

BLOGGING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

By Andy Merchant, Co-Founder of Bloggers Required

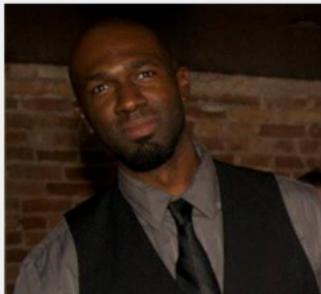
We asked a cross-section of bloggers a series of questions about their blogging behaviour, experience and knowledge.

BLOGGING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

The world of blogging is a fast-evolving one, and the proliferation of easy-to-use blogging tools and free sites has meant that it's really hit the mainstream. In fact, between 2006 and the end of 2011, the number of blogs worldwide increased from 36 million to 181 million, and by now there must be over 200 million blogs in the world. So with so many blogs in the firmament, how can bloggers set about making sure that theirs shines amongst the brightest? We spoke to a cross-section of bloggers, from seasoned bloggers who were publishing their thoughts online a decade ago to those who have only just joined the game.

Q1. How and why did you get into blogging?

People have a range of motivations when they start blogging. Some have a head full of ideas and inspiration that they need to get out, and the blog is an extension



Jason Francis

of the journal or diary-writing tradition – a personal endeavour that brings in other readers as a bonus, rather than as an aim. Jason Francis of the **Social Media Samurai** blog is one such blogger. "I've been blogging since 1998 when it was probably still called journal writing. It was a way for me to get

thoughts out of my active mind and into a more structured form."

Beauty blogger Lottie Pierce, a more recent blogger who writes under the name **Love, Beauty & Spa**, had the same approach to the art: "I have always loved writing, so decided to combine it with my other passion: beauty. I decided to start a blog as it was somewhere I could write as much or as little as I liked about my favourite products. I write my blog for me, because I enjoy writing and creating each post. Being able to share my love for certain products is a bonus."

Others are keen to engage with a particular community of peers, whether the fashion community, parenting community or other, or to bring a new angle that they feel hasn't been covered on existing blogs. Stephanie Pickering

of fashion and beauty blog **Jellybean Adventures** says that she got into blogging because she kept reading posts on other blogs that were 'carbon copies' of one another. "A new product would come out or a new dress in a popular shop and then there seemed to be an influx of posts all reviewing or talking about the exact same thing. I wanted to, yes, review products, but I wanted to do a show and tell. I want to see what it looked like before and then the after picture and then be able to judge for myself how great it works or doesn't work."

Or your blog can be a useful and pragmatic addition to an existing enterprise that then becomes a passion, as in the case of Hollie Brooks, who contributes to the **Mia Fleur** interior design blog that complements her family's online retail business. "We started blogging in the run up to launching our online shop, to share our inspirations and give everyone a taster of what was to come. However the blog has changed a lot over the last year and blogging has become a hobby of ours; something that we love doing."

Journalist Chris Brown, who now publishes the **Polaroids and Polar Bears** blog, realised that blogging could be a useful addition to his professional skill set and allow him independence. "I've always loved going to the theatre and writing.

At first I started doing freelance for a number of publications in the West Midlands but then I realised that actually I could do this for myself. I spent days looking into hosting, domain names, WordPress templates and meta-tags and pretty much taught myself before taking the plunge."



Chris Brown

There are a plethora of bloggers out there, especially in the beauty and fashion space, but there's definitely still a chance to hit the big time. Twenty-two-year-old beauty blogger Zoe Sugg (**Zoella**), who specialises in vlogging, regularly hits 500k-700k views for the videos she posts. How did she engage such a big audience? By producing high quality content on a regular basis, but also by being accessible and fun. Sounds easy, but her perfect formula is hard to match because it's very much hers. Stick with your own unique voice, overcome your fears and shyness to put yourself forward, and most of all – BE PATIENT AND CONSISTENT. Rome wasn't built in a day, and a great audience of readers isn't built up overnight.

Another British beauty blogger, **Lily Pebbles**, has gone in a relatively short space of time, from being unemployed to being able to make a good living from her vlog. Look at the best, soak up what they're doing, but don't copy them – create your own style and hope that it resonates too.

