



How to Attract Guest Bloggers

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Posted by Adam Justice on Feb 23, 2012

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[Social Media Sun](#) has been very fortunate in our campaign to attract qualified guest bloggers. I had always planned to fill some of our need for content with regular guests. There are many benefits to letting other bloggers contribute to your blog, and there can be many benefits for the contributor as well. It's a way to bring in fresh ideas, it is slightly less work than writing a piece yourself, it helps solidify your relationships with the writers who you allow to be your guest, and it exposes both parties to new readers.

Most small blogs would like to incorporate guests into their publication, but I often hear that their attempts to attract quality writers fall on deaf ears. Most small bloggers believe that their lack of popularity is the major problem, but Social Media Sun isn't that popular; plus, we've been attracting several guest bloggers every week since we opened our doors, and have had more than 30 guests in the past 45 days.

Start With the Writers You Know Well

I started getting things together for the site approximately a month before the launch, and part of that time was spent recruiting the first group of guests from a large pool of social media bloggers that I'm glad to call my friends. I ended up getting 14 submissions before I even opened the site, and all of them came from my current network.

I've only been networking with this group of friends for the past year or so. Some of them wanted to support me, and some of them had enough faith in me to believe that the site would succeed. I had also done favors for many of the writers; everything from guest blogging on their sites to helping with minor web design work. I had also spent hours in conversation with them, and when our relationships started neither of us were looking for a favor.

I asked [Jason Falls](#) to do a guest submission after knowing him for only a little over two weeks. It turns out that we're from the same small town in rural Eastern Kentucky, and to some degree he felt compelled to help (I offered to do everything short of being the Social Media Explorer janitor when I found out he was from Pikeville. It wasn't me trying to suck up to someone who is successful either. I was just amazed that another social media blogger knew where Pikeville KY was, let alone was born and raised there).

I have contributed close to 4,000 words worth of articles and tutorials to [Spin Sucks](#) and Spin Sucks Pro, so I decided to see if [Gini Dietrich](#) would do me a solid and write something for the launch. She was more than happy to, and she wasn't under any obligation because I had never asked for repayment for writing on Spin Sucks. No matter what niche you're in, you should have enough contacts that are qualified to at least know a handful who would consider helping you out with a guest spot. If you don't, you probably need to go back to the drawing board on your social presence.

Offer an Incentive

No matter how popular a blogger is when I approach them, I always let them know that the site is ready to offer special considerations for their hard work. All guests are guaranteed to get a backlink or two in their short bio and I promise to campaign heavily on the day their post goes up so it will get as much exposure as possible.

By outsourcing some of the writing to guests I can concentrate a little more on marketing and doing things that will get them more exposure than if I had to spend that time writing. I add most guests to a special Twitter list on the @Sun_Social account that I visit and re-tweet from daily. I also send out their blog posts on Twitter when I have the time, and let them know that I'm available for simple design work or marketing help if they need something really important promoted. I also have a standing offer to anyone who contribute a quality post for 20\$ in premium membership credit for the [Social 100 list](#), our free advertising and social blogger network.

Even though I don't have much to offer, I offer what I can and try and be innovative when it comes to special occasions. MY friend [Liz Strauss](#) is busy working on [SOBcon](#), and she has been one of my guest targets since I first opened the site. I realized that it would be a great opportunity to get Liz involved with SMS, so I offered to advertise SOBcon in exchange for a guest post. It's a win-win for our site because not only do we get a great guest who is well respected, I get to help a friend, and we get to associate our site with the SOBcon brand which is almost as well respected as Liz herself.

Look for People Who Actively Guest Blog

Not everyone who you see featured on Social Media Sun is a personal friend of mine. I read material from at least a dozen blogs every day, and I stop and take notice when I see someone who stands out. Usually new bloggers I am exposed to are guests for sites like Social Media Explorer or SEOmoz, and if I really like them I'll investigate their circumstances further. If I see them guest post more than once, I assume that they're interested in doing many guest pieces and I'll reach out to them.

I always refrain from trying to head hunt the guests from other sites. It's more of a professional courtesy that I have learned from working as an Engineering contractor for the past few years than it is an un-written rule. After all, there is no law that says you can't ask. If I see the same person doing guest posts on multiple sites however, it's a clear indication that they are doing a type of guest contributor tour to drum up some attention for their website or project. The most important factor for these guests is

exposure, but you're much more likely to get them to consider contributing than someone who you've only seen post on their own blog.

