

Building Traffic With Content

**Use Content to Build, Advertise and
Drive Traffic to Your Online Business**

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Contents

Why is Content Important?

Are you new to online marketing? Or are you one of the millions of frustrated website owners watching helplessly as your site fluctuates up and down (even on and off) the search engines?

Is your traffic suffering as you try to stay on top of the most current methods of finding traffic, only to find that they are ineffective for bringing targeted traffic or stop working soon after the search engines catch on?

There is a reason that staying in the search engines is vitally important. The amount of people who are searching for information online is increasing rapidly.

An Ipsos-Reid poll showed that people are starting to rely more heavily on the internet with increases in the frequency of internet usage in North America the UK and Asia. At the time of the poll 72% of Americans were online within the previous month, and that number continues to rise.

How are they finding information on the internet?

According to research published by Gvu (Graphic, Visualization and Usability Center), most users – novice, expert, young, old, male and female – find new websites from two main sources: hyperlinks and search engines.

Pew Internet & American Life Project also published statistics about search

engine use which indicated that "84% of online American adults have used search engines. That amounts to 108 million people. On any given day, 56% of those online use search engines."

How many of these potential visitors are finding YOUR website? More websites are created each day leading to increased congestion and competition for the top spots in search engine results. How are you able to compete? Well first of all, how do search engines bring you traffic?

Two of the most popular methods of getting traffic from search engines include PPC – Pay Per Click – and SEO – Search Engine Optimization.

PPC:

Pay Per Click is advertising provided by the search engine providers (Google, Yahoo! and others) where you PAY for top placement. Their strategies for placement differ slightly. Some search engines will give you higher placement if your ad has a higher click-through rate (meaning more people click on your ad in ratio to the amount of times your ad was shown), others give top positions to the highest bidder.

In either case, you PAY. It is a quick way to get listed in the search engines and a smart way to get your traffic flowing – but it is not the cheapest AND you could spend far more than is profitable for your business if you don't know what you're doing.

SEO:

There are a lot of companies working 'behind the scenes' to help website owners get plenty of traffic from the natural search engine listings. Natural listings mean the search engine has ranked you according to the value it believes your site will offer an individual searching for a specific word or phrase.

Understanding exactly WHAT the search engines want to see when ranking sites requires knowledge of the algorithms. These algorithms change all the time as search engine providers try to outwit the search engine optimizers trying to find loopholes in the ranking system.

Some SEO companies will promise you top spots for a certain cost. Some are honestly creating optimized websites – others may be using techniques that could possibly get your site BANNED from the search engines entirely (once the search engine catches on). However, optimizing your website for better placement in the search engines is a technique that you should become familiar with and use to your advantage.

Both of these traffic methods have their pros and cons for generating traffic from the search engines. You will find out more about using them properly later on. But first you need to know what REALLY works...

Content is KING!

Before you start to think that this is another SEO technique that may or may not work depending on the current algorithms of the search engines, think about it...

EVERYTHING on the internet is CONTENT.

The internet is a veritable treasure trove of information. Good, bad, valuable or not, the internet is all about providing information to people. That is why smart internet marketers know that people want information from their websites – not just SEO enriched pages of advertising.

The loopholes that search engine optimizers have been trying to use for high ranking in the search engine has created a plethora of sites that boast high keyword ratios, thousands of irrelevant hyperlinks and sometimes even redirection. These redirected websites try to create an optimized web page that the search engines will rank high but actually redirect the viewer to a less search engine friendly site.

Well, the search engines caught on. The websites that were getting the highest placements weren't always providing quality information or useful content. In fact, they not only lowered the ranking of these sites – they even removed them from the listings completely.

This sent a shock wave through the internet community and smart marketers realized that there is only one sure way to convince the search engines that they were meant to be at the top: Quality

Content.

Not only do the search engines love content, but visitors do too. By providing visitors with useful information and relevant links to other sites, they come back again and again! And that's not the only benefit.

Because website owners are now hungry for content, there is a huge market for informative articles that other website owners can use on their sites. By offering information to these sites in exchange for a hyperlink to your website, you get even more exposure, both to search engines AND customers.

So, how do you harness the power of content? How do you pull the most benefit and profits from your information?

Find out right now...

