

The First 6 Months of Blogging - By The Numbers

Has it really already been 6 months?

Holy crap that came a hell of a lot quicker than I thought it would.

No one told me or warned me how much work it would be to start and grow a blog. It is a lot of work!

But more importantly, it has been 10 times more rewarding than I expected it to be.

This blog was born on September 25th, 2014 when I officially pushed the buy button to purchase the domain and hosting from [Blue Host](#). I have wanted to start a blog for years. In fact, I actually did start a blog back in 2009, but not really for the public. I used the blog as a place to share investing and trade ideas with a friend. It was more like a shared journal. It was on the blogger platform and it was free. We did have the occasional visitor, but it was mostly just for the two of us. We were not trying to grow an audience, nor did we really even know that would be possible.

After a few years that blog died as my friend moved on and I had no reason to write. Or put more accurately, I had no **one** to write for.

At the time I had no idea that there was such a hungry audience out there waiting for content on things I liked to talk about. It wasn't until 2013 after finding and consistently reading several really successful blogs that I got the urge to want to start a blog again. This time I wanted to write for the public. But then the impostor syndrome and fear kicked in. The following questions started to swirl in my head:

- What if no one reads what I write?
- Or worse, what if they do read my content and absolutely hate it?
- What if I run out of things to write about?
- Will anyone take me seriously?
- What if it's perceived as just "another" personal finance blog?
- What will my friends think?

- What will my wife think?
- Should I tell anyone I know that I am starting a blog?
- How will I be unique?
- How will people find my blog among the hundreds of millions online?

I didn't have any good answers so I just let the idea float away. It wasn't until almost two years later when Scott Dinsmore of LiveYourLegend.com sent out an email blast to a list I happen to be on for his annual build a blog challenge that I really started to reconsider the blog. I won't lie, after reading the email, I let it sit in my inbox for a couple of days. It was the exact push I needed to finally get this blog going.

In the almost 2 years that lapsed between 2013 and when this blog was finally born, I had messed around on Blogger creating free blogs on all sorts of topics. But after a few weeks I would lose interest. It was in those failures that I realized that I needed to choose a topic that I was deeply passionate about. It had to be based on the things I just could not stop talking and thinking about in the real world. But I also realized that I needed to have a flexible platform that would allow me to spread my wings from time to time to explore other topics.

It was during those few days between when I got Scott's email and when I finally pushed "Buy Now" that it all came together. As Gen Y Finance Guy, I could talk about personal finance and everything it touches. **And they say that every story begins with or goes back to money.**

Yes, I would put my stake in the ground as a personal finance blog with my own unique story and approach to building wealth. To me this little hole in the wall on the web is as much a personal finance blog as it is a lifestyle design blog.

I am so glad I started and I am really looking forward to the next 6 months. Shoot, I am looking forward to the next 6 years of blogging.

But before I get ahead of myself let's take a look back over the past 6 months and see what happened.

By the numbers

Month 1 (9/25/14 to 10/24/14)

Zero traffic on day one...not even a visit from myself ☐

But then during the first month I had a spike on 9/30/14 that lasted two days due to the blog challenge group that probably felt sorry for me and came over to give me some feedback on the blog (after I begged a little...okay, it was a lot of begging and I promised to visit their site as well).



I did manage to write 3 posts during the first 5 days of this young blogs life:

1. [Why Gen Y Finance Guy?](#) 607 words
2. [The Share Economy & Rental Income](#) 950 words
3. [I Make 6 Figures But I Hate My Job](#) 1,988 words – This is probably the post I was most proud of and really showed me taking steps to living life by design.

Then

For the remaining of the first 30 days I managed to write at least one new blog post a week. Actually, it was a little better than one a week since I managed to write 5 in 25 days.

1. [The Lyft Experiment](#) 644 words
2. [We Don't Have Our Parents American Dream](#) 952 words
3. [I'm 28 years old, now what?](#) 661 words
4. [Managing Debt: The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly](#) 1,503 words
5. [Markets Don't Go Up Forever!](#) 180 words

7,485 words written in month 1

The first 30 days was a bit lonely over at the blog with respect to readers. But I also didn't want to spend too much time building up traffic with so little content on the blog. The important thing was that I took action and got the blog launched and started getting in the habit of writing.

