



This is the *first* Wizard Weekly. My name is Cathy Perkins, I'm the WordPress Wizard and I'll be your guide into this *wonderful* world of blogging and WordPress.

WordPress - the best blogging platform *ever*. Thank you to everyone who's here and everyone who's submitted questions, I really appreciate it. Even though today's topic is "Before the Blog," anyone who has a blog should think about and use the items that we're going to talk about today to focus on (and maybe even *re-focus*) on what you really want your blog to do.

The Action Guide is available at thewizardtoday.com. If you find the big red button that says, "Get the Action Guide," and click on it, you can print the guide, or follow along on the screen. Although, I *highly* recommend that you print it and take lots of notes.

At the end of the call I'm going to tell you how to get your Blog Strategy Guide. This is a working document; it's for you to work with to further define who you are and what you want your blogging presence to be.

Tips to Get the Most Out of This Call:

- Print the Action Guide
- Take notes
- Use these tips to plan your blog

- Use the Blog Strategy Document (which I'll tell you about at the end)

First of all we're going to talk about: "What do you want your blog to accomplish?" Hint, hint, the answer is *not* to make money (well, ultimately, it is), but before you can make money, you have to decide on *many* things. The first one is: "What do you want your blog to accomplish?" Why are you getting a presence on the web? Or, why do you already have a presence on the web? What is *your* purpose? And, what do you want the purpose of your blog to be? These may seem like some tough questions as we go along, but they're really critical (critical to your success). So we're going to talk in depth about a lot of these things.

Next is: "What is the title of your blog?" The title is what will appear in the browser bar when people are on your site. You want to use keywords in your title because the title can either help or hurt your SEO and the effect of how people see you. It's really critical for people and for your SEO that you get the title right.

Now you need to write a brief Elevator Speech for your blog. Do you all know what an elevator speech is? It's the amount of things you can say about yourself in the amount of time that it takes an elevator to go wherever an elevator is going. You need this for your blog too, because it's going to go in the *meta tag* of your blog for SEO purposes (SEO - Search Engine Optimization). So, people in your blog won't actually see this description, but Google, Yahoo, MSN, whatever search engines are spidering your blog will see it. This description is what will appear when you're indexed and you get listed as a search result. If you've ever searched for anything (and I'm sure you have) on Google, then you know that the title comes up and then underneath that title there's a little, not quite paragraph, but several

lines of text about the title. This is where your description will appear, so make it good, make it so that people will want to click on the title of the result and go to your blog to read it. So don't just say, "This blog is... about." Say what your purpose really is.

Think about what pages you want to have initially in your blog. Plan ahead and your plan will work for you. I'm sure that you want to have a page about you, but don't put information about you in your first post. Don't put information about you and make it a sticky post that sticks to the top of your page. Put it on a page and call it "About Me," or "About the WordPress Wizard," or "About Blogging for Boomers." Just put it on a page where you can go in depth and talk about yourself and put your contact information on the About You page. We're going to talk about contact information in a little bit, it's very, *very*, important.

Plan ahead, and think about what some pages would be that you want to have. Nothing is carved in stone because you can delete pages, and add pages at will. But if you have some stuff planned out before your blog goes up for the world, it's going to look more complete, Google is going to like you a *whole* lot better, and people who first visit your blog are going to want to come back. Especially when they see lots of good content. On my blog I have "My Portfolio" page (sites that I have designed and installed). I have an "About Me" page, I have an "About Pricing" page for people to read, and I have a page about what services I offer. So those are just some ideas to get you started thinking about what pages you might want to have. Remember, like I said, *nothing* is carved in stone, and you can always change it later. You can change the wording, or you can get rid of the entire page or even *add* an entire page.

