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# I Run A Thank-You Notes Website That Makes \$8.7K/Month With Display Ads



Heidi Bender



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**ABOUT**

BUSINESS

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SAVE



Heidi Bender

Founder, **Tons of Thanks**

\$8.7K

REVENUE/MO



1

FOUNDERS

1

EMPLOYEES

## Hello! Who are you and what business did you start?

Hello, my name is Heidi Bender. I started my website, [Tons of Thanks](#), to help people write thank-you notes. Before becoming a full-time writer, I worked as a data management consultant for twenty-two years.

I provide example thank you messages on many topics. What's included in a thank-you message will vary based on who is being thanked and the reasons for the thanks. What you say to your grandma about graduation money will be much different than thanking your boss for a promotion.

Since starting Tons of Thanks in 2014, I've helped more than 15 million people write a thank you note message.



# TONS OF THANKS

Thank You Note Examples & Advice

tonsofthanks.com

## What's your backstory and how did you come up with the idea?

It was probably back in 2013 or 2012 when I learned about blogging. And then I heard that people were able to quit their jobs, earning all their income online.

Coming up with an idea was challenging. I felt like an average woman without any special knowledge to share. So I took a course about how to develop a website. The course explained that you only need to know a little more than someone else to teach beginners on the topic.

One idea that I shortlisted was thank-you note writing. My mom taught me at an early age to write thank-you notes, and I continued writing them as an adult. I surveyed my friends about the idea and learned that some had never written a thank you.

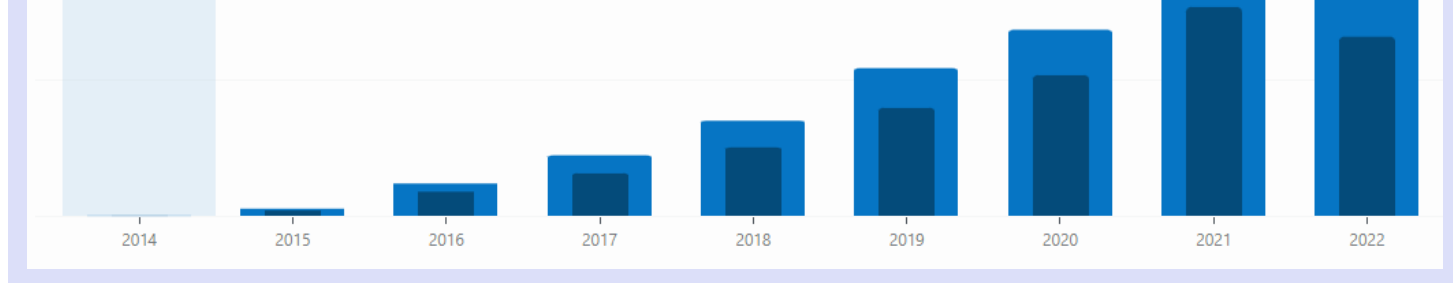
To further validate my idea, I found websites already helping people write thank-you notes. And several books had been written on the topic.

However, many of the example messages others were providing felt too generic. I could provide better examples of what a good thank-you note looks like, which would help people write their own meaningful thank you messages.

## Describe the process of launching the business.

To get started, all I needed was a website. So I signed up for a cheap shared hosting plan for only \$3.97 monthly. Next, I installed [WordPress](#) and worked on the basics, like setting up an about page.

Then I wrote a post about how to write a good [thank you note](#). Much to my surprise, only a few people read the article.



I would check the stats daily and see no one reading them except my mom. I knew very little about the Google sandbox for new sites, SEO, link building, or any current SEO strategies.

So, I joined a writing challenge in October 2014 to write a new blog post every day in October. I completed the challenge and still wasn't getting much traffic. I had a lot to learn!

Feeling frustrated and discouraged, I sidelined the blog, only working on it extensively after joining the same writing challenge in October 2015.

“ If I stopped after my first few posts didn't get views in 2014, I would not have gone on to help millions write thank-you notes.

And while the pageviews were slowly increasing, it was nothing to write home about. And there was no way I could leave my day job anytime soon as the site was not making much money.