Over the first month I tried to balance writing while at the same time working on the aesthetics of the blog. It took me **4 themes** before I finally settled on the one we currently have. I also got plugins installed. Oh, and I did install Google Analytics from day 1 so that I could track activity on the blog. I always say that you can't optimize what you don't measure. That's true whether it's your finances, fitness, or when it comes to blogging.

Total Time Spent = Approximately 20 hours in month 1

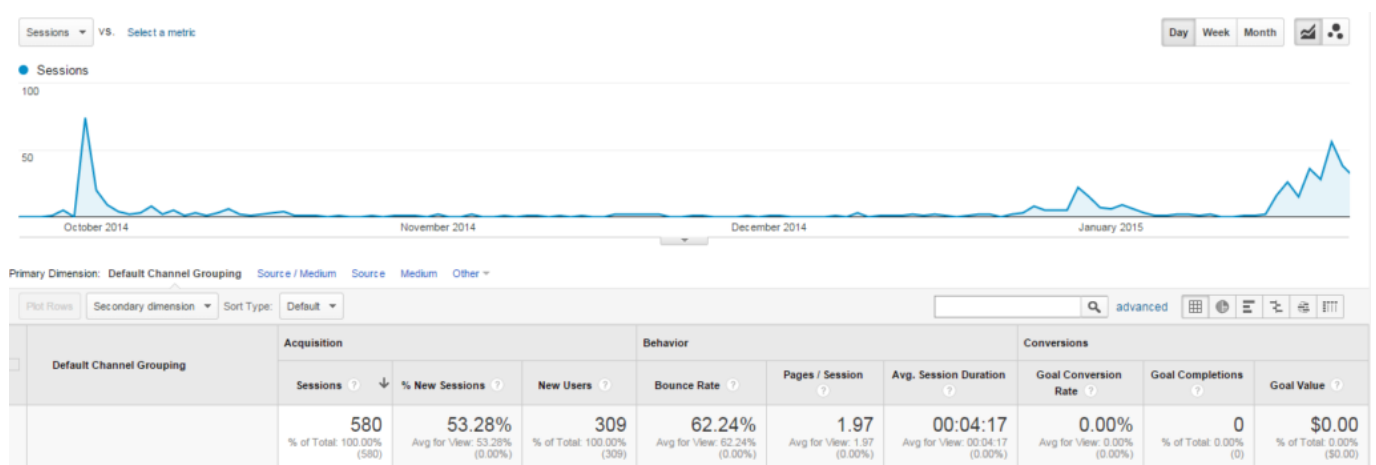
Total Cost = \$136 (this paid for 3 years in advance)

Overall I would call month 1 a success.

Month 2-4 (10/25/14 to 1/24/15)

I made a decision when I launched the blog to work on writing before anything else. This was the first test to see if I really had it in me to consistently peck away at a keyboard and ship at least 1 new post every week. The goal was to get into a routine of a regular writing 3 months before I would actively start drumming up traffic to the site. During this time I told no one of the site except the people in the blog challenge.

Okay, one of other exception would be my wife. But other than that, I did not share it with anyone else.



As you can see, the old phrase, “build it and they will come” is not true on the internet – at least not for me. The site was essentially radio silence with respect to traffic between the October spike and the beginning of January.

Writing was the primary focus. I managed to publish another 15 posts in months 2 through 4.

