

# Introduction

This document outlines the process of ideating, producing, and self-editing content to make your writing for the Hubstaff blog as productive, efficient and high-quality as possible. In the sections below, you'll find information on a range of topics related to writing for us. Please go over this document before submitting your first post so you have an idea of what to expect. Skimming it occasionally after that isn't a bad idea, either, as it will receive regular updates.

## The perfect post

Here are the things we like to see in a blog post. Once you've read this entire document, you can come back to this section as a quick reminder of the type of content we're looking for.

- **A compelling lede.** If your first paragraph isn't catching the reader's attention, they're going to leave. HubSpot has a great article on [writing article introductions](#). Definitely check it out. This first paragraph will be used in social content and emails to bring traffic to the blog, so think about how you can inspire interest and intrigue while still giving a clear idea of what to expect in the blog post. *Also make sure to include the target keyword in your intro.*
- **Informative, actionable content.** The reader should be able to take the advice and apply it immediately to improve how they work.
- **Useful section headings and images.** H2 and H3 section headings tell the reader what to expect next, and make it easier to skim an article. Don't forget about them. You can also use images to demonstrate a point, show an example, or split up large blocks of text. When in doubt, default to more section headers using keywords as noted, as it makes it clear what the article is about.
- **Links to other useful resources.** If we have a blog post on a related topic, link it! Linking to external high-quality resources is also encouraged, but prioritize Hubstaff content. It is our policy to link to other articles or blog sites, but we discourage using links to any marketing or product pages for promotional purposes. No UTMs or tracking allowed.
- **Use callouts.** Pull out the most important or memorable content from the body of the post into its own space. See the best times to post on a grey box in [this post](#).
- **A call to action.** The end of the post should include a question or a logical next step, and encourage the reader to share their thoughts in the comments.

Here's a great example: [Why There's No Perfect Time to Post on Facebook](#)

To this end, we aim for most of our blog posts to be 1,000 words or longer, with some coming in much higher. However, remember that giving detailed, high-quality coverage of an issue is more important than the word count.

## Blog overview

The whole idea behind the Hubstaff blog is to **help businesses fight inefficiency, gain peace of mind, improve productivity and achieve their goals.**

Being helpful is the main objective of our content.

Keeping this in mind is crucial for maintaining conformity between our posts, establishing the right tone for content, and understanding the goals behind the blog. Not every post will be directly tied to this idea, but the vast majority will serve this purpose.

Some of our most common themes are **Productivity, Management, Business Growth, Metrics and Engagement, Freelancing and Remote Teams.** Within those main content areas, we focus on time tracking, useful software and tools, proven processes, time and project management and content marketing.

## Target audience

The majority of our customers are **service-based businesses (such as marketing and web development agencies) that employ (or are considering hiring) remote, distributed, or mobile-based workers.** Startups and e-commerce businesses make up another major segment of our customers.

Most often, the people within these companies who consume our content are on the C-level (CEO, CTO, founder, president, and so on), so **you can assume you're talking to the decision-maker.** Remember this when you're thinking about the tone of your post.

Content should not be surface-level or obvious. Remember to dig into a topic and make sure you're covering all related sub-topics when writing a post. Again, being helpful is key when writing for the Hubstaff blog.

## Tone + style

The Hubstaff brand voice is **Bold, Upbeat, Driven and Clever.**

In general, we try to keep a **relatively informal tone**, though it's better to **err on the side of professional-sounding**.

We don't take ourselves too seriously, but we understand that our readers are often making important decisions for their companies.

Every once in a while, we may encourage you to be a bit irreverent or edgy to differentiate your post from the other content that's out there. Your post should represent a unique perspective or take on a topic that's of interest to the audience.

We also place a high priority on clarity. Every post should be easy to read, even if the reader is just skimming through to look at section headings.

Use simple language that doesn't rely on adjectives and adverbs to get your point across. (Note: The [Hemingway app](#) is a good place to check your writing.) If you can use one word where you had two, do it. Sentences shouldn't run on to many lines.

