

Spring Forward



SPRING 2023

02

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

ASJA MAGAZINE

TAKING KEY
STEPS TOWARD
PROGRESS IN
YOUR CAREER





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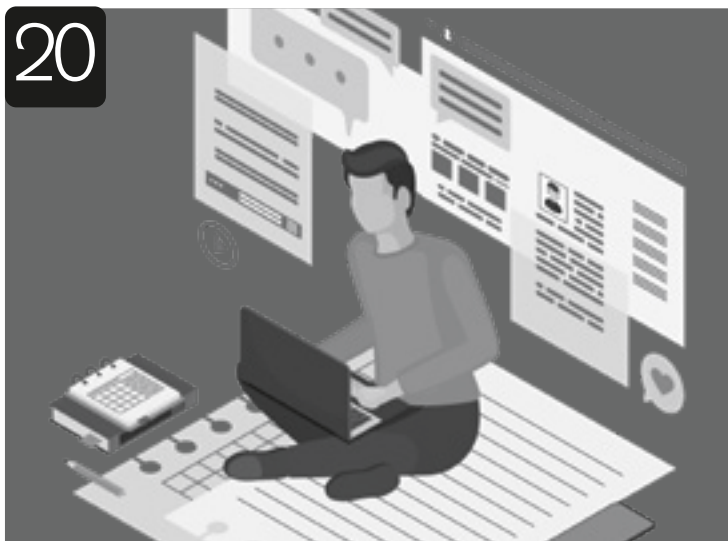
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ASJA MAGAZINE

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of the American Society of
Journalists and Authors*

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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 brings 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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*Freelance Writer
and ASJA President*



From the President's Desk

ASJA'S ROLE IN CREATING A STRONGER, MORE DIVERSE FREELANCE COMMUNITY

Our economy has been dancing on the edges of recession for a while now. One leading indicator drops while another rises, resulting in a two-step that stays just clear of fulfilling the official definition while still clearly affecting certain sectors of the economy—and the workforce. We could even be in a recession now and not know it yet.

What does this mean for professional freelance writing?

Some say that recession is good for freelancers because publications and organizations that have cut their workforce will hire freelancers to fill in essential gaps. On the other hand, recession also can force clients to cut freelance budgets and pull back on new projects. What happens to you and your business comes down in part to luck of the draw, for sure. But that's not all there is to it.

Those of us who have been freelancing for a while have the choreography down. We learn to ride the waves and weather the droughts of this business. We do this by diversifying our services and our client lists, by keeping up with marketing efforts even when we're busy, by staying involved

in our professional organizations, and by learning from—and sharing—hard lessons along the way.

I remember back in 2008, I was riding fine as the recession started. I had two long-term contracts that were keeping me more than busy. I was working evenings and weekends to meet my deadlines. I put marketing efforts aside: Why try to drum up new work when I'm drowning in what I have?

Then, in one week, both contracts abruptly canceled. I went from full-tilt boogie to alone on the dance floor.

But not for long. As a seasoned freelancer and a long-time ASJA member, I knew my next moves. I alerted my network of colleagues, I attended the ASJA conference and signed up for Client Connections, and I contacted editors I hadn't heard from in a

while. Within a few months, I was back to a full dance card, with a more varied client list that included publications, government agencies, and nonprofits.

That's the power of ASJA.

I was talking to Sandi Schwartz the other day. She's an award-winning author who joined ASJA in 2019, just before the pandemic. She explained that when she was focused on writing about parenting, she joined the Parenting Journalists Society. Then, when she was writing and marketing her book, *Finding Ecohappiness*, about the mental health benefits of nature, she joined the Nonfiction Authors Association. Then she learned about ASJA from long-time member Estelle Erasmus. As an ASJA member, Schwartz has access to resources that fulfill her needs, no matter what her current mix of projects.

"ASJA has filled the need for all the buckets of my writing business: being an author, content marketing [writer], and journalist. No other organization fills that need. Now that my book is launched, I primarily focus on journalism and content marketing tips and resources that ASJA offers," she told me.

That sounds like the best preparation for whatever comes next, whether we dance into a recession or continue to skirt the edges.

STEPHANIE
VOZZA*Freelance Writer
and ASJA Editor*

CHILDHOOD DREAMS

I have a confession to make: I became a writer by default. While growing up, what I really dreamed of becoming was a pharmacist. As a child, my sister had severe asthma. It seemed like we were always going to the neighborhood drug store. I idolized the pharmacist who dispensed medicine from behind a big counter that was a few steps higher than the rest of the store. He was kind, smart, and he had just what we needed to help my sister breathe easier.

When I went off to college, I was a pre-pharmacy major. My first year in school was a struggle, filled with biology, chemistry, and math. My parents were happy with my career choice, and I was determined to make them proud.

Then a mid-week concert during my sophomore year changed everything. I decided to go with friends to see the band the Romantics play at a local venue instead of studying for a calculus exam. Not surprisingly, I failed the test, scoring a 20 percent. My professor took me aside and told me to drop the class because there was no way I could pass.

Sitting in the registrar's office, I started to rethink my major. The only course I was doing well in was Creative Writing. I had taken it to check the box for an English requirement, but it filled more than just three credits. It was the only class I looked forward to and the only one where I felt at home. When it was my turn to talk to the registrar, I made an impulsive decision. I not only dropped calculus; I changed my major from pre-pharmacy to communications.

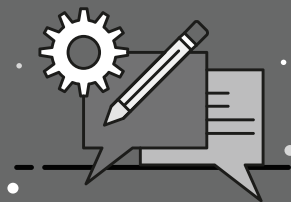
Let's just say my parents were not amused. My mother took every opportunity she could find to tell me that I'd never get a job and I'd never make any money. Writers were starving, and (perhaps her biggest fear) they lived in their parents' basement. The world doesn't need more writers; it needs pharmacists. My dad wasn't quite as vocal with his disappointment, but he started talking about the women

engineers he worked with and how they drove nice cars. While a red convertible did sound enticing, I stuck to my guns and graduated with a degree in communications with an emphasis in advertising.

Right out of college, I was hired by a large Detroit ad agency where I worked in the custom publishing department. We created magazines for brands that included Century 21, PGA, NBA, and Friskies Cat Food. I was an assistant in the circulation department, hoping to eventually work my way into other areas of the agency. My goal was to be a copywriter, and I had visions of sitting around a big table with a creative team, brainstorming clever ads that made people buy things.

