HOW TO CREATE A

BLOG THAT BOOSTS YOUR CAREER

SP | SIMPLE PROGRAMMER

Hey there, I'm John Sonmez, the founder of Simple Programmer and the author of this blogging course.

Thanks for purchasing this workbook for the How to Create a Blog to Boost your Career email course.

The goal of this workbook is to help you to **get as much out of the blogging course as possible.**

Nearly 14,000 students have already come through the blogging course, created their own blogs and have really started seeing **drastic improvements in their income, job opportunities and more.**

A few have even learned how to use their blogs to create **passive income** for themselves. (Pretty awesome—more on this later…)

Before you dive into the course and the lessons, I wanted to give you a little bit of advice about how to best use this workbook.

I've included all of the actual lessons from the email course.

Normally you get those lessons once a week, every Monday and Thursday, but I've included all the lessons here so that you could easily reference them and so that you can peek ahead and move forward if you are really raring to go.

But…

I would advise you to actually work at the pace in which the email course delivers the emails. There are two reasons for this:

First, after having nearly 14,000 developers graduate from the blogging course, and having changed the frequency of when the lessons are sent out, I can tell you that **the most successful developers were the ones who received and followed the lessons twice a week.**

The lessons are large, and require some time to think about and complete. If you try to rush through, you are likely to get overwhelmed and give up.

The idea behind the course is to help you to slowly make little steps each week until you have a blog and good blogging habits in place.

Think about the reasons why you may not have a blog right now or why the blog you did create is stale and not being updated. Probably it has to do with the feeling of being overwhelmed.

So, **do yourself a favor and slow down**, really do what is asked in the lessons and don't put too much pressure on yourself.

Also, **do the homework**. Reply to the emails—I'll respond back—and do all of the assignments. Trust me, it will be worth it in the long run.

And that's actually the second reason why I would advise you to take your time and go at the pace of the emails—the course is interactive.

Many of the lessons involve you replying back to the emails and taking some sort of action. You'll miss out on some of the value of the course if you don't take these steps.

With that said, you are of course free to go about this blogging course however you like.

So, good luck.

I'm looking forward to hearing from you and seeing your blog.

Hope you find a lot of value in this blogging course and workbook.

CHOOSING A THEME

SIMPLE PROGRAMMER

Let's brainstorm some possible themes for your blog by trying to figure out what would make a good specialty for you.

First, let's start with areas of expertise you either have or would like to acquire.

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Next, list some of the things that interest you the most or you are most passionate about.

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Finally, what is unique about you or your personality that might give you an interesting perspective to blog from?

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Now, go ahead and read through lesson and follow the instructions.Use the ideas above to help you come up with some good possible themes.

You can write the ten ideas from your brainstorming session here:

1. ....
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3. ....
4. ....
5. ....
6. ....
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9. ....
10. ....

ADDITIONAL HELP

If you are having trouble with this step—don't worry—you are not alone.

I get more questions about specialization and choosing a theme than any other topic.

It's difficult to do.

Many developers are afraid to commit to a specialty, because they are afraid that they'll be severely limiting their options and they won't get to work with all the fun technologies they like.

Neither of those things could be further from the truth.

The idea here is to stand out by choosing a very narrow focus that you can claim ownership of, so that you can stand out.

You may have other skills and abilities, but it is difficult to be perceived as an expert in multiple areas.

People like to put you in a box and identify you by a label—good or bad.

So, rather than letting other people do it for you, you are going to pick your own label.

The key here is to be very, very specific—at least at first. You can always expand later, but when you are starting out, it is critical that you have a very specific and narrow specialty that will be the theme of your blog.

C# is not narrow enough, neither is ASP.NET MVC or Python.

One of my friends built an entire business that enabled him to quit his job, because he chose to specialize in computer vision using Python using the OpenCV framework.

Every month he sells more than $10,000 worth of tutorials, books and training materials to developers that want to learn how to use OpenCV because he is THE expert in that area.

If he created a generic blog about Python, there is no way he would have been able to achieve that level of success.

So, for you, start big and then narrow your scope to just about as small as you can.

Think about some area of software development that you think developers have problems with and that you could potentially provide them the best solution they have ever seen for that problem.

That's how you become an expert!

And don't worry if the specialty you want to pick isn't something you are an expert at right now. If you pick a narrow focus, you'll be able to become an expert in that area. Trust me.

Plus, when you go really deep into an area and become "the expert," it's a lot of fun. It's actually really interesting to be able to dig deep like this.

And remember, over time you can eventually expand your expertise and become more broad—even tackle new expertise.

The key is starting off with the biggest advantage you can, which is being the big fish in the small pond.

You can also switch your specialty later on if your first idea doesn't work out. You are not choosing a path for life.

The most important thing is to pick something and get started.
Many software developers get stuck here and don't move forward or they pick something too broad and they end up never getting traction with their blog.

Don't make those same mistakes.

LESSON 1 EMAIL

In this lesson we'll be talking about the most important step that you need to take before you even think about creating your blog: choosing a theme.

No, I'm not talking about a WordPress theme—you can always do that later.

What I am talking about is choosing what the theme of your blog is; what it is about.

The success of your blog can depend, in a large part, on how well you do this.

But, I don't want to put too much pressure on you.

Too many developers never end up creating a blog, because they can't decide what their blog should be about. By far, it would be better to choose a less-than-optimal theme for your blog, than it would be to never start one in the first place.

THE PLAN FOR TODAY

With that said, here is the plan for today:

1.   Learn about how to select a theme and how important it is to your success

2.   Actually select one today, so you'll be ready to create an actual blog for the next lesson. (Remember lessons go out every Monday and Thursday.)

That's right. You are actually going to pick your theme today so that you can follow along with the next lesson and get your actual blog up and running.

We are going to move quickly here because **inaction is the number one reason for failure.**

SPECIALIZATION & "NICHING DOWN"

When you choose a theme for your blog, you are going to want your scope to be very narrow and focused. This is also called specialization or "niching down."

The idea is that you shouldn't create a general blog about software development, but instead should create a blog that is much more specific to a targeted area of software development, technology or other smaller specialized topic.

Let me give you an example—one that you'll hear from me a lot—that helps illustrate this point.

Suppose you have a garbage disposal that just broke.

You go and look for a plumber to repair it. In your search, you come across:

▶ ABC Plumbing

▶ Joe's Plumbing and Household Repair

▶ Mr. Garbage Disposal Fix-It Man

Which one do you select?

