THE INTERNET
No Place For Dummies
Article Directory Marketing
And Article Syndication

fresh ideas

Carl Hruza
5th Edition

"The Internet – No Place for Dummies" Reference Guide

Article Directory Marketing and Article Syndication – What You Need To Know And Avoid in 2012

By Carl Hruza

Copyright 2012 Carl Hruza / Connect Online Services

www.noplacefordummies.com

All Rights Reserved

This book and the products and services referred to in this book are not associated, affiliated, endorsed, or sponsored by WordPress, Joomla, eBay, Facebook, or Google, nor have they been reviewed tested or certified by WordPress, Joomla, eBay, Facebook, or Google.

Disclaimer – As the author of this guide I have no affiliation with any of the plugin, software or service providers referred to within this guide. I am not responsible for any technical issues which might arise from the installation or use of any 3rd party plugins or other software referenced in this guide. Always make a full backup of your Wordpress installation before installing any new plugin or software. Always fully test the software after you've installed any plugins.

About the Author.

Carl Hruza has been a successful Internet Marketer and multiple business owner since 1998. Coming from an industry background with a strong emphasis on computing and technology, Hruza created one of the very first true SEO companies back in 1999. Over the years he has focused his efforts more on providing information to other Internet Entrepreneurs, and does this through a variety of outlets. His articles are commonly syndicated around the web by popular websites such as Web Pro News and Site Pro News, and he operates a training a consultancy business, providing highly rated courses on Internet Marketing and Business Development through his website at **www.noplacefordummies.com**

Learn more about the author at **www.webdesigndoorcounty.com**

Other popular titles in my "The Internet – No Place for Dummies" Series include -

A Complete Guide To Web Marketing and Creating an Online Business

WordPress and Social Media Powered Content Distribution

Article Directory Marketing and Article Syndication

Wordpress – 12 Essential Plugins To Make Your Site Rock.

All books are available from www.NoPlaceForDummies.com

To receive occasional updates on article marketing techniques and strategies, please subscribe to my email list at http://webdesigndoorcounty.com/subscribe-to-news-list.html

Foreword.

The following is a complete reference for Article Marketing for 2012.

Yes, it is date-specific. If you search the web for resources on these subjects you'll find 1000's of opinions, the vast majority of which have been made redundant by the passage of time. Things are on the change. It's a daily task to keep abreast of the current state of things concerning Google and its impact and influence on SEO and web traffic in general. Once you've read this book it is recommended that you visit the author's website and register for newsletter updates, to keep abreast of important changes within the industry.

INTRODUCTION

I want to start out by explaining things. You need to understand the concepts so you can apply the strategies.

Whilst you may be anxious to roll up your sleeves and get down to the business of 'doing it', I urge you to acquaint yourself properly with the 'why' before you get too far into the how.

So that there's no ambiguity over what I want you to take away from this, let me spell it out to you now:

1. An understanding of how to build an effective list.
2. An understanding of the importance of content ownership
3. An understanding of the effect of duplicate content and how it is handled by Google
4. An understanding of how to achieve a high "Google Credit Score" for your original content
5. An understanding of the different types of Article Marketing

After which we'll get into the 'doing' phase, and it will work like so:

1. We'll create a simple 'sales funnel' utilizing 'landing pages' to 'receive' the visitors from your new articles.
2. We'll generate a syndication quality article to compliment the content / theme of

your new page and explore the option of 'outsourcing'.

3. We'll research potential article syndication websites and create an invitation letter to the owners

4. We'll submit the article for syndication to the list we've created above

5. We'll utilize Article Directories effectively in our strategy for syndication

6. We'll create a list of contacts generated from the sales funnel and setup auto-responders.

At that point you'll have everything you need to build your business. There's an Internet Marketers term which I detest, it's so cliché and smug, it goes like this: "rinse and repeat". Unfortunately I can't think of a better term to tell you what to do after you've completed the steps in this book and you've gone through the exercise as listed above. You'll have new people on your lists, you'll simply need to start over at point 1 with your next article and continue building your list. You'll be amazed when this system picks up momentum and you see the true long-term value of what you are doing.

Building a List For Your Business.

How does list building fit into a guide focused on article marketing? Building your list of contacts is the cornerstone of an effective article marketing campaign. We'll be covering how the two are connected later in this guide, but for now you need a clear understanding of how lists are compiled and why people use them.

In many ways your most valuable business asset is your mailing list. Traffic/visitors to your site will come and go as things beyond your sphere of influence change around you. Google introduces a new algorithm change and your traffic can drop 50% overnight. So it's important to develop a list of contacts and to keep them 'fresh' and engaged.

Many websites are tuned to collect people's email addresses and nothing else. I'm not talking about 'spammy' websites I'm referring to some very well constructed and informative sites.

All commercial websites should promote some form of 'call to action'. If you're selling a product directly from your site then you'll be using texts like 'buy now'. But if your site focuses on building email lists you'll generally be offering some form of incentive in exchange for a visitors email address. People use free guides, free ebooks, competitions

etc, to encourage people to register and leave behind their email address.

Once your list is created and populated you begin the steps leading up to making a sale. Most people use a series of pre-written 'auto-responders' to send a series of sales letters to their list. Generally, the first few emails are designed to build trust and reputation. Later in the series the actual selling begins. I won't get too in-depth into designing effective lists, but if you'd like to learn more then look for my upcoming reference guide in "The Internet – No Place For Dummies" series, which covers list building and email marketing in much more detail. (due for release end 1st Q 2012)

Now you may be asking, "why wouldn't I just sell the product to my visitor when s/he first encounters my website, why would I bother trying to get them to sign up to my list in place of just making a straight sale?". The point about list building is that you have ongoing opportunities to sell something to your contacts, whereas with your website you generally have only one shot. What if the person visiting your website doesn't have enough money in their account to purchase from you on that day, or they're just not ready, or they want to shop around? If you can encourage them to join your list you'll have access to that person on an ongoing basis for however long they remain a subscriber. Plus you can sell multiple products, offers, services to the same person.

However you manage the front-end of your business, having an active contact list is always going to improve your bottom line.

The Importance of Content Ownership

Before we get into the detail of article marketing you need to understand some basic principals of how the web works. I'm not talking kid's stuff here, I'm talking about some important concepts that few people really understand.

What I'm looking for here is for you to understand the importance of being rewarded fully for the content you publish (as the original author) on your website. People take this for granted, but they are wrong to do so.

Never assume that you are recognized as the owner or author of a piece of content by Google or any other search engine. There are steps you need to take to make sure you are given recognition for your efforts, and this section is largely concerned with how to make that happen.

The web is all about content, it's basically one large article directory. The task for a search engine is to provide an efficient indexing system so we can connect with the information we are looking for in the fewest possible steps.

In the old days, when we bought our 'Encyclopedia Britannica', we'd flip to the front to find a broad index of content, then flip to the back to try and find a specific piece of content. It was and still is a pain trying to find something specific in a large hardcopy publication.