Instead, I stayed in the custom publishing department (today known as content marketing), moving from circulation to editorial. My career grew organically, driven mainly by networking with other writers. Today I primarily write about business, in both journalism and content marketing.

I love what I do and cannot imagine what would have happened if I had followed my childhood dream. Fortunately, my mom's predictions about my fate were wrong, and my parents eventually got over their dismay at my career pivot, proudly telling people their daughter is a writer. Life has a funny way of working out. Did you always want to be a writer?



NEW ASJA MEMBERS!

APRIL 2023

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ASJA >>>> Membership Benefits

Often Forgotten Membership Benefits

Did you remember that ASJA provides membership benefits that go beyond this magazine, the annual conference and Client Connections, Pitch Slams and Special Interest Group (SIG) events?

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

>> Some benefits you may not have
taken advantage of lately include: <<



Delta Airlines

Special discounted airfare
for ASJA members traveling
across the world, up to
10% of the fare.



Avis Car Rental

A corporate discount
program for ASJA
members to enjoy
low rates.



MEMBER NEWS

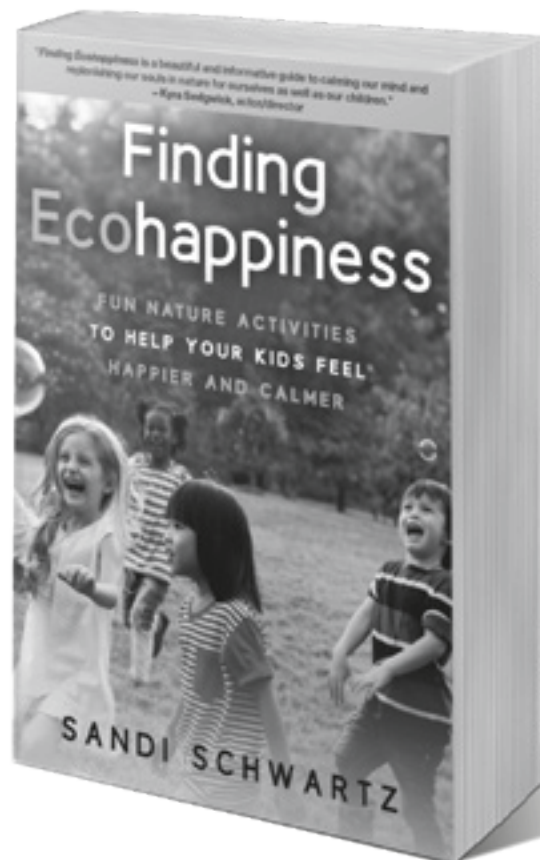
»»»» Book News



Vince Guerrieri's third book, *Weird Moments in Cleveland Sports: Bottlegate, Bedbugs, and Burying the Pennant*, was released by Gray Publishing on November 1, 2022. The book is an offbeat collection of stories about some of Cleveland sports' most infamous moments.



Kaitlyn Wells' debut picture book, *A Family Looks Like Love* (Penguin Random House), was published May 2022. It explores her painful childhood experiences growing up Black biracial in Texas, but from the perspective of her dog, Sutton, who inspired the story. The heartening story reminds all that love is what makes a family. It's been awarded the Outstanding Book Award 2022 by the National Association of Black Journalists and received a recommended rating by the Children's Book Council.



Sandi Schwartz's book *Finding Ecohappiness: Fun Nature Activities to Help Your Kids Feel Happier and Calmer* was honored with a GOLD award by the Nonfiction Book Awards, via the Nonfiction Authors Association. The book focuses on the science-backed mental health benefits of connecting with nature, exploring topics including awe and gratitude, mindfulness, creative arts, outdoor play, travel and adventure, volunteering, food, and animals.



Parul Kapur Hinzen's debut novel, *Inside the Mirror*, about twin sister artists in 1950s Bombay has won the 2022 Association of Writers and Writing Programs Prize for the Novel, judged by Brandon Hobson, and will be published next year by the University of Nebraska Press. The novel was inspired by her arts reporting as a young journalist with *Bombay: The City Magazine*.

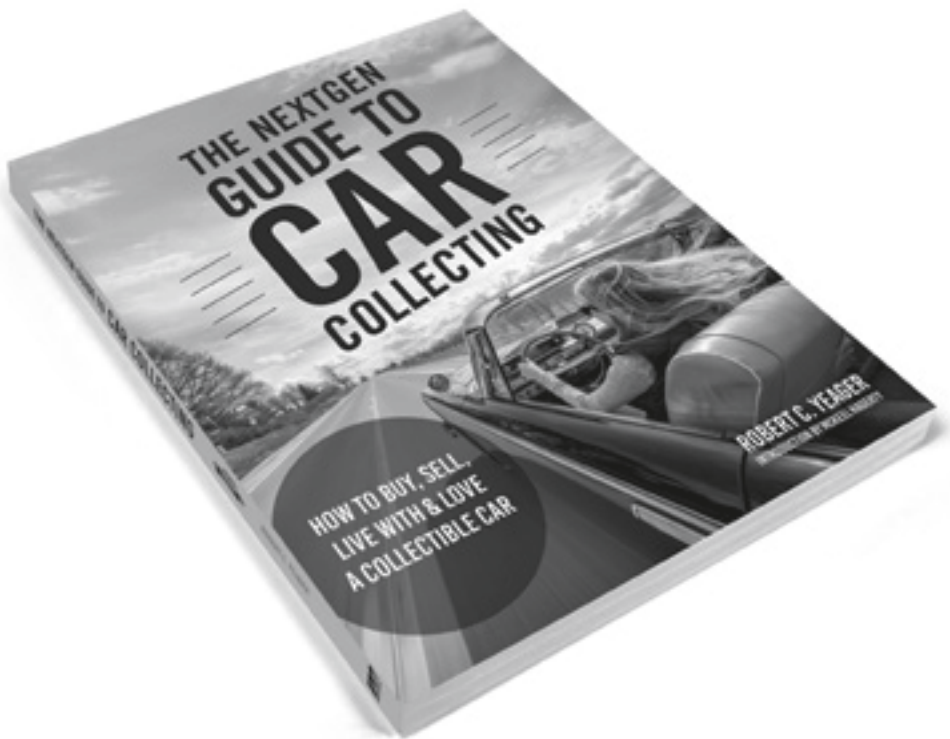


John Egan's book *The Stripped-Down Guide to Content Marketing: Success Secrets for Beginners* was released November 9, 2022, by Hawk Star Press. The book provides the essentials for creating high-quality content that grows a business, including content marketing campaigns to emulate and content marketing campaigns to avoid.



