

7 Formulas for Writing Articles That Get Read!

By Alexandria K. Brown

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Many of us have been asked to write an article at one time or another. Maybe it's a contribution to the company newsletter. Or a promotional article to gain publicity for ourselves or our companies. Some of us write articles regularly for clients.

No matter why you're writing an article, it's your responsibility to make it be interesting — otherwise no one will read it. (Except you.)

So how can you make your article interesting and engage your reader? It's all about the ANGLE. First pick your topic. For example, let's say your topic is something boring ... "car wax." Now, here's where many people start writing.

Stop! You need an angle! What aspect of car wax do you want to write about? Is there anything new or sexy in the world of car wax that people are interested in? Some ideas: how the new generation of car waxes helps protect your paint job for twice as long, OR, an overview of the best five brands of car wax on the market, OR what the best type of wax is for your particular car. Get it? These are all angles. (By the way, I've never waxed my car, so please take these ideas with a grain of salt! ;))

Ready to brainstorm your angles? Here are seven article "formulas" to get you started. Some elements of each may overlap with each other, but each formula is truly a distinct animal.

1. The How-To

People love how-to articles! They lead the reader step-by-step through how to reach an objective. They also sometimes offer resources the reader can contact for more information.

What expertise do *you* have to share? Turn that subject into an interesting how-to for readers. Examples: "How to Make Your Employees Stick Around Forever," "How to Find the Best Dress for Your Figure," and "How to Promote Your Business for Free."

2. The List

This is one of the most basic formulas and the easiest to write.

Give a short one or two paragraph intro, then launch right into your list. Keep each item to a few sentences max. People love numbers, so number your list and give your total number in the title! Examples: "31 Ways to Organize Your Office," "15 Tips for Pain-Free Feet," "Five Reasons Management Won't Be the Same in 2001"

3. The "Straw Man"

Here you set up a premise and knock it down, showing the benefits of your alternative view or approach. This is ideal to use when you're discussing the drawbacks of a new practice or method that's controversial right now. Here's a great example we often see on the covers of health magazines: "Are High Protein Diets the Key to Fast Weight Loss?" You get all excited, thinking you've discovered an amazing dieting revelation. But the article reveals, point by point, that high protein diets are unsafe for the long term, and that of course the only reliable way to lose weight is through diet and exercise. Oh well! Back to the treadmill....

4. The Mini Case Study

Raise a provocative question and then answer it with three or four real-life examples. Example: For an article titled, "Should You Quit Your Job and Go Freelance?" you could begin with a few stats on how today's workforce is leaving the corporate world in search of solo bliss. Then you could feature a few real cases, each with different outcomes to show all sides of the issue.

5. The Interview

Choose a credible expert to interview for your article. For example, if your topic is the latest trends in banking, you could interview a top banking industry analyst. Present it in either a traditional article format or do a Q&A format.

6. The Trend

Trends aren't just for fashion! Whenever a trend sweeps a certain profession, you'll suddenly see dozens of articles covering the topic. From the latest hairstyle to the latest tax shelter, people want to know all about these trends - their origins, benefits, and drawbacks.

7. The Study Finding

These articles report the results of a study or survey. If you do a bit of research, you can probably dig up a recent study on which you can base your article. Examples: "Blue Chip Companies Cutting Marketing Budgets Across the Board," "Armadillos Now Deemed America's Favorite Pet," and "More 20-Somethings Finding Love Online."

Hope these ideas got your juices flowing! And let me know if you need any help developing angles for *your* articles. :)

Alexandria Brown is president of AKB Marketing Communications. Her FREE monthly e-zine gives "how-to" tips on writing compelling copy for Web sites, brochures, and e-zines. Learn how to attract new clients and build customer relationships! Subscribe today by sending a blank message to <mailto:AKBMarCom-On@lists.webvalence.com>

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