Next, you need to consider what look and feel you want your blog to have. Think about the colors, and the overall impression you want to make. Some people want an austere, very professional looking site, and others want to have a little bit of fun. So this depends on what you're focused on. What is your niche? If it's something like crafting, perhaps, it can be a little bit more elaborate. If it's a very serious subject, you might want it to be a little bit more austere, more professional looking. So before you go out and look at WordPress themes, just get a general idea about what you think that you'd like people to see when they visit your page. Get an idea of the overall impression that you want people to get when they first click on your page, because if you don't get them within a couple of seconds, they're going to be gone, and they won't come back. So, the first impression really is quite important, and part of that first impression (besides your title) is the layout and the look and the feel of your blog. So it really is very important.

Think about whom you want to link to, initially. This is going to change over time too, but when you first put you don't want not to have any links. Develop a list of *relevant* sites that you'd like to link to. Of *course* it's going to change, but at least get two or three, because people like that. In the blogosphere, that's called "link love," and when you *give* link love, you *get* link love. So you want to link to some relevant sites and give your readers the opportunity to find out *more* about what they're looking for because, *sure* they're going to click away from you, but they're going to come back. If you've given them something that's really good, then they're going to come back. So I wouldn't worry too much about them clicking away, except in certain instances when you click away to a place where you don't know where you're sending them. In

your links sections you'll know *exactly* where you're sending them. So, linking is a good thing.

Next, think about: What is your call to action? What is the one thing that you want people to do at the very beginning when they come to your blog? Of course this is going to change over time too, but maybe you need an *opt in* box to trade something for their email address. You certainly want to start building your list *immediately*. The best way to do that is to get somebody something in return for their name and email address. You might already have something to sell but perhaps before you start selling on your blog, you should start to build your list on your blog. You want people to know, like, and trust you, and you want to build that into your relationship with people who read your blog.

Later on in the Wizard Weekly series we're going to talk a lot about interaction and building relationships, which is just critical. Just starting out you need to know that that is going to be your ultimate goal, to build relationships with your readers and get them to come back and train them to do what you want them to do. So, it's probably not a good idea to start immediately selling something, but it's probably a much better idea to *give* them something in return for their name and address. Once you have their name and email address, you're going to start a dialogue with them, and then you'll be able to offer them what you have for sale. It's a much friendlier way of doing things, than it is to just hard sell right from the very beginning.

Let's talk about your contact information. This is critical; I've seen blogs where there's no way to get a hold of *anyone*. That's just almost a *forbidding* feeling. When someone reads your blog, and they want to say something to you, then they *must* be able to get a hold of you. There are ways to put up your email address that are safe and so

that scammers and spammers won't be able to collect your email address. We're going to talk about that, too. Plan on where you want your contact information to be, and it really, really can be in several places. It can be on the "Contact Us" page, of *course*. It can be on the "About you" page. It can be down in the footer, just with a little link that says, "Contact Us." People want to be able to get a hold of you, and you *must* provide them a way to do that, or they might leave and just decide to *never* come back, and that would be just a travesty.

Think about who your target audience is. Who do you want to visit your blog? Get a mental picture; it might be a friend of yours who might be your ideal client or customer. It might be somebody that you make up in your head, but get a picture of who you want to reach, and every single thing that you do on your blog, direct it at that one person. This might sound a little bit strange, but really, if you do this, you're going to attract your ideal *clients* (plural!) and *customers* (plural!). A lot of people are going to fit that bill, but for you to have an image in your own head of who it is that you want to come to your blog and build a relationship with, then you're going to have an image that you can use to direct every single that you do on your blog to.

Think about where your blog will be hosted. Now, I could really go on about this (and I just might), but if you're just starting out and you want a Blogger blog, or you want a WordPress hosted blog at www.wordpress.com, that's fine. I have nothing against either of those two platforms. Just realize that it's not permanent. As soon as you get the hang of everything, and really get into it and learn more about blogging, you're going to want your own hosted WordPress blog.

You must own your own information. You must be one hundred percent responsible for everything that you do, and that includes having your blog on your own hosting account. There are horror stories about Blogger blogs that have been shut down for no reason. In fact Google shut down their own blog for no good reason, just because *something* in their blog tripped *something* in their filter. It was shut down for no reason.

