How to secretly enlist leading world publications as your advertising allies

Part I

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One of the standout qualities that truly separates world class copywriters from lesser mortals is their commitment to world class research.

Even though it’s not as glorious as creating headlines, bullets and offers, there isn’t a single outstanding ad writer who doesn’t shine in the research department.

The power of research is like a diamond tipped drill burrowing deep into the earth. And just like in oil prospecting, the greatest rewards are reserved for those who hit black gold.

Many think this requires locking yourself in a room for weeks or crawling through the bowels of a big city public library.

It’s just not so.

Did you know that with a few keystrokes and the right guidance, you can uncover information gems 99% of savvy internet users haven’t a clue about?

Apply this in the realm of advertising and you can move mountains.

Here’s what I’m talking about.

If right now, you were asked what’s the most valuable thing in your wallet, how would you answer?

Cash, credit cards, your driver’s license. Perhaps, a cherished family photo.

Believe it or not, I’m going make a case that your public library card (if you’ve still got one) is numero uno.

The most valuable item in your wallet?
Sounds geeky...I know...but here’s the deal.

While much of the world is dumbing down on the hit-or-miss Wikipedia, you can mine a storehouse of thousands of the world’s most respected publications and journals.

While others are looking for answers at Bob’s Business Blog -- you can tune into The Wall Street Journal, The Economist, Financial Times and Barron's -- capable of searching every article of every issue from yesterday to a quarter century back.

Mind you this has nothing to do with Google, search engines or even the web itself.

Do you know how much a subscription to The Wall Street Journal costs online?

It’s $79.

This is actually peanuts compared to what some publications cost. There’s a banking publication which costs $3,000 a year to subscribe to offline but is 100% gratis if you’ve got a public library card and your library system subscribes to the database that has it in its “virtual holdings.”

Let’s say one database -- and there are dozens -- has 3000 publications in it. And let’s assign a modest subscription cost of $50 per publication. It would cost $150,000 in total to subscribe to these publications.

Suppose you needed information in an obscure area like rubber chemistry, European agricultural economics or truck fleet management.

Where are you going to go to get it?

Don’t even mention Google.

One laser-like citation from the leading rubber chemistry journal requires just a few more keystrokes but carries the room silencing power of the words “E.F. Hutton” uttered at an 80's cocktail party.

How to access thousands of authoritative publications from The New England Journal of Medicine to The Wall Street Journal...all online and 100% FREE

To illustrate this, let’s go to the New York Public Library’s web site to access their database holdings. This process can be applied precisely the same just about anywhere else.

We need just two things:

1. A valid New York Public Library card
2. An internet connection to access the New York Public Library website.
The link to the databases is accessible through most all public libraries in the United States, Canada, the UK and Australia.
After we’ve reached the page which lists the database holdings, we can select one and then log in. I’ve chosen “Newspapers and Magazines.”

Just plug in the number beneath the bar code into the circed field below

The access method is the same wherever you go
The little red “home icon” denotes everything that can be accessed with a Chivas on the sofa. The others require trudging down 5th Ave to the library. Since I’ve done the later more times than I care to remember, I’ll opt for the former.

You’ll notice I’ve underlined the New York Times (1851-2003). I’ve done this for a very good reason.


These pages have been boarded, scanned and converted to PDF online. Every dotted ‘i’ and every crossed ‘t’ in each publication’s entire history.
The Copywriter's Research Magnet

The scope of this database’s contents is staggering. Inside, you’ll find:

- Every birth notice in the publication’s history
- Every obituary in the publication’s history
- Every book and movie review in the publication’s history
- Every letter to the editor in the publication’s history
- Every display ad in the publication’s history – both direct response and otherwise
- Millions of pages of public domain articles (before 1923)
- And far, far more

But there’s a very big rub you should know about.

Because these databases are licensed for a fee through capped state and city budgets -- similar to public television -- they can be sliced and diced any which way.

This has some strange consequences.

New York City does not license a single ProQuest Historical database.

What this means is a New York City resident physically needs to travel to the library, much like he did 30 years ago to use microfilm and microfiche, to access the New York Times historical database.

But somebody up in Boston (a city which does license this database) only needs to put on his night robe and drag himself to the computer at 3:00 am if he wanted to dive into the 1,976 articles about the Lincoln assassination.


The front page the day after. Note the price of four cents.

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And the Bostonian need not to be tethered to Beantown to do this. As long as he’s got an Internet connection and a valid library card, he can do so from Thailand.

**Information asymmetries and the reason why McDonald’s employees earn more than 98% of crack dealers**

Once in a while, a book not specifically about marketing or copywriting comes out that is very relevant to marketers. One such book which was published recently is *Freakonomics*.

The subtitle of the book is very direct response like: “A rogue economist explores the hidden side of everything.”