White Flag, **Judy L. Mandel's** second book, explores the ramifications of transgenerational trauma as well as the complexities of substance use disorder (SUD). Her investigational memoir seeks answers to questions about why a loved one has SUD, why they couldn't stop, and what can be done. A personal story with wide ranging meaning for anyone touched by this epidemic.

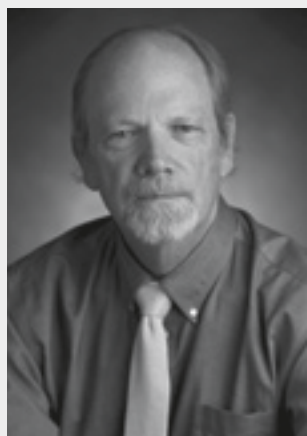
After a year of hard work and more than a decade of reporting on collectible cars for *The New York Times*, **Robert Yeager's** book *The NextGen Guide to Car Collecting* was published on December 6, 2022, by Quarto/Motorbooks. Yeager says the book was an outgrowth of his many articles for the *Times* as well as his lifelong enthusiasm for automobiles. The volume is stuffed with photographs and includes chapters on history, investing, the exploding internet marketplace, the growing interest of women in enthusiast cars and motorsports, the Deming quality movement, and buying and selling tips. The final chapter includes verbatim interviews with two globally prominent father-son teams: Bruce and Spencer Trenery, owners of Fantasy Junction, the Emeryville, Calif., classic car dealership; and Patrick and Tazio Ottis, internationally known restorers of vintage Ferraris, Alfa Romeos, et al. McKeel Hagerty, CEO of the world's largest insurer of classic and specialty vehicles, wrote the introduction.



Gene Meyer recently published *Hidden Maryland: In Search of America in Miniature*, a collection of 50 award-winning features, columns, and profiles written for *Maryland Life* magazine from 2005 to 2013, with updates and images. Tour the USA—in Maryland! This oddly-configured state—the ninth smallest—has it all. Meyer has spent decades exploring its hidden nooks and crannies, meeting people, and finding places not on any traditional tour map.



»»»» Activities, Awards and Accolades



Milt Toby's "Forging Its Own Path" was named the Best Magazine Article at the 2022 EQUUS Film and Arts Fest on December 4, 2022. The article compared penalty provisions for the use of performance-enhancing drugs in Thoroughbred racing with procedures used in human athletics for prohibited medications. The winning article appeared in the August issue of *Blood Horse* magazine and was adapted from Milt's upcoming book, *Unnatural Ability: The History of Performance-Enhancing Drugs in Thoroughbred Racing*.



Ann Hoffner has been named a contributing editor by *Ocean Navigator* magazine. "There is no party or press event to mark the occasion — or even a raise, unfortunately," says editor Tim Queeney. "Just a hearty thanks for all the work she's contributed over the years."



Estelle Erasmus and Sherry Paprocki launched the soundbite-filled *Freelance Writing Direct Podcast*, covering tips, tricks, craft, and strategies a writer needs to know to move forward in their creativity and career. They share how the sauce is made, feature lots of fun interviews and advice from authors and writers, break down pitches and essays, plus provide insight from their combined 45+ years of experience as editors, writers, authors, and speakers. Find it on iTunes and Spotify.



L. M. Archer interviews Gotham Ghostwriters members about their new books for her monthly series "GG Craft Interviews." Author interviews include *New Yorker* cartoonist Bob Eckstein about his humor book *The Complete Book of Cat Names (That Your Cat Won't Answer to, Anyway)*, Raina Lipsitz about her timely *The Rise of a New Left*, Kate Rounds about her debut novel, *Catboat Road*, and writer David Tabatsky about the Holocaust-inspired *The Boy Behind the Door*, and novel *Filthy Rich Lawyers*.



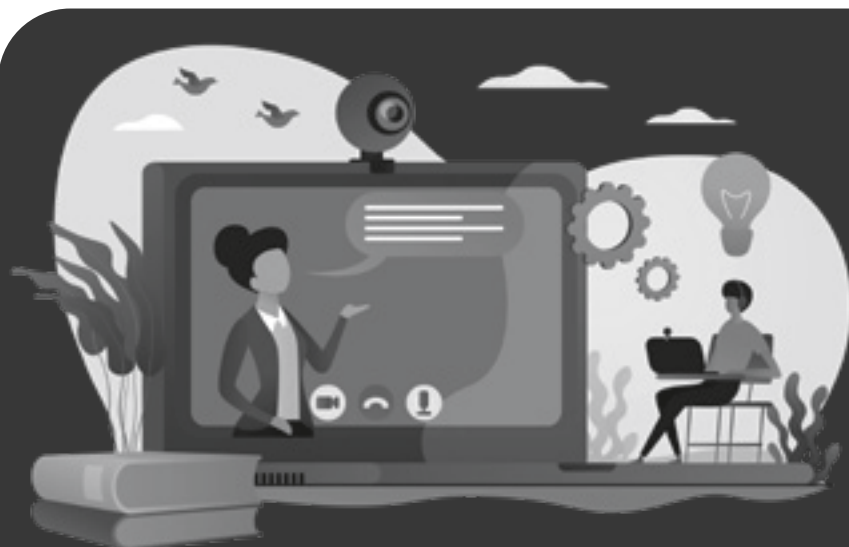
An article **Lisa Rabasca Roepe** wrote for *The New York Times*, "Millennials Want to Retire at 50. How to Afford it is Another Matter," appeared at the top of the homepage the morning of September 24, 2022 and was a LinkedIn Trending topic. She was also interviewed about the article on SiriusXM's The Perri Peltz Show.



