



at&t

*Networking Exchange Blog*

# **Blogging Guidelines for Editors and Authors**



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# Overview: Strategic Direction

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The Blog is designed to be a living, breathing site, constantly updated with new content.

Networking Exchange is re-thinking ways to engage with the audience, build thought leadership, and create a valuable tool that technologists return to for valuable information.

To better understand how we can accomplish this goal, we interviewed more than 300 technologists.

The study uncovered what visitors want from Networking Exchange, what they don't want, and what will prompt them to make Networking Exchange a resource they use regularly. In other words, a place to go to learn more about products, solutions, and services that can help their organizations' IT challenges.

This document is designed to clarify the shift in strategic direction and assist authors and editors to help evolve the blog to meet the needs of the target audience.

Based on new user insights, we've made enhancements to better meet the needs of progressive technologists' and position Networking Exchange as an invaluable tool.



## *Section 1:*

# *Research and Audience Interviews*



## Overview: Strategic Direction

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**Research uncovered key insights regarding the needs and expectations of the target audience.**

Research indicates Networking Exchange has two distinct audiences, each with different needs and goals.

**Beyond a blog: Evolve to an invaluable business and information tool that keeps technologists coming back.**

If done properly, the Networking Exchange blog can be a more effective lead generator for AT&T, as well as a useful tool for end users by providing relevant information that addresses the varying needs of the audience.

**Hone positioning, targeting, and content strategy.**

The goal is to position the blog as a dynamic tool valued for its ability to deliver action-oriented results.



# The Networking Exchange Audience

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Research identified two key audience types, each with different goals and needs when visiting a blog.

## INFLUENCERS

### Who are they?

Involved in researching and purchasing IT products and services but do not have final purchasing power.

### Mindset drivers:

- Self-reliant: Believe there's a tech solution for just about everything.
- Dedicated: Feel it is important to take contributions that better the workplace; considered a go-to person for opinions on many subjects, not just technology

### Pain point/Challenge

Finding the right information to help them build a persuasive argument that will ultimately be used to sell their ideas

## DECISION MAKERS

### Who are they?

Have the authority to make tech purchases for their department or organization.

### Mindset drivers:

- Team-reliant: Don't believe they have to know it all or do everything by themselves
- Trusting: Rely on their influencers for advice on purchasing decisions
- Altruistic: Focused on managing up and managing down

### Pain point/ Challenge

Ensuring that tech purchase decisions will perform for diverse stakeholders who have varying technology experience



## ***Section 2:***

# ***Voice and Tone***



# Brand Expression: Voice and Tone

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Voice and tone are the editorial representation of the AT&T Networking Exchange brand personality.

- Voice brings our brand to life through words, helping to deliver on the brand promise.
- Consistent voice and tone provide the framework to give writing a distinctive style.
- Voice and tone build trust with the audience.

## AT&T corporate voice and tone guidelines:

Our Voice Principle Helps Us Connect to Our Audiences by:



Voice and tone sets the stage for how readers perceive, trust and relate to the brand.

Networking Exchange blog strives to relate to its audience on a personal level by being genuine, engaging, and conversational – differentiating AT&T from the competition.





It's not just what a company does, but who it is that makes it a brand.

People want to engage with humans, not faceless brands

When it comes to a blog, a tone of voice both embodies and expresses the brand's personality and set of values. It's people that make up the brand – their expertise, thoughts, predictions, and opinions.

Regardless of whether a business is B2B or B2C, readers want an H2H interaction: human-to-human.

Engaging, valuable content needs to have a voice that is relatable and trustworthy.

Language doesn't need to be 'dressed up.'

The voice should be real. Formal language can convey a sense of professionalism and authority. But it runs the risk of being stiff and lacking in personality.

Informal language can more easily be filled with personality and warmth, yet may be accused of being reckless and lacking professionalism. The goal is to strike the right balance.

The Networking Exchange voice is always relevant, intuitive, and understanding of user needs. In our tone, readers recognize the confidence of a trusted advisor — a reliable source to turn to when seeking help, information, or inspiration.

Read copy aloud. Writing sounds different when spoken. If it sounds awkward, it probably reads awkward. The tone might be too stiff or too casual or not sound natural or conversational.