21 Ways Content Drives Your Traffic

So you recognize the need for content in order to satisfy both the customer AND the search engines. But how does content actually bring your web site traffic?

Since it's been established that the main methods of driving traffic are from search engines and hyperlinks from other sites, most of these suggestions will contribute to one method or the other and occasionally both. Some suggestions include offline activities that can attract another audience altogether. By diversifying your tactics you are creating a well-rounded game plan to drive traffic to your site.

Search engines are the main source for internet users to find the information they are looking for. Being listed high in the search engines means more people will find you when looking for the product, service or information you provide. Search engines use different methods for determining your position in the listings. Understanding how they work and what they're looking for can help you get the best listings.

Hyperlinks are links that direct a visitor or search engine to another website or page. When websites provide a link to your site it tells the search engines that you are valuable and thus affects your position in the listings. In the right place it can direct human traffic to your site as well.

Here are a few suggestions and examples you can use to improve your search engine position and create hyperlinks to your website. Which

methods will work for you depend on your website, writing abilities and determination.

Keywords

Keywords have always been important to search engines. People use search engines to find information on a topic by typing a word or phrase and receiving a list of the most relevant sites (as determined by the search engine).

Not using keywords properly is where many have gone wrong. Filling a page with keywords will NOT get you a good rating with the search engines. However, writing content that uses popular search words WILL.

By researching the popular keywords for your topic or product, you can create information that places these words into the context of an article for your website.

By creating an article and optimizing each page for a separate keyword you can easily get the search engines to include you in the results when users search for that word or phrase. Depending on the competition you may find yourself surprisingly close to the top position after the search engine finds you.

Information

Information is the basis of the internet. By providing search engines and visitors with plenty of information on your topic you will provide plenty of opportunities for the search engines to list you in the search results.

By creating information you will also become a resource for other websites that may link to you, providing your site with valuable hyperlinks. Information is a great way to show your visitors that you have something worthwhile to impart and they'll be more likely to recommend you to others.

Information can be news related to your topic, updates, commentary or tips and hints. Everyone loves a 'how-to...' format, so consider creating one for your site for the most attention.

Web Pages

Websites NEED pages. The more, the better.

Having a website filled with keyword-filled, template style pages will not impress the search engines or your visitors. However, websites with pages of real content and relevant links to other sites will become a feeding ground for the search engines.

Slowly but steadily adding pages of real content will help your site attract the search engine spiders on a regular basis. This is the 'tortoise wins the race' philosophy to making friends with the search

engines!

Creating content for these pages is crucial. Your visitors may land on a page of your site that is not the main page. Having information on every page that focuses attention on your main product or service will generate more interest and sales.

Newsletters

Have you heard that 'the money is in the list'? What list are they talking about?

Your SUBSCRIBER list. Yes, with close to 80% of sales taking place *after* the first contact it is imperative that every website have a newsletter when possible. The percentage of sales goes up with each contact – the highest percentage being made after 5 to 7 contacts.

But to have a newsletter you must have content! So start putting some ideas together and write those newsletters. Set up your website to attract subscribers and wait for the follow up of traffic as they open their email and come back to your site.

By giving your subscribers relevant and valuable content, you can build trust and can offer suggestions to promote your products, services and affiliate links. Your visitors will judge you based on the value of the content you send. If you only advertise without giving beneficial information for free, your subscribers may soon start deleting your emails without reading them.

Develop a series of brief but informative articles. Perhaps the bulk of the information can be created on an optimized webpage and an introduction be presented in the newsletter while directing them to your site for further information.

Getting your subscribers back to your site should be the primary objective.

Free Reports

Free reports are a great way to attract subscribers to your newsletter. These reports can also be given away by other people (on related websites) with a link to YOUR website inside. You provide them something to give to their customers for free and you get the traffic that follows!

By including a free report on a topic that is relevant and of interest to your visitors as a subscription bonus you can entice hesitant visitors to sign up for your newsletter. Make certain the report has value for the subscriber or they may feel it was simply a bribe to capture their email address.

Identify a problem or question that might attract your visitors. Write a two or three page report that gives a partial solution. Indicate your product or service as part of the solution, but do not necessarily make it sound like an advertisement.

To create your report you can provide more details to your service than is listed on your webpage (ie: 'Find out how YOU can save money

on home repairs with this special report...). You might also try one that warns of a danger (Are you putting YOUR family at risk? Find out with this special report...).

