



Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Article Marketing

Results of a 30-day Article Marketing Experiment

An InkwellEditorial.com e-book by

by

Yuwanda Black

Is article marketing profitable; how it works; which sites work best; how often to submit; what to submit; results to expect; etc. All of these questions – and more – are answered!

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About the Author

Yuwanda Black is the publisher of <http://www.InkwellEditorial.com>: THE business portal for and about the editorial and creative industries. She blogs at <http://www.InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com>.

Ms. Black has been in the publishing industry since 1987 and owned Inkwell Editorial, an editorial staffing agency in New York City, from 1996-2004.

She repositioned the business as an online information portal for editorial and creative professionals in December of 2004.

As of this writing, Yuwanda has published six e-books, one freelance writing e-course, numerous e-reports/pamphlets and hundreds of articles. For a complete list of her e-books, reports and pamphlets, visit <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/bizguides.htm>.

In 2000, she wrote and developed a popular Chicago-style copyediting course, attended by Fortune 500 executives and junior execs alike.

Ms. Black also developed and taught a web development and marketing course at Borough of Manhattan Community College in 2001. A serial entrepreneur, Yuwanda has been featured in magazines, newspapers and online outlets nationwide, among them:

Entrepreneur.com's small business magazine, *Be Your Own Boss*
(<http://www.entrepreneur.com/magazine/entrepreneursstartupsmagazine/2005/february/76108.html>)

The Wall Street Journal's, RealEstateJournal.com
(<http://www.realestatejournal.com/homegarden/20041207-needleman.html>);

the highly popular work-from-home site, PowerHomeBiz.com
(<http://www.powerhomebiz.com/vol147/marketing.htm>);

and the noted search site, About.com
(<http://podcasting.about.com/od/monetizingyourpodcast/a/yuwandaarticle.htm>); and

the noted online business journal, GreaterDiversity.com.

Among other accomplishments, Ms. Black has been a freelance writer since 1993; a syndicated small business columnist, and a freelance/entrepreneurial advisor.

Yuwanda holds an AA in English; a BA in Sociology; and took courses towards an MA in Criminal Justice (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, NYC).

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Following are my findings from a month-long article marketing case study (conducted from October 18, 2006 through November 18, 2006).

THE DETAILS – WHY I CONDUCTED THE STUDY

As an overworked freelancer, my goal was to create more passive income.

A little history: I've been in publishing since 1987, and have been a freelancer since 1993. I kind of took freelancing as it came those first few years, never relying on it as my primary source of income.

Inkwell Editorial was formed in 1996 as an editorial outsource firm. The smartest thing I did as a manager was add staffing/recruiting to Inkwell's list of services. That really got the company over the hump, as placement fees ranged from a low of 3K on up to around 12K.

NOTE: In general staffing fees are much higher, but in editorial, salaries are low, so recruiting fees are below what you'd make in another arena, eg, tech.

A handful of placements a year and a few temps on assignment, coupled with my freelance income provided me a very nice living.

Then came 9/11. The arena in which I staffed (editorial) crashed. Ad agencies and publishers cut back their output because no one was spending on ad campaigns, so no need to hire copy editors, creative directors, graphic designers, etc.

However, during the time we offered on-site temps, I built up a pretty good roster of clients and now get most of my work via referral.

Present Day: Having been a freelancer since 1993, I've reached the point where I want to "touch" projects less. So, my goal going into next year is to create more passive income. My hope is that within a couple of years, I can get by on just my product sales alone. Having reached 40, I want to work less and play more.

Now, on to the details!

NOTE: This e-book consists of a series of blog posts, a Q&A session and conclusions drawn from the experiment overall. I hope you find it useful.

WHAT DID THE STUDY CONSIST OF?

My goal was to submit one article a day for 30 days (excluding weekends) to 25 top-rated directories.

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How did I choose which directories to submit to? I used their PR and Alexa rankings. What are PR and Alexa rankings.

What is a PR Ranking? What is an Alexa Rank?

PR Rank: First, PR stands for page rank. Impact-Direct.com defines page rank as:

A method developed and patented by Stanford University and Larry Page [cofounder of Google] to rank search engine results. Page Rank gives a unique ranking to every page on the internet. The ranking number is based on the number of quality inbound links pointing at a page and is represented on a scale from 1-10, with 10 being the optimal rank.

In the article, “*What Is Page Rank?*” by Kimberly Bodane, she describes why page rank is important, as well as what you can do to improve yours.

There is also a very detailed article on problogger.net entitled *Google Page Rank Explained*. It’s at <http://www.problogger.net/archives/2005/07/16/google-page-rank-explained> with helpful feedback from other readers.

Alexa Rank: An article published by e3Server.com on thehostingnews.com, *What is Alexa Ranking*, describes Alexa rankings as “a very powerful tool of viewing and comparing web site traffic for one site to the rest of the web.”

Read full article here: <http://www.thehostingnews.com/art-what-is-alexa-ranking.html>

The lower the ranking, the better. Sites that rank 100,000 or lower are considered extremely popular.

To learn more, type “alexa ranking” in the search engine of your choice and do some reading. You’ll be able to get a full understanding by reading a few articles of detailed information.

To find out your site's PR, go here: http://www.prchecker.info/check_page_rank.php

To find out your site's Alexa's ranking: Go here: <http://www.Alexa.com>.

Case Study Notes: I missed 3 days submitting. I also added and deleted approximately 4 directories from the list as I went along. Why? Because they either went offline (in one case), were not uploading articles in a timely manner, and/or were not suitable for the type of article I had written that day.

Overall, though, I consistently submitted and was able to glean some good findings, which will be discussed later.

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Here I will lay out a series of blog posts, because they detail what was happening at the time, giving valuable insight and details about the study as it was unfolding.

THE BEGINNING OF THE ARTICLE MARKETING CASE STUDY

I posted the following comment to another blogger's blog – as he had written an article entitled, *Is Article Marketing Worth Your Time?*

It was a few days after I had started my article marketing experiment. You can view the article here: <http://www.entrepreneurs-journey.com/405/article-marketing-ezinearticles-review> (my post to it is almost at the bottom of this page; for ease I've pasted it below).

My Blog Post to <http://www.entrepreneurs-journey.com> on October 26, 2006

Yaro,

I read your post with great interest because I am one week into doing this very same test. [Note: I started the experiment on October 18th. I don't submit on the weekends and have missed one week day so far.]

I have been a freelance writer since 1993 and have been had a niche site online since 1999.

I've been a part of the Google AdSense program for about a year and a half. I've made decent pocket money with this program, without putting any effort into it. All I did was slap the ads on the pages and forgot them.

I've also been marketing with articles for about 3 years now — submitting to a few major directories a couple of times a month (mainly ezinearticles.com and ideamarketers.com).

Upon deciding that I wanted to create more passive income, I decided to give article marketing a REAL try. I decided to submit one article to 25 top-rated directories for 30 days straight.

Only a week into it, my Google AdSense income has quintupled (increased 5 times) and my subscriber rate has increased 3 fold. And this is after ONE WEEK.

Now, my site has been around a while, but my Alexa rank sucks (although my site does have a PR rank of 6).

[NOTE: The highest ranking I've ever enjoyed in Alexa is in the 800,00s. Now it's at 6,000,000+. But, I've never really understood SEO and don't worry about these things.]

Anyway, given these very early results, I'd say that article marketing does work. BUT, you only get out of it what you put into it. I've been submitting articles manually and it

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does take up a chunk of time — about 2 hours a day.

I'm always skeptical of “easy” money-making techniques, but I'd read so much about article marketing and had experienced newsletter growth from limited efforts with it in the past, so I wanted to see what it would be like if I really pushed it.

Now, if I could just get some feedback from users on which article submission software to use — that would be great.

Sorry to be so long-winded, but I wanted your readers to have a complete picture so they could understand my conclusion about article marketing.

Continued success to you, and thanks for the post.

Sincerely,
Yuwanda Black,
PubliserInkwellEditorial.com
InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com
###END OF POST###

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POSTS TO INKWELLEDITORIAL.BLOGSPOT.COM

The following posts are from my blog (InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com). They detail, more or less, what was going on during this time. Insights and findings come later.

