



Colossal Content Marketing Report



TrackMaven

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**Blog posts are
a sum of content
marketing's parts**

I. Introduction

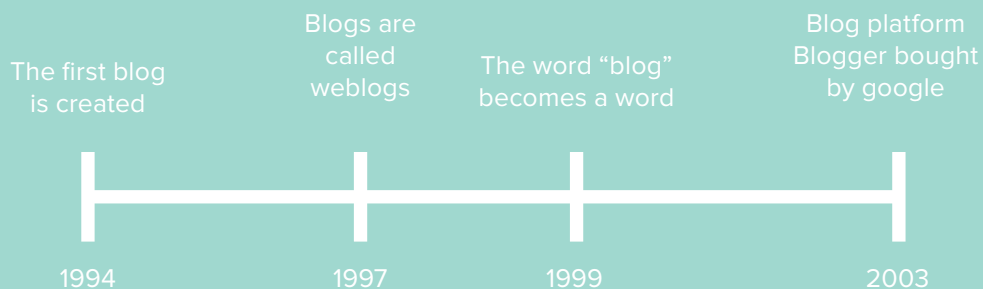
What is Content Marketing?

Content Marketing is a form of owned marketing that involves emails, blog posts, guest posts, white papers, ebooks, webinars, case studies, website copy, infographics, FAQs, and social media content. Anything involving pieces of media or text that require some type of copy to be written or published is a form of content marketing.

Content Marketing represents a large part of inbound marketing, and its overall goal in any campaign is to try to acquire more leads, prospects, or customers. It is used to provide education and value for these potentials.

Every year marketers are spending more money on content marketing efforts in order to increase brand awareness and to drive more inbound leads into their funnels.

Rather than reporting on the varied effectiveness of each and every type of content marketing, we chose to focus on the blog. Why? Blog posts are a sum of content marketing's parts, often combining the statistics and research of white papers, ebooks, and case studies with the design of an infographic, but with greater length than social media posts and greater personalization than website content.



The History of the Blog

The first blog is credited to a Swarthmore College student named Justin Hall, who in 1994 created the site [Links.net](http://links.net). However, the term "blog" didn't enter our lexicon until several years later. The invention of the word was a joint effort between John Barger, who coined the term "weblog" in 1997 as a shortened version of "logging the Web," and Peter Merholz, who truncated the term to "blog" in 1999.

Blogging rose in popularity for personal use as easy-to-use blogging tools became more mainstream, including Blogger.com, the

blog-publishing platform created by Pyra Labs, which was eventually acquired by Google in 2003.

While individuals have used blogs as an online version of a personal diary since the beginning, corporations and media giants alike have adopted the blog as a forum to spread brand awareness and engage and/or entertain their audience.



How can analytics inform better content creation strategies?

Data Introduction

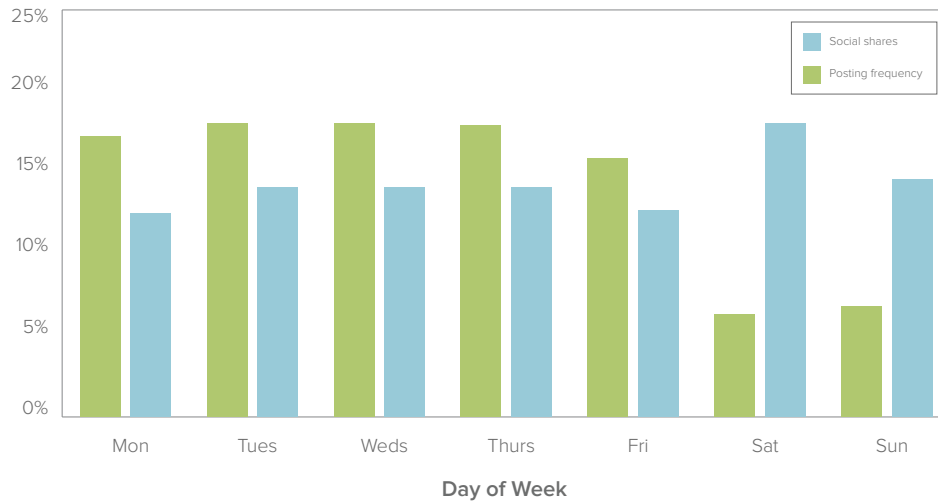
At TrackMaven, our own company blog is our forum to share the quirks of our culture, address our customers' pain points and FAQs, and share proactive marketing insights. Many of the questions we hear from customers and colleagues center around content. How can we use analytics to inform better content creation strategies? How can we develop the ideal content publishing strategy? This analysis is an endeavor to shed more insight on those and other content marketing questions.

For this report, **we analyzed 4,618 blogs** and collected all posts for each of these blogs through **April 3, 2014, for a grand total of 1,167,426 posts**. For each post, we analyzed trends in engagement by capturing the number of social shares, **which came to a grand total of 1,915,428,305 social shares for the data set**.

While blog post engagement can come in many forms, throughout this report, we will define the engagement or effectiveness of a blog post by the number of social shares.

II. Schedule

Posting Frequency vs Average Social Shares by Day of Week



Millions of blog posts are published every day, but is there a “best” time to publish? We broke down the posting schedule for our data set by day of the week and time of day, and analyzed both for the most effective times to post.