Obviously, search engines automate that task pretty well on the web by recording billions of documents and serving up the most relevant to our needs in a few milliseconds.

However, Google has taken it all a few steps further. With the advent of their Page Rank algorithm a few years back Google demonstrated its capacity for collecting multiple sources of information and building actionable data profiles. Google has since added to its profile arsenal by recording the specific surfing habits of its users and the websites on which they land. Combining the personal data it records about us with the data taken from a website (via Analytics, Chrome, or just simply from standard Google searches), Google can now match us with content deemed even more relevant to our needs.

So Google has become a very intelligent content indexing system, delivering more and more 'personalized' results based on our surfing habits, our demographic and the performance of the websites to which we are referred.

Duplicate Content

To many, the term 'duplicate content' has very negative connotations. We've long been warned about the perils of having our content flagged as 'duplicate' and told to avoid it at all costs. My concern isn't so much the prospect of a penalty for using previously published material, it is more to do with losing the credit when yours is the original work.

But why should Google care about duplication if it's large enough and fast enough to index pretty much everything on the web, surely it has the capacity to determine which content is the original and which has been duplicated? Well, actually it isn't (large enough or fast enough). And therein lies the problem.

Google *needs* to know the source and originator of published content. As the author of a piece of content I should have precedence over everyone else who publishes it. Google needs to know who owns the content so it can give preference and prominence to the source and not to someone who has merely replicated it for their own self-interest or gain. It's one of the most critical yardsticks that Google has to judge us by. If it gets the source wrong in its algorithm all other measurements will result in a false or negatively weighted outcome. It can't reward quality content fairly, if it doesn't know who has

authored it.

Unsurprisingly this isn't something that we hear Google making a big deal about. Why? Because they don't have and never will have a perfect working solution. But it's clear from some of the algorithm and policy changes during 2011 that Google is working hard to improve its chances of determining the true source of content.

The first step in a series of new steps was for Google to make a basic assumption about Article Directories. Article Directories contain a lot of content, a large percentage of which is previously published content. Article Directories fared well under the old system of ranking, but some of the key directories, EzineArticles for example, have taken a major hit under Google's new 'Panda' algorithm update. In a sense the hit has been more about sending a message than it has been about cleaning up the web of duplicate content. In a way Google has behaved like a newly elected Government. When you're trying to introduce a new way of thinking, it sometimes helps to make a few high-profile personnel changes. So Google has basically announced to the world that duplicate content is on its radar – learn the new rules or face the axe.

When you look closely at the results of Panda it's fairly easy to work backwards and reverse-engineer the thought processes involved. Article Directories contain primarily duplicate content, but not entirely, so Google must have factored other information into its decision to devalue AD's. If you look at the whole scenario, it can give you valuable clues as to where things are headed. There are two clear problems with Article Directories and the type of content they provide a home for:

1 – Re-Publishing of Previously Published Content (Duplication).

Clearly, people create content, often for their own sites, then use multiple article directories to re-publish that same content, either in an attempt to gain back-links, attract direct traffic or appeal to niche re-publishers of content (syndicators). Either which way it is commonly duplicated, and the Article Directories are the catalyst for making this happen.

When you look at everything else contained in an AD (all non-duplicate content), you see the second problem –

2 – Poor quality content.

When you search an article directory for something unique, what you'll often find is something that doesn't read too well. In many cases that is because it has been mechanically spun from previously published content. So in terms of value to the

searcher, it's even less useful than the original, which has already been tagged as a dupe.

So clearly the Article Directories, and the way in which they operate, are not going to garner sympathy from Google, who've taken on the task of improving the quality of the web.

So where does this leave us with respect to content publishing? What are the rules and how do we play the game?

<div align="center">

CONTENT = ARTICLES | ARTICLES = CONTENT

</div>

It's important to understand that there's no difference when we talk about pages on your website and something which gets submitted to an article directory. It's all content, and they're all articles in some way, shape or form.

If we're not careful we can become unwittingly caught up in the purging process, even if we're not playing an active part in so-called article marketing. We may not necessarily be penalized but we may have our original content devalued in some way because it appears elsewhere in a similar format. Hang with me on this, I'll make it more clear soon.

Protecting Your Content and Establishing Ownership
The two main issues surrounding duplicated or republished content are -

1. If your content is found from Google search outside of your own website you are loosing direct traffic.
2. If Google is unable to establish you as the originator of the content, you may eventually have the content published on your own website devalued or even de-indexed.

If you are a proactive article marketer it's important to understand the consequences of what you are doing. But what if you're not proactively distributing your content, imagine if the control over your content is taken away from you without your consent. Well it's probably happening to you already. People find content on websites and republish it without permission. They may even try to rewrite the copy and claim authorship for themselves.

And it isn't just people -

Content Scrapers -
If you feel flattered when someone republishes your content, keep in mind that a large

percentage of this duplicated and replicated content is collected and republished by software – content scrapers. They automate the task of trawling the web and stealing text copy that matches a target theme. If someone has a website about 'health' and your site is also about health, when they program their scraping tools to collect information relating to the health niche, it may well be your content that they're scraping, along with many others. Many of these tools use integrated text spinners which churn out some bastardized version of your original work. Wordpress blogs are rife with heavily spun content collected by automated scrapers.

I've written extensively for a wide variety of niches and I frequently find whole pages of content which I've written for a website, reproduced elsewhere without permission. Many people assume this cannot harm you, and maybe in a direct sense it cannot. But at best, it's leaching your traffic away from you, and at worst, it could embroil you in the middle of an upcoming scheme to remove duplicated content from the web. (or greatly minimize its presence).

The upshot is, you need to lock-down your content and control its use on the web.

But I own the content, I wrote it and published it first!

To illustrate the reality of the point I'm making, here is a link to a post on a popular webmaster forum. The post Title is '[Help, Google Gave Me The Ax - Because Of Content Thieves!](#)'
Here is another post titled [Somebody stealing my content and outranking me with it?](#)
There are many similar examples of the above posts to be found, yet in most cases, people are not even aware that it is affecting them.

Even if someone or some 'bot reproduces your content with a link-back to your website (the back-link is rare), Google does not always know where the content originated. Google can only determine the originator if it has real-time indexing of the entire web, which it does not. Think about it for a moment. If Google only has between 18% and 30% of the entire web in its index at any one time, how can it assume that a piece of content it encounters for the first time does not already exist elsewhere? In fact mathematically, it must assume the opposite of what you'd expect – it must assume that all new content it finds **is** previously published.

Article marketers have developed the idea that you can post an article on your site, wait until it's indexed, then post it everywhere else and Google somehow recognizes you as

the 'originator' - therefore if anyone is going to get hit with the 'dupe' penalty it isn't going to be you. This is a complete fallacy. Since Google has such a low percentage of the entire web in its index - how can Google know you're the original author? You're only a little less likely to get hit with a dupe penalty than the person who has taken your content and republished it.

