

How to Write a HARO Article

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Occasionally we'll get a story where we use quotes that come with the story. The Asana task might describe the story as an expert roundup because of the way we got the quotes. One of the most common ways to round up experts is through HARO, which stands for Help A Reporter Out.

[HARO](#) is a program of [Cision](#), a widely used platform for press releases and other forms of public relations. The platform allows people needing an expert or source to post queries and sources or experts to propose quotes for the story.

It's a win-win because the writers get their expert quotes and the experts get their name and company in a story and a backlink to their sites.

When an expert roundup or HARO story comes in, it means the SEO team or the client posed a question to industry experts, and the quotes are their answers. The article is built around the quotes.

For editors, this means that if you're editing a HARO story, you won't find the quotes on the experts' websites. They should be attached to the Asana task. So check the quotes against the attached document.

For writers, it means HARO articles are formatted a little differently, with quotes in italics or as block quotes, usually with an introductory sentence.

How Does Big Leap Use HARO?

I put out a HARO query on the General Channel for Slack:

For my goal I am researching [HARO \(Help a Reporter Out\)](#). Most of the sources I've found are how to sign up to be a source, or how to use the platform. That's not what I'm looking for. I've edited some HARO articles, but on the last one the writer didn't understand what HARO is, and I had to explain the format. If you have a moment to answer a few questions:

1. How often do you use HARO (or a similar format)?
2. How and why do you use it?
3. What are its advantages and drawbacks?

4. What do you want writers to know to use the material you collect for HARO stories effectively?

I got 3 responses representing 3 different departments and approaches.

1. How often do you use HARO (or a similar format)?

Alex Bonilla, Sr. Digital Marketing Specialist

I am subscribed to HARO emails, but rarely look at them. They funnel into a folder specifically for HARO.

Nicole Denson, Marketing Manager

I get HARO emails multiple times a day and look through them (when I can) for backlinks on behalf of Big Leap.

Haley Bunch, SEO Manager

My team has used HARO as another form/type of blog content. We often use it for "Expert-Roundup" type blog posts. They're a way to breakout of just traditional blog content and listicles and "how-to" type posts. We actually have had clients recently say they want to explore content that is more "thought leadership" and content that provides "expert opinions".

The different approaches surprised me a little because I was thinking about how we used HARO for clients, as Haley says about clients wanting to establish thought leadership. But Nicole reminded me that Big Leap also wants to establish thought leadership, and HARO gives us a chance to speak as experts.

2. How and why do you use it?

Alex Bonilla

I've used HARO in the past for outreach. I would spend a few minutes each day to look at the morning, evening, and afternoon emails and send any leads to our clients. Our clients can then write a small blurb that we can send back in return for a backlink.

Nicole Denson

I use it because oftentimes there are SEO/digital marketing prompts that can be a good fit for Big Leap to respond to. I've also used it to conduct our own research and gather responses for some articles in the past. We requested HARO responses and featured people in our article on Big Leap's blog.

Haley Bunch

My team will brainstorm blog ideas that would make good "Expert roundup" type posts. I then pitch those ideas to the client and they choose the one they like. From there, we then submit the idea or "query" to HARO and ask for experts to weigh in on and provide thoughts/feelings/opinions on whatever our topic/idea is. From there, we gather all the HARO submissions and choose the best ones, run them by the client, and then compile all of those into a blog post. After the blog post is complete and posted on the client's website, we then can use it as an outreach opportunity for the individuals we mentioned in the blog post - those individuals can share our blog post on their social, etc.

Again, different approaches, and different insights.

3. What are its advantages and drawbacks?

Alex Bonilla

Advantages = LOTS of opportunities

Disadvantages = Most require a quick turnaround time, which is hard to do with clients.

Nicole Denson

Amen to what Alex typed above. Sooo many opportunities, not enough bandwidth to respond to all of them and do quality work on them.

Haley Bunch

One of the drawbacks I will tell you is, depending on the client, HARO does not accept queries for all websites. If your website does not get a certain amount of traffic and traction according to HARO's criteria, they will reject submissions, so there are clients we have not been able to use HARO for because their websites were too small and so we've had to use more manual ways to do "Expert roundup" type posts.

However, on the flip side, an advantage is that if you have a massive recognizable brand, you can get hundreds of answers to your query. Like when we would do HARO queries for BambooHR, because their brand is so recognizable, we would get hundreds of submissions of people wanting to be featured in a blog post on BambooHR's website.

Alex's comment explains why he funnels HARO emails into a folder, and Nicole's how much opportunity there is for thought leadership pieces. Haley's told me something I hadn't seen in any of my reading. HARO has criteria to consider, including website size and traction. Useful to know.

4. What do you want writers to know to use the material you collect for HARO stories effectively?

Alex Bonilla

Not sure I understand this question.

Nicole Denson

I don't really collect material for HARO stories right now. Could you expound on this question more?