If you are like me—and most people—you are likely to choose Mr. Garbage Disposal Fix-It Man. Why? Because he specialized. He is specific.

That doesn't mean he's the best plumber. For all we know ABC Plumbing might fix garbage disposals better than Mr. Garbage Disposal Fix-It Man, but Mr. Garbage Disposal Fix-It Man will get much more of the business, because he chose to specialize.

Now, obviously Mr. Garbage disposal may not get as much general plumbing business, but as long as the garbage disposal market is big enough, he'll get a majority of that business and be able to charge higher rates for his services.

He'll be a big fish in a small pond.

And that is exactly what you want to be: a big fish in a small pond, not a small fish in a big pond, like most beginning bloggers try to do.

That is what will get you noticed!

The number one biggest mistake that most software developers I talk to make, is being afraid of being pigeon-holed. They try too hard to be generalists, because they don't realize the extreme value of being a specialist.

Need a bit more convincing? Let me ask you a few questions.

Who makes more money, specialist doctors or general practitioners?
Who's more sought out? General lawyers or specialized lawyers?

If you want to explore this topic a little further, check out this article on The Biggest Mistake You Can Make in Your Software Development Career, or the video version here.

For now, I'll assume you agree that specialization of some sort is important.

SELECTING A THEME

So, let's get back to talking about the theme for your blog.

If you can pick some kind of specialization, that is the easiest way to pick a theme for your blog.

Be the Android ListView guy or gal. Be the ASP.NET MVC expert or the Java Spring MVC guru. (Specialize even further than that if you can.)

Want a good example? Take a look at my buddy, Troy Hunt's blog.

Read a few of the titles of his blog posts and see if you can figure out what his specialty is.

You can also go another route and base the theme of your blog on a unique perspective or concept.

For example: you could be the stand-up comedian of software development or the "cranky programmer."

There are a lot of ways you can go with this—so don't be afraid to be creative.

Just make sure you pick something.

The easiest thing to do for now will be to pick a specialty of some sort—perhaps something you are already very familiar with.

Here are some ideas to help you select a theme:

▶ Some specialization you already have

▶ Some specialization you'd like to have and can document the process of learning

▶ An intersection of two things, for example my podcast, Get Up and CODE is an intersection of software development and fitness. My Entreprogrammers podcast is an intersection of programming and entrepreneurship.

▶ A unique perspective you bring on a wider topic

▶ A funny or entertaining twist on software development in general

▶ A curation of other posts and news about a topic or topic area

Want another good example? Check out my good friend, Pinal Dave, and SQL Authority. His blog gets over 3 million views a month, in part because he chose to specialize and to do it so well.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Now it's time for the rubber to hit the road.

Your mission for today, if you choose to accept it, is to come up with a theme.

Brainstorm 10 different ideas and pick the best one.

Once you've picked the best one, reply to this email and send it to me.

If you are having trouble deciding, send me a few ideas and I'll pick one for you.

Also, one last thing before I close this out:

You might be afraid of making a choice right now, but don't be. Pick something for now, you can always change it later. In fact, you probably will. But the only way you are going to know if your theme is going to work for you is if you try it.

Talk to you in the next lesson, when I'll show you how to actually create your blog.

P.S. Start thinking about a domain name—you'll need it soon.

Also, if you are wondering if you should use your own name as your personal brand, check out this video.

And, if you want my opinion on whether you should blog in your native language, here's my opinion on that one.

CREATING YOUR BLOG

Here are all the steps in one place for creating a new WordPress blog on Bluehost.

1. Pick the domain name you'll use for your blog.

2. Sign up with Bluehost. Here is the link.
   (This is the link that will get you the deal pricing from lesson 2.)

3. Log in to your Bluehost account.

4. Click cPanel.

5. Scroll down to "Website Builders."

6. Click the WordPress logo.

7. Click the WordPress logo again (under blogs.)

8. Click "start" and select your domain.

9. Click "Check Domain" (and ignore the error, it's just saying you are going to overwrite what was there, which was nothing.)

10. Click "Install Now."

11. Write down login information and copy link to your new WordPress blog

12. Go to link and login.

13. Go to Posts -> Add New to create your first post.

14. Congrats!

Want a video of the whole process? Here it is.

Alternatives:

A little more expensive, but I highly recommend WPEngine, because they are awesome and will start you off with a super fast blog that will scale well and is 100%, fully supported by them.

It's even easier to create a new blog with them.

Go here to sign up and see the plans.

I'd actually recommend this over Bluehost, but I know the starting plan is $29 a month so it's not in everyone's budget.

But, if you can afford WPEngine, do it. It's going to be much better in the long run.

ADDITIONAL HELP

I see a few major mistakes when developers create their blog.

One of the biggest ones is cheaping out and going with the totally free option.

Yes, you can do this, but you will almost certainly regret it later.

You have to ask yourself if you aren't willing to commit a few dollars a month for Bluehost or, better yet, $29 a month for WPEngine, how committed are you really going to be to your blog.

Besides, once you get going, you'll find it's pretty easy to generate $29 a month of revenue from your blog, which will easily cover the hosting costs.

So, yes, if you are completely cash strapped, or you live in a country where a few US dollars a month is a lot of money, I understand creating a free blog.

But, if you can afford it—trust me, from my own experience—choose a paid hosting option. It's well worth the initial investment—especially if you ever want to make money off of your blog.

The second major mistake I see, honestly, is not choosing a very simple blogging platform like WordPress.

I know it sounds like I'm pushing WordPress here, and that is because I am.

WordPress might not be the fanciest blogging software, and you might not like PHP, but it is the most dominant one and it has the largest ecosystem.

Too many developers are tempted to futz around with their blog and they spend more time tweaking it or working on the technical details than blogging.

One of the main reasons I like WordPress so much is since I don't really know PHP, I can't mess with it too much.

I can install a theme or a plugin to handle just about everything I need.

Right now this might not seem like a big concern, but just like utilizing free hosting, this one can come back to bite you.

WordPress is easy. That is very good when you are starting out.

You can literally create your blog in 5 minutes and get going with it.

LESSON 2 EMAIL

Ok, are you ready for it?

Today is the day you actually create your blog.

It's an exciting day—perhaps one that you'll remember for the rest of your life.

I know that seems like a joke, but it's not. **Creating my first software development blog was probably the single most profitable thing I ever did for my career.**

I want you to have the same success, so let's get started.

GETTING STARTED

There are, of course, a few different technology options for creating a blog, but because the goal of this course is to get you up and running as soon as possible—and really that is the most important thing in the long run—we'll be going with a very simple—yet powerful—solution: WordPress + Bluehost.

I use WordPress for all my blogs, because it is so simple, configurable and there are so many plugins. By far, **WordPress is the most popular and well supported blogging software in the world.**

I also used Bluehost to host my blogs, earlier on, because they let you create a WordPress blog with a single click and they have excellent support. Ok, and the price is extremely cheap as well.

SIGNING UP

So, the first step is to sign up with Bluehost.com.

I have a special deal with Bluehost, so if you use this link, you'll be able to get a special deal for signing up. I think at the time of this email, you should be able to get hosting for **$2.95 a month,** plus a free domain name.

They also throw in a bunch of other stuff, like $200 in advertising credit that you can use to get readers for your blog, and they even offer a solid money-back guarantee.

I don't want to make it look like I'm pushing Bluehost too hard. You can definitely sign up with someone else if you like. Bluehost is just the service I recommend, because I had a good experience with them in the past and I happen to know it is a super-fast and easy way to get your blog up and running today.

If you'd like an alternative and a more manual route—and you are familiar with running your own Linux box—you might try Digital Ocean. It's where I am currently hosting my blog.

(If you'd like to really geek-out and read about all the options. I wrote up a detailed post called: Blog Hosting The Ultimate Guide. It talks about blog hosting options like Bluehost, as well as another favorite of mine, WP Engine.)

But, if you are just getting started, do yourself a favor and just go with Bluehost for now. You can always move it later.

The sign-up process is very simple. In fact, it's so simple that I'm not going to waste your time going through it here. I'll just give you a few of the highlights and some of my commentary on them here, so we can move on to more important things.

Also, if you do want a more detailed walk-through of exactly how to set up your blog, how to navigate around the WordPress software, and even how to setup a full blog on a Linux server, using Digital Ocean, I do have a full tutorial on how to do all this in my How to Market Yourself as a Software Developer package.

SIGN UP NOTES

So, really the biggest thing you need to know about signing up for a Bluehost account is that **you'll need to pick a domain name.**

You can use an existing domain that you registered somewhere else, but I'd recommend registering it with Bluehost, since with that special discount link, you'll get it for free—plus, it's a lot less hassle.

Just go through the screens and fill in your information.

At this point, I wouldn't worry too much about the different options and add-ons they offer you. You can always uncheck everything and add anything you want later.

Don't spend too much time making a decision here, since everything is refundable and all the options are changeable after you sign up. They key thing is to get your blog up today.

The only real choice you have to make is how long of a term to sign up for and if you want any of the add-ons they offer.

INSTALLING WORDPRESS

Once you've set up your account, the next step is to actually install WordPress. Luckily, it's dead simple. All you have to do is literally click a button.

Log into your account. If you get an error, just wait a few minutes—the automated system that creates the account can take a few minutes to set everything up.

You should end up at the main Welcome screen (after a few more offers for upgrades.) From here, just click cPanel, which will take you to the Control Panel you'll use to manage your site.
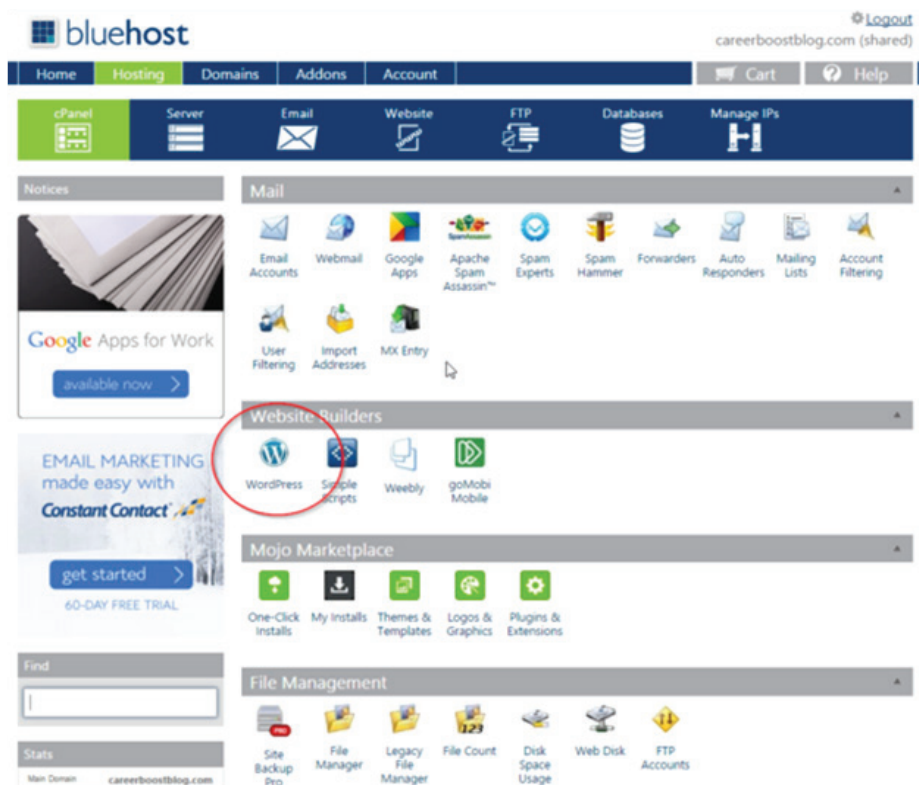
Just scroll down the page and find the section "Website Builders."

Now, click the WordPress logo and when you get to the next page, click the WordPress logo again (it should be under blogs.)

A screen with "Install WordPress" on it will appear. Just click the start button and select your domain.

Click "Check Domain" and you'll get an error message that you can ignore. It just tells you that you are deleting whatever is already there, and you'll overwrite the files. But, since you don't have anything there, no need to worry about it.

Finally, click the "Install Now" button and you are good to go.

Ok, so it wasn't exactly "one click," but still, you have to admit it's pretty easy.

LOGGING IN

At the very end of the install process, you'll get a page that has all your login information and a link to your new WordPress blog.

Just go to the link and login and you are all set up and ready to go.

Once you are logged in, just go to Posts and then Add New to create your first post.

I've actually created a video of this whole process.

Open this link in one window, and your BlueHost account in the other, and I'll walk you through the steps.

The whole thing takes less than 5 minutes. You can find the video here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXi6tVtHhTo

That's it, it's really that easy.

