

VIRTUAL TIDBITS

DOCU-TYPE - VIRTUAL ASSISTANCE, WEB DESIGN & HOSTING

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Volume 9, Issue 5

September/October 2007

In this issue:

- 1 Editor's Notes
- 2 What's New?
- 2 Spotlight
- 3 **Ebooks to Build Your Business**
- 4 A Little Bit of Fun!
- 4 Back to School Safely
- 4 Dates to Remember
- 5 Cool Links
- 6 The 10 Commandments of Press Releases
- 8 Get What You Pay For
- 8 We Want to Hear From You.

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Editor's Notes:

Welcome to the latest issue of Virtual TidBits.

First things first, sorry this issue is late. Read What's New on Page 2 to find out why :-)

Well... it's that time of year again... "They're going back!"

Actually, since this newsletter is late, they have already gone back to school and inevitably that means that us small business owners can now get back into a regular business routine. I don't know about you but the summers are taken up with chauffeuring my daughter around to friend's and camp; going to her horse shows; and just plain wanting to be outside instead of in my office. I feel guilty (sometimes :-)) but we all need a little break here and there (at least that is what I tell myself) and it's amazing how much more "into" work I feel by just taking an hour or two off for myself.

We hope everyone got a chance to take some time for themselves over the summer and we wish the kids a successful transition back into school mode.

See you next time!

Sincerely,



Janice D. Byer, CCVA, MVA

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What's New?

BIG NEWS!!!!

As I mentioned in my Editor's Notes, this newsletter is a little late because... drum roll please.... **We have completely redesigned our website** and I wanted to announce it to you in Virtual TidBits.

Yup, after a year of trying to find the time to work on my own site, it is finally complete (well... almost... we are going to put up a way cool, new, flashy portfolio page to take the place of what is there now).

Not to toot my own horn (ok... yes I am :-), I think it looks awesome. The navigation is pretty cool and I have put a search feature on there so you can find anything that is included on the site by entering a keyword.

It is completely optimized using all the tips and tricks I have learned over the years and I have even included a site map on there which shows you just how LARGE this site is (and why it took over a year to build).

I invite you all to visit my site and have a look. Let me know what you

think (and if you spot any problems).

After many, many, many hours of doing this in my spare time, I am breathing a huge sigh of relief. This is the 3rd design of my site in 9 years so keep your eyes open in 3 years as I get the itch to redesign it again...LOL

For right now though, I am proud of this new site and hope you like it too!

www.docutype.net

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100 articles relating to small business and over 500 links, resources and tips to help you run your business. We even include a list of each newsletter and what articles are in each issue so you can pick which issue you want to read when you want to read it. No more of the time consuming task of downloading each issue from our website. Find out more - www.docutype.net/news.htm

Spotlight - Pets Get to Stay - www.petsgettostay.com

This website is the latest addition to the Luxury Lifestyles family of websites where just about anyone can find a property anywhere in the world that they would like to spend their vacation. From small to extravagant, if you want a home to stay in for your vacation, you can find it on their websites.

This latest website is homes that allow visitors to bring their family pets. It can be so hard to arrange a

vacation when you have to worry about finding someone to care for your family pet and then worry about them the whole time you are gone.

Pets Get To Stay allows you to bring Rover with you, isn't that great?! Be sure to book your vacation property with them if you would like to take your family pet with you (or even if you don't.

www.petsgettostay.com

And be sure to check out their other websites:

www.dreamexoticrentals.com

(which we just finished completely redesigning too)

www.europeanvacationrental.com

www.livinglarge.biz

And, if you need to rent an awesome luxury car:

www.hotcarsmiami.com

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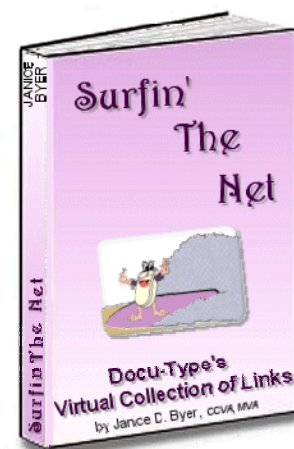
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How to Make a Blog, Website Design for Mobile Devices, ...and more

Surfin' The Net - Docu-Type's Virtual Collection of Links

Being a virtual company, I have spent many, many hours on the Internet since opening my company. During that time, I have saved quite a lot of links to sites I have been to many times; have been referred to by others; or just looked like I might need them some-time in the future.

