

Getting Your Articles Published Online – Insider Tips From 2 Of the ‘Net’s Most Powerful Article Syndicate Owners

Interviews conducted by Karon Thackston

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<http://www.copywritingcourse.com>

<http://www.ktamarketing.com>

Kim Haas of Womans-Net.com

KARON: Kim, thanks for making the time in your busy schedule to answer a few questions. I know you'll have some unique insights into getting articles published that will greatly benefit students of The Step-By-Step™ Copywriting Course.

KIM: You're most welcome, Karon. It's always a pleasure.

KARON: Tell us a little bit about you, Kim. How'd you get started? How did you grow Womans-Net?

KIM: Well, I established my home office in 1997 after resigning from my husband's automotive repair garage as a part-time bookkeeper. I decided to become a stay-home mom in order to raise our 5th child full-time.

I started Womans-Net as a hobby in June of 1999 in order to have some contact with people outside my home, and to break out of the isolation I felt. As I networked with other women, I began to realize the value of having good information on your web site in order to keep visitors on-site longer, and to keep them coming back. I sent out several requests for articles from associates who were interested in providing articles I could use on my site.

KARON: Did you get a good response?

KIM: Yes! Articles began pouring in and I started adding them to my site and watching my traffic increase as the number of articles grew. I also began receiving requests from webmasters who wanted to use my content on their own sites. I started offering columns from authors who sent in their articles on a regular basis and within a month I had approximately 30 webmasters displaying my columns on their web sites. One year later, we now serve approximately 1,000 web sites with our syndicated content.

KARON: Wow! That's some fast growth!

KIM: Yes... so much so that, after a couple of software upgrades for improved function, we are now able to schedule our article content days, weeks and even months in advance in order to offer our webmasters updated site content without regular maintenance. In addition to our syndicated article feeds, we now provide authors with a web interface that allows them to become staff writers and submit their content directly to our site under various topics.

KARON: Sounds great! Speaking of all those articles, Kim. Obviously, authors write in order to drum up exposure for their business. But when articles are "too promotional" they stand a good chance of being rejected. What do you, as a publisher, look for when accepting articles?

KIM: There are some very specific things I personally look for. Articles that are "fresh" is very important. People are always submitting articles, but many topics have been "done to death".

KARON: Really? What do you find is "overdone"?

KIM: It seems everyone is an expert about how to promote your web site for free or how to drive traffic to your site. I look for topics in where the author approaches the topic from a new angle or a unique perspective.

KARON: Can you give us an example of articles you've seen that do this well?

KIM: Well, not to put you on the spot, but here's an article clip with an example of using personal experience:

Do You Make It Easy

by Karon Thackston © 2001

<http://www.ktamarketing.com>

Let me give you an example of what I mean. I was recently at a site and wanted to place an order for an ink cartridge. Seemed like a simple enough task. I saw the "search" box in the corner so I typed in "Epson Ink Cartridge" and hit search. Up comes page after page of ink cartridges by EVERY manufacturer the store carried. What's worse. they weren't in any type of order. The Epsons were mixed among the HPs and the lasers were jumbled in with the ink jets. What a mess!

The site supposedly had extremely low prices so I was determined to see if I could find my cartridge. I dug through page after page and finally found the one I needed. The price was indeed very low. Thinking the worst was over, I added the item to my cart and clicked "check out".

Next I came to a process where I had to fill out my name and shipping address. That wasn't so bad. Then I was taken back to my cart to verify my purchases. This seemed a little redundant. Next I moved on to a page where I completed my billing address. There was no place to check a box if the billing and shipping address were the same so this became tiresome quickly. Finally, I entered my payment information. I did not yet have the amount the company planned to charge for shipping. On the final screen, I received the total and completed the order.

KARON: OK... now I'm blushing! But thanks for the compliment. (And no... that was not planned!)

KIM: You're welcome, Karon. But do you see my point? This is much more interesting than just a page full of facts about how to make the purchasing process easier for your customer.

