

# Daring To Be Different: A Blog People Want To Write For

By Sarah McGillicuddy

It still amazes me (and I'm not that old) that after bringing my daughter to a Disney movie I can play her the soundtrack in the car on our way home. No waiting for the CD to come out or the hit song to play on the radio, but instant gratification.

I make this observation to highlight how the "Uber-ized" landscape we live in places immediacy and digital access as a basic expectation when we seek out information and answers. Marketing professionals see this firsthand in the changing expectations of clients and their immediate evaluation based on our websites, social media, and overall digital presence.

Like all of you, I want my company to surface when questions are posed that relate to what we do and how we can provide value. Acentech gets genuine business leads from Google searches. We receive four inquiries per month that are valid opportunities. At least one of those turns into a real job and a new client. One thing I've learned in working with an SEO specialist is that Google rewards websites for the creation of unique content, even though the algorithms might be weighted differently and change often.

### Content Takes Time and Teamwork

With that lesson in mind, the marketing team and I set out with the intention of creating a robust blog. Our opening premise was to avoid self-congratulatory posts in favor of stories we hoped would be informative, entertaining, and slightly esoteric. I also wanted the blog to give insight into the company culture while tying it to our work and keeping with the mission of education.

I sought the counsel of marketing professionals in my SMPS network who ran successful blogs. I wanted to glean as much insight as I could to ensure this got off the ground successfully. I knew that I wanted the blog to be an informative resource to clients that would provide information of value to them that was related to our work.

I knew this would take time. To make the barrier to entry as minimal as possible, I encouraged everyone to contribute and placed no limitations on the type of content that would be deemed blog-worthy. I emphasized that there was nothing

worse than launching a new site, building a blog, and then having it sit neglected like a vacant storefront occupying precious real estate on your site.

We created a schedule and sent calendar requests with due dates months into the future and made sure to have a 10-week backlog before we launched. I admit that having such loose guidelines on the content was tough for me initially. However, I wanted to get the firm excited, to spark imagination and, most importantly, to normalize contributions across the board.

In the beginning, the blog featured movie reviews, travelogues from Italy—whatever our contributors were willing to write. It didn't matter the topic because our gamble paid off—it lit the match! From there, we started working with our consultants to marry what people were passionate about to what was in concert with our consulting practice.

For instance, for someone obsessed with golf, we encouraged a piece on the acoustics of the sound of the golf club hitting the ball and the emotional connection it has to performance. It was tough at first. However, it was worth the effort as our co-workers now clamor to contribute to the blog. What's more, the blog has turned into a marketing engine for our firm in the form of excellent content used for targeted PR pitches, social media content, and speaking opportunity platforms.

One of the things we did was make our blog subscription-based. We didn't automatically add anyone to it. The only subscribers we automatically included were Acentech staff. People loved getting an internal email with their publication. In turn, colleagues would support one another and take time to comment on each other's contributions.

### The Results

This cross-collaboration and teambuilding was a wonderful and unforeseen result of establishing the blog. Co-workers became inspired by each other's work and strove to contribute in a similar or even more creative way.

What started as a mostly internal list of subscribers has grown to more than 550, most of whom are clients. We frequently receive



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#1 Google rankings related to our blog posts. Our clients often remark that they enjoy our writing, and the content caught the attention of a beloved PR guru, friend, and mentor, which to me was the greatest compliment of all. Our blog also won a first-place SMPS Boston award. Many of the comments expressed disbelief, such as "I can't ever imagine our staff being willing to participate at this level."

With search engine algorithms wise to the ways of clickbait articles, producing expert content is key to rising in the ranks of Google search results. By developing reliable content, Acentech's blog continues to increase in searchability—and popularity—as it progresses.

In closing, I'd like to share my favorite blog post with you, one that exemplifies the spirit we hoped to achieve when we started out. Titled "Best Seat in the House," ([acentech.com/blog/best-seat-house](http://acentech.com/blog/best-seat-house)) this popular post had multiple staff members contributing to it. The topic is not about our firm. Instead, it provides advice from our acoustic nerds on where to find the best seat in a variety of different performance venues. Depending on the cultural experience you are seeking, whether a black box theater show or a high-decibel rock concert, where you sit can have a critical impact on your experience.

This is at the heart of our culture, a group of performers who are passionate about the performance and the patron experience—which is why they dedicate their careers to the science of sound and design. ■

## Final Reflections

The Acentech blog has proven itself to be a terrific staff engagement vehicle, allowing each contributor to shine. The results not only exceeded internal expectations but also gained a strong online following by:

- Gaining an average of 20 subscribers per month
- Exceeding benchmarks with 25 percent of the firm's most-viewed website pages our blog posts (industry average is 10-15 percent)
- Receiving repeated #1 Google rankings for "MRI Vibration" and "Mecca Sound System"
- Earning a top-20 position on Google for "Acoustical Design" post

When analyzing blog results, Paul Witham, director of SEO at MARC USA, remarked "Having 25 percent of top traffic on a corporate site directed toward its blog is rare—virtually unheard of. This is a result of in-depth and unique content not available anywhere else online."

The screenshot shows the Acentech blog homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the Acentech logo and social media icons. Below that is a 'Blog' header. The main content area features a list of blog posts with dates, authors, and titles. To the right of the posts is a 'SUBSCRIBE TO OUR BLOG' form with fields for first and last name and email address, and a 'SIGN UP' button. Below the subscription form is a 'FILTER BY' section with dropdown menus for 'ALL MARKETS' and 'SEARCH BY TAG'. At the bottom of the page, there's a 'CONTACT' section with a form for sending a message, a 'TWITTER FEED' section with tweets, and an 'INSTAGRAM FEED' section with photos. The footer contains 'LOCATIONS' for Boston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Charlottesville, and NYC, along with a 'NEED HELP?' section and a 'STAY INFORMED' section with another subscription form.

All consulting groups actively contribute to blog

Easy sign-up blog subscription

Pick topics that suit you—customizable filters

Like the post? Click on author's name to see more written by him/her

Seamless integration with entire site. Footer consistent with rest of Acentech.com.

Blog post page anatomy. Courtesy Acentech.