# NE Voice and Tone Attributes

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Conversational	Genuine and relatable. Creates human connections.
Accessible	Approachable. Not systematic or unresponsive.
Forward Looking	Anticipates what's coming over the horizon.
Credible	Knowledgeable, trustworthy, and reliable.
Provocative	Challenges conventional ways of thinking.
Actionable	Takeaways that readers can use in their job.
Relevant	Addresses big issues the audience faces. Nothing superfluous.
Inspiring	Gets readers excited about this way of thinking.
Passionate	Exuberant and poignant.
Conversational	Easy-to-understand. Not condescending.
	Makes no reference to products and services.

Independent



## ***Section 3:***

# ***How the Blog is Evolving***



# Varying Content Types

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With new insight into what the audience wants, we need to re-think the types of content we deliver.

There are many ways of delivering content. Now more than ever B2B buyers rely on content — all types of content — to research and make purchasing decisions. And that spans beyond long blog posts.

Users are seeking out an increasingly diverse range of content assets. According to the recent study, a large majority of respondents have used five different content types when researching B2B purchases. Leading the list are:

- Case studies
- Whitepapers
- Infographics
- Interactive presentations
- Video

*(Razorfish Quantitative Research of 300 progressive technologists)*

## Long-form and short-form posts

### Short form posts

Not every post has to be 500 words. Some topics can be written in much less. A short-form post is “bite-size” information. It could be a thought-provoking statement, a quirky thought; a unique theme. Short-form posts invite dialogue and open two-conversation with readers.

### Connecting dots (or collecting dots)

Without a doubt, the ability to connect the dots is rare, solving the problem that hasn't been solved before, seeing the obvious, is more essential than ever before.

Why then, do we spend so much time collecting dots instead of looking for data, even when we have no clue (and no practice) in

Their big bag of dots isn't worth nearly as much as your

Posted by [Seth Godin](#) on April 15, 2014 | [Permalink](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

Tweet 1,055 67 Share 296

*Example: Short-form post*



Short-form posts can easily be adapted for interesting and engaging content for social media usage. Besides long or short-form posts, other types of content can accomplish a goal: convey a lot of information visually, with an intro.

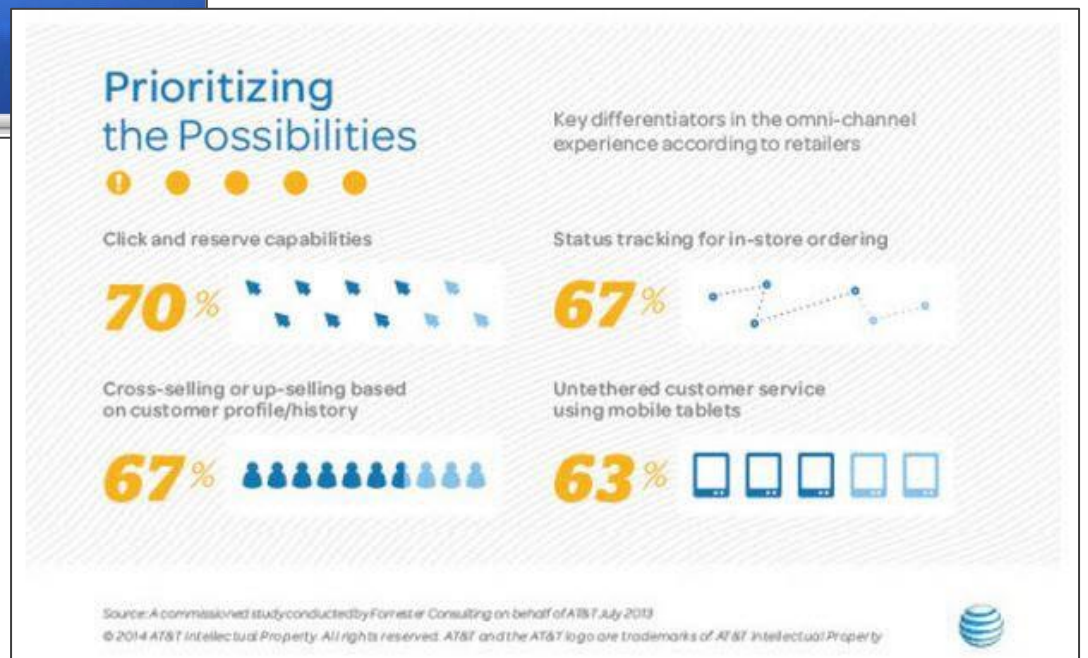
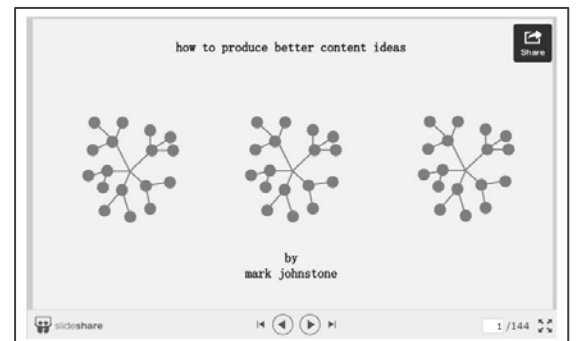
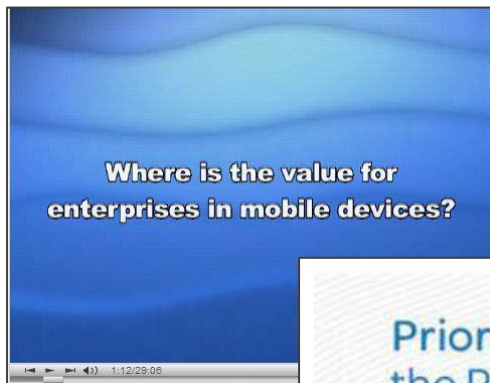
## Visual content: Write intros, not posts. Let the visuals speak for themselves.

