

# asterisk



Insights and smart practices from your content team

Issue No. 7

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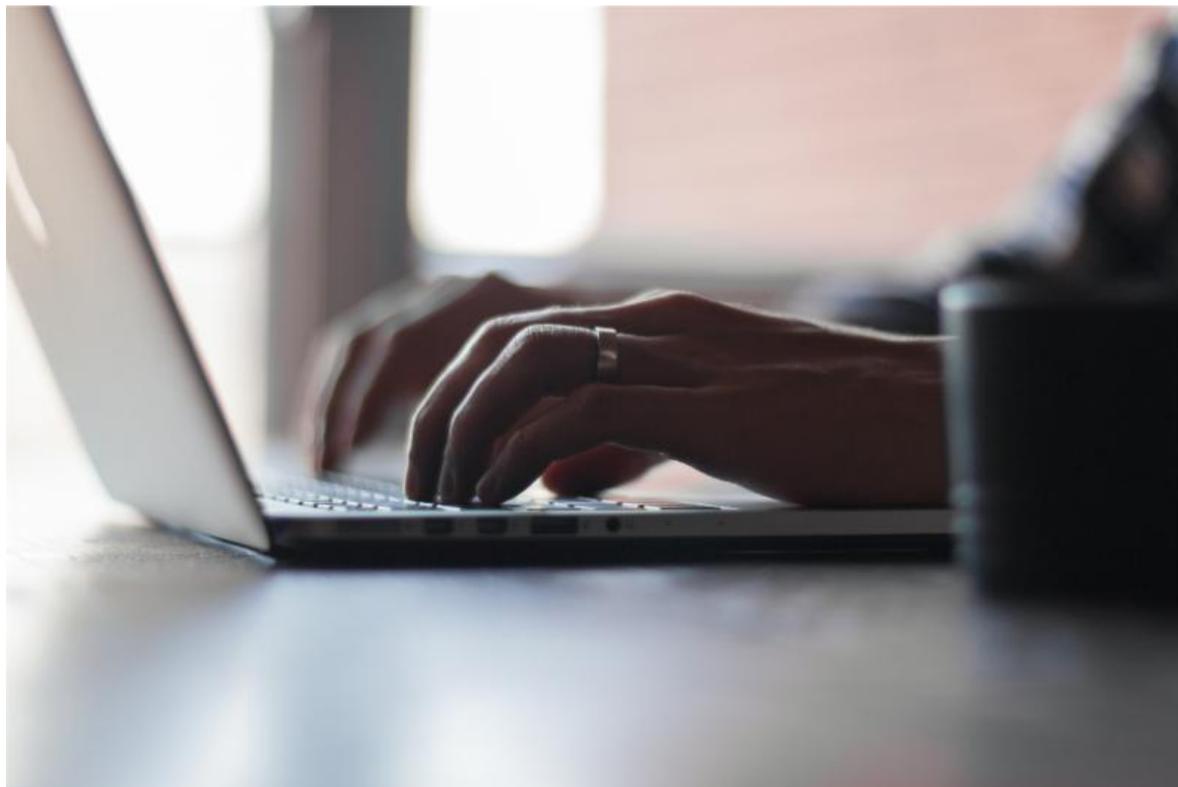
**In this issue:** Blogging dos and don'ts, election catchphrases, the exclamation point and more.

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#### **CONFIRM YOUR SUBSCRIPTION!**

Canada's Anti-spam Law is now in effect. If you haven't had the chance yet to give your express consent to continue receiving *asterisk*\*, you can do so by clicking [here](#).

feature\*



**THE ART OF THE BLOG**

The pressures of content marketing are driving more and more organizations to push out a steady, regular stream of consumable content on a near-realtime basis. Blogs are a handy way to do that.

Yet while generating fresh material is important, there are risks in treating content (which is just a way of saying "good, valuable ideas written down") purely as a commodity.

Here are some tips we've compiled developing blog content for our clients:

### **1. Only blog when you have something to say.**

While it may seem that the most important thing about blogging is just having your voice out there in the mix, a flimsy blog will undermine your credibility. Saving your blogging for when you have something significant to share will boost the value of your content. Quality still counts.

### **2. Be strategic.**

Think about the themes you want to explore through your blog program. For example, maybe your blog will focus on customer pain points or emerging trends. Choosing themes of value to your readers provides a compass to guide you as you write and publish.

### **3. Create an editorial plan.**

Based on your strategic themes, map out a program of content entries for the coming quarter or six months. Don't be rigid: the plan will no doubt change based on emerging topics and new opportunities. But having a roadmap makes it easier to be strategic about your content. It also gives you milestones to work toward, which means you're likelier to post on a regular basis.

### **4. Organize your thoughts.**

How many times have you reached the end of a blog and wondered what it was really about? Blogs may be informal but they still need structure and a point. A meandering blog will lose readers' interest or, worse, make them doubt your authority on a topic.

### **5. Keep it concise.**

On average, aim for 400 words per blog. If it's a technically deep topic, go to 800. Keep it digestible for your readers. If you really want to explore something in depth, take the opportunity to sustain readers' interest and split the subject across multiple blogs in a series.