Send the report via an autoresponder or manually send it to your subscribers as soon as possible so they remember to open their email.

Submission to Article Directories

If you are writing content for your own website then you don't want to overlook the benefits of sharing your efforts with others.

By writing short articles on the topic related to your website, you can offer these articles for other website owners or newsletter publishers to use by submitting them to an article directory.

These directories get spidered by the search engines on a regular basis because of the high value of the content they provide. If you have not yet been picked up by the search engines this is the easiest way to get them to find you. You also get exposure to those who look for articles in the directories for use on their sites.

When they make use of your articles on their websites or in their newsletters, you will get the credit as the author along with a link to your website. Not only will you gain visitors, but you will benefit from the hyperlinks that are created.

Submission to Relevant Websites

Another beneficial use for articles is to offer them directly to sites you would like to share an audience with.

This is not only a great way to gain credibility for your topic, but will provide useful hyperlinks all over the internet. Sometimes you can even get links from sites that would not agree to a formal link exchange request. If the site which uses your article is a high traffic site you will also gain invaluable exposure to the visitors reading your article.

Forums

Forums – groups of internet users that discuss common interests online – are a fantastic way to share information.

Search for a forum that discusses something related to your website. Be sure to spend time 'lurking'. That means reading the posts and becoming familiar with the style of discussion and written (and unwritten) rules. Most forums forbid spamming. What is considered spam by one forum is perfectly acceptable by another, but blatant advertising rarely is appreciated.

In most cases you can either post a link to your website in your signature or share information that arouses questions about your website from other posters. Some forums permit you to post your articles (if the forum is business related). If you are unsure about the policies, be careful. Offering free advice can sometimes be enough to

establish credibility and if you have a blog or other non-marketing site you may be able to send traffic to that first and encourage visitors to visit your website from the blog.

Linking Pages

Are you creating linking pages to impress the search engines? How much more value would they have if you offered quality, optimized content for each of your categories?

Rather than having a bland list of 'linking partners' you could be using your links to gain more credibility AND provide more content for the search engines.

Create a separate page for each link category and write 200-400 words of content on that subject. Offering your recommended links at the end will make you a source for information rather than just a catalogue of links.

Optimizing each page for a popular keyword will draw more traffic to your site than links alone. It will also be more beneficial for your visitors who are searching for related resources.

Press Release

If you thought you were starting to grasp the importance of content, you haven't even started to see the potential yet.

Press releases should become an important part of your marketing.

What do you need to create a press release? Content.

Press releases are notices to the media about newsworthy events, accomplishments or information. By creating a press release to announce a new product, results of a poll or related news event, you can get free advertising in the media.

News media is always looking for new content for their readers. Learning how to compose and deliver a press release will give you access to this pool of willing advertisers.

To create your own press release, go to a website like www.PRweb.com and read the releases that are posted there. When you are familiar with the format you can write your own and submit it. Just avoid advertising copy and be sure to highlight some new thought or angle to make your press release newsworthy for publishers to use. If you want to invest the extra money you can hire a press release writer or have your release reviewed by a PRweb specialist.

Newspaper

Press releases can work just as well in your local paper as they do in online news websites.

Submit your press release to the editor or the writer for the section of the newspaper you want to target.

You could also try to submit your own column, giving tips and related information to your topic, as a free form of advertising. Smaller

newspapers may find this idea more appealing since larger newspapers would not be likely to publish your works without formal working arrangements.

Magazine Articles

Just like online magazines, printed magazines need fresh content all the time. If you are writing articles you may be able to submit them to magazine editors for review.

Be sure to follow their policies which may be listed on their website or you can email or phone for instructions. Just like newspapers, you will have a greater chance for success if you target smaller publishers first.

Classifieds

Online classifieds have gone through some fluctuations of their own. Originally touted as one of the best methods to get traffic, the inundation of ads by internet marketers nearly flooded the market and made it impossible for readers to find what they were looking for.

However, using classifieds can still send you some traffic and will also help your site get listed in the search engines. Use keyword phrases in your ad and include a hyperlink. You are not putting a lot of content in these ads, but what you do put needs to be effective.

Offline Brochure

Do you promote a product, information or service that can be used

locally? Consider creating a brochure that gives information on a question related to your topic. Include reference to how using YOUR service or product will assist them in solving the problem. Give some brief answers and point out your website as a source for more information.