Christine Heinrichs has been writing about the Piedras Blancas, California, northern elephant seal colony since 2011, when she won a Ten Spurs award for her account of the federal investigation of the shooting of three seals as they slept on the beach. The local newspaper editor invited her to write the monthly column in 2014. During the summer of 2022, transient orcas were recorded in the area, focusing attention on what researchers call the seals' "lightscape of fear."



Emily Paulsen won a 2022 Gold International MarCom award for writing for a white paper on *Telehealth and Health Care Access: Fulfilling the Promise* (client: URAC). This is a follow-up to the Platinum award for writing she won in 2021.



Have you heard about the ASJA Virtual Education Committee?

We're a small, but very active team passionate about bringing learning opportunities to the ASJA community. To date, we've organized a dozen webinars and masterminds covering anything from how to deliver a cracking TED talk, how to expand your business through coaching and podcasting to the latest news on the PRO Act and book publishing.

Some other topics you can expect to learn about:

- How to write standout reported essays
- Business tools for freelancers
- Diversifying your income streams
- Negotiating contracts and pay



If any of this sounds like it might interest you or another awesome freelancer you know, please head to our Webinars page to see upcoming and past events!



>>>>>>>

PAYCHECK

CONFIDENTIAL

Category: Book

Scope of work: 1,000 words

Total fee: \$175 per hour

Rating: 10

Ghostwriting pop culture pieces of approximately 1,000 words for a book. Author wasn't clear on aspects of the work, such as the voice and how much research should be done by him vs. me, but he had excellent communication with me. Some pieces took 90 minutes, some 3 1/2 hours—the author had no complaints about paying for the actual hours worked.

PENGUIN

Category: Book

Scope of work: Developmental editing

Total fee: \$8,500

Rating: 8

Developmental editing on a tight deadline for two projects, one on liver health (95,000 words) and one on psychiatry/antidepressants (65,000 words). I did some line editing where the writing was very weak. As is common for a big-five publisher, they're not used to paying quickly, so in both cases, I actually completed the project just as the first "on signing" payment arrived in my bank account. Editor was lovely to work with. Took me 23.5 hours total for the \$5,000 project (95,000 words), 18.5 for the \$3,500 project (65,000 words).

THE WASHINGTON POST

Category: Article

Scope of work: 2,100 words

Total fee: \$1,500

Rating: 8

BIRDING MAGAZINE

Category: Article (print)

Scope of work: 3,200 words

Total fee: \$200

Rating: 4

I have wanted to write for *Birding* for most of my career, even knowing that their pay rate is miniscule. Writing for this publication helps me establish a platform in the birder market, as members read it cover to cover. The editor gave me fairly free rein, made a few very intelligent edits, and used my husband's photos with the piece at \$30 each, which helped justify the time and effort required. Getting paid, however, took more than seven months after delivery and four months after publication. First the editor did not submit the required paperwork to accounts payable for two months; then the payables person said she only writes checks on one day per month, so another month passed. After that, the check got lost in the mail and had to be reissued. I finally received two handwritten checks—one for my

husband, one for me—130 days after publication. While I know I will write for this pub again, I would not recommend it to anyone who relies on magazine work for their income.

WEILL CORNELL

Category: Article (online)

Scope of work: 654 words

Total fee: \$1 per word

Rating: 8

I got this client from Client Connections at the conference. It was a news story on research about to publish, one interview. These are quick-turn assignments, about a week or so from assignment to draft. It was assigned at \$500, and I turned in a bit more than that. I didn't realize they pay based on final word count, which worked in my favor. With edits it came to 654 words, and I needed that word count to invoice. Payment took 6 weeks, instead of 4. The editor looked into it for me and said the first payment takes a bit longer since I'm new to the system. They haven't assigned anything else yet, but I would work with them again.

ASJA
EVENTS
CALENDAR 2023

*Virtual Pitch Slam
and Virtual Client
Connections*

Check the ASJA website
for the latest dates.

CONFIDENTIAL

Category: Podcast and TV series

Scope of work: 1,800 words

Total fee: Mid six-figures

Rating: 10

This is the renewal of an 18-month performance rights option on an article I published in 2018. I wish I could name the production company, but I can't (yet). The company is developing the story into a podcast and TV series. If an actual production results, the purchase price for rights will be in the mid-six figures. Negotiating work from a performance-rights agent AND a performance-rights attorney has been essential in making this happen.

FORTUNE BRAND STUDIO

Category: Article (online)

Scope of work: 450 words

Total fee: \$850

Rating: 9

Editors are responsive and easy to work with. Most projects are on a pretty quick timeline, but they give you everything you need to get it done. Original contract included indemnification clause, but they removed it. Wish the 45-day payment cycle was quicker!

BUILDING STONE MAGAZINE

Category: Article (print)

Scope of work: 3,892 words

Total fee: \$1 per word

Rating: 10

I wish all magazines were like this. The editor provided complete direction including all of the sources and their contact info, lots of background on the two architectural projects, and all of the photos. I interviewed three people for each piece, wrote drafts and submitted them. The editor made a few minor edits and asked me for an invoice. Five days after emailing the invoice, I got a check. I look forward to writing for this pub again.



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

BRAND

Category: Website copy

Scope of work: 2,000 words

Total fee: \$3,000

Rating: 7

This website was for an early- to mid-stage business start-up, which is not my usual focus. However, my favorite designer won this client, and I was glad to help out. It's a nice addition to my portfolio. Since the clients are entrepreneurs, there was a lot of back and forth with both copy and design, but I think all parties ended up satisfied.

MINNESOTA MONTHLY

Category: Article (print)

Scope of work: NA

Total fee: \$500

Rating: 9

There was no contract beyond the assigning email. Editor Amy Nelson was easy to work with and edited with a light touch.

WEBMD

Category: Article (online)

Scope of work: NA

Total fee: \$500

Rating: 5

Payment was low for the amount of work required, but I'm proud of the article, so that counts for something. The format they use for submitting the articles is a little cumbersome and the invoicing takes a bit, too. (I unknowingly skipped a step, and my invoice didn't go through the first time.) I will carefully consider future assignments from this client to make sure the ROI works out in my favor.

