

How can I syndicate my article or my writing?

Syndication is the goal of many of my writing/publishing seminar attendees, so let me share what I know about it so you can pursue it farther on your own, if you are then still interested.

What they mean is usually one of two things: (1) having a syndication (very few still exist) or a newspaper chain take an article (or today perhaps a blog) and sell it (as is) to many other publications "in their chain," or (2) a syndicate would set up the process where the writer prepares a series of articles (or blogs) so they will appear each month usually as a special column. The syndication finds and signs the buyers, sells your gems, and pays you a percentage. The more times it appears, the more money you make.

A great idea but very, very hard to arrange. **The usual barriers:** (1) there are very few syndicates; check Google; (2) there are fewer newspapers, with less print space, (3) magazines are far less interested as well, (4) editors will only seriously consider a writer with lots of items in print, (5) being famous helps a lot, (6) a popular book helps that much more, and (7) how do they (the syndicate "selling" you or the editor buying your output) know you can produce top-quality material more than once, particularly month after month?

You want to try it anyway? Great! Find a syndicate, see the kinds of publications they serve, zero in on a topic or theme the readers of those publications care a lot about, and write six columns (or articles or blogs) to send to the syndicate or editor you think will hire you. Include a query letter explaining your quest, plus a full resume that contains some references. (More anon.) Since short is always better than

long, make the six samples 400-600 or so words long, each separate and prepped in ready-to-use copy form. If you have a book in print, send a free copy too.

Don't ask if they will pay you in your first submission! (If they pay freelancers, they will pay you.) You can send it to as many editors as you wish. Most will reply, in time. If any say "yes," follow those up with whatever the editor wants to read or hear. In the meantime, keep writing and selling the regular way.

I suppose the gist of **winning query letters here** would include: you like their publication because..., you'd like to share some very interesting information with their readers because..., you have (or can write) many items or articles that they may wish to syndicate (samples enclosed) because..., and they should include you on their pages because... In short, how your syndicated pieces will (mightily) help the readers and the magazine. Then take it from there.

Have I ever done this? Yes, but the travel editors of a couple dozen newspapers scattered across the country probably didn't know. They received a newspaper article from me in the regular way: fully written, with a cover note attached that gave the highlights of the article and told of the availability of photos. If they wanted to see the pix, I mailed a proof sheet of b/w's, they picked out what they wanted, and I sent the negatives. (That was the process before the Web and digital cameras.)

How was that syndicated? If the editor liked (and used) the article, he'd usually write back and ask if his newspaper could syndicate it. (Example: the *Chicago Daily-News* and the Field Syndicate.) I wrote the editor back, told him I was honored to be asked but I was mini-syndicating it myself and it was likely that there would be rights difficulties if it got syndicated again where I was already submitting. I never lost a sale.

Did that work? Yes. I usually sold two to four articles to a regular 13-18 targets, but twice I sold 9 of 13 and once I submitted to about 100 and I think I sold more than 30—I know it was past 20 but I was too busy to keep track. (**If you want to see this article/photo process in detail**, see my book [The Travel Writer's Guide](#).)

Getting back to the question of how you get syndicated, I think there are only **a few ways that up your odds**: (1) see the editor of your **local newspaper** and discuss writing a regular or weekly column (the best of which can be syndicated [as reprints] elsewhere later), (2) focus very tightly on a **niche topic**, probably write “the” book about it, and stay visible so some editor in the field asks you to write regularly for his/her publication, when you might suggest a column or syndication, or (3) **become some kind of celebrity** so it would be a “feather” in some editor’s bonnet to have your name regularly on their pages.

Not very encouraging, I know. Of all the above, if you can get some editor to ask you to do it, bingo. Or have some syndication “court” you so you/they can earn from your notoriety. (But please **don't get notorious by bumping off lowly blog writers**.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett
