12 secrets to crafting and framing clickable content

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That's it!

WRITING IS DAMNED HARD

Writing Is Damned Hard

*The content of your blog shouldn't
depend on blind inspiration.*

Trust us on this. We're a book publisher. Our staff has over 20 years' experience plucking ideas from obscurity and launching them into fame. Every book we produce is essentially a $40K bet on our title, framing, and content—get it wrong too many times, and we're out of business. Decades of painstaking scientific analysis on our own newsletter, the BK Communiqué, has taught us the secrets to click-worthy content.

If your blog isn't getting the level of traffic you'd like—or even if you just have a case of writer's block—try this handy Mad Libs–style tool. It's designed to inspire you to generate the kinds of titles and ideas that'll grab eyeballs and get your audience clickin'.

Seriously, if your blog isn't about cats wearing fruit as hats, or cats swatting angrily at things, or really just anything having to do with cats, and you haven't quite reached the traffic level you know you can, don't give up and start posting cat stuff now.

Try this out. It'll take about 15 minutes. We'll start by getting you warmed up and focused on what your audience cares about. Then, we'll run the drill: 12 guided headline-generating exercises to get your creative juices flowing—and those clicks you've been lusting after.

By the end, you'll have at least 12 new ideas to stock your editorial calendar—and you'll be well on your way to making the cutest of Internet cats look like yesterday's news.

ENVISION YOUR AUDIENCE NAKED

STEP 1:
Envision Your Audience Naked

Well, not naked physically, but mentally.
What makes them tick and what are they looking for?

Take some time to answer the following questions. You need to know what your audience cares about; otherwise, your content is just another irrelevant distraction competing for their attention. And what you do here will keep you on track later in Step 2. So don't skip this part. You'll pull a hamstring.

- Who are you really trying to reach? Be specific and don't say things like "all those who think dolphins are cute!"_____

  _____

  _____

  _____

- List a few beloved celebrities, fictional characters, or role models these people love. (If you say "the Kardashians," then you should stop now and never write again.) _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

- What are your audience's life goals? Do they wantto be rich? To have deeper and more meaningful relationships? To open up a hotdog stand at the beach?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **What constitutes your audience's obstacles and pain points? What prevents them from achieving their goals? What's really annoying to them?**

  _____
  _____
  _____

- **What does your audience love (on a deeper level than just burritos)?**

  _____
  _____
  _____

- **What does your audience hate (on a deeper level than just Jell-O)?**

  _____
  _____
  _____

- **What key skills does your audience hope to learn?**

  _____
  _____
  _____

- **On what topic do you consider yourself to be a subject-matter expert—how can you actually help your audience achieve their goals? Be brief; there's no one here to impress.**

  _____
  _____
  _____

- **Name some of your favorite things to write about (that you don't mind being public knowledge):**

  _____
  _____
  _____

NOW FOR THE FUN! LET'S MAKE SOME HEADLINES

STEP 2:
Let's Make Some Headlines

*You already know that you need to start
with a click-bait-y headline.*

More accurately, start with a compelling headline that pulls readers in. But a compelling headline can also provide the frame for what comes next—and give you a great idea for a post you haven't even thought of. So let's get started!

Fill in the blanks below. If you get stuck along the way, don't panic. Consult your answers in Step 1 for some clues.

1 Give Them the Head of George Clooney

Can your headline include a celebrity name, brand, or concept? Not cheesy d-list celebrities (have I mentioned the Kardashians?) but real celebrities within your well-defined audience or niche. There's nothing like a big name to hook people's interest! Imagine the headline in these ways:

- **What ___ [   ] ___ would say about ____ [   ]:**
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **What ___ [   ] ____didn't realize about ____ [**
  ]:
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **The thing nobody realized about ____ [   ]:_____**
  _____
  _____
  _____

(2) Give Them Univision Telenovela-Level Drama

Can your headline suggest controversy, drama, or conflict? Nobody wants to read something bland or boring ("Adding nutmeg to chocolate pudding enhances the flavor somewhat but is not very healthy"). Give them conflict! Give them spice! Give them something to be worked up about ("The poison you unknowingly put into your children's food, you murdering oaf!")! Some ideas:

- **The secret conflict within ____ [   ]:_____**
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **The unspoken tension about ____ [   ]:_____**
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **What nobody will admit about ____ [   ]:_____**
  _____
  _____
  _____

3 Make It Easy Enough for the Average American

Can your headline promise easy, bite-sized content? Because, let's face it: we people are lazy (keep in mind that as a nation, we created the term "couch potato")— and unless you give a list of simple steps or a nicely limited number of facts, readers will assume your blog will require just waaaay too much effort and then go back to their Cheetos and People magazine. Some suggestions:

• **Five ways to _____ [** **]:_____**
_____
_____
_____

• **Six common mistakes about _____ [** **]:_____**
_____
_____
_____

• **Three things your _____ [** **] _____ doesn't know about _____ [** **]:_____**
_____
_____

