Scaling Article Writing & Marketing For Affiliate Marketers

Host, Dan Ho, AffiliateArticleWriters.com
Guest, Chris Knight, EzineArticles.com

DAN: Hi, everyone. My name is Dan Ho. I'm the founder of AffiliateArticleWriters.com, a training service that revolves exclusively around article marketing in lifetime income programs. And I'm here today with Chris Knight, CEO of EzineArticles.com, the most successful and prominent article directory online.

Chris, first of all, thanks for taking your time. Of course, I know your schedule is very busy.

CHRIS: Sure.

Let me start by saying this. I've listened to and read several of your previous interviews, and mine's going to be a little bit different, in the sense that I look to focus on just one facet of article marketing. And that is as it pertains to affiliate marketing, and I just hope that's okay with you. I think it's a big realm within article marketing.

CHRIS: Sure, exactly.

DAN: Okay. The first question is, this is just a curiosity type question. In your estimation, how significant do you think the role is that affiliate marketers play in EzineArticles, with respect to such things as percent of total live articles on the site, percent of current volume daily submissions, overall quality score of the articles, and so forth?

And do you believe that affiliate marketers who submit their best articles will play a major part of EzineArticles growth curve going forward?

CHRIS: That's quite a question there. In fact, that was one of the reasons why I wanted to do this interview, because there seems to be like… let me answer the question:

I don't have an exact number. I do know that we don't have quite two million articles on the site, and my guesstimate would be somewhere in the neighborhood of 150,000 to 300,000 are most likely from affiliate marketers. That number is probably low.

It's probably higher than that. However, the real question that we would ask is what percentage of those affiliate submissions are high quality, unique, original articles written by the affiliate marketer him or herself, or by someone that has the exclusive rights to? Because most affiliate marketers out of the gate, when they are like brand new to the world, they normally take the articles written by the merchant that they're pitching and submit them… wrongly.

So, if I look at the rejection rate, if I could identify, and we don't profile a member versus if they are an affiliate marketer or if they're not. But let's just say that we were able to profile an affiliate marketer versus just a regular expert in their niche, whatever that is. I would be willing to guess that the rejection rate of content submitted by affiliate marketers is at least 100% higher than non-affiliate marketers, which mean as much as 80% of articles submitted to us by affiliate marketers are most likely in the rejection pile.

That's a great reason for this call because I hope that we can bring that down, because we don't want to reject content. We want to accept as much as possible of unique, high-quality, original, and exclusive-rights content.

So, that's unfortunate, but we can kind of cover a little bit more of this conversation as to what's that difference. Why are there so many affiliate marketers who are just not getting it right the first time out the gate?

DAN: That's fantastic. In fact, I kind of suspected that maybe you didn't have exact numbers, and I was, of course, was just very, very curious. And my next set of questions actually has some hypotheticals and kind of delves into this topic even further. So, rather than you continuing to expound on that, maybe I could just kind of distill it a little bit more and you can answer more specific questions.

CHRIS: Sure.

DAN: Let's start with this. Because of a label given to approved members at EzineArticles, that is the expert author title, there are some people that seem to be of the view that to write good quality, original content, well-researched articles, that the author needs, they think they have to hold a degree or some sort of certification on the topic or the niche. What would you say is your view on that?

CHRIS: We have a little secret DR group, which stands for Doctor. If you go to http://DR.EzineArticles.com/ you can see all of our doctorate levels. And that covers from medical doctors to doctors of philosophy and whatnot. So, having a medical or having a doctorate degree is definitely not necessary. Having an MBA or a greater college degree is not necessary. In fact, no formal education is technically necessary.

The ability to communicate valuable, unique tips that are not the same rehashed garbage you see over and over again is a skill that's needed. So, when we look at the obstacles that stop a person from submitting an article to us, we study those, of course. We want to know not only what motivates them to submit. They know they want to do it, but they're not

sure, or they feel like they have to be perfect, because you kind of touched on that just a little bit where they feel like they have all this knowledge. Right?

And the reality is that massive action is necessary, and that you will find that over the years. And maybe you've found this to be true, since you've written so many yourself over the years, "Geez, the articles that Dan is writing today are significantly better than the ones he was writing a year ago, two years ago, and so forth backwards." It's more important, again, to take massive action and just know that somewhere in the future you're going to kind of laugh at what they're producing today.

I've done this myself. In fact, in 1998 I wanted to produce a lot of short, informative articles, and I actually built a site just for it to test. So I wrote, like my first 150 or so articles were for http://Top7Business.com/ - And I look back today at what I wrote and it's like, "Oh dear, have I come a long way since then." Heck, yeah.

You don't get to have that confidence and that knowledge of what to write about and how to write it and how quickly you can produce high quality content until after you've done it. So, it's more important to get into the "do it now" mode. Don't taking rejection personally.

Just like a good sporting event, there are always bad ref calls. And as much as we try hard as heck to not make bad calls on rejecting content wrongly, it does happen. And so you need not get bent out over that sometimes and just keep on plodding through with massive action, as that's more important than perfection.

DAN: Right. That's a great answer. It kind of touches on what I want to ask you next. And I think I know the answer, but I definitely want to give you some hypotheticals, because I know your primary interest in doing this call is to set the record straight on what types of affiliate marketers you believe make great article writers and submitters.

So, I just want to give you two scenarios or two hypothetical people and then just ask you if you would consider them to be people you would want to submit.

Scenario one – Let's say you have someone who possesses some basic knowledge on the principals of affiliate marketing. Let's also say that this person in their personal life is someone who's single and looking to date people and the sign up for a few dating sites. I've never done this, so this is kind of why I'm choosing this particular example.

