

Guest Posting: Waste of Time or Great Promotional Tool?

Transcript

This is a transcript of the seminar, edited slightly for easy reading.

You can find the audio version at www.writershuddle.com/seminars/may2014.

Hi, I'm Ali Luke and this is the May seminar for Writers' Huddle: *Guest Posting: Waste of Time or Great Promotional Tool?*

Before we go any further, it's probably best that I explain what guest posting is, because unless you're a blogger or you've been around the blogging world quite a lot, you may not have come across it.

Guest posting simply means writing a piece of content, a guest post, for somebody else's website or blog. You'll sometimes hear it referred to as guest blogging, or maybe being a contributor to a website, or a writer for a website, or something like that.

And it's not just something that you can do if you have your own blog. I did quite a bit of my guest posting when I didn't have an active blog of my own at all. So it's a technique that any writer can use to promote themselves or to promote their work.

The Advantages of Guest Posting

There are a few different reasons why you might want to have a go at guest posting.

One of the biggest, if you're right at the start of your career as a writer, is to build up some writing credits – to build up some pieces for your portfolio and to perhaps get a bit of experience as well.

I've been working with a friend of mine, who's just launching her own business as a writer and editor, particularly of blog posts and online content. I've been really encouraging her to do some guest posting just to get some good clips

out there to show what she's capable of, and also as a way to build up some relationships within the blogging industry.

If you do have a blog of your own, guest posting is also a great way to drive some traffic to that blog. I'm sure that if you started a blog, or if you're currently running a blog, you probably have the same problem that I did when I started my first blog. It's quite hard to get noticed.

You maybe have a handful of readers, perhaps some friends and family members and colleagues, people who know about your blog. But once you want to expand beyond your own friends, or perhaps friends of friends, you really need some ways to get your work out there in front of a wider audience. And for me, guest posting has been the best method that I've used to grow my blogs.

Another advantage is that guest posting allows you to establish some relationships with major bloggers and influential people in the online world. It can be hard to get in touch with someone perhaps by email if they're really busy, or you might leave comments on their blog, but not all bloggers read the comments if they're really quite a big blog. I'm thinking maybe somebody with 50,000 or 100,000 readers here.

But if you send in a guest post, even if that perhaps goes through an editor rather than through the blog owner, they're probably going to get to know your name ... especially if you do this more than once. And if you've contributed a really good piece of content to their blog, if it gets lots of traffic for them, if it gets lots of shares on social media, that's a great way to get noticed by somebody who could be quite influential and could potentially be in a position to really help you out with your writing career.

Who Can Guest Post?

The only prerequisite for writing a guest post is that you can write well. Like I say, you don't need to have a blog of your own. You certainly don't have to have a really big Twitter following, or Facebook following.

Obviously, none of those things hurt, but in my experience of doing guest posting over 6+ years now, what bloggers really want is a well-written piece of content that they haven't had to produce themselves.

You really don't need to be able to provide anything more than just the post itself, and if you do a good job of that, and if you do a good job of pitching it as I'll come on to a bit later in the seminar, you've got a great chance of getting that post accepted and published on potentially quite a major website.

But ... Guest Posting Doesn't Pay (Directly)

So there's one caveat that I should mention before we dig in a little bit further, and that's the fact that most blogs do not pay for guest posts. **What you get as a reward for your effort and your time and your skill is the chance to be in front of their audience.**

You get a short bio, so a couple of sentences about yourself at the end of the post, and you can link back to your website, or to your book on Amazon, or to your services page if you work with clients – whatever you want to link to. But you don't usually get paid.

I know for some writers that's a bit of a deal-breaker. Some people think that you should never write for free. And if that's how you feel, that's absolutely fine. I really respect that position.

For me, I think I'd have struggled to get my career off the ground without doing a little bit of work for free, initially, just to build up some writing credits. But if that's something that you really don't feel comfortable with, obviously that's fine.

Also, there are some sites that do pay for guest posts. You'll find links to some sources of those, and some sources of blogs in general that take guest posts, in the worksheet for this seminar.

