

# Real Estate Blog Blazers

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8 Top Real Estate Bloggers Share Their Secrets to Creating a High-Profile & Very Successful Real Estate Blog!

## Real Estate Blog Blazers

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I write about Social Media and Technology for Real Estate. I'm interested in helping real estate agents build a better real estate blog. I regularly speak and consult with some of the most influential organizations in real estate about blogging, social networking, lead generation through social media and technology. Some of my speaking experience includes Inman Connect San Francisco 2009, REtechSouth 2010, Real Estate WordCamp 2010 and the REALTOR® Rally 2010. I'm also the Founder of REBarCamp Los Angeles (a one-day social media conference, BarCamp style, for the real estate industry).

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*many thanks and in no particular order  
to irina netchaev, ines hegedus-garcia,  
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# Introduction

It's what the client is doing that drives an industry to change. Do you know the percentage of consumers who begin their home search online? Recent statistics show that an estimated 90%+<sup>1</sup> of home buyers begin their home search online. Staggering statistics which beg the question, what are YOU doing TODAY to position yourself to reach those buyers?



“What's important is that it is now common, and will soon be expected, that every intelligent person (and quite a few unintelligent ones) will have a media platform where they will share what they care about with the world.” - Seth Godin<sup>2</sup>

With an estimated 200,000,000<sup>3</sup> blogs making up the blog-o-sphere, more and more real estate agents are turning to WordPress as their website solution of choice. It's quickly becoming a big player both as a blogging solution and as a listing publication solution.

<sup>1</sup> 2009 NAR Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers, <http://www.realtor.org/prodser.nsf/products/186-45-09?OpenDocument>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sethgodin.typepad.com>

<sup>3</sup> <http://socialnomics.net/2010/05/05/social-media-revolution-2-refresh>

## Important Things

**1** Get a Google Reader account: <http://www.google.com/reader>. Start subscribing to other blogs who's style you like (both inside and outside of your industry).

**2** Pick a domain and choose a blog platform: Wordpress.com, wordpress.org, typepad.com, etc. When it comes to domain name, pick something memorable versus something that's keyword rich.

**3** For branding purposes, register your profile/username across multiple platforms. Sites like [usernamecheck.com](http://usernamecheck.com) and [knowem.com](http://knowem.com) allow you to check your username across multiple social networks. Grab your name and secure your brand online before someone else does.

Why? Well, because there's virtually nothing that you can't design on the WordPress platform and it ranks just too darn well in search results.

In this ebook, we'll explore how some agents have managed to build name/brand recognition and profitability through their blogging efforts showcasing how blogging has emerged as an effective real estate marketing tool.

## Starter Steps

Every tool that social media counts in it's arsenal is empowering (blogging, photo-blogging, video-blogging, micro-blogging, podcasting, etc.). Gives the individual an opportunity to build name/brand recognition for himself without "breaking the bank." With the right kind of strategy and tact, even the little guy can compete against big business by carving out a little media empire of his/her own.

So where do you start?

### **Picking A Domain Name**

When picking a domain name, it's best to go with something memorable versus something that's keyword rich. This is not said to undermine the importance of keywords it's just that you'll get your blog to rank in more significant ways than having a keyword rich domain.

See, here's how blogs like WordPress work. Every time you write a new post, you create a new page on your site (with it's own unique url). The more pages Google has indexed, the more likely it is for your site to show up in the SERPs (search engine results pages) for whatever keywords you specify.

Establish your permalink structure early on and stick to it. Then focus on using keywords in the titles to your posts when you publish something new. This is significantly more important than having a keyword rich domain.

### **Choose a Blogging Platform**

I'm biased towards [wordpress.org](http://wordpress.org) (it's what we use to design our clients' sites). Why? Because there's just about nothing that you can't design on the platform, and it ranks extremely well in search. Other platforms you might consider using are Blogger<sup>4</sup>, Typepad<sup>5</sup>, and [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com)<sup>6</sup> (the free, hosted version of the WordPress platform).

Whichever platform you decide to use, the important thing to consider is your url and branding. In other words, don't include the name of the blogging platform in the url (purchase your own unique domain). For example, most blogs read: \_\_\_\_\_.[blogger.com](http://blogger.com), \_\_\_\_\_.[typepad.com](http://typepad.com) or \_\_\_\_\_.[wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com). Instead of building brand/authority for those platforms, purchase your own unique domain and redirect your blog no a subdomain like: [blog.yourwebsitename.com](http://blog.yourwebsitename.com) or [yourwebsitename.com/blog](http://yourwebsitename.com/blog).

### **Starter Steps: Things to Avoid**

Here's a list of things you might want to try and avoid when launching your new blog:

- **Don't delete comments.** Inflammatory comments or direct self-promotional type comments are fair game. You can delete those. But if someone offers a comment

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4 <http://www.blogger.com>

5 <http://www.typepad.com>

6 <http://www.wordpress.com>

from a very differing point of view, leave it. Be responsive and agree to disagree. Flat out deleting the comment on the other-hand is begging for an argument. Here's an example of a great comment policy from The Phoenix Real Estate Guy:

<http://www.phoenixrealestateguy.com/about-jay-and-francy/blogcomment-policy>

- **Don't steal other people's content.** For obvious reasons and it's just not nice. Familiarize yourself with RSS (Really Simple Syndication). You might want to use Feedburner for this: <http://www.feedburner.com> (you'll be able to track RSS subscriber counts and also allow for people to subscribe to an email version of your blog. Another thing you might want to familiarize yourself with is Creative Commons Licenses: <http://creativecommons.org/choose> (you essentially keep copyright to your work but allow people to copy and distribute your work provided that they give you credit.).
- **Don't overload your site with a bunch of random stuff.** Many people think that the more they overload their sidebar content the better when in fact, less is more. The most important features include: IDX, contact form, newsletter form, and RSS subscription options. Everything else you can basically do without. Why would you want to link people to external site like your social networks if the goal from the beginning was to get them to your site to search for homes. Think about it. The less information you have on your website, the better (go with the essentials).

This ebook isn't exactly a thorough step-by-step guide but rather a starter step resource and a look at how other practitioner's are implementing these techniques to build brand/name recognition and generate business. So without further ado, let's jump right in shall we...



