

Book Marketing on a Shoestring Budget: Guest Blogging for Success!

With Shelley Hitz,
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About The Expert

Shelley Hitz



Shelley Hitz is an entrepreneur, speaker, author and consultant to individuals, organizations and small businesses who want to multiply their impact through self publishing.

And she teaches from personal experience. Over a two year span, while working full-time, she self published five books, multiple audio CDs, authored two websites that attract thousands of visitors each month, and created multiple products that she sells through her website and at her speaking engagements.

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Introduction

Why You Shouldn't Ignore Guest Blogging as a Marketing Strategy

As an author, you may not be used to thinking of as many different strategies as possible to promote your presence on the web and increase your traffic and subscriber list. However, now's the time to start!

One strategy often overlooked, however, is guest blogging: Yet those who have tried it agree that it can quantum-leap your prominence and popularity within your niche very quickly, bringing rewards all round.

As with most strategies, there is a wrong way and a right way to do things. Simply knowing a few key conventions and principles and following a [simple action plan](#), can turn modest benefits into huge ones with speedy, far-reaching impact on your career.

If you approach guest blogging intelligently, with even the barest minimum of preparation, becoming a guest blogger can provide an increase in:

- Social proof of your expert author status
- Fresh traffic
- Visibility
- Inbound links to your own blog
- Awareness from important authority figures
- Emotional connection and engagement
- Joint Venture opportunities

What guest blogging does for you:

- Allows you to provide value to your online community
- Encourages others to promote you and your guest posts
- Allows you to get to know other key players in your niche
- Build a strong networking base
- Share information
- Let people get to know you

How Can Guest Blogging Affect Your Career as an Author?

Networking is the lifeblood of book marketing online. It's even more effective if you network intelligently, using **a strategy** and **a system**. Planning in advance doesn't mean you can't be genuine and spontaneous; nor does it mean you're selfish if you focus a lot of effort into getting the best results. After all, you'll be reaping the best results for your host, as well as for yourself – and those who read your articles.

You see, that's the real job you perform as a guest Blogger – to create a win-win-win situation all round, for:

- Your host
- Those who read your posts
- You

Guest blogging should be an enjoyable and rewarding activity. It also shouldn't be hard to do, or take too much time!

Setting Yourself Up for Guest Blogging Success

Guest blogging isn't hard, but there are hidden pitfalls you may not discover till you've tripped over them. There are also hidden opportunities to achieve impressively greater results that many people miss. We want to help open your eyes to some of these pitfalls and show you ways to make the most of your guest blogging opportunities.

You'll be able to create a solid strategy that fits into your lifestyle and the time you have at your disposal.

So let's get right to it...

Benefits of Guest Blogging

We've mentioned already: Everybody benefits. Your host has a welcome break. Her readers get to hear a fresh voice. You gain exposure and credibility.

One benefit that is often overlooked: The gratitude factor. Once you've played hero (successfully) to your host, it doesn't matter how far above you she is in the blogging stratosphere: You've breached the inner sanctum and you are now a trusted associate. She has an emotional connection to you – a very positive one.

At the very least, yours will be a name she is not going to forget.

One of the most sure-fire ways to incite this sort of positive result: Reliability and consistency.

And one more factor rarely mentioned. Everyone is busy, and guest bloggers don't grow on trees, so your chances of scoring a hit by offering to write a post on a blog are much higher than if you approached the National Ballet and offered to substitute for the lead dancer.

Deliver what you promise, on time, and you'll quickly be viewed as a guest blogging star!

The Drawbacks and Pitfalls of Guest Blogging

There aren't too many drawbacks to guest blogging, if you do a halfway decent job; but one of them you're no doubt thinking about already – it takes time.

It takes time out of your busy schedule, and it becomes one more deadline – one that isn't flexible, because you've given your word and your blog host is relying on you.

Also, while you're blogging on one site, you're not blogging on your own.

But just remember – guest blogging can be reciprocal. You can invite guest bloggers for your own blog while you're off writing brilliant posts on your niche buddy's site.

