

How to hold that perfect contest for your
site/blog?

By SYC

(<http://www.submityourcontest.com/>)

STEP 1 – DETERMINE GOAL OF CONTEST

Before holding any blog contest, you should have clearly defined goals that why would you like to hold this contest. Unless you have specific goals to achieve by holding that contest, you are already in a wrong direction towards hosting the contest on your site/blog.

Mainly, a blog contest may help you in following ways:

1. Getting more traffic
2. Getting your site back from dead phase
3. Getting some activity on your site
4. Promote your new product
5. Building your brand online

STEP 2 – TYPE OF CONTEST TO HOLD

Now you have defined your goals which you would like to achieve, decide what type of contest would you like to hold? There can be several types of contests which you can hold depending on a big number of factors. For example if you want to build links to your site/blog, you can hold a contest where people will have to link back to your site. But always make sure, your contest requirements will surely help you achieve your goals and don't cram contest requirements. For example if you want traffic increase, you shouldn't hold a requirement for people to be top commenter...since more comments not necessarily mean more traffic. Contest Requirements should be perfectly matched to entry requirements.

STEP 3 – CONTEST BUDGET/PRIZE ARRANGEMENT

Decide your budget for the contest. Budget for the contest is very important as it will help in determining the type of entry requirements and type of contest needed for the correct prize. There are two ways a budget gets decided:

1. The amount you are willing to spend
2. The Sponsors willing to spend for your contest

Yes, the sponsors. Another important part if you are planning to hold a big contest. Getting a sponsor is not an easy job and most important part is to convince the sponsor to giveaway something for your contest. A sponsor needs a perfect reason to be able to spend something for your contest. He wants something in return. And be sure you are able to return handsomely unless the sponsor won't return after your first contest. Loyalty of the sponsor is paramount which needs to be won.

STEP 3a – FINDING SPONSORS

This is an optional step. Not everybody needs to hunt for sponsors. But some smaller sites find it difficult to find sponsors for their contests. Where to start then? Look for contests similar to you are planning. Find who sponsored those contests. Now try to contact sponsors with a personal written email and tell them how you will promote them in your contest. Also tell them about your expectations from your contest. Be realistic in your expectations. Don't go overboard. Also make sure you don't mass email the sponsors as personal attention is evokes good response. You can even take help of webmaster forums for finding sponsors for your contest. And if you don't want to keep your upcoming contest a secret, a post announcing the welcome of any interested sponsors would also be helpful.

STEP 4 – TYPE OF ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Entry requirements should be decided only after you plan your budget. There is important reason for it. Level of requirements should be directly proportional to the contest budget/prize list. You can't ask users to submit your blog to every social bookmark site for a prize of only \$10 and neither can just ask users to comment for a \$2500 cash prize! Contest should not be too simple for high prize and not too difficult for small prize! Before deciding entry requirements, just think yourself as a user and consider whether you will enter the contest with the entry requirement you have planned for your contest. And with entry requirements always specify if the contest is only for US residents or open worldwide. You don't want to waste time of an Indian user for a pen drive which you can ship only to US/Canada, do you?

STEP 5 – ANNOUNCEMENT

Now that you have decided goal, type, entry requirements and budget, now it is time to finally announce the contest. Proper announcement is really important as sometimes badly timed announcement can lead to poor contest result even after a huge prize! Keep all points noted which you would like the contest user to remember.

Announce the post properly, format the text and use something below given format. It will be easier for the user to completely understand the contest if you follow the below given format.

CONTEST NAME:

PRIZES:

DEADLINE DATE: (Do specify the time according to your time zone upto when you will receive the entries – it becomes easier and less chaotic and even less ambiguous)

HOW TO ENTER:

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS (Country Specific):

CONTACT FOR QUERIES:

SPONSORS FOR THE CONTEST:

Try to use this type of format and your users will love it since they can read the contest details properly and quickly and will be more than happy to take part in a properly announced contest.