# 1 Irina Netchaev



**Irina Netchaev**

[@PasadenaViews](#)

[pasadenaviews.com](http://pasadenaviews.com)

Irina Netchaev is a Broker Associate with Keller Williams Realty in Pasadena, CA. Passionate about her city and all things real estate, Irina has emerged as a valuable local resource for all things Pasadena (dining, entertainment, real estate and more). She's not only savvy about all things real estate, she's also quite savvy about the ways of the web and how search and social media impact your bottom line.

## Interview With Real Estate Blog Blazer, Irina Netchaev

**@Ribeezie:** What defines a successful blog for you? Is it site traffic, number of subscribers, number of comments, revenue, etc.?

**@PasadenaViews:** A successful real estate blog is one that generates leads.

**@Ribeezie:** When did you decide you finally reached success with your blog?

**@PasadenaViews:** I am still working on the success part. However, I think my blog is moderately successful – it's increasing in readership and the number of leads that I'm getting. For me, a minimum of 5 to 8 leads a day is a successful blog.

 **It finally dawned on me that I had to look at developing content as prospecting time. I made a decision to allocate an hour a day for research and writing. My goal was to have 3 to 5 posts a week, especially when my blog was still a baby.**

**@Ribeezie:** What do you consider to be your most successful blog post ever?

**@PasadenaViews:** My annual state of the city post seems to always get a ton of hits - <http://www.pasadenaviews.com/state-of-the-pasadena-housing-market-and-california-real-estate-forecast-for-2010/> This year, as of April 15, it had over 1,000 unique visitors - on average 10 a day.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on writing a successful blog post?

**@PasadenaViews:** It has to be a combination of what consumers want and calls for action.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on developing content and writing consistently on your blog?

**@PasadenaViews:** It finally dawned on me that I had to look at developing content as prospecting time. I made a decision to allocate an hour a day

for research and writing. My goal was to have 3 to 5 posts a week, especially when my blog was still a baby.

**@Ribeezie:** How important do you think headlines are when writing content for your blog?

**@PasadenaViews:** Critical... titles or headlines can make or break your post. You have to write for SEO and readers. Tough combination, but a skill that you need to acquire.

**@Ribeezie:** Do you spend any time and money marketing your blog?

**@PasadenaViews:** I spend time by marketing my blog on social media networks. I have not spend any dollars yet for PPC or other types of advertising. However, I also use my blog's domain in my email signature, business cards, flyers and every piece of marketing material that I produce.

**@Ribeezie:** How do you measure results (if at all)?

**@PasadenaViews:** I look at site stats and the number of leads that I get. My leads are separated into Home Search memberships, phone calls and emails. I then track the number of leads converted to appointments and the number of closings that I get from these leads. For example, 17 of 21 2009 transactions were internet produced leads. I had close to 59,000 unique visitors my sites last year. For every 57 unique visitors, I had a registered home search user. I generated 1 sale for every 48 registered users. My goal this year is to continue to maintain and increase registered home search users and to convert more of them into sales.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best success story or experience that happened as a

result of the blog?

**@PasadenaViews:** I can't think of one particular experience, but my blog certainly exploded my production levels and changed my approach to prospecting and marketing.

**@Ribeezie:** In your opinion, what are the elements of a successful blog design?

**@PasadenaViews:** Keep it clean and crisp.

**@Ribeezie:** What are your best Top Five tips for better blogging? (In 140 characters or less).

**@PasadenaViews:** 1. Be consistent. 2. Be timely... Write about topics of interest today. 3. Don't get off on too many tangents. It's okay to have fun with your blog once in a while, but if you're in real estate, write about homes, real estate statistics, community, etc. 4. Stay positive. 5. Don't give up.

**@Ribeezie:** What do you think are the most common mistakes newbie bloggers make?

**@PasadenaViews:** Expect to see immediate results and give up too early.

**@Ribeezie:** If you knew then, what you know now, what would you have done differently?

**@PasadenaViews:** I'd reach out to more experienced bloggers earlier and ask questions.

**@Ribeezie:** What advice would you give to someone who wants to start their first blog?

**@PasadenaViews:** Just do it... start on a free platform like Wordpress. Attend REBarCamps. Join ActiveRain. Explore and read other bloggers sites to get a feel for what you like and do not like.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite blogs? ("Must Reads" that you visit daily).

**@PasadenaViews:** Honestly, I don't have time to visit blogs daily... I like [www.bubbleinfo.com](http://www.bubbleinfo.com), [prologger](#), and [Inman](#).

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite books that you recommend to other (especially newbie) bloggers?

**@PasadenaViews:** Books get outdated too quickly... I just read lots of articles and follow links on twitter and facebook.

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## Nick Bastian



**Nick Bastian**

[@RailLife](#)

[raillife.com/blog](http://raillife.com/blog)

**N**ick Bastian is a Real Estate Agent licensed with Realty Executives in Tempe, Arizona with 17+ years experience. In 2006 he co-founded Rail Life, LLC which caters to business owners, commuters, sports fans, convention goers, property owners, students, art lovers, vacationers, etc. in learning more about the areas and venues surrounding the rail line in Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa. He's done a fantastic job of capturing substantial local media attention and is recognized as someone to follow.

### Interview With Real Estate Blog Blazer, Nick Bastian

**@Ribeerie:** What defines a successful blog for you? Is it site traffic, number of subscribers, number of comments, revenue, etc.?

**@RailLife:** To me, a successful blog combines a passion for what you do and an interactive audience.

**@Ribeezie:** When did you decide you finally reached success with your blog?

**@Raillife:** I am still trying to decide that!

 **High expectations of immediate successes. The “magic bullet” syndrome of thinking there will be measurable results after a couple of posts is probably why so many blogs fail.**

**@Ribeezie:** What do you consider to be your most successful blog post ever?

**@Raillife:** Strange as it may sound, I can't think of one specific post.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on writing a successful blog post?

**@Raillife:** Don't worry too much about "sculpting a perfect post" because most people really don't care if you make a mistake now and then...

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on developing content and writing consistently on your blog?

**@Raillife:** Enjoy what you do and write about things that interest you. Blogging just to get something out can be such a waste of time.