Everyone knows that there are major benefits in doing routine guest posts at popular sites in your niche. Some bloggers actually find the time to do it, but most are too busy writing their own content. If you just sent out invitation to every blogger you came across, you'd be lucky to get a response from more than 10 percent of them. If you narrowed that list down to bloggers that you've saw do guest posts for two or more sites in the last month, you'd increase your response rate considerably. Everything you do in blogging, it pays to be smart and efficient. Recruiting guests is no different; use what you know to optimize your response, and make your job easier.

Advertise Your Need, Their Value

If you're truly serious about taking on guests on a regular basis, make sure your readers know about it. Most small bloggers that want to feature guests will make an obscure passage about accepting guest contributions, and call it a failure when no one replies to your request. Make no mistake people aren't going to volunteer if there aren't clear benefits for them built in to the equation.

Instead of advertising the fact that you need guest bloggers, advertise the benefits that someone would get from doing a guest post on your blog. Instead of a small paragraph at the bottom of your About Me page, write a new blog post detailing the benefits of guest blogging and dedicate the last portion of it to offering up the reader's first opportunity. You need to be as creative with your guest blogger attraction campaign as you are with every other aspect of your website. That means that a simple note isn't going to cut it; you need to put boot to pavement to get started. I also recommend putting a link to your call to action for guest bloggers above the fold.

Outsource a Few Posts

A lot of your credibility and value comes from perception. If you've begged for guests for months and have never had another blogger answer the call, most bloggers are going to interpret that as a sign that the effort heavily outweighs the benefits. In a value proposition you'd be turning guests away. It won't hurt to cough up some cash for a professional freelancer to get the ball rolling. You can get articles written for anywhere between 15\$ and 150\$. I like to ask professionals who normally ghostwrite for other bloggers if they'd consider giving me a discount if I give them credit as the author (after all, you want guests, not someone else to write a piece under your name).

Price isn't always indicative of quality, but at the same time you get what you pay for. If you're looking for an average guest post that isn't specially researched (very few blog posts are), I have wonderful contacts who will get the job done for about 20\$. If you're wanting an article that digs deep, is well researched and written, you will be lucky to spend anything less than 50\$. If you don't have a clear cut plan in place regarding how you are going to monetize your blog, save your money; it isn't worth the investment.

Host a Guest Blogging Contest

If you have a large network and know lots of bloggers, it may be more worthwhile to offer a 100\$ grand prize for a contest than to hire 5 different guests for 20\$ apiece. The results could go either way on this one, so keep in mind that you're gambling, and only gamble as much as you can afford to lose. If you only get three entries, you still have to give the reward to someone or face the prospect of being blacklisted by the freelance writer community.

On one hand the possible payday is larger than normal so some writers are going to put in the extra effort. On the other hand it's open to the public and you could get 100 entries, but only 2 or 3 good enough to post. You're giving up all your control for the possibility that more than five quality pieces are submitted.

Make Your Blog a Place Where People Want to Be a Guest

When bloggers find out that there isn't a long line of writers dying to submit guest posts to their site they immediately blame it on the popularity of their blog. Exposure is the primary benefit of guest blogging, so I'd be lying if I told you that above average traffic doesn't make your blog a more attractive guest posting destination. Social Media Sun has attracted a constant stream of guest writers since its inception, so that proves that traffic isn't the only motivation. The key word there is attractive; what other traits make a website more attractive to writers?

I knew that the only way to get regular guest submissions was to make the site attractive to them in as many ways as possible. I started with the design; several writers have complimented the design, and like to see their writing on a site that looks very professional. Pay special attention to the quality of the articles you do accept and publish. If a writer knows that their piece will be featured among the ranks of other great writers, they're more likely to submit. Bloggers will be much more likely to want to submit if you've featured some of the most popular bloggers in their niche. Having

Jason Falls appear as a guest during the grand opening added credibility that I could not have gotten from unknown contributors, no matter how great their content was.

Many writers like publishing for me because I edit their submissions well. Even though we do not get the traffic of larger websites, we offer a level of exposure on the social networks themselves that other sites cannot. A lot of drive by readers will not even notice the author's name on a multi-author blog, but an engaged reader who takes the time to share a post or leave a comment is more likely to not only recognize the author, but to investigate their work on their own website. Sometimes it isn't the volume of social engagement, but the quality that will impress a writer. If you have a friend who is a popular blogger or personality, encourage them to re-tweet guest contributions from your site and acknowledge the writer.

