Builtvisible.

The complete guide to outreach

Tips and tactics for earning your content the visibility it deserves

You can make the best content in the world, but it's all for nothing if nobody sees it. That's why at Builtvisible we take our time with content promotion. We define and follow a robust outreach framework to ensure our content earns the right ROI.

Thus, without further ado, I'm pleased to welcome you to Builtvisible's essential guide to all things outreach. Within, we'll cover what outreach is, why it's important and how to go about it.

This guide is perfect for:

Outreach beginners

In-house digital, PR, comms and social media teams

Content strategists looking to understand the full content journey

Agency staff

Let's get started!

B.

Meet the author

Specialising in outreach and promotion during her five years at Builtvisible, Olivia has been responsible for some of the agency's most successful campaigns. Her work has netted coverage from the BBC, Forbes and Fast Company, and these exceptional results have earnt industry recognition from the likes of The Digital Impact Awards and The Drum.

She is responsible for driving innovation amongst the team, and her oversight across the business's output ensures that our work delivers the coverage our clients deserve.

She is continually shaping the agency's market-leading approach to outreach through new tooling, enhancing ideation processes and developing novel outreach strategies. Her creativity, passion for results and sharp ROI focus have all contributed to her becoming the agency's lead when it comes to all things off-site.

B.

Contents

B.

1. What is outreach and why should you care about doing it right?

Done right, outreach is how your marketing content finds its way to the people who matter. Done wrong, it's a recipe for wasted budget.

Let's look at what outreach is and why you should care.
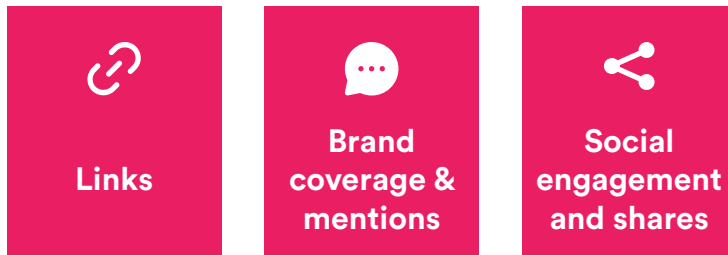
B.

What is outreach?

Outreach is the act of reaching out and telling the outside world about your content. Put simply, it's a method of direct promotion. What that content is will vary—it could be a shiny, elaborate hero piece, or it could be a simple interview, comment or press release—the list really does go on!

Outreach can bring rich rewards, but only if you're doing it right. If you're doing it badly, not only are you missing out on its benefits, you're also wasting time and money. You might even be damaging your brand. Frankly, if you're doing outreach badly, you may as well just not do it at all.
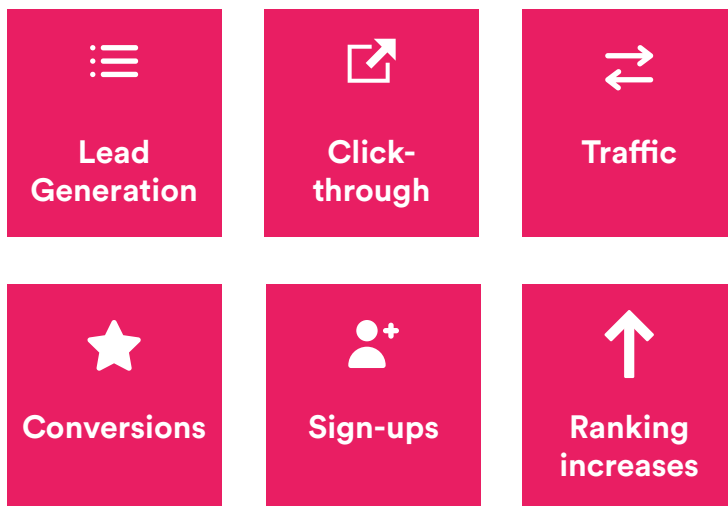
If you feel you're not getting the most out of your outreach, then this Builtvisible guide is for you. It'll show you how we maximise results, equipping you with all the tools and tactics needed for effective outreach.

B.

The goals of outreach

The goals of outreach are as varied as the content to which they're tied. However, some common goals that we encounter at Builtvisible are:

Links	**Brand coverage & mentions**	**Social engagement and shares**

These direct outcomes from outreach could then have various desired impacts, such as:

Lead Generation	**Click-through**	**Traffic**
Conversions	**Sign-ups**	**Ranking increases**

The above list is by no means exhaustive, but the theme that runs throughout is getting a clear, tangible and measurable return on outreach investment, and understanding what you're trying to achieve from the very beginning.

B.

2. Getting started with outreach

Now that you understand what outreach is and why it's so important, you'll no doubt be chomping at the bit to get moving.

So, let's start looking at putting outreach into practice.

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Getting started with outreach

I'm sure that lots of us are guilty of falling into the trap of seeking quantity over quality. However, I'm here to remind you that, when it comes to coverage and links, not all websites are treated equally.

There is far more value in picking your shots carefully, and for Builtvisible that means making sure the right content is shared with the right audience. This audience-first approach means that I'd rather spend the time and effort finding and contacting 30 carefully chosen and vetted targets than 60 of dubious value. That's not to say that a scattershot approach can't reap rewards, but it's an expensive and risky approach in terms of time, energy and reliable results. Why not protect your time and budget by following a clearly outlined, carefully targeted outreach framework?

But! Don't start making calls and sending emails just yet! There's a very important first step you must take.

Get to know your content

It's no good building an outreach list if you don't really understand what you're going to be selling. Any questions your outreach targets have will be directed at you, so not knowing the ins and outs of what you're promoting could hurt your chances of pick up. The obvious way to combat this is to spend some time getting to know the asset. Basically, become an expert in it. This is particularly crucial if you weren't involved in production from the start.

I've broken this 'getting to know your content' step into a four-stage process:

Brand	Context	Asset Immersion	Supplementary

B.
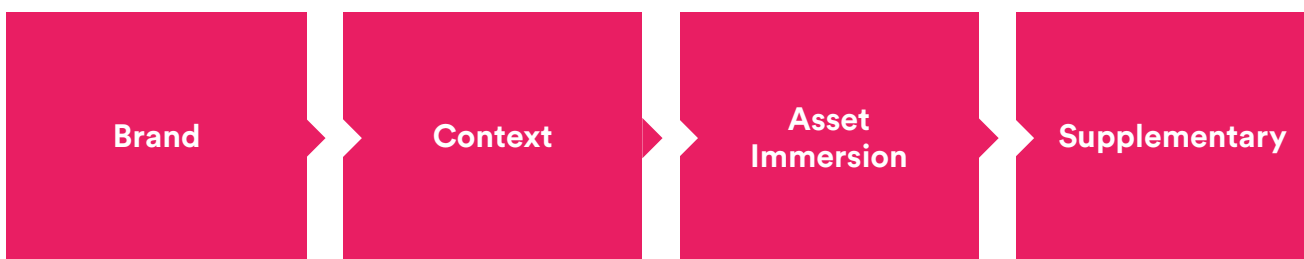
1. Brand

Get to know the brand for whom you're outreaching by understanding the following:

A.   **What is the brand's core product offering?**

B.   **What is the brand's USP?**

C.   **What's the brand's style and tone?**

D.   **What's the brand's ethos?**

E.   **Any dos and don'ts?**

F.   **What's the brand's target audience?**
This could be different from the brand's usual target audience

B.

2. Context

Next, it's time to gather important contextual insight about the asset you will be outreaching. Find out about and make sure you understand:

A. What are the KPIs associated with the asset?

B. Is there a strategy behind the asset's production? If so, what is it?

C. How does your piece fit into the wider discussion? E.g. if you're sharing a comment about the latest financial news then read up on the current industry chatter.

B.

3. Asset Immersion

Familiarise yourself with the asset itself, if you don't already know it:

A. Have you read all copy attached to the final asset?

B. Do you understand how it works? E.g. the methodology behind any surveys, how any numbers are being crunched behind the scenes, etc.

C. Is there a backstory to how the piece came to be? Was there anything notable about the creative process that could add depth to the story?

D. Is there a story behind it? If so, get to know it! For example, the story of the artist behind Staysure's <u>Travelling with Mental Illness</u> was of particular interest to journalists.

E. Re-read the signed-off concept, research and design briefs if relevant and available.

F. Speak to other people who have been involved in the production of the asset to find out what they regard as lead, secondary and tertiary outreach angles.

B.

4. Supplementary

Are there secondary, but supplementary outreach assets you can use? If so, get to know them, too! For example:

A.   **Original interview material**

B.   **Alternative/additional design assets**

C.   **Raw datasets. Are there any other angles, headlines or stories you can build?**

Some of these questions won't be relevant depending on what you're promoting, so adapt the list as needed. At any rate, the point of this preparatory 'getting to know your content' stage should be quite clear: if you know your content inside out, you're in the best possible position to sell it to your outreach targets.

B.

Refining outreach angles

Now that you understand what you're working with, it's time to refine and finalise your outreach angles and hooks.

At Builtvisible, outreach angles and hooks are at the fore of all our ideation sessions, in order to prevent our campaign assets from floundering out in the wild. These angles will naturally require a little tweaking at the point of promotion, but most of the hard graft will have already been done.

Now, it's easy to say 'make sure you have your angles', but the natural question to ask is what makes an angle or hook good?

A hook in marketing—as defined by Oxford Dictionaries—is 'a thing designed to catch people's attention'. Indeed, a piece of content's hook provides a journalist with an article headline—this needs to be newsworthy to stand a chance of being picked up. We validate hooks, and therefore a journalist's possible future article headline, by judging our content on a selection of criteria (which just so happens to spell out the acronym **USHER**, if you find that easier to remember):

USEFUL:
Does your content provide a useful or practical element that will be of value to your reader? E.g. 'how to live well with type 1 diabetes.'

SURPRISING:
Does your content have the shock factor? This could be a staggering fact, e.g. 'study reveals that one pair of rats can produce half a billion descendants in three years!'

HOT:
Does your content tap into a trending topic? E.g. 'how to make the most of your Bitcoin investment' during the Bitcoin boom of late 2017.

