

Authority Through Alliances

The Authority Bloggers Guide to Creating Profitable Partnerships

by Chris Garrett

<http://www.chrisg.com/>
<http://authorityblogger.com/>
<http://probbloggerbook.com/>

chrisg.com

AuthorityBlogger
strategic blogging for business and professionals

It's good to share!

This special report was delivered free to chrisg.com email subscribers. It will be available for the month of September 2008 only. After that, it will be removed from circulation. Use it or lose it!

Feel free to forward to your friends and colleagues. See the back page for copyright details.

If you were sent this document by a friend, **make sure you subscribe** via email at <http://www.chrisg.com/subscribe/> to receive future exclusive special reports and a **free ebook download** "Creating Killer Flagship Content".

Thanks for reading. When you are finished, please do email it, post it on your blog or tweet about it to whoever you believe would benefit from it.

Contents

The Question.....	4
The Answer.....	4
How can you make an income with no audience?	5
The Art of the Alliance	6
Benefits of Partnering	6
Typical Offers	7
Stop! Get Your Head in the Game.....	7
Be Prepared.....	8
What DO You Have to Offer Partners?	9
Use Social Proof.....	10
Making Introductions and Offers.....	11
Who to Approach?	11
Partner Deals	11
Making the Partner Offer.....	12
Finally.....	13
Always Build Your List.....	13
Tracking and Success	13
Disclaimer and Copyright.....	14

The Question

As part of the call for your most important questions, via the Authority Blogger list, and more recently my blogging survey, I was sent several great questions that can be rephrased as:

- “How can I grow my subscribers?”
- “How can I take my blog to the next level?”
- “How can I get other bloggers to notice me?”
- “How can I reach new audiences?”
- “How can I sell more?”

As you can imagine, I had lots of options going through my mind when I read these questions. They are popular themes and things every blogger will think about. For this first special report though I wanted something with a greater positive impact on more people.

I needed to focus on just one approach; I had to draw out a single strategy that would trump the others. Then I remembered a Flagship Content starter question that was perfect for this:

“What would you do if you had to start over again, from scratch, and still make your mortgage payment, in only one months time?”

It's a tricky question, and having only a month time frame forces you into doing only what works, and fast.

If you are ever in a fix trying to come up with a report yourself, try answering it. It works for a lot of markets and niches. Anyway, back to the question at hand ...

The Answer

So I had my starting point, now the question needed answering. I narrowed all my strategy ideas down to a simple answer that I would be completely confident in employing. In fact, the strategy comes down to two things I am sure you would predict and one missing tactic that I don't often talk about.

1) **An Authority Blog** - You would need to build credibility, fast, and with only a month time limit you don't want to be relying on any techniques such as advertising that depend on you building a huge audience with masses of traffic, you want to be successful by gaining a smaller audience of people who really want to listen to you.

2) **Flagship Content** - Both to support the first item and also to provide fuel for the third, super-tactic. Flagship Content is the glue that binds everything I recommend together.

So, what is the third, magical tactic?

Remember you are starting from nothing, you have no readers, no list, no feed subscribers; you are at square one.

How can you make an income with no audience?

Yes, it is possible to make a good income with no audience, no list, no traffic and with very little niche profile. The answer is simple ...

3) *Access Other People's Resources*

You might not have an audience of your own but you do need one, so you gain time in front of someone else's. If you already have an audience this is a brilliant way to grow it, effectively and fast.

Of course the first way you can access someone else's audience while helping someone out is by guest posting. Guest posting works, but there are so many more options available to you.

This special report is not just about accessing outside audiences, and it is not just about guest posting. What I am talking about is creating powerful and profitable alliances where you can grow your profile, subscriptions, traffic and profitability.

If this sounds like something you would like, read on!

The Art of the Alliance

When mentioning an alliance or partnering I am talking about when two or more people come together to achieve a common objective by pooling their resources. It's friends helping friends, strategic cooperation or joint venture.