Summaries and intros, not full posts for:

- [Infographics](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Webinars](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Presentations](#)
- [Slideshare](#)

Research shows that most people absorb information better when it is presented visually.

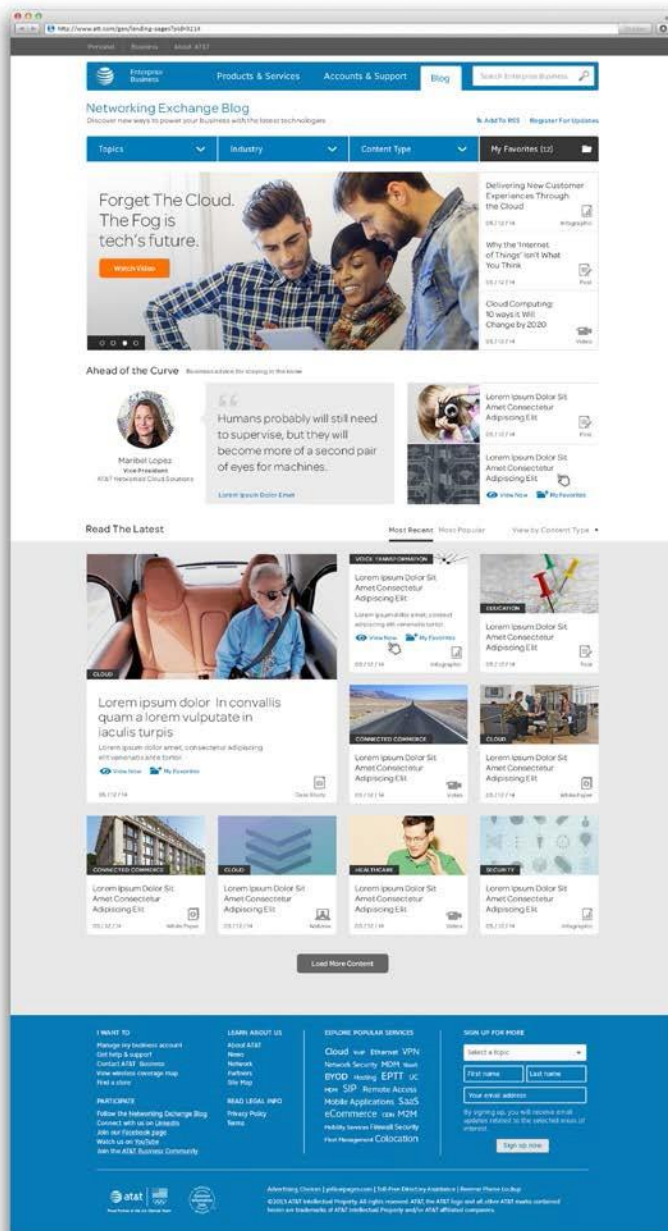
## Examples of Visual Content:





# Engaging Page Design

Networking Exchange has a clean, fresh look-and-feel that conveys a warm and approachable persona and delivers a simple and engaging user experience.