Affiliate marketing wasn't working, which was the primary way taught in the course to make money online. It turned out that most visitors were happy with the free help and didn't need or want to buy thank-you note cards. In 2014, affiliate commissions from Amazon were just under \$50, with 2015 only bringing in less than \$30.

Sometime in early 2015, I turned on Adsense Ads. The most the site earned from Adsense was \$510 in December 2016.

I self-published my book, [A Modern Guide to Writing Thank-You Notes](#) in May 2016, which didn't become a bestseller! The book continues to sell, with an average of 43 copies a month.

## Since launch, what has worked to attract and retain customers?

I didn't write much in 2016, averaging only one monthly post. But then, more of those old initial posts started to rank on the first page of Google.

I took another unhelpful blogging course. However, I met another person in the class that told me about AdThrive. AdThrive ads pay more than Google Adsense Ads. My life changed forever!

My page views were nearly high enough to meet AdThrive's minimum requirement of 100,000 monthly pageviews. My new friend taught me how to use Pinterest as a traffic source. The extra Pinterest traffic pushed my site to over 100k pageviews. AdThrive accepted my site within a few months.

I started learning more about SEO from a few courses. And the site traffic grew steadily, allowing me to leave my day job in March of 2021 for income from ad revenue.

My site relies heavily on SEO, with 99% of the site's traffic coming from Organic Google Search.

Recently, I've been given access to share posts on [MSN](#), which I'm hoping will be another excellent traffic source.

The key to the success of the site has been understanding search intent and long-tail keywords.

The process of writing a thank you note is easy. It can be done in two or three sentences. The hard part is the wording. For example, the wording for saying thank you for a gift to your mom is much different than [thanking your boss for a raise](#).

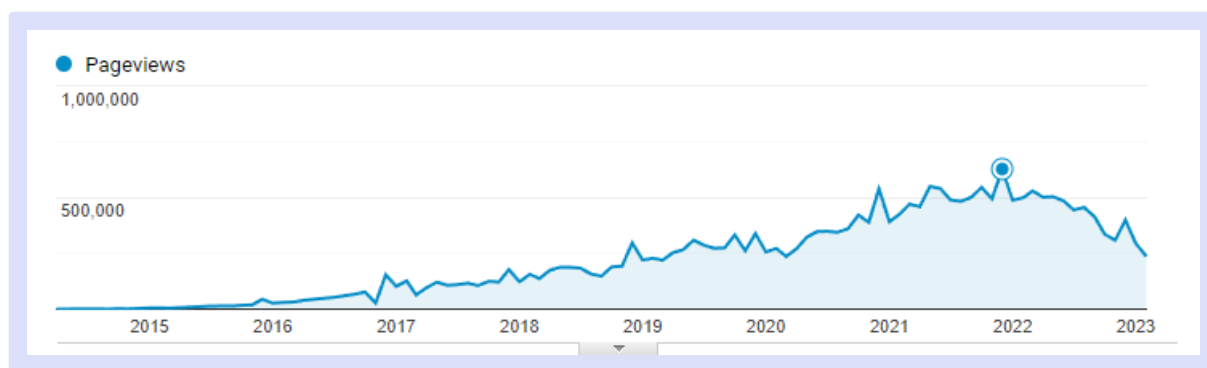
An example of long tail keywords is the various situations an employee has for thanking their boss. To match search intent, I did keyword research to find out why people wanted to thank their boss.

I found out that people needed help with wording to thank their bosses for raises, promotions, appreciation, gifts, team lunches, individual lunches, when leaving the company or changing positions, and retirement.

As you can imagine, saying thank you to the boss for lunch is much different than thanking the boss for a promotion. So, I created different articles with example messages tailored to each situation (ie, long tail keyword).

## How are you doing today and what does the future look like?

My site had a setback with the Google updates in September 2022. Traffic has declined, so I'm doing what I can to help the site regain the traffic and become the number one site for thank you note help.



I am updating old content, removing old content that was not useful, and writing new content to attract more viewers.

The main cost for running the site is hosting, SEO tools, and a paid group for bloggers. I also write all the content, so the profit margin is high when the pageviews are up.

I plan to continue growing my brand and helping more people write thoughtful thank you messages. I want [Tons of Thanks](#) to become the go-to resource for all thank-you note-writing help.