So it's important to take some basic steps when writing content to ensure that it cannot be easily replicated outside of your own website. This is new thinking in many respects. We've been lead to believe that when people reproduce our content it's a good thing, a vote in our favor. Unfortunately, Google is in the middle of having to readjust its own thinking, its own mechanisms for deciding what's useful and what isn't. Each time a loophole is exploited, in this case the mass reproduction of simulated content for gaining SERP advantage through the manipulation of article directories, Google has to step in and rewrite the rules.

The Solution

The simple way to protect the content which we publish to our own website is to make certain that it cannot be easily replicated outside of our own site. Having a page of static text, perhaps with an image placed somewhere on the page, is the easiest way to loose control of your work. It can be collected and republished with complete ease.

So the way to make your page more unique is to incorporate different types of media into the actual article, and to embed them into the context and content of the page.

1 - Integrated video.
2 - Integrated images.
3 - Links out to authority resources (links to Google reference sites, WIKI and other non-commercial sites which are themed to the source content are precious).
4 - Integrated social media within the page.
5 - Google + and FB 'like' on the specific page and not just the homepage.
6 - Alternate formats for accessibility, like PDF, audio and audio/video versions of the specific page content.
7 - Some pattern of social bookmarking and interaction.
8 - The option for textual interaction with the page, either a simple comments script or full-blown blog.

In doing most or all of the above, you're essentially creating a **unique template** for your work which cannot be replicated. You're creating an encryption code which cannot be

cracked outside of your own website and you're giving Google a reliable yardstick for measuring your content and determining authorship. The more uniqueness you can apply to a page in the form of components which cannot be easily replicated outside of your website, the more 'bits' there are in your encryption code and the more 'secure' Google feels about your specific content. (The reward is a high Google Credit Score, or more "Authority" if you prefer the old nomenclature).

And before you think, "well then, I'll just grab some content from eZines and embed a few videos into it". Well that won't work, and that's the whole point. The textual content is still the key component, it will still be 'snippet-checked' against Google's index. The videos, audio, social media, external links etc are just solidifying the uniqueness of the footprint of that page on the web. If there's more social media interaction on an article or blog post, then that's creating an even broader authority footprint, almost eliminating the possibility of it being replicated elsewhere entirely. And if the interaction keeps on happening, i.e it's continually changing in a unique way in Google's index, then you'll get a reward for freshness (not the bathing type).

Earlier I mentioned embedding the actual images and videos into the context and content of the page. I didn't just mean using YouTube embed code. What I mean is to make the images and video form part of the story on the page. So removing one or the other, or both, will render the remaining content meaningless. Think about writing a report and showing a table of results which is integral to the report. What if we create the tabulated results as an image, then create a short video to explain how the results were collected. Without the image and the video, the report is practically meaningless, which makes it virtually useless to someone looking to harvest content without your involvement. And if a genuine person wants to share your content with their readers, they can use a short text extract (which your provide) and a link back to the original content on your website.

So I recommend you make this your goal in 2012. Rather than spending a full day writing a 1500 word article, engage your visitors with 350 words of useful and succinct information, then utilize other media types to complement the article. There are freely available text to audio and text to video tools available, so you can create embedded versions of your text easily in both audio and video formats. Remember to build the alternate formats into the wording of your article, so the textual content cannot be reproduced without the alternate formats being present, thus making the page as a whole entirely without replica. In other words, make the article incomplete without the inclusion of all of the embedded and alternate media formats.

The Google Credit Score

By implementing the above strategy you are creating what I term a high Google credit score. Imagine that the parameter in the algorithm 'original author' is weighted, perhaps on a scale of 1-100, with 100 being an absolute certainty that Google knows you're the originator of the content. So if you score high 90's, all subsequent processing of the algorithm is numerically weighted in your favor and your content will never be downgraded or removed for being dupe.

The strategy is to simply ensure that it can have no duplicate.

So as someone who publishes work on their own website, you can see how it's important to protect your content and have control over how it is replicated. But what if you proactively seek to spread your content around the web as a form of marketing?

ARTICLE MARKETING – ARTICLE DIRECTORY MARKETING AND ARTICLE SYNDICATION

Fact #1 - We are all Article Marketers, whether we choose to be or not. If you proactively publish your content in article directories, blogs or eZines, or just simply choose to passively publish content on your own website or blog, you are still an article marketer.

Fact #2 – Google is changing the rules on duplicate content and the new rules affect ALL web publishers - proactive and passive article marketers alike.

The difference between active and passive article marketing and why I consider anyone with a website to be involved with one or both -

Proactive Article Marketers
Clearly, there are proactive article marketers who utilize sites like ezinearticles dot com to publish content. This is one of the most widely used methods of website promotion, yet at the same time it is one of the most widely misunderstood and potentially ineffective. I'll get to the how and why later.

Passive Article Marketers
If you simply have an eCommerce site or publish a blog or some other type of website, you may not be proactively using article marketing as part of your promotion strategy,

so you may think the rules and concepts don't apply to you. But you are wrong. The most successful websites all share something in common – useful information/products/services. Whenever you publish something useful, it's going to get shared. That's the power of the Internet at work. People will take your content, extracts, products, images or whatever you have that's worth sharing, and....share it. In it's most innocent form the sharing process can be useful to you. But in other cases which I've already covered, people can take your content and use it in ways which can hurt your reputation and your business. You're either in control over the 'sharing' process or you're a passive bystander. You <u>need</u> to take control.

Proactive Article Marketing – Does it Work, Is It Worth Your Time?

Disclaimer – even when a particular approach to web marketing might seem illogical, you can always guarantee that a niche group will be doing it the illogical way and claiming to be successful at it. And they may well be.

My approach to marketing comes from a preponderance of evidence coupled with the personal experience gained from 14 successful years in the Internet Marketing arena. In my first installment of the reference guide series "The Internet – No Place for Dummies", I recited a story which took place during my first year in Internet Marketing. On the verge of giving up, I submitted an article to a leading eZine of the time which generated $14,000 of business in 48 hours, and went on to create passive income from a group of clients recruited as a direct consequence of the published article. And that's just one article from many successful articles I've published over the years. So it can be worthwhile but only if you do it right.

The Different Types of Proactive Article Marketing.
There may be some subtle variations on these, but generally speaking, article marketing strategies fall into one of the following two broad categories -

Marketing to Article Directories

Marketing for Syndication

Marketing to Article Directories
This is the most common form of article marketing, though not in my opinion the most useful. Some benefits can be gained, but there are generally more effective ways of utilizing your time.
For those who don't know, Article Directories are basically websites which accept and publish articles from multiple authors and list them in some type of searchable directory layout. These articles can often be submitted with an anchor-text link somewhere in the article body, and/or an anchor-text link in the author bio box. Once the article is published in the directory, it can be found by visitors to the directory and may eventually appear directly in the Google search index. An article published in a popular directory may attract some visitors from within the directory itself, but generally the viewing numbers are not very high. In 2011 Google updated its algorithm and has downgraded the prominence of these article directories, meaning that their direct traffic is not as high as it once was.

