

Article Marketing - for brand awareness or making money?

Should you just use articles to gain brand equity and raise awareness of your business, or should you look to make money from your articles?

Once you have created articles, it is worth considering whether, in this age of the free content mentality, it is worth attempting to make money from your articles and information products, through, for instance, a subscriber or membership model.

There are plenty of websites who do offer premium and paid content, who are very successful in doing so, but there are also many other websites who have chosen to raise awareness of their brand and expertise by giving away the content for free.

The choice is entirely yours, and it is worth looking at the different models that may be available to you to experiment with. No decision needs to be locked in stone, so if you find a particular model does not work for either your users or your business, you can change the model, but bear in mind that this may cause dissension in the ranks of your users if you do so.

1. Partial Access/ Sample Chapters

Many of the online bookstores (eg Amazon) and publishers (eg O'Reilly) offer sample chapters to whet the appetite of the customer and encourage them to buy the whole book. This can also be done with white papers and so on, as well as with music or films, by offering a summary or clip, and selling full access at a cost. The software industry has used this for years by offering a time limited or restricted trial version of the software to allow potential customers to try before they buy.

This model allows you to promote the samples in many different places, whilst maintaining control of the complete document, film or music and controlling the data harvesting from those who purchase the whole product. This data is the basis of your marketing list for existing customers, and hence is very valuable for all future promotions and marketing.

2. Extended Content with Bonuses

Another mechanism is to offer bonuses or additional content in the paid version. This has been successfully used by the movie industry, offering DVDs with extra footage, inside information, director's cuts and so on, but can equally be used with white papers, ebooks, articles and so on.

3. Time Limited Access

There are a growing number of sites who either offer articles free for the first few weeks after publication and then you pay to access historic content (eg Marketing Sherpa), or who offer newly published articles as premium content and then the archive of older articles for free.

The point with all of these models though is that the content needs to be of high enough quality to encourage people to pay for access to it. It is vital to produce unique, quality content for your search engine rankings, to increase your market share, and for brand equity. Whether you also use the articles to increase your income or revenue from your website is a decision that needs to be made based on knowing your target audience and understanding your competition. If similar content is available elsewhere for free, it is inevitable that your potential membership and hence income will be reduced. In which case, it may be better to provide the information in your articles for free to help develop brand awareness and show your company's expertise in the field, rather than seeking revenue gain.

About the Author

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