**@Ribeezie:** How important do you think headlines are when writing content for your blog?

**@RailLife:** Headlines are important a majority of the time but I think too many people worry about cramming in a key word and don't just go with a more natural headline that might be a better fit.

**@Ribeezie:** Do you spend any time and money marketing your blog?

**@RailLife:** I have been known to have the Rail Life brand show up at a place, or two... :-)

**@Ribeezie:** How do you measure results (if at all)?

**@RailLife:** I try to keep track of what interests people and write as much as possible about those things. It can sometimes be a tricky balance and can make some aspects of my particular blog more challenging. Some things that tend to do well are not always my strongest points to write about.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best success story or experience that happened as a result of the blog?

**@RailLife:** I am always very thankful when my peers in the real estate industry say they like what I am doing with Rail Life. Having a trackback to a post I wrote in the past can put a smile on my face...

Given that, I gotta' say that having a consumer in my car saying they saw me "everywhere" before making a decision on which agent to work with, is pretty cool, too.

**@Ribeezie:** What are your best Top Five tips for better blogging? (In 140 characters or less).



**@RailLife:** Have fun. Be consistent. Don't flame or pick fights. Write good content. Have fun!

**@Ribeezie:** What do you think are the most common mistakes newbie bloggers make?

**@RailLife:** High expectations of immediate successes. The "magic bullet" syndrome of thinking there will be measurable results after a couple of posts is probably why so many blogs fail.

**@Ribeezie:** If you knew then, what you know now, what would you have done differently?

**@RailLife:** If I would have known how much work this crap is, I would have never started...

**@Ribeezie:** What advice would you give to someone who wants to start their first blog?

**@RailLife:** Just write...

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite blogs? ("Must Reads" that you visit daily).

**@RailLife:** I like what Heather does at <http://www.locomusings.com>. The <http://www.miamism.com> blog is one of my favorites and <http://www.RainCityGuide.com> is one that I like to try and keep up with. <Http://www.HyperlocalBlogger.com> is another that I like to get ideas from on a regular basis.

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# Teresa Boardman



**Teresa Boardman**

[@TBoard](#)

[stpaulrealestateblog.com](http://stpaulrealestateblog.com)

**T**eresa Boardman is the Associate Broker at Saint Paul Home Realty. She currently sells real estate in St. Paul, Minnesota and writes a weekly column for Inman News. Blogging since 2005, Teresa has amassed quite the following in her own digital corner of the blog-o-sphere.

## Interview With Real Estate Blog Blazer, Teresa Boardman


**@Ribeezie:** What defines a successful blog for you? Is it site traffic, number of subscribers, number of comments, revenue, etc.?

**@TBoard:** A successful blog is one that is read by it's target audience and if it is a business blog revenue is generated. Blogs with no traffic rarely get generate business and there is no correlation between comments and business or comments and reader ship. Part of success depends upon what the blogger is looking to achieve.

**@Ribeezie:** When did you decide you finally reached success with your

blog?

**@TBoard:** In early 2006 when it started generating revenue. It took others who started in 2005 longer to generate revenue because even though they started a few months before I did they wrote like 10 posts for the whole year and I wrote one a day. I add that because success is achieved by getting readers which is achieved by having content not by having a blog for a certain amount of time.

 **Don't spend hours and hours working on plugins and platforms, start writing. Blogs are still about content and without content there is no readership and that applies to all platforms.**

**@Ribeezie:** What do you consider to be your most successful blog post ever?

**@TBoard:** I have over 1800 posts. There is one that gets more visits than any other and it is about a local realtor and lender who went to jail for mortgage fraud.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on writing a successful blog post?

**@TBoard:** Write from your own experience in your own voice don't imitate anyone else. Always think about your readers not about what you want to write but what others want to read.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on developing content and writing consistently on your blog?

**@TBoard:** For people who have business blogs and are doing business the ideas happen all day long. A note book and a camera should be available at all times. Content can be stock piled too. write when the ideas come and save the posts for later.

**@Ribeezie:** How important do you think headlines are when writing content for your blog?

**@TBoard:** I think they are important to get reader attention. I suck at headlines but I have a lot of readers anyway.

**@Ribeezie:** Do you spend any time and money marketing your blog?

**@TBoard:** no time . . no money Google does it all. There is no point in marketing it.

**@Ribeezie:** How do you measure results (if at all)?

**@TBoard:** The number of inquires for CMA's and sign ups for home searches, emails, traffic and revenue generated.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best success story or experience that happened as a result of the blog?

**@TBoard:** The teacher who found my blog and bought a house two years later and recommended by services to other teachers who recommended them to still more teachers.

**@Ribeezie:** In your opinion, what are the elements of a successful blog design?

**@TBoard:** the blog should be friendly, non commercial looking, easy to navigate and have a lot of photos. Calls to action and contact information should be easy to find.

**@Ribeezie:** What are your best Top Five tips for better blogging? (In 140 characters or less).

**@TBoard:** Imagination, a spell checker, photographs, timely topics, local topics and humor.

**@Ribeezie:** What do you think are the most common mistakes newbie bloggers make?

**@TBoard:** They give up too quickly. They don't get any comments so they don't write very much. A post a week isn't enough. The other mistake is using active rain as a main blog. It is better to blog to your neighbors than to other realtors. Active rain is more fun because of the comments so some never leave it and it is their only blog.

**@Ribeezie:** If you knew then, what you know now, what would you have done differently?

**@TBoard:** My blog has evolved over a five year period. I can't really piece it all together.

**@Ribeezie:** What advice would you give to someone who wants to start their first blog?

**@TBoard:** don't spend hours and hours working on plugins and platforms, start writing. Blogs are still about content and without content there is no

readership and that applies to all platforms. I have a typepad blog, a self hosted wordpress blog and web site and a blogger blog.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite blogs? ("Must Reads" that you visit daily).

**@TBoard:** DPS, Make Magazine, Pro blogger, news cut, MN tech evangelist.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite books that you recommend to other (especially newbie) bloggers?

**@TBoard:** sorry I started it before anyone wrote a book on real estate blogs. There is one book that influenced me and my philosophy about blog type marketing and that is "Small is the New big" by Seth Godin It is not a book about blogging but many of the ideas behind my blog are in it.

