Get a real blog...

http://getarealblog.com

This ebook will help you make the jump to self-hosted blogging (if that's what you want to do).

Note: you can download the latest version of this ebook at no charge from http://getarealblog.com/the-ebook/

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1. Introduction

Do you use a blogspot.com, wordpress.com or some other free blog? A lot of people do - and there is no shame in doing so. They are:

- free,
- easy to set up - one click template swapping and no worries about where to FTP which files,
- easy to use - just post, no sweat, and
- easy to maintain - Blogger/WordPress does all the hard upgrade work for you.

In other words, you don't have to be your own pHp/MySQL guru and system administrator before you've even started posting. That's why they are suitable for beginning or casual bloggers - much of the fuss has been removed, and all that is left is the important stuff - getting quality posts out.

Let me reinforce the point that I can see no shame in this whatsoever - if you are content to blog for the rest of your life in this way, more power to you – at least you are out there doing it, and posting.

For some people, the free blogs aren't enough. Some of the reasons for looking at an alternative to free blogging are:

- Flexibility and extensibility - if you need total control over look and feel (blog theme, individual page templates, and overall layout), you may need to explore the freedom that a self-hosted blog offers,
- Making money - there is a certain amount that you can do in placing Google ads into a Blogspot blog, but if you want to pursue other money-making ideas (like third-party ad brokers) then you will need a better setup, and
- Notoriety - while not easily separable from making money, having a higher index ranking (such as Google PageRank or Technorati rank) relies heavily on brand reinforcement (in other words, the effort you put into promoting your blog name and associated domain name).

Basically, it is all about control of your blogging environment. If you need a lot of control, self host. If you don't, then you may well be forever happy with the free options.

This ebook will take you through some of the joys and pitfalls of moving from a Blogger-like setup to a self-hosted blog. Topics to be covered are:

- defining your needs,
- deciding on a domain name,
- finding the right blogging platform,
- finding a hosting provider and transferring your domain name to them,
- installing the blog software,
- tweaking the blog,

- Migrating content from your old blog, and
- Promoting the changed domain name to keep existing readers (and get new ones).

PS: the title of this ebook comes from the George Thorogood song "Get a haircut and get a real job". Free blogs are real blogs too, I just love that song 😃

2. Defining your needs

So… what do you want from your blog?

This sounds like an easy question. Ask most people and they will tell you something that sounds like one of the following:

- "I like writing and blogging gives me an excuse",
- "I want to make money",
- "I want to promote my business",
- "There is a cause that I feel passionate about and I want to spread the word",
- "I want to share my opinions and knowledge with the world",
- "I want to share stuff with my friends", or
- "I want to gain recognition within my profession/hobby".

What's behind this? What do you actually need from blogging?

2.1.   Motivation according to Maslow

One way to categorise needs filled by blogging is through [Maslow's hierarchy of needs for bloggers](#) - you'll see it isn't quite so simple (and it requires a lot of self-honesty):

- **Physiological needs** are those required for minimal physical subsistence - the stuff that we need to live, and while I believe that all the layers of the pyramid are important, we can go without the others for short periods. Is it relevant as a motivator for bloggers? Unless you are being tortured into blogging, or use blogging itself for sexual gratification, then it probably doesn't apply. I'd rate this as a fairly rare motivator.
- **Safety** is important - and I believe that this covers physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual safety. I can only think of a couple of cases where safety is a motivator for bloggers: (a) when the blogger's personal beliefs rely on a view that needs to be promulgated through blogging (as in a spiritual mission), or (b) there is a fear of a loss of safety through not blogging (and granted, this could be the same thing). I'm guessing that both of these cases are extreme.
- **Love/Belonging** is where it starts to get interesting - there is a fine line between blogging because all of your friends do

(acceptance of peer pressure is usually placed in the Love/Belonging category), and blogging for the recognition of your friends (which is probably placed in the Esteem category - can anyone confirm?). Regardless, I believe that Love and Belonging are noticeable motivators for bloggers. Will they be sustainable when things become impossibly successful? Love may conquer all, but could the lack of it motivate us to blog?

- **Esteem** is probably the easiest category of need to identify with blogging. If we look deep inside ourselves, chances are that most of us blog because we like the recognition that it brings. Sure, the recognition may be shared with a business or a partner. Low self esteem increases the need for recognition, but I wouldn't draw the conclusion that successful bloggers have low self esteem. The esteem might come from blog income, an increase in services sales, or increased product awareness. It may be that the esteem payoff, if not forthcoming, is a prime source of the [blog monster](#).

- **Self-Actualisation** is the first of Maslow's growth needs, and is where a lot of us see ourselves as bloggers - we're on a mission to improve ourselves and others. Sometimes we succeed 😃 While I jest, I believe that there is an important thing at work here - creativity. In blogging, we generally think, solving problems in a way that reinforces and extends this aspect of our life experience (in plain language, we use what we have to get what we want and what we have gets better as a result). I'd argue that while self-actualisation is essential to a well-rounded life, it is not a sustainable motivator for bloggers - exercising our creativity is usually a by-product rather than a key motive to keep blogging.

[At the time I picked Esteem](#) as the likely need being met by blogging for most people - but a lot of people had differing opinions.

2.2.   The practical choices

In more practical terms, for the purposes of this exercise, it might be worth picking one or more of the following statements:

1. "I have stuff that I want to get off my chest and I don't care if anyone else ever sees it",
2. "I want to blog to promote my business/book/charity/patient support group/cause",
3. "I want to be better known in my profession", and/or
4. "I want to make money from blogging".

It can be the hardest thing in the world to be honest with yourself. A little self-honesty now will help you a great deal further down the track. The thing is, if you picked anything but the first option, you would be better off with a self-hosted blog complete with your own domain name.

In every case, it is easier to get exposure with a self-hosted blog.

Some of the other factors (such as platform and making money) are linked to a certain extent, so it is important to know which of the above statements fits - and not just now, but where you see yourself in 12 months time. Pick one for now (and it is OK to change your mind later, trust me) 😃

2.3.   The cost-benefit argument

There is also a cost-benefit argument for moving to your own domain name and self-hosted blog – basically, if your time is limited, and it takes time to write good content, can you afford to restrict the exposure of your writing in any way? Is the money you are saving in using a free host worth the potential loss of audience members?

It is hard to quantify the difference – it is entirely possible to have adequate exposure for your needs on a free blog, sure, but no-one would argue that it is easier that way in the long run.

3. Deciding on a domain name

Note: I'll let you know right up front that I have an interest in getyerown.com - I'm using it to illustrate some of the examples below.

Most domain registration resellers operate in more or less the same way - please use whichever one you feel most comfortable with. Just compare prices first 😃

I'd also like to add that the following is a long section - the subject material is complex and I'm only covering it at a fairly superficial level. If you have questions, please send an email to facibus@gmail.com and I'll do my best to answer them.

