



The Myth of the Ideal Blog Length

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by Naren Arulrajah, Ekwa Marketing

One of the most widely quoted statistics in content marketing is that blogs averaging 2,250-2,500 words tend to dominate the top spots in Google search results. Various studies have returned similar results. Therefore, 2,250-2,500 words is considered the ideal length for a blog post.

As a medical professional, you likely spotted the flaw in the above theory. Correlation does not prove causation, and that holds just as true in marketing as it does in dentistry.

What Google wants

Google and other search algorithms are designed to seek the highest quality, most valuable, most popular content. Many factors are used to determine search ranking, most notably:

- Citations from reputable websites – One of the key factors that Google uses to determine authority is inbound links. If media outlets, professional associations, and other trusted bloggers are referencing your article, Google assumes it offers valuable and reliable information.
- Keywords – Google does not exclusively search for an exact term, as it is entered. The algorithm also recognizes synonyms, similar terms, and related concepts.
- Performance – Although industry experts disagree, data indicates that Google uses clickthrough rate as a ranking factor. More importantly, a high ranking blog is essentially useless unless people click to view it.

Why longform blogs (usually) perform better

The simplest, and most likely, explanation for the prevalence of 2000+ word pages is that it takes more words to convey more information. An in-depth article will be longer than a basic summary. A blog that includes more facts, subtopics, and new facts will garner more links. Essentially, for many topics it takes more words to provide more value.

However, some topics are simpler than others. If a question can be thoroughly answered in a few hundred words, then you would need to add meaningless “fluff” in order to reach a few thousand words. In this case, a longer blog would actually be lower quality, and therefore, probably earn a lower position in Google search results.

Consider these examples:

- How often should I floss? – This is a simple question, that does not require a detailed response. The searcher is more likely to be looking for a quick answer. Google recognizes that fact. The coveted number one spot and featured snippet on Google goes to a page at Mayo Clinic with 629 total words, and just 189 words in the article body.
- What causes gum disease? – At the opposite end of the spectrum, this is an infinitely complex query. Any article attempting to answer the question in a couple hundred words would not do the topic justice, and Google’s search results reflect that fact. Now the featured snippet and first non-advertisement result is a very detailed page at National Institutes of Health. The page has 2271 words in total, with 1945 of those in the article body.

Short content vs thin content

Since the Panda update of 2011, Google has targeted what it deems “thin” content. This may include pages with minimal text, but thin does not mean short. In fact, ezines and content farms were the hardest hit when Panda debuted. Both types of websites tended toward long, low-quality, keyword stuffed content, which was published on dozens or hundreds of sites.

Thin content is defined as adding little to no value to the reader. It may be so short that it does not cover a topic adequately, or it may contain thousands of useless words. This includes:

- Duplicated content (even if it is duplicated within your own website)
- Automatically generated or “spun” content
- Doorway webpages that do not include valuable content
- Low quality cookie-cutter style websites
- Affiliate pages without value-adding content
- Shallow, uninformative, or unhelpful pages

So, how long should a blog post be?

That question can be answered with another question. How many words do you need to cover the topic comprehensively, and provide maximum value to the reader?

As mentioned above, for many topics, higher value translates to more words. However, that is changing as the internet becomes more visual. Words are not the only way to convey information and provide value. If you don’t want every post to be an essay, try pairing shorter text with elements such as:

- Infographics
- Relevant photographs
- Explainer videos
- Charts and graphs
- Helpful links
- Interactive features

When in doubt, ask yourself if the post is useful, and if it can be made more useful. Google isn’t looking for more words. They are looking for more value.

About the Author

Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete internet marketing company that focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education, and the online reputations of dentists. With a team of 180+ full time marketers, www.ekwa.com helps dentists who know where they want to go, get there by dominating their market and growing their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call 855-598-3320 to speak one-on-one with Naren.