

Swipe File:

15 Ways to Promote Offers In Content

If you're an online marketer, then you already know the importance of content marketing. And you're probably already using content to build relationships with your visitors and subscribers, pull in traffic from the search engines and pre-sell products.

Here's the thing...

No matter what kind of article you're writing – such as an optimized article for the search engines or one to build trust with your subscribers – you can use it to promote offers.

You may create an article that's a direct sales pitch. Or you can use a "stealth technique" to indirectly pitch a product.

Either way, articles are one of your most powerful selling tools!

Here then are 15 different types of articles you can use to promote your offers...

1. Making Sales With the Direct Pitch Article

When you think of an article, you probably think of a tips article or "how to" instructional article. Indeed those probably are the most common types of article.

Plenty of prospects wouldn't continue subscribing to a newsletter or reading a blog if every article was a direct sales pitch. And yet if you sprinkle in the occasional direct-pitch article among your content articles, you may enjoy a high conversion rate.

So what does a direct-pitch article look like? It's essentially a mini sales letter, so it includes all the features of an ad. Here's how to do it...

Step #1: Craft an Attention-Getting Title

The title is one of the most important parts of your article because if it doesn't capture your prospect's attention, he won't even both reading the article. And that means you need to put forth a benefit in your title and/or arouse curiosity.

Let's suppose you're pitching an affiliate marketing product. Here are examples of attention-getting titles:

- Seven Reasons Every Marketer Ought to Read [Product Name] (Note: This one works on curiosity.)
- How to Triple Your Income Overnight (This one puts forth a big benefit.)

Step #2: Answer WIIFM?

Once the prospect starts reading your pitch, he's going to be wondering "WIIFM?" (What's in it for me?) And you need to answer that question or your prospect is going to stop reading.

All you have to do is list the benefits of the product.

Examples:

- You'll discover a simple SEO trick that will shoot your articles straight to the top of the search engines!
- You'll find out the secrets of keeping your Sunday school students sitting eagerly on the edge of their seats!

Step #3: Create a Compelling Call to Action

You got your prospects interested in the product. Now you have to call them to action.

If you created a long article with the intent to completely sell the prospect on buying the product, then your call to action should encourage the reader to buy.

Example: "Take out your credit card and click this link..." (with the link leading to an order form).

If your pitch is designed to pre-sell the prospect and you want the sales letter to close them, then your main call to action is to encourage the reader to click through to the sales letter.

Example: "Click here now to find out how you can triple your profits overnight..." (with the link leading to the sales letter).

Tip: For best results, give your prospect a reason to click the link and buy now.

Example: You can offer prospects a bonus product if they purchase the product using your link within 72 hours or so.

2. Drumming Up Interest with a Case Study Article

A case-study works well because it's a form of social proof.

You see your readers don't completely believe marketer's claim. But when they see proof – such as a person just like them who's getting results – it helps to persuade them to purchase the product.

And that's why a case study article is a great pre-selling tool.

A case study is pretty straightforward. Your article details what problem you (or someone else had) and how the product you're promoting helped you to overcome the problem.

You may even offer proof of your results, such as a set of "before" and "after" pictures, screenshots, videos, etc.

Let me give you a few examples:

- You're promoting a general "make money online" product. You find an online marketing beginner and track his results as he goes through the course and applies what he learns. Not only do you talk about the financial impact of his results, you also talk about the emotional impact (e.g. how thrilled he was to wipe out his credit card debt).
- You're promoting a "build muscle" product. You take pictures and measurements of yourself before using the product. Then you use the product for eight weeks (while taking pictures and measurements on a weekly basis). Then you write an article about these results and share your conclusion as to how well the product works.

Tip: Think of your article as a long testimonial for the product, where you include measurable, verifiable proof that the product works.

3. Weaving Offers into "How To" Articles

The "how to" article is one of the most common types of articles. Typically this is where you give your readers step-by-step instructions on how to complete some task or process.

Examples:

- The Quick and Easy Way to Turn Your Clunker Into a Showroom-New Car!