So if you're in a position where you feel like you don't want to or really can't afford to write free content, then there are other options out there, but I just want to raise it right now at the start so that you're aware that in general, you won't expect to get paid for a guest post.

Two Specific Situations When Guest Posting Probably Won't Work

The next thing I want to just discuss, before I get into some tips on getting started with guest posting, is a couple of situations when – certainly in my experience – guest posting doesn't work all that well as a promotional tool.

These are the cases where I think guest posting probably falls more into the 'waste of time' category than the 'beneficial for your business' or 'beneficial to you' category.

Situation #1: When You're Promoting Fiction

The first is if you're promoting a novel (or probably any kind of fiction, or poetry or memoir, or something like that – although my only experience has been with promoting a novel this way).

I did a lot of guest posting when I brought out my novel *Lycopolis*, because guest posting had been such a successful technique for me with promoting my non-fiction work.

Also, a lot of bloggers at that time were doing what they call a virtual book tour, when you go round a bunch of different blogs, having posts or interviews or reviews on different ones, often one a day for two weeks or a month.

It was a lot of work to organise, to line up different opportunities on different days. It was a lot of work writing the posts, and it really did not have much impact on my book sales.

I sold perhaps a handful of extra books – maybe ten or twelve extras – as a result of doing twenty or thirty posts across different blogs. So this has not just been my own experience. I've talked to Jo Penn, who runs thecreativepenn.com, and she agrees that for fiction the virtual book tour or guest posting route is probably not going to be one that sees a lot of return on your investment. There are better ways to promote your fiction.

So why doesn't it work, when it works so well for other things? I found myself asking that a lot when I was looking at the results from the first few days of my tour and thinking, *this is really not going how I wanted.*

I think the problem is that when you're promoting a non-fiction book, or promoting yourself as a writer, there's a more obvious link between your content and what you're promoting.

So my struggle with promoting my novel *Lycopolis* was that in general I was writing for blogs that were about writing techniques – so I was writing about the processes of writing. And not all writers are going to be interested in buying a novel by someone they've not heard of before.

Plus, when you're writing a novel and promoting that, you're in competition with every other novel that the people who read your post might want to buy.

So if I write a book on blogging, which I've got several of, and promote that with a blog post, there aren't that many books specifically on blogging giving quite advanced tips and techniques. There aren't that many out there.

Whereas there are loads of novels, and the only real benefit of a novel is that it'll probably entertain you and maybe you'll get something out of it beyond that – you'll feel enlightened by it or uplifted by it, or something like that.

But that's a quite hard thing to pitch to someone who you maybe just come across from a guest post. So I think maybe it could work for some types of novel. Maybe it could work if you had some very good connections with blogs that were perhaps focused on specific genres of fiction.

But it really didn't work well for me, and several of the writers I've talked to haven't had much success from this sort of technique. Ellie di Julio, who I spoke to last month for our seminar, she'd run a couple of virtual book tours with companies that do this as their business, and she really hadn't had much success from that, and she was a bit disappointed in the result.

This is just to say, if you're a fiction writer, guest posting could have lots of benefits for you, like getting your name out there, getting some experience, building up relationships with other fiction writers – but it's probably not going to be a way to sell lots of copies of your book.

Situation #2: Guest Posting for SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)

In this situation, guest posting it has worked in the past, but it's not likely to work so well now and in the future. **Guest posting for SEO means you're guest posting just to get a link back to your website.**

If you're a web writer, and if you've spent a bit of time looking into ways to promote your site, ways to rank more highly in Google and other search engines – what's called search engine optimisation or SEO – then you've probably come across the idea that you need to get backlinks to your site.

So other sites on the web need to be linking to yours, and that helps Google to see your site as a bigger, more respected, more important site, because lots of people are pointing to your site. And it will help you rank more highly in Google and other search engines.

Now Matt Cutts, who's the Google head of webspam, spoke out about this in January and basically said guest posting is dead. This caused quite a lot of ripples in my corner of the blogging world!