Domain names are important if you want to increase awareness of your blog. Whether you're promoting a cause or selling a book or making money directly from the blog, the right domain name will help you achieve your goals. There are two approaches to this - a "shirley" name (in other words, calling it anything that might as well be Shirley Temple) and stacking your domain name with the same keyword or words that people will use to find you on Google.

Of these, the latter is the better - Google will give a higher relevance to a domain name that matches the entered search terms. In plain language, "acmewidget.com" will rank higher than "acmebolts.com" on a search for Acme Widgets (notwithstanding that the Acme Bolt Company might have a higher page rank for their site - but it is better to stack as many positives on your side as possible - please get the right domain name, it will help you, even if you never want to sell your blog).

3.1. Keywords that fit your niche

Firstly, it is important that your domain name fits your niche as closely as possible - and wherever possible, it should be loaded with niche-specific keywords.

Example: Let's say you're living in Canberra and run a television repair business - what keywords do you think that your customers are going to type into google or whitepages.com.au (or any other business directory service) to find you? How can you make it easier for them? You can probably guess that canberratelevision.com or canberratelevisionrepair.com are the obvious choices - but how do you know?

Enter Overture's Inventory tool. It is easy - you enter the search terms you're interested in, and it returns the most popular associated searches across Overture's database. Searching on "Canberra Television Repair" didn't bring up any hits - I guess because Canberra is in Australia - but "Television Repair" showed the following results.

Keyword Selector Tool

Not sure what search terms to bid on?
Enter a term related to your site and we will show you:
- Related searches that include your term
- How many times that term was searched on last month

Get suggestions for: (may take up to 30 seconds)

`television%20repair` ▶

Note: All suggested search terms are subject to our standard editorial review process.

Searches done in January 2007	
Count	**Search Term**
22005	television and electronics repair
13923	**television repair**
858	radio and television repair
215	rca television repair part
213	television repair part
208	toshiba television repair
182	mitsubishi television repair
172	rca television repair
168	sony television repair
104	television repair tip
93	plasma television repair
84	television repair service
83	zenith television repair
82	television and radio service repair
69	television repair manual
61	television repair forum
60	jvc television repair
55	television repair shop
53	projection television repair
51	sharp television repair
51	television repair troubleshooting
50	apex television repair
48	panasonic television repair

You can see that "television repair" ranked second in associated searches - so it is actually a good combination to go for.

4. Finding the right domain name

This is not as easy as it sounds. Truth be told, if there are two good keywords that go together to describe your niche, someone has probably grabbed them.

Some rules of thumb:

- if you're never ever going to sell the domain name/blog, then monetary value of the domain name alone doesn't matter as much. That said, domain names are more valuable if they are going to bring in more search engine traffic (and you might be wanting to do that, so you may as well go for the best name you can).
- Whatever else happens, .com names are worth more than .net, which are worth about the same or slightly less than .org - but all these are worth more than an equivalent .info domain name. This depends on the context and the value that has been added by use - trust me, fauxcuisine.com is not worth anywhere near as much as problogger.net 😃
- Shorter names are generally more valuable than longer ones. They're also easier to remember. Imagine telling someone your domain name over the phone - it is pretty hard to misunderstand "news.com.au" or "acmebolts.com"
- Complex words, words with different ways of being spelt, and uncommon words can make your life harder - netmarketing.com vs netmarketting.com, enroling vs enrolling, and so on. These mis-spelt domain names are the province of the typosquatter (someone who makes money from common mispelling of popular sites or where people get the .com and the .net mixed up – this behaviour is generally frowned upon).

There are a couple of ways to find the right combination of keywords such that it works for Google and for human readers:

1. magnetic words, and
2. a domain name suggestion service.

Magnetic words are easy - just write all the keywords you can think of on little bits of paper and move them around (just like you would the magnetic poetry kit words on your refrigerator at home). When you come up with something that doesn't sound too revolting, check a domain name reseller to see if it is available.

A simple domain name suggestion service is available through getyerown - I typed in acmebolts.com (which is already taken) but it suggested the following alternatives under the Smart Search tab:

More Options

Also Available	Previously Suggested Domains	**Smart Search**	International Domains

Powered by DomainsBot -- To find variations of a word or domain name, enter it in the box below.

Domain Name / Keyword: acmebolts

Domain Extensions: ☑ com ☐ info ☐ net ☐ org ☐ biz ☐ us

Intelligent Search Options: ☑ Add popular prefixes

☑ Add popular suffixes

☐ View choices with dashes

☑ View choices with related keywords

Search

SEARCH RESULTS: Select All   Check Availability

☐ MASSIMOBOLTS.COM	☐ CIMABOLTS.COM
☐ APICEBOLTS.COM	☐ SOMMOBOLTS.COM
☐ ACMEBOLTSPRO.COM	☐ YOURACMEBOLTS.COM
☐ EASYACMEBOLTS.COM	☐ ACMEBOLTSSTORE.COM
☐ MASSIMOBOLTSLIVE.COM	☐ MYMASSIMOBOLTS.COM
☐ MASSIMOBOLTSPRO.COM	☐ YOURMASSIMOBOLTS.COM
☐ MASSIMOBOLTSONLINE.COM	☐ BESTMASSIMOBOLTS.COM
☐ EASYMASSIMOBOLTS.COM	☐ MASSIMOBOLTSSTORE.COM
☐ CIMABOLTSLIVE.COM	☐ MYCIMABOLTS.COM
☐ CIMABOLTSPRO.COM	☐ YOURCIMABOLTS.COM
☐ CIMABOLTSONLINE.COM	☐ BESTCIMABOLTS.COM
☐ EASYCIMABOLTS.COM	☐ CIMABOLTSSTORE.COM
☐ APICEBOLTSLIVE.COM	☐ MYAPICEBOLTS.COM
☐ APICEBOLTSPRO.COM	☐ YOURAPICEBOLTS.COM
☐ APICEBOLTSONLINE.COM	☐ BESTAPICEBOLTS.COM
☐ SOMMOBOLTSLIVE.COM	☐ EASYAPICEBOLTS.COM
☐ APICEBOLTSSTORE.COM	☐ MYSOMMOBOLTS.COM
☐ SOMMOBOLTSPRO.COM	☐ YOURSOMMOBOLTS.COM
☐ SOMMOBOLTSONLINE.COM	☐ BESTSOMMOBOLTS.COM
☐ EASYSOMMOBOLTS.COM	☐ SOMMOBOLTSSTORE.COM
☐ MYACMEBOLTSLIVE.COM	☐ YOURACMEBOLTSLIVE.COM
☐ BESTACMEBOLTSLIVE.COM	☐ MYACMEBOLTSPRO.COM
☐ MYACMEBOLTSONLINE.COM	☐ EASYACMEBOLTSLIVE.COM
☐ YOURACMEBOLTSPRO.COM	☐ BESTACMEBOLTSPRO.COM
☐ YOURACMEBOLTSONLINE.COM	☐ MYACMEBOLTSSTORE.COM
☐ BESTACMEBOLTSONLINE.COM	☐ EASYACMEBOLTSPRO.COM
☐ YOURACMEBOLTSSTORE.COM	☐ EASYACMEBOLTSONLINE.COM