This is also a good example of how to take a fresh approach to a topic that's been done to death. Instead of lecturing to readers about how webmasters should make the buying process easier for their customer by adding this or taking this out... etc., it actually shows a real life example of the frustration that a customer deals with when shopping online and then offers solutions for the webmaster. Your articles are interactive in that you ask the reader questions they can answer in their minds and get a better understanding of the points you are trying to make. Personal experiences also help make the article more interesting than a page full of facts.

KARON: How so?

KIM: Well, keep the same article in mind... which would you rather read:

FACTS –

80% of customers purchase products from web sites who make the ordering process simple. Prices should be listed in a comprehensive manner to make selection as easy as possible. Offer the customer a link on every page of the ordering process that allows them to check the status of their shopping cart or modify the quantities of their product. Statistics show that of the 20% of customers who complete the ordering process, nearly half of them considered purchasing from a competitor due to the difficulties experienced when attempting to find the products and their associated prices.

OR

The site supposedly had extremely low prices so I was determined to see if I could find my cartridge. I dug through page after page and finally found the one I needed. The price was indeed very low. Thinking the worst was over I added the item to my cart and clicked "check out".

I would much rather read about how your experiences affected your buying decision rather than to read a bunch of statistics and facts about how most people do this or some people do that. Tell me how YOU felt when you had to deal with a difficult order process. Tell me what influenced your opinion and prompted you to write this article. People have feelings and articles can be used to influence the reader to take the action you are trying to get out of them. They're much more interesting than just reading through a page full of facts.

KARON: So emotions are important in articles. And so is getting the reader involved?

KIM: Absolutely!

KARON: Great! Well those are some excellent "do's" when writing articles... how about some "don'ts"?

KIM: One "pet peeve" of mine is articles that are full of links instead of information. Those are regularly rejected. When I read an article, I don't like seeing a link in every paragraph, or long lists of site links. I don't mind one or two links in an article when the resource directly relates to the topic being discussed, or if it illustrates the topic, but articles shouldn't be used as mini-search engines. I believe articles should teach and inform readers, not pound out benefits of buying a particular product. I think that should be left to classified ads and sponsor ads.

I've seen lots of articles that hype up a particular affiliate program and do nothing for the reader. It doesn't serve to show readers how to select an affiliate program or what to look for in an affiliate program, instead it just says "buy this product so I can make money off you".

KARON: Yeah... I don't like reading those either. It makes me wonder if the information is valid or if they are just trying to get my money!

KIM: Right... me, too!

KARON: What else?

KIM: Don't write about your affiliate program. Don't bore your readers with long, boring, drawn out explanations. Don't copy someone else's work, change a few words and then pass it off as your own.

KARON: Good advice! Now, let me ask you this... syndicates are very powerful and offer a much greater amount of exposure for authors. Are there special considerations an author must

keep in mind if planning to submit articles to syndicates?

KIM: Yes, and thank you for asking <grin>. The most important thing to do before submitting articles to syndicates is to read the publisher's guidelines. Guidelines are usually posted to help increase your chances of getting your article published. Many authors don't take the time to read over the guidelines and then wonder why their submission was rejected.

The author should make certain that the content they are submitting fits into the topics or categories the publisher is looking for.

The author should also include a short resource box that gives their contact information, URL and a short blurb about who they are and what they do.

KARON: "Short resource box". Do a lot of author's over do it?

KIM: Yes. Some do. Bios that are more than 3 or 4 sentences are pushing the limits to blatant advertising. A bio should state the author's URL, email address or subscribe address and a short blurb about who the author is. Here's an example of a resource box or bio:

(c) 2002 Womans-Net

Kim Haas is a WAHM and Founder of Womans-Net.com, a popular online networking community for women focusing on working from home and women in business. Let us help you achieve financial freedom with your home-based business. <http://womans-net.com/cgi-bin/prolinkz/pl.cgi?a1>

Note the resource box contains the copyright year and copyright holder, the author's name, website description and a URL. Long rambling bios tend to turn off the reader and the publisher. Don't try to cram your entire life history into the bio. Submissions have been rejected solely on the basis of the length of the bio at the end of the article.

KARON: Wow! So that's serious stuff?

KIM: Not too serious... you just don't want to get carried away.

KARON: OK... moving on. There are several ways to get your article out to the masses... email lists, directories, individual contact with the publisher, etc. How do publishers prefer to receive article submissions?

