

Working with Wikipedia

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WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia



Working with
Wikipedia



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Working with Wikipedia

Wikipedia has been a remarkably successful "group knowledge" project. Over 3 million English-language articles have been written by many millions of "editors". Articles can be written and edited by anyone. Wikipedia has no formal review or fact-checking process. It operates under the theory that many eyes will spot and correct errors and abuse.

Wikipedia has become the de facto "go to" site for students, business people, and journalists searching for facts and knowledge about almost any topic. While many academics frown upon it being used as an authority, it does largely provide users with accurate summaries and an appreciation of consensus opinion on controversial topics. Many use it responsibly as a jumping off point for knowledge (visiting its linked external sites), not as an end point for knowledge.

Because Wikipedia has become both the default first stop for casual researchers (and many times their only stop) and a form of gateway into more detailed third party knowledge, many people have tried to "game" Wikipedia for their own ends: public relations, advertising, inserting links to drive traffic, etc.

This is a strategy that largely backfires as almost every article has dozens or hundreds of people who watch it with hawk-like intensity. Such overt attempts rarely last long and frequently end up in an "edit war" that rarely ends favorably for the person trying to use Wikipedia promotionally.

It is, however, not always clear to new users, even those with the most honorable of intentions, about what is allowed into the online encyclopedia. You might spend considerable amount of time entering a write up about your company only to find it gets locked and deleted for not being "notable" enough.

This eBook will help you understand the basic policies of Wikipedia and how you can use the site to your advantage and avoid time consuming conflicts.

So You Think Your Company should be in Wikipedia?

Golden Rule of Wiki: Never Edit Yourself

It's generally considered in poor taste if you edit an entry you have a vested interest in. For example, editing (or creating) an entry about your own company would be considered a conflict. Ideally, Wikipedia believes if you're

important enough to be written up for Wikipedia there should be third party users who are aware of your company and are willing to write you up.

In practice, it doesn't hurt to get the ball rolling yourself. Wikipedia keeps track of the IPs of editors so if you choose to start a "stub" devoted to your company, you should not edit from an IP that's traceable back to your company.

Are You Notable?

Naturally most people think their company is notable. You wouldn't be working for a company you didn't think had something notable to offer. If you own a company, you're unlikely to be devoting your life to an endeavor you don't think is notable. Great frustration can be had on Wikipedia when you try to write up a company or product that seems manifestly notable only to have that entry deleted and locked by upstream editors who disagree and seem intractable in their disagreement.

Wikipedia has several "tests" to determine if a topic is notable enough to be entered. Before you create a topic, you need to ask yourself if the topic fulfills the following "tests":

Significant coverage: Has your company or product been covered in a significant way by TV, newspapers, magazines, etc.?

Coverage Source is Notable and Independent: If the source is, say, a local university newspaper, Wikipedia tends to judge that as a non-notable source. A company newsletter would likewise be non-notable. A notable source would be a daily commercial newspaper, a local TV station, etc.

Awards: Has your company won an important and notable award? What's a notable award? Well, in a somewhat circular way, if the award is in Wikipedia then it's arguably a notable award. Hence, an Emmy award is a notable award. A Lucite trophy given by a local organization of auto dealers is not a notable award in Wikipedia's view.



Get Notable

There is a certain irony that Wikipedia, which is a "dead tree" media killer, waits until dead tree media (newspaper, magazines, books) determine the notability of a topic. There are many emerging trends (and key players) on the Internet that frequently don't get noticed by traditional media. Unfortunately, Wikipedia seems very committed to its current notability guidelines and until such time it loosens them, the ability of small- and medium-sized enterprises getting a neutral, facts-based write up into Wikipedia is slim unless the company has received significant news coverage.

As a first test, you might enter your company name in [Google News](#) and discover if your company has received any significant media coverage. If not, and you are determined to get your company into Wikipedia, you should develop a media strategy to get covered by your local daily and local TV station. It's pretty hard to prove coverage on TV as few TV stations keep stories online. However, you can capture your segment and host it on YouTube as proof your company has received significant coverage.

What Else Can I Do with Wikipedia That's of Benefit?

Complete Your Profile Page

Although anyone can edit most wiki pages without registering, registering confers certain benefits, notably the ability to maintain a pretty open ended profile page. On your profile page you can link to your company,



provide company information, information about your services, etc.