EMOTIONAL:
Does your content elicit an emotional response? E.g. 'women are more likely to be cast as a 'hooker' (8%) than a 'trader' (6%) in films about trading and finance.'

ROBUST:
Does your content provide unique and credible data, commentary or insight? If so, put the onus on that. E.g. 'medical nutritionist Dr. Sarah Brewer ranks our favourite hangover cures.'

B.

In the event that outreach consideration during the production process was lacking—hopefully this will never be the case—come up with some new and/or additional angles ahead of making contact with outreach targets to ensure you're fully equipped.

Your content doesn't necessarily need to satisfy all of the USHER criteria, but if it ticks a few of the boxes you should have some clear hooks—and therefore headlines in mind—that just need a bit of refinement at the point of reaching out to those journalists.

If you're looking for more on what makes a good hook, you can find it <u>here</u>.

At Builtvisible we also carry out preliminary outreach during the early stages of content production. Preliminary outreach is when we will ask a small subset of outreach targets if they think our content idea—and therefore its likely hooks—would be of interest. Not only can you achieve early buy-in from outreach targets, but sometimes they will make suggestions or requests that will influence the way in which you develop your content and its hooks.

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3. Building an outreach list

Like all good processes, phase one of our outreach approach starts with building a list.

Constructing an outreach list comes down to finding suitable sites and corresponding outreach targets. It takes time.

Much like the ageing of a fine wine, you can't rush the ~~stalking~~ prospecting process, but there are some key principles that Builtvisible stands by to make this process as efficient as it can possibly be.

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So, what makes a site 'suitable'?

Suitability depends on what you're sharing with the web. However, we find that if you follow the below key principles then you can't go far wrong.

Key principles

1. Relevancy

A. Is your intended recipient going to find this asset of interest and genuinely applicable to their audience? Does this recipient cover similar topics?

B. Does the publication capture your brand's target audience?

C. If you found a link from this publication would you report it to your client?

2. Trust and authority [SEO hat]

Whether you have an SEO background or not, there are still certain SEO considerations, namely looking at the trust and authority a domain commands.

At Builtvisible we primarily look at the 'Trust Flow' score from search engine and SEO backlink checker Majestic to provide a top-level gauge of site authority:

> **"Trust Flow, a trademark of Majestic, is a score based on quality, on a scale between 0-100. Majestic collated many trusted seed sites based on a manual review of the web. This process forms the foundation of Majestic Trust Flow. Sites closely linked to a trusted seed site can see higher scores, whereas sites that may have some questionable links would see a much lower score"**
> *Majestic*

Please note: there are a few common-sense checks to bear in mind when deciding what to do in scenarios like the above, which I delve into in more detail in point four.

B.

Now, deciding on an acceptable TF score isn't as simple as setting a minimum threshold and ignoring anything below that magic number.

You also have to be mindful of relevancy. Consider this scenario:

You've found a publication that has a TF score that's below your typical minimum requirement, but, this publication is highly relevant to your content, your brand's audience and so on.

In this case, I would argue relevancy outweighs that TF minimum requirement and would add the publication to my outreach list.

💡 How to

Verify TF with Majestic's handy browser plug-in
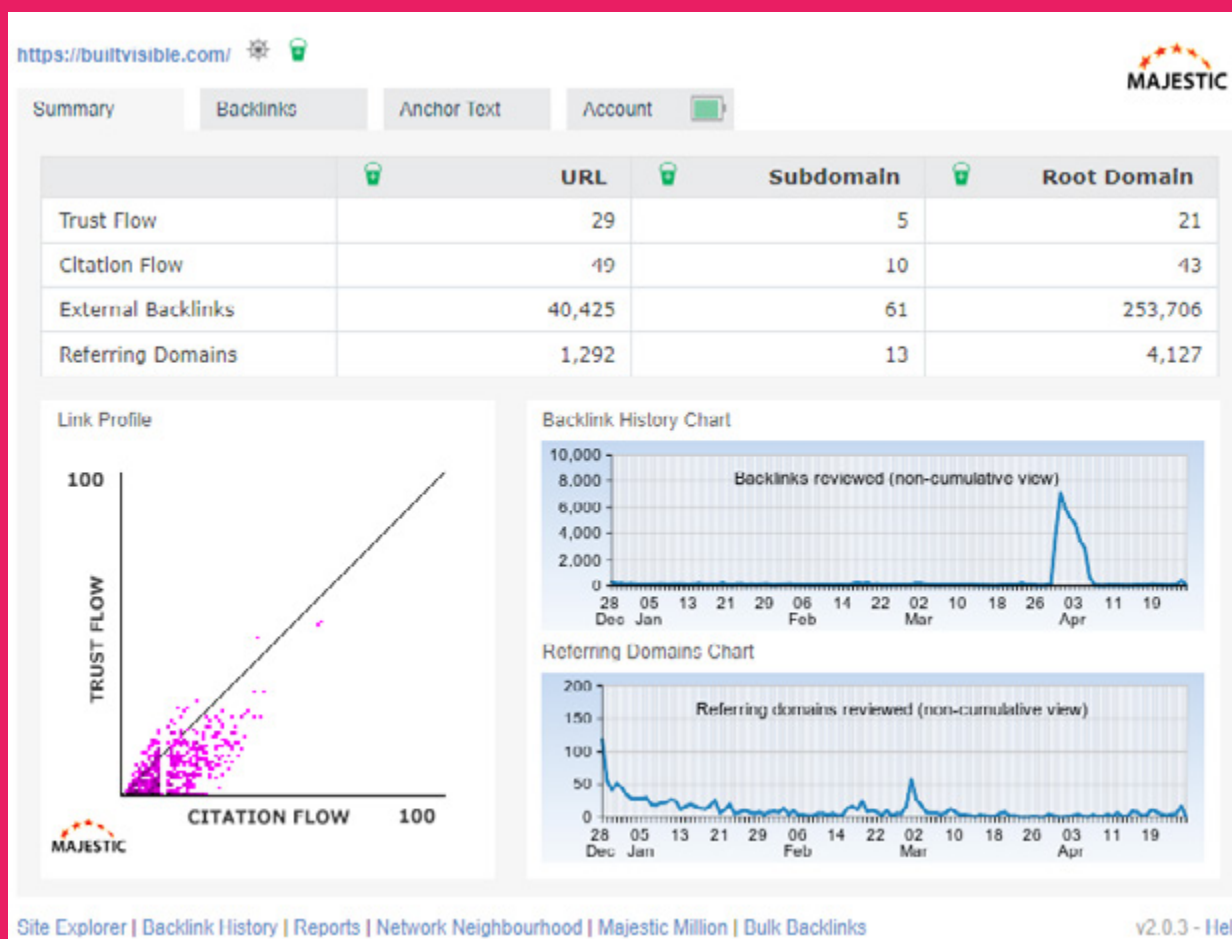
Figure 1 - Majestic's Trust Flow

3. Follow vs. Nofollow [SEO hat]

If you're tracking SEO KPIs, there's an age-old discussion about followed vs. nofollow links, and whether it's worth targeting publications that only offer nofollowed links.

B.

Side note:

For those who don't know, a followed link will pass link equity to your brand's site which in turn will boost Trust Flow and authority. A nofollow link, on the other hand, prevents link equity from being passed on. Regardless of your KPIs, I say it's still worth receiving a nofollow link and therefore including publications that have a site wide 'nofollow' policy for the following reasons:

• The link will still contribute to raising brand awareness.

• It will still drive referral traffic and therefore potential leads and conversions i.e. probably some KPIs.

• Depending on the authority of the external site providing this nofollow link, it could lead to natural pick-up from other sites that do provide followed links, which you can follow up with later down the line to update to a juicy followed link.

Figure 2 - Checking for rel="nofollow"

Check if a link is nofollow by looking at the source code (ctrl + U in most browsers) and searching for rel="nofollow".

4. Common sense

As well as content and SEO considerations, there is also a need to exercise a bit of common sense.

A. Is the target site still active? Hint: check the footer for copyright dates and verify social profiles are still active.

B. Does the website look like a good site or does it come across as a bit spammy or like it's stuck in the stone ages? If the latter, exclude from your list.

C. Is a news story monopolising the site's coverage? If so, mark this down on your list and consider delaying contact until the current story has died down.

B.

Contact details

It's no good simply finding relevant publications and/or articles—you'll also need to collect corresponding contact details. Sometimes finding this information is really easy, but other times it can be a painful process that calls for a number of sleuthing techniques.

Finding contact details

1. Editorial mastheads, staff lists, contact us or FAQ pages

Sometimes your target publication will have a conveniently public editorial masthead, staff list or contact us/FAQ page, which includes crucial information such as email address (therefore email formats e.g. firstname.lastname@website.com), staff names, job titles and contact numbers. This scenario is a dream come true, yielding maximum return for minimal effort.

You can quickly find out if your target publication has one of these useful pages on offer by refining your search using Google's 'site:' operator. Here it is in action:
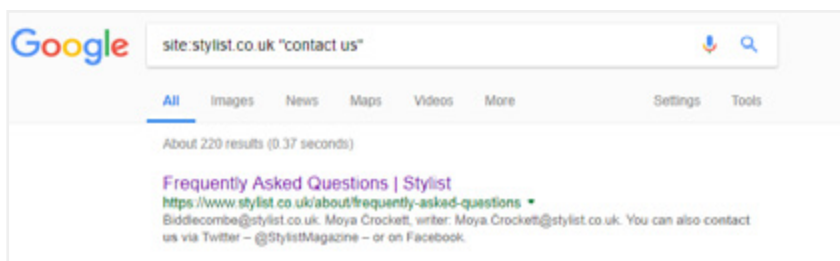

Figure 3 - FAQ Stylist

Side note: some publications put emails in different formats in the interest of limiting spam, for example, "name (at) domain (dot) com" or equivalent. Another site operator search will let you know if this is the case.

B.

This FAQ page leads me to a whole host of useful contact information, which is exactly what I'm after:

Figure 4 - Stylist Contact Information

2. Twitter & All My Tweets

If you know the name of your intended recipient and they have a Twitter profile, you can use All My Tweets as a way to locate email addresses and more. Log into All My Tweets using your own Twitter account and the tool will ask you to input the Twitter handle of your intended recipient.