He did later clarify a little bit, and what he said was that guest posting *for SEO purposes* is what Google is against. Because it's become quite a spammy, devalued thing in some areas. Lots of SEO companies and agencies are pitching low quality posts, perhaps to not amazingly high quality blogs, just so they get a link back to their site in the bio.

The link is certainly a useful and important thing to have, but it shouldn't be your primary motivation for writing a guest post.

I've found that the relationship-building aspect, and the direct traffic from the guest post itself, rather than any boost in traffic from Google afterwards, is what's really valuable.

So don't be put off by this, but also don't see guest posting as a quick and cheap way to build links to your site or anything like that. I'm sure that within the Huddle that's not the approach that anyone has, but I want to mention it now in case you go off and do a bit of research on guest posting, and perhaps come across this more SEO, link-focused attitude towards it.

Getting Started with Guest Posting

With all that out of the way, let's take a look at how you can get started with guest posting. **The best place to begin is with blogs that you already read.**

(It may be that you don't read any blogs at all; it may be that you do and you don't necessarily think of the websites you visit as blogs. So you know, Huffington Post for instance is a blog, although probably not one that you're going to want to target with your very first guest post.)

These blogs are good places to begin because you already know them. It's a bit like if you're pitching an article to a magazine: good magazines to target are ones that you perhaps subscribe to for a couple of years or ones that at least you pick up an issue and read it occasionally, rather than magazines that you've never heard of before and you've just found in the course of your research.

Hopefully you've already got a few blogs you're reading. If not, you might want to take a look around the web, see if there are any blogs that you want to maybe subscribe to (which is free) – you can just get the posts straight to your email inbox in most cases.

There are loads of good blogs on writing that take guest posts, and you can find links to some of those in the worksheet. And these can be good places to begin, because I'm assuming that you've got an interest in writing since you're in Writers' Huddle.

Then of course there are blogs on pretty much anything imaginable. So any hobby you might have, any interest related to your career, anything to do with maybe the stage of your life you're in –, there are blogs on parenting, and there are blogs on solo travel for older women, and all sorts of different niches and concepts. You might be surprised what you can find out there.

So that's definitely where I'd recommend that you start.

What Topics Do You Want to Write About?

And then something else to think about is what topics you'd like to write about. I've done different topics over the years. I started off writing about

healthy eating and weight loss, way back at the very start of 2008, and I lost interest in that after about a year or so. But it was not a bad place to begin, and I did have a bit of work writing for a couple of blogs on healthy eating topics.

Then I wrote about personal development quite broadly for a bit, so that was perhaps a newer interest of mine. And the whole personal development/self-improvement field is a really, really big one, and there's a lot of scope for different things you can write there. Even if it's not a primary interest of yours, you might find there are some blogs along those lines that you can contribute to.

Today, I mostly write for writers, and most of the blogs I write for are related to writing or blogging. And there are obviously lots of blogs out there on those topics, I guess because writers like to write and they like to read about writing!

So those are my topics, but yours might be completely different. Like I said, it might be related to things like your hobbies, or the stage of life you're at, or your experience in your career and so on.

It's a good idea to sit down and just brainstorm somewhere between five and ten topics that you find really interesting, you already know quite a bit about, or at least you know where to go to find out good information when you're researching.

Then you can see if there are any blogs on those particular topics that you'd like to contribute to. You may want to particularly focus on topics that you are considering maybe writing magazine articles about, or writing a book on or something like that.

So when it comes to choosing which blogs you're going to target, bigger blogs are better in terms of they will send you more traffic, and a link from them is usually more valuable for search engine optimisation purposes. Though as I say that shouldn't be your main motivation.

But bigger blogs are also much harder to get a guest post on to. Even moderately sized blogs will get an awful lot of guest post pitches – as editor of DailyBlogTips, which has maybe 30,000, 40,000 newsletter subscribers, I get at least a couple of guest post pitches daily. Sometimes I just delete them straight

away because they're really not very good, and I'll talk about that in a few minutes. But we do get a lot of offers of guest posts and Daniel (the owner) and I have agreed to only run one every fortnight, because we don't want to dilute our own voices and our brand too much.