Here's how it works -

Method 1 – Playing by the rules

1. I write an article or content page and add it to my website.
2. I wait for the article to be indexed by Google then I submit the exact same article to multiple Article Directories.

That's quite a simple approach, it's well within the means of even the most novice of Internet Marketers and it isn't too time consuming, so many people do it. But many do it without fully understanding why they're doing it. If you ask them why, many will give you this stock reply -

1. I believe that there is value in the back-link(s) coming from the article in the directory pointing back to my own website.
2. I believe the article will send new visitors directly to my website.

So let's explore the two perceived benefits in more detail.

Back-link Value.
Back-links have long been considered in Google's ranking algorithm as a mechanism for casting votes for a target website. The more back-links, the more votes, the more 'important' the target page and the higher it would rank in the SERP's. As always

happens, people sought to exploit back-linking to their advantage by automating the generation of large amounts of back-links in an effort to manipulate the Google SERP's. And it worked fine for a time. But the benefit given to these back-links by Google is changing. Going into 2011 it was generally understood that Google utilized two related ranking factors for all web content. The first was 'Page Rank'. This was a popularity score or vote given to a page calculated on the number of sites back-linking to that page. The actual PR was calculated based on an evaluation of each incoming link performed within the Google software or 'algorithm'. The evaluation considered the PR of the referring page and how many outbound links were on that page. Factors such as the referring site 'authority' and the referring site theme, were also assumed to be passed along with these links.

The last two components of the back-link value are still important – referring site authority and theme or relevance. These are difficult to measure in ways where a numerical value can be assigned, so many people with a 'scientific' bent often dismiss their existence (if it can't be measured it doesn't exist). But 'site authority' and the value of the referring site's relevance do exist. In simple terms, a site builds authority as a whole entity, whereas individual pages in a site build individual Page Rank. Sites like Amazon.com, Youtube.com have high site authority. Individual pages within the site may not have a high PR, but when you receive a link from a PR0 page on a high authority website it carries with it a little more juice (importance and benefit) than a link from a PR0 page on a low authority website.

The sites' relevance to your theme is even more important. If your website is all about 'natural health', having a link from a site also about natural health will improve the juice flowing from that link.

So how does that apply to a link coming from an Article Directory back to your website?

Well, unless it's a themed directory, you won't be getting any value from the link in terms of it being relevant to the content of your website. It will be originating from a PR0 page, so the actual PR it passes isn't going to help any. But in terms of it being on one of the larger directories like ezinearticles.com it will have a little site authority affect to pass along. But not much these days.

So if there isn't a whole lot of benefit to be had from back-links, what about the direct traffic?

Let's say an article published on ezinearticles.com gets 350 'views' in the first 2 months,

which is perhaps a little overly optimistic in the post-Panda era. The issue is: how many of those views will result in a visitor clicking through to your website?

The stats indicate that it is a surprisingly low percentage. It's clearly influenced by the quality of the article and the effective use by the author of any calls-to-action, but it's typically in the range of 2% to 10%, which would be from 7 to 35 actual referred visitors to your website using the example above.

Now just how 'targeted' are those visitors, how much benefit do they bring? It largely depends on how your article is written. For example, has the article pre-sold a product to a visitor so that they're landing on your page in buy-mode? That's quite unlikely since blatantly self-serving articles are disallowed by the directories where manual approval is a part of the process.
So in most cases, the handful of visitors you do receive will result in a conversion rate which is quite low.

So what has your effort accomplished? - In most cases, not very much.

Method 2 – Gaming the system with 'spinning'

Method 2 tries to take Method 1 and turn it into something better by playing the numbers game. It reminds me of the old manufacturing industry adage - "we loose a dollar on every sale but we'll make it up on volume".

Instead of processing their articles one at a time, certain article marketers use software tools called 'text spinners' to rapidly create many variations of the original article. These variations are then submitted in bulk to the article directories, often using automated article submission tools.

So a strategy involving this method would look like so -

1. I write an article or content page and add it to my website.
2. I take that article and I run it through a spinner and create many copies from the original
3. I use software to distribute the spun copies to the article directories

So now you can see that instead of one back-link there could potentially be several hundred, and instead of 7-35 visitors there could potentially be several thousand.

Nothing has changed in terms of the intended consequences, we've just multiplied the outcome by a factor of 100, or 1000, or however many spun copies and article directories were utilized.

So this works great, right?

Not exactly. Here are some of the pitfalls -

- Often times the spun copies are awful in terms of grammar and readability. So they're not useful to a human being.
- Because of their poor quality, many will not get past a manual review from an article directory so they will not be published.
- Those which are published will generally receive a very low rate of click-throughs from real people, since their readability is so poor.
- Since the 'spinning' part of the process is often performed quite shoddily, the finished product bares too close a resemblance to the original article and it can easily be detected and treated as duplicated content. Though dupe content may not be penalized, it almost certainly will not be rewarded. So the link juice passed by these duplicated articles may be zero.

So what has all this effort accomplished? -

The end result is that you have a whole series of articles on the web which look strikingly similar. None of these articles are passing real visitors since they're so poorly written (spun), and most of these articles are passing little if any link benefit since they've been treated as dupes. So you may as well have stayed at home and baked a cake.

Now there have been and there still are some success stories from people who use article spinning in conjunction with article directory marketing, but Google has these people well and truly on their radar. They've come out and said as much via their venerable Anti-Spam/Manipulation spokesperson Mr. Matt Cutts. (Believe some but not all of what he tells us).

You can see how some of the above is getting awfully close to becoming 'black-hat'. It's an attempt at directly manipulating Google into providing your website with higher SERP's, yet provides little or no benefit to the end user.

So the question is, do you want to create a new marketing strategy for your website based on something which is going to get shut down, and possibly result in you being penalized in some way?

Oh What A Fool I've Been
Whether you use Method 1 or Method 2, there's an even bigger and more glaring downside to this whole process which many people fail to see. There are several in fact, here are two -

Problem 1 - If your site is perhaps quite new, or has a lowish authority, then there's a strong possibility that the copy of the article submitted to the Article Directory will show up in the search engine results ahead of the copy on your own website. Now with a 10% click-through rate, you've just presented the Article Directory with 90% of your traffic on a plate. The AD gets found first in the SERP's and all you get from your own content is a measly 10% rate of click-throughs (if you're lucky). You might think you can counter this by only submitting unique articles to the directories, ones which have not been published first on your own website. But the end result is exactly the same – had it been published on your website and not on the AD, your overall resulting traffic would have been much higher. The small number of visitors generated by the article directory under its own steam will not compensate you for the lost traffic from not having published the article direct to and only on your website.

Problem 2 – If you go down the spinning and bulk submission route, you're creating back-links at a velocity which looks completely unnatural, in the eyes of Google. So you could quite easily be the recipient of one of the many warnings Google is issuing through it's Webmaster Tools platform – "Your site has been flagged for having unnatural linking activity".

