



# THE STATE OF **CONTRIBUTED CONTENT**

*Your Guide to Getting Published Online*

presented by  
Influence&CO.

# WHAT QUALITIES ARE PUBLICATIONS LOOKING FOR IN CONTRIBUTORS?

To reap the benefits of contributed content, you have to understand what publications are looking for in submissions. To help guide your efforts, we used our publication relationships to ask more than 150 editors at various industry-specific publications a series of questions about the current state of contributed content. The following report is a culmination of the data we've gathered from our recent Editor Survey. We analyzed the data and pulled four key insights we hope you'll find useful.

\*As with any survey, this data is not absolute. Please remember that these insights are based on self-reported responses from our pre-existing editorial relationships and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the publishing industry as a whole.

## About Influence & Co.

We help companies position key individuals as industry influencers and thought leaders. We focus on creating high-quality content, coming from our clients, that reaches their target audience online. Our clients range from startups to fast-growing companies on the Inc. 5000, as well as Fortune 500 brands.

**86% OF SURVEYED EDITORS  
ARE PLANNING TO INCREASE  
THE AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTED  
CONTENT ON THEIR SITES.**

With the majority of the editors we surveyed planning to increase the amount of contributed content on their sites, brands and industry experts have more opportunities than ever to reach their audiences with thoughtful content. But in an already cluttered online world, pouring more articles into the mix means overstimulated readers have no choice but to filter out the noise.

**That's great news for brands and leaders publishing educational, reader-friendly content. But it presents a huge challenge for those who haven't yet mastered the art of content creation.**

Brands have an increasingly difficult time earning the precious attention of their intended audiences. That's why guest posting can be so great. Pushing out content to external publications can funnel organic and SEO traffic back to your site, increasing your overall brand authority and influence.



# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET PUBLISHED

Publications prefer content from you.

Creating content editors love isn't rocket science.

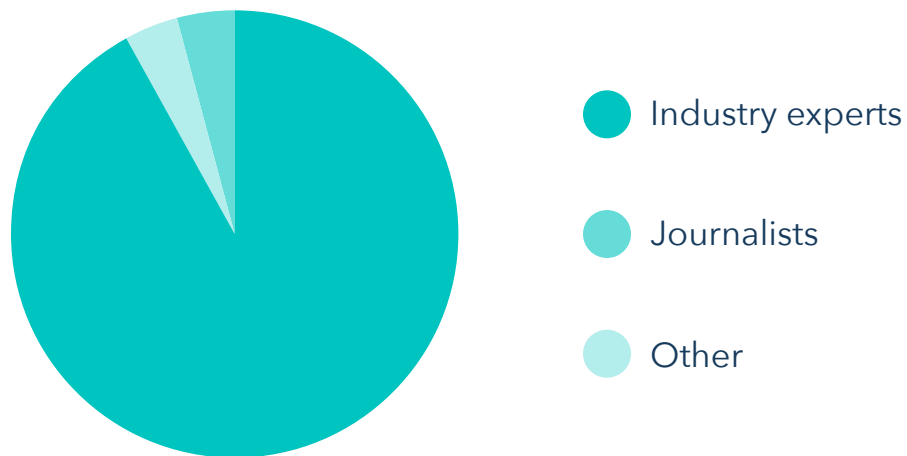
Editors want you to share your knowledge.

You don't have to be a columnist to contribute content.

# PUBLICATIONS PREFER CONTENT FROM YOU.

Based on our survey, 92 percent of editors prefer contributed content from industry experts and leaders over journalists. Editors enjoy supplying their readers with insights from people who can tell engaging, informative stories from the trenches. Furthermore, editors want contributed content from people who can speak the language of their publication. That means all you need to do is write what you know -- while educating the publication's readers and staying in line with its unique voice.