WordPress.com blogs can be shut down for no reason. *One* complaint to WordPress, and if it's severe enough, they'll shut you down, and they won't ask questions. If your blog is hosted on *your own* account, on *your own* hosting account, you can't be shut down, by anybody. The only thing that can happen is that your host server can go down and that just doesn't happen that often - *now*. It used to, but it doesn't anymore because they're very reliable.

Make sure, when you're getting your own hosting account that you ask for a Linux server, rather than Windows, because that's what WordPress needs to run well. That's Linux. Generally you'll have a choice. Somewhere in the purchasing process, you will be asked if you want Linux or Windows. So always choose Linux. Almost all hosting companies (*almost* all, not all) will offer you "One-Click Install" of WordPress. It's very easy to install with a One-Click Install: you click, it starts to install, it asks you some questions that are fairly easy to answer, and pretty soon your WordPress blog is installed for you.

I agree with the gurus who say that it's easy to put up a WordPress blog, but what you get is not what you're going to like. What goes up when you first install, is a default WordPress blog. It has a very ugly, blue theme. Which is not suitable for almost anything. So, that's when you want to start looking around at the WordPress codex (that's

codex.wordpress.org). Start looking at themes. You're going to find *zillions of beautiful, free* WordPress themes out there. The beauty of WordPress is that it doesn't cost you anything to use the WordPress software; it's free. There are zillions of free WordPress themes (there's that word again, free).

What you must pay for are your domain, and your hosting. Hosting is getting very, *very* inexpensive, so that's really not a consideration. You can buy a domain for nine dollars (or something like that) a year. You can get hosting for as little as about four dollars a month, it might not be the plan I would suggest, but it's good for starters. You can start with a low-cost, low-feature hosting account and then you can go up from there. There's no interruption in service, all they do is add the features for the higher priced hosting account. So, it's really quite easy to start low, and then work your way up as you find that you need more features. So you can start your WordPress blog and have it hosted on your own account for very, *very* little money and it's money that will be well, well spent and returned to you many times over.

If you have your own domain, it's much more professional, it won't have the word "Blogger" in the domain name, or it won't have the word "WordPress" in the domain name. You can get a WordPress account, with WordPress, for some small amount of money per year, and you will not have the WordPress name in your blog, but believe me, you're still going to be hosted on WordPress and they're still going to have something to say about whether you can stay up or not. So, that's kind of a middle ground that I don't really recommend. I do recommend getting started with Blogger or WordPress hosted blog, as long as you know that it's not permanent.

Get your own hosting account. It will pay you dividends in the long run that you can't even believe. You can't imagine how wonderful it is to feel so empowered that you have your own hosting account. That may seem like a trivial little thing, but believe me it's not. It's wonderful to think that you're in control and not have to worry about being shut down, or having a complaint, or whatever. So get your own hosting account! That wasn't too bad of a rant either I have to admit.

Let's go back and kind of review. We went through these steps, kind of quickly. What do you want your blog to accomplish? Think deeply about that because that's the core of your entire online presence and your online business. What do you want to accomplish by being on the Internet? I can't emphasize enough, that you have to be clear about this. You can change your direction, once you decide on something today, that doesn't mean that in six months or so it can't change, because it certainly can. If you want to hit the ground running with your blog (and your internet presence), please be clear about what it is that you want to do and what you want to accomplish.

Pick a good, good title. Do some keyword research. We haven't even talked about that, but we're probably going to do an entire call on keyword research because it's that important. If you know your niche, and you know what you want to focus on, then you can get a title for your blog. It will *naturally* have keywords in it, if it's focused enough. Any title that you pick is going to have keywords, unless you're doing a blog about computers and you name it "The Cookbook Revolution," or something like that (farfetched, I know, but I've seen worse). If it relates to what you're doing and your reason for being on the Internet, then it's going to have keywords in it.