You can also have a lot of fun with [NameBoy](). NameBoy does the same smart search but does it, well, a little smarter. Here's how NameBoy handles the keywords "acme" (used as primary) and "bolts" (secondary):

tip: Also try Expired and Expiring Domains

Add these names to cart

	Com	Net	Org	Info	Biz	Tv
acme					☐	☐
boltacme	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
acmebolts		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
boltsacme	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
bolts				☐	☐	☐
acmebar			☐	☐	☐	☐
acmebolt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
acmesbar	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
acmesbolts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
acmesbolt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
acmeoyster				☐	☐	☐
topbar					☐	☐
topbolts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
topbolt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
acmelightning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Com	**Net**	**Org**	**Info**	**Biz**	**Tv**
peakbolts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
peakbar		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
acmeet		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
levelbar		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
peakbolt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
levelbolts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
stagebolts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
stagebar		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
acmelab				☐	☐	☐
acmetal		☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
advacme	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
levelbolt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
stagebolt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
acmeslightning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Add these names to cart

What I usually do is to use NameBoy then buy the domain names from [getyerown]() - it works out a little cheaper. NameBoy wants USD15.00 a year for .com domain names and getyerown USD7.15 (USD6.95 plus 20 cents for the ICANN fee). Please register domain names with whoever you feel comfortable

dealing with - for example, if you are an Aussie, [Melbourne IT](#) charges AUD69.50 a year for .com domain names, but their offices are right here in Australia (if that is important to you then the extra is worth thinking about).

There is another alternative - to buy the right name even though it belongs to someone else. Naturally, this costs more. If you would like to know more about how to do this, please let me know, and I'll add a chapter to this ebook that covers it - I've done it, and it can be fun - but be careful that you don't get sucked into the hobby of domaining - it can be a trap! 😃

5. Finding the right blogging platform

Finding the right blogging platform is important. This chapter looks at some of the popular alternatives and why you might go for one over another. There are a lot of alternatives that it doesn't cover - it is not intended to be an exhaustive list. When in doubt, please do some research, talk to other people, and experiment.

5.1. WordPress

I like WordPress - because it is what I am used to. WordPress uses the the PHP scripting language and MySQL database - both of which I have used for years at work and at play. WordPress has a lot of [plugins](#), some of which are really really good (and some that don't work at all or get in one another's way).

It may be that you are migrating from WordPress.com and are already familiar with the basic operation of WordPress - and this can be a good reason to stay with it (although it must be said that self-hosted WordPress - sometimes called multi-user or MU - is different to the wordpress.com version in several ways). You can download it for free from [wordpress.org](#).

PS: If you're thinking about setting up a social network around your blog, keep an eye on the [BuddyPress project](#). It isn't Facebook, but it will allow you to set up some similar functionality.

5.2. Movable Type

[Movable Type](#) is popular - I've used it myself, but gave it up because I found it easier to do what I wanted in WordPress. Several famous bloggers use Movable Type - and some heavy-traffic sites like [Boing Boing and Treehugger](#). You can run multiple blogs from the one control panel, which is handy, and Movable Type has a personal edition that is free. There are also [Enterprise](#) and [Community](#) editions (and the Community edition contains some of the same functionality available right now as promised in the future with [WordPress MU with BuddyPress](#)).

5.3.   Blogger on your own hosting

Blogger/Blogspot (*blogname.blogspot.com*) will work on your own domain hosting - it is just a matter of setting it up that way. That said, you are still stuck with the basic problems of Blogger - it is hard to do anything much else than post one posting at a time, and just about every template change has to be hand-coded.

5.4.   Drupal and other community CMS

I'd have to say that Drupal is the easiest way I know to set up a social community site in a hurry. It is a real web content management system (CMS). The default installation is fairly low-tech out of the box - it has a blog option, but it doesn't have a lot of bells and whistles straight out of the box. The wiki option is much the same.

The exciting thing is that Drupal (and Plone, and many other community CMS) can be configured to work as well as one of the multi-user versions of Movable Type (but without the license fee). Examples include [The Rake Magazine](#), [the Indianapolis Museum of Art](#), [Warner Bros Records](#), and the [New York Observer](#) - all full-on commercial websites.

The downside of Drupal is that it requires a lot of work to make it really sing (and depending on how many tunes you want it to sing – it can be a true community site with blogs, wikis, social voting, shared downloads, and much more besides).

5.5.   Quick BlogCast

Quick BlogCast gets you up and blogging quickly - it is a [cheap hosting add-on](#) to some domain reselling packages. It is not as configurable as WordPress MU or Movable Type, but it is worth considering if you need a blog in a hurry on your own domain name.

5.6.   Recent comparison resources are a little thin on the ground

Basically, there aren't a lot of comparison resources around - most of the people who write about one blog platform over another are either commercial vendors, developer groups or user-fans - or the reviews are years old. Here's what a bit of googling turned up:

- Wikipedia has a list of different [blog publishing systems](#), but it isn't very useful for making a comparison.
- [Darren Rowse wrote a good post that is much like this one](#), but considers the free options like Blogspot as well.
- [Asymptomatic has a comparison chart](#) but it is way out of date.
- [SitePoint has a review](#) that is also out of date.
- [Online Journalism Review](#) has one that is around 18 months old.

If you want to find out about blog platforms, it is probably just a matter of research research research.

5.7.   Other considerations

It has to be said that there are other considerations.

- One big one is ease of installation - for example, some hosting providers have a set of one-click applications that take, well, one click to install. The hosting setup has scripts that take care of the hassle for you (like knowing the name, username and password to your database server). If you are unsure, it is easier to go with the blogging platform that is on your hosting provider's one-click list.
- Another is technical support - if you have a friend who is an experienced user of Movable Type (and they are willing to help you) then this is worth considering as an extra tick against that platform.

6. Finding a hosting provider and transferring your domain name

Note: I've mentioned mediatemple.net below to illustrate an example - I have no financial interest in you using them over any other hosting provider - please use the one that you feel comfortable with. I do use getyerown.com to show an example of transferring the domain name (specifically redirecting the DNS, but we'll get into that later) - I do have an interest in getyerown.com as discussed previously.

I've broken this stage of the process down into three steps:

1. Identify your needs and selecting the hosting provider that fits,
2. Transferring your domain name, and
3. Setting up the domain in your hosting package.

6.1.   What are your hosting needs?

The first step in any successful project is to identify needs - in other words, work out what you want before you go shopping for it.

Different hosting providers generally offer a range of hosting packages to suit the needs of the casual blogger right through to high-volume commercial traffic levels. It is easier to find the right package (and the right hosting provider) if you think through what you need them to provide.