After a few seconds, the tool will churn out an archive of your person of interest's tweets.

Figure 5 - All My tweets

It's then just a case of hitting 'CTRL + F' and searching for what you're after.
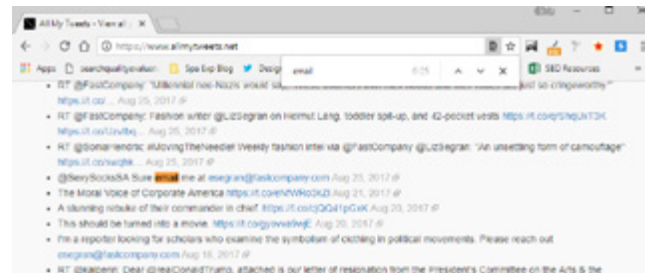

Figure 6 - All My Tweets Search

Don't forget: contacts can be sneaky and mix up the formatting of their email addresses, so you may need to search for a few variants before you hit upon that contact detail gold.

B.

3. Hunter offers an email finder product with a very simple user interface.

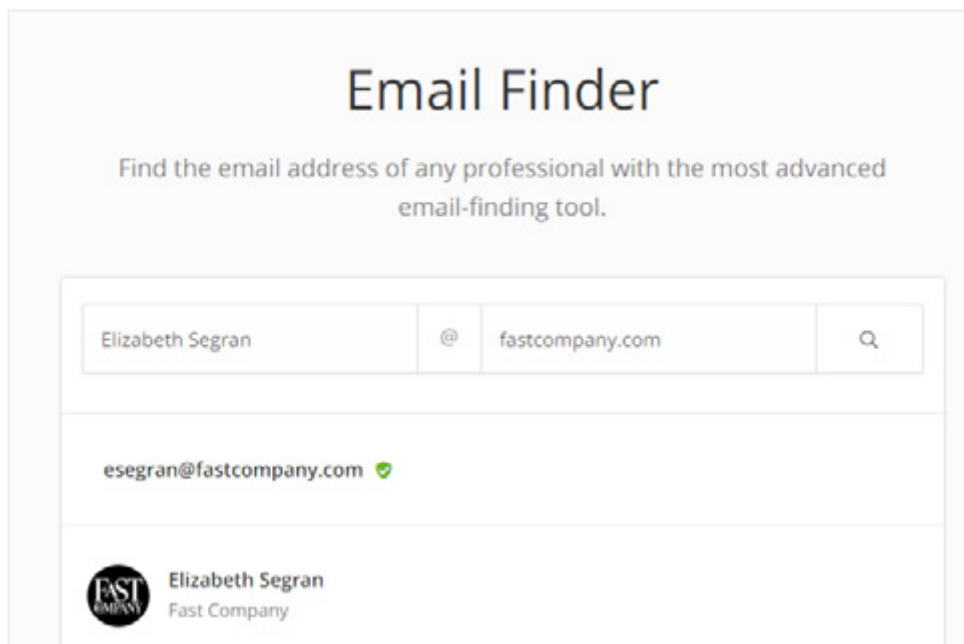All you need to do is enter a full name and associated domain name and *voilà*:

Figure 7 - Hunter Email Finder

4. Media databases and tools

If you've got the budget to do so, then I'd recommend enlisting the services of media databases and tools in the interest of scaling the collection process. Naturally, there is a wide range of useful tools out there, but we find that Gorkana and BuzzStream do the job. Here's how:

- Amongst other features, Gorkana offers an extensive media database, providing instant access to email addresses and phone numbers.
- BuzzStream also supports the discovery of contact details via its web-based software or, alternatively, through its browser extension, BuzzStream Buzzmarker. The latter allows you to gather details wherever you go on the web.

Everyone has their own way of approaching the fiddly task of gathering contact details, and the above should provide plenty of options to work with. It's then just a case of finding what works for you!

🔗 Other useful resources, services and tools:

anewstip.com
journalism.co.uk
hey.press

B.

Validating contact details

Paid media services like Gorkana should provide you with contact details that don't require validation, however if haven't signed up for a paid service, then there are a few free tools that will help you authenticate the addresses you've collected.

Enter the email address you have into MailTester. This will check it for you and hopefully come back with everything in green. Green = a valid email address.

Figure 8 - Mail Tester

Hunter offers a similar type of service, though the tool also highlights sources for the email address and any other addresses associated with the same domain
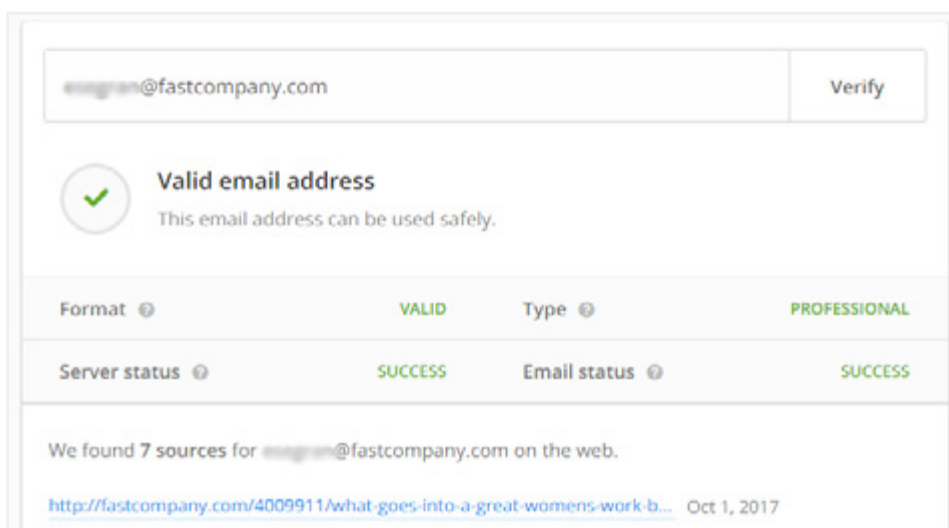

Figure 9 - Email Validation with Hunter

Of course, it's worth noting that the contact details you've collected may well extend beyond email addresses and therefore might call for some good old-fashioned 'validation', e.g., picking up the phone and hoping the right person picks up!

Now that you've built yourself a relevant outreach list, it's time to organise and prioritise.

B.

How do you find suitable sites and outreach targets?

Now that you're armed with those key principles, it's time to put them into action and find the suitable sites and corresponding contacts for your outreach list.

Here's a list of tactics we use at Builtvisible:

1. Manual discovery with Google

By far the most popular approach to finding suitable sites and contacts is googling related search terms and then delving into the results. We also take time to explore image, video, news and map results—you never know what you might find!

The below example highlights a list of articles I would investigate. From this list, I would also see if the associated author looks like a suitable recipient for my music-centric content.
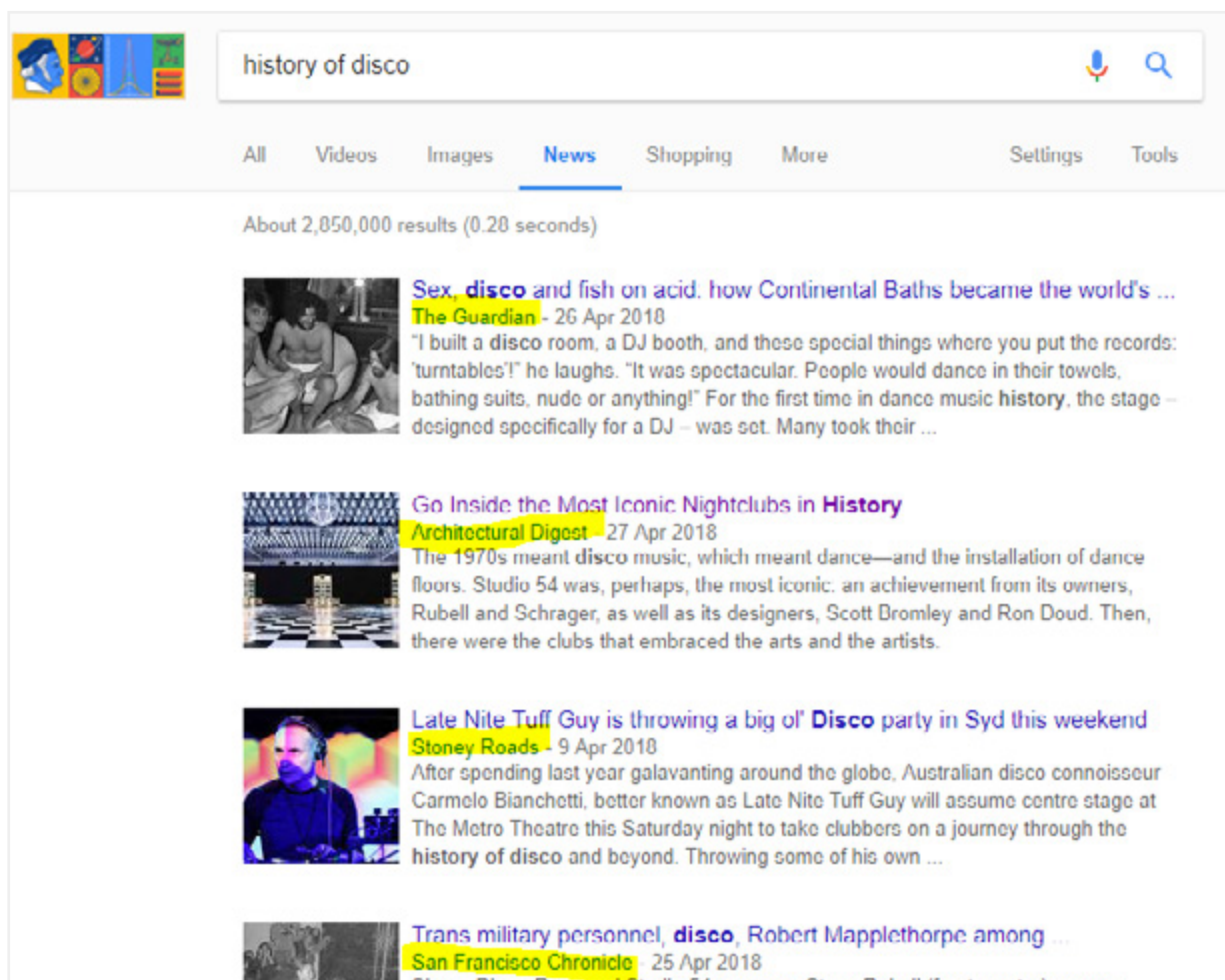

Figure 10 - History of Disco Serps

B.

