

Using Article Submission To Drive Traffic To Your Website

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Article submission is a great way to attract traffic to your website. If you can write (and write well) this is one of the more popular 'free' publicity ideas that may just work for you.

The General Idea

Here is how **article submission** works. You write an article covering a specific area of a broader general interest category. You then submit your article, for free, to any number of the hundreds of websites that accept these articles. The goal here is two-fold:

- a. to create backlinks to your website, raising your 'popularity ranking' in the eyes of the search engine robots AND
- b. to position yourself as an expert in your field of expertise.

Let's look briefly at each . . .

Site Ranking

Your website will be ranked by a number of ever-changing factors in relationship to a search term entered by an Internet surfer. I have been working with a number of life coaches recently so I will use this as our example.

Typing in the word 'coach' as the search term on Google brings 10,500,000 hits. (figures as of 2/22/07). Yahoo does one better on this one, bringing in 173,000,000 hits. That is one hundred seventy three MILLION hits. In neither case does either engine bring up a life coach at all on that all important first page.

Now think about it. When YOU surf the Internet, do you look much farther than maybe the first page or two? Most likely not. There are many life coaches who use **article submission** as part of their marketing activities. So, why isn't anyone appearing on that first page? Over and over I hear comments like "Gee, I spent hours and hours posting articles and nothing has happened." Why is this so?. The answer is quite simple, as you will soon see.

Let's change the search term. Type in the words "life coach". Google now brings 21,800,000 hits. No life coaches on the first page. Type in the search term life coach on Yahoo and you will get 55,600,000 hits. One life coach's website will appear. One single site on the first page. Now, **do you know why this ONE person's website appears on this all important first page?** Again, the answer is simple. However it may surprise you . . .

The Article Submission Process

Here is how the process works. To **submit articles** you must first register with the individual article sites. You will be required to fill out a form for each site. Most sites will then send you back a confirmation link, which you must visit to activate your account. After this has been accomplished, you may **submit articles**, subject to the submission guidelines of the particular site. Depending on the number of sites you register with, this can take from several hours to several days.

Once registered, you will need to visit each site and submit your article. This is where it gets really time intensive, as you will need to fill out a form for each article, paste the article, provide keywords, author information, links and submit the article. This is AS time consuming, if not MORE time consuming than registering for these sites.

Once the article is submitted it is 'up for review'. Most sites review each and every article submitted. Depending on the relative size of the site, getting your article approved can take from a day to months or even longer.

If the article is approved quickly, it will may have a shorter 'shelf life' than most. This is because the 'newer' site is growing and MAY replace the olders articles relatively quickly based on submissions and a number of other factors.

The Advantages to Article Submission

Submitting articles, as mentioned, has two advantages; it creates back-links to your site and positions you as an expert in your field.

The back-link is one of the criteria in determining how well your web site is ranked among all the other sites out there. You will be competing with, in the example above, perhaps 10's of millions of other sites for that coveted high ranking. But back-links are not the only criteria in ranking your site. There are many other factors, (far too many to list here) that will contribute to the optimization of your site for the search engines.

For the massive amount of time invested in creating back-links, you will most likely want to use the **article submission** idea, but don't expect too much in the way of quick results. The article submission process is a bit like dropping pebbles into a bucket of water. At first, it seems as though nothing is happening. After a time though, the pebbles begin to replace the water in the bucket. Eventually, the bucket will be filled with pebbles and no water will remain. Think of this as a process, but it is certainly not as the be-all and end all to search engine Nirvana. Time and effort notwithstanding, it is an effective tool in the free marketing arsenal.

Positioning yourself as an expert in your field should be the PRIMARY goal here. Article sites go to great lengths to get the top rankings and keep abreast of changes in search engine criteria. Rely on them to get the ranking for your ARTICLES. You should concentrate on the content. Think about this. Does it matter how that prospective client gets to your website? It can be the direct result of your site ranking, or it might be because your article showed up on the first page of Google, was read and then your reader clicked thru.

The Content

I could write a book on this subject. Someday I may.

Let us use websites to illustrate my next point. Take a few moments and sit down and just look at your competitor's websites. Get a feel for the content. Notice anything?

