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Do Writers Need Web Sites?

By C.S. Paquin

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Do writers need Web sites. In my opinion, if you're searching for work on the Internet then yes. But why, I hear you ask?

When I decided to get serious about my freelance career, I spent considerable time researching Internet resources while planning my marketing strategy. Would there be enough work on the Internet to sustain my existence? Or would I have to resort to a print marketing campaign to get the word out? Given that e-mail is cheaper than paper and postage, the Internet seemed a good option. So, I built a Web site, which, I expect to work for me on three levels.

First of all, it 'looks' good to have a Web address. And they're as commonplace as telephone and fax numbers in Author Interviews these days. Therefore, in terms of projecting a savvy image, a Web site is invaluable for providing another way for a potential client to reach you.

Secondly, a Web site can be a showcase. If you have clips then uploading them to your site is a quick way for clients to see what you're capable of. If you're just beginning, it's a chance to present some material. Yes clients look for published work, but they also appreciate good writing.

Depending on your HTML skills, a Web page can let you show off photography you may have taken. Being able to take a photo if needed is a great skill for the intrepid reporter. I have a few photos in my clip file I'm particularly proud of – one being a rather fetching close-up of a Highland cow, featuring front page of a Sunday supplement. Said cow now features in the Clips section on my Web site.

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Another aspect to 'showmanship' is employers often request clips as text only. No attachments, nothing fancy. It's rather sad to see your official newspaper clips reduced to bare text, with no formatting. I'm often tempted, as are others, to attach a little jpeg or pdf file to show how my work 'really looked'. Nevertheless, you have to respect the potential employers' wishes. So, with the text, I paste the URL of the better-presented piece, knowing that the employer may also want to see a better layout. It's easier for the client to click a hotlink to a Web page than to open another program to see my work (Big hint: Make it easy for the client).

Finally, once established, a Web site can provide secondary income to your actual writing. You might decide to publish a weekly column and set up an e-mail list of subscribers. With enough subscribers on your list,

advertisers WILL want to pay you to reach your audience. Or you get a book accepted by a publisher . well of course you'll want to sell a few copies from your site.

Of course, not everyone has Web design skills, or planned a Web presence in their budget (which, in my case was about \$0.00). But do not be deterred. You don't need to register a domain name though it does help. A domain name looks better than a long URL and you have an e-mail address that stays the same.

You can also choose to use space on another domain name -- often a far cheaper option than getting your own domain and paying server-hosting fees.

If you really, really can't put an HTML page together (and with the software packaged with the major browsers, it's easy to make simple pages), consider trading services with a budding designer. Only the other night on an e-mail list I subscribe to, a Web designer requested help with writing a press release. She couldn't afford to pay anyone to write it, and would happily have traded HTML services for a well-written release.

C.S. Paquin is a nationally published writer in both the business and humormarkets. Cheryl has a Master Of Arts in Journalism and has been writingfreelance for over five years. She contributes regularly to regionalpublications in Minnesota. She is the owner and editor of www.WritersLounge.com, a site for creative nonfiction and essay writers.

Do You Know Who Owns Your Words?

By Mike Banks Valentine

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Writing for the web creates a lot of new questions about who owns all those words circulating out there on web sites, in ezines and in ebooks. What about the CD's created from many of those words in all those digital forms all over the web? Instead of books or articles or columns, it's all being re-named "Content".

In a 2nd Circuit Court decision last year, six freelance writers won a case against the New York Times, Newsday and Time for copyright infringement. Their work was re-sold as digital content on a CDROM and later published on the web.

Their claim that they did NOT relicense their work for use on the web or in digital compilations and were entitled to compensation when that content was re-sold was accepted by the court in a judgement against the original publishers of that content.

Many writers online offer their articles "Free" for use on the web, in ezines or in ebooks available online. But in fact are being paid by the publishers by requiring that "resource boxes" be used, such as the four line blurb following this article. This is, in fact, a form of payment and is agreed to by those writers in exchange for the traffic, publicity, subscriptions and exposure gained when readers visit the authors web site, subscribe to their ezine or see advertisements run for a fee on their web site.

"Content" is proliferating, professional "paid" writers work is becoming less valuable online and some professionals are shouting, "ENOUGH! We want to be paid for our work!"

An article this week at "Ezine-Tips.com" discusses how to raise the ire of any professional writer by asking them to write for free.

<http://ezine-tips.com/articles/management/20010316.shtml>

In an earlier article by the same author, (Janet Roberts, associate editor of "List-Universe.com") many articles by online writers are labeled "advertising in disguise".

I'll buy that definition in many cases. I'll buy it in this case. I'm advertising my weekly newsletter and my web site by offering opinion and insight on the web. And it works!

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I've written openly and widely that content I provide is just like an ad for my web site and my business.

<http://www.workz.com/content/1680.asp>

Advertisers pay to have their ads appear in my newsletter and on my web site. You might say that my "advertising in disguise" attracts advertising to support my advertising if you want to see that advertising as inherently wrong.

But I'll also ask then why is it that my articles are well read and syndicated across many networks of web sites and ezines. I run a business content distribution service called "Free-Content" at:

Over 500 well respected writers and publishers subscribe to that list and publish articles distributed there. I'm about to expand that service into additional topics and expect all to be just as successful as the business content list.

It's not advertising, it's content, it's free and I am a professional. What does that all mean? I leave it to you to decide.

And now for a word from our sponsor.

Mike Banks ValentineWebSite101 "Reading List" Weekly Netpreneur Tip SheetWeekly Ezine emphasizing small business on the InternetSubscribe address <mailto:WebSite101-subscribe@listbot.com>articles available: <http://website101.com/freecontent.html>



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