Blog Post (InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com): Thursday, October 26, 2006

Article Marketing Experiment: Does It Work, or Not?

I was going to give an update on this next month, as I'm only a week into my experiment, but I got so excited about the results so far that I wanted to share.

Also, I posted a comment (listed below) on another blogger's site (<http://www.entrepreneurs-journey.com/405/article-marketing-ezinearticles-review/%23comment-24716>). As it so happens, he had conducted a similar experiment in March of this year [2006].

What was the experiment? Article marketing. I've been a user of this technique to a limited degree for the last 3 years or so. Wanting to create more passive income and having read so much about article marketing, I decided to give it a real try.

What prompted this whole thing is that I've been so swamped with projects this fall that I'm literally at the point where I realize that to keep the same income (gotta pay the mortgage!) and still have a life (ie, work less), I need to create more passive income.

With all that being said, read on for the results.

Be sure to click over to Yaro's blog to read a lot more on this if you're really interested.

Blog Post (InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com): Thursday, October 26, 2006

Case Study Details: How article marketing is significantly increasing my income

I recently wrote an article entitled, *Article Marketing: Long or Short Articles -- Which Is Better?* [<http://inkwelleditorial.blogspot.com/2006/10/article-marketing-long-or-short.html>]. As you know from my current little article marketing experiment, I've been submitting to a lot of sites. Hence, reading a lot of submission guidelines.

Guess what? It seems that **I'm not the only one to realize that longer articles are better**. I remember when I first started marketing with articles about three years ago, guidelines generally called for articles between 400-600 words. Many did NOT want you to go much over that.

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Many of the sites I'm currently submitting to now request articles of AT LEAST 500 words. One even had a minimum requirement of 700 words. I think this bodes well for the quality of material to be found on the web.

In reading submission guidelines, I got the distinct feeling that directory owners were sick and tired of the poor quality of many articles.

So, you may be thinking, **how long should an article be?**

Personally, I've found that between 700-900 words allows you to cover a topic in-depth enough to give the reader enough information so that they feel like they've learned something. Or, at least to make you feel like you've dispensed some helpful, useful information.

Now that article marketing seems to have settled in as a viable marketing tactic, and many are using it, **how do you differentiate yourself from the pack?** I covered this in the previous article, but following is a quick recap:

1. Sincerity: It can be sensed, even via the written word. Human nature can sense when someone is dumping a load of bull on them. Quit thinking about what you want to sell a prospect and think about how you want to help them.

Ostensibly, you created your product/service because it fills a need. So, look to why you originally started doing whatever it is that you do. Spell out the benefits the customer receives (eg, it will make you happier, save you time, etc.), not the features you want to sell them (eg, it has a fancy top, it goes really fast, etc.).

2. Be Yourself: Nothing sells like personality. Personality helps in developing a relationship. People buy from those they know, like and trust. Once a relationship is developed (no matter how peripheral at first), these sentiments can easily be built upon.

When you consider that **most prospects have to see your ad 7-28 times before they will purchase from you**, then the sooner you can start that relationship, the better.

So, if you're quirky, let that show through; have a wicked sense of humor, bring it on; have an interesting hobby, are a world traveller -- let readers know a little about you!

A recent post explains how to go about this: *Increase Your Freelance Income by Finding Your Unique Voice* [<http://inkwelleditorial.blogspot.com/2006/10/increase-your-freelance-income-by.html>]

3. Give details, details, details: Some studies cite that up to 86% of web surfers are looking for information when they go online. Don't disappoint by glossing over a subject. Give details -- and this includes recounting what DIDN'T work, as well as what did.

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If you follow these three rules, you will create a loyal following of readers who will be happy to not only see your article in their inbox, but forward it to their readers. And that, after all, is what you're after.

Blog Post (InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com): Monday, October 30, 2006

Case Study: How article marketing is significantly increasing my income (Part 1 of 5)

Last Thursday, I reported on an article marketing experiment I am in the midst of conducting. Specifically, I wanted to create more passive income, so I decided to give article marketing a real try and see how it went.

All this week I will be dispensing details about this on-going experiment. For details on the beginning, click [here](http://inkwelleditorial.blogspot.com/2006/10/article-marketing-experiment-does-it.html) [http://inkwelleditorial.blogspot.com/2006/10/article-marketing-experiment-does-it.html].

Following are the sites I'm consistently submitting articles to. I chose them because they had good PR and Alexa rankings. If you don't know what a PR or Alexa rank is, it is explained briefly below, with links to other sources for in-depth information.

1. EzineArticles.com: This directory has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 552.

This is perhaps the number one article directory on the net. You can submit across a number of categories and the submission process is very easy.

You must create an author account to submit. The thing I like the most about this site is that you can track your articles and it gives you a wealth of information like how many ezines picked up the article, how many hits it's gotten, when you submitted, etc.

To me, the best part of this directory is that they post your article within 4-6 hours, once you've achieved platinum status, which is not hard to do.

2. ArticleDashboard.com: This directory has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 3,461.

Again, you must create an author account to submit. It's easy to submit once you do this. This directory also gives some article stats (eg, how many times the article has been downloaded, emailed to others, etc.).

3. IdeaMarketers.com: This directory has a PR rank of 4 and an Alexa rank of 8,897. You must create an author account and article stats are provided.

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4. EasyArticles.com: This directory has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 52,143.

You must create an author account to submit. Beyond providing a list of articles you've submitted, this directory doesn't provide article stats. The submission process is very easy once you've set up an account.

5. PowerHomeBiz.com: This site has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 25,152.

NOTE: This is not an article submission site, but a small business portal of sorts. I submitted to this site because they don't publish "fluff" articles. There is a certain level of professionalism that you must have to get published on this site. They don't publish just anything and it gives you a certain level of prestige if you're lucky enough to be published here.

I got good e-zine subscription rates from an article that I had published on their site a couple of years ago. The article was entitled, *Why You DON'T Need National Media Attention to Grow Your Biz* [<http://www.powerhomebiz.com/vol147/marketing.htm>].

What is a PR Ranking? What is an Alexa Rank?

PR Rank: First, PR stands for page rank. Impact-Direct.com defines page rank as:

A method developed and patented by Stanford University and Larry Page (cofounder of Google) to rank search engine results. Page Rank gives a unique ranking to every page on the internet. The ranking number is based on the number of quality inbound links pointing at a page and is represented on a scale from 1-10 with 10 being the optimal rank.

In the article, "*What Is Page Rank?*" by Kimberly Bodane, she describes why page rank is important, as well as what you can do to improve yours.

You'll also find a detailed article on problogger.net ("*Google Page Rank Explained*") with helpful feedback from other readers. It's at this link:

<http://www.probloger.net/archives/2005/07/16/google-page-rank-explained>.

Alexa Rank: An article on e3Server.com, What is Alexa Ranking, describes Alexa rankings as "a very powerful tool of viewing and comparing web site traffic for one site to the rest of the web."

The lower the ranking, the better. Sites that rank 100,000 or lower are considered extremely popular.

To learn more, type "alexa ranking" in the search engine of your choice and do some reading. You'll be able to get a full understanding by reading a few articles of detailed information.

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Why I Used PR and Alexa Rankings as Markers for My Article Marketing Campaign

To be honest, I'm an SEO (search engine optimization) neophyte. I don't like learning about technology – I'm a writer; all things technical bore the bejeezus out of me.

BUT, I have read enough about these two tools to know that they are important and that if I was going to use article marketing to create passive income, I needed to rely on getting the word out to as many as possible. This only happens via sites that are extremely popular.

How do you measure the popularity of a site? Via its PR and/or Alexa ranking are two viable ways.

It seems to me that when I didn't update the site as regularly, it's ranking was fine, but as soon as I started to fiddle with it, the rankings went in the crapper. I'm sure some experts can tell me why. From what I understand, Google sometimes changes its algorithms, and that can cause site rankings to shift significantly.