If an article does look suitable, I will add the domain name, relevant article URL and the contact's name to my list, followed by contact details (more on this in section 4). Alternatively, I would add this information to a software platform, such as BuzzStream.

Pro tip: you can refine your search in the settings via Google tools. Through this, you can define a date range, which will allow you to view a list of the latest articles on the topic or sites in a specific country.
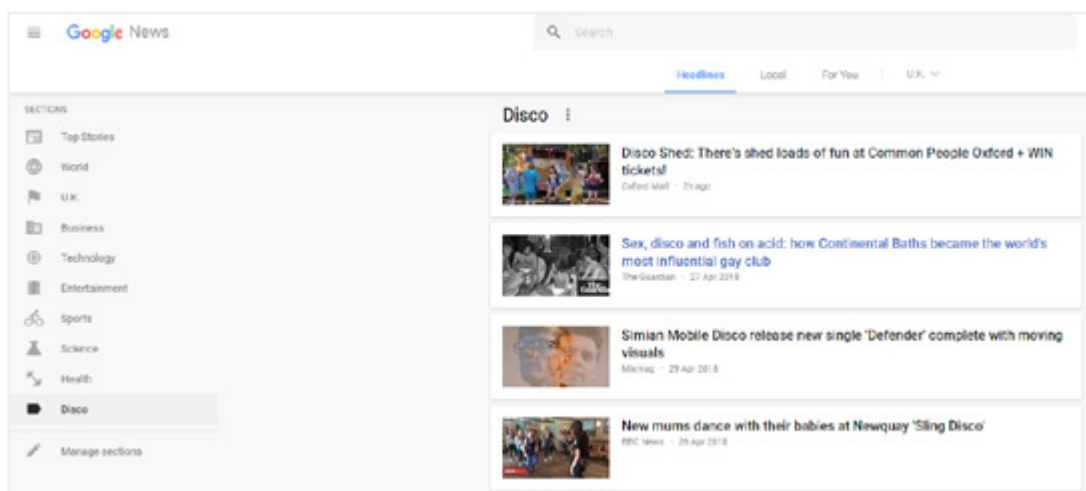

Figure 11 - Google News

Be sure to visit Google News to ensure you've looked into all the latest related headlines, too.
If the asset you've produced is live on a site already and contains an image, do an image search using Google to see if it has naturally been picked up elsewhere. From there, you might find further opportunities to reach out and ask for the image to be credited with a link back to the original piece of content if it's not already doing so.

💡 How to

Right click on an image -> click 'Search Google for Image'.

Use Google advanced search operators to narrow down your manual search.

Some of my favourite operators are:

- Find related websites by typing "related:" in front of a website's domain: related:builtvisible.com

- Find out if a website is covering a specific topic or shares certain formats through site search: site:time.com infographic

🔗 Helpful resources

Google: Refine web searches
Moz: Mastering Google Search Operators
Beyond: Google advanced search

B.

2. Scrape pages

Using a selection of tools, you can quickly extract key information from web pages. This is called scraping and it ultimately speeds up the prospecting process.

Required tools

gInfinity – infinite scroll for Google search results (otherwise known as Search Engine Results Pages, or SERPs)
Google SERPs Extractor or **Linkclump** – helps you extract a big list with ease

Three-step method

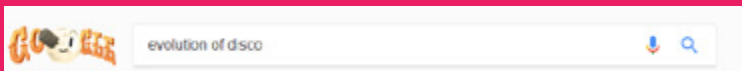**1. Pop your search query into the big G (Google)**

Figure 12 - Evolution of Disco Search Query

2.Scrape the results and extract a list using gInifity and Google SERPS Extractor/ Linkclump.
Tip: you will need to tweak the settings on Linkclump in order for it to extract correctly.
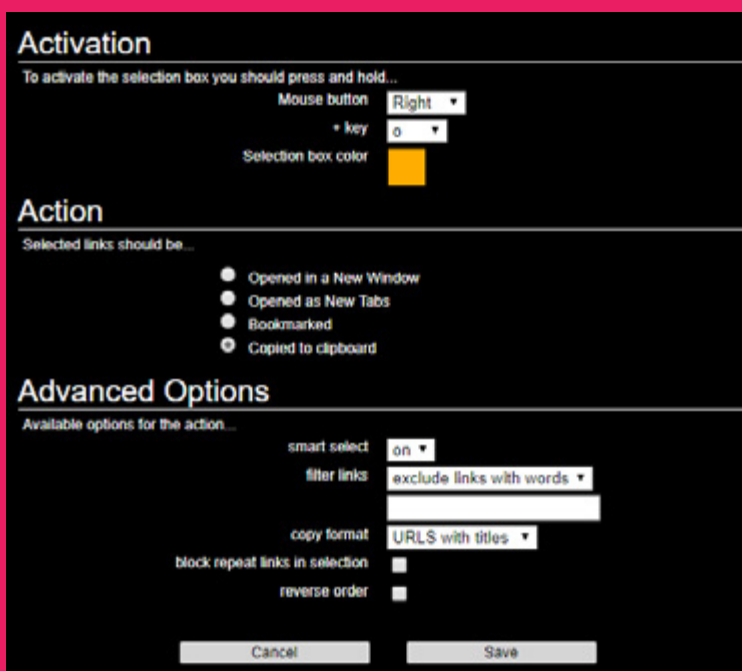We use the following:

Figure 13 - Linkclump

Three-step method

Then paste your list into Excel. It should look something like this:

Figure 14 - Extracted List in Excel

3. Analyse and prune the extracted list

This will identify which articles (and therefore which authors and publications) will make it to your outreach list.

To speed up the analysis process, I recommend fetching those SEO metrics I mentioned here, for example, Majestic's Trust Flow. With the addition of SEO metrics such as Trust Flow you will be able to whittle away any untrustworthy websites, ensuring that time is being spent on websites worth targeting with your content.

At Builtvisible, we have a selection of platforms at our disposal, however, for this purpose, I would recommend using URL Profiler.

How to use URL Profiler:

- Paste the list of URLs from the Excel spreadsheet into URL Profiler

- Select the metrics you're interested in—in this case Trust Flow, which masquerades as a checkbox named 'Majestic'.

- Wait for the magic to happen

You'll need to have a paid Majestic account and ensure the Majestic API is hooked up to work with URL Profiler. More information about how to authorise URL Profiler's access to Majestic's API found

B.

Three-step method

After a bit of a tidy up, you should then be left with something like this:

Figure 15 - Tidied Up Dataset

💡 How to

You can apply colour scale formatting in Excel via the conditional formatting drop down button and select the colour scale you're after. More on conditional formatting in Excel here and Google Sheets here.

As you can see, I've chosen to sort my list by Trust Flow (largest to smallest) and have applied some cheeky conditional formatting—this makes it easier for me to see which articles I definitely want to look into, versus those I want to discard.

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3. Discover similar or related websites

For this, we use Google Chrome's SimilarSites extension, SimilarSites or Right Relevance.

Personally, I like to use the extension as opposed to the search function as I think it's more efficient, but it's up to you!

How to use the SimilarSites extension:

- Let's say you've hit upon a website that is highly relevant to what you're outreaching

- Click on the SimilarSites extension button

- A neat list of similar websites to investigate will present itself, like so:
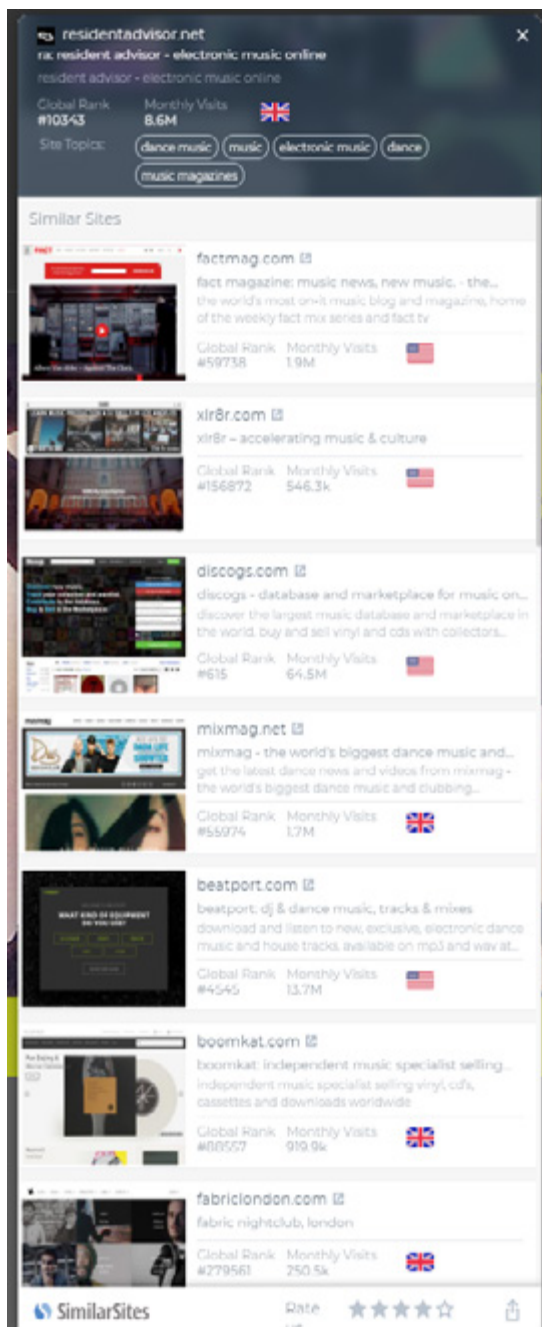

Figure 16 - SimilarSites

Additionally, you can use <u>Right Relevance</u> to discover similar articles and websites. You can then analyse these and hopefully add them to your outreach list.