While bigger blogs are better, you may need to target slightly smaller blogs to begin with, perhaps just until you've built up a little bit of experience in guest posting.

Because normally, once you've posted on a few blogs that the larger ones will have heard of, they're more likely to take you seriously and to look at your post.

However, you may want to just go straight to the top and target the biggest blog that you think is going to be a good fit for you, and if they don't take your post, rework it and submit it to a slightly smaller blog.

Brushing Up Your Web Writing Skills

Before you go too far into guest posting, if you've not written for blogs before or if you've only written a handful of blog posts, do make sure you're clear about how to write a good blog post, how to write well for the web. (See this Huddle seminar for help: <http://www.writershuddle.com/may2013>.)

So you do obviously need to be able to turn out a good blog post.

Looking at Different Blog's Styles

If you're not quite sure what a particular blog wants, just read the last five or ten posts – take a look at the style, the structure, the length, those sorts of things, and see whether you can do something similar.

Just like if you were writing for a magazine, you'd look at the way that they do their articles, you know, the tone, the audience, the level of vocabulary – all those sorts of things. Because they won't necessarily spell these things out in their writers' guidelines, on blogs, but you can pick it up from taking a good look at their content.

You may want to look for particular blogs where the style suits your own preferred way of writing or of thinking. So in the personal development world

there are loads of different blogs, at different levels of content and with quite different styles. Two that I like and have written for are Productive Flourishing (www.productiveflourishing.com), which is Charlie Gilkey's blog, and Dumb Little Man (www.dumblittleman.com), which is owned by Jay White.

They're very, very different. Dumb Little Man is much bigger, and it's a very mass-market blog. The content is definitely aimed at people who might be quite new to some of the personal development ideas. It's usually quite beginner-friendly, and it's written in a very straightforward, easy to grasp way.

Productive Flourishing, on the other hand, is a much more nuanced and academic blog. Charlie has a PhD in philosophy. And while his blog is certainly very readable, it's also something where you want to sit down and give it some thought, it's not something you where you skim through several posts in a coffee break as you might with Dumb Little Man.

They're both great blogs, they both do a really great job of serving their audience, but they're very, very different in style, and the way that I write posts for each of them is different. So look around at blogs in whatever industry or whatever topic you're targeting, and just see which ones naturally suit the way you prefer to write.

Following the Guest Post Guidelines

Once you've chosen a blog, you'll need to figure out exactly how they want you to submit content. And just as different publishers want manuscripts submitted in different ways, different blog owners will want different things with your guest posts.

The best thing to do is to look for their guest post guidelines. These might be called "Guest post guidelines", they might be called "Submit an article", or "Write for us". They might be "Writers' Guidelines" - there's a bunch of different terms that may be used. You can normally find them linked to either from the navigation menu at the top of the site, maybe from the sidebar, or often from the Contact page and perhaps from the About page of the blog.

The Contact page is probably the best place to start, because bloggers know that if someone's thinking of pitching them a guest post, they're probably going to come to the Contact page at some point.

Not every blog has guest post guidelines though. If you really can't find them, you may want to email or tweet the blog owner and just ask if they have any guidelines. It may be that they don't, but they're happy to consider guest posts anyway.

Typical Guidelines to Expect

These won't necessarily apply to every single blog, but these are just general guidelines to keep in mind.

The first is that blogs want your posts to be 100% original, not previously published. So they don't want a guest post that's already appeared on your blog. They don't want a guest post that's appeared on someone else's blog. They don't really want a post that's heavily based on something you've already written, and they certainly don't want something that's copied or plagiarised from someone else. I'm sure you're not thinking of doing that, but it's important to say.

I don't think I've ever come across a blog that didn't require guest posts to be completely original and not previously published content, though you may well find that there are some out there.

Then secondly they'll usually give some guideline on length, and often that will be "over 500 words", because that's usually quite a decent length for a blog post.

Many blogs will just say that the length doesn't matter too much, what's important is that it's a good post. But if they do have any guidelines on what length they want, it's a good idea to try and fit in with those. And this applies to being both too short and too long.