Am I proud of every post? Not by a long shot, but that wasn't the point. The point was to write consistently. The point was to ship (publish) a new post once a week. Some are good, and others might not be worth reading. But here they are nonetheless:

1. [The Financial Truth: There's a limit to how much you can cut expenses, but there's no limit on how much you can earn.](#) 1,939 words
2. [My Huge 86,400 Deposit And I'm Going To Spend It All](#) 924 words
3. [Momento Mori - Remember Your Mortality](#) 717 words
4. [42 Days Later](#) 185 words
5. [A few more financial victories around the corner!](#) 268 words
6. [Ray Dalio - How The Economic Machine Works \(Video\)](#) no words but a great video I highly recommend watching.
7. [Outside of Mortgage Debt, I am Now Debt Free!](#) 1,675 words
8. [Get Your Goals Ready and Lets Make 2015 Epic](#) 478 words
9. [We All Make Bad Financial Decisions, But They Don't Have to Define The Rest Of Our Lives!](#) 696 words (I managed to survive some stupid financial decisions)
10. [Fail Forward and Make Mistakes to Reach your Goals In 2015 And Beyond](#) 980 words
11. [A Certificate of Deposit that returns 100X my Chase savings interest rate](#) 790 words
12. [The True Financial Death!](#) 752 words
13. [The Path Is All Math](#) 305 words
14. [Joined the Yakezie Alexa Ranking Challenge](#) 410 words (this been motivating ever since joining, I will explain below in a second)
15. [The Mortgage Snowball Strategy To Pay Your Mortgage Off In 5-7 Years](#) 1,433 words (another post I am pretty proud of)

11,552 words written in month 2-4

I proved to myself that I could write consistently. The pace was a little better than 1 a week.

In January I actually started visiting other personal finance blogs as my first step at connecting with others in the community. My hope was that on posts that I had something thoughtful to say, I would leave a comment, and then others may find my response interesting and click over to visit my site. As you can see from the chart above, this strategy did start driving traffic back to the site. Although it still wasn't anything to write home about.

At this point I now had 23 posts live on the site and was ready to officially open the doors to the public.

The Yakezie Alexa Ranking Challenge

On January 14th, 2015 I came across the [Yakezie financial bloggers network](#). This is essentially a blog for personal finance and lifestyle bloggers. It is packed with all kinds of resources, a directory of personal finance blogs, as well as a member's forum. Sam from [Financial Samurai](#) created this site as a way to help other financial bloggers get up and going. It is his way of paying it forward. In conjunction with the site, Sam created the Alexa ranking challenge. If you want the details you can click item number 14 above, but the gist of it is that you are supposed to do a number of things and in the end improve your ranking into the 200,000 handle (over 6 months).

When you first start a blog your Alexa ranking actually starts off at worse than zero. You start with no rank at all.

The day I officially joined the challenge my rank was **26,214,230**.

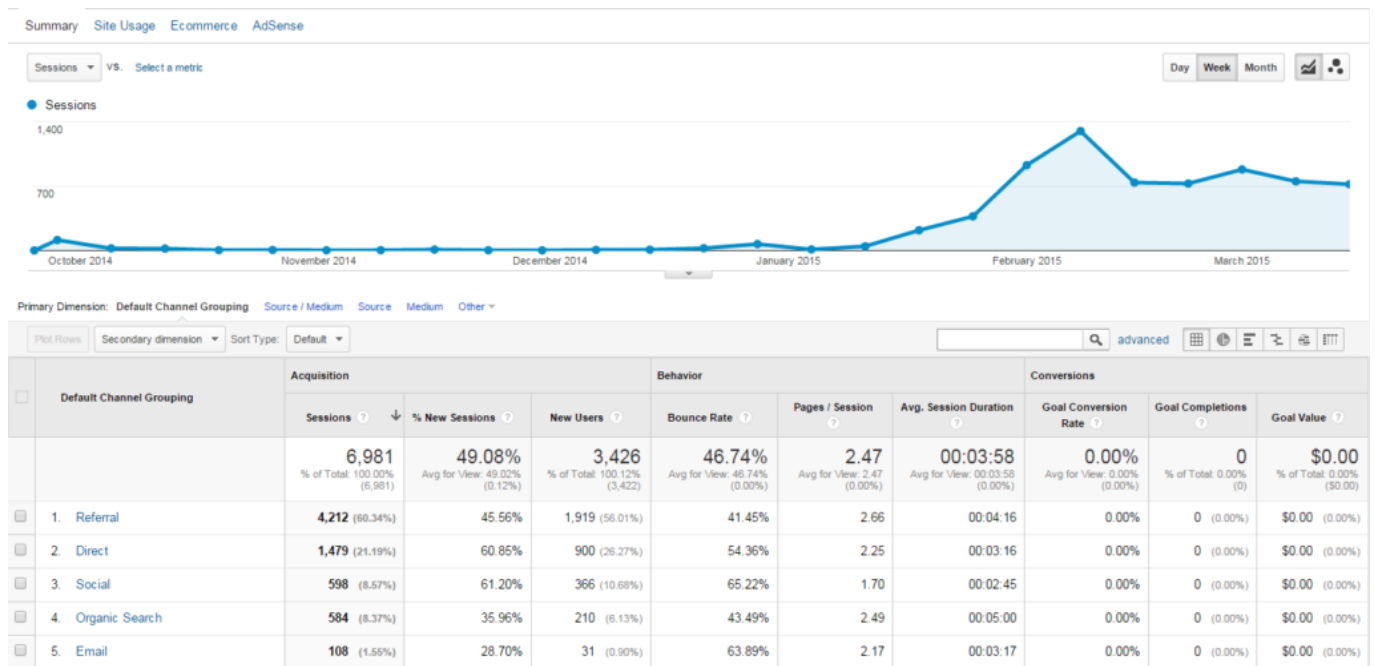
I had a lot of work to do.