You can even geolocate, specify video only and sort by relevance or time.

Right Relevance also spits out a list of relevant influencers and trending conversations which could offer up even more outreach opportunity.
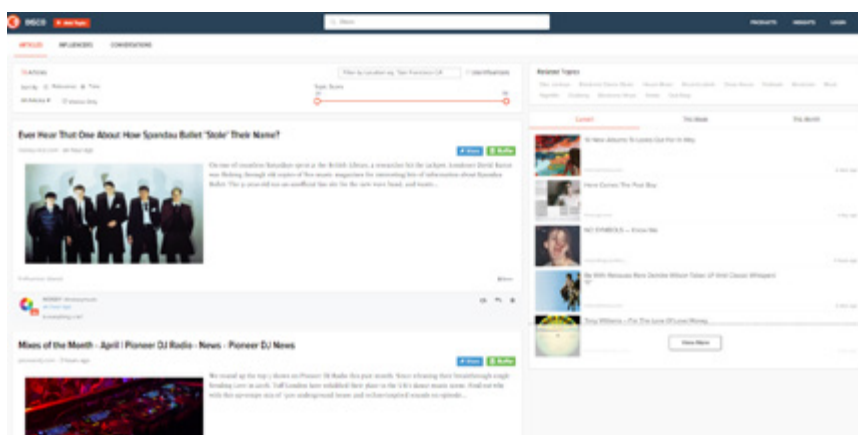

Figure 17 - Right Relevance

4. Use other paid tools

<u>Buzzsumo</u>, <u>Ahrefs</u> and Majestic can also be extremely helpful when it comes to building your outreach list:

BuzzSumo

> **"Helping you create & amplify content. View most shared content & influencers for any topic or site. Content strategy, outreach & competitive research."**
> *BuzzSumo*

BuzzSumo offers up a whole host of valuable insights and features to help you build out your outreach list.

The 'Content Research' tab's 'Content Analyzer' feature is my first port of call. Drop in a topic, keyword or domain and within seconds you'll have an overview of the content that is most engaged with and shared.

You have the ability to filter the results by date, content type, language, country and word count, to name but a few!

Once you have your list, simply export as a CSV and start refining the results for relevancy.
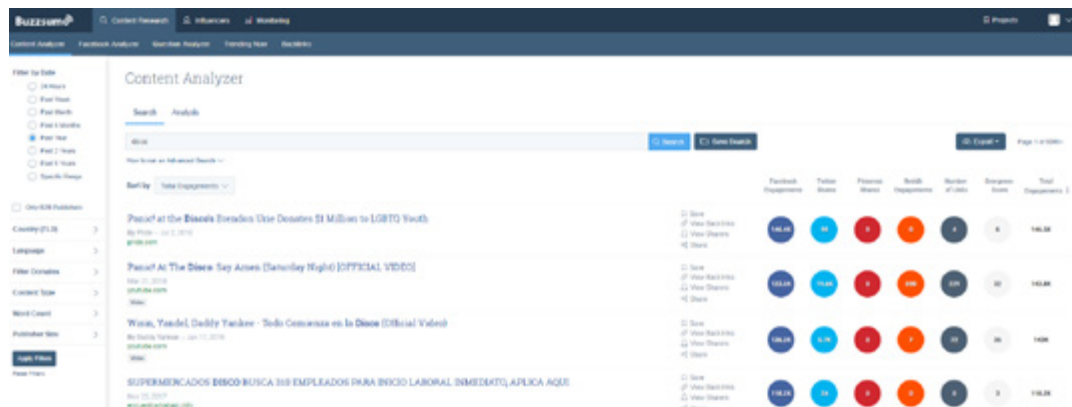

Figure 18 - BuzzSumo Content Analyzer

The 'Influencers' tab allows you to search for influencers who may (or may not) be suitable to outreach to. Here you're able to filter by influencer type, e.g. blogger or journalist, as well as by country.
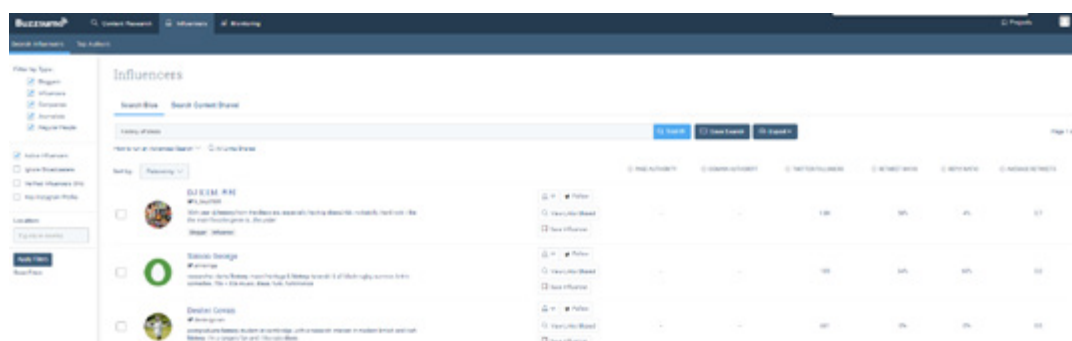

Figure 19 - BuzzSumo Influencers

For the purposes of building an outreach list, I feel the aforementioned features are the most important when it comes to BuzzSumo, but its features are extensive, so I would recommend anyone who hasn't tried it out to give it a go!

B.

Ahrefs

Like BuzzSumo, Ahrefs offers up its own version of the most shared content via the 'Content Explorer' feature and is in fact considered to be the best alternative to BuzzSumo. Again, just like BuzzSumo, you have multiple filter-by options, though Ahrefs additionally offers the user the ability to filter results by estimated monthly organic traffic as a nice value-add.

I also particularly like that you can specify where your chosen topic should feature, i.e. in the title, in the content or everywhere. You'll find this feature next to the search bar:
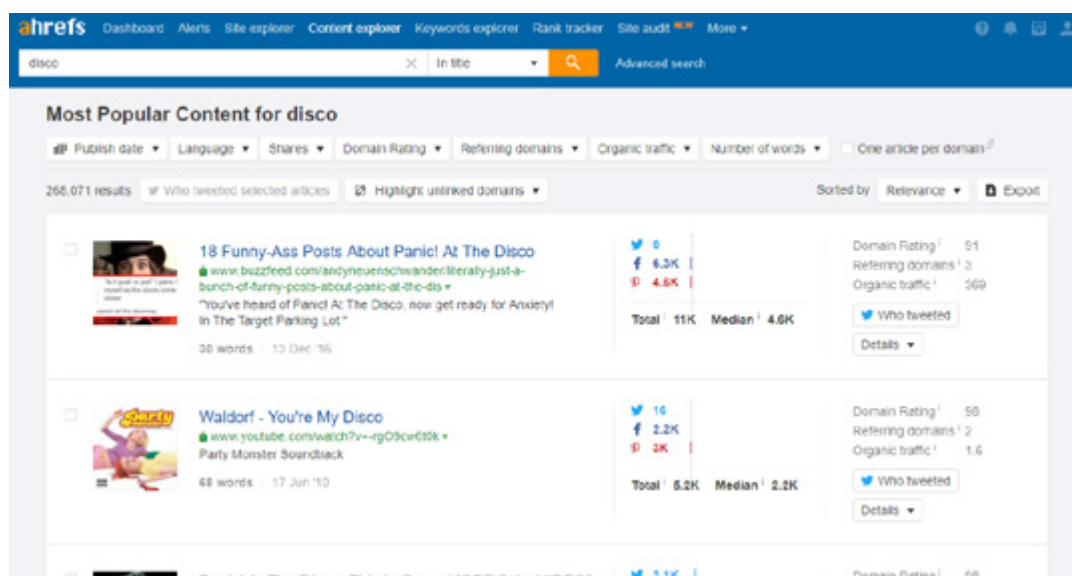

Figure 20 - Ahrefs Content Explorer

Ahref's 'Site Explorer' is also invaluable if you've come across an article that is very similar to what you're intending to promote.

Pop the URL of the similar article into the search bar and you'll get an overview of the links that page has already acquired, which may open up even more outreach opportunities as the page may have built links from websites you've yet to come across.

Majestic

This is also a great tool to find out what links a piece of content has accrued. Simply slot in the URL of a similar article you've come across and check out its backlink profile

