

Resources for Nancy Direct Program

Establishing Your Expertise Via the Internet **With Julia Schopick** 4/24/07

1. Q: How did you first become interested in the Internet?

- I first used the Internet to do research for my husband, who was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor in 1990. Through my research, we found both holistic and conventional treatments that helped him to live another 15 years!
- After I became more adept at researching, I did it for my clients – to find them more PR opportunities.

2. Q: When did you start to use the web for marketing?

A: To market HonestMedicine.com. (I found leaving blog comments and conducting audio interviews to be very effective.)

3. Q: Tell about the difference between a website and a blog, and why a blog provides the best opportunity for promoting one's expertise.

- They are very similar, except that, with a **BLOG**, you can leave comments, through which you can showcase your own expertise.
- It **doesn't matter** whether you yourself have a regular website or a blog, as long as you **showcase your expertise** effectively on it.

4. Q: Why do you believe that public relations -- both "real world" and online PR -- is the best method for marketing an expert?

A: Traditionally, PR gives the professional – the expert -- the **best opportunity to showcase his/her expertise, through "real world" promotional opportunities:**

- Speaking engagements
- Articles both by and about them in publications that will likely be read by their potential clients, patients and customers
- TV and radio appearances

All these promotional methods – which are terrific for getting people known for their expertise – should (as much as possible) be before **your target markets**.

These "real world" methods can be adapted for your "web-based PR" methods.

5. Q: How can you promote your expertise through PR on the web??

A: There are now excellent online ways to do this. Ideally, you will **eventually be interviewed for other people's blogs and websites**, and you will be asked to write articles for other people's blogs and websites, too. But this will not happen until you are better known as an expert.

An **excellent way to get yourself noticed** as an expert is to:

- Leave **intelligent, carefully crafted comments** on other people's blogs
- **Interview other experts** for your own blog.

Audio interviews on your own website are great PR vehicles – if they **sound professional** – and if the **people you interview are also experts!!** It took me a long time before I learned how to conduct professional-sounding interviews, and to edit them to get rid of the “ums.”

6. Q: What's the **first step** to becoming known as an expert on the web?

A: Having an **expert's website or blog**, with a serious, professional look. It must include **professional, publication-worthy articles written by you.**

You will want to link to your own articles in your blog comments. You'll also want to have noteworthy links to resources that others may not know about on your website or blog.

- Your **own articles should contain hyperlinks** to the source articles whenever you mention any. This shows how professional and “expert” you are.
- Your site should be **user-friendly**. If people can't navigate the site easily, they won't bother with it.

7. Q: Can one person have as successful an Expert's Website or Blog as a large organization?

A: Absolutely. Often, a large organization – probably because there are so many people who must approve all the information that ends up being posted – **will not always have the level of information contained on a site owned and maintained by one or two experts!**

I wrote an article about this, which can be found on www.webbasedpr.com.

8. Q: How do you decide which blogs to leave comments on?

A: Although I won't spend lots of time on this topic here, I'll mention again that first you must know **who your target market** is. Your target markets are the people you want to reach with your PR (both online and real world PR). (Please see my article on target markets on www.webbasedpr.com)

9. Q: After deciding WHO your target market is, what's your first step to finding the best blogs to leave comments on?

A: **RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH** – to find the blogs that discuss the topics you want to comment on. (Use Google's blogsearch feature, as well as Technorati.)

If you're not proficient at web researching, you might want to hire me (or another professional like me), to help you. If you are not a really good online researcher, then you may not

want to put your time and energy into that. It's good to know there are people out there to help you with the researching and the writing.

I also consult with experts to teach them how to do online research. It's really fun.

10: Q: Give an example of how you research for the right blogs to leave comments on.

A: For instance, in my case, with HonestMedicine, I started out by researching the terms "pharmaceutical," "cancer," "chemotherapy" and "alternative medicine," because I had strong feelings and expertise on these (often controversial) topics.