And they just find out that these dating sites really work well for them. And now they have these positive experiences they want to share, perhaps even negative experiences. And although this person is by no means a "relationship expert," he or she has some real experience and knowledge on how single people can benefit from using dating sites. And so, proceeds in creating a dating review resource and is considering doing some article marketing.

Now, obviously, in this example, dating can be swapped out for many niches. It could be someone who has dating experience or herbal gardening, using and reviewing skin care products and so forth. Now, is this someone, based on that hypothetical, is this someone you would want submitting their unique content to EzineArticles, assuming their content is unique and rich?

CHRIS: Sure. In fact, that person, it sounds like they have some minor qualifications. We have a slang term for the people who chase niches who don't have expertise in them, and we call them "article ambulance chasers." So, these are people who have no experience at all.

In fact, as you were talking I was thinking, "Man, we have quite a few 'Get Your Ex Back' articles." And many of them are crap. They don't deliver, for example, a personal experience. They say, "In this event, this happened to someone I know." It's yourself right? "And here's how we overcame it." Or, "Here are the six strategies that you haven't read before on how to choose the right mate."

Some of those articles, since there are so many of them, you picked a high niche with a lot of supply. There is a lot of article supply, which means there is a lot of competition in that niche.

You have to not only produce an article that delivers a little bit about your expertise, but you have to find a way to say something that hasn't been said before, which is awfully difficult, and deliver your own unique style. That unique style is more important.

After you read, on our side of the fence, when we see tens of thousands of articles a month and after you've read your first 20,000, 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 articles, it's like subconsciously you just know when you're reading the same stuff that has been regurgitated and rehashed, instead of someone who blows you away and you're like, "Wow. That was original."

There's where you're adding value as a writer, when you can find your unique voice. How do you communicate in 400 to 800 words the same message that everyone else says, but relating to your expertise, relating to your business life's point of view. You probably already do have a unique

viewpoint, but yet, I think marketers want to sometimes take the easy, lazy route of reading what someone else has written already. And they want to rewrite it, or they want to spin it, or they're like, "I just want to say the same thing."

That's wrong. You have to mix your DNA in that.

DAN: Right. I like the way you put that. You have to mix your DNA in that. And we'll touch on that a little bit more as well, on the whole notion of just rewriting what other people have given them.

That was a great answer. In fact, it kind of helps you segue into scenario two. But I'm still going to ask you anyway because based on that answer, I'm still not sure because this is a common thing that I come across because I've been in the online marketing world for seven to eight years. So, I own some courses and stuff, which is nothing in and of itself.

But one of the things I noticed in some of these courses is that the big selling marketing courses, you'll often get advice from the so-called gurus and many of whom are unquestionably superb marketers. But they'll tell you to employ affiliate marketing, any part or sometimes exclusively. And they'll teach and advise and identify, like you just talked about. They'll teach and advise and identify good markets to get into.

And oftentimes they, either the students or the "gurus" themselves, will be personally knowledgeable in that niche or topic.

Now, let's say these affiliate marketers, again whether the marketer himself or simply a student of one, hire a quality ghostwriter to write all of their articles, or they decide because it's a good market, that they want to research and study this market, so that they themselves can write intelligent unique content on the topic.

Maybe you kind of answered that, but is this someone you would still want to be submitting their content to EzineArticles?

CHRIS: Yes.

DAN: And I was coming from a marketing standpoint first. Gardening looks like a good topic and I'm going to learn all about it so I can write about that. Is that someone you want submitting to EzineArticles?

CHRIS: Sure, especially if they can do the unique, inserting their DNA into the content and if they can find a way to uniquely deliver a new message that says basically the same. The articles have got to be how to, strategy, tip-

based and not regurgitated, rehashed, rewritten content. So, there's our members challenge.

And then when you were saying that I was thinking every day we get affiliate marketers who ping us with "I don't get it. How do I get started?" And then they find out about Section Three.

In our editorial guidelines we have like five and a half, six pages of guidelines. Section Three is dedicated just to affiliate marketers. We've put in this little barrier designed and purposed to say if you're going to be an affiliate marketer and you won't spend $10 to own a domain name that you own yourself, we won't think you're a serious marketer. We won't think you're a serious affiliate.

And so, we put in that little Section Three that says, "You must have your own domain name that redirects to your affiliate link and that we won't accept an affiliate link in an article because that doesn't add value to our users."

DAN: That makes absolutely perfect sense. I always advise my students to go look and read your Terms and Conditions and appreciate that before they even start submitting anything.

I kind of want to summarize the reason I use those two examples. The first one with the dating person – again, a lot of people get thrown off with the expert author thing so they think, "I'm not a relationship guru or marriage counselor or relationship counselor, so maybe I won't do that." When, in fact, you're saying, "No. As long as they're 'inserting their DNA' into that and they have real life firsthand experience," you want that content.

And also in the second case scenario – it's someone who maybe doesn't have a real life firsthand experience, but they're willing either to hire a quality ghostwriter who does or they're willing to become knowledgeable on the topic that they're writing on so that they're contributing real value.

That was my kind of mindset in structuring those questions. Let's touch on this because you've alluded to this in your answers up to now and I know this kind of underpins the EzineArticles philosophy to a very significant extent.

And that's both you and I, Chris, agree very much on the notion that PLR [Private Label Rights] article membership sites are just not a good idea. So many affiliate marketers, like you just said before, where people are inherently lazy, they like to take a shortcut that may not be viable.