Here's a list of things that hosting packages can be expected to vary around. I've avoided specific numbers (i.e. I haven't said "make sure you get at least 40MB of storage") because everyone's needs are different - and what seems adequate today can be totally inadequate in 12 months time. That disclaimer aside, some of the things that you need to think about are:

- How many blogs do you plan to run? Some hosting providers have low-end packages that make it easy to run one domain or many, but others are designed to run just one domain. If you're only ever going to run one blog, then a single domain package may be the perfect option for you. Otherwise, think about a multi-domain package.
- Platform dependencies can be a consideration. If you have your heart set on running WordPress then it might be worth looking at a hosting provider that gives you this as a one-click installation (in other words, the hosting provider has a set of scripts that run in the background and make your life easier - they take care of database host names/file paths and all that sort of thing for you).
- Storage on the hosting package server could be a consideration if you're looking at low-end packages with small limits. There is no hard rule for how big a blog might get - especially if you add a lot of images and/or host your own videos. And while it may seem obvious, it is worth saying - multiple blogs means more space needed.
- Bandwidth is the amount of traffic back and forth to your blog. If you get StumbledUpon or Dugg it can spike in a hurry. Multiple blogs means more bandwidth needed.
- Scalability is probably the most important for me personally at the moment - I've got a lot of blogs, plan to create more, and I've seen what can happen when inadequate hosting is overwhelmed. Some hosting providers will shut your domain down just when you need it to really shine (like when you're linked to by a famous blogger or you get StumbledUpon or Dugg) because you are taking up more than your allocated bandwidth - to me this is the height of stupidity, but it does happen. While not going out of my way to promote one hosting service provider over another, mediatemple.net does have an enlightened view of traffic spikes for their higher-end packages (they give you another server for free for short periods of time, then only charge if the traffic increase is sustained).
- Support - specifically the quality of support - varies enormously. I've had good and bad experiences with hosting provider support staff - and when it has been bad, it has been very very bad. One way to find out the quality of support is to Google on prospective hosting provider names - where bloggers have received poor service, they usually blog about it.

Be sure to compare apples with apples - and judge the best combination of cost and benefit that suits your own individual needs.

6.2.   Transferring your domain name

Once you've identified the right hosting provider and paid for hosting, you need to go back to your domain registrar/reseller and set the DNS (domain name service) servers to the one provided by your new hosting provider. This is not as scary as it might seem. DNS is a network of servers that tells other servers where every domain name is hosted. You need the DNS entry to point at your new hosting provider so that when someone looks for your domain they get to the right server (i.e. the one hosting your blog).

Here is my domain control panel on getyerown.com showing some of the domains I've registered myself:
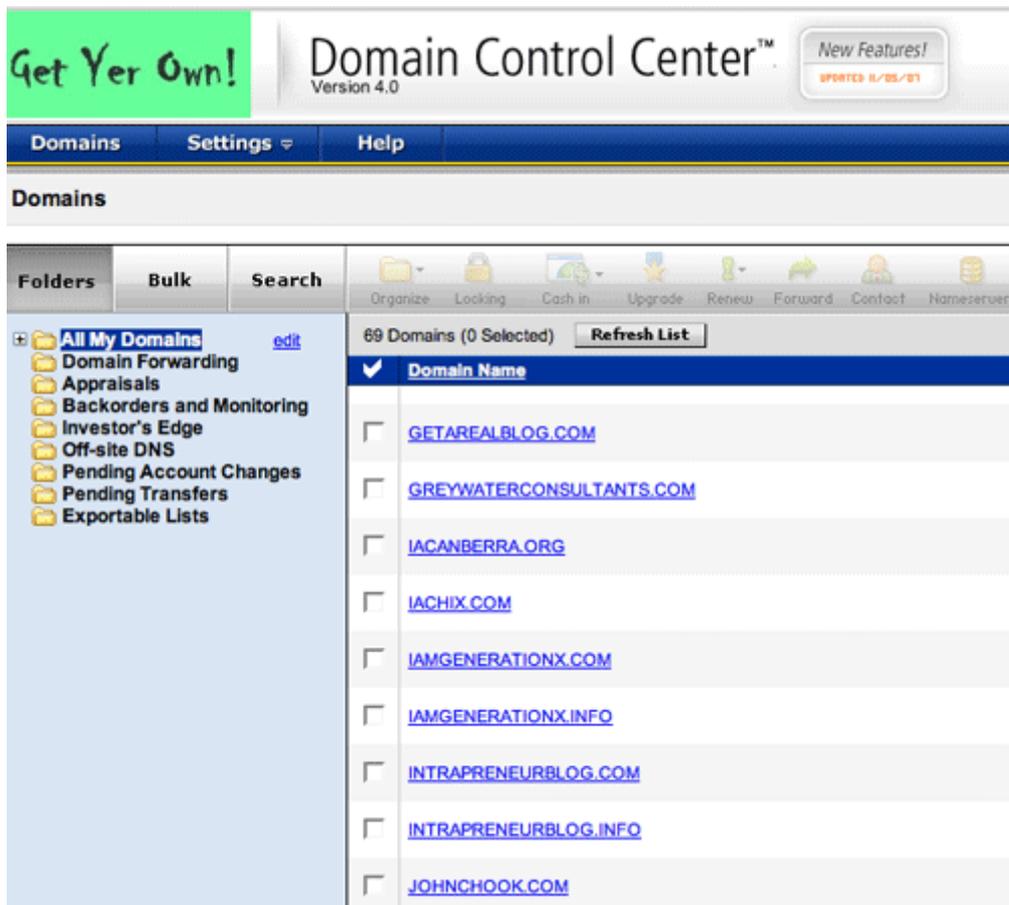
Let's say I'm transferring intrapreneurblog.com to my mediatemple.net hosting (and I did this for real - as my first blog in the Flagship Blog Project). The first step is to click on the name that you want to change - you'll see a panel that contains information specific to that domain name:
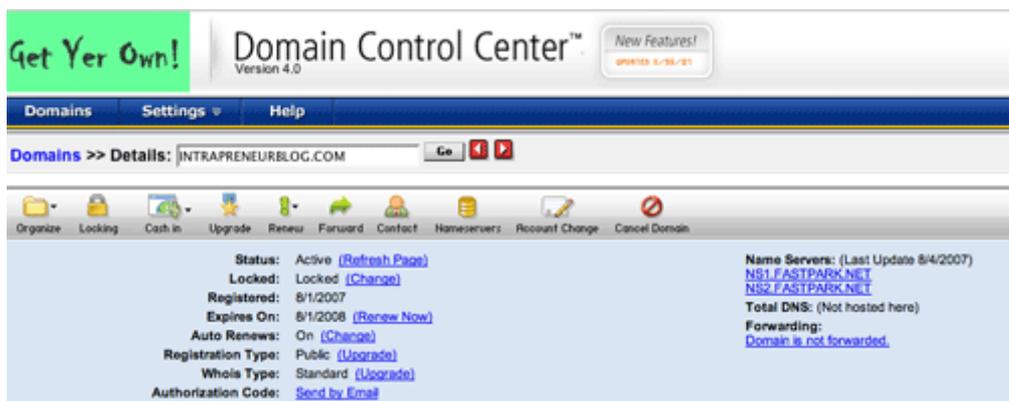
The bit you're after will be called something like domain name, domain name server, nameserver or DNS (depending on which domain reseller/registrar you use). Click on the domain name server link, and you'll see something that looks like this:
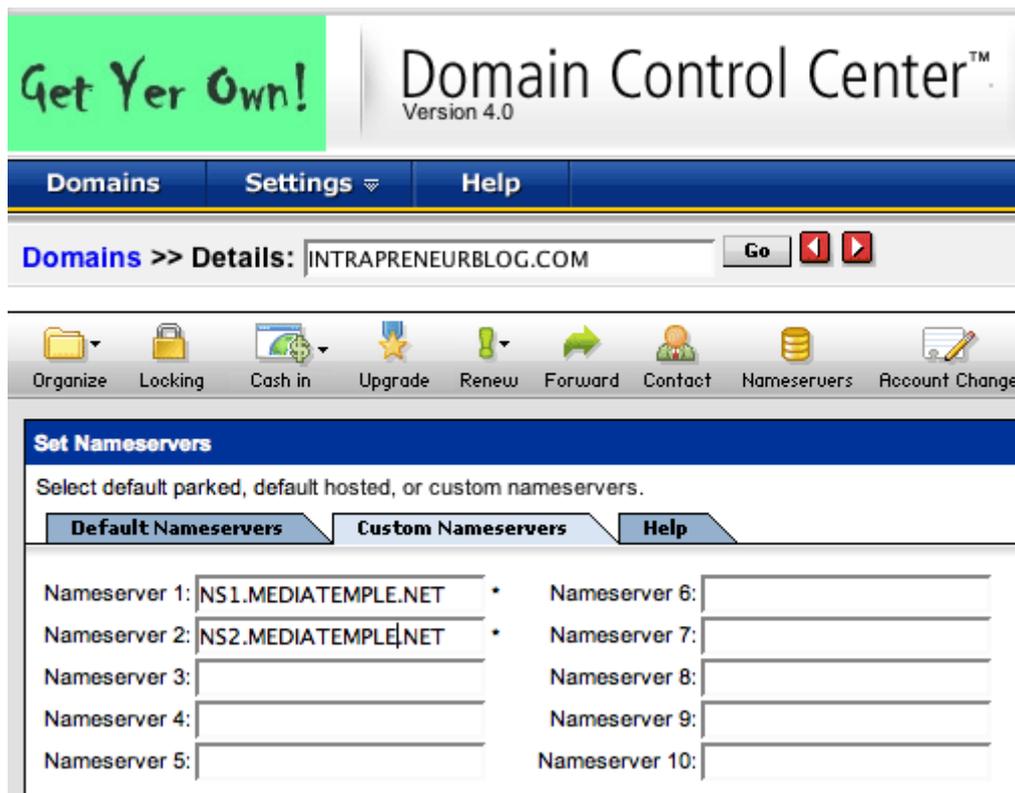
Generally speaking, you will need to enter at least two name server entries here. Your hosting provider should tell you what to change them to. I've changed the domain name server entries here to ns1.mediatemple.net and ns2.mediatemple.net - I want this domain name to point at (that is, to send traffic to) my mediatemple.net hosting.

