

10

WAYS

to use your

BLOG

as a

LEAD

GENERATOR

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INTRODUCTION

The whole premise behind a blog and website is what I like to call, “Help your prospects with the **know, like and trust** factor.” People buy from people they know, like and trust. Therefore, you want to make it as easy as possible for your prospects to know you, like you, and trust you.

When you blog about the projects you're working on, giving your opinion about a photo, or a room, **it helps your prospects get to know you. It also helps them decide if they like you, your style, how you conduct business, etc.** They are getting to know you, which is good, but **the best thing about it is that they're doing it on their own time.** They can look at your website at midnight, at one o'clock in the morning, at 3 AM. They can look at it when you're driving your kids to school! **Your prospects are pre-qualifying themselves, on their own time!**

When your website and blog are working properly for you, they cut down on the tire-kickers, idea shoppers (you know the ones that just want to get your ideas, but never place an order) and those least likely to buy from you. **The time wasters are eliminated!**

With that in mind, I've put together this course **“10 Ways to Use Your Interior Design Blog as a Lead Generator”**.

As you read on, I hope these tips will be helpful not only in giving your interior design business a boost, but also in helping you grow as a person and an entrepreneur well on your way to success!

Cheers,



Barbara Deckmeyer

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10 WAYS TO USE YOUR BLOG AS A LEAD GENERATOR

TIP #1: Capture as much information as you can, from every single visitor that lands on your website

Write up a free report or a 'How-To' guide or tips on where to get great deals in your town. Anything you can offer your prospect for free is a great way to get their name and email address. Then, you can put them on your email list and start sending them information about your business via an email newsletter.

The best way to do that is with what's called an *Opt-In Box* or a subscription form. That's where you'd say, "Get my Free Report on the Top Ten Places in Town to Get a Great Deal on Furniture" and they'll give you their name and email address in exchange for your free report. You've now captured their contact information and can stay in touch with them.

Write a few ideas that your readers and ideal clients might want to know more about. (Tip – Think of some of their most frequently asked questions)

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TIP #2: Showcase your work

Of course we want to do that on your blog in a gallery page or you can do it with success stories, something like that, and you can do that in a number of ways. You can do that with video, which is fabulous today and very popular, and also with photos.

A blog is a great way to allow your prospects to see your style of work, the caliber of projects you work on, your professionalism, the great work you do, etc.

What projects do you have photos of that you can post in your blog?

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TIP #3: Write a Case Study

Provide the parameters of the job, the limitations that were given to you – ie the budget or you had to work with certain colors or your customer has a mob of kids. Whatever your parameters were for the project, be sure to include them, along with a little history about the project and the end results. It's a great way for prospects to say, "I really like that. I'm going to give her a call."

What was a really great client project that you enjoyed and the client loved?

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TIP #4: Testimonials

Be sure to use your testimonials on your blog, liberally! Use them all over, everywhere you possibly can on your website and in your blog. Why? Think of your testimonials as a 24/7 workforce referring you new business.

Your previous clients said fabulous things about your work and they go out and they tell all the people that are coming on to your website about how great you are and how beautiful your work is and how happy they are; it's a referral.

Being able to include that all over your website is your way of getting positive feedback, it's a supplemental message that says, *"You're so great, you do a great job,"*

Make sure your testimonials are very specific.

You don't want them to say, *"I just love the furniture you did,"* or *"I love the color,"* or *"Your drapes are fabulous"*.

We want them to say:

"Before you came in it was so hot in the room and the sun was blaring in, we couldn't even sit in the room without having to wear sunglasses. Then after (your product) installed in our window treatment, we were able to really enjoy the room. It's very cool and we enjoy our view and the temperature of the room."

What recent projects have you completed that you can still get a raving testimonial from?

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TIP #5: Make it Easy to Find You

Ideally, your contact details need to be very clear and very easy to find on every single page of your blog, preferably in the header.

I'm sure you, like me, have been on websites where you're looking for the "Contact Us" page. Don't you just hate it when I go to a website and I'm trying to find a way to call the person or the company and I have to go five pages deep and this little teenee-tiny number is in the very bottom of the page.