Now, you just need to know what to write about. But, don't worry we'll be covering that in the next lesson.

In the meantime, explore around the WordPress interface a little bit. It can look a little intimidating at first, but it's really not that complicated—I promise. (And don't worry, I've got some information about how to best utilize WordPress in that How to Market Yourself as a Software Developer package I told you about earlier.)

Oh, I almost forgot... your homework for today's lesson.

Actually, it's pretty simple: **Reply to this email and send me the URL to your new blog.**

P.S. Once you have your WordPress blog up and running, probably the next thing that'll pop into your head is, "Hmmm, this default WordPress theme looks pretty boring. What can I do to make my site look a little more professional?"

Well the great thing about WordPress is there are literally thousands of great themes to choose from, both free and "premium" (i.e. paid).

My recommendation for this though is to go with the Thrive suite of premium themes.

Why would I recommend Thrive over the many free themes available out there?

For one thing, Thrive's themes are *fast*. I've tried out several different themes on Simple Programmer, and the Thrive themes performed best.

And if your goal down the road is to earn side income from your blog (and it should be—any developer willing to put in some consistent effort can create a blog that brings in an extra $1,000 to $2,000 per month), then you're definitely going to want to use Thrive.

Thrive makes it super simple to put ads on your blog, create forms to capture email addresses for your readers, create beautifully designed pages to offer your services as a freelancer (or even your own products)... All the things you'll need to do to turn your blog into an income-generating side business.

Like good hosting, this is one of those investments that will pay for itself many times over.

You can get more details on Thrive Themes here.

COMING UP WITH POST IDEAS

Rules:

1. Create a list of 50 blog post ideas (yes 50)

2. Never let the list get below 30. When it does brainstorm new ideas to keep it at or above 50.

3. Pick your best 3 ideas and those are your first 3 blog posts.

You'll spend 30 whole minutes brainstorming blog post ideas. Use the full 30 minutes.

Use a Trello board or other list system to track all the ideas. (This worksheet isn't the best place to put 50 ideas and you'll need to keep the list up to date.)

Ideas for possible blog posts:

- Tutorials and how-to's
- Book and product reviews
- News roundups
- Commentaries on other blog posts and news articles
- Interesting stories about your life (related to your theme)
- Interviews with people in your field
- Lists of things (Top 10 ways to ___, My 7 Favorite ___)
- Controversial / provocative posts
- Video or Vlog posts
- Guest posts (let someone else do the writing)
- Multi-part series posts (cover a much larger topic)
- Resources and links
- Case studies
- Answer a question
- Funny parody posts
- Cheat sheets
- How you solved a problem
- A problem that is currently stumping you
- Predictions about the future
- Product comparisons
- Define something

Top 3 best ideas:

1. ………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. ………………………………………………………………………………………………

3. ………………………………………………………………………………………………

ADDITIONAL HELP

Coming up with post ideas is difficult.

I have difficulty doing this myself.

But, if you go through this exercise and come up with 50, it will take away one of the biggest reasons you have for procrastinating on writing a blog post—not knowing what to blog about.

If you are really struggling with coming up with 50 posts ideas, here are a few additional tips:

▶ Try looking around sites like Hacker New or Reddit / Programming to find posts that are popular and see if you can write a similar kind of post, but tailored to your particular theme.

▶ Start a conversation with someone at work about a topic or go out to lunch and talk shop. What topics come up? What are you especially passionate about? Direct your energies into a blog post topic.

▶ Ask someone else to come up with a few blog post titles for you.

▶ Come up with blog post title that start with each letter of the alphabet. Sometimes having a constraint like this is helpful, because it forces you to get creative.

▶ Look through a book related to your theme or technology and come up with blog posts topics about each of the chapters in the book.

It also may help to pick categories for you blog posts and to group each blog post idea into a category. Think about what categories of topics you'd like to blog about on your blog and try to come up with perhaps 5 categories and 10 blog posts for each category.

This is another way to divide and conquer to make the task easier. Whatever you do though, don't skip this step and don't procrastinate on it either.

You don't need perfect titles, just ideas for your posts.

LESSON 3 EMAIL

If you've successfully completed lessons 1 and 2, you should have a brand-new WordPress blog up and running on your own domain.

If you haven't, I've got two ideas of what the case may be:

1. You aren't convinced you actually know what to write about or have enough topics to write about

2. You are too busy and haven't gotten around to it yet

By the end of this lesson, you should feel a lot more confident that you—yes even you—can find plenty of topics to write about and if you are just too busy right now, don't worry you can just save these emails and come back to them later.

YOUR BEST WEAPON FOR DECIDING WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

Many software developers, and wanna-be-bloggers in general, often don't make any progress on their blog, because **they can't decide what to write about.**

There is a misconception that you have to be an excellent writer and an expert in a topic area in order to write a blog post.

All you need to write a blog post is an idea and an opinion.

Unless you are a completely monotone robot, I'm pretty sure you have an opinion, but you may be a bit short on ideas. Don't worry. I'm often short on ideas, yet I manage to crank out at least one blog post every week going on… holy crap—7 years now! Wow.

Anyway, enough tooting my own horn.

My point is, you need ideas—and lots of them. So, how do you get ideas? Well, it's pretty simple, you brainstorm.

You'll have a lot easier time coming up with blog post ideas for your blog if you dedicate some time to thinking of them rather than hmm'ing and haw'ing on the spot trying to think of them.

So, your secret weapon for deciding what to write about is…

A LIST!

Yes, a list. I use Trello or Workflowy to create a list of my blog post topics, but you can use whatever you want: a piece of paper, a notepad, stone tablet, leather parchment, papyrus scroll, etc.

Here is the catch. That list always needs to have at least 30 items on it.

When you first make the list, put 50 items on it.

Wait a minute Johnny-boy. 50 items? Are you serious?I can't think of 50 blog post topics—I have a hard time thinking of one—50 would be nearly impossible.

