

Competitors into Profits - Lesson 1

GUEST BLOGGING



How to Use Guest Blogging to Grow Your Relationships and Expand Your Reach

One of the simplest things you can do to make a connection with another online business owner is to write guest posts. All you're doing is writing for a different site in order to get these added benefits:

- **More exposure for your business:** You tap into a new audience and get to include a byline that sends readers back to your site to sign up for more information.
- **A budding connection with a fellow online business owner:** You grab their attention by showing you're a provider of quality content, and they appreciate that you took time to understand their audience.

And of course, that fellow online business owner also benefits because they get **AWESOME** content for their audience at no charge. The only thing they need to do is allow you to include a byline.

But before you rush off and start submitting posts or asking for opportunities, there are a few things to keep in mind.

- **Be Targeted:** Always understand the blog's targeted audience before you approach the owner. Read their posts, sign up for the newsletter and pay attention to comments on the site and social media. In other words, and it's what we do for ALL networking activities, do your homework!
- **Be Prepared:** You can always pitch an idea to a blogger about a post, but make sure your idea is complete and has concrete details that will generate interest. A good recommendation is if you don't already know the blogger personally, have a finished post that you can show them, so they can see the quality of your work and they know that it's something their audience will find very valuable. It saves them a lot of time and helps ensure they're not wasting their time with a bunch of back and forth trying to get the content ready to go. Of course, you should always let them know that you can do any edits they want or even switch focus for the post if they prefer. Assure them that you're there to serve their audience in the best way possible.
- **Nurture:** Make the most of the connection you've made. Do follow up guest posts and work together in other ways. Not sure how to work together? Consult the other lessons in this course. Whether you do webinars, create products or do other things, work to keep the relationship going. And be natural...the more you correspond, the more you can get involved with a little chit-chat, ask more personal questions, get on Skype to talk, the stronger your relationship will become. Just be natural. Don't force it.

But Hang On, What is Guest Blogging Exactly?

Let's back up a bit and talk about what "guest blogging" is. Most of us probably have some idea, but let's define it in terms of a business AND relationship-building activity.

The mechanics of a guest blogging opportunity is that one website owner publishes an informative blog post on another website owner's blog. In return, the guest blogger is generally allowed to include a byline with a link to their site. They may also be able to include some links within the content. Sometimes, guest blogging is reciprocal in that both website owners publish content for one another's sites. But in many cases, it's just one website owner publishing content for another.

Setting Your Guest Blogging Goals

Clearly, guest blogging is not just a relationship building technique; there are plenty of other benefits. Here are some things you can accomplish with guest blogging.

1. **Build relationships with other business owners within your niche market.** Choose your connections wisely. The more time and effort you put into each guest posting opportunity, the better your results will be.
2. **Increase your online presence and gain traffic.** If you provide great content and a compelling reason to come back to your site, your traffic will grow.
3. **Build your list.** Always send traffic from your byline to a special opt-in offer. If you send them to your home page, most of that traffic will be wasted. It's also harder to get them to buy something on first contact, so make them a free offer they can't refuse.
4. **Establish yourself as an expert in your field.** When your highly informative content is seen in more places, it establishes your credibility and people are more likely to see you as an expert.
5. **Build your brand and reputation.** Getting more people seeing your content, knowing your name and seeing your face (since you'll include your image in your guest posts whenever you can) means more brand recognition.
6. **Bigger and better more opportunities.** Once people see you publishing on other high profile blogs, they're more likely to want you to write for them. You can even think of it as a ladder of sorts. When you start with smaller sites and can show you have experience and expertise, larger sites are more likely to start publishing your content too.

Keep the #1 goal first and foremost in your mind. Reach out to people you want to connect with and who would make great potential partners. If you think they're too high profile and out of reach, then start with other sites. Once you've established yourself as a quality guest blogger, you can then go to the higher profile sites with more to offer.