Travel blogger Jess Gibson, who blogs as **The Travelista**, has the dream job of travelling around the world, staying in luxury hotels and writing about it. Originally working as an underpaid and overworked PA in London, she managed to persuade the magazine in the next office to include some of her writing free of charge. They sent her to do some travel reviews, she realised it was her calling, and she now has a successful luxury travel blog. She makes the point that her success was partly down to good fortune, but also that much of it was down to persistence, persuasion and sheer hard work.

Q2. Where do you get your writing inspiration from?

It's difficult sometimes to recognise where we get our blogging inspiration, as there is so many stimuli in the world, from newspapers and magazines to TV and the internet, and even just walking down the street. If you ask most bloggers where they get their ideas they tend to say "Oh, well really the ideas just pop into my head!"

Inhabiting the world you blog about is useful – beauty blogger **Lottie Pearce** keeps herself immersed in media that are relevant to her blog. "I am inspired by products I discover in shops or online, by newspaper and magazine articles and by other blogs. I am constantly learning and

researching about the beauty industry – I live and breathe it!"

Another method is to practice what you preach – if you blog about anything practical, make sure you're active about exploring new ideas and new techniques that you can pass onto your readers, whatever the field you're covering. Hollie Brooks of interior design blog **Mia Fleur** says: "We are always making and crafting things at home, so it's only natural that we then blog about them. However, we tend to ask ourselves, 'what do we know how to do, that others might like to learn how to do'? Then we go from there!"

If you have a more ideas-based or thoughtful blog, one idea is to find something to react against! Joiee Birch, who writes about fashion, style and the occasional rant on his **Mr Joiee** blog, says: "In the age of Twitter and Facebook, everybody has an opinion about something. If I see a statement or a point of view I strongly disagree with, it quite often inspires me to write my own views on the subject – I really enjoy writing when I'm angry or annoyed with something because the words seem to just flow better, and I would like to think a certain level of passion comes across when people read it. I wouldn't write anything that I didn't believe in 100%."

Or if you are more motivated by fun and less by getting annoyed, another way is to try to find a subject that you can bring some humour to. **Pretty Wild Things** beauty blogger Serena Ozigowicz recommends this technique. "Blogging has been a great way for me to write about things I love (or hate) on a daily basis. I like to inject a little humour into my writing – whether that's noticeable I'm not sure – but I really enjoy the freedom of writing what I truly think about a product, or what I'm loving at this moment in time."

Bloggers do admit to often getting ideas and inspiration from other bloggers. This can be a great idea, especially if you have writer's block, but it's also important to make sure you are bringing something new to the mix, otherwise your blog community can become an echo chamber.

Again, it's those with a unique and strong vision that tend to prosper, both in terms of readership and engagement with brands. Photographer Scott Schuman began **The Sartorialist** blog in New York with the specific idea of

“creating a two-way dialogue about the world of fashion and its relationship to daily life”. Since he launched the blog, he has worked with Verizon, Kiehl’s, NESpresso, DKNY, Gant, Absolut and more, as well as having his work published by Penguin books. None of this would have happened without the right inspiration.

Q3. If you could offer some words of encouragement to a newbie or frustrated blogger, what would they be?

Blogging has exploded in recent years as free and easy-to-use blogging sites enable newbies to dip their toes in the water. But success (however you define it) doesn’t come instantly. You’ll need to be inspired, work hard, stay patient, reach out to other bloggers and have a voice and style of your own if you want your particular blog to stand out from the others. It also helps to be adaptable – if something’s not working, change it up fast. Try different things and don’t be scared of making mistakes on your road to recognition. Also beware trolls – a hazard of internet living, trolls (and indeed spammers) can make your life unpleasant, but there is a world of supportive fellow bloggers out there who will back you up. Listen instead to the constructive feedback.

To get you through the quiet days, when it feels like nobody is reading or watching, you must be passionate about your subject. Whether you’re writing about flowers or surfing, fashion or social media, you need to care enough that you’re motivated to produce content. If you’re motivated by attention or money solely, your blog will probably fall flat.

That’s the background. What are some helpful tips that our blogger community can offer beyond those basics? Lorian Trebbi of fashion, beauty and lifestyle blog **It’s Lol** says you should know your stuff: “You need to be very clear, descriptive and precise. For example, when reviewing clothing materials or make-up brands, learn about the terms! There are always ways to further your knowledge.”

