

adventures in  
*Blogging*

**A Novice Blogger's  
Guide to  
Making Friends  
Online**



1,800 to 22,000  
Monthly Page Views  
In 6 Months  
**HOW I DID IT!**

By Kimberly Gauthier



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## **Assumptions:**

In writing this book, I made a few assumptions about you, the reader.

1. You have a blog / site
2. You have chosen your niche (photography, parenting, beauty, etc)
3. You update your blog regularly
4. You write good content
5. You are somewhat savvy when it comes to Facebook and Twitter

## Introduction

Hi! 2011 has been a great year for my photography blog, Through the Lens of Kimberly Gauthier, and I'm so excited about what I've accomplished that I want to share what I've learned with you. I've been blogging for 2 years; I started my first blog, Pet Impressions Photography, in 2009 as a tie in to my pet and portrait photography business. Two years later, I realized that I liked blogging a lot more than portrait photography and Through the Lens was born.

If you're like me, then you've read a few books, you've heard the sales pitches by SEO consultants, and you've agonized over Google Analytics and your page rank and you're still a little mystified why some blogs seem to skyrocket to a rank of 5 while yours is stuck at 2 (where mine is as I type this). The first suggestion I'll make is stop. Stop worrying about your page rank and if you do a little of what I suggest, you'll be too busy to worry.

One piece of advice that I've received several times is to focus on providing good content and making connections. That's way more fun!

I'm writing this eBook to share everything that I've learned over the past 6 months. I used to think that whenever I learned something great, I had to hold it close, because I didn't want anyone to get a jump on me. My attitude started changing with every blogger and photographer I met; everyone is so generous with their time and knowledge and I want to pay that forward. This is more of a "**How I Did It**" instead of a "How To" book and I hope it's helpful.

After you finish reading this eBook, I would love your feedback and to hear about your tips and tricks.

## In this book...

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## About me

I'm a perpetually positive woman; I'm that person who walks down the street smiling at everyone. I'm sure half of downtown Seattle thinks I'm flirting, the other half probably thinks I'm nuts. I'm 40 and fabulous and I love taking pictures. I'm not tech savvy at all and when I transitioned my blog from Google Blogger to Wordpress, I was a little freaked out. Now, I have a better handle on my coding and when I'm convinced that I'm about to blow up my site, I call my designer (Regina, [LivelyUpDesigns.com](http://LivelyUpDesigns.com)).

I want to let you know that I'm not a social networking guru, the only thing I know about SEO is what I learned from Search Engine Optimization for Dummies (good book), and I'm figuring this all out as I go along. I don't have all the answers, but have stumbled upon a winning formula that I'm certain will help you with your site.

I'm writing this from the perspective of a photography blogger; if you're a food blogger or a mommy blogger, you may have to make a few changes here and there.

While reading this eBook, I want you to start asking yourself "who is my customer?" I learned that my customer is "me." I'll explain later.

### Resource ReCap...

I work with Regina on my web design and updates; [LivelyUpDesigns.com](http://LivelyUpDesigns.com)

## Google Analytics: January 2011 and July 2011

This isn't a chapter to explain how to use [Google Analytics](#). I want to show you where I started when I began focusing exclusively on being a photography blogger (in January 2011) and where I am today (July 2011). It's pretty cool.



See the increase in page views, average time on my site, and the decrease in the bounce rate? This doesn't mean I have over 22,000 subscribers/followers, but I'm getting people to check out my site. Usually, when I'm not trying to impress friends and strangers reading my eBook, I'll delve a little deeper to find out how many of those page views are unique, where they're coming from, and what keywords are attracting them to my site.

But for now, let's stick to the exciting surface. To some, this may not be a big deal, but to me, it's huge. I'm not at the level of [Digital Photography School](#) or [ProBlogger](#); heck, there are smaller bloggers who blow these numbers out of the water, but I've definitely made improvements and it didn't really take that much work.

If you're equally impressed, then I get to have fun with my next sentence.