ONCOLOGY LIVE MAGAZINE

Category: Article (print)

Scope of work: 2,399 words

Total fee: \$1,800

Rating: 8

MEDSCAPE

Category: Article (online)

Scope of work: 1,000 words

Total fee: \$1,000

Rating: 9

MEET MONARCH (PUBLISHED BY SIMPLE PRACTICE)

Category: Content marketing

Payment: \$500

Scope: 1,200-1,800 words

Rating: 6

The editors seem a little green and disorganized but the assignment itself (based on my pitch) was pretty easy and only required talking to one source (which they provided). We agreed to a deadline and then it took over a week to get a contract, so I pushed back and told them that the previously agreed upon deadline was no longer feasible due to the delay in getting the contract. They seem to work more with therapists than freelance writers (and maybe that's why their freelance processes seemed disorganized), so I probably won't pursue this market further. Although they liked my first piece, they expressed vague interest in the follow-up piece I pitched but never responded one way or another even after I followed up.



PAYCHECK

CONTINUED



Help your fellow members by submitting a paycheck report. Log into the member portal at ASJA.org. Click on the "Members Only" tab and select "Paycheck Report a Payment." Knowledge is power!

HUMANITIES

Category: Article (print)

Scope of work: NA

Total fee: \$450

Rating: 8

Easy editing, prestige for the subject, low pay.

WESTFIELD INSURANCE VIA CONTENTLY

Category: Article (online)

Scope of work: 1,000 words

Total fee: NA

Rating: 5

The work itself was easy. I received 50% immediate payment submitting the draft, and the other 50% immediately after completing revisions. While the research and writing were easy and revisions didn't take too long, the initial editor left 35 comments on a 1,000-word article, many of which were "please change word X to word Y," which she easily could have done herself, even if she just noted that she was making the change to make me aware. She asked for Twitter hashtags

in edits, which I can provide, but they should have been determined by the SEO team ahead of time to benefit the campaign. And she asked me to change some phrases to passive, which I did, but then the assigning editor reminded me not to write in passive voice, even though the only passive voice was what the initial editor asked for. I was going to withdraw from future assignments, but the assigning editor agreed to take over editing. I just turned in a draft for another story and the editing was better.

ONECARE MEDIA

Category: Content marketing

Payment: \$1,000

Scope: 1,000 words

Rating: 4

The pay is good, but the process can be frustrating. They pay via Bill.com, but because I have a common name, AP didn't double-check who they were paying and initially paid the wrong person. They insisted it was an issue with my bank account. Finally,

after many stressful email exchanges, I convinced them that they hadn't paid me and it wasn't something I could fix. Payment was about 6 weeks later than it should have been. I suspect that was an outlier, but the writing and editing process is also cumbersome. They send a lengthy Google Doc with suggested sources, links to research, keywords to include, etc. I appreciate getting detailed instructions, but frankly, the number of things they want mentioned in a 1,000-word article is a lot. I felt like I could either fit the word count and gloss over 1-2 concepts they wanted included or thoroughly address everything but go 400 words over. Then, during the revision process, the editor revoked my access to the Google Doc (which she'd created so she could do that) but continued sending me questions like "where'd you get this stat?" or "did you double-check this person's title?" I didn't realize I was going to lose access, so I hadn't saved my article as a Word doc. Being able to read the draft would've made it easier to answer questions.

Are you taking advantage of all ASJA has to read?

Did you know that ASJA has three membership publications? Each provides a slightly different reading pleasure.

➤ **ASJA Magazine, our official publication**

Members repeatedly tell us that the magazine you're holding is one of their top benefits. It's typically filled with industry news, service articles, market reports, and tools and tricks of the trade to interest journalists, authors, and content marketing writers. The editor is Stephanie Vozza.

➤ **ASJA Confidential, the blog**

ASJA Confidential, the blog on our new website, is found after you log in under resources. It contains interesting news, events, and takes from ASJA board members, committee chairs, and others. The editor is Fiona Young-Brown.

➤ **ASJA Weekly, the email newsletter**

ASJA Weekly is our email newsletter distributed to all members and archived on the website under the resources tab in case you miss an issue. Every Tuesday you'll find editor Holly Leber Simmons waxing poetic on some aspect of the freelance writing journey as well as upcoming events, sign-ups and registration information, volunteer opportunities, and member news.



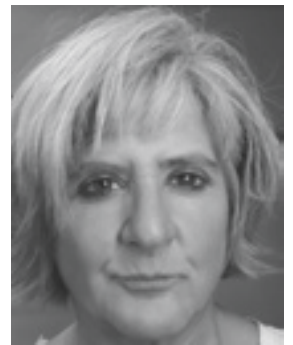
You're never out of the loop when you read ASJA publications.





Clearing Clutter Forges SPACE FOR CREATIVITY

“Clutter is an overabundance of possessions that create chaos and disorderly living spaces,” says Deacon Joseph Ferrari, professor of psychology at DePaul University. He disagrees with Marie Kondo’s philosophy that keeping items that spark joy when touched is the path to rooting out clutter. “Joy is a deep emotion, but it sells books,” he says, arguing that beliefs like Kondo’s are “not supported by research. ‘Joy’ is a mood and is temporary.”



TAMI KAMIN MEYER

Freelance Writer



Clutter and Focus

Phoenix-based freelance writer Amy Suto knows all about how clutter impacts focus. “I was a pack rat,” she admits. But no more. Today, Suto is a self-described digital nomad. Since March 2022, she has traveled to Portugal, Italy, Budapest, and Prague, to name a few. She maintains her busy freelance writing career wherever she finds herself, but her possessions had to go to achieve this lifestyle.

She says she thought some clutter was essential, like pens, sticky notes, and the like. Then she realized they were not essential at all. As she rid herself of nearly all her personal belongings, Suto says she likened clutter to a “manifestation of things we’re putting off. It is the ornaments of décor and things on our to-do list that prevent us from thinking clearly.”

Ferrari, who researches clutter and its impact on people, says excess clutter can lead to emotional exhaustion, stress, and burnout. “There is a positive correlation between clutter and mental stress,” he says. In 2021, Ferrari published two studies on clutter and its impact on workers. One, “Office Clutter: Comparing Lower and Upper-Level Employees in Work-related Criteria,” surveyed 202 office workers about various work-related matters. One of its findings revealed that clutter affected higher-level staffers more than lower-level ones. Higher-level staffers were also closer to burnout and reported less job satisfaction than their underlings.