As a way of saying thank you to my clients, contacts, associates, and the business community as a whole, I have managed to go through all of those links in my Favourites (IE) listing (wow... that was a fun job, let me tell you :-)) and have compiled them into categories here just for you.



This Ebook is a compilation of the secret weapons of our success and is a must for all small business professionals!

Also included in this ebook are some of my articles. For many years I have been writing articles that have been published in many online and print publications. I wrote these articles from my experience... they are "been there, done that" articles on a variety of subjects. I wrote them to help others so what better content to include in Surfin The Net?

And... we are even throwing in a **FREE Bonus Ebook** -
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Find out more and order your copy at
<http://www.docutype.net/SurfinTheNet/linksebook.htm>

A Little Bit of Fun

I was in Wal-Mart buying a large bag of Purina for my dogs and was in line to check out. A woman behind me asked if I had a dog.....Duh!

I was feeling a bit crabby so on impulse, I told her no, I was starting The Purina Diet again, although I probably shouldn't because I'd ended up in the hospital last time, but that I'd lost 50 pounds before I awakened in an intensive care unit with tubes coming out of most of my orifices and IV's in both arms. Her eyes about bugged out of her head.

I went on and on with the bogus diet story and she was totally buying it. I told her that it was an easy, inexpensive diet and that the way it works is to load your

pockets or purse with Purina nuggets and simply eat one or two every time you feel hungry. The package said the food is nutritionally complete so I was going to try it again.

I have to mention here that practically everyone in the line was by now enthralled with my story, particularly a tall guy behind her.

Horrified, she asked if something in the dog food had poisoned me and was that why I ended up in the hospital. I said no.....I'd been sitting in the street licking my butt when a car hit me.

I thought the tall guy was going to have to be carried out the door.

Back to School Safely by Kay Green

September is the month we think "Back to School" You know the normal tradition of buying new clothes and new school supplies. It is also the month to think about sending our kids "Back To School Safely". Will your kids be safe and protected when they go back to school? Here is a list of 8 ways to can protect your child and their belongings.

1. LABELS - We label our kids clothes and belongings.

Lets also protect our kids by having them all wear a physical ID everyday at school. That can be an ID Bracelet, Shoe stickers or Dog Tags. <http://www.mypreciouskid.com/dog-tags-personalized.html> This leaves your contact phone numbers with your child at all times.

Continued on Page 5

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Dates to Remember (for September/October 2007)

September:

4th - Labour/Labor Day
10th - Grandparents Day
22nd - Yom Kippur
24th - Heritage Day (South Africa)



October:

8th - Thanksgiving (Canada)
16th - World Food Day
24th - United Nations Day
31st - Halloween

(These dates come from a variety of online resources and are correct, to the best of my knowledge)

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Cool Links

Yet again, this past couple of months I have had to deal with those who have plagiarized my website and the content that is on there. Please note that you can't just copy content from someone else's website and use it on your own site without their permission.

During this round of finding sites that have copied my content, I came across several who used my Benefits page (that seems to be the most popular content to copy) but I even

ran into one site that had all of my main pages, word for word, image for image on their domain. They didn't even bother to change the hyperlinks. Duh!!!! So, the links from their homepage to their "supposed" services page, actually send to my services page. LOL (I could say more but you can just imagine how amused I am by this).

Anyway, I don't want anyone else to have to go through this (including the chick who said she didn't copy my site but that I must have copied hers...

yeah right... I have been in business for 9 years and she has been for 2 ... do the math, chick!). So, today's cool links are two things...