So many affiliate marketers are still attempted by these PLR article membership sites. Obviously, the reason is that they're bad for EzineArticles, meaning these people who buy PLR and use that to rehash content and submit it to you guys. Obviously, I understand, and I think most people can grasp the reason why that is bad for using articles from a real perspective.

But if you had to make an appeal to the self-interests of those affiliate marketers who are tempted by all of the PLR article siren song, what would you say to dissuade them from using PLR in the first place or stop using them if they currently are? Let me say this in the self-interest of those affiliate marketers who are thinking about this.

CHRIS: You're not adding value. Here's the deal, something you may not know. In addition to the almost two million articles that are live on our site, we also have nearly a million articles in our deleted bin – articles that have been submitted that never made it live to the site or that made it live and they were pulled.

Everything that's PLR in this world eventually ends its way into our site. So, everything that's PLR gets submitted somehow, some way by somebody who's not listening to this recording. And when they do that, we kind of appreciate even some members that we're unable to accept any of their articles because they just contributed to our identification as to it all.

Every article has a unique fingerprint and we're very efficient at identifying derivative content, as well as exact match of content. So, on a daily basis we'll see somewhere between a low of 20 to a high of as much as 250 articles that we're not able to accept because they tripped our proprietary derivative content filters. And we have software and human both reviewing it because it's a continually tweaking, changing, and it's a moving target.

So, if you want to buy PLR, Private Label Rights, articles and put them on your own site, go nuts. However, our perspective is that our members may not all know this perspective, but one of our core focuses is obsessing on the end user. When we say that, out members immediately think that means them. The reality is that we're able to be FREE to our members because of our users. We have 30 million total visitors a month to our site.

That's the obsession that we're usually obsessed on because if we obsess about them making sure that they have a positive user experience, meaning they land on an article and they find value and they leave on a click to the link in the resource box or on an ad and they don't bounce back to the search engine that sent them or the amount of time spent on the

article is above thirty seconds to two minutes, we can kind of metrically determine whether or not we delivered a positive user experience.

So, we're obsessed about that and PLR doesn't create a positive user experience because it's the same old crap rehashed and whatever. So, if you're an affiliate marketer and all you can come up with is, "I'm just going to submit somebody else's crap that everyone else has and I'm going to put my name on it." You're mud. Your name is mud.

I'm not saying PLR is bad. It's just not right for this industry, this niche, this type of syndication, this type of distribution, especially if you're going to put your name on it. A lot of people do that and it's wrong.

If I had a dime for every member that, even today at least some 20 some support tickets out of the 500 to 1000 that will come in today, at least 20 will be members that say, "Oh, I didn't know I shouldn't submit articles that I didn't write and put my name on it." And I'm like, "What? How did you not know?" Private Label Rights say you can put your name on it and they're just starting out.

It's just really important that if you're going to be an affiliate marketer over the long term, meaning multiple years in article marketing. You can't get rich overnight, but you can use it to build a solid foundation of traffic that comes back every month, every year thereafter. Especially if the content is evergreen, meaning it's not specific to something that happened to today only.

You want to win over the long term. If you submit PLR article content, we're doing to identify you really quickly and efficiently because we have a lot to lose by not doing that.

DAN: Understood.

CHRIS: Then you have no long term relationship with us. And it's like we want to have long term relationships with all of our members that submit high quality, unique, original content.

So, if you want to a short term relationship and get terminated or banned, that's a waste of time I think because the real money in affiliate marketing doesn't usually happen the first 30 days. It compounds over time, over quarters of producing a solid foundation. And a great way for an affiliate marketer to create a solid foundation with content is, of course, writing unique, quality articles and I would say syndicating a percentage of them.

You shouldn't syndicate 100% of them. You should probably syndicate somewhere between 40% and 60% because you want to have some of that unique content on your own site, right?

DAN: Right. That's a great perspective. And when you said they think our clients or whatever word you used is them, meaning like the affiliate marketers in this case, that it's really not. And I really appreciate that because it's all about the end users. It's kind of like Google. If their results aren't relevant, then game over, forget about it.

I totally appreciate where you're coming from and I really wanted to bring that question up because unfortunately if you've been around the block before. And what you're describing with what some of the newer people in affiliate marketing are approaching. It's almost a case of they just don't know what they don't know because, like you just said, some of the people will tell them when they buy some articles, "Yeah, yeah, you can put your name on it."

I guess I understand that if someone's trying to run a PLR membership site, but obviously while we're on the phone here to kind of clear the air and tell everyone that's not a good idea.

And unfortunately, what I've seen. I'm not going to name any names, but there are some people that are very successful at affiliate marketing and they are giving bad advice. They're just telling people to go use PLR for your article marketing or whatever. And it's just unfortunate because they may be in a position of influence or authority and therefore they kind of lead a bunch of people, especially the newbies or some new people in affiliate marketing down the wrong path.

So, that's why I wanted to ask you that question so you could be very, very clear specifically why that's a bad idea for the marketer, for you and for the end user especially. I appreciate that. That was some great feedback.

We're coming to the last segment of the interview and this is a topic kind of near and dear to my heart and one I really want to pick your brains on, so maybe this will be the longest part of the discussion right, but hopefully not too long. It's scale.

Scaling the article marketing is just something that's a bedrock of my beliefs and my training, and so, I want to ask you the importance of scale and get your take on this.

I think many affiliate marketers are missing the boat on really scaling their article marketing. It's my belief that many people stop article marketing or

take a stop and go approach because they don't really truly realize or appreciate the immense value they can offer when scaled properly.

