

Reinforce Your Expert Status: The Value of Articles

by Deborah Chaddock Brown

In the past, the website was your primary method of communicating with target prospects. Hopefully by now you all have a website for your business and if you don't – Microsoft offers a free website service that will allow you to have some presence on the web without the big expense of a fancy site.



But a website is a formal representation of the products and services you offer. It is difficult to establish a relationship with prospects strictly through your site. That's why I'm such a big fan of blogs. Blogs welcome conversation and reach out to your target prospect to begin a relationship of trust and friendship. People buy from those they like and trust.

But WHY should they buy from you? What sets you apart? Whether you own a business or sell a product or service for your boss – how do you communicate your expertise in your industry?

One way is to write and publish an article or better yet – a series of articles.

"I can't write," you may say to me. OR "I don't have time to write."

Perhaps. But I contend that you have something to say. Think about conversations you have with prospects. You identify a need and can effectively articulate the benefits your products/services offer to meet those needs. Well, that's an article. Whether it is advice on how to prepare your home for market or how your energy drink increases the productivity of plants, shrubs and trees or the benefits of massage therapy in this stress-riddled world – you have an opinion that people are interested in hearing.

Publishing articles on the Internet is easy and FREE. Simply take your written advice and cut and paste it into a publishing service like E-Zine Articles. Not sure you can write? Purchase a handheld tape recorder and talk your article out loud. Then transcribe or delegate the transcription. Viola! You have an article ready to publish.

E-Zine articles allow you to set up an account and then upload your articles. The articles are logged by subject matter and author and are then submitted to thousands of search directories on the web. People looking to populate company newsletters with fresh content will publish your article. Potential customers seeking information in your industry will stumble upon your article; gaining knowledge and view you as an expert in the field. Post the articles on your website or link from your site to E-Zine. Within your E-Zine account you can link back to your website, blog and/or books you have published and that are available on Amazon. Here is a sample of what I have published.

Each article is a separate "website" with your name and company. It all adds up to solidify your reputation as an expert in the field.

You ARE an expert. Consider publishing articles as a way to get the word out! Need help? Call me.

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Where in the World Are You and What Are You Doing? Twitter.

What is Twitter? It is an online service that allows you to stay connected – up to the minute connected – with customers, colleagues, friends and family. Using your computer or mobile device you can easily leave a quick message. It's like text messaging or instant messaging but the whole world can follow your footsteps.

Why? I recently attended a luncheon entitled the State of the Web 2008 where Matt Dickman of Fleishman-Hillard shared an example of how Twitter kept loved ones in contact during a tragedy: the Minnesota bridge collapse. He showed how Twitter messages were getting the word out about the collapse to family and friends a full 30 minutes before the newswires. Traditional phone lines were down, but those affected by the incident were able to communicate their safety through Twitter to their loved ones.

Podcasting: Radio Broadcasts on your Site

I'm a self-taught techno-phob trying to ease my way into all of the exciting avenues the web offers. Clearly I'm not ready for Twitter, but I threw down the gauntlet on my blog and challenged myself to have my first podcast on the web by my Dad's birthday, March 15.

Well, I've managed to record a session on Writing with the Reader in Mind and have created an MP3 file. Now I'm trying to figure out how to upload it to the web. Stay tuned. Visit Websites People Read and see if I meet my self imposed deadline.

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