You don't want that. You want your customers and prospects to call you with more work!

Some WordPress themes give you the ability to customize the header so you can add your name, your logo, a tag line, a phone number. Sometimes other themes are very basic and they won't allow you to do that, many limitations. But again it's going to depend on your theme.

Do you have your contact information on every single page? Is it prominently displayed and easy to find?

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TIP #6: Add video

Do as much as you can to start adding video to your blog; on your front page or create a special video page or a gallery page with videos.

I really like putting videos on the front page specifically because you can introduce yourself. Think of it as: When a customer calls you or a prospect calls you out to the house for the first time and they meet you and they hear all about you, what you do, and it's a way to introduce yourself and your mission statement and talk about your business and your style and how you like to conduct your business.

If you can do that on the video on your front page, it cuts out one more step of the customer pre-qualifying themselves and saying, "Hey I really like her. She is great or he is awesome. I want to work with him. Where's that phone number?" The more you can do the better. The one thing that I will say about the video is you want to keep it pretty short. People's attention span is not real long when it comes to video especially introductory videos, so I would keep it, if you could keep it, under a minute the better. Just hit some top points, certain basic fundamental points, and chat a little bit about you and your business.

What professionally taken photos can you put into a PowerPoint slideshow? What projects will you select and how soon can you get that inserted into your blog?

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TIP #7: FAQ's on Steroids

Answer absolutely every single question a prospect could ever ask. You want to include that on your blog. If you have a Frequently Asked Question or a "Good to know Georgia" page or something like that, use that space to write out every single question that your prospects, and clients have ever asked you.

For example:

How long have you been in business?

Do you have a style?

Do you do modern or contemporary?

Do you do residential or commercial?

Do you have any specialties?

Do you do custom cabinets?

Think back and write down every single question anybody has ever asked. And any question they could ask. And every question they should ask. Again, this is a pre-qualifying step where your customer is getting to know you, to like you and to trust you.

Take a few minutes to look at my website www.HighDollarDesigner.com, I have a "Get to know Barbara" page and you'll see I have quite a few questions there and a lot of good information. Each question is filling in my potential clients and my prospects with more information about my services and my business.

What are a few of your most frequently asked questions? Write them here and commit to adding the answers to your website as soon as possible.

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TIP #8: Create a slideshow of your work

The eighth way to use your interior design blog as a lead generator is to create a slide show of your work. Now that's a really easy thing to do.

There are free services online. One of them is called Animoto.com. They have a program where you can upload photos and they have a free service and they have a paid service. Basically, you just take pictures of the work you've done, you could put in a few words and then it converts it into a video that you can put on your website. Another one is called SlideShare.com and you can do that as well.

You can include that on your blog, you can include them in your LinkedIn page, Facebook page, you can include them in many different places when you create these slide shows. You can also do it in PowerPoint as well.

What you want to do with the slide show is you want to include at least an opening page that talks about or has your logo, the name of your business and your phone number and maybe your website—your pertinent information on the first page. You want to include many, anywhere between three and ten photos maybe; I usually include maybe five to six photos. Then you want a closing page with your phone number, again the name of your business and your website and a call to action.

Be sure to include a call to action that's says, "Call today!" or "Email me today!", anything like that.

What client projects are especially great for a slideshow? Note them below.

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TIP #9: Make a running commentary

This step is really fun. I really like doing this on a blog. The ninth way to use your blog as a lead generator is to take one photo, and it can be either your photo or it can be photo in a magazine or online you particularly like, and I would like to hear you do a running commentary about that photo. You're going to write about, "I really like this photo. It has the right balance, it has a good sense of style. The color on the walls are bright and cheery," whatever it is about the photo that you like or even what you don't like.

Typically it's kind of a little bit better to do what you like. But what it does is, it allows people to hear you in your writing and understand your sense of style, maybe the things that you would do in a room that you would say, "*I would recommend doing this*".

Basically you're just writing about this photo and it's allowing your prospects to again get to know you, to like you, to see your sense of style, your design capabilities, what you would do differently, what you might do better, what you support and they might see a picture on there and you might write something that looks just exactly the problem that they're having in their house. That would be a fabulous way to secure them to get them to call you.