Paragraphs should be relatively short.

## Post topics

In many cases, a member of the Hubstaff team will contact you to see if you're interested in writing a post on a specific topic.

Here are a few types of posts that we run regularly:

- **Roundups.** Take 10 or 20 tips, tools, or resources, and break down the advantages or benefits of each.
  - <http://blog.hubstaff.com/best-mac-time-tracking-apps/>
  - <http://blog.hubstaff.com/manage-remote-employees-better/>
  - <http://blog.hubstaff.com/20-seo-tips-experts/>
- **Tips.** We give tips to readers on how to more efficiently and effectively run their businesses. These can be very wide-ranging.
  - <http://blog.hubstaff.com/improve-organizational-communication/>
  - <http://blog.hubstaff.com/effective-team-meetings/>
  - <http://blog.hubstaff.com/podcast-content-marketing-machine/>
  - <http://blog.hubstaff.com/motivating-employees-who-work-remotely/>
- **Guides.** These can be the length of a standard blog post, or a more complete guide that we publish once a quarter. Either way, the goal is to create an educational, informative guide to a certain topic that our audience finds useful.
  - <https://blog.hubstaff.com/remote-team-management/> (Full guide and ebook)

- <https://blog.hubstaff.com/remote-project-management/>
- <https://blog.hubstaff.com/overtime-pay/>
- **Inside view.** We give readers a look into Hubstaff and how we got to where we are. These are usually written by internal authors, but not always (and you can always ask about opportunities for ghostwriting).
  - <http://blog.hubstaff.com/trust-in-remote-teams/>
  - <http://blog.hubstaff.com/grow-and-convert-organic-traffic/>
  - <http://blog.hubstaff.com/webinars-and-conversions/>

We're certainly open to other types of posts, but these are some of the mainstays of our content. If there are topics you're interested in writing about that would be a good fit for our blog, send us a message.

Our articles focus on a variety of topics, but they all go back to our focus on **Productivity, Management, Business Growth, Metrics and Engagement, Freelancing and Remote Teams.**

Some of the blogs we look to for inspiration (for more style than content):

- [WP Curve](#)
- [Invision](#)
- [Buffer](#)
- [Zapier](#)
- [CoSchedule](#)
- [Backlinko](#)
- [Neil Patel](#)
- [Intercom](#)

## Writing quality

**The quality of our content is the most important consideration** when writing and editing posts for the Hubstaff blog..

High-quality content

- is helpful to the reader
- is easy to consume
- is in-depth (see next section)
- presents a unique perspective or take
- doesn't require a ton of editing

If you're writing on an approved topic, have done (or received) enough research on the subject matter, and have gone over your post a few times to check for inconsistencies, issues of clarity, and typos, the quality of your writing will almost certainly be up to our standards.

You can use the [Hemingway app](#) to check your writing for opportunities to increase clarity, but take its recommendations with a grain of salt. An automated solution is no match for an experienced writer or editor.

Please note that we reserve the right to refuse publication of any piece of content that does not follow these guidelines or that we deem to not fulfill the minimum quality standards of the blog.

## Research

In some cases, you'll be given information on your topic.

This information is often a distilled version of research done on the subject, and can be very useful in preparing and writing the post.

We will likely include example posts that either capture the topic well, or can be used for reference when writing your draft.

Whether you've received this information or not, looking into the subject of the post is vital to creating the 10x content that we're looking for. Here are a few things we like to see:

- **High-quality and very reliable sources.** That doesn't mean you can use only official sources, but make sure the author of a source is an authority in the field in which they are writing. When using statistics, for example, always give a source and link back to the original publisher. The same goes for charts and images.
- **Arguments backed with empirical evidence.** Statistics make for great evidence and are easily remembered and replicated by readers. We can also use these to create infographics.
- **Attributions.** If you quote someone else or a statistic, be sure to mention where you found it. Links to sources are especially appreciated by editors. We don't allow links to marketing sites or product pages.