The reason I interject this here is because the authors spend a good deal of time demonstrating the role of “information asymmetries.” *Economists’ parlance*.

They also devote a chapter to demonstrating how McDonald’s employees out earn 98% of street level crack dealers in a chapter entitled: “Why do drug dealers still live with their moms?”

Back to information asymmetries.

As the authors describe, and we know very well, it’s common for one party to a transaction to have better information than another.

Whether it’s:

- A real estate agent and a home seller
- A car seller and buyer
- A mortgage lender and borrower.

The internet has “mortalily wounded” these asymmetries to a large degree. Now, a home seller can find accurate pricing information at zillow.com, a used car buyer can instantly access a vehicle’s history at carfax.com and pricing info at kbb.com while a mortgage borrower can turn to dozens of sites in which lenders compete on price.

God bless the Internet.

But would you like to know what the single biggest asymmetry is?

It’s this.

Almost everyone mining serious information online (not counting the local movie times or weather) is choosing the chipped beef quality of information when they could so easily be enjoying filet.

I’m going to demonstrate a method of information retrieval that should make serious direct response marketers jump for joy.
How direct response advertisers can take advantage of implied endorsements from the world’s leading publications

Here’s a straightforward hypothetical.

Pretend you suddenly owned a company that imports green tea.

Your job is to create advertising that makes the company optimally profitable in short order.

Since you’re not Proctor and Gamble, you rely on direct mail lists of health food buyers and settle on a pricing strategy that yields higher profit margins than any of your competitors. You do this because you intend to present your green tea as superior to everything else in the marketplace.

How would you create advertising for a plentiful and seemingly mundane product that persuades prospects they’ve got to have it?

It would sure help if you could get a heavyweight endorsement.

Try to imagine a stamp of approval so convincing, it shakes the change loose from a prospect’s pocket upon reading it.

What if the New England Journal of Medicine or The Lancet were to endorse your brand of green tea?

That would sure seize a prospect’s attention.

But that’s never going to happen. Or is it?

Let’s dive into one of the databases and see what surfaces.
While green tea is perfectly intelligible in the top search field, the bottom two need an explanation.

The "PMID" stands for ProQuest Media ID. ProQuest is one of the easiest to use and best stocked databases.

Each publication has a number which identifies it. PMID(28691) represents The New England Journal of Medicine and PMID(28154) The Lancet. Other databases, such as Gale and EbscoHost, use similar formatting.

Notice also that the “OR” operator (underlined in red) was chosen instead of the default "AND."

What this tells the database to do is go and find all the articles about green tea which appeared in The New England Journal as well as in The Lancet.

6 documents found for (green tea) AND (PMID(28691)) OR (PMID(28154))

1. **Green tea: prevention and treatment of cancer by nutraceuticals**
   - Full Text - PDF

2. **Doctoring the risk society: Risk factors**
   - Full Text - PDF

3. **News in brief**
   - Full Text - PDF

4. **Green tea extract may have neuroprotective effects in Parkinson’s disease**
   - Full text

5. **Editorial: Green tea and gastric cancer**
   - Full text

6. **Green tea and the risk of gastric cancer in Japan**
   - Full text

*One small screen of six results*
If you examine the first result, you'll notice the option to display it as “Text and Graphics,” “Full Text/PDF” or as an “Abstract.”

It's worth noting that the Full Text/PDF option gives you the same format as the paper-and-ink version you'd find at the nearest medical college.

Green tea: prevention and treatment of cancer by nutraceuticals

Green tea has always been considered by the Chinese and Japanese peoples as a potent medicine for the maintenance of health, endowed with the power to prolong life. Recently, Yunan and colleagues looked at the effects of the main active green tea constituent, epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG) on chronic lymphocytic leukaemia B cells isolated from leukaemic patients. These cells are characterised by their resistance to apoptosis because they secrete and bind vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), a potent angiogenic cytokine that also acts as a crucial survival factor for tumour cells. The researchers showed that addition of EGCG to these cells markedly decreased VEGF receptor phosphorylation, leading to the disruption of the VEGF-dependent autocrine pathway that protects the cells from apoptosis and cell death.

These results support our observations on the potent inhibition of the activity of VEGF-receptor tyrosine kinase by components of green tea, and provide strong evidence that this inhibitory effect may have profound repercussions on tumours that depend on this cytokine for progression. Of considerable importance is the low concentration of EGCG required to trigger the observed biological effects, because VEGF-receptor activity can be inhibited and apoptosis of leukaemia B cells can be induced with concentrations of EGCG in the plasma after moderate drinking of green tea (2–4 cups a day). Although more

How many hours of digging would this take to find 15 years ago?

Now here's where it gets really interesting.