Days of Week in order of avg. posting frequency:

1. Tuesday & Wednesday (tied): 18% of all posts published
3. Thursday : 17.9%
4. Monday: 17.2%
5. Friday: 15.9%
6. Sunday: 6.8%
7. Saturday: 6.3%

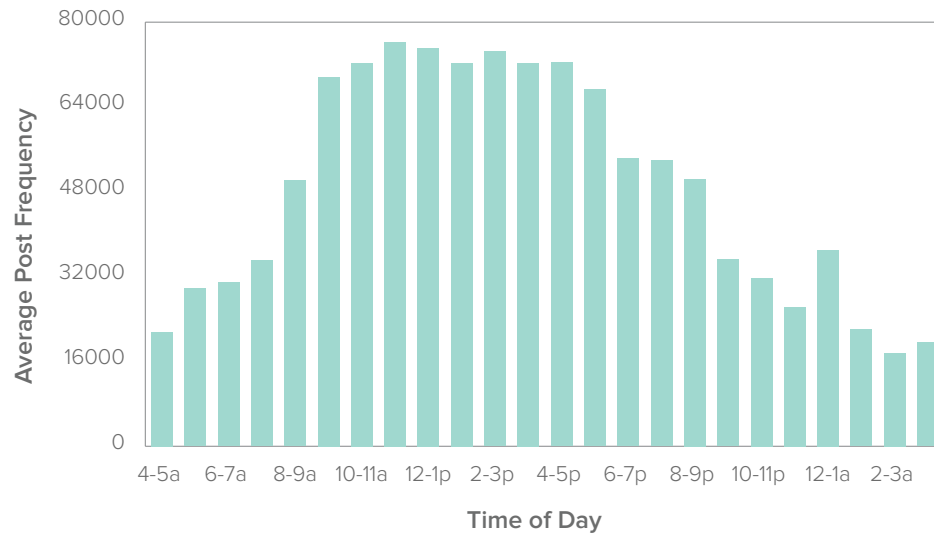
Days of Week in order of avg. social shares:

1. Saturday: 18% of all social shares
2. Sunday: 14.6%
3. Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday (tied): 14.1%
6. Friday: 12.7%
7. Monday: 12.5%

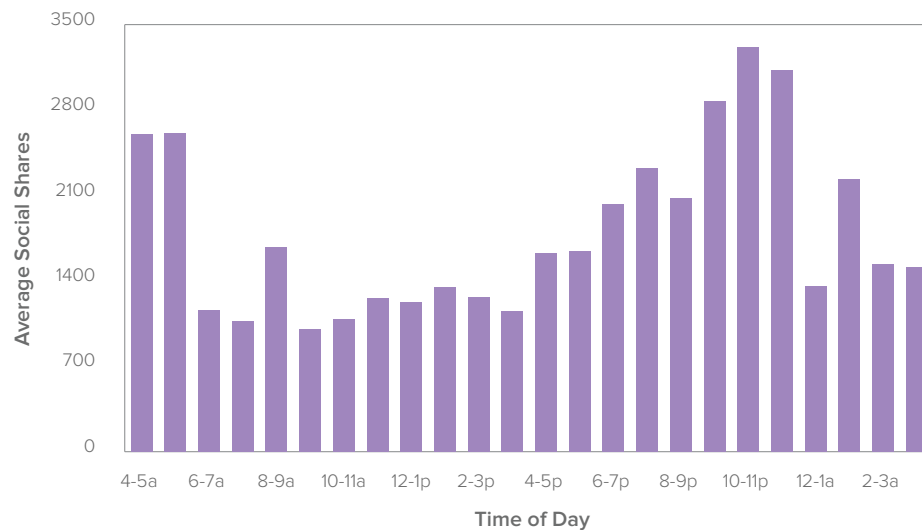
What day of week is most effective for publishing blog posts?

When we look at the most frequent days of the week for publishing blog posts, we can see that content marketers have been focusing their efforts during the workweek, with the most posts published on Tuesday and Wednesday. Of the 1.2M posts we analyzed, a **whopping 87% were posted during the workweek**. However, the **13% of posts published on weekends** raked in the most social shares. Saturday is particularly ripe for content marketers to reap a massive ROI; **while only 6.3% of posts were published on Saturdays, they received 18% of the total social shares**.

Posting Frequency Based on Time of Day



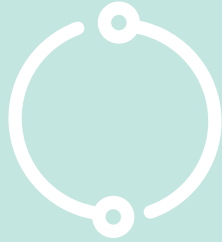
Social Shares Based on Time of Day



What time of day is most effective for blog posts?

The top left graph shows the distribution of posting time for our entire blog data set, which has a mostly normal distribution. **There is a noticeable influx** of blog posts coming within normal work hours from roughly **9AM to 6PM EST**, with the highest point at **11AM-12PM** with **6.53% of posts** published then. However, while posting frequency steadily declines after **6PM EST**, there is a secondary spike in posts from **12-1AM EST** at **3.17%**, most likely due to **scheduled posts at the start of the next business day**.

However, when we look at blog post effectiveness by time of day there is an inverse effect; the peaks of engagement are clustered outside of working hours. In the bottom left graph, we can see that **blogs posted between 9PM-midnight EST have the most social shares, with 10-11PM as the highest point of engagement**. There are also secondary spikes in engagement between 4-6AM, 7-8PM, and 1-2AM EST.