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# Ted Mackel



**Ted Mackel**

[@RealtorTed](#)

[homebuysblog.com](http://homebuysblog.com)

**T**ed Mackel comes from a generation of selling real estate. A third generation native Southern Californian, Ted Mackel sells real estate with Keller Williams Realty in San Fernando Valley, Simi Valley and East Ventura County. No stranger to the new media landscape, Ted markets himself and his business very well. Always passionate about real estate and doing creative things with video, Ted is a leader in both selling real estate and marketing on the web.

## Interview With Real Estate Blog Blazer, Ted Mackel

**@Ribeezie:** What defines a successful blog for you? Is it site traffic, number of subscribers, number of comments, revenue, etc.?

**@RealtorTed:** Subscribers. My blog is design to function as a virtual resume. The type subscribers, then I am potential referral sources. Not everyone reading as a buyer or seller, but everyone who does read knows a buyer or seller.

**@Ribeezie:** When did you decide you finally reached success with your blog?

**@RealtorTed:** The answer this question is more so, when I run into people around town that I know and they comment about something I posted or a video I have created.

There is a huge population of voyeurs who read but never participate. Continually running into these voyeurs and hearing their comments about what they see me doing was what helps me understand the success of my blog.

**@Ribeezie:** What do you consider to be your most successful blog post ever?

**@RealtorTed:** My article on 12 tips to making your REO offer more attractive generates the most traffic. The idea was to write a piece so the readers could feel like they were on the inside and get a peek at the process from the listing agent's point of view on an REO. It definitely gets the most hits daily.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on writing a successful blog post?

**@RealtorTed:** I really don't care whether people like or hate Fox news. An important lesson can be learned from the O'Reilly's, Hannity's, Limbaugh's and it's not their belief or position, it's that their opinion is black and white it's very easy for people to understand where they stand on any one issue and that is why the ratings for those shows are so high. There is an old saying that if you don't stand for something you'll fall for anything - Alexander Hamilton.

People buying and selling houses want to know what you think. Wishy-washy




ideas and cheerleading spin does not attract traffic or readers.

If you are a true practitioner don't be afraid to show off your knowledge.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on developing content and writing consistently on your blog?

**@RealtorTed:** Write down a list of the top 10 things that you believe buyers and sellers need to know. There's 20 topics. Where do you think buyers and sellers are being left behind by the agents representing them now? Write about that. Tell buyers and sellers how to stay out of trouble. Look for things going on in your community you can talk about.

If you live in a smaller community; development issues like a new shopping center or housing project are great to write about, keep people in the loop.

 **'Talking about what you do for a living' is not the same as bugging the living daylight's out of people with a sales pitch. 'Talking about what you do for a living' is about educating and helping people.' Earn people's trust and respect and then LATER you can ask for their business.**

**@Ribeezie:** How important do you think headlines are when writing content for your blog?

**@RealtorTed:** Just write for what people are asking on Google, forget about "Extra, Extra! Read All About It!"

**@Ribeezie:** Do you spend any time and money marketing your blog?

**@RealtorTed:** When I door knock or farm, I pitch my blog first. I tell people looking for good information about the local market conditions that should be reading my blog.

I post links to my blog everywhere I put it on all my printed material in one of run into people I'm always directing them to have a look.

I also create events with local businesses and show them what I'm doing with my blog and how they can do the same for their businesses.

**@Ribeezie:** How do you measure results (if at all)?

**@RealtorTed:** I use woopra.com, so far this has been the best tool for me. It helps me understand how people get to my site and what they're reading. Contacts are important part, but more on the quality side. You can have 1000 Mickey Mouses and Donald Ducks registered but that doesn't mean much.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best success story or experience that happened as a result of the blog?

**@RealtorTed:** Listing appointments with people who have read the blog are much better. My Blog is a pre-interview/virtual resume on purpose.

**@Ribeezie:** In your opinion, what are the elements of a successful blog design?

**@RealtorTed:** I have no idea - its a big fat lab experiment for me.

**@Ribeezie:** What are your best Top Five tips for better blogging? (In 140 characters or less).

**@RealtorTed:** Be yourself, be opinionated, Show off your knowledge about real Estate & your community, be remarkable, be ubiquitous

**@Ribeezie:** What do you think are the most common mistakes newbie bloggers make?

**@RealtorTed:** Quitting before your 3 years into it ;). Seriously, forget about who is reading your blog. Your blog is your virtual resume for that next listing appointment. Content and plenty of it is KING.

**@Ribeezie:** If you knew then, what you know now, what would you have done differently?

**@RealtorTed:** I started in 2004 and stopped by the end of the year. I should have kept going.

**@Ribeezie:** What advice would you give to someone who wants to start their first blog?

**@RealtorTed:** If you don't like getting on a soapbox and you don't love talking about what you do for a living, then don't start.

"Talking about what you do for a living" is not the same as bugging the living daylight out of people with a sales pitch. "Talking about what you do for a living" is about educating and helping people. Earn people's trust and respect and then LATER you can ask for their business.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite blogs? (“Must Reads” that you visit daily).

**@RealtorTed:** <http://www.phoenixrealestateguy.com>, <http://www.agentgenius.com>, <http://www.calculatedriskblog.com>.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite books that you recommend to other (especially newbie) bloggers?

**@RealtorTed:** Tipping Point, Outliers, Purple Cow, Never Eat Alone, Trust Agents.

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# Rhonda Porter



**Rhonda Porter**

[@mortgageporter](#)

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**R**honda Porter is a started blogging in late 2006 after watching a news report involving a local case of mortgage fraud and hearing misstated facts about the legislation of mortgage originators. She writes as a way to help consumers learn more about their mortgage and the process of buying a home and does so from a financial planning perspective. A Top Producer at Mortgage Master Service Corporation, Rhonda is someone to follow closely as a top blogger in the lending space.

## Interview With Real Estate Blog Blazer, Rhonda Porter

**@Ribeezie:** What defines a successful blog for you? Is it site traffic, number of subscribers, number of comments, revenue, etc.?