By gaining access to other bloggers audiences you can rocket towards your goals faster, easier, more efficiently and with few, or even zero costs.

Don't get me wrong, this is not about taking advantage of an influential person's generosity. It is a swap; you provide value in return for value. A successful alliance, partnership or venture is when it is set up fairly, runs smoothly and everyone wins in the end.

What you need to do is find another site owner or blogger who has a sizeable audience that compliments your target market, or find an expert or niche star who has something of value to offer your own audience.

So your mission is:

- 1) Have something real and valuable to offer
- 2) Creating sufficient profile that people will listen to you
- 3) Approaching people who have resources that you need
- 4) Making an offer
- 5) Running the alliance so everyone succeeds

A great deal of low level association goes on in the blog world, but for some reason never at the level of what goes on in other industries. Outside of blog networks, you rarely see bloggers go out of their way to promote another.

This is strange when you consider the many benefits ...

Benefits of Partnering

There are many benefits of partnering with others in this business, not least the simple social benefits that naturally come from working with other people. Here are some specifics:

- **Grow your audience** – This is the fastest way to grow your audience by attracting the right people
- **Gain credibility** – Through personal recommendation from someone they trust other publishers will be delivering new readers predisposed to listen to you
- **Social Proof** – Connected to the last point, if you are seen associating with the names of your niche then your profile is cemented and grows
- **Sell products and services** – A positive review or endorsement, combined with access to a greater market reach, converts into sales
- **Make deeper connections and new contacts** – Through working with others they get to know you better and introduce you to new people

These are just a few of the many benefits, each deal will turn out in a unique way, and is always positive providing you make sure it all turns out correctly.

Typical Offers

You can create whatever deal works but in general there are some classic ways publishers can help each other:

- **Links** – A classic that many bloggers already take part in
- **Mentions/Reference/Testimonial** – Taking a link further, as well as a link a personal recommendation or endorsement
- **Promote** – This is where the publisher gives a push, an encouragement to sign up, read or bookmark
- **Ad swaps** – I advertise you, you advertise me
- **Review a product** – Another typical offer familiar with bloggers
- **Co-create a product** – A familiar example will be the ProBlogger book which Darren Rowse and I co-authored
- **Interview** – Darren and I have been interviewed numerous times for the ProBlogger book, we gain exposure, they get great content
- **Affiliates** – I am an affiliate for many products that I will promote because they are good value and because I get a commission for each sale
- **Supply content** – Guest posting is under this category, but so would writing a forward for a book, supplying audio for a course ...
- **Speaking** – When Liz asked me to speak at SOBCon she gained an additional speaker and I got to raise my profile in an audience that did not necessarily already know me well
- **Introductions** – Networking is all about making connections, being introduced is the easiest way
- **If you like X you might like Y** – When selling a product, bundling can make $1+1=3$
- **Co-registration** – A type of bundling, you sign up to a list then on the thank you page there are suggestions of other similar newsletters
- **Special offers and discounts** – Instead (or maybe together with) affiliates, readers of a list or site get a discount on a valuable product using a coupon code or voucher.
- **Prizes** – If you run a competition you are going to need some compelling prizes, which can be supplied by contacts who gain additional exposure and implied endorsement

As you can see, there is a lot to be gained from this kind of cooperation.

Stop! Get Your Head in the Game

A word of warning!

This is not about

- **Using people** – There has to be a fair trade; otherwise all you will do is destroy your reputation. You want to be seen as a good person to work with.
- **Tricks** – This is not a black-hat sneaky tactic, be up front, open and authentic, acknowledge the people who help you
- **Ripping people off** – If you blow up your value beyond reality then people will just feel burned and not want to associate with you, or worse
- **Winning and losing** – It's cooperation not competition, when negotiating one of these deals there should not be a winner and a loser
- **Being a doormat** – The flip-side to the previous point, don't give away the farm just because someone asked
- **Selling yourself short** – By the same thinking, you won't get if you don't ask. You might be surprised what people are willing to offer.