Try connecting with your audience outside of work hours

This contrast between blogging frequency and social shares by time of day shows that **content marketers who are publishing outside of work hours are getting above-average engagement.**

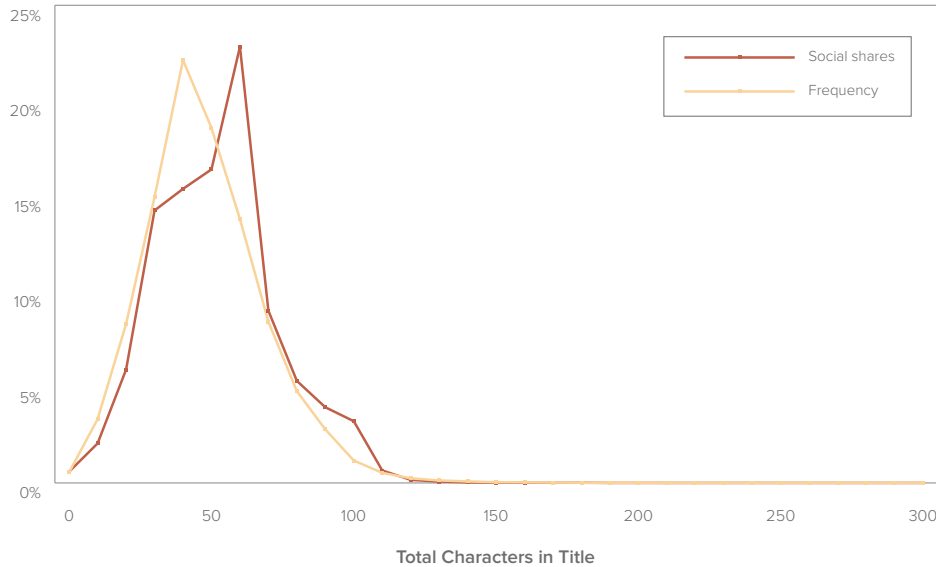
While your brand's blog content might be aimed at professional growth, leisure hours are readers' preferred time to read, reflect, and share the content that resonates most with them. So content marketers, take note –

just because your content is educational or work-related doesn't mean it should come during working hours. Your audience's craving for educational or entertaining content is innate, so engage your readers during the time they have to indulge that craving.

III. Title Analysis



Post Title Length Distribution vs Social Shares



We’ve all been told not to judge a book by its cover... but do we judge a blog post by its title?

A typical marketing adage advises that we should follow the 80/20 rule when creating a post, assuming only 80% of people will look at your headline and then only 20% will read the whole post. With that in mind, creating a great headline or title is of the utmost importance to entice your audience to keep reading past the title and absorb the entire blog post you worked so hard on.

To this point, we took a closer look at trends in blog post titles to uncover correlations between title and engagement.

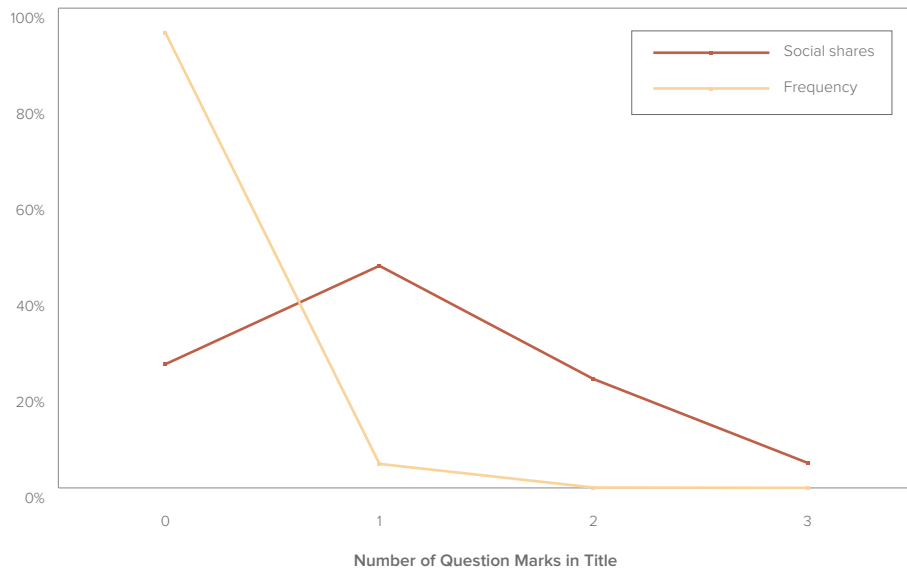
What’s the ideal blog title length?

In this graph, we see a relatively normal bell curve for title length, with the **most frequent titles containing 40 characters**.

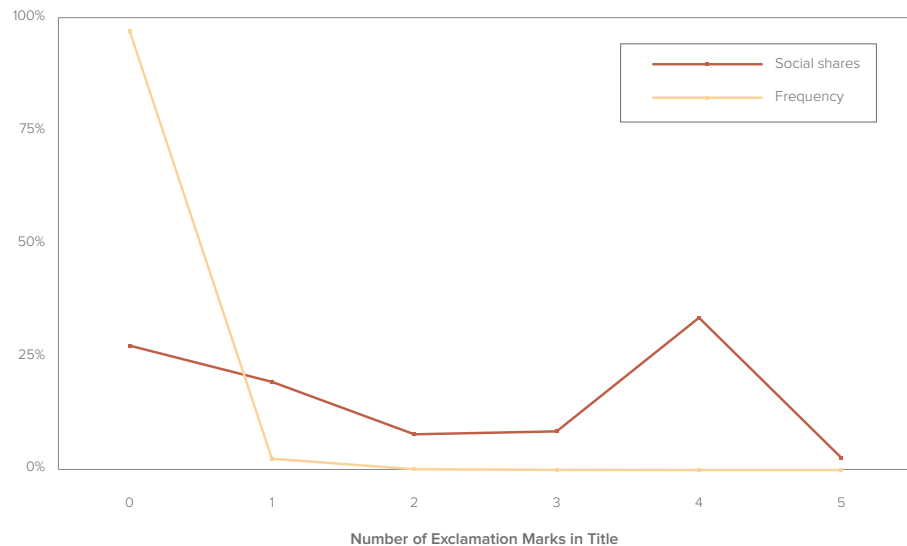
However, the distribution of social shares peaks farther to the right, with 60-character titles receiving the most social shares.