**@mortgageporter:** I do look at my site traffic and number of subscribers.

What's more important to me than "how many" is "who". For example, it doesn't matter to me if I have thousands of people following me on Twitter or friends on Facebook if they are not people who I would like to be having a dialogue with.

In my opinion, comments are a great way to measure a successful blog. People are interested in the content and what you have to say and are engaged with you.

**@Ribeezie:** When did you decide you finally reached success with your blog?

**@mortgageporter:** I've had different areas of success with my blog. Since a majority of my clients are people who first learned of me through my blog, I have to count that as a "success". This began to happen on a regular basis after six months of writing at Mortgage Porter. Another success has been the attention I have received from the media with interview requests. Without my blog, I'm pretty sure that I would not have been on their radar or perceived as an expert.

 I constantly have the “back end” of my blog up when I'm at my computer. My job and my clients constantly provide me with ideas for future topics. If I don't have time to write a post at “the moment” I have an idea, I will at the very least, enter in a blog title/topic and jot down some bullet points or links as a draft on my blog platform...

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on writing a successful blog post?

**@mortgageporter:** It's important to not get too wordy when writing a post. If you have a long subject, then break up the article into a series of posts. I think we live in times where people have very short attention spans...and venues like Twitter probably don't help our society in that regard!

Be personable. I like feeling like someone is talking to me when I read their blog...not like I'm reading a text book.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on developing content and writing consistently on your blog?

**@mortgageporter:** I constantly have the "back end" of my blog up when I'm at my computer. My job and my clients constantly provide me with ideas for future topics. If I don't have time to write a post at "the moment" I have an idea, I will at the very least, enter in a blog title/topic and jot down some bullet points or links as a draft on my blog platform. That way, when I do have more time, I can revisit my drafts and I write an article at my leisure.

I think it's important to plan how many articles you would like to post each week and try to stick with that. If you're just starting out, a good goal could be three articles per week.

**@Ribeezie:** How important do you think headlines are when writing content for your blog?

**@mortgageporter:** Headlines are very important to your blog post. Your headline is what will grab your reader's attention first. The nice thing about writing a blog post is that you can change your headlines before you publish them...I often don't come up with my headline until after I'm done writing my blog post.

**@Ribeezie:** Do you spend any time and money marketing your blog?

**@mortgageporter:** The only way I really promote Mortgage Porter is by using Twitter and Facebook. I'm fortunate that the Seattle Times and PI have links to it on the real estate sections and others have promoted it for me via links.

I do advertise monthly on a local blog, the West Seattle Blog, it's really more about supporting their community efforts. I do receive business from WSB readers and I'm told they've seen my ad, but more importantly, it's the feedback they read about me in the WSB forums.

**@Ribeezie:** How do you measure results (if at all)?

**@mortgageporter:** In 2009, when I review my "mortgage pipeline" here are my sources of business: 54% from blogging/social media, 27% past clients (returning or referring new clients), 19% real estate agent/financial planner referred. Some of the past clients and professional referred clients are from relationships I originally developed through my social media efforts.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best success story or experience that happened as a result of the blog?

**@mortgageporter:** When I first started writing, I did not expect anyone to read my blog. I really wrote for myself. It was almost just for venting purposes because I was frustrated with the wrong information that the news media was giving to viewers about mortgage licensing back in late 2006. I wrote for myself and the fact that I have readers and people who contact me for help or advice, is something I feel very proud of.

I will often write a blog post to answer a question that I have received via



email from a client or one of my readers. The post is written generically of course (not to Dear Suzy Jones and your 500 FICO) and once it's posted, I send my client the link to "their" post. They're often absolutely amazed that I cared enough to do that. What's nice for me is that not only did I add content, that article is available in the future should I need to refer or share it again with another blogger.

**@Ribeezie:** In your opinion, what are the elements of a successful blog design?

**@mortgageporter:** I like a clean looking blog meaning, not a lot of clutter or flashy objects. I want the font large and plain so my eyes can read it without strain. I like to see any ads or links off to one side. It's nice to see recent comments so you know what the trending topic is on that blog as well as search tools. It's also important to make it easy for readers to subscribe to your blog. I always have this in the upper corner of all the blogs that I've created. If someone wants to subscribe to a blog, they shouldn't have to search for "how to".

**@Ribeezie:** What are your best Top Five tips for better blogging? (In 140 characters or less).

**@mortgageporter:** Just be yourself. Don't pretend to be someone else. People can spot someone insincere pretty quickly.

Read other people's blogs and don't be afraid to comment and participate...but don't do so just to promote your blog (that's spammy).

Write about things you are passionate about. If your career isn't one of those things--or find parts of your career that you ARE passionate about.

Always have a note pad and pocket camera with you. I use live-scribe and I love it! You never know when you'll find something to write about.

I like to mix up my content a little. On weekends, you'll probably find more casual posts on my blog that are non-mortgage related. Weekdays-I'm all business.

**@Ribeezie:** What do you think are the most common mistakes newbie bloggers make?

**@mortgageporter:** The biggest mistake I see a newbie blogger make is having unrealistic expectations. Blogging is a time commitment and you need to be prepared to give 8-12 months of regular postings before you may see results. In fact, when I first started writing, I did not do it for business...it was really about trying to clear up mis-information from the media regarding licensing a few years ago.

**@Ribeezie:** If you knew then, what you know now, what would you have done differently?

**@mortgageporter:** I really stumbled into blogging and looking back, I'm not sure that it would have helped me to worry about SEO, html, etc. I probably would have over-thought blogging and may have never started.

I'm not sure that I would go back and change anything.

**@Ribeezie:** What advice would you give to someone who wants to start their first blog?

**@mortgageporter:** I think it's important to check out other blogs and learn

what styles you like. When I first started blogging, it seememd like most of the blogs I liked the looks of, were Typepad and so that's what I have for Mortgage Porter. I'm NOT recommending Typepad one way or the other...it seems like Wordpress has more "community" support.

I think that picking a blogging platfrom is like picking out a pair of shoes--you want to make sure you'll be comfortable in them. With blogging, check out various platforms (most are free or cheap) and see which one you feel the most comfortable using so that when you decide to write a post, you won't dread using the platform.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite blogs? ("Must Reads" that you visit daily).