Dig into that backlink profile to see if there are more websites that you can add to your outreach list.
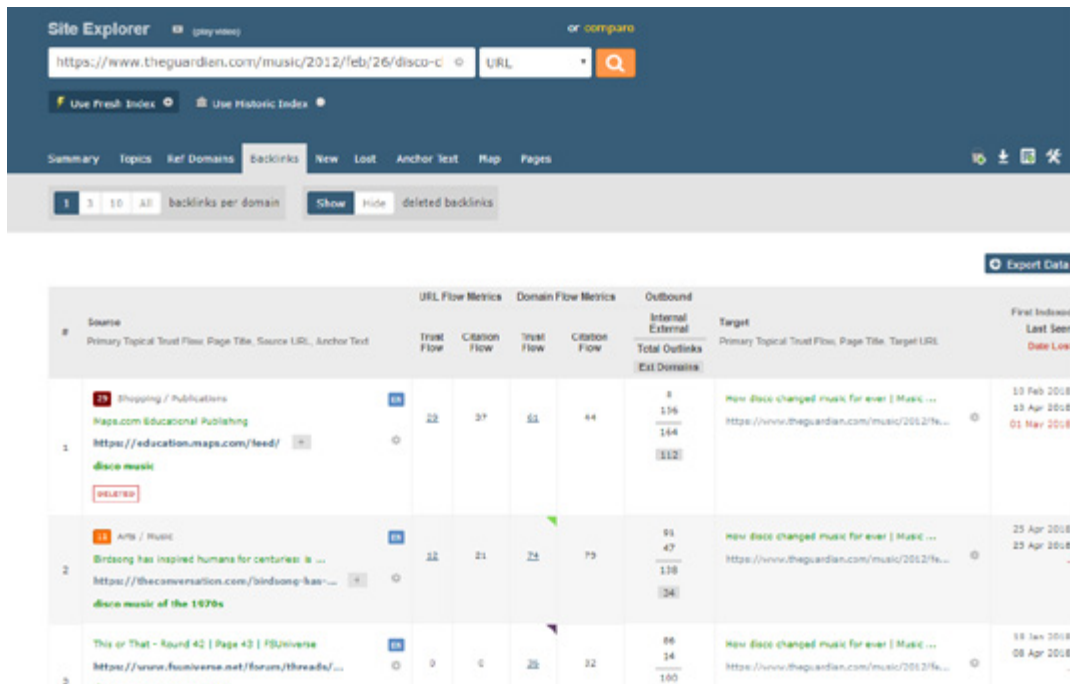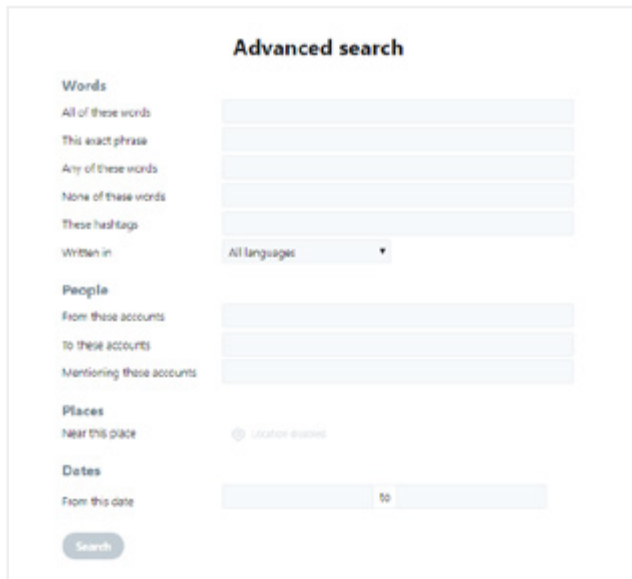

Figure 21 - Majestic Site Explorer

For the non-SEOs out there, a backlink profile is simply a list of all external websites linking to the article that you're interested in

B.

5. It's not the end of the world if you don't have access to paid tools

This is because social platforms can also be valuable when building an outreach list.

Twitter is usually my starting point, as it's an almost instant way to grab an overview of relevant trending conversations, key influencers and outreach targets. Type your query into the search bar and see what comes back. Don't forget about Twitter's advanced search filter option—it'll really help you refine your search.

Figure 22 - Twitter Advanced Search

Figure 23 - Twitter Lists

If you've got a publication wishlist, I suggest checking each publication's Twitter accounts to see if any have public lists. If yes, there could be a convenient staff list worth digging into.

✨ Top tip #1

Follow the hashtag '#journorequest'. There may be one key journalist looking for the very piece of content or story you're working on. In a similar way, you can search for key publications on LinkedIn and use related people to expand your list even more.

Instagram, Facebook and Twitter are also really useful because sometimes your outreach targets leave helpful tips about getting in touch. For example, some journalists explain they prefer to be contacted with particular subject lines or at certain times, while others highlight pet peeves to avoid.

✨ Top tip #2

Get the Skrapp Chrome extension to export page results and, in some cases, find email addresses too.

✨ Top tip #3

If you've not heard back from a must-have-coverage-from target, perhaps they are on holiday? Use Instagram to validate and schedule a follow-up email accordingly. More on when to send outreach emails in section 5.

If you have existing outreach lists from past projects, then make use of them! See if any of those outreach targets are applicable to the asset or story you're looking to share.

Now that you've built out what is hopefully a robust and relevant list of publications and author names for your content, it's time to organise and prioritise your outreach list.

B.

Building out, organising and prioritising your outreach list

What else should you include in your outreach list?

By this point you should have already collected the following information for your outreach list:

- Publication name

- Domain

- Author name

- Contact details

If you're manually building your list, I think it's also worth including the URL of the article that led you to that person. Then, depending on your KPIs, you may also want to include some additional information.

For example, if your KPIs relate to SEO then you will likely need to pull in key SEO metrics such as TF. I personally think this information is integral, regardless of KPI, because it's unlikely you will ever want to have your content covered by an untrustworthy site.

If your content's KPIs are not SEO-based, other possible data points that may be of interest include:

- Your outreach recipient's Twitter handle

- Social following

- Publication readership

- Media outlet type or tier e.g. national, regional, blog

- Job title

- Additional contact information e.g. when to contact a certain publication or person

The variables that matter to you will be entirely dictated by your content, so the key is to build your list accordingly.

Tip: if you already pay for a tool like Majestic, just add its respective browser plug-in to easily fetch SEO metrics. If you're using BuzzStream, the software handles this step for you by crawling each domain or URL. Alternatively, there are many free tools that can bulk check domains for you.
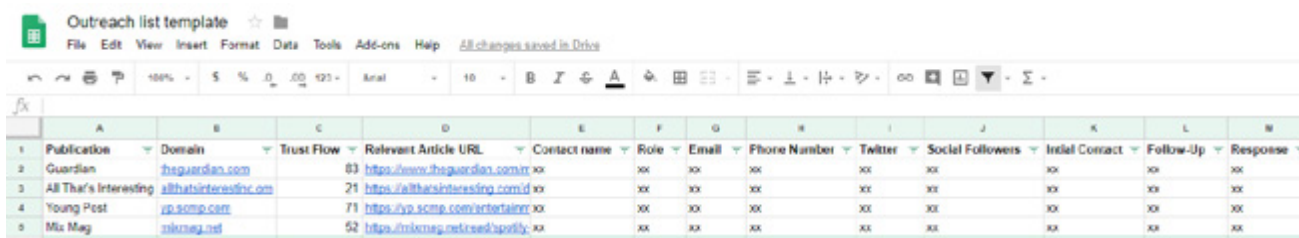
B.

Organisation

Regardless of what you include in your outreach list, it's extremely important to keep it well-ordered to ensure easy navigation and facilitate collaboration with other team members. This is particularly important if you're not using a platform that takes care of the heavy lifting for you.

For those of you not using such software, I recommend keeping things nice and simple by building your list in a spreadsheet with either Google sheets or Excel Online—both make it easy for others in your team to view and edit the document at the same time.

Simply add the column titles you need and populate with the relevant information. In the interest of keeping on top of how your outreach progresses, don't forget to include the following columns:

- Initial contact (date)

- Follow-up (date)

- Response/notes

Example of an outreach list template:

Figure 24 - Outreach List Template Example

Prioritisation: who should you approach first?

Defining the order in which to approach publications will again be subject to your aims. If you're SEO-driven, then perhaps you'll want to prioritise those with the highest Trust Flow. Alternatively, if you're chasing softer metrics such as social reach, then publication tier or the number of social followers might be more relevant.

If you're working alongside a PR agency, then this could also impact your order of approach. Always, always, always have those conversations with relevant teams as early as possible to ensure everyone is fully aligned before reaching out.

Often, we will include multiple relevant people from the same publication in our outreach lists, but we never contact those people at the same time to avoid an embarrassing double-publication. Unless we have an established relationship with someone already, our order of approach will be informed by job title hierarchy, whereby we approach the highest rank last.

Example of an editorial organisational chart paired with an order of approach:

1. Writer/Contributor/Blogger

2. Journalist

3. Features Editor

4. Deputy Editor

5. Editor / Managing Editor

6. Editor in Chief

Note: most top-tier publications will include job titles on staff list pages or mastheads which you'll be able to locate using site operators as discussed in <u>section 4</u>.

Sometimes outreach recipients will ask for payment for coverage. If you're considering paying for coverage, make sure you're aware of the rules surrounding this. Publications may be required to disclose content that has been paid for, and there are SEO implications to bear in mind.

In the interest of making life as easy as possible for yourself, I would suggest adding one final column to indicate your order of approach. Your list will then look a little something like this:

Figure 25 - Outreach List Template with Priority Order

In the example above, I've added some conditional formatting to my priority order column just to make it even easier for me—or whoever else may be working with this sheet – to see who should be contacted first.

Now that your outreach list has everything you need, is well organised and an order of priority has been assigned, it's onwards to crafting your outreach email!

B.

4. The outreach email

Before diving into the nitty-gritty, let's take a moment to remember that outreaching content via email is not the only approach. There are countless methods to employ—from picking up the phone, to sending DMs on Instagram. As is the theme throughout this whitepaper, I strongly recommend trying out different tactics, but for now, I will primarily focus on reaching out via email.

B.

The importance of your outreach email

An outreach email is a pitch – an opportunity to showcase your content, which will hopefully lead to a positive outcome. If your pitch is bad, however, then chances are your content will be rejected or, worse, simply ignored!

Everyone should, therefore, treat their initial outreach email as a one-shot opportunity (thanks Eminem). With this in mind, you need to invest time in crafting effective outreach emails.

> **"If there was one universal agreement among the journalists I spoke to, it [email] was our preferred contact method"**
> *FastCompany*

> **"90 percent of journalists prefer to be pitched by email"**
> *Ragan*

B.

Email body

Even though the subject line is the first thing your recipient sees, it's best to save it until last because, ultimately, the body of your email will dictate what to use for your subject. So, let's get straight to those outreach email tips and tricks.

One thing to note before we get started is that each outreach email should be unique. The degree of uniqueness of each email will vary, but it is absolutely key that every email you fire off is tailored to your recipient.

1. Be human and personalise

Remember, someone, i.e. an actual human being, will be on the receiving end of your email, so keep this in mind and write as if you were standing face to face.

The cardinal rule: always address your recipient by name.

(Arguably a little contradictory, but in the interest of the next point, I'd be sparing when it comes to pleasantries.)

> **"Email personalisation can increase your reply rate by 100%"**
> *Woodpecker*

2. Get to the point quickly

Your recipient will have an overflowing inbox and therefore doesn't have time to wade through paragraph after paragraph, so get to the point pronto.

Tips and tricks:

- Explain why you're contacting the person and show them what you have to offer as soon as possible – ideally in your first paragraph.

- Include no more than five short paragraphs and remember you can always provide further information in a follow-up.