What the new design accomplishes:

- More inviting
- Less cluttered
- Increased usability
- Surfaces more content
- Highlights content
- Highlights authors

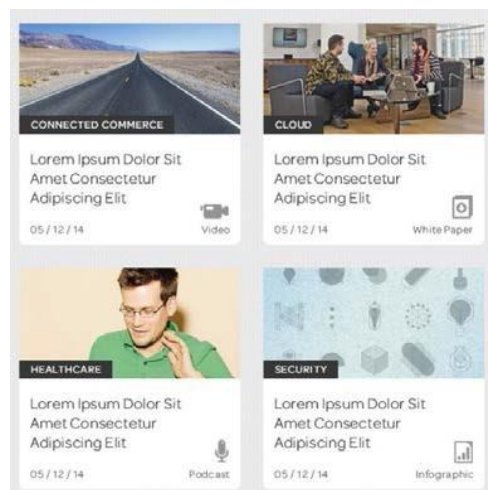
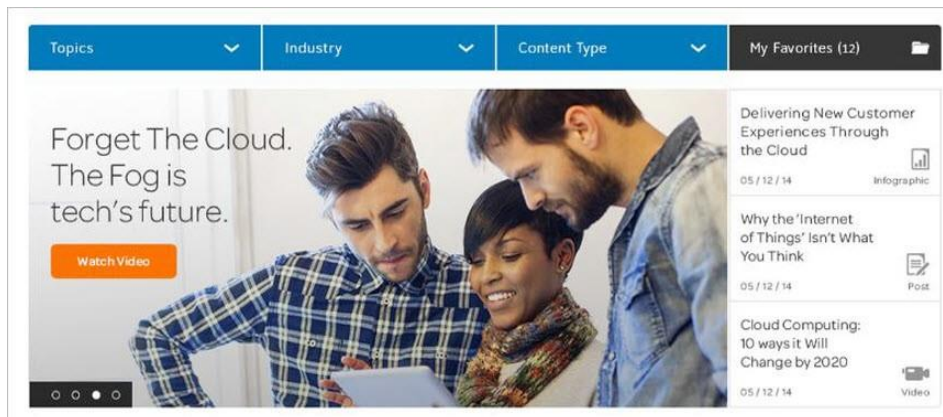


# New Content Components

Some new elements have been added to the blog, each of which has a maximum character count, to keep pages clean and avoid overly long headlines and wrapping text.

Depending on the placement, headlines will appear differently; however all headlines adhere to the same character count.