Kimberley Wright of lifestyle blog **Keystrokes by Kimberley** has several practical tips: “Attend a webinar or conference once or twice a year. Build a brand and keep the mindset that you are building a brand. Invest in a domain

name and have an email address at that domain name. Select WordPress or a custom site. Commit to regular writing and posting and produce original photography.”

Confusingly, it’s good to post regularly to build up followers BUT it is also important to step away from the computer if you’re forcing it, as readers will be able to tell that you’re faking it.

Business blogger **Joanne Dewberry** says that planning is crucial. “Plan! A blog needs to work as a piece of marketing material even if you are a mummy blogger. Plan and mind map ideas and topics for what you will blog about. If you have a day when you write loads, schedule some in for other days so your blog updates regularly rather than 10 one day and none for a week. Don’t forget to re-share on social media old content.”

A regular time to write can be helpful, says Liz Wright, who blogs as **Mamas Around The House**. “Writing, like anything, takes practice. Sit down and write 30 minutes a day and it will become easier. Some bloggers are good at posting every day, while others post only once a week and that makes them happy.”

Nailah Dossa of style blog **Moda in Londres** underscores the importance of networking with other bloggers. “My main advice would be to work hard and post regularly, also to collaborate with other bloggers as often as you can. Particularly those who have a larger database than your own. It’s also a good idea to go to as many events related to what you blog about in order to build up contacts, as that will be a great help in the future.”

Lastly, although it is tempting to jump into the blogging pool and get started, a bit of brainstorming first about what you want to publish and what you want to achieve might help greatly in the long run. Says beauty blogger **Abitha Pallett**: “If you’re a new blogger you should dedicate some real time to determine what you want to put into your blog and what you’d like to get out... To frustrated bloggers I’d say that firstly you need to troubleshoot and identify the problem you’re experiencing with your blog. Once you’ve had a step back and given it some thought you can work on remedying it. Set yourself a goal and work out what you need to do to achieve it. Try not to be too hard on yourself as everyone has problems with their blogs somewhere along the line!”

Fashion blogger **Nikki Fountaglou** agrees, and says that most bloggers will find their flow in the end if they keep trying. "I started several blogs on different sites until I was finally happy. I got a rhythm happening and from there I just kept going, but it took a long time to find that. I remember when I first started I was like "How embarrassing, what am I writing about and why?" There was a lot of deleting, but you get there – you find a reason to keep going and you find sense."

Q4. What has changed most about blogging culture/the blogging industry since you started?

The world of blogging ten years ago was much more sparsely populated, and those who did inhabit it were often (talented) eccentrics with a devouring passion for their subject. Now it's so much easier to create and maintain a blog it has become much more of a mainstream activity. With the downturn of traditional journalism models, bloggers have stepped into the breach, and as a result many brands have started taking blogger outreach seriously in recent years.

Meghan Lorine of fashion blog **Eye Hate Heels** says that it's become much more competitive for bloggers in the least year and a half alone, but that competition can be a spur to success. "Even actresses are hopping on the blogging bandwagon. Every time I hear of a new fashion or street style blogger on the scene, I gain more motivation to creatively push myself to success." Sure enough, **Lauren Conrad** and **Olivia Palermo** of (kind of) reality shows *The Hills* and *The City* both have highly successful blogs.

For those who want to be able to concentrate on their blog full-time – the non-hobbyists, or the hobbyists who want to take it to the next level – the critical word is 'monetisation'. Yolanda Arrington, of award-winning US lifestyle blog **Witches' Brew**, explains: "Initially, we blogged and that was it. Our Facebook and Twitter presence grew shortly after. I'd say the biggest change is having to find ways to integrate all these other forms of social media into our business model. Blogging has become less of a hobby for me and more of a business that I want to get deeper into because of that. I've learned that blogging is merely a foundation or a launching pad. The key to making your blog work is

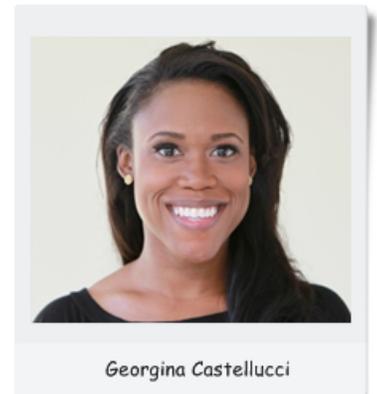
to step from behind the computer and start hosting events and looking for other ways to monetise what you offer."