### **6. Maintain momentum.**

If you're time or resource-crunched, get help -- either to get a first batch of blogs "in the can" ahead of launch, or to bridge a gap when your internal team is occupied with other priorities. With help now and then you can keep the thought leadership flowing.

punc'd\*

## **THE EXCLAMATION POINT**

*"Sale ends today! Act now!"*

In marketing, the exclamation point is a time-honoured device for shrieking imperatives. Because of

its potency, most writers recommend using it only on rare occasions. It's like chrome on a vintage car: a little trim is flashy; a whole vehicle made of the stuff would be blindingly ridiculous.

The exclamation point has its roots in medieval manuscripts. Monks would add the Latin word *io* -- meaning happiness or joy -- to the ends of particularly rapturous sentences. Over time, the "i" and the "o" merged and became a symbol indicating emphasis, volume, joy or exaltation. (We're not sure which of these Jeb Bush's Republican leadership campaign is supposed to conjure up with its "Jeb!", though the prospect of another Bush presidency might indeed be joyful if you own an NFL team or a Chick-fil-A.)

The exclamation point has acquired some specialized uses over the years. In chess notation, exclamation points suggest an interesting move. In musical theatre, a show with an exclamation mark in the title generally contains a song of the same name. Stick an exclamation point beside an equal sign (!=) and you can argue online with people using the wrongheaded logic of false equivalency.

Some cities use exclamation points in their names, like Quebec's Saint-Louis-du-Ha! Ha! and Hamilton!, Ohio. Wonder if the good people of that U.S. town will vote for Jeb! in a show of punctuational solidarity!

The logo features the word "Jeb!" in a large, bold, red serif font. Below it, the year "2016" is written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font. A red exclamation point is positioned to the right of the year.

## content matters\*

### COMPETITION BUREAU

Cartels and other anti-competitive practices can have a massively harmful impact on Canadian businesses. Earlier this year, our team worked closely with the Competition Bureau of Canada to conceptualize and write a playful and engaging animated video communicating the dangers of cartels to businesspeople and the general public. You can watch it on [YouTube](#).

## shout-out\*

### LOTS NEW AT ASCRIBE

If you've visited our website over the past couple of weeks, you may have noticed something different. Or more accurately, you may have noticed that everything is different. Our new, third-generation website offers a cleaner and simpler user experience as well as better compatibility with mobile devices. You can check it out at [ascibeinc.ca](http://ascibeinc.ca). And that's not our only recent change. As part of our continued growth, we've welcomed veteran writer [Jim Riel](#) to our team as Editorial Director, along with [Jayme McRae](#) as our Client Service Administrator and Project Manager -- adding depth, experience



and capacity so we can continue to serve our clients with excellence.

## pop\*

### ELECTION 2015: YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN

In most communications, repetition is the fast track to dullness. We expect a story to develop and want it to keep moving.

But in an election campaign, each party's goal is to burn a simple, memorable phrase or two into our minds. [Just not ready. Real change for our middle class. It's only the NDP that can defeat Conservatives.](#)

A few pointed words, the thinking goes, will stick in voters' minds when they step into the booth to mark their ballots on October 19.

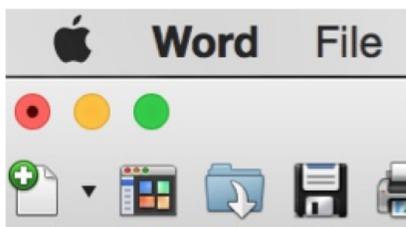
That's why, in the thick of an election, it's not just what the party leaders say, it's how often they say it that counts. Check out [this short CBC video featuring a very friendly Stephen Harper.](#)

We sympathize with politicians who, after a gruelling 78-day campaign, are probably desperate to stop talking in repetitive catchphrases and get on with the business of governing. But until then we'll all just have to keep a stiff upper lip, or keep on carrying on... or some other catchphrase to that effect.

## practice point\*

### AT-A-GLANCE DISASTER AVERSION

When you're working with certain applications in Mac OS X, you may notice the red "close" button sometimes has a black dot inside it. What the heck does it mean?



Think of it as a warning sign: the dot means changes have been made to your file since the last time you saved -- so maybe you should save your work in case something goes wrong! Keeping an eye on the upper-left corner of the screen might save you some grief and frustration down the road.

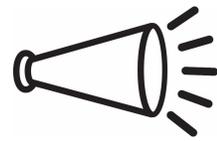
## storytelling\*

### MOMENTS IN STORYTELLING

To celebrate election season, here are some fun milestones in the history of the stump.

### **Fifth Century BCE**

The Greek sophists become the world's first "hired speechwriters", lending their skills in the art of argument for (reportedly) handsome pay.



### **1960**

The first televised presidential debate pits JFK against Richard Nixon and makes electronic media central to the electoral process.

### **1993**

Prime Minister Kim Campbell's popularity falls after her party runs ads seeming to mock Liberal leader Jean Chrétien's appearance -- proving again the power of electronic media in elections.

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