First, if you want to check to see if anyone is copying your content, go to <http://www.copyscape.com>.

And second, I wrote an article series on what else to do and invite you to read it at <http://www.docutype.net/articles/sitetheft1.htm>

Back to School Safely

(Cont'd from Page 4)

3. IDENTIFY - Use shoe stickers to identify all their belongings with your family name and several contact phone numbers. Do not however have the child's name in plain view to strangers (on back packs and lunch boxes). <http://www.mypreciouskid.com/name-stickers.html> Put the info INSIDE.

4. FRIENDS - Know your children's friends, their names, addresses, and phone numbers. Remind them they are to never go to a friends after school without calling home FIRST!

5. DAILY PLAN - Talk each morning about the days plans and remind them to call you BEFORE changing any part of the daily plan.

6. CODE WORD- Teach them to never go anywhere with someone they do not know. Have a family

CODE WORD that only family members know.

7. WALK or DRIVE them to and from school and the bus stop. In this day and age it is not safe to let our kids walk alone or wait alone for a bus.

8. MEDICAL RELEASE - Give every person who ever cares for your child in your absence a Medical Release ID Card. It contains a medical release signature that lets authorities treat your child in your absence plus all your family contact numbers. <http://www.mypreciouskid.com/medical-release-card-kit.html> One goes to school, scouts, daycare, sports, pre-school, church, grandma, and anyone else who has your child with them.

Children's safety has become a high priority in this day and age. As a parent I am thinking about every time

my child leaves the house. I have learned to make sure she has her jacket, her lunch and her ID every day. Will you send your kids "Back to School Safely" this year too?

Articles written by Kay Green, Christian homeschool mom to Melissa 24, Jordan 22, Allison 19, Haley 7. Her and her husband of 28 years live in Oregon with their children.

Kay owns:

<http://www.MyPreciousKid.com>
Child Safety & Baby Gear Company.

<http://www.PreciousKids.org>

Adoption & Homeschool Resources

<http://www.123HomeBusinessGuide.com>

Home Business Resources

<http://www.KayGreen.com>

Author and Family Site

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The 10 Commandments of Press Releases by Bill Stoller

In baseball, it's said that you know an umpire is top-notch when you never notice his presence. If he's doing his job, he won't call attention to himself in any way. It's much the same for the writer of a press release. When the recipient of a release focuses only on its content ~ and not on its creation ~ the writer has succeeded. With that in mind, here's The 10 Commandments of Press Releases:

1. Thou Shalt Be Professional. No goofy fonts, rainbow paper or silly gimmicks. Even lighthearted press releases represent a communication between one professional and another.

2. Thou Shalt Not Be Promotional. If you can't get enough objective distance from your company to write a press release that's not filled with hype and puffery, hire someone to write it for you.

3. Thou Shalt Not Be Boring. Even the driest subject matter allows for some sparks of creativity. Journalists like knowing that there's a human being communicating with them, not some corporate robot.

4. Thou Shalt Be Brief. Learn to cut out extraneous words. Keep your sentences short. Include only the points necessary to sell the story. The well-crafted one page press release is a thing of beauty.

5. Thou Shalt Know Thy Recipient. A features or lifestyle editor is a very different creature from a city desk editor. If you're promoting the opening of a new winery, the food and wine editor may be interested in all the details about what kind of aging process and wine press you're using. The city desk editor just wants to know when the grand opening is and what's going to happen there.

6. Thou Shalt Use The Proper Tense. When writing a hard news release ~ a contract signing, a stock split, a major announcement, etc.) use the past tense (Acme Industries has changed its name to AcmeCo, the company announced today...) When writing a soft news release ~ a

trend story, a personal profile, etc. ~ use the present tense (Jane Smith is one of the best marathon runners over 40. She's also blind. Thanks to new technology from AcmeCo, Jane is able to...).

