

# Articles That Sell

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Use The Best Kept Secret Of The Internet  
To Promote Your Business For FREE!

The power of the Internet as a marketing tool for small business owners cannot be overstated. However, developing a web site is only the first piece of this intricate puzzle. Driving traffic to your site is an ongoing, arduous process - one that is most effectively achieved when you employ multiple strategies.

One such strategy is contributing content to web sites, article archives, and "e-zines." Because your URL will be included in your by-line, this is a very inexpensive form of on-line promotion from a number of perspectives:

- \* A significant percentage of readers will "click-through" to visit your web site
- \* The increased number of links "pointing" to your site improves its search engine rankings
- \* Because you have demonstrated your expertise in the article, you will generally be held in higher regard than if you were simply advertising or listed in search engine results

The first step in the article submission process is to determine your target audience, the web sites they visit, and the types of articles they enjoy reading.

Let's assume, for illustration purposes, that you want to get the attention of human resources professionals. Visit a search engine such as <http://www.google.com> , and enter the phrase "human resources."

Browse some of the resulting web sites to get a sense of topics that are currently "hot." If you find that employee retention is a top concern for HR - and you have valuable insights to offer - you're ready to start writing!

Here are some tips to guide you:

- \* Be sure that your content is informative and useful - not an advertisement for your services
- \* Keep the article length to between 750 and 1,000 words
- \* Include a four-line by-line that consists of a brief biography, your contact information (i.e., email address and telephone number), and web site URL
- \* Format your article in a text file with carriage returns inserted at 65 characters or less and create a version in Word or WordPerfect.

Don't overlook carefully proofreading your work. If possible, wait at least one day after writing the piece to proofread it and ask a friend, family member, colleague to review it as well. Also consider hiring a writing or editing specialist (such as Affinity Business Communications at <http://www.affinitybizcomm.com/>) to perform a bit of "word-smithing."

It's now time to identify appropriate venues for your article. The HR-specific web sites that you found earlier are a perfect place to start. These might include <http://www.shrm.org/> , <http://humanresources.about.com/> , and [http://www.suite101.com/articles.cfm/human\\_resources](http://www.suite101.com/articles.cfm/human_resources) .

Next, identify professional and non-profit associations whose Members may benefit from your content. A search engine or an association locator such as <http://www.asaenet.org/find/> or <http://www.associationcentral.com> can help you do this, and there may be opportunities to publish your work in journals or newsletters at both the national and local (i.e., chapter) level.

Third, compile a list of article archives that accept contributions in your topic area, such as <http://www.articles911.com/> , <http://www.expertarticles.com/> , <http://www.ezinearticles.com/> , and <http://makingprofit.com/mp/articles/submit.shtml> .

Fourth, explore both on-line and offline e-zines and newsletters. There are several directories to help you target those to which your article is relevant, including <http://www.ezine-dir.com/> , <http://www.ezinesearch.com/search-it/ezine/> , and <http://www.ezinelocater.com/> .

And lastly, consider performing another web search, this time for your specific topic (e.g., "employee retention"). I would even recommend taking it a step further by utilizing the search phrase "employee retention articles," for example, to generate a list of web pages that are compilations of links to articles similar to your own. This is a terrific way to be "found" by individuals actively researching your topic.

It is imperative that you review the editorial and formatting guidelines for each site and customize your article accordingly. Most web sites that accept contributions include a page with submission information and requirements, or provide the editor's email address so that he or she may be contacted directly with questions.

If your article is accepted, it may take up to three months for it to "go live." Some web sites do not acknowledge receipt of your submission and may even publish it without notifying you. It is important, therefore, that you create a log to record, follow-up, and track your submissions.

Consider adding a page to your web site that lists where your work has been "featured," and update it each time an article is published or reprinted.

As mentioned in the opening of this article, on-line promotion is a continuous process. To keep the momentum going, it is recommended that you develop new articles as often as time allows and repeat the submission process at least once each quarter. Be sure to create a "Bookmark" (Netscape) or "Favorite" (Internet Explorer) file for the web sites you identify, giving yourself a "head start" when writing on similar topics in the future.

While submitting articles can be a tedious and time-consuming endeavor, the free publicity and client leads it generates make it well worth the effort. And if publishers value you as a consistent source of high-quality content, you may even be invited to serve as a columnist or regular contributor. Doing so will keep you in regular contact with the people with whom you wish to do business - enabling you to position yourself as a problem solver, a strategic partner and, most importantly, permit you to remain "top" in the minds of your potential and existing clients."

This excerpt of the new special report "Articles That Sell: Use The Best Kept Secret Of The Internet To Promote Your Business For FREE!" is provided by the author, Bonnie Jo Davis. To learn more about Bonnie and her favorite free marketing tactic visit <http://www.articlesthat sell.com> .

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