Well, first of all, don't call me Johnny-boy, and second, you can think of 50 blog post topics. You just have to free your mind a little bit and devote half an hour to doing nothing but brainstorming every possible topic (related to your theme) that you can think of and…

LOOK AT THIS LIST OF BLOG POST TYPE IDEAS

- ▶ Tutorials and how-to's
- ▶ Book and product reviews
- ▶ News roundups
- ▶ Commentaries on other blog posts and news articles
- ▶ Interesting stories about your life (related to your theme)
- ▶ Interviews with people in your field
- ▶ Lists of things (Top 10 ways to ___, My 7 Favorite ___)
- ▶ Controversial / provocative posts
- ▶ Video or Vlog posts
- ▶ Guest posts (let someone else do the writing)

- ▶ Multi-part series posts (cover a much larger topic)
- ▶ Resources and links
- ▶ Case studies
- ▶ Answer a question
- ▶ Funny parody posts
- ▶ Cheat sheets
- ▶ How you solved a problem
- ▶ A problem that is currently stumping you
- ▶ Predictions about the future
- ▶ Product comparisons
- ▶ Define something

If you can look at that list and you can't come up with at least 50 blog post ideas, then maybe you've picked the wrong theme for your blog.

But, don't just assume you can't come up with 50 blog posts ideas, actually take the half hour to brainstorm as many ideas as possible.

Brainstorming Tip: Don't be picky. Let the ideas flow. It doesn't matter if they are good or not. Some of my best ideas and biggest traffic generating blog posts were based off of ideas that I first thought were no good.

Now, if you honestly can't find 50 blog post ideas that fit your theme, it actually may be time to go back to the drawing board. If that is the case, perhaps you actually niched down too small and have too specific of a theme (this is very rare), or you just don't know or care enough about the theme you picked.

If that is the case, don't despair. You just learned something. Just go back and pick another theme or change your theme a little bit and try again.

SUMMING IT UP AND HOMEWORK

Here is your homework for today:

Get your list of blog posts started and **spend 30 minutes brainstorming at least 50 blog post ideas** to put on the list. Don't filter, just brainstorm—let the ideas flow.

Once you've done that, pick your **top 3 best ideas** and that will be the first 3 blog posts you write for your blog.

Remember, once you get down to only having 30 items left on your list, it's time to brainstorm again and get that list back up to 50.

If you always have a list of blog post ideas with at least 50 items on it, you'll never sit down at your desk and not know what to write about.

Congratulations, you are well on your way to building a blog that will boost your career, but we aren't done quite yet.

Up next, we'll be talking about one of the most important topics that will ultimately determine the success of your blog: **consistency.**

In the next lesson, I'll help you pick—and stick to—a posting schedule.

COMMITTING TO CONSISTENCY

How often will you commit to writing a blog post? Fill it in here.

Example: I commit to writing a blog post once a week.

✎   ....
....

When will you write your posts?

Commit to a day of the week and time, fill it in here and actually mark it on your calendar.

✎   ....
....

Shipping is important. Set yourself a time limit for writing a post and put it here. You will spend this amount of time on a post at max and then you will ship it no matter what.

Now, get a sticky note and write on it:

I WILL SHIP !

Stick it to your monitor.

ADDITIONAL HELP

One thing that that helps with committing and being consistent is to set some timeframe and measurements in place.

For example, when I go on a diet, I don't imagine that I'll have to eat that diet for the rest of my life. The same thing when I do a new workout program.

Instead, I set a period of time that I am committing to and then, I say that I will reevaluate and either renew that commitment or change it at that time.

So, do the same thing with your blog.

You don't have to commit to writing a post once a week for the rest of your life. Just commit to doing it for 6 months of even a year and then say that you'll reevaluate after that.

It can also help to really believe that consistency and commitment are the two best tools you have to be successful.

I've said this before, but I'll say it again: a majority of people give up too soon.

Want to read a great book on the subject? It's called 3 Feet From Gold.

If you are willing to stick in there and keep blogging, you are eventually going to become successful and start seeing the real benefits of doing it, but you have to be the person who sticks with it if you want to succeed.

As a blogger that has been blogging for years now, I can tell you that there will be times when you absolutely don't want to blog. There will be times when you hate blogging and when you feel like you have absolutely nothing to say.

So, be prepared for those times and have an extra post stored up that you can publish for that week so that you don't break your commitment.

Or just push through it and get something out there—even if you feel it's not your best work.

Whatever you do, don't give up.

And if you fall of the wagon and miss a post, get right back on the next week.

You'll be doing the future you a huge favor—trust me.

LESSON 4 EMAIL

Do you know what the single, most important thing that makes or breaks a blog is?

If you read yesterday's email, you probably guessed right: **consistency.**

There is nothing more important to making your blog successful—and useful to your career—than being consistent.

No matter how badly you mess everything else up. No matter how poor of a quality of a theme you select or how bad your writing is, **nothing will kill your blog more than not being consistent.**

WHY CONSISTENCY IS SO IMPORTANT

Before we get into how to be consistent, let's start off by talking about why it is so important. There are two main reasons:

1. **Consistency over time builds a large collection of blog posts,** each of which is like a little magnet that has the potential to draw potential customers, clients, employers and fans to you.

2. **Consistency over time will improve your writing and communication skills in general.** The more you write the better you get at it.

If you have a blog that has 10 blog posts on it, it's not going to get a lot of traffic. Especially if it took you 10 years to write those 10 blog posts.

On the other hand, **if you have a blog that has 200 blog posts on it, because you wrote one blog post every week for 4 years, you are probably going to be getting a lot of traffic.**

It's very difficult to imagine someone who is that consistent and is not successful. In fact, I challenge you to find one such person. Find me a person who has written a blog post every week for 4 years and doesn't have a decent amount of traffic or success—you just can't find a person like that, because they don't exist.

I'm not going to lie to you, **it might take you some time for your career to really start benefiting from creating a blog,** but that is exactly why you should start now.

Besides, I'm giving you a short-cut—at least as short of a short-cut you can take. You don't have to go down all the wrong paths that I did. If you follow the advice in this email course, you'll be starting off with every advantage that I didn't have.

Now to address the second point—since I know you may be thinking that you just aren't a good writer, so you'll never have a successful blog.

Here is the thing. **When I first started my blog I was a horrible writer.** You may be reading these emails and thinking—dang, he STILL is a horrible writer—and that may very well be the case, but I've improved a great deal from some of my first blog posts.

In fact, blogging allowed me to do something I never thought I'd ever do: <u>I published an actual book</u>—and not a short one either, we are talking 504 pages.

Writing and communication in general, was always something I sucked at. No, really.

In high school I was in all the advanced classes for math, history, science, etc., but the one area where I was not only not in an advanced class, but **I consistently got C's in was English.**

But, despite my sad start and my general inaptitude for writing, consistency moved me from a crappy writer to a decent one. I even sometimes think I might be starting—starting—to become a good one. (But I'm not getting my hopes up.)