Don't just mention the sponsors in the contest announcement. Try to give space to sponsor on every contest page of yours. Relate contest entry requirement to the sponsor's site. Like recently TylerCruz wanted every contestee to be a member of MarketLeverage(sponsor) to be able to win something. This way, the sponsor is assured of guaranteed return and would definitely love to sponsor your next contest too if first one goes successfully. Least you can do is not just simply link back to sponsor but use its image/banner and do write something about sponsor's site in a thank you post too! Sponsors after all spend money and should get good returns too.

STEP 6 – PROMOTING THE CONTEST

Promoting a contest is again a very important step which many contest holders fail to realize the importance of. Imagine announcing a \$2500 worth contest on a new blog/site and not getting any entries just because you didn't promote it elsewhere except on your own site/blog. Not worth it! So where to promote about your contest? There are a lot of sites/contest blogs where you can promote about your contest. But are all the contest sites/blogs worth putting your effort in? For checking contest blogs, it's easier....check the blog's posting frequency – will give you an idea of how many contests it posts about or even an idea of how many contest submissions it must be getting? Current period is mid July 2008, and if a contest blog's last post is before 1 July 2008, it seems it's not worth it since so many contests are happening at any given point of time that posting content on a contest blog is not very difficult. But posting frequency is not the only criteria. You can check blog's rankings like Technorati rank, Alexa Rank and number of rss subscribers it has. Well here I am listing few contest blogs where it will be useful for you to post about your contest details.

1. <http://www.contestblogger.com/> - Post at their forums (No registration required)
2. <http://acontestblog.blogspot.com/>
3. <http://www.submityourcontest.com/> - Post at <http://www.submityourcontest.com/contact/>
4. <http://www.indocontest.com/>

5. <http://www.contestbeat.com/>
6. <http://www.contestlive.com/>
7. <http://www.theprizeblog.com/>

Above are few sites which are useful if you want to promote your contest. But that is not all. There are many more sites where you can submit. I am not listing them all but here is a top 20 contest blogs list which you can refer to for that:

[Top 20 Contest Blogs](#)

Apart from this there are webmaster forums where you can post about your contest. Some are mentioned here:

<http://forums.digitalpoint.com/>

<http://www.namepros.com/>

<http://www.v7n.com/forums/>

<http://www.bloggeries.com/forums/>

<http://www.blogpremiere.com/forum/>

STEP 7 – REMINDING PEOPLE REGULARLY

Just because, contest has started well and running does not mean, you can now sit idle. You will constantly need to keep a check on progress, promote it aggressively and answer the queries if there are any. Do make a proper record of all entries (Excel would do fine) and update them on daily basis. This saves you a lot of time at the end of the contest. Also keep on reminding people about the contest regularly – example is to include info at the end of post and even providing info the post footer in feeds. And if you can make a good banner or hire a designer, design some banners and promote it at other sites, Entrecard and even put a banner on your site directing new users to the ongoing contest.

And in meanwhile, people may ask you queries and additional information about the contest. Don't just leave them – Keep a tab on such queries and be prompt with your answers. This helps build relationships and even give an image that contest is indeed genuine and legit.

Another method for reminding people regularly is to constantly post updates to the contest and number of people entered and even telling people that they still have great chances of winning.

STEP 8 – RESULTS

Time has come now to announce the results. Be sure to close comments on the blog post, so that unnecessary comments can be avoided after the contest closure. Also before closing, post a comment saying that contest is closed and move to the specified url for results/updates. You should also include a post before announcing that contest is closed if you need more time to tabulate the results.

Announce the results in a proper way both on the blog and tell the winners by email individually. Don't expect users to keep tab on when contest closes (if your contest entry didn't require them to subscribe to your rss feed) – it's your duty to inform them on time about their winning. Also you should have a rule for the condition where nobody claims the prize.

FINAL STEP – PLEASE DELIVER THE PRIZES and ON TIME. DON'T FOOL AROUND.

THE END.

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<http://www.submityourcontest.com>

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<http://www.submityourcontest.com/contact/>