

Step 1: Know your audience

- What keeps your market awake at night – what do they stare at the ceiling worrying about?
- What are they afraid of?
- Is there something they are angry about, who are they angry at?
- What are their top 3 daily frustrations
- What is happening in their business and their business lives?
- What do they secretly desire most?
- Is there a built in bias in how they make decisions? E.g. Accountants need a lot of information before they can make a decision?
- Does your market have its own language/jargon?
- Who else is selling something similar to them and how?
- Who else has tried selling them something similar and failed?

Step 2: Know what you want to achieve with the article – What is your goal

It is easier to write articles when you know what you are trying to achieve. It might be to inform the customer of pertinent information or else to get them to take up a specific offer.

Step 3: What type of article do you want?

- Problem / solution
- How-tos
- Explanations – 'how stuff works'
- Top tips
- Opinion / analysis
- Look into the future
- Fable
- Horror/disaster story
- Case study
- Seasonality
- Reviews
- Educational content
- "Best of"
- Surveys / feedback request
- Event recommendations
- Resource links
- Amusing or inspirational anecdotes, stories and quotes
- Answering feedback
- Interviews
- News
- Statistics and lists
- Quizzes
- Contests
- Product News
- Company news
- Stories about people in the company
- Previews of upcoming events
- Milestones
- Editorial Or Regular Columns
- Quality Control stories
- Community affairs
- Personal achievements and milestones
- History of company people product or your community (not just a geographical community either)
- Forums for Q/A etc

Step 3.5: Still Not Sure - Here's Some More Ideas!

- How to Survive "X" Article
- The Most Common Mistakes Article
- Time to "X" Article
- Shortcuts to "X" Article
- Barriers to "X" Article
- The Beginners Guide to "X" Article
- How to Turn "X" into "Y"
- 3 Stages of "X" Article
- How to "X" Article
- Signs & Symptoms of "X" Article
- Top 10 Lists
- (#) Steps Article
- Story Article
- Question & Answers Article
- Pondering on a particular subject Article
- Just plain pondering Article
- Traps to avoid article
- Universal Laws article
- Rules for "X" Article
- Bust a Myth about "X" Article
- Warning Signs of "X" Article
- The 5 and 5 (The 5 do's and 5 don'ts)
- Seasonal Articles (eg - Christmas, Easter, Summer)
- Topical Article
- Conduct an Interview
- Create a Series of Articles
- A Book Review
- A Movie Review
- What I Learned From "X" Article
- Perform a RANT about "X" Article

Step 4: Choose A Topic

Okay... So now you know what type of article you want, but can't decide on a topic...

Start by thinking about the benefits that your customers are interested in about your product / industry. / area of expertise.

Brainstorm different areas to write about. Start with Broad Topics. Here is an example of some of our broad topics

- Customer Retention
- Repeat Business
- Referrals
- Social Proof
- Copy In Newsletters
- Design of Newsletters

Next you want to pick a broad topic and go deeper. - For example if I chose "Design of Newsletters" I could go deeper like this:

- best practices
- Images in Newsletters
- Font in newsletters
- colour or black & white
- common mistakes
- professional vs DIY

Step 4.5: Still Not Sure - This Will Help You Brainstorm

Here are some questions that will get your brain really moving and I promise if you read through this list you'll have plenty of ideas about articles to write.

1. WHAT KEEPS YOUR READERS UP AT NIGHT?
2. Can you describe your PERFECT customer?
3. Can you describe Your WORST customer?
4. What questions do you get most often from customers?
5. What's a dirty little secret in your industry?
6. What's your favourite customer success story?
7. What's the funniest/craziest thing that ever happened to you in your business?
8. What's your personal business philosophy?
9. What's the best reason for a customer to NOT do business with you?
10. What can you teach your readers to do (for free) that would help them solve a chronic problem?
11. Are there other services, providers, products that you can recommend to your readers?
12. Is there "conventional wisdom" in your industry that is just plain wrong
13. What things is your company NOT good at?
14. How and why did you get into the business you're in?
15. What's your most embarrassing failure story?
16. What lies are told in your industry?
17. What do you find yourself complaining about most?
18. What's your favourite part about coming to work everyday?
19. Consider your customers over the last 6 months. Do you see any patterns? Any great stories? Any complaints you handled well?
20. Can you write a cheat sheet?
21. Can you write to your customers and ask them what they would like to read about?
22. What is the most common exaggeration in your industry?
23. Do you have a blog...if so, what's your most popular blog post?
24. Have you been interviewed for a radio show? Newspaper article?
25. Has your company been mentioned on TV? Trade publication?
26. Have you written a Free report? Checklist? Guide? Instruction manual? Book?
27. If you were to survey your list, what would you ask them?
28. Who are/were your mentors?
29. What email subject line would ruin your business? Think of the worst subject line you can.
30. What is your greatest non-business success?
31. What was the last trip/vacation you took?
32. What is the next step you'd like the reader to take? How can you make it easier for him/her to take it?