The point is, **if you write consistently, you will improve,** <u>no matter how bad you are to begin with.</u>

If I can do it, you can do it—trust me.

BEING CONSISTENT

Ok, so I've harped on you enough about consistency. I only do it because I want you to understand just how important it is—but, now it's time to get down to business: let's talk about how to be consistent.

Well, **consistency starts with understanding how important consistency is.** Hopefully, I've drilled that into your head by now, so we can put a big fat checkmark on that one.

Next up is having a schedule. **It's very difficult to be consistent if you don't know what you are supposed to do and when.**

You need to first decide on how many times a week you are going to post to your blog and then you need to decide when you are going to do it.

I'd suggest posting to your blog at least once a week. It's very difficult to build traction and build a big catalog of content if you are only posting once every few weeks or once a month.

Yes, posting once a week is a big commitment, but if you can sit at your desk and not goof around and procrastinate, you can probably get it done in 1-2 hours a week.

But, if you can't commit to once a week, at least pick some level of commitment that you can absolutely stick to.

With that said, if you are just starting out and would really like to get out of the gates running, **you might try to commit to a schedule of 2-3 blog posts a week for at least a few months.** This won't be easy, but it will let you build up your blog much quicker and you can always slow down the pace later on.

Once you've picked the frequency of how often you are going to post, the next thing I would suggest is to pick exactly when you will write your posts.

The surest way to make sure that you consistently post according to your schedule is to schedule the time to post each week (or whatever frequency you selected.)

You don't have to do this step, but you'll be a lot more successful in the long run—and be more likely to be consistent—if you pull out your calendar right now and make a recurring appointment to write a blog post on a specific day at a specific time.

A FINAL TIP… JUST SHIP

One last road block to consistency that we have to conquer, before we move on: "it's not good enough" syndrome.

We all suffer from it—or at least most of us do.

We write something. We feel like it's not very good and we are tempted to either revise the heck out of it or chuck it in the trash can.

Don't.

Instead, just ship it.

I'm not saying just ship some un-spellchecked, careless first draft of whatever you write. But, what I am saying is don't worry about your blog posts being perfect—or anywhere close to perfect for that matter.

Seriously, write for the time you scheduled. Go over it and preferably have someone else proofread it, then ship it.

You will be much more successful if you can ship every week than you will be if you only ship perfect posts, but do so once a month or once a year—or, if you are like most perfectionists and procrastinators, never at all.

Some of my most successful posts of all time have been blog posts that I almost hit the delete button on because I thought they were utter trash.

So, just remember consistency trumps all—there is no excuse for not shipping.

IT'S TIME FOR HOMEWORK

Alright, you shipping machine you, here is what I want you to do:

Take a big sticky note and write **"I will ship it!"** on it. Stick it on your monitor.

Today you will decide how frequently you will create a new post on your blog.

This is NOT a commitment you will take lightly. So, think long and hard about it. Don't commit to a frequency that you can't keep up with, but do commit to something.

Now, pull out that calendar of yours and pick a date and a time that you will write your blog posts based on the frequency you committed to. Once you get into the habit of writing consistently, you can remove this calendar appointment, but for now, just commit to a date and time. You'll be a lot more successful if you do.

Finally, **reply to this email and tell me how often you are going to blog and when.**

The next lesson is very exciting. We are going to be talking about getting traffic to your blog.

So, look for an email new in the next few days with your next-to-last lesson.

GETTING TRAFFIC

Pick a few other software developer blogs that you will leave relevant, valuable comments on every day or whenever there is a new post.

List them here:

....
....
....

Commit to leaving a certain number of comments on one of those blog or other blogs every day.

How many comments will you shoot for each day?

....
....
....

Search engine traffic will eventually be your main traffic source.

The best way to get search engine traffic is to:

1. Be consistent and write good quality posts that people will link to.

2. Share your posts on social media so people can read them and link to them.

Come up with a plan to share your posts on social media once you write them.

If you are using WordPress, you can use the Jetpack plugin to link create sharing links for your posts.

You can also use the Jetpack plugin to automatically have the posts shared when they are published.

You also might consider using a theme from Thrive Themes, since Thrive Themes has many sharing features built in and can also help you build a list of subscribers.

If you start collecting email addresses to build a list of subscribers, you can email them whenever you create a new post and you'll send additional traffic.
This can really build up over time.

Here are the two best resources I recommend for building an email list of subscribers for your blog:

1. Drip (this is an email list management software. This email course is being delivered through Drip.)

2. Thrive Themes. These themes are specifically built to add subscribers to an email list. Plus, they look good and are super fast themes.

ADDITIONAL HELP

When you first start out with your blog, don't worry about traffic.

In fact, I wouldn't even measure it. It will just discourage you.

Instead focus on the process of doing things that will help you generate traffic in the future.

Write good quality posts consistently and promote them. In the long run that will generate you the most traffic over time.

But, if you are really proactive and want to do even more to start getting traffic now, I do have a few other suggestions you can try.

Guest posting

Start looking for popular software development blogs and see if you can contribute a guest post. (In fact, just recently I opened up Simple Programmer to guest posting, so you can submit an article idea here.)

Guest posting is a great way to get traffic to your blog, because most blogs let you put a link to your blog at the bottom of the article in what is called your byline.

Link building

You have to be careful with this one, because if you pay for link-building services, etc. you can

end up worse than you were before you started, but there are some ways to do this properly that will still work.

One of the best ways is to go and look for similar topics that you have blogged about and see where people are linking to those articles.

You can email the author of a blog or resource and mention the other article they linked to and ask if they would include a link to your blog post as well.

Most will say no, but some will say yes. Having these extra links will help you rank higher in search engines which will eventually send you more traffic.

Submitting your posts to link sharing sites like HN or Reddit

This one is not for the faint of heart, but if you get a popular post to go viral on one of these news sites, you can get a lot of traffic.

The problem with these sites is that some of the people who lurk there and comment on posts are just vile human beings that have no joy in life besides tearing other people down.

So, weight the pros and cons carefully before deciding to submit your blog post.

It could go viral and generate you lots of traffic, but if it does you'll most likely get a lot of hate as well—especially if you are trying to sell something or you have any kind of ads on your site.