Be generous, open, honest and authentic, and partner with people who are the same.

Be Prepared

To get the big deals you need to be ready. Any publisher or blogger worth their salt will do at least a small amount of due diligence to see if you are worthy of partnering with. First impressions count and few people will partner with a blogger displaying a "coming soon ... under construction" page.

This means at the very least you need an Authority Blog, or something approaching that level. You need great articles in your archives and at least one piece of Flagship Content, preferably another ready to give or sell as part of the partner deal.

If you have not quite achieved a level yet where the niche stars will want to work with you, don't worry, you can still benefit greatly by working on the same level as yourself or the next rung up, and work up to the big stars.

As a check list, make sure you have ready:

- 1) Have a dedicated subscription page on a friendly URL that sells your subscription options
- 2) A good about page that lists anything to support your case such as qualifications, achievements and testimonials
- 3) Something valuable to offer

Worried about that last one? Don't be ...

What DO You Have to Offer Partners?

You might be wondering at this point what you have to offer potential partners. Never fear, you might have more to give than you think you do.

- **Expertise** – Even the biggest stars of a niche will be missing some specialist knowledge, your Flagship Content could be a door opener for this
- **Traffic** – It might not be quantity of traffic but more quality or particular demographic, you could even pay for it if you have the budget
- **Subscriber base** – Do you have a good list or a feed count? Or maybe you have a small but extremely responsive list?
- **Credibility boost** – If you are well respected in your niche then people will want to partner with you for some of that to rub off
- **A valuable product** – Create something that customers will want and partners will want it too
- **Big commissions** – Profit is always a compelling motive
- **Contacts and connections** – Everyone wants to work with Liz Strauss, not just because she is a great person, but also because of that she is the most connected person anyone is likely to ever meet.

Be very careful with the last one, a sure fire way to lose contacts is for them to think they are being sold, used or exploited for your own gain.

Review copies are a great way to get people to talk about you and your product but people WILL try to scam a free product.

Always check out anyone who contacts you for a review copy or who wants to partner with you.

- Google and Technorati background checks
- Twitter search
- Google PR, Backlinks, Alexa, Feed subscribers
- Maybe even archive.org

On the affiliate side of things you will need to be able to record and pay affiliate commissions. Either get specialist software, use software with affiliates built in (like Amember, 1shoppingcart), or deliver your product over services with affiliates as a feature, like clickback and e-junkie.

Just as you will be checking out your partners, people will be checking you out also. Make sure the picture is as rosy as you can make it. Let's look at that now

...

Use Social Proof

Especially when starting out, you need to use every technique available to you for people to know you are worth partnering with. A great psychological technique is to show rather than tell.

- Use language that implies that people are engaged and supporting what you are doing
- Testimonials – if you haven't got any, get some. LinkedIn is a good source
- Big names who are already supporting you
- Badges, awards and buttons
- Comments, traffic, feed and list counts

Once you have prepared the ground and are ready for anyone who wants to do background checks, all that is left is to make the deal happen ...

Making Introductions and Offers

The part of all this that puts most people off is the introduction.

Approaching people with a view to getting them to help you is daunting. But think about it, isn't this just another reason to make your offer as juicy as possible, so you are providing them something of value rather than asking for a favour?

Also you do not want to make this a cold-call situation. Get onto their radar first; get known as a valuable contributor. You need to break the ice, and not seem like you are demanding in a vacuum. Of course, you don't want to be seen as a stalker either!

- 1) Go to conferences - deals happen in halls
- 2) Use Twitter
- 3) Comment on blogs, not just the person you want to target
- 4) Guest post
- 5) Make yourself useful on forums

Partner with people they know. Make yourself known, in a good way.

Who to Approach?

To begin with you might not want to aim too high, at least until you have grown in confidence and know that your deals will work out for all concerned. That said, shooting for the moon and actually winning it has got to be the biggest confidence boost of all.

