

## Video 1: Why is Guest Blogging a Critical Piece of Your Blogging Strategy?

Hi there, I'm Justin with HubSpot Academy.

Guest blogging is an effective tactic that helps your business in more ways than one. Not only does it help you build authority as a thought leader within your industry, but also, and more importantly, it's a powerful way to optimize your website for search when done correctly.

Before moving on, let's define what it means to guest blog. Guest blogging is writing and publishing an article on someone else's website or blog. You may be asking yourself, "Why on earth would you take the time to write a blog post for someone else's site as opposed to your own?"

Here are three reasons why you should consider guest blogging as a key facet to your business's overall content strategy.

First, it expands your audience.

Websites with a helpful blog most likely have a dedicated audience. Guest blogging allows you the opportunity to share your thoughts, ideas, and expertise with this particular audience. Without guest blogging, it could be difficult and would likely require more time and resources to reach this audience.

Second, it increases referral traffic to your website.

The goal should be to educate and inspire with every guest blog post you write. Doing so helps position you as a thought leader in your industry. And if people see you as a trusted advisor, then it's likely they're going to want more, which leads to targeted visitors coming to your website.

For example, take a look at this graph which shows incoming referral traffic to a website page I published in March of 2018. Notice the spike of visitors coming to the page in May 2018. That's because of a guest blog post I wrote that included a link back to my website, which led to over 600 visits from that post in just one month.

And third, which is the most important reason of all in my opinion, it helps your website's search engine optimization.

Guest blogging is a great opportunity to build inbound links back to your website. An inbound link is a link coming from another site to your own website. Inbound links help increase domain authority. Domain authority is a prediction of how well your website will rank on search engines. The higher your domain authority, the more credible your content will appear to search engines. And if search engines think your content is credible, then it's likely you'll see an increase in rankings.

Guest blogging was the main tactic I used to get one of my educational website pillar pages to claim the number one position on Google for broad terms with high monthly search volume like "DIY truck camper" and "truck cap camper."

I did this by writing 24 educational guest blog posts for relevant, high-authoritative websites over the course of 12 months and building links back to that specific page. And if you're curious about the impact, this page received over 16,500 visits from search engines over the past 12 months, and my organic traffic keeps going up and to the right month over month. Just the way I like it.

So if your goal is to get your website ranking on search engines, then you really need to create a guest blogging strategy. Doing so will help you and your business grow better.

## Video 2: How to Create a Guest Blogging Strategy

Before getting started with guest blogging, it's important to outline a strategy to make sure you get the most out of your efforts.

Let's review five things you should consider when creating a guest blogging strategy for your business.

First, your goal should be to write for websites that have higher domain authority. Writing for websites with higher domain authority will ensure you're getting the most value out of your guest blogging efforts from an SEO perspective.

Let's simplify this by splitting the domain authority ranges of sites into three tiers.

Tier one, a website with a domain authority between 0 to 20.

These websites are either fairly new or are not active. Inbound links from these sites won't make that much of an SEO impact on your site. However, don't count these sites out. They're generally going to be the easiest to secure a guest blogging spot. If you do write for a site with lower domain authority, then do it strategically. For example, if the site is new and up and coming, then consider writing a guest post for them as it could pay off in the long run.

Tier two, a website with a domain authority between 21 to 70.

These are the websites you should be aiming for. Websites in this tier generally have a healthy dedicated audience and enough domain authority to justify your content creation time. Keep in mind, the higher the domain authority, the more writing guidelines you'll likely receive and the more difficult it will be to secure a guest blog opportunity.

And tier three, a website with a domain authority above 71.

These websites generally have top-industry blogs. Unless you're already well-known in your space or have a contact already established at the company, then steer clear of these sites in the near term. I'm someone who loves a challenge, but you want to set yourself up for success.

You may be asking yourself, "How can I find the domain authority of a website?" You can do research with Moz's Link Explorer. This tool will tell you the domain authority of any website you plug into it. Plus, you get 10 free queries per month.

Second, syndicate your educational content.

