

Content Syndication & SEO



When you create awesome content, it's natural to want to share it, and one way to do that is to publish it on other websites. It comes up all the time:

- You write a great article for a digital magazine or other industry site, and you want to share it with your audience on your blog or website.
- You want to use some of your best work to build your network on LinkedIn.
- You publish a great blog post on your site, and another webmaster requests permission to repost it on his/her site or blog.
- You operate two or more websites with distinct goals and audiences, but create a piece that will benefit both readerships.

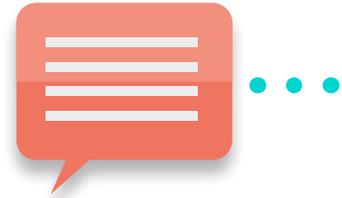
Google, however, strives to index and show pages with [distinct information](#), and ascribes penalties to sites that appear to manipulate traffic for their own benefit.

This leaves many marketers asking how to handle duplicate content across multiple domains. While Google acknowledges that most duplicate content does not have a deceptive origin, it's important to know how to avoid penalties.



Whether you're posting an article you wrote for Forbes on your personal site, or allowing other publishers to syndicate content from your branded blog, following some basic best practices will help search engines keep track of duplicate content.

Establish a Primary Location



Every article you write, whether it is for your own blog or a feature for an online magazine, should have a primary location. There is no rule regarding where that location should be (your site, the site of a major publication, etc.), but it is important to define the primary location for search engines so they know which URL to prefer in search results. Keep in mind:

- The primary location is the URL that Google and other search engines will consider the original source.
- The primary location will, thus, receive 99% of the SEO value of the content (The primary location will rank on SERPs, syndicated locations will not.)

The content should be published first at the primary location. All other publications will be considered syndications, and should follow a few best practices.

Best Practices for Syndicating Content

Once your content has been published to its primary location, you can syndicate it—or allow another publisher to repost it—as long as everyone follows some basic SEO etiquette. If you are duplicating an article you wrote for another site on your own blog or website, these strategies are easy to do yourself. If another publisher requests permission to copy your content, require he or she do one of the following:

- **Tease and link**—Write an article summary and link directly to the the original article URL. For example, “Feeling overwhelmed by college tuition stress? Here’s an article I recently did for Forbes about managing your kids’ college debt, with some tips that worked for me: [Article Title Here As a Link.](#)”
- **Post and attribute**—Publish the article in its entirety, with a note at the top (whenever possible) that says something like: “This article was originally published as [Article Title Here As a Link](#) on Friday, September 4,” or, “This article originally appeared on [Publication Name.](#)” This will clear you of plagiarism concerns, and it will establish the original URL as the official home of the article.

And, as with all things, monitor and measure. There are no guarantees that a link to the original post will avoid every SEO issue that might come up. If syndication ever seems to impact your traffic, it's time to investigate.

Technical Considerations

When syndicating full content in multiple places there are also some technical considerations that will help search engines make sense of the syndication:

- **Noindex**—Including the [noindex](#) tag in the headvver of the page on which your content appears will prevent search engines from crawling the page. That means the content is available for that site's audience, but Google will only return the primary location in search results.
- **Rel=canonical**—Including the `rel=canonical` tag in the header of the page, with the URL of the primary location as the canonical, tells search engines which version is the original.



Of course, these technical considerations can (and probably should) be used in conjunction with the content-based best practices. Asking a publisher to attribute your content to your site and using the `rel=canonical` tag is not over-kill.

As the marketplace becomes more digital, and content marketing becomes more central, you will have more reason to optimize every piece of content you create—and you may have more and more great places to publish. Just make sure to identify the primary location for search engines, and syndications won't damage your SEO.



Q ■ Should I wait to syndicate content to larger sites?



Even with primary locations identified and best practices followed, owners of smaller websites still have legitimate concerns about syndicating content to larger sites. If content is published to a small site one day, and a major site—with much greater authority—the next day, will Google really prefer the smaller site in search results?

There's no clear-cut answer, which is why monitoring metrics is so important.