I subscribe to your newsletter. I know you publish a lot of tips, so maybe there are too many for you to give an answer here. But if you had to, I'd like to pressure you a little bit with a two-part question:

1. What would be the top strategies or tactics you'd impart to affiliate marketers for scaling their article marketing?

2. Part two of the question; what words of wisdom could you offer these affiliate marketers, or any online marketers for that matter, that would encourage them to focus more of their efforts into the article marketing arena?

CHRIS: So, the first thought is that if you are really the expert in your niche, and you've only written ten articles, are you really the expert? The answer is no. I have this saying in business. I always say to myself and to our team, I say, "Get big or get out. Get big or get out. Get big or get out." If you don't get big, someone else is going to have your lunch.

Now, on the topic of scale, when you find something that works and works once and it works again and it works again and it works 10 times. It works 100 times. Why wouldn't you want to continue to exploit that scale until you find some saturation point at which point it doesn't work anymore? There are some fields of scale where even the top person in the market hasn't figured out where the top is.

Let me give you a little analogy. I want to mention one more thing. Before I talked about how our end users are our primary focus. We obsess on the end users. Our end users, if I put on my affiliate hat because I've been an affiliate marketer, I've been a VIP affiliate for a lot of people. And when I put on my hat, the end users to EzineArticles are your clients. That is your money stream. That is your traffic stream.

And that is why the traffic from our site is so valuable because they are already preconditioned to know something about you, know, like and trust something about you. By the time they get to your site, they're warmed up. And so, the worst thing you can do is flip them directly to, "You just got to know who I am. You just saw six of my tips, or two of my tips, or seven of my tips and now BAM, Buy, Buy, Buy." No, no. you haven't built a relationship yet.

Maybe that works a small percentage of the time, but it's more important to get them on your email newsletter list, get them on your alert list, get a

relationship built over time and use a site like ours to build that relationship. And then you get to convert them.

I have an analogy for you on the scale. I want you to think about a grocery store. Do you remember the old days, maybe before we were both born? And they had these small grocery stores. And the grocery stores had a number of items. Let's just say it was a small grocery store and they had 100 items.

And at that grocery store you could buy 100 items, so you had 100 items of choice. And then along came a larger grocery store down the block that had 1000 items. It's like, "Hmmm, which one has better choice? The one with 1000 items."

And then along came a supermarket. And what did they have? Well, they had 10,000 items and now if you go to a supermarket today, the ones that are still standing and making it successfully, they have 100,000 plus items. So, that offers you massive multiple choices, but it's easy to see that more articles, more inventory, gives you more choice from an end users standpoint. That's one analogy.

Now, I want you to think about search engines for a bit. Imagine if you or I were to create a search engine however crazy that might be as an idea. And if you compare all the search engines that exist today, it's not difficult to assume that the largest search engines have the most billions of pages indexed in their index versus the small ones that don't have that many billions of pages indexed.

In order for them to deliver great value, they have to be comprehensive. Heck, it's one of my goals as an educational and informational site. We want to have more millions of articles, so we can be more comprehensive.

Well, it's the same sort of thing for you. When you find something that works and you know that you're after the long term, meaning multi years and you know that it's very difficult to stop this business. I don't know if you know that.

That's like when you put your content out there, once it's gets viral and people start syndicating it and email newsletters start picking it up. After awhile you have this ascent to make. You have this big burn of energy to happen to get your ship in the air. And that ascent could take one to two years, three years, and some people continue and they never stop ascending.

Kind of like us. It's the same for our writers, our members/expert authors. It's the same for them as it is for us in that we both are continuing to grow

the amount of articles. I call them part of your inventory. So, every article that you have is part of your article inventory, your agents. They are agents for you. They're selling for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week every year.

So, once you find something that works, why wouldn't you want to exploit that? There are two types of markets that you can usually write about. You said before dating. "Dating" is a very high content supplied niche. We would call that the head of the long tail. Very intense competition. Your chances of ranking well are very low. Your chances of getting traffic are somewhat unknown. There might be more traffic in the mid to long tail within that.

Let me give you a mid-tail example. Dating …

DAN: Christian dating or something?

CHRIS: Sure. Christian dating might be a good example. That might be the middle of the tail. And the long tail might be Christian dating for people who have diabetes or something very specific. That would be like the long tail of that.

And you might find it much easier to get more traffic on that and, of course, the secret there is to find out where the intersection of content supply and user demand meets. Where do those intersect? I think the big money/traffic is in the mid-tail rather than the long tail.

Sometimes in the long tail you might write something that can rank number one and you might get a lot, it might answer perfectly the question that the market has, but it might not have a huge volume of interest. So, you need to find that.

In order for scale to work, you also have to have leverage. And that's one thing you can get when you're writing articles. In fact, here's a great tip. Don't write just one article at a time ever. That makes no sense. It's easier to write a 1000-word article and cut it in half and have two 500-word articles that will produce more traffic for you. I almost guarantee it because I know that two articles at 500 words will almost always out pull the number of traffic views per year than one article at a 1000 words.

We call that the article set. It's always better to write them in sets so you can get a higher return on your time. So, there's another reason for scale. You want to decrease the amount of effort and cost that goes into producing articles.

I have a few more tips here. Let's pretend, we'll go down a different path onto the ghostwriting path next, but first I want to cover. Before you write one brand new article and submit it to us. Look at your existing content inventory. If you've been around for any amount of time more than a month, there's a good chance that you've already produced content somewhere, somehow in your niche that you might have old email news or archives of your own.