The single easiest way to increase the attractiveness of your blog for potential guests is to improve the considerations that the post affords them. If you publish guest posts under a generic username consider creating a separate unique username for each guest. Increase their exposure by including a short biography, or make their byline more substantial. Increase their visibility by adding their business photo to the post, and allow them the freedom to link back to their own work when it's relevant to do so. To avoid having the writer alter the content just to sneak in a few extra hyperlinks, allow them to link 3-5 related posts or "also by this author" at the end of the article. There are hundreds of ways to increase the value of a guest post for the contributor, so be creative and make sure to advertise the benefits when you solicit posts from experts.

Use a Guest Blogging Network

One of the places that you are sure to find bloggers who are willing to write as a guest is on guest blogging networks. There are several out there, and each has its own set of rules, standards and quality of submission.

The first guest blogging network I have used is MyBlogGuest.com. At My Blog Guest potential contributors submit their posts to the network, and all of the blogs that are interested offer to publish it. The contributor then selects the best offer and can submit it directly to your blog via a script that has access to a special "guest" account on your Wordpress Blog (or you can opt to have the article delivered in a text format). There is also a section for infographics and plenty of resources to hone your guest blogging skills. It also offers you the opportunity to submit guest posts of your own.

I signed up for an account before the launch of Social Media Sun, and have made a handful of offers since then. No one has accepted, many times opting for a site that gets less exposure simply because our blog is newer and hasn't gotten a Google Page Rank

yet. I am convinced that an established blog that puts in the effort in the community could effectively use My Blog Guest to solicit submissions.

The primary concern I have with guest blogging networks is the quality of those submissions. My Blog Guest only allows you to see a short snippet of the entire article, and contributors have names like SEM Expert, webarts, and superdude. There are lots of submissions that seem to be outsourced from India, and the bulk of the content isn't what I'd call top drawer. The owner of the network, [Ann Smarty](#), fights hard to keep the quality high and the network running as smoothly as possible, but the lure of cheap backlinks and free content is too much of a draw to the wrong crowd to ever win that war.

If you don't mind putting in the work to screen the contributors, research their topical knowledge and engage in a formal editing process with them, My Blog Guest could work out well for you. If you're expecting a river of free, high quality guest contributions that will flow effortlessly into your blog, you may want to explore other options.

A similar resource is [Guest Blog it](#). It is newer, and their design is nicer. Do not let the spiffy design fool you though, Guest Blog It doesn't offer the depth of content that My Blog Guest offers yet, and they suffer from many of the same problems (outsourced submissions, poor quality, competitive market). Since I don't have an account with their service, it's also not clear to me if the articles are exclusive to the sites that publish them. I can however see that there is a very small minority of contributors with names I can pronounce. I personally will publish a writer from India if they have the skill and necessary grasp of the English language. I've worked in article marketing a long time however, and this is rarely the case.

Take Advantage of Hot Streak

A few times every month, we have a period of higher traffic and consecutive submissions that are very good, even compared to the level of quality we try and uphold at all times. During these "hot streaks" there will always be a handful of unsolicited guest blogging requests and a surge in positive feedback from readers. This is the best time to reach out to others to be a part of your site with a guest submission. The potential of your product becomes more apparent during these upswings, and the high quality content with positive feedback is at the top of your blog for a reference. I also think that the positive feeling improves your pitch, and the added confidence will help your offer come across as worthwhile. Always take advantage of momentum in everything you do, but pay close attention to the momentum of your blog. Sentiments and traffic patterns shift in a heartbeat, and the only way to build your blog up to a top

level resource is to stack more blocks before the blocks that support them crumble away.

Improve Your Elevator Pitch and Solicitation Skills

Recently when I sent the initial proposal to Liz Strauss, she instructed me to try again. The second time she wanted me to ask a compelling question. I was extremely intrigued by her statement. We share a few interests, but there are some obvious lifestyle differences between Liz and me (most notably the big city which she lives in, and the rural country where I'm at, and the fact that her blog is well-known and successful, while my blog is new and still in the proving grounds). How in the world do I know what is compelling to her?

I ended up studying [her blog](#) and About Me page for over an hour. I thought she may have even given me a hint, but then I realized that she was offering me a once in a lifetime opportunity: to ask any question in the world of someone who has achieved my goal. Maybe the question didn't have to be compelling to her, but compelling to me. So I went with a question regarding the inner workings of the business. It showed her where I was on the learning curve. It proved that I was serious about making Social Media Sun a real winner and it was a chance to remind Liz that she is doing the favor for me.