Start with Blogs You Know

Consider some of the blogs that you already patronize. Most business owners stay in touch with their fellow businesses through social media as well as blogs that pique their interest. If you know your way around a blog, then you know which ones have a greater sphere of influence and which do not. As you comment on blog posts, you get a sense of who the owner is, and if their goals and ideals match yours. You will also have a better understanding of the type of content they publish and what their audience is all about.

If you want to seek out new blogs that you don't already know, always do your homework before proceeding. Get to know them before you prepare any content or make first contact.

The Responsibilities of a Good Guest Blogger

In order to make this guest blogging thing work for you, there are a few responsibilities to keep in mind. There are no shortcuts to providing stellar content blog owners will be jumping at the chance to publish.

1. **Research the blog in question** – This has been mentioned before, but this is the first mistake many potential guest bloggers make, so it's important to drill this home. Your content needs to be in line with the focus of the target blog and its values.

Before sending a pitch to the blog owner, know what they stand for, what type of content their readers are interested in, as well as what their guidelines are (if they're posted).
2. **Adhere to the rules** – Falling afoul of the guidelines will not be looked on favorably by the host blog. Know what is expected of you and what is being asked in return. Always search for guest author guidelines on the site before drafting any content. Not all blogs publish guidelines, but check first.
3. **Gauge the blog's reputation** – Remember your reputation is going to be linked to the host blog after you make your guest appearance. If they are not influential in the industry, you may not gain as much exposure as you were hoping for, but don't put your nose up at quality bloggers who currently may not have a broad reach because you're here for the relationship. Many people's online careers are sparked by relationships built with other like-minded people who were just starting out too.
4. **Make sure it's targeted** – Blogs that are not relevant to your niche, even if you like to write about the blog's subject matter, won't likely result in the mutually beneficial relationship you're hoping for. Some people just publish on all sorts of subjects, hoping something will stick somewhere. Always stay targeted – the relationships you develop and the traffic you get will be much more beneficial.
5. **Stick around the blog** – Don't just do a guest stint and never communicate with the blog again. Become an active participant on that blog, answer comments to your posts and become a part of the community.

6. **Write stellar content** – Always bring something new to the table. Many guest bloggers make the mistake of thinking that mediocre, watered down recycled content will fly on a guest blogging stint. This mistake might seriously tarnish your reputation. Provide the same quality that you would if you were writing for your own site.
7. **Reciprocate** – Return the favor by promoting the host blog's content. Remind your audience to check out your guest posts. Post on social sites and encourage your readers to support the blogs that have offered you this opportunity.
8. **Nurture the relationship** – It will probably be said a few more times before this lesson is done, but it's important: keep in touch, work together and get to know the blogger on a more personal level.

Approaching the Blogger

Included in this course are a couple of templates you can use to make the first contact. Please note while these letters are templates, they still require you to put some thought into them and customize your letters to each guest posting opportunity. If you sound like you're sending a form letter, then they're going to treat you like someone who sent a form letter – and they'll put your email in the trash. When using those templates, be sure to read the instructions in the instruction document AND in the templates themselves.

Remember, read any submission guidelines the site may have before you do anything. They may specify whether they want an idea pitched to them or that they'd rather receive a completed post. If they don't specify this, have a complete post ready if you don't already know the blogger personally. That will save them a lot of time in deciding in whether they want to work with you or not.

Always address the blogger personally. Never write "To Whom it May Concern," but instead show that you actually do read their blog and know what it's all about. The less personal your email is, the more likely they are to ignore it.

Remember to also let the host know who you are. Introduce yourself and your blog/online business. Include links to a few past guest blogging stints or to articles you have written that have been published on your site, as well as your publications in other places online. Remember to link directly to the content you are most proud of, don't just give them your home page link and make them search around for your best content.

The key in all this is to be personal and to make it as easy to work with you as possible... don't waste their time!

Creating your Guest Post

Writing your post may go before approaching the blogger (if you plan to write the post first), but you can also start the process by planning your approach, so you have a very good idea about what you want to do before you start writing.