- The Secrets of Getting Grass Stains Out of White Pants
- The Three Easy Steps to Getting Top Rankings in the Search Engines

While there are multiple ways to promote offers in “how to” articles, here are the two most common methods:

1. Weave links into the content. This is where the completion of one of more of your steps requires the use of some sort of product. Naturally you recommend a specific product.

Example #1: Let’s suppose you’re writing an article about how to wash, wax and detail a car. You can include affiliates links for your preferred brand of wax.

Example #2: Your article teaches people how to optimize their articles for the search engines. The first step is to find keywords using a keyword tool, which gives you the perfect opportunity to recommend you’re preferred tool.

2. Provide useful but incomplete information. This strategy works well for information products (like books, ebooks, reports, videos, etc). Here you share some information but it’s not complete. The reader needs to purchase the product in order to get all the details.

Example #1: Your article provides information about how to groom a matted poodle. The article may provide specific instructions for getting out the mats but the reader needs to purchase a grooming video to learn the final steps (how to clip and groom the dog).

Example #2: You’re writing about how to make more money as an affiliate. Your article includes instructions on cloaking links – but it merely tells people what to do, not how to do

it. For full instructions the reader needs to purchase your affiliate marketing ebook.

4. Promoting Offers in a Tips Article

Instead of offering step-by-step instructions, a tips article – just as the name implies – offers a series of tips to help the reader complete a task or process.

Examples:

- Five Tips for More Beautiful Hair
- The Seven “Must Have” Items to Pack for Your Next Trip to Vietnam
- Three Ways to Improve Your Memory

Just like the “how to” article, you can weave your offers right into the content. You can even do this directly, such as by having one of your tips be to purchase a specific product.

Examples:

- Tip #2: Get an Aweber.com account. (For an article on building a mailing list.)
- Tip #7: Join Membernaire.com. (For an article on how to start and run a membership site.)
- Tip #10: Buy a good flea comb. (This is for an article about removing fleas from a kitten. Naturally you’d provide a specific recommendation with an affiliate link.)

Also, just like the how to article, you can provide useful but incomplete information as a way to pre-sell an information product.

This works particularly well for a “tips product” where you can share a handful of the tips and direct the prospect to order the product to get the rest.

Example: You could write an article covering five copywriting tips as a way to pre-sell a product that covers 101 tips for better sales letters.

5. Promoting Products in Interview Articles

If you’re promoting affiliate products, then one way to impress your prospects is to interview the product creator (who presumably is the expert on the topic). Then you can include your affiliate link at the end of the article.

When you think of an interview, you might think of something like “How did you get started doing this?” and other personal questions. However the interview will be much more powerful if you instead focus on asking questions about the niche topic.

Examples:

- Ask a copywriting expert “How do you write high-response headlines?”
- Ask a dog-training expert “What’s the biggest mistake new dog owners make when they’re housetraining a puppy?”
- Ask an ebook marketer his top three secrets for getting so much traffic to his sites.

In short: Ask questions that directly relate to the product you’re promoting.

Writing this type of article is easy – all you have to do is present it in a “question and answer” format. Then include your affiliate link when you promote the product at the end.

The tricky part is to get product creators to agree to the interview. Typically you can increase the chances of them saying yes by:

- ➔ **Making money for them first.** Become an affiliate, show that you can put cash in their pocket and they'll be more likely to entertain your interview requests.
- ➔ **Build a relationship.** Meet product creators at offline seminars, network with them on Twitter, get to know them via private messaging on popular forums, email them. Point is, befriend them first... and securing any JVs (joint ventures) in the future will be easier.
- ➔ **Tell them the benefits.** Whether you're writing to a good friend or someone you've never talked to before, you need to give them a reason to say yes to your request. That is, tell them the benefits.

Here's a short and sweet email template you can use to request interviews. Do note that this particular email works best if the product creator already has some sense of who you are (e.g. you've made sales for him, met him at a conference, etc).

Subject: I'd like to feature you in my next newsletter...

Dear [First Name],

Hi [First Name], it's [your name] here from [your site]. I'm writing to request a short written interview that I can feature in an upcoming newsletter.

In exchange you'll get traffic, sales and new customers, since the goal of the interview is to promote your newest product, [name of product]. And since I have a newsletter list of [number] eager subscribers, you can expect plenty of sales.