Always show gratitude to the writers you approach. Remind them that they would be doing you a favor, one that you're glad to repay with services that you do better than others. Even if they turn you down, you never know where each of you will be a year from now. I've been turned down by a blogger because she wasn't familiar with the site, but was contacted two weeks later asking if she could contribute after she had noticed the articles from our site in her Twitter feed numerous times.

Remember that everyone you meet that is capable of producing a quality guest post for your niche is probably busy with prior engagements and their own projects. Sometimes you have to take no for an answer, but if they give you the opportunity to be persistent, they probably just want to feel important enough to be the object of pursuit. Even the most modest bloggers have some level of ego, and it isn't going to hurt you one bit to compliment them.

You want to be as brief as possible when soliciting a guest post from another blogger, but you want to get your point across as well. Choose your words carefully, and base your choice on what you think will inspire your target to answer with a yes. If you can get your pitch in front of your target, it's always possible to achieve the desired outcome. You're probably going to do this by sending a nice e-mail, tweet or Facebook message. If you have the opportunity to ask in person, take it. It's way too easy to

ignore an e-mail or instant message, and it's a lot easier to say no to a keyboard, especially when you get solicited a dozen times every day. If you can't do it in person, try to arrange a Skype chat or do it over the phone. The more personal you can make your pitch, the better your odds of getting a yes.

If you do have to resort to e-mail, remember that it's a conversation. You're not trying to sell anything, you're definitely not doing a job interview with them, and trying to impress them is more likely to alienate your target guest than it is to make them want to get right on a guest submission. Treat it like every other conversation you'll have today, and if you don't know your target at all, you may want to have a few regular conversations before you ask them for a favor. After a certain point guest blogging isn't a necessity for writers, it's a favor.

An Example of How This Should Work

Guest blogging's reward is the experience itself, the exposure you can get from another site's readership, and the SEO benefits offered through back linking. Some people who are predisposed to spamming see it as an opportunity to plug their new project for 400 words, but that is the complete opposite of what an effective guest would do. The only link you need is the one in your bio. Your advertisement is an awesome article that rivals anything else published in your niche. Always put your best foot forward on a guest post; you never know who is going to read it. An insightful, well written post that clearly teaches readers something useful is the best advertisement of your expertise you can get, and when someone comes across the rare posts that are truly expert in form and function, they'll spend a couple extra minutes figuring out who wrote it.

Writers like [Eugen Oprea](#) went from relative obscurity to being one of the premiere SEO bloggers after only a few appearances on popular SEO blogs like [SEOMoz](#). He had more visitors from SEOMoz last month than on [EugenOprea.com](#) he did from Twitter. I immediately began pursuing him as a guest for Social Media Sun, but I had to join a line of other sites who were equally impressed. While I wait for some of Eugen's time to free up, I keep myself busy by reading the guest posts that he's writing at [Social Media Examiner](#) and other sites. He has stayed in contact with me since I first approached him, and he's only gotten better since then.

Eugen played the game exactly like it's supposed to be played. He wrote extremely high quality, well researched posts. He showed he was consistent over a number of submissions on different sites, and he has been visible since he began his guest blogging campaign. The fact that Social Media Sun is waiting for him to finish up some promised submissions to other sites tells you that the publicity has raised everyone's awareness and raised his stock among the blogs that accept guest submissions. He's

no longer approaching those sites, those sites are approaching him. In the end it's good for everybody. His latest guest spot was on Social Media Examiner and it solicited nearly 300 percent of the social engagement that their average submissions get. This can be another good tactic; odds are if Eugen asked me to do a guest post for his blog, I'd be obliged to help out.

Go Find Your First Guest!

Even though popularity will definitely help your aspirations of filling your blog with guest posts, it isn't a mandatory requisite. Some bloggers form friendships more naturally than others and will have an easier time with this. Some others will have to work at it. Often when people start blogging they become consumed with the thought of becoming an expert, and forget how to act with people like a normal person. That is really the key to attracting guest bloggers – to bring parity between the pedestal you've put them on and the gutter your blog is in. It works in the opposite direction as well, people like you better when they can relate to you.

Don't be discouraged easily, and don't force the issue. The best guest opportunities will come naturally and it will be easy to convince them to contribute because they'll want to. No matter how popular a blogger is, they aren't going to produce better content for your site than someone with the skills that also has the motivation. Studies have shown that people who work for free do much better work than paid employees, and it's all because their interests are aligned with the work. There's really nothing left for you to do now except put some boot to pavement, and go find your next guest blogger!

About the Author



[Adam Justice](#) is an experienced web developer, and CEO of [Elkhorn Media](#). He founded [Social Media Sun](#) after being a technology and Internet journalist for a number of years.

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