copyhound

What is your goal?

Before you start your first draft, ask yourself:

What is the singular point I'm trying to make?

What's the one thing I want the reader to remember after reading? <u>Actually write it out!</u> Everything in the blog should speak to that one thing.

✔️ *It's in my financial best interest to make sure we are properly maintaining our equipment.*

❌ *This widget adds flexibility, cost savings, and reliability to our site – and it's really easy to use.*

✔️ *With the labor shortage, the right equipment helps staff do more with less.*

If you can't summarize your North Star in one reasonably-sized sentence, you're trying to cover too much.
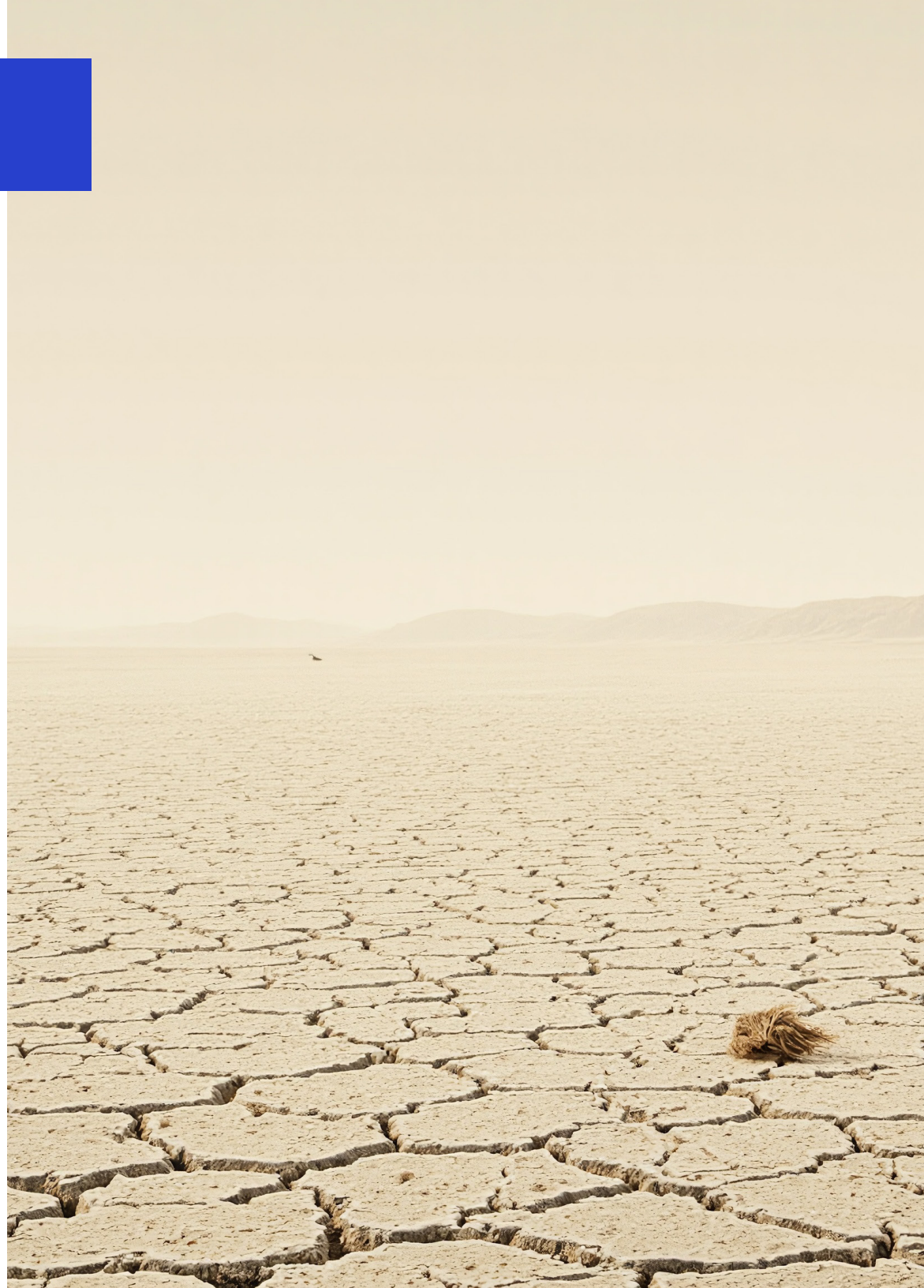
Don't go chasing word counts.

Don't be beholden to word counts. Use however many words needed to get your main point across.

Word counts are guide maps to writing wastelands. You fill your writing with clutter to get to that number. You use 7 words instead of 2. You add a paragraph that doesn't relate to your North Star.

This is so disastrous because you make the reader do more work .

After your first draft, go back and cut at least 20% (ex: 600 words -> 480). Ideally, write the first draft, set it aside for a few days, then come back to edit with fresh eyes.