Your domain reseller/registrar will have a similar set of screens (similar, but probably not exactly the same) that will allow you to do the same. If you get stuck, get onto support - don't be shy, it is what they are there for 😃

6.3.   Setting up the domain in your hosting package

 The last step in this stage of the process is to set up your hosting package to receive the domain name once the transfer goes through. Like all other things, the basic process will be the same even if the specific screens differ from hosting provider to hosting provider.

In mediatemple.net's control panel I click on the add domain button and see something this:

It's fairly simple - I type in the new name and tell mediatemple.net that I'd like to set it up as an alternate domain (rather than as a separate new server) - and in the next screen I tell it which server I want it on. And done.

When the DNS transfer goes through (that is, when the amended entry has propagated around the world – and this can take anything up to a couple of days) intrapreneurblog.com will point to my mediatemple.net hosting. Cool 😃

PS: I have to thank Steve Collins for introducing me to mediatemple.net - a recommendation from a knowledgeable friend was worth a great deal to me.

7. Installing the blog software

Installing blog software can be easy - or it can be not so easy. The ease of installation depends entirely on your choice of blogging platform and whether your hosting provider offers this particular platform as a one-click option or not.
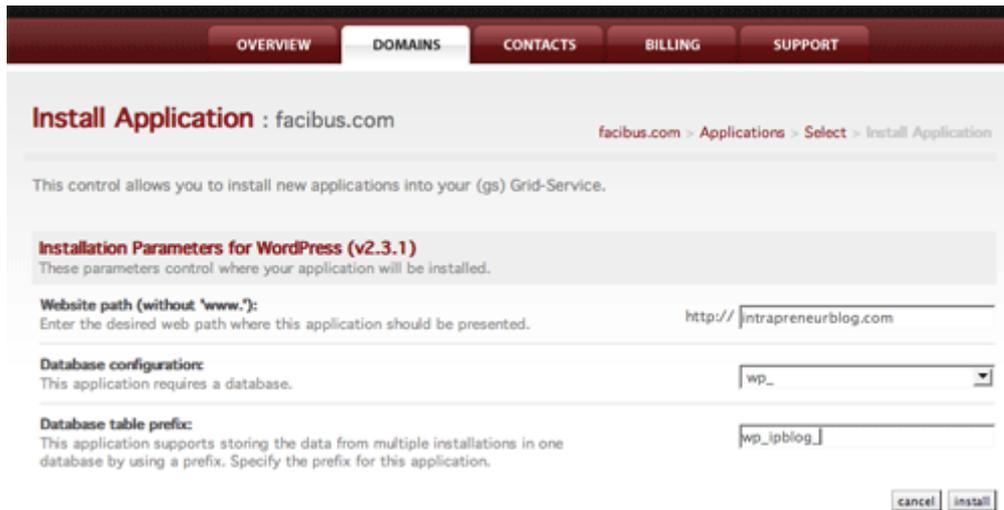
As I said earlier, I do not have a vested interest in you choosing mediatemple.net over any other hosting provider - they are mentioned as an example only.

The following examples use WordPress on Linux hosting as an example - the basic principles are fairly applicable to the installation of any blog platform on any server operating system.

7.1.   The easy way

The easy way, it has to be said, is to find a hosting provider with one click no-fuss installation. While it takes a little more than a single click, it is a lot easier than the alternative.

Here's how it works. Selecting the one-click application list inside the control panel lets you choose from the available options - in my case, this is Drupal, Zen Cart and WordPress. Selecting WordPress gives you this screen:

I've entered the path that I want WordPress installed to (at the root of domain name intrapreneurblog.com, not in a subdomain or a subdirectory), the database I want used (a general WordPress database called wp_) and the database table prefix that I want used (wp_ipblog_). The database and table names matter - you can get into trouble where you have two or more applications working from the same server that use the same database and table name - things get overwritten and messy in a big hurry. So the trick is this - either use a separate database for each blog, or make sure that at least the table name is unique.