Either way, what you write should be your best work and should be very targeted to the blog you want to write for. Here are some steps for putting your blog post together:

- **Read Through the Blog:** Look at recent posts and dig deep into the category you want to write about. You do not want to duplicate something that has already been done. Take note of the voice and style to see how your writing might best fit in. Also, take note of the perspective the blogger takes on certain subjects. While there may room for varying perspectives, you do not want to directly contradict the core opinions of the blog owner.
- **Read the Comments:** Understand the people who are reading the blog. What posts seem to resonate with them? What questions do they have? How can you help with something they seem to be looking for?
- **Create a Quality Post:** Obviously, you want to make sure your post is of the highest quality possible. If you want it to be noticed by the blogger and to make an impact on the audience, the post has to be good. Make sure you have your post proofread as well. Typos are a fact of life, but in this case, you have to put your very best foot forward.
- **Create an Original Post:** You will also be creating completely original content and offering exclusive publishing rights, unless the blog does not require it. While you can write on topics you've covered before, make your guest post original and try to incorporate new ideas. Also, try to link to other relevant content from the blog you're writing for as well. Bloggers love it when you can link with content they've already published on their own site. It also shows you're paying attention.
- **Create a Targeted Post:** In addition to having a quality and original post, you want it highly targeted to the audience. Mention things that are relevant to the readers and link to previous posts and any relevant products the blogger may have.
- **Avoid Self-Promotion:** You can mention what you do for a living in your post, as it adds to your credibility, but don't promote your products or link to a bunch of your pages inside your post. In fact, don't include any of your own links inside the post, unless the blog owner has specifically said you can do that.
- **Craft Your Byline:** In addition to developing a relationship with the blogger, you also want your site to benefit from the guest post. Make sure you craft a byline that is targeted to the topic that you wrote about and provide a link for them to claim a free offer (in return for an opt-in) on your site. Included in this course is a document with more byline tips and some templates you can use for best results.

Continuing to Build the Relationship

Once the post is up, your job isn't over. Here are a few things to do to ensure your fellow blogger is thrilled with your work and will want to stay in contact.

- **Promote your post.** It's not simply the blog owner's responsibility to get eyeballs on your content. Promote your post to your list and social media followers as well. Your fellow blogger will also appreciate the burst of traffic.
- **Respond to comments on your post.** It's polite and helps develop the community of your fellow blogger.
- **Write a follow-up to your post.** Are there certain points you can expand on or did the blog readers have questions you could answer in-depth?
- **Write other posts.** If the blogger liked what you had to offer, ask if there is any other topic they'd like covers.
- **Reciprocate the opportunity.** Return the favor and ask if you can help them help expand their reach by posting on your site. Make it easy for them by coming up with subject ideas or interview them, so all they have to do is answer a few questions.
- **Work together in other ways.** Here is a post on more meaningful ways to connect with people you don't know. It includes 7 more ideas, so use them readily:
<http://contentrix.com/meaningful/10170>

Overall, remember to treat this like any other budding friendship. Don't be pushy and don't try to force being buddies. You'll find some of your connections are very personable and want to share private details about their lives, but some will want to keep things on a more professional level. Get a sense of what they need and nurture the relationship that way.

What to Do Now?

Now it's time to get to work. Your tasks for this lesson are:

- Find a blog you want to write for and do your homework. If you don't already know the blog well, get to know it.
- Pitch an idea or prepare a highly-polished post and contact the blog owner. Use the template provided with this lesson.

Once the post is published, remember your responsibilities and continue to develop that relationship. And after you have one guest posting experience under your belt, see what other blog owners you can connect with.

Get Feedback

Remember to get feedback from others and ask questions. Here are some things you might ask for help with in this lesson.

- Finding blogs that are the best fit for you. Perhaps come with a list of possibilities and get opinions about how to proceed.
- Topic brainstorming. Have a few ideas on topics you could cover and get others to help fine tune the idea, so it's as original and targeted as possible.
- Feedback on your blog post. When you have a draft ready, be sure to ask for feedback.
- Feedback on your contact letter. Make sure to use the templates if you aren't comfortable crafting your own contact letter from scratch.



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