For content marketers who are masters of SEO and long-tail keywords, the greater effectiveness of 60-character titles could play to your strengths. That said, don’t overdo it – blogs with titles beyond the 60 character length saw a sharp decline in social shares.

Usage of Question Marks in Title vs Social Shares



Usage of Exclamation Marks in Title vs Social Shares



Does title punctuation effect blog engagement?

The vast majority of the over 1 million blog posts we analyzed stuck with declarative headlines. But isn't content consumption driven by our inquisitive, excitable human nature?

In the top left graph we see the frequency and effectiveness of question marks in blog titles. Looking at the high y-intercept of this graph, we can see that **94.89% of blog posts did not include a question mark.** However, our analysis shows that there is a noticeable peak in the average percentage of social shares for blog posts with a question contained in the title. The **5.01% of**

blog titles that included a single question mark has 46.30% social shares, nearly double that for titles without question marks.

However, there is a fine line between appealing to our human curiosity with a question and exuding spamminess; **the average engagement was lowest for titles that went overboard with two or more question marks.**

While punctuating with a single question mark correlated with higher engagement, the chart on the bottom left illustrates that the same is not true for exclamation points. **Few blog titles use exclamation points (97.24% without), and for good reason – the average**



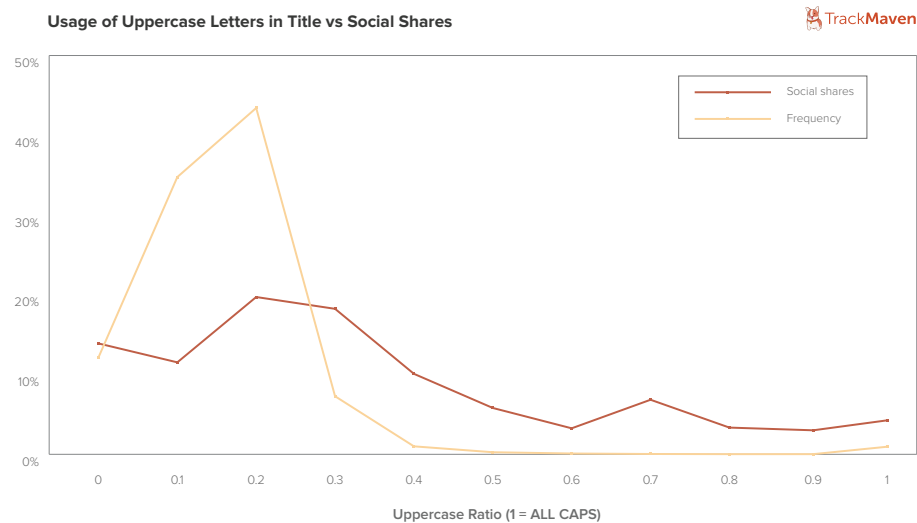
We crave content that appeals to our inherent curiosity

social shares decreased for titles that added up to 3 exclamation points. Interestingly, while **less than 0.1% of posts were so bold as to include 4 exclamation points, those that did saw 2,027 social shares on average, accounting for 33.72% of the total.**

Lukewarm excitement, it seems, is forgettable, but real excitement!!!! is share-worthy.

While that result might tempt you to exclaim away in your blog titles, make sure that the “!!!!” level of excitement is appropriate to your content and your audience.

Again, as human beings we crave content that appeals to our inherent curiosity and excitability, and we share what we care most about. So rather than using another declarative headline, consider adding some color with punctuation.