And most likely, if you do a good job, the niche expert who you delighted with your guest post will reciprocate by writing one for your blog too.

How to Get Guest Blogging Jobs

You're probably already following authority blogs in your chosen niche, as well as blogs you like because they're entertaining and fun. Perhaps you empathize with the author or share common problems, experiences, lifestyles and goals.

Very often getting a guest spot on a smaller blog can be even more effective than being accepted for a guest spot at a top blog. You may be much more in harmony with both the blog owner and his readers, since you're all in the same boat together and can identify with all the problems and concerns at that level.

Generally, a proven rule of thumb is to approach blogs similar to yours in readership when seeking guest spots – but if you can land a power blog up at the top, go for it!

Don't assume that top niche figures have no interest in less prominent guest bloggers. They're as glad of the break as anyone else.

And if you can serve up something delectable that doesn't directly compete but thrills their subscribers, they'll want you back.

How to Find Blogs that Need Guests

Don't waste time on blogs that are not active. If the last post was written a year ago, and there are exactly two comments for the last six months (both by the owner's mother) it's going to be more pain than gain. Furthermore, it's a sure sign the owner may just be too busy (or too disorganized) to promote it.

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Not only should regular posts be a hallmark of the blog you're considering, but it should have character and be an entity unto itself.

How do you know which blogs will benefit you the most as a guest blogger? There are 3 simple ways to research the best blogs for you and 4 ways to find them. I share all the details with screenshots in my report "[A Step-by-Step Guide to Guest Blogging.](#)"

So, once you find the best blogs in your niche, how do you find out if they need a guest poster?

Many will let you know they need guests.

They'll have a spot in plain sight (often the sidebar) letting you know that guest bloggers are welcome and telling you how to apply.

The best ones also will often have a section with clear guidelines about whether or not:

- Photos are allowed
- Bylines, resource boxes or bio clips are encouraged
- Linking is permitted

They will often also state clearly:

- What topics and types of posts they are looking for
- What article length is preferred
- Guidelines for style

But don't sit there meekly waiting for your favorite blog to follow this formula. You may have to be assertive and proactive about putting the idea in the owner's head. In that case, it's up to you to point out to the owner that you're the solution to her problem!

Here are your clues that a blog may be ripe for a guest writer.

The blog owner is talking up:

1. Going on that cruise to Alaska next month
2. Heading off to an upcoming industry conference
3. Complaining about being overwhelmed with projects
4. Talking about their upcoming surgery
5. Talking about the impending birth of baby number three

In other words, get into the habit of following likely blogs and looking for opportunities – and clues.

The Number One Way to Get a “Yes”

If you're fairly low in the pecking order when it comes to your niche or you've stayed behind the scenes till now, you're going to have to work a little harder to convince people you're their ideal guest. Face it, which would you rather have as your guest of the week: Ex-Beatle Paul McCartney or Joe Smith from Waubashene, sock salesman?

If you're Joe Smith, it's your job to convince the blog owner that you'll be a much more interesting and relevant guest for his readers than Sir Paul. (If it's a blog about socks, you've got it made!)

Write a short, direct email offering to guest post. Your email should tell the blog owner:

- Why you're a good fit for her readers
- Relevant facts about you (emphasis on `relevant')
- Links to samples of your work. These should demonstrate that your "voice", tone, style and interests are consistent with the blogs; not jarringly different

You might also want to:

- Suggest a couple of proposed topics (snappy headlines should be enough to demonstrate the suitability)
- Refer back to a relevant post they've made, letting them know you follow them
- Let them know you're planning to promote the post and how.

But no matter how carefully you plan your proposal letter, your best success will come if you've been a regular reader of the blog. The number one way to get a "yes" is to have contributed valuable comments to the blog over a period of time.

Other Ways to Find Guest Spots

Do your homework. Read blogs in your niche, looking for likely ones to submit a request to. If you're not doing it already, start following your favorite few on a daily basis. I know, this sounds like a lot of work – but if you time yourself reading the daily post on five blogs, you'll discover that in actual fact, it only takes minutes out of your day.

