If you have comments enabled on your blog, they definitely **show how interesting and engaging your blog posts are** and whether you're able to provoke a conversation with your audience.

If you have enough comments, **it gives a sense of community and that people are really following you and your work**. Besides the number of comments, you also want to assess the quality of the comments. Is there really a conversation going on below your blog posts or not?

A metric for that is called the Conversation rate (by Kaushik). And you calculate it using the formula below:

$$\text{Conversation rate} = \text{Comments} + \text{Replies} / \text{Number of posts}$$

3.4. Page speed and uptime

As you probably know (because you're the same), people on the internet **hate it if anything loads slowly and they have to wait** for a page to render on their screens. Nothing is so good on the internet that your potential audience won't click back if they have to wait only a second too long.

Page speed is therefore extremely important for your audience and for search engine ranking. **Your blog speed loading time plays a very important role in how well you rank in search engines.** So make sure your page loads fast.

If you're using WordPress, here are **a few suggestions for speeding up your page loading time:**

- Have as few plugins as possible
- Have a good hosting
- Make sure your WP theme is optimized
- Regularly update WordPress, theme and plugins
- Use a caching plugin (W3 Total Cache)
- Consider using Content Delivery Network (CDN)
- Optimize all the images on your site
- Use [LazyLoader](#) for images to load
- Reduce the number of posts on your homepage, the number of widgets and other content
- Turn off pingbacks and trackbacks
- Minify HTML, CSS and JavaScript
- Maintain and optimize your database

There are a few tools with which **you should regularly check the health of your blog loading speed.** Most of the basic checks are for free. All the tools give you a grade, so you can easily monitor how you're performing.

- [Google PageSpeed Insight](#)
- [Pingdom Website Speed Test](#)
- [GTmetrix](#)
- [WebPage Test](#)

Even worse than your page loading time is if your blog isn't available to readers at all (downtime). It can be caused by your hosting or other errors. **Make sure you get alerts if your site goes down.**

There are a few tools that can help you with that:

- [Jetpack](#) by wordpress.com
- [ManageWP](#)
- [Pingdom](#)
- [Site 24x7](#)
- [Service Uptime](#)
- [Monitor.us](#)
- [UptimeRobot](#)

Now let's move to your site analytics. You can get all the data below from [Google Analytics](#) or other similar web analytics tools.

3.5. Users (Unique visitors)

It's the most basic blog metric you probably know very well. It's a metric that **shows individual people (uniques) who visited your blog and read your content.** It shows the number of people coming to your website.

Google Analytics defines Users as your blog readers who **have had at least one session** within the selected time frame you're analyzing.

3.6. New vs. Returning Visitors

As the name already implies, the metric shows **how many blog visitors are completely new and how many visited your blog at least once before.** The metric can give you a vague idea of the loyalty that's developing with your audience.

You need a good ratio between new and returning visitors. Getting new visitors shows that you're doing good work promoting your content and attracting new audience. Returning visitors indicate that people are interested in your blog and that your content is of high quality, so people come back to read more.

When you're analyzing your metrics, look for the following:

- Increased number of new visitors
- Increased number of returning visitors
- Returning traffic should be at least 25 % of your visitors (the ideal is 1:1)

3.7. Sessions (Visits)

A session is the period of time a user is active on your site. A single user can open multiple sessions. The default session time is 30 minutes, which means that if a user is inactive for 30 minutes or more, any new activities of the same user are attributed to a new session. If a user leaves your site and comes back in 30 minutes, it's attributed to the same session. If they come back after 30 minutes or they're inactive behind their computer for 30 minutes or more, a new session is initiated.

The sessions also expire at midnight and if there is a campaign change. The latter means that users first come to your blog by one distribution channel, leave, and then come back by using any other distribution channel.

3.8. Pages per Session

The Pages per Session metric tells you **how many pages users view on average when they visit your blog.** The more pages they view, the more interested they are in your content, obviously. The metric shows how good your blog's content flow is and how interesting your blog posts are. Here are a few ideas for increasing the number of pages a user views per session:

- Make sure your blog has a good user experience and design
- Write and publish more quality content
- Write attention-grabbing titles
- Take care of internal linking within content
- Use strong call to actions
- Feature popular posts at the bottom and in the sidebar
- Categorize and tag your posts (be moderate with tags because of duplicate pages)
- Break down longer articles into series (like this one)
- Have an attention-grabbing menu structure
- Have freebies on your blog that people can download (resources pages)
- Use excerpts instead of long texts on your homepage
- Create a FAQ page
- Have a search box on your site
- Speed up your page load time

3.9. Total Page Views (Impressions)

As the name implies, the metric shows the **total number of pages viewed on your blog**. As mentioned before, a page view occurs when a page is loaded or reloaded in a browser. It's one of the most important metrics for advertisers and it shows the overall growth of your blog. Repeated views of a single page are also counted into this metric.

Here's an example. A user comes to your homepage in the morning and reads two of your blog posts. Then the same user comes back in the evening, goes to your homepage and reads four of your blog posts. That would count as one user, two sessions and 8 page views.

When you track visitors, visits and page views, make sure you see **a steady growth of unique visits each month**. Don't forget to analyze spikes in these three metrics.

3.10. Average Session Duration (Average Time on Site)

Average session duration **shows the average amount of time a visitor spent viewing your page**. If they spend a lot of time on your site or a specific landing page, it means that they found what they were searching for and that your content is of high quality.

Here are **a few recommendations for increasing average time on site**:

- Everything listed in the "How to increase page views" section above
- Quality content again and again
- Easy-to-read experience – fonts, design
- Content structure for online reading
 - Short paragraphs and sentences
 - Blog posts structure with enough catchy subtitles
 - Bolded text
 - Add lists, quotes or tables to break up the content
 - Embed social media
 - Pictures within text
- Adding video, image gallery or podcast to play
- Encouraging a community on your blog (comments, forums etc.)

3.11. Bounce Rate

The bounce rate is a metric that **shows the percentage of visitors who arrive to your blog and click away without doing anything else**. It's measured based on a visit that lasts less than 10 seconds or if a visitor only views one page and exits (or more accurate when user closes the site, clicks the back button, types a different URL in the browser, clicks on an external link or session timeout occurs).

If you have a high bounce rate, it means that you don't drive visitors to other pages on your blog. **That usually happens because a reader expected something else than the content published in your blog or there is no other interesting content**. Because there's no interaction and no new page views in such an instance, it consequently also influences less time spent on your blog.

If you have a high bounce rate, it means you have to **consider the quality of your content or re-evaluate your webpage design and user experience**. You may also be targeting the wrong keywords with wrong content.

The most **frequent reasons for a high bounce rate**:

- Everything we talked about under "Increasing page views and time on site"
- Hard to read or understand content (complicated sentences, unclear, basic grammar mistakes)
- Too many banners, pop-ups or auto plays
- Untrustworthy design and an overall bad impression
- Broken website and technical issues
- Badly targeted keywords
- No clear next step or too many call-to-actions
- Wrong use of external links
- Site not optimized for mobile

3.12. How good are your basic blog metrics?

At this point, you may ask yourself how good your basic blog metrics are. There are two ways of getting a general sense of where you stand:

Google Analytics Audience Benchmarking: In Google Analytics, you can find a [Benchmarking report](#) that will compare Sessions, % New Sessions, Pages/Session, Average time on site and Bounce rate to a chosen industry vertical.