The workplace clutter people complained about the most were paper, trash (such as used coffee cups), and office supplies. According to Ferrari, home-based workers said their most bothersome clutter was the stuff in closets and kitchens and on bookshelves. His research found men and women collect clutter equally; however, women are more likely than men to admit to it and seek help to overcome it.

Can Clutter Be Cured?

In Ferrari’s mind, living in clutter is a state of mind that can be overcome. To that end, he urges people to “hold onto relationships, not relics.” Further, he suggests decluttering by throwing things away or even recycling them after organizing them. Create piles, if necessary, but maintain them in a systematic order. “Hold on to the memories, not the materials,” he says.

Some de-clutterers donate unwanted belongings to charities like Goodwill. While not dismissing the vital work of non-profits, Ferrari suggests people also consider giving their excess possessions to people who have lost everything due to a tragedy such as a house fire.

A quick check on Craigslist or a similar platform might lead donors to someone who needs exactly what they don’t.

Clutter and hoarding are not synonymous. Hoarding is a psychological condition listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, while cluttering is not. “Hoarding is vertical, meaning lots of the same items over and over. Clutter is horizontal. It is just a breadth and overabundance of stuff,” Ferrari says.



In Ferrari’s mind, living in clutter is a state of mind that can be overcome. To that end, he urges people to “hold onto relationships, not relics.”

Clutter Has Side Effects

Some people are not impacted by living and working in a cluttered space. However, the majority of clutterers do feel its effect; for example, Ferrari says clutter causes people to waste money buying duplicates of items they already own but can't find. That's not the only cost: Ferrari says the average American home contains more than \$3,000 in old, unusable electronics and \$7,000 in unused stuff.

Clutter also impacts the livability or usability of space. Such a scenario can cause distress. Ferrari suggests people ask themselves if the state of their living or work environment upsets or triggers them in any way. If so, the clutter leads to emotional and or physical despair.

Clutter can also impact relationships, says Ferrari, because it can lead to arguments, misunderstandings, blaming, and more.

The psychological effects of clutter can include:

- Low psychological well-being (the more clutter a person has, the less well-adjusted they tend to be)
- The stereotyping of women as clutterers, while society attributes male clutter as being "toys"
- Mood disorders (clutterers tend to be more depressed and feel more negative emotions than non-clutterers)
- Lower quality of life when living or working among clutter

Tools That Can help Writers Create Less Clutter

After selling nearly everything she owned, Suto created a strategy to prevent clutter from recurring. For one, she has gone paperless and encourages other writers to do so. "If you digitize, it's at your fingertips," she says.

She relies on two main tools to maintain her digital nomad lifestyle:

- **Otter.ai:** This tool transforms voice memos to written transcripts. Suto records telephone interviews, downloads the recordings, and then copies and pastes the content. While the free option has benefits, the paid version offers more services.
- **A reMarkable E ink writing tablet** for reading documents and textbooks, sketching, and notetaking to replicate the experience of writing on paper as much as possible. "It's worth the money," she says.

"Anything else is too much and just for the bells and whistles," she says, noting that most documents can be signed digitally, and banking can be done online.

Tami Kamin Meyer has been a practicing Ohio attorney since 1992, and a freelance writer and editor for longer. She served as Marketing Chair of ASJA for three of her six years of membership. Her byline has appeared in *U.S. News & World Report*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Bankrate.com*, *Next Avenue*, *Parents.com*, *Legalzoom*, and *Healthcare Services Investment News*, to name a few. She has been the editor of *Write Now Columbus*, a monthly e-newsletter focused on the burgeoning literary scene in Columbus, since 2020. That same year, she was named to her second stint on the Board of Editors of the Columbus Bar Association. Tami is an avid recreational kayaker, the happy "dog-ma" to three rescues, and the proud mom to two adult sons, both journalists.



