

What's Next
Issue



SUMMER 2020

04

*A Quarterly Publication
of the American Society of
Journalists and Authors*

ASJA MAGAZINE

WHAT'S NEXT?

*How you can plan for
an uncertain future*



ALSO INSIDE >> Why Newsletters Are the New Social Media //
How to Start an Online Class // Learn About Masterminds // Coping with COVID-19

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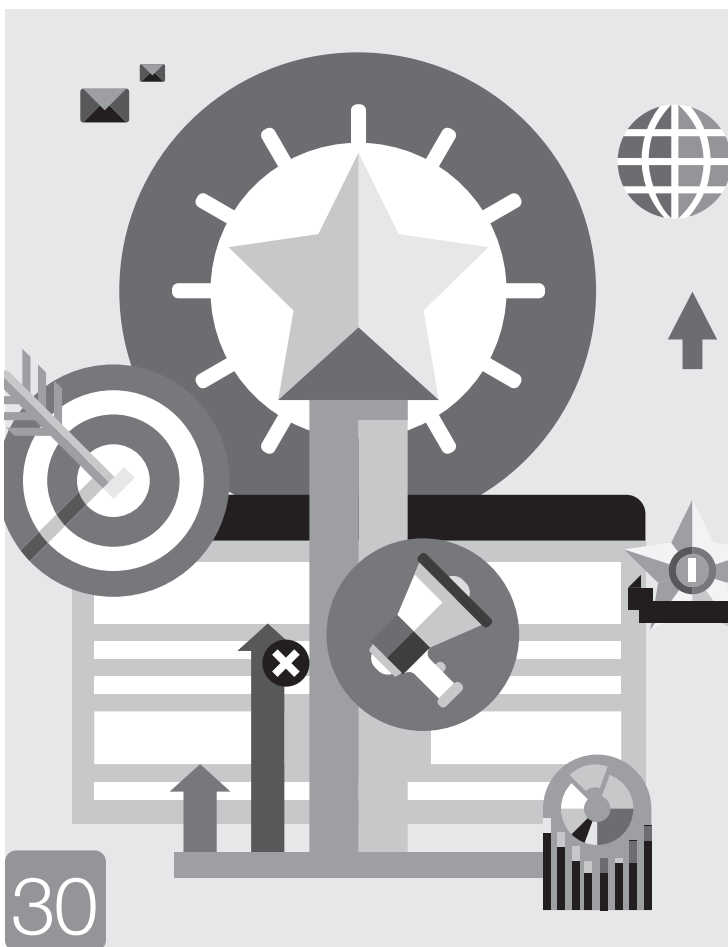
How members found ways to navigate these challenging times

ASJA MAGAZINE

Quarterly / No. 4

*The Official Publication
of the American Society of
Journalists and Authors*

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Founded in 1948, the American Society of Journalists and Authors is the nation's professional association of independent and entrepreneurial nonfiction writers. ASJA is a primary voice in representing freelancers' interests, serving as spokesperson for their right to control and profit from the uses of their work wherever it appears. ASJA and the ASJA Charitable Trust bring leadership in establishing professional and ethical standards, as well as in recognizing and encouraging the pursuit of excellence in nonfiction writing. Since 2010, the ASJA Educational Foundation has been offering programming that covers all aspects of professional, independent writing for both established and aspiring writers. ASJA headquarters is in New York City.

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Writers Emergency Assistance Fund

CHAIR Laura Laing



*From the Immediate
Past President's Desk*

“GOODBYE, FAREWELL AND AMEN”*



MILT TOBY

*Freelance Writer
and ASJA President*

Around this time two years ago, give or take a month, I was working on my first column for ASJA Magazine as the organization's incoming president. It was a quick review of our annual conference and there were ample highlights—some fun, some sobering—to write about.

Matthew Caruana Galizia accepted ASJA's Conscience in Media Award on behalf of his mother, Daphne. An investigative journalist who had worked for decades to expose corruption in Malta, Daphne was killed in October 2017 by a bomb hidden in her automobile. The investigation of her murder, conducted in part by some of her staunchest critics, continues.

Salley Shannon, a past president with an extraordinary record of service to ASJA and the freelance community, received our appropriately named Extraordinary Service Award.

Now jump ahead to April 2020: I looked forward to my last column as ASJA president—this one—as a smooth wrap up to another successful annual conference. What could go wrong? All the pieces were in place to make the event a success.

Conference Co-Chairs Randy Dotinga and Kristine Hansen, with help from a small army of volunteer panel moderators and speakers, put together an excellent series of educational sessions.

Wendy Helfenbaum, Jeannette Hurt, Erin O'Donnell, and another cadre of volunteers were up and running with Client Connections.

Awards entries were in the hands of the volunteer judges under the guidance of Salley Shannon and Janine Latus.

ASJA's Officers (Laura Laing, Howard Baldwin, Emily Paulsen, Sherry Paprocki, Randy Dotinga, and me) and Directors (Beverly Gray, Jennie Helderman, Parul Kapur Hinzen, Lottie Joiner, Carolyn Crist,

Lisa Rapasca Roepe, Sally Abrahms, Arielle Emmett, and Wendy Helfenbaum) were pitching in as always.

Publications Chair Leida Snow, ASJA Magazine editor Stephanie Vozza, Weekly editor Brenda Lange, Confidential editor Debbie Koenig, Social Media Chair Tami Kamin Meyer, and their volunteers had the promotion machine in high gear.

And our management staff at Kellen, primarily Holly Koenig, Tim Bennett, James Brannigan, James Cafiero, and Patrick Dougherty, were working overtime and then some. (If I've missed someone who contributed to the conference preparation, and I probably have because there are so many of you, I apologize. Thanks for all that you do!)

We'd covered all the bases in the run-up to the conference, all but one: a pandemic.

During an emergency meeting on March 13—ironically falling on a Friday—the Board of Directors voted to postpone the New York conference. The scope of Covid-19 still was unclear at the time, and there was some hope that it would run its course quickly. Considering that the meeting was still five weeks away, the optimistic view was that postponing the event was premature.

With months of work and the organization's most visible event on the line, I believe this was the most difficult decision asked of any ASJA Board. As the spread of Covid-19 accelerated at an alarming rate over the next few weeks, though, postponing and rescheduling proved to be the right choice. One of ASJA's goals is to lead rather than follow, and this time we were ahead of the curve.

The other shoe dropped a week later, on March 20.

Late last year, ASJA joined with the National Press Photographers Association as plaintiffs in a federal lawsuit in California challenging

a new law that adversely affects freelancers. Portions of AB5 limit the amount of work that freelance journalists and photographers can do without losing their independent contractor status. ASJA's and NPPA's lawsuit was the first (and as of this writing, still the only) legal challenge to the constitutionality of AB5 brought by freelance journalists' and photographers' organizations. We were ahead of the curve again.

A week after the Board's conference vote, the judge overseeing our case in California issued two surprising and disappointing orders. The first denied our motion for a preliminary injunction that would have halted enforcement of the onerous AB5 provisions while the litigation was pending; the second granted the state's motion to dismiss the lawsuit in its entirety. Our attorneys from the Pacific Legal Foundation recommended that we appeal the trial court's orders to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Both boards, ASJA's and NPPA's, voted to stay the course and proceed with the appeal. Briefing in the appellate court should be well underway by the time this issue of the magazine reaches your mailboxes.

A postponed conference and disappointing rulings from a California federal court were not how I wanted to end my term as president of ASJA. To the current and past board members, I have this: working with you these last two years to promote ASJA and our members has been a privilege and a pleasure. Your diligence and consideration when making hard decisions always reminds me of what a remarkable group you are. Thank you!

** Yes, the title is missing my beloved Oxford comma. This is the way it appeared on the title card when the last episode of M*A*S*H was broadcast on February 28, 1983.*



From the Editor

WHAT'S NEXT



What's next? This is a question I used to ask myself several times a day as I checked off items on my to-do list. The question kept me on track and looking ahead. It made me feel productive and in control. And I always had an answer ... until I didn't.

The coronavirus pandemic rapidly changed the world for all of us. In some cases, what I thought was next was no longer possible, and in other cases it was no longer relevant. I didn't always have an answer, and being in a place of not knowing felt unsettling.



STEPHANIE
VOZZA

*Freelance Writer
and ASJA Editor*

When I wrote my Editor's Letter for the April issue of this magazine, "What's next?" was the annual ASJA conference in New York City. I was planning on attending and even more excited that I could take in a Broadway play while I was in town and see a friend perform. And suddenly that was no longer possible.

What's next now? I have to admit I don't always know.

In his book *You Are Awesome: How to Navigate Change, Wrestle with Failure, and Live an Intentional Life*, author Neil Pasricha says getting through times of uncertainty takes believing that everything you go through in life really is a step to help you get to a better place.

He writes: "There's a staircase you're not seeing. Trust that it's there, right in front of you, and that it leads to exciting new places. Have the courage to believe in this one thing that you can't see."

This issue is filled with inspiration for moving forward when you don't have all the answers. Melanie Padgett Powers came to the rescue when we changed our editorial calendar at the last minute to add an article about how writers can prepare in an uncertain future. Damon Brown, Joanne Cleaver and Jennifer Nelson penned stories that can help you pivot and grow your businesses in new ways. And Tami Kamin Meyer shared a personal op-ed of surviving a great loss.

We won't always know what's next, and that's fine with me. As Pasricha writes: "It's very possible and very likely that what you're going through is a step toward a future you'll be happy with. But you just can't see it ... yet."



Want to write for your peers?
magazine@asja.net



ASJA >>>>>> Membership Benefits

KNOW SOMEONE WHO MIGHT
BE ELIGIBLE TO JOIN ASJA?
SEND THEM OUR WAY!

ASJA's mission is to be the voice and career
resource for independent, entrepreneurial,
professional nonfiction writers.

VISIT ASJA.ORG/MEMBERS

- ▶ **Advocacy:** Opportunity to support ASJA's mission to protect the rights of independent writers and inform the freelance community of potential threats.
- ▶ **Client Connections:** One-on-one appointments with editors and agents, usually at ASJA's Annual New York Conference or regional conferences.
- ▶ **Virtual Pitch Slams:** Interactive conference calls during which members get their story pitches heard live with feedback provided by a top editor.
- ▶ **ASJA's Conferences, Special Interest Groups (SIGS), and Forums:** Members enjoy multiple networking opportunities, share experiences and tips.
- ▶ **ASJA Paycheck:** A rights-and-fees database, which collects member reports of payments and terms to help them negotiate from a position of strength.
- ▶ **ASJA Press Card:** Entry to many museums, conferences, and other press events.
- ▶ **Freelance Writer Search:** Access to new job opportunities.
- ▶ **Discounts:** ASJA's conferences, Publishers Weekly, Delta Air Lines, and AVIS Car Rental.
- ▶ **ASJA Magazine:** State-of-the-industry publication providing information, inspiration, and motivation.
- ▶ **Emergency Fund:** For members in need.

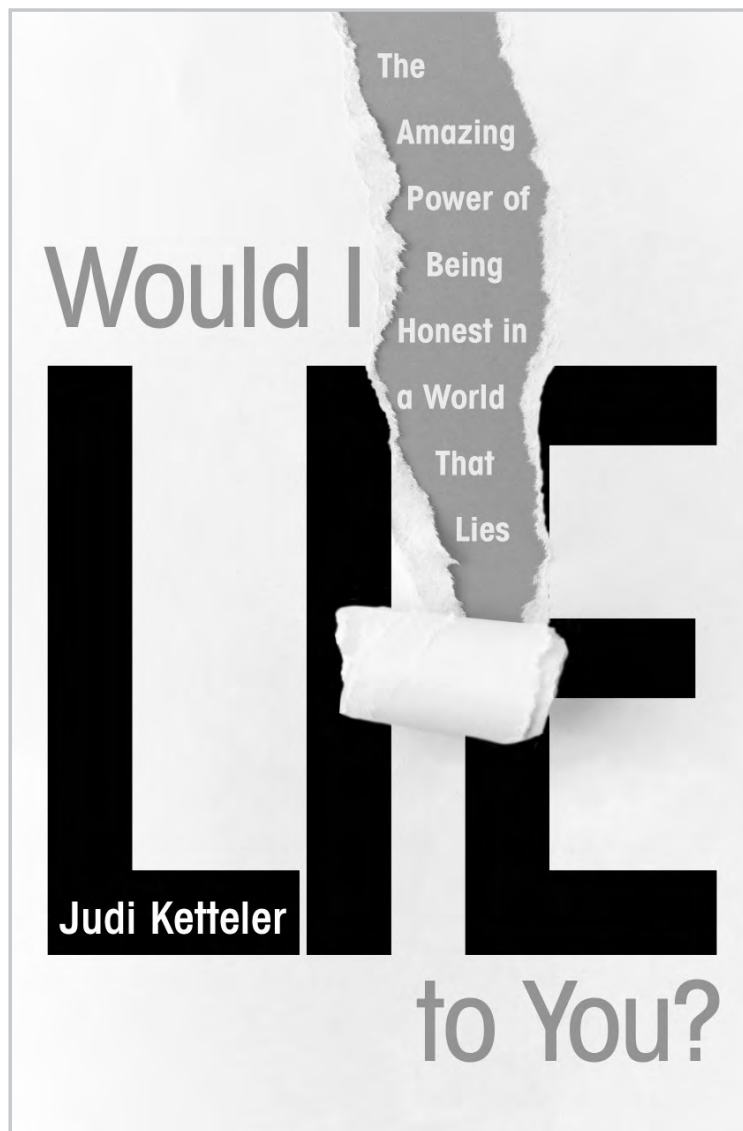


MEMBER NEWS

»»»» Book News



Jyrki Penttinen published *The 5G User's Guide: The Next Generation Revealed*. This book contains the essential information we all need in order to start using 5G. It presents the principles of the 5G mobile devices and networks, and gives practical guidelines for selecting, setting up, and using mobile phones and services. "The fifth generation of mobile communications is about to take off and it will be the big thing throughout the 2020s," says Penttinen. "While the new 5G networks are being deployed and evolve, this guide works as a survival kit for the ones wanting to know more about the practical aspects of the new era in non-technical terms."