What others are saying. You can find a lot of data online and compare your blogs to others. In income reports, many bloggers also report their analytics data. For example, a bounce rate higher than 80 % is really awful. You can find a lot of data online if you're interested.

3.13. Exit pages

The bounce rate is when someone visits your blog and leaves it immediately. Exit pages, on the other hand, show **on which page a visitor left your blog after visiting multiple pages**. Some pages (such as purchase pages) have a naturally high exit rate.

You should analyze your top exit pages to see **why a higher number of your visitors is leaving your site on that particular page**. There may be a strong reason behind why they leave.

3.14. Top landing pages

Top landing pages, on the other hand, show **which blog posts are driving the most traffic on your site**. It's a good metric to know, especially because you want to have your top landing pages updated and fresh. It also gives you an idea of the content that works best for your blog. You should also determine the popularity of your top sites by looking at social media stats we will talk later about.

The analysis of top landing pages will show you:

- Pages that are driving the most traffic to your website
- On which pages visitors usually land first and what is their experience
- Performance of each landing page
- Conversion performance of each landing page

3.15. Traffic Sources

Never have all of your eggs in one basket. It's the same with traffic sources. **It's very important to have a diverse number of stable traffic sources that drive readers to your blog.**

Traffic sources are broken down into three main categories in Google Analytics:

- **Search visitors** – Readers coming to your blog by using search engines
- **Direct visitors** – Readers coming to your blog by typing your URL directly into a browser or by using a bookmark
- **Social visitors** – Visitors coming from social media
- **Referral visitors** – Visitors coming to your blog from other websites. It shows the percentage of readers that visit your blog because a link was shared on another platform or was mentioned on another website. Referral traffic shows who the biggest supporters of your blog are.
- **Email visitors** – Readers coming to your site from your mailing campaigns
- **Paid channels** – Different paid channels

There are some very general directions that **you shouldn't have more than 40 % - 50 % of organic search traffic.** Otherwise you're too dependent on Google and if search algorithms change, you can have big problems.

Well, it's definitely **better to have more traffic from search engines than too little**, but it still makes sense to work on diversifying.

More than 30 % of direct traffic shows that you're doing good work on your brand building, because people are entering your website directly into browsers or they have your site bookmarked. Never forget to encourage your readers to bookmark your blog.

You should also pay close attention to your referring traffic. **If your referring traffic is lower than 20 %, it means that you don't have enough links on your site.** In this case, you should put more effort into link building, partnerships, blog posting etc.

General directions you should follow:

- Search traffic: Around 40%
- Referring traffic: 20%+
- Direct traffic: 20% - 30%+

In addition to that, **referrals show you potential opportunities for partnerships with other blogs and websites that are sending traffic your way.** If some website owners like you and link to you, there's a great chance they'd be willing to send even more traffic your way.

As already mentioned, **the most important thing is to have healthy traffic distribution.** If too high of a percentage of traffic is coming from a single source, you're exposed to high risk of traffic drop if something happens to this source. Therefore, put some additional efforts into channels that are underperforming.

You can also see a detailed report by medium and source that sent traffic your way.

In a detailed analysis, you can see your top traffic sources and make sure you nurture them even more in the future. Here is what you should take care of:

- Healthy distribution of your traffic sources
- Your main traffic sources (top 5 – 10) and are they the sources where your target audience lives
- Opportunities for partnerships to get more traffic your way from a specific source

3.16. Best performing distribution channels

You're interested in the volume, price and performance of each of your distribution channels. The volume and price (even organic traffic has its own price) are quite easy to calculate, the question is how you can measure performance.

One way is to measure the following metrics for every one of your distribution channels:

- Bounce Rate
- Time on Site
- Pages per Visit
- Conversions

3.16.1. Conversions by traffic sources

When you have set goals (micro and macro conversions) in your analytics software, **it's essential to see which traffic sources are performing the best in terms of your ultimate goal – conversions.** Analyzing conversions by traffic sources will give you a good sense of where most of the junk traffic comes from and which traffic channels work the best for you.

Now let's move into a detailed analysis of the main distribution channels.

3.17. Metrics for different distribution channels

It's time to look more extensively into each of the most popular distribution channels (traffic sources). **We're more or less going to look at the basic metrics for a specific distribution channel.** The more you master a specific distribution channel, the more metrics you can add on your own and decide which ones are actionable metrics and which ones are vanity metrics in your case.

Here are the main distribution channels we're going to cover:

- Search Engine Optimization
- Email Marketing
- Social Media Marketing (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, SlideShare, Quora, Pinterest)

I'm not going to cover any paid channels (PPC, Banner Advertising etc.), because that's a whole new science and a new set of metrics. The hypothesis is that you have zero budget for advertising your blog and so you have to grow it organically. If you have a budget for advertising, excellent, but remember to master one (paid) distribution channel really well before you move to the next.

4. Search Engine Optimization - SEO metrics

Search Engines with Search Engine Optimization usually drive the most traffic to your website, therefore they deserve the number one spot among distribution channels. **On average, they drive more than 60 % of traffic to websites.** But as we said, you don't want to be too dependent on search traffic, so always make sure you have a healthy distribution.

You can get most of the metrics described in this chapter services like [Moz Open Site Explorer](#) and [Majestic SEO](#).

Here are the SEO metrics you should be following:

4.1. Keywords Rank

Keywords are the pure basis of Search Engine Optimization (SEO). If you focus on SEO, you simply **have to do your keyword research and know very well for which (long tail) keywords you want to rank well.** And after producing content targeting a specific keyword, you have to put all the efforts in "on-site" and "off-site" optimization to rank as high as possible in search engines (so called SERPs).

Since search engine rankings constantly change because of search algorithm updates, thus **you want to regularly track how well you rank for the targeted keywords.** If you lose your positions, you want to put effort into gaining your positions back again. So you have to know what's happening with your positions in search engines very well. Fortunately, you have many tools that can help you with rank tracking.

Here is **what you should determine when doing a keyword analysis:**

- Have you kept your high ranking for your top keywords (making sure you don't lose your positions)
- Keywords you want rank better for (putting more effort into SEO)
- Completely new keywords you want to rank for (new content production)

There are many tools that can help you determine which keywords you and your competition rank for ([SpyFu](#), [SEMRush](#) etc.) Now enjoy playing with your keywords.

4.2. Key SEO Metrics

Now let's focus on the key SEO metrics you should follow, if you consider search engines to be an important distribution channel for your blog. **The key SEO Metrics you should follow are:**

- Google PageRank
- Alexa Score
- Moz Domain Authority (DA)
- Moz Page Authority (PA)
- Number of Referring Domains
- Number of Backlinks
- Anchor text distribution
- Spam score
- Majestic Citation Flow (CF)
- Majestic Trust Flow (TF)
- Trust Flow – Citation Flow Ratio
- Number of indexed pages
- Number of broken links
- Crawl Error Reports
- Pages Crawled per day and time spent downloading

4.3. Google PageRank

Google PageRank **used to be the most important metric in the SEO industry.** It indicates the popularity of your blog across the web. Nowadays Google doesn't relay and update PageRank as frequently as it used to.

First of all, PageRank is a number from 0 to 10 assigned to your blog by Google (as you've probably figured out). **The higher the number, the more credible and authoritative your site.** It's primarily based on the number of links to your site.