Big brands can get away with syndication more easily since they have so much authority in and of themselves.

A safer route for small brands that are concerned about this is to only syndicate older content. Grab a series of posts on a topic from last year (or even years ago—depending on how quickly your industry moves) and use that in your syndication. It would be much more unlikely for Google to still prefer the more authoritative URL, since that content already has a history on the smaller brand site.

Content Marketing Strategy Considerations

Syndicating content is often treated as a quick fix for getting more eyes on a piece of great content. While it does definitely work to that end, content syndication should be a strategic element of an overall content marketing strategy.

Consider each publication and/or platform that is hosting syndicated content and how your brand might build the best authority with each audience. Simply syndicating your latest blog posts might not be the best approach. Ask yourself:

- Which segment(s) of my target audience read this publication/use this platform?
- Which content pieces have been the most successful on those publications/platforms?
- What content are competitors having success with on those publications/platforms?



You might find that a series posted on your blog a year ago, for example, is a great fit, and syndicating that content would yield better results.

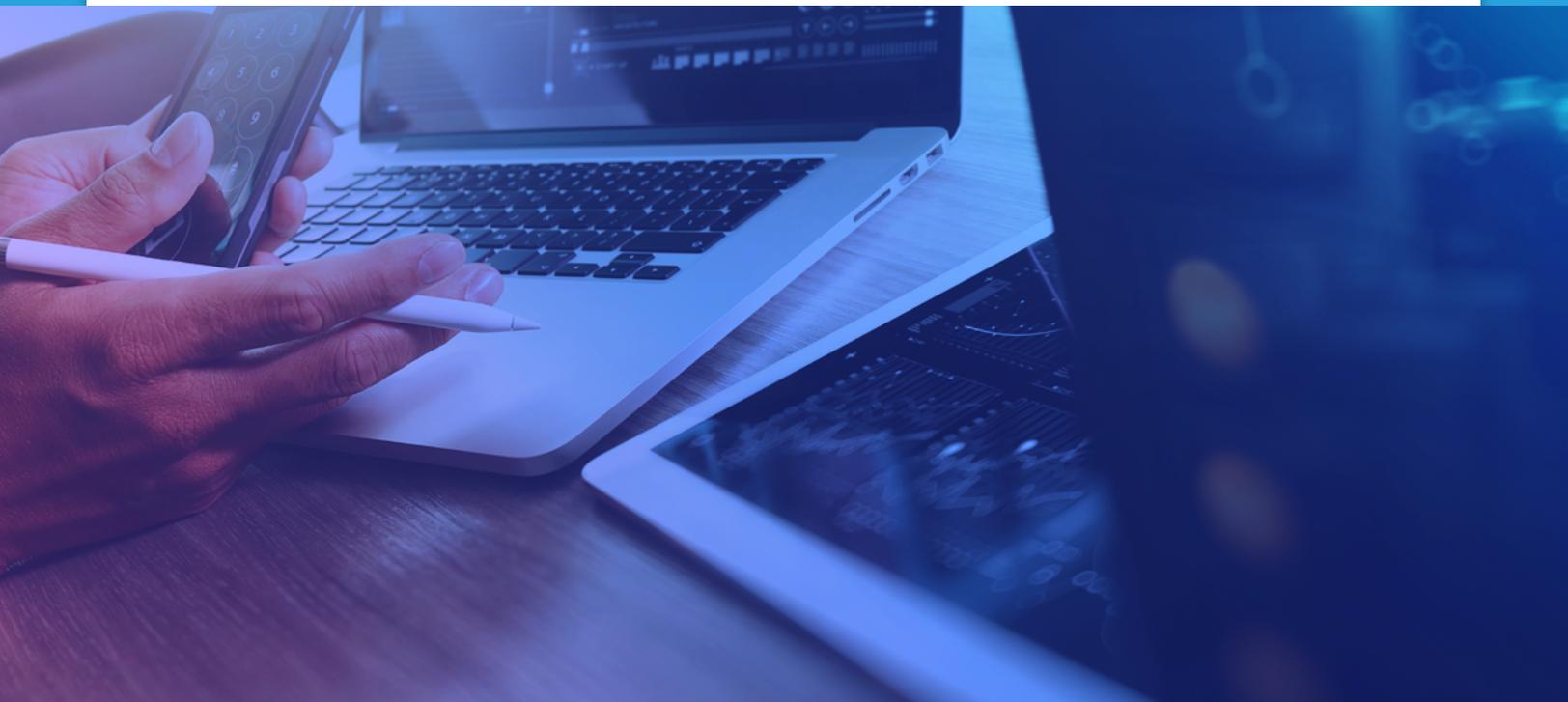
As you build an audience with syndicated content on other publications, consider how to leverage that growth to build your brand's audience. A big following on another site, after all, is still that publisher's audience. Make sure your content syndication strategy doesn't end with republished content, but that it ties into a greater strategy to drive traffic back to your site.



