

Garbage-In. Garbage-Out. Why Chop Shop Content Won't Bring Leads

By Trish Mahon



A financial services client looking for a content strategist recently asked me for a writing sample. I provided a well-researched piece on crypto-currencies that outlined the rise of virtual money within an historic context. The article predicted our steady evolution into a cashless society and the potential fall out of a world suddenly devoid of physical money. I posed all the tough questions and provided a summary of prevailing answers --- exploring the potential impact to central banks, global exchanges, and the human psychology of buying and selling.

It was a successful piece – fully optimized and packed with key words and hyperlinks that referenced a larger report (which I also put together) for off-the-page conversions and qualified lead generation. An article like this is a windfall for a given demographic and rarely fails to deliver solid prospects and robust revenues in the hands of a seasoned sales team.

The client responded to the piece with a simple and straightforward question: *how much per word?* I had to laugh. It's hard to believe in a world where we're all vying for critical eyeballs and click-throughs via web, mobile, email, social, influencer, PPC, and PR --- that some folks are still counting words. It's even harder to comprehend the fundamental misunderstanding that words create leads. They don't.

This is not about wrangling the lowest 'cost per page' or getting the best bang for a buck. I'm not selling a pound of ham. It sounds basic, but effective Content Marketing requires quality not quantity, context not capacity, and strategy not slapdashery. J.D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye" (73K words) is every bit as entertaining as Ayn Rand's "Atlas Shrugged" (561K words). Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" (66K words) is every bit as engaging as Tolstoy's War and Peace (587K words). Regardless of length, each of these masterworks tells a unique and dynamic story, and so should your content marketing effort.

Developing an effective lead nurturing funnel is far more sophisticated than merely feeding text to a hungry algorithm. It is exceedingly more strategic than pumping out all-purpose copy via automation, artificial intelligence, or a chatbot. Unfortunately, the paid content universe is filled with the fallout of copy chop-houses where potential prospects are chased off by entry-level hacks that answered a "Work from Home" ad on Craigslist.

It's easy to forget that there is a human being on the receiving end of what we post, tweet and share on behalf of our company, product or service. There's a reader with intellect and interests --- preferences and predilections. And it is those very idiosyncrasies that make them a prized prospect. The more we educate and engage them, the more valuable they become.

So, this is no task for dabblers or someone looking to make "extra income." An article, essay, eBook or White Paper that delivers highly qualified leads and millions of dollars in revenue --- requires expertise. A "how much per word" mentality will not buy that expertise. Perhaps this is why so many lead generation programs are unsuccessful and so many content marketing campaigns go bust.

You do *get what you pay for* and low open rates, anemic conversion figures, and scant sales metrics are the upshot of paying for gratuitous, cookie-cutter content. Needless to say, I never got back to that client --- nor have I come across a single article or essay touting their products or services since my last correspondence.