

How to Be a Leader in Your Niche

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When you first started marketing online, did you have dreams of waking up in your pajamas, setting up a little bit of content that you carefully crafted with just the right keyword density - and then watching the money roll in?

Well, it may have worked that way once upon a time, but thanks to automated tools and scummy spammers, search engines cracked down on that minimalist work strategy and now you have to go to a little bit more effort.

You might be nervous about being a leader in your niche. You might have these common feelings:

- Who would want to listen to me?
- I don't have anything unique to say.
- I'm not pretty, young, or smart enough to be a leader.
- I'm nobody and there are already leaders in this niche.

These feelings are normal, but they're not accurate. Be honest. How would you like it - as a consumer - if you only had one choice for a restaurant, a salon, a clothing line, a music style, a grocery store, etc.?

You probably wouldn't like it much, right? It's the same way with leaders in a niche. Consumers connect with leaders in different ways. Some people might love sarcastic, hard-selling individuals - and you can't fathom why - because you prefer sweet, motivating people.

Everyone's different. And whatever you have to offer, it's going to have an audience for it - your style, your voice, your message - it's unique to everyone else even if you're talking about the same niche topic.

You don't have to be an expert already. People love following along with someone on their journey from start to finish - so share where you're at and work from there.

As for looks, it's a non-issue. Unless your purpose is to attract people with your looks, then don't worry about it. People looking for advice on parenting don't care if you have a crooked tooth or wrinkles under your eyes.

There are several ways you can position yourself as a leader - in a way that's comfortable to you. It doesn't mean you have to get out there and brag about how wonderful you are - it means you do the right thing and your audience automatically lifts you up to authority status.

Be a Researcher and a Sharer

No matter what niche you're in, there's news that needs to be shared. There are new:

- Breakthroughs
- Trends
- Strategies
- Products
- People

You want to share all of that with your target audience. Yes, even share who your competitors are! We'll get more into that in the next section. If you're in the anti-aging niche, for example, you might share a medical breakthrough that helps plump up crow's feet.

Maybe you'll see a news story about how women are flocking to plastic surgeons to get rid of their "Madonna Mitts" - which is what the industry termed her aging hands.

You can share things like which anti-aging treatments people can do at home that you've tried and feel work best. Stay abreast of top manufacturers' or sellers' product releases and then talk to your audience about it.

Your blog or your email subscriber list will be the place where your subscriber feels they can go to gather all of the information they want. They don't want to have to go all over the Internet and buy a bunch of different products to see what works best - that's what they'll love you for!

Whenever you blog about something with a cutting-edge slant to it, you increase your worth in the niche. Your readers will bookmark and share your site with others, they'll trust your recommendations whenever you want to promote something, too.

The lazy (unsuccessful) marketer does nothing but look at keyword volume, outsource their content to ghostwriters without injecting any of their own personality, and basically copycats the true leaders who are out there working for their audience the way they should be.

Align Yourself with the Best People

When you're a true leader, you're never running solo the entire time you spend growing an online business. The top marketers understand that you work individually, but you stay connected with a team of like-minded leaders on the 'net.

Don't be afraid of your competition - embrace them. They can be guest bloggers or invite you to guest blog on their site, they can co-create products with you, and they can cross-promote you whenever you sign up as an affiliate to promote one of their products.

Don't just look to people who are bigger in status than you are, either. You want to keep an eye out for rising stars in your niche and help make them well-known, too.

It's not just competitors who you should align yourself with, either. It's anyone whose products or services are related to your own niche in some way. Let's go through an example.

Suppose you run a diet blog that teaches people how to embrace a healthy lifestyle through nutrition. You want people to adopt lifelong eating habits that improve their lives.

You can certainly promote other leaders in the diet niche - like someone specializing in juicing, for example - but you also want to connect with someone whose information is relevant, if not directly identical.

An exercise and fitness leader would be a good example of this. People learning about good nutrition often want the whole-body approach, which means moving your body and getting fit.

You also might want to align with:

- A parenting leader so you can help their audience learn about good nutrition for growing kids.
- An aging leader so you can teach good nutrition for senior citizens.
- A job success leader so you can offer information about staying alert and energetic during a long workday.

There are endless possibilities for someone if you think about the target audience who needs what you teach and then consider who else they might be learning from. Here are some more examples:

- A smoking cessation leader so you can help smokers quit their bad habit without gaining a lot of weight.
- An Amazon affiliate who runs a site about desserts so you can provide information on healthier dessert options.
- A skincare leader so you can teach good nutrition that helps your skin maintain its youth and appeal.