KIM: Again, this depends on what the publisher's guidelines are. We accept submissions in a variety of methods throughout our site. Our business archive articles are to be submitted directly using our online web form. We often pull articles from this area to be used in our syndicated columns. Many of our columns are written on a weekly basis by one author; those authors are to submit to us via email. We also offer on-site content, which is submitted through a web interface.

KARON: Do you ever use email lists?

KIM: Yes, we do. We search through several email lists that offer free reprint articles and then contact those authors individually with a note requesting permission to use their work. Those authors often become regular contributors to our various content areas.

KARON: When you use a list to select articles (which probably contains thousands of articles a month) what draws your attention to particular articles?

KIM: A catchy title. Most often, I scan the article titles that are normally listed in a table of contents before the actual articles begin. Article titles that "jump out" are the articles I look closer

at.

KARON: Can you give us some examples?

KIM: Sure:

Building an E-mail Address Database
Optimizing Your Site For Search Engines
How to Avoid Program-Itis
Top Seven Ways to Tune up your Website

When scanning these titles, which one would get your attention and make you want to find out what the article is about?

KARON: Probably, "How to Avoid Program-Itis".

KIM: Then we're on the same wavelength. My first thought is what the heck is Program-Itis! So, I'll take a look at this article to find out what Program-Itis really is.

KARON: So titles are to articles what headlines are to ad copy?

KIM: Exactly! The title is everything! It must grab attention. Once you get people to look beyond the title, you've done your job.

KARON: Kim, you've just been wonderful in sharing your professional insights with us and I thank you very much!

KIM: My pleasure, Karon. Anytime.

KARON: Be sure to visit Kim at any one of her three sites. Of course, there's <http://www.womans-net.com>, the powerful article syndicate. There's also <http://www.womanlink.com> - devoted to all areas of being a woman, and <http://www.ez-responder.com> the most flexible and affordable autoresponder service on the 'Net. Over 26 features and customizations for less than \$5.00 per month!

Shelley Lowery of Web-Source.net

KARON: Hi Shelley! I really appreciate you taking time to offer your expert advice to the readers of The Step-By-Step™ Copywriting Course.

SHELLEY: You're welcome, Karon. Any time.

KARON: Tell me about you, how you started the Syndicator and how large the syndicate has grown.

SHELLEY: I am the Executive Publisher, Editor-in-Chief and Webmistress of Web-Source.net, and am a full-time Internet Marketer, Writer and the author of several successful ebooks.

I have been writing Internet articles for the last four years. This is a highly effective means of building credibility. My articles have appeared in hundreds of electronic and print publications including Microsoft Value Added, Internet Magazine, WebProNews, SiteProNews, Add Me, iBoost, AIM, NoBoss Online, WhatUseek, and others.

When I first launched my syndication service, I had originally planned to use the service to syndicate my own articles. However, that quickly changed, as I saw an opportunity to not only provide a variety of content to web sites, but to also provide writers with a great way to gain massive exposure.

KARON: Wow! You've been busy. How many sites do you service now?

SHELLEY: The Syndicator provides content to over 4,000 web sites, including co-branded syndication sites. The content is also delivered to over 10,000 ebooks circulating the Internet.

KARON: That's what I would call large! So how much exposure do you estimate that to be?

SHELLEY: With a combined audience... nearly half a million viewers each week.

KARON: That's some promotional power! But not everybody writes articles suited for syndication, do they? Do you have any advice for authors who want to move beyond article archive directories and into syndication?

SHELLEY: Yes, I do. One of the most important considerations is your article's target audience. If your article focuses on a subject that holds little interest, your chance of being published will be minimal. In addition, if a syndicate isn't looking for the type of article you've written it definitely won't be published.

KARON: How do we know what they're looking for when we write our articles?

SHELLEY: A good rule of thumb is to find out what type of content the syndicates publish **before** you write your article. Not only will this increase your chance of being published, but it will also assist you in targeting your article to a specific audience.

KARON: Do they provide a list?

SHELLEY: Usually. Check the Web site or email the syndicate for a list of current topics.

KARON: Great! What else?