So you are clear on this, let me give you a simple example of how this affects you, using some real data collected from a collaboration with a client in the employment industry. (It doesn't matter what the industry is, the concept is the same).

If you don't care for numbers and stats, just scroll-down a few paragraphs to (*)

Client has a medium authority website, a PR3 and receives around 14,500 monthly uniques.
Client researches and creates reports on employment trends and publishes these reports

as both blog posts and web pages on his own site.
Client then submits these reports to Article Directories and provides tools on his own website to encourage syndication and republishing of his content (RSS Feeds, copy/paste HTML code etc).

The Test.
A new report/page was written and added to the clients website
The new page was indexed by Google
The new page was formatted as an article and submitted to the three largest Article Directories with a link back to a different page on the owner's website.
One month from the original article/content appearing in Google, an analysis was conducted on the content and its contribution to traffic to the client website.

The article/content has received 327 unique visits directly from Google search.
The target page in the author bio has received 253 unique visits directly from Article Directories.

Using Google Analytics data, it was determined that 95% of the 327 hits delivered from Google originated from one of 12 different search terms. On all but 3 of these terms, the clients content page was outranked by sites which had republished the content. This is extremely poor yet is quite typical of what happens when your site has a low authority score.

But what does this mean, what should you conclude from the above?

One might look at those stats and think that for 30 days, a combined total of 580 visits to a single page was not a bad return on the investment in content. However, when you consider that the click-through rate from an article found in one of the larger directories can be as low as 10% you start to think about the true cost of having those directories out-rank you for your own content.

253 is 10% of 2530. Assuming that a high percentage of people finding the article came from external searches and not internally from Article Directory searches (we can make this assumption based on the SERP's of the content in the directories outranking the content on the owners own website, which received 327 hits from those same searches). Let's say that 75% of those 2530 hits came from Google searches, that's almost 1900 people finding the article within the 3 article directories directly from Google search.

Had those same people found the article on the originators website first (as they should have), the total search-related hits for the month would have been around 2200 and not the 580 actually recorded.

So you can see the significance of this. Almost 75% of the traffic was forfeited to republishers.

(*) When your content is published externally from your website, you share the benefits of that content with the people who republish it, and often times they receive far more traffic from your content than you do.

Having conducted several similar tests through 2011, I've seen examples where the ratio is much lower and examples where it is quite a bit higher, but in over 65% of the cases it was in favor of the republishers. As one might expect, the sites with a higher authority and a more comprehensive internal page back-linking strategy faired better.

So for those who actively publish their content in article directories, the self-inflicted damage can be high, even in a post-Panda world where the power of Article Directories has been diminished. The real bad news is when your content starts to get pushed aside to the point where it disappears from the index altogether, since it is basically duplicated and Google has determined that a republisher deserves more of the spotlight than you do.

Where does this leave you?

Firstly, it's wrong to draw the conclusion that Article Directories and content republishers serve no useful purpose, they can and do, you just need to know how to use them.

Article Marketing for Syndication

Marketing for syndication generally requires a different approach to the article structure and content from the outset. You should ideally write with syndication in mind, you don't have to, but it helps. I've had articles syndicated which were written for a different purpose, but the most successfully syndicated articles I've written have come when syndication was the goal from the outset.

Here's how it works -

1. I write an article and (may) place it on my website first.
2. I proactively research websites and ezine owners who I believe may be interested in sharing my article with their readers. I write to them, personally, and offer them the article in exchange for leaving the resource/bio box intact
3. I build a contact list of these websites, blogs, ezines etc who have previously syndicated my work, and I actively provide new and ongoing material to these sites for their own use.
4. These site/ezine owners welcome my content as it's informative and on-point for their visitors – it adds value to their own website or list.
5. The sites/ezines who syndicate my content have a niche following who have a direct interest in the subject of my article. When they click-through, they're not necessarily pre-sold, but they're warm and receptive to my presence.
6. I then submit that article to the leading Article Directories for the purpose of attracting further syndication, and nothing much else.

Let's attack this from the potentially negative aspects first. As with article marketing to directories, as covered in point one, there is still an element of 'duplicated content'. Assuming these articles are republished on other websites, they may attract the same attention from Google and be awarded the same status as any other page of duplicated content - the back-links may not pass any juice/benefit.

But here is where the important factor comes into play – the goal of article syndicators is not to build back-link juice and appear Saintly in the eyes of Google, it's to build an incoming stream of direct traffic. In some ways this strategy can unshackle you from Google, you're no longer worried or preoccupied by the business of ranking your pages, your focus is on building direct traffic. It isn't a complete unshackling, your traffic is still under Google's influence, but you've created at least some degree of buffer between your source of income and Google's habit of changing things at will.

Points to consider -

1. The source of your traffic is your syndicated article and it should ideally be written in a format to attract syndication.
2. The typical visitor from a syndicated article is not hitting your website in 'buying mode', so you need to collect their contact details first, then work on building their trust and your reputation, then commence the process of selling your products/services to them. It should be viewed as a process of relationship building and not a one-time hit.

I don't know about you but the prospect of minimizing the need for Google in my marketing efforts is something which I find attractive. I have little or no interest in building a website for the purpose of pleasing a search engine, a piece of software. Though I'm not breaking my dependance on Google directly or indirectly, I am limiting the damage it can do to me by a significant enough degree.

As I talked about at the start of this guide, the most valuable asset for any website owner is a contact list. The most effective way of building a contact list is through article syndication.

Article "Quality".
If you're juggling thoughts around in your mind about how to move forward, one of your concerns might be article quality. There is almost certainly a requirement for a higher quality product with syndication than with basic marketing through directories. The quality of writing to get an article approved in a leading directory can be quite low. But to get an article freely syndicated, the quality needs to be of a higher standard. It's sometimes difficult for people to assess whether or not their own standard of writing is good enough, so many people try the process then attribute the failure to the 'system' and not to their own ability to write effectively. However, there are places where you can pay for syndication quality articles and they're quite affordable. I'll cover these sources in the upcoming 'doing' section.

Where and how to submit articles for syndication
This is the main issue which limits the effectiveness of a syndication campaign. The problem is that it requires work, and this turns many people off.
This topic is covered in detail in the working guide section.

So let's get into the specifics and get your article syndication campaign underway.

You'll note that I've minimized the strategy of using Article Directories in the conventional sense of trying to gain direct traffic and back-links. If your site is new, or in a very uncompetitive niche, you can still benefit some from submitting articles to article directories, so long as you avoid spammy techniques. So I'm still going to use them as a small component of our overall article syndication/marketing strategy. So if, for whatever reason, you decide not to embark on a syndication campaign, but you wish to utilize article directories anyway, then the information below is still relevant for you,

just omit the syndication steps. (for a far less effective marketing campaign).