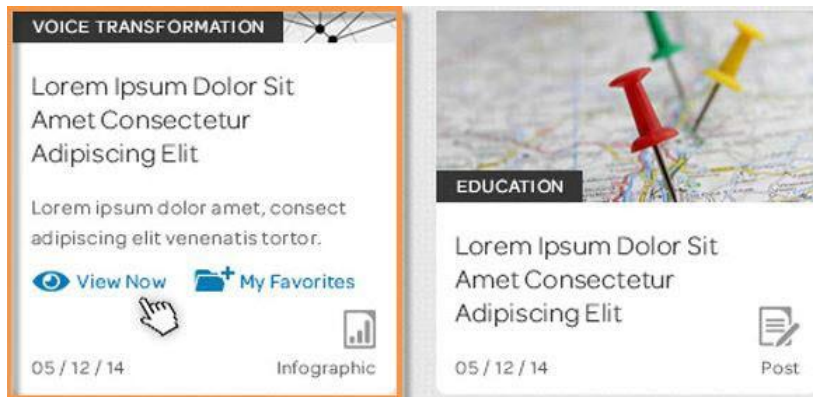
## Re-vamped headline style





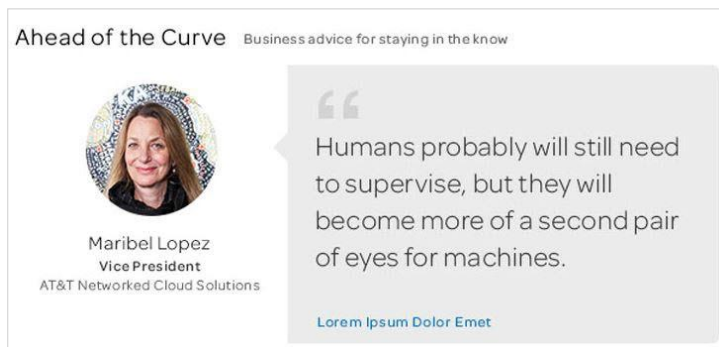
## Rollover Summaries

Each post has a summary that builds upon the headline, to give the reader more information and a clear vision of what the post is about.



## “Ahead of the Curve”

The home page will feature a section that highlights forward-thinking posts and pull quotes.







## Key insights

All posts, including visual content, have a bulleted list of the key takeaways from the post. It serves as an executive summary that lets readers get a quick snapshot of the post.

### Post/Article Page

The screenshot shows a blog post page for 'APT Attacks Have Increased Ten-Fold in One Year'. The page features a navigation bar with 'Enterprise Business', 'Products & Services', 'Accounts & Support', and 'Blog'. Below the navigation is a search bar and a 'Networking Exchange Blog' header. The main content area includes a date '05/12/14', the article title, and a byline for 'Steve Caniano, Vice President'. A 'Key Insights' section is highlighted in orange, containing two numbered points. To the right of the key insights is the main body text. Below the key insights is a 'Related Products & Services' section with links for 'Network Security', 'Cloud Services', and 'Mobility'.

**Key Insights**

- 1 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor.
- 2 Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt.

**Related Products & Services**

- Network Security
- Cloud Services
- Mobility

## Key Insights

- 1 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor.
- 2 Nemo enim ipsam voluptatem quia voluptas sit aspernatur aut odit aut fugit, sed quia consequuntur magni dolores eos qui ratione voluptatem sequi nesciunt.



# Mix of Topics and Content Types

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To ensure Networking Exchange has a good mix of topics and varying content types, editors would like to partner with authors to ensure the blog has the right assortment of content. Of course, authors have extensive knowledge in their areas of expertise, and have in-depth knowledge of what's new and what's next in the industry.

We encourage authors to continue to submit content outlines as they've done previously.

## Conducting a gap analysis to identify missing topics

In addition, editors will be conducting an inventory of existing content to ensure each topic has a substantial number of posts. The exercise also ensures each post that covers the same topic has a unique angle. For example, cloud computing may be a hot topic, but having five posts that provide the same information and conclusions isn't valuable to readers. Each post must have a unique angle, or a differentiating point of view.

## Maximizing author's unique point of view and expertise

As a result, when a need is identified, editors will reach out to authors requesting that they cover a specific topic, or provide their unique point of view. When considering new posts for the editorial calendar, editors may contact authors to discuss a ways to put a unique "spin" on similar topics – or use different content types. During the interviews, users identified the topics they are most interested in:

- o Network Security
- o Latest devices
- o Sustainability
- o Cloud computing
- o Mobile apps & devices
- o Voice transformation
- o Data on demand
- o e-Commerce
- o Network transformation
- o Mobile marketing
- o Connected commerce
- o Social media
- o M2M

Ensuring Networking Exchange has the best content possible and covers all the topics that are most relevant to the audience is a team effort!



# Character Counts

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## **Character counts for content:**

### Headlines

70 characters including spaces

### Sub-headlines

70 characters including spaces

### Rollover summaries

70 characters including spaces

### Executive summaries:

75 words or less: 2-3 bullet points

### Author quotes

115 characters including spaces

### Short-form posts

250 words or less

### Long-form posts

500 words or less

### Intros: Videos, webinars, white papers, case studies

150 words or less

### Author bios

150 words or less



# Blog Post Content Checklist

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Editors will verify character counts. A note to authors: when submitting posts, please include a headline, sub-headline and body copy. Optionally, you are welcome to provide a Summary and Key Insights that adhere to the maximum character counts.



