

One of the most effective means of building your business and developing your own reputation as an expert is to craft articles or a how-to book on the subject of your company's specialty. The amazing new advances in publishing technology have made this approach quite easy and you receive a return that more than justifies the modest effort it requires.

## **Branding Is an Ideal Way to Build Your Book Business and Your Reputation As an Expert**

Professionals generally agree that no technique for building your business is more effective than branding yourself as an expert and your business as the most knowledgeable source of information for the product line you handle.

With the new technology that has been developed by the publishing industry, it is now possible to reinforce your reputation as an expert by writing books, not just articles, about your industry and your products. With these new developments you can accomplish this with very little or no formal training. You need nothing more than the ability to take the same words you use when you converse about these subjects and place them on paper.

Let's look first at the advances in article distribution. Internet-based article aggregators and distributors are the most exciting new outlets for widespread dissemination of the articles you write. Just as you chose to read this article because it matched your special interests, so hundreds of thousands of information-starved people around the globe seek knowledge from the broad range of subjects distributors like ezinearticles.com offer. Your single article may be seen by upwards of a million viewers.

Like the editors who man the copy desks at the distributors' offices, editors of print trade journals in your specialty aren't looking for literary masterpieces. Their

concern is information that will help others in your field perform as well as you do. Much like the Web-based article distributors, simple, direct writing, similar to the way you would describe the subject in conversation, is what these magazines seek.

### **The Secrets of Crafting a Strong Article**

First and foremost, be specific. The editors and the people who read the article don't have to be told that PVC piping has impacted sales of copper tubing. They know that already. They want to know how your staff counsels customers on selecting either PVC or copper and why they make those decisions. At the simplest level, write an article on the five most important considerations when choosing the type of piping to use for a specific job.

In essence, think of your article as a training session in print. You may want to formulate your piece by bulleting each feature and adding the details of your related selling points. Begin the article with a simple declarative statement of why you recommend either PVBC or copper for a specific job. Then wrap up the article with a positive statement. It may be a short summary of what you have written or possibly a summary of the features.

When writing an article for Internet distribution, it is best to keep it to a range of 500 to 1,200 words. In general, articles written for the Web are shorter than those published in a print journal, where a realistic ceiling would be a maximum of 2,000 to 2,500 words. If you think through what you want to say in advance and outline carefully, it won't be hard to cover all key points within these limits. Internet surfers are often people in a hurry. They prefer short, punchy, informative text.

### **Expanding to a Book**

Once again, you have two choices: an e-book or a traditional print volume. Essentially you are following the same procedure we recommended for crafting your article. However, this is an opportunity to expand on your subject and weave in far more information than the space limits of an article allow. Here you have the freedom to add more personal observations, even weave in the philosophy by which you run your business. But once again, it is essential that you plan out what it is you want to relate and outline it carefully.

You are writing what is in essence a how-to book. Use a structure very similar to the assembly instructions in a build-it-yourself assembly kit. Guide the reader forward step-by-step by adding new information in each successive chapter. This type of informative book does not have to be extensive. Writing 25,000 to 30,000 words is relatively easy to do. The average typed, double-spaced page contains in the neighborhood of 250 words, so by spreading your knowledge and your thoughts over 100 to 120 pages, you can turn out a very informative book that you can use as a promotional tool to help brand you. Even though your primary objective is to use the book to increase your business—selling books and related items—you may be able to offset a piece of the production cost by selling the book to libraries across the country. They are always on the lookout for solid, informative works.

### **Publishing Your Book**

This is where you benefit from the marvelous advances in publishing technology. No longer do you have to suffer with huge press runs and the exorbitant costs vanity presses used to charge. Today, you can print any number of copies you want and continually fill in with more by using the digital services of a Publish on Demand (POD)

publishing company. These newcomers eliminate all of the drudgery in publishing. You simply send them a finished manuscript prepared on your computer and a relatively small production fee (averages for this type of book from \$400 to at most \$1,000).

The POD house will prepare a book cover (\$300-\$500 if done on your own), format the interior text (\$500-\$700), obtain an ISBN number and matching barcodes, file for Library of Congress Cataloguing, Print your book, set up distribution with a wholesaler and register it with the .coms: Amazon, BN&N and Borders. All this will be done regardless of how small your initial order is. And as you find the need for reorders, you simply call the POD house and within a week or so, the books will be at your office.

Take advantage of this often unexplored method of growing your business and your reputation. It's a lot easier than you think, and the results will more than justify the minimal effort it takes. If time simply is not available, consider retaining the services of a ghost writer to prepare the materials for you.

Whichever road you choose, don't wait any longer. In this era of a faltering economy, new ideas and innovative approaches are needed just to sustain volume, let alone increase it.