Make a list and then make it a point to reach out to those other leaders and form a bond with them so that you can help each other out as you both grow your online business.

Promote and Produce with Ethics in Mind

Never create products where you intend to leave vital information out or intentionally mislead your target audience. People who market products based on trends or fads alone often do it without even considering whether or not it's the right thing to do.

They're after only one thing - money.

When you create products, don't do what some online experts do and leave crucial details out of the product - in an attempt to squeeze more money out of your target audience at a later date.

Here's a good example:

As an Internet Marketing leader, you might put out a product that teaches someone how to blog. But your blog product only covers the topics like finding what to blog about, how often to blog, engaging your customers.

All of this is good information, of course - but you left out a very important part of the puzzle - how to set up the blog in the first place! This kind of behavior isn't always intentional.

You might have truly forgotten that the reader doesn't even know how to buy a domain name, get hosting, and install a blog because you're well past that stage. Still, it's your responsibility as a good leader to provide that for them.

Don't leave it out so you can sell it as separate information in another course, or as an upsell or one time offer. That's not the attitude of a true leader - that's the attitude of a leech.

Be Accessible to Your Audience

Accessibility is important to your prospects and customers. So few marketers are truly open to hearing from their customers and when it happens, word spreads and you cultivate the right kind of reputation.

Many marketers put up a wall between themselves and their online audience. They don't engage in blog comment discussions once a post is created. Even Seth Godin himself doesn't even allow comments on his blog anymore - and he's always talking about developing a loyal tribe.

So it's good to see marketers who are there for their audience and who take time to interact with the people who need and want their help. There are even some marketers who create a help desk so that tickets are opened, rather than a simple email sent.

Of course, that's an option for you, and it might even be necessary if you have a lot of technique elements to your site, but it means a lot when your reader can just contact you - and get a response from you, not a virtual assistant that you've hired - or worse - made up to make it look like you're more important than you really are (it happens).

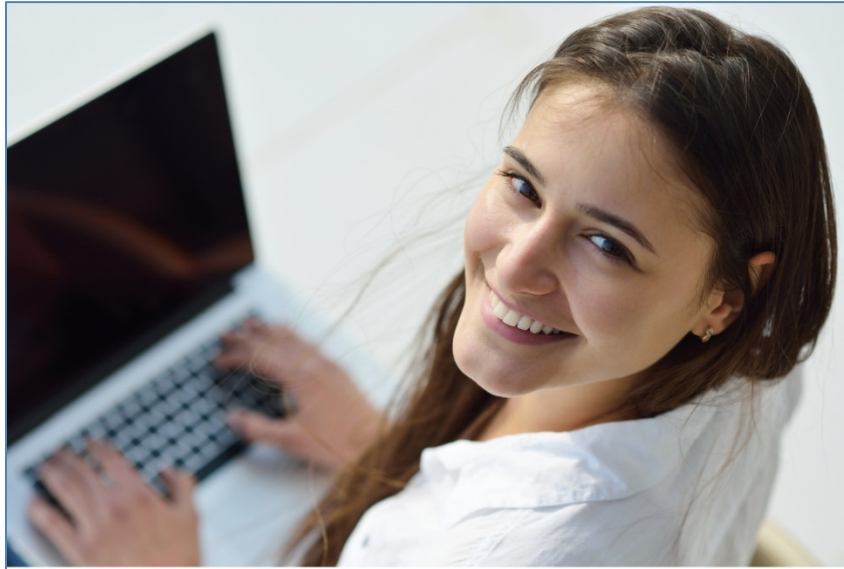
The best way to be accessible as a leader in your niche is to do the following:

- Respond to people on social networks like Twitter, G+, and Facebook.
- Respond to blog comments whenever you go in to approve them.
- Reply personally to your emails.
- Open comments up on things like YouTube videos to show you care about feedback.

All of these things take time, yes. But that's where you can really put a personal touch on your usually sterile online business. Going the extra mile can serve you well as a niche leader. It shows you care.

You don't have to incorporate all of these elements in one day. It will take some time to integrate them all into your business, and you may have to outsource in some other areas to free up some of your time.

Stay on top of your socialization and personalization and it makes it less overwhelming. Don't take a lot of time with it, just do it and move on without stalling and getting mired down in lengthy discussions every single time. Acknowledgement is all some people will need - to know that they've been heard and appreciated.



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