All you have to do to get these benefits is answer the five questions below. If you have any comments or concerns, don't hesitate to contact me at [enter contact info].

I appreciate your time! And I look forward to helping you bring in new sales.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Here are the questions:

[Insert Questions]

6. Creating a "Day in the Life" Article

The goal of a case study article is to show what kind of results a typical user gets, while the goal of the interview article is to showcase the product creator's expertise. Now we have another kind of article, the "day in the life" article.

Basically this is an inspiration article that's used to evoke emotion in your prospects. You want them to imagine themselves living the sort of life you describe in the article. Naturally the article recommends a product that will help people achieve the lifestyle.

Let me give you a few examples...

- A Day in the Life of an Internet Millionaire. Here you might talk about what sort of work the person does in a typical day. But you'd also push the emotional and social proof buttons by talking about the person's luxurious lifestyle. At the end of the article you'd recommend an Internet marketing course (preferably one that the millionaire created).

- A Day in the Life of a Personal Trainer. This would be a good story for a fitness or weight loss product. You'd talk about useful information - such as what the trainer eats and what types of exercises she does to keep in shape - but you'd also touch on the emotional hot buttons (and get the reader to identify) by sharing some of the personal struggles of the trainer's clients.
- A Day in the Life of a Work at Home Mom. Here you'd share the mom's tips of how she juggles work and family. At the end you could promote anything from an online marketing product to a time-management product.

7. Pre-Selling With the Product Review Article

I just typed the word "review" into a keyword tool, and it spit out hundreds of results.

Everything from "digital camera reviews" to "Jenny Craig reviews" to "gas grill reviews."

And I bet that right at this moment, someone is searching for reviews in YOUR niche too.

That's why a product review is so powerful.

Not only are people actively seeking out reviews, these people usually tend to be cash-in-hand customers.

In other words, they're red-hot and ready to buy. They just need confirmation from a trusted source that the product they're researching will solve their problems.

That's where your product review article comes in. Inside you tell people what's good about the product, what's bad about the product and why they should (or shouldn't) buy it. If you recommend it, then you drop your affiliate link and make some money.

Here's what a typical product review article might look like:

The Truth About [Product Name]!

Introduction: Here you introduce the product and the intended purpose or benefits. You may also come out and tell people whether you recommend the product or not. However, if you do that, give readers a reason to read your entire article. (For example, "There's one type of person who definitely shouldn't buy this product - you'll find out if you're that kind of a person in just a moment. But first...")

One or two paragraphs: Here you share what's good about the product. If you've used the product and received positive results, share them here.

Another one or two paragraphs: This is where you share the product flaws. And yes, every product has a perceived weakness. This is your chance to bring up the possible objection and possibly handle it.

Example: Let's say a perceived weakness of an ebook about social media marketing is that it doesn't go into very much depth about Twitter. You can mention this as a weakness - and then offer your prospects a free book about Twitter if they buy the product through your link.

Conclusion: Now you give your recommendation and reiterate the benefits. Then provide a call to action so that people click your link and buy the product.

Or, if you don't recommend the product, highlight once more why you wouldn't recommend it. You may recommend an alternative product instead.

8. Comparing – And Recommending – Products

If you just have one product to recommend, then you can pre-sell it using the product review article.

However, if the product you're reviewing has competition from another similar product – or if you want to promote two similar products – then you can use the product comparison article instead.

The general outline is the same as the product review article. Specifically:

- You introduce both products and their intended audience and benefits.
- You list the good points of each product.
- You list the bad points of each product.
- You wrap up by noting whether you recommend one, both or neither of the products.

In some cases you may compare two products in which one of them is a good product and one of them (in your opinion) is awful. In that case recommend the good product and drop your affiliate link. Don't link to the bad product, at least not with an affiliate link (otherwise your product review seems worthless if you're going to try to get people to buy the poor product so you can pocket a commission).

There may be cases where you don't like either product. That's ok too. You can tell your readers why you don't recommend either one... and then offer them an alternative (better) product.