Offer to leave your brochures in places that might attract your audience or post them on community boards. Pass them along to friends and family who might pass them along to others for you.

Traffic is people – whether they come to your site or directly to you, they all count.

Newsletter Exchange

Are you having success with your newsletter? Perhaps you'd like to approach another website owner and offer to write a short article for his subscribers – or to exchange articles to promote one another to each other's list.

If the newsletter isn't competition, but complimentary to your market, they should be equally interested to talk to your list of subscribers.

Article Announcement Lists

Article announcement lists are similar to article directories in that your article will be placed before an audience of webmasters and publishers who may choose to use your article on their website or in their newsletter.

The advantage of article announcement lists is that the members sign up to receive new articles by email. Your article will be directly sent to members who are interested in the topic of your article based on the list description they have subscribed to.

Yahoo! has a 'Groups' area where you can browse the lists and sign up to receive announcements. By following the guidelines for posting, you can submit articles relevant to the topic (for example there are groups for home, business, internet etc.)

The individuals receiving your article have already indicated an interest in articles on the chosen topic and this creates the perfect audience for your material. You may find traffic coming directly from the members of the list or from their websites when they publish your article with your link.

Publish an Ecourse

Create a multi page tutorial that can be given to subscribers or given away by other businesses.

Like a report, the ecourse can be offered as a freebie by yourself or others. The readers receive valuable tips and information all while being directed to your site at the end of each lesson. You may find that a tutorial delivered over the course of several weeks allows you to develop a relationship with your reader whether they originally received it from you or someone else.

By providing valuable instructions on a related topic to your business you are warming up your audience to become future customers or clients.

Affiliate Programs

Help your affiliates drive traffic to your site by giving them letters or reports to post on their sites or in their newsletters. Your affiliates are also in need of content to provide their customers and if you are providing that content for free they will have more success in sending their subscribers or visitors in your direction.

Your Blog

Creating a blog that is related to your business or niche will allow you to attract an audience that may not respond to a sales page. Providing content and news about your topic with hyperlinks to your various articles or sales pages is an indirect way to send traffic to your site. You can set up a free blog at www.blogger.com.

If you have valuable content and offer subscriptions to your blog (subscription services are free at www.bloglet.com) you can create a pool of readers who will turn to you first when looking for your product or service. You can also make your blog available for others to publish on their websites by creating an RSS feed. This will allow other websites to automatically run your new content on their websites every time you update your blog.

By submitting your blog to www.PingOmatic.com you can alert other

blog services when you post updates.

Other Peoples' Blogs

Your content can be just as valuable to other bloggers who may have a difficult time finding content to share with their readers.

Offering to submit an article to a relevant blog can be a great way to drive traffic to your site with the use of a hyperlink in your author credit.

Be a Contributing Writer

If your writing skills or expertise are truly impressive you may be able to offer an online or offline magazine or newsletter your services as a contributing writer.

By writing a column on your topic or service and having it regularly published in a magazine that caters to your audience, you will have the opportunity to place yourself as an 'expert', leading to loyal readers and customers.

With all these suggestions to use content for building traffic, what kind of content should you be using?

What Kind of Content Do You Need?

Going back to some of the SEO methods used in the past, some website owners were happy to fill pages with keywords that attracted search engines, but turned visitors off. Now even the search engines are learning to 'read' like a human. If the content has too many keywords and unlikely sentence structures, it may consider the site to be manipulated and not list it.

If you want a site that attracts search engines AND keeps people on your website, you need to have information that is relevant, informative and well written. However, when using methods that are designed to attract search engines, the content still needs to be keyword-rich. What does that mean?

Keyword-Rich Content

Keywords are very important to search engines. The words you think that people looking for your information or product might use in the search engines are called 'keywords'. The search engine acts like a Yellow Pages phone book. People look up a topic by word or phrase and find the related entries listed.

Your traffic will depend largely on if you choose the right words. If you use words that no one is searching for – or words that are highly competitive – your chances of being found through the search engines goes down dramatically.

One way to find the right keywords is to find out what words are most

popular for searches. Using a word harvester like the Keyword Selector Tool (found at www.overture.com in the Resource Center) you can find out approximately how many searches have been made for your selected keywords. You may find some similar words or phrases that have even higher amounts of searches than your first selection.