**@mortgageporter:** Get Rich Slowly, The Mortgage Reports, The Phoenix Real Estate Guy, West Seattle Blog, Seattle Twist, Seattle Bubble.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite books that you recommend to other (especially newbie) bloggers?

**@mortgageporter:** Realty Blogging.

**@Ribeezie:** Anything else that you'd like to add? (Closing comments, etc.)

**@mortgageporter:** I sometimes hear people say that it's too late to begin a real estate related blog or social media and I have to disagree. As long as you're writing for yourself, being true and allow time, I think it's worthwhile. If you are blogging to become a real estate tycoon in 6 months, you're going to be miserable. Be realistic, have worthy goals and you should have an enjoyable long term relationship with your blog.

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## Jim Duncan



**Jim Duncan**

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**J**im Duncan is an Associate Broker/Partner at Nest Realty Group in Charlottesville, Virginia. A real estate blogger, analyst and public speaker, Jim is an early adopter of emerging technologies. He writes about real estate on several blogs – locally in Charlottesville, for the State REALTOR® Association blog and nationally for Agent Genius.

### Interview With Real Estate Blog Blazer, Jim Duncan


**@Ribeezie:** What defines a successful blog for you? Is it site traffic, number of subscribers, number of comments, revenue, etc.?

**@JimDuncan:** A successful blog for me is one that provides fulfillment - inclusive of all the above. If I am able to consistently produce quality content that is informative to me and to my readers, that is success.

**@Ribeezie:** When did you decide you finally reached success with your blog?

**@JimDuncan:** I'll look back and define success as the time when I realized I was getting business, referring to my blog and having clients and fellow Realtors refer to my blog.

It's become a source of information and conversation and occasionally controversy; when people started talking about my blog offline - without my being present - I recognized that I had achieved a modicum of success.

 **I measure results by the number of questions, emails and closings I get... My blog is a repository for the questions I answer for my clients as well as a place for me to express my opinions.**

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on writing a successful blog post?

**@JimDuncan:** A successful blog post is one that is well-written, well-conceived, researched, edited, produced and published... One that is informative and possibly thought-provoking.

If I can answer a question or spur someone to action through my writing, I'll be happy.

If I get no comments but have become more informed, knowledgeable and educated through the process of researching

and writing the post, it's a success.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on developing content and writing consistently on your blog?

**@JimDuncan:** Read, read, read. And practice real estate every single day. I write a lot because I work extremely hard at being a great real estate professional, consultant, analyst and Realtor. Without the practical daily experience, I would likely have nothing to write about.

**@Ribeezie:** How important do you think headlines are when writing content for your blog?

**@JimDuncan:** Headlines are crucial, and are something that I have never focused on. Lamentably.

**@Ribeezie:** Do you spend any time and money marketing your blog?

**@JimDuncan:** No.

**@Ribeezie:** How do you measure results (if at all)?

**@JimDuncan:** I measure results by the number of questions, emails and closings I get. Again, I choose to be different in that I use my blog as a means by which I sort through my own thoughts. My blog is a repository for the questions I answer for my clients as well as a place for me to express my opinions.

A good result is if I can send a post to a client rather than have to

answer the same question again and again and again.

For example: <http://www.realcentralva.com/2009/02/05/is-there-radon-in-charlottesville>

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best success story or experience that happened as a result of the blog?

**@JimDuncan:** No one story, other than the tremendous friendships, connections, clients and closings I have generated by virtue of doing this every day.

**@Ribeezie:** In your opinion, what are the elements of a successful blog design?

**@JimDuncan:** Simplicity of navigation and speed.

**@Ribeezie:** What are your best Top Five tips for better blogging? (In 140 characters or less).

**@JimDuncan:** Be consistent.

Be yourself, be authentic and be true to yourself.

Read as much as you can digest.

Ask questions - of yourself and your readers.

Admit mistakes and be nice.

**@Ribeezie:** What do you think are the most common mistakes newbie bloggers make?

**@JimDuncan:** They follow the advice of those who are trying to sell them something. Blogging is a *\*tool\** and is not the *\*answer\**.

Practice, write for a few months before releasing it to the masses. Ensure that you can do this consistently and well.

Not focusing on quality of writing is a huge mistake newbies make.

Grammar matters. Spelling matters. Writing well matters. You spell legal descriptions on contracts correctly - why not on a blog post that will never go away?

Thinking that participation in the "re.net" will equate success is a ridiculous concept. It's a wonderful part of what's out there, but it likely will not generate a closing any more than joining Rotary or your local social media clubs.

**@Ribeezie:** If you knew then what you know now, what would you have done differently?

**@JimDuncan:** If I had known that I would be doing this five years later, I would have hired a wordpress person to design my site more professionally from the beginning - not just the external design but to ensure that the structure of the site was sufficient to grow to the level it has.



**@Ribeezie:** What advice would you give to someone who wants to start their first blog?

**@JimDuncan:** Start with wordpress. Practice writing. Be thoughtful and considerate. Don't attack. Admit when you're wrong. Don't delete controversial posts.

Don't be stupid. If you think it's a bad decision, it probably is.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite blogs? ("Must Reads" that you visit daily).

**@JimDuncan:** 1000Wattblog, Calculated Risk, TechCrunch, WSJ.com, RealCrozetVA, Cvillenews.com.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite books that you recommend to other (especially newbie) bloggers?

**@JimDuncan:** I've never read a book about blogging or tangentially related to blogging.

## 7 Brian Copeland



**Brian Copeland**

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**B**rian Copeland is a licensed Real Estate Broker (Village Real Estate Services) in Nashville, Tennessee. He holds a master's degree from UT, Knoxville in communications management and was chosen as Greater Nashville Association of REALTORS® Rookie of the Year, selling more homes than any other like-agent in the metropolitan area. Currently in the top 1% of all agents in his marketplace, you'll find Brian blogging about his passion, selling real estate and doing a might fine job at it.

### [Interview With Real Estate Blog Blazer, Brian Copeland](#)

**@Ribeerie:** What defines a successful blog for you? Is it site traffic, number of subscribers, number of comments, revenue, etc.?

**@NashvilleBrian:** As a former journalist and media professional, a

successful blog to me is one that (1) creates loyalty via quality, salient information; (2) is seen as an important news source; and, (3) gets a buzz going in the off-line world.

