



Article Marketing 101

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Why Write Articles?

The catch-22 of Internet business is how to drive traffic to your site, even if they've never heard of your business at all. Most people who visit an online site will either find it through a search engine, hear the URL from an offline business that is online too, or have a friend tell them about a new website. In general, there are so many different sites out there competing for everyone's attention that to get noticed by new potential customers, you actually have to create content outside your website, preferably in high traffic areas, with links that go back to your products and offerings.

That's where article marketing comes in. The purpose of article marketing is to gather attention from high traffic areas and bring them back to your site. Instead of relying on your website to attract people to it via the search engines, article marketing is a method where you actually go to places where large crowds of online viewers congregate and offer them valuable information that makes them want to learn more about you and your business.

DON'T RELY ONLY ON YOUR WEBSITE COPY

Your website copy is great for converting customers once they arrive at your site, but it's not enough to draw people to your website all on its own merit – even with good search engine optimization techniques. Instead, you want to find multiple article directories where people are interested in reading various topics and submit your own articles to target the audience that might be interested in your products so that you can convince them to visit you online. After all, your website copy may be spectacular, but if no one reads it, you're not going to make many sales. You have to get people to your site first before you can actually sell them anything online.

INCREASE YOUR TRAFFIC TO INCREASE YOUR PROFITS

The best way to increase traffic to your site is to actually go out and find areas of high traffic and then drive some of that traffic back to your site. Article marketing does this exceedingly well for various reasons. One, people are always looking for fresh content, and article directories provide just that. Two, you are allowed to put backlinks to your website in the resource box, providing a conduit where traffic can flow back to your website from high traffic areas. Three, article directories provide a large audience to start, and it's easy to harvest some of that traffic. Finally, article marketing lets you market a niche via topics, keywords, and categories, making it easy to attract

highly targeted traffic that will be interested in your products and services and not just random traffic.

Make Yourself An Expert

Most business owners are experts on the products they are selling; however, they don't always have the time to sit down with each new customer to go over the wonderful benefits of each product. Yet, if people understand the benefits, they will be more likely to want to buy. People buy products because they're looking to solve some problem or to improve their lives. If you're the person who can show them how to solve their problems or improve their lives, then you take on an air of authority and credibility as an expert that can help you to gain trust and to sell more products.

PULL OUT YOUR CREDENTIALS

If you happen to have them, you should flaunt them, especially in the resource box that is available for authors to say more about themselves. People believe people more when they have some level of authority that makes them credible. That's why if you have a higher degree in a specific niche, have written a book, or can lay claim to expertise based on some remarkable accomplishments, make sure to mention some of that in your resource box.

MAKE YOUR ARTICLES INFORMATIVE

Another way to impress people with your knowledge is to make your articles informative, as well as entertaining. People don't have much time these days, and when they take time out to read your article, they want it to count. If instead they reach the end of your article and feel like it is a "puff piece," they are likely never to read another article by you again.

PICK TOPICS RELEVANT TO YOUR NICHE

Write numerous article topics in the same niche, all on various aspects of that niche. The more articles you write on the same niche, the more people looking for information on that topic will get to know you and your expertise. If people don't find the answer to their problems or issues in one article, but they found you credible as an expert, they will look at the other article that you've authored to find one that does answer their questions. If you have many different articles, and they take the time to read several of those articles, eventually, they will also want to learn more about you personally.

Since the resource box allows you to put two links to your presence online, you have two opportunities to show them more of who you are and what your business can do for them. Once they've read a few of your articles, they will have some idea of who you are and are more likely to visit your site with some set opinion about you that influences them, hopefully favorably, to buy something from you.

How To Write Good Articles

In article marketing, you may end up taking the same article and submitting it to different sites in order to get more traffic. You will want to use the same mechanics of article writing that you would use to draw people to the content on your site and to make it people and search engine friendly. Article directories are highly indexed by search engines to begin with, but adding keywords in the right density can really boost your exposure with them in your targeted niche. Meanwhile, you also want to concentrate on making the articles easy to read, informative, and entertaining.

HOW TO BE SEARCH ENGINE FRIENDLY

To be search engine friendly, you want to try to use keywords that are highly searched but are not too competitive to market online. For that, you'll want to check out the Google Keyword Tool at <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>. This tool is an easy way to brainstorm for keywords that you will add into your articles to help the search engine understand what your article is all about.