The key to finding the best words for your content is to use the most general term first and then find more specific words or phrases that relate to your website. For example; if you are looking for words for a children's education site, you might first look up the words 'children' or 'education' to discover the most searched term related to your topic. Perhaps you'll see 'child education' or 'teaching children' are more commonly searched terms than 'children's education'.

When you've found words or phrases that are commonly searched for you can find details on the competition for these words in the PPC area by using the View Bids Tool, also in the Overture Resource Center. If the word has high bids or many bidders you can consider that the competition will also be high in the natural search engine results. Check it out for yourself. If the natural search is bringing up sites that lack appropriate content you may be able to top them with your own keyword-rich content.

Unique Content

The algorithms are constantly changing, but currently it has been stated that the search engines don't like duplicate content. That is why many affiliate businesses that set up new websites for each member are often unable to make a top showing in the search engine results.

Too many of the same thing.

Writing your own content or hiring a ghost writer to write it for you will work better. Using free to reprint articles may work, depending on the amount of times that work has been reprinted. In every case, do not duplicate the webpage of another site – both for ethical reasons and the fact that it will not bode well for your search engine status.

If you are using a template site you will need to change a significant amount of the information in order to create a site that the search engines will consider as unique. You can do this by changing your web page title, meta tags, introducing paragraph and by inserting links or editorial blocks within the article body.

Unique content is also important to visitors who may be viewing other related websites and are looking for fresh information on the topic. By providing unique content you will stand out from the crowd.

Informative Content

As mentioned before, getting traffic is not valuable to you if people leave your site right away. Providing informative content is not only more beneficial to your visitors it is important to 'smarter' search engines which also pick up on the content.

If the content is made up of keywords and phrases strung together the search engine may discount it. There are grammatical rules that some search engines may use as a basis for weeding out optimized sites from the truly informative.

Obviously the search engines won't really know if the content is of any value to your visitors – only you can know that – but if you have to sit and write proper information you'd do well to make it of value to the reader.

Relevant Content

Keeping to a theme will help your website both with the search engines and visitors. Keyword-rich articles will likely be relevant or you wouldn't choose them. If you are posting information on various topics, you just won't have the opportunity to optimize your site to its greatest potential.

Amount of Content

The more pages you can say something on the better. Keep information pages short (400-800 words) or the search engines may not 'read' all the way through. Creating many web pages and optimizing the content and the web page will allow you to target more keywords than if you try to cram them all onto one page.

Be careful when using systems which create hundreds or thousands of web pages automatically. Creating content for each page is important and many of these programs create cookie-cutter sites that are simply keyword-rich without any real content. In fact, not only may it not help you with your position in the search engines – it may even hurt you. With many individuals using the same programs the search engines can read the 'finger print' and may consider the web pages to

be invalid for inclusion in the search engine.

Content is useful for creating traffic, pleasing the search engines and offer valuable information to your visitors.

What else can you do with content?

Where Else Can You Use Content?

Think you've exhausted your uses for content?

No. Content is very useful for marketing and attracting customers, but that is certainly not the only thing it's good for.

We understand HOW content helps you bring traffic, but what USES can you make of the content you have? Here are a few ideas:

Create a Website

You can CREATE a website with content.

Yes, if you are just starting out with your business, or are starting a new business online you are in dire need of CONTENT. As explained previously, websites should be based on relevant, informative, engaging content. By creating information and converting it into an optimized website you can easily build a website that has value both to your visitor and to the search engines.

Write a Book

One of the most popular products to sell online is electronic books, or ebooks as they are commonly called.

Ebooks combine the best of the online experience by providing information (which is what most internet users are looking for) with the ease of a downloadable product. That means no inventory, packing or shipping. Also you capitalize on the internet users' demand for instant gratification. Wanting the information and being able to access it immediately are big draws for your customers.

If you're not selling the book, you can still use your content to create a free give-away for your subscribers. Not only do they get a valuable item for free (which is what everybody wants) but you can keep in contact with them and build on that relationship for other business offers.

Build a Blog

If you don't know what a blog is then get ready...

Blogs began as personal entries, similar to an online diary, which allowed individuals to voice their opinions or discuss a favorite hobby, idea or topic.