By the end of January I had improved significantly, by improving the site ranking to **3,942,604**.

The take away is that action leads to significant improvement in the beginning. Watching this number on a daily basis was just the metric I needed to keep writing. If you are a blogger or thinking about starting a blog, then you need to join this challenge and use the ranking as a metric to measure your success.

Month 4-6 (1/25/15 to 3/24/15)

This is when the magic really started to happen...



- I continued my blog commenting strategy in an effort to not only get to know other bloggers but also to contribute to the conversation and possibly drive traffic back to my site. I was always taught to go where the fish are. Which by the way, one thing I have learned is how friendly everyone is in the personal finance community.
- In January I also reached out to [Financial Samurai](#) and [1500 days](#) to ask if they would be interested in a guest post. They both graciously accepted my offer. To my surprise, both guest posts went live on the same day (2-7-15). This is the spike you see in February. Traffic has fallen off a bit since then, but has remained elevated at about 750 visitors a week and about 3,200 visitors a month.
- Since January I have been actively following and commenting on 100+ blogs. It's funny how you can actually get a sense that you know someone after interacting with them online enough times.
- I got set up on Twitter, Facebook, and Google plus...oh and I reserved a YouTube Channel and Instagram account. I am not hugely active on many of these channels. With the exception of Twitter I mostly just have posts getting delivered automatically in case others have a preference as to where they

consume or are notified of new content. By the way, my twitter handle has gone from 0 to 197 followers.

- I got an email capture form set up using mail chimp. Believe it or not, but I have built that list up to over 125 subscribers.
- I also got my [Financial Stats Page](#) live that tracks my net worth and is a central spot that links to all my [monthly financial reports](#).
- I also got all the [disclosures](#) up that are required by the FTC.
- In February I picked up a blogging accountability partner. We both started around the same time and have become good friends online. I think I am learning a lot more from him then he is learning from me. Shout out to Brian at [Debtless in Texas](#).
- I published another 15 posts:
 1. [The Slight Edge](#) 1,022 words
 2. [Financial Stats for Gross Income and Net Worth Now Have a Dedicated Page](#) 235 words
 3. [January 2015 - Detailed Financial Report #1](#) 2,844 words
 4. [Thursday Rant #1: The Office Time Keeper](#) 1,165 words
 5. [Buy Into Weakness - Investment Rule #1](#) 1,275 words
 6. [Example of Buying Into Weakness - Investment Rule #1](#) 1,206 words
 7. [Murder Your Mortgage in 7 Years Q&A](#) 975 words
 8. [How I Blew \\$290 on Valentines Day With My Wife](#) 1,524 words
 9. [My Love Hate Relationship with Taxes](#) 2,082 words
 10. [Thursday Rant #2 Office Lotto Pools](#) 704 words
 11. [Everyone Has a Number, Mine is \\$10M, What's Yours](#) 3,272 words
 12. [I Just Brought On a CEO To Help Run Things Around Here](#) 1,120 words
 13. [Nominated For The Liebster Award](#) 3,030 words
 14. [February 2015 - Detailed Financial Report #2](#) 3,545 words
 15. [Paying Off Your Mortgage Early vs. Investing The Extra Payments In Stocks](#) 2,219 words
 16. [Anatomy of A Side Hustle: How I made \\$18,000 at an effective rate of \\$100/hour](#) 1,959 words
 17. [Favorite Reads, Views, and Listens In March - Books|Blogs|Videos|Podcasts](#) 246 words