As journalists are encouraged to blog more and more by their editors, bloggers are starting to move the other way. Manchester lifestyle blogger **Chrissie Lowe** says: "I started my first blog ten years ago, and back then it was considered a geeky hobby. Now people can make a living from sponsored posts and banners or have it as a popular extension of their business. Top bloggers like Perez Hilton and **Susie Bubble** are celebrities in their own right. Also a lot of online news sites have articles written by bloggers rather than professional journalists nowadays."

So where bloggers used to be strongly driven keepers of online diaries, they can now be journalists, brand ambassadors, even celebrities (especially ironic for **Perez Hilton** who made his name deriding them!).

But remember always, your blog needs a heart. Says lifestyle blogger **Georgina Castellucci**: "Brands have realised we are truly digital influencers that can have a major effect on their business.

Many new bloggers have also begun their blogs with that as their end in sight. Get lots of free things, get paid and become famous. If that is why you go into it, you most likely will not succeed."



Q5. What daily tools and platforms do you use in your blogging routine, for research, promotion, sharing and other?

The holy trinity of core social media sites – Facebook, Twitter and YouTube – still rule for most bloggers. Because they're so popular with the average user and so mainstream, content put on those sites in an intelligent, strategic manner stands a great chance of scoring a good audience. That means a good number of readers who are genuinely interested in – and engaged by – your content.

But it's not enough to just use these sites – you should think about how to use them well so that you get the most out of them. Newbie blogger **Katie Chesworth** may not have been in the blogging game for long but she's well aware of this: "I'm still a baby, however I think the way you reach your audience has changed. Hashtags are big now and you need to know how to use them effectively to get the views. It's no good just sending a random tweet out!"

Plus-size blogger **Talie Campbell** underlines this point: "It would be worth checking if something similar to what you've written about is trending at that time because it makes it easier for people to find."

Having a blog and not helping people to find it (and your most exciting or important posts) is a bit like building a shop with no roads or paths to it. It may be there, but you're not going to have many people coming through the door.

Reaching out to your particular community on social media is also important – for example, the hashtag #fbloggers or #bbloggers stand for fashion bloggers and beauty bloggers. Says blogger **Karolina Anne**: "If you use one of these hashtags, the tweet will be sent to fashion bloggers or beauty bloggers. It's great for tips and sharing your posts as well."

Facebook blogging groups also exist, where you can network with likeminded bloggers and help each other out. Don't forget about offline either – take note of any events

happening in your area and get networking in person. Even if you're shy, it's a great way to make some connections.

If you have a lot of social media on the go – and particularly if you have more than one blog – it's helpful to manage all your social media with one programme. This also allows you control over the scheduling of posts – useful for bloggers with day jobs or just busy lives. HootSuite seems particularly popular with bloggers, although there are other options out there.

Blogger **Chrissie Lowe** echoes other bloggers in identifying Bloglovin as an increasingly important platform and says it's becoming more common for PRs to ask for reader/follower numbers there as well as on Facebook and Twitter.

Every blogger should know that there is a host of free and valuable tools that will help you do more exciting things with your blog, build your audience and eventually monetise your blog. Make sure you're aware of the best ones out there, and pick and choose to create your own blogger toolbox.