But, just shake it off. Haters gonna hate!
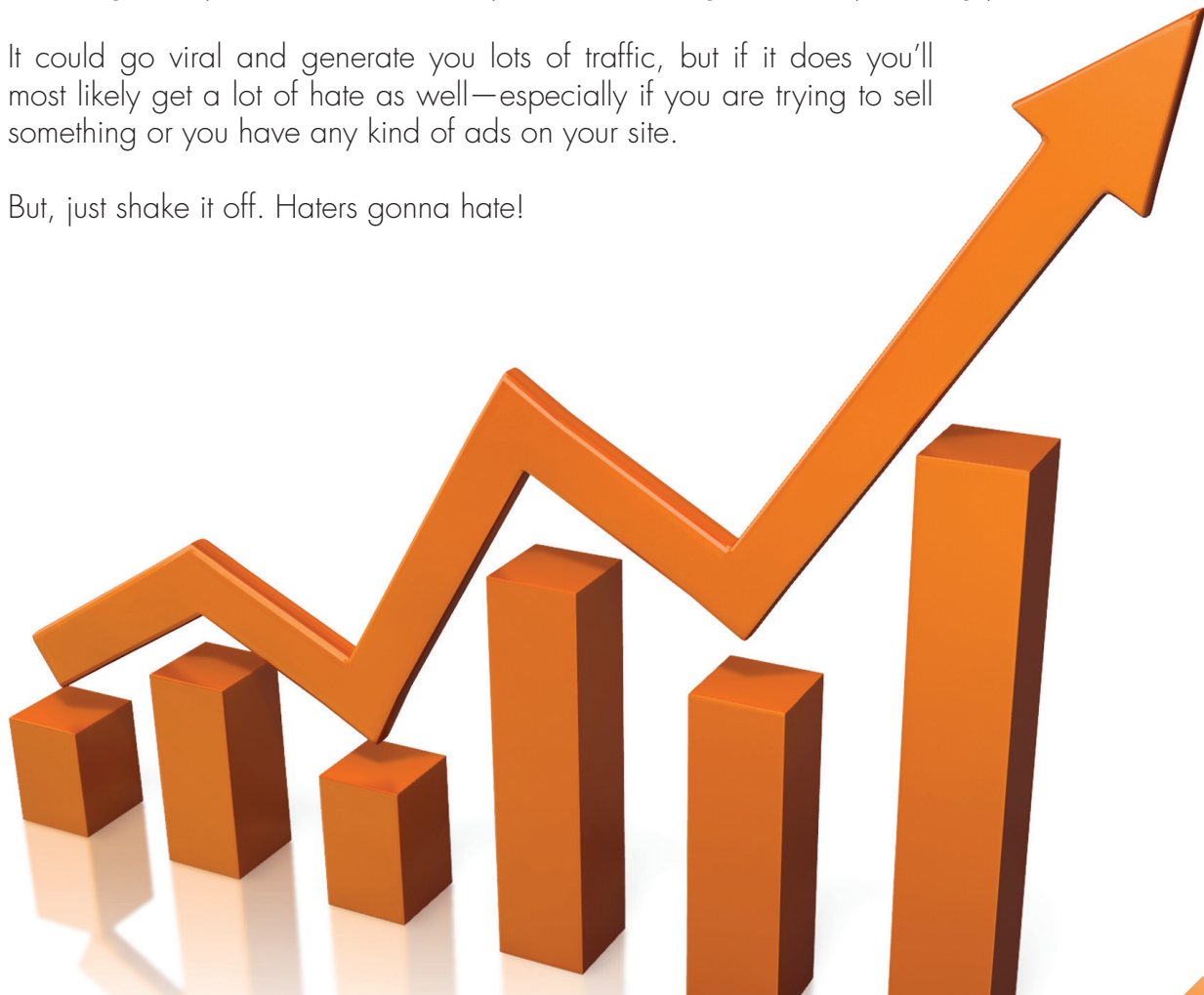
LESSON 5 EMAIL

If you've been following along so far and have set up your blog, you are well on your way to success.

- ▶ You've picked out a theme for your blog
- ▶ You've got a domain name
- ▶ You've got your blog up and running
- ▶ You have a list of topics to write about
- ▶ You've even committed to a posting schedule

Yet, there is still one thing you need in order to be successful:traffic.

What, did you think you were just going to start your blog and instantly people would show up and start reading your posts?

It's doesn't quite work that way, but there are a few simple strategies we'll talk about here and then I'll give you some more information on where to go next—if you really want to take things to the next level.

STARTING OUT

When you are first starting out, the easiest way to get some traffic to your blog is to start commenting on other software development blogs.

Most comment systems on blogs allow you to have a profile that, when clicked on, will take someone to your blog or web page.

So, if you want to start letting people know about your blog, go and visit other software development blogs or related blogs and leave good quality comments on those blogs.

Eventually, people will notice your comments and hopefully will be interested in checking out your blog as well.

You can even post a relevant link to a blog post you wrote in the comments section of someone else's blog.

But, before you get all comment happy, we need to have a little talk.

ALWAYS SEEK TO ADD VALUE

The worst thing you can do for your blog is to be seen as a spammer on other people's blogs. Not only will this ensure that you don't get traffic, but it will negatively impact your reputation and your personal brand (more on that later.)

When you comment on other people's blogs—especially if you post links to your own blog—**make sure you are not just trying to promote yourself and your blog.** Add some real value to the conversation.

The goal should be that people click on your blog because when they read the insightful comment you posted, they were interested in what else you had to say.

Now, this approach isn't going to generate a huge amount of traffic for you, but it is a good way to start getting traffic when you first launch your blog. It will also start to build up a reputation for you in the community of software development bloggers.

When you are first starting out, **I'd recommend spending 15-30 minutes each day** reading other software development blogs and leaving comments.

Over time this will add up,as long as you are—say it with me now—CONSISTENT.

NATURAL SEARCH ENGINE TRAFFIC

Over time, if you are writing good quality blog posts and being consistent, you'll find that **a majority of your traffic will start to come from search engines**—ahem, Google.

Search engine traffic usually takes some time to acquire, because it is mainly based on how many high-quality sites are linking back to your content. These are known as backlinks.

Now, there are lots of ways to build backlinks. But, large portions of them are questionable.

You should primarily focus on creating quality, highly targeted content, consistently. If you do this, as people find your blog, they will link to it and share it. Over time, these links will result in increased search engine traffic.

If you try to do what is known as "black-hat" techniques to artificially build links, you may get some good search engine traffic for a while, but most likely Google will eventually figure out what you are doing and you can lose all your traffic literally overnight.

So, focus on writing high quality posts consistently.

Sure, it will take time, but it will be well worth the effort.