On DailyBlogTips, for instance, we mostly publish quite short posts, and if I get a guest post pitch that's more than a thousand words, I might take it if it's a really good, in-depth post that deserves that length of treatment, but I'll

probably want to cut it down or maybe even have the blogger turn it into two separate posts.

Then thirdly, you'll probably get some advice on whether you need to include or suggest images for your post. This does vary quite a bit from blog to blog. Some bloggers like to choose their own images, others like you to just find them yourself, some blogs use a lot of screenshots and step-by-step instructions and photos and things like that. So it really depends on the blog you're writing for, and you can often get a good feel for this by reading some of their previous posts.

Fourthly, you'll probably have some instructions on the submission format. My personal preference, both as a guest poster and as someone who receives guest posts, is just to have a Word document, nicely formatted, with the post in it. That's the most straightforward thing for me.

However, a lot of bloggers will prefer you to put your post into HTML code first. If you have to do that, the easiest way is usually to make a draft post on your own blog, assuming you have one.

In WordPress, click on the "text" rather than "visual" tab of the post editor and you'll get the HTML code for the post, and you can just copy that into a Notepad document and save it as a text file. And that will be fine.

If you're really struggling with format, most blogs will at least consider a post sent in, perhaps not their preferred format. Sometimes, just through ignorance, I've sent in the wrong format and it's been fine.

There'll also usually be some mention of who you should submit the post to. You know, in the case of smaller blogs that's usually just the blogger – the blog owner – there's only one person. For larger blogs there may well be an editor, or an associate editor, or an assistant or somebody else who handles the guest posts. So do try to make sure you're sending it to the right person. It's not necessarily a disaster if you don't, but the more things you can get right, and make their lives easy for them, the better.

Then finally there'll probably be some guidance on whether you should just send a finished post, a whole draft of a post that's basically ready from your point of view, or whether you should send them a pitch – so a suggested title

and outline. Different blogs like different things, I've done both as a guest poster.

Personally I prefer to just write the post first and even if I'm just sending them a pitch, I'll often just write the post then write a short outline of it and send that. I can't think of a single time when that has not worked out and I've not been able to use the full post.

Occasionally, I've actually sent a full post when they have only wanted a pitch. Usually I've done that if I've just had trouble getting a response from them, and I've just gone ahead and sent the post anyway.

I don't necessarily advise that, it's obviously better to stick to what they ask for, but if you're a really good writer and you send them a great post that's on topic for their blog, it probably just cuts out a step of the process.

It is important to follow the guidelines, but I would say don't get so hung up on the guidelines to the extent that you don't submit something because for whatever reason you can't quite meet every single one.

You know, it's better just to submit something than nothing. But do try and make sure that you meet the guidelines where at all possible. And you know, if you are deviating from them – say, sending your post in a different format – then just perhaps say “I'm sending this as a Word document, I hope that's okay,” or “Let me know if you want this in a different format,” or something like that, and just try to be easy to work with as a writer.

And ... Make Sure the Blog Takes Guest Posts

Something that I didn't mention already, but that's pretty important, is that you should make sure that the blog you're trying to write for actually takes guest posts.

I know this sounds a little bit obvious and basic, but not every blog takes guest posts. Some really large blogs don't take them. Some large blogs used to take guest posts and no longer do. Some used to take guest posts and still take guest posts from people who have previously written for them, but not from new people. (Copyblogger, for instance, closed submissions to any new guest

posters a little while back. I've been able to keep pitching to them because I've written for them before.)

So do make sure the blog does take guest posts. Usually if they're not taking them they'll at least update their Contact page or their guest post guidelines to tell you.

If it's the case that the blog doesn't have any guidelines, but you think they take guest posts – you see different people's names appearing with guest post bios alongside posts – then you might well want to pitch anyway. But don't set your heart on writing for one particular blog until you're pretty sure that they are open to receiving guest posts.

Seven Tips for Guest Posting Success

So finally, I want to give you my seven best tips for success. These are gleaned from writing lots and lots of guest posts over quite a few years now, and from also helping some other people with their guest posts too.

