Should You Be Worried About Duplicate Content?

From time to time, I like to write non-exclusive guest posts for friends who receive our BlogEnergizer emails because well… plenty of reasons. Sometimes it is for my company's benefit – *Warning! Straight talk ahead. I run a business and not a charity and am not apologizing, nor hiding the fact.

At other times, I do it because I genuinely **want to help** people put quality content on their blogs, sites or newsletters without driving themselves bonkers.

Now that we got that out of the way, you may be wondering what is non-exclusive guest post. It means the post is sent out to over 3,000 people (maybe more depending when you're reading this). So if you use it, you may not be the only blog publishing it. You can consider this a syndicated blog post.

This naturally sends warning bells a-clanging for a lot of people.

"What about duplicate content?"

"Won't I be penalized by the search engines?"

While I'm not an SEO expert, I have been around the block several times and will share what I **do**.

When Is It An Issue?

- Duplicate content is a site issue. If you have replicas of your web site, that's duplicate content. A reprint article or non-exclusive guest post peppered here and there on your blog is not duplicate content because Blogger A's blog is not a replica of your blog and vice versa.
- The web and other media is full of syndicated content. If you look at traditional media, news is news. Stuff that make the big headlines are the same. Besides, rarely will you find original content anymore. It may be original in arrangement and words used but goodness, how many "100 Useful Plugins For Bloggers" posts have you seen that are being re-hashed over and over. I've seen plenty. A lot of the times the list is even the same list. Yet, they get passed on, shared over and over and blogged about again and again.
- Duplicate content is an 'issue' that needs to die ☺.

Despite this, I know we may still be concerned about what we publish and you should but that doesn't mean you should drop syndicated posts entirely and end up with either a *dead blog* or

working yourself to the bone for 'fresh original' content. Neither of which are going to get you where you want to go.

What Can You Do?

Here's the big question then. What can you do when you want to take advantage of some great content other people have written and given you the right to republish?

1. **Write your own blog title**. If you must reprint the post in entirety as-is, put it in the author's title post.
2. **Write your own intro**. Take a look at other blogs. Even exclusive guest posts have some kind of introduction. It's good practice especially when your blog is not set up to support multiple authors it eliminates the issue of your readers mistaking the post is written by you.

> *Use pull quotes, sidebars, and commentaries like this to create uniqueness in post, make content easier to read and aid understanding.*

3. **Use quotes**. Pull out some great points in the post and highlight it how books and magazines do it. This makes your post attractive to read and it differentiates your page from a straight copy-paste job.
4. **Add commentaries**. Similar to the quotes above, inject your own comments into the post. You can differentiate it as quotes or put them in a box to the side. This further customizes the post.
5. **Choose quality posts**. If you're getting it from us, you can be confident it's not junk or content made just to game search engines ☺
6. **Mix it with your own content**. This is rather easy to do because I trust you are already publishing your own content so adding a syndicated post here and there is not going to hurt you especially if you do the above as well.

If you're getting syndicated guest post from us, that's actually a notch better than the ones picked up from article directories because our distribution is *very* limited. 3,000+ people may sound like a lot but I can guarantee not every single person will publish it.

✓ Some just don't open their emails and miss out ☺ see, there are rewards for opening our emails.
✓ Sometimes the guest post doesn't fit their blog topic. Happens a lot and it's OK.
✓ Sometimes people just get too busy.

Bottom line, instead of finding our guest post on 10,000 other blogs online you might find it on only a handful of sites. That hardly qualifies for the duplicate content axe.

As I said earlier, I'm not an SEO guru. Never have, never will and that's not what I do, this is what I know but you don't have to take my word for it. Here are three resources and articles that might hopefully help you clarify the issue.

Lynette Chandler

BlogEnergizer.com

Did Google's Panda Update Kill PLR? By Melissa Ingold.
The focus here is PLR but the basic principles remain the same. [Read/Watch it here.](#)

Reprinting Articles - 10 Smart Strategies to Sidestep the Duplicate Content Debate by Wendy Maki
The popularity of writing articles to market everything and anything online has never been greater -- and shows no sign of slowing down anytime soon.

