



## Tips for Creating Quality Sponsored Content

### **1. Why Choose Sponsored Content?**

Sponsored content is an attractive option for advertisers looking to communicate their industry expertise in greater detail than a traditional print or digital advertisement. By telling your brand's story in the form of an article, you will stand out from traditional advertising with these benefits:

1. Establish your brand as a thought leader in the industry
2. Share your brand's expertise
3. Provide in-depth content in an engaging way to the AQUA audience
4. Capitalize on an increasingly popular form of advertising

### **2. What Makes for Effective Sponsored Content?**

Quality sponsored content starts with the audience in mind first, not your sales pitch. Effective sponsored content educates and informs the reader while only subtly (if at all) referencing your brand. Some companies decide to hire freelance journalists to write sponsored content, ensuring the article is of sound journalistic quality.

### **3. What Makes for Ineffective Sponsored Content?**

Poor sponsored content ignores the reader and focuses solely on your brand. It will read like a sales pitch or press release rather than an informative article. Consider this dating analogy: "Content marketing is like a first date. If all you do is talk about yourself, there won't be a second." Like a bad first date, ineffective sponsored content is only about you. It turns readers off and won't have the effect you're seeking.

### **4. Ask Yourself...**

1. Is this content written with the AQUA audience in mind?
2. Are we sharing our expertise with the audience rather than simply pitching our products?
3. Is the information included in the article objective?
4. Will the reader benefit from this content?
5. Will our headline attract readers beyond those familiar with our brand?

If you answered "yes" to the questions above, you are on your way to creating quality sponsored content that will resonate with our audience!

## 5. An Example: Effective vs. Ineffective Sponsored Content

For this example we'll use a fictitious company, Big Slides.

### Ineffective Sponsored Content

**Headline:** Big Slides is the World Leader in Custom Pool and Spa Accessories

**Article excerpt:**

*Since 1977 Big Slides has been a global leader in the pool and spa industry, creating cutting-edge products that always exceed customer expectations. As an innovative company, Big Slides' state-of-the-art manufacturing process ensures high quality products customers will love at an affordable price.*

### What's Wrong With This?

- The headline will not attract readers
- The headline and content is simply a sales pitch
- The content is focused on the brand rather than the audience
- The content is filled with jargon and empty claims like “global leader” and “cutting-edge”
- The article is likely to turn off readers who feel “tricked” into reading a sales pitch

### Effective Sponsored Content

**Headline:** Five Tips to Help Retailers Sell More Pool and Spa Accessories

**Article Excerpt:**

*As a pool and spa retailer, upselling your customers on accessories is a great way to add to your bottom line. However, with so many accessories on the market, it can be overwhelming trying to suggest the appropriate products with every sale. How can you ensure your customers walk away satisfied with every purchase — rather than feeling “sold” on products they don't really need?*

*At Big Slides, we've worked with hundreds of retailers across the country over the years. With each customer we offer five simple tips to improve their sales of accessories. We've shared those tips — and why they're effective — with you below: ...*

### Why This Works

- The headline entices the AQUA audience to learn more
- The headline is not a blatant sales pitch for Big Slides
- The content is written for AQUA readers and offers beneficial information
- The content shows off the Big Slides' expertise in its industry
- The content is devoid of jargon and empty claims
- The content mentions Big Slides, but is not a blatant pitch
- This article has a higher likelihood of being shared, extending the reach of your message

## **6. Additional Tip: Running a Traditional Ad Next to Your Sponsored Content**

Advertising partners frequently inquire about including a print ad next to their sponsored content piece. While that decision is entirely yours to make, the practice is discouraged by AQUA.

The purpose of sponsored content is to “look and feel” like the strong editorial content our audience is accustomed to seeing in *AQUA*, not a traditional advertisement. Placing an ad directly next to your sponsored content can lead the reader to believe the entire piece is simply an extended sales pitch, rather than an informative, beneficial article.

The choice is yours, but our recommendation is to place your traditional advertisement elsewhere in the magazine, allowing your sponsored content to make an impact on its own.