- If your content is live on a site somewhere, always include the URL

- If you've got multiple assets to share, consider uploading them to a Dropbox folder, or equivalent, to limit email body copy.

- If you choose to embed image assets in your email, compress them to reduce image load times, which you can do with compression tools like TinyPNG.

3. Be confident

You've selected your recipient to receive your email on purpose, so make it clear to them that you have something they need.

4. Be candid, but strike a balance

You're not reaching out to your recipient for fun and games—you're after something. What that something is will vary, however, do consider whether you should be upfront about what you're after or if you take a softer approach to avoid putting them off instead.

B.

Example scenario:

One of your content's KPIs is links, which means you want your recipient to cover your content, but crucially you want them to provide a backlink.

Hi [x]

I'm getting in touch because I think you'd be interested in [insert content] for this reason [insert reason/highlight relevancy to contact].

Do you think this may work as a story for your audience? If so, would you be able to include a link back to the piece when you publish it?

If you have any questions or need further detail about [content] then just let me know and I'll be happy to assist.

Many thanks!

Olivia

B.

Softer approach:

Hi [x]

I'm getting in touch because I think you'd be interested in [insert content] for this reason [insert reason/highlight relevancy to contact].

Do you think this may work as a story for your audience?

If you have any questions or need further detail about [content] then just let me know and I'll be happy to assist.

Many thanks!

Olivia

B.

Direct approach:

Now, I'm not saying the direct approach can't work, but I do think a softer approach is better at showing how your content can be mutually beneficial, which—in the long run—will lead to stronger, more evergreen relationships with your target contacts. When that all-important coverage of your content is published (if that's the goal) and if a link back is missing, then that's the moment to go back and request a link be added.

5. Safeguard your credibility

When confined to the body of an email, it's arguably even more important to ensure you're coming across as credible and there are some ways to bolster this:

A. Spell check

B. Review grammar.
   Pro tip: use Grammarly and get the relevant plug-ins

C. Validate look and feel Test send your email for validation and, where possible, send to different email providers, e.g. Outlook, Gmail, Yahoo! Accounts, to see if there are any inconsistencies. Testing is particularly important if you're inserting image assets in your email body.
   Pro tip: if you are manually sending multiple emails with a similar email body, then be sure to copy and paste as values, make changes and only then add the formatting.

D. Think about your email signature Ask yourself if you need to tweak or even remove it to give your content a better chance. I don't think there is a hard and fast rule with this, but some questions to raise:

• Could your job title be acting as a deterrent? For example, does it spell out what your goal is with your content?

• If working at an agency, could the mention of it come across as too commercial, but also confusing if you're positioning yourself as a representative of a different brand? If this is the case, is your client willing to provide you with an email address from which to outreach? Personally, I don't tweak my email signature, but if you're thinking about doing so consider if the removal or tweaking of it could jeopardise your credibility.

B.

6. Be mindful of sentiment towards your brand

All brands are perceived differently, so ask yourself if it would be beneficial, or potentially detrimental, to mention the brand you're outreaching for from the get-go. A notfor-profit will be perceived very differently from a gambling brand, for example.

Brand mentions examples:

1. I am working on behalf of/alongside charitable social enterprise, Better.

2. Experts in pest control, Rentokil, have recently revealed how quickly rats breed.

The brand you're outreaching for should be apparent anyway, because you'll have included a link back to where the content is available on the brand's site. Alternatively, you'll have disclosed the asset, which will no doubt feature the brand name somewhere.

Finally, bear in mind any breaking news stories relating to your brand. If there's something brewing and it's not good, it may be best to hold off on outreach until things blow over.

Here are some examples of emails

Figure 26 - Outreach Email Example One

Subject: Experts in pest control reveal how quickly rats breed

External Sender

Hi Cecile,

I've just launched an interactive project with Rentokil that visualises the staggering rate at which rats reproduce. I thought it might interest Daily Mail's science readers.

To understand the issues of increasing rodent populations, we looked into the extraordinary rate at which rats breed. The study reveals that one pair of rats could produce **half a billion** descendants in just three years if left unchecked! Please take 2 mins to check it out here: http://www.rentokil.com/rise-of-the-rats/

I've attached a GIF that shows the speed of which rats reproduce as well as a press release that explains more about the project with a quote from Rentokil's rat expert Dr Andy Brigham.

I'd love to hear your thoughts about the project and whether it's something you'd be interested in sharing with your readers?

With best wishes,

Jennifer Prothero

—

Builtvisible.com
jennifer@builtvisible.com

Figure 27 - Outreach Email Example Two

Subject: Northampton insurer launches first solo travel planner

Hi Lawrence,

My colleagues and I have worked with Staysure, the Northampton insurer, to create the first ever travel planner for pairing solo travellers with their perfect holiday destination.

You can see it here: https://www.staysure.co.uk/solo-travel/

It works by taking into account the following criteria:

- When do you want to go?
- What is your ideal temperature?
- What is your daily budget?
- What do you want from your experience (e.g. beach, mountains, heritage sites)?

As the planner has been designed specifically with solo travellers in mind, we've assessed the destinations (there are over 80 of them) based on factors such as female friendliness, national security and whether there are any meet-up groups for likeminded travellers.

I wondered if you'd like to write about this for the Herald & Post? I'm happy to provide you with a code to embed the planner into your article, as well as high-res images of the best destinations for solo travellers.

Thanks,

Alex Andrews
SEO Executive

Figure 28 - Outreach Email Example Three

Subject lines

Having now built out your email's body copy, the final thing to tackle is the subject line. In my opinion, this is the hardest element to tackle.

Joanna Wiebe from Copy Hackers rightly states, "a subject line is there to get people to open [an email]". With this objective in mind, it's safe to say that subject lines are extremely important—if not the most important—items to consider when it comes to drafting up outreach emails.

> **"85% of editors determine whether or not they are interested in a pitch by the subject line of the email"**
> *Fractl Study*

I like to compare a subject line to a teaser trailer for a film: if it's compelling enough then chances are your target audience is going to watch the full trailer. In outreach terms, that means a good subject line translates into reading the body copy, so it's absolutely key that you nail that line!

Teaser trailer = subject line
Trailer = email main body

Now, as we know, teaser trailers are short and snappy and, similarly, subject lines need to follow that same principle.

1. Keep it simple, but choose your words carefully

You only have room for a few words in your subject line, so make them count by only including the most important and relevant keywords.

If you're targeting someone who favours particular buzzwords, prefers certain formats, covers regional stories or likes to include key influencers/experts then work that information into your subject line, but only if it's relevant to your email's main body.

Example scenarios:

Location
E.g. Northampton insurer launches first solo travel planner

Person of interest
E.g. Olympic silver medallist Kerri-anne Payne offers up her top 5 swimming tips

Format or data source
E.g. Millennials are the most forgetful generation in the UK, survey reveals
E.g. Top 10 hangover cures around the world revealed

B.

Additionally, you need to:

2. Pay close attention to your punctuation

- Is a question mark necessary?

- Avoid emojis and excessive punctuation, such as multiple exclamation marks, unless you're absolutely sure that they would be well received

- Exercise caution if using uppercase as it can look spammy

And finally:

2.3. Tone

If your content elicits a certain emotion, acknowledge it to grab your recipient's attention!

For example:

- 9 of the world's most precious wonders on the brink of extinction by 2020

- Women are more likely to be cast as hookers (8%) than traders (6%)

I appreciate that coming up with an attention-grabbing subject line isn't as simple as just following the above principles, so here are a few tactics to help you:

A. Scribble down as many subject lines as you possibly can in one minute, pick your favourites and develop further.

B. Use free word combination tools like Merge Words or Kombinator for inspiration.
Google Adwords Keyword Planner may also be useful if you have an account.

C. Ask the opinion of your team, friends or family.

D. Highlight your outreach email's key points, rank them and go from there.

E. Use outreach targets' relevant headlines to develop your own.

Much like your outreach emails, you should ensure your subject lines are tailored to your recipient. I suggest having five or six email subject line templates to hand and then simply tweak them at the point of sending off your email, if necessary.

B.

Testing and monitoring

Finally, a note about testing. As mentioned in the email body section, it's really important to send yourself, a colleague or even your mum a test outreach email to make sure it looks the part. I also suggest resizing your screen or opening it up on your phone to ensure that your email is mobile friendly. You should also monitor your subject lines to understand which are the most successful. A successful subject line is one that manages to get the recipient to open the email. This can be monitored in a few different ways:

1. **BuzzStream**
   The software tracks email open rates (as well as much more) and offers up
   a subject line performance statistic report a bit like this:

49	26	1	11
25	20	0	0
59	19	0	1
44	15	0	0
27	13	0	1
22	12	0	3
27	11	0	5
17	11	0	1
24	10	0	0
9	8	0	0
26	7	0	0
19	7	0	1
19	6	0	0

Figure 29 - Subject Line Performance

2. <u>**Yesware**</u>
   A product designed specifically to track who opens your emails, links and attachments.

   Please note: some email tracking products may make the recipient aware that you're monitoring opens and clicks, which I think can act as a bit of a deterrent when it comes to replying, but that's entirely subjective of course.

   There are a variety of email tracking plug-ins and extensions you can opt
   to install too, just do a quick search and take your pick.

B.

3. <u>LinkedIn</u>
   If you'd rather not splash the cash on a specific email tracking software and are sceptical of extensions, you can always leverage your LinkedIn profile to find out if your email subject lines are encouraging people to open your email.

   Link to your LinkedIn profile within your email body copy (perhaps within your email signature) and if email recipients visit your LinkedIn profile (LinkedIn helpfully lets you know this detail) you know your email subject line has done its job.

   This is admittedly a less robust way of finding out how successful your subject lines have been because a person won't always check out your profile just because they've opened your email, but still a tactic worth bearing in mind.

   By this point, you should be able to put a tick against all of the following:

   A. Do I have several outreach email templates that I'm happy with?
   B. Do I know who I am sending out my outreach emails to and has the list been well-research in line with my asset?
   C. Do I have a clear order of prioritisation?

   If you can respond to all of the above with a yes, then there's one final consideration
   to have, which is when you should send out your outreach pitches.

B.