The first year I started Simple Programmer, I got less than 50 views on my blog each day, but **now Simple Programmer gets over 7,000 views a day.**

There are a few other tricks I discovered to help me get to that level of traffic—which we'll talk about next—but, a majority of it came from just consistently writing blog posts every week.

HOME WORK

What? You didn't really think I was going to let you get away without doing some homework did you?

I've got two things I want you to do this time--both of which should help you get some extra traffic.

The first is to **write up a post on your blog about this email course.**

Make sure within the post you link to http://simpleprogrammer.com (so, I see the pingback that lets me know you wrote the post) and for the email course sign-up, you can link to: https://simpleprogrammer.com/blog-course.

Wait a minute… won't that generate traffic for me and not for you?

Well, not really. If you just created your blog, I'm not going to be getting much traffic from it, but there are two reasons I am asking you to do this:

1. **I am going to be putting a list together of all the blog posts talking about this email course and I'll be linking to them.** That means—as long as you write a quality post about this email course—I will link to you from Simple Programmer. This will help you get some traffic (remember how important backlinks are). Just make sure you write a quality post—that's all I ask.

2. **I would like you to help promote this email course so that I can reach more developers with it.** If you are getting some value from this course, please share it. (Here's a handy link to send a quick tweet about the course.)

Finally, **your second homework assignment is to find some post on Simple Programmer and comment on it.**

You should already know why this is valuable. SimpleProgrammer gets over 7,000 views a day, so if you write a quality comment, there is a good chance you'll get some traffic back to your own blog.

HOW TO EARN INCOME ON THE SIDE FROM YOUR SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT BLOG

I still remember the day I made my first real income from Simple Programmer:

Your Payment History   **Unpaid Balance: $883.07**

Date	Transaction	Amount	Balance
Jun 02 2010	04/2010 Advertising Fees	$5.87	$5.87
Jul 02 2010	05/2010 Advertising Fees	$1.93	$7.80
Aug 02 2010	06/2010 Advertising Fees	$0.90	$8.70
Sep 02 2010	07/2010 Advertising Fees	$2.21	$10.91
Sep 28 2010	Payment by Direct Deposit	-$10.91	$0.00
Oct 02 2010	08/2010 Advertising Fees	$3.09	$3.09
Nov 02 2010	09/2010 Advertising Fees	$8.86	$11.95
Nov 27 2010	Payment by Direct Deposit	-$11.95	$0.00

I know, kind of pitiful right?

Let me tell you though, I was RIDICULOUSLY proud of that income.

Even though it wasn't much, and even though I was making a lot more from my 9-5 job…

Earning this money felt SO satisfying.

Because it meant that I had a way of making money that was completely my own—and no one could just take that away from me.

Six years later Simple Programmer generates close to $30,000 per month.

Which is fantastic. I never thought the blog would come so far.

I still can't help but kick myself sometimes though…

Because even after I made my first few dollars from my blog, it wasn't until the last couple of years when I really started to see a decent chunk of income from Simple Programmer every month.

If I could just zap myself back in time to when I first started Simple Programmer, I'd DEFINITELY do things differently.

And #1 on my list would be:

Spell out from Day 1 all of the different income streams I would create with the blog.

Had I done that, I'd be 3 YEARS ahead of where I am today.

This missed opportunity why I decided to create a course specifically for other software developers who blog. It's called:

10 Ways to Make Money from Your Blog

This program truly is the resource I wish I'd had when I was starting out.

It's a whirlwind tour of all of the different ways I know of to earn money from your blog.

I'll show you every technique I'm using with Simple Programmer—and even several revenue streams that I haven't had a chance to implement yet.

You'll see live examples of how other bloggers are using these income-generating approaches…

And even get a few "sneak peeks" at the revenue I'm generating with Simple Programmer.

In this video series, you'll discover:

▶ What's a REALISTIC goal for how much you can earn with your blog?

▶ How to earn more from advertising by cutting out the middle man

▶ How to collect money "passively" whenever someone else makes a sale

▶ One question to ask before you try to make money with your blog if you want to maximize what you'll earn (and keep the trust of your readers)

▶ How to find companies that will pay you for access to your audience

▶ 3 non-obvious ways to sell advertising (much more profitably too)

▶ How I turn every blog post at Simple Programmer into an income-boosting opportunity

▶ Not making money yet? Step 1a to start earning money with your blog today

▶ A tempting trap that can make you some money today, but destroy your blog before you have a chance to really earn more down the road

▶ Don't have a lot of traffic yet? You can still make money from your blog—a lot of money actually

▶ The costliest mistake I made when starting Simple Programmer, and what you can do TODAY to avoid making the same error

▶ 3 things you can offer on your blog that require almost no upfront work

▶ How some developers are able to quickly make enough income to quit their day job and support themselves using their blog

▶ An easy, "why not" way to generate a few bucks a month (or maybe more)

▶ How a small but dedicated fan base could bring in enough revenue to pay your mortgage each month

▶ 10+ ways to get people to pay you for the knowledge you already have

▶ One step you must start TODAY that will be a "force multiplier" on everything else you do with your blog later on

▶ How the "podcast king" makes money by borrowing the expertise of other developers

And I'm throwing in a bonus too...

Recently I hosted a "look over my shoulder" presentation for a select few diehard supporters of Simple Programmer.

In this video, which is not for sale anywhere else, I fire up my screen sharing software, open up the Simple Programmer books, and step through my income streams line by line.

You'll see exactly what strategies I'm using to monetize Simple Programmer—and how much revenue each channel brings in.

When was the last time someone offering you "business advice" was willing to be that transparent with you?

10 Ways to Make Money from Your Blog represents 7-8 years of hard-won knowledge that I've accumulated while building Simple Programmer from a brand new blog to a 6-figure business.

If someone had come along and offered to show me the ropes like this when I was getting started I'd have gladly paid $1,000 or more—and it would have been the best money I've ever invested.)

(Think I'm exaggerating? Over the last 3 years, Simple Programmer has earned nearly $400,000 and grown to nearly $30,000 a month. Can you imagine where the site would be if I'd figured all of this out 3-4 years earlier?)

I don't want you to make the same mistakes I did.

That's why I produced this course.

And since you've shown that you're serious about this blogging thing by investing in this workbook, I want to make you a special offer:

Right now, you can get 10 Ways to Make Money from Your Blog **at a special price of 50%off.**

For all the details and to claim your savings, click here to check out the course.