Get inspired

Feedly – one of the easiest to use RSS feeds, which will allow you to keep up with content in your field

Alltop – all the headlines from your favourite topics, to help you keep abreast of what's going on

TrapIt – allows you to search out content on your subjects from diverse voices, helping you get ideas beyond those just in the mainstream media

Google Adwords Keywords Research Tool and **Google Trends** – these are a great way to see what the wider world is thinking of and looking for, which will help guide you when you're planning your content

Pimp your visuals

Flickr – well-known photo site Flickr can be a great source of free images; just use its advanced search to find images with a Creative Commons license that you can use

Compfight – this excellent photo stock site allows you to search many images that you can use free of charge as long

as you credit correctly and stick to license terms

Pixlr – this is a great, free photo-editing tool that will help you to polish your visuals so that your blog really stands out, and will save you buying Photoshop

DaFont – this site offers loads of free fonts that you can use on your blog

Cool things on your blog

Thinglink – free and exciting technology that allows you to make your images interactive

Livefyre – this comments system for your blog is free, allows you a good deal of control and also has great customer service if you have any problems

Disqus – this is a well-established blog commenting system, used by many big name websites

Digg Digg – add all your social sharing buttons in one go, rather than having to do them separately

Pop Survey – host surveys that allow you to get to know your readership better so you can help tailor your blog to them even better – or another option is **PollDaddy**

Reach out and get the word out

Feedburner – if you want to get your best content onto people's feeds and have all your subscribers in one place, this can be very useful – it's a bit fiddly though

Bloglovin – when you want to research and engage with other blogs easily

Rapportive – this is a Gmail plugin that gives you lots of info on all your contacts within the email programme itself, allowing you to build relationships better, which is a key part of blogging

MailChimp – this is a free and user friendly way to send out newsletters and other mailouts to your readers

After the Deadline – this checks your grammar and spelling, and generally just makes sure that you are publishing quality text that isn't riddled with mistakes

Social strategy

SproutSocial – monitor all of your social media accounts in one go, this offers sophisticated social media analytics and post scheduling

Tagboard – a great app that lets you monitor hashtags and keywords across various social media

Buffer – schedule your social media posts to engage with the right people at the right time

Tweepi – manage your Twitter followers

Bit.ly – your handy URL shortener, particularly useful for Twitter where there is a character-limit on your posts

Saving and sharing

Dropbox – the best for storing your data in cloud form, and you can even get a plugin so your blog syncs to Dropbox, giving you peace of mind

LoveIt – a mobile social network for images, LoveIt lets you organise and share your images, as well as engaging with others' pictures and giving you inspiring recommendations – you can also save images privately for future reference – like a mood board

Evernote – an incredibly useful note taking app that lets you save notes, photos, audio pages and more across all your digital devices

Get productive

Google Apps for Business – free productivity suite from Google allows you to email, create and share documents and slides, save in the cloud and schedule meetings and deadlines

Focus Booster – are you easily distracted? Focus Booster is an app designed to help you concentrate better on each of your tasks, so you get the most out of your time

Trello – this free project management software is invaluable if you're working with others, especially remotely – for example, if you get together with other bloggers on a joint project

Wunderlist – if you're one of life's list makers – and as a blogger you certainly have a raft of tasks to stay on top of – this app is for you

As well as these tools, it's worth checking in regularly with blogger sites such as **ProBlogger**, for the latest blog news and tips, and **Copyblogger**, for marketing and SEO ideas and tutorials.

Also, if you are a WordPress user, there are some further plugins we'd recommend to make your life easier:

WordPress SEO by Yoast – if you have a WordPress blog, this is a great, quick way of making sure you're ticking all the SEO boxes so you can just concentrate on creating great content

Akismet – stop getting spammed!

Tweet Old Post – this WordPress plugin keeps promoting your older but timeless content, so it doesn't have impact just once but instead keeps on giving!

If you're inspired by all these ways in which you can improve your worklife, blog and reach, then you might want to look at further tools and tips, and in which case you can go deeper **here**. If you're a fashion blogger there are more tips **here**. Although there is a whole cosmos of tools out there, think about where your gaps are and where you need to improve the most, and start with a few new tools at a time until you're comfortable with them and using them fully. Then the world is your oyster.

Q6. Do you understand your blog analytics, and how important do you think they are? Please share some best practice.

Analytics may not be 'sexy' but neither is working hard on your blog and getting little reward in terms of readership and reach. Many new bloggers struggle to understand what analytics are and how to use them, and the key is probably to start simple, and gradually develop a more sophisticated understanding of how to make use of the data.

Georgina Castellucci is clued up on this front and checks her analytics every day: "I want to know what is drawing my readers in, where they are from and their demographic as to shape my content to meet their needs. Look for the keywords people searched to find your relevant post, remember that and utilise smart SEO practices going forward."