Some parts of the article have more weight than others when it comes to keywords. Titles, headings, and subheadings are lent more weight in the Google algorithm that scans each Web page to determine what the article is all about. If you can, try to use the keyword in your title and/or in a paragraph heading. Make sure to add the keywords to the tags too if they are requested by the article directory to help make searching within the article directory easier too.

HOW TO BE PEOPLE FRIENDLY

Readers online don't always read the full article that they are surfing. Often, they might read the summary, the title, the first sentence, and then scan the page for bullets or small paragraphs. People just don't want to read a long article that has no white space and paragraph headings. It's not only hard on the eyes, but it doesn't suit the modern need to skim information to pick out relevant pieces without having to read an entire article, which few people

have time to do. For that reason, keep it short, between 300 to 800 words at most, and always seek to give the reader a clue about what is being discussed before you actually dive into the details.

Bulleted and numbered lists with headings on each item help to make very popular articles. They allow readers to skim each point and to only read the ones that interest them without needing to dwell too much on those that they already know or have no interest in. Try several different formats for layouts and see which one works best with your audience.

What Not To Do When Article Marketing

When people first find out about article marketing, they get so enthusiastic that they tend to overdo things. They think that if a little of something works, then a lot of it should work more. It doesn't. In fact, in some cases, like when stuffing keywords in your articles too frequently, it can actually hurt you. Have a good understanding of the proper balance of a good article, and you'll always maintain a good online presence without being sandboxed by Google or being pegged as a spammer by visitors.

DON'T STUFF KEYWORDS

Keyword density should be between 1 and 2% of the overall word count of your articles. That means that within an article of 300 words, your chosen keyword might appear between 3 and 6 times. It's better to err on the side of less than more because, if you do end up putting in too many occurrences of a keyword to try to manipulate the search engines, what ends up happening is that you're not listed at all in the search results pages. That's what's called being "sandboxed" by Google, and it's a very bad thing to happen, particularly when your article marketing for the primary purpose to drive traffic back to your sites.

DON'T SELF-PROMOTE IN THE ARTICLE

Article directories have very precise terms of service for what you can and can't say within the context of the article itself. Self-promotion is limited to the resource box, where the author has the opportunity to link to outside resources and to say more about himself/herself. As for the article itself, it should be about the main topic and not about you or your business offerings; however, it should be relevant to the market niche that you currently market to with those products and services.

DON'T USE PLAGIARIZED COPY

It is possible to self-plagiarize on the Web, as many copy scanners won't know who the original author was and why an article shows up both on your website (where no name is given) and under your expert author profile in an article directory. In that case, Google will assume that you are using duplicate copy to stuff your website, and/or the article directory will think you are plagiarizing. Neither of these are good ways to start, so you should just avoid using copy from your website in article directories, as well as copy from other websites that aren't yours, so Google doesn't penalize your site and/or the administrators of the article directory don't label you as a plagiarist.

Brainstorming Topics

Keyword research will give you a good clue as to what potential topics might work to create interest online. Generally, you want to be as current with a topic as you can and understand that the interest will rise and wane depending on what is currently holding the public's attention. You want to pick topics that are trending upwards in the public's mind and that are also relevant to your niche. For that, you may have to set aside a little time to brainstorm topics, even before you sit down to write.

KEEP A NOTEBOOK

Inspiration doesn't come on a set schedule, and even if you know of ten topics that will interest your readers, you will need far more to continue marketing down the line. That's why it's a good thing to keep a notebook handy for when inspiration does hit you. It may be when you're watching the news and hearing about some controversial topic that is associated with your niche. If you have your notebook handy, you can easily reach over and jot down several topics regarding that controversy to write on later.

You can also see what others have written online in your market niche and what popular blogs are discussing online. Use technorati.com to find blogs in your niche with large audiences and good ratings and read a few articles to brainstorm topics. Read the comments too to see what other people might have to say about that particular topic and then write a comment of your own.

READ AND SUBSCRIBE

Part of the process in brainstorming topics is being an avid reader. You should know what your trade magazines, newspapers, blogs, and other media sources are saying about your niche. You should also use them to generate ideas for topics to add to your expert author profile. Check out what other experts in your field are saying and see if you agree with them.

DO A MIND MAP

As you go about your day, you will find ideas being triggered from various media sources; you can use a mind map to help bring them together to brainstorm new directions in writing. There is free mind mapping software available online that will allow you keep track of disparate pieces of information, links, and articles, which can help you to reduce the time spent on brainstorming when it finally comes time to sit down to write a few articles for your audience.