To find out your site's PR, go here: http://www.prchecker.info/check_page_rank.php

To find out your site's Alexa's ranking: Go here: <http://www.Alexa.com>.

Show Me the Money!

Okay, all of that is fine you may be saying, but what about the money? During the first few days of my experiment, my Google AdSense earnings quintupled. That's what got me so excited.

Well, my earnings have cooled off, but **I am still, on average, doubling what I was making before I started this experiment.**

Disclaimer: I had written in another post that my site, InkwellEditorial.com, had a PR of 6. When I checked months ago, it did. I checked it today (10/30/06) and it's a 5. We won't even discuss my Alexa ranking, which used to hover in the 800,000s; now it's at over 6,000,000.

My blog's PR has skyrocketed though -- from a 0 to a 5.

Further, I said that I was submitting an article a day (excluding weekends) for 30 days to 25 different sites. I've missed one day so far and since not all sites were appropriate for certain articles, on some days I've submitted to only 20 or so sites. For me, this was enough to be considered "significant."

Stay tuned for Part II tomorrow.

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Blog Post (InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com): Tuesday, October 31, 2006

Case Study: How article marketing is significantly increasing my income (Part 2 of 5)

Following are the latest details on my experiment – **article marketing (does it work, or not?)**. Listed below are more of the sites I'm consistently submitting articles to.

See Part I of this series for how and why these sites were chosen. It's at this link: <http://inkwelleditorial.blogspot.com/2006/10/case-study-how-article-marketing-is.html>.

6. Alumbo.com: This site has a PR rank of 5 and an Alexa rank of 64,317.

You must sign up for an account to submit here. I find their submission process awkward and a bit confusing. Eg, you have to choose what category to submit to, and this is not easy they way they have it set up because you're not sure if you're choosing the right thing.

Also, no article stats are provided here – not even a page that lists the articles you've submitted. Without this, it makes it hard to keep track of what you've submitted already. In my opinion, this is a basic because if you write a lot and submit to a lot of directories, you need some type of tracking mechanism to stay organized.

NOTE: In most of the directories, you have to choose a category, but it is pretty simple and straightforward. This is not the case with Alumbo. You'll just have to see for yourself what I mean.

7. ArticleCity.com: This site has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 6,630.

You don't need to create an author account to submit here. The process is very easy and straightforward. No article stats are provided though (bummer!).

You can click on your name and find out which articles are live on the site, but there is no way to find out which articles you've submitted already. This is important because they take 15-30 days to approve an article for publishing, and if you don't keep track, you won't know if you submitted a piece already, or not.

One cool feature of this site is that you can submit articles in bulk (more than one at a time). There are stipulations, but being able to do this makes submission so much faster.

8. Zinos.com: This site has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 6,630.

Zinos is not an article directory, but a digest of eZines on the web. You must create an author account to submit and it provide a list of articles you've submitted, but no article stats.

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The one thing I don't like about this site is that they assign you an Author ID, which you must use to sign in. I don't like this because most of the time, once you've created your account with a directory, your username is your email address and your password is something you create.

As they assign you an Author ID, I can never remember it, so I have to stop, locate it and put it in. It's a small thing, but it interrupts my flow of work. When you're manually submitting to many directories, this is a major time buster.

9. WebProNews.com: This site has a PR rank of 7 and an Alexa rank of 3,980.

This is a news site for e-business professionals. Although this is not an article directory, I had written an article that fits well with their content and I knew it had a good chance of being picked up.

FYI, this site only accepts articles related to "eBusiness, search engines, information technology, or web development." So, I haven't submitted every article I've written to them, because all of my articles don't fit their guidelines.

Tip: To dovetail on the above, **only submit relevant content to directories/sites**. The one thing you don't want to do is get banned from a site for submitting content that doesn't fit their guidelines and/or submitting poorly written pieces.

Most article directories have sufficient categories that you will easily be able to find one that fits your material. If a site is not an article directory, then look for guidelines that tell you what they do accept.

10. Buzzle.com: This directory has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 5,835. You must create an author account – then wait. With most directories, once you create an author account, you are able to log in instantly, after clicking on a confirmation email that they send to you.

With this site, you have to wait to be approved – it only took a few days, but compared to other sites, it's a little hitch that makes you go "rats!". Worth the wait though with their rank and all.

This directory provides limited article stats and it's easy to submit once your account has been approved.

Questions from Readers

Q: Are you posting the same article to each of these different directories?

A: Yes. This is how article marketing is done.

Is this seen as spamming? To be honest, I don't know. All I can say is many times I have

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found one of my articles in a directory that I did not post to. I can only assume that some directories pull from others.

Q: Are you posting to each directory every day?

A: Yes, which makes it so time-consuming.

Many of the directories are similar, but some allow HTML, while others do not. So, I create an HTML-coded version of the article, and a plain text version. Then, I simply copy the version the directory accepts into the box.

How the Money is Shaking Out?

Right now, running about 2.5 times/day what I was making before I started this experiment. FYI, I'm doing a day-to-day comparison (eg, Sept 30th to October 30th earnings). At the end of the experiment (11/18/06), I will compare 10/18 thru 11/18 to 9/18 to 10/17 for this year and for last year.

Building Your Brand — Getting Name Recognition

Before I started this experiment, when I typed my name into Google, the count came back at between 700 to 800. Yesterday, I googled my name and the count came in at 11,200. **Last Friday (10/27), my name returned 14,200 results!**

Why is this important? Simply put, *the more visible you are, the more credibility you build*. Remember, most prospects have to see your ad 7-28 times (depending on the source you cite) before they will buy from you.

So, while this may not lead to direct sales, when a prospect is looking for what I'm selling (my ebooks if I can ever find time to get them onto ClickBank.com), my name will hopefully be top of mind (at least in the top 3).

Stay tuned for Part III tomorrow.

P.S.: Please send in your questions (<mailto:info@inkwelleditorial.com>). So we all benefit, I'm trying to wring every bit of useable data out of this experiment that I can. As with any study, it's input from many sources that yield the best results.

Blog Post (InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com): Tuesday, October 31, 2006

How Article Marketing is Significantly Increasing My Income (Part 3 of 5)

The never-ending question: **article marketing – does it work, or not?** Wanting to create more passive income, I decided to give article marketing a REAL try. The following are results so far (this is Part 3 of a 5-part series).

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Following are more of the sites I'm consistently submitting articles to. I chose them because they had good PR and Alexa rankings.

What are PR and Alexa rankings? For explanations of these, as well as details on the beginning of the experiment, see the **10/26/06 post on InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com**.

11. SubmitYourNewArticle.com: This directory has a PR rank of 4 and an Alexa rank of 62,309.

You must create an author account to submit. They approve your account pretty much immediately.

The submission process is a breeze and the site offers article stats, primarily, how many times the article has been downloaded, how many times it has been sent to friends, and how many articles you've submitted (a tracking feature).

12. Amazines.com: This directory has a PR rank of 4 and an Alexa rank of 16,710.

I love the ease of this site. Once you create an author account, you can start submitting. They also have a bulk submission feature, which allows you to submit more than one article at a time. This site also has a tracking feature, so you know what you submitted, and when.

One of the coolest features of this site is that it shows you how many articles are in each category. For example, as of this writing, the WRITING category had 1,090 articles, while EZINES has only 25.

If it's a toss-up as to what category to submit to, this can be a handy guideline.

13. GoArticles.com: This directory has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 2,407.

You must create an author account to submit here. A really progressive feature of this site is the feed they set up for authors (many directory sites now offer this). This makes it easy for readers to get your content.

This site also has a tracking feature so you can keep track of what you've submitted. And, it provides individual article stats (how many words the article is and how many times it's been downloaded), but you have to click on the author's name to get this information.

In my opinion, this is a bit odd because it took me a few minutes to figure out how to find the article stats.

But hey, with its Alexa and PR ranking and the sheer number of articles (almost 300,000!), it's a site you can't afford to overlook.

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14. Isnare.com: This directory has a PR rank of 5 and an Alexa rank of 5,323.

I love the ease of submission of this site – once you create an author account. BUT, it takes a while for them to approve your article for publishing – unless you use their paid submission feature (Platinum account).