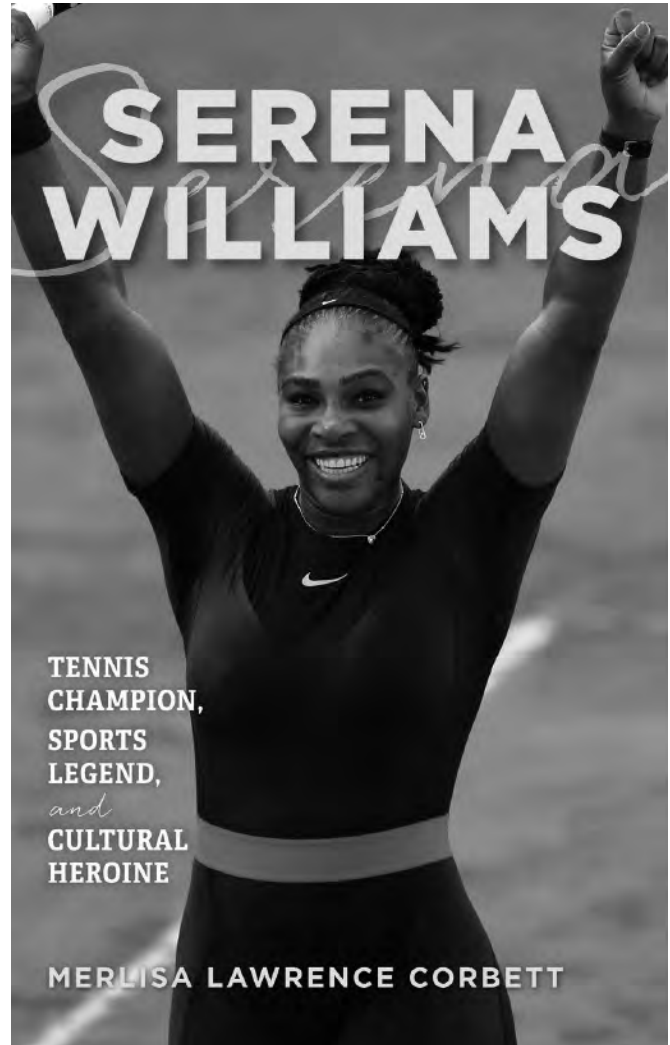
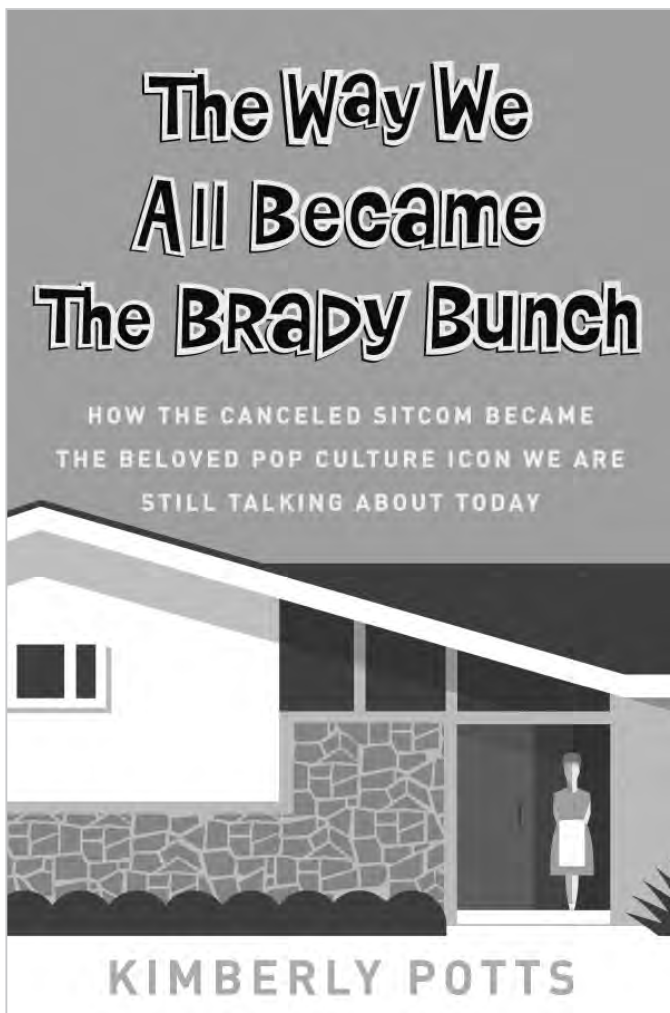


Judi Ketteler's book, *Would I Lie to You? The Amazing Power of Being Honest in a World That Lies*, was published in January 2020 by Citadel Press. The book explores what it means to live a more honest life in today's world of lies, and is partly based on a *New York Times* essay Ketteler wrote about keeping an honesty journal. The *Library Journal* review called the chapter on self-honesty "particularly stimulating," and said the book overall was "Great for generating discussion on the subject of authenticity and thinking through tough questions." *Would I Lie to You?* received coverage in *TIME.com*, *The New York Times*, *Business Insider*, *Fast Company*, and other outlets.



New York-based TV historian and entertainment journalist **Kimberly Potts'** book *The Way We All Became The Brady Bunch* was released in December 2019 by Grand Central Publishing. In the book, Potts takes readers behind the scenes and into the history of the series to

document how, despite middling ratings and negative reviews, Mike, Carol, Greg, Marcia, Peter, Jan, Bobby, Cindy, and Alice emerged as America's favorite TV family and enduring pop culture icons.

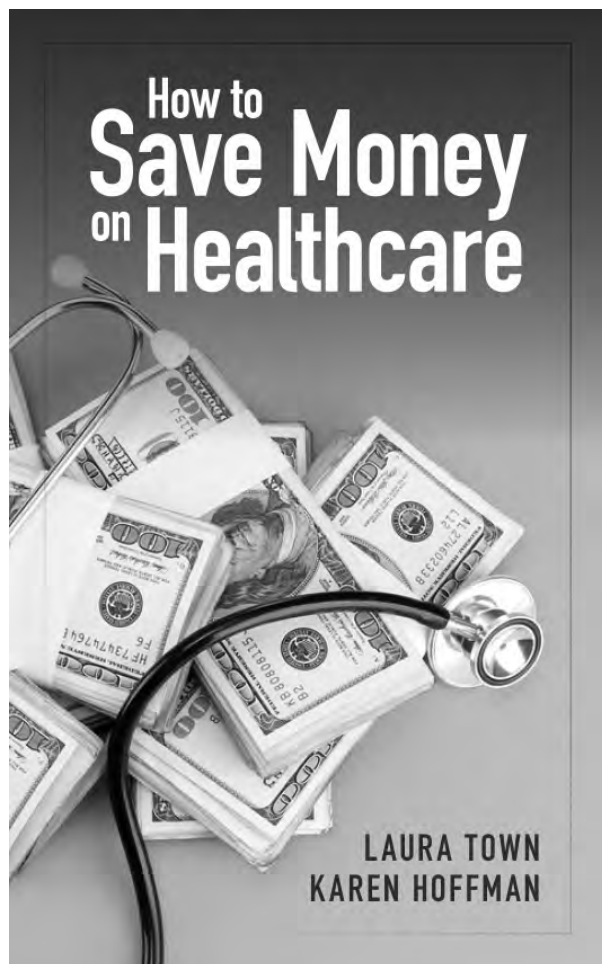
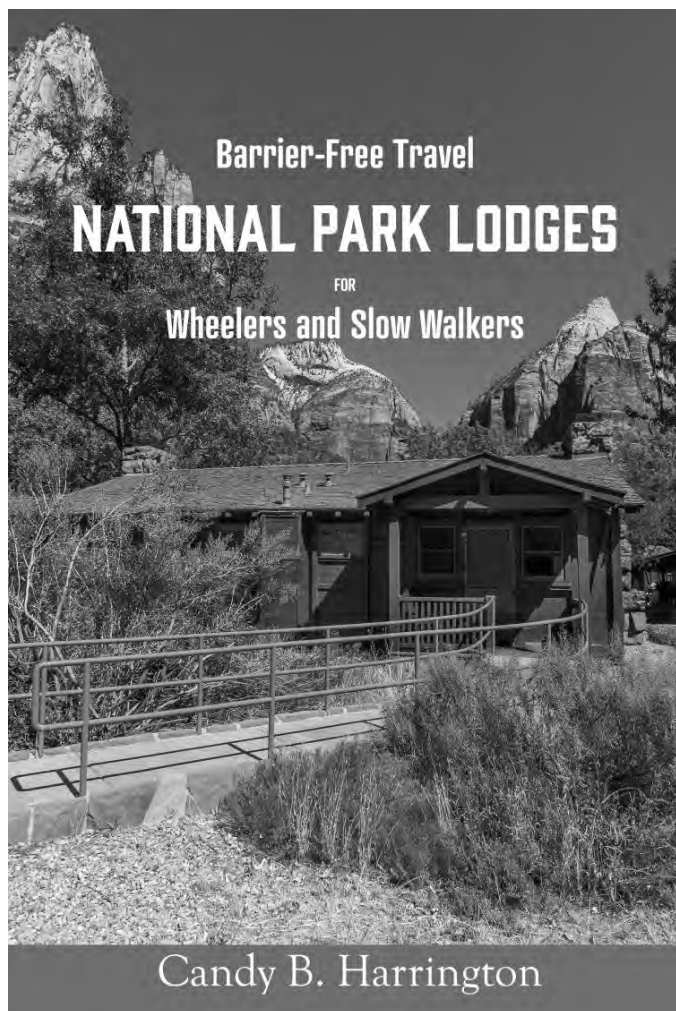


In February 2020, sports journalist and author, **Merlisa Lawrence Corbett** released her new book *Serena Williams: Tennis Champion, Sports Legend, and Cultural Heroine*, published by Rowman & Littlefield. More than a biography, the book not only tells the story of Williams' upbringing and remarkable career; it looks at Williams as a sports pioneer. Lawrence Corbett explores Williams' influence on cultural and political issues such as body shaming, gender equality, and racism in sports and society. Corbett also analyzes Williams' impact on discussions of feminism, the sports celebrity, and the marketing of female athletes.



MEMBER NEWS

Candy B. Harrington released her latest national park access guide, *Barrier-Free Travel; National Park Lodges for Wheelers and Slow Walkers*. The guidebook includes detailed information for wheelchair-users and slow walkers on 52 national park lodges throughout the mainland U.S. According to the publisher, "It's also a great idea book, for folks who are undecided about which national parks to visit. *Barrier-Free Travel; National Park Lodges for Wheelers and Slow Walkers* is an excellent resource for seniors, parents with stroller-aged children, Baby Boomers, folks who need to take things a little slower, and anybody who uses a cane, walker, wheelchair or scooter."



Omega Press released *How to Save Money on Healthcare* by **Laura Town** and **Karen Hoffman**. The book guides consumers through the confusing process of healthcare benefits and government programs as well as options for medical tourism. According to the publisher: "Being an educated, proactive customer of the healthcare market will ease some of the stress and worry of seeking care and enable you to concentrate on your health."

Kim Eierman's book *The Pollinator Victory Garden: Win the War on Pollinator Decline with Ecological Gardening* was published by Quarry Books in January 2020. According to the publisher: "The passion and urgency that inspired WWI and WWII Victory Gardens is needed today to meet another threat to our food supply and our environment—the steep decline of pollinators. *The Pollinator Victory Garden* offers practical solutions for winning the war against the demise of these essential animals."

Got news to share with ASJA?
Submit your items at asja.org/members.



Paul Vachon's latest book, *Detroit: An Illustrated Timeline*, was published by Reedy Press. The book points out many of the seminal events and noteworthy turning points of Detroit's long journey, some little known, including the city's fall to the British during the War of 1812, the existence of slavery in Detroit as late as the 1820s, and Mayor Hazen Pingree's aggressive advocacy for the everyday citizen against corporate interests. According to the publisher, "Triumphant sports teams, the contributions of religious leaders, and courage of civil rights leaders are all brought to life, completing this chronological sketch of America's city of the straits."

Awards, Accolades and Activities >>>>



Robin Westen received a 2019 Folio Eddie and Ozzie Awards Honorable Mention and a 2019 National Mature Media Award Gold Award. Both were for her article "My #MeToo Moment" published in *AARP Magazine*.

Jen Reeder won two awards from the Dog Writers Association of America, including The Pet Candy Award, which honors "the most inspiring story about a pet lover" and comes with a \$300 prize. Reeder's winning entry, "Service dog helps 7-year-old boy prepare for his 10th surgery," appeared on the TODAY show's website.



Margie Goldsmith, winner of 90 writing awards, was chosen into the KIRA Summer Artist program of Kingsbrae Garden Residency for the Arts in St. Andrews by the Sea, New Brunswick. The program includes four weeks in a freestanding studio set in among the gardens of Kingsbrae, a stipend, private bedroom and bath in a well-manicured historic property, breakfast and dinner daily and access to the Gardens and public events. Margie Goldsmith was chosen from 223 applicants, and will take her residency the month of August, where she will be working on a new book.



>>>>>>>

PAYCHECK



To protect the confidentiality of information filed with Paycheck reports, additional details including rights and more are available at asja.org/paycheck/report-a-payment

WE NEED MORE PAYCHECK REPORTS!

Share market insights with your peers by logging into the ASJA Member Website. Click on Paycheck and Report a Payment. Knowledge is power!

LEGALZOOM

Article, consumer pub (online or print)

Scope of work: 10 posts

Total fee: \$3,575.00

Article terms: Acceptance

Write articles for consumers and small to mid-sized businesses on labor law, leadership, running/starting a business, etc. Each article is \$350, though I have been able to negotiate up when the articles get more in depth than originally planned. Pays immediately. Editor is very easy to work with. Gives long deadlines, so I am able to bundle my work: do interviews for multiple pieces on one day and write all the articles the next.