You might have emails to clients that you could erase the personal indentifying information. You might have ebooks that can be repurposed into or physical books that could be repurposed. You might be doing an interview just like this, transcribing it and having it edited into a bunch of articles. That makes great content that you didn't even have to physically write. It was your unique expertise, but transcribed and split into a job and then you have articles.

Before you write one new article, you should always make sure that you repurpose and repackage the existing content that's unique and originally exclusive to your name that you've already produced. That's often overlooked.

Whenever I say that to a group or I'm speaking somewhere. They say, "Oh yeah, I might have a 1000 articles somewhere within the things I've already produced over the years that I can reuse."

To our end users, the content that you produced that they haven't seen yet is new to them. Then the person will come back and say, "Well, I already have the article on my website."

"Okay. So how many views did you get?"

"Two hundred?"

"Is it climbing in value, or no?"

It doesn't have to be exclusive to EzineArticles.com. It has to be exclusive to your name. That's a misunderstanding that we sometimes knowingly allow to continue, meaning when we say that an article has to be exclusive to your name, we know some people are hearing that means it has to be exclusive to EzineArticles.com and that is not true.

It does not have to be exclusive to EzineArticles. It has to be exclusive to your name. We should not be able to find the same content that you produce under somebody else's name anywhere else on the Internet. That's what we mean by exclusive rights to your name.

So, as long as that's exclusive to your name and it doesn't have to be exclusive to our site, you might want to test a percentage of the content you've already produced and see whether or not we can get you a higher return for it. There's a good chance that the average article receives between 20 to 250 views per year. And the average click-to rates are between 2% and 12%. Our site averages somewhere in the middle of that. And yours are pretty good. I'm looking at your traffic status right now, Dan.

I don't know how public or not this is, so I won't share. But it looks pretty healthy.

DAN: Yes, It's very healthy. I don't mind you sharing. But yes, I've gotten a lot of traffic, obviously, from EzineArticles over the years.

CHRIS: Why don't you share it then?

DAN: I don't know off the top of my head, but I know that I have probably close to three million page views or something, between two and a half and three million page views. The URL clicks are probably in the 300,000 to 400,000 range.

I do know that as an affiliate marketer, I've just driven a ton of sales. So, there's no fear for me anymore. Obviously, I'm a staunch believer because it's not like, "Oh, is this going to work? Or is this not going to work?" I've been doing this for years and the results have proved themselves out. So, there's no speculation left for me. I understand that people that don't really know how to think about scale like you talked about before.

If somebody writes ten articles, are you an expert? The answer is no. Well, that person is also not going to get, not any, but they won't get much result so they'll think to themselves, "Why bother scaling this? I don't see the results." They just haven't given it enough time to scale it to a higher level where they can see the results.

And I guess that's just my opinion that if people truly appreciated it, if they really stuck by it and they didn't say to take it back to what you said, "Affiliate marketing isn't a 30-day game, or a 60-day game."

And that was kind of my next question, which is kind of a playful question. It's not a question that maybe you have the answer to, but from all of the data that you've seen, maybe you have a notion of a "level" or a "magic number" of live articles from a very general standpoint that seems to be a threshold to reach before people start generally experiencing significant number of article views like I experienced or URL clicks and so forth.

Let me state it differently. What kind of consistent, ongoing volume submission would you say, from any general standpoint, would someone have to do to fall within your top 500 expert authors in any given month and grab a significant piece of the massive traffic pie afforded by EzineArticles? What would it take?

CHRIS: Let's talk about that massive traffic pie. Right now it's at five million a month out bound. So, that means that five million visitors leave our site and go to our member sites. So, that's about a million and a quarter total clicks leave our site on a weekly basis.

In order to get the top, I have an exact number right here. Right now, as of this recording, in order to get in our top 100 members, 971 articles is the 100th member. So, in order to be in the top 100, we have 100 members who have written 970 or more articles.

Just think about what do we really want from affiliates? If we were to be really selfish, what we really want is we want affiliates to make a lot of money using article writing and marketing. If affiliate marketers are able to do kind of what you've done already, and they're able to turn it into, they get past that ascent where they have to invest. It's like ten years of effort for one or no units of gain. You have to get past that.

You asked that question, so maybe I should answer it now. Ten years ago it was ten articles. Five years ago it was 100 articles. And now it's somewhere between 250 and 2500 articles is where the magic begins.

Some people have told me, they said, "You know, Chris, when I reach 250 articles." To some people that seems like an enormous amount of articles. When they reach 250, they said that they couldn't shut the traffic off if they wanted to, and that it was pretty amazing.

Right now, we have this '100 articles in 100 days' challenge, and there are over 1500 competing in it right now. It's not that difficult to ramp up and produce one to two articles a day, every day.

I believe working in bursts: It's kind of like a lifestyle. If you're going to lose weight or be lean and be fit, you don't just go the gym one day. Like a business owner, you don't just market your business one day. You don't just advertise on one day. You advertise and market every day. You eat right every day. You go to the gym somehow and get fitness in every day or every other day, right?

That's kind of like climb your ascent. Know that you're investing before you see a return. And then don't give up until you hit at least 100 to 250

articles before you evaluate whether or not this medium can work for me. And then don't worry.

In fact, one more tip here, you're going to learn a lot along that path. You're going to learn an incredible amount about yourself and about which niche you like the most and the one you have the most fun in. But along that path, I would encourage you to. Some members of ours spend an enormous amount of time obsessing about optimizing their existing articles.

We know from experience and some stats that we study a lot of what they're doing, what they're getting and what works. We know that if you spent the same amount of time. Instead of spending 100% of your optimization time, if you spent only 10% of that on optimizing and 90% on producing new content, that the sheer force. We have some members that "will" themselves up to the top of the traffic heap. So, they don't always have the best articles, and this, of course, is where we're in conflict because we're not always proud of some people who produce a high volume of content.