Finally, there are also times when both products are good and you'd recommend both of them. However, if you just outright recommend both of them, your reader is going to be just as confused as before he started reading your comparison article. As such, you need to tell your prospects what type of person should buy the products.

Let's suppose you're comparing two article marketing ebooks... and you recommend both. You might qualify your recommendation like this:

Example:

"If you're just looking for information about how to squeeze the most profits out of your articles, then get [Product A]. If you'd like marketing information plus killer tips on how to actually write compelling articles, then [Product B] is the one for you."

9. Persuading Prospects With the Testimonial Article

You've already discovered that offering social proof is a powerful psychological sales weapon. That's why testimonials work to increase your sales. But in order for the testimonials to be effective, they need to specifically back up your claims.

You see, an enthusiastic testimonial – one that has a lot of exclamation points ☺ – is worthless if it's weak.

Example: You'll see plenty of online marketing ebook testimonials that say something like "Great ebook – a real page turner!! I couldn't put it down!!"

That would be a great testimonial for a Steven King novel. But it's extremely weak for a non-fiction "how to" product testimonial.

Now, you obviously can't write your customer testimonials for them. However you can produce better testimonials by asking specific questions. Instead of merely requesting "feedback and testimonials", you can ask something like "How did this product help you?" Doing so will ensure that you get results-oriented testimonials.

Once you have your testimonials lined up, the next thing you can do is write an article that highlights these testimonials. Essentially what you're doing is creating a direct pitch where you highlight three to five benefits of the product. After you mention a benefit, then you provide a strong testimonial that backs up the claim.

For example, if you're selling membership site software. One of your claims is that it's easy to use. You make the claim and follow up immediately with a testimonial from a non-technical person who talks about just how easy it is to use.

Here then is a template of how this article should look:

Introduction: Introduce the product and hint at the main benefits.

Paragraph 1: Benefit #1

Paragraph 2: A testimonial that proves your claim.

Paragraph 3: Benefit #2

Paragraph 4: A different testimonial backing up your claim.

Paragraph 5: Benefit #3

Paragraph 6: A different testimonial that proves what you said in paragraph 5.

Paragraph 7: Conclusion - reiterate why it's a great product and provide a call to action.

10. Qualifying Prospects With the Question Article

This article type is designed to catch the attention of your most qualified prospects and draw them into the article, all through the use of a question in the title.

Examples:

- Do You Want to Wear Size 4 Jeans?
- Who Else Wants to Learn How to Earn Six Figures Blogging?
- Do You Grind Your Teeth?

Once you have the prospects reading your article, then you go on to talk about how frustrating the problem is. You remind your reader how it feels to have the problem. In other words, you're pushing his or her emotional hot buttons.

Once you've agitated the problem, then your article can go in one of two directions (depending on what you're promoting as well as your own preferences):

- 1. You can provide how to instructions to help the reader solve his problem.** You can weave your offers into the content or provide "useful but incomplete" instructions with a pitch at the end of the article.
- 2. Alternatively you can use the direct-pitch approach** where you introduce a product as the solution to the prospect's problems. Then you list the benefits and include a call to action at the end.

Now let me give you an example of asking a qualifying question in the title and then "agitating" the problem in the introduction.

Note: This example uses a story that the qualified prospect can identify with.

Does Your Dog Steal Food From Your Counters?

Picture it: Thanksgiving 2008. Fifteen hungry guests waiting in the living room. The smell of turkey and all the trimmings fills the air.

My yellow lab, Rover, was apparently hungry that day too. Because right after I pulled the turkey out of the oven, I turned my back. It couldn't have been for more than ten seconds. And when I turned around, the turkey was gone...

11. Engaging Readers With the Quiz Article

If you can get your readers active and engaged in your article, they'll read through to the end. That means you have a good chance on pre-selling them on your offer. And one way to engage your readers is by asking them to take a quiz.

Tip: Another reason that a quiz article can help you pre-sell a product is because it taps into the "foot in the door" persuasion tactic. This tactic works like this...

You first ask someone to do a small task or favor. Once they agree to this smaller task, they are much more likely to agree to do a bigger favor or task.