It takes a lot of time to create a valuable piece of educational content. An efficient way to get the most out of your guest blogging efforts is to first create a valuable piece of content on your own website, then repurpose and package it to provide new value and meaning for someone else. And when I say repurpose and package, I don't mean simply copy-and-paste. Use snippets from your original content as a framework to build a new narrative. This approach is how I was able to get my website's digital nomad website pillar page ranking from the fifth to the first page of Google in two months.

Here's a step-by-step approach on how I did it.

To start, I created an educational website pillar page on how to become a digital nomad. A pillar page, which is also known as a content pillar, is a website page that covers a broad topic in depth and is linked to a cluster of related content. The page offers multiple sections of helpful content from job training for digital nomads to working tips for digital nomads. Each section of content has an anchor link at the top of the page, making it easy for people to navigate from section to section. And creating long-form sectioned content like this makes it that much easier to repurpose and package it in the future.

Next, my wife, Ariele, and I repurposed and expanded the content from the pillar page into a practical step-by-step guide on how to live and work from the road. This way, people who enjoy the pillar page's content and want to continue learning and start a transformation of their own have a resource to help them through their journey.

The digital nomad guide is a comprehensive resource that covers every major topic in-depth. It took us about eight weeks to create. Once we finished we knew we needed to build authority to our pillar page through guest blogging and inbound links. Instead of starting from scratch, we repurposed content from our guide to produce a series of guest blog posts. In fact, we were able to create three high-value guest blog posts in one week.

One recommendation when doing this: Consider optimizing your guest blog posts for the keywords you want to rank for.

For example, notice how a couple of our guest posts start with "becoming a digital nomad." This is a high-traffic keyword that we want to rank for on search engines. If you're writing on websites that have higher domain authority than your own site, then it's likely your guest blog post will initially rank higher than your website. That is, until you build the authority on your own site page.

Third, think critically about your link-building efforts.

Inbound links are not created equal. Here's a list of ways to navigate how to get the most out of the links you include in your guest authored content.

To start, link to specific pages on your website.

A page with multiple quality inbound links will rank higher on search engines than one with no links.

If your goal is to get a specific educational page on your website ranking in search engine results, then build links to it.

Next, link to educational content.

I understand that you might want your landing pages to rank on search engines, but using guest blogging as a way to build authority to them is not the answer. Most websites won't link to landing pages because it doesn't provide value to their audience. Instead, link to something like an educational pillar page that promotes the landing page you're trying to send people to.

Next, include your most valuable inbound link near the top of the page, if possible.

Search engine bots crawl through a page's content the way a human would read it - left to right and top to bottom. Links that are found near the top of the page pass more authority to the page they're linking to. Each link thereafter will have a reduction in value.

On this note, if you're able to be descriptive in the anchor text, then do so. Anchor text is the actual text of a link to a web page. On most websites, this text is usually dark blue and underlined, or purple if you've visited the link in the past. Anchor text helps search engines understand what the destination page is about; it describes what you will see if you click through.

Most high-quality websites will only allow one link to your website. Keeping this in mind, make it a goal to include one high-quality link to your website per post and try your best to naturally fit it in near the top.

With the rest of the links in your post, consider:

- Linking to other guest blog posts that you've authored on other websites when relevant. This is important for two reasons: First, you can build authority to your guest blogging portfolio. This way, you're not technically building links back to your site. Instead, you're building links to pages that link to your pages, which will still help from an SEO perspective. And secondly, this gives you a reason to check in with those you've guest blogged for with an update on how you're supporting their content with inbound links. Information like this could help strengthen the relationship with those you collaborate with as it shows them you're invested in your content on their site.
- Another way to effectively use links in your post is to link to other relevant content on the website you're writing the guest post for. This may take a little more time to do, but it's a nice touch that your contact will appreciate.

And lastly, expand your guest blogging portfolio.

The first inbound link you receive from a website will be the most valuable for your site from an SEO perspective. This doesn't mean you should be a one-and-done guest blogger for a website. However, if your guest blogging goal is to increase your website's domain authority, then it's better to have a more diverse group of inbound links as opposed to all of them coming from one source.

Fourth, provide outstanding service to your guest authored content.

You should never publish and forget your guest blogs. Once your content publishes, that's really just the beginning of your ongoing support for it.

Here are a few things to consider paying attention to.

To start, engage with people in the comments.