Eg, I submitted an article on 10/19, and as of today (11/1), I'm still waiting for that article, and subsequent ones, to be published.

What does their Platinum account include? Among other things, article distribution to over 40,000+ publishers and hundreds of article directory sites for a fixed amount per month (\$59.95). I have to say, it seems like a good deal – especially when I consider the amount of time I'm spending each day just submitting to 25 sites manually (about two hours).

If you're busy, this is a huuugggeee chunk of time (see what I do for you guys?!). Once I finish my little case study (on 11/18), I will be looking into paid submission software/services, and this is one I'm seriously considering.

Besides the absolute horror of manual submission, I'm considering using this site's submission service because it has a testimonial from a name I recognize and trust, Jenna Glatzer, Editor-in-Chief of Absolutewrite.com.

15. NetpreneurNow.com: This directory has a PR rank of 4 and an Alexa rank of 49,423.

This site can be a bit confusing when you log on, eg, where is the “Submit Article” button? You have to click on Article Directory (left hand side of home page) and then you see a link that reads “Post a new article.”

You don't have to create an author account to use this site – tres cool! BUT, it also doesn't offer any tracking features or article stats. So, you're on your own here (eg, get out your article tracking pad and resign yourself to submitting and forgetting).

You'll have to check your server logs to see if any incoming traffic was generated from articles posted here.

What are server logs? Basically, they are reports you can get from your web host that tells you where visitors from your site came from, eg, a click from an ad on Google, a link from an article on IdeaMarketers.com, etc.

Again though, as this site has good rankings, it's worth it to submit.

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COMMON PROBLEMS WITH ONLINE ARTICLE MARKETING

Delayed Publishing: Many article directories take days, even weeks, to publish your content. This is a double-edged sword. On the positive side, ostensibly, it means that articles are being reviewed and there is more quality content out there; eg, less garbage on the web as a whole.

The negative is that it takes longer to get the word out about your product/service. So, figure this into your marketing timetable if you are rolling out a new product/service.

Tracking the Effectiveness of a Directory: It is highly unlikely that you will have time to do this with any degree of detail, unless you have major chunks of time on your hands. As noted throughout this series, some directories have tracking features and provide article stats, some do not.

In my opinion, time would be better spent targeting highly trafficked directories, submitting to them, and judging the “overall progress” of your article marketing campaign “over a period of time – eg, a month, a quarter, half-year, etc.”

BE IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL

I once read an article that said, especially with Internet marketing, it’s not the immediate results you’re after (although I have been pleased with this aspect of my little campaign so far), but the long-term benefits of establishing yourself as an expert.

Once you establish your abilities and your trustworthiness — and this comes from prospects seeing you in many different places across a period of time – it will be that much easier to make the sale.

As with any business venture, article marketing can garner profound results, but it takes time and effort, effort and time, to get the long-term rewards.

WHAT’S GOING ON WITH THE MONEY?

Holding steady at about 2.5 times what I was making (per day) before I started this experiment.

READER QUESTIONS

As I’ve been getting quite a few inquiries from readers, I will devote Monday’s (11/06) issue to answering all of them. **So, send in yours** (<mailto:info@inkwelleditorial.com>).

In the meantime, be sure to catch the rest of the case study. I’ve been an online marketer for a while and am learning a lot! As a matter of fact, *I will be conducting a similar study with online groups/forums/message boards next (details coming after 11/18).*

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Stay tuned for Part IV tomorrow.

P.S.: Send in your questions (<mailto:info@inkwelleditorial.com>). So we all benefit, I'm trying to wring every bit of useable data out of this experiment that I can. As with any study, it's input from many sources that yield the best results.

Blog Post (InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com): Wednesday, November 01, 2006

How Article Marketing is Significantly Increasing My Income (Part 4 of 5)

Following is Part 4 of my case study on article marketing. Specifically, I'm studying the following topic – in detail: **Article Marketing – Does It Work, Or Not?**

My desire is to create more passive income. An overworked freelancer, I decided to give article marketing a REAL try, as I'd read so much about it. Following are more of the sites I'm consistently submitting articles to. I chose them because they had good PR and Alexa rankings.

For explanations of these, as well as details on the beginning of the experiment, see the **10/26/06 post on InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com.**

16. ContentTycoon.com: This directory has a PR rank of 4 and an Alexa rank of 201,965.

You must create an author account to submit. According to the announcement on their site, they recently underwent an overhaul and the wait time to approve an article is less than 24 hours.

This is not the case with my articles. To date, they've approved 2 of the 8 I've submitted. Considering that some sites can take up to 4 weeks to approve an article though – I'm not complaining.

No article stats are provided here. So again, get out your article tracking log sheet.*

17. AfroArticles.com: This directory has a PR rank of 4 and an Alexa rank of 38,666.

This site has extensive category listings.

I had to smile when I read their submission guidelines because I wrote a couple of articles explaining why I believe that longer articles sell better. Read at <http://inkwelleditorial.blogspot.com/2006/10/article-marketing-long-or-short.html>. On article length, they state: An article length between 700 to 2500 words is desirable.

Finally, somebody gets it!

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This site is easy to navigate and once you create an author account, you can start submitting multiple articles immediately. Article stats and a tracking feature are also provided.

As an aside, being African American, I like that they have categories which focus on "Afro Issues" among the other categories you'd find at any article submission site. When I ran my ethnic online crafts business, I had a hard time finding enough outlets to submit articles to, so it's nice to see someone has recognized this void.

18. ImpactArticles: This directory has a PR rank of 4 and an Alexa rank of 189,006.

You don't need to create an author account to submit here. I tried to use their form to submit, but it didn't work. So, I sent them the article via email, as advised on their site (eg, when the form doesn't work).

This is a no-frills site (no tracking features, feeds or article stats provided). The only reason I chose this site is that it is updated daily and I recognized a couple of names of authors who have done well in Internet marketing (ie, Charlie Cook and Willie Crawford).

Google either of these names and you'll see what I mean. I figured if their articles are there, then it's a good place for mine to be.

19. Free-Articles-Zone.com: This directory has a PR rank of 4 and an Alexa rank of 56,670.

You need to create an author account to submit. I'm a bit perplexed at this directory because I've submitted 8 articles here and according to my account, only one is showing up.

The others seem to have disappeared. Usually a site will tell you if an article is pending, or if there are problems that need to be addressed before it is published – nothing here. Just one article that was published on 10/19, which means it's probably the first one I submitted.

HTML Note: This site uses what I call "alternative code" for common elements (bold, ital, underline, etc.). Eg, instead of `BOLD` for bold, it uses `BOLD`. This is the only site I encountered to use this type of coding.

I'm bummed that I'm going to have to go back and submit to this site. I really like their setup and the overall feel of the site – not to mention their very good rankings.

20. MainStreetMom.com: This directory has a PR rank of 5 and an Alexa rank of 200,721.

This is not a directory site. It describes itself as "The online magazine for modern

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mothers with traditional values.... See explanation below as to why I submitted articles here.

By the way, no need to create an account to submit here – they have an article submission form that you use.

When It's a Good Idea to Use Lower-Rated Directories and Websites

Targeted Marketing: As I explained at the beginning of this experiment, I chose directories/sites based on their PR and Alexa rankings.

But, as you may have noticed, some of these sites are not exactly “top-rated.” So, why did I submit to them? Because they spoke directly to the audience I'm trying to reach.

This may sound a little elementary, but in the interest of educating, it is always more important to reach 100 people who fit your target market than 1,000 who do not.

Eg, MainStreetMom.com. While its Alexa ranking is below the much desired 100,000 or lower range, it speaks directly to an audience who show a great interest in my product (e-books on freelance writing – again, if I can ever find time to get them on Clickbank!).

So, as you prepare to market, write down the who, what, where, when and why as it pertains to your target market. Eg, who and/or what are they, where are they, when are they there and why are they there?

Answers to these questions will give you a pretty clear picture of where and how to market your product/service.