This forces you to trim the fat and get rid of the unnecessary parts that make your writing worse.

MY PROCESS FOR CUTTING

Step 1: Write a bad first draft. Don't worry about clutter here. Just write. Power through it and then sit back in self-hatred about how awful it is.

Step 2: Ruthlessly proofread it with the mindset of cutting. Hatchet away pointless sentences that don't provide any value.

Go Patrick Bateman on your copy.

Step 3: Proofread for typos. Don't worry about anything but catching the errors.

Step 4: Make all the edits and set it aside for a day or so.

Step 5: Proofread it at least one more time and be super picky about cutting words. This is when the hatchet has turned into an X-ACTO knife. Cut as much as you can. Realistically, if you had a 600-word blog, you can get it down to 400.

Pro tip: It's not great for the environment, but print out your draft. You'd be surprised how much you catch reviewing a hard copy.

SCANNABILITY

The chances someone reads your entire blog are slim. Very slim. Here are 6 tips to help with scannability of your blogs:

Use Subheads
And have the subheads be full thoughts, not 3-word teases. Can you tell the story of your North Star if they only read the subheads?

Use Bullet Points
Like short paragraphs, bullet points show information faster and create more of that beautiful white space.

Use Short Paragraphs
Long paragraphs are daunting for readers and they'll skip them or stop reading. There's huge psychological value of white space.

Play with Font Style
Don't be afraid to ***stylize text*** in body copy to *place emphasis* on certain words. It gives important ideas a megaphone when people scan.

Don't Data Dump
Don't have data/info dump paragraphs. The more numbers you use, the less likely the reader will retain any of them. Work with a designer to create an image that tells the data story.

Use Numerals When Possible
Numbers (when used sparingly) stand out in articles because they are different than letters (wow, great insight there!) When something is different, it stands out more.
Instead of "half of all," say "50% of all."
Instead of "twenty pounds," say "20 pounds."

HEADLINES

Some people write headlines first and then write the body copy. Others write the headlines last. Regardless, your headline should revolve around your North Star.

The chances of you nailing the headline on the first try are not great. Write 5-10 decent-ish headlines. More than likely, there will be bits and pieces from all of them that you then use to create your finished headline.

Some helpful tips for crafting headlines:

· Tell the actual value of the content
· Ask questions
· Use numbers
· Be concise and to the point
· Check on keywords to include (!!!)

Exclusive To All Newspapers

DIANA WAS STILL ALIVE HOURS BEFORE SHE DIED

A SERIES of previously unseen CCTV images have revealed that Diana was alive and well before she was tragically killed in Paris, ten years ago.

INSIDE ● Do you think Diana is dead? Or have you seen her in Morocco? Call now: 0900 000 0000. If not, call: 0900 000 0000. Calls cost (cont. p .94)

BODY COPY

Incorporate case studies: If the topic relates to relevant case studies, include them. Stories about actual people are much more impactful.

Format your blog as a Q&A: This is great for AI search and is really helpful for readers, because they can quickly search for what they are looking for.

Use quotes to help break up body copy: Incorporate quotes – either from someone in the organization or link quotes to something people said to respected news outlets or trade pubs.

Use varying sentence lengths: Throw in short sentences. And long. Don't write one medium sentence after another.

Get to the point: Set the stage, but don't linger too long. Get to your North Star quickly.

If you want to make a dramatic point, use as few words as possible.

HOW MUCH PRODUCT PROMOTION SHOULD YOU DO?

Blogs are supposed to be thought leadership. They should answer a question or give insights to a reader.

The amount of product or brand promotion is a direct correlation between risk and reward.

Low Risk / Low Reward

Promote the brand and product A LOT. This is low risk because it's very easy to want to *promote, promote, promote!*

It's low reward because the reader sees through it and probably bounces fast. You got a click, but no meaningful action.

High Risk / High Reward

Don't mention the brand or product at all. Not once. This feels like a huge risk, and it requires a lot of restraint.

However, you service the reader and this plays the long-game of becoming the actual thought leader in the segment.

AI AND BLOGS

AI is really useful writing blogs, for everything from brainstorming topics, research, headline ideas, creating first drafts and even giving an extra set of proofreading eyes. Here are a few sample prompts to use during production:

Topic Creation
Please come up with 5 compelling and persuasive article ideas for [Subject]. Present your response as headlines followed by paragraphs describing the content of the article and why you think it would be interesting

First Draft
Write a 500-word blog in a [Type of Tone] tone about [Topic/Your North Star] for [Audience] in [Insert Industry Type]

Proofreading
Check for any grammar errors or spelling mistakes in the following text and please call out the errors and mistakes you found [Insert Text]

What can I help with?

To learn more about how AI is impacting blog and search performance, check out the AEO section of Copyhound