

AUGUST 2014

Getting Your Content Published

Recently I asked Forbes and Inc. to publish content I would provide. They both said yes—in the same week. Better yet, these won't be one-time articles. They are weekly columns. Easy, right? I'll provide more on that in a bit.

The fact is smart content marketers who publish blogs and articles all want distribution in top-tier media. The exposure is mindboggling. Online, Forbes reaches more than 26 million unique visitors per month. Add Inc.'s additional 4.9 million average unique monthly visitors and this is huge brand exposure—worth millions if it were an ad buy. In fact, there has been a huge shift to content marketing in part because it costs 62% less than traditional marketing and generates about three times as many leads. (Source: DemandMetric). That's why 93% of B2B marketers use content marketing (Source: CMI).

However, content marketing has its challenges. It requires the right audience to be effective. Growing an audience can be tricky. Building it on your own is slow and tapping into an existing audience requires special PR finesse. The truth is this: if editors published everyone's content, there would be quality dilution. That's why it's important to know what it takes to get media like Forbes or Inc. to publish your content. Today I am sharing my secrets.

Before the Pitch

- Know thy self. Are you ready to be a content marketer in the high-flying circles of mega media? Not everyone is—yet. For example, I'm working with a fantastic client who would love to be in Forbes. It might happen tomorrow, but today we're implementing a right-sized plan to prepare them. We're starting with industry trade media. They are working hard and building their expertise. We've had more than a dozen bylines published this year alone.

Executive Insights



Cheryl Isen

work like crazy to find the right media fit for their target audience. Once I make a match, then we start ghost writing articles or provide editing.

The Anatomy of the Perfect Pitch

- Select the right media. Do your research from multiple perspectives. First, prioritize the media your target audience interacts with. Cull that list down to what aligns with your expertise. Great content educates readers. So do some matchmaking. Read the content on the media sites. When you discover a match with media that covers content that you have expertise in, you have your priority media list.
- Find a unique position. Dig deeper into your research to understand the content currently offered. Who is your competition for placement? What are they saying? Can you add a unique point of view? Are there any gaps you can fill? Can you offer anything new, different or more compelling? Does the media's style match your own?
- Create sample content. Turn your unique position into a sample article that matches the style, tone and length of your target media. Then go the extra step. Create a list of 6-10 article ideas. Present the ideas with a great headline and a couple of sentences focused on what readers will learn. Make sure these are thought provoking and demonstrate your special expertise.

Create your village. There is usually a team behind every "byline star". For example, with my clients I develop the positioning and PR strategy, find the right company experts to brainstorm content with, shape it for the media and then

- Find the top dog. Usually this is the managing editor. Don't waste your time communicating with a non-personal email address. Use your best detective skills to find and connect to the right person. Try Twitter and LinkedIn. Work your connections to find someone who knows this person and get an introduction. Have no shame. Remember, you have content their audience wants and you have to get it to the top dog so they can publish it and get more readers, which will help them sell more ads!

- Prepare the pitch. This is the media version of shark tank. Know this: you have one shot to get it right so do the work. Be very brief. Take the time to cull, redraft and make every sentence work. Put yourself in the mindset of the editor. Their job is to offer up great content so they can sell more ads. With that knowledge, work in the answers the editor wants to know—who are you and why should they care? State your expertise, and then add why this will benefit their readers. Hook them with a tease—use one or two of the article "ideas" you prepared. Wrap up with a statement about how to reach you and that you will follow up in a week.

- The follow up offer: Editors rarely respond without a second ping. Keep the reconnect brief. Ask if they would like to see some sample column ideas or perhaps a draft article. Assuming your pitch and ideas were good and they say yes, send in the sample article you've already completed.

Cheryl Isen is president of Isen and Company, a strategic marketing and public relations founded in 2001. Serving as an organization's "CMO to go", Cheryl and her network of talented associates run or supplement a company's Marketing and Public Relations efforts.

Visit IsenandCo.com to learn more.