 **In 2009, after blogging for three years, I realized that every listing appointment party I walked into mentioned they had found me via my blog or had spent a lot of time there once a friend had told them about it. I never really thought where my business came from...it always just came. I realized at that point, my blog had turned into a Farming 2.0 success in my business.**

**@Ribeezie:** When did you decide you finally reached success with your blog?

**@NashvilleBrian:** In 2009, after blogging for three years, I realized that every listing appointment party I walked into mentioned they had either found me via my blog or had spent a lot of time there once a friend had told them about it. I never really thought where my business came from...it always just came. I realized at that point, my blog had turned into a Farming 2.0 success in my business.

**@Ribeezie:** What do you consider to be your most successful blog post ever?

**@NashvilleBrian:** "Why Isn't My Home Getting Shown" has been the shining star of all my blogs. It has been re-posted and shared through multiple agents, national and international brokerages and consumer-

to-consumer. It gets 50-75 hits each day, even in its oldest form. In my analytics, it's amazing the people who nationally search for this very title and land on me.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on writing a successful blog post?

**@NashvilleBrian:** Achieve a conversational tone. So many RE blogs are statistical blah-blah-blah. Try to be concise, tight and personable. I want every reader to say, "Wow, I feel like I already know you." That is brand-building, people!

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on developing content and writing consistently on your blog?

**@NashvilleBrian:** Watch the local news and follow your local news stations' Twitter feeds. As soon as something is reported, send it through your "real estate filter" to see how it's salient, then start writing immediately. Usually my first idea doesn't make the cut. The third and beyond idea from the news story is the keeper!

**@Ribeezie:** How important do you think headlines are when writing content for your blog?

**@NashvilleBrian:** My headlines are bor-or-oring. I title everything through the eyes of "what is the 'Googler' typing in her toolbar." My analytics support my approach. They aren't sexy.

**@Ribeezie:** Do you spend any time and money marketing your blog?

**@NashvilleBrian:** If you consider tweeting and facebooking links to your blog "time spent," then yes. That's the only extra marketing I do for the blog. The one exception is when I do a farming piece on my zip code reports. I create a masked URL so I can measure the mailer. I've only experimented with it, and honestly, it hasn't returned yet.

**@Ribeezie:** How do you measure results (if at all)?

**@NashvilleBrian:** My blog measurement is most qualitative. I receive emails, street comments and shout outs all the time about peoples' read of NashvilleAndBeyond. I check my analytics 3 to 6 times each day.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best success story or experience that happened as a result of the blog?

**@NashvilleBrian:** Luckily, I'm in the top 1% of all agents in Nashville. Twice a year, I post the list of the top 1% for the consumers. Not only do I get 10 to 15 buyers or sellers a year from those blogs, my fellow agents on the list come up to me all the time, hug me hard and say, "Thank you, thank you, thank you for your blog. I got another client off it." Sure, my blog serves me; but what a joy it has become to serve in a friendly team spirit. Remember, there IS enough business to go around for us all.

**@Ribeezie:** In your opinion, what are the elements of a successful blog design?

**@NashvilleBrian:** (1) A consistently branded visual, central graphic and

matching thumbnail; (2) a drop cap at the beginning for a professional feel; (3) The <!--more--> tag; (4) and for Heaven's sake, remember just because you have all those fonts, colors and widgets doesn't mean you have to use them all (or even any of them).  
SIMPLICITY IS OUR FRIEND.

**@Ribeezie:** What are your best Top Five tips for better blogging? (In 140 characters or less).

**@NashvilleBrian:** 1. Blog as hyperlocally as humanly possible. Approach your topics as you are choosing a subject for doctoral dissertations.

2. Don't be too serious. Include something out of your comfort zone every now and then.

3. Create gorgeous charts and visuals to support your subject matter. Be a visual snob about how good those visual look!

4. Be a grammar freak. Know the uses for their, they're, there; you're, your; inaugural vs. annual; and many, many more.

5. Just start typing. Don't over think your intro. You can always erase and edit later. Don't screw up your creativity.

**@Ribeezie:** What do you think are the most common mistakes newbie bloggers make?

**@NashvilleBrian:** Newbie bloggers must remember that a blog is a CROCK POT not a MICROWAVE. You're not going to get your tasty

treat (ROI) until you stew your goodies. If you're expecting immediate results, you will be disheartened and fail.

**@Ribeezie:** If you knew then, what you know now, what would you have done differently?

**@NashvilleBrian:** I would have started with a self-hosted WordPress out of the gate. Honestly, it took Thesis to really wake me up.

**@Ribeezie:** What advice would you give to someone who wants to start their first blog?

**@NashvilleBrian:** You have to commit to writing your blog. You don't have to budget the time, but just make sure you get in AT LEAST four a week.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite blogs? ("Must Reads" that you visit daily).

**@NashvilleBrian:** Embarrassingly, I don't read any. I have one friend who is a songwriter who is stinking hilarious. When she posts, I always read it.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite books that you recommend to other (especially newbie) bloggers?

**@NashvilleBrian:** None of my readings influence my blogs. I try to use my own thoughts and inspiration. The books I read are simply for fun.

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# Ines Hegedes-Garcia



**Ines Hegedes-Garcia**

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**I**nes Hegedus-Garcia is a blogger and REALTOR® extraordinaire. Author of [Miamism.com](#) and REALTOR® at Majestic Properties, Ines has built quite the brand for herself serving Miami Beach Real Estate needs from luxury single-family homes to waterfront condominiums. No stranger to the blog-o-sphere and new media, Ines is someone to follow closely as someone you can learn a great deal from in this space.

## Interview With Real Estate Blog Blazer, Ines Hegedes-Garcia

**@Ribeezie:** What defines a successful blog for you? Is it site traffic, number of subscribers, number of comments, revenue, etc.?


**@ines:** A successful blog to me is one that achieves the objectives of the creator. We all have a different approach and our goals will vary - from



engagement, revenue, communication and even top of mind.