## Writing process

Once you're assigned a topic and have done enough research, you can get started writing.

We highly recommend outlining the article first and sharing it with your Hubstaff editor, as it can help you head off issues later in the writing process (we really don't like to send articles back for serious revisions, but if there are issues, we will).

As you're writing, go over the **perfect post** list above to make sure you're including the necessary pieces of the article. Also, be sure you're following the **image guidelines** below.

Some other tips on writing your post:

- Use bullets and numbers to make it as scannable as possible.
- Tell a story. The best posts come from some sort of failure or success.
- Use short paragraphs. Even 1-2 sentences is ideal.
- Write short sentences with simple words and language. Avoid cliches or jargon.
- Make the post very specific. Make it extremely actionable on one very topic so it's not going all over the place.
- Write like you are making a speech on the topic to your best friend. Write every post to someone that you know.

Once you have a final draft ready to submit, put it in a Google doc and share it with [blog@hubstaff.com](mailto:blog@hubstaff.com). Make sure to grant edit access when you share.

## Image guidelines

We'll take care of header images for your posts, but if you have a good idea about a header image, we'd love to hear about it.

If your article includes tools or websites, please **include screenshots** where possible to the article.

**Create an image folder in the folder where you store your draft**, and make a note in the Google doc where each image should go, either by inserting it into the document or making a note like this:

[image: filename.jpg]

If you're going to include non-screenshot images, keep these guidelines in mind:

- **Sourcing.** Always make sure we are authorized to use a picture that you'd like to include in a blog post. If a source is unclear about the copyright of an image, assume you're not allowed to use it. Try to obtain permission or choose another image. Read [this Lifehacker post](#) about online image use.

- When you use non-screenshot images in your blog posts, you need to provide information about their source; include a link for the post or the document itself to the original source of the image where the license of the image is clearly visible.
  - This doesn't apply for images sourced from meme sites, screenshots, and logos.
- **Avoid stock photos.** Here's a [list of sources](#) of high-quality, free visuals you can use instead.
- **Format.**
  - **PNG:** good for screenshots and logos.
  - **JPG:** good for landscapes, images with people, and other non-screenshot scenes.
  - **GIF:** only use to add an animation (use with care).
- **Dimensions.** Images should be no wider than 1600px, intended to be shared at half-size. For example, the widest an image will be is 800px. If you'd like an image not to take up the entire width of the post, choose width that you prefer and double it. Example: If you want the image in the post to have a 400px width = resize the image to 800px actual width before uploading to Wordpress.
- **File size.** Each image should be max 100kb. Use an image optimization tool like [TinyPNG](#), [RIOT](#) (Windows), [ImageOptim](#) (Mac), or [Trimage](#) (Linux) to keep file sizes down.
- **Naming.** Give the image a descriptive and relevant name, ending with "@2x" so that they can be half-size after it's uploaded. Example:  
Communication\_channels\_chart@2x.png
- **Captions.** These should be **used strategically to highlight important points** from the text. Captions are generally **not needed for screenshots**. It should be obvious to the reader why they're there.
- **Alignment.** Center all images, please.

If you have any questions about images, or you're unsure about our usage guidelines (especially sourcing and copyright), reach out to your editor.

## Revisions

In our never-ending quest to publish the best stuff on the internet, we may ask you for revisions of your work.

Your editor will leave a note in the Google doc with details on the revisions requested. Ideally it should only take a couple days for you to complete these revisions.

## Editing

Your article will undergo editing before it gets posted, and there's a possibility that some notable changes will be made.

We'll never eviscerate the piece, but some things might stand out to you as not what you wrote. We're just trying to make the post as awesome as we possibly can.

## Sharing

Once your post is live, we'll share a link with you. If you're listed as the author, we hope you share the content with your networks as it (hopefully) aligns with the content you publish on a regular basis. If you're ghostwriting a piece, please share as a reader and not the author.