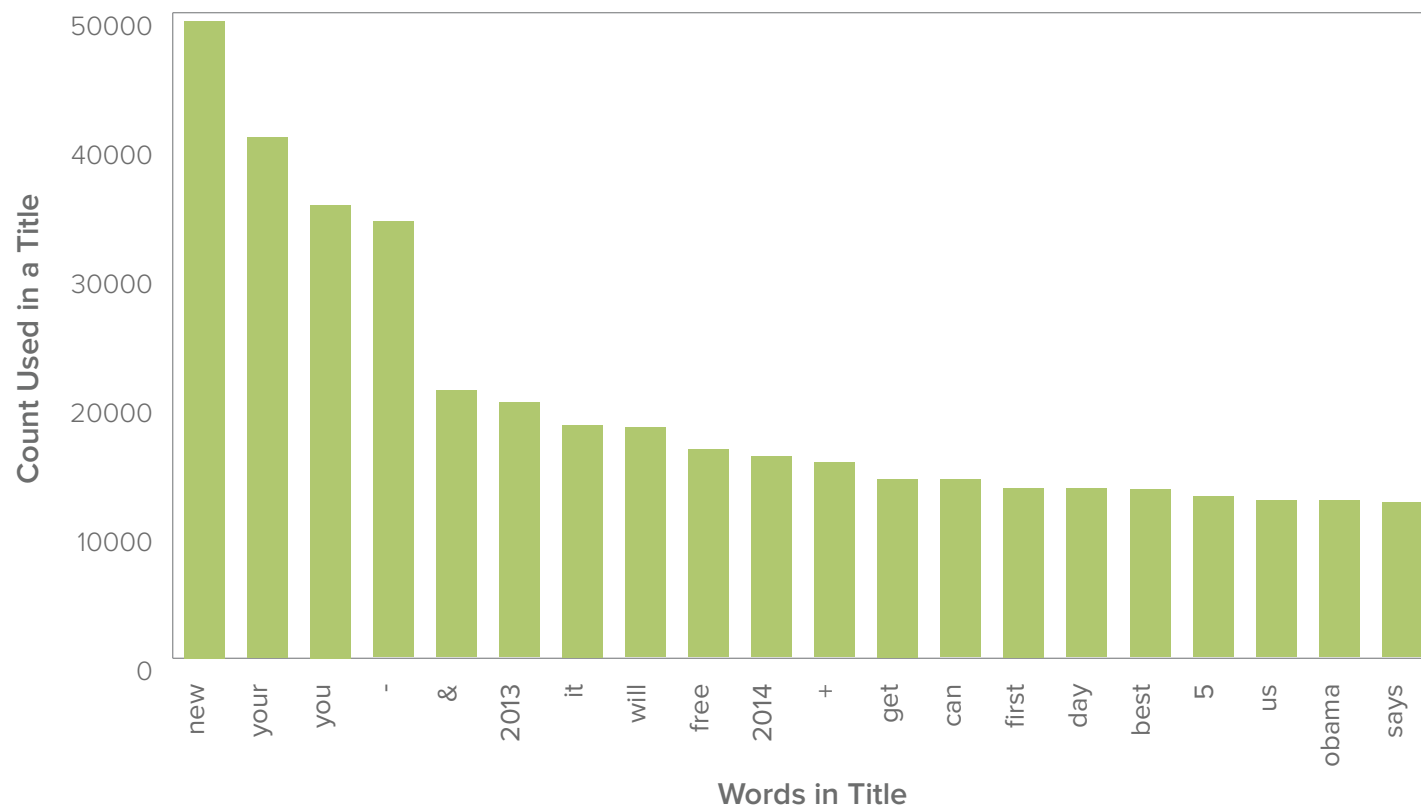


How does title capitalization effect engagement?

The graph below shows the frequency and social shares compared to the ratio of uppercase letters in blog titles, with an uppercase ration of 1 meaning ALL CAPS. At the extreme ends of the spectrum, it seems more content creators are inclined

to evoke e.e. cummings than to shout at their readers, as 12.14% of blog titles had no capitalization, while less than 1% were written with Caps Lock. The majority of content marketers, however, are getting it just right, as **the peak for both frequency and social shares correlates with standard capitalization practices.**

Top 20 Words from Blog Titles



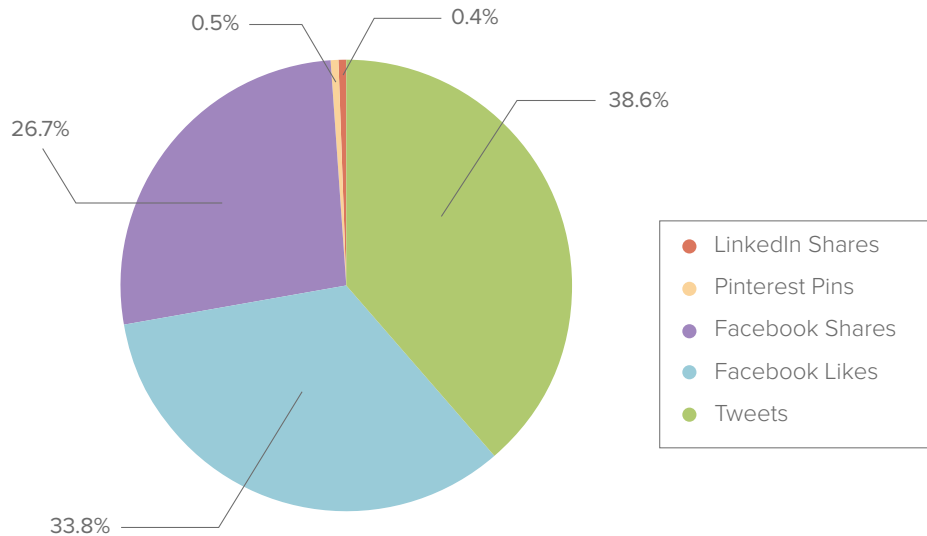
Most Common Words in Titles

The chart to the left shows the frequency of narrative words in blog titles. “Your” and “You” top the list by leaps and bounds, accounting for a combined total of 38% of narrative title words.

Considering “your” and “you” are hallmarks of the 2nd person point-of-view to directly address the reader, this result underscores that more personally-directed content is the benchmark for blogging.

IV. Social Channel Analysis

Social Shares by Channel



While a blog may have the best intentions to improve the customer experience or entertain the reader, it's hard to truly make a difference and establish your brand if no one is reading your content. The good, if not overwhelming, news is that there are more channels than ever before to promote content and reach your target audience. The social network that serves as the

ideal platform for your brand's blog will vary according to a variety of factors, such as the subject matter and target demographics. However, a proactive marketer can strategically tailor content to reach different audience subsets across a variety of social networks.