**Through starting the business, have you learned anything particularly helpful or advantageous?**

My biggest mistake so far was taking it easy when traffic was at its highest point. I would only work maybe one day a week, thinking I had reached the “passive income” point. However, I learned the hard way that my site was not immune to Google updates.

I try not to think about all the “could haves, would haves, should haves,” and now I’m working hard to build Tons of Thanks as the best brand and resource for all things related to thank you note writing.

## What platform/tools do you use for your business?

I am currently using [Ahrefs](#) for SEO research. I like the easy-to-interface and ease of exporting results to Excel.

I also rely on [Google Search Console](#) (GSC) when updating posts. You can see how well search terms are ranking for each page on your site. Then, you can decide which keywords to add to the post when updating it.

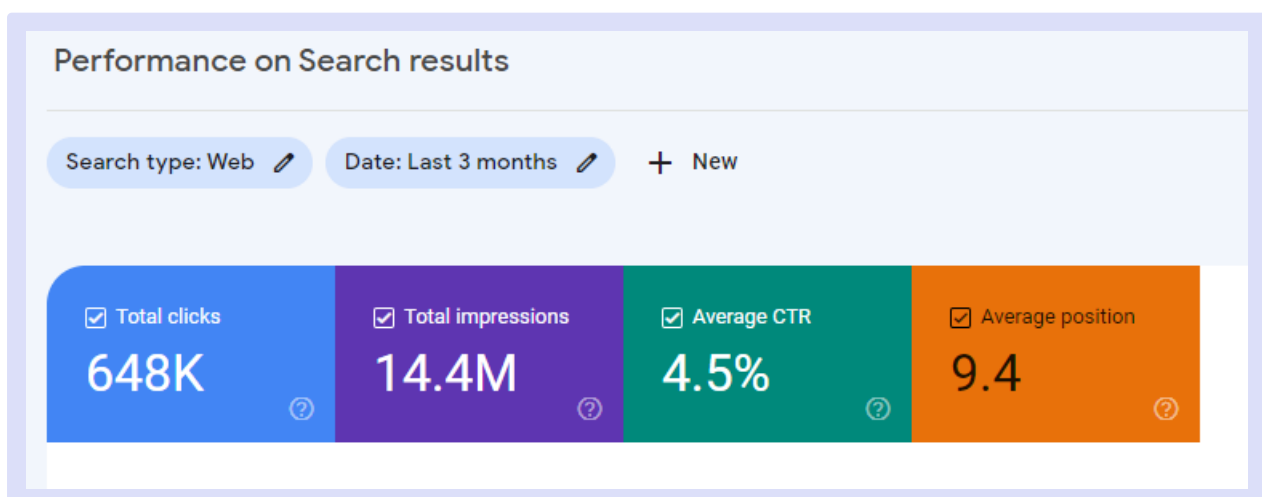
Within GSC, you can filter by page. Then, you can see the position of the keywords that the page ranks for. When you see related keywords in positions 4-10, you can try updating your post with more information about those keywords, while not keyword stuffing, to try to increase your rankings.

Also, the total number of impressions for your site is not a meaningful metric. 14.4 million sounds great, doesn't it? However, it's the total clicks that I care about. The clicks represent people that are visiting my site.