4   Give Them Real Value (Not the Type Found at McDonald's)

Can your headline offer an immediate practical benefit or value? "How-to" articles are the staple traffic-drivers of the Internet. This happens because we don't want to admit we need help or don't know how to do something. So going on the net, learning something, and then pretending we knew it all along (thank you, superfast Wikipedia pages) remains the only viable option. Try these:

- **How to surprise your boss with ____[   ]:_____**

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **How to make ____ [   ] ____ easier than it's ever been!_____**

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **The one simple hack ____ [   ] ____all use:**

  _____

  _____

  _____

5 End Their Pain

Can your headline address a common reader pain point and promise solutions? Are your words the aspirin that will soothe the pain? At the most primal level (because we humans are painfully simple creatures), the goal remains simply to bring down the pain and bring up the pleasure. So try these:

- **How to prevent _____ [** **]:_____**
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **How to get past _____ [** **]:_____**
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **The way to _____ [** **] _____ without _____**
  [**]:_____**
  _____
  _____

6 Surprise Them

Pulling out a deadly weapon provokes surprise, but presenting something more positive is a superior option. Can your headline confound expectations? Can it create something online marketers like to call a "curiosity gap" (a compelling question that you now simply must know the answer to, dammit). For example:

- **Why_____ [   ]_____ is actually the best at_____
  [   ]:_____
  _____
  _____

- **Why _____ [   ] _____ is a castle of lies!**
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **Why I hate _____ [   ]:_____**
  _____
  _____
  _____

(7) Show Near-Maniacal-but-Still-Relatively-Controlled Enthusiasm!

Can your headline make superlative claims (aka "best ever," "most shocking ever," "you will never believe")? Yeah, all very cheesy, but years of research have shown superlatives garner serious attention. So what about these?

- **The 50 best _____ [** **] _____ ever created:_____**

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **This year's 10 top failures in _____ [** **]:_____**

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **The 10 pieces of advice in _____ [** **] _____ that most disgust me:**

  _____

  _____

  _____

8   Address Them by the Name of Their Hope

In this case, we mean identifying the actual hope, not renaming an aspiration "Phyllis" or something like that. For example, "Seven business books every CEO should read" singles out the audience of people who hope to lead companies, so "CEO" represents the name of the hope there. This one can take a bit of nuance and skill— you need to basically ask yourself whom your readers aspire to be.

- The ten things every ____ [   ] ____ should know about ____ [   ]:_____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Seven articles every   [   ] __ should read:
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

9 Pander to Their Vanity Like They're Prom Queens

Can your headline promise readers they'll learn more about the most important people in the world—themselves? People love to explore issues of self and self-identity, and self-assessments and quizzes of any kind tend to pull people in. Try these:

- **Quiz: How good are you at _____ [** **]?**_____
_____
_____
_____

- **Which of _____ [** **] ____ are you?**_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(10) Talk Smack like a TMZ Reporter

Can your headline promise to deliver the "real dirt" on somebody? We all like to consider ourselves sophisticates, but the Boston Herald no longer exists, while the National Enquirer remains profitable. The lesson here: readers love the tasty whiff of scandal and the sound of important people falling with an ignoble thud. Words such as "confessions," "secrets," and "myths" hint nicely at something notorious. So, how about these?

- Confessions of an accidental ____ [   ]:_____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Why ____ [   ] ____ is a myth:_____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Secrets of becoming a ____ [   ]:_____
  _____
  _____
  _____

11 Make Them Feel like an Exclusive Country Club Member and Not Just Another Schmo at the Local Y

Can the headline offer readers inclusion in a special community or an elite group of people "in the know" so that they feel truly special? Use headlines like:

- **Ten facts only true _____ [   ] _____ lovers understand _____**
_____
_____
_____

- **Little-known facts about the wonderful, mysterious world of _____**
[   ] _____
_____
_____
_____

- **I know you'll get why we love this list of _____ [   ]____ so much_____**
_____
_____
_____

12 Treat Them like the Legends They Are in Their Own Minds

Write something that confirms readers' pre-existing beliefs; people feel warmth and comfort when reading things they agree with. We all want to feel right, even when we're not. And at the very least, we don't want to be the only moron in the room. So:

- **Why you are absolutely right about _____ [   ]:_____**
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **What _____ [   ] _____ just don't get about _____ [**
  **   ]:_____**
  _____
  _____
  _____

- **Why _____ [   ] _____ should watch out for _____**
  [   ]:_____
  _____
  _____
  _____

That's It!

We hope you surfaced some great ideas just now and that next time you're stuck for a title —or suffering from writer's block — that you'll find this exercise useful.

Now, go write up one of your ideas and break the Internet with your brilliance!
We believe in you. Really.
And we're really tired of cat videos.