Article Marketing Tips Learned from This On-Going Case Study

a. Submit to the head of the directory: What do I mean by this? Many directories have sub-categories. Eg, a main heading might be “Writing & Speaking.” Under this you may find article marketing, e-book publishing, copywriting, etc.

From my article stats (where provided), I've noticed that the articles submitted under the main heading (eg, Writing & Speaking) get read more than those under the sub-headings.

I can only guess that many people don't know exactly what they're looking for, so will search under a main category heading first. As most surfers flit from article to article, they may never get around to clicking through to sub-categories.

Article directory owners may disagree with this, or move your article to a sub-category, but unless/until they say otherwise, I would submit under main category headings first.

b. Submit a series of articles: Over the last month and a half, including this series on

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article marketing, I've written two more series (eg, Part 1 of 2).

I don't know if it was the topic or not (my topics focused on ways for freelancers to make more money), but articles as part of a series are getting more reads in a shorter period of time than single articles. They are also picked up by more e-zine publishers.

Mind you, this is a very limited study and a very narrow topic. Much more analysis over a longer period of time would need to be done to make definitive conclusions.

I'm just tossing out info as I notice it. If you can lend any insight into any of these observations, please do so. I'm as anxious to know as anyone.

c. Go minute! What do I mean? Give as much detail as possible. With online marketing being so competitive, implementing even the smallest change can mean a big return.

Readers pick up on and dissect the smallest details. In my opinion, this is extremely helpful because something that you might not think of as important could be the "clue that breaks the case wide open."

Shake, Shake, Shake My MoneyMaker!

My earnings are up a bit to almost 3 times overall what I was making (per day) before I started this experiment.

**Article Tracking Log Sheet:* After this experiment ends, I will be doing a final, in-depth case study analysis. Along with this, I will provide an article tracking log sheet I fashioned to keep track of where I submitted articles.

Stay tuned for Part V tomorrow.

P.S.: Send in your questions (<mailto:info@InkwellEditorial.com>). So we all benefit, I'm trying to wring every bit of useable data out of this experiment. As with any study, it's input from many sources that yield the best results.

Blog Post (InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com): Friday, November 03, 2006

How Article Marketing is Significantly Increasing My Income (Part 5 of 5)

Following is Part 5 of my case study on article marketing. Specifically, I'm studying the following topic – in detail: **Article Marketing – Does It Work, Or Not?**

Wanting to create more passive income, I decided to try article marketing because I'd always gotten good results with it getting the word out about my businesses in the past.

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Following are more of the sites I'm consistently submitting articles to. I chose them because they have good PR and Alexa rankings. For explanations of these, as well as details on the beginning of the experiment, see the 10/26/06 post on [InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com](http://inkwelleditorial.blogspot.com) (<http://inkwelleditorial.blogspot.com/2006/10/case-study-details-how-article.html>).

21. AuthorConnection.com: This directory has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 278,391.

You must create an author account to submit. They assign you an author ID, which is a little annoying because I can never remember mine and have to stop what I'm doing, locate it and then log in.

It's a minor inconvenience, but as I've said before, when you are manually submitting, anything that takes more time is just a pain. Another thing that is a little bothersome with this directory is their subcategory listing.

What I mean is, once you choose your main category, they ask you to select up to five subcategories to put your article in. While this may seem like a good thing, I find it too time-consuming.

I'd rather have the main and sub-categories listed together and be able to select right from the get-go where I wanted my article to go.

No article stats are provided here, but a tracking feature is available.

22. ArticleBeach.com: This directory has a PR rank of 5 and an Alexa rank of 47,816.

You must create an author account to submit. They assign you a password, which again is annoying. See review above as to why. Article tracking and stats area available.

One cool feature of this directory is that it shows you which category you submitted to (I sometimes forget and want to go back and see). FYI, you have to click on the author profile to see this; it won't show up if you just click on the article.

23. BeezyMouse.com: This directory has a PR rank of 1 and an Alexa rank of 93,766.

You need to create an author account to submit here. Article stats and a tracking feature are available. The site doesn't tell you how long they take to approve articles -- not all pieces I've submitted have been posted yet.

I was impressed by this site because it has only been online since July of this year, yet already has an incredible Alexa ranking.

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24. ArticleCube.com: This directory has a PR rank of 4 and an Alexa rank of 20,937.

You need to create an author account to submit. I love this site – it has all the bells and whistles (stats, tracking features) and it also has a link to two popular social networking sites (Digg and Del.icio.us) where you can add your content.

In my opinion, this shows the progressive thinking of the site owners, as social networking sites (eg, FaceBook, MySpace, etc.) are all the rage right now. This could account for its high rankings, as it's only been around since October 2005.

25. ArticleOnRamp.com: This directory has a PR rank of 0 and an Alexa rank of 72,050.

I love this site because of its responsive webmaster, Jason. I suggested new categories and he added them and got back to me within a couple of days. Even if he had not heeded my suggestions, I just appreciated the “human touch” behind this directory.

You need to create an author account. Author stats and a tracking feature area available. Articles are approved pretty rapidly too.

Way to go Jason!

26. Article-Buzz: This directory has a PR rank of 3 and an Alexa rank of 80,757.

Easy to use: simply create an account and submit. Article tracking and stats are available. The approval process is pretty quick; tons of categories to submit to. Site's cool feature: a blog that lists “feature articles.”

There are no specifications listed as to how to get your article on the blog, but it's cool because it makes your article stand out if it does get published here.

27. AllFreelanceWork.com: This directory has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 50,575.

This is not a directory, but a freelance job listing site that has a ton of useful tools for freelancers – job listings, article submission, freelance software, posting of freelancer profiles, etc.

This site can be overwhelming because it offers so much. To make effective use of it, figure out which features fit into your freelance plan. I've been a user of this site off and on for the past 5 years or so and for my money, it is one of the best sites on the web for freelancers.

28. AssociatedContent.com (AC): This directory has a PR rank of 6 and an Alexa rank of 5,082.

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This site describes itself as a “media community.” If you are a freelance writer -- or a business owner seeking a low-cost, effective media outlet -- this site is a must.

You must create an author account to publish and they take up to 8 days to approve an article. They almost always adhere to this guideline. A few times they’ve taken as long as 10 days to approve one of my articles, but this is rare. On the flip side, they will rarely approve an article BEFORE this timeframe.

The best part of AC, they PAY for articles. So, if you’ve written it and are distributing it for free, why not pick up a little cash on the side. The minimum you can receive if they accept your article for publishing is \$3 (payment can go as high as \$40). They pay via PayPal and payment is prompt (within a few days).

I’ve made hundreds of dollars over the course of a few months submitting my articles here. AND, I’ve gotten tons of publicity, subscribers and e-book sales. As a matter of fact, this is what prompted me to finally decide to put my ebooks on ClickBank (the increase in sales once I started using AC).

Site I wished I’d discovered a couple of weeks ago: ArticleWheel.com: With a PR Rank of 4 and an Alexa rank of 34,372, I will be giving this site a try.

One of the things that caught my eye about this directory is that they have a pretty low-priced article submission feature. Meaning, they will submit your article up to 300 directories for just \$6. Again, as I’ve learned first-hand the horror of manual submission, I’m taking note of paid submission plans, in all forms.

When Choosing Article Directories, Which is More Important: Page Rank or Alexa Rank?

In my non-tech-savvy opinion, page rank. Why? Alexa rank derives its results from those who have the Alexa toolbar installed. So, how do you know how many visitors peruse your site who don’t have the toolbar installed? You don't.

Also, who is more likely to know about, keep abreast of, and use, technology like this? Techies. One of the criticisms of the Alexa ranking system is that it is skewed toward tech-oriented sites – although plenty of non-tech savvy sites rank in the top 100,000 (the holy grail of positioning).

Conversely, page rank is somewhat of a community-driven response to a site. Eg, when users across the web find your site useful, they link to it, forward it to friends, etc. When enough people/sites do this – especially those sites with high PR rankings – then your site is considered important/relevant (hence, a rise in the rankings).

In my mind, this is more of a grass roots (ie, pure) response to a site. You don’t have to

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“do” anything (eg, install a tool bar), except produce good content that users will find useful enough to link to/tell others about.