Feedback: 10

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

Article, consumer pub (online or print)

Scope of work: 800 words

Total fee: \$250.00

Article terms: Acceptance

Carolina Public Press (CPP) is one of a new type of nonprofit newsrooms attempting to re-invent the news business model. CPP pays \$250 for feature stories. My first assignments went so well that one story was submitted for a state feature writing award. Then the managing editor asked me to check out a potential story based on a public filing. The angle he speculated about did not materialize even though I made several calls and we looked at the issue from several angles. He subsequently told me he didn't want to work with me any more based on "miscommunications." This is a surprising and disappointing development...if the reporting does not prove out, there's no story. CPP does good work but at this point I'd consider it a marginal market especially for seasoned freelancers who are accustomed to working with top tier editors.

Feedback: 2



NEW ASJA MEMBERS!

JULY 2020

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS

Holly Simmons, Silver Spring, Md.
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Kelly McSweeney, Littleton, Mass.
Haley Shapley, Seattle, Wash.
Joanne Cavanaugh Simpson, Towson, Md.
JoAnna Haugen
Kristen Schmitt, Canton, N.Y.
Elisa Shoenberger, Chicago, Ill.
Catherine Arnold, Salt Lake City, Utah
Amber Dance, Torrance, Calif.
Maria Ter-Mikaelian, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Alison Ashton, Marina del Rey, Calif.
Ronda Kaysen, West Orange, N.J.
Elena Botella, Washington, DC
Rona Gindin, Orlando, Fla.
Susan Towers, Lewes, Del.
Karen Blum, Owings Mills, Md.

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Monica Pierce, Meridian, Idaho
Iris Manning, Mass.
Alex Ruppenthal, Chicago, Ill.
Suzi Morales, Scotch Plains, N.J.
Joyce Alla, Marblehead, Mass.
Cynthia Yoder, Princeton Junction, N.J.
Veronica Graham, Arlington, Mass.
Christine Gacharna, Leesburg, Va.



JULY 2020 CALENDAR

ASJA 50TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE



April 18 – 19, 2021

New York Marriott Downtown,
85 West Street at Albany Street
New York, N.Y.

Virtual Pitch Slam and Virtual Client Connections

Check the ASJA website for the latest dates

Boost your bottom line by participating in Virtual Pitch Slam!

Want a guaranteed audience for your perfectly crafted story idea? Join us for Virtual Pitch Slam (VPS), a one-hour interactive phone call during which a guest editor will hear up to 15 pitches from professional members. Bonus: You'll get honest feedback on why your pitch works or not, plus the chance to place your story with a new outlet.

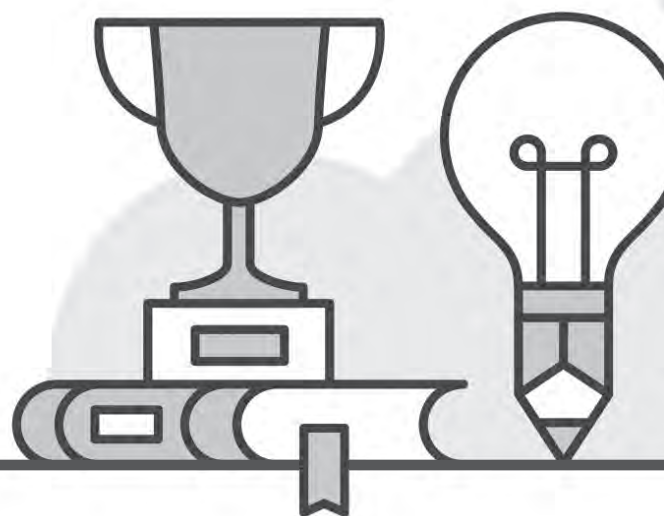
Held every month or so, we've done great Pitch Slams with editors from Discover, Sierra, Eating Well, Atlantic CityLab, TheKitchn.com, American Way, Boston Globe Magazine, Wine Enthusiast, PBS, Your Teen, Preservation, The Open Notebook and more.

We record the event, and it's posted on our members-only website for other writers to listen to (if they didn't snag a coveted pitching slot). Many of the ideas pitched during VPS have been published, so it's a win-win for everyone.

We need your help to find more willing participants: Does one of your editors need pitches? Please send them our way! Get details from Wendy Helfenbaum (wendy@taketwoproductions.ca)

*Congratulations
to the 2020*

ASJA



WRITING AWARDS WINNERS



Blog Post/Personal

"The Emotional Debris from An Abusive Father," by Margie Goldsmith in **CoveyClub.com**

Business/marketing

"How Sovereign Citizens Helped Swindle \$1 Billion From the Government They Disavow," by Ashley Powers in **The New York Times**

HONORABLE MENTION

"How Origami is Revolutionizing Industrial Design," by Jim Morrison in **SmithsonianMag.com**

Excellence in Reporting

"Shot in the Dark," by Laura Beil in **Texas Monthly**

First Person Essays

"Still Life with Dick Van Dyke," by Marian Sandmaier, in **The Pennsylvania Gazette**

Health Articles

"When Measles Arrives: Breaking Down the Anatomy of Containment," by Apoorva Mandavilli in **Spectrum**

HONORABLE MENTION

"Our Skulls Are Out Evolving Us and That Could Mean A Public Health Crisis" by Katherine Lewis, in **onezero.medium.com**

How-to Articles

"How to Teach Consent to Boys -- Without Shaming Them," by Jennifer Fink in **YourTeenMag.com**

HONORABLE MENTION

"How to Bullyproof Your Child," by Estelle Erasmus in **The New York Times**

The June Roth Memorial Award for an Outstanding Medical Article

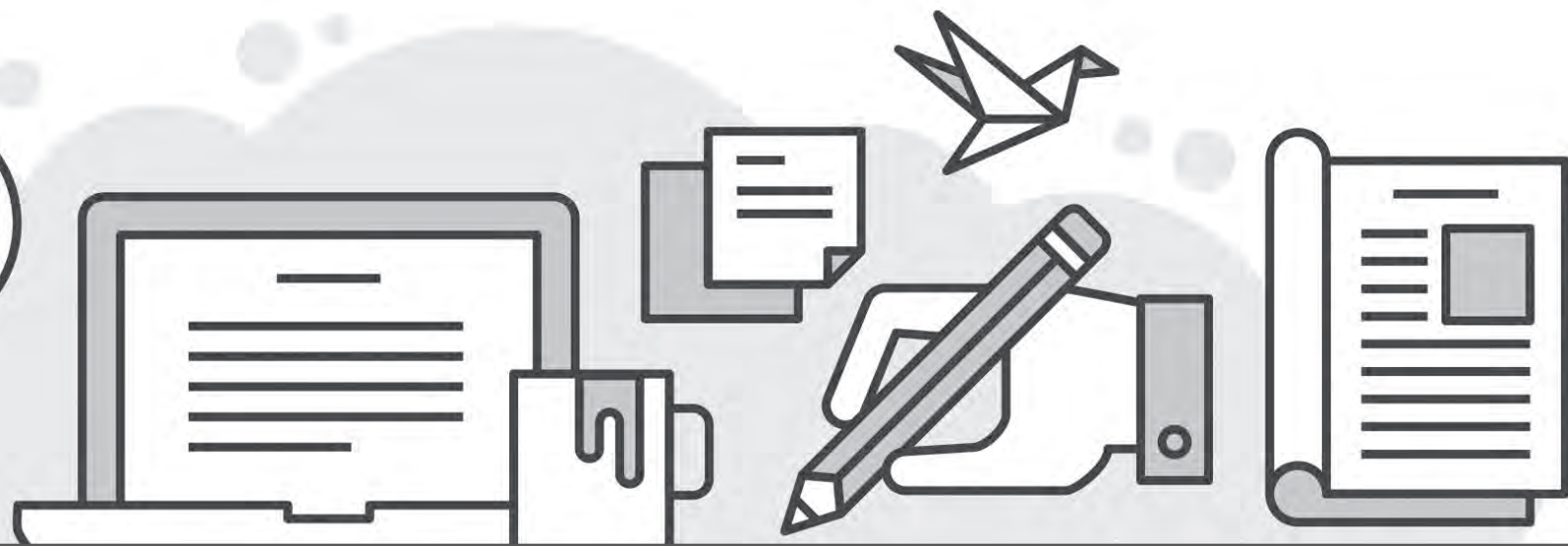
"Bite Marks," by Bobbi Dempsey in **Harper's Magazine**

Lifestyle Articles

"The Survival of Japan's Music Rests on Artificial Ivory," by Rachel Nuwer in **BBC Future**

HONORABLE MENTION

"Secret Life of a Mermaid," by Maureen O'Hagan in **Narratively**



Profile Articles

"Randy Rainbow's Witty World," by Margaret Engel in *The Washington Post Magazine*

Reported Essays

"How can I wean my children off their new habit of playing 'musical beds'?" by Sarika Chawla in *The Washington Post*

HONORABLE MENTION

"The silver Christmas tree, an icon of Space Age kitsch, turns 60," by Kate Silver in *The Washington Post*

Science

"A Significant Problem," by Lydia Denworth in *Scientific American*

Technology

"The Kids Are All Right," by Lydia Denworth for *Scientific American*

Trade

"Opioid Crisis Spurs New Strategies for Cancer Pain," by Darcy Lewis in *OncLive.com*

Travel

"How Palermo Became a Host to African Refugees," by Ashley Powers, writing in *Airbnb Magazine*

HONORABLE MENTION

"The Risky Fame of a Rare Island Wildcat," by Rachel Nuwer in *Hakai Magazine*

Fitness & Sports

"Women Deserve to Run Without Fear," by Christine Yu in *Runner's World*

Food & Drink

"Please Don't Call This Cultured Nugget 'Lab Meat,'" by Jenny Splitter in *Popular Mechanics*

Opinion/Op-Ed

"Chernobyl, the HBO miniseries: Fact and Fiction," by Robert Peter Gale in *The Cancer Letter*, nominated by Katie Goldberg

The Arlene Award for an Article That Made A Difference

"How Japan Undermines Efforts to Stop the Illegal Ivory Trade," by Rachel Nuwer in *National Geographic*

The Donald Robinson Memorial Award for Investigative Journalism

"Worse Than a Death Sentence," by Rohini Mohan, in *Type Investigations/Vice News*

Biography/History Books

The Lost Brothers by Jack El-Hai, University of Minnesota Press

HONORABLE MENTION

Battle for the Marble Palace: Abe Fortas, Earl Warren, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon and the Forging of the Modern Supreme Court, by Michael Bobelian, Schaffner Press

Children's Books/Young Adult Books

Enemy Child, the Story of Norman Mineta, a Boy Imprisoned in a Japanese American Internment Camp During World War II, by Andrea Warren, published by Holiday House

HONORABLE MENTION

Eclipse Chaser, Science in the Moon's Shadow, by Ilima Loomis, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

General Non-Fiction Books

Bottle of Lies: the Inside Story of the Generic Drug Boom, by Katherine Eban, Harper Collins

Memoir/Autobiography Books

Your Heart, My Hands: An Immigrant's Remarkable Journey to Become One of America's Preeminent Cardiac Surgeons, by Arun K. Singh, MD, with John Hanc, published by Center Street

Service/Self-Help Books

Sex After Grief: Navigating Your Sexuality After Losing Your Beloved, by Joan Price, Mango Publishing Group

MELANIE
PADGETT POWERS

Freelance Writer



WHAT'S NEXT?



HOW YOU CAN PLAN FOR
an UNCERTAIN
FUTURE

A couple of years ago ASJA Member Ilima Loomis went through a “personal recession” after a divorce. Suddenly she had to shoulder all the household expenses. And, as a single parent, she didn’t have as many available hours for time-consuming journalism projects. Her income dropped by tens of thousands of dollars, and she was starting to rely on her parents for financial help.

“T

hat was unacceptable to me,” she said. “I think there was also something emotional as a single parent where I had a very strong urge to provide and make sure I had financial security for my daughter.” She knew she had to switch up her freelance writing business to earn more money and build resiliency for the long term. She changed from journalism to content marketing and decided to focus on health care.

One of the best things I did was really think about playing the long game,” said Loomis, who lives in Hawaii and writes about health care, science and her state. “That’s more important than ever. It’s really easy to get caught up in the crisis, but it’s the daily habits that keep your business going... I’ve never been more grateful for the ground work I laid in my business the last two years.”

Like Loomis, freelance writers can build resiliency in their business, setting themselves up to better weather any crisis. This year’s coronavirus pandemic has upended all aspects of society, forcing us to give up our normal way of life and shelter in place for an undetermined time. While some freelance writers became busier than ever—especially those covering health care and technology—many lost gigs and clients and new work dried up.

As the economy sinks into a recession—and forecasters say “recession” may be putting it mildly—what can freelance writers do to keep the work flowing? Looking forward, what can we do to plan for future crises and keep our businesses afloat?





CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING THESE

5 TACTICS

IMMEDIATELY >>>>

1 *Stay Connected to Your Network*

Reach out to past clients occasionally so when a crisis hits, your email doesn't hit them out of the blue. When work slows, contact current and past clients, going back several years.

"Work your network and let them know you have availability that you didn't have before," said Michelle Rafter, a business and technology reporter and ghostwriter in Portland, Oregon.

Reach out immediately to your "second-tier" market too, Rafter said. Those are your past clients who you don't work for much, maybe because the pay is lower than you aim for or the work is a little boring.

2 *Be a Utility Player*

What else can you do besides write? Can you offer your clients copy editing, proofreading, public relations, video editing, graphic design? Ask them how you can help and be open to switching up your skill set, Rafter said.

But be reasonable; if you're not a graphic designer, don't offer to create a 20-page document in InDesign.

3 *Build Your Skills*

What skills do you foresee your clients needing? What skills are in demand that you don't have? Invest in an online course to expand your offerings, depending on your interests, which could range from copy editing to video script writing, from content strategy to podcast hosting and producing. This could also mean learning how to work faster so you can quickly turn around assignments for clients. To do this, learn how to improve your interview skills, craft better leads and narrative stories, and do research faster. Even speed reading and faster typing could help.