And we're always looking for that happy medium where we can find high quality, unique, original content in a scale that makes sense. From our perspective, we'd rather have 2000 members instead of 171,000 members that all produce all high volumes of thousands of articles a year. That would be great. It's just not going to happen. And there's some goodness in diversity.

So, we still appreciate the members that submit one to ten articles. However, it's so easy to get into our Platinum membership. Our Platinum membership begins at 10 or 25 or more articles, so it's so easy to get to that level because less than 15% ever actually do. I think that that's because they give up. They give up before they see. They wanted to get rich quick or they thought this is an easy way to get there.

You're going to need to write content for your own site. I don't care what you do online – content or article marketing – whether you submit to us or not, you're going to need to get really efficient at using content to attract traffic. Otherwise you're going to spend a load of money acquiring clicks through pay-per-click, which of course I'm happy to take through advertising. That's great.

This is difficult for me to say because our services are free to our members because we have advertising on the site. We know that if I were to start a brand new business today, grass roots, and I didn't have a quarter million dollars a year or whatever number it would take, I know that I would be

immediately writing articles day and night, every weekend, week out, and/or repurposing existing content or hiring ghostwriters.

Perhaps, if we could, I'd like to touch on the ghostwriter side because I have some tips on what to do there. Maybe you have some thoughts as well.

DAN: Sure.

CHRIS: On hiring ghostwriters, the biggest mistake people do is they blindly trust ghostwriters of any kind. And let me tell you, there is a clear career path that most ghostwriters go on. And it looks something like this:

They start out writing and pumping these $.25 to $4 articles. And they pump these out in high volumes. They make PLR clubs and they create thin "ambulance chaser-type" content. And along the road, the ghostwriter says to him or herself, I want to make more money as a ghostwriter.

In order to do so, I can create an agency where I have ghostwriters write for me and then I sell and distribute their works. That's one route that makes me a business owner now, rather than a writer. And you have to decide if you're that entrepreneur or are you the technician writer.

And then the other path is they learn that "I can make more money as a copywriter." Copywriting makes more money than article writing. Of course, there's some magic in between there because if you know something about copywriting, there's a good chance you're good at article writing as well, even if you are delivering unique experiences.

So, ghostwriters go through that path where I have a really hard time recommending it. In fact, we don't officially recommend any ghostwriter right now just because they come and they go so fast.

The first tip is never trust any ghostwriter at all, even when you have a contract. And I would assume you have a contract that gives you the exclusive rights to that content.

That's tip number two, which is get a "work for hire" contract that says you own the content and that only your name can be on it or any name you choose. So if you want to use a pen name or a pseudo name. We call them "Alt Authors" or alternate author name. Just make sure you have exclusive rights to the content.

Number 3 that relates to number 1, which is never trust the ghostwriter. Even after you have the contract that says the ghostwriter is to produce exclusive rights and unique, original content to you, you then have a

responsibility to cross-check and double-check that content. I know that some of you are going to argue with me on this, but I don't think you can trust anybody and that you need to test all content yourself. Copyscape is not that test. So, while they're good to identify some plagiarism, we catch content all the time that Copyscape doesn't catch.

So, just because someone says it's Copyscape proof, if an article writer is saying that the content is Copyscape proof, that's a clue, if you're an article ghostwriter and you're saying to your client, "My content is Copyscape proof." I hope that's a marketing ploy and not a truth, because if you have to test your content against Copyscape, you're not actually producing it yourself, or you're rewriting it, or you're rehashing or you're not a really high-quality ghostwriter.

How do you then test the content that you are in fact purchasing is, in fact, like it said is supposed to be contractually? One way to do that is to grab two complex sentences out of the article and check them against GYM – Google, Yahoo, Microsoft.

DAN: It's an acronym.

CHRIS: Just check two complex random sentences in those two search engines because we're going to and you don't know which two we're checking. And then, in addition, some ghostwriters, I've noticed, and I don't know if you've done this yourself or not. But I've noticed that some ghostwriters will actually guarantee that their submission will be accepted on EzineArticles.com. ☺

Somewhere in the coming year, I know that we're interested in taking it further to develop a more certified, ecosystem of people who are approved and above board. That's a complex path for us right now because ghostwriters sometimes are super shifty. Not on purpose, just because there are life transitions, they're working out of their home and they're reputation is under development.

Kind of like copywriters; if I had to write now, I could probably rip off the top of my head some copywriter names that are famous and that I would trust their content, if they were producing copy for me as a client.

I can't name off the top of my head a lot of ghostwriters that are still ghostwriting it today, because they come and go so fast. It's transitory. So, don't trust a ghostwriter. *[Notice, I didn't say, don't hire a ghostwriter…I just meant, don't blindly trust them.]*

Here's an acid test for whether or not you have a great ghostwriter. If we can't tell that the content you submit was ghostwritten, then that's the acid

test for us. And we can usually tell when a person submitting on 45 different topics, that they're probably not really writing every topic themselves. It's possible. There are some members that can do it.

Our top member right now is doing that. He's writing a lot of his own content or almost all of it, if not all of it. But it's so easy for us to spot when a person doesn't give you original content, because it just doesn't follow. You want to take your expertise and you want to inject your life experience with that expertise to give your original, unique slant or angle on the issue, which is what really adds value, versus somebody who just repurposes and rewrites something else, or spins it or whatever.

