

Let Your Visitors Build Your Website

By Stephen Bucaro

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Building and maintaining a website is a lot of work, especially if you are a one-person operation. Along with the technical design and maintenance of the website, you have to manage content, advertising, and promotion.

The most important component of your website is the content. Content gets your website listed in the search engines. Search engines bring traffic to your website. Without traffic, you can't generate revenue. But creating and posting content is difficult and time consuming work. Wouldn't it be nice if you could get your website's visitors to post the content for you? You can!

What type of content can your visitors post?

- Articles
- Classified ads
- Ebooks
- Forum messages
- Photographs
- Poetry
- Recipes
- Reviews

I'm sure you can think of many more possibilities.

The ultimate visitor built website is an auction site. But an auction site requires expensive and complex software and advanced administration. You might prefer one of the lower maintenance options.

The idea is, you let your visitors provide the content while you focus on tasks more directly related to generating revenue, like advertising and promotion.

There are two ways to let your visitors post content.

- Submit for your approval
- Direct posting to your website

The second option requires the visitor to setup an account before posting. Then, if that user posts blatant advertising or inappropriate material, you can delete the material and cancel that user's account. Websites that allow direct posting are constantly under attack by abusers who post blatant advertising. You might find the first option, reviewing each submission and posting yourself, to be less work in the long run.

A visitor built website receives two types of traffic.

- People who submit content.
- People who consume content.

The content producers must have an incentive to contribute. That incentive can be the opportunity to promote themselves; for example, a "resource box" at the bottom of each article that they submit, or an "about the artist" page for each account. Some visitor built websites provide an incentive based upon a share of the website's revenue.

In most cases, the content itself will be incentive enough for the content consumers. But in the case of a "free classifieds" website, the reality is that few people seek advertising. In this case, your website's audience will consist solely of producers. In order to get repeat visits, you'll have to cause their ads to expire after a certain interval.

The most important part of a visitor built website is content management. The content must be subdivided into sections or categories. Let your visitors choose the category for their contribution. In direct posting, website visitors will abuse the posting process by posting an item under several or all categories. You need to decide if posting an item under more than one category is to be allowed.

Examples: www.epinions.com members earn money by writing and submitting reviews of consumer products. www.site-reporter.com members earn money by reviewing websites and completing questionnaires.

A visitor built website lets you focus on tasks more directly related to generating revenue, like advertising and promotion, while relieving you of most of the chores of content creation. Which type of visitor built website will you start?

Resource Box:

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