If you're a new blogger, your PageRank **may be N/A which means that your page was not yet evaluated or not publicly disclosed.** Since Google isn't updating the metric as often as it used to, it may even stay N/A for a long time, if not forever. If you have an N/A PageRank, just make sure you were indexed by Google.

Many SEO experts say that you should just forget about it. Today, PageRank is only one of more than 200 signals Google looks at when deciding how to rank your blog. You shouldn't rely too much on this metric, but it can still give you valuable insight.

PageRank may show you if you've been (God forbid) penalized by Google. If your PageRank equals zero (not N/A), there's a great chance that your blog was penalized for whatever reason. Of course on the other hand, a greater number can also give a sense of higher authority and credibility of your website.

- Calculated by: Google (and outdated)
- Scale: 0 – 10 (integer numbers)
- Tool: [PRChecker](#)

4.4. Alexa Score and SimilarWeb Global Rank

[Alexa.com](#) is an Amazon company that estimates traffic for a specific website. It's not very accurate but it gives you a general idea of how popular a website is. **Alexa ranks websites, and the more traffic there is to a site, the higher position in the ranking it receives (lower number).** Thus the lower the ranking of your blog (you want to be number one), the better the position you're in according to Alexa.

- Sites in Alexa's top 1000 are extremely popular
- Sites that run in the top 5 million sites usually enjoy a steady flow of traffic

As we mentioned many times, it's not only about the quantity, but also the quality of your traffic. If you have a really good niche site, you can have less traffic but enjoy a high number of conversions, because of really good targeting. If you plan to build a media blog, things are again quite different. Similar to the Alexa Rank is the [SimilarWeb Global Rank](#). It's one more popular ranking site you may want to check.

4.5. Moz Domain Authority (DA)

Moz Domain Authority shows a potential to rank for your root domain. It's calculated for your entire domain based on all the linking metrics. **It's an authority measure ranked on a logarithmic scale from 0 to 100**, and the higher the score you have, the better.

- Calculated by: Moz Open Site Explorer
- Scale: 0 – 100

4.6. Moz Page Authority (PA)

Moz Page Authority measures a specific URL's relevancy and strength. You can check the PA for every one of your blog posts or any other pages. If you enter your domain, it shows the authority for your first page. It's also an algorithmic metric based on all kinds of different linking metrics.

- Calculated by: Moz Open Site Explorer
- Scale: 0 – 10

4.7. Number of Referring Root Domains

Unique (Root) Referring Domains is a Moz metric that **tells you how diverse the link profile of your blog is.** It shows how many different unique domains are currently linking to your blog. The higher the number your blog has, the more diverse and strong your blog link profile is.

Since all the Google updates (Panda, Penguin), the quantity of (low value) links doesn't count as much as it used to. Five links from respected and authoritative sites are probably much better for your ranking than 30 links from small new sites without authority. Still, **you want to have a diversity of links from authority domains to your blog.** If you don't know what a good score is, compare it to your competitors.

- Calculated by: Moz Open Site Explorer

4.8. Number of Backlinks

The number of backlinks shows **all the links to your blog, including internal, external, follow and no-follow links.** It's important for your blog to have a strong link profile in terms of quality and quantity.

4.9. Anchor text distribution – backlink profile

Anchor text (link label, link title) is the visible text in a hyperlink that links to your site. You should analyze your overall anchor text distribution and see how diversified and natural it is, especially in comparison to your competitors in the chosen niche.

Here are some of the best practices for anchor text distribution after the Penguin update:

- You must have a **healthy (natural) anchor text distribution** (for your niche).
- Wherever possible, anchor text should be **relevant to your blog topic** (only a small percentage of generic anchors as part of natural distribution).
- **Don't aggressively build an exact match anchor text** (for the money keywords or the keywords you want your blog to rank), even less so in combination with rich keyword landing pages.
- **No spammy anchor texts** (anchor texts with no relevance to your site or shady keywords).
- **Healthy site-wide link distribution** for external links pointing to your site and all site links (the majority of links should not point only to your homepage, but also sub-pages)

If you're asking yourself **what a healthy anchor text distribution for a blogger is**, below is the general rule (recommended by [Backlinko.com](https://backlinko.com)) you should follow (but again, check against your top performing competitors):

- 45 %: Unique anchor texts
- 30 %: Brand Match Anchors (BlogBrand) – Search engines want you to build a trusted brand
- 10 %: URL Match Anchors (<http://www.YourBlog.com/>) – aka Naked Linked Anchor
- 10 %: Domain name (YourBlog.com) – aka Naked Link Anchor
- 10 %: Blogger name anchor text (Your Personal Name)
- 5 %: Generic anchors (click here, check this blog post, find out here, etc.)
- 1 %: Your money keywords anchor text

You can see your link distribution using many different tools like [Majestic](#) or [Ahrefs](#) or [Moz Open Site Explorer](#).

4.10. Spam score

The spam score shows **what percentage of sites with a similar linking structure was penalized by google**. This metric can give you a glimpse of how healthy your link structure is.

- Calculated by: Moz Open Site Explorer

4.11. Majestic Citation Flow (CF)

Citation Flow is a score between 0 and 100 and helps to measure the link equity or “power” the website or page carries. **It’s based on the strength of the link pointing to your blog.** It analyzes the incoming equity of each link. The more domains that point to your blog, the more influential your blog is. It’s a metric similar to PageRank.

- Calculated by: Majestic Site Explorer
- Scale: 0 – 100

4.12. Majestic Trust Flow (TF)

On the other side, Majestic Trust Flow is designed to calculate **how trustworthy the links pointing to your blog really are.** It’s all about the quality, not quantity of the links.

Blogs closely linked to a trusted seed site can see higher scores, whereas **blogs that may have some questionable links would see a much lower score.** The score can also be between 0 and 100. A High Trust Flow means a high-quality backlink profile and usually also indicates quality content.

- Calculated by: Majestic Site Explorer
- Scale: 0 – 100

4.13. Majestic Trust Ratio

Majestic did a big research of backlinks on millions of websites and **found that the top 25 % of domains had CF/TF ratios near 1.09.** An average site had a CF/TF ratio near 2.89. But domains with a lot of spammy backlinks had ratios between 6.58 and 9.87!

The closer this value is to zero, the better the position your blog is in. Trust Ratio between 0 – 1.81 is considered okay.

You can also calculate it the other way around, Trust Flow / Citation Flow, which should be around 0.5. The maximum number is 1 and the closer to 1 you are, the better the position of your domain. So your Citation Flow should not be 1.9x higher than Trust Flow.

- Majestic Trust Ratio = Citation Flow / Trust Flow (0 - 1.81)
- Majestic Trust Ratio = Trust Flow / Citation Flow (0,5+)

4.14. A good starting point

If you're a newbie blogger, try to get to the following metrics as soon as possible:

- Moz Domain Authority (DA): 15+
- Moz Page Authority (PA): 15+
- Number of Referring Root Domains: 30+
- Majestic Citation Flow (CF): 15+
- Majestic Trust Flow (TF): 15+
- Majestic Trust Ratio: Below 1.08

4.15. Number of broken links

You want to make sure you have no broken links on your website. If there are many broken links, search engines could assume that your site is outdated and the user experience is bad.