In this working section we're going to -

1. Create a simple 'sales funnel' to 'receive' the visitors from your new articles.
2. Generate a syndication quality article to compliment the content / theme of your new page.
3. Research potential article syndication websites and create an invitation letter to the owners
4. Submit the article for syndication to the list we've created above
5. Utilize Article Directories effectively in our strategy for syndication
6. Create a list of contacts generated from the sales funnel and setup auto-responders.

Creating a simple 'sales funnel' to 'receive' the visitors from your new articles.

Landing Pages

It's important that you maximize the benefits of your articles by creating custom landing pages for each article niche. If you have several articles written around a common theme, as most people do, then in some cases, each article can share a common landing page on your website. However, if you don't have sophisticated means of tracking your campaigns, it may be wise to use a different landing page for each article campaign. That way you can see where your traffic is coming from and how well each source converts. Generally the landing page won't be your home page, it will be a page designed to continue the momentum generated during the reading of your article by the outside reader.

If you think about this as a typical structure for article marketing –

≅ My main website is all about natural health

≅ My homepage is a basic summary of the natural health industry, an overview of what my website discusses

≅ My article is written about the uses and benefits of Ginseng, a natural health product.

Where should I send people who've just read my article, to my homepage? - No,

obviously not. I need to create a landing page for my article on 'Ginseng' which continues the theme I've started with the article.

I can create a landing page which is a product sales page, and that's what many people do. But it isn't the right thing to do. In fact, many article syndication websites and even article directories will not publish an article if the links point back to a product sales website/page.

A better approach is to create a landing page which continues to provide information to the reader, then subtly requests that the reader 'subscribes' to access even more information on the subject. That is creating the first components of an effective sales funnel. We have the syndicated article feeding into a landing page which is optimized to convert the reader into a subscriber. Once subscribed, we'll begin the process of selling to them with time on our hands.

So how do you create an effective landing page?

There are a variety of tools available to help with your page construction and layout. One such tool is called 'Optimize Press' and is available here Optimize Press work quite brilliantly (on the Wordpress platform) at creating sales pages which flow through in a very systematic way. It's approach does lean towards the Internet Marketing style of drawing people into an offer, so you'll need to assess it to see if it fits your style of doing business. Regardless of whether is matches your business style it is undoubtedly a smart tool for creating an optimized landing page and drawing people into your offer.

There are alternatives to Optimize Press and you can even hire people to create the pages for you [Google Landing Page Creation].

In many cases, the landing page should bare no resemblance to the pages on the rest of your site. If, for example, it were to have the standard site navigation bar at the top of the landing page, these would be considered 'distractions' away from the purpose of the landing page. In theory, you want to give the person landing on the page no distractions whatsoever, just a clean page with a simple and effective message.

Incentivizing for opt-ins

There isn't a rule of thumb for this, so you'll need to think about your specific situation. In many cases you'll need some incentive to get people to leave behind their email address when they hit your landing page. These incentives vary greatly and in some ways are dependent on the article which referred them to your landing page in the first instance. Let's look at some slightly different scenarios.

≅ In the syndicated article bio, I use the technique "this is part one of a two part series, go to my website to register for an advance copy of part II" Here the incentive is in the article, so your landing page need only be simple, an email form a subscribe button and your policies link, with a brief description of what they're registering for. [Note – it always pays to tell people that they will be receiving occasional updates from you via email, from which they can safely and easily unsubscribe at any time].

≅ The syndicated article sends people to your website in search of additional information. In this case you may want to generate a report specific to the information they're going to be looking for, and give the report away in exchange for their email address.

You can see from the two examples that there are different approaches each based on the specifics of the article content. Which is why it's often a good strategy to create a landing page to match each article. How you incentivize the sign-up process will largely depend on your niche and your creativity.

The critical component to using landing pages is the ability to test the different layouts and texts. You need to maximize the conversions of your landing page so that you get the best return from your marketing efforts. The only way to do this is to test, test, and test some more. There's a page testing component inside Google Analytics which can be used effectively to see how people are responding to sections of your landing page. You can set this up from within your Analytics account and it's a worthwhile exercise if you're working at optimizing landing pages.

Of course, you can't optimize and test your landing page without traffic. In this guide we're interested in generating that traffic from article marketing, but you can also use your regular site visitors to test your landing pages. Just funnel them though to the page and track their activity with GA. But if you're doing so make sure the people who come from your regular search traffic to your landing page are expecting the content they're going to be seeing. Otherwise your conversions will be poor and you might falsely associate the poor conversions with a poor landing page design, where the culprit is really in the type of traffic you are sending through.

So to recap on landing pages – a landing page is the receptor for your external traffic which you'll be generating using article marketing (or any other means of marketing if you wish). The landing page should pick up where the article left off and coax your visitor into taking some form of positive action. Usually that action is to join your email

list, and you can provide some form of incentive for them to take this step. Sometimes the landing page leads straight to a product sales link, but with this method you are losing the ability to follow-up with your prospects via email auto-responders.

Generate a syndication quality article to compliment the content / theme of your new page.

Which comes first, the landing page or the article, is entirely down to you. I have landing pages created for a wide range of products and services, so I generally work in this sequence -

- ≅ Identify the product or service I'm looking to promote
- ≅ Create an effective landing page that will cause the necessary call-to-action
- ≅ Write an article or series of articles to drive people to the landing page
- ≅ Promote the article via syndication

To create your syndicated article you need to write in a fairly specific way. The style of writing is different than the style you might use when writing for your website or for an Article Directory. Most content we write for our own websites is clearly going to be self-serving. It promotes our products and/or services and that's its primary purpose. That same style can also get you in article directories, since mostly the verification process is quite loose if it exists at all.

But we need to create content which the owner of an active website, blog, newsletter, ezine etc, will want to publish on his/her own website. That means it needs to be informative and entertaining, and not self-serving.

Why do these people want to publish other people's content? Well, they're trying to provide informative content for their readers on a range of different subjects. So they're always looking for guest articles and posts to keep their readers informed and entertained.

It's important to understand how this type of article marketing is different than submitting your content to article directories. An article directory may get a lot of traffic, but they also have a lot of content. So the eye-balls on your articles sitting inside an article directory are going to be low. When your content is syndicated, you can end up being exposed to a large number of eye-balls. Furthermore, they're often highly targeted viewers since the website owner has carefully selected the content (your article) to match the interest profiles of the visitors to his/her website.

The keys to getting syndicated are -

1. Write well, grammatically

2. Write informative content which is not self-serving

3. Provide some level of entertainment for the reader, perhaps use some humor, or a little controversy, anything to get an emotional response from the readers

Of course you're asking yourself, "what's in it for me, the author?". Well you're trying to make a connection with the reader and to lead them on to your website through hyperlinks in the body of the article, the author bio section, or both. Most article syndicators/publishers will allow you to embed a link in the article body, and almost all of them will allow you to create an author bio with a link back to your website. So you can make a connection with the reader easily by complying with the 3 simple points above, embed some form of call-to-action in the closing stages of your article, and use hyperlinks as the vehicle to get people on to your landing page.