4 *Share In-Demand Topics*

Loomis recommended browsing all your clips to see which relate to in-demand topics. For example, during the coronavirus, many content publishers were looking for stories about working from home, human resource and business implications and wellness issues.

Share those with editors, put the links in your email signature and post them front and center on your website.

5 *Be Easy to Work With*

This sounds like a no-brainer, but when clients are more stressed than usual, it will be more important than ever to make their jobs simpler. Turn in fact-checked and edited copy. Ask for and study their style guide to clean up your stories. Suggest art and catchy headlines. Be polite and respond quickly.



BUILD BUSINESS RESILIENCY



“HAVE INTENTIONALITY AND THINK ABOUT WHERE YOU WANT TO BE IN ONE YEAR. DON’T COMPARE YOURSELF TO OTHER PEOPLE AND WHERE THEY ARE AND IF THEY PLANNED BETTER THAN YOU DID.”

– Ilima Loomis

»» **Melanie Padgett Powers** is the owner of MelEdits. She is a freelance writer, managing editor and copy editor/proofreader in the Washington, D.C., area. She primarily works with membership associations and health care organizations. She has a journalism degree and was a newspaper reporter in her home state of Indiana before moving on to membership associations. She is the host of the Deliberate Freelancer podcast, which focuses on the business side of freelancing.



Looking beyond tactics, take the time to zoom out and examine your business. Consider how you can plan for a crisis. “Start where you are right now,” Loomis said. “Don’t beat yourself up if you haven’t done this yet. It’s not a time to be hard on yourself. It’s time to think long term.”

When Loomis switched up her business, she scheduled a two-day solo business retreat to brainstorm and set goals. (If you’re concerned about the cost, know that “retreats” can be held in your house, but mix it up and choose a different room.)

“I looked deeply within myself to see what I wanted my goals to be,” Loomis said. “Have intentionality and think about where you want to be in one year. Don’t compare yourself to other people and where they are and if they planned better than you did.”

Examine the makeup of your business to determine how you can maximize your opportunities and minimize risks, Rafter said. This might mean diversifying your services or increasing the number of industries you write for.

To minimize risks, examine how your clients pay you. Do you work for clients who are chronically late in payment or pay way too little? Consider how they might act during a crisis and consider whether you need to improve your payment terms, like adding a late fee or shorter payment timeline. Ask clients if you can get paid by direct deposit or online such as through PayPal. If you still receive checks, be sure to download your bank’s mobile app to deposit checks at home.

Plan now for equipment failures. If your laptop crashes, you may not have the cash on hand to replace it, bringing your business to a screeching halt. Create an online savings account and start to set aside small amounts each week or each month so you’ll have it when technology fails you.

Pamela Capalad, a certified financial planner and accredited financial counselor in Brooklyn, New York, hesitates to give tactical financial advice such as save more money or spend wisely right now. “To tell people that after they’ve just lost income and gigs just doesn’t feel right,” she said.

Before the coronavirus struck, freelancers knew they should be building a financial safety net, but it wasn’t always possible while hustling from gig to gig and paying for health insurance and expensive rent or mortgage, Capalad said.

“Our individual actions are not what caused this,” said Capalad, who is also self-employed. It was politics, policies, societal infrastructures. “The gig economy makes it easier for people to lose work. Freelancers are very unprotected. And it’s been growing and has never been addressed.”

The fallout from the coronavirus pandemic offers an opportunity for advocacy. “We are at a time right now where we can advocate for ourselves. Now is the time to think collectively about what we really need,” Capalad said. Freelancers can band together to call upon their representatives for more protections for the self-employed, such as unemployment benefits, Medicare for all and sick leave.

“It’s not that this stuff is not possible,” Capalad said. “It’s that we haven’t had the time and space to look at this.”

WHY >>>>> NEWSLETTERS ARE THE NEW SOCIAL MEDIA



DAMON BROWN

Freelance Writer



>> Former ASJA Board Member Damon Brown helps side hustlers, solopreneurs, and other non-traditional creatives bloom. He sold his successful startup Cuddlr and now guides others through his one-on-one coaching, his Inc. column at www.incdamonbrown.com, and public speaking on platforms like TED. Damon's latest book is *Bring Your Worth: Level Up Your Creative Power, Value & Service in the World*. Join his community at JoinDamon.me.



wenty years ago, specialists said everyone needed a website. Ten years ago, it was a social media presence. Today, both have gone out of fashion, the former because of our increasingly mobile world, and the latter because of serious trust issues with the social media platforms.

And the wiser among us are turning back to the medium that never went out of style: Email.

Similar to podcasts, newsletters are experiencing a resurgence because they create a personal connection to our audience. Writers like myself (JoinDamon.me), Claire Zulkey (evilwitches.substack.com) and others have plugged away at our newsletters for years, as if they were a secret code to truly building a platform. Now, as the social media dream dissipates, the true power of the humble email newsletter is being revealed.

“Thanks to changes in social media algorithms, most of my followers and subscribers will not see most of the content, which means they’re missing out on valuable information that could help them,” says former ASJA Board Member Jennifer Fink of the weekly paid parenting newsletter Building Boys (buildingboys.substack.com). “I’m devoting a lot of time to something that’s valuable, and my time is worth something.”

**HERE'S WHY A NEWSLETTER
IS WORTH THE EFFORT
TO CONNECT TO YOUR
READERS, BUILD A
FOLLOWING, AND EVEN
INCREASE YOUR DIRECT
AND PASSIVE INCOME.**

Connect with Your Audience the Right Way

A newsletter can be reflective of you, your audience and your intention in ways social media messages, limited by 280 characters or other arbitrary rules, cannot. For instance, my JoinDamon.me newsletter is a weekly, 200-word vignette, built like a coaching conversation on productivity, time management and emotional intelligence, followed by a few quick links to my latest *Inc. Magazine* columns and other articles worth reading. It is reflective of my coaching style, my keynote talks, and my writing voice.

Best-selling author Tim Ferriss' newsletter (*tim.blog/2015/08/07/5-bullet-friday*) is a twice-weekly affair chocked full of links to new health trends, long-form articles and even poetry, as well as info on the latest episodes of his popular podcast. Ferriss' intense, kinetic energy shows in his messaging.

You can send newsletters by hand, as we did ages ago, but the smartest strategy is to get a newsletter platform to help you organize and schedule your distribution. Free or low-cost options include MailChimp, Constant Contact and ConvertKit.

"I have some perceived control over my relationship instead of social media," says writer and consultant Paul Jarvis, author of the book *Company of One* (*pjrvs.com/signup*). Launched in 2012, his newsletter has more than 35,000 loyal readers. "With the newsletter, I own that relationship and that connection so I can do with it as I please."



Stop Guessing What Will Work



“M y email has never been one sided; it always comes from my personal email address, and I can learn from them, find out what they are working on,” Jarvis says. “Me paying attention to what people say in response to my newsletter is the best way to drive business as well as have people pay attention to what I have to say.”

Jarvis doesn't have to guess what his audience wants, as they are literally telling him. Even a best-selling traditional author cannot have a direct line with the audience, as there are several intermediaries (agent, publisher, distributor, book seller) separating them from the readers. Audience access enables what popular creative Chris Guillebeau and others call “Market, Create, Sell” rather than “Create, Sell, Market.” You are not guessing if your next book, project or idea will work with your readership, as you already are regularly talking with them

about what they want and need next.

My latest book, *Bring Your Worth: Level Up Your Creative Power, Value & Service to the World*, came directly from the conversations I had with my JoinDamon.me audience. Combined with my one-on-one coaching and keynote experiences, the newsletter gave me wonderful insight into how I could best serve my audience of non-traditional entrepreneurs, side hustlers and creatives. A year before the book's launch, I severely scaled back my social media and doubled down my commitment to the newsletter conversation. Every thing about the book's approach felt different, from the immediate interest in preorders to the strong support during my book-inspired Entrepreneur-in-Residence at the Toledo Library to, ironically, the shared conversations on social media. The book resonated with my readers stronger than any of my previous titles because the newsletter allowed me to listen to them more carefully.

I do a month or two in advance, with articles filled in the hopper. Every week, I write an article or two, so if one isn't so great, I don't need to send it. That consistently shows the people on my list that it is something I care about. If I'm putting time and attention into the benefit of them, they can put care and attention into reading it." – PAUL JARVIS

Be Consistent

The most important part of having a successful newsletter is consistency. Again parallel to the podcast world, your audience will respond more favorably to a humble, consistent connection than an ambitious, erratic effort. My newsletter is sent out every Wednesday at 5:55 am. Jarvis' newsletter is called the Sunday Dispatches because he wanted to commit to delivering it on time. Fink's Building Boys Bulletin arrives once a week because, she says, that's what she could commit to consistently.

Whether you do monthly, quarterly or bi-annually doesn't matter as much as committing to the schedule. Otherwise, your audience won't build.

If you are afraid of being inconsistent, Jarvis says one of the best method is to show up early.



Make (More) Money

For the uninitiated, a newsletter looks like a loss leader, a.k.a. a time-or-money-heavy investment that ideally (and indirectly) gets you other work. If done strategically, though, newsletters can bring in both active and passive income. In 2019, Fink shifted her free long-running newsletter to a weekly paid newsletter, Building Boys Bulletin. Readers can get limited access for free or, as of Spring 2020, pay \$60 annually for an unlimited subscription. She is one of many paid newsletter producers through the media platform Substack.

"I spend a lot of time collecting, curating and contextualizing information, and I believe there's value there," Fink says. "The beauty of this model, for me as a writer, is that building my subscriber list means I can make additional money without doing more work... It won't take me any more effort to write and send the newsletter to thousands versus dozens of subscribers, so I'm now devoting time and energy to building my subscriber base."

For Jarvis, the monetization comes from both audience size and targeting. It all started a while ago when he hit 10,000 subscribers. "I started doing products, as I knew 10,000 people couldn't all hire me for a \$20,000 consulting engagement, but what about a \$200 online course? I thought, 'I'll make a little money on the side from my consulting work.'"

"Now, I haven't done consulting for years and focus solely on products," Jarvis adds. "The newsletter drives 100 percent of my revenue."





HOW TO
START AN

Online > CLASSES

In 2007, Debbie Hodge got into scrapbooking. She was so good at scrapbooking that she started teaching others how to make pretty pages. Hodge, now 57, created over a hundred short online courses for scrapbookers, charging \$50 or so per course, which is market rate for the hobby and lifestyle category.



JOANNE
CLEAVER

Freelance Writer

» Since 1981, Joanne Cleaver has freelanced full time, specializing in business, entrepreneurship, women's topics, careers, personal finance, investing, and travel. She has authored seven books, all traditionally published. Two of her three grown daughters are also published authors.

A few years ago, other accomplished scrapbookers asked her to coach them through the process of setting up their own courses. That's when Hodge realized that the real money wasn't in running an ever-expanding array of small-ticket consumer courses but in teaching aspiring entrepreneurs how to design courses of their own.

In 2016 she launched Teachwhatyoudo.com, which does what it says. For \$1,000, Hodge will share her formula for translating your expertise to an online course. In January, her core course grossed \$100,000. At any given time, about 100 people are enrolled in teachwhatyoudo.

"It's as much work to sell a \$1,000 course as a \$50 course," says Hodge.

Hodge hasn't written a book (yet), but I have. My latest is *The Career Lattice* (McGraw Professional, 2012). Based on that book and related ongoing editorial and research projects I manage, I know an awful lot about how people can apply their career skills to get ahead, both inside companies and on their own. I've even led workshops based on Lattice at conferences (including ASJA conferences) and for local business groups.

So why am I not making \$100,000 a month from an online course that shows people how to apply Lattice strategies to achieve their career goals? I think I could. Maybe you could, too. Here's what the experts say it takes.

While expertise is a big part of building credibility with potential participants, it's the course experience that drive social shares, recommendations, and word of mouth that draws in ever-more participants. — BOB PIKE

SELF-PUBLISHING FOR ADULT EDUCATION

In many ways, choosing a format for teaching is like choosing a path for publishing a book. We ASJAers are most conversant with the traditional route of securing a contract with a traditional publisher. While the author retains the copyright, the publisher handles production, marketing and distribution. In general, a big publisher is considered to have more authority in the market for selling the book.

Until the advent of online course platforms, ASJA members with expertise typically had one reliable option for translating that expertise to a teaching: teach as part of someone else's platform. Just as a book is one title in a publisher's catalog, an individual expert's course was best brought to the public through a university, community college or other organization. We delivered the material and the experience, and the school provided the space, marketing and, hopefully, the students.

But now, we can bring our books to market via self-publishing platforms and hybrid publishers. And in the same way, online course platforms have opened multiple paths to teaching and training. And just as self-publishing a book means that the author gets to manage production, distribution and marketing, so it is with launching an online course.

Course platforms range from quick, easy and low-profit to complicated, endlessly expandable, and high return.

Udemy and Skillshare offer course creators the chance to be found by, they claim, millions of motivated learners. They also put courses in competition with each other for attention and students by offering consumers huge catalogs for small monthly subscription fees. Udemy and Skillshare market intensely, but mainly to build their own brands. With dozens of similar courses jostling for attention, every course is a commodity and every creator's income at the mercy of Udemy and Skillshare's corporate goals. It might be possible to build a following within the closed systems of Udemy and Skillshare, but they don't make it easy.

Experts who want to launch substantive courses that justify substantive fees will find their best chances with platforms that handle the technology and some of the business functions, such as payment transactions. It's up to you to craft and execute a compelling marketing plan that makes the entire effort pay.

TALKING ISN'T TEACHING ISN'T TRAINING

In 2010, I took a "train the trainer" bootcamp course from The Bob Pike Group. It was \$2,000 well spent. I learned how to design learning modules that actually engaged participants. I learned how to present material in different formats to keep sessions lively. Most importantly, I learned how to translate what I knew to help people achieve their own goals.

If there was one thing the Bob Pike instructor impressed on us, it was that the content is secondary to adults' aspirations. This is the dynamic that drives success with online courses.