Syndicated Content: A Checklist

Search engines don't like duplicate content, but there are good reasons to repost content in multiple places online—if you do it right.

- Determine the content's primary location, and publish it there first.
- Link syndicated copies to original content—either by teasing the full content, or adding an attribution link.
- Use `noindex` whenever possible.
- Use `rel=canonical` whenever possible.
- Monitor and measure rankings and traffic.



Additional Resources:

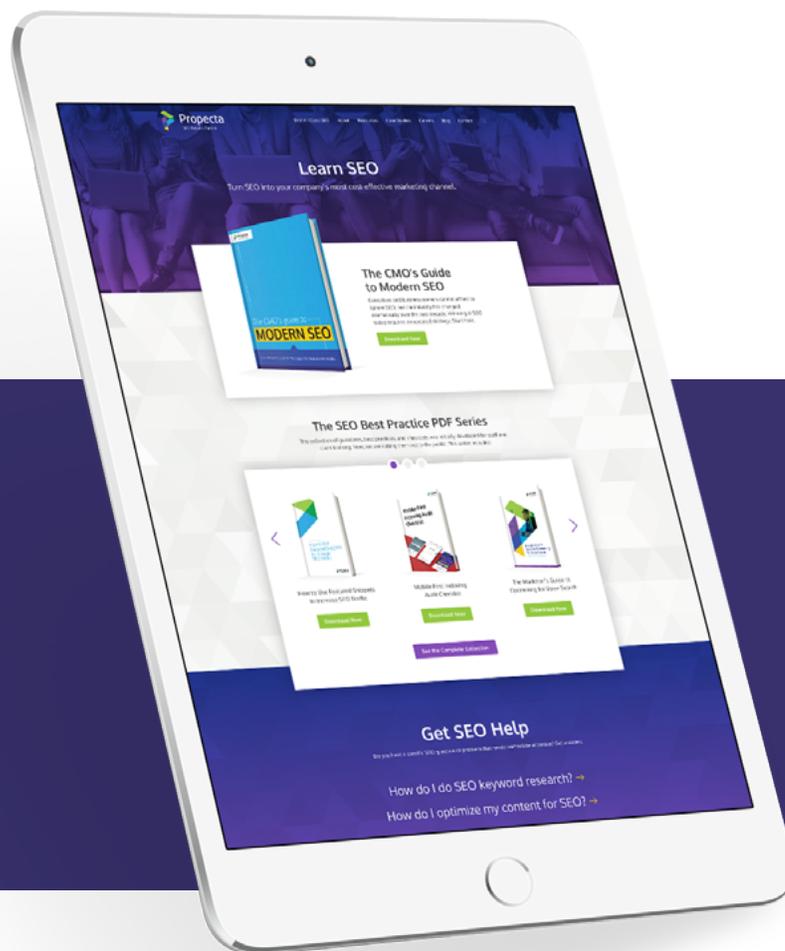
[3 Myths About Duplicate Content](#)

[Duplicate Content: Causes and Solutions](#)

[How To Tell Google Not to Index a Page in Search](#)

[How to Earn High SEO Rankings With Every Blog Post](#)

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