5. When to execute outreach and follow-up

It's no good doing all this prep work if your email ends up getting buried in your recipient's inbox because it's poorly timed. Although there is no sure-fire way of being noticed from the get-go, there are a few things that you can take into consideration that can maximise your chances.

B.

Time and day

1. Time of day

Think about your own working day and how you prioritise tasks. Of course, this will differ from person-to-person, but I would hazard a guess that most of us catch up on emails or calendars either earlier in the day to set priorities or at the end of the day to prepare for the next.

CoSchedule's analysis of 14 studies, which investigated the best time to send an email, corroborates this. Its research shows that the optimum times to send emails are:

- 10 a.m. or 8 p.m. came out on top.
- 2 p.m. is also touted as a good time to hit send—this will likely be some time after lunch, which is a good moment to check-in on your inbox.
- 6 a.m. is called out as a reasonable time to fire-out emails, too, thanks to so many of us checking our inboxes before we've even climbed out of bed!

Whenever you decide to strike, don't forget to think about time differences if you're sending emails to recipients based in different parts of the world. If time difference is something to consider, you can simply schedule your emails, which is something I'll address a little later.

2. Day of the week

Once again, think about your own working week.

- When are you busiest?
- When do you assess what the week has in store and plan accordingly?
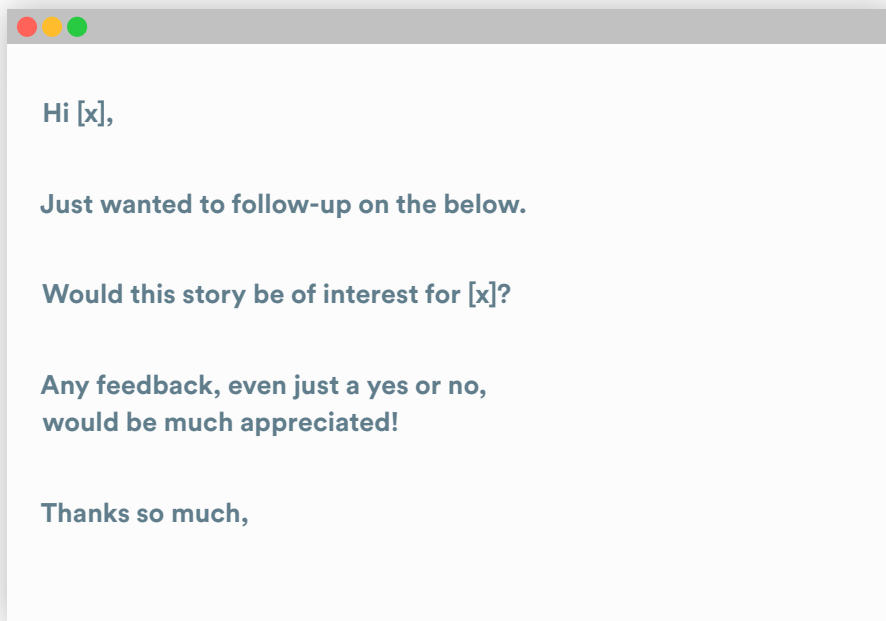- When do you review the week's happenings and wrap things up?

Now, more importantly, have a think about your recipient's working week. What days are likely to be their busiest? Well, the good news is that CoShedule's analysis helpfully outlines the best days to send out important emails and the results are probably not too surprising. The ideals are:

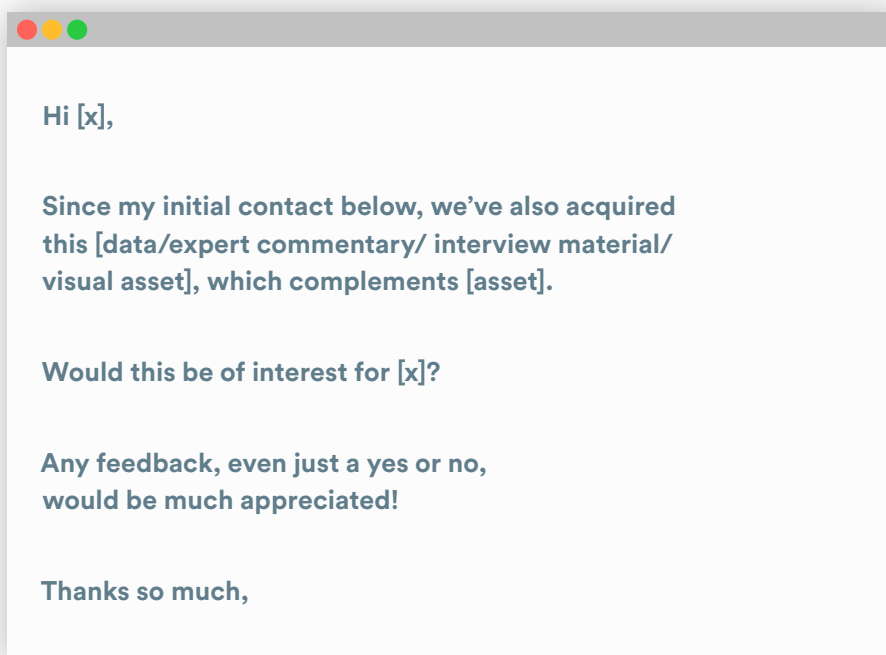- Tuesday
- Thursday
- Wednesday

B.

Follow-ups

Picture the scene: you've followed every step of the outreach process, but your content is yet to receive any recognition. This is where the power of a follow-up email can shine.

A follow-up email's objective is to remind your recipient of your original email and ultimately elicit a reply. A follow-up doesn't need to be in-depth or particularly personalised, but rather short and snappy, like this:

Hi [x],

Just wanted to follow-up on the below.

Would this story be of interest for [x]?

Any feedback, even just a yes or no,
would be much appreciated!

Thanks so much,

If, since your initial contact, the content has been updated or amended in some way, then I suggest highlighting that in your follow-up as it provides further justification for chasing. For example:

Hi [x],

Since my initial contact below, we've also acquired
this [data/expert commentary/ interview material/
visual asset], which complements [asset].

Would this be of interest for [x]?

Any feedback, even just a yes or no,
would be much appreciated!

Thanks so much,

B.

Automation

It should be clear by now that your first initial contact—your first outreach email, for example—should be tailored to its recipient. However, this doesn't mean you can't save yourself time by automating the delivery of those emails. Enter automation.

Email automation is a process by which emails can be sent out automatically in certain sequences or with specified criteria. Email automation is especially helpful when you're trying to get your emails out during those optimum times across different time zones. So, how can you do it?

- **BuzzStream**
  BuzzStream enables you to set up your outreach templates and schedule them as part of a sequence with specific conditions. For example, you can set your sequence up so that your initial email is sent out on day one and follow-ups are automatically sent out after a certain number of days, which are determined by you, should you receive no response.

- **Email provider delays**
  Email providers such as Outlook or Gmail also give you options to delay the delivery of emails.

The time you'll have saved automating the delivery of your emails means you can then spend more time crafting your personalised outreach emails and subsequently begin basking in link, coverage or social share glory. Hurrah!

🔗 Useful resources

Microsoft Delay or schedule sending email messages
Boomerang Gmail Delay Send

B.

6. Project post-mortems and conclusion

After the outreach has been executed, all that's left to do is review how the content has performed.

B.

Content Performance Review

At Builtvisible, we hold content performance review sessions within which we run through a series of questions to ascertain the following:

- What worked?

- What were the challenges?

- What was the outreach approach?
  - Most and least successful approach, including subject line analysis

- How was content covered, shared, etc.?
  - Look at what hooks and assets were used

- Who out of our outreach recipients was the most receptive to content?

The key objective is to not only track success (or failure) of content, but to take content performance learnings and apply them to future content.

To conclude

If you're still with me after reading all six sections of this whitepaper then I would first like to say well done, you've made it! By now, you should feel equipped to execute your own outreach strategy and feel confident that your content can earn the return it deserves.

If there's one takeaway I'd like you to carry with you it's this:

Remember that outreach requires thought and should be a consideration from the very start of your content's production. Without a well-planned, targeted outreach strategy, your content stands to fall, so take your time with each step and enjoy the results.

Good luck!

B.

Appendix

B.

Appendix

Throughout this whitepaper I have mentioned a number of tools. Below is a handy table with URLs for each.

Tool / Platform	Link	Referenced in sections
Majestic	majestic.com	3
All My Tweets	allmytweets.net/connect	3
Hunter	hunter.io	3
Gorkana	gorkana.com	3
Buzzstream Buzzmarker	buzzstream.com/blog/buzzmarker-for-chrome.html	3
Anewstip	anewstip.com	3
Journalism.co.uk	journalism.co.uk	3
Hey.Press	hey.press	3
MailTester	mailtester.com	3
BuzzStream	buzzstream.com	3, 4, 5
Google News	news.google.com	3
gInfinity	Google Chrome Plug-In	3
Google SERPs Extractor	chrisains.com/seo-tools/extract-urls-from-web-serps	3
Linkclump	Google Chrome Plug-In	3
SimilarSites	similarsites.com Google Chrome Plug-In	3
Right Relevance	rightrelevance.com	3
BuzzSumo	buzzsumo.com	3
Ahrefs	ahrefs.com	3
Skrapp	Google Chrome Plug-In	3
MailTester	mailtester.com	3
Grammarly	app.grammarly.com	4
Merge Words	mergewords.com	4
Kombinator	kombinator.org	4
Google Adwords Keyword Planner	ads.google.com/intl/en_uk/home/tools/keyword-planner	4
Yesware	yesware.com	4
Boomerang Gmail	boomeranggmail.com	5

B.

Builtvisible.

Builtvisible exists to deliver the most meaningful agency experience in the world for both our clients and our staff. We love what we do, we love how we do it and our superb client and staff retention rates are a direct consequence of our approach.

We are unashamedly a specialist agency centred on three industry-leading service offerings: SEO, Content and Analytics. We have a proven track record of success with some of the world's most exciting brands.

We'd love to hear from you and explore how we can help your brand measure its presence, attract users and create customers.

Learn more about us by reviewing the work we've done for our clients, or introducing yourself at hello@builtvisible.com