(And you'll most likely have learned something valuable too.)

How to be a Good Guest Blogger

If you've only just discovered the blog you want to guest post for, then research will be your second best aid to success.

Go through back posts, follow up on commenters' Twitter and Facebook links and find out:

- Who reads it?
- Are there multiple comments on most posts?
- What is the skill level of its readers, related to its main focus?
- What are its conventions and idiosyncrasies?
- What is its writing style? What pace does it set?
- What sort of "voice" does it have?

Analyze the prose style of the owner. Does she write with short, punchy sentences or does she use a chatty style, full of adjectives and exclamations? Is she gentle and introspective, or incisive and analytical?

Is she cynical or sarcastic? Is she kind and friendly? Does she focus on the people in her niche or on its technology? Does she use humor or is she serious and pedantic?

What is the subculture of the group she's writing for? What posts get the most comment activity?

Are there any areas the blog owner seems to be weaker in dealing with – areas you could fill, making him look like a hero to his readers?

Do his readers have an obvious need that he hasn't yet managed to meet?

Pay as much attention to the comments as you do to the posts in a blog: That's where the answers to all these questions will lurk, ready for you to mine them like diamonds.

Things Not to Do as a Guest Blogger...

You can use strategy but still keep it real and natural. Don't force things – especially making comments. Never comment for the sake of commenting. Only do so if something strikes you and you can contribute to the discussion.

Other things that are frowned upon:

- Keyword-stuffed articles (they won't feel natural)
- Promoting your own services or products
- Not writing original posts for the blog; using PLR
- Poor research that shows in your writing, and gets challenged and thoroughly whopped (this is not half as much fun for the owner as "challenged and brilliantly proving its point")
- Being late with promised articles
- Ignoring the blog owner's guidelines
- Writing about something completely different than promised because you just didn't feel like doing the research
- Failing to proof-read your posts and having to correct the published post six times
- Submitting uninspired generic posts, when a little research could have spiced your topic up with a juicy fact or two

All of the above can be directly categorized under “bad habits you should never indulge in”.

Part One: Building your Guest Blogging Profile

Becoming a guest blogger is like anything else in life: You can do it in a hit-and-miss fashion and reap minimal results... or you can approach it intelligently, researching your subject and taking the time to acquire the tools, building efficient habits.

Firing off sporadic posts in a hit-and-miss fashion is rather like planning to get rich by winning the lottery: Your odds of success are one in a million, and the returns you do get will be comparatively small.

Recognizing that guest blogging is an art and a skill, and approaching it armed with knowledge and an action plan will automatically vault you into the top segment of guest bloggers. The ones who:

- Are looked for eagerly
- Rarely get turned down
- Always get invited back
- Become a trusted resource and ally
- Become an authority figure in their niche

How Do You Get Guest Blogging Gigs?

If you’ve never done it before, it can be a little scary to “cold-call” on established blogs, begging for work. But let’s face it: Blog owners aren’t going to beat a path to your door begging you to guest blog unless you’re already a cult figure or top expert in your field.

You need to proactively go out there and get the gigs, especially if you’re closer to starting out than in being the Oprah Winfrey of your niche.

If the idea of approaching others and begging for guest blogging spots makes you feel nervous, try this simple exercise. Indulge for a few moments in practicing true empathy and imagine how you would feel if

someone bright, professional and competent offered to give you a break by writing your blog post next Tuesday?

Wouldn't it feel like a tiny vacation? A small but always-present load lifted off your shoulder? What makes you think you're the only person online who says to themselves: "I *really* don't want to write tomorrow's blog post...."

How would you feel, if someone took even one of those daily posts you have to write for your blog off your back? Wouldn't it feel like blissful relief?

To make your job easier, I've developed two Microsoft Word templates that you can use to approach blog owners. You simply edit the information as it relates to you and e-mail it to the blog owners that you have identified in your research.

Personally, I love having templates when writing an e-mail like this. Staring at a blank piece of paper is NO FUN! These templates are included with my report "[A Step-by-Step Guide to Guest Blogging.](#)"

Part Two: Building your Reputation as a Guest Blogging Powerhouse

Your technique and system needs to be streamlined, consistent and efficient in order to make the most of every opportunity – both to benefit your host and your own reputation.

