

What Article Publishers REALLY Want

By Heather Reimer

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If you write articles to promote your business, you've probably wondered how to get publishers to gobble them up. It seems so hit and miss at times, doesn't it? I've been writing articles to plug my content writing services for three years. A few of them bombed, a few were picked up by major publishers and distributed to hundreds of thousands of readers, and the vast majority landed somewhere in between.

So what separates the flops from the faves? Here are a few of my findings:

=Short tips articles aren't hot tamales. The majority of publishers still want articles in the 400 - 800 word range.

=The REALLY big, influential publishers seem to be looking for how-to articles that explain and/or clarify a process and that offer lots of links to resources, especially free ones. If you can fit all that into one article, along with a pinch of personality, you've got yourself a winner.

=Don't be shy about including a little of yourself in your article. Notice I said "a little". Whenever I've strayed into rant and rave mode about some pet peeve, my articles have suffered. But when I offer observations and useful advice gained from my own experience and good research, publishers and readers respond.

=Metaphors aren't just for poetry. Your writing becomes more colorful and accessible if you draw parallels. For example, I once compared the aggravation caused by poor website navigation to a bully teasing little kids on the playground. Readers remembered that one because they could relate to the image.

=Keep an eye on trends. Noticing more pop-ups lately? A decline in spam? (I wish!) An increase in hype on the web? Whatever it is, chances are good other people have noticed it too - or will soon - and your article on the subject will make you appear like a sage visionary. Or just a clever person.

=Recycle ideas. I constantly have to remind myself that just because I wrote an article on search engines a year ago doesn't mean that topic is forever off limits to me. The most prolific article writers often regurgitate the same ideas over and over, altering them slightly for new audiences. And the audience is always being renewed so plagiarizing yourself is not a crime. (Unless you send the same article twice to lists that prohibit it... that IS a crime!)

=Don't spend a lot of time distributing your article to the smaller ezines unless their audience is your ideal target market. Article announcement lists and syndicators will get your article in front of more publishers with less time and effort on your part.

=Obey the rules. Each list has its own submission guidelines. Run afoul of them and your efforts will hit the round file and you'll become known as the first writer who couldn't read.

=I've stressed the importance of proofreading in so many previous articles that I'm not even going to mention it here. Oops.

=Don't bother blitzing the lists with articles during holiday periods, as I did, thinking all the other writers will be snoozing and there'll be a shortage of good articles out there. The publishers are snoozing too.

The fact is that article writing, like any other form of writing, is an imprecise art not a science. There are no guarantees. You could knock off an award-winning item in ten minutes. Or you could expend gallons of blood, sweat and tears writing the most insightful, entertaining, pertinent and timely treatise ever conceived and have it land, thud, like an overripe coconut on a deserted beach. Keep writing, keep submitting, keep shaking that tree and eventually good things will shake loose.

Heather Reimer is the owner, head writer and editor of The Write Content.

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