After clicking on install I need to confirm that I want WordPress to overwrite everything in the existing directory structure of intrapreneurblog.com - which I do. I then click on a Finish icon that opens this screen in a new browser tab/window:

WordPress

Welcome

Welcome to the famous five minute WordPress installation process! You may want to browse the ReadMe documentation at your leisure. Otherwise, just fill in the information below and you'll be on your way to using the most extendable and powerful personal publishing platform in the world.

Information needed

Please provide the following information. Don't worry, you can always change these settings later.

Blog title: IntrapreneurBlog

Your e-mail: facibus@gmail.com

☑ Allow my blog to appear in search engines like Google and Technorati.

Double-check your email address before continuing.

Install WordPress »

WordPress, personal publishing platform.

After clicking on the big friendly Install WordPress icon, the following appears:

WordPress

Success!

WordPress has been installed. Now you can log in with the **username** "admin" and **password** "30dca6".

Note that password carefully! It is a *random* password that was generated just for you.

Username
admin
Password
30dca6
Login address
wp-login.php

Were you expecting more steps? Sorry to disappoint. :)

WordPress, personal publishing platform.

The next steps are easy - log in, change the admin password, and start tweaking the blog (and we'll cover that in Chapter 8 Tweaking the blog).

7.2. The hard way

The hard way isn't a lot harder than the easy way - once you've done both. The hard way involves:

- Downloading your blog platform software and unzipping it to your local hard disk: you may have some built-in archiving applications as part of your hosting package that allow you to upload a single zip/tar file and

unarchive it in place - or maybe you have command line access to your server and can do it that way. Apart from this, you'll be downloading the archive (*.zip or *.tar.gz or similar file), unarchiving it on your local machine (i.e. your PC/Mac etc), then FTP transferring the file to your hosting server.

- FTPing the software to your server: FTP is File Transfer Protocol - the way that files used to be universally moved around the internet (and around local Unix/Linux/*nix systems). It is still handy for copying files between the hosting web server and your local machine. There are different FTP applications/clients around - it is hard to recommend one over the other (although FileZilla is a favourite for Windows). To FTP files you will need the FTP address (often something like ftp.*yourdomain*.com, *yourdomain*.com, or *yourhostingproviderdomain*.com), an FTP username and password, and sometimes a specific directory address. If in doubt, contact your hosting provider's support area.

- Following the instructions that came with your blog platform to run the install script: This is often as easy as typing in a specific web address - something like http://yourdomain.com/install.php or something similar. Read the instructions that came with your blog platform software - there will often be a file called something like INSTALL. (Note: You may find yourself reading a lot of phrases like "something like" in this article - this is deliberate, as nearly every blog platform package is different in the way it names files and the information that you need to supply for installation).

- When prompted, entering your database server domain address, database user name and password, and the installation directory/file path. It may also require you to set up the database and database tables (or just nominate them as in "the easy way" above).

You can probably imagine that the hard way can be a bit scary the first couple of times. If you try it and get it wrong, you can always delete the blog platform files and start again from scratch (not something to do casually once you've started posting, but at this stage it has less impact).

8. Tweaking the blog

OK, so you've got your blog up and running on your hosting provider of choice. The domain name URL works, and you're looking at a fairly blank canvas. For a WordPress blog, it will look something like this:
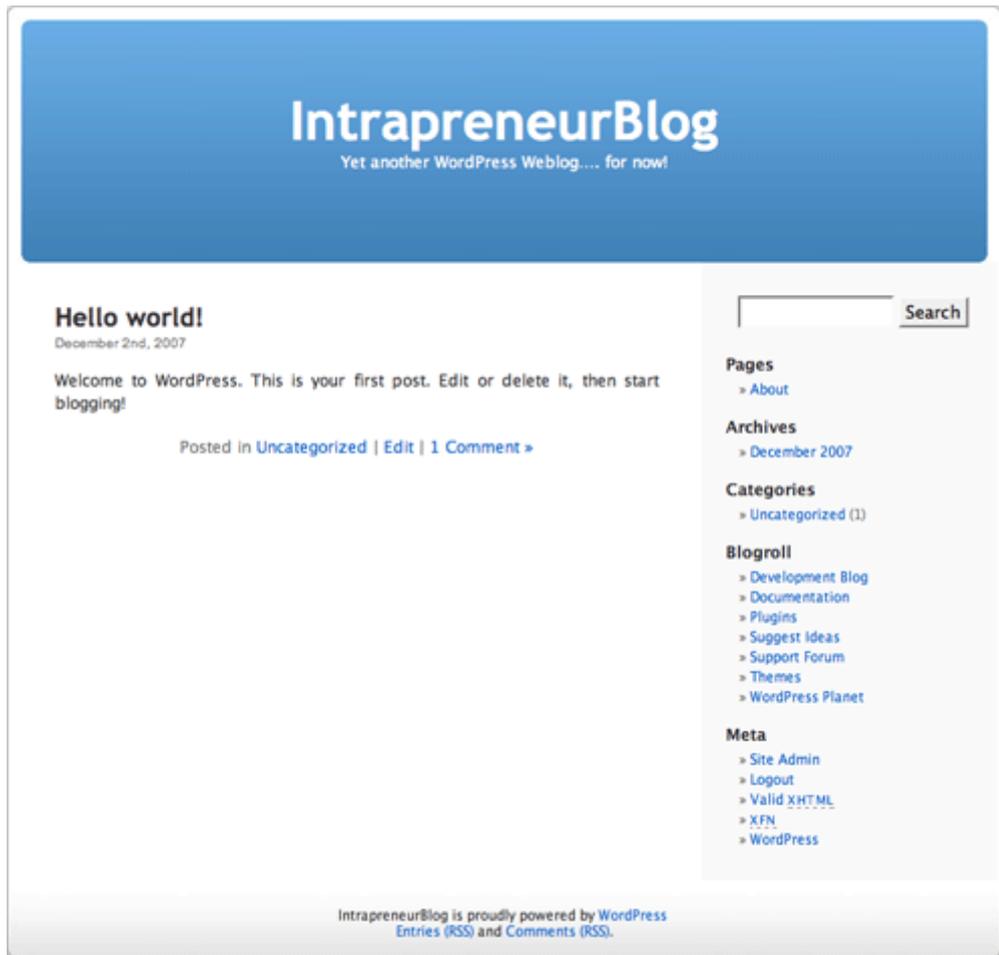
Some people like blank canvas - I see potential. That is currently what your new blog is - potential. Let's bring it to life a little.

There are a number of things that you can do to a blog to tweak it - I'll cover the basics of themes, plugins and sidebar widgets here (notwithstanding that there are a lot of other possibilities, like theme customisation with PHP and CSS coding).

8.1.   Themes

Themes generally change the look of your blog - the number and position of sidebars, the size and colour of text, the position of comments in relation to the post that they are on, that sort of thing. Some super-themes (like K2 for WordPress, my personal favourite) add a lot more flexibility, making them easier to customise.