Really take the time to provide value and delight those who have questions or comments. If a reader is going to take the time to read your post and engage with you, then you should do the same. This could be further explaining something you wrote about or encouraging them to reach out to you personally to learn more.

Keep in mind, it's possible you'll get people who challenge your content. Whether they're right or wrong, that's not the point. Always be professional when engaging with others online. Getting defensive and lashing out won't do you any good. You should welcome a healthy debate, as it keeps people engaging with the comments section. The more comments a blog post gets, the better—comments keep it relevant.

Next, engage with people on social media.

Similar to the comments section, social media is another place where you'll want to monitor and engage with people sharing your content. Again, if a reader is going to take the time to engage with you, then you should do the same.

This should be fairly easy to keep track of if people tag you in the post. In this case, you'll get a notification and can respond accordingly.

That being said, not everyone will tag you on social media when sharing your content. Instead, you can find this content by doing a search on that channel using the keywords from your post. For example, I did a search on "pillar content," a recognizable keyword from my guest post title, and found this tweet.

And fifth, nurture the relationship with your contact.

It can take time to source high-quality guest blog opportunities. Once you land one, do everything you can to create a strong relationship with your contact. People do business with people they know, like, trust, and value. Make it a point to create a positive, meaningful experience for your contact. Doing so could lead to another future guest blog post, or, even better, another guest blog opportunity sourced by your contact.

And that's it, five things to consider when creating a guest blogging strategy to ensure you're getting the most value out of your efforts. Keep these in mind when outlining a guest blogging process of your own.

### Video 3: How to Find Guest Blogging Opportunities

It can take a lot of time and energy to find websites that accept guest blog authors. On top of that, you want to find the right opportunities to make sure it's worth your while.

Luckily there's a list of things you can do to help you find ripe opportunities as opposed to guessing and hoping for the best.

To start, define your niche.

Make it a habit to write for websites that are relevant to your industry. This is important for two reasons:

1. It ensures you'll reach a target audience that you want to get in front of;

2. And building links from external websites to your site will be more valuable if they're related.

Let's assume your business sells financial planning services. In this case, writing for a fashion blog might not be the most effective approach. However, that doesn't mean you can't identify opportunities that exist outside your market. There's definitely a way to get creative and find overlap between two semi-related niches.

For example, your financial planning company could write for a home improvement website by creating a post on "financial planning tips for your upcoming home renovation."

With this approach, you can strategize opportunities that come your way and justify whether or not they're beneficial for you. But remember, don't stray too far off the path. The more relevant your website is to the site you want to write for, the better from an SEO perspective.

Next, find relevant websites that allow guest authors.

There are multiple ways you can approach this. Let's review each in depth.

First, do research on Google.

Perform a series of search queries on Google. To make it easier for you, consider using a formula, like [your market] + "guest post." But don't just limit it to one search—get creative and exhaust your options, like [your market] + "contributing writer" or "submit content" or "writers wanted" and so on.

Going back to our financial planning example, this is what a sample search engine result page looks like.

There's a wealth of opportunity in here to get you started. You can see specific websites as well as a lists of websites that may offer guest blogging opportunities with just one search. You'll even notice there are specific guest bloggers in the industry that're mentioned, which brings me to my second suggestion: Research potential influencers.

Are there names of influencers in your industry that keep you informed and up to date? If so, then research them and learn about their guest authoring opportunities.

You can do this by doing a search on Google with [their name] + "blog." If they've written for multiple websites, then Google will find them.

To take it a step further, you could copy and paste the first sentence in their author bio and use that to do another search query on Google. This could help you find more blogs they've written for.

Third, do research on Twitter.

Using the same logic as doing research on Google, go to Twitter and type in a formula like [your market] + "guest blog." This approach can help you find new influencers to research as well as websites that allow guest blogging.

Fourth, research websites that your buyer personas might visit often.

Are there specific websites that you know your ideal audience visits frequently? What better way to get in front of them than to have one of your guest blog posts pop up in their Twitter feed or show up in a newsletter in their email inbox?

And fifth, prioritize outreach to websites based on domain authority.

Websites with high domain authority will provide more value in regards to building inbound links. My recommendation: Focus on websites with domain authority of 70 or below.