Taking a quiz is a small task. Once the reader has agreed to do this, they're much more likely to agree to a bigger favor - such as joining a list, clicking on a link or even purchasing a product.

However you're not just listing quiz questions for the sole reason of engaging your readers. Ideally the quiz should be highly relevant to the product you're

selling. And as such you can use the quiz to “lead” your prospects to a solution (i.e. your offer).

For example, a quiz article that’s promoting a weight loss product might include questions like:

- Have you ever lost weight and then gained it back?
- Do you crave sugary foods?
- Do you have problems making time for exercise?

(Plus perhaps another two to seven questions.)

Then you “score” readers and pre-sell them by saying something like:

“If you answered “yes” to three or more questions, then it’s not your fault if you’re overweight! You just haven’t found a diet that fits your lifestyle. Introducing [product name]...” (You then pre-sell the product with a direct pitch and a call to action.)

12. Using the Competing Case Studies Article

Earlier you learned how to write a case study article where you showcase your results (or someone else’s results) with a particular product. Now here’s another idea: Choose two similar products and offer competing case studies. Then you can recommend the product with the best results. Basically this is hybrid article that’s part case study, part product comparison.

Here’s how to do it...

Step #1: Find at least two people to test two products

You want these people to be as representative of your target market as possible. So if you’re targeting middle age single moms who’re 20 pounds overweight, then your testers should fit that category. While one test per product will work, ideally you should have two or more testers per product.

Tip: You can find testers on niche forums, on your mailing list or on a joint venture partner's mailing list or blog. Ideally look for people who are well-known in the forum communities and are an active part of these communities as you want someone who won't just disappear.

To recruit these people, offer them the product for free in exchange for testing it.

Step #2: Set up the test

Each tester should start at the same time and log their results regularly. How long the test runs and how often the testers log their results depends on what you're testing.

Example: If you're testing weight-loss or SEO products, your test may run for six to eight weeks. On the other hand, you may just do a one to three day test for products like "how to juggle" or "how to set up a blog."

Step #3: Share the results

Finally you write an article that describes your testers, what action they took and the results they received. You can also share their general impression of the products and their results. And just as with a product review, you may share the good and bad points of each product.

Then, where applicable, you recommend the product that produced the best results for your testers.

13. Dropping Offers In “Top Ten” Articles

People like lists. In particular, they seem to gravitate towards top ten lists.

If you doubt this is true, just look at how popular “list style” articles are on blogs, forums and in article directories. Or enter the search “top ten” into a keyword tool and you’ll find that people are actively searching for top ten lists such as:

- Top ten Christmas gifts.
- Top ten beaches in the world.
- Top ten movies of all time.
- Top ten books to read.
- Top ten laptops.

And I could go on and on. Just check out WordTracker (or your favorite keyword tool) to uncover dozens of “top ten” lists that people in your niche are searching for.

Now look at those examples I just gave you. Notice how you could create a “top ten” article around all those topics... and in almost all cases you could drop your affiliate link for each product. In other words you’d have ten affiliate links in each list you create.

Example: Your “top ten laptops” article would start with an introduction, then you’d list your top ten laptops (with affiliate links for each of the laptops on your list) and then you’d wrap up the article with a conclusion that reiterates why you think those laptops are the top ten on the market.

In other cases you may not provide a link for each item. Instead you’d provide one affiliate link at the end.

Example: You’d provide one travel site affiliate link for the top ten beaches article.

So what kind of lists can you provide in your niche? As an example, if you're an online marketer, then you might create lists like:

- Top ten affiliate marketing books.
- Top ten software and scripts every marketer needs.
- Top ten seminars every marketer ought to attend.
- Top ten marketing membership sites.

14. Pulling Prospects in With the Worksheet Article

You've already discovered that engaging your readers is a good step towards getting them to pay attention to any pre-selling you do. Yet another way to engage readers is by creating the "worksheet article."

Just as the name implies, you create one or more useful worksheets that your readers can use to help them solve their problems. In most cases you're basically providing "useful but incomplete" solutions.

That is completing the worksheet is a first step in solving the prospect's problem but he won't solve the problem fully unless he also purchases the product you're selling.