**@Ribeezie:** When did you decide you finally reached success with your blog?

**@ines:** Although I do think I've reached success with my blog and noticed when I started getting positive feedback from clients, I think there's always room for improvement. My goals are never static and I'm always looking for creative ways to increase my audience's curiosity and making my blog more relevant. It's a dynamic process that never ends.

 **Creating a schedule helps with consistent content and releases pressure when it comes to coming up with new ideas on what to blog about. Use client questions as topics for blog posts, have series posts that piggy-back from one another and pay attention to what kind of content gets the most attention.**

**@Ribeezie:** What do you consider to be your most successful blog post ever?

**@ines:** I don't think I can narrow it down to one post. All of my architectural posts have historically gotten more views, more feedback and more interest. I guess there's a lot to say about writing with a passion.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on writing a successful blog post?

**@ines:** Write about what you like and know - if you have a passion for something, words will flow and your enthusiasm will be evident to your

readers.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best advice on developing content and writing consistently on your blog?

**@ines:** Creating a schedule helps with consistent content and releases pressure when it comes to coming up with new ideas on what to blog about. Use client questions as topics for blog posts, have series posts that piggy back from one another and pay attention to what kind of content gets the most attention.

**@Ribeezie:** How important do you think headlines are when writing content for your blog?

**@ines:** Some people say headlines should be catchy, others say they should be keyword rich - since I'm not an expert, I do both.

**@Ribeezie:** Do you spend any time and money marketing your blog?

**@ines:** I'm always marketing my blog as our team's brand. Whether it is with direct mailers or while I'm participating in different social media platforms. I treat that brand as an extension to our value system and the "marketing" doesn't come out as pushy.

**@Ribeezie:** How do you measure results (if at all)?

**@ines:** I measure results by consistently getting business from our on-line efforts. We do ask our clients where they find us and on a regular basis study how many of those find us through traditional vs. social media means.

**@Ribeezie:** What's your best success story or experience that happened as a result of the blog?

**@ines:** Recognition in general is our best success story but I have to say that people feeling like they know us before meeting us because of our blog and social media exposure is something that you can't put a price on.

**@Ribeezie:** In your opinion, what are the elements of a successful blog design?

**@ines:** Successful blog design is subjective in my opinion - some people are visual other are auditory, others are intellectual and non-visual. What I may consider good, someone else may think it's terrible. The approach should be to make the design appealing to the author, knowing that will attract like-minded individuals. At the same time, trying to incorporate different types of communications: writing, vlogging, podcasts - in order to expand the audience base.

**@Ribeezie:** What are your best Top Five tips for better blogging? (In 140 characters or less).

**@ines:** 1 - write about what you like and know. 2 - practice makes better, so keep at it. 3 - use conversational language and drop formalities. 4 - use your voice. 5 - be genuine.

**@Ribeezie:** What do you think are the most common mistakes newbie bloggers make?

**@ines:** Common mistakes newbie bloggers make is not writing with depth and not being consistent.

**@Ribeezie:** If you knew then, what you know now, what would you have done differently?

**@ines:** I would have started my own blog in an open source blogging platform from the start.

**@Ribeezie:** What advice would you give to someone who wants to start their first blog?

**@ines:** Read other blogs, participate in conversations, keep it real and genuine.

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite blogs? ("Must Reads" that you visit daily).

**@ines:** my blogroll has my favorites: <http://www.miamism.com/links/blogroll>

**@Ribeezie:** What are some of your favorite books that you recommend to other (especially newbie) bloggers?

**@ines:** Realty Blogging by Paul Chaney and Richard Natch is a "MUST." Secrets of online persuasion by JP and Deborah Micek. Crush it by Gary Vaynerchuck.

**@Ribeezie:** Anything else that you'd like to add? (Closing comments, etc.)

**@ines:** The rewards you will get from blogging will exceed any and all expectations, it's important to keep it real and genuine and to be consistent. Remember to pay it forward and always be willing to help others succeed.

## 9

# Tools And Resources

This is a list of tools and resources that I think you'll find useful from around the web. For more tutorials and resources, subscribe to [RicardoBueno.com]: <http://feeds.feedburner.com/ricardobueno>

or join the [RicardoBueno.com] :: Starter Steps Newsletter:

<http://www.ricardobueno.com/newsletter>

- <http://www.copyscape.com> – this service is dedicated to protecting your content online. Their service includes a detection program that checks for copies of your pages online and offers your resources/guides for dealing with plagiarists.
- <http://www.google.com/alerts> – Google Alerts is like having an assistant that searches Google daily for specified key search terms (provided by you) and then emails you any time something comes up. You can register to receive these alerts either via RSS or email. I recommend you sign up for alerts on a couple of things: your company name, your competitor's name(s), and any industry terms that you'd like to keep track of.
- <http://www.google.com/analytics> – You need to install an analytics solution on your

website, stat! Where is your site traffic coming from (entry sources)? Where is it going (exit paths and bounce rate)? What keywords are people typing to get to your content? Analytics can give you so much information about what's working on your website (if it's working) and what you can do to make it rank better. Google analytics is the obvious solution because it's free. When you're ready to upgrade to a premium solution, consider something like: <http://www.visistat.com>.

- <http://www.feedburner.com> – use Feedburner as a way to distribute your content and keep track of your subscriber counts. Readers can subscribe to your RSS feed via a reader of their choice or via email all while you keep track of subscriber counts.
- <http://www.wordpress.org/extend/plugins/mobilepress> – MobilePress is a WordPress plugin that renders our WordPress blog on mobile.
- <http://www.apture.com> – Apture is a plugin that allows site visitors to view links to other information (video, links, audio, etc.) without ever actually leaving your site. This links render in a pop-up window on your site so you don't lose readers to those other site destinations.
- <http://www.madmimi.com> – Madmimi is a great email marketing tool. Even better? They have a free plan (at least up to the first 100 subscribers). The program is literally plug-in play in terms of usability features. You can create custom web forms and generate emails with designed headers to match your existing site design. If you don't have an email list, this is a great place to start.
- <http://highrisehq.com/?source=37signals+home> – HighRise is a 37Signals product. It's a CRM tool for tracking leads, contacts, and deals. It's a simple product (we like things that are simple to use) and really quite effective. Like Madmimi, they have a free version of their product that allows you to manage up to 250 contacts before upgrading to a paid version.