Google Analytics is the place to start. It's relatively simple to use (there are plenty of online tutorials on YouTube if you're struggling) – and in no time you will know:

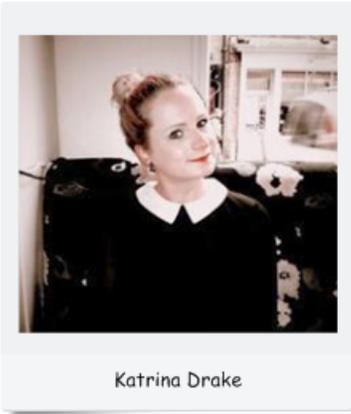
- **How many people are reading your posts**
- **Where those people are and how they're viewing the content**
- **How they're finding your blog**
- **How long they're staying on there and what they're looking at when.**

This is interesting – but it's also useful as it allows you to improve your blog and tailor it more finely depending on the insights you gain.

For example, maybe if you have a travel blog, lots of people are looking at your site when it's a Monday morning, because they're heading back into the office for another long week and are sneaking a bit of escapism. If you know that, then you might put your exciting Caribbean beach holiday post up then, when you know you'll pull in the readers, rather than late on a Friday afternoon when nobody could care less.

The patterns will be different for different blogs, and that's why analytics exists. You can schedule posts to be published at good times. You can also concentrate more on a certain kind of post if that's what your readers are flocking to – e.g. maybe they prefer your beauty reviews to your fashion posts.

UK lifestyle blogger **Katrina Drake** says that she does have some knowledge of SEO from her day job "so I know what my statistics mean. It's always good to keep an eye on them as they can suggest valuable changes you can make



Katrina Drake

to your blog to improve it. For example, keep your bounce rate low – preferably under 50%. If it is high it means readers are either not finding the content interesting or your blog is too hard to navigate and they are becoming impatient and closing your blog window.”

Tactics devised through the use of analytics will help to increase your audience, and that in turn helps if you want to monetise your blog – and monetisation is important for many who’re trying to make the move from hobby blogging to full time.

Blogger **Donna Granada** explains: “I think blog analytics become significant when you’re looking for sponsors because they would usually ask about the traffic your blog is generating, which is really vital to them since they will be paying you to take in customers to their sites.”

Many bloggers stress, however, that analytics are useful but not the be all and end all – they give you some good guidance about how your content is working, but you should also pay attention to what you feel is true to your blog and trust your instincts. Maybe the audience you have right now isn’t the one you’re aiming toward.

Says **Meghan Lorine**: “I think you need to take the analytics with a grain of salt. They’re a great resource to understand what your readers are interested in, but you shouldn’t let them dictate your entire blog.”

For the newbie blogger particularly, analytics may be brand new territory, and can sometimes be a little daunting to get your head around. If you fall into this camp, a good place to start is this **post** by Kiss Metrics, on what and why metrics matter. Following on from that it’s worth heading over to HubSpot to read **10 Amazing Blogging Insights Your Analytics Can Tell You**. Now that you hopefully have the basics, you may like to visit Jeffalytics to read his **Google Analytics 101: Tips to become a better blogger** or **A Newbie Guide to Using Google Analytics to Track Social Media Marketing**. If you’re not a Google Analytics ninja

by now, well then you should be! Do you still have a thirst for more? Ok, then head back to Kiss Metrics and read **50 Resources for Getting the Most Out of Google Analytics**.

Q7. Where do you hope blogging will take you in the future?

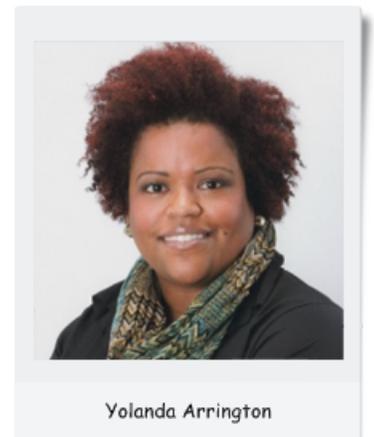
Most bloggers get into the blogosphere because they have a passion – whether a passion for writing, or a particular subject. But this doesn’t mean that they don’t want to harvest some good out of their blogging other than just having an outlet for their words, pictures or videos.