## Which contributor type do you prefer?

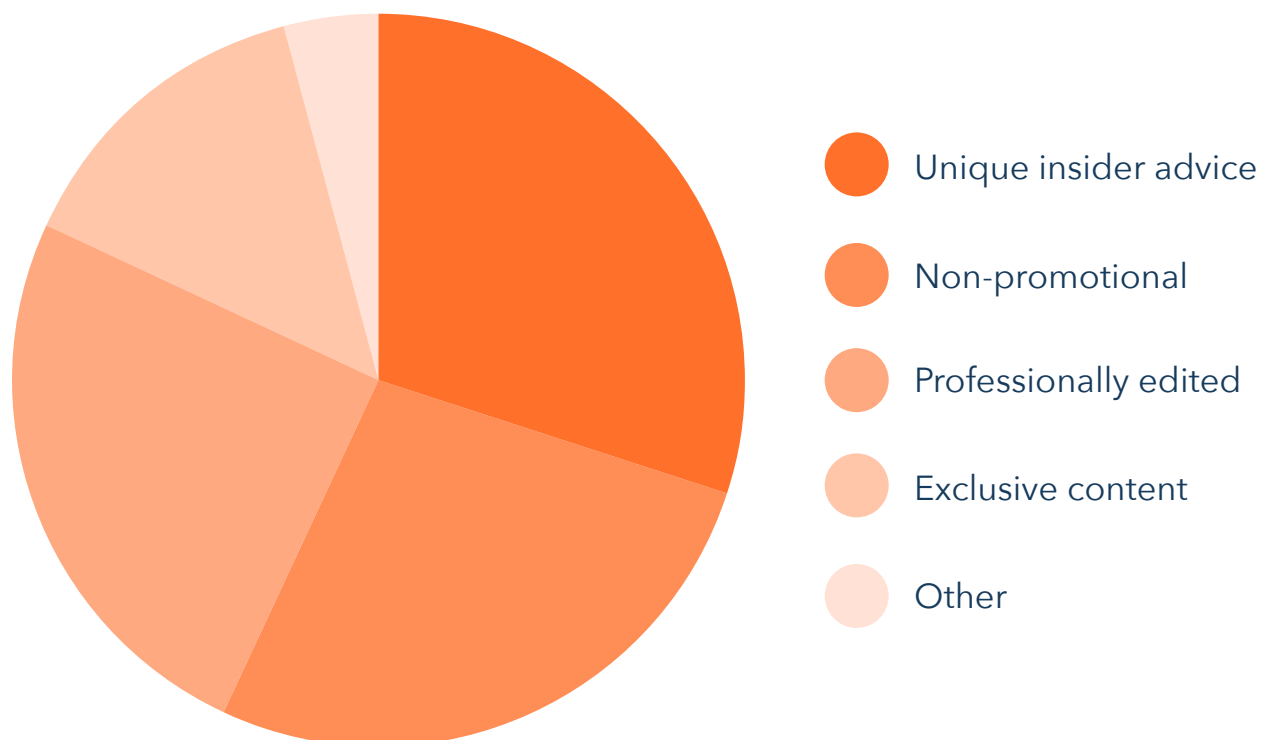


For example, consider our client, Chris Cancialosi. As managing partner at gothamCulture, Chris is an expert in leader and organizational development. With the help of Influence & Co. and his unique expertise, he contributed the article "[3 Traits Leaders Need to Shape a High-Performance Culture](#)" to the online publication [Linked 2 Leadership](#). Since then, it's been retweeted to over 300,000 people and was Linked 2 Leadership's ninth most popular article in 2013.

# CREATING CONTENT EDITORS LOVE ISN'T ROCKET SCIENCE.

Based on our research, most editors have similar ideas of what makes guest content successful. We'll take a look at the attributes that were cited most:

What quality is MOST important to you in contributed content?



# I. The content provides unique insider advice.

Editors look to contributed content to provide insider information or thoughtful commentary from industry experts. As one editor in the insurance industry put it,

“It’s imperative to get direct content and insights from key players in the industry, whether they are peers of our readers or general colleagues.”

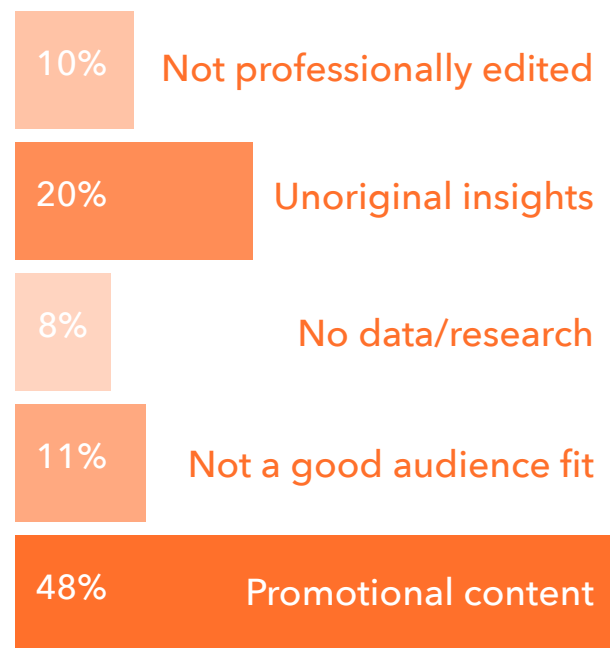
Industry experts have been where readers are -- or where they want to be. By offering their tips and experiences to people with similar goals, these experts can give readers something journalists can't: real-world wisdom.



## 2. The content is non-promotional.

When vetting article submissions, editors are looking for new ideas that will educate or entice their readers, and promotional plugs don't fit the bill. When asked about the most common problem editors see with contributed content, promotional material was chosen more than twice as often as any other problem. Avoid being promotional by committing to authenticity. When writing a contributed article, ask yourself, "What can my audience gain from reading this article?" By focusing on adding value to the reader instead of promoting your business, you'll earn respect from editors and your audience.