What projects are you currently working on that you can take photos 'in progress'?

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TIP #10: Include (3) three tips in your commentary

This is a little bit similar and what you can do is you can include one photo and this time instead of writing a running commentary about the photo, you can include three tips. You could point three things out. You could say,

"Include a really beautiful flower arrangement on the table in your house like this photo."

"Take a note of the crown molding, the style of crown molding at the ceiling line."

"This is great way to draw your eye up to the ceiling."

So if you can include several tips about one photo, they get to see you in action.

A lot of time people might be concerned, *"Well I'm giving away all my free information when I do that."* I don't want you to be worried about that because often times, I don't know if you had this happen, but customers will try to do it themselves first. They'll try to go all the steps and figure it out themselves and they can't do it and it doesn't look good and they spend a lot of time and they've wasted a lot of money. Then they call you out and you can show them, because they've wasted so much already, then you can come out and do the work for them.

It's a really great way to do that and I just can't tell you how many times that has happened to me. I walked into a room and I just can see the store-bought products, I even see the bags and the receipts and the plastic wraps thrown all over the room and this pathetic-looking drapes or window treatments just barely limply hanging on the window and they're roasting, they have no privacy. So they give in and they call the expert which your blog is showing them that you are the expert.

List below several topics you'd enjoy writing about. Then note 3 tips for each topic.

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Take one topic and find (3) three photos online to support it

The 11th ways to use your blog as a lead generator is to take one topic and find three photos to support it.

For example, you might select a topic title using window treatments - *"The benefits of fabric shades on a window."*

You might say,

"Here are some fabulous benefits to having a fabric shade on your window instead of a hard treatment."

What you can do is to find three different styles of fabric shades. You could find a flat fold Roman shade; a relaxed hem Roman shade and a cloud shade.

You might talk about,

"A Roman shade is really great for a contemporary streamlined room or in small spaces, a relaxed hem Roman helps bring softness to a hard room, maybe a bathroom or a kitchen. A cloud shade might be great for a little girl's room."

Any number of things can be done to support one topic. You might want to talk about the benefits of a dark kitchen. You include three different pictures of dark kitchens and maybe you'll include a light kitchen. But take one topic and include several photos to support that topic.

For something like that, this is a great way for those that don't like to write because you don't necessarily have to do a lot of writing. You could just write a little blurb and then include three photos.

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Take a few minutes to write out several topics or themes below. Then search for photos that support your topics or themes. For example, your theme might be '*Decorating with the Color Red*'. Look for 3 photos you like, using the color red in the decorating. Write a few sentences about each photo.

Add your 3 images here:

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HOW TO ELIMINATE THE “I DON’T KNOW WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT” SYNDROME

The third thing that we're going to talk about is how to eliminate the *"I don't know what to write about"* syndrome forever.

People, when they blog, or when they think about blogging, they get overwhelmed at the thought, *"Oh my gosh, I don't want to blog. What am I going to write about? I have no idea what to write about."*

Well here's my secret tip that I do every time I write a blog.

At the first of the year, in January when I'm planning, I write what is called an editorial calendar for the entire year. Now that may sound overwhelming but it's actually quite simple and it's very freeing to be able to do that. What you want to do is to take one piece of paper and write down on the left side every month--January, February, March--and include a couple spaces in between each month on your page. Then fill in the super easy 'holiday' months and tie in your offerings somehow to the month.

For instance, in January, the first of the year and a real obvious thing is getting organized after the holidays. What you can do is write about how to get organized for your decorating for the year. Lay out your decorating plans for the year.

"What would you like to do this spring?"

"What would you be interested in this summer?"

"Or here is how to organize your bookshelves."

"Here's a few photos on clever accessorizing for your bookshelves."

February (Valentine's day) - You might include the color red as a topic for that month

July (Fourth of July) – You can include how to entertain with an outdoor party as your topic.

September (Back to school) – You can talk about decorating a kid's room or even an office.

