

# Articles are Great Marketing Tools: How to Write Your Article and Get It Published

By Henry Stimpson

Writing articles for magazines, newspapers and Web sites is one of the best ways you can promote your services and products in a B2B context. Articles highlight you and your company as experts and thoughtleaders. Here's how to get published.

**Know what the editor is looking for.** Scan a few recent issues of the publication you want to get in. Sometimes you'll find that the articles are all staff written. If so, look elsewhere.

If outsiders write some articles, check the format. Is a certain column reserved for contributors, or are bylined articles interspersed throughout? Does the publication use 500-word op-ed pieces, lengthy articles or both types? Some publications post guidelines for contributors on their Web site.

Some magazines also publish an editorial calendar. These calendars let you pinpoint when editors are looking to cover certain subjects.

**Go on a scavenger hunt.** You may already have the raw material for an article but not realize it. A text of a speech, a slide presentation, a detailed memorandum, a brochure or a report can often be transformed into an article by rewriting the material.

**Write a summary.** Once you've targeted a publication, write a brief summary of the story you'd like to submit. Most editors prefer a query first; some only want to review

finished copy. Go with whatever the editor wants to do.

The summary tells in a few brief paragraphs what you want to write about and how you plan to approach it. Ask for permission to proceed. Now the editor can tell you whether he or she's interested in the topic and may offer suggestions on writing the story. The summary will also serve as quick outline—a big help in getting started.

**Get the facts.** Next, gather up all the key facts that make your case. The more meat you can put in your story, the better. A little research pays off.

**Take a stand.** Most publications want contributors to have a definite viewpoint. You don't need to provoke a raging controversy, but some basic stance or theme should form the framework for your story. The reader should come away with a few strong key points that serve your cause.

**Use examples and stories.** Your article will come alive for readers when you can use real-life examples to bolster your points.

**No commercials.** Avoid commercialism. Editors won't let you mention your own product or service. Readers are looking for expert advice, not an advertisement.

**Keep the "buzz" down.** Know your audience. In a trade publication, some industry jargon is okay. But if you're trying to get published in a more general publication, skip the buzzwords.



**Henry Stimpson, APR, "PR Czar"** at emersongroup, has ghostwritten hundreds of articles and placed them in publications of all types, including The New York Times, and has written under his own name for The Boston Globe, Yankee and numerous trade publications. Henry provides public relations, marketing communications and writing services to organizations in many industries. He can be reached at [inq@thoughtleading.com](mailto:inq@thoughtleading.com)

If in doubt, always choose plain English. Simple words usually say a lot more than big ones.

**Check your organization.** Check through your article to ensure it's organized logically. Let an unbiased person read it and give you an opinion whether it flowed well and made sense.

**Submit and follow up.** Editors are notoriously pressed for time; some won't get back to you with an acceptance or rejection. If, after a reasonable amount of time has passed, politely follow up and ask the editor if he or she has decided whether to accept your article. If the answer is no, find out if it can be rewritten to satisfy the editor. If not,

send it to another publication immediately.

**Recycle for more bang for the buck.** Now you've got the story published. You're basking in glory, sending copies to clients and colleagues. Now take the next step. Try to get the article published elsewhere.

For instance, let's say that your article is about the reducing the risks of getting hit with an employee lawsuit. It's pretty likely you can tailor it and get it published in a human resources magazine, a local business journal and trades serving various industries.

**Reprint it.** To get the most value from a published article, get permission from the publication it appeared in and reprint it. Then you can add it to your sales kit or use it in direct mail or on your Web site. An article lends more credibility to your organization than any advertisement can.