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The Best FREE Marketing Technique On The Web: An Exclusive Interview With Michael Southon

By Joshua Rose

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Are you searching for a free dynamic traffic and sales building technique? Well, the crucially important benefits of writing articles make it a strategy that's difficult to top.

And when you think of writing articles, it's likely the name, Michael Southon, pops into mind. Michael is simply one of the web's most published and successful article writers. He's been reprinted literally tens of thousands of times and his articles can be found on over a staggering 8000 web sites.

Joshua: This is indeed a pleasure for me, Michael. Can you tell us a little about your Internet background?

Michael:

I got started out in online business in January 1999 with an Ezine directory called the Business Directory of Ezines, which I later renamed The Free Directory of Ezines. Back

then I was a total newbie and the idea of writing an article that would get published seemed outrageous. But in May of that year I wrote my first article "10 Tips For Successful Ezine Advertising" and it was published a week later in WebProNews (500,000 subscribers).

Joshua: Wow, that's quite an entrance! I also seem to see your articles all over the net. Can you summarize the specific benefits you're getting from writing articles?

Michael:

This technique works on so many levels – for example, I get 'name branding' from people seeing my name over and over

again, I get free links to my sales page on hundreds of websites, my 'link popularity' goes up because my articles appear on hundreds of websites with an active link back to my website, and that boosts my ranking in the search engines, I get huge exposure to readers of Ezines or Newsletters, and so on. It really is a multiplier effect.

Joshua: So, you're killing a number of 'big' birds with one stone. While this is great, let me ask you this: Is it REALLY possible for the average person to be successful writing articles? How about for those who feel they're just not good writers?

Michael:

Absolutely. There's a very well-known Ezine Writer who writes very simple articles – they're just a list of tips. But they get published all over the Web and he's made his name and his success with those articles. You don't need any literary skills to succeed with this technique.

Joshua: I know what you mean. I've seen a lot of simply written articles that were excellent due to the content. But this raises an important question: How does someone come up with content ideas? What do you do, for example?

Michael:

The key to coming up with topic ideas for your articles is to be very aware of what you yourself are learning. As you

know, ecommerce is a huge area and we're all learning new things every day. Every time you learn something new, write a short article about it. Because there are almost certainly other people who are going to have to learn what you just learnt and your article is going to make it much easier for them to get that information. The other thing to do is pay close attention to the questions people ask you. For example, I had a question last week from a man in the UK who wanted to know how to use articles to promote an affiliate link. So I answered his question and then wrote an article titled: "How To Boost Your Affiliate Sales With Free Articles".

Joshua: Okay, assuming I do that and then write my article, how receptive are newsletter editors towards accepting articles from other writers? Am I likely to get published?

Michael:

The vast majority of Newsletter publishers don't write their own content and even those who do still need outside input, 'guest articles'. The problem is getting noticed because there are a lot of people writing articles now. One of the keys to getting loyal publishers who keep using your articles is to have a fairly constant output – at least one new article every 2 weeks. Publishers like to use articles from 'regulars' – writers who they have published before and who they can count on for more articles in the future.

Joshua: Yeah, that's been my experience too. Each time I submit, I'm finding that new editors are using them. You also mentioned 'name branding' earlier. Is this a vital ingredient to one's eventual web success?

Michael:

Yes, I think it is important. You could also call it 'Establishing an Audience' or 'Building Credibility'. The reason it's important is that people have become very wary on the Internet (because of all the scams). If someone lands up at your website and they have never heard of you before, chances are they won't buy anything. But if they have seen your name over and over again, as the author of helpful articles – then you have a potential customer.

Joshua: Related to this is another 'payoff' for the writer: the Resource Box -- your ad. What do you think is the most effective strategy here?

Michael:

Well, this really is an art in itself. It's as important as the article itself. Here's a valuable tip: if you're using your Resource Box to promote your eBook, don't mention the eBook! Instead, create a free report (1 or 2 chapters of your eBook) and offer that from your Resource Box. When I started doing this, my sales tripled overnight.

Joshua: Wow. So, we shouldn't try to sell anything here. We should promote a free information product that captures their email addresses. In your opinion, Michael, does this work best by sending them to your site to sign up, or going with a 'mailto' address, or both?

Michael:

Well, I have to say that I've had bad experiences with

putting my email address in my Resource Box. The spammers got hold of it (or rather the email harvesters). The email address was ept-subscribe@ followed by my domain name and I still get dozens of emails every week that say 'Hello ept-subscribe'. The best method here is sending them to a sign-up form where they have to enter a valid email address because they'll be receiving an email a few seconds later with the download details for your free report.

Joshua: You've had tremendous success online. In your opinion, is there such a thing as an *Internet Secret*, some magical formula for easy web success?

Michael:

Most of succeeding online is just sheer perseverance. But I would also recommend reading as much as possible. There's really masses of information on how to succeed on the web. Having a mentor is also a key to success (I've had a few).

Joshua: Me too. This has been great, Michael. I really appreciate your input. Thank you.

Michael:

It was my pleasure.

Joshua: Any last tips or comments?

Michael:

Do what you're passionate about, follow your bliss. Because people will pick up on it and it will take you anywhere you want to go. But one still needs to persevere. Successful people are people who have learned to deal with failure.

The Key to a Successful Affiliate Program

By Michael Southon

Two Christmases ago I tugged on one of those paper crackers and after a small bang, out popped a piece of yellow paper the size of a credit card.

On one side was a riddle that didn't make much sense, but on the other side was an 'Inspirational Quote' that made a lot of sense.

So much so, that I still have it in my wallet.

This is what it said: "The shortest and best way to make your fortune is to let people see clearly that it is in their interests to promote yours".

I'm constantly amazed to see affiliate programs that offer 20%, or even as little as 15%, to their affiliates.

It is generally accepted that the production of any information product is only 10 percent of the whole process.

What's the other 90 per cent? Marketing!

My own affiliate program gives 50% commissions, and I wouldn't dream of offering less. After all, who makes the sale – me or the affiliate?

It may be disappointing to see 50% of your sale price going to your affiliates. But it's worth remembering this: without your affiliate, that sale simply wouldn't have occurred.

Of course, there are many other factors involved in building a successful affiliate program, but this is the first and most important: make your affiliates your equal partners, because they'll be doing 90% of the work.

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Michael Southon has been writing for the Internet for over 3 years. He has shown hundreds of webmasters how to use this simple technique to get massive free publicity and dramatically increase traffic and sales. Click here to find out more:

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