**But wait! There's more!**

### **Resources ReCap...**

[Google Analytics](#); a free tool that I use to track the story behind my page views

[ProBlogger](#); a fantastic blog about blogging and resource for bloggers of any skill level

## How I got readers/subscribers/followers/likes

**Blog Parties & Link Ups:** In January, I was getting readers and subscribers by participating in link parties. For those of you who aren't in the know, a link party is when a blog hosts a link up on his or her site and loads of bloggers come along and post a link to their blog or a specific blog post. These are a fantastic idea and these are a terrible idea.

**These are a fantastic idea, because** a lot of people are going to (hopefully) check out your site in a short amount of time. I would link up and cross my fingers that out of the 50-100 participants, a handful would like photography and a few of those would like my blog. In January, I was excited to promote my blog and I thought this was as good an option (helloooo, free) as any.

**These are a terrible idea, because** there's no guarantee that many people will check out your site and I started to get the idea that the people who commented and/or subscribed did so to get a follow back. The worst comments were "Hi, I'm visiting from \_\_\_\_\_, I followed, I'd love it if you followed my blog too." No interest in the post, my photography, nothing.

I've had the best success by sticking with link ups that are related to photography. I started participating in photography challenges; these gave me an opportunity to practice my photography and I met a lot of fantastic photography bloggers.

If you would like to try and link up to bring traffic to your site, stick to your niche and don't expect miracles. And keep an eye out for the [Ultimate Blog Party](#) – the bloggers who organize this fantastic idea organize all of the blogs into groups so I was part of other photographers and artists. Anyone looking for a creative blog to follow didn't have to muddle through hundreds to find Me.

**Follow Blogs / Comment Often:** I'm sure you've heard that leaving comments on blogs will create positive back links. Blah blah blah. When I started blogging, I followed every photography blog under the sun. This didn't work out for me, because my readers weren't professional photographers; they were people like me. Remember when I said I'd explain the "who is my customer?" question?

When I bought my first DSLR camera, I couldn't find a resource to help me use it; now over 2 years later, I'm working to build my site so that I am a resource that I was originally looking for in 2009. See what I mean when I say that my customer is me? So who is your customer? Once you figure that out, follow blogs that your customer writes/follows and that you connect with too.

I follow the blogs of photography lovers and bloggers and I comment when I feel inspired.

**Forums:** Where link ups were hit and miss for me, forums have been pure gold. I joined both photography and blogging forums and received the best response when I became active in conversations, ask and answered questions, and requested feedback. People love to help, so I asked questions and I received a load of great information.

The blogging forums I visit the most are [The Blog Frog](#), which is a collection of Communities, hosted by blog publishers (like [SITS Girls](#), hosts of [Bloggy Boot Camp](#)) and [Social Fabric](#), which is a member only forum where bloggers support each other through sharing information and sharing each other's posts. It's been fun interacting with so many bloggers; there's a wealth of information in the Blog Frog and Social Fabric Communities; in fact, participating is how I discovered ProBlogger's [31 Days to Build a Better Blog](#).

**Here's a Hint:** If you're going to join a forum, look for ones that are active. I actually find this to be more important than the forum's topic. I can belong to a quiet group about photography and blogging or a very active group about dating or dogs. There are going to be photography

lovers in all of these groups, but I want to be where the people are chatting it up every day. Remember, this is supposed to be fun!

**Social Networking:** I think this is something we all have a grasp on; how many hours a day do YOU spend on Facebook? I finally realized that I should be promoting my blog while I'm hanging out on these sites. Today, I belong to several sites and use my Blackberry to keep up with them when I can't use the computer (like when at my day job). These are my favorite sites:

<b>Facebook Page</b>	ThroughTheLens.KG	<b>Twitter</b>	kg_photography
<b>Google+</b>	Kimberly Gauthier	<b>Flickr</b>	Through The Lens

When it comes to social networking, I get involved in discussions and ask questions. I've learned that **it's just as satisfying to promote others as it is to promote my blog** and these sites make this easy. If you get inspiration from Sally Jones, then mention her on Twitter. If you copied a joke from Tom Smith's feed, then thank him on Facebook.