SHELLEY: Another consideration of great importance is your formatting. Always review the submission guidelines prior to writing your article. Each publisher may require different

formatting. However, as a general rule, plain text is always best.

KARON: So after we find out what's needed, just email it for consideration?

SHELLEY: If you're submitting your article by email, keep in mind most publishers will not accept articles submitted as a file attachment. Your best option will be to paste your article into the body of your email.

KARON: Is that the preference? Submission by email?

SHELLEY: As each publisher has different preferences, there really isn't a standard submission method. Some publishers prefer to receive submissions via email, while others provide an online submission form.

Most publishers that accept article submissions display their submission guidelines on their web site.

KARON: Let's talk about article do's and don'ts for a minute, Shelley. What will help us get noticed and what will get us canned?

SHELLEY: The articles selected to run in syndication are well written in simple, everyday language. And, provide readers with quality information that teaches and informs.

KARON: And what about the articles that are rejected. What do they have in common?

SHELLEY: Here is a list I created. I called it the "article writing sins." If a writer's article doesn't get published, chances are, the reason most likely falls into one of the following categories:

Poor Grammar and Spelling - Always check and double-check your articles for spelling and grammatical errors. Keep in mind, your spellchecker isn't foolproof.

Poor Structure - An article should be well organized, and begin with an opening statement and end with a closing statement. Your words should flow together from the beginning of your article to the end.

Too Sales Oriented - Articles written in the form of a sales letter will be instantly deleted by most publishers. Articles should never be written merely to sell a product or service.

Improper formatting - When writing articles for publication, you must write for the media in which you publish. Different media have different formatting guidelines. For example, most ezine publishers require that your article is formatted to 65 characters per line or less, including spaces, and written in short paragraph sections.

KARON: Not to interrupt you, but explain (for some who may not know) exactly why formatting is a major issue. I know when I ghost write articles for clients, I always provide them in 3 formats. Most of them don't understand why until they try submitting the article themselves.

SHELLEY: Well, there are a variety of reasons. With ezine publishers, the requirement is because they must take their subscribers' email programs into consideration. There are many different types of email programs and they all have different ways in which they format messages. Some email programs automatically wrap text at a certain number of characters, while others won't wrap the text at all. If an article isn't properly formatted, many email programs will either force a portion of the sentence to the next line, or even display each paragraph as one long line.

The 65 characters per line guideline has become the standard on the Internet because it's a safe

line-length for a majority of all email programs.

KARON: And what about the Web?

SHELLEY: Web publishers may have different formatting requirements, as the content isn't delivered via email. Web publishers, like most syndicates, publish content over the Web. The articles are transformed into HTML and are delivered via Web pages.

Formatting is a major issue on the Internet. Your article must be properly formatted, because publishers won't take the time to format it for you -- they'll simply use another article.

KARON: OUCH! And that hurts when you have a really great article and it gets passed up simply because of incorrect formatting. Thanks, Shelley. What else is on your "sin" list?

SHELLEY: Excessively long bylines- I don't know how many times I've reviewed articles that contained bylines that were as long as the article itself. The standard acceptable byline length is six lines -- eight lines **maximum**.

Poor Photograph - If you're serious about getting your articles published, it will be well worth your time and effort to get a professional photograph taken. More and more publishers are requiring a photograph with article submissions.

I don't know how many great articles I've had to delete simply because the author either included a poor quality photograph, or they didn't include one at all.

KARON: Another simple thing that could have been prevented. Here's a little tip... you can get a professional photo taken at Wal-Mart for only \$6.95. They'll even put it on a disk in .jpg format for you!

Thanks, Shelley. Any closing thoughts?

SHELLEY: Basically... If you really want to be published by a syndicate, the best advice I can offer is this... Write a great article that teaches and informs, targets the specific audience in which the syndicate focuses, and follow the submission guidelines. By following this simple strategy, you will considerably increase your chances of being published.

KARON: Again... we appreciate your time and insights!

Be sure to visit Shelley Lowery at <http://www.web-source.net>, one of the Web's most powerful online syndicates. While you're there, subscribe to one of her many article announce lists and boost your exposure dramatically!

SHELLEY: Thank you, Karon! It was my pleasure.