So, that’s why I don’t give too much importance to the Alexa rank.

As you’ll notice from the sites listed in this series, not many rate above 5. When I started reading about page rank a few years ago, any site with a 4 or above was considered a good site to link to. Now, it seems to be a 5 or above. Again, in my humble opinion, if you’re a 4 or above, you’re doing good.

Dead Presidents Rising!

My earnings are starting to cool off – but *I’m still averaging about twice per day what I was making before I started this experiment.*

NOTE: After this experiment ends (11/18), I will be doing a final, in-depth case study analysis. Findings will be presented in an e-book.

Stay tuned for “Questions from Readers” about this case study on 11/06.

P.S.: Send in your questions (<mailto:info@InkwellEditorial.com>). So we all benefit, I’m trying to wring every bit of useable data out of this experiment. As with any study, it’s input from many sources that yield the best results.

Blog Post (InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com): Monday, November 06, 2006

Article Marketing Case Study: Reader Q&A

An overworked freelancer, I decided to try and **create more passive income**. My mode of trying to accomplish this is article marketing. Why article marketing?

I’d read so much about it and had used it to promote past businesses with some success (a little bit of time yielded pretty good results). So, from October 18th thru November 18th, I decided to study article marketing in detail to learn as much about it as I could.

For details on the beginning of the experiment, see the 10/26/06 post on InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com (<http://inkwelleditorial.blogspot.com/2006/10/case-study-details-how-article.html>). Following are reader questions about my findings to date.

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QUESTIONS FROM READERS ABOUT ARTICLE MARKETING

Question: Since your site has been around a while, do you think that's why you've been so successful with your experiment. My site is new, what do you think my chances are?

Answer: I'm sure my site's popularity has something to do with the success of the case study, however, I think it has more to do with the topic and the in-depth information provided.

I think the following three things have been the main reason for the success of this case study:

1. In my opinion, any time you undertake a venture that no one else has put significant time into – and it is a fairly popular topic that a lot of people want to know about -- it will garner interest.
2. The internet makes it easier to reach a wide audience quickly; and
3. It is a “live experiment with instant results.” We live in an information age where people want to know – and they want to know TODAY.

Question: How much money are you actually making? Can you give specifics?

Answer: The Google AdSense program prohibits giving specifics, but as I said in one of my recently published pieces, I was making basically entertainment money (barhopping with friends kind of cash), car payment money, etc. *My earnings have a little more than doubled since I started this experiment.*

What I want everyone to realize is that the more money you make, the harder it is to double that. So, it's not like what I was making was terribly difficult to double – I'm just surprised that by pumping in a few extra hours per day that I was able to see such a big difference.

The whole point of the experiment is to see if this was viable – if article marketing was really what the experts were touting. It's taken a good deal of work, but I needed to know if it would be worth my time to pursue it to any degree. So far, I have to say that for me, it definitely is.

Question: Can you recommend any article submission software?

Answer: Nope, not at this point. I'm manually submitting articles to the directories. BUT, I will be purchasing some article submission software once this experiment is done.

I have my eye on a couple, but as I haven't used any, I hesitate to recommend any. Spend

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a few days researching this on the web before you put out any money. And if anyone has any feedback they can pass along, I'd be happy to share it.

Question: Are you consciously changing articles from posts on your blog to avoid duplicate content penalties?

Answer: No, I'm not. That would be way to time consuming for me. I queried Chris Knight, who manages perhaps the number one article directory on the net (EzineArticles.com), about duplicate content penalties.

My question to him was:

To Whom It May Concern: I would like to ask Mr. Knight a question about being penalized for submitting the same article to many directories. Specifically, if you do this, are you penalized by the likes of Google? Does it hurt your site's ranking?

Christopher Knight's response: To answer your question, unfortunately, I have no idea what Google will do or won't do. Me personally? I wouldn't submit to hundreds of directories because that doesn't seem like a good return on your time.

I know that it's better to submit 100 articles to 1 directory than submitting 1 article to 100 directories; especially when that 1 directory is EzineArticles.com! :-)

Try that experiment for yourself and I bet you'd find the same conclusion I did. The bigger issue is do you really want to manage 100 different trust relationships with your article or just a handful? Best of luck with the study. *End of response.*

I did a little more research and found arguments on both sides. All I can say is, from my efforts so far, the following has happened:

Google Search Results: A Google search of my name before this study returned 700-800 results. As of today, 11/6/06, it returns 15,100 results.

Alexa Rankings: My site's (InkwellEditorial.com) Alexa ranking was over 6,000,000 right before the beginning of this experiment (10/18/06). As of today, it's 3,320,982.

PR Ranking: My PR ranking has stayed at 5, but I've gotten links from sites that have PR ranks of 6 (eg, www.entrepreneurs-journey.com) and 7 (<http://problogger.net>) – which, ostensibly, will only add to my PR ranking in the future.

Will I be penalized somewhere down the road for this? As I'm an SEO (search engine optimization) neophyte, I have no idea. I plan on doing a lot more in the way of SEO. This whole study has made me realize the importance of learning more about this.

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Question: How do you decide what topic to write on?

Answer: I write what interests me, what others are asking about, issues I think need to be addressed, etc. I don't have a process, so to speak, I just – write.

Q: An abbreviated version of a question a reader sent in is as follows: Wondering if I'd be able to pick your brains slightly. I write business plans for clients but at the moment it has been practically impossible for me to get any work . . . I would love to write articles but my problem has been:

Question a) Actually finding things to write about let alone a 700-900 word article scares me to bits! What sort of analysis tool do you use to find topics without much competition?

Answer: Angela, I don't do any analysis to find topics to write about; I get ideas from reading other articles, questions from readers of my material, addressing issue that are bugging me (my reasoning is, if I'm having a problem with it, others are too – practically nothing under the sun is unique to only one individual); issues in the news; etc.

I don't mean to be too vague or general – but I find that if you write from a position of truly wanting to help others – and not from a desire to optimize a site for "x" key word or to “just” make money – you will always have a wellspring of ideas from which to pull.

Question b) Writers block (I find it very difficult to write). I constantly rewrite my business plans. Any tips?

Answer: When I first started my blog, my fear too was that I wouldn't be able to fill it with fresh, interesting content on a consistent basis. BUT, I've found that the more I write, the more ideas I flesh out. Focus on detailed articles (solving one problem of one issue), not general ones, and you will most likely find that you have to CUT your word count, not struggle to increase it.

As for your difficulty writing, my advice is – just write. Initially, don't worry about grammar, word count, organization, etc. Just get your ideas down on paper. Then, go back and flesh out pertinent points. One written “rambling” may contain seeds for several articles.

Question c) I'd love to start a blog but generating content causes a) and b)!

Answer: Save a copy of your written ramblings. Thinking that you will remember an idea is folly – it will invariably escape you. I have a document on my computer entitled “Article Ideas.” I constantly add to this as new ideas pop into my head. On those days when the idea well runs dry (it happens to the best of us), it comes in handy.

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Question d) Are there resources (a quick course in creative writing) that can help me?

Answer: There are so many on the web, they are too numerous to name. I hesitate to recommend one, because I haven't taken any. But, go with recognized names in the freelance industry.

To research sources, go to noted sites like WritersDigest.com and WritersMarkets.com. Also, frequent writing forums. Ask questions and/or read feedback from those who have taken courses.

Shameless Plug! My e-course, **Launch a Profitable Freelance Writing Career in 30 Days or Less -- Guaranteed!** (details at <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/SmallBizCntr/black-freelance-writing-ecourse.htm>) will be available in January 2007.

FREE E-BOOK: There is so much more that I want to address about this topic based on the findings to date. I'm sure there'll be more after this experiment ends on 11/18/06.

So, I will be doing a final, in-depth case study analysis. The findings will be published in a FREE e-book and will be available the second week of December. If you'd like a copy of this, subscribe by sending your email address to [info\[at\]InkwellEditorial.com](mailto:info[at]InkwellEditorial.com) (replace [at] with @).