I've started promoting the photography of people who like my Facebook page and people who belong to my Flickr Group. I also write a "Fan of the Month" post to celebrate people who interact a lot on my Facebook page. This shows my fans that I appreciate their support, while encouraging interaction, which makes Facebook happy (my page will show up higher in the feed). Ta Daaa!!!!

Instead of focusing on gaining new readers, we should start focusing on the readers we already have – getting to know them – because our readers will be the ones who share our blog with others. Interesting thought, right?

**And link up your sites:** I've joined [Networked Blogs](#); a Facebook application that allows you to add your blog to a network of blogs. Networked Blogs pulls from my blog site and I selected the option to automatically post to my Facebook page. My Facebook Page is linked to my Twitter profile, so every time something posts to that page, it also posts to Twitter. Wow. Talk about saving time. How did I do this?

In Facebook, go to [Networked Blogs](#) and click Go To App, and Register a Blog. Follow the steps from here. I realized that it's pretty simple once I stopped over thinking the application (I tend to think a lot). During your set up process, you'll be given the option to link you Networked Blogs profile to your Facebook page and Twitter profile.

**Guest Blog:** My first guest blogging opportunity came from a contact I made on The Blog Frog. After a couple of posts, I sat around waiting for more calls to come in; they didn't. I joined [My Blog Guest](#), which connects bloggers who want to guest with sites who are looking for contributors. On My Blog Guest, I've found guests for my site and opportunities to guest on other sites. Most of the emails I get aren't the best matches for me or my blog, but it's worth deleting the 10 when you find the one that's a good fit. Today, I'm a regular contributor on several sites.

Don't do what I did and wait around for someone to approach you; instead when you're on a site that appeals to you, look for their guest post requirements (e.g. 500+ words, 2 images, 2 links to your own site) and submit a post. If there aren't any requirements, then contact the editor/writer. I did this with Digital Photography School and have been published on that site twice (remember the spikes on the Analytics graphs).

**Here's a Tip:** I picked this up from [The Lady Blogger's Society](#); when you guest blog on a site that receives a lot of page views, clean up your blog in preparation of the traffic. It's like planning for an open house – straighten up the rooms, bake some cookies, and send the kids to the park. Stephanie Cuevas, publisher of The Lady Blogger's Society, discounted her eBook in anticipation of the influx of traffic she received from a guest post on ProBlogger.net. Brilliant!

**Step outside your niche:** Another cool thing about guest blogging is that I get to blog about things other than photography. I write articles for a local rescue group, I'm a firm believer in law of attraction, and I love writing about blogging and self promotion. Just like me, my readers have a variety of interests and it makes sense that we can connect with new readers outside our niche.

**YouTube:** I just started vlogging, so this will be brief. I use [YouTube](#), because I was told that it would humanize my blog. YouTube allows me to show off my humor, cute videos of our dogs, to review products and books, and to share what I'm learning with others. My channel

isn't only about photography and I think that's okay. I've also created a [welcome video](#) for my site in place of an About Me paragraph.

I link up videos on various pages of my sites. For example, on my PR page, I have links to my product review videos. On the My Gear page, I've embedded the video tour of my home photography studio. On the eBooks page, I've embedded all of my videos sharing blogging tips.

It's really cool how all these FREE tools can be used to cross promote you and others!

### **Resources ReCap...**

[My Blog Guest](#)

[Networked Blogs](#)

ProBlogger's [31 Days to Build a Better Blog](#)

[SITS Girls](#)

SITS Girls, [Bloggy Boot Camp](#)

[Social Fabric](#)

[The Blog Frog](#)

[The Lady Blogger's Society](#)

[Ultimate Blog Party](#) For a fantastic, organized link up

[YouTube](#)

## My blog

Just a few things that I do with my blog that I want to share with you...