Let's look at some ways of doing this.

1. In the article body you're providing information on a topic. Some element of that topic requires an explanation beyond the scope of your article, so you could place something like this in parenthesis [The subject of {topic} is quite in-depth and beyond the scope of this article, but you can learn more about {topic} here]. So the underlined text would be a hyperlink back to your information/landing page. Notice that you are also using keywords in your 'anchor text' links, which can help your SEO efforts.

2. I sometimes like to finish the actual article in the bio box, rather than just use the standard canned bio "Carl Hruza is author and publisher of....please visit his site here". Sometime the bio box will get omitted by publishers, so this is a good strategy to ensure they use it, make the article incomplete without it. I know certain publishers don't allow that strategy, so you will occasionally see me use a conventional bio box.

3. I use the 'Part I of a II Part series' approach from time to time. It works like this – in the bio area, finish the article as mentioned in 2 above, then say something like... "But where does this leave us? to find the answer you'll need to read Part II of this article which you can access at the author's website [link].

So you're building ways to ensure your bio box is included (along with its link) and to get people to click through to your website. The key is to try to always leave something hanging in the air at the end of your article, then have some trigger to send the reader to

your website to collect the missing piece of the puzzle.

Not all publishers will let you get away with the above. So you'll need to keep records of what you do, who allows what etc.

If you're worried about your ability to write articles of sufficient quality for syndication, then you can always outsource the work. Write a clear and concise project requirement and post it on a website like Elance (.com). People will then bid for the project and you can select the bidder you feel most comfortable with. When outsourcing through new channels I take certain steps to improve my chances of getting a quality article in return for my money. I usually stipulate -

1. The writer/company must be USA based with American English as their first language

2. The writer/company must be able to demonstrate prior experience writing for my niche

3. The writer/company must have a track record of positive feedback

4. The article must be a specific number of words (usually 900-1000)

5. The article title should be [title]

6. The article should contain two subsections, titles [sub1] [sub2]

7. The article must be 'magazine quality', and useful in attracting syndication

8. The article must be informative, interesting, factual and thorough

9. The article must pass Copyscape

10. The author must agree to make changes if required

11. Full ownership of the article and rights to publication transfer to the client on completion and payment.

There are other points to make which are specific to your niche. You could for example specify a grade for the writing style, such as Grade 8 for example, which is the most common standard of reading on the web.

The point is you need to guide the writer through the process so you receive a finished product close to what you expected.

What would you expect to pay for the above? Generally I'd pay somewhere between $50 and $100 for the above article. That may seem steep, but you can recover many times more that $100 from a well written article which is well syndicated.

Some people have an issue with outsourcing article writing then claiming credit for it themselves. I like to think of it as being the conductor of an orchestra. You're laying down the ground rules, creating the theme, dictating the tempo etc. On any orchestral review you'll always see 'Conducted by' before you see the names of any individual orchestra members. Many popular authors use 'ghost writers' for their books. John Grisham employs a team of ghost writers to crank-out his novels at quite an alarming rate.

Research potential article syndication websites and create an invitation letter to the owners.

Article syndication is a good deal about building relationships with real content publishers. If you have money in your budget and you plan to pursue this approach then an investment in the [Directory of Ezines](#) is a good choice. They'll help you to locate websites offering to syndicate your work in a variety of niches.

Other ways to find sources is to simply Google the term and include your specific niche in the search phrase 'content publishers in the [your niche] niche'. Or even 'Guest articles [niche]'.

Remember, you're looking for websites with a following of readers in a similar niche to your own. These are generally blogs, forums, ezines and any website which utilize guest posting or guest articles for their content. Many of the more effective syndication sites are ezines. Ezines often have a large email subscription list and they'll send out content to their readers along with offers and other incentives. I've used Ezines very effectively when promoting webmaster type articles, a niche which seems to be quite responsive. But there are ezine websites for every niche imaginable.

Once you find a few prospects, create a custom email letter to approach the site owner. Try to personalize the letter so that it is clear to the recipient that it isn't some 'mass produced' template letter. Perhaps include reference to a specific post or page on their website.

Here's a letter which I've used in the past -

Dear [try to find their actual name on their website],

I came across your website [insert their url] whilst researching [specific subject], and found the answers to my questions were covered in detail on this page [insert the page title and url].

I note that you provide guest content to your readers. I am an author in the [insert niche] and write occasional articles on the subject, focusing on providing information and facts

in an easy to absorb manner. [elaborate on your style or qualifications for writing in this niche if you wish, but keep it simple and concise].

I wonder if you would consider one of my articles for inclusion on your website and/or within your ezine?

I've attached a sample article for your perusal. If this is of interest, I would be happy to produce content for you on an ongoing basis and can often work with publishers like yourself to create very specific content to satisfy the needs and interests of your visitors.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Sincerely,

Obviously you should adjust the above to fit the specific circumstances, but always try to personalize the letter as much as possible so it isn't dismissed as 'spam'. I tend to write these intro letters in a more passive style. In the grand scheme of things I'm looking for an 'exchange of services' but consider myself to be the one likely to gain the most from the exchange, so I'm always polite and a little passive. It seems to work.

Once you begin to accumulate contacts who are receptive to your offer, keep sending them quality content and keep in regular contact with them. Many of the more successful syndicators have many 1000's of contacts in a wide range of niches and make considerable income using this technique.

Do not fall into the trap of mass-submitting all of your article to all of your syndication list. You need to keep record of each syndicator and note something specific about the content they prefer. If a particular article won't appeal to a specific syndicator, don't send it.

Utilizing Article Directories effectively in our strategy for syndication

Since you've created your syndication quality article and you're submitting it to multiple websites anyway, there's no reason why you should not submit the same article to some of the more common article directories. Remember, we're not looking for back-links, since they're pretty worthless from these sources anyway, and we're not expecting much in the way of direct traffic, but it is possible that your article will be found within a directory and syndicated, and that's what we're looking for.

Incidentally, once you've been doing syndication successfully for a while, you may have collected some fairly high-profile publishers who're using your work. In this case, you might not want so submit those same articles into article directory sites, rather, keep an

element of scarcity so the higher profile websites have something with a little more exclusivity from you. But for most of us involved in syndication, submitting the articles into the larger article directories shouldn't cause a problem. **So who are they? -**

1. knol.google.com

2. ehow.com

3. squidoo.com

4. hubpages.com

5. ezinearticles.com

6. examiner.com

7. technorati.com

8. articlesbase.com

9. seekingalpha.com

10. buzzle.com

11. gather.com

12. goarticles.com

13. brighthub.com

14. suite101.com

15. ezinemark.com

16. infobarrel.com

17. helium.com

18. articlesnatch.com

19. selfgrowth.com

20. ideamarketers.com

21. associatedcontent.com

22. thefreelibrary.com

23. amazines.com

24. selfseo.com

25.   pubarticles.com

26.   bukisa.com

27.   sooperarticles.com

28.   triond.com

29.   articlerich.com

30.   articledashboard.com

31.   articlealley.com

32.   web-source.net

33.   isnare.com

34.   articlecity.com

35.   submityourarticle.com/articles/

36.   articletrader.com

37.   articleclick.com

38.   articlesfactory.com

39.   articleblast.com

40.   articlecell.com

41.   articlecube.com

42.   EvanCarmichael.com

43.   articlemotron.com

44.   upublish.info

45.   thewhir.com/find/articlecentral

46.   ultimatearticledirectory.com

47.   articlecompilation.com

48.   biggerpockets.com/articles

49.   abcarticledirectory.com

50.   site-reference.com

The above list is ordered by traffic and Page Rank.