This is something that you don't want to change very often. The title of your blog really should remain fairly static. Google doesn't like to be fooled, and they don't like changing titles. People don't like changing titles. People are generally opposed to pretty much any kind of change. When you get them to start coming to your blog on a regular basis, they need to know that what was there before is going to be there again (with the exception of new information). What was there before is still the title, and what is there again when they go back, really should still be the same title. So, put a *lot* of thought into.

Think about what impression you want to make. See, every one of these points is really, really critical for you to think about. What do you want people to think of when they see your page for the first time? What impression do you want to make on them? It's just really, really important. First impressions really do count. You've heard that over and over, all of your life; "First impressions are the most important." This is going to be the first contact that people have with you so, make it worth their while. Make it pleasing, but don't make it too busy. Don't use *jarring*, neon colors - in excess. You can certainly have some bright colors, I'm not saying that, it's just that you need to make it harmonious, make it a pleasant place for people to be. Pleasant doesn't have to mean boring, by any means.

There are many great themes out there, and you'll have trouble if you don't have a color scheme in mind that you think that you want to start with, you will be looking at themes until you're blue in the face. The interesting thing about themes is that they can change. If you know what you're doing, and you back up your data, and you back up your blog, you can change your theme very easily. People won't mind that, if the title is the same; if the information is the same; if the layout is similar. Just so they're not

confused when they come back and see a new theme, you can change your theme. That's probably one of the most fluid things (besides the arrangement of your sidebar, links, and pages) that you can do to your blog to update it because you want people to get used to you. You want them to know what they're going to find when you come to their blog, but you don't want them to be bored. I'm not talking about changing your theme everyday or every week - no, not at all. But keep things interesting. Keep people a little bit on edge, because they need to know that they're going to get the information, they need to know that it's *you*, but a new theme can really perk things up, if you're getting a little bit stale.

So, think about your theme, and keep looking at themes. Don't be satisfied with the first one that you come across, or the first one that you even install. We're going to be talking about how to install themes too because I want you to be empowered; to do your own blogging, know how to set up your own blog, and know how to install themes. You don't have to be a programmer to do *that*. You may need help with some things, but you don't need help with that, unless you need some help uploading.

We're going to talk about that too, we're going to talk about almost everything that it takes for you to have a wonderful blog and have it be *yours* and yours alone. So, think about all of these things and write them down. Print out this guide and really think about all of these questions, and it will pay off in the long run.

I know that there are people out there who say "Ready, fire, aim," and that's fine. If you want to get something up quickly and... Well, no I'm going to go back on my word. I'm going to go back on what I just said. Please, don't do "Ready, fire, aim," quickly. If you put up the wrong stuff

and people have been there and don't like it, they're not going to come back. No matter if you change it to put up good stuff. So, please do a little bit of planning in advance. It's just going to pay you dividends in the future.

So I think I've really talked about all of the beginner questions that we've had, and so I'm going to tell you now about how to get the blog strategy document. This is something that you'll want to print out and think about and really go over, because it's a wonderful guide to setting up your blog. It really makes you think about what you want to do. So, if you'll go to <http://www.thewordpresswizard.com/strategy.pdf>, you'll be able to get the Blog Strategy document. Please, *please* print that out and really, really work through it. It will help you get clear in your mind about what you really want to do.

I'd like to thank you all so much for being with me today and I invite you to come back next week when we're going to be talking more about blogging and WordPress. We're going to get into some of the details and some of the inter-workings of WordPress, and what you need to do to install your own. We'll be talking about hosting, about buying domains, where to do all of this stuff, how to do it, and how to get WordPress. It's just going to be really an exciting time.

So, I'd like to thank you, and I invite you to go to <http://www.thewordpresswizard.com> and look around there, and come back often! Mainly over the next few weeks there are going to be some very exciting announcements on my site, The Word Press Wizard that you will *not* want to miss. Exciting things are happening all around! So, I'd like to thank you for being here, and remember to get your Blog Strategy document at

<http://www.thewordpresswizard.com/strategy.pdf>. Thank you for being here and remember: Blog on, and blog now!