

Angela Kelly Smith

Best Practices for Running Your Blog Brand + Design Scoop ep. 004 Podcast Transcript

Welcome to Brand + Design Scoop, where I share practical, relatable tips on branding, design, and building a business for sole proprietors.

I'm Kelly, a brand strategist and Squarespace website designer and founder of AKS Design Studio.

For those of you in the United States, I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving and that you're enjoying lots of leftovers today. Leftovers are my favorite. Though my favorite leftovers are of the HBO variety. You know, the series "The Leftovers" that ran from 2014 to 2017. Best show ever. Go watch it if you haven't. I rewatch it every year!

So, today we're going to talk about best practices for running a blog. Last week, we talked about [creating content for your blog or podcast](#). And I shared several reasons why you should start a blog or podcast. **Those include improving your SEO ranking and increasing your audience size.** I won't go into those details again. Let's just assume that you've already decided that you're ready to start a blog.

If you've got a Squarespace website, or are considering moving to Squarespace, I've got a video on my blog at AKSDesignStudio.com from November 23rd that walks you through [how to set up a blog](#). So, check that out if you need help. The link to that post is in the show notes.

But this podcast is about best practices for running a blog in general. It doesn't matter at all what platform you're using. How you run your blog is going to be the same everywhere.

When you put out a blog for your business, you have two specific goals: To improve your SEO ranking, and to grow your audience.

But those aren't the end goals. **The end goal is to get more clients or customers.** Attracting more visitors to your website increases your chances of getting more clients. And a blog helps you do that, especially when you blog frequently and strategically.

Another thing that a blog helps you achieve is keeping visitors on your website longer. If visitors are reading your blog, they have the opportunity to visit other pages to check out your

services or products, to sign up for your newsletter, to actually hire you. So, there's some things you can do to encourage them to linger longer.

Let's look at how you can be strategic and running your blog to improve your SEO, attract a bigger audience, and keep visitors on your website longer.

(1) One of the most important things to do to run your blog is to post regularly and frequently.

Regular and frequent posting will help search engines find you more easily. Your site will stay active in search engines. That's because your site will essentially ping search engines every time you add new content. And remember from last week, the more new content you share, the easier it is for search engines to find you.

So, you'll want to create a schedule for posting regularly and stick to it. Make it realistic, something you know that you can handle, something you can make time to do.

Now that I've said that, I'm going to tell you how frequently that should be, regardless of how frequently you just imagined that could be for you. **Ideally, you should blog weekly.** That will optimize search engines' ability to find you. Now, if you really can't do it weekly, try every two weeks. Maybe you can even do it every 10 days. Once a month just isn't enough.

And if you don't set a schedule, honestly, you just won't do it. So, mark it in your calendar when you're going to sit down and write to make sure that you do it.

And to make it easier on yourself so that you're not scrambling for content every week, create a content calendar. A content calendar is essentially a spreadsheet where you write down your topics, titles, posts, dates, social media posts, social media links, social media, images, and social media hashtags. When you do this in advance, you don't have to think about it every week. And you don't have to reinvent the wheel every week and forget where you put that information. It's all in one spot.

You can make your own calendar in whatever spreadsheet program you use. I write my posts in Apple notes, I put the date, title and social media post copy in the note. Then I transfer the date, title and social media info to my calendar that contains the link image and hashtags.

If you don't want to make your own calendar, there are some fabulous free templates out there. Just Google "content calendar."

There are also wonderful social-media-scheduling systems that have built in content calendars. I love both HootSuite and Loomly. Loomly is a bit simpler with an easier learning curve. In both of them you can schedule out your posts way in advance. You still have to post the blog by hand on your own website. But the posts gets sent out automatically to your social media accounts.

Now, some website hosting platforms will send your posts your social media accounts for you. See if yours does, but make sure that you can control what it sends, like an excerpt from the post. I like to write different excerpts for Facebook versus Twitter.

It's fabulous to schedule out your posts three months in advance. This can be really tough. But it's such a relief not to have the pressure of needing to come up with a post for a few weeks. Of course, you can't just go three months ignoring your blog. You should be creating content all the time and adding to your calendar. But once you've got your preliminary calendar filled, you've got a nice cushion. I've currently got six weeks filled. Not bad. But I'm working on filling it up even more.

When you write each post in your blog, you can make it really easy on yourself by first creating a post template. [[How to Create a Blog Template in Squarespace.](#)] That way you won't have to add all of the necessary components each time you write a new blog post.