Obviously that's quite a task, manually going through and submitting your articles to so

many directories. You could of course just focus on the top 5 or 10, or you could automate the task.

There are a few well-known automated article directory submission programs around, one of which is AMR (Article Marketing Robot). You can select your article to be published into over 1000 directories, and I'm sure many of the top 50 listed above are contained within their database. But you need to be careful if you're using these types of automated tools, it's better if your rate of submission is slow and 'natural' looking. So use their scheduler and send out maybe 10 or 20 per day.

People also get hung up about whether the articles can all be the same or whether they should be 'spun' so they're largely original. If your modus operandi is to gain back-links, then original content might be better. But we've already discounted that as irrelevant so your main purpose should be to attract syndication. In this instance, spun articles are not going to be of the requisite quality needed to attract syndication, so it's better to submit the same copy to each directory.

For most of my own syndication efforts I don't use AMR or any other automated tools. They get the job done but I rarely see any benefit from these directory sites these days, so why bother?

Pen names and aliases

I get asked a lot about using aliases and pen names when writing articles. I serve a range of clients who come to me for my help in promoting their websites. When I create articles for them I always use a pen name. I manage pen names so I can see what's being submitted where and for which client. So a specific client of mine will be assigned a unique pen name.

When I'm writing for my own websites I use the same system, just as a means of organizing my content and controlling/tracking its distribution. I have very few articles published under my real name. There is nothing unethical about using pen names, it's a practice widely used by popular authors.

Setup auto-responders for your list of contacts generated from the sales funnel.

So, you have a landing page and you're ready to start sending out your articles. Before you do so you need to make sure all of your follow-through steps are in place. If you've taken my advice to heart then the focus of your landing page will be to collect emails. You'll need to use an email list management service to manage your lists, one which

allows you to setup auto-responders.

You can pay for a list management service like those available from Aweber, Constant Contact, iContact etc, or you can host your list on your own website and invest in some software.

The advantage of self-hosting is that you don't have to pay high monthly fees, the disadvantage is that you may get your domain blacklisted if your list attracts too many spam complaints. In some cases your host provider may even close down your website.

Either way you'll need to create auto-responders for following up with your list of contacts.

Auto-responders can be approached in a number of ways. The important thing is to treat them with the same significance and importance as your landing page, because these are going to determine your conversion rate just as much as the landing page.

Each step in the sales funnel should be tracked and tested, and that's true of your auto-responder follow-ups too.

I can't write your messages for you because I have no idea what your niche is. I tend to use this strategy which works well in most of my niches -

1. Use 12 – 14 messages in the sequence.

2. Send out the first immediately on subscription

3. Set intervals between each message as follows -

≅ Instant

≅ 3 days after first

≅ 3 days after previous

≅ 5 days after previous

≅ 5 days

≅ 5 days

≅ 7 days

≅ Then every 7 days thereafter

Many people like to refrain from 'selling' anything in the first few messages. I disagree with this in most cases, but not all. It largely depends on the content of your article. If you're writing about something specific and the reader has signed up to your list, it may well be that they're 'active' at that point, highly receptive to offers from a reputable

source. Some would say that you haven't built any trust at this stage of the relationship, which is valid to a point. You have written a quality article and demonstrated your knowledge of a subject, so there is some degree of trust already established. The point is, I wouldn't want to have a person come to my website in buying mode, register for more information, then leave empty handed because I was too timid to show them a product. In that instance I could just be warming up a prospect who goes off and buys from someone else. There's a fine balance and it's hard to give you a definitive answer to when you should introduce the products/services in the sequence of events. Like everything, testing should provide the answer for your specific situation.

Monitor the activity closely in your email campaign. You need to look for the open-rate of the messages – what percentage of people open the email and read it will largely be determined by the email subject line. If you're getting a low open-rate you need to change the subject line to something more enticing.

Then look at the click-through rate. A low click-through rate indicates poor content and/or poor call-to-action. Revise your copy of the click-through rates are too low.

Then look at the stats on your product sales. If you're getting a good open rate, a good click-through rate but poor sales, then there's a few things which could require addressing. Perhaps the email content does not closely match the type of product you're trying to sell. Perhaps your product page is poorly worded. Perhaps it's a poor product to begin with. Perhaps you needed to build more trust before trying to sell. Perhaps you didn't introduce your product early enough in the process.

The point is you need to test and analyze then adjust and test again. It's a perpetual process of finding the best conversion rates for the entire sales funnel. This may not sound like a lot of fun, but the difference can be something like pouring 5000 people into your sales funnel and making $50 or pouring 5000 people in and making $50,000 – that's the potential scale of impact from your sales funnel.

A word of caution about testing

Many people fall into the trap of making changes without having passed through enough people to establish reliable data. If you're putting 100 people a day through your funnel and you're not getting any sales, don't jump up and start making changes. Monitor the progress over 10 days, at which point you should have sufficient data to make a judgment. If you need to make changes, make one change at a time, so you can be clear about the affect of each change. Making multiple consecutive changes gives you no information about the subsequent outcome, other than 'cumulatively it was better or

worse'.

With everything in place you're now ready to begin submitting your articles. Use the same systematic approach to testing as you do with your landing page and emails. After all, article syndication as an active component of the sales funnel. Record how much traffic comes from each source and adjust your efforts so you get the most out of what you put in. This may lead to you dropping certain websites and focusing more on creating content for others. Don't dismiss the idea of creating a unique piece of content for a publisher, as some request. Just make sure you test the results from that publisher and ensure that you're getting a positive return on your time.

Keep in communication with your syndication partners. Keep asking them for feedback on what you do and how you could do it better.

Keep everything moving forward. As your business builds, make outsourcing part of your program and establish relationships with outsourcers who become a part of your team.

Try to put a dollar value on everything that you do. Is an article typically worth $100 to you over a six month period or $10,000 ? If it's worth $10,000 you shouldn't preclude the idea of paying $500 or more to get the articles written.

Keep at it and good luck!

Carl Hruza

2012

To receive occasional updates on article marketing techniques and strategies, please subscribe to my email list at
http://webdesigndoorcounty.com/subscribe-to-news-list.html