

Write an Article (A powerful and FREE marketing tool for your product or service)

by Dr. Robert Sullivan

Some time ago I placed an advertisement in a periodical with national circulation. It cost a few hundred dollars for a "1-column inch" display. I'm sure you have seen these type of advertisements many times. We sent our artwork, paid the bill, and got ready to fill the hundreds of orders we expected. We were advertising a business book. We received three orders!! A few months later I had an article published in the same periodical which resulted in hundreds of sales. Why?

When you consider it, the answer is obvious. How do you react when reading an advertisement versus an article? You are suspicious of the advertisement but reading about the same product or service in the body of an article gives it instant credibility. Clearly the author is an "expert." Furthermore, it appears that the publication itself is actually endorsing the product. Publications want your articles and will generally include a short byline (your advertisement!) at the end of the article.

I get the impression that many people are as fearful of writing as they are of speaking in front of a group. Don't be - the process is easy and painless. Getting "published" is easy. Remember that virtually every magazine editor is always looking for content - especially quality content that is free. This is win-win. The magazine gets an article that may attract readership and you get free advertising. Let's write an article - by the numbers:

1. Identify magazines and other periodicals that relate to your product or service and would be interested in related subject matter. Do this by visiting your local library and asking at the reference desk for a copy of "Standard Periodical Directory" by Oxbridge Communications. This fantastic reference lists every periodical currently being published. There is a handy index that lists periodicals by subject type. Copy the pertinent information including name of editor, address, telephone and fax numbers. Visit a local large book store with a good selection of periodicals (I like Barnes and Noble) and quickly review any of the periodicals you previously identified.
2. While reviewing the articles, note the writing "style." Is it humorous? Academic? For periodicals you cannot find, call the magazine and ask for a sample issue and a copy of their writing guidelines. Call (or e-mail) the remaining magazines on your list and ask for their writing guidelines.
3. Reviewing the content of the various publications will give you many ideas for topics and possible articles.
4. It's time to write! Get over any "fear" you have of writing. The process is easy and rewarding. Begin writing your article for the most likely candidate

from your list of periodicals and attempt to follow their style of writing.

Keep these writing guidelines in mind:

- Pick a subject and organize your thoughts on paper.
 - Start with a quick outline to help you stay focused and organized.
 - Write using short sentences and paragraphs .
 - Don't use big words - you are not trying to impress anyone - you are teaching.
 - The first paragraph should quickly identify the purpose and content of the article.
 - The last paragraph should be a call for action or a conclusion.
 - Write each paragraph deductively. That is, make your point immediately and follow up with supporting information.
 - Don't be verbose. Read any legal or insurance document for an example of how NOT to write.
 - Carefully check grammar and spelling (do NOT rely on your word processor spell checker - remember those checkers still cannot correct "there" to "their" if required).
 - Have an associate review your work and ask for critical comments. Wait a couple of days and review your work yourself. Correct as necessary.
5. Think carefully about your "byline" -the information that you want included at the end of your article. This byline should be a sneaky "sales message" and give some indication of your expertise. As an example, here is a byline I frequently use:

Robert Sullivan is the author of "The Small Business Start-Up Guide" and "United States Government - New Customer! Either may be ordered toll-free by calling (800) 375 8439. Also, check the Small Business Advisor at <http://www.isquare.com>

Even a short byline can contain a lot of information. Mine includes my name, the fact that I am an author (an "expert"), lists a couple of my books, provides an 800 order number for these books and references my website.

6. Give your article an effective title (use a subtitle if it makes sense). Print your article using 1.5 or double spacing with large (at least 1-inch) margins (or refer to the magazines guidelines, if any). Include your byline at the end of the article. If submitting by e-mail, use single spacing.
7. Submit your article to EVERY periodical you have found (even though you have written your article in the "style" of one of the selected periodicals). Your package should include the following:
- A copy of the article
 - A cover letter briefly describing the article (include the number of words) and the fact that you are not requesting payment but only

- require that your byline be included. You should also request a copy of the issue that will include your article. (Think positive!)
- A small photo of yourself (a head shot). Color or black and white is okay but it should be glossy. Many publications like to include a picture of the author.
8. Follow-up each submittal. E-mail is always best, if available.
 9. Don't get discouraged. Keep writing and submitting.

Incidentally, you can maximize results by having an 800 order line and the ability to accept payment via credit cards. In our case, 92% of our orders are via credit card.

The more you publish, the easier it gets. Writing can be fun and, as we have noted, it is absolutely the best form of "advertising." Give it a try. If you write an article that relates to small business, send it to us for possible use in our monthly newsletter or our Internet website. We have only one guideline - submittal via e-mail only.

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Robert Sullivan is the author of *The Small Business Start-Up Guide*, and *United States Government - New Customer!*. He frequently lectures on starting small businesses and appears on CNBC's "Minding Your Business" as a small business expert. His books may be ordered toll-free by calling 1 800 375 8439.

Robert also developed and maintains an extensive award-winning Internet website, "The Small Business Advisor," at <http://www.isquare.com>