28,423 words written in months 5 & 6

47,460 words written during first 6-months blogging (blog posts only, its over 50,000 if you include pages like about, recommended, etc.)

Based on the screenshot above you can see that 60% of my traffic has been driven through referrals. This is largely a result of my commenting strategy and guests posting. I plan to keep pursuing this strategy as long as it works. I also have several new guest posts in the works that I hope will go live sometime between now and May. Right now my goal is to manage 1-guest post a month.

What about Monetization?

Another decision that I made early on was that I wanted to find ways to monetize the blog. However, I made a promise to myself to put that off until March. Once March hit, I made a huge monetization push by putting up affiliate links in the side bar of the blog. I also created a recommended page that contains all my favorite products and companies.

Currently I am still just testing a lot of things to see what works. It's kind of like when you are cooking spaghetti, you throw the noodles against the wall to see if they stick. You know the noodles are done when they stick to the wall. Same thing with some of the monetization things I am trying ☐

And it has paid off. Nothing huge but we have made our first \$115 online (all during our first month and almost enough to cover the first 3 years of hosting). As this income grows to be a more substantial number I will detail it out for all of you following along. The goal of everything I post on this blog is to be as transparent as possible. You get a front row seat to see what is working and also what to avoid like the plague.

Conclusion

Blogging is a lot more work than I ever could have imagined. The more I get into it, the longer my list grows of things to do. I still have focused almost zero attention on the SEO side of things, which is important if I want to have any kind of passive traffic coming to the site. The only step I have made is downloading the SEO Yoast plugin. At some point I am going to need to reduce the number of blogs that I am actively following and commenting on. Not sure how I will approach this yet. One

thing I have started to do is mark certain blogs as “must read” in my Feedly app.

The writing has gotten better, at least in my eyes. The traffic and comments that I have gotten tend to reinforce my perception. There are at least 200 topics I have started in my offline drafts folder, and another 500 in my head. The first 6-months on this blog have been largely foundational and about me. I want to get better at blending my experience while at the same time providing insight and actionable takeaways for you the reader to apply in your own endeavors.

I am very excited for what lies ahead. The journey has only just begun.

Onward and Upward!

- Gen Y Finance Guy

[Interested in starting your own blog?](#)

Blue Host - Have we inspired you to create your own blog? Well let me save you some money. This is the hosting company that I use for this blog. It is stupid cheap and the customer service is amazing. The normal price is \$5.99/month, but if you use this link you will get a 34% discount (only \$3.95/month). It took me less than 5 minutes to buy my domain, install WordPress, and get the first version of this site up and running.

OR you can check out our [Recommended Products and Resources page](#).



Gen Y Finance Guy

Hey, I'm Dom - the man behind the cartoon. You'll notice that I sign off as "Gen Y Finance Guy" on all my posts, due to the fact that I write this blog anonymously (at least for now). I like to think of myself as the *Chief Freedom Officer* here of my little

corner of the internet. In the real world, I'm a 30-something former C-Suite executive turned entrepreneur turned capital allocator. I am trying to humanize finance by sharing my own journey to Financial Freedom. I believe in total *honesty* and *transparency*. That is why before I ever started blogging, I decided that I would share all of my own [financial stats](#). I do this not to brag, but instead to inspire motivate, and also to hold myself accountable. My goal is to be a beacon of hope, motivation, and inspiration for *you*, the reader, by living life by example and sharing it **all** here on the blog. My sincere hope is that you will be able to learn from me - both from my successes and my failures! [Read More](#)