

Content Chunking for Nonfiction

Why, What, How

by Tanya Hall

Material you already have within the pages of a forthcoming book can become an arsenal of content that serves you across multiple platforms before, at, and after publication day.

Here's a look at a few ways to make content in your books do double duty.

Use it in your blog. Blogging provides an opportunity to engage with readers, create a sense of community, and test new ideas. Many bloggers also appreciate the disciplined approach to writing that blogging creates—you may be more likely to flesh out and finish up short pieces derived from a book when you know there's an audience waiting for them.

A typical nonfiction manuscript yields 15 to 20 standalone blog posts. Look for ideas that don't require the book's complete framework to make a clear point.

If you identify passages from one to four paragraphs long and index them by subject matter, you will have a "content matrix" file that will make specific posts easy to find when you need them. Your well-organized content matrix should be rich with keywords to help you identify appropriate material quickly.

At the end of each blog post, include a reference to the book the content comes from, and information about where and how to order the book.

Use it in guest blog posts. Once you've identified your standalone blog posts, don't limit them to your own blog. A well-placed guest post can bring exposure to new readers and be a great way to boost an author platform.

Use tools like Alexa and Technorati to research high-traffic, high-quality

blogs by people with expertise that's complementary to yours. For instance, a management/leadership blog might welcome a career coach's post on hiring and firing.

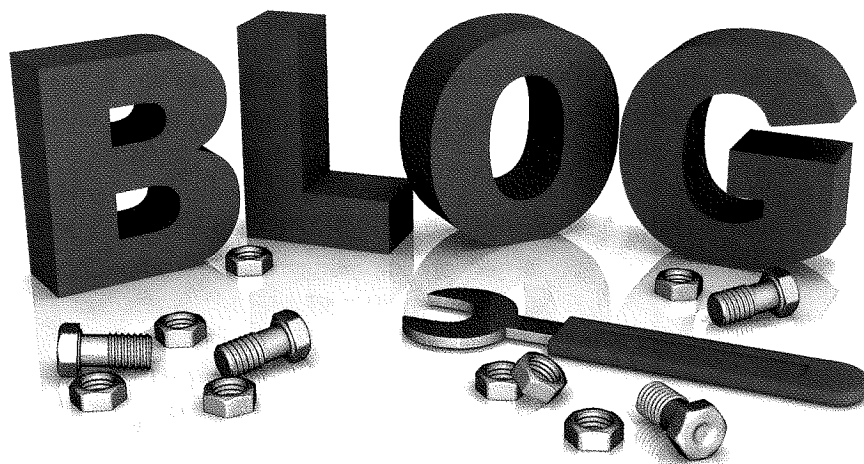
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Host bloggers often want content that hasn't appeared elsewhere online; if you identify posts in your content that could easily be syndicated, pursue the high-traffic guest blog opportunities before posting them on your own site.

Use it in tweets. Harvest Twitter tweets of no more than 140 characters straight from your book.

Compelling statistics, memorable quotes, and interesting generalizations can all make strong tweets. Preschedule these in Twitter to make your social media strategy manageable, since it's okay to automate your information sharing (although not your interaction).

Use in social media responses. Increasingly, people are turning to online communities for answers to their questions. LinkedIn has a dedicated area for Q&A where strong answers earn points for their helpful-



ness. Other sites, such as Quora, are completely dedicated to questions and answers.

Many times, blog posts (or excerpts from blog posts) can serve as answers to questions posed in these forums.

Use your content matrix and work backward, doing searches on the sites for questions containing keyword concepts that you have indexed (“Hiring Great Employees,” “How to Green Your Office,” etc.).

In your profile or in the post itself, always mention your book and Web site.

Use it in standalone articles. While I’ve been focusing mostly on online opportunities so far, print media such as magazines and newspapers still provide huge audience reach—and also typically have online counterparts.

Having an article published in a major national magazine is a great credibility and platform booster. Standalone articles of this nature are generally quite a bit longer than blog posts, and while the core idea will come from your book, the content may need to be customized a bit to suit the magazine.

Start by identifying the top- and middle-tier publications that publish articles related to the content of your book. Take the time to read through a few recent issues to get a feel for the editorial voice of each periodical and the subject areas it commonly covers.

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Most magazines publish submission guidelines (also called “writer’s guidelines”) that spell out the ideal length, proper format to submit in, and payment/rights details. Armed with that information, customize content from your book as required.

As with guest blogs, most magazines want material that hasn’t appeared elsewhere, so pitch your content strategically, starting with the top tier and approaching the middle tier only after exploring the top tier, but also give priority to periodicals that are geared precisely to your audience.

Use it in new books. One way to do this is by merging different yet complementary content. You might start with a relatively general title and enhance it by blending in content from another book to create a new volume catering to a specific audience.

For example, material from a book on health and wellness for readers over 40 years old could be blended with material from a book on vegan cooking to create a guide for health and wellness for vegans over 40—assuming, of course, that you have the rights you need for this kind of repurposing.

Recipes from national cuisine cookbooks could become an around-the-world cookbook.

Similarly, material from a book on job hunting/interviewing skills could blend with material from a book about using LinkedIn to create a complete guide to finding and landing a job.

Clearly, this approach won’t be suitable for all titles, and usually additional editorial work will be necessary to create a consistent voice throughout the newly blended work.

Another alternative involves selecting material from many books in the same genre to create a new title (and also perhaps offering that material through content aggregators). For instance, you might combine recipes from cookbooks about various national cuisines to create an around-the-world cookbook, or combine excerpts from travel books about particular states to create a travel book for a region. As above, you would need to be sure that you are legally entitled to reuse this content this way.

DOUBLE-DUTY DIVIDENDS

While it’s possible to go back through a completed book and pull content to repurpose, it’s much more efficient to identify excerpts for repurposing during the editorial process.

Each nonfiction work will do better in some content channels than in others. Think about the target audience(s) and where they spend time before you plan your content-repurposing strategy. Good planning and organization will pay off before, during, and after a book launch, leaving you with more time and less stress. ■

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