The following instructions apply to WordPress blogs - the basic principles are the same regardless of your chosen blog platform.

1. Find the right theme: It may be that you are happy with one of the default themes (and you can find these under Presentation > Themes in the Dashboard). Otherwise, you'll need to find a theme and

download it. A good start is to look at the [WordPress Theme Viewer](#) and browse through the available options.

2. When you've found the right theme (or right enough for now), download it, and unzip it to your local machine's hard disk.
3. FTP the theme to your *blogdomain*.com/wp-content/themes/ directory.
4. Go to Presentation > Themes in the Dashboard and select the theme that you would like to see.
5. Click on View Site to see the theme in action.

Things to look for in a theme are:

- Configurability: you will need to be able to add and remove sidebar widgets, change your theme's header and other graphics, and if you are so inclined, insert advertising blocks. If you need to dig into individual files and hand-code every single change, please trust me, you may soon grow tired of it.
- Compatibility: it needs to be said that some themes are fatal - they will not work with the current versions of blog platform software.
- Fit: if you have an ideal customised design in mind, finding a theme that is close to it will cut down on your work.

The trick is to try a few different themes then stick to one that works for you - it becomes an important part of your blog's branding.

8.2. Plugins

Plugins are just that - pieces of code that plug into your blog platform and extend your capabilities. There are plugins to:

- [manage spam comments](#),
- allow your readers to subscribe to comments,
- display YouTube videos and Flickr images,
- display Twitter messages,
- [display postings from other blogs and news items via RSS](#),
- displaying statistics, and
- displaying rankings from Google, Technorati, Alexa, and lots of others besides.

This is just the start of it - there are hundreds of different plugins, and more coming out all the time. There are also a lot of different places to get plugins - one of the largest for WordPress users is the [WordPress plugin directory](#).

To install a WordPress plugin:

1. Locate, download and unzip the plugin.
2. Read the plugin author's instructions carefully (this is a good idea, trust me!) ☺
3. FTP the plugin to your /wp-content/plugins directory.
4. Go into Dashboard > Plugins and activate the plugin.

Some additional configuration may be necessary – once again, check the plugin author's instructions.

You should now check your blog carefully to ensure that the plugin did what you thought it would, and be prepared to remove it if it causes erratic behaviour.

A word of warning – some plugins do not work with some versions of WordPress (and it is fair to say that some plugins don't really work well at all). When in doubt, google on the plugin name and see if anyone else has had issues with it.

8.3.   Sidebar widgets

Sidebar widgets are snippets of code that are placed in your sidebars. They can:

- be tied to plugins (and display things like Twitter entries or Flickr photo thumbnails),
- display categories of posts,
- display your top commenters,
- position Adsense or other advertising blocks, and
- a thousand other things besides.

To access widgets in WordPress, select Presentation > Widgets. There are different types - the ones that you'll need more of are the Text widgets - these contain the snippets of code from AdSense, Alexa, Technorati, Amazon etc that bring your blog to life. You can also use Ultimate Tag Warrior to manage your WordPress Widgets - it does a fine job, but there are compatibility issues with UTW and some later versions of WordPress.

8.4.   intrapreneurblog.com - the tweaking so far

Looking at Intrapreneur Blog, I've done the following to tweak it:

- Activated the Akismet plugin to take care of comment spam,
- Installed the K2 theme,
- Uploaded a header graphic,
- Changed the K2 options to display two sidebars,
- Changed the blogroll to link to Maria's blog, Matt's blog, and my blogs,
- Changed the time to be GMT+10 (Eastern Australian Standard Time),
- Changed the permanent link (permalink) structure to show date and post name rather than just number,
- Changed the sidebar options to display a basic set (recent posts, post categories, and a tag cloud), and
- Written the first post (and copied this to the "About" page).

The front page now looks like this:
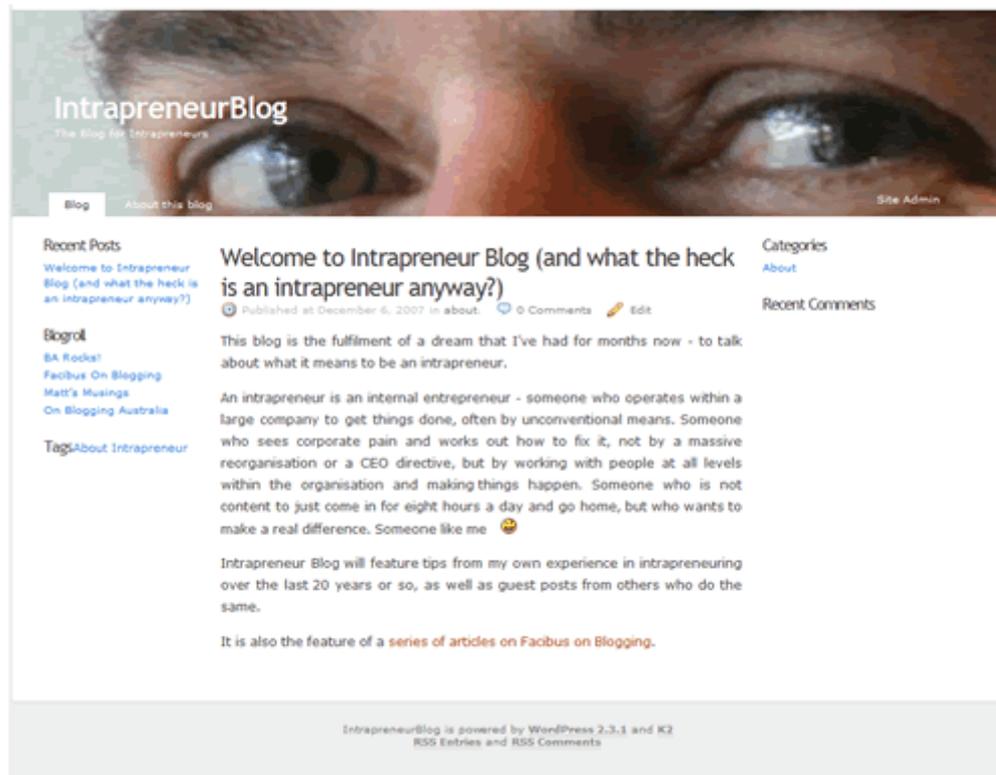
9. Migrating content from your old blog

Content migration is a bit like installing blog software, it is either easy or hard. Unlike installing blog software, however, the easy way is still a fair bit of work, especially if you've been blogging for a while and have racked up a lot of posts.

Note: the following instructions apply to WordPress specifically - most other blogging platforms have some form of assisted content migration (i.e. some mechanism for doing it the easy way). That said, this is an overview rather than a comprehensive guide - I've tried to mention the really important stuff, but there will be a hundred variations on this advice depending on:

- how complex your old and new blogs are in terms of plugins/tagging/graphics,
- the platforms of your old and new blogs, and
- your familiarity with HTML/XHTML.