People want to be inspired to achieve something for their lives or their careers. The technical or how-to content is how they achieve their goals, but they'll sign on to your course if they are inspired. Every session needs to blend how-to material that the participants can apply and use right away with inspirational and motivational content that encourages them to achieve their personal goals through that material. Convert information to action that quickly changes people's lives.

While expertise is a big part of building credibility with potential participants, it's the course experience that drives social shares, recommendations, and word of mouth that draws in ever-more participants.

What doesn't work: lecturing.

GETTING STARTED

"Start with a deep understanding of customer needs," says Abe Crystal, a university professor and co-founder Ruzuku, a freestanding course platform. He and other experts point out that authors have a major advantage in designing engaging courses because they are already adept at organizing material to draw participants through the learning process.

INSPIRATION + EXPERTISE >>>>

Two myths trip up aspiring course creators, according to Hodge and others who make a living helping others operate online courses. The first misperception is that success pivots on your expertise and mastery of unique information. The second misperception is that the most important decision is picking the technical platform.

Crystal recommends creating a pilot version to test with a small circle of people who will give you honest feedback. Refine accordingly and expect to continue refining the content as more participants give you additional feedback, he says.

As you shape your expertise into course segments, peel off several pressing topics for catnip webinars designed to demonstrate the value of your course to potential participants. Free webinars are a proven way to pull in people who are interested in your course. Your goal is to get them hooked on their vision for achieving their goals through your course by helping them actually achieve a small goal on the spot in the webinar.

Lindsay Weirich had authored dozens of magazine articles about craft projects when she spun off a book, products and YouTube videos that demonstrated skills in bite-sized segments. Now, she has translated her YouTube following of 480,000 to regular subscribers to \$79 classes that illustrate watercolor painting skills. So far, about 5,000 students have taken her classes, hosted on the Teachable platform.

The first few rounds of a class draw the most questions from students, and Weirich tweaks the content accordingly. Those who want critiques can join her \$5 a month community for comments from Weirich and others on their in-process and completed work.

While her polished courses don't require a lot of maintenance, Weirich constantly feeds YouTube and other social channels with a constant flow of fresh, free demos and tips to continually attract new students. All marketing channels converge in the coveted email list, which also must be stoked with a steady stream of shareable newsletters and new offers.

"You have to figure that only a small fraction of the people on your mailing list will actually buy," says Weirich. She and others say that a good rule of thumb is that 2 percent of any audience likely to be already interested in your topic will likely buy your course.

TECHNOLOGY (SIGH)

Technology, payment processing, keyword marketing, video production, audio production, email list management ... launching a course demands that creators either master or hire essential digital skills.

Chris Badgett, founder of Lifter LMS (which stands for learning management system), a freestanding course platform that synchronizes with Wordpress, says that course creators have to become conversant in several key skills, but don't have to be fluent in each of them.

The most important skill is your own expertise, says Badgett, and your ability to teach what you know. You also have to be willing to lead a community—for both participants' ongoing learning and your ongoing revenue—and be able to either learn or learn to collaborate on the technology platform. Finally, course creators have to manage the business underpinnings of the operation, from incorporation to cash flow management.

Successful freelancers likely have most of those skills, says Badgett, and usually need mainly to overcome their fear of the technology. A spectrum of digital platforms offer models ranging from those requiring small investments of time and money and likely to deliver small returns (Udemy and Skillshare) to platforms that you can customize, with tech support, to bring to the world under your own brand (Ruzuku and Lifter LMS).

Aspiring creators often are relieved to learn that it's time and cost efficient to become sufficiently conversant with platform mechanics to collaborate with expert designers and programmers. "They'll do it really fast and for a lot less money than you think it will cost, and it'll be a better product than trying to do it yourself as a beginner," says Badgett.

"People worry about the technology instead of their content, but it's the content that is way more important," says Hodge. "You're an authority with a unique hook. If you create a path to the benefits they're longing for, they'll pay for it."





TOOLS OF THE TRADE

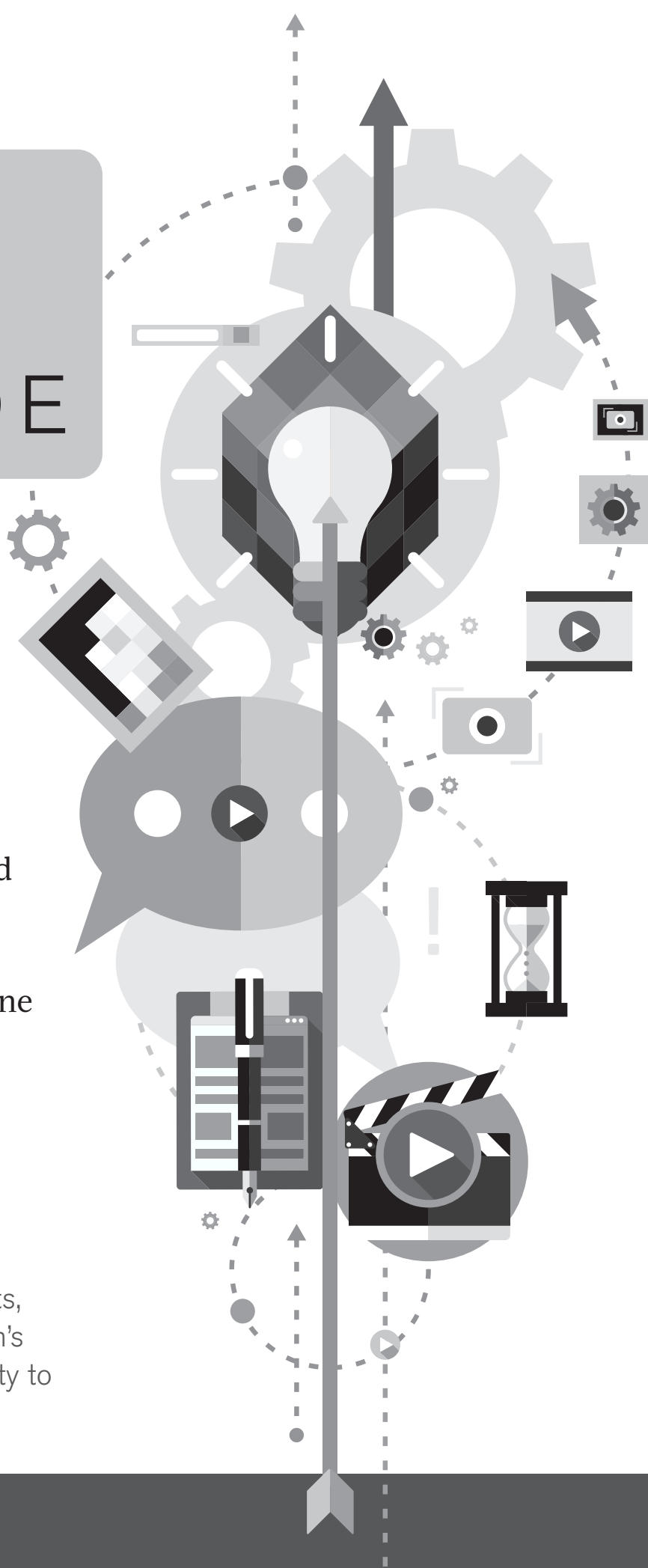
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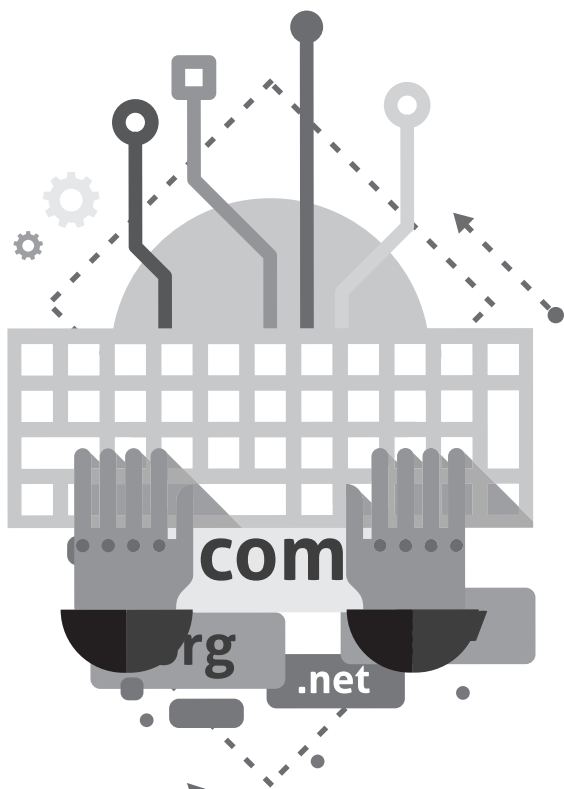
Freelance Writer

ONLINE CLASS PLATFORMS

The process of getting acquainted with the various platforms involves sales webinars, videos and an onslaught of emails. Joanne Cleaver spent some time wading through the options writers have for teaching an online class.

In addition to reviewing her comments, Cleaver suggests joining the platform's Facebook or LinkedIn user community to get feedback from its customers.





Udemy

UDEMY.COM

COST >

Offers an “all you can learn” self-serve buffet for which students pay a small monthly subscription fee. Udemy takes a cut of the income from your course. You can also present your course on additional platforms, with some exceptions.

BUSINESS MODEL >

Hosts your brand on its website and handles transactions. Fees you can charge range from free to \$199.

BRAND CONTROL >

Instructor has no control over pricing and Udemy often runs discounts. Udemy will cross sell your class to your competitors and vice versa.

COMMENTS >

If you don't have your own website, this might be an inexpensive way to test your concept, but you won't get much market intel because you can't control the pricing or competitive positioning. As this is a DIY site, much can be gleaned from its blog. No apparent mechanism for gathering student contact information to build a direct relationship.

Skillshare

SKILLSHARE.COM

COST >

Offers an “all you can learn” self-serve buffet for which students pay a small monthly subscription fee. Skillshare compensates instructors by the “student watch minute”: the longer students watch the more money you make. Skillshare also pays \$10 for each referral.

BUSINESS MODEL >

Hosts your brand on its website and handles transactions.

BRAND CONTROL >

Instructor has no control over how material is presented or promoted.

COMMENTS >

Seems to put all the risk on the course creators, but then, the expectations are minimal. One “Creative Personal Writing” course comprised seven ‘lessons’ of two to nine minutes each. Its leaderboard indicated that 5,500 people had taken the course but as instructors are compensated by watch time it is impossible to estimate revenue to the instructor. No apparent mechanism for gathering student contact information to build a direct relationship.



CourseCraft

COURSECRAFT.NET

COST >

From free with 9% commission on participant enrollment fees to \$47/month with additional transaction support and capacity.

BUSINESS MODEL >

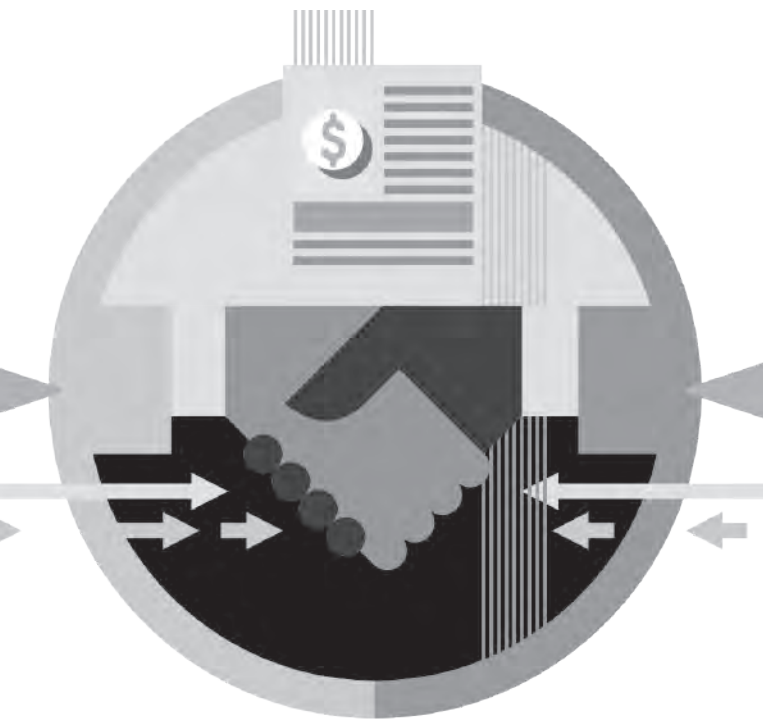
Hosts the course and transaction function; for a fee, will support your URL.

BRAND CONTROL >

For a fee, will co-brand by using your URL.

COMMENTS >

CourseCraft doesn't do much to promote itself.



Teachable

TEACHABLE.COM

COST >

Charges instructors \$29 to \$399 monthly

BUSINESS MODEL >

Handles transactions and supports plug-ins for email list management and so on.

BRAND CONTROL >

Hosts class on Teachable site. Is piloting a search

function for potential participants to find classes hosted by Teachable.

COMMENTS >

A popular and robust platform that appears to count on peer coaching through its Facebook group and its FAQs for troubleshooting problems.



Ruzuku

RUZUKU.COM

COST >

\$75 to \$125 monthly with a different mix of services at each price point.

BUSINESS MODEL >

Handles transactions and supports plug-ins for email list management and so on.

BRAND CONTROL >

At the higher price point, Ruzuku is invisible to users; it connects to your website.

COMMENTS >

A surprising number of courses are powered by Ruzuku, while its online resources for course creators is thin.

Memberpress

MEMBERPRESS.COM

COST >

\$249 to support one course to \$549 to support five courses; often runs specials. Not clear if this is a one-time or monthly fee.

BUSINESS MODEL >

Handles the tasks through connected services for transactions and email management.

BRAND CONTROL >

Memberpress is invisible to users; it connects to your WordPress site.

COMMENTS >

Memberpress has an impenetrable façade and I'd be wary of counting on this company for guidance or even referrals to providers of adjacent services.



LifterMLS

LIFTERLMS.COM/PRESS

COST >

Ranges from \$8.25 per month for one course to \$83.25 for unlimited course sites and expanded tech support.