Blogging can lead to recognition and the establishment of an expert reputation. It can sometimes bring in enough money to quit the day job, and in a handful of cases be seriously lucrative. It can give people a foot up into other worlds, whether getting a regular column in a magazine or a newspaper, a book deal or a job with a well-known brand.

It can even do good – like the trio of mummy bloggers who teamed up to form the award-winning Team Honk blog and campaign, which raised lots of money for Comic Relief in Ghana. Each blogger has also achieved an even stronger profile for her individual blog as a benefit of working together – there really is strength in numbers.

We asked some bloggers where they see their blogging career taking them in the future.

Yolanda Arrington says that her goal is to blend blogging and branding. “I currently do some social media consulting, but I would love to become a real tastemaker who is able to bring bloggers and web savvy folks together with brands and public relations people to bring real content and product directly to the audience. I love bringing people who have skill A but need to meet folks with skill B together. I guess you could say that I want to become a “Dot Connector”. That’s what I hope my blogging and social media efforts are doing.”



Yolanda Arrington

Chris Brown hopes that his site might start paying for itself. "At the moment blogging is a hobby. However I'm starting to get interest from advertisers who are looking to place adverts on my site. Polaroids and Polar Bears wasn't set up as a way of making money, however it may evolve into this. This won't detract from the content though."

Foraging and food blogger **Jane Sarchet** likes the idea of making it onto paper. "I'm currently writing my second ebook, which I hope to have finished by the end of the year, and perhaps one day I might see a real life book with my name on. That would make me VERY happy."

And she's not the only one! "I would love for blogging to become a full time career. Maybe one day snag a book deal, design a line of chic, comfortable heels?" says **Meghan Lorine**.

Conclusion

Bloggers today are a diverse bunch, with lots of new faces on the scene who're keen to reach out to as many readers as possible but are unsure how to do so. The good news is that you can learn this – as long as your content is strong, you're happy to pick up new skills and you are true to your own style, then chances are that with some hard work, sensible strategising, dogged persistence and the help of others, your blog will become increasingly popular.

On the whole, most existing bloggers are content to continue practising their craft. If there is one discontent, it is that people want to do video blogging but don't feel confident enough, or they lack the specialist software and time or bandwidth to upload content. It's a new skill to add and daunting for many, but bloggers shouldn't be scared to at least try their hand at it.

The blogosphere is only going to become busier and more populated over the next few years, but as long as bloggers find their special niche and stay true to it, they'll find an audience, whether it's a small but devoted one, or a large and lucrative one.

Thanks

Many thanks to the bloggers who took part in the Bloggers Required Q&A. Their responses can be read in full [here](#).

About the author

Andy Merchant is one of the co-founders of **Bloggers Required** and director of **Populate Digital**, a social media consultancy. Over the past decade Andy has worked on a variety of social B2B and B2C campaigns, for a wide range of brands, from a London tourist attraction, to a leading book publisher and a luxury watch brand, as well as helping to launch and establish a number of start-up and challenger brands. This year Andy is a judge for the 2014 UK Blog Awards and Samsung Digital Media Awards 2014. Follow Andy on [Twitter](#) | [Pinterest](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

About Bloggers Required

Bloggers Required is a free service for bloggers. It aims to be a facilitator between small businesses, agencies, brands, and start-ups looking for support with blogger outreach, helping to make life a little bit easier for everyone involved.

Brands are invited to fill in a simple and intuitive form, which is called a 'blogging assignment'. The assignment acts as the overview, detailing how the brand would like bloggers to help.

Once the brand's assignment is added to the site, it is then up to the blogger to make sure their blog is a good fit for the assignment and to get in touch with the brand via the site. Once contact is made between the brand and blogger, it is then up to both parties to decide on the best way forward!

Appendix

Statistics from NMIcrite (Nielsen/McKinsey) <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/newswire/2012/buzz-in-the-blogosphere-millions-more-bloggers-and-blog-readers.html>

Q1:

Jason Francis, *The Social Media Samurai* <http://www.the-socialmediasamurai.com/>

Lottie Pierce, *Love, Beauty & Spa* <http://lovebeautyand-spa.blogspot.co.uk/>

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