Now blogs are used by many online businesses as a way to attract an audience through an informal source. Blogs are generally content-rich and give advice or news about an industry, product or service related

to the business of the blogger (the term coined for those who write blogs).

Blogs are often used to indirectly attract an audience by providing valuable information for free. Some bloggers permit readers to subscribe to their blog or even add comments to their postings. While not as interactive as a forum, those who follow a particular blog are not necessarily interested in the business, but because they are receiving information on a topic of interest they are kept in contact with that business by choice, making blogs a good way to develop customers.

By posting articles as often as possible, you can write a blog on nearly any subject imaginable. For instance, if you are selling model planes you will likely find a willing audience that wants to hear about competitions, new products and personal antidotes on the topic. A blog created for that purpose will engage your market without directly advertising to them – creating a 'warm' market that will turn to you first when purchasing model planes.

Promote Affiliate Programs

Use your articles as a way to promote other peoples' products for a nice commission!

Whether you are submitting articles to directories with your affiliate link attached or are writing a free report on the product, or even creating a webpage that directs your visitors to the affiliate site, you can make excellent use of content.

Promoting affiliate programs by putting your own 'stamp' of authority will help you to drive qualified traffic to the affiliate site. With content you can compete against other affiliates representing the same product by giving your customers a personal recommendation or further information that will convince them to buy.

Don't stop there – content can be configured in any way you can imagine. You may find even other uses for your content than those listed here.

Where Do You GET Content?

There are three main sources for you to get the content you need.

They are:

Write it Yourself

Hire a Ghostwriter

Use Other Writers

There are pros and cons to each source but by using a combination of sources you can accumulate a well-rounded body of content for your use. Here are some of the points to consider when using the different methods for creating content. What works best for you will depend on your level of writing ability, what the content will be used for and your budget, among other things.

Write it Yourself

Writing content yourself is not only the least expensive method, but allows you to inflect your personality into the content. This can be very useful in attracting a loyal customer, especially through newsletters and articles.

Writing content yourself can also be beneficial when writing about a topic of which you are particularly knowledgeable about. If you can inform your customers on a topic it may be difficult to find another writer who can impart the same information accurately.

However, if your writing skills are extremely poor you may need some assistance. Whether you simply need to hire a proofreader to catch grammatical errors or an editor to rearrange your thoughts and point out where your information needs clarification, you may still be able to create your own content for less cost than hiring a writer while maintaining the originality of your content.

Hire a Ghostwriter

When you need more than just a little assistance, whether it's because of time restraints, lack of writing abilities or you need a writer with knowledge of a topic you aren't familiar with, you should consider hiring a ghostwriter.

Ghostwriters are individuals who will write content for you (website, articles, ebooks, press releases etc.) and give you all the rights of the original author. You pay them for their time and abilities and in

exchange you claim ownership of the material.

Ghostwriters are valuable to businesses that need quality content on topics that are easily researchable by the ghostwriter. You may also find ghostwriters who are experts in their own field but hire themselves out as writers as a side business.

For more detailed assignments you can also hire a ghostwriter to use your knowledge or research and compose the information in a manner which reflects your own 'voice'. The ghostwriter will need to work very closely with you and develop a style of writing that will emulate the way you express yourself. Ghostwriters have often been hired by famous people to assist them in compiling their autobiographies.

The cost of hiring a ghostwriter is variable depending on the level of expertise required, the amount of research needed and the nature of the assignment. When hiring a ghostwriter you should make a 'work-for-hire' agreement which means that the writing cannot be resold to another buyer or used by the ghostwriter for other purposes.

If you regularly need access to a variety of information you can use a service such as www.InfoGoRound.com which gives you access to a large database of articles written by ghostwriters. This service also permits you to request articles on specific topics that one of their professional writers may undertake writing for you. While the content may be used by other members you are entitled to use them without crediting the original author. You may also change the information or add to it without special permission as would be required if using free to reprint material.

Use Other Writers

There are really two categories of other writers you should consider. Writers who offer their content for free and paid writers.

Paying for a writer to create content for you is not common for small businesses unless the expertise of the author is needed for the material to be useful. Secular magazines often pay writers for their work which can vary in cost depending on the background of the writer and the size of the publication. Fees for writers can be found in the 'Writer's Market' book which is a resource for writers looking for paying jobs.

