



# Business Strategies

## Don't Get Stumped

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By Michael Hammond

**T**he Presidential Election has taught us that the power to communicate in a clear and concise message matters. Too often we are intimidated by a blank page or screen and have trouble getting the message started. For example, in the article “How To Write An Introduction: A Simplified Guide” by Amanda Zantal-Wiener, she calls it the dreaded cursor-on-a-blank-screen experience that all writers — amateur or professional, aspiring or experienced — know and dread. And of all times for it to occur, it seems to plague us the most when trying to write an introduction.

Think about it: You already have a blog post you want to write. Can't you just dive in and write it? Why all the pomp and circumstance with this dag-blasted introduction?

Here's the thing — intros don't have to be long. In fact, we prefer them to be quite quick. They also don't have to be so difficult, but they do have to exist. They prepare the reader and provide context for the content he or she is about to read.

Let's break down exactly how to write an introduction that's short, effective, and relatively painless.

### 1) Grab the reader's attention.

There are a few ways to hook your reader from the start. You can be empathetic (“Don't you hate it when...?”), or tell a story, so the reader immediately feels some emotional resonance with the piece. You could tell a joke (“Ha! This is fun. Let's read more of this.”). You could shock the reader with a crazy fact or stat (“Whoa. That's crazy. I must know more!”).

For this intro, I went the “empathetic” route.

### 2) Present the reason for the post's existence.

Your post needs to have a purpose. The purpose of this post is to address a specific problem — the pain in the butt that is writing intros. But, we have to do it, and therein lies the approach to something important: making writing introductions easier.

Just because you know the purpose of your post, doesn't mean the reader does — not yet, anyway. It's your job to validate your post's importance, and give your audience a reason to keep reading.

### 3) Explain how the post will help address the problem.

Now that the reader is presented with a problem that he or she can relate to — and obviously wants a solution — it's time to let the audience know what the post will provide, and quickly.

In other words, the introduction should set expectations.

Of course, there are other valid ways to write in-

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troductions for your marketing content — don't feel the need to follow this formula for every single piece of content, as some are more casual than others. But, this guide should help provide a solid framework to follow if you're just getting started, or if it's just one of those days when the words aren't flowing.

But what are some examples of great introductions in the wild? We thought you might ask — which is why we picked out some of our favorites.

### 3 Introduction Paragraph Examples to Inspire You

#### 1) “Confessions of a Google Spammer,” by Jeff Deutsch

“Before I became an inbound marketer, I once made \$50,000 a month spamming Google. I worked a maximum of 10 hours a week. And I am telling you from the bottom of my heart: never, never ever follow in my footsteps. This blog post will tell you exactly why ...”

There are a few reasons why we love this introduction. Immediately, it grabs our attention — how the heck did this guy make fifty grand every month? And just from 10 hours a week?

But unlike some spammy comments that might



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contain a similar sentiment, he almost immediately serves us something unexpected — he tells us not to do that.

Then, he states the true purpose of the blog — to explain why we should “never, never ever follow in [his] footsteps.” In just three sentences, this introduction has captivated us and validated the story's existence with a looming life lesson. The takeaway? Keep it short, but powerful.

### 2) “Announcing the public view of Azure Advisor,” by Shankar Sivadasan

“While it's easy to start building applications on Azure, making sure the underlying Azure resources are set up correctly and being used optimally can be a challenging task. Today, we are excited to announce the public preview of Azure Advisor, a personalized recommendation engine that provides proactive best practices guidance for optimally configuring your Azure resources.

“Azure Advisor analyzes your resource configuration and usage telemetry to detect risks and potential issues. It then draws on Azure best practices to recommend solutions that will reduce your cost and improve the security, performance and reliability of you applications. In this blog post, we will do a quick tour of Azure Advisor and discuss how it can help optimize your Azure resources.”

Here's a great example of an introduction that presents a problem and a solution to it. Sure, it's easy to build apps on Azure, Microsoft's cloud platform — but maybe you had some issues with its setup. Well, wouldn't you know? Azure Advisor is here to address those challenges, and you can preview it for free.

But wait — there's more. The introduction not only immediately presents a problem and a solution, but it

concisely summarizes just how this product provides a fix. And, it explains why the text will be helpful, with the sentence, “In this blog post, we will do a quick tour of Azure Advisor and discuss how it can help optimize your Azure resources.”

That's a best practice for brands that have made a mistake — even a small one. Technology is great, but it can come with bugs. That's where an intro like this one can be so helpful.

### 3) “Taste the Season at Sushi Sora,” by Chris Dwyer

“The extraordinary spread of metropolitan Tokyo, all the way to the magical silhouette of Mount Fuji on the horizon, has few better vantage points than from Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo. From every room, the cityscape unfurls beneath you, while from the sushi counter at Sushi Sora, the vast floor-to-ceiling window offers uninterrupted views toward the Tokyo Skytree and far beyond.”

Strong introductions aren't just important for blogs — they're essentially to quality editorial pieces, too. That's why we love this introduction to an article from Destination MO, the Mandarin Oriental's official online magazine.

In addition to being empathetic or funny, visuals can be huge — not just an actual picture or video, but words that actually help the reader envision what you're describing. This introduction does just that, with expressive phrases like, “the magical silhouette of Mount Fuji on the horizon.” Well, yeah. That does sound magical. But where can I go for such a view? None other than the “Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo,” the author tells me, especially “from the sushi counter at Sushi Sora.”

Here's the thing about this intro — it gives the reader something to aspire to. Now get to work on your marketing message for 2017. ❖