

January 2011

Dear Friend,

If you're a business owner but not interested in writing, you may wonder what possible value an "article on writing articles" could have for you. And if this were 20 years ago, the answer to that question would have been: Not much.

However, article-writing is no longer something that only journalists and freelance writers do. These days, *EVERYONE* who owns a business and has any kind of online presence should know something about how to present themselves through writing – and not just sales writing.

Articles are one of the core ingredients of "content marketing" (a term first used about 10 years ago). And since content marketing is the #1 way successful business owners are now communicating with their audience, I figured a series on "how to write articles" made a lot of sense.

In this issue, I'm going to just briefly touch on some of the main things you need to know about writing articles. In the months to come, I'll show you things like:

- how to improve your interviewing and research skills,
- the best way to weave keywords into your content, and
- tips on how to change your style of writing from article to article, in order to keep your "audience" coming back for more.

I'll also devote an issue to the topic of hiring writers for \$5/hour (a common practice nowadays), and why that might not be the best strategy for your own business.

Writing Articles . . . *NOT* for Writers Only!

by Chris Wilson

My first introduction to articles came in 6th grade, when I was required to bring in at least one news article a week and present it to my class.

Eight years later – the year I chose journalism as my major at City College of San Francisco – I was writing articles on a regular basis for our school newspaper. According to my journalism teacher, I'd already figured out the "formula" for writing good articles.

Today, having written hundreds of articles over the years, I can honestly say it takes a lot more than a "formula" to write a good article. However, you don't need to be an expert to write a decent one.

If you've been reading magazines and/or newspapers most of your life, you could probably do a decent job of writing an article yourself. Especially if it's about something you're already familiar with. Which brings me to . . .

Choosing a Topic

"Write what you know" is a phrase writers often hear. It's a good tip for marketers, too.

Not only does understanding your subject help you write better, it also saves time. You don't have to spend hours researching the topic if you're already familiar with it!

Choosing a Format

Deciding the format you'll be using for your article is the next step. How-to, corporate profile (interview format), review, and round-up (basically a list, with each heading "fleshed out" a little – great for blog posts!) are all formats that easily capture the attention of readers.

NOTE: Throwing in a sidebar now and then is an excellent way to add valuable (or at least interesting) information to an article. Think about your own reading habits: Don't you at least look at the sidebar first, before reading an article?

Why Write When I Can Just Advertise?

If this is a question you've asked yourself, take a look at this quote from [Junta42](#) (an excellent resource for content marketers):

"According to the Roper Public Affairs, **80% of business decision makers prefer to get company information in a series of articles versus an advertisement.** 70% say content marketing makes them feel closer to the sponsoring company, while 60% say that company content helps them make better product decisions. Think of this – what if your customer looked forward to receiving your marketing? What if when they received it, via print, email, website, they spent 15, 30, 45 minutes with it?"

In Conclusion . . .

Even if you decide to hire someone else to do your writing for you, just knowing what a good article looks like and how to go about building one will help you better evaluate someone else's work.

At the very least, you'll be able to better guide them as to the types of articles you want written for your own business!

RESOURCES

[*Secrets of a Freelance Writer*](#), by [Bob Bly](#). The pages most useful to someone wanting to write primarily for their business are **pages 127-128** (turning articles into free booklets and special reports) and **page 134** (sending copies of articles you've written as part of your follow-up campaign with customers).

[**"Why Every Entrepreneur Should Write and 9 Tips to Get Started"**](#), by John Baptiste, CEO/Co-founder of [OnSwipe](#) – a start-up that provides a platform for "easy and engaging magazine-like publishing and advertising on tablet devices."

If you can think of other things you'd rather be doing than writing articles, but want the benefits you could get from content marketing, please give me a call at **916/801-0480**, or e-mail me at cwilson@worddesign.biz. I offer a free one-hour, no-obligation consultation to anyone interested in learning more about how I can help them.

To your success,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris".

Word Design

www.worddesign.biz