Here's a plugin to [check for broken links](#) if you're using WordPress.



Another tool to check if everything is okay with your blog for SEO purposes is – [Google Webmaster Tools](#). Here's what you should check in GWT (if you aren't getting data, make sure you have the right URL in GWT, because for Google, a site with www and one without are two totally different sites):

4.16. Number of indexed pages

You want to make sure that **you get the highest possible number of indexed pages**, depending on how many pages you have on your blog. Make sure the number of your indexed pages isn't dropping.

4.17. Crawl Error Reports

You want to make sure **there are no crawl errors on your website** and, additionally, that there are no bugs or missed redirects.

4.18. Pages Crawled per day and time spent downloading

You want to make sure that Google crawls your site as often as possible. The more frequently that Google crawls your site, the quicker Google notices changes like when you're publishing a new post.

You follow the goal of **having the highest possible number of pages crawled per day and the lowest possible amount of time spent downloading.**

A few things you can do to increase your Site Crawl Rate:

- Make sure your server works correctly
- Page Speed Matters here again
- Update your site regularly and publish new posts
- Increase the number of backlinks
- Submit a sitemap in GWT

Make sure there are no big differences in your reports.

4.19. Bing Webmaster Tools – Second opinion

You may also want to get **a second opinion on your crawling status**, and [Bing Webmaster Tools](#) is probably the best place to go. Things you can check in Bing Webmaster Tools:

- Crawl Information, Index Explorer, SEO Reports, Link Explorer, Page Traffic

5. Email marketing metrics

Besides Search Engine Optimization and Social Media Marketing, **Email Marketing and a growing email database are two of the most important tools for every blogger.**

An email is one of the most intimate online possessions (to how many people would you give access to your main email account?) and therefore also **the best way for a blogger to build close relationships with readers.**

5.1. RSS Subscribers

Before we go to email marketing, here's the place where RSS deserves to be mentioned. **There's a big debate out there if RSS is dead or not.** On the one hand, companies like Google, Twitter and Apple dropped RSS but on the other hand, [Feedly](#) (as one of the most popular RSS apps) has seen tremendous growth in the past few years.

You'll have to decide **how much effort you'll put into building your RSS subscribers** and whether the number of RSS subscribers is a metric important to you.

Here are a few tools that can help you with RSS analytics:

- [FeedBlitz](#)
- [Feedio](#)
- [FeedPress](#)
- [Simple Feed Stats WP Plugin](#)

Now let's start with email marketing metrics. **Here are the most important email marketing metrics for bloggers you should be tracking:**

5.2. List size / Emails sent

List size is **the total number of recipients (email addresses)** that you have in your database (a list or all the lists combined) and you are sending your email message to.

5.3. Number of email campaigns sent

Then we have **the number of email campaigns you send in a specific month.** You have to decide how frequently you'll send an email to your subscribers and measure how the frequency influences different email marketing metrics.

Email marketing frequency research statistics show that, very roughly, 1/4 sites send an email once per month, 1/2 on a weekly basis and 1/4 send more than one email to the readers per week. **So sending your emails out on a weekly basis probably makes the most sense.**

If you don't yet have any data about when your audience is most likely to read your email, **target midmornings during the work week.** An A/B test may help you get an answer of the best timing (more about split testing in the next chapter).

Below are **a few tactics bloggers are using, but you have to decide what your strategy will be.** These are just ideas, not proven best working tactics. Many bloggers send:

- An email for every new blog post (and automate it with [IFTTT](#))
- A monthly or bi-weekly newsletter
- New paid offers they have and product information emails
- Updates from their personal life
- Special reports (income report, what I am reading etc.)
- Thank you email (for downloading, subscribing, reading etc.)
- Happy Birthday and Happy Anniversary emails

Let's go on.

5.4. Bounce Rate and Delivery Rate

The bounce rate is **the percentage of total emails sent to your subscribers that couldn't be delivered to the recipient's inbox.** If an email isn't delivered, we call that a bounce. There are two types of bounces:

- **Soft Bounce:** Temporary problem with the inbox, such as a full Inbox, account problems (deliver later)
- **Hard Bounce:** Email doesn't exist anymore, so you should immediately remove these emails from your database (even if only to uphold reputation with your ISP provider).

Based on the bounce rate, you can also calculate your delivery rate. **Delivery rate is calculated by subtracting hard and soft bounces from the total number of emails sent, then dividing that number by gross emails sent.** Your delivery rate should be higher than 95 %. Lower than 80 % is a really bad delivery rate. If one of the emails has a lower delivery rate, check the title and other elements of your email that could mark you message as spam.

$$\text{Delivery rate} = \frac{\text{Emails sent} - \text{Bounces}}{\text{Emails sent}}$$

5.5. Open Rate

Open Rate shows **how many subscribers opened your email**. It's at the top of funnel metrics for email marketing. Metrics can be misleading since they don't count emails that may have been opened - if a recipient has some kind of image blocking in their email client, your stats will show that an email hadn't been opened, even if it might have been. On the other hand, some email clients or preview panes automatically open emails, which also impacts your stats.

$$\text{Open rate} = \text{Emails opened} / \text{Emails delivered}$$

You can definitely influence the percentage of Open Rates by optimizing the subject line, but you shouldn't forget to focus your efforts also on CTRs and conversions. The best value of measuring open rates is to use them as comparison, for example looking for similarities between emails that had high open rates.

You should also know that **the highest percentage of email opened usually happens about one hour after delivery**. Research shows that emails with the best open rates are the ones with a medium length of a subject line, counting between 25 and 40 characters. An open rate of 20 % - 30 % or more is considered good. 40% and more is considered really good.

5.6. Click-Through Rate

Click-Through Rate (CTR) is calculated as **the proportion of the subscribers who clicked on one or more links contained in an email message**. It shows performance of every email you sent to your subscribers.

It gives you good insight into how many of your subscribers are engaging with your content and are interested in reading your new blog posts. Emails with more links usually bring higher CTRs, but not necessarily. If you have too many links, spam filters may tag your email.

Average companies achieve around 2 % - 6 % CTR. A Click-Through Rate of around 10 % is really good, more than 10 % is super excellent. So if 10 out of every 100 subscribers click on a link in your email, you have a super healthy email list.

$$\text{CTR} = \text{Unique clicks} / \text{Emails delivered}$$
$$\text{Adjusted CTR} = \text{Unique clicks} / \text{Emails opened}$$

5.7. Click-To-Open-Rate

You can also calculate the Click-To-Open Rate (CTOR) that shows **how many subscribers who opened your email also clicked on one of your links**. A weak open rate and a high CTR can show that your email subject was weak. A CTOR between 10 % and 15 % is considered normal, from 16 % to 40 % is excellent.

$$\text{CTOR} = \text{Click-through rate} / \text{Open rate}$$

5.8. Unsubscribe Rate

The Unsubscribe Rate shows **the percentage of people who unsubscribed from your list** (clicking the unsubscribe link when you send an email and then following through the opt-out process). It doesn't really show the health of your email list, but you should keep an eye on your unsubscribe rate. A high unsubscribe rate can show that you're doing basic email marketing mistakes (irrelevant content etc.) or, if many people unsubscribe after a specific email, that they didn't like it. The average unsubscribe rate is between 0.1 – 0.5 %, if you achieve less than 0.1 % you're doing excellently.

$$\text{Unsubscribe Rate} = \text{Unsubscribes} / \text{Emails delivered}$$

5.9. Churn Rate

The Churn Rate is the percentage of subscribers who leave your email list for various reasons. Transparent churn are all people who unsubscribe in a specific period, indicate your message as spam or don't receive your email anymore because of the hard bounce.