9.1.   The easy way

The easy way is assisted content migration. Here's how you would do it if moving from a Blogger/blogspot.com blog to a self-hosted WordPress blog.

1. In the new blog, go to Dashboard > Manage > Import
2. Click on the Blogger link.

3. Click on the Authorise icon.
4. Click on Grant Access (or if you haven't done this before, enter your Google ID and password). If successful, you will be presented with import options. If not successful, you will be doing it the hard way (see below).

Going from wordpress.com or another WordPress blog to a new WordPress blog is easier - WordPress exports (Dashboard > Manage > Export) an XML file that contains posts, comments, categories and pages - you then import this using Dashboard > Manage > Import and select WordPress. It doesn't import tags if you're using an earlier version than WordPress 2.3 on either side - if you are using the Ultimate Tag Warrior plugin on the old blog then it does save the tags as categories (and if you are a tagaholic then this can be a nuisance to clean up, but it is still better than doing it the hard way).

Note: Regardless of migrating content the easy way or the hard way, you'll need to change internal links (links from within posts to other posts) to reflect your new domain name/URL structure.

9.2.   The hard way

The hard way is manual copy/paste. I don't need to tell you that this could be a real pain, especially where there are hundreds of posts containing a lot of images.

Depending on what your source blog is, it can be easier to copy from the smart editor (Visual editor in WordPress) than the raw HTML code - it is worth testing this to see if the links are preserved (that is, they stay and work after pasting into your new blog). If you are familiar with HTML/XHTML you can edit links as you import individual posts or the whole lot by search-and-replace.

Graphics need to be moved to the new hosting and relinked, unless you can be 100% certain that you will never be shutting down the old blog, and the links within your posts are absolute (that is they contain the whole link, for example http://facibus.com/onblogging/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/ipblogvanilla.gif) as opposed to relative (for example, ../uploads/2007/12/ipblogvanilla.gif)

9.3.   Migration checklist

It is worth checking the following after content migration to ensure that they are working:

- post order matches that of the old blog (if not, you could have to re-timestamp some or all of the new blog posts)
- comments are intact and link to the comment author
- plugins are up and running
- posts are categorised the way you want them (i.e. your category list is not ten miles long with all your tags turned into categories)
- graphics are intact

- links from one post to another are intact and reflect the new domain name/URL structure

10. Promoting the new domain name

You've got the blog, you've got content, it all looks slick - now you just need to tell everyone about it.

There are two big reasons for this:

1. You need to keep whatever readers you've gathered to date, and
2. You need to bring your blog to the attention of a lot of new potential readers.

Here is a list of promotional activities I've undertaken over the last week for my case study example, Intrapreneur Blog:

- Claimed the blog on Technorati,
- Created a Squidoo Intrapreneuring Lens,
- Added Intrapreneur Blog to the BUMPzee Australian Blogs Community,
- Added a post that linked back here, and
- Added posts here that link back to Intrapreunering Blog.

There is a lot more that is possible in blog promotion – there is an introduction to this in Section 11.2 Blog promotion 101.

Note: the example (Intrapreneur Blog) is new - if it were an established blog, I would have also done the following:

- posted about the new blog on the old one,
- posted about the old blog on the new one, and
- possibly put a server or HTML redirect onto the old server.

A note on redirects: this ebook is about moving away from a Blogger or Wordpress.com hosted blog - if you have one of these, chances are you will not be getting server access to be putting in a server redirect. That said, you might be able to change your old template to include a simple redirect as follows:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>redirecting to my new blog domain</title>
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=iso-8859-
1">
<META HTTP-EQUIV="Refresh"
 CONTENT="5; URL=http://intrapreneurblog.com/">
</head>
<body><h1>Intrapreneur Blog has moved!</h1>

<p>Intrapreneur Blog is now at
```

```
<a
href="http://intrapreneurblog.com/">"http://intrapreneurblog.com/"</a
>.</p>
<p>Please update your bookmarks accordingly.</p></body>
</html>
```

The above code will redirect your readers to the new domain name in 5 seconds. Please note that this does not redirect inbound links that go beyond the blog's front page - if someone has linked to a specific article then that will keep pointing at the old domain structure.

11.   The next steps

The next steps are to:
- write quality content, and
- promote it as often as time allows.

There is a lot more to blogging than this. That said, the best thing that you can do for your blog right now is write quality content then promote it.

11.1.   What is quality content?

Quality content is timeless, catchy and adds value to your niche – pillar posts that form the foundation of a solid blog. These are the posts of value that bring readers back to your blog again and again - and convince serendipitous stumblers to stay.

Articles on pillar posts usually contain the following advice:

- Provide something from your own perspective that covers the material in enough detail.
- Don't base a pillar post on a bunch of links from other people
- Don't rewrite someone else's posts
- Don't quote too much, link

All this advice is fine as far as it goes – but I came up with a simpler definition of pillar posts:

> **A pillar post contributes something new that adds value to its niche**.

Think of it like you are a PhD candidate - you have to make some unique contribution to your chosen field. There is a time for me-too announcements, and a time for speedlinking, but sooner or later you need to create posts that contribute something of remarkable value within your niche.

How do you do this?

Contributing something new to your niche is not as hard as it sounds - I use reframing to come up with something new, and you can too.

Adding value to your niche is harder - I like the "what I wish I'd learnt before I got started" concept that Darren Rowse blogs about so well.

11.2. Blog promotion 101

Once you start getting some solid pillar posts together, the next best thing that you can do is to promote the content that you've created.

Here are some simple things that you can do to promote your blog:

- Create a link bait post,
- Promote the link bait post via Twitter, The Blog Link, Bloggerati.com.au and coRank,
- Commentstorm through a few blogs every day,
- Work through some of the no-cost marketing options recommended by top bloggers, and
- Try to work out a way of low-cost advertising (possibly through StumbleUpon).

As with everything else in this ebook, experiment and go with what works for you.

11.3. Where do I learn more?

To learn more, I'd recommend reading the following blogs:
- DoshDosh
- On Blogging Australia (notwithstanding that this is my own blog, it does contain some good resource posts)
- Problogger

I would also recommend joining the Aussie Bloggers Forum – you will learn a lot and have the opportunity to network with some great bloggers.

12. Reviewer comments

Following are some of the nice things that people had to say about this book.

Jayne from Our Great Southern Land:
Hi Andrew,

I've just finished reading your ebook and wow !

I found it to be a very easy-to-understand read about a subject that had bamboozled me for a while.
The step-by-step instructions were simple and easy to follow, and the underscored message of personal research is invaluable for individual requirements from blogs.

As a member of a team blog, I'd been asked to consider moving to a self-hosted blog but none of us knew where to begin, what to look for, what would meet our blogs needs - in short, after many hours searching online, I was still unable to come up with anything except what wouldn't suit us for a variety of reasons, one of them being ignorance of what the process of moving to a self-hosted blog actually entailed.

I'd recommend your ebook to anyone considering their first move to a self-hosted blog,it would save a lot of time and headaches!

Cheers,
Jayne