Just don't be upset if you get knocked back, just move on to the next and try to learn from each.

Partner with people you are fans of. That makes people nervous, but you have to partner with people you respect and know will add value.

Also, have confidence in what you have to offer. Confidence is attractive and makes it more likely a deal will be done.

Partner Deals

Remember as I said before. it's not about just your own gain. That would be a favour, or in extreme circumstances, exploitation.

Each deal must be mutually beneficial for you, the partner and especially the audience. Ideally the audience should enjoy and gain so much value that they will anticipate your next promotion or event and bring friends.

If it goes well and everyone benefits then you will have a partner for life, and long term is what you really want to aim for.

Work out the deal first, or at least what you are willing to do, what the benefits to the partner are, and what you need in return.

The easier you can make their part of the deal the more likely they will say yes, so make the process and the instructions simple, and work on how you describe it to communicate ease and reward.

Making the Partner Offer

While some people recommend using a template to approach potential partners, I don't believe you should use a stock email. Far better you get to know the person THEN ask *personally*.

You might need to stroke their ego a tiny bit, but if you do use specifics. It's horrible when people tell you they are long time fans and you KNOW that can't be true.

Use social proof (mentioned earlier) and exclusivity; you are not offering this to just anybody.

Use these approaches carefully and cautiously, as you don't want to come across pushy, manipulative or sleazy. If you are "pitching" you are trying too hard, they need to want to be on board without being overtly sold.

Have all the details of their part to play ready, when, how and step by step what needs to happen. They need to know how to deliver, and you need to know that they will deliver, and a plan b if they do not.

The better the deal for partners, and the better you communicate, the more partners you will get, to the point where people ask to partner with you

Communication with partners is VITAL - you MUST keep in touch with partners and potential partners before, during and after. Supply your IM accounts, perhaps even your cell number.

Give LOTS of lead-time, people are busy, especially your most wanted partners. Also provide polite and well-spaced reminders so everyone makes each deadline. Provide updates of where you are with your side of the bargain.

Finally

I hope this report has given you some ideas for how you might grow your audience, build your profile and make more profit using strategic partnerships and alliances.

Here are some final thoughts:

Always Build Your List

Remember that subscribe page? Whatever happens, make sure that page is at least mentioned. Ideally, the visitor will be delivered there as part of the deal, but whatever happens, try to make sure you at least grow your list.

Always have an eye on the long term, if you gain nothing else from a deal you must at least consider ways that you can add to your email list and feeds.

Tracking and Success

You need to know which partnerships worked out, which didn't, and why for each. If you do three or more deals, how will you know which one delivered the most value?

Before going in you need to decide which criteria you will judge success on and how you will measure it. This means implementing tracking.

Affiliates are easy, the software does the counting for you, but does not tell you the how and they why, and will not tell you about issues such as reputation and credibility.

Also you need to take into account which partnerships were most easy, fun, and argument-free. This isn't supposed to be a chore, so try to work with people who make life light and straightforward rather than an uphill battle.

Disclaimer and Copyright

Here is some legal stuff. Short version: please be nice and honest when sharing this work.

(c) Chris Garrett 2008 - Some Rights Reserved.

Chris Garrett owns all publisher and ownership rights to this material. This document and any part of it may not be republished, repackaged and/or distributed in any way or for any purposes without express and prior written consent from Chris Garrett or his legal representation.

You may store, print this document for your own personal use.
You may forward this document to friends, personal contacts and colleagues.

You may WITH ATTRIBUTION, 100% UNCHANGED distribute this document or any complete, unaltered copy of the PDF file to an email list, or via your OWN blog, website, or forum providing you do not pass on any charges for this FREE document. Attribution in this instance means attributing Chris Garrett as the owner and creator of the document along with at least one active hypertext link to <http://www.chrisg.com/subscribe/>

If you think this material may be useful to your audience please as a courtesy contact Chris Garrett about where you shared it.