Though medical language has a tendency to make non-medical people drowsy, ProQuest has a convenient search feature in the “Text and Graphics” mode which
makes pinpointing blockbuster benefits a snap.

**Pinpointing blockbuster benefits and proof and hitching them to a mundane product**

**Abstract** (Document Summary)

Green tea has always been considered by the Chinese and Japanese peoples as a potent medicine at the effects of the main active constituent, epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG) on chronic apoptosis because they secrete and bind vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF), a potent angiogenic factor to these cells markedly decreased VEGF-receptor phosphorylation, leading to the disruption of the angiogenic switch.

**Full Text** (886 words)

This is the same article as up top but in a digital version where we can quickly cut-and-paste lines of text. The keyword “green tea” also appears in red which means we can rapidly spot a relevant benefit or proof component in a 32-page dissertation.

At this point, we can start building a list of powerful benefits and features while going through this tightly focused set of search results one-by-one.

Here’re some of the lines I’ve clipped from the articles that came up in the search results.

- “These findings nevertheless raise the interesting possibility that green tea could be used as a combination agent for treating leukemia.”
- “This mechanism also provides a strong scientific basis for the chemopreventive property of green tea that has been inferred from several epidemiological studies which showed that frequent drinking of green tea is inversely associated with the risk of developing several types of human cancer, such as esophageal cancer.”
- “We believe that anticancer agents designed by nature and used for several thousands of years with little toxicity may prove useful in treating and preventing cancer.”

The authors of this article headed a molecular medicine laboratory and the article appeared in the Sep 18-Sep 24, 2004 of *The Lancet*, pg. 1021.

Now we come to the fourth article: “Green tea extract may have neuroprotective effects in Parkinson's disease.”

- “Researchers from Israel have found that a phenolic compound in green tea is a strong neuroprotectant in two different models of Parkinson's disease.”

This comes from the Aug 4, 2001 issue of *The Lancet*, pg. 391.

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We’ve rounded up some pretty impressive citations from an unquestioned medical authority.

Now let’s locate a kitchen sink of benefits and proof components by searching all of the 2,923 publications in the database which contain the search terms “green tea” and “weight loss.”

Two words require no quotations but more than two do
Since we’ve done a general search of all 2,923 publications, we have to weed through the manageable 89 results to find something on target.

The first and fourth results are press releases. *There’s no keeping those pesky marketers out.* And the seventh result looks rather weak compared to a medical (or medical sounding) publication.

A little searching yields the following result.
Though The Independent isn’t a medical or health publication per se, it’s a widely recognized publication whose citation would have a definite impact in the United Kingdom.

There’s a lot of ammunition in this article.

“Green tea comes from the same leaf as black tea, but undergoes a less aggressive manufacturing process and contains antioxidants that can protect against cancer and heart disease. A recent study found drinking two cups a day was equivalent in antioxidants to five portions of fruit and vegetables.

American research has also found green tea can help with weight loss. It found that men who were dieting and who took a green tea extract every day lost twice as much body fat as those not on the green tea supplement. Scientists believe that a plant based substance called catechin, contained in green tea, may stimulate the body to burn calories.

Green tea also contains natural antihistamines, which prevent the swelling and irritation associated with prickly heat.

People in Britain spend about pounds 700m a year on tea and drink 62 billion cups.”

This is good material. What else is there?

“Jeffrey Blumberg, the senior scientist and director of the Antioxidants Research Laboratory at Tufts University in Massachusetts, said there is strong data showing green tea is good for the heart, moderately developed research linking green tea to cancer prevention, and preliminary findings that green tea will help with dental health, weight loss and osteoporosis.”

Here’s another one from a very medical sounding journal.
"Green tea is the nonoxidized, unfermented product of the leaves from the evergreen plant, Camellia sinensis. It is made up of catechins, the most abundant of which is Epigallocatechin Gallate (EGCG). It is believed that EGCG is responsible for the vast array of presumed health benefits green tea possesses, such as the prevention of cancer and cardiovascular disease. Several studies have reported that EGCG may also have a protective effect against HIV infection."

We could easily dig up a dozen more articles like this.

Since these citations are like little nuclear bombs of persuasion...we want to be careful not to detonate one in the playground.

Minefields in this area

Here’s what the green tea advertiser needs to keep in mind before the ink hits the paper. The usual "I am not a lawyer" caveat must be mentioned here.

1. In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration has wide reaching powers concerning medical or health claims made about foods and drugs. The Federal Trade Commission also enforces “truth in advertising.” In 2004, the FTC challenged ads that promoted such things as pills, powders, green tea, gels and patches for weight loss without diet or exercise. It was called "Operation Big Fat Lie." And internationally, there are as many varying laws governing these things as there are countries.

