

Big Buzz on Social Networking with Squidoo

Carolyn Howard-Johnson interviews Jennifer Akers on how to social network with squidoo and what it will do for you.

At the recommendation StumbleUpon.com and others, I am trying more social networking. Jennifer Akers has Squidooed longer than anyone else I know and has several lenses. This is our dialogue on that subject:

Jennifer says:

The secret to lensbuilding [on Squidoo] is to find a narrow topic, include unique content and then tell everyone about it. ;-) Niche topics seem to do well. Make sure to add phrases to your tags -- things that people would search for to find your lens.

My lenses have done okay. I've gotten a little cash. Better than that (did I really say that?) is that my work on Squidoo shows up higher in Google searches than work on my website.

Carolyn says:

Cash? I didn't know about the cash. Too funny. Based on visits?

Jennifer says:

Yep, cash, paid monthly. When you sign up at Squidoo, you decide if you want cash or to donate to charity. Your payment is figured from a portion of the purchases from your lens and a portion of everyone's sales, based on your lenses' performance and quantity. Only Squidoo knows the exact formula. To find out your answer to cash or charity, check out your profile.

Carolyn says:

Oh, I must have signed for charity. Hope they really use it for that. Ha! So about those getting ratings?

Jennifer says:

Better ratings means more people see your lens, and more visitors increase your sales.

Another way to earn money is by referrals. If a friend uses your referral URL to create their first lens, then both of you will earn money. When the friend earns her first \$15, each of you will earn \$5. If you find yourself talking about Squidoo to everyone, then use the URL and make money for you and your friends. I list my referral URL at the bottom on my Freelance lens.

Carolyn says:

So, tell me. Do you see any results of any kind from having a Squidoo lens? (-:

Jennifer says:

I've been contacted to write articles on another site, do a podcast interview, and join a Squidoo marketer for a new product based on one of my topic lenses. Just a few things off the top of my head, besides the small checks.

Carolyn says:

So what's this voting business? Send me your address and I'll go vote!

Jennifer says:

Definitely vote. You've got to be logged in to vote. (Sorry, can't vote on your own lenses.) Your lens rank increases with votes and visits. Here's my address:
<http://www.squidoo.com/JenniferAkers>

This is the main lens, Carolyn. On the left, under Explore More, look for Lenses by Jennifer Akers for the rest of my lenses. I have 7, I think. :-)

Carolyn says:

Mmmm. I imagine that would be a good example of how people might focus their own lenses.

Jennifer says .

I'm taking you to that page for a reason. ;-) Every lens has that link, which takes visitors to your profile listing all your Squidoo lenses and Fan photos.

Carolyn says:

So how do you drive traffic?

Jennifer says:

Squidoo works like other social networks -- be social. Join groups, lensroll similar or complimentary lenses on your lens, make comments. They recently started members as "Fans" of other lensmasters. I joined as your fan today -- make sure you join on your own lens too!

Visit your Lenses by Carolyn link and you'll find your profile. Under your name/bio, you'll find the link for Join this Fan Club.

Carolyn says:

I just visited. Wow! I have two fans. You and Maggie Ball who is co-author of an e-chapbook of poetry I did. Anyone can become a fan. LOL. Just go here:
www.squidoo.com/member/join_fan_club/Carolyn . This could get fun! A little like playing a game.

Jennifer says:

From that page you can also email your lens, or submit it to other social networks like StumbleUpon, del.icio.us, reddit, etc.

Carolyn says:

I haven't quite figured out how to do use this del.icio.us stuff. I started trying to use them on my blogs and got hung up. I'm still working on it, though. Ha!

Jennifer says:

Carolyn, you're fabulous at marketing and making social contacts. I get more contacts from Squidoo when my lenses are built from my passions with substantial content. Your goal is to inform and also drive visitors to your other sites.

It doesn't have to be a cold, unfeeling job. I love being able to help others and share new information. That's the heart of social networks. It's helpful to define your topic and your lens purpose when you start. It will grow from there.

My warning is for people not to use it to spam others or to leave random messages on lenses or groups solely to leave their 'lens-print'. Join groups and make comments on lenses, but do so because you're interested in the topic and want your lens-print there.

Carolyn says:

Aha! Lensprint. Sort of like leaving a comment on a blog. I'm sure one tries to make a useful comment and to always include their website or Squidoo URL.

Jennifer says:

I joined StumbleUpon and del.icio.us a few weeks ago. When you find something worth saving or sharing online, click on the social network's icon (which is downloaded to your browser window). I use mine like a favorites page only better because you tag each site you save. That makes it easy to search for similar topics in your own file or others'.

Carolyn says:

Yes, StumbleUpon is certainly touting these social networks and talks about these additions to one's toolbars to make networking easier.

Jennifer says:

I'm not an expert, and I neglected mine for a few months last year. I know others who do very well -- both income and marketing. Like I said, it's superb in Google searches. I recently read a marketing study, which shows social networks rank higher than traditional sites.

Carolyn says:

I got a sense from something that you said that one could add articles to their Squidoo lenses. I'll search around for a way to do that, if that is true.

Jennifer says:

Squidoo lets you build your page with sections called modules. They always add new modules, so I'm always learning new things. I found out how to use them simply by playing with different kinds. Modules can always be deleted if you're not happy with the results.

So, you use a text/write module to add articles. I've written my own articles on my lenses. You can also use basic HTML in Text/Write and add URLs to articles and sites. Try Amazon Plexo, which is good for visitor interaction, as they vote on your links and can add their own.

Carolyn says:

Ahem! What is Amazon Plexo?

Jennifer says:

Squidoo has modules (or sections) that you add to your webpage. You want to add some modules that encourage interaction from visitors.

Using the Amazon Plexo module, you add links to whatever products you want under Amazon. Visitors can add their own links, which they cannot do under the basic Amazon list module. Visitors vote on their favorites, moving items up or down the list. Visitors can also add your entire list to their lens. Does that sound like copying? On Squidoo, it not only drives traffic back to your lens, but also your work is seen by more people.

Squidoo has "Plexo" on other modules, like Links Voting (links from any site), Text List Voting (your written lists), YouTube Voting and Flickr Voting.

A new interactive module called Duel is for the brave and smart user. You set up a debate, and visitors 'duel' by commenting on their side of the argument.

Carolyn says.

OK. To see a beginner's lens go to mine:

www.squidoo.com/HowToDoItFrugallyforAuthors. The value here is to show you that you can do it if I can. Then visit Jennifer's to pick up ideas to grow yours bigger and better. It's www.squidoo.com/JenniferAkers. And don't forget to explore her different lenses.

Jennifer Akers is a freelance writer and book reviewer with a social networking addiction. Her relationship articles focus on strengthening families, nurturing children, and ending domestic violence. Jennifer helps businesses and individuals connect with their audience through copywriting and editing. She Squidoos at www.squidoo.com/JenniferAkers.

The interviewer, Carolyn Howard-Johnson is author the author of THIS IS THE PLACE; HARKENING: A COLLECTION OF STORIES REMEMBERED; TRACINGS, a chapbook of poetry. All are multiple award-winners. Her two how to books, THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T; and THE FRUGAL EDITOR: PUT YOUR BEST BOOK FORWARD TO AVOID HUMILIATION AND ENSURE SUCCESS are

both USA Book News winners and hold the Irwin Award .and the Reader Views Literary Awards, respectively.

Her blogs include www.SharingwithWriters.blogspot.com, www.TheNewBookReview.blogspot.com and www.AuthorsCoalition.blogspot.com, a blog that helps writers and publishers turn a ho-hum book fair booth into a sizzler.