Writers can be found through associations, recommendations by other people and from freelance websites like www.elance.com. When hiring a writer you should ask for samples of their work and have them make an agreement for permission to use their work or the exclusive rights to the work. Without an agreement in place you may be facing copyright infringement claims or find the writing published in another place without your knowledge.

Working with writers, proofreaders or editors is just another part of doing business online. Making use of these services can help you project a polished, professional appearance to your visitors and readers while still giving you control of the information presented.

As with any contract work you should be careful to choose individuals who respect your needs and deadlines and can provide quality work

while at the same time recognizing the value of the services these individuals are providing to you by giving them enough time to finish your projects and adequate pay.

If you are planning on writing your own content, where do you start?

How to Write Your Own Content

If you have a small budget or you are very interested in creating your own content you should make yourself familiar with the necessary steps required when writing content for business use.

Create a Draft

When you start writing you should begin with a draft of your information. Regardless of whether you are writing a paragraph or a book you should write down the basic thought or information that you are trying to put across to your audience.

Many times a writer will go back to the draft for reference or as a starting point if the first efforts are not satisfactory. By preparing a draft you will not need to worry about whether you remembered the points that needed to be covered or what the purpose of the writing was.

You may only need a few words or brief sentences for your draft. Writing your thoughts as well as your references or quotes down ahead of time will free your mind to create compelling content without trying to hold all the important details in your head as you work.

If you are writing an article or report you should just write the thoughts down as they come to you for your first draft. You can go back and edit it when you've put everything on paper. If you're writing longer content, such as a book, you need to create a table of contents along with a brief summary of each chapter as a basis for getting started.

Do not be concerned with proofreading or accuracy on your first draft. If you need to do more research or check a fact you can go back and do it later. Getting started can be the hardest part for most writers. Avoid getting caught up in making it perfect the first time and you will find it much easier to progress from beginning to end without too much stress.

Make it Clear

When you've finished your first draft you will need to read it over from start to finish and make notations of areas that need clarification or rewording.

Sometimes the information you write down makes sense to you but is not clear to others. This can easily happen when your writing is based on information you already know but are taking for granted that your audience is also aware of. Even if your readers SHOULD have some knowledge of your topic, if you don't clarify the basis for your comments they may find the information confusing or misleading.

Carefully read over your information or ask for an objective opinion. If

you must do the final check for yourself it is easier to catch mistakes if you leave the information for a while and go back to it later for a fresh look. Try to look at it from the perspective of your reader and determine if they would understand the language or explanations easily.

Accuracy and Proofreading

When your writing is finished it is important to check it for accuracy. Are dates, statistics or facts accurate? Are you using proper spelling, especially for names and places?

It is very easy for readers to double check your information when they are browsing the internet. If something strikes them as being 'off' they may actually go see if what you state is referenced somewhere else on the internet.

Proofreading should always be done before publishing your content. Using a spell checking program on your computer will catch most spelling errors but you should try to have a second party review the final copy to catch mistakes that you may have overlooked.

Writing your own content can give you a great sense of accomplishment and ownership. While trying to maintain a professional writing style can be very important, it is also effective to allow your own personality and style to shine through and permits your audience to connect with you.

As interesting as the writing process is, there are some warnings to

keep in mind when you choose to write for yourself.

What NOT to Use for Content

At this point you not only understand the benefits of using content, but you realize that accessing content is fairly easy.

However, the written word is used by humans worldwide as both a means of communication and as a powerful tool to control others. Legal documents and contracts, as well as other forms of records and statements carry a lot of weight in our society and what you put on paper can come back to hurt you if you do not follow some simple guidelines.

Copyright Law

If you are writing your own content you need to be aware that written work and art are both protected by copyrights. The authors and artists do not need to file official documentation to enforce their rights to the works they've created and you can be liable for copyright infringement for any works that you use without the proper authority or permission.

Copyright law is not simple and can be interpreted differently by individuals. However there are some basic points to consider when using another work as a reference or in full.

You are NEVER allowed to publish any amount of another writer's words verbatim without the permission of the author to do so. It is wise to have the written permission unless you are otherwise granted

permission by the author such as when using free to reprint articles that are submitted to article directories.