7. Thou Shalt Think Visually. A press release is more than words ~ it's a visual document that will first be assessed by how it looks.

I'm referring to more than font size or letterhead. I'm talking about the actual layout of the words. Whether received by mail, fax or e-mail, a journalist ~ often unconsciously ~ will make decisions about whether to read the release based on how the release is laid out. Big blocks of text and long paragraphs are daunting and uninviting. Short paragraphs and sentences make for a much more visually inviting look.

When writing a non-hard news release, I often use a simple formula ~ the lead paragraph should be one or two sentences at most. The next paragraph should be very, very short.

Like this.

8. Thou Shalt Tell A Story. How to arrange the facts of a hard news release is pretty much cut and dried. The old "who, what, when, where and how" lead and "inverted pyramid" concepts still hold. (Rather than engage you in a course in basic newswriting, I'll direct you to a really good discussion of what the inverted pyramid is.

Check out:

<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=52&aid=38693>

Continued on Page 7

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The 10 Commandments of Press Releases Cont'd from Page 6

So let's focus on a soft news release. The trend story, the feel-good company story, the "gee-whiz, I didn't know anyone was doing that!" release. The difference between these releases and the hard news release is simply a mirror of the difference between a feature story in, say, the entertainment section of your newspaper and the breaking news report on page one. The hard news story is about cold, hard facts (A mudslide closed portions of Interstate 70 last night, causing massive delays). A feature article about the guy who spends all day looking at seismograph readouts trying to predict where the next mudslide will occur will be very different. It's likely to be in present tense, it won't load all the facts upfront and it will be designed to draw the reader deep into the text. It is, in short, all about storytelling.

Here's the formula I use for these kinds of releases. I call it the 3S approach ~ Situation/Surprise/Support.

The first paragraph sets up the situation. The second paragraph reveals the surprise. The third paragraph supports the claim made in the second paragraph.

One very typical 3S is discussing a common problem in the first paragraph (For centuries, people have accepted memory loss as an inevitable result of aging.) The "surprise" paragraph announces the solution to the problem (But one local man says he's ready to prove the medical establishment wrong.) The "support" paragraph then tells the story. (John Smith, an Anytown entrepreneur, says he's found the key to retaining a strong memory function far into old age. His "Memory Maker" software is based on ancient Chinese texts that were used more than 2000 years ago to...)

Another 3S ~ let's revisit our mudslide watching friend. How would you start his story using this method?

While John Smith's colleagues at the National Atmospheric Center are watching the skies for signs of lightning and tornadoes, his attention is focused elsewhere.

John Smith is listening to the mud.

As the Chief Mudslide Analyst at the NAC, Smith spends his days glued to a seismograph, eyes and ears peeled for the telltale signs on an impending slide.

Along with the 3S in action, I also followed the 7th Commandment.

That really short second paragraph is a visual grabber, and will keep the journalist reading right into the meat of the release.

9. Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness. This may seem an obvious point, but it always bears repeating.

Tell the truth.

Don't inflate, don't confabulate, don't exaggerate. Don't twist facts, don't make up numbers, don't make unsubstantiated claims.

Any decent journalist will be able to see right through this. If you're lucky, you're release will just get tossed out. If you're unlucky, you'll be exposed.

It's a chance not at all worth taking. Make sure every release you write is honest and on the level.

10. Thou Shalt Know Thy Limitations. Not everyone can write a press release. A good feature release, in particular, isn't an easy thing to craft. If you just don't feel like you have the chops to get the job done, hire a professional.