These are all the subscribers who don't receive your emails anymore. In addition to the people who clearly say they don't want to receive your messages, **opaque churn indicates all the readers who are emotionally not interested in your content anymore, but they don't opt-out**. They simply don't check their email accounts very often or ignore your messages. It's expected that with time, interest in your content from a specific person decreases.

When dealing with your list size, expect that the **natural churn rate for an email list is up to 25 % every year**. That means that you'll lose a quarter of your subscribers per year. You have to grow your list much faster than your churn rate is.

$$\text{Churn rate} = (\text{Unsubscribes} + \text{Bounces} + \text{Spam Complaints}) / \text{List size}$$

5.10. List Growth Rate

You should, of course, strive to grow your email list to expand your audience. The List Growth Rate **is the measurement of how fast your email list is growing**. You should calculate your growth rate by subtracting hard bounces, complaints and unsubscribed readers from the number of new email subscribers in a given month, and then dividing that number with the number on your size list.

List Growth Rate = (New Subscribers - Unsubscribes – Hard Bounces – Complaints) / List size

5.11. Forward Rate (Referral/Share)

Email Sharing and Forward Rate **is the percentage of your subscribers who open your email and click any social sharing button** to post content on social networks or click the forward button and forward your email to their friends. Sharing and forwarding is one of the best ways for you to gain new audience. Therefore, you have to encourage your readers to share your content. Ask them to do it.

Forward rate = Number of Emails forwarded / Emails delivered

5.12. Complaint rate

Complaint rate is the percentage of your subscribers who label your message as spam. Spam complaints are taken very seriously by many email marketing service providers (Mailchimp, Aweber etc.). You should make sure that people can easily unsubscribe and that you're sending emails only to people who really opted-in to your mailing list. Your complaint rate should be lower than 0.05 %.

Spam complaint rate = Spam complaints / Emails delivered

5.13. Conversion Rate (CR)

Conversion rate is the most important metric besides CTR. The conversion rate is the percentage of your subscribers who clicked on a link within your email and completed a desired action, be it a micro or macro conversion. The conversion rate also depends greatly on your landing page and a clear call-to-action.

5.14. Earnings per Email Sent

At the end of the day, you want to calculate how profitable your campaign was. **You can simply calculate that by dividing the total revenue generated from the campaign with the number of emails sent.** Of course, to calculate Earnings per Email Sent, you must have call-to-actions for macro conversions in your email. For that, you need to build up your conversion funnel with your monetization strategies as quickly as possible.

To sum up email marketing, here are the metrics you should target when sending emails:

Delivery rate	95 %+
Open rate	25 %+
CTR	10 %+
CTOR	20 %+
Complaint rate	less than 0,05 %
Yearly Churn rate	less than 25 %



6. Social media metrics

Now let's move from Search Engine Optimization and Email marketing to Social media marketing and Social Media Metrics. **In this chapter, we will cover all the metrics related to the main social media channels.** As mentioned before, we won't cover any metrics for paid social media advertising, only metrics that show how many people you can reach and influence without a budget.

As you know, **there are many social networks and new important ones are being born every year** (Snapchat, Periscope etc.), which makes it impossible to cover all the channels and all the metrics. But the most popular social networks and the key ones for bloggers are definitely covered.

Here they are:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Google+
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Instagram
- SlideShare
- Quora
- Pinterest

There is another challenge. **There are so many different metrics to follow for every social network, it's a complete overkill.** Under every social network, you will find many metrics, but at the end of the day, you have to decide for yourself which metrics are really important to you and you will follow.

The names of metrics are slightly different for every social network, but from the macro perspective, every metric falls into one of the following categories:

- **Post creation rate** – The total number of social media posts you create in a given time period.
- **Audience: Fans/followers/subscribers** – The number of people who follow you on each of your different social media channels.
- **Audience growth rate** – The number of new audience members your gain (or lose) for every channel divided by the total audience for that channel in the beginning of the period.

- **Reach and impressions** – The number of people who have seen your posts during a time period. Posts count as reached when they're shown in the social media feed. The total reach includes your audience (organic) and reaching people with shares and ads. Organic reach are your fans who have seen your post (without advertising). Reach counts unique people and impressions count all the times that people have seen your posts. One of your posts can be seen multiple times.
- **Applause rate** – The number of approval actions you get for a created social media post (like, favorite, +1 etc.).
- **Amplification rates** – The number of shares you get for a created social media post (share, retweet etc.).
- **Conversation rate** – The number of comments and replies you get for a created post.
- **Response rate** – How many comments, questions, complaints or other types of interactions with your readers you respond to.
- **Click-through rate** – The percentage of people who click on a link in your created post.
- **Engagement rate** – The percentage of people who have engaged with your content in any way (applause, amplification, conversation, sometimes also click is counted). It can be calculated based on reach, followers (if reach is not available), impressions (especially for advertising purposes) or post.
- **Conversion rate and economic value** – The percentage of people who take a desired action (micro/macro conversion) and come from social media traffic. Conversions lead to sales and economic value refers to the bottom-line impact of your content promotion on social media.

6.1. The most shared content on social networks

Before we go to any specific social network, you want to know **your most shared content on the main social networks**. That will only give you a general overview of what content has the best amplification rate.

You can easily check the most popular content shared on social networks with a free [Buzzsumo](#) account. **And don't forget to check what the most popular content on social networks from your main competitors is.** Now let's dive in to specific social networks, starting with Facebook.

6.2. Facebook Page Metrics

Facebook is probably the most important social network for most content creators, so let's start there. Since Facebook is a mature marketing platform with many insights, **metrics are quite complicated to follow**. There are two basic things to understand.

You have two levels of reporting (Page and Post level). One is Page Level and gives you a general overview of your page statistics. The other is Post Level, giving you additional breakdown of your content performance (for every post). So it makes sense to use Page Level for general insights of how your page is progressing and Post Level to find what content works best for your audience.

The second challenge is that **on the Page level, you only have daily, 7-day and 28-day reports available**. Facebook doesn't segment data on a monthly basis. Yes, there's no way you can get a monthly report easily on the Page level.

If you want to do calculations on a monthly basis, things get complicated, especially for unique metrics (like reach and talking about this), because they can't be added or averaged. The data you can calculate on a monthly basis are all the non-unique metrics like impressions, page stories and page post impressions. Here are a few things you can do:

- **Use the 28-day report from the last day of the month** and hope your first days weren't too strong, because you leave them out. Maybe even intentionally avoid posting anything in those first few days.
- **Use the 28-day report from the last day of the month and try to calculate the metrics for the missing days.** You will especially have a problem for unique metrics and would only get a rough estimate. In this case, it makes sense to use only non-unique metrics (use impression instead of reach, stories instead of people talking about). Another downside is that you have to do a lot of calculating.
- **Analyze your data on a weekly or a daily basis.**

When you export your Facebook Page insights, you get hundreds of columns with different data and everything is quite confusing.