Too much information. Plain and simple. I preach and preach and continually preach this to my clients. If you get nothing from this article, try to understand this: Every single word, every single sentence, every single paragraph gives your potential customer or client the opportunity to say "No". Every single word, every single sentence and every single paragraph should be carefully designed to do just one thing:

Create curiosity. For it is curiosity that will lead to ACTION.

Yes, yes I know. We want to tell our potential customers or clients all about ourselves. We want them to know what we can do for them. We want them to fully understand why they should do business with us, and not the competition. And so we give them everything. And when we give them everything, they make a decision BASED on that information. No, no, no. . . WRONG!

Web site designers are not marketers. They are web site designers. They are wonderful people and many of my personal friends design websites for a living. But they are not marketers.

An effective site or article will create curiosity. Period.

This will lead to action on the part of the potential client. The action should be to request more information or to sign up for a newsletter. The 'closing' should be done in person. Unless you are marketing a \$9.95 booklet, don't try to get potential clients to take action based on the information on the site or in your article! A \$9.95 booklet is

an impulse buy. It is an impulsive, hedonic response. If you are marketing a larger ticket item, such as long-term life coaching, it will not be an impulse buy. The action component of the sales process should always be accomplished IN PERSON!

Pictures

Be careful with this. Believe it or not a picture is one of the primary reasons people will make the dreaded snap NO decision.

Real estate clients, for example, especially insist on using a picture. But if you happen to look like Aunt Bessie who used to smother the client with unwanted kisses years ago, you could lose a potential client solely for this reason. You may look too professional. You may look too homespun. The older client may perceive you to be too inexperienced. The younger client may see you as an old fogey. You have no control over this but, either way, you COULD lose. When in doubt, do not use a picture, unless you have a very good reason for doing so.

I could go on and on about this, but I will stop before I get carried away. I am getting off topic.

Information

Your article should give great information. This is how you position yourself as an expert. But it should not give ALL the information in regards to the topic. Again, it should be carefully crafted to create enough curiosity to get them to click on the link to your site. The article must contain SUBTLE prompts to action. But, remember this. The article may be perfectly written to cause that person to follow up and click through to your site, but . . .

ALL THE CLICKS IN THE WORLD WILL MAKE NO DIFFERENCE IF YOUR SITE CAUSES YOUR CLIENT TO MAKE THE NO DECISION!

Again, your site MUST also leave them hanging. This creates further curious ACTION.

Using Articles To Market Effectively

I love scenarios. So let us look at two scenarios to illustrate my point:

Scenario One

Suppose for a moment you are standing at a party. One of your friends points to an extremely well dressed man across the room who is surrounded by a group of people hanging on his every word, some even taking notes. "That is Joe Smith," says your friend. "He is a consultant. He shows people how to build million dollar practices. He has done it 1000 times over."

So you saunter on over to the crowd surrounding Mr. Smith. Eventually you get a word in edgewise, introduce yourself and coyly ask, "So how does one build a million dollar practice?"

"Oh, it's very simple," replies Mr. Smith, "ridiculously simple. It can be done in no time at all. All you must do is . . . " Just then someone taps Mr. Smith on the shoulder and whispers in his ear. "Sorry, I must leave," states Mr. Smith, "it was nice meeting you." He walks away.

How would you feel?

You might feel like kicking yourself for not getting to Mr. Smith sooner. You might stay awake all night, tossing and turning. Mr. Smith has the answer and it is very simple. He was willing to give you the answer, the answer you want, the answer you need. But now it is too late.

Come Monday, you call Mr. Smith's office and are informed that it takes 18 months to get an appointment. You offer to pay a little extra, if you can be squeezed in somehow. The answer is a firm no. Now how do you feel?

Mr Smith has the answer. The answer you want! The answer you need! But now it will be at least 18 months

before you can get it.

You have been left hanging. You are in a state of extreme curiosity. You are ready to take action.

Scenario Two

You are sitting in your office when the phone rings.

"Hello," says a voice on the other end, "my name is Fred Jones. I show people how to build million dollar practices. I would like to show you how. The cost is only \$400 per month, this week only!"