One last tip: right before you start writing your release, spend an hour or two reading your daily paper, paying special attention to stories similar in feel to yours. Immerse yourself in how the pros do it and you'll be in the right frame of mind to tackle the job! To view professional press releases updated daily, go to: <http://www.publicityinsider.com> and click on the "Press Release Gallery"

About The Author:

Bill Stoller, the "Publicity Insider", has spent two decades as one of America's top publicists. Now, through his website, eZine and subscription newsletter, Free Publicity: The Newsletter for PR-Hungry Businesses <http://www.PublicityInsider.com/freepub.asp> he's sharing ~ for the very first time ~ his secrets of scoring big publicity. For free articles, killer publicity tips and much, much more, visit Bill's exclusive new site: <http://www.PublicityInsider.com>

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Get What You Pay For by Bob Osgoodby

It's no secret that we have been outsourcing much of our support for products and services to India. Why, because it is cheaper due to a lower wage being paid. But is it cheaper in the long run? I don't think so.

I can understand their thinking when it comes to the manufacturing of products. But they are totally dropping the ball when it comes to service. When I purchase something, I expect support if I have a problem. I first expect to speak with someone who speaks my language. It does little good if you are unable to effectively communicate with someone who is supposed to be there to help you. I also expect that the person providing the support is knowledgeable in their product. And finally, I expect the people providing the support to be responsive.

Some personal examples that I have experienced include the support offered by a major computer manufacturer. Many of their products come from China, and some of the instructions included with the product, are a poor translation of the technical details necessary for the installation and use of the product. So you call their support number only to be connected with someone who also barely speaks your language.

Last month, New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo said his office had received an unprecedented number of complaints against Dell (Computers), amounting to approximately 700. "We want fairness," Cuomo said Wednesday.

"Either provide the customer service packages that you sell or don't sell the packages."

I had a problem with the Internet Service provided by Comcast. Someone was sending out hundreds of thousands of emails and forging my return email address. I contacted them as I was getting thousands of returned emails every day which had bad email addresses (bounces). Their response was to threaten to shut down my email unless I stopped doing it. I tried to explain to them that I wasn't sending them, but to no avail.

They were not listening and were not responsive. The emails were actually being sent from a computer in Russia. I finally solved part of the problem by speaking with their supervisor. He realized that I was not the guilty party, but could do nothing to stop the bounces coming to me. The problem eventually went away when the perpetrator stopped forging my address.

I am having a current problem with one of my web space providers - the

Bit Shack. When I first started with them, they were great. But then the Company was sold and now the support is virtually non-existent. The only way to contact their support department is by email, and they solve their problem by not answering the emails - totally unacceptable.

I could go on and on with examples, but I think you get my point. Do I have negative feelings regarding the support provided by people who barely speak my language and I can't understand? Yup - likewise technicians that don't know what they're doing? Am I prejudiced regarding non-responsive email support? Again, Yup.

So what is the solution? Mine is simple - I won't do business with Companies that don't provide the necessary level of support. There are always alternatives and those who I do business with, have learned from the mistakes that others are making, and have developed a business plan that is working.

So, what is their secret? It really isn't a secret, and it is as obvious as the nose on your face. Most people are not stupid, inexperienced maybe - but not stupid. They expect to do business with Companies that treat their customers with the same courtesy, respect and level of support expected, and if they don't, they will go elsewhere.

Before doing business with anyone, I recommend doing a little homework first. Check their level of support. If they have outsourced their support to people who barely speak your language, or their first level of support is not knowledgeable or unresponsive, look elsewhere. Do you think I'm prejudiced? If I can't get what I pay for, I guess I am.

Did you know that subscribers to Bob Osgoodby's Free Ezine the "Tip of the Day" get a Free Ad for their Business at his Web Site? Great Business and Computer Tips - Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Instructions on how to place an ad are in the Newsletter. Subscribe at: <http://adv-marketing.com/business/subscribe2.htm>

Editor's Note: I wrote an article on a similar subject a few years ago, *Cheaper Isn't Always Better*. You can read it at <http://www.docutype.net/articles/cheap.htm>.

We want to hear from you!

Now I would like to ask for more feedback and details. What do you like about the newsletter and what would like to see changed? Are the fonts good? Do the articles meet your needs?

Does the newsletter, on a whole, help you and your business? What would you like to see more of? Etc. Send your comments to TidBits_Feedback@docutype.net

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