The reprint permission is usually listed on the article or on the website where the article was posted. In most cases you are free to use the information as long as you do not edit it in any way and you list the author and their personal bio in the resource box they provide along with the article.

Terms for Using Others Writing

When you hire a writer you must agree in writing to the terms of usage. If the work is purchased outright and the original author has no copyright claims, or is providing the work for your use only, you must state that it is a 'work-for-hire' or that you have purchased exclusive rights to the work.

If you have limited or single use rights to the work than you will not be permitted to use the content for more than the specified time or place of publication. The article may also be resold to other individuals for their publications or websites.

If you are simply quoting a reference source you are usually safe to do so as long as the reprinted information is shown within quotation marks and the source or author is listed along with the quote or with a symbol indicating the source in the appendix.

The rules for copyright infringement can be a bit murky but you can be assured that if the content you've duplicated is questioned, more often

than not the courts will rule in favor of the original writer.

You can find more information on US copyright law at www.copyright.gov.

Now that you know what kind of content you need and where to get it – how can you optimize your website with the content you provide?

Optimizing Your Keyword Content

If you are using your content to draw the attention of search engines you will find many different opinions on how to best optimize your web pages.

Outlined here are some simple techniques that will do well with any content page and especially well with keywords that are not being commonly used by other sites. If you can locate keywords related to your website that are not being currently focused on by bigger sites you may find your pages easily placing high in the natural search engine results.

First add your keyword or phrase in the <title> tag.

Next add the words or phrase in the <meta keyword> tag as well as a short descriptive line in the <meta description> tag. Do not become overly repetitive or advertising with your wording, although using words that incite curiosity is fine since they may appear as the description used for your listing.

When writing your headline be sure to use the keyword or phrase and place it in Header 1 tags which will appear as <h1> and </h1> on either end of your title.

Try to use the word or phrase several times in the first few hundred words that appear on your webpage. If your site has columns, be sure to count the first column as your starting point as the search engines will read left to right just like you do – down the first column before moving to the next.

Make use of the keywords or phrases by integrating them into your content as naturally as possible. It may be possible for the search engines to determine if a word is not fitting into proper grammar usage and is only being used for optimization.

In the same regard you should be cautious about over using the word or phrase which may also 'tip off' the search engines.

Whether these tactics work for you is greatly determined by the quality of the research used to select keywords or phrases as well as other factors, known and unknown, which the search engines apply to determine your position in the listings.

Optimizing several pages with different keywords can allow you to test this out. Words or phrases that have high competition may be less likely to make it to the top, but if the competition didn't do their homework (especially if you're working in a niche area) you may be very surprised by the results.

A Quick Note for Pay Per Click Users

As promised at the outset, here is a simple guide for getting started with PPC advertising. You should find it to be complimentary to your overall marketing program and a good start to finding traffic while you continue to build your natural search engine placement with the methods outlined earlier.

Research Your Keywords

Don't waste your money bidding on words or phrases that will attract the wrong audience or too broad of an audience or you will quickly go through your advertising budget with very little results.

Use programs like the one found at www.Wordtracker.com that can assist you in creating a list of keywords and phrases that will relate to your topic. You can also easily find out which words have large amounts of competition as well as the current bids for those words.

When you have made your keyword and phrases list, develop a simple ad that is both clear and descriptive. Use proven advertising copy words like "how to..", "learn", "save", "free" and "easy" in your description. Create curiosity while still providing enough specific information that you will not attract under qualified traffic.

Use each keyword or phrase you are bidding on in its own description rather than giving the same ad copy to every word. Test your campaigns and keep to a budget.

Figure out how many customers you need to make a sale and based on that figure you can work out how much you are willing to spend to attract customers through pay per click advertising.

If your product sells on average for \$20 and it takes 100 visitors to make a sale you can afford to spend 20 cents per visitor to make a sale. Obviously you would want to spend less in order to make a profit, so by bidding 10 cents per word or phrase you would spend \$10 to make a \$20 sale.

Don't forget, pay per click is only one piece of your marketing strategy, so while you may spend more using pay per click when you first start, eventually your content and hyperlinks will attract free visitors which will offset the cost per sale ratio.

Make use of content to its fullest potential. Respect your readers and writers by presenting accurate, relevant content in a way that truly informs or entertains. Learn more about your chosen topic or share your knowledge with others by communicating with **CONTENT!**