We actually buy those spinners and we use them to reverse engineer so that we can identify those who have used them. When we buy some of those, when there are products out there attempting to game us, we'll go out and acquire the stuff and try to integrate it and reverse engineer it and then make sure that we can mute it as quickly as possible because if we deliver a bad user experience that reflects poorly on, not only on us, but all of our members in the whole project.

Our reputation long-term is more important than any one member or any one user at the time.

DAN: Right. Wow, that was a mouthful in so many different dimensions of what you were just talking about. And I was taking mental notes in my head and amazed to go back maybe five minutes to touch on a couple of the key points that I just found amazing in my mind how you said the huge amount of traffic that EzineArticles post monthly, I think you said 30 million. I didn't know that, but I find it fascinating how you said only 15% will ever make it to the Platinum status. Was that correct as well?

CHRIS: That's correct. Less than 15% make it past Platinum and that's because two years ago we stopped giving Platinum for quantity only... It used to be Platinum was quantity only. And we created a Basic Plus membership that's between basic and Platinum. And Basic Plus means you missed the mark, but we want to give you another chance. So, Basic Plus gives you 25 more chances to prove that you've a unique quality that writes well and you're an expert author of some kind.

And then from there you can either be further extended another 25 in Basic Plus, or you can earn Platinum Unlimited status. On a monthly basis, it's only about 400 to 500 new members go Platinum on a monthly basis worldwide.

So, it's a very small club. And what Platinum gets them, of course, is the little yellow star on the site. It means that we have trust. We try to build

trust profiles with our members. We have an extensive history tracking service internally on everything. Every transaction, most every event is logged. And it allows our editors to not only see the article they're reviewing, but to see the history.

From that information we can determine how much we should deliver trust. And, of course, Platinum authors are trusted more than basic members. And it's not to be confused with our Premium membership.

We have a [Premium membership](#) but you can't buy Platinum status. And somebody will confuse that and they think that, "I can just buy Platinum or if I pay as a client, then I'm a Platinum member." No, you can't. In fact, we have a few Premium members who are suspended right now. You can't buy editorial bias and we prove it by walking away and refunding money (because we don't want non-ideal members to be clients).

Platinum membership also gets your articles reviewed faster. And when all is said and done on a daily basis, first there are Premium members, then there are Platinum, then there are Basic Plus, then there are Basic. And we review in that order, and so we kind of give a priority for those who submit more than 10 or 25 will get the Platinum.

DAN: That makes perfect, perfect sense because those people have built a history with you guys, so to speak, or a history of more reliability. That absolutely makes perfect sense.

Everything you said on the ghostwriting I found to be true as well. They're a very fickle group. And I find it interesting, I didn't ask you that directly and I appreciate you sharing just from a business perspective. And once you said it I'm like "Oh yeah." It's a big undertaking and obviously fraught with a lot of inherent difficulties as you pointed out where I'm talking specifically about approved ghostwriters, so to speak, that you guys will approve that have made it through these hoops.

You're right. It's very hard. In my opinion, it's about relationships. I have some relationships with ghostwriters, but it took years to build those. And it was several years before I trusted one, to just give her access to my account, "Go in and you can be the one who is submitting some of these articles." And it just built that level or trust over phone calls. There are little tests that people can do because it's contract labor, so you have to pay people.

This is maybe a tip for people out there. Eventually you have to 1099 them, and the fickle ones are not interested in giving you]data]. They're like "I'm not telling you were I live or my social security number." But eventually, when you have to claim this as a business deduction, they

won't reveal that, and that shows that their level of trust in you is not that high.

I know we're kind of running out of time, I just want to touch on one last aspect of scale:

You made a [tweet on Twitter several days ago](#) that I think is relevant to our discussion here on scale. And I liked it very much. And you said, I'm going to quote you, "To think scale, you have to think transactional leverage. Optimize daily transactions without adding massive human labor."

Now, let's take this to article marketing. When I read your quote, I thought, "Whoa." Affiliate managers for companies could learn a lot from taking that quote to heart and applying that "transactional leverage" to the affiliate force via article marketing. But not just by simply saying, "Hey guys, do more article marketing," but by taking specific proactive steps in assisting their affiliates.

As an example, maybe an affiliate manager shouldn't just say, "Go buy this ebook that teaches you how to do keyword research," or, "We recommend this keyword research tool," but to proactively come up with a list.

For example, this is just off the top of my head. Come up with a list of the Top 200 keywords. Let's say mid-long tail, long tail keywords. The top 200 keywords targeting their product or service and just giving them to the affiliates, so that the affiliates can get busy writing articles rather than worrying about one other thing that they have to learn.

Kind of like getting that leverage and their affiliate force --- getting more out of a transaction and not having to add more human labor to it.

So, my question here for you, Chris, giving your own quote and the possibilities for you to educate affiliates, not just affiliates, but affiliate managers who oversee the productivity of a large number of affiliates, what would you advise them to do to gain that transactional leverage without adding massive human labor with respect to article marketing?

CHRIS: I'm not sure I'm going to give you the right answer. So, this is in the male enhancement firm that I track that is very efficient at training their members how to write articles. They've written ecourses and autoresponder sequenced mailings, and this is a great thing to do, I think, on how specifically to produce original content.

So, instead of just giving the content alone, of what they should write on. If I were an affiliate program manager and I had an army of 4000 affiliates, of those affiliates, only about 10% at the most are going to be thinking in scale, if that. I'd want to identify that 10% and then I would provide to them the article titles that they should be writing on.

I would deliver them 100 to 1000 titles per quarter. And then I would demand they write an article about it as a return favor for having produced which article title they should write about. And if they didn't write an article title on the ones that I delivered to them, then I would revoke that title from them and say you're going to give it to another affiliate to produce.

