



## Internet Marketing Consultants

This is one of the 'Best of' articles written by Barry Welford. The current portfolio of these articles is to be found at <http://smmbc.ca/portfolio/>

### How Long Should That Blog Post Be?

The original can be found at <http://www.dirjournal.com/articles/how-long-should-that-blog-post-be/>

In an earlier post we described [How To Write Engaging Blog Posts](#). What wasn't covered was how long that blog post should be. There is no single right answer to that question but we will suggest what you should take into account as you write your own blog posts.

#### What the Experts Have Said

Luckily a good deal has been written by some very expert bloggers to help us in deciding how long our blog posts should be. One of the most skilled bloggers is **Darren Rowse**, who writes the Pro Blogger blog. Almost exactly three years ago, he discussed [Post Length – How Long Should a Blog Post Be?](#) He noted then that it had been debated by bloggers hotly over the years and a number of factors had to be considered.

- Reader Attention Span – average blog readers stay 96 seconds per blog
- Search Engine visibility – a page of at least 250 words is probably a reasonable length.
- Quantity of Posts – More posts are better for generating readership with RSS and in Search Engines even if they are short posts
- Topic/Genre – The type of post that you're writing will often determine it's length. Reviews are generally longer.
- Comprehensive - write enough to comprehensively cover your topic and then stop

Those factors are still very good advice.

Twenty Steps [had data](#) from the Technorati Top 100 blogs. This showed that half of all these blogs have an average of less than 250 words per post. The author felt this made sense because people find it a lot harder to concentrate on reading off a monitor than they do from the printed page. It was pointed out that others feel that 500 words should really be the minimum. A Copyblogger post on [How Long Your Blog Posts Should Be](#) suggested that blog posts could be longer than the somewhat industry accepted standard of 250-600 words provided they were giving detailed advice or were telling a story. Shorter posts could be appropriate to give factual information such as stock market reports that could provide links to other information sources.

## Advantages and disadvantages of different lengths

Summarizing the advice that was given two or three years ago, we have the following picture:

- For the right audience, if you are giving advice or telling a story, then the length should be what it needs to be even if that takes 2,500 words or more.
- For most audiences and most topics a mid-length blog post is probably more appropriate. That would put it in the 500 – 1,000 range.
- For human audiences, very short posts only work if they are giving very intensive information that can be covered in few words or if they are listing the links to other information sources.
- If the main aim is to be search engine visible in order to create traffic for AdSense ads, then short posts may again be acceptable. They should ideally be about 300 words long in order to give adequate content for search engine optimization.

That analysis was true a few years back. Has anything changed since then to suggest modified advice is more appropriate.

## Enter Twitter

As anyone who spends some time on the Internet knows, the big factor that is changing people's habits on the Web is Twitter. Since May 2008, many bloggers are spending an increasing proportion of their online time on Twitter.

At that time, the UK Guardian noted that [Real-time micro-blogging is gaining in popularity](#).

It noted a problem in identifying the true traffic to Twitter, since measurement companies like Hitwise tend to rely on browser-based metrics to see where samples of people are going. Twitter can be accessed or receive inputs with only a mobile phone. In addition, many of the systems that are built around Twitter use web pages to interface directly to the Twitter database.

At that time, Twitter did not respond to a request asking how many active users there were and how many tweets they sent each day; but it's a safe guess that both were in the millions. TwitDir, a Twitter directory, suggested there were 1.05 million Twitter users, up from 518,000 in October 2007.

Since then it would seem that the rapid rate of growth of Twitter users has continued.

The typical tweet on Twitter is less than the 140 characters and spaces that are allowed. It is not unreasonable to assume that many people are becoming very accustomed to reading and writing these incredibly short status reports.

## Very Short Stories

An interesting reflection of this greater comfort level with short items is described by Zoe Siskos on the Social Media Group blog. ([This title's just six words long.](#))

By way of illustration she mentions a blog post on Wired that covered [Very Short Stories](#). Wired had asked various authors to write a story in just six words. Wired wrote that Hemingway's best work was a story that was just that length (For sale: baby shoes, never worn.) With that ultimate standard in mind, she goes on to say:

I wonder if people who use Twitter frequently have learned to be more concise in their regular, daily communications. Perhaps people who enjoy Twitter are already concise communicators. Perhaps being concise isn't the main point at all; instead, it's making sure that we are communicating effectively by using each word to its fullest potential.

That is the key here. The Internet is great for supporting conversations and communication.

Perhaps the message is that blog posts should be slightly shorter than in the past and should be encouraging dialogue.

## Encouraging Dialogues Not Monologues

Dialogues are inherently more effective than monologues. Having very long posts may occasionally be appropriate to fully and effectively explain some difficult concept. However it may often be doing more to flatter the author's ego rather than creating an effective channel of communication with the audience.

In this Twitter-sensitive world, which encourages concise communication and more interaction, blog posts should be shorter than they used to be. Perhaps 500 words should now typically be the target with some hooks included to stimulate comments.

A recent example that follows this formula is the [Daily SEO Tip](#) website. It should be mentioned that an additional inducement (hook) for comments at this website is that commenters receive a link to their blog and a link to the most recent blog post they wish to have featured. The result is a blog that has a series of relatively short posts, each with a large number of comments. That is probably a goal for all bloggers to shoot for.