So let's first break down the data you get:



For your Page	For each of your Posts
Likes New Likes Unlikes	
Engaged Users	Engaged users
Reach <i>Total</i> <i>Organic (Unpaid)</i> <i>Paid</i>	Lifetime reach <i>Total</i> <i>Organic</i> <i>Paid</i>
Impressions <i>Total</i> <i>Organic</i> <i>Paid</i>	Lifetime impressions <i>Total</i> <i>Organic</i> <i>Paid</i>
Page Views (Logged-in) <i>Total</i> <i>Unique</i>	
Reach of page posts <i>Total</i> <i>Organic</i> <i>Paid</i>	
Impressions of your posts <i>Total</i> <i>Organic</i> <i>Paid</i>	
Page Consumers Page Consumption	Post Consumers Post Consumption
Negative feedback <i>Total</i> <i>Unique</i>	Lifetime Negative Feedback <i>Total</i> <i>Unique</i>
Daily count of fans online	
Check-ins <i>Total</i> <i>Unique</i> <i>Mobile</i>	
Video Analytics Video Analytics	
	Analytics for people who liked your page <i>Impressions</i> <i>Paid Impressions</i> <i>Reach</i> <i>Paid Reach</i> <i>Engagement</i>
Daily people talking about This	

Now in the second step, let's clear up the more complicated part of the terminology:

- **Impressions** – The number of times your posts or any content associated with your page were seen (may have been seen). One person can see one piece of content several times.
- **Reach** – The number of unique people who see (or more accurately may have seen) your post or content associated with your page.
- **Consumption** – The number of clicks (clicking on the post, opening a link, watching a video etc.) on any of your content, even if a story wasn't created. Consumption is a product of consumers.
- **Consumers** – The number of unique people who clicked anywhere on your post or page content.
- **Talking about** – The number of people sharing stories about your page (page and post level).
- **Engagement** – The unique number of people, including all clicks and created stories (also the ones that were not the result of a click). Engagement is always equal to or higher than consumption. It can happen anywhere on the page, not just on the post level (for example liking your page).
- **Logged-In Page Views** – The number of people who saw your Timeline (when logged into Facebook).
- **Stories** – Stories are created when users interact with your Facebook Page or your Post. A story is basically an item that's displayed in the News Feed or News Ticker. Here are the stories that can be created:

Page level	Post level
Likes of your Page Likes, comments or shares of your Page posts Posts on the Page Wall Answers to a Question you've asked Responses to your Event Mentions of your Page Tags of your Page in a photo Check-in (checking-in, liking/sharing check-in deal) Recommendations	Likes, comments or shares of your Page post Answers to a question you've asked Response to your event

But now here is the most important question. Which metrics should you follow? Well, below are probably the best basic metrics to follow. First, a few vanity metrics on the page level that you should be following:

- **Total Page Likes and New Net Page Like** – Your fan base (and growth rate).
- **Page Views** – The number of times your timeline was viewed

- **Page Reach** – The number of people you reached in any way for your brand building.
- **Number of created posts** – The number of posts you posted on your Page Timeline.
- **Reach of page posts** – How many people were reached by posts you published on your page (you are especially interested in organic reach).
- **Page engagement** – The number of people who clicked anywhere or created a story.
- **Page consumers** – The number of people who clicked on any of your content. You can also check your page consumption next to the number of consumers.
- **Talking about this** – The number of people who shared a story about your page.
- **Negative feedback** – You should definitely analyze whether you're getting any negative feedback and why.

Here is one interesting actionable metric to follow on the page level:

- Page Consumers / # of posts / Page Reach – **Engagement performance of your page**

In my case, I export reports on the last day of a month, delete all 1 day and 7 day columns and all rows that don't refer to the selected date. Then I delete paid and total metrics, because I'm interested in organic metrics the most. In the next step, I transpose cells to have a nicer view, compare metrics to previous months and calculate more actionable metrics.

And on the post level, you should calculate your best performing posts, which are the posts with the highest engagement (with a click on a post):

- Post Consumers / Post Reach – **Percentage of people who saw your post and engaged with it**

Based on those metrics, you can also calculate other more actionable metrics. Examples are below. You may choose engaged users instead of consumers, as it is a more complete measure of engagement, but since you're a blogger, you're interested in how people are engaged in your content.

- Post Consumers / Page likes – **The % of your fans who actually consume you posts**
- Post Shares / Post Consumption – **The % of consumers who shared your content**
- Link Clicks / Post Consumption – **The % of consumers who clicked a link to your blog**
- Total Link clicks to your blog – **The amount of traffic you received to your blog**

On the post level report, I export insights for the chosen month. I calculate post consumers in relation to the total post reach and see my top 10 performing posts. But you can also play with other metrics.



6.3. Twitter

Next to Facebook, **Twitter is probably the second most important social network for bloggers.** Here are the metrics you should be following for your Twitter account:

- **Tweets** – The number of messages you sent out to your followers in a selected time frame.
- **Tweets Impressions** – The number of times users saw your tweets (timeline and search results).
- **Followers** – The number of readers who subscribed to your Twitter account.
- **Following** – The number of people you are following.
- **New followers** – The number of new followers in a selected time frame.
- **New followers within a tweet** – The number of people who clicked “follow” within your tweets.
- **Unfollows** – People who unfollowed you in a selected time frame.
- **Followers growth rate** – New followers (minus unfollows) divided by all the followers you have (in the beginning of selected time).
- **Profile visits** – The number of people who visited your profile (clicked on the name, photo or @handle of your Twitter profile).
- **Likes** – The number of times a user liked your tweet (new, total).
- **Replies** – The number of times a user replied to your tweet. Mentions that start with a @ handle of a specific user you’re engaging. Replies only show in your feed and the feed of users who follow you both.
- **Mentions** – The number of tweets in which your @handle is used, but not as a direct reply.
- **Retweets (RT)** – The number of users who shared your tweet with their own network of followers.
- **Hashtag clicks** – The number of clicks on your hashtags in your tweets.
- **Embedded Media Clicks** – The number of times a photo, video or a gif was clicked in your tweets.
- **Shared via email** – The number of times a user shared one of your tweets by email.
- **Total Engagements** – The total number of times users interacted with your tweets (retweets, replies, follows, likes, clicking on links, hashtags, avatar, username or Twitter extension).
- **Engagement per Tweet** – The total number of times users interacted with your tweets.
- **Engagement Rate (per Impressions/Followers)** – The number of engagements divided by impressions (or average number of followers).
- **Number of Direct Messaged (DM)** – The number of direct messages you receive regarding your blog.
- **Outbound clicks** – People coming to your blog from your Twitter account.

6.4. Google+

Many bloggers are claiming that Google+ is dying out. You have to decide for yourself.

Here are the metrics you should be following for your blog's Google+ Page:

- **Followers** – The number of followers you have. You can also analyze the followers of your personal page.
- **New followers** – The number of new followers in a selected time period.
- **Followers growth rate** – The number of new followers (minus unfollows) divided by the total number of followers (in the beginning of a selected time frame).
- **Following** – The number of people you are following.
- **Posts** – The number of posts you published on Google+.
- **Reach** – The number of people that were shown your posts.
- **Views (Impressions)** – The number of times your page and your content were viewed.
- **+1** – The number +1s on posts you published on your page.
- **Comments** – The number of comments on your post.
- **Shares** – The number of times your post was shared with other users.
- **Total Engagement** – The number of comments, shares and +1s on your posts.
- **Engagement rate** – Engagement compared to reach (or average number of followers or number of posts).
- **Collections and communities** – Collections and communities you are following/managing.
- **Outbound clicks** – People coming to your blog from your Google+ Page.