Once you fill out the obvious months, you can see what some of the gaps are, or what's missing in the products that you offer. So if you do bedding and window treatments, or

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custom cabinets, just make sure you can get a good smothering of all the products that you offer and include one topic each month. It's really quite simple.

Then once you get that made up and you print it out, you want to tack it up to a cork board or somewhere you can see it. Then here's what happens: you'll be so surprised when you watch and see how your mind will start looking for ways to write about the topic of the month. It will start coming to you and there will be all kinds of opportunities and you'll get to a point where you have lots of ideas and, "*Which one should I write about?*"



The editorial calendar is a really great way to get rid of the whole drama around your content production.

Bonus

And finally... I have a fun, *bonus* way on how to get content for your blog. It's a great way when you need to have something in a pinch and maybe you've got writer's block or you're late or you're running behind or anything like that.

1. Don't do it!

The *number one* way to come up with new content in a pinch is by not doing yourself. You can ask a friend to be a guest author. You can find a non-competing business for instance your flooring guy or your drapery work room or your upholsterer or somebody that can write a guest spot for you on your blog.

Somebody that's obviously non-competing and that doesn't have the same customers but can write a special thing about flooring one month and it would be a great way to have some help do some writing for you or borrow an article from their blog. Of course you have to ask permission but that's a great way.

2. Go to Ezinearticles.com

Another way to get content in a pinch is to go to Ezinearticles.com. What you can do is you can go on there. If you have downloaded my "Boost Business with a

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WordPress Blog" free ebook, I'll tell you a little more on how to do this, but you can get an article from Ezinearticles.com and post it on to your blog.

The only thing you have to make sure you always do is include the author box in the bottom. The author is the actual person who wrote the article and it will have their link to their website, you have to make sure everything stays intact. You can include that on your blog. You are allowed to do that.

3. Do not post any content that's local to you.

The one thing that I would make sure that you do, if you do decide to do that, is to make sure that any content that you post on your blog is not from anybody that's local to you because obviously we don't want you promoting somebody else's blog. We want you promoting *your* blog. But you can write about somebody across the United States or across Canada because obviously local customers are going to look for local designers first and then they're going to spread out from there.

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FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

Designer: When you talk about posting pictures whether to describe the picture, and depending on the website where you get them, how do you note the owner, because you don't want to take someone else's content of a picture. Are you talking about pictures that we would specifically use of our own work or are you talking about pulling the picture from the Internet?

Barbara: First off, let me say that I am not an attorney so it's best for you to consult yours for this type of information. However, I can tell you what I've seen people do.

1. It's best of course to use, your own content that's always the number one, best way to go. If you're unable to do so, or you don't have enough photos or something relative to a specific topic you want to write about.
2. Contact the owner and ask them, "May I use your photo and blog about it on my site and give you credit?" Then ask them, "What would you like me to write under the photo?" "Thanks goes to Mary Smith from MarySmithInteriors.com for supplying this photo."
3. Another thing you can do is ask your favorite vendors for photos. If you're writing about a kitchen, go find a great kitchen online from one of the vendors you like and ask, "May I write about this kitchen and use this photo on my blog?" Typically, they like that because it provides more links and more exposure for them. They hand that stuff out liberally. They also have great photography.

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Designer: What's the disadvantage of using Blogger? I've been using Blogger and really, really, really love it. I just changed over to WordPress and I know it's just the learning curve thing but what's the disadvantage of being on Blogger? Is it because it's owned by Google and at any point they could cut you off?

Barbara: Here's the thing about Blogger. Blogger is going to have the same disadvantages as WordPress.com. You're not hosting it yourself. You are hosting it on Blogger. Therefore, Blogger has control over your blog and your content.

You always want to have ownership of your content. Always, always, always. You don't ever want anybody else to have ownership of your content. There are a lot of web designers out there that will want you to host your site on their server, and I always say no, no, no, don't do it.

When I set up websites for my clients I don't want to host your site. I want you to have control over your own site because what if something happens through the years, to your web designer or any number of things that could happen and you absolutely must have control over your own website. It's the same with blogs, Blogspot, Blogger, WordPress.com, you need to have control over your own site and your material.