BUSINESS MODEL >

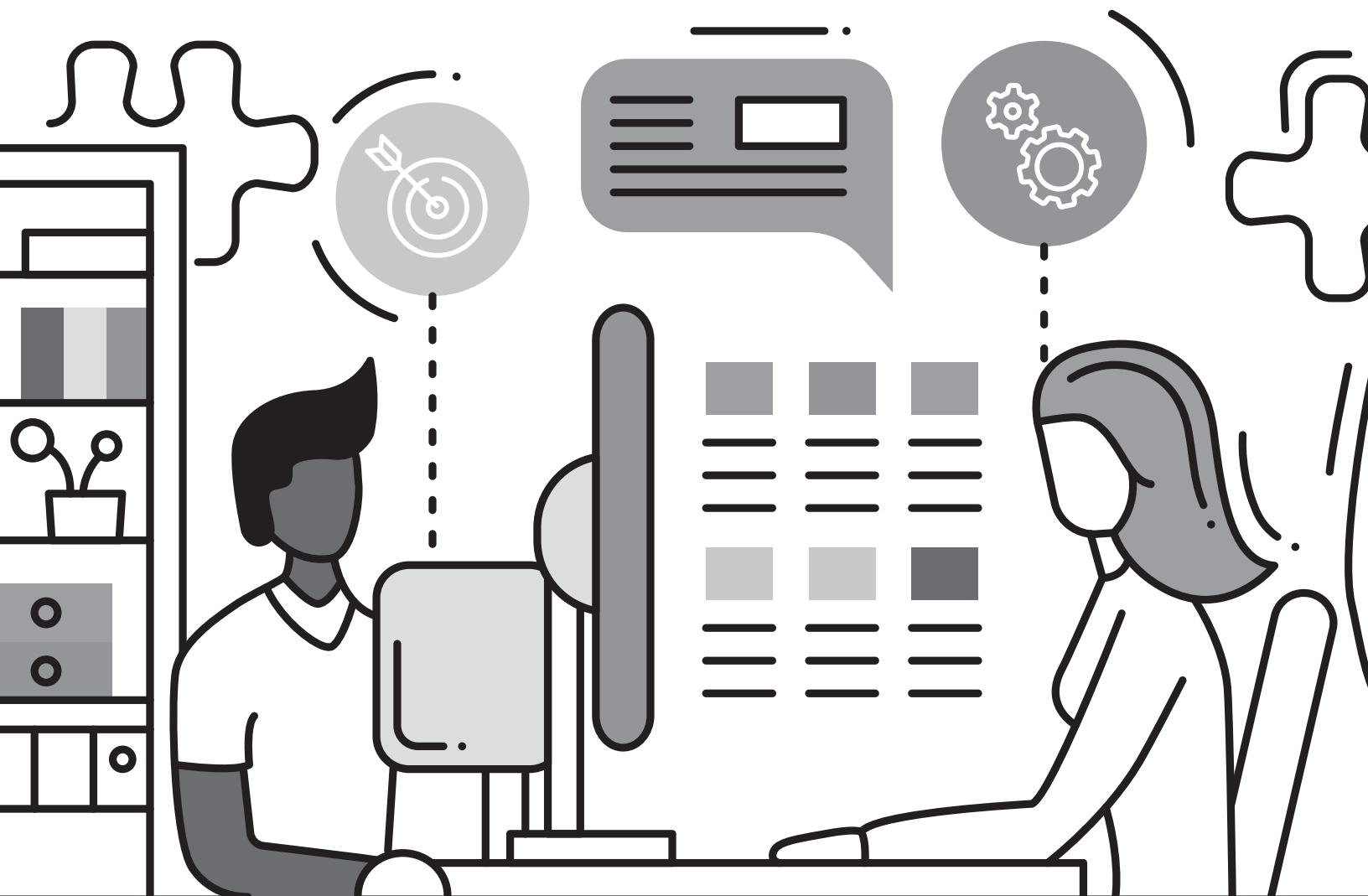
Handles the tasks through connected services for transactions and email management. You can also subscribe to a monthly masterclass to have input on additional features and to get insights on course dynamics from other Lifter users.

BRAND CONTROL >

Lifter MLS is invisible to users; it connects to your WordPress site.

COMMENTS >

Seems to come closest to having a community, in which course creators share the nuts and bolts of building a real business through and with their courses.



Masterminds

WHAT ARE THEY AND
WHY SHOULD YOU JOIN ONE?



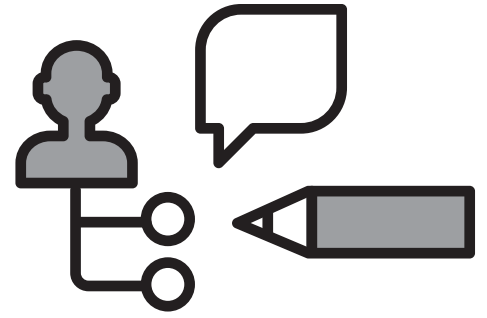
A couple of years ago, a group of my ASJA friends and I were shooting the bull with each other about our clients, our writing businesses, our editors, our rates, how and where we get clients, land assignments and deal with our pain points. In essence, we were “masterminding.”

I realized just how incredibly valuable peer-to-peer meeting groups could be, and I saw how much we all got out of being in one. I wanted to become a thought leader and facilitate my own mastermind group events, specifically for independent and freelance writers who run small businesses. Today, I facilitate mastermind workshops out of my Florida home studio.



JENNIFER
NELSON

Freelance Writer



>>> WE'RE IN GOOD COMPANY

Mastermind groups are steeped in literature and rooted in history. A mastermind group of writers and poets in England included J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Owen Barfield and Charles Williams. Both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* are said to be the products of their author's masterminding work.

Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and President Warren G. Harding belonged to a mastermind group called the Vagabonds.

President Theodore Roosevelt started a mastermind group when he was in office to surround himself with more experienced politicians.

Even Bill Gates and Warren Buffet are said to be fans of networking via masterminds because two heads (or more) are better than one. The power in masterminds lies in its members who learn from the collective wisdom and experience of each other.

Add refreshments and you can easily see how masterminds are the hottest thing since book clubs.

>>> THE NUTS AND BOLTS

Here's how it works: A group of like-minded folks—poets, entrepreneurs, politicians, writers—gather and meet either in person or virtually these days. Typically one person is in the hot seat at a time and workshops their problem, meaning they explain their pain point or issue they'd like help with, provide background information, and state what they're doing or how they've tried to solve the issue to date.

For writers, it might mean you're trying to find better clients, land an anchor or retainer client, expand your niches, increase marketing or create a unique selling proposition such as a class, podcast, workshop or eBook. Then the rest of the group takes a look at your sticking point and helps brainstorm solutions.

Most of the time, a group of masterminders are on the same journey you are—some are ahead of you, some behind you, but everyone can relate to your issue and help bounce ideas around until the person in the hot seat has some solutions to implement. Typically, masterminds are for those who are striving to revolutionize their business or level up in some way—expanding, adding value, increasing income or scaling upwards.

I've seen masterminds work for entrepreneurs, CEOs, high-earning businesswomen, marketers, local business owners and yes, of course, every type and brand of writer.

You come away with actionable take-aways to implement and incorporate in your work. Plus, helping others and listening to those with more, less and different experiences enables you to expound on your overall knowledge and business acumen. — JENNIFER NELSON

>>> GROUP THINK TO THE RESCUE

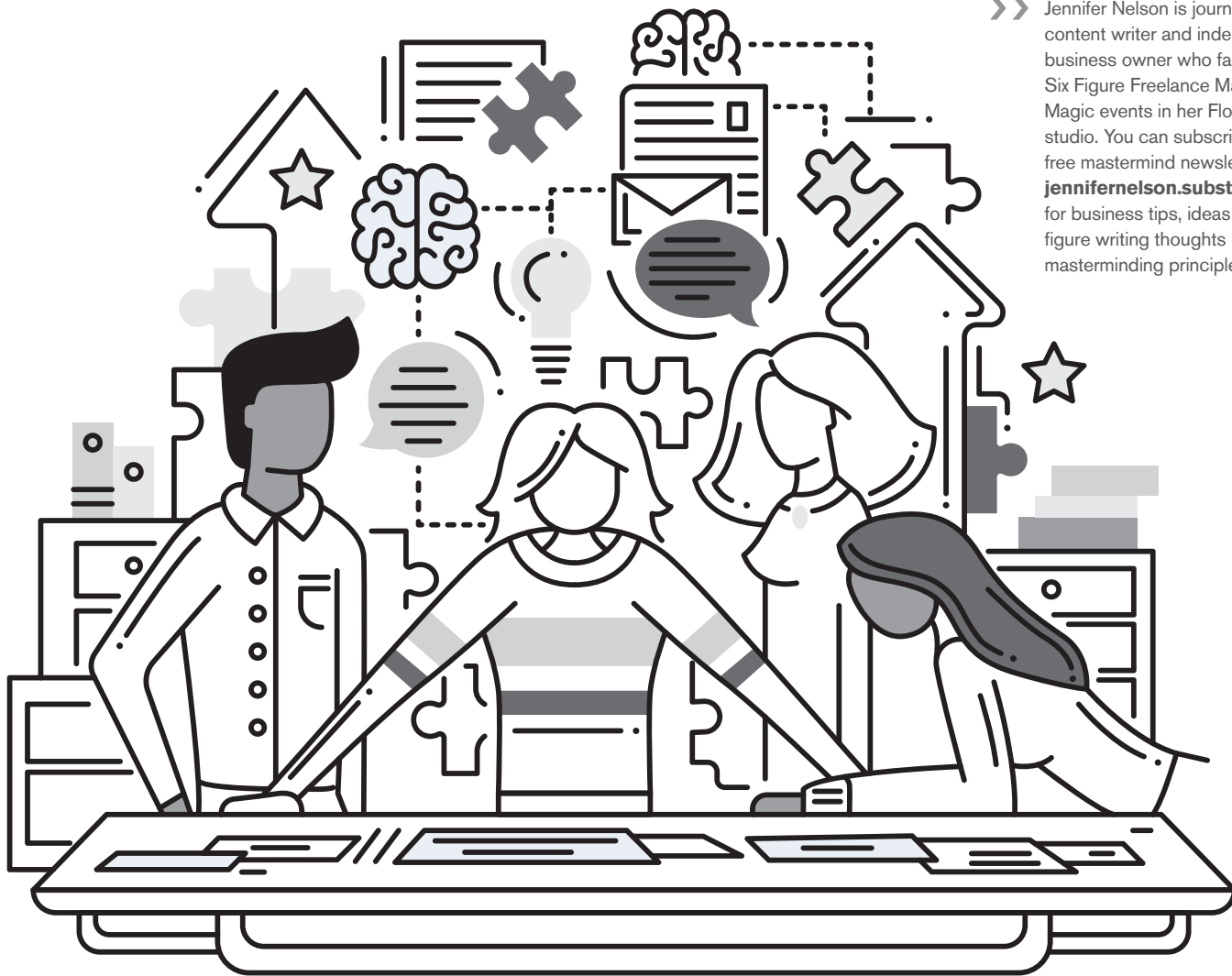
So how can you benefit from joining a mastermind group? The most obvious way is by becoming accountable when you join. You'll commit to working with a group of like-minded individuals who are aiming to improve their work and business just like you are. And because writing and owning an independent freelance business is often a solitary pursuit, having a springboard to hurl ideas off and bring resolution to problems is a huge advantage.

At the end of a mastermind session, the person in the hot seat has a slew of solutions to bring back to their home office while the rest of the group has usually learned a great deal, too.

You come away with actionable take-aways to implement and incorporate in your work. Plus, helping others and listening to those with more, less and different experiences enables you to expound on your overall knowledge and business acumen. In fact, sometimes the best way to solve an issue is by hearing the way others would solve the same or similar problem.

What's more, verbalizing your pain points by sharing them with the group puts your issue out into the universe so the help you need can meet you head on. You're also extending your network and building a rapport and trust with like-minded writers who can provide you leads, referrals and support going forward.

Once you've been in the hot seat and repeatedly helped others in the hot seat, you benefit from the continued collective wisdom, advice and solutions the group proffers—even beyond the advice you were initially seeking. You might also come away with an accountability buddy or supportive new friends for your writers' tribe.



>>> Jennifer Nelson is journalist/ content writer and independent business owner who facilitates Six Figure Freelance Mastermind Magic events in her Florida-home studio. You can subscribe to her free mastermind newsletter at jennifernelson.substack.com for business tips, ideas and six figure writing thoughts based on masterminding principles.

>>> WHERE TO FIND MASTERMINDS

You don't have to be in the same business or the same type or stage of entrepreneurship to benefit from a mastermind. You may find mastermind opportunities at your local Chamber of Commerce and other organizations for small business owners or entrepreneurs in your area.

You can also start a group by asking local writing colleagues if they're interested in beginning a mastermind group. Six to 10 members is a great number for a monthly group in which one person takes the hot seat at each meeting.

You can also start virtual masterminds by asking writing colleagues in Facebook groups or in ASJA if they'd been interested in participating in one. You can hold them over Skype, Google Hangouts or Zoom and meet as often as weekly or monthly.

Paid mastermind opportunities and events, either in person or virtually, are another option, which can provide next-level support with a facilitator who keeps everyone in the group on track, curates membership to successfully guide the right member mix, and provides additional benefits like ensuring each group member receives a master plan of actionable solutions to implement.

Often a paid or fee-based mastermind group safeguards member commitment, participation and a high involvement with experienced professionals. The masterminds I facilitate are two-day events in which each group member takes an hour-long turn in the hot seat to workshop significant writing business challenges and level up their business. In between, we have breaks, refreshments, guest speakers and challenging business activities.

To find a group or one-time mastermind event, check with both area and virtual coaches and writing communities to see what others have found or recommend. There are mastermind groups at every price point, including paying up to six figures to belong to a group helmed by an industry titan.

A successful mastermind group is typically a win-win for all its members. They provide you with honest feedback, help you stay accountable and usually can foster revolutionary changes in your business, all while networking and raising your game on par with those at their tops of theirs.