## **Blog post content checklist:**

- Content type
  - Long-form post – 500 words or less
  - Short-form post – 250 words or less
  - Video - 150 words or less (should be an intro)
  - White paper - 150 words or less (should be an intro)
  - Case study - 150 words or less (should be an intro)
  - Webinar – 150 words or less (should be an intro)
  - Podcast - 150 words or less (should be an intro)
  - Presentation - 150 words or less (should be an intro)
  - Infographic - 150 words or less (should be an intro)
  
- Headline  
70 maximum character count including spaces
  
- Sub-headline  
70 maximum character count including spaces
  
- Rollover summary  
70 maximum character count including spaces
  
- Key Insights  
Bullet point format – 75 words or less: 2-3 bullet points



## **Section 4:**

# ***Best Practices for Blog Writing***



# Brainstorming Blog Topics

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When thinking about a subject, here are some tips to deliver an outstanding post:

## Think freely

Share a fresh thought.

## Blaze new trails

What's the next "big thing" in networking? Think beyond what's happening now to what will happen in the future that will impact the audiences' business.

## Walk in your audiences' shoes

What are their biggest concerns? Objectives? Challenges?

## Ask and uncover

Pose an engaging question to your audience.

## Be original

If you have access to original data that you can analyze to expose, add to, or refute an industry topic or trend, take advantage of it.

## Be (slightly) controversial

Your content doesn't have to be centered around a radical opinion to leverage the power of controversy. It could present a bit of data that refutes common assumptions.

## Be the most comprehensive

Write the most comprehensive post readers can find anywhere. If the topic is complex, consider dividing it into multiple posts.

## Be the first

Is there a trend in your industry that few have written about (or written about *well*) where you see an opportunity? Jump on it!



# Writing for Blogs

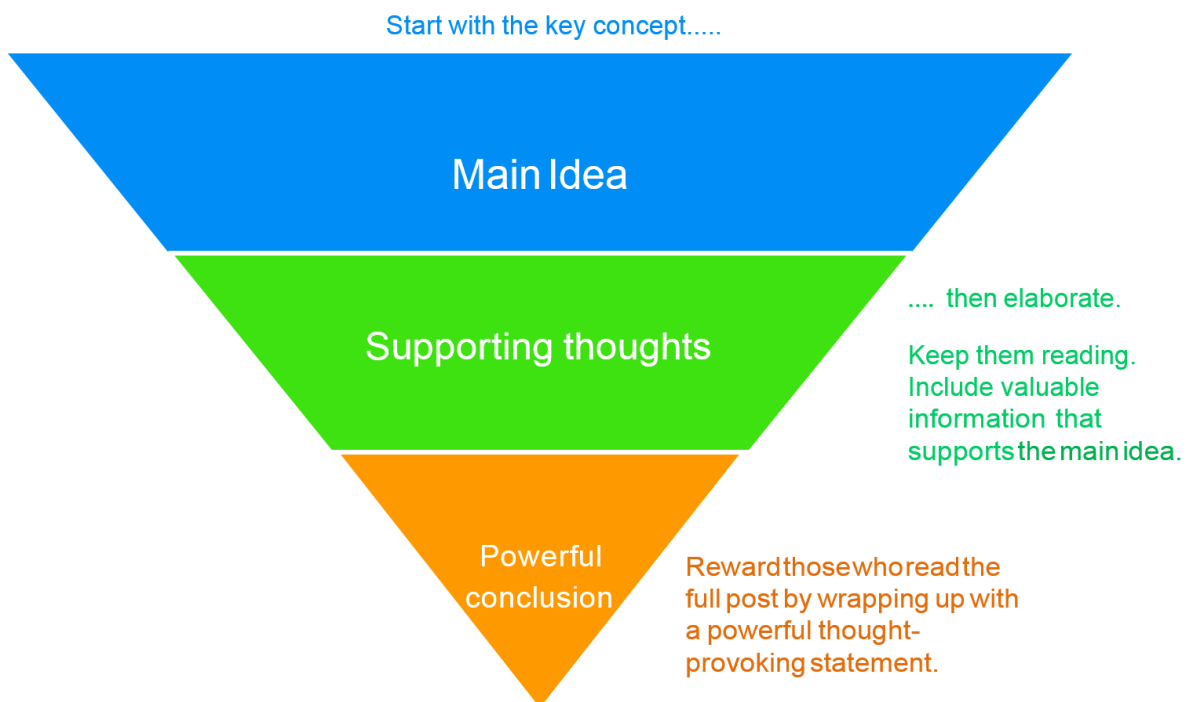
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There are fundamental differences between reading text on a screen and reading text from a sheet of paper.