33. Think of the most recent current event/ pop culture reference that captured your attention. Can you relate it to your business? Can you make a contrast between the way "the world" thinks and the way your readers think?
34. What's the most profound story from your personal life?
35. What is your most profound "Eureka!" moment when you finally "got it"?
36. What's the biggest mistake you ever made in your business?
37. Have you ever "fired" a customer?
38. What is your business "motto"? Do you have a phrase or famous quote you find yourself saying to yourself, your co-workers, your family?
39. Can you interview (either in person, on the phone or thru email) an expert in your industry or a related field?
40. What's the most earth-shattering claim you can make about your business?
41. What's the saddest experience you've had that you learned the most from
42. What's the most common misconception your readers/customers have about what you do?
43. Have you ever walked away from short-term money because you knew it would cause long-term problems?
44. What's the earliest/most favourite childhood memory you have of being interested in your business or in business in general?
45. What's your favourite childhood memory... not business related?
46. What are three character traits that you have in common with most of your customers?
47. What problems do you face that your customers also face?
48. What's your favourite "war story"?
49. Who has been your most hated "enemy"?
50. What's your most gruesome war story?
51. What are your readers' idiosyncrasies?
52. Who are your readers' heroes?
53. Who are your heroes?
54. If you were to compare a customer's (or your) success story to a fairy tale or famous movie...which one would it be?
55. What is the boldest challenge you could make to your readers?
56. What's the sweetest deal you could make as a last ditch effort to get a reader to buy?
57. What was your last job before this one? What did you learn there?
58. What are the characteristics that separate the winners from the "wannabes" on your list?
59. What's your favourite "paid your dues" story?
60. In what ways does the 80/20 rule apply to your business/industry/reader list?
61. What's your favorite song? Novel? Movie? Painting? Poem? Sculpture? Play? Joke? TV Show? Why?
62. What businesses do you admire? Hate?
63. What advertisements do you admire? Hate?
64. What do you want your customers to say about you to their friends? Business associates?
65. What's the geeky-est thing you've ever done? A time where you just got lost and obsessed?

66. What's your take on the latest industry news?
67. What's the FUNNEST thing about doing business with you?
68. What "negative" about you is actually a positive thing about you?
69. What are the biggest costs your readers will incur if they don't do business with you?
70. What analogies do you find yourself using the most when discussing your business?
71. Do you have special procedures, policies or people that make you unique?
72. What are your business goals for this year? Next year? Five years?
73. What's the most outrageous guarantee you can make?
74. What's the dumbest thing a customer ever did?
75. What is your favourite "downtime" activity?
76. What are the three main reasons your product is so expensive? So inexpensive?
77. What do your competitors say about your product/service?
78. What's the best thing you can say about your toughest competitor?
79. How did you land your first customer?
80. What's the most "imperfect" thing about your product/service?
81. If you had to make a list of 99 things, what topic would you choose?
82. What does your spouse know better about your business than you do?
83. Would you recommend your children pursue a job in your industry?
84. If you were king of the world, what 3 things would you change about the world/your industry?
85. What is/was your worst character flaw?
86. If you were to segment your customers into 3 or 4 "types" what would they be?
87. If you could slap your readers upside the head and get just ONE idea through their thick skulls, what would it be?
88. If you had to give a speech at your industry's trade show, what topic would you choose?
89. What's the most common reason that customers DELAY doing business with you? Do you have "I wish I had done this sooner" testimonials?
90. Can you invite readers to your home? Office? Plant?
91. Can you run a contest?
92. Can you ask readers to beta test? Take a demo? or a test drive for a reduced rate?
93. Why don't you carry a notepad and pencil with you at all times?

List of Events by Month for tie in with your newsletter articles

Any entry with 'movable' in brackets after it should be checked for its exact dates

January

- New Years Day
- Elvis Presley's Birthday
- National Hat Day
- Peter Roget's Birthday (Roget's Thesaurus)
- Groundhog Day
- Australia Day
- Edmund Barton's Birthday (First Australian PM)

February

- Mardi Gras (depending on Easter)
- Ash Wednesday (depending on Easter)
- Monopoly first went on sale in 1935
- Valentine's Day
- Super bowl Sunday
- Leap Day
- Footy season starts...

March

- Dr Seuss's Birthday
- Labour Day (In Vic, Tas and WA)
- St Patricks Day
- Easter Weekend
- Qadr (Islamic Holiday based on lunar calendar)
- Make up your own holiday day
- Equinox
- Real Footy season starts

April

- April Fool's Day
- Anniversary of the invention of the dollar sign
- Da Vinci's Birthday
- Jewish Passover (moveable)
- Easter (moveable)
- Queen Elizabeth II's actual birthday
- Earth day

May

- Cinco De Mayo
- Lost Sock Memorial Day
- Mother's day
- Pentecost Sunday (49 days after Easter)
- Florence Nightingale's birthday (Nurse)
- Star Wars Day/George Lucas' birthday
- JFK's birthday

June

- Solstice
- Flag Day
- Donald Trump's birthday
- Queen's Birthday Holiday/Foundation Day in WA

July

- American Independence day
- Man lands on the Moon
- Arnold Schwarzenegger's Birthday
- J.K. Rowling's Birthday
- Amelia Earhart Day

August

- Left Hander's Day
- International day of lucid dreaming
- International Youth Day
- Gifted and Talented Awareness Day
- International Cat Day
- World Dog Day

September

- Dr Phil's Birthday
- Equinox
- Ramadan starts (movable)
- Talk like a pirate day
- Rosh Hashanah
- World Rubber Day
- Engineer's Day

October

- Eid al-Fitr Day – the Day after Ramadan ends
- Yom Kippur (Movable)
- Evel Knievel's Birthday
- Sukkot (Movable)
- Simchat Torah (Movable)
- Billy Gate's Birthday
- Halloween
- Canadian Thanks Giving (Zac is Canadian and has an axe to grind)

November

- Guy Fawkes Night
- Melbourne Cup Day
- All Saints Day
- American Thanksgiving
- Black Friday
- Billy the kids birthday

December

- Charles Ringling birthday (Ringling's Circus)
- Civil Aviation Day
- Solstice
- Christmas
- Hanukkah (moveable)
- Kwanzaa
- New Years Eve
- Ben & Zac's Birthdays