Tomorrow's Post: A Proposed Minimum Wage for Freelance Writers (yep folks, we're going to get political – after all, tomorrow is election day. Remember to VOTE and stay tuned!)

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STATS FROM STUDY

Alexa Rank

At beginning of experiment (10/18/2006)

InkwellEditorial.com: 6,000,000+

InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com: It didn't even register

At end of experiment (11/20/2006)

InkwellEditorial.com: 1,193,936

InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com: 965,541

PR Rank

At beginning of experiment (10/18/2006)

InkwellEditorial.com: 5

InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com: 0

At end of experiment (11/20/2006)

InkwellEditorial.com: 6

InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com: 5

Author Name Recognition

At beginning of experiment (10/18/2006)

Google search for "Yuwanda Black": hovered between 700-800 returned results

At end of experiment (12/1/06)

Google search for "Yuwanda Black":

Google (18,000 results)

Yahoo (Over 7,800 results)

MSN (Almost 3,000 results)

Money Results

I did a comparison of 10/18/2005 to 12/31/2005 to 10/18/2006 to 12/31/2006, and to my surprise, I made LESS from Google ads.

However, subscriptions to my newsletter were up about 20%, and as mentioned above, my site and name's recognition was up in all the search engines. I didn't make any e-book sales during this period, as I'm in the process of migrating all of my e-books to ClickBank.

I wonder how many I would have sold during this period with so many more eyeballs coming to the site? This, I'll never know.

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The final money results surprised me, especially as I started out so well. However, I think a few things contributed to this:

a) Google Timing: InkwellEditorial.com first started displaying Google ads in January 2005. For the first year, the income was pretty consistent. I worked on the site a lot because I was excited about this stream of income.

BUT, I started to notice that without updating the site at all, my income was basically the same. So, as I got busier, my initial enthusiasm for updating the site faded.

Without new content, the site attracts fewer new visitors, so income drops. A site needs new traffic to increase.

Conclusion: By January 2006, many of my site's visitors had already seen the Google ads served up, so they were less likely to click on them when and/or if they did continue to visit the site.

Further, the niche my site serves (the freelance writing community), has a limited number of advertisers. The same ads pop up again and again. So, even many new visitors may have seen these ads on other freelance writing websites.

b) Time Period: I probably could have selected a better time to conduct this study, and for a longer period of time. The experiment ended on November 18, 2006.

Conclusion: Many are in holiday mode a week or two before this, so this could have contributed to the fall-off in income.

c) Posting: I started the blog in February 2005. I used to convert blog posts to articles and post them to the site itself (InkwellEditorial.com). I stopped doing that during the summer of 2006 (too time consuming). Now, I just post to the blog itself.

Even though I have Google ads on the blog, they are not "front and center" like they are in the articles on the site.

Conclusion: Post a synopsis of your articles on your blog and have visitors click through to your site. Visitors are much more likely to tool around a site if the navigation bar is right there in front of them than if they have to click over from your blog to your site.

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CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM EXPERIMENT

Which marketing directories are best? This is hard to pinpoint, because it depends on your audience – who you’re trying to reach.

As a general rule, I’d say go with top-rated directories in your sector AND top-rated general directories.

To find the best ones, type in phrases like “article directory”, “article marketing directory”, and “article marketing” into your favorite browser.

What to look for in a directory (how to choose an effective directory)? The criteria I used for selecting a directory was PR and Alexa rankings. These are good guidelines to start with.

HOWEVER, there may be lesser-known, niche directories (or websites that accept articles) better suited to your marketing efforts. You will have to do some detective work to find this out.

But, remember, it is better to reach 100 TARGETED prospects, than 1,000 general ones.

If you’re considering a directory, look under the category you want to submit under. Number one, check to see IF they have a category applicable to your article. If not, it’s probably not a good place for you to submit.

Number two, check the category you want to submit under and see how many articles are there relative to the rest of the categories.

If they have 10,097 articles under Technology and 6,439 under Marketing, but only 233 under Health/Exercise, you might not want to submit to that directory, I don’t care what their PR or Alexa rank is.

You have to constantly ask, “Does this marketing outlet EFFECTIVELY reach my audience?”

Other things to look for in an article directory:

a) stats (article reports) – as in, do they offer any. Things like how many times an article has been read, how many ezines have picked it up, and how many comments it’s garnered (this won’t happen a lot) are important to know because it can clue you in on “hot topics” that can lead to better sales.

b) tracking features: What I mean by this is does the directory keep a list all of your articles in a place where you can easily see them. Usually, when you set up a user account, they will list all of your articles for you, noting which ones are pending, which

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ones are live, when you submitted and when it was accepted or rejected.

Although you can use the Article Marketing Tracking Sheet featured below, if a directory keeps these kinds of stats for you – all the better.

c) posting times: as in, how long does it take them to publish your article. This is particularly important if you have a time-sensitive piece.

d) payment: as in, does a directory pay. This is a very new concept among directories, but I think it is the next big thing. So, how does it work? [For those of you aware of how this works, feel free to skip this little part].

Most article directories derive their income from ads. Eg, you know those Google ads you see across the top of the page, in a side bar, in the middle of an article? These ads are served up based on the content of the article. Each time a visitor clicks on an ad, the site owner makes money.

As an example, if you submit an article about motorcycles, then you might see advertiser (Google) ads about motorcycle schools, Harley Davidson dealers, or motor cycle riding gear. The logic being, people who read ads about motorcycles are interested in them and the lifestyle that surrounds it.

Some sites are now starting to offer content providers (me, you – the article writers), a portion of the proceeds earned from ads that appear beside their content. Tres cool! My reasoning is, why shouldn't we benefit monetarily from our content? After all, without writers, these sites wouldn't exist.

The web is a very crowded place these days. And, while article marketing is still one of the best ways to get unlimited FREE exposure, it is becoming "old hat." I think a lot of directories will disappear if they don't start paying as content providers will inevitably go where the money is.

ArticleonRamp.com is one site that began this revenue-sharing model this year [2007]. After not submitting to it for a while, when I got the email from the webmaster announcing this program, I immediately started submitting again.

NOTE: I didn't stop submitting to this site because I didn't like it. In fact, it's been one of my favorites since I discovered it in October 2006 because they post articles quickly and my articles seem to get a lot of reads there. I took a break over the holidays and only submitted a few pieces to a couple of sites during this time

Now, be warned, I don't think there are going to be any great fortunes made. I know, I have Google ads on my site. BUT, if you submit to 20, 30 or 40 sites – and submission software makes it much easier to submit to hundreds at a time – there could be a nice chunk of change served up at the end of the month.

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REVENUE-SHARING ARTICLE DIRECTORIES, BLOGS, FORUMS & MORE

I did a Google search and came across the following site, AdMoolah.com. It has a list of sites that offer revenue sharing to content providers. Most offer a 50% take; some offer 100%.

Cut/paste following in to your browser to see the list:

<http://www.admoolah.com/blog/index.php/adsense-revenue-sharing-sites/>

They detail 12 article directories, 16 communities/forums, 4 blogs and a host of sites listed under “Other”.

Hey, if you’re writing and submitting articles for free now, why not pick up a few dollars along the way where possible by submitting those same pieces elsewhere.

Disclaimer: I have not submitted to any of these sites, so don’t know anything about them other than what I read on their sites.

Good luck – and if you make a fortune (even a tiny one), please let me know!

How often should you post to article directories be effective? From my experience, I’d say at a bare minimum, once a week, with 2-3 times a week being ideal.

This is enough to keep your product/service top of mind with your target audience and it also has several other benefits:

a) Newsletter material: You will quickly build up a cache of material to use in future newsletters, as writing samples, etc.

b) Keeps your writing fresh and topical: If you are writing this often, 9 times out of 10, you are going to have to turn to topical events/happenings/circumstances to keep your writing fresh. This is always a good thing.

The media loves up-to-the-minute material and you have a greater chance of being picked up by a major media outlet/online service. The more publicity, the better!

c) Develops good marketing habits: Most of us back-burner marketing. However, it is something we all need to do to keep the business flowing in. If you spend 2-3 days a week just banging out one article, that’s 100 to 150 “media touches” a year just submitting to one directory.

