

8 Tools You Can Use for Successful Blogging

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I get the irony of blogging about blogging but given [I already talk about talking](#), I'm okay with that. This isn't a topic I typically hit on but as the thoughtLEADERS Blog continues to grow and thrive and I get people asking me about what works and what doesn't, I figure it's worthwhile to dedicate some airtime to the topic of building your blog following and turning it into real value.



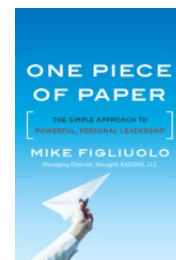
No, I'm not Chris Brogan and this isn't going to be some massive SEO/SEM treatise. This is nothing more than a list of the best tools, techniques, and widgets I've learned and used over the years. I use and believe in these tools and I hope you'll get as much value out of them as I have.

First, allow me to spell out some social media principles and beliefs so you understand how and why I use the tools I do.

Outposts: I believe in outposts (e.g., twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook) serving as a first point of contact for someone to run into me and my business. From those outposts, the primary goal is to get folks to come here to the blog or our main website. I always want to build the conversation and relationship on "my turf" so to speak. Those outposts also allow us to interact with folks in their "natural element" so we're in front of them when they're looking for content. If you want to see examples of our outposts, check us out on Twitter at [@Figliuolo](#), [@thoughtLEADERS](#), and [@1PieceofPaper](#). On Facebook we're at [thoughtLEADERS](#) and [One Piece of Paper](#).

Make it Fun: Entertain first. Engage second. Sell third. No one is coming to a boring-assed business blog. If you want their attention, entertain your audience. Do things like talk about your topic of interest in terms of [wookiees](#), [superheroes](#), [rappers](#), and [heavy metal bands](#). If they enjoy coming to your site, you'll have more opportunities to engage them and they'll eventually (hopefully) either buy your services or refer you to those who will.

Cash: I'm a capitalist. Yes, I LOVE writing but I have to fund my completely irresponsible lifestyle and that takes cash. That means I sell [my book](#), [our training courses](#), and advertising space. I'm not ashamed of it. This is a for-profit enterprise. All that said, ensure the selling doesn't get in the way of the content.



Guest Bloggers: Make it bigger than you. I could write a little leadership blog with nothing but my own work. Sure, that's fun but it gets old. I regularly seek out and invite other people to come write posts here. Noob bloggers freak out at the notion of someone else having the stage in their arena out of fear the readers will defect to the guest blogger. I see it differently. [When I bring in a guest](#), I'm creating value for my readers by finding and screening new content and perspectives. I'm also getting new readers because invariably that guest blogger tells their audience to come read their work on our blog where they also get exposed to our work. It also allows me to be lazy – it's easier to copy/paste a post by someone else than it is to write it myself, eh? By the way, if you want to write a guest post here sometime, [just contact me for guest post parameters](#).

All that said, here are some of my favorite web tools for blogging easily and successfully:

Ad networks – Ones I use/prefer are [PulsePoint](#) (high fill rates and payouts), [BuySellAds](#), and [Text Link Ads](#).

Feedburner - if you want people to read your stuff, get in their inbox. Feedburner makes it easy to capture names/email addresses, send new posts, and manage your list (and to get on our list, [CLICK HERE to sign up](#) and you'll see how easy Feedburner makes it). Their code is pretty easy to customize to fit your blog too.



Outbrain - Once you have people reading your stuff, you want them to read more. See those three little images at the end of this post that say "You might also like:"? Yeah. Outbrain. Easy piece of code. People love clicking pictures. They read more of your stuff. And Outbrain's customer service is OUTSTANDING! Immediate issue resolution.



Site Meter – analytics matter. I know a lot of folks love Google Analytics (which I use too – a little). Sitemeter is super easy, inexpensive, and gives me some interesting data insights.



Tweet Adder – OHMYGOD! Incredible twitter automation tool. You can autofollow/unfollow, push RSS feeds, use search terms to follow, etc. The impact of it for building an audience is unparalleled. [Go. Get it. NOW!](#)



Constant Contact – You need a bigger email platform to do newsletter-y things that Feedburner can't do. I like Constant Contact (although MailChimp has a couple of good features I wish Constant Contact had but I hate some portions of the MailChimp UI). Open a [Constant Contact account now](#).



Amazon Associates – if you recommend [books](#), music, movies, etc., you should be an Amazon Affiliate. The commissions aren't bad at all.

Add This – great customizable social sharing widget. If you write great stuff and want people to share it, you need this button.

There you go – 8 little tools that help me make this blog work. I'd be interested to hear what tools and techniques you use. Also, if you see any widgets, plugins, or techniques on our site that I don't mention above and you'd like to learn what they are, feel free to drop me a line. I'm happy to share what we do and hear your suggestions on what we might do better. Happy blogging!



- [Mike Figliuolo](#) at [thoughtLEADERS, LLC](#)