Harlow Clark

For the 4th question, I'm wondering what you find most effective in assembling the quotes. Should they be in different categories with a brief introduction to each category? Should they be used to illustrate longer points? What format makes the quotes most effective?

Nicole Denson

I like the idea of having the quotes sorted into different categories with a brief introduction to each category. That would be super helpful! What do you think Alex Bonilla?

Alex Bonilla

I'm still not sure I'm following. Are the quotes the content we are providing back to HARO or are they content opportunities from HARO?

Harlow Clark

They're the quotes we receive back from the HARO sources, which we're using to write the article.

Alex Bonilla

I see. I haven't used HARO as a source for content. I would assume we would use them as sources or quotes from reputable sources to back claims made within the content.

Haley Bunch

Here are some examples of HARO type blog posts we have written for my clients over the years:

<https://www.davincivirtual.com/blog/benefits-of-remote-work-according-to-the-experts>

<https://www.bamboohr.com/blog/conflict-resolution-in-workplace/>

<https://www.bamboohr.com/blog/improve-management-coaching-hr-experts-weigh-in>

<https://channelfactory.com/the-ultimate-guide-to-diversity-inclusion-in-marketing/>

Formatting the HARO Responses

HARO responses are not reviews, where you quote them verbatim, with grammar errors, typos and all. One reason sources respond to HARO queries is to advertise their expertise, so you want them to look good. Consider this typo from a HARO article:

“3 million tomes of greenhouse gases are avoided,”

The source meant *tonnes*, but I don't know if the typo was theirs or the writer's. I suspect it was the source's because the writers cut and paste the quotes into the piece. (That's the easiest way to do it. No need to retype the response.) I corrected the typo silently, though I could have put *[tonnes]* in brackets to signal an insertion. If you're not sure whether something is a mistake, leave a note in the doc, or Slack the requester, who may be able to get in touch with the source or the client, depending on who made the HARO query

You don't have to use the whole quote, but don't change the meaning. Use ellipses [. . .] when you cut something, or brackets [] when you insert something for clarity. You may want to break the quote up and use it in more than one place. Each use should be attributed.

I have indented the quotes here, but a lot of times you'll also want to italicize them. If you break a quote up, you may quote it in a sentence:

Brad Fancis, chief nit-picker at Big Leap, adds, "Creating a Client Bible is great way to organize the relevant information about clients in an easily digestible format."

Or you could italicize it as a block quote:

Creating a Client Bible is great way to organize the relevant information about clients in an easily digestible format.

— Brad Francis, Nitpicker in Chief, [Big Leap](#)

And One Something to Keep in Mind for Content Updates

URLs change, so when you go back to the article a few years later, or when you go to update it, some of the sources might be out of date. For example, in this piece we did for Davici, "[10 Surprising Benefits of Remote Work According to the Experts](#)", Kieran Knight has a great quote:

Kieran Knight from **Fitness Home HQ** said, "Before, I used to wake up early to go to the office then come home quite late at night since a CEO's job is really taxing. I can only spend time with my family during weekdays. Now, I am able to spend more time with my family, especially my kids. We have grown a lot closer since I stay at home most of the time. I was able to cook for them, assist them in their online classes, and play with them."

But the link now brings up a blank WordPress template. I checked to see if the website has probably changed, searching for *Kieran Knight Fitness Home HQ*, but that brings up a suggestion to use the Wayback Machine. I didn't find anything in the Wayback Machine, so if we were updating this piece, we would probably want to find another quote.

Resources

<https://respona.com/blog/haro/>

Guide to HARO

The first part is how to set up an account as one of the experts who helps a reporter out.

Set up a Google alert for articles containing your quotes. You'll need a Gmail account.

HARO has a free basic service for the sources. Doesn't say if the reporters pay a fee for the service.

<https://www.helpareporter.com/>

For rules about using the service as a reporter

<https://www.helpareporter.com/journalists/>

This is the procedure.

They mask your email when you send out a query. You can be anonymous, but not to Cision.
When you submit a query check the Anonymous box if you want to be anonymous.

This is the URL for submitting a query

<https://app.helpareporter.com/reporters/queries>

Submit Query

[Bookmark This Page](#)

REPORTER DETAILS

Please ensure that the query that you are about to submit meets HARO's [Rules for Journalists](#) before you submit your query. If it doesn't meet our [guidelines](#), it won't be published to our Sources.

[Will my email be displayed publicly?](#) ⓘ

(optional) ⓘ

QUERY DETAILS

☐ Keep me anonymous

SUGGESTED POST DATE (OPTIONAL)

[Request Specific Date and Slot](#)

TARGETING POTENTIAL SOURCES

DEADLINE TO RECEIVE PITCHES

SUBMIT QUERY[Query Guidelines](#)[Past Queries](#)[Favorite Sources](#)

\$ Upgrade!

You are on a basic package. Click above to select a package that best suits your needs!

💬 Provide Feedback »

Share feedback on your HARO experience by clicking the link above!

❤ Share a Success Story »

Share the love! If HARO has been a help to you, let us know.