#1: Pitch More than One Idea at a Time

If they ask you to pitch ideas rather than send a full post, don't just give them one idea. Suggest at least three. I'd probably say more than five was overkill. Three or four is about right.

What I would do in this case is choose what I think is my top idea, give the title of that and flesh it out with a little outline, then say something along the lines of, "If that doesn't sound quite right for you, here are three other possible posts I could write", and then give them some more ideas.

Do make sure that all the ideas are on topic, make sure they're all ones that you are completely willing and able to write, because then you may just have a slightly better chance. It might be they don't like your top idea, for whatever reason – they've just covered it recently or they've got something else in the works – but they might like one of the other ideas. Pitching several ideas gives you an extra chance of getting accepted.

#2: Choose a Topic They've Not Covered Recently

Tackle something that's on-topic for the blog, but that maybe they've not covered in a little while.

The way I used to do this when I was pitching a lot of guest posts was I would look at their categories on the blog, and I'd see what categories were looking a little bit empty, which ones hadn't had a new post in a few months, and where I might be able to contribute something that fitted in well.

It may be sometimes that a blog has changed direction a bit, but it may also be the case that the blogger is perhaps lacking expertise in a particular area, or they just haven't had many guest posts pitched on a particular aspect of their topic.

Sometimes filling a gap in that way can really make your post seem more attractive to them. But do make sure that whatever you're pitching is definitely on-topic for the blog. You know, don't pitch them something that you think fills a gap but is actually just a particular aspect that they don't cover at all.

#3: Over-Deliver

If the blog is open to longer posts, for instance, you know, if you've seen some really big in-depth posts on them, then offering them something really comprehensive can go down well.

This has worked really well for me with ProBlogger, which has posts of quite a wide variety of lengths. Their posts are generally at least 700-800 words. But I've sometimes pitched them 2,000 or even 3,000-word posts that are really comprehensive, and those seem to have quite a good chance of not only being accepted, but also of getting quite a bit of attention on social media.

If you can deliver something that goes a bit above and beyond, then do try to do that – it really does boost your chances of not only being accepted but of seeing some really good results from your post as well.

#4: Try Unusual Post Structures

There's nothing wrong with writing a list post or a how-to post, or something fairly basic and straightforward. But you can get a little bit more creative

with the type of post you might write. So one I did recently for ProBlogger was a seven-day guide to setting up your blog. It was basically a how-to post, but it was split into instructions - on day 1, do this, day 2, do that, and so on. It had a bunch of extra links and resources in.

So even if you're writing a post that's basically a list, you can enhance it by putting in extra tips, or extra resources, or images or something like that. And you can also get even more creative structures – I've got a post with some suggestions here: zenoptimise.com/8-blog-post-structures.

#5: Help a Fellow Writer

Help out a fellow writer by linking to one of their blog posts within the body of your post.

This won't always be appropriate. You shouldn't force a link in there where it doesn't naturally fit, and you shouldn't link to content that's sub-par just because you're trying to do so on a favour.

But if you know another writer (or somebody blogging in your particular topic area) who's got a great post on a subject that fits in with yours, it can work very well. Simply find a way to easily and naturally put in a link to their post from your guest post, which is probably being published on a good-sized blog, and that will send them some traffic and it gives them a really good link.

They'll generally get a pingback telling them about it, though you may want to drop them an email letting them know as well, and it's a really good way to build up a relationship.

In one of my posts on ProBlogger, I linked to a fellow blogger - somebody who I've known for a few years now in the industry who has a really valuable blog - and he got in touch to say thanks.

I don't think I even bothered to tell him that I'd linked to it. But he dropped me an email to say thanks for the link, and he asked me if I did any ghostwriting. So I actually ended up with a small writing gig for him, doing a bit of ghostwriting. And that came pretty much out of nowhere for me.

It was a way to reconnect with somebody who I'd not spoken to in a while, and it just resulted in a bit of extra work.

So you never know where a particular relationship might lead. And if you can do a favour to someone else, it's a nice thing to do, it makes you look like a good and generous person, and it may also result in some real tangible benefits for you.