That’s without doing any other marketing or advertising. Who knows how many other opportunities this kind of consistent marketing will bring your way.

Consistency breeds habits – and creating good marketing habits puts you 90% ahead of

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your competition.

Which type of marketing is compatible with article marketing? Press releases; newsletters; daily tips, jokes and inspirational messages. All of this is FREE or practically free marketing you can successfully combine with an article marketing campaign without too much more work. How?

Take a daily marketing tip from your article and send it to your database. Tell a personal story that made you write the article in the first place. Rewrite your article into a press release and submit it to FREE PR sites like PRWeb.com.

Only you know what's right for you, your business and your budget. These are just a few ideas to get your creative juices flowing.

Should you only do article marketing? The one thing I like about article marketing is that it only costs time. So, if you are just starting out and don't have any money, then yes, it is an effective vehicle to start to get your name out there.

BUT, I'm a firm believer in combining FREE marketing efforts with paid ones. Choose one paid and one free method you can use all the time, and you can put your marketing on auto-pilot.

Eg, do a mailing of 500 postcards a month and submit articles 2-3 times a week to specified directories. Depending on your income goals, this could be all the marketing you will ever need to do.

NOTE: Until you are established, you will more than likely have to do more than this. BUT, this is a cheap, simple program to start.

Should article marketing software be used? My initial reaction is, "Absolutely!" However, once I get over the horror of the memory of *manually* submitting to 25 directories a day, I say, "It depends." On what?

How many directories you are submitting to and what you want to gain from your article marketing efforts. Increasing your newsletter subscriber rate is different from promoting your e-book, which is different from trying to get your first few clients.

As a general rule, I'd say if you are submitting to 5 or fewer top-rated directories, it will not be too much of a pain to do it manually. Any more than this, then investing in submission software will be well worth your time.

As Thomas Jefferson said, "If you love life, do not waste time, for time is what life is made of."

Amen!

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Which articles work best – long or short articles? In my experience, definitely longer articles. Specifically, I've gleaned that articles between 700-900 words seem to work best.

I think this is because it is the perfect length for a well documented/well thought out article, without being too long winded. Anything shorter seems to be too general in nature. Web surfers are primarily looking for INFORMATION. But, if you don't say anything new, unique and/or useful in your article, it's just like a million others on the net.

From my estimation (and this is not scientific fact, just a general observation from this experiment, and from being a web surfer for well over a decade), article that are 300-500 words are just too general in nature.

It's obvious that these types of articles are written just to drive traffic to a site, not to educate, inform or enlighten the reader. You'd be surprised at how just adding 200-300 more words can improve an article.

Tips for increasing your article length – not with fluff, but with money-making content

- a) *Write from the heart:* This may seem simple, but many don't do it. Forget about things like key word density and search engine optimization. Write from an honest place of wanting to inform and enlighten the reader.

Do this and they will be much more likely to become loyal readers (and buyers) of your content, programs, etc.

- b) *Focus on the minutiae:* Instead of doing a general article, focus on one point of a topic and explain it in detail. Back it up with statistics, research and quotes from noted experts.
- c) *Write like you talk:* In my experience, “conversational” writing allows ideas to flow smoother. One point seamlessly flows into another and before you know it, you have enough copy for two articles instead of one.

If you are constantly trying to “get a piece right” by editing that conversational voice in your head, you stop the flow of ideas. Even if this medium doesn't fit your target audience, write in this manner first. Then, go back and make it sound the way you want it to sound. You should still have more than enough content for a solid article.

If you follow these guidelines, you will invariably find yourself cutting your word count, not fighting to increase it.

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How much money can you make using article marketing? This depends on many factors, eg, what sector you're in; what type of product/service you're selling; how often you submit to directories, the type and quality of the articles submitted; who your target market is; etc.

In general, I will say that I don't think that article marketing is a way to make a lot of money – directly. However, it is an effective marketing method to bring in long-term sales. How?

Quite simply, by creating name/brand recognition. The more you see someone's name/message/ article/product, etc., the more comfortable you will feel purchasing from them when you are READY to buy their type of product/service.

Marketing experts estimate that potential customers have to see your name/message/product/service 7 to 28 times before they will contact and/or buy from you. Article marketing is a great way to build this type of visibility.

In conclusion, article marketing is effective for long-term sales via building visibility/notoriety. However, it is not effective for direct, immediate sales.

Are some niches better suited for article marketing? I think that all niches can benefit from article marketing. After all, it is just another form of bringing notoriety to your product/service, ie, like a press release.

However, I think some sectors benefit more from it than others. My sector, freelance writing, is notoriously low-paying. Advertisers pay less for ad word campaigns and for products and services than say, for example, a tech-oriented sector.

A programmer selling an e-book about programming would probably make more money from a Google Adwords campaign than I do because: a) it is a web-savvy product and his niche is more comfortable online than mine (freelance writers); b) the genre as a whole carries higher priced products than the freelance writing sector; and c) the “comfortability” of this sector purchasing online is greater than mine.

10,000 more reasons could be given for 10,000 more niches, but the “hard science” niches (eg, tech, medicine, engineering, etc.) are likely to do much better online than the “soft science” niches (eg, freelance writing).

Will you be penalized for duplicate content if you post to your site, then submit to numerous directories as well? I read arguments on both sides of this question, but the one that made the most sense to me was written by Richard Keir in the article *Duplicate Content - Penalize Me, Please*.

I found the article on Pandia.com, specifically: <http://www.pandia.com/sew/169-duplicate-content.html>. He writes:

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I publish an article which I put on my PR0 site. Somebody with a PR6 site picks it up and publishes it too. Surprise, they get indexed and I don't. Later maybe I get indexed but it doesn't do me a lot of good PR-wise. Is this a duplicate content penalty? Yes - but mostly no. The search engines didn't say, "I'm going cream this PR0 for putting up this article that's on this PR6 over here." All they did was see that the PR6 is a much higher authority site than my PR0.

He goes on to argue that you should publish your own articles that point to your own site – after all, this is why sites are created and articles are published – to garner traffic (e, build a customer base).

This is my thinking too. I always publish my articles to my site or my blog first, THEN submit to article directories.

For an alternative view, read the post on ProBlogger.net at <http://www.problogger.net/archives/2006/01/31/why-i-dont-use-free-articles-on-my-blogs/> (the part of this post addressing duplicate content is about halfway the page).

Basically, the gist of Darren's (the webmaster at ProBlogger.net) argument is:

Even if search engines don't penalize sites who engage in duplicate content (and I doubt they do for a few free articles) it doesn't make good sense to me to use content that might have appeared on thousands of other sites . . . [because] Unless you have a very highly ranked site you're unlikely to come out on top of the SE results.

Read more to make an informed decision, because only you can decide what is right for your promotional efforts.

How long should you wait after you have posted an article to your site to submit it to other sites? I do this, usually, almost immediately. Sometimes, a day or two later. Why?

Because some directories can take three to four weeks to publish an article, in my experience, this doesn't hurt you. I have to say though, a lot of directories are getting better about publishing articles within 48-72 hours.

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Conclusion: Article marketing is a wonderful way to build your credibility as a freelancer. The more people see your name, the more they trust you and the more likely they are to hire you.

It also helps you to be a better writer – if you constantly write and submit to directories, you will get faster (at writing and researching); you will have a constant flow of ideas; and it will keep your name steadily in front of clients because you can use the content you generate in, for example, a newsletter – making it serve double duty.

The best part of article marketing – it's FREE!

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ARTICLE MARKETING TRACKING SHEET

I used this tracking mechanism to help organize my article submission. Remember, I was submitting manually. And, although many directories have tracking features, I wanted to be able to know at a glance when and where I had submitted.

Other columns you could add are how many views an article is/has received and whether or not you received comments on an article. These two stats clue you in as to what topics really interest your audience, allowing you to create other content along this vein.

ARTICLE MARKETING TRACKING SHEET

Name of Directory	Article Title	Date Submitted	PR Ranking	Alexa Ranking

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ENDMATTER

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