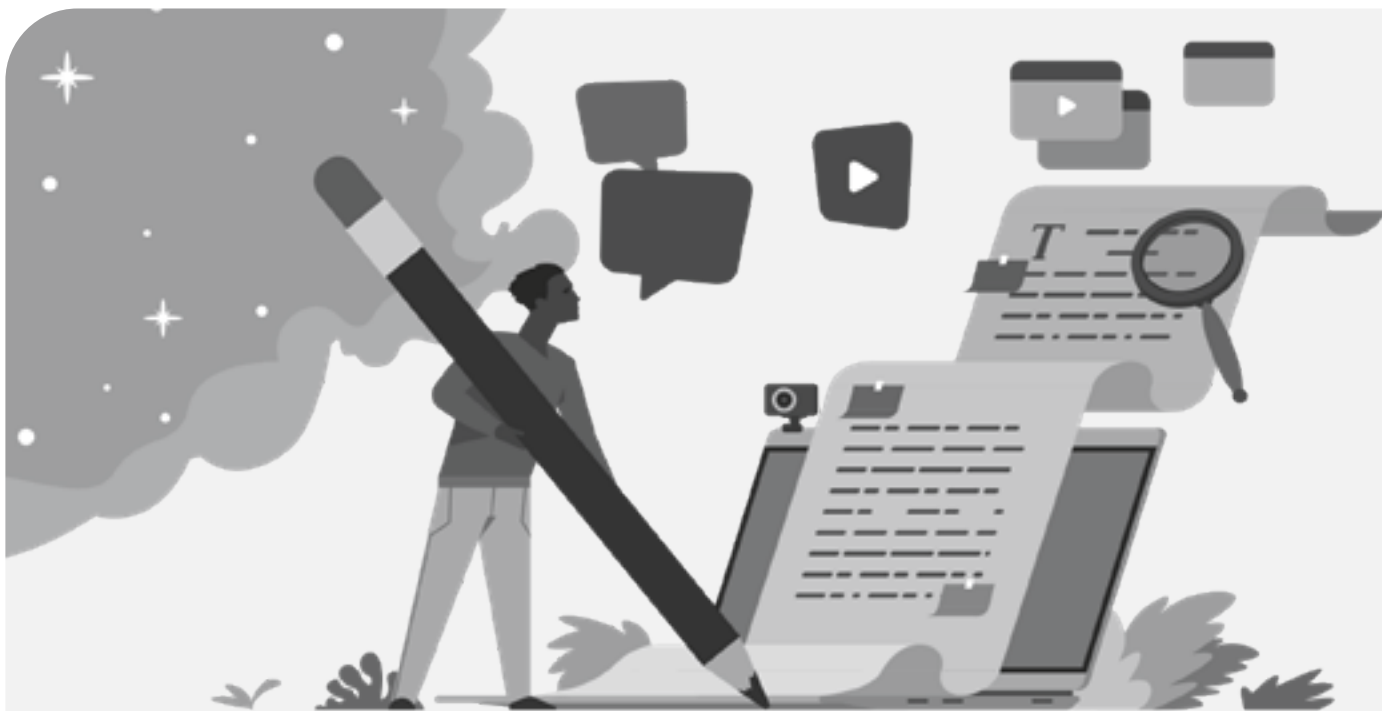
5

TIPS FOR CREATING GREAT CONTENT

from a Journalist-Turned-Marketer







SUSAN MANGIERO

Freelance Writer

Susan Mangiero, CFA, MFA, MBA, Ph.D., is a freelance content marketer and ghostwriter with a focus on financial services, financial technology, insurance, and education. Her MFA in Creative & Professional Writing thesis examines brand storytelling best practices. Susan draws on her experience as a trader, digital entrepreneur, economist, expert witness, and business school professor to educate, inform, and empower audiences to make better decisions. She is on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/smangiero>.

People like to buy from someone they trust, whether it's soap, news, or financial services. No one knows this better than Gavin Daly, a former journalist with bylines in *The Boston Globe*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Hartford Courant*.

Daly, who is senior vice president and head of corporate and digital marketing for Cohen & Steers, uses his newsroom know-how to promote the firm as a specialist investor in real assets and alternative income to institutional investors like pension and sovereign wealth funds, family foundations, financial advisors, and individuals.

Thinking like a journalist can help you with your content marketing assignments. Daly shares five tips for creating great content based on his experience as a correspondent.



Good journalists help their audience navigate thorny challenges. Content marketers do the same by sharing straightforward content about the unknown.

Tip > 1

Be Candid

As a marketing executive, Daly acknowledges consumers' skepticism about the information they receive from various sources.

"Trust is low right now," he says. "It is incumbent on brand managers to produce content that addresses economic or other uncertainty while cutting through the noise. Talented content marketers, like talented journalists, shy away from sensational stories crafted just to increase clicks. However, they are open to sharing content authentically about what's really happening. Instead of offering basic information available anywhere, they share unique insights."

Good journalists help their audience navigate thorny challenges. Content marketers do the same by sharing straightforward content about the unknown. Daly cites inflation as an example. Instead of avoiding investors' concerns or continually painting an overly optimistic picture, his team confronts the topic head-on: "We've seen inflationary periods before, and we know how to navigate challenging markets [such as the] recession, inflation, [and] geopolitical risks. These are scary topics, but we can provide actionable insights to our clients on what's happening, why it's happening, and what may be next. Our goal is to help investors make better decisions."





Tip > 2

Make It Local

All news is local. No matter what information someone receives, Daly thinks it's only a matter of time before they ask, "What does this news mean to me?"

People want information they can immediately apply. Daly explains, "People need to know where to put their money, whether they should invest defensively or put money to work, or how to plan for a worst-case scenario. Money is emotional. It is scary to think about the downside, but it is not a topic a financial services marketer can ignore."

Daly makes a point to share content that reflects his clients' concerns. "When someone hears about the pandemic, the war in Russia, inflation, or something as specific as the Inflation Reduction Act, there's an opportunity to give that person an insight on why an event or new development matters to them," he says. "You need to know where your brand can improve the silence or cut through the noise. For us, it's about what these events mean for investors."

Successful marketers understand the power of keeping things local. They strive to make their content personal for both prospects and clients. As Robert Rose, chief strategy advisor for the Content Marketing Institute, says, "When your audience says 'Your content is exactly what I needed' is when you know you've won."

Daly agrees: "The financial professional audience is a busy audience. Given their spending clout, marketers throw a lot of information their way. The decisions our portfolio managers make each day become the insights we can share with our clients. When our clients are informed and can put market developments into context, we win."



Successful marketers understand the power of keeping things local. They strive to make their content personal for both prospects and clients.



Tip > 3

Tell a Story

Words have scant value unless they come together to tell a memorable story about your brand. Savvy journalists convey news through the lens of the main character, someone impacted by a current event or villain.

In his book *Moneyball*, journalist Michael Lewis makes baseball math exciting with his description of Billy Beane, former Oakland Athletics general manager. He does not focus on formulas. He shows the pressure Beane faced for trying a new technique. Malcolm Gladwell captivates readers with his *New Yorker* piece, “The Ketchup Conundrum,” about ketchup and food testing as a culinary adventure, featuring condiment pioneers Jim Wigon and Howard Moskowitz.

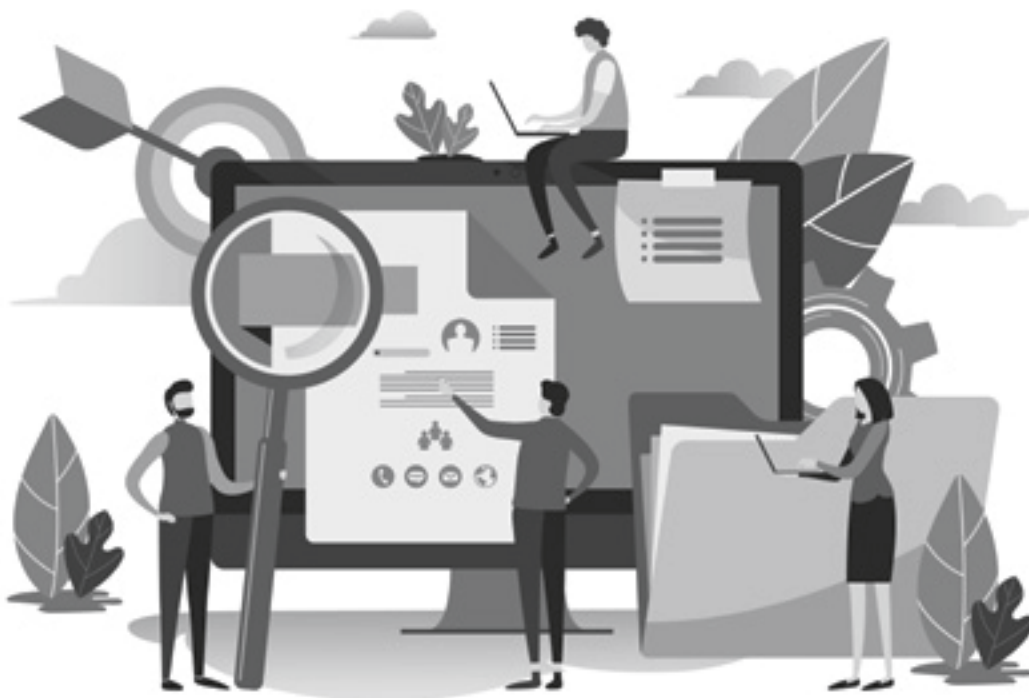
The publications and media organizations that are thriving today – from the *Financial Times* to *The Wall Street Journal* to niche trade publications and small podcasts with a dedicated following – have built brand equity by telling engaging stories.