Out of the nearly 2 billion social shares in our data set, we found that the **majority of social shares**

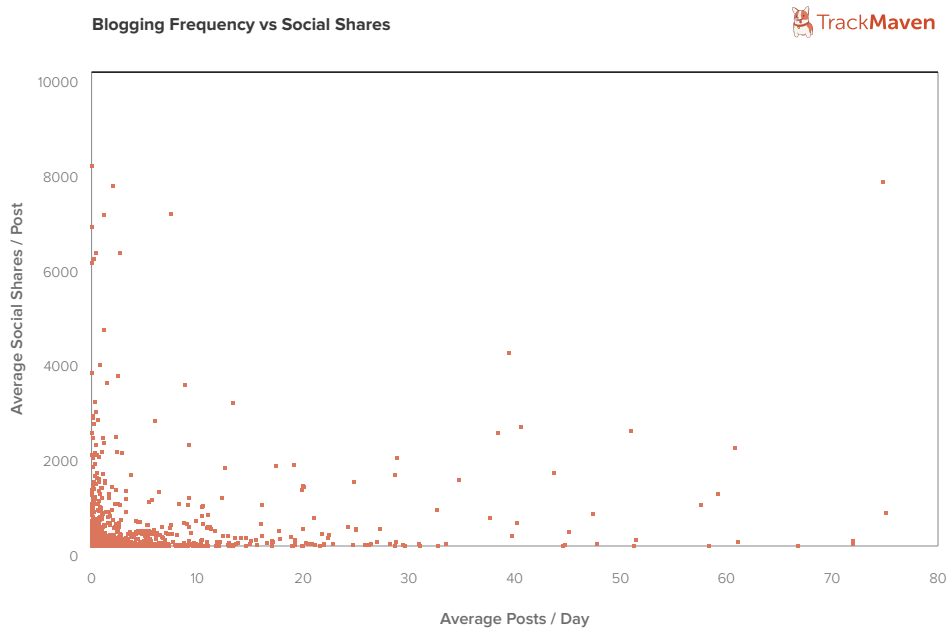


A proactive marketer is not limited to a single social network

were on Facebook and Twitter. Tweets accounted for 38.6% of the total social shares, with Facebook Likes a close second with 33.8%. **Content consumers were more likely to “like” a blog post on Facebook than to “share” it, as Facebook Shares accounted for 26.7% of the total social shares.** Pinterest Pins and LinkedIn Shares were marginal players, with Pinterest Pins outpacing LinkedIn Shares by 0.1% (0.5% vs. 0.4%).

With Facebook and Twitter boasting active user counts of 1 billion and 560 million, respectively, it makes sense that nearly all social interaction came on those platforms. But with LinkedIn's burgeoning active user base of 240 million and niche of professionally-oriented content, it's particularly ripe for B2B content marketers to see blog post engagement.

V. Blog Posting Strategies



The baseline goal for any piece of content is to strike a chord with the desired audience, and the zeitgeist of “viral content” has placed a premium on shareability. The volume of interactions a post receives plays a huge role in determining the effectiveness of a content strategy. But while we’re exposed to viral content on a daily basis, how easy is it to generate? Is it based on how frequently someone blogs or how the content is conveyed?

First we looked at the outlets who post most frequently...

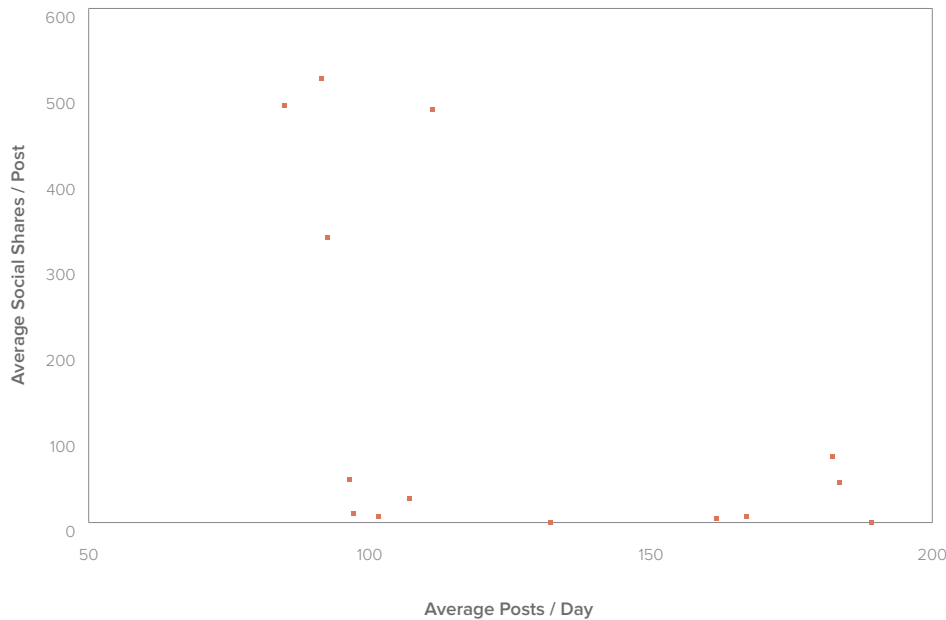
For most blogs, audience engagement stems from consistency. To develop your blog into a habitual part of your audience’s daily content consumption, you have to

fulfill their expectations and appetites for new content on a regular basis. However, that doesn’t mean that more posts per day is necessarily better. We see from the graph to the left that while the majority of the blogs are clustered with **fewer than 22.5 posts** per day and **2,250 social shares per post** on average, **there is a flurry of outliers with varied posting frequency and engagement.**

Most Frequent Bloggers

While most blogs in our data set **averaged fewer than 22.5 posts per day**, we saw a handful of outliers with **extremely ambitious publishing schedules averaging well over 80 posts per day.**

Most Frequent Bloggers: Posts per Day vs Shares per Post



Out of the 4,618 blogs we analyzed, the blogs with the highest number of posts per day on average were **Deal News, CNS News, and The Globe and Mail**. We pulled the most shared posts from each source, and saw varying results in engagement for these more real-time news and deal-oriented sites.