Top 5 reasons guest content is declined:




### What is non-promotional content, anyway?

Non-promotional material is unbiased, informative content written with the purpose of educating readers. The information enhances the quality of the article while providing readers with valuable tips or takeaways. In contrast, promotional content openly advertises an author's product or company and often reads like sales copy or a testimonial.

### 3. The article has been professionally edited.

The less work you can give editors, the more willing they'll be to accept your article submission. This means you should always have another person read over your articles and use online plagiarism checkers, such as [Plagiarisma.Net](#) or [Copyscape](#), to avoid duplicated or inauthentic content. Keep your style consistent by adhering to the [AP Stylebook](#) or [Yahoo! Style Guide](#). Check out our [blog post](#) for more tips on establishing an in-house editorial team or surviving without one.



Following these guidelines will give you a better shot at getting your content accepted by an editor. It's also important to note that many publications list their content guidelines on their sites, but not all publications accept contributed content. Read the guidelines carefully, and be sure to follow them closely.



# EDITORS WANT YOU TO EDUCATE READERS.

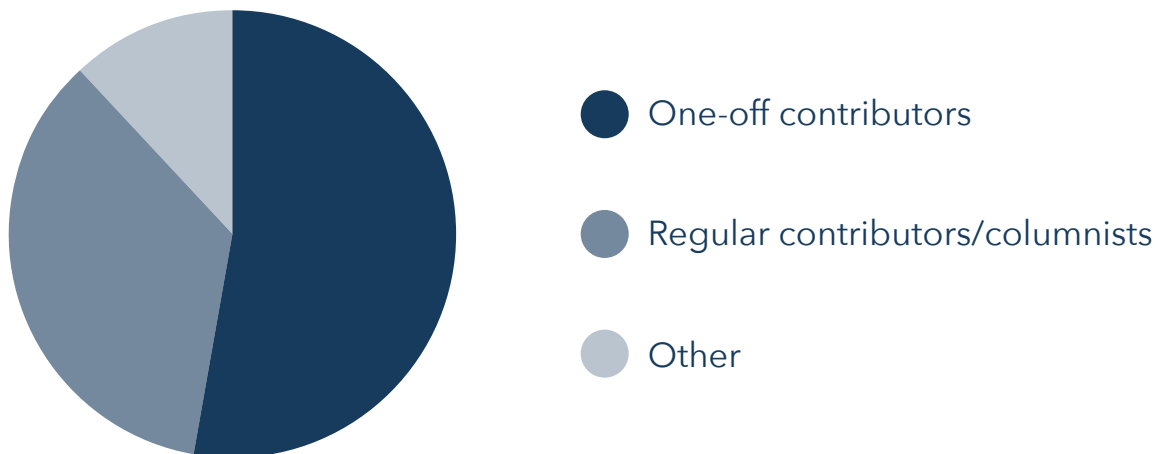
Editors are advocates for their readers, so they want information that's helpful to their audience. When you can provide a teaching moment, both editors and readers will see you as a **trustworthy and credible source for information**. Address common industry problems, and teach readers how to fix them. Share relevant examples from your own company. Become your editor's best friend by making sure your content:

- Avoids promotion.
- Offers explanations, how-to steps, or clear takeaways.
- Uses anecdotes and personal experiences to illustrate main ideas.

# YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A COLUMNIST TO CONTRIBUTE CONTENT.

Although this trend has fluctuated over the past three years, 53 percent of editors we surveyed still prefer one-off contributors, compared to 35 percent of editors who seek regular columnists.

Which submission type do you prefer?



Business and entrepreneurship publications tend to prefer one-off submissions, while marketing and tech publications rely more on regular contributors. These correlations are important to note when pitching to editors; some might not be looking for full-time columnists.

# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Content contribution is only one piece of the content marketing puzzle, but it can be an extremely effective tool. And we've built our company around doing it right. At Influence & Co., we help companies position their key leaders as industry experts. We create bylined articles, using our clients' specific experiences and knowledge, and get them published on sites that reach their target audience. We measure success through article contributions, which has sparked our interest in the future of the contributor model.

Now is the time for brands and their leaders to establish an authoritative online presence. Based on our research, the most desired type of contributed content is non-promotional content from industry experts and business leaders. Standing out among the duds is hard, but it's not impossible to do. We've done the research for you, and now it's your turn to share insights that both editors and readers will crave.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For more information on creating this type of thought leadership content, check out our whitepaper on ["The 8 Steps to Thought Leadership Through Content Marketing."](#) You can also sign up for a [free consultation](#) with a member of our team to get started on your thought leadership strategy today.