- I post regularly, generally 4-5 days a week
- My posts stay on topic (for the most part) and are about photography
- I keep it positive
- I invite guest contributors to give my readers a fresh perspective
- I incorporate YouTube
- I try to respond to all comments and I definitely respond to all emails
- I use the WordPress plug in [Tweet Old Posts](#) and [LinkWithin](#) – to expose readers to older posts (keeping them on my site longer)
- I promote new posts three times a day for three days
- I have business cards ([VistaPrint](#) / [UPrinting.com](#)) with my blog and social networking links
- I carry around a spiral to write down blog topic ideas and To Do lists (I'm kind of a nerd)

I'm not suggesting that you do the same as I listed above; I simply want to share what I'm about, because it did contribute to increased views and I think that increase was because I do the above consistently. If you have your own system and follow it consistently, then you're off to a great start.

## Resources ReCap...

[Tweet Old Posts](#)

[LinkWithin](#)

[VistaPrint](#)

[UPrinting.com](#)

## Facebook page

I learned that I needed to separate my blog from my profile, because the combination of posts about my blog and photography combined with the randomness that is me was too much for my friends.



I created my Facebook page in May 2011, the below screen print is from July 8, 2011. 812 people like my page.



How I got so many fans so quickly and the pros and cons of each method.

**Facebook Ads** – In May 2011, I combined my money with a Facebook ad credit that I received from a contest and I created an ad for my page for \$10 /day for 5 days. What I love about Facebook advertising is the ability to direct my ads to my target audience (photography lovers); so I know that most of the people who like my page from the ads will most likely stick around and interact.

That’s the upside. The downside is that you can easily blow through your budget if your target audience is too broad (everyone in America) and the cost per click can be expensive if your target is too narrow (women, 35-40, in Washington State). Also, choose a reasonable end date; if you want to spend \$100 on advertising and set a budget of \$10 a day for 30 days – guess what; you’ll spend \$300 (\$10 x 30 days).

**Facebook ads, in my opinion, give me the best shot of locating and retaining fans/readers/subscribers.**

**Cutest Pet Photography Contest** – In May, I held a Pet photography contest; the focus being on the cuteness of the pet, not the individual’s photography skills. Making the pet the focus opened the contest up to many more people (folks confident in their photography and folks not so confident).

Participants emailed me their pictures during a 3 day period, I uploaded them on the 4<sup>th</sup> day and opened up the contest for votes for 3 days. The participants promoted their pet to their Facebook friends who had to “like” my page in order to vote. The pet with the most “likes” won a \$25 American Express gift card.

I received 4 entries in May. There were 25 entries in June.

The upside is that a lot of new people checked out my site and blog. The downside is that some of these people didn’t stick around. Now I like this idea better than “follow me, I’ll follow you,” because everyone had fun and that has sticking power.

**Facebook Page Shares in Forums** – If you’ve participated in forums then you may have seen the “Let’s Follow Each Other” threads. These are great for support, but I wonder how many people actually take the time to check out each other’s blogs and Facebook pages. If

everyone is just blindly following each other, then (1) we all get a ton of new likes and (2) we risk losing value in Facebook's eyes and won't show up as high in the stream of our fans.

## What does Facebook think about Follow Me, I'll Follow You?

How I understand it (by asking others with more experience) is that the Facebook bots see the crazy increase in your fan base and when there isn't a corresponding increase in interaction, then your page loses "importance." I may be completely off base about this, but it's worth thinking about.

If you want to continue participating in these discussions, go ahead. It's fun! Here are the guidelines I use...

1. I stick to my niche (photography); if the follow me/follow you thread is too broad, then it's difficult for me to find blogs/pages/profiles to follow.
2. I no longer share the link to my page. Instead, I find the blogs/pages/profiles that appeal to me, follow them and then leave a comment like "Hi, your work is fantastic, I'm here from \_\_\_\_\_ and I appreciate you sharing your link. I write the photography blog Through the Lens of Kimberly Gauthier." No pressure to follow me back and this gives the other person an idea of where their audience is coming from, which is helpful.
3. I set follow guidelines for myself: If someone follows me; I don't feel obligated to follow them back. I'm thankful for the follow, but I will only follow people I plan to interact with, that I will learn from, and who will make me laugh.