When some news event occurs where I think I have something important to add, I search for the blogs that are discussing the topic. For instance, during **Breast Cancer Awareness Month**, I left approximately 50 comments on blogs that were encouraging people to buy "**Pink Products.**" But, in my comments, I gave a *different perspective*, by pointing out that all of these pink products were **making MONEY for the "pink" companies** that were also helping to raise money for cancer research. AND, in my comments, I linked to articles that were on my blog.

In my comments, I always try to be very **polite, and very informative.**

I would be **happy to send you links** to some of the sites where I have left comments.

11: Q: Please give some examples of topics other experts might research for the purpose of leaving comments.

- A nutritionist would probably want to comment on the controversy over trans fats that is going on now. Just go to a blog search engine and search under "trans fats."
- A veterinarian might want to comment on the latest scandal about dangerous toxins in some pet foods.
- A psychotherapist might want to comment on the Virginia Tech slayings.
- An adoption attorney might want to comment on Madonna's recent controversial adoption, which is still in the news.
- An immigration lawyer might well want to comment on any of the many discussions of illegal aliens on the blogs. (e.g., the recent Bill O'Reilly/Geraldo Rivera blowout)

Obviously, by the time some people read this, the above topics will no longer be in the news. You will, of course, want to find other topics that are in the news to comment on!

12: Q: After you've pinpointed lots of blogs for your comments, how do you decide which blog or blogs to actually leave your comments on?

A: Spend time on these blogs. See which ones you're impressed with. Search in the search boxes of the blogs themselves to see if they are writing about other topics you're an expert on. Research their past postings to see which topics they address.

BOOKMARK the best sites, and spend time on them every day. See what they are saying, and which topics they are covering.

Before I started leaving comments on other people's blogs, I spent hours and days getting a sense of who the **"movers and shakers" are in the medical advocacy and alternative medicine fields**. Now, after leaving comments on some of their blogs, I am honored that several of them link to my site.

Ditto with my clients' sites.

But, these aren't the only sites you'll want to know about you as an expert. As a matter of fact, **your primary target market – people who will use your services – are an entirely different bunch**. Again, read my article on target markets on www.webbasedpr.com.

13: Q: Once you decide on a blog or blogs to leave comments on, how do you leave comments that other people will read, and that will make you known as an expert?

A. This is a huge -- and important -- topic. I will give several examples here of comments I posted that had very different, but equally great, results. I am **happy to provide actual links for people**, if they would like them, so they can see the actual postings, along with my comments. My email address is JuliaS1573@aol.com.

- **Breast Cancer Awareness Month** – my "Think Pink" comments campaign
- **Chicago Tribune health columnist Julie Deardorff's blog posting about Googling** – My comment led to my being quoted in a *Chicago Tribune* article that was then syndicated nationwide – all because of one comment I left on this journalist's wonderful blog!
- **The recent antioxidant meta-analysis controversy** – I left several comments on this topic
- **My Huffington Post comment**
- **Dr. Mercola's blog** – I've left a few comments on this very popular blog. In my comments, I linked to my 3-part HonestMedicine article, "The JAMA Controversy."

14. Q: How should a person actually choose the topics to comment about?

A: Pick a point you want to write about -- that means a great deal to you. The **hotter, or more newsworthy, the topic the better**.

Find the blogs that are discussing that topic.

Always **be polite**. Never be insulting, even (especially) if you don't agree.

Find sites you feel comfortable with and that seem interesting. Remember, the visitors to these sites are the people who will be visiting your site and with whom you will be in conversation. **So don't leave comments on sites if there is anything about the site you are NOT comfortable with.** For instance, some pornographic sites will occasionally contain intelligent postings about topics you are interested in. **Do NOT leave comments on these blogs.**

I do NOT believe the old adage that "there isn't any bad PR." Trust me: There IS bad PR. So don't leave comments on the wrong sites. Be careful.

15: Q: How do I actually WRITE the comments?

A. This is also a big topic and right at the heart of the discussion. It's a topic we might want to have another conference on, if you'd like. Suffice it to say that it's important to work hard on your comments. Know that, once you have written the "perfect" comment, you **can leave individualized variations on other sites that are discussing the same issue.**

Also, keep in mind that these comments will often **stay online for months and years.** So compose them carefully and look them over before hitting "send."