You'll quickly gain a reputation as guest blogger par excellence if you are:

- Reliable
- Consistent
- Professional

These habits aren't the result of superior blogging skills – they're the result of planning and strategy. Get into the habit of following a "checklist" or action plan, and you won't miss opportunities to benefit the readers, the host – or yourself

Why You Should Use a Blogging Plan

There's no point writing a fantastic post only to miss six simple ways to point people back to your sites (thus boosting your web presence and authority) because you were "just concentrating on getting the post done".

Do your research: When you find a blog that seems a likely candidate, pay attention to whether or not they:

- Give their guest posters bylines, bios or resource boxes
- Allow their guest posters a link back to their blog
- Allow do-follow links

And remember – your job is not over and done with when the post is published. That's when you should be kicking into high gear, cross-promoting it on Facebook, Twitter, Stumbleupon, forums, and other social networks you belong to.

How to Follow up like a Pro

Another important trait all great guest bloggers share: They realize their job is only beginning when the blog post is finally published.

Not only do they **promote the post**, they **answer comments** on their guest post. (Ask ahead of time if the blog owner wants you to answer the comments, or prefers to do it themselves.)

Many blog owners will simply give you your own log-in and password to their blog, and expect you to upload your post when ready – fully proofed and checked – yourself.

You'll be able to log in that way also, to answer commenters on your post.

Two Secrets of a Power Blogger

“Where can I come up with material?”

You may be secretly thinking this. You know how hard it is to come up with original posts. However, your host is relying on you for unique, original content.

So where do you find ideas? How does someone like Darren Rowse of Pro Blogger find really valuable topics to write about, day after day after day?

Well, you can bet he plans ahead.

And you can bet he looks for tasty morsels everywhere, whether he’s on the blogging clock or not.

Events trigger ideas. People trigger ideas. Even Tweets trigger ideas.

A great example of someone who has developed a journalistic mindset is Jim Qwilleran, fictional hero of Lillian Jackson Braun’s “The Cat Who” murder mystery novels. The hero is an aging newsman, with a background consisting of years of having to come up with snappy material within absurdly hectic deadlines. Even though he’s retired and writes a laid-back column for the local paper, just for fun, he looks at everyone he meets as a potential story. And usually it’s the smallest incidents or inconsistencies that make the hairs on his luxuriant moustache quiver, alerting him to juicy story fodder.

Whether you like murder mysteries or not, the “Cat Who” books are worth reading just to hitch a ride along on Qwilleran’s mindset.

You see, your guest posts have to be not just professional and competent, but juicy too. They should be a treat for both your host and his readers. Reading your guest post should feel like a really satisfying way to spend their valuable time.

What you post is as important as how often you post.

What to Do to Trigger Good Guest Blogging Habits

One exercise you can always do: Make a list of the type of things you can blog about for your niche.

To get your ideas flowing, here are some generic suggestions:

- Genuinely valuable, unique information that hasn't been shared before
- "How to" tutorials – especially if you can show a simpler and easier method than the experts
- Bolstering your host's weaknesses to make her appear strong
- Sheer entertainment or humor, if that's in the blog's subculture
- Current events related to the host blog's main topic
- Hot-off-the-press updates in your industry
- Seasonal themes

Scheduling your Guest Posts

Don't fire off an offer to guest blog at every good blog you come across. Instead, plan to select and approach them on your designated schedule. (Don't panic – this can be as little as one or two blogs – it's entirely your call!)

If you research twelve likely blogs in one morning, slot them into your blogging calendar spread out over the number of weeks it needs to take to fit them into your plan. You can use the [excel spreadsheet I formatted](#) to keep you organized or one of your own.

Decide on the number of guest posts you'd like to write per week before you ever begin your search. Even one guest post per week is a wonderful tool, if you are consistent and regular about that goal.