Don't forget your personal Google+ page, where you should follow:

- **Followers** - The number of people that are following you.
- **Following** – The number of people you are following.
- **+1** - The number of +1s on posts you have published.
- **Collections and communities** – Collections and communities you're following/managing.
- **Outbound clicks** – People coming to your blog from your personal Google+ Page.



6.5. LinkedIn

I'm not sure whether building a LinkedIn Page makes sense for a blogger. **I think it makes much more sense to build your personal profile as a blogger and connect it extensively with your blog.** Therefore, I've chosen to overview the metrics for a personal LinkedIn Profile. Here are the metrics you should be following for your LinkedIn account:

- **Number of connections** – The number of your first level professional connections on LinkedIn.
- **New connections** – The number of new connections in a selected time period (and connections growth).
- **Number of followers** – The number of people who follow you for publishing posts (total, new)
- **LinkedIn Profile Views** – The number of views of your profile in a selected time period.
- **Number of recommendations** – The total number of people who recommended you.
- **New recommendations** – New recommendations in a selected time period.
- **Endorsement** – The total number of endorsements you received.
- **New endorsements** – New endorsements you received in a selected time period.
- **Profile ranking** – Where you rank among your connections.
- **Profile rating** – The quality of your LinkedIn Profile (it should be All-Star).
- **Inbox messages** – The number of people who wrote to you regarding your blog (no sales offers).
- **Number of LinkedIn posts** – The number of LinkedIn posts (new, total).
- **Number of Post views** – The number of post views from when it was published.
- **New views** – The number of new views of posts published in the selected time period.
- **All-time Post Engagement (and engagement rate)** – The total number of likes, comments and shares on your posts (compared to views or number of posts).
- **Outbound clicks** – People coming to your blog from your LinkedIn account.



6.6. YouTube

Sooner or later, your audience will also want to meet you in the most personal way online, which is probably video. Besides that, **video and photos are becoming a more and more important media for connecting with people**. Here are the metrics you should be following for your YouTube account, if you have one:

- **Total number of uploads** – The number of all video uploads to your channel from the beginning.
- **New uploads** – The number of new uploaded videos in a given time period.
- **Subscribers** – The total number of subscribers to your channel.
- **New subscribers** – The number of new subscribers to your YouTube Channel.
- **Lost subscribers** – The number of lost subscribers to your YouTube Channel.
- **Subscriber growth rate** – The number of new subscribers (minus lost subscribers) divided by the total number of subscribers (in the beginning of a selected time frame).
- **Views** – The total number of times a video was viewed or all the views your videos have received.
- **New Views** – The number of views during the reported time period.
- **Views to subscribers** – Number of views per video divided by the number of subscribers.
- **Minutes watched** – Total time that the video has been played. It tells you how long users engaged with your videos (new, lifetime).
- **Likes/Dislikes** – The number of likes and number of dislikes (new, lifetime).
- **Likes to views** – The number of likes divided by the number of views.
- **Total number of ratings** – The number of likes and dislikes (new, lifetime).
- **Comments** – The number of comments to a specific video (new, lifetime).
- **Comments to views** – The number of comments posted divided by number of views.
- **Shares** – The number of shares of your uploaded videos (new, lifetime).
- **Shares to views** – The number of shares divided by the number of views.
- **Videos in Playlists (Favorites)** – The number of videos added to playlists (new, lifetime).
- **Total Engagement and engagement rate** – The total number of favorites, comments, shares and ratings in the reported time period (compared to views, per video or average number of subscribers) or lifetime.
- **Outbound clicks** – People coming to your blog from your YouTube account.



6.7. Instagram

Instagram is the most important photo sharing app. Sooner or later, you simply have to be present on Instagram. Below are the metrics you should be following for your Instagram account. If you don't have one, I suggest you create it right away. To get all the stats, you'll have to use tools like [Iconosquare](#).

- **Number of followers** – The number of people that are following you.
- **Number of following** – The number of people that you're following.
- **New followers** – The number of new followers in a given time period.
- **Follower growth rate** – New and lost followers divided by the total number of followers in the beginning of a selected time frame.
- **Media** – The number of photos and videos (media) you published (new/total).
- **Filters** – The filter with the highest engagement per media.
- **Likes** – The number of received likes on your media (new/total).
- **Comments** – The number of received comments on your media (new/total).
- **Total Engagement** – The number of likes and comments combined (new/total).
- **Engagement per post** - The number of likes and comments per post.
- **Engagement rate (per follower)** – Engagement as a percentage of average number of followers.
- **CTR** – The number of clicks on your Instagram bio (hopefully leading to your blog).
- **Best time to publish** – The best time to publish a new photo.



6.8. SlideShare

SlideShare can be a **great way to make your content more interactive, especially for extensive and complicated topics, and to give the reader a general overview of it.** It also helps by reaching a completely new audience that prefers to consume the slide format of content.

Here are the metrics you should be following for your SlideShare account in a selected time period:

- **Followers** – The number of people who are following you (new, growth rate).
- **Following** – The number of people you're following.
- **Total number of slides** – The total number of published slides.
- **Newly added slides** – The number of newly added slides.
- **Views** – The number of views of your uploaded slides (new, total)
- **Number of favorites** – How many slides were marked as favorite (new, total).
- **Number of comments** – How many comments you received on your slides (new, total).
- **Number of email shares** – How many times your slides were shared by email (new, total).
- **Number of social shares** – How many times your slides were shared on different social networks (new, total).
- **Total engagement** – The number of favorites, comments, email and social shares.
- **Engagement rate (per views)** – Total engagement divided by the number of views.
- **Engagement per slide** – Total engagement divided by the number of slides.
- **Number of outbound clicks** – How many times users clicked on a link that drove traffic to your blog.



6.9. Quora

Answering questions relevant for your niche on Quora and linking to your blog builds your authority, **you can make awesome new connections and you can drive traffic to your blog.**

Below are the metrics you should be following for your Quora account in a selected time frame.

- **Followers** – The number of people who are following you (new, net, growth rate).
- **Following** – The number of people you're following.
- **Total number of answered questions** – What is the total number of questions that you answered.
- **New questions answered** – The number of new questions answered in a given period.
- **Number of views** – How many times your answer was viewed (new, total).
- **Number of shares** – How many times readers shared your answers with their followers (new, total).
- **Number of upvotes** – How many times your answer was upvoted (new, total).
- **Total engagement** – The number of upvotes and the number of shares.
- **Engagement rate (per views)** – Total engagement divided by the number of views.
- **Engagement per answer** – Total engagement divided by the number of answers.
- **Outbound clicks** – How many times a link to your blog inside the answer was clicked.