Some article marketers throw caution to the wind and blast their articles out to hundreds of article directory sites using article submission software. Other article marketers manually submit articles to just one or a few article directory sites out of fear of triggering search engine duplicate content filters. The majority of article marketers fall somewhere in between.

As article marketers and SEO (Search Engine Optimization) experts debate the merit of submitting articles to multiple article directories, webmasters continue to pick up re-printable articles and content for use on their sites. These free reprint articles give webmasters the opportunity to keep their sites fresh and provide their visitors with quality content.

The paradox of article marketing is that this viral spread of articles through the process of making them available for free reprinting is precisely the objective of most article marketers.

Certainly, for standard article directories that lack customization and use identical content management systems, and for those sites created using automatically scraped content, the devaluing of duplicate content by search engines can be a genuine concern.

Smart webmasters, however, who use reprint content recognize that SERPS (Search Engine Results Pages) rank pages, not articles. With that in mind, here are 10 smart strategies savvy webmasters can adopt when using free reprint articles to create a win-win for everyone.

Reprint Strategy #1: Be selective and choose quality articles for reprinting.

Become familiar with authors who produce quality content. Avoid PLR (Private Label Rights) articles submitted by multiple authors, with or without rewriting. Also, avoid articles produced by article spinner software that generates multiple variations of a single article.

Behind the Page -- Customizing Reprint Content

Having selected appropriate quality content, webmasters can move on to make changes behind the scenes, in the source code of the page the article will appear on. Taking charge of the content of the metatags of the page can help to make the presentation of the article unique.

Reprint Strategy #2: Change up the keywords listed in the keyword metatag.

Reduce or increase the number of keywords used, or select different, relevant keywords to highlight.

Reprint Strategy #3: Use a unique page title.

Do not use either the page title used by the article directory or the article's title as the title for the page where the article is to be reprinted.

Giving the article page a distinctive title gives the page a chance to stand out on those SERPS that display the page title as the heading for the search result. More importantly, using a different title will help the page to appear unique rather than as yet another reprint.

Reprint Strategy #4: Write a custom description for the page.

Avoid using either the summary provided by the author or the first sentences of the article for the page meta-description. Like the article title, using the existing summary simply announces that the article is reprinted content. Writing a new description for the page provides added control over the keywords the page competes to rank for. Also, for the search engines that use the page description in their SERPS, the new description can be written to persuade searchers to click to the article page.

On the Page -- Custom Reprint Content Presentation

Smart webmasters go farther and customize the presentation of the reprint article on the page by adopting style and layout tactics used by print magazines for decades.

Strategy #5: Write an original introduction or summary to place before the article on the page.

Not only can an original introductory text box lure a reader into the article, just as in print publications, it can also provide another opportunity to control the specific keywords that the article page targets, partly by pushing the reprinted article farther down the page.

Strategy #6: Add original page headlines and/or subheads.

Webmasters can add original headlines and sub-headings to direct the visitor's eye path and experience on the article page and to control on-page keyword targeting.

Strategy #7: Use call-outs.

Do as print magazines and newspapers do, and pick out a memorable or intriguing quote from the article itself. Copy that quote into a text box in a larger font to emphasize it. This can be a powerful tactic both to draw readers into the article and to emphasize target keywords.

Strategy #8: Add sidebars with short fillers of original content.

Like print magazines, webmasters can use this technique to add value to the reader experience by adding tips, short lists, product information, quick statistics, or any other relevant information. It is also another opportunity to add keywords.

Strategy #9: Interrupt articles, breaking them up into sections.

Add text boxes with related content or relevant advertising part way into the article. Print magazines regularly use this "continued on" technique. On a web page, such text blocks can break up a single page into sections. The can provide the opportunity to highlight other information or advertising while providing yet another opportunity to target desired keywords.