Do your research and make a list of websites you want to pitch with a guest blog idea and document their domain authority. This will help you better strategize your approach on who to reach out to first. If you're just getting started, then maybe consider getting your feet wet with lower domain authority opportunities that are easier to secure.

Then once you start building a portfolio of work, as well as build up your confidence for a guest blogging process, then you can approach the top-industry websites with a domain authority of 71 and above.

And there you have it. Now you know how to go about finding guest blogging opportunities. And to help you get started with some blogs that are looking for guest authors, I've added a helpful link to the additional resources section. So get after it.

## Video 4: How to Secure a Guest Blogging Spot

Securing a guest blogging spot is a game of persistence and patience. It's going to take more than blasting an email to a bunch of prospects to secure a worthwhile opportunity. The best way to approach the process is to consider it as if you're building a new relationship because that's exactly what you're doing.

Remember, you need them more than they need you, so you're the one who's going to have to make an effort initially. Take the time to form a connection with a genuine intention because once a bond is formed, that's when the magic happens.

Let's review some tips on how to go about building a relationship with a company that can ultimately lead to a guest blogging opportunity.

First, do research on the companies you want to write for.

There's a few things to consider here. You can start by going directly to their blog and review the last two to three months of published content. Make note of the authors in each post. Which one writes the most content? Are you able to find a senior staff writer or possibly a manager? This information will help you identify either one or several people you should consider building a relationship with.

Researching LinkedIn can be another helpful way to learn more about contacts and their role at a company. You can do this by searching for the company name, then click the "See all employees on LinkedIn" link on their business profile page.

Second, engage with companies you want to write for before pitching an idea.

The goal here is to get on the company's radar before reaching out to them formally. Here's a few ways you can do that.

Find a recent blog post by a member of their team that you intend to build a relationship with and share it on social media. And I don't just mean liking or RT their content on Twitter. That's not going to make you stand out. Actually take the time to read their content so you can provide a helpful anecdote in your social post. When crafting your social post, consider:

- Speaking to the author directly and tagging them in the post;
- Listing one helpful piece of information or quote from their article;
- Including the link to their article;
- And tagging the company.

A piece of advice, make sure to tag the author as well as the source of where you read their content. Why? Because tagging a profile on social channels like Twitter gets you in their notification feed, making it easier for them to respond to you, especially if they don't know who you are.

Then, once you've engaged with them on social media, write a thoughtful response as a comment on their actual blog post. Instead of just saying "great post!," tell them why you liked it. Consider even offering a few tips of your own if it makes sense and provides value. If you want to keep the conversation going, then consider asking them a question in your comment. However, make it about the post and building a relationship with them.

I recommend doing this one to two times before actually reaching out via email to a contact at the company. This way, you have something to talk about as a conversation starter – how much you like their content.

One last thing you can do if you really want to stand out is send a warm email to the person one to two weeks before you're going to pitch them an idea. Keep it short and concise, and focused on them. If it's too long, then they might not read it because it could look like you're trying to sell them something.

Here's an example of something you can use and customize to your situation:

- Start by Introducing yourself;
- Let them know which blog post you liked and link to it;
- Tell them that the post helped you;
- Explain something specific you liked in the article;
- Thank them;
- And end with a salutation.

You're not asking for anything yet. You're just telling them how much you appreciate them.

If you're having a hard time finding the person's email address, then you have a few options to find it.

You can do it with a tool like Volia Norbert. All you need to do is input the person's name and company website URL.

Another option is to do research manually. I learned this trick early on in my career when I was trying to connect with certain contacts at various companies, and their email address wasn't offered anywhere online.

To start, go to Google and type in this formula: [contact's first and last name] + ["@" followed by company's website URL] + "email address." If you can't find them that way, then try finding an example of the email nomenclature of one of their team members, then create that string.

For example, my @hubspot.com email address is not easily found online. However, you can see that my friend and fellow HubSpot Academy teammate Kyle Jepson's email is kjepson@hubspot.com. Even though you may not know my email address, you know my name is Justin Champion, so you could try reaching out to me at jchampion@hubspot.com and see if that works.