6.10. Pinterest

Some niche blogs (like foodie and travel blogs) drive an enormous amount of traffic from Pinterest. As you probably know, **it's a female and picture-dominated social network**. You have to decide whether that could be an important distribution channel for you to drive traffic to your blog. Here are the stats you should be following:

- **Pinterest followers** – The number of people who are following you on Pinterest.
- **New followers** – The number of new people who are following you on Pinterest (and net)
- **Lost followers** – The number of people who unfollowed you on Pinterest.
- **Followers growth rate** – The number of new followers (and unfollows) divided by all the followers in the beginning of a given time.
- **Pinterest following** – The number of people that you're following on Pinterest.
- **Number of boards** – The number of boards you created.
- **Number of pins** – The number of pins you made on all of your boards.
- **Number of repins** – The number of repins of pins you made.
- **Number of likes** – The number of likes your pins and repins received.
- **Number of comments** – The total number of comments on your pins.
- **Engagement** – The number of repins, likes and comments on your pins.
- **Pinterest shares from your blog** – The number of pins your readers created while reading your blog. It shows very well how appealing the visual content on your blog is.
- **Growth of Pinterest shares from your blog** – The percentage of change of Pinterest shares from your blog.
- **Repins from your blog** – The number of repins of pins that were pinned to Pinterest by your readers from your blog.
- **Average Pins Per Pin** – The average number of repins you receive each time you make a pin or repin. A repin is when someone saves your pin to one of their boards. Repins show how fast your visual content is spreading.
- **Top performing pins** – Your best performing pins in a given period. You can measure performance by impressions, clicks, repins or likes.
- **Top performing boards** – Your best performing boards in a given period, again you can measure it by impressions, clicks, repins or likes.



- **Impressions** – The number of times a Pin showed up in the home feed, search results and category feeds.
- **Viewers (Reach)** – The number of unique people that have seen your pins.
- **Outbound clicks** – People coming to your blog from your Pinterest account.

Metrics in Pinterest analytics are calculated as average daily impressions, average daily viewers, average monthly viewers, average monthly engagements, average daily repins/repinners and clicks to your site.

Now that we've gone through the most important metrics for bloggers, **we have three more things to cover for the end:**

- Qualitative data
- Validated learning with the A/B test
- Dashboards and how to measure metrics in the most efficient ways

7. Validated learning and dashboards for bloggers

In this chapter, we will cover **metrics that are important for validated learning and gaining insights into what works for your market and readers and what doesn't**. The rule for you as a new blogger is that you want to learn and get market insight as fast as possible.

Only a superior strategy and understanding of your market will enable you to build a viable and scalable business model around your blog. We will also cover how **you can use different dashboard services to follow your metrics in one place on a daily basis**.

As mentioned in the beginning, when you start blogging and are focusing on understanding your market and readers, **validated learning is the most important thing and should be part of your actionable metrics**.

Two of the best ways to learn what works and what doesn't in your industry and for your readers **are employing interviews and doing split testing**. You have a chance to gather qualitative (interviews) and quantitative data (split tests) by interacting with your readers. To refresh your memory, quantitative data are deep insights you get about your target markets and your product (descriptions).

While quantitative data are more exact (numbers), qualitative research helps you gain an in-depth understanding of something. The main difference for qualitative data is that there is no statistical data analysis. Here is how you do it.

7.1. Ask your readers

The important rule of blogging is to connect with your audience in person. That means engaging in comments, replying your emails, showing that you care and asking your readers for their insights.

Make sure you connect with people who subscribe to your email newsletter, not only by regularly sending them emails, but also on different social networks (export your mailing list and import it under add contacts).

Here are the three main **different ways of gathering qualitative data:**

- Focus groups and group discussions
- Individual in-depth interviews
- Observation of your readers to evaluate user experience

Because it sounds too abstract, let's raise that **to a more practical level** to see how you can do it:

- Ask a few of your friends if they can visit your blog in your presence while you observe them.
- Find top 10 of your fans (the people who read your mailing list the most or like everything) and ask them if you can make an in-depth interview with them to see what they like and what they don't. Then ask them to share your content even more.
- Add people from your mailing list to social networks and start a chat with them, asking them what they like about your blog and what they don't.
- Form a FB group to gather recommendations for improving your blog.

You can also **learn a lot about your readers by gathering quantitate data with structured online surveys and interviews.** You can, for example, send an online survey to your email subscribers and gather important data on the direction into which you should further develop your blog.

Besides surveys and interviews, **split testing is a must to gather data about your readers and about what works for your blog** and what doesn't.

7.2. Split testing

Split testing, also known as A/B testing or multivariate testing, **is a method of conducting controlled, randomized experiments with the goal of improving your blog metrics.** You try to improve the number of clicks or other completions on your blog, such as clicking a banner, filling a form or making a purchase.

The good news is that website testing is actually not very complicated. You simply show different versions of parts of your website to your readers and track which one works best. With many different software solutions and plugins available, it's not difficult to set different split tests.

Therefore, you should follow the rule: **Always be testing!** As a blogger, here are the things you should be constantly testing:

- Headlines
- Call-to-Actions and banners
- Social buttons
- Visual elements
- Website navigation
- Landing pages for your products
- When you send out your emails etc.

You can test many other things like typography, colors, font-size, different widget positions on your sidebar, copywriting, testimonials, form fields etc. The basics are simple, but at some point things get really complicated.

Fortunately, there are many quality free resources online. Do the same with split tests as with metrics. Start with the basics and then add tests as your knowledge and blog maturity develop.

7.3. Dashboards

Last but not least, you need a good system for gathering, tracking and analyzing your metrics. As mentioned before, I copy all my metrics into an Excel file once a month. It helps me not to forget about metrics and just work based on my instincts. Even more, it forces me to really analyze my blogging progress.

Besides using the Excel file, there are **a few dashboard solutions that help you gather all the metrics in one place and visualize them.** I use a dashboard to follow my main metrics on a daily basis.

Here are a few dashboard solutions you can check out:

- [Dasheroo](#)
- [Geckboards](#)
- [Cyfe](#) – the solution I use
- [Leftronic](#)
- [Klipfolio](#)

You won't be able to gather all data on your dashboard, so you may use any additional analytics software, especially for Search Engine Optimization (Rank Tracking) and Social Media. Buffer and Hootsuite are very popular for social media analytics.

Again, there are many resources online telling you which dashboards and analytics software make sense to use in which cases. **For me, a combination of Excel, Google Analytics, Cyfe and Hootsuite works perfectly.**



8. The conclusion

There it is. I hope you enjoyed the Metrics that matter for bloggers eBook and that you learned a lot. It's not an easy topic, but **blogging isn't only about writing content**. It's about creating quality content, distributing it to the right audience and achieving your micro and macro conversions.

To have your conversions as high as possible, **you have to know what works and what doesn't**. The only way to do that is to measure and analyze metrics, and take action based on metrics. Data are always proof. Don't base your blogging only on intuition. Intuition is an important part of blogging, but it isn't enough.

That's it, we've come to the end. If you would like to further research the topic and learn even more, **here are a few recommended books** (also many times resources for this eBook):

- [Lean Analytics](#) by Alistair Croll and Benhamin Yoskovitz
- [Web Analytics 2.0](#) by Avinash Haushik
- [You Should Test That](#) by Chris Goward

Now it's time to apply theory into practice. **Download all the free accompanying files and start measuring your blogging progress** and success with metrics that matter:

- Dashboard - Metrics that matter for bloggers (Excel template)
- List of the most popular affiliate programs and ad networks for bloggers (PDF)
- List of 70+ rank tracking solutions
- Facebook Advertising definition
- Other files

Visit <http://agileanlife.com/blogging/>

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