2. The green tea advertiser needs to balance the perception that a particular entity is endorsing his brand or product without crossing the line.

Here’s what I mean.

If The Wall Street Journal were to publish an article in which they identified nanotechnology as the most promising industry of the decade, a nanotech company would be foolish not to trumpet this fact. But if they suggested for a moment that Dow Jones had actually endorsed their company, when they didn’t, they could count on being sued back into the Stone Age.

With that out of the way, let’s come up with some mockup advertising that uses the research we’ve dug up.
“New, super green tea’s four amazing health force fields help you safely melt pounds of fat and even burn disease out of your body”

You may have heard of studies which show green tea is an effective weight loss supplement.

Like a recent one which found that men who were dieting and took a green tea extract every day lost twice as much body fat as those who did not.

But did you know recent research shows green tea has a number of other surprising and powerful health properties you can’t risk being without? Like:

- Natural cancer-killing agents (from The Lancet, Sep 18, 2004 pg. 1021)
- A phenolic compound that’s a strong neuroprotectant in two different forms of Parkinson’s disease
- An antioxidants research professor’s finding that green tea offers middle-aged men excellent heart protection
- A clinical immunologist’s finding that epigallocatechin gallate, present in large quantities in green tea, prevented the HIV virus from binding to CD4 molecules on human T cells. Green tea paralyzes the HIV cells.

And the following quote which comes from the heads of a molecular medicine laboratory.

“We believe that anticancer agents designed by nature and used for several thousand years with little toxicity may prove useful in treating and preventing cancer.”

From the article “Green Tea: Prevention and Treatment of Cancer by Nutraceuticals” (The Lancet, Sep 18, 2004 pg. 1021)

The array of benefits is impossible for any health conscious person to ignore.

**But there’s a problem with the quality of tea carried on most store shelves**

Our tea costs three times as much as our closest leading competitor. That’s because we put greater time and care into harvesting, drying and transporting our tea than anyone else.

There’s a very good reason for this.

You see, without the right harvesting methods, green tea leaves can lose up to 72% of their nutraceutical and antioxidant value within six days. This means you’re often getting only a tiny fraction of green tea’s unique antioxidant protection.

For this reason, our teas aren’t stocked on store shelves. They’re sent overnight.
The green tea advertiser has achieved several things in this ad.

1. He’s laid a granite foundation of proof that green tea should be in any health conscious person’s cupboard.
2. He’s created identification in the prospect’s mind between prominent medical journals and his brand of green tea.
3. He’s laid out a reason why his brand of tea costs three times as much as others.
4. He’s taken a page out of the Claude Hopkins’ playbook and deterred the prospect from choosing a competing brand. Otherwise he’ll miss all the benefits of the proprietary process which has been carefully explained to him.

You’ll notice once you’ve assembled a bedrock of research and proof, the ad will largely write itself.

While this can’t be done with any product or service, it’s the area that offers the most potential for improvement.

Playing down the promise, building the case with proof and ultimately sounding far more credible than others in a marketplace that turns a deaf ear to hype.

How much is the expert witness worth that could determine the fate of your business...or life?

Do you remember Dr. Henry Lee?

He was a household name eleven years ago as the expert witness at the O.J. Simpson trial. His specialty is forensic serology, which is the identification of blood, hair, semen and tissue types.

He testifies about 100 times of year.

For someone on trial for murder, his reputation as the ultimate expert can mean the difference between the gallows and a Sunday drive in a convertible.

The storehouse of publications in the databases is not only the expert witness for your business but in superior, everyday information retrieval.

What to do next

1. You should become as well acquainted with the databases your public library subscribes to as you are with using a search engine. Spending a few hours doing this pays big dividends. If you haven’t got a library card, you should get one from your local library. Once you get one, you don’t have to set foot inside again.
2. You should endeavor to find several different methods of accessing library
databases (a.k.a. gateways). If you’ve moved, the library card you once had
likely still works. I have a working card from the Boston Public Library fifteen
years later and one from New York five years later. And if you’ve got some
downtime when you’re traveling in a different city, you should attempt to
stock up on as many “visitor’s” cards as you can.

3. “Borrow” a friend or family member’s card. You can look up the virtual
holdings on the library’s website once you’re familiar with the way they work
to see if it’s worth your while. You may notice big differences in the holdings
that are out of your state

4. If you can get a hold of a card of a family member’s who is in college, this is
the information jackpot. Whether it’s a community college or an Ivy League
school, they have the flushest access. And since keg parties occupy most of
their thoughts, you’ll actually help put their tuition dollars to good use. Unlike
the public library system though, once they’ve graduated, they are completely
cut off.

In the next report I’ll show how to set up targeted alerts from the leading
publications in a particular industry or field. The information comes directly to you
and exactly when and how often you specify.