Be **clear, concise, to the point, and as articulate and eloquent** as you can possibly be. If you don't think you're a good writer, do NOT leave comments without getting input from someone who knows how to write good comments.

REMEMBER: Again, both the good news and the bad news is that your comments may stay up for years.

- **MOST IMPORTANT:** Whenever possible, put a link to an important article on your own site. (EX: My 3-part "JAMA Controversy" article on www.honestmedicine.com.)
- Be specific as to WHAT information (article) people should access on your site, and have a link to that article.
- NEVER leave short, meaningless comments, ending with "for more information, go to my site." This is spam.
- In your signature line, always leave your blog or website's URL.

16. Q: What are a few the greatest things about the "blog comment" approach to PR?

A: (1) You can leave a comment and **see it in print almost immediately.** Sometimes comments have to "await moderation," but the results can be seen much more quickly than when you write an article for a newspaper or magazine. With **print articles, you sometimes have to wait weeks or months before they are published.**

(2) You can **recycle these comments** and use individualized versions of them on lots of other blogs.

3) You can also recycle them by **turning them into articles for your own (and for other people's) blogs or websites.**

4) Again, these comments sometimes stay online forever, which is why you must be very careful about what you say and how you say it!!

17. Q: What is SPAM?

A: Spamming is something you **NEVER** want to be accused of doing. It is leaving comments that are just excuses for telling people about yourself and your website. Site owners and search engines hate spammers. Site visitors hate them, too. Rather than spamming, write nothing.

18. Q: Why do you feel that audio interviews on your own site are excellent ways for promoting your own expertise?

A: First, I wouldn't recommend interviewing other experts if you **aren't a good interviewer.** And be careful to make sure that **the experts you'll be interviewing will be articulate.** (You will want to pre-interview them, of course.) But online interviews that you conduct will give you an opportunity for **to be known as an expert by the level of guest you can get, and the quality of the questions you ask.** Also, in your interview, you get to showcase your ability to **grasp your interviewee's subject.**

- EX: My interviews on www.honestmedicine.com: Dr. Elizabeth Lipski and Dr. James Beranger (See under "audio interviews/podcasts.")
- EX: For www.webbasedpr.com, I'll be interviewing people who are experts in blogging, marketing and podcasting.

19. Q: How do you promote your own online (audio) interviews?

A: **By leaving comments about the topic of the online interview on other people's blogs.** For instance, for one client's site, I interviewed a **top online environmental expert.** It was a fantastic interview. I promoted it by going on other people's blogs where they were talking about this very famous website, and I left comments about the interview that was now posted on my client's site. I did this in a way that was not spamming – and the results have been terrific.

20: Q: Tell about your services so our listeners can know more:

A: It's important to say, first of all, that I don't do a cookie cutter approach. So the answer to this question will vary from one client to the next.

I help other experts and professionals to get known by their target markets, through both "real world" and online methods. I get them speaking engagements, articles, blog comments, audio interviews, and – in some cases – radio and TV appearances. (For some clients, we concentrate on one area only; for others, we do a combination approach.)

- For clients for my WebBasedPR consulting business, I first help them to **analyze their website or blog** to make sure it **showcases their knowledge of their topic AND their OWN expertise**.
- I also **analyze their marketing** – both online and “real world” -- to make sure they are coming across well as experts. If they aren’t, we decide how they can improve their websites or blogs, and their overall marketing.
- I help them look at **who their target markets** are, and how to reach them with blog comments and audio interviews.
- I help them look at **where they need to go**, and what they need to do to showcase their expertise to their potential clients and customers.

Each client is different and has different needs. Analyzing those needs and how to best fulfill them is one of the things I pride myself on.

21: Q: Books, websites and other resources you recommend?

A: Go to my website, www.webbasedpr.com. Several are listed there.

22. Q: Is it possible to talk with you about whether your services would be a fit?

A: Yes, I give free consultations and am offering a free consult to each person here today – as well as to anyone who reads this interview online.

Please write to me at JuliaS1573@aol.com.

Or call me at 708-848-4788.

Thanks very much!

Julia Schopick

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