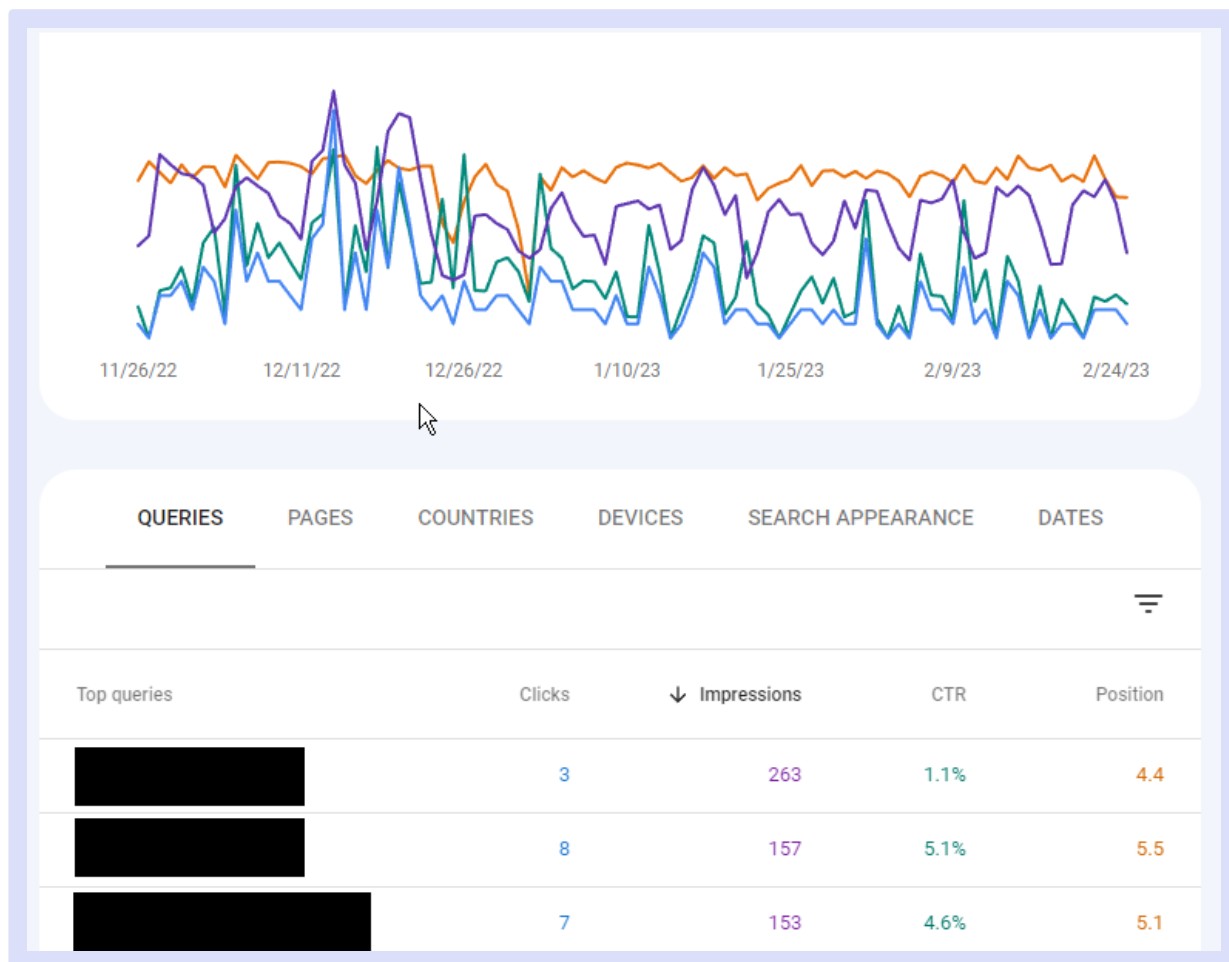
Your goal should be a high click-through rate (CTR).

Impressions from keywords in position 10 are not going to drive very many clicks to my website. Also, images from articles can rank, and show as impressions.

It's possible to have an image rank in the top 3 for images with the article itself being much lower. So, unless someone is looking at images (which may not make sense to do for informational keywords), it's not going to lead to very many clicks.



“ My site relies heavily on SEO, with 99% of the site's traffic coming from Organic Google Search.



## What have been the most influential books, podcasts, or other resources?

My decision to try out blogging full-time was strongly inspired by Pat Flynn of [Smart Passive Income](#). Pat was an architect who switched to online business after he was let go from his day job. When I was first learning about blogging, I listened to Pat's helpful podcast during my hour-long commute to my day job.

I also have learned from Spencer Haws of [Niche Pursuits](#). While Spencer doesn't currently offer courses (I took most of them when they were available), he shares helpful tips and advice on his website, podcast, and YouTube channel.

And I felt validated by my decision to monetize my site with ads by Jon Dykstra of [Fat Stacks Blog](#). I also took his course, learning more about SEO, and currently participate in his forum only available for course members.