One last thing before we move on, be careful not to go overboard and become a pest. Remember, the goal is to stay top of mind, not annoy them. If you look over eager, they could pick up on it, which could lead to them ignoring you.

Third, take the time to craft your pitch.

You have one chance to make a first impression of how you can be a potential valuable contributor to their website. Here's a list of things you can do to best prepare for an effective email pitch.

To start, know the website's author guidelines before sending your idea. Most high-quality blogs that accept guest posts will publish a list of guidelines. If you're having a hard time finding theirs, then just do a Google search for it by using [company name] + "guest blog guidelines."

If you want to secure a spot, then follow these guidelines closely and use it as a charter to formulate your pitch.

Next, make sure your topic offers unique value.

You can approach this a few different ways:

To start, how trendy is the topic? High-quality blogs love content that's hot right now.

Another way is to review the most popular posts on their blog. It's possible you can see this in their blog sidebar. If not, you can use a tool like Ahrefs that can list any blog's top-performing content.

If your goal is to write a high-quality blog post for a site, then make sure it's something they don't already have content for. If they do, then they may turn you down. That is, unless you frame the content in a unique way and call out how it could be helpful to their current blog content.

And lastly, consider offering ideas that you can repurpose from your content.

Unless bandwidth is not an issue for you, you need to consider how long it'll take to write a quality piece of content on a given topic. If you put in the time and effort to create great content on your own website, then you'll have the opportunity to recycle it in more ways than one.

Fourth, send a personalized email.

Don't waste people's time with an email that appears templated. I get emails often from people looking to write for the HubSpot Academy User Blog. If the email appears impersonal, like it took the sender two minutes to write, I rarely read it.

Here's an example of an email you can send that shows you've taken the time to craft your ideas and you're serious about collaborating with them.

To start, introduce yourself.

Next, lead with how you admire their content. Call out a piece of content you particularly like and mention how you commented on it. If you sent them a warm email, then choose a different piece of content to show them that you're consuming their content regularly.

Next, explain why you're reaching out. Be clear that your intention is to write a guest blog post for their site.

Next, offer a few topic ideas that you can write. Then supplement those ideas with other types of content you can create if they have a need. To go a step further with optimizing this, consider listing topics that align with their top-engaged content.

Next, if you can find a list of their guest blog guidelines, then include how you'll write a unique topic for them that follows their process. I'd recommend linking their guidelines URL in your email. This shows you've actually seen the page.

Next, include a validation point by showing them the quality of your work. This could be showing them a guest post you've already written, a pillar page you've created on your website, and so on. To go a step further with optimizing this, make the example you include closely related to a topic you suggested earlier in your email.

And lastly, close with how you're looking forward to their response. I like to keep things friendly and show that I'm eager to get started soon.

And fifth, always be seeking new opportunities.

It can take time for people to respond to your email pitches. And it's likely they may not respond ever. Don't let this frustrate you. Prospecting guest blogs is about the forest, not the trees. The more opportunities you pitch, the more likely you are to secure a guest spot.

This means that you need to set an on-going guest blogging quota and stick to an outreach schedule to make it happen. If you're consistent in approach, then you're giving yourself the best chance at landing opportunities.

One piece of advice, don't give up. If you haven't guest blogged yet, then it can take some time to build a portfolio. But with each guest post you complete, the more you'll strengthen your portfolio. The stronger your portfolio, the more likely you'll be able to secure a guest blogging spot.

And that's it, five tips to securing high-quality guest posts. Now it's up to you to take these suggestions and apply them to your situation.

## Video 5: How to Write a Guest Blog Author Bio

When writing a guest blog post, generally you'll have the opportunity to write a short author bio about yourself. Think of it as your personal elevator pitch. An elevator pitch is a 30-second memorable description of what you do and/or what you sell. You want to lead with your strongest attributes that are relevant to the audience. This is an important opportunity that you don't want to overlook because it's the one major facet of off-site branding you're able to control.

So where do you start when writing a guest post author bio? Before getting started, there are two things to consider:

First, follow the instructions given to you by your contact.

It's possible the site you're writing for will offer guidelines for your author bio. For example, your author bio could be up to 100 words, one link to your website, and a high-resolution headshot. Make sure to follow these instructions and use them as the baseline for creating your author bio.