Strategy #10: Add related content below the article.

Added content could be as simple as a short list of links to related pages or articles. It can be visitor comments. It can also be a spotlight on a relevant product. Anything that follows naturally from the content of the article and adds value to the visitor is a good candidate. This kind of material can lead visitors to the next destination and provides even more keyword content for search engine optimization.

Winning the Reprint Game

Putting a bit of effort into customizing the presentation of reprinted articles multiplies the benefit of using them and creates a win for everyone. The author/article marketer wins when the article is picked up by a webmaster who presents the article effectively to readers and

search engines. The article directory wins when their crediting link is found on a well-presented page. The webmaster who reprints the article wins by offering quality content to visitors and by using articles for more effective SEO.

Finally, the visitor wins by finding quality content presented in a meaningful way. Even if a visitor discovers that they have encountered the article before, on another website, the custom elements of the presentation can still provide new value to their surfing experience.

Duplicate Content or Syndication? Article Submission Myth Unveiled by Simon Deels

First of all to set you on the right path with regards to the question "IS SEO DEAD?" No, it's not and not by a long shot. But the way search engines act and index a website have changed and to cope with it all, internet marketers have to adapt but stay true to their gut and work hard mixing old with new techniques in an intelligent way for prosperous rankings.

But many things have changed and I will be writing on many of the new advances and changes so you can mold your online marketing strategy accordingly for better rankings. The biggest hit in search engines that webmasters had to take was after the Google Panda update which dealt a big blow to every webmaster, dropping page 1 rankings to 3-30th page. For these marketers, who since the dawn of their SEO careers have created genuine content, pay good writers good money for it and now have stopped doing so anymore because many so-called experts believe or make you believe that this is because of submitting your articles to various article submission directories which create duplicate content hence hitting the site with a penalty or devaluing their content, which in a nutshell is all about what I will be discussing in detail in this article.

Why and how article submission can help your website

Submitting your website to Article Directories was and still is one of the biggest arsenals in your marketing strategy. It's the best known link bait, getting blog and website owners to put your resourceful article on their site, ending up creating good related links from those websites and contextual links from the article site where it was published, making links which help your website increase its search ranking for the targeted keywords you focused on. Also sending genuine traffic to the links you provide in the author section which may eventually convert them into sales or sign ups or whatever you are targeting for.

The Scary "Google Panda" Updates

The scary Google Panda update was created by and named after Nanveet Panda who is a Google engineer who had an idea on how to make the search engines deliver better results in the SERPS to the end user filtering out advertisement focused websites and benefiting genuine user interest websites in Google's new search engine algorithm.

The Panda update solely focuses on bounce rates, website speed, and social activity and is primarily concerned with the content of a website and how the user interacts with it.

But how can a website that has not seen any traffic, soar in rankings and work its way to the top? So here the old SEO methods do work out coupled with good site structure, web design & content. However, when they reach to the point where they start getting traffic the Panda comes in to action, determining whether their website is worthy enough for the general user or not.

If the sole purpose of your website is for example to sell an e-book or it is Made for AdSense (MFA), Panda may just discount your rankings. This is because Google wants to add value to every search query and deliver the best results to the end-user.

So if you are a webmaster who has created a blog focused on a few set of keywords and then start hammering it with content which is fairly custom written, but is so with mistakes or is just created to keep the blog updated and keeping the site unique, you are not fooling anyone and least of all Google.

As the average Google user has become way more internet savvy than in the past and can figure out a Splog (Spammy blog) than a reader-worthy blog, your site will be mired with an exceptionally high bounce rate giving negative signals to the search engine. The Panda update also lets Google identify a Splog by looking at the number of blog posts added which comprise of a certain word count e.g.: 250-300 words. The same applies to articles submitted to article directories with a bare minimum of 500+1 words just to get approved by the directories. So again, marketers are not fooling Google anymore with their lame old SEO article marketing techniques.