What do I mean by necessary components? Here's what you'll need to include include in every post:

- A sentence or two about you, like your little bio. And get straight to the point. My post bio reads: “Angela Kelly Smith is a Squarespace website designer for small business owners who want to attract more clients through a beautiful, strategically-designed website. Check out her website design and SEO package.” And then I have a link to that package. So that's two short sentences.
- Every post will also need to include social-share buttons. Ideally, visitors don't want to have to copy and paste the link from the URL bar when they share your post. Social-share buttons make it easier for them to share.
- You want to add a summary section that features four to six other blog posts. You can set this up so that just the titles or a thumbnail is visible, not the excerpts if you don't want. This will look really nice.
- And you'll want to have a link to your signature program or your services or products in general. You don't want to just leave people stuck on your blog posts wondering where to go.
- Next, you need to guide them to where you want them to go.
- You can also include a search bar.
- And if you have a newsletter, definitely put up a signup form for that on every post page.

(2) Be sure to put your blog in the main navigation menu at the top of your website. Also put it in the menu in your footer. I've noticed some websites don't have a footer menu. You really should.

(3) You may want to feature your blog somewhere on your homepage. If the main purpose of your website is sharing content, then your blog is going to be at the top of the homepage. If

your blog is a marketing tool for your business, then you could put it in a sidebar or at the bottom of the page.

(4) **Use the summary section.** You don't have to show excerpts you could just show the titles are nice thumbnails.

(5) **To help boost your SEO ranking, put links to other posts within your posts.** My posts [“How to Start a Squarespace Website”](#) and [“How to Start a Blog in Squarespace”](#) link to each other. You don't want to link to other posts randomly. Link to other relevant posts that support what the visitor is reading.

(6) **You need to make sure that the URL of your post is the same as the title of the post.** Most blogs do this automatically now. It used to be the websites generated a random number for each post. That was terrible, and it did nothing for SEO ranking. You can go into your website settings and dictate how your post URLs get created. You might want the date to be included, just in case you ever use the same title. Again, if you don't include the date, and I don't, and you do use the same title again, a number will be tacked on at the end of the title. For example, if the title of your post is “website design,” and you use that title again, the new title will be “website design 1,” even though it's your second post about it. You can always go in and change the URL of individual posts. But definitely make the URL the title of the post.

(7) **And use SEO keywords in your title. This will help people find the post more easily.** You may want to use a really cute or funky title for your posts. And that's fine sometimes. But those will be harder for people to find unless you use keywords for tags and categories. My post called “How to Start a Squarespace Website” is really plain, but it's an exact Google search term. This will help my SEO ranking.

(8) **Add an image for social sharing.** You should definitely have a general image for the whole blog. This should be different from the image of your website. If you don't use Photoshop, try out Canva. It's free and super easy to use. [I pay for Creative Cloud Express. I find it has more options than Canva.] Make a square image with the name of your website at the bottom. Put the title of your blog in the middle, or what your blog is about in the middle. My blog image has “AKS Design Studio with Angela Kelly Smith” at the bottom. It reads “News and Tips about Branding, Website Design, and Podcasting” in the middle. Sharing anything from the blog will have that image attached to it.

But I go a step further. It doesn't actually show that image. I create individual social-sharing images for each post. I put a “AKS Design Studio with Angela Kelly Smith” at the bottom. Then I put the post title in the middle. When someone shares one of my blog posts, these images show up with the post instead of my site wide image or my general blog image.

(9) Finally, you should write an excerpt for the blog posts to show up in the summary section. Some blogs automatically pull an excerpt from the first paragraph. Some don't pull anything at all. There needs to be an excerpt to grab the reader's attention and draw them to read the post.

I recommend writing one that tells what the post is about and using keywords that make the post more findable by search engines. You use this excerpt on your website and in the SEO settings section for that post. That excerpt will show up under the title of the blog when it pops up in a search. It will tell people what the post is about and increase chances that will come to your site to read it. Again. Be sure to use powerful keywords and phrases.

Alright, if you want these items and a list, go to the link in the show notes.

Next week I'll be talking about identifying and appealing to your ideal client. So see you next time on Brand + Design Scoop!

[Link to this episode on the website](#)

Angela Kelly Smith provides custom Squarespace websites, branding strategy, and marketing instruction so freelancers and entrepreneurs can run a successful business while spending more time focusing on the work they really love doing. Check out her [website design + marketing strategy services](#).