Designer: I thought that one day they might cut me off and I'd lose everything I've done, which would be terrible.

Barbara: It takes years and years sometimes for people to build up their websites. To lose it all would be disastrous!

The other thing is it really does not look very professional when your customer sees something like this –

www.highdollar designer.wordpress.com

www.marysinteriors.blogspot.com

What does that say about your business? Does it say you don't take your business seriously and are unwilling to invest a measly \$100 to get your own domain and webhosting?

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Here's the thing: If you are tired of working with tire kickers and shoppers and are ready to work with high-end, big budget clients... then you certainly can't look like you're cutting corners or you can't afford \$100. That matters!

The same goes with your email too. I know this is a little off topic but when you get your own WordPress.org site (your self-hosted site), you will be able to have your own email--georgia@georgiasinteriordesign.com. That looks so much better, much more polished, far better branding and you look more professional in today's competitive market. No more MarysInteriorDesigns@aol.com.

Designer: That's perfect. Thank you.

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EDITORIAL CALENDAR SAMPLE

MONTH		TOPIC	TALKING POINTS	PROMOTION
January	1	Organizing	Bookshelves, baskets, bins & tags.	Storage, Bookcases
	2	Decorating Goals for the Year	Redesign that under utilized space	Space Planning
February	1	Decorating with Red	Paint, furniture, slipcovers, pillows	Bedding
	2	Case Study / Testimonial	Room Makeovers – before and after	Consultation Promo
March	1	Buying a Headboard	Beautiful Bedrooms. Furniture	Bedroom Furniture
	2	Shutters	Not your ordinary shutter	10% Off Shutters
April	1	Audit your Decorating	Audit your decorating	Staging
	2	Draperies	Draperies	25% off Fabrics
May	1	Mother's Day - Outdoor Decorating	Throw a Tea Party	Table Cloths, Placemats, Chair cushions & pads
	2	Paint Colors - Spring is Here	Color wheel	Color Consultation
June	1	Father's Day - Man Rooms	Man Rooms	25% off Wood Blinds
	2	Kitchen Cabinets	Guest Author	Kitchen Redesign
July	1	Black & White Decorating	Picnics, parties and people at your house!	Red White and Blue Sale
	2	Fabric Shades	Cool down in hot summer weather	Fabric Shades
August	1	Vacation Destinations	Decorating Tips from Abroad	Sunbrella Fabrics
	2	Granite Counter Tops	Pros and Cons	Counter Tops
September	1	Back to School	Kid's Rooms, whimsical, colorful decorating	Colorful Vibrant Bedding
	2	Small House Living	Prepare for the Holidays	
October	1	Table Top Decorating		
	2			
November	1	Entertaining		
	2			
December	1	Holiday living		
	2			

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EDITORIAL CALENDAR

MONTH	TOPIC	TALKING POINTS	PROMOTION
January	1		
	2		
February	1		
	2		
March	1		
	2		
April	1		
	2		
May	1		
	2		
June	1		
	2		
July	1		
	2		
August	1		
	2		
September	1		
	2		
October	1		
	2		
November	1		
	2		
December	1		
	2		

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About the Author



Interior Designer, Speaker & Marketing Consultant to Interior Designers.

Having been a successful Interior Designer herself for over 23 years, Barbara Deckmeyer works with Interior Designers, manufacturers and industry partners who are ready to uplevel their business and take on more clients. Or they are ready for more big-budget clients.

Her clients come from many different industries from landscape architects, mortgage brokers, dentists, churches, interior designers and so many more. The work she does helps her clients generate hundreds of thousands of dollars of revenue for their businesses.

Known for her creative and passionate approach to marketing, Barbara combines both technology based online marketing (the wave of the future for business), with tried and true offline techniques. Her client's businesses generate more leads and more money as a result. The strategies Barbara recommends and uses herself provide proven, verifiable and easily trackable results.

If you are struggling to generate proven, consistent profits with your marketing, Barbara can help. Visit www.HighDollarDesigner.com or call 949.494.3345 to schedule your FR:EE "Online Marketing Strategy Session" today!

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