Once you have confirmation on your guest post, make it a point to ask the person you're working with for guest author bio guidelines. Doing so early on in the process will help reduce back and forth via email, making it easier and pleasant to work with you.

And second, research the format for other guest bloggers on their site.

An efficient way to get started with writing your author bio is to review several author bios on their site, preferably guest authors if you can find them. You can do this by navigating to a blog post on their site. The author bio will exist either on the actual blog post or can be accessed by clicking the author's name, which will take you to their author bio on a dedicated page on the site.

Plus, reviewing other examples can help give you creative ideas on where to start when crafting one of your own.

However, it's possible there may not be an order or consistency across author bios on the site. In this case you'll have more creative freedom. Although, it still helps to have guardrails to ensure you're being effective with your author bio.

Here are eight best practices to consider when writing an effective author bio. To help us visualize what this looks like in action, let's dissect an author bio I use when writing guest blog posts for Content Marketing Institute as an example.

First, tell them about yourself.

This should be personal and career focused. For example, in my author bio, I explain that:

- I'm the Content Professor for HubSpot Academy; this is what I do for work.
- I'm a published author of a book, *Inbound Content*, which is a relevant read for this audience.

- And I'm one half of Wild We Wander, my alternative lifestyle brand.

At a minimum, make sure to include your title and company you work for. Additionally, it's best not to go over the top with jargon or buzzwords in your title, like if I called myself a Content Wizard as opposed to a Content Professor. Doing so could result in my audience rolling their eyes and me losing credibility with them.

Moreover, use acronyms sparingly. If you're an SEO Director, then write Search Engine Optimization Director. If you're a PPC analyst, then write Pay Per Click Analyst.

Next, choose a high-resolution photo of yourself.

Include a professional yet casual photo of yourself. Make sure it's one where you're smiling – you don't want your photo to look like a mugshot.

I chose a high-resolution photo that's true to me and my style.

Next, keep it short and concise.

Make it a habit to write an author bio that's 100 words or less. This is more than enough words to form an effective elevator pitch for yourself. It generally works out to be 3-5 sentences.

This example is 75 words and four sentences in length.

Next, explain what you do in the third person.

Your author bio should be written as if someone else were talking about you. Lead with your name as opposed to "I".

Notice how I refer to myself as "Justin," "he," and "him" in my author bio.

Next, include an element of validation.

You want your audience to see you as a credible source. In order to do this, you need to give them a reason to see you as a thought leader within the industry. You can do this by offering a performance stat or an award you received if it's relevant.

For example, I chose to include that I'm the creator of HubSpot Academy's Content Marketing Certification Course, which at the time had awarded over 25,000 certifications to professionals across the globe. This is something that can help me build credibility with my audience if they don't know who I am yet.

Next, provide something interesting or authentic about yourself.

Remember, we're all human. Offer something personal about yourself that helps the reader better connect with you.

In this case, I led with my purpose. I'm dedicated to educating and inspiring the world how to become better storytellers.

Next, offer social media channels where readers can engage with you.

Don't list all your social channels—just list the top one to two channels where people can engage with you. Make sure the channels you choose are ones that you monitor and engage with people on regularly.

For me that's Twitter and LinkedIn. Make sure to hyperlink the social channel in your description with your social profile link. This way people can easily find you by clicking the link.

And lastly, but most importantly, include at least one inbound link to your website.

Remember, guest blogging is a great way to build inbound links back to your website. Some sites will only offer a link back to your website in the author bio, so it's important to be strategic about your link choice.

When choosing which link or links to include in your author bio, here are a few things to consider:

- Link to your website. At a minimum, link to your homepage. However, you could link to a specific site page if it's educational and relevant to your article or audience.
- And don't link to a landing page. Doing so could result in the site removing your link altogether.

For example, I included a link in my author bio to Wild We Wander's website as it's helpful and relevant to my audience. Plus, I'm always looking for opportunities to build authority to my site.

In the event you're writing for a site that won't allow you to link back to your website, don't consider this a loss. This will happen. Focus on the opportunity you're getting to educate and inspire a new audience. Do your best to create a meaningful experience. If you do, then people will come looking for more.

And that's it, eight best practices to consider when writing an effective author bio.