Then you have a full-time person managing, like you create a system of some kind that would manage that article title itself, which is a promise. It's a promise that you're going to deliver the value in the article body. I think sometimes the title is difficult for a lot of people to come up with. And we know that that's a high percentage of the success of the article is whether or not the title is good.

So, it [the article title] has to have a primary and a secondary hook, and it has to be a little longer than maybe you feel comfortable, but it delivers a promise. And one way to get transactional leverage would be to take away some of the work that affiliate marketers have to do. And so, I would create an autoresponder sequence series, kind of like our http://EzineArticles.com/training/ series that is free.

We have a free sequenced email course. It's a free ecourse on how to do article writing and marketing. That takes one time to produce and we produced it last July. We're about to revise it this quarter or this month. We have delivered millions of emails. Something like three or four million emails have been delivered since last July on a course that we produced 11 months ago on how to do the basics of article writing and marketing that still apply today. Everyone should do this!

If I were an affiliate marketer, I would want to invest the time to create simple e-courses like that that a person can subscribe to and learn to over a period of time because it's really difficult to dump on somebody and say, "Here's everything you need to know." And give them like 12 hours of knowledge. It just doesn't work. We don't learn that way.

It's better to feed them over time and keep checking in with them, but use technology to get that leverage, and producing a sequenced email series is under-leverage is what it is. It creates such a huge return.

When I think about, I think about the things we've done that have been really great last year through this year. And I think, "Wow, we need to create more of those for everything that we do." And affiliate program managers should do the same. Do you do that?

DAN: You just gave me some fantastic tips I wasn't employing. I'm just listening intently on what you're saying.

CHRIS: Imagine if you're going to write titles. I'm really in love with the idea of writing titles for your affiliate marketers. If you're a merchant and you're selling a product, it's difficult to say, "Okay. Come on. Let's go affiliate marketers." It's like, no, how about you do something for me.

I'll tell you what; I can't give you the article because if I do that then everybody has the same dang article. But, what I can do is I can come up with unique, original. I can come up with 10,000 this year, article titles based on my knowledge and research and you can use the traffic search terms featured within EzineArticles to get some data. You can use Keyword Discovery's API. You can use Google Insight. You can use the AdWords kw tool. You can use all kinds of data sources to figure out what should be the top article titles you should be producing.

And then, of course, save some for yourself. And then, since you can't possibly write 10,000 articles this quarter – maybe you can, I think I could, not me personally, a team of writers. In fact, this is my business motto – If I were an affiliate marketer, I would have a team within a building. And I know that's not conducive with the solopreneur lifestyle of wanting to be barefoot at home, and which I did at one time. I still like that idea. The solopreneurship is a great business model, especially in recessionary times.

But another model that I would do is I would have a room of 50 writers and I would have two or three trainers and I would teach my writing system. In fact, there's were the transactional leverage can be found also. In creating a writing system that is unique and exclusive to the way that you believe the world works. And teach that system in order to unlock and unleash value from your affiliates.

Imagine an affiliate marketing army producing original content that pitches your stuff. That's like really authentic, really powerful because of how authentic it is. And, of course, it will be ripped and copied and stolen from you -- you can expect. There is a lot of unfairness that comes with being a lead dog. But we know that content thieves never rise to traffic power. There are too many forces working against them.

So, even when you do get ripped, no content thief ever rises to traffic power long-term. It's not possible. There are just too many forces working against them. We're sure the heck working against them and we know Google is working against them. There are others, the ISPs work against them because we and you can report them for an AUP or TOS violation.

It should not be a major concern. You can be vigilant, but it shouldn't be a roadblock. In fact, you should kind of expect, especially if you get popular. At some point, congratulations, you're popular enough to be stolen from. Don't get bent.

DAN: Exactly. Take is as flattery. As they say, "Imitation is the highest form of flattery."

This is just fascinating to me because I always try to think. That wasn't always the case, but when I started stumbling upon and educating myself on thinking in terms of leverage and scale and especially how to do that without having to, in your particular example, without having to add a lot of human labor. Or it could be any other type, it could be money or it could be anything.

It's just fascinating. I wish we had more time to talk about this. I already got some tips from you. It's just amazing. I love the title idea. And I also love how you hold them accountable and you have a take away. And if you don't use these titles, then we're going to give them to somebody else who is and you're going to miss out and miss the boat.

Just fascinating, especially at the level you've built EzineArticles, you must be constantly thinking about scale and obviously the ghostwriting example, if that takes off for you guys is a classic case of you thinking in leverage and scale and just kind of taming the beast and making it work for your business.

It's just amazing. I appreciate you sharing your time, Chris. I know we've probably gone over the hour.

Thank you so much for your time. Hopefully, somewhere down the line, I can just maybe talk to you more just about leverage. It's just fascinating, the whole topic of leverage and scale.

I appreciate you sharing your time with us. I've learned a lot from you. And thank you for your insights and your input.

CHRIS: Sounds good. We look forward to reviewing your articles. Thanks, Dan.

DAN: Thank you, Chris. Bye.

After reading this interview you should have a better understanding of how to scale your article marketing efforts for optimal results. You should be inspired to reach that escape velocity of 250-500 articles laden with your DNA. If you're already there, you should be inspired to scale your investment to reach a new level of success.

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Remember, every article you write and submit is exchanged for website traffic, brand awareness, credibility, media exposure and more. Think in scale - the more you write and submit, the more highly prequalified traffic that will be coming to your website in the days, weeks, months and even years to come.