"No, thank you," you reply politely.

"But wait," says Mr. Jones, a hint of desperation in the voice, "I have done this for many of my clients. I have had a lot of training. I go to great lengths and offer many free services. Just tell me what you need and I promise I will be able to help you. . . "

"No, thank you," you reply, a bit more forcefully. "But wait, you don't understand . . . " you hear Mr. Jones saying as you hang up the phone . . .

Now think about it for a moment. If you were going to have surgery, would you choose a surgeon who:

- a. has a waiting list a month long OR
- b. calls you every day and begs you to use his services?

You want to give the impression that you are Mr. Smith, NOT Mr. Jones. The sad fact is that most of the articles I read give the impression that the writer is Mr Jones. This is not an impression you want to create, either in your articles or on your website. The impression of 'neediness' is created by giving TOO MUCH information. Your potential clients pick up on this quite quickly and simply click away.

The Trust Factor

All other things being equal, people will only do business with people they trust. And, conversely, if a potential client does not trust you, they will NEVER do business with you. YOU MAKE OR BREAK THAT TRUST IMMEDIATELY IN THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THE FIRST ARTICLE your potential client reads. You make or break that trust INSTANTANEOUSLY when your website flickers onto the screen. If your article and/or your website does not create INSTANT TRUST, you are dead in the water.

Assuming that you are savvy enough to get beyond the initial trust hurdle, everything you present from this point on will either ADD TO or SUBTRACT FROM the initial trust created.

OK. Let's assume you have fine tuned the article to not only create trust, but also to not SUBTRACT from it. Let us also assume your article contains the all-important, subtle calls to further action. What then? I have spent a good deal of time conversing with site owners. Here are some other important considerations.

How Many Sites?

As many HIGH QUALITY sites as reasonably possible. Notice that I said high quality sites. You only want to submit articles to the highest quality sites you can find. As mentioned previously, submitting articles is extremely time intensive. Submit one article to one hundred sites. You will see what I mean. Your fingers are going to hurt before it's all over.

Different Versions of the Same Article?

Are you penalized for redundant content by the search engines? Do you want to have 15 articles on page 93 of the search engine results? Or would you rather have 1 article listed 10 times on the first page of the search engine results?

Submission Software?

There are advantages and disadvantages here. I am personally of the opinion that you should retain complete control of each submission. This allows you to fine tune the article specifically for the given site and for the given categories on the myriad number of sites out there. The subtle change of a word or two here or there can make a major difference in the message to the highly targeted audience.

Sites?

Different sites cater to different audiences. Don't submit a self-improvement article to a marketing site.

Categories?

Different sites have differently targeted categories. One of the major beefs site owners have is incorrect category submission (putting a religious article in a transmission repair category). Remember that your article will be reviewed for quality, content, categorization, etc.

Site 'popularity'

These numbers change nearly as quickly as search engine rankings.

How often?

Regularly and continually, keeping in mind that the process is somewhat akin to planting seeds. You may not see immediate results, but eventually you will have a field full of plants. Some will be annuals, some biennials, some perennials.

'Quality' of the article

Nothing will kill the trust factor more quickly than a shoddily written article, catchy, worn out industry specific phrasing, insincere language or an article containing a blatant sales pitch.

And Finally . . .

I will say it again. **Article submission**, done properly, is a valuable tool in your free marketing arsenal. But there are other free marketing tools you will also want to utilize. Press releases, used correctly (see previous page) may lead to your article being submitted for publication in newspapers or magazines. This concept can lead to you being chosen as a regular contributor.

Don't ignore that large segment of the population that, (believe it or not), does not yet own a computer or perhaps owns a computer and simply does not know how to operate the thing. These are the folks who will type in the search phrase 'coach' rather than the phrase 'life coach specialization depression'.

Oh yes. I nearly forgot. Why does just ONE website appear on Yahoo's first page when one types in the search phrase 'life coach'?

"Oh, it's very simple, ridiculously simple. It can be done in no time at all. All you must do is . . ."

Sorry . . . I have to go . . .

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