Improve Your Industry's Coverage

You might not be able to do much about your company however it is likely your industry is covered in multiple topics by Wikipedia. Many topics have informal working groups devoted to improving the quality of topics. You can raise your profile within these working groups by adding and improving industry-related topics you are knowledgeable about.

Apply the Social Media Playbook

The rules and rewards of social media apply to Wikipedia just as well as they apply to Facebook or Twitter:

Get access to networks

Expand your network

Raise your profile within that network

Towards a Happier Wikipedia Experience

Many people dipping their toes into Wikipedia have bad experiences, usually owing to the steep learning curve involved in understanding the Wikipedia style. While there are not an overwhelming number of rules, Wikipedia does require one to write in a fashion that is different from the style most people in business are accustomed to. In business, one is usually advocating for a position, using a combination of appeals to logic and emotion to sway minds. Wikipedia demands a strict adherence to what it calls a "neutral point of view".

The Neutral Point of View

The Neutral Point of View in Wikipedia requires one to represent all significant sides of an issue fairly and without an attempt to use persuasive language. Many write ups lack significant sides being documented and that's an important area where one can contribute. Wikipedia makes a distinction between a significant side and a "fringe" perspective. For example, in a write up of the moon landings, one might expect to see the technology used for the moon landing documented but not expect to find fringe ideas about technology used to ostensibly fake the moon landings.

No Original Research

To those used to writing persuasively, this can be a hard concept to grasp. Wikipedia does not let you introduce your own hypotheses and argue for them within the context of a write-up. You may be entirely right but if the hypothesis has not been proposed by others within the notable literature, then it is considered "original research".

Criticism Sections

Many topics have a "Criticisms" or "Controversies" section of a write-up. Poorly written criticism sections or a criticism sections that lack balance could be damaging to your industry and your own business. It might be worthwhile examining topics that relate to your business and see how they're handled, especially the criticism section. If you see important omissions, consider eliminating the omission with a write-up using

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a neutral point of view with proper references to notable and independent sources.

Other Wikis

URL: wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wikis

URL: mywikibiz.com

URL: wikitravel.org

URL: wikihow.com

Wikipedia [provides a list of other wiki type projects](#) not affiliated with Wikipedia. They use a similar system of building out a knowledge base using user contributions. Depending on your industry, you might find opportunities to expand networks and raise your profile on some limited topic wikis. Of note:

City Wikis: Check the [City Wiki write up](#) to see if there's a wiki devoted to your city. If most of your business is local, you might find a worthwhile network on your city wiki.

WikiTravel: A wiki site devoted to showcasing cities around the world from a tourist perspective.

MyWikiBiz: A business directory that uses the wiki format.

wikiHow: wikiHow is a "how to" wiki that lets users jointly edit "how to" type articles.

Other Group Knowledge Sites

Knol

URL: knol.google.com

Knol (defined by Google as a "unit of knowledge") is Google's attempt to create a



group knowledge project. Knol is different from Wikipedia in that it's "anything goes". One can write from any point of view, there's no balance requirement, and one can introduce original research.

Knol allows the original author to set user participation levels. If the original author wants to be the sole editor, he or she can lock other editors out of the article. The original author can allow editing but has the final say whether or not the changes are approved. Finally, the original author can allow anyone to freely edit without moderation.

Compared to Wikipedia's barebones article formatting, Knol provides a rich WYSIWYG interface, allowing for the easy creation of attractive layouts and text formatting.

It would not be a bad idea to stake out your turf on Knol and enter your company details as a write up. Many assumed Google would use its search engine to drive traffic to its Knol site, over say, Wikipedia. It is debatable, however, how much weight Google gives its own site weight for search results. With Knol, Google has come under criticism as being now both a knowledge provider and a knowledge organizer. Google has had to walk a fine line to avoid criticism that these two aspects represent a conflict.

Knol runs Google ads along side your write ups and features revenue sharing with the author.

Wikipedia



eHow

URL: ehow.com

eHow is a "how to" knowledge base with user created articles. eHow is the knoll-equivalent

of wikihow. Whereas wikihow allows group editing, eHow is single author focused. Like Knol, eHow allows authors to share revenues from ads. eHow receives 11 million unique visitors per month.