## Advice for other entrepreneurs who want to get started or are just starting out?

My advice is not to give up too soon! If I stopped after my first few posts didn't get views in 2014, I would not have gone on to help millions write [thank-you notes](#). In 2021, the site had 4.5M million visitors.


Also, I had been encouraged by experts to remove display ads on my site because they didn't like them. However, I had no products that were selling. One way to provide free content is to monetize with display ads. Trust yourself to be the expert on what's best for your website.

Treating your website like a business will increase the chance of success.


## Where can we go to learn more?

- [Tons of Thanks](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Personal Twitter](#)

If you have any questions or comments, drop a comment below!



Heidi Bender, Founder of Tons of Thanks




Pat Walls, Founder of Starter Story

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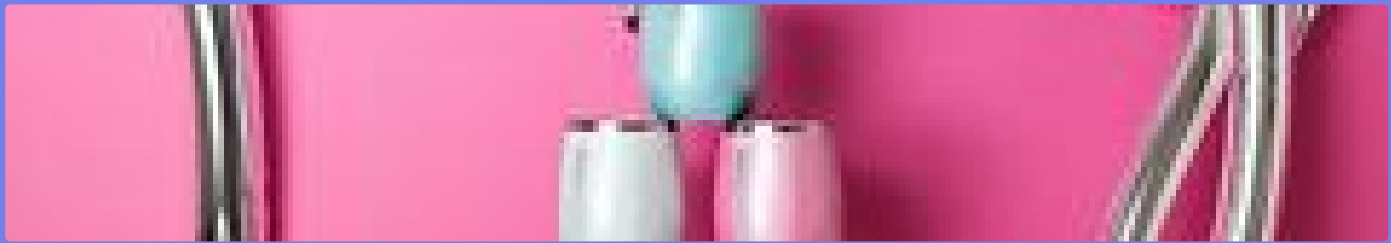
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Dylan

I Grew A Drinkware Brand To \$1.1M/Month At 23 Years Old



Drinkware brand

**\$12M** / month



Chris

How I Started An SEO Agency For Lawyers Generating \$3.6M/Year



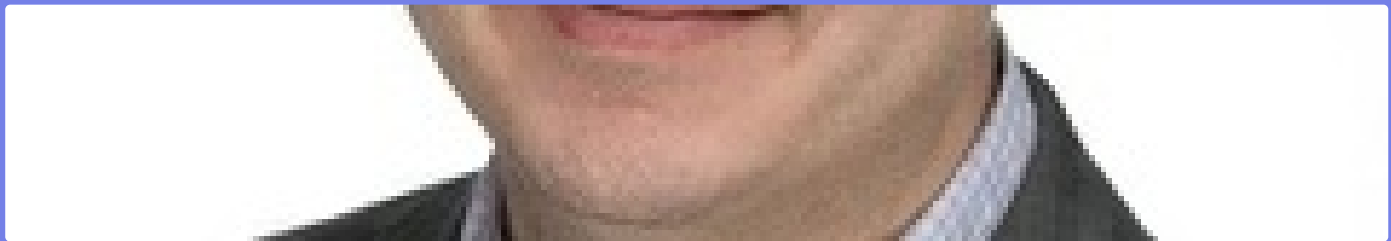
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**\$10M** / month



Matt

How I Started An \$8M/Year Stock Market Research Website



Finance blog

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**\$1.08M**/YEAR



Scott

**\$300K**/YEAR



Chad

**\$1.2M**/YEAR



Garrett

**\$300K**/YEAR

## Resources to keep you building



Abhishek

**\$12M**/YEAR

Building a business is not a game of luck.

It's about taking action every day.



Samping

**\$432K**/YEAR

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Osman

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**Sam Parr**

My First Million

I love this website.



**Rand Fishkin**

Moz / SparkToro

Love Starter Story's transparency.



**Johne Vang**

Be The Match

You can't find this information anywhere else.



**Trent Baren**

Instagram

So much valuable information.



**Bilal Budhani**

Entrepreneur

I was hooked on Starter Story as soon as I discovered it. Resonated with me right off the bat.



**Jenn Leach**

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**\$1.62M**/YEAR

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**Michael**

**\$1.2M**/YEAR

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