#6: Use Your Bio Effectively

I mentioned earlier that you get a bio at the end of your guest post, and it's usually a couple of sentences about you. (You get to write these!)

For me it might say, "Ali Luke is a writer and blogger and she runs Writers' Huddle, which is a teaching community site for writers. You can find out more by clicking here." You know, it could be very straightforward like that. But do use it effectively.

For the first two or three years of my guest posting, I just linked to my homepage – so I'd say "Ali Luke writes at Aliventures about writing and the writing life."

There was nothing very wrong with that, it was the approach I saw a lot of people taking, but I don't think it was a very compelling call to action. **Unless somebody had really, really, really loved my guest post and felt like they must read more of my content, they're not going to click and find out about a whole new blog.** They've got a bunch of blogs they already read.

Now, I link to a specific post or resource. "Ali Luke blogs at Aliventures. If you enjoyed this post, check out her post on Seven Habits of Serious Writers" – which makes for a more compelling call to action. Because it gives somebody a specific action to take. They might think, *I could go and read this one post, it's related to what I've just read, the title sounds intriguing, I'll go and check it out.*

Once they've come to my blog and read one post, maybe at the end of that post I have another call to action – I might get them on to my newsletter list, or suggest they buy one of my ebooks.

You don't have to do this just with blogposts. You could link to your newsletter signup page from your bio – that's what I sometimes do now with guest posts. You could link to your book on Amazon, or your book sales page on your website, or whatever that might be.

If you're a copywriter or an editor or something like that, you could link to your services page. You know, "Ali Luke is a writer, and she works with people who want editing and ghostwriting, click here to find out more about her services." Or whatever it might be that's appropriate for you. But I would definitely say try and have something a little bit more specific than just "here is my blog."

And if you can tie in your bio to your post content in some way, to the guest post itself, then I think that is beneficial because it creates a natural link and continuation there, rather than just seeming tagged on at the end.

#7: Follow Up After Your Post is Published

For me, this means starting out by answering comments. This is a bonus opportunity to engage readers, as every comment you leave will have your name alongside and, assuming you fill in the URL field, your name will be linked to your website or to your book on Amazon or to whatever you want that link to go to.

If somebody reads my reply to them, thinks "Oh, that was helpful, I'll go and check out a bit more about Ali," they can click on my name and then they'll come to my website or to whatever I've linked to. So that's quite a good way just to boost the chances of readers actually coming back to your site.

Something else that I think is important to do afterwards is to say thanks to the host blogger. You know, it's polite, but it also gives you a chance to reconnect to them, to say "Thanks so much for publishing my guest post, I got a lot of extra traffic from it, I saw it had had blah-blah-blah number of shares on Twitter" and "I really hope it was beneficial for you and your audience." Or whatever you want to say.

This is just a way to keep in touch with them, and to maybe move the relationship on a little bit, because if it went well you may also want to pitch again. Not straight away, not when you're saying thanks for this guest post, but

maybe a couple of months later, you may want to write again and say, “I posted for you back in May, and it was a post titled [the title] at [link], and here’s another idea that I thought could work for your blog. Are you interested?”

Once a blog’s taken a guest post from you, there’s a very good chance that they’ll take another one. Because you’re a known quantity. They know that you’re easy to work with, they know you didn’t kick up a big fuss about the edits they wanted to make to your post, and they know that you came by and answered the comments. They know you didn’t insult any of their readers. They know that you’re going to be easy to work with again.

Steve Maurer’s Success Story

I wanted to mention a specific success story, because it’s not just me who’s had some real benefits from guest posting! This is something that’s working for a lot of different writers.

Steve Maurer is a Huddle alumni, and he did a seminar for us a few months back. Steve is a brilliant copywriter and he wrote to me a bit about his experience with guest posting. I’m going to include his full statement of the benefits he’s had with guest blogging along with the seminar files, as a .pdf.

So here’s the quick version. Steve wrote an article back in March titled “How to Write Compelling Copy for ‘Boring’ Industries” – which I think is a brilliant title and topic, because content marketing is such a powerful marketing technique, but lots of industries, frankly, are not tailor-made for really engaging, interesting topics.