Most shares for top blogs by posting frequency:

1) Deal News

Best Laptop Deals: 2 Quad HD Laptops from HP and Samsung Starting at \$699

131 total shares

<http://dealnews.com/features/best-laptop-deals/>

2) CNS News

Aerosmith's Joe Perry Tweets 'Freedom of Speech' Defense of Duck Dynasty

78,866 total shares

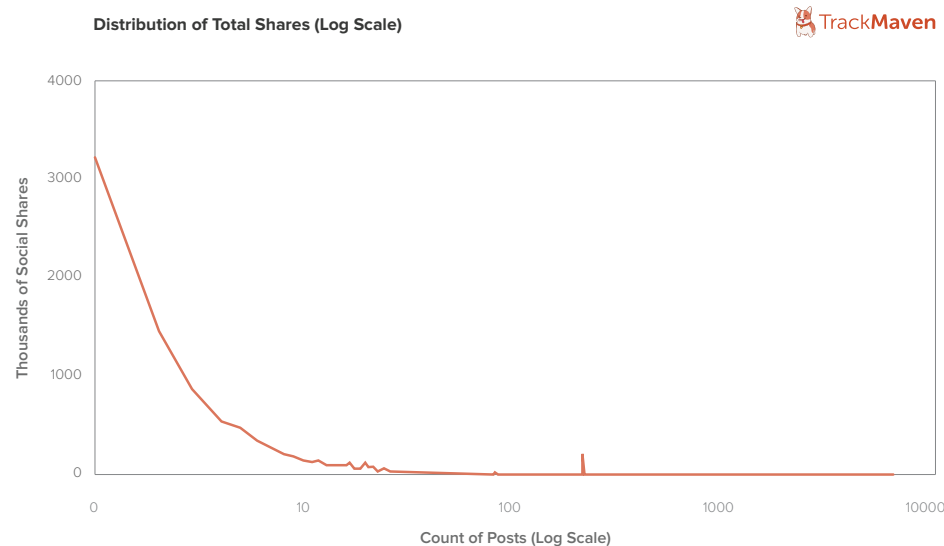
<http://cnsnews.com/news/article/michael-w-chapman/aerosmith-s-joe-perry-tweets-freedom-speech-defense-duck-dynasty>

3) The Globe and Mail

Put your faces back on, ladies: Why the #nomakeupselfie trend has to stop

40,661 total shares

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/put-your-faces-back-on-ladies-why-the-nomakeupselfie-trend-has-to-stop/article17685301/>

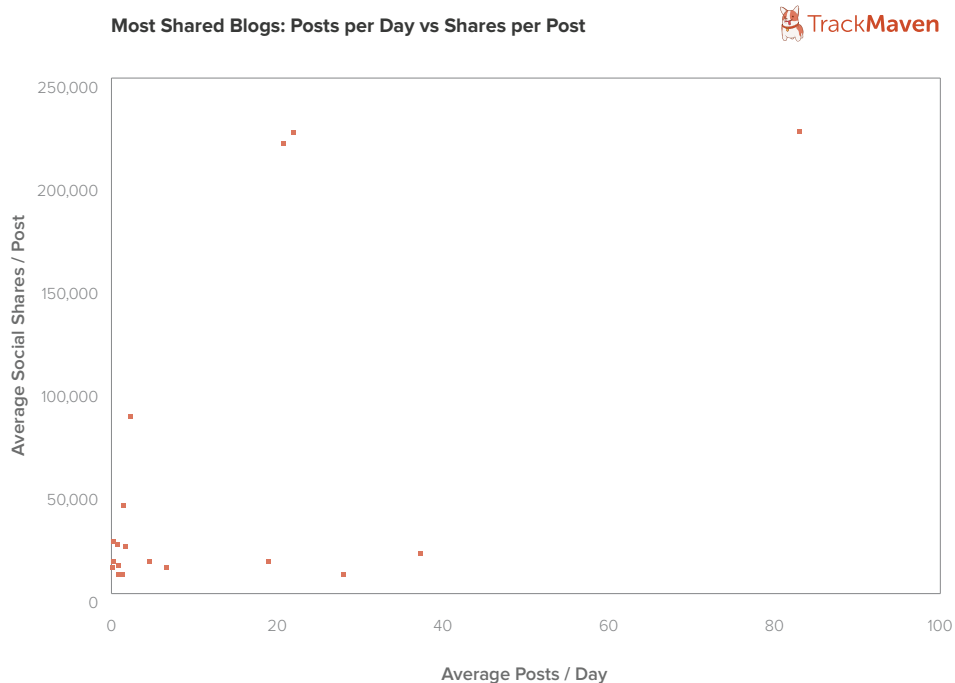


Ultimately though, we see from the on the upper left graph just how difficult it is to produce viral content.

The number of posts that are able to generate social shares well up into the thousands are small, as the graph curves sharply downward to hover over the x-axis. Looking at the distribution of social shares for over 1 million blog posts, we can see that virality is achieved by only a small minority of blog posts. For greater insight, we took a closer look at the “viral” outliers, meaning those posts with the highest average number of social shares per post.