According to Forrester Research and Jakob Nielsen:

- 79% of users scan the page instead of reading word-for-word.
- Reading from computer screens takes 30% longer than reading from paper.
- Web content should have 50% less word count than its paper equivalent.

The beginning of each post should “pack a punch” and tell a story for those readers who scan the first paragraph.





The following are guidelines for writing effective web copy:

## Headlines

Headings are the most important piece of content. Captivating headlines make people want to read on. Keep them punchy and factual. Clearly and accurately describe what the page is about. Avoid superfluous words. And, keep it short.

Tips for headlines:

- Write headlines that intrigue and prompt users to read on.
- Be clear and precise.
- Keep it short and simple.
- Avoid the temptation to write a catchy title that will not be clear out of context.
- Convey the story of the paragraph below so users see what's in for them.
- Do not use abbreviations or acronyms in titles unless you are sure that your audience will recognize them.

## Content in Posts

Format content to support scanning and break up long blocks of text for readability. Let readers get a quick grasp of the article by glancing at the page. Techniques to help readers scan the page are:

- Chunking information
  - Bullet points - encourage the scanning reader to read the real meat of your content.
  - Numbered lists – readers who scan can quickly read this style.
  - Sub-headlines - mini headlines that group content into readable bite-sized pieces.
- Short paragraphs - one thought per paragraph.
- Short sentences.

**Ten-fold increase in APT attempts**  
Reinforcing the need to act now is this: At AT&T, we process 310 billion flow records each day, totaling more than six petabytes of Internet traffic. Over the last year, we've seen a ten-fold increase in APTs attempts, which is a definite cause for concern.

**What you can do**  
Traditional security measures may not work with APTs, because many only stop you from sending data to well-known malicious ports or IP addresses. Stealthy APTs require a multi-layered approach that digs deeper to detect suspicious activity. To increase your defenses:

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**What you can do**  
Traditional security measures may not work with APTs, because many only stop you from sending data to well-known malicious ports or IP addresses. Stealthy APTs require a multi-layered approach that digs deeper to detect suspicious activity. To increase your defenses:

1. Start with an APT Security Assessment to identify the presence of APTs and vulnerable security gaps in your network.
2. Apply a higher level of web and email filtering with deep packet inspection to examine outgoing traffic on a more detailed level to find hard-to-detect APTs.
3. Consider a data loss prevention service that alerts you when specific data leaves the company, such as large data file containing proprietary designs, to flag potential botnet activity in real time.
4. Explore using a network-based firewall to continuously inspect inbound/outbound traffic to stop threats before they infiltrate user devices or your network.





## Write in active voice

Don't use the Passive where you can use Active. Your content should be written in an action- oriented style, speaking directly to the reader.

## Educate. Don't sell.

Keep blog posts objective, don't over-promote products, services or the company. Readers visit blogs for information and insight. Express a point of view and have a unique perspective. This strategy will help establish authors as industry experts and the business as a thought leader.

## Use simple language

See how you can simplify your message. Help your readers process your post and be inspired by you in less reading time.

## Use links strategically

When writing links, make sure that they are concise and descriptive – a roadmap for readers. The SEO team will be responsible for selecting hyperlinks and anchor text to ensure all links align with the search optimization strategy. When inserting a link within the main body text, select words that make it clear where the user will be taken.

According to Neilson Group research, people avoid clicking on unknown items, or even worse, ignore them all together. Also, avoid "over-linking." Too many links disrupts the flow of the post.

## Feedback, Comments, and Questions

If you have any questions or comments, please contact:

<Name>

<Phone>

<email>