## Twitter

I had a hard time figuring out Twitter, but now I love it. I use [Hootsuite](#) to manage my Twitter page; there's just so much going on and the Hootsuite layout helps me follow conversations, I get to schedule Tweets and I can log on from anywhere (no download necessary).

I use Twitter to connect with people I admire, make new friends, and to follow up on events. When I can't keep up with a high profile trial, you better believe that there are a lot of other people Tweeting the blow by blow.

I don't have a lot to say about Twitter (the Facebook section was wordy, right?), but I will tell you my general guidelines:

1. I check out a person's feed before following, because I don't want a bunch of "get more Twitter followers" Tweets in my stream. Sucks!
2. If someone has protected Tweets, I don't follow. I respect their privacy, but there is so much going on that I've stopped taking those extra steps to ask permission to follow them; I just move on to the next person.
3. I love hash tags! These are the # before a word. When I attended Bloggy Boot Camp (organized by SITS Girls), I followed #BBCSEA to keep in touch with the other ladies. It's really handy.
4. I always thank people who mention me.

A great Wordpress plug in related to Twitter is [Tweet Old Posts](#). The title explains what it does and you can exclude posts so that only your beauties are shared again.

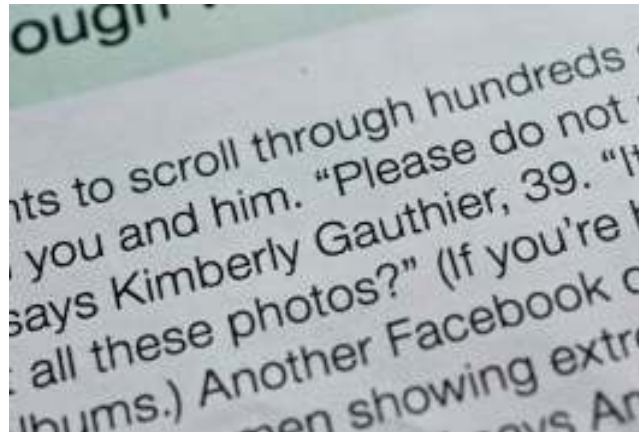
### Resources ReCap...

[Hootsuite](#)

[Tweet Old Posts](#)

## Shameless self promotion

Four words: [Help A Reporter Out!](#) I've used this site to promote myself and my blog. HARO is how I got the mention in Redbook Magazine earlier this year.



I've made a lot of connections and the press I've received for my blog was FREE! I get 3 emails a day, Monday through Friday, with inquiries from writers and reporters. There are a lot of opportunities and I only respond to inquiries that will benefit my blog.

Check out the [In the News section of my PR Page](#) for examples of free publicity, most of which resulted from a contact I made through HARO.

### Resources ReCap...

[Help A Reporter Out!](#)

## The end

So that's it! This is what I've been doing for the past 6 months. I do this part time, so if you have a full time job, business, or family, I'm confident that you can incorporate a few of these ideas into your blogging/site promotion.

I wrote this quickly, because I've been getting a lot of questions about what I'm doing to promote my site. If you have any follow up questions, I'll be happy to Skype with you for up to 30 minutes to share ideas. An hour long consultation is regularly \$150, but if you've made the investment in my book (and in me) then I'm happy to offer 30 minutes for \$25 or an hour for \$40.

My Skype name is: [kg\\_photography](#)

Thanks for taking the time to read my eBook. I hope it's useful and that I gave you some ideas that you can incorporate today. I would love to hear your feedback, so please contact me with your thoughts at...

Email: [kimberly@kimberygauthier.com](mailto:kimberly@kimberygauthier.com)