Most Shared Blogs

You’re probably familiar with the most shared blogs from our analysis, as seen in the lower left graph. **Out of the 4,618 blogs we analyzed, Gawker, Jezebel, and Gizmodo had the highest average engagement per post.** Gawker lead the pack with 224,153 social shares per post and 83 posts per day on average. Jezebel came in a close second with 223,650 shares per post and 21.9 posts per day on average. Ringing in third was Gizmodo, with 218,451 shares per post and 20.8 daily posts on average.



Case Study: The Meaning Behind Gawker Media's Virality

Top Posts from the Blogs with the Most Engagement

As all three of these most-shared blogs fall under the parent company of Gawker Media, it's clear the online media company has figured out a thing or two about blog virality. We pulled examples of the most shared posts from each of our most shared blogs to take a closer look at the content and titles that are driving Gawker Media's huge engagement.

NPR Pulled a Brilliant April Fools' Prank On People Who Don't Read



Jay Hathaway

Filed to: READING COMPREHENSION 4/03/14 4:08pm

1,288,827 🔥 58 ★ ▼



1

Gawker

(a) NPR Pulled a Brilliant April Fools' Prank On People Who Don't Read

224,197 total shares

<http://feeds.gawker.com/~r/gawker/full/~3/3pnrQdCPuT0/npr-pulled-a-brilliant-april-fools-prank-on-people-who-1557745710>

Greatest Wedding Photo In the History of the World



Meredith Woerner

Filed to: THIS IS AWESOME 5/29/13 2:22pm

720,346 🔥 39 ★ ▼



1

Gawker / io9

(b) Greatest Wedding Photo
In the History of the World

278,770 total shares

<http://feeds.gawker.com/~r/jezebel/full/~3/iOScXQgBsql/greatest-wedding-photo-in-the-history-of-the-world-510358157>

I'm Biracial, and That Cheerios Ad Is a Big Fucking Deal. Trust Me.



Meagan Hatcher-Mays

Filed to: RACE 5/31/13 5:10pm

887,978 🔥 131 ★ ▼

EXPAND



WHAT IS SHE?

2

Jezebel

(a) I'm Biracial, and That Cheerios Ad Is a Big Fucking Deal. Trust Me.

293,865 total shares

<http://jezebel.com/im-biracial-and-that-cheerios-ad-is-a-big-fucking-dea-510740851>

Female 'Purity' Is Bullshit



Lindy West

Filed to: PURITY 5/07/13 2:04pm

508,126 🔥 105 ★ ▼

EXPAND

FUCK ALL OF THAT.



2

Jezebel

(b) Female 'Purity' Is Bullshit (subtitle: "FUCK ALL OF THAT")

286,066 total shares

<http://feeds.gawker.com/~r/jezebel/full/~3/Cbpct9eINEA/female-purity-is-bullshit-493278191>

Stunning Behind-the-Scenes Photos Show Iconic Movies in a New Light



Vincze Miklós

Filed to: MOVIES 6/09/13 1:00pm

321,098 🔥 33 ★ ▼



EXPAND

3

Gizmodo / io9

(a) Stunning Behind-the-Scenes Photos Show Iconic Movies in a New Light

241,374 total shares

<http://feeds.gawker.com/~r/gizmodo/full/~3/XTqZZFnNB80/stunning-behind-the-scenes-photos-show-iconic-movies-in-512190237>

The Myth of the CEO



Hamilton Nolan

Filed to: CORPORATE AMERICA 4/03/14 4:10pm

40,304 🔥 37 ★



3

Gizmodo/ io9

(b) The Myth of the CEO

224,162 total shares

<http://feeds.gawker.com/~r/gawker/full/~3/LSeW4fOwkL4/the-myth-of-the-ceo-1557547904>



The Meaning Behind Gawker Media's Virality

Gawker Media Group, Inc. has a base of **47,000,000 million readers, over 2 million fans on Facebook, and 3.3 million followers on Twitter**. We can attribute some of their success to the sheer size of their audience; however, the individual posts above with the most engagement were entertaining, evocative, and tried to change the status quo of our everyday culture.

Gawker Media Group understands that virality doesn't occur often, but when it does it comes from content that adds value back to their readership. Maybe the posts aren't life-changing thoughts, but they connect emotionally with their audience and their interests. Gawker Media tells stories that entertain and resonate with their readership enough to create a consistent stream of viral content.



**Pique curiosity
with inquisitive
blog titles**

VI. Key Findings

Most posts are published on Tuesday and Wednesday, but the most social shares came on Saturday and Sunday. **Consider publishing content on the weekend.**

The benchmark for title length is 40 characters, but **blogs with titles of 60 characters had the most social shares.**

Try phrasing blog titles as questions. Few blog titles used question marks (94.89%), but social

shares peaked with the use of 1 question mark.

12.14% percent of blog titles used no capitalization, while less than one percent use ALL CAPS. **Social shares correlate with standard capitalization, so keep it standard. Facebook and Twitter were the most popular channels for social shares**, accounting for a combined 94.1% of the 1.9B social shares we analyzed.



Put your audience's time and interests first

Conclusion

The original intent of blogs was to promote an individual or brand's own message. They were a marketing outlet bent on expanding reach with the underlying purpose of self-promotion.

Yet we've seen from the data in this report that things have changed since the birth of the blog. **Blogging is no longer about overtly spreading brand awareness, as the marketers who prosper with blogging effectiveness are giving back to their readers.**

From posting on the weekends to stirring curiosity with question titles, a content marketer who wants to drive impact understands that their post needs to teach something useful to their audience, or strike at the chord of our humanity, like Gawker Media's highly-shareable content. As content marketing efforts expand and consumers are ingesting more content than ever before, the most successful blogs remember to put their audience's time and interests first.