Part Three: How to Write Powerful Posts

Powerful posts hook people into a conversation; plunge them into dilemmas; arouse their sympathies and emotions. They put you in the middle of the action; carry you away from the world; make you think. They trigger change, provide blinding revelations, make people laugh and feel good again. Powerful posts make people angry, destroy schedules and divert people from their purpose.

In short, powerful posts engage the reader. Reading them becomes an instant priority. They're irresistible.

How to Create Powerful Post Structure

A lot of the above can be created through your writing methods. You don't have to be brilliant. You don't have to have a degree in literature or journalism. You just have to observe the rules of putting together a great post. You need:

1. **A short, punchy headline** that is irresistible.
2. **A first sentence that "hooks" the reader**
3. **A great resource box** or bio, no more than two lines, tops
4. **Professional caliber, original photos**
5. **A Thumbnail photo of you, resized ready to fit their specs**
6. **Breaks in the text.** Short paragraphs, numbered lists, bullet points and subheads all help people to read posts quickly and easily.

Remember that online readers **scan** first – until they find something that "grabs" their attention.

Photos aren't always necessary – but many blog owners love it when you provide quality photos they can use to enhance your article.

Pay attention also to posts that get the most comments. Whether they're positive or negative, a high degree of interaction and activity is a sign you're doing something right!

Is it really Worth it?

Investing the time in guest blogging will become ridiculously easy, if you follow a structure. It will soon become second nature and – like Jim Qwilleran – you'll find yourself excited about ideas that will suit your favorite blogs everywhere.

Mimic the blog you're writing for, and you can't go wrong.

Make sure you proof-read carefully. And stick to a deadline, keeping their commitment.

Remember – even one guest post a week consistently (spread across many blogs or a favored few) can add up to an awful lot of respect and authority as the months tick by.

Part Five: Personalizing your Guest Blogging Strategy

Now it's time for you to think about your own guest blogging strategy.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What are your goals; to gain web visibility or expert status?
- Simply to share knowledge that will help people in your niche?
- Boost your reputation?
- Build up your network?
- Find Joint Venture partners?
- Who are you writing for?
- Are you focusing on blogs strictly within that specific niche?
- Will you aim for the top, or start out with more modest blogs that are perhaps more in line with yours?

How Much Time Are You Going to Commit?

How are you planning to handle your guest blogging activities? Will you dedicate one day a week? One post a week? Develop a policy of never turning anyone down? Be very choosy, and focus on only a few blogs?

How Will You Know Guest Blogging is Worth the Effort?

It would be irresponsible to consider this strategy without also considering the return on the time you're investing. What would "success" look like to you? Would it be making new friends? Getting loads of comments? Becoming one of the "in" crowd? Being approached by an industry figure you respect as a potential Joint Venture partner?

Guest blogging can help build your self-discipline, build your confidence as a writer and open doors you may not yet dream about

Combining simple, solid structure – your plan – with great opportunities can help cement your reputation in a very enjoyable way.

Here's to finding your perfect guest-blogging strategy!

To your success,



Shelley Hitz
Self-Publishing-Coach.com

p.s. To take your guest blogging to the next level, grab your copy of, "[A Step-by-Step to Guest Blogging](#)" – Plan Your Virtual Book Tour!

“A Step-by-Step Guide to Guest Blogging”



You're going to learn:

- ✔ **10 Simple Steps to Successful Guest Blogging.** (p.5-8)
- ✔ How to **Choose the Best Blog Hosts – 3 Techniques for Researching the Highest Quality Blogs to Include in Your Tour.** (p.9-12)
- ✔ **4 Effective Methods and 8 Different Resources to Find Blogs** for Your Guest Posts. (p.13-17)
- ✔ **A 6-Step Guest Blog Post Checklist** to Make Sure You “Cover All Your Bases.” (p.18)
- ✔ **Byline Tips and 7 Byline Templates** to Ensure You Get the Click to Your Site. (p.19-20)
- ✔ **Two Letter Templates That You Can Copy-and-Paste** into an E-mail to Send Out Compelling Requests to Blog Owners That Help You Get a “Yes” Response. (p.20-23)
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