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Put Your Firm's Content in Places Your Clients Already Trust

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Many A/E/C firms put substantive effort into creating insightful blog posts, videos, emails, social media posts, and other content. What they may miss out on is finding the best ways to put that content directly in front of the potential clients with whom it would resonate.

Conventional content marketing relies on strategic distribution via diverse (yet appropriate for the message) channels.

Given the volume of content available, it's hard to rise to the top of online searches. Email distribution is ideally limited to organic lists comprised of people with whom you have some existing connection, lest you be banished to spam folders. But given the volume of email, it's possible (sadly, even likely) your prospects may just ignore your messages. Social media platforms are so crowded with new information (some of it paid placements) that your message can be drowned out.

Why Go Through the Trouble of Publishing in Third-Party Media?

Wouldn't it be better to put your message in the places where your ideal clients go when they want to learn about issues that affect them? Those places are their industry or professional niche media—in print and online.

There is a huge variety of these niche publications, most of them unknown to those outside the niche, but quite well-known inside it. For example, if your A/E/C firm wants to reach post-secondary institutions, one way to do so is through *Business Officer*, published by the National Association of College and University Business Officers. If you're not in that field, you may never have heard of it. But anyone in a top leadership role in post-secondary likely reads it thoroughly—either in print or online. They may also access content through the association's social media channels.

These specialty media outlets publish text articles, but increasingly welcome electronic content such as webinars, videos, and infographics. Here are three reasons why it's a good idea for A/E/C firms to publish their content through these media.

1. Add prestige and credibility to your firm's message. Niche publications live or die by the credibility and value of the content they publish, so they set the bar high editorially. With high-quality content available to them, and because the content is being published by organizations or industries with which they are involved, readers are conditioned to have more respect for content that appears in their professional media.

So, when an article authored by a member of the A/E/C firm is published in a recognized periodical, it gives that information (and your firm) credibility.



STORY BEHIND THE PICTURE | Over 300 white “sunbrellas” were installed on the ceiling of GALLEGOS United Headquarters to brighten up the space and conceal fire protection.

GALLEGOS United Headquarters, Huntington Beach, CA. Lorcan O’Herhily Architects. ©Lawrence Anderson Photography, Inc., lawrenceanderson.net.

Sure, your firm’s marketing strategy should include increasing traffic on its own blog and other platforms, but getting content published in a recognized publication first ultimately can help build credibility for your message.

2. Sidestep Google. It can be hard to get your article noticed by Google. This is partly because of the immense competition for top slots in search results, and partly because of the algorithms that search engines like Google use. It helps to have a more reliable way to get your content in front of the right eyeballs—have it published in media where your ideal clients already are looking.

3. Meet your firm’s “top of funnel” prospecting needs. Niche media publications work hard to become indispensable to senior-level professionals within their fields. With highly specific circulation, these media are a wonderful way for you to bring your firm to the attention of people who haven’t heard of you yet—helping meet your firm’s need to consistently grow awareness among prospective clients. And it’s not just the print issue—save for only a few, niche media have active and robust websites and presences on social media, which also helps your message reach a wider audience.

You can then demonstrate the value of following your firm’s social media or blog, helping you strengthen that relationship with your prospective clients who want to engage with you in those ways.

Getting Published: It’s Far From “Hit or Miss”

Getting published is a black hole for many A/E/C firms. Their experts may have poured heart and soul into writing an article, sent it off with the pride and anxiety of shipping a first-born to college ... and then never heard back from the editor.

It’s much better to take a leaf from the book of freelance writers and get the editor’s buy-in before sitting down to write the article itself. Do this by means of a “query letter,” which is like a mini-proposal for the article that is sent to the editor first. A good query contains four points.

- **What’s your topic?** Clearly and succinctly describe your proposed topic—three or four sentences are all you need.
- **Why would the readers of this particular publication need to know about that topic?** Describe why it’s relevant, and note that all editors want content developed just for them, so show why your topic matters to the niche of the publication.

- **What will your article cover?** Provide an outline, with three or four bullet points, one line each.
- **What’s the author’s credibility?** Editors want to be sure they have authors with sound qualifications, so describe the author’s professional, academic, and industry qualifications.

Another way to get published in niche media is through working with their writers, either on the magazine’s staff or freelancers. Writers are always looking for recognized subject-matter experts to interview.

Two of the best resources on this are “A Reporter’s POV: How Marketers Miss the Mark With the Media,” in *Marketer’s* June 2017 issue, and “10 Steps to an Award-Winning Public Relations Program,” in the April 2016 issue.

Whether you’re promoting one of your firm’s professionals as an expert by proposing an article, or making your firm’s experts available for interviews with writers, it pays to develop a sound relationship with the niche publications’ editors.

The bottom line is, niche media should be a prime focus of your content marketing efforts if you want to be seen where your clients are investing their time. ■