The Myth Unveiled

So it comes down the question which is yet to be answered; submitting a custom written article genuinely related and pertaining to your niche to hundreds of article directories on the web will make your article be considered by Google to be duplicate content? The plain and simple answer is definitely no. Various new SEOs who apply to join our Marketing Team discuss this issue when we ask them about the Google Panda update and they point their fingers at Article

Marketing which is fairly false. But to clarify all that, submitting your article to article directories which have a good standing like Ezine and various others does not trigger the Panda to mark your content as a duplicate content or spam. Matt Cutts himself said in a guest appearance in Rand Fishkin's (SEOMoz) Whiteboard Session that getting your article picked up by other websites, shared or submitted to article directories is considered syndication of content just like a headline news syndicated to various news channels. So there you have it, it's totally safe to submit your unique article to multiple article directories as long they are real articles just like the one you are reading right now as well as complying with some guidelines below so let's jump to that.

How to play safe and combat the Panda menace

The Do's

1. Make genuine content: With a good Title, a read-worthy piece of information or idea.

2. Check for grammatical and spelling errors: Proof read your article more than twice or I would say 5 times before you submit your article anywhere. Google has invested a lot in determining whether the article was written out of the blue or time and effort was put into publishing a piece of content that is worthy of syndication.

3. Eye catching titles and headings: Use Titles and headings that keep the interest of your readers and publishers rather than just focusing on a specific keyword you want your website to rank for. Keeping your article to have a far less bounce rate and making it juicy link bait.

4. Recommend links: If you are quoting or posting an idea you got from a website or using a website name for reference, don't be shy to give out a link to them. It helps your content to be genuine and original making the users want to visit the website to explore the suggestions you made in the article. It also helps the on-page optimization about which I will be discussing in my future publication; "Do External links hurt or help your website in search rankings"

The Don'ts

1. Go above the minimum: Don't limit the word count of your article just because it will get approved. Try to convey the message and drive the reader into your content with detailed information on the topic, but not too long either but keeping balance which will make your user to stay rather than jump off detrimentally affecting your article bounce rate.

2. Variety: Write your articles on a variety of topics in your chosen niche. Also keep in mind that your articles length cannot always be within 500 to 550 words as the Panda can figure out an article mill regularly producing a specific amount of words to get articles approved regardless of the topic the writers are writing on.

3. Submit only to known directories: Article directory submissions do work very well as long you publish them to good directories which have natural authority in Google. Please note that this article in no way recommends submitting your article to each and every article site on the internet just to get a link. Avoid directories that are run on generic looking templates or have less or no PageRank. PageRank of article directories or websites is not a factor which carries a lot of weight when it comes to search engine rankings but it gives you an idea how much of the articles posted in that particular article directory are syndicated and whether it's safe to publish your article on that directory.

4. Avoid Keyword Stuffing: The safe limit for a keyword on a page is 2-3%. So keep the limit of your keywords in the articles below 2%; as the page where your article will be published also shows recommended articles or similar articles which may also have similar keywords thereby exceeding the keyword limit of the page which you aimed for in the first place.

Conclusion

Article marketing helps and due to that you still see articles submitted to known directories every day. So if you have just stopped due to a hit by the Panda update, don't. This will seem purely unnatural to the search engine. But make your articles worthy and ask yourself the question whether the content you are about to write will appeal to anyone or not. Your article may either be informative, idealistic or fictional but it should always appeal to your audience.

SEO is far from dead but for those who know how to stand back up when they fall, and the only way to do that is to realize the changes and adapt yourself in the new world of online marketing.

As John F. Kennedy once said "Do Not Pray for Easy Lives. Pray to Be Stronger Men". So stick to your guns, overhaul your marketing strategy to today's times and your website(s) will eventually rank well.

Simon Deels is an Internet Marketer with an experience of more than 13 years in the field of internet marketing and tons of top ranking website under his badge; he is also the Chief Editor and co-founder of King Copywriting which deals in providing quality content writing services including blog posts, press releases, website content, SEO article writing and more; catering to hundreds of website owners every month.

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