How > 4 ASJA MEMBERS COPED WITH THE COVID-19 CRISIS

COVID-19 not only upended business as usual for many ASJA members, but it also rocked their sense of normalcy. Sheltering at home and social distancing took away a lot of the activities many relied on for their wellbeing. But writers are a resilient group, and members found ways to cope in a new world.

We asked your peers to share some of the things they did to make it through a time of uncertainty, and here's what they said:

MAINTAINING FOCUS

For Susan B. Weiner, coping meant paying attention to where she puts her focus. One way she stayed positive and moving forward was to enlist the help of others.

"It's not easy to focus when there's so much to worry about," she writes. During the pandemic, she started positive conversations on Facebook. For example, one post said: "Find your focus on MONDAY. Please post three things that you'd like to accomplish today."

"I figure it's easier to focus if I post a manageable number of tasks," she writes. "Plus, I enjoy the community of other writers posting their goals and sharing how they're doing."

Weiner also focused on exercise. "I collected a list of free online exercise videos, which I also turned into a blog post, 'Well-exercised writers are better writers,'" she shares. "Going to the gym used to be a regular occurrence, and a big mood booster. Now exercise is still part of my existence."

Finally, Weiner also focused on helping others. "Writers are a big part of my 'tribe' whom I have tried to help with the first two items listed above," she writes. "Financial professionals are also important to me. I've rushed to publish some posts on my blog—and a 'Letter from the Editor' in the magazine that I edit—that help them figure out how to communicate with their clients during a challenging time."

FINDING CREATIVE WAYS TO SAY "THANKS"

Susan Gordon lives a few miles from the coronavirus epicenter of New York, and the kindness of a stranger gave her a reason to smile and find a way to say "thank you."

"A few days ago, I called a local housewares store and ordered about \$30 worth of cleaning supplies," she writes. "When I told the owner that I could drive to the store, but was reluctant to go inside, he quickly offered to drop off my purchases at no charge, on his way home."

Since then, she ordered from the merchant twice more, and each time the owner graciously dropped off the goods. After one order, Gordon signed a copy of her latest book, *Wedding Days*, wrapping it in plastic and putting it in a small shopping bag as a gift for him.

"He was delighted!" she writes. "I didn't know you were such a famous author!" he told me on the phone. I'm hardly famous, but heck—I didn't correct him."

SHARING TALENTS

Amy Brecount White coped with the pandemic by sharing her talent with others. "As a former English teacher and now part-time essay coach, I was inspired by all the writers, musicians, and chefs who are sharing their skills online," she writes.

She launched a free video series for ages 12 and up called "Your Writing Coach: Building Real Life Writing Skills." She shares a mix of writing tips, prompts, and reflections gleaned from her teaching and writing experiences.

Marijke Vroomen Durning was also looking for ways to help during this pandemic crisis, but she didn't know what to do.

"I hate calling people on the phone, so phone checks on seniors is out of the question," she writes. "I can make masks for hospitals, but so many are being made already."

Then Vroomen Durning's husband had a great idea. Several friends and acquaintances had been asking if they could pay her to make them fabric masks. A talented quilter, Vroomen Durning didn't feel right selling them.

"But they are work to make," she writes. "So instead of accepting pay, I asked them to donate what they felt the masks were worth to our local food bank."

One friend gave a \$100 donation, and Vroomen Durning had raised \$400 for the food bank by the time this went to print. She also made and donated scrub caps in response to an appeal by a surgical nurse on a local Facebook page, and at press time she was working on her first batch of 24.

FINDING SOMETHING TO SHOW FOR IT

A few years ago, Jennifer Goforth Gregory's cousin went through a divorce. During the difficult time, he told her that if he was going to have to go through it, then he wanted something to show for it when he got to the other side. At least he could look back and find something tangibly positive, he told her, and he focused on getting in shape.

"I was thinking about this and decided to take the same approach with the COVID-19 crisis," she shared with her Facebook group. "I am aiming for three things to show for it on the other side:

- Clean and organized closets and drawers and cabinets
- A regular exercise routine
- A finished training class of my own to offer people on growing their content marketing business

"I think that on the other side of this, if I have even two of the three that I will feel a great sense of accomplishment and that at least something good came from this. But hopefully three somethings will come from this!"

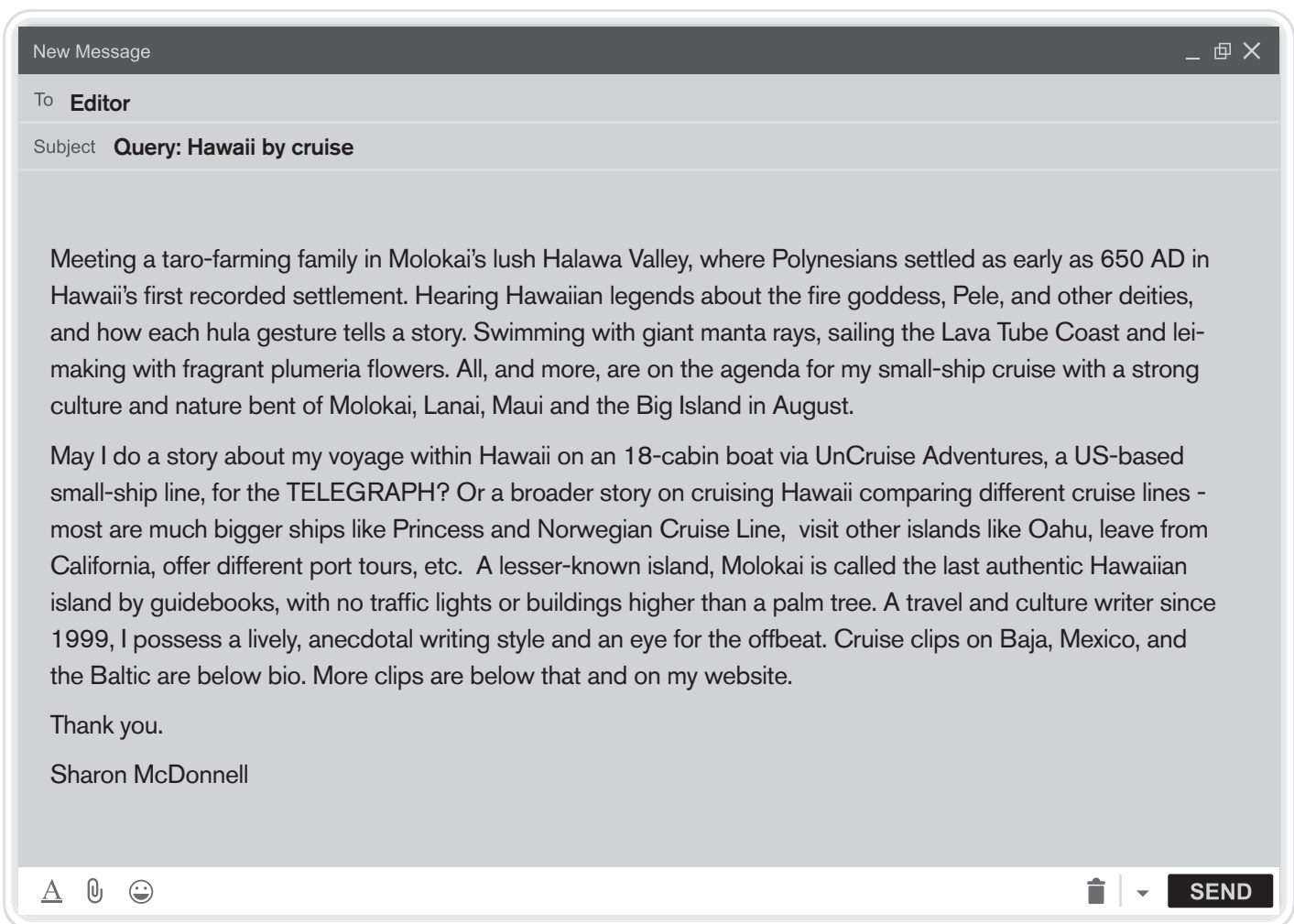


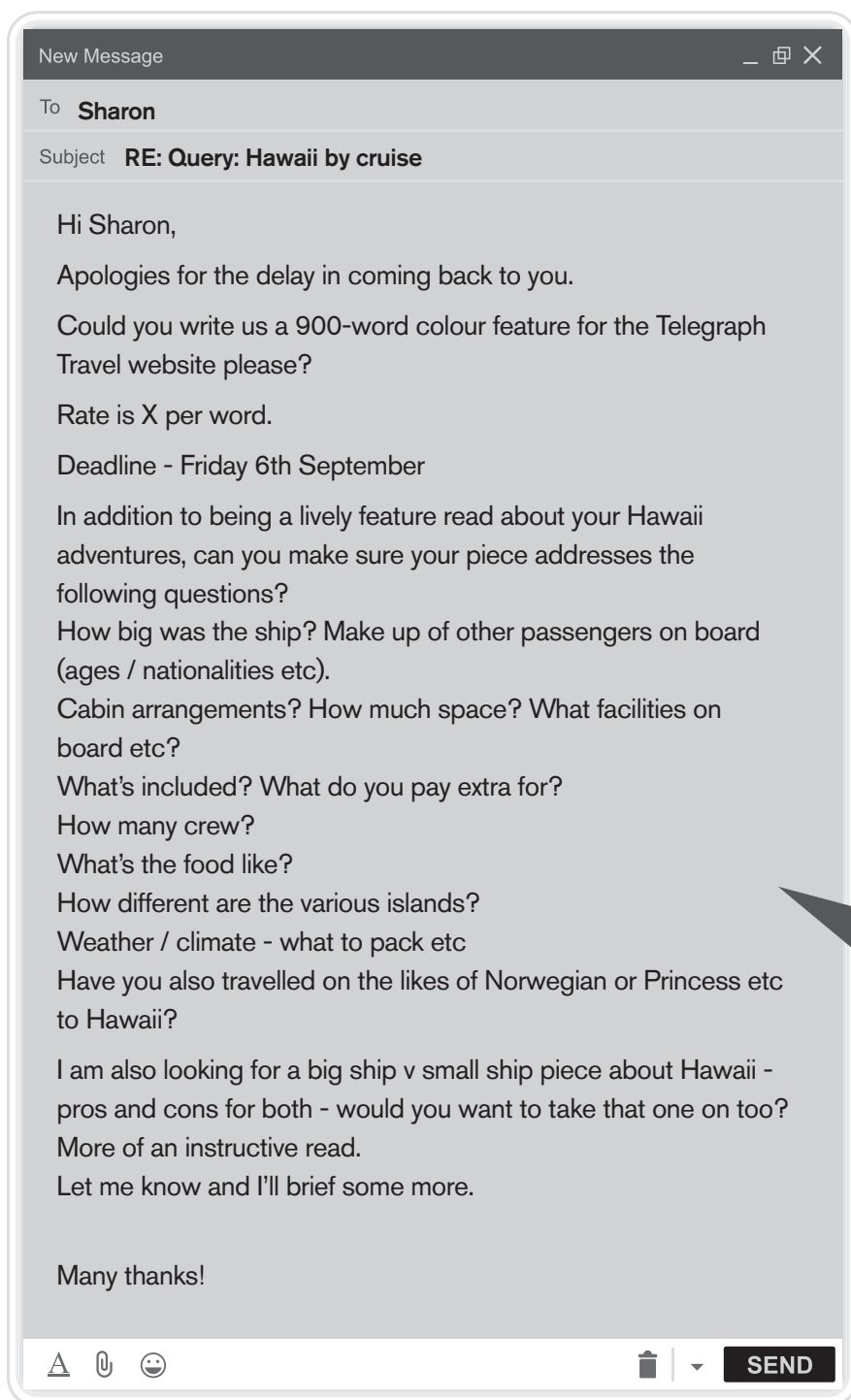
PITCH PERFECT >>>>

with Sharon McDonnell

Imagine turning one pitch into multiple assignments. In this issue, we get a peek at an email that delivered just that for ASJA member Sharon McDonnell. She reached out to an editor at The Telegraph, a major London newspaper, that resulted in selling three stories to its travel section.

HERE'S THE EMAIL THAT PIQUED THE INTEREST OF THE TELEGRAPH EDITOR:

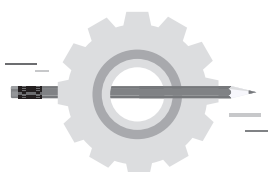




AND A THIRD ASSIGNMENT

Later, Sharon received another email from the editor, asking if she could write a third-person story about her small-ship Hawaii cruise for "1,000 Dream Trips," a huge package the paper was putting together, for extra pay.

McDonnell had contacted U.S. outlets with her original idea, and none had any remote interest. "Perhaps because they cover Hawaii often," she says. "I never limit myself to U.S. outlets. Foreign ones get far fewer queries, and respond faster."



If you want to check out the published stories, follow these links:

www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/hawaii-culture-nature-by-small-ship-cruise/

www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/hawaii-cruising-big-ship-v-small-ship/

www.telegraph.co.uk/guides/dream-trips/destination/cruise-to-the-heart-of-hawaii-by-small-ship



Stacey Freed



**ASJA MEMBER
SINCE: 2014**



I've enjoyed meeting other members and establishing friend relationships as well as relationships that have led to finding work.

► **What is your writing specialty/focus?**

I have a niche writing about construction, architecture, design, housing, real estate, but I also have written several articles about dogs and, recently, personal finance.

► **Please share a proud writing moment.**

When my essay "Tourist No More," which appeared in a travel book called ***She Can Find Her Way: Women Travelers at Their Best***, was nominated by the editor for a Pushcart Prize. Although I didn't win, I was so pleased to be nominated.

► **How long have you been an ASJA member?**

Since 2014

► **How long have you volunteered for ASJA?**

The past year

► **What kind of volunteer work do you do for ASJA?**

I was a Virtual Pitch Slam host and most recently I've been a co-chair for the upcoming Virtual Client Connections (VCC) events.