So Steve wrote this post, and he promoted it on LinkedIn and on some other sites. It ended up getting him a writing gig worth just under 3000 dollars. Which is absolutely fantastic – well done to Steve! And it just shows that if a guest post gets in front of a big audience, chances are somebody will read it who is in business or knows someone in business who could really use your services.

If they like your style, they like what you wrote, there's a good chance that they may hire you over some writer that they've never really heard of or experienced before. So I've included Steve's write-up of his experience along with the other seminar files. He's even included an excerpt from the email that he received that launched off this gig.

Why YOU Should Try Guest Posting

Even if you're not a copywriter like Steve, or even if you've got something slightly different to promote in terms of your services, guest posting is a really good way to get your name in front of people in the writing industry, to build up your profile.

There's no drawback. The only cost that you have is a bit of your time invested in writing the post. The worst that can happen is perhaps the post doesn't do as well as you hoped. It doesn't get much attention, you don't get any clients or any book-buyers or what have you as a result. But even then, you'll have a piece of content out there on (hopefully) a good-sized website that you can point to and say "I wrote for this website."

I'd definitely encourage you to give guest posting a go. And I think the final thing to say is that I think the barrier to entry really isn't high.

A lot of the pitches that I get for DailyBlogTips are laughably bad. If anyone in the Huddle pitched me a guest post, it would be in the top 5% of pitches I get, and you'd have probably a pretty good chance (assuming you were writing on a topic that was actually relevant to DailyBlogTips) of getting accepted.

I know you are all competent writers with a good grasp of the English language and of grammar and of spelling and of punctuation, which, trust me, is more than a lot of the people arriving in my inbox appear to have!

So please don't think that you have to be really, really good at writing to guest post, or that you have to have loads of experience. You don't. You just have to be competent and easy to work with. These are the only two things you really, really need.

I'd really encourage you to give guest posting a go some time in the next two or three months. Even if you don't have anything specific to promote right now. It's still a way to just get out there, to get a little bit of experience writing for a different audience, in front of an audience.

If you're thinking about starting a blog, it'll be a good way to test the waters without committing to a whole blog of your own straight away.

And like I say, guest posting had nothing but benefits for me. It's been my main way of promoting my blog and my ebooks, and it's also resulted in clients, just like for Steve.

In fact, one my best clients now, a long-term, well-paying client, was somebody who read one of my posts on Dumb Little Man and liked my style, and wanted to work with me. So you never know quite where guest posting is going to lead. You don't know who might be reading and what doors they might be able to open for you.

Taking Your First Step Towards Guest Posting

The first step to take, if you are thinking that you would like to have a go at guest posting, is as I said earlier, create a list of blogs that you'd like to guest post on. So I'd suggest something like five to ten blogs would be a good place to start. And read their guidelines.

To help you out, I've included some links to big lists of blogs across a range of topics, and also some links specifically to writing blogs, and to their guidelines, that you might want to check out.

This month the worksheet for the seminar is a bit different. So I've done the usual summary of key points from the seminar, but I've also included some templates that you can use if you're looking at how to pitch your guest post, what to write in your pitch email. I've included Steve's write-up of his experience as well. So I hope you'll find all of that useful.

Do take a bit of time to dig into those resources, and to perhaps look at some of the links that I've given as well. And I really hope you will try out guest posting. As I say, it's been fantastic for me, but there are so many other writers

and people in the blogging world who have basically launched businesses and careers, sometimes six-figure, seven-figure businesses, on the back of guest posting.

And it's easy to get started with – you really don't need any contacts, you don't need any specialised knowledge or skill apart from the ability to write, you know, and having a topic you can say something about.

So if you'd like a bit of extra help and support, please do post in the forums. Don't forget that we've got the Critiques forum, where you can post a draft piece of work – a guest post, for instance – and ask for feedback. If you're new to this, I think that's a really good way to make sure you're delivering the best possible content you can.

So good luck, and I'll see you in the forums.