Examples:

- You provide a budgeting worksheet to help people understand their debts and how to start reducing this debt. Then you promote a "get out of debt" product.
- You offer a calorie log for your prospects where they have to list everything they ate today so they can add up their total calories. Completing this worksheet is the first step in learning where to cut calories and you offer a diet book that shows them HOW to cut those calories.

Now let me give you a specific (but greatly abbreviated) example. Let's suppose you're teaching people how to write a sales letter. The first step is to profile the target market. You can provide a worksheet that helps readers do exactly that. Your profiling worksheet might look like this (note this is only a partial worksheet for illustration purposes):

Instructions: Picture your one perfect prospect and then fill in the following information about your target market:

Age:

Gender:

Where they live:

Income level:

Education:

Marital status?

Children?

Hobbies:

Where they spend their extra money:

Where they go on vacation:

Their biggest problems:

Their biggest frustrations:

What worries them:

What do they really want?

What kind of TV programs do they watch?

What types of books and magazines do they read?

What types of sites would you find in their online bookmarks?

What classes did they take in college?

(and so on)

At the end of the article, you'd then tell readers that the next step is to list all the benefits and features of the product.

Finally, the last step is to write the sales letter. And in order to successfully complete this last step, your readers need to purchase the copywriting product that you're recommending.

Simple, but very effective.

15. Arousing Interest with the Critique Article

The purpose of the critique article is to help your reader's learn a bit more about a topic and/or polish a certain skill. At the same time you can also pre-sell your readers on purchasing a certain product or service.

Let me give you a few examples:

- You can critique a sales letter to teach copywriters how to write sales copy more effectively. You can critique smaller parts of the letter, such as the order form upsell or the guarantee. In all cases you tell your readers how to make the piece better (by offering a specific example of how, exactly, to strengthen the headline, guarantee or other piece).
- If your market includes web designers, you might critique a website on its design and/or usability.
- You point to videos on YouTube as a means of teaching people how to create better videos.

So where do you get these videos, sites, sales letters and other items to critique?

- 1. You ask for volunteers.** For example, you offer to critique a sales letter in exchange for the author allowing you to post the critique publicly. They'll get free exposure and a free sales-boosting critique out of the deal.
- 2. You create pieces for critique purposes.** In some cases you may decide to just create a piece with mistakes so that you can show people how to make it better. This works best for small items such as a pay per click ad or critiquing a headline.
- 3. You critique others' work.** Finally you can also randomly choose other marketer's work to critique. However you may want to ask for permission before you do this (to avoid hard feelings).

Tip: Here's where you can incorporate a stealth promotion technique. Let's say you're promoting a copywriting product, so you want to critique a sales letter. Don't pick a completely unrelated product like "how to train a dog!" Instead, choose to critique a letter that will interest your prospects, such as another copywriting product or perhaps a marketing product.

What happens is that you get to promote two products. Firstly you directly promote the product that you're pitching at the end of your critique. Secondly you get to quietly promote the product on the site you're critiquing.. IF you send people to the site using your affiliate link! ☺

Conclusion

There you have it – 15 proven ways to make more money with your articles! Let's quickly recap a handful of the ways you just learned how to weave promotions inside of your articles:

- **The direct pitch article:** The straightforward way to let people know the benefits of a product and why they should buy it now.
- **The competing case study article:** You combine the power of social proof with a product comparison to provide a compelling reason to buy a specific product.
- **The "top ten" article:** You can make up to ten recommendations in this one simple article!
- **The "how to" article:** You can drop a link right inside the content by creating a "step" that requires readers to purchase a product in order to complete the step. Brilliant!
- **The testimonial article:** Here you back up each of your claims by presenting a strong testimonial to prove that claim. It works thanks to the power of social proof!

Plus you discovered ten other types of articles you can use to promote your products, services and other offers.

Now I'm betting this report triggered a few ideas about how you can squeeze more profits out your content.

That's why **now is the best time to take action on what you just learned.**

First, spend a few minutes writing down your content ideas. Then, start writing your first article... starting with the direct pitch article. Complete at least one article today, and commit to writing at least one every day for the next couple weeks.

Then **track your results and see which types of articles put the most profit in your pocket!**