► **What are the benefits of volunteering?**

I've enjoyed meeting other members and establishing friend relationships as well as relationships that have led to finding work. And, there are perks to volunteering. For example, as a VCC chair I automatically get appointments with editors, but I also have been able to have contact with editors. They, in turn, are more likely to remember my name if I query them in the future.

► **How much time do you spend per month volunteering for ASJA?**

Depends on the month and event. Maybe 8-10 hours depending on what's happening.

► **How do you fit volunteering in with your work commitments?**

I do volunteer stuff in between work commitments, when I'm slow during the day or when I want to procrastinate from work or when I just need a break from working.

► **What do you like to do when you're not writing?**

I like to run, hike, bake, read, travel, hang out with my family.





That's Productive

Are You Making Any Of These 6 To-Do List Mistakes?

One of the easiest ways to stay on track throughout your day is by creating a to-do list. This tried-and-true productivity tool can help you stay focused and on top of what needs to be done. It doesn't matter if you use a piece of paper, a Google doc or an app. All that counts is that you have a centralized location to record your tasks.

Unfortunately, to-do lists aren't fail-proof, and if you don't use yours correctly you could derail all of those great intentions.

Make sure you aren't making one of these six common mistakes:

WRITING IT IN THE MORNING

It's okay to consult your list in the morning, but if you leave the job of writing it for the day you want to get things done, it may be too late. Instead, create your list the night before. Getting in the habit of ending your day by planning the next can help you stay ahead of your tasks. It's also a great way to transition from professional time to personal. When you make your to-do list, you can unwind and leave work behind, knowing that you've got a blueprint for going forward.

HAVING TOO MANY TO-DOS

It can be tempting to include everything plus the kitchen sink in your to-do list; writing one can make us feel optimistic about what we can actually accomplish. Having more things than you can complete, however, sets you up to fail. Instead, focus on the top three things you need to do. Be realistic that they're things you can do in one day. It can help to estimate the amount of time each will take. Then track how long each task actually takes to give you some information you can use in the future. If you finish your to-do list, you can always add more items later.

NOT FOCUSING ON PRIORITIES

It can be tempting to put easy tasks on your to-do list; they're quick to check off and give you a sense of progress. But treating each and every task as being list-worthy won't give you traction on important items that can move your career forward. Make sure your to-do list is filled with priorities and not distractions. Once you complete your high-priority tasks, you can move to the less important administrative chores that need to get done.

INCLUDING SOMEDAY TASKS

We all like to dream—and we should dream. But aspirational tasks, like starting a podcast or writing a novel, don't belong on your to-do list. If you want to gain traction on "someday" goals, break them down into manageable tasks and put those on the list instead. For example, if you want to start a podcast, put "research platforms" or "create an editorial calendar for month one" as a to-do. Then, create a master list of "someday" dreams that are separate from your to-do list that can provide you with inspiration and a plan for the future.



BEING VAGUE WITH INSTRUCTIONS

Have you ever put something on your to-do list and then weren't sure what you meant later? Providing yourself with vague instructions makes it difficult to take action when you're in work mode. Skip words like "develop" or "implement" and be super specific with your tasks. If you have to figure out how to complete a task before you can start working on it, you'll waste time and brainpower. Instead, be clear about what you need to get done.

REUSING YOUR LIST

Each day is a clean slate for productivity, and that requires a new list of to-dos. Instead of reusing your list and adding items beneath the tasks you've crossed out, start fresh. If you had tasks that didn't get done, write them on your new list. If you notice that you're writing the same task over and over onto new days, reconsider whether it needs to be there at all.

Remember, hours in the day are finite. When you write your to-do list, consult your calendar and make sure you're connecting the two tools to maximize them both. A to-do list can be a blueprint for your day. Make sure you use it wisely to get ahead.



PAUL VACHON

Freelance Writer



Market Report | EATING WELL

Eating Well, a publication of the Meredith Corporation, is a magazine that stresses the inextricable link between nutrition and health. Its motto “Where Good Taste Meets Good Health” encapsulates its mission, which is to “provide the inspiration and information people need to make healthy eating a way of life.”



And for more than 25 years the publication has fulfilled its task admirably. Although its focus may at first seem highly specialized, *Eating Well* covers the topic of food from various angles, and divides its content into intelligently designated departments, most of which online writers’ guidelines describe as “freelancer friendly.”

Managing Editor Wendy Ruopp explains that while the magazine’s tone is not especially academic, stories need to be well sourced, especially pieces that cover more technical topics.

“Articles relating to nutrition and the environment need to be science backed, so we expect our writers to do the necessary research and be able to cite sources for fact checking,” she explains.

Front-of-book (FOB) pieces appear in a section called Good Life, and can range from 150 to 400 words. Subcategories include **Trends**, which are stories usually linked to a news peg and cover new food items that are hot and healthy--think veggie chips made from kale or Brussels sprouts, or natural alternatives to white sugar, such as coconut or date sugar.

Travel also falls under the Good Life umbrella, which typically runs stories about “...food SO DELICIOUS you’d jump on a plane and go there tomorrow if you could.” Each issue presents five diverse locations (mostly in the U.S.), such as restaurants located on farms or towns noted for exceptional vegan food.

Pieces in the **Thinking** section discuss current social (and potentially controversial) issues that are food related, such as sustainability and social justice in the food industry.

Fix offers stories that might be related to a health condition, while **Fit** is related to exercise. A page covering a nutrition-related topic also appears in some issues. Ruopp stresses that writers for these sections “need to be able to write very well, and very concisely.”



Typically this will include taking a relevant study, translating it for the lay reader, and at the same time make it interesting to read.

"If you can send us some writers that can do that—that would be awesome!" she says. Even here, however, the coverage still needs to have food as its central component.

Eating Well usually runs four feature-length articles per issue, which are generally penned by writers with whom the editors have long-standing relationships. Topics for features hew closely to a given issue's overall theme, and are therefore assigned.

"But if we get a compelling query from someone new who has especially great clips, we might offer them a feature assignment," says Ruopp. Feature articles are shorter than in most consumer magazines, and generally run from 700 to 1,500 words. Occasionally, a more complex piece can top out at 3,000 words.

Compensation also qualifies as freelancer friendly. Pay starts at \$1 per word, but can go higher. FOB pieces can sometimes pay more. Ruopp explains that to make an assignment worth a writer's time, a 300-word article may pay up to \$2 per word. "But they have to be good words."

Invoices are requested at submission. Upon official acceptance, payment is authorized, which normally takes between 45 and 60 days.

Eating Well's standard contact retains all rights, and provides for a 25% kill fee.

Paul Vachon is a Detroit-based writer and author who writes on Detroit history, Michigan travel, plus general feature stories.

EATING WELL AT GLANCE



Fees: Generally \$1/word, but can go higher.

Story Lengths: Between 250 and 400 words for FOB departments, 700-1,000 for features.

Frequency: Monthly

Payment Terms: On story acceptance.

Kill Fee: 25%.

Rights: Contract reserves all rights.

I am a Weeble.

Weebles wobble but they don't fall down.



TAMI KAMIN
MEYER

Freelance Writer

Last year, 2019, was horrific for me. Just two days before ASJA's annual conference in New York City, my wonderful, loving, funny, supportive and handsome boyfriend died unexpectedly at the age of 58. I found him dead the morning of May 3 in the shower of our Manhattan hotel room.



Brad McFarland and Tami Kamin Meyer enjoyed a bike ride in Central Park on May 2, 2019. Brad died unexpectedly the next day.

That trip to NYC was our fourth together, with each visit better than the one before as small-town Brad's love of the city grew more each time, nearly rivaling mine. Little did we know that May 3, 2019 would be the bookend of our love affair together in the physical world.

Seeing my beloved slumped dead in the shower when just hours before we were laughing together and discussing our upcoming anniversary celebration felt like I was repeatedly being pummeled in the stomach. But I couldn't feel it, because my brain could not or would not process the scene it was witnessing.

It might sound incredible, but in those early moments, I did not panic. I did not shriek. I did not cry. Instead, my brain instinctively shifted into Lawyer Mode (my other profession), mercifully protecting it from processing this macabre occurrence.

It wasn't until Brad's autopsy was released several weeks later that I learned he died of an enlarged heart. I felt like I could die of a broken one.

After realizing Brad was dead, I washed up and changed out of my pajamas into street clothes. I remember thinking the room would soon be crowded with people and I needed to be dressed. I'm a lawyer and, besides, I've seen plenty of episodes of Law and Order. I knew what was coming.

The idea of immediately fleeing the city to continue mourning back in Ohio never occurred to me. That would not only have meant missing the ASJA conference but, more importantly, I wanted to stay in as close proximity to Brad as possible. I didn't want to leave him alone in the city he had grown to love. Most important, I knew Brad would have been disappointed if I had skipped town because he died. He had a lot of faith in me, and I could and would not let him or myself down.

I attended the conference in an almost dream-like state. I heard panel members speaking but I couldn't really comprehend what they were saying. There was an insistent buzz of chatter around me but all I heard was a dull void. Fortunately, I was enveloped in a circle of support from fellow writers that unquestionably helped me survive those horrific first few days, and for that, I will be forever grateful. They also offered keys to their Marriott hotel rooms, just in case I wanted to nap or get away for a private cry. That generosity and compassion touched me so deeply that it's caused me to become more patient and empathic. Another gift from Brad.

How did I manage participating in the conference? How do I wake up each morning knowing it's one more day since Brad and I shared our favorite and daily expression of "Big Love" with one another? What compels me to grapple with story ideas and editors, competing against a mass of talented wordsmiths for the few available white spaces a publication has available? When yet another editor ignores or simply bypasses an idea I suggested, why don't I just take the hint?

Something inside keeps me going. It burns bright and propels me forward, each and every day.

It's called resolve. Sometimes, I joke that as a journalist, I am blissfully ignorant of who I have no business calling for an article. But that's also how I live my life.

I do not let circumstances best me. I literally view obstacles as the Devil, and I cannot and will not let the Devil beat me. I simply will not let it win. It's not ego, mind you. I don't think I'm all that great. I just don't give up. If I do, my world crumbles. I cannot be the loving mother my two adult sons deserve. I cannot be the conscientious writer I try to be. Clients who have entrusted their legal matters to me will not be serviced properly if I let the negative override.

Please don't get me wrong. I didn't become a widow one day—which is what I am even though Brad and I weren't married—and write *The Great American Novel* the next. I had zero motivation to do work of any kind for months after his death, and my fogged brain couldn't focus on anything other than drinking coffee, sleeping, crying, petting my dogs and spending time with my son, Justin. Though he is old enough not to have to do it, Justin normally divided his time between his father's nearby house and mine. However, those first 21 days, he rarely left my side. When he left

for a pre-planned, 3-week trip to Japan, I was left to confront the new and unwelcome reality that was my life. That time is fuzzy, I'll admit. I don't recall how long that cloud of confusion reigned on my mind, but somehow I understood it to be a normal albeit irritating reaction to the shock that I was just going to have to withstand until it dissipated on its own.

By press time for this issue of the ASJA magazine, the first anniversary of Brad's passing has come and gone. I will have driven the two hours each way to visit his grave for the third time since he died. I will have awakened many more mornings knowing my most fervent cheerleader was not present on the sidelines. But, I haven't and won't give up. Not on writing. Not on thinking positive. Not on life, and not on myself.

That attitude of survival, of literally not giving up no matter the odds stacked against me, is how I have persevered in my freelance writing career. As writers, we face rejection, criticism, self-doubt and more. However, for me, surviving a setback doesn't just mean I opened my eyes the next day. It means addressing life and then living it on my own terms.

One way I do that is by putting myself in daunting situations, like continuing to take improv comedy classes. Brad had gifted me with a six-week introductory course for my birthday in January 2019, with classes beginning that April. I only missed one class after he died, and that absence was pre-planned as I was in New York at ASJA. I have continued with improv, in small part because it was Brad who initiated it. But the main reason is that I enjoy it. I will not quit improv despite its direct link to Brad. I will not let the sadness I sometimes feel about him not being around overtake and poison my attitude and life.

I will not give in to despair. The coronavirus is rampaging the world as I write this, and as tenuous and frightening as everyday life has temporarily become, I fervently believe a positive attitude is imperative for survival. As a parent, a friend, a human and as a writer.

I readily admit I'm not the most eloquent wordsmith, the best educated or the most knowledgeable about grammar. But what I am is a steel rod of strength and positivity. A steel rod might bend due to outside forces, but it does not break. It will not disintegrate, no matter the weight of the challenges it faces.

My advice to others facing adversity, whether at home, work or play? Be a steel rod. Stand up straight. Be upfront, yet tactful and compassionate. Be kind but not a doormat. Love yourself enough to treat yourself well while remembering we do not live in a vacuum. The indiscriminate spread of COVID-19 is proof of that.

Live with integrity, positivity and joy, even when there doesn't seem to be a single reason to do so.

Because the truth is, there is.

» Tami Kamin Meyer is an award-winning Haiku poet and an oft-published freelance writer for magazines, newspapers and web sites. Her byline has appeared in publications such as *Forbes*, *MarketWatch*, *Next Avenue*, *Your Teen*, *Ohio Magazine*, *Columbus CEO* and *Columbus Monthly*. She is also a personal bankruptcy attorney in Ohio and volunteers for the Columbus Legal Aid Society. Kamin Meyer, the mother of two adult sons, one a journalist and the other an aspiring writer still in college, is the Chair of ASJA's Social Media Committee. She tweets as @girlwithapen.

ASJA MAGAZINE

American Society of Journalists and Authors
355 Lexington Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10017

PERIODICALS

Putting on an in-person annual conference is no small feat. Having to cancel that conference can feel so disappointing.

Thank you to our conference leaders for their long-term planning and quick-footed transition to a virtual conference:

Randy Dotinga and Kristine Hansen,
conference co-chairs

Jeanette Hurt and Erin O'Donnell,
Client Connections co-chairs

*Thank you also to Kellen staff,
as well as the many volunteers
who prepared panels, pitch
slams and masterminds.*



SEE YOU IN NEW YORK IN SPRING 2021!



WWW.ASJA.ORG