Explore Different Article Styles

We have one type of article style, the bulleted list; however, there are many different styles of articles. You can also use them to generate many different articles from one topic. Here, we'll talk about a few different styles of articles that might help you to brainstorm different angles of one topic.

ASK THE READER A QUESTION

In this style, your title is a question. For instance, if you sell shoes, you might write an article on "Why Do People Think High Heels Are Sexy?" This is just one topic, but it can also be split into the woman's and the man's point of view. When you write in the resource box, you can then point to shoes that have been historically viewed as sexy shoes, and if they happen to be on sale on your website, all the better. However, if you can't point to a sales page directly because of the terms of service, just finish the article on your site with a piece on what makes for historically sexy shoes.

POINT TO ASTOUNDING STATISTICS

A topic can be about why 4 out of 5 dentists ask their patients to chew gum to prevent dental decay. If you are selling tourist packages, maybe your articles are about different points of interest across the globe, and if they have some great statistics, why not focus on that? For instance, if you knew that 75% of people who vacation in the summer with their families choose a

beach location, then this can be a good topic to discuss why so many people do that.

TELL A STORY

Maybe you have a personal story to tell as to why you went into the business you did. Maybe you know of someone's story that touched your heart and made you realize what's important about your business. Telling a story has a way of connecting people to other people's real life situations and also of provoking comparison. Sometimes, you can use the comparison to trigger people into avoiding mistakes by not learning more on your niche market. Other times, it can help them to become more productive by hearing how other people became successful with some method or strategy. Humorous stories can also be used to make light of the human condition while also entertaining your readers. Just be careful to stay as respectful of other people's choices so that no one can see bias or callousness in the way that you tell the story, which will be an automatic turnoff. Keep it heartwarming and friendly, but don't moralize or patronize your readers.

Submit Articles Frequently

Article marketing works by creating exposure for your business. The more articles you have, the more likely that you will start to create a following and the more you will bring traffic back to your door. However, if you show your audience everything that you have the first week, you won't be able to maintain that online presence long enough to reap the rewards of a long-term exposure on the Internet. Therefore, plan your article marketing to make it frequent, but also lengthy. You can do this by getting articles ready ahead of time and then rolling them out a little at a time.

PLAN ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Once a day isn't a bad schedule for a blog, and it certainly can be equally as good for article marketing. Keep in mind that you will probably be submitting to multiple directories, and that needs to be managed too. You might want to stagger the appearance of your article in different directories just to manage the workload better, or you can opt to hire a company that submits an article to multiple directories in the same day.

NOT ALL ARTICLES ARE ACCEPTED

Not every article will be accepted, since some might unintentionally violate the terms of the service. In that case, you may submit it and it never gets published. Be sure to have a backup article ready in case an article is not published so that your readers aren't left stranded while you try to think up another topic.

KEEP AT IT

Article marketing is a long-term strategy, not an overnight success. Each article builds on the others and will link visitors more and more to you. Thus, don't expect one week of article marketing and seven articles to lead to immense streams of traffic coming back to your site. It takes a while to get up and running, and it will take some backend promotion to really fully exploit the potential of article marketing.

As long as you have a plan, just keep at it. It only takes time if you decide to do it all yourself, and it can generate a loyal following for very little money. If you decide that it's just too much work, you still have the option to hire ghostwriters who can use your direction, keywords, and topics to put together some dynamic copy to use in your article marketing plans. It will cost you more upfront, but if you start to see an increase in sales relative to that expense, it will be money worth spending.

What To Do If You Can't Write

What if you can't write or don't have the time? Can you still do article marketing? Yes, you can. You can hire ghostwriters who will pass all of the rights of their copy to you, and you can then submit it as if it were your own original copy. Many people do outsource their article marketing, either because they can't write or because they don't want to take the time to write. As long as you are providing the research for your writers, you can be reasonably sure that what comes from them will be representative of the information that you wish to market to your potential customers.

WHERE TO FIND FREELANCE WRITERS

You can find freelance writers all over the Web. They will be available for work on job boards like Elance.com or GetAFreelancer.com. You can approach different blog owners who have a writing style that appeals to you and that seem knowledgeable in your niche to see if they want to write for you. You can even outsource from other countries, but you will generally have to spend more time editing those articles, as they may have spelling or grammar mistakes in them, being that they are non-native writers.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN NEW WRITERS

Every writer has his/her own area of expertise and knowledge base to draw from. If your articles have to do with the energy industry, you really do need to find someone who understands that industry. You can't just hire someone who writes successfully about other topics because, many times, the knowledge doesn't transfer well. Some writers are great technical writers, but are poor creative writers. They would work well for technical subjects like computer hardware and software, or maybe even for mobile devices. Just don't ask them to write about style or fashion. Look through a writer's past projects to see if he/she has experience with your topic, and you'll have a better chance of getting someone who can write for you and can represent your company well.

YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

Freelance writing rates are all over the map, and generally, lower paid freelance writers might provide a temporary bargain, but will not have as good a quality as other, more seasoned writers. Some will refuse to work for anything less than their set wage. Others might be more flexible. It's up to you to decide whether your topic demands a more knowledgeable writer or if you can hire a beginner and get a good deal.

Promote Your Articles Everywhere

Writing good articles, submitting them to multiple directories, and linking property back to your offerings are just the basic steps of article marketing. To really ramp up the exposure, you should link to your articles that you are using to draw traffic from areas all over the Web and create a web of interest from multiple sites. This way, you can build your image as an expert in the field while quickly funneling people back to your website. This is particularly useful as an intermediary space to wean people off of social networking sites and back to something a little more commercial so that you can eventually get them to become subscribers to your business websites.

UPDATE SOCIAL NETWORKS WITH ARTICLE POSTS

If people know that you are writing free information that they can read, find helpful, informative, or entertaining, and don't have to buy anything, they'll be more likely to click some link back to your article. However, if you add a link to a social network that goes directly to a sales page, people are jarred by going from a site that frowns upon such activity to one that is openly self-promoting for commercial purposes. In between, you have places like blogs and article marketing, where people aren't really on a social network anymore, but they're not on a commercial website either. If there happen to be links back to the website from there, that's fair game and no longer deemed unacceptable behavior, since the commercial link appeared in the proper context. It's a way of getting people used to clicking your links from high traffic social network sites back to an area where you're going to lead them back to your business website.

CROSS LINK YOUR ONLINE CONTENT

Once written, content is a good way to offer something of value to people while keeping them hooked into your business. If you set it up right, you can use article marketing to lead people off of other sites, like blogs, social networks, and news sites, back to your website. You can also use your website to cross link to content on article marketing sites to offer your visitors content that is valuable without having to copy it directly to your site and risk self-plagiarizing.

All of your content should promote other similar content, as you never know what someone is searching for and where they're going to find their answer. Besides, the more someone reads your articles, the more likely that they will eventually convert from a loyal reader to a loyal customer too.

Follow-Up For Article Marketing

Once an article is written, it's not the end. You may end up discovering new information that can be added to an already written article that will appeal to old and new readers. You may find that you get contacted by someone who read your article and that you need to reply to the inquiries derived from your article marketing.

TAKE A CUE FROM POPULAR ARTICLES

Track your traffic stats and readership to determine which articles are the most popular and which are driving more traffic to you. Once you know what has hit a nerve, churn out a few more articles on the very same topic, but

from different angles. It's an easy way to follow up on a topic that already has had massive interest and that is sure to be a crowd-pleaser.

GET MORE EXPOSURE FROM THE SAME ARTICLE

Places like Squidoo that offer a form of article marketing always promote fresh content over stale content. If you take the time to add new content or comments to all of your articles to keep them fresh, they will be re-indexed by Google and/or the site in which they are posted, giving you fresh exposure for a minimal amount of work.

TRACK YOUR RESOURCE LINKS

Use URL shorteners for your resource links so that you can track them better. When traffic comes to your site, using something like a link developed in <http://bit.ly> to let you know what article that link originated in, you now have an idea of the traffic coming from different topics and articles, not just from different sites. This is very valuable information to mine to develop products and services that can meet an already existing demand.

ABOVE ALL, HAVE FUN!

Article marketing is a science to build traffic and buzz about your product offerings, but it doesn't have to be a chore. It can be quite fun as you start to engage in a conversation about topics of interest to you and your buyers. You can use the research and knowledge from past popular articles to develop informational products that you can sell on your website too. If they like the short articles, why not offer them a report or an ebook on a similar subject? The key is to find the topics of interest to your audience and then customize your offerings to fulfill the demand and interest of people coming back to your site. Article marketing is a great way to engender trust in your opinion and to help you get more sign-ups to your website by providing more free content in exchange for an email address to send it to and permission to email them information on your industry. Once you are armed with an email address, you can start to market to them with email campaigns, as they have converted from reader to subscriber of your content, all without much fuss. It's only a short step after that to go from being a subscriber to a buyer of your products.

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