

18 Tips For Writing Content That VARs, ISVs, & MSPs Will Love

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Business Solutions magazine has been in the business of creating high-quality content focused on VARs (value-added resellers), ISV (independent software vendors, or software developers), and MSPs (managed services providers) for more than 25 years. Over time, our editorial team has learned many lessons about creating content our readers desire.

The below guidelines aren't rocket science or voodoo magic, but they do work, and they will challenge your thinking when it comes to writing content. Many companies can't help but use their blog, case studies, and bylines as vehicles for shameless self-promotion by hyping big customer wins or product announcements. This, as opposed to focusing on what a VAR, ISV, or MSP would want to read. And then they wonder why results are less than stellar.

Following this brief guide will empower you to write articles that VARs, ISVs, and MSPs will not only find valuable, but cast your company and executive as a thought leader.

Headlines

1. Your headline is the biggest factor determining whether or not someone's going to read your content. If your headline is too long, too promotional, or not compelling, no one is going to read your content (brace for disappointment).
2. Good headlines should contain a clear VAR, MSP, or ISV benefit.
3. Good headlines compel readers to click on them. Before you settle on a headline, consider what your target audience will think when they read it. Including the benefits to an end user won't resonate with a VAR reader. What will a VAR/MSP/ISV want to see?
4. Use short headlines — 10 words max.
5. Consider tried and true headlines that historically perform extremely well. Some examples are "3 Steps To Closer Merchant Relationships," "5 Tips To Understanding Mobile Payments," and "Beginners Guide To Cloud Storage"
6. Your company name shouldn't be in the headline. Research we did shows that our readers often skip articles with vendor names in the headlines because they assume the articles are just advertorials. Based on this feedback, we edit company names out of articles that appear in our newsletters.
7. Utilizing key words (i.e. bar code, storage, cloud, etc.) in your headline will help increase the relevance of your articles in BSMinfo.com search results and external search engines (i.e. Google)
8. Include benefits to the VAR, not the end user, in the headline. Which headline is a VAR more likely to read: "How A Hospital Solved Its HIPAA Problems" or "How A VAR Won A \$100,000 Hospital Contract." While both headlines would appeal to a VAR, the second is way more compelling to a VAR.

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Content

9. Be a thought-leader, not a self-promoter. The most-clicked articles in our newsletters are educational and in no way promotional. Promotional materials are often discounted by readers.
10. Know your audience. An end user case study is different from a VAR-focused case study. VARs don't care so much about how the solution helped the customer as much as they care about things like how the VAR in the case study found/won the business, challenges they overcame during the installation, how much money they made on the deal, and how they can turn that one deal into more business.
11. Step stories ("3 Steps To Closer Merchant Relationships"), Tips ("5 Tips To Help You Understand Mobile Payments"), and Beginners Guides ("Beginners Guide To Cloud Storage") do extremely well. We strongly prefer these types of article in our newsletters as they are compelling, provide the most value to our readers, and are the most-clicked.
12. The maximum word count for a single article/topic should be 800 words. Any longer and you should consider breaking the article into separate parts. If your article is short, but contains valuable content, it's perfectly fine.
13. Use existing content you might already have. If your company has a blog, case studies, white papers, etc. that information oftentimes is perfectly fine to be posted as part of your MarketConnect program assuming it meets the best practices mentioned in this document.
14. Don't worry about not being a writer. Good articles can be in Q&A format. Write your own questions (nonpromotional) and have your team answer them (nonpromotional).
15. Work with the Business Solutions team to develop original content. We have an editorial team that can help you create questions for Q&As, give you article ideas, conduct interviews, and more. If you need help, just ask!
16. Utilizing key words (i.e. bar code, storage, cloud, etc.) in your content will help increase the relevance of your articles in BSMinfo.com search results and external search engines (i.e. Google)

Topics

17. This is quite simple: write about hot tech topics and trends. You and your team know what issues VARs are facing today. Write about those issues in a nonpromotional way and your success will greatly increase.
18. Article ideas you can use now:
 - [#] Things VARs Need To Know About [hot industry topic]
 - [#] Tips To Successfully Sell [your technology]
 - [#] Common Mistakes [your technology] VARs Make
 - [#] Secrets Successful [technology] VARs Know
 - How To Overcome [common customer objection]
 - Beginners Guide To [your technology] – a primer for VARs thinking about selling
 - Advanced Guide To [your technology] – advice for VARs experienced in their field