When asked how his team tells brand stories, Daly points to the library of videos on his company’s website that features brief tutorials about investing. They are part of the firm’s Real Assets Institute. The same holds for an upcoming investor conference his firm is planning for investors, built around the Institute’s messaging and brand.

Daly describes education as vital to brand messaging: “This type of community outreach is another rich source of brand storytelling for our firm. We create content using a conversational tone. Investing is serious business but being serious is not anathema to using plain language. It is about getting our customers to trust us and to know we are here for them for the long haul. Like a weatherman who distills technical information down to basics, we focus on what topics hit home the most with our investors with simple language.”



Savvy journalists convey news through the lens of the main character, someone impacted by a current event or villain.



Tip > 4

Be Curious

The best journalists are intellectually curious and willing to research their topics. Daly says it is the same for content marketers. Good journalists are reporters first who dig for stories and build a network and expertise. They read and watch all they can on the topics about which they're reporting. Content marketers and in-house writers at businesses need to have the same commitment to their "beats."

"Firsthand business experience is a plus but rolling up your shirtsleeves to dig for information is as crucial as ever," Daly says. "Quality takes time and money. It is hard to produce credible content on a shoestring. Brands must allocate appropriate resources to get the content marketing job done well. Absent credible information, everyone suffers when trying to make essential life decisions."

Daly urges content executives to give their editorial teams ample resources to build the content that drives the content marketing engine. "This means giving them the time they need and the access to your internal experts they need," he says. "Expect those editorial teams to dig and do their homework. Compelling content comes from finding a good story thread and following it."



Good journalists are reporters first who dig for stories and build a network and expertise. They read and watch all they can on the topics about which they're reporting.





Tip > 5

Measure Your Content

Audiences have an ever-expanding appetite for content, which is good news for brands. Produce engaging, relevant, and timely content for a receptive audience and watch your revenue rise.

Remember to calculate ROI (return on investment) using appropriate metrics. Content writers should ask their clients for access to this information so they can produce better, more relevant content. Count clickthroughs for whitepapers. Gauge time spent watching videos or listening to podcasts. Check whether any leading industry publications picked up your brand content. Assess whether online seminar attendees asked for product literature after the event.

News companies track their engagement all the time. Content marketers are no different. Performance numbers reflect the quality of content and the distribution method used to deliver your content. As Daly points out, “Good journalism was built on the back of the news carriers on street corners selling papers. Today, content is delivered from email and apps. Push your content out, track your results, learn from the results, and refine. Measure whether your content is generating leads or leading to client retention. Ultimately, your content must add to the bottom line.”

In addition to measuring content performance, Daly recommends “atomizing” content to stretch marketing budgets even further. “You can repurpose content for two or more audiences. You can convert a data table from a survey write-up to a viral infographic. Post call-out quotes from a podcast or website Q&A on social media. Modern technology makes it easy to distribute brand content and enhance the bottom line.”



News companies track their engagement all the time.

Content marketers are no different. Performance numbers reflect the quality of content and the distribution method used to deliver your content.

Embrace the Opportunities

Content marketers are ideally positioned to promote brands. They can hire excellent writers, format content in various ways to suit their audience, and exploit technology at rates that fit most organizations’ budgets. Innovative companies know the power of content marketing and act accordingly.



SURVIVING A SLOWDOWN

Four ASJA Members Share Their Strategies



KATIE NAVARRA

Freelance Writer

Katie Navarra is a freelance content marketing writer for human resource, leadership, education, and equine clients. She is also a certified business and leadership coach based in upstate New York. Her book, *Shoeing the Modern Horse*, was published in November 2022.





Country singer Dierks Bentley might “Settle for a Slowdown” in his hit song, but a slowdown gives writers varying levels of heartburn.

“I panic all the time. I decide I suck, need to get a new career, and am a fraud. It’s totally normal to feel that way, especially if it’s 3 a.m.,” says Jennifer Goforth Gregory, ASJA member and author of *The Freelance Content Marketing Writer*. “You should never make decisions at 3 a.m., but it is OK to feel that way because it drives you to take actions that turn it around.”

Ebbs and flows are part of running any business, but in some cases can be predicted. Radio reporter and podcast host Susan Valot has used Toggl since late 2015 to track hours and noticed that work dips in the summer.



Finding ways to channel anxiety into action can help boost revenue and offer space to recharge or work on passion projects.

"At an old job, we called this the summer doldrums. Even sources seem harder to get ahold of," she says. "If I hadn't been tracking hours, I would have internalized this and worried it was something I was or was not doing. Seeing the pattern over the years makes me feel better and realize that it's not me."

Finding ways to channel anxiety into action can help boost revenue and offer space to recharge or work on passion projects. Four members share their strategies for surviving a slowdown.

Use Accountability Buddies

ASJA member Renée Batchner has also noticed a seasonality to slow times in her journalism and content marketing work. For her, January is a "dead month." She uses a marketing challenge to power through. She frequently finds an accountability buddy and participates in the Freelance Success marketing challenges.

In December 2022, Batchner and fellow ASJA member Lisa Fields agreed to be accountability buddies to power through the last weeks before the holidays. Batchner uses this time to send follow-ups to unanswered pitches and letters of introduction. She also reviews old 1099s and reaches out to past clients.

As a result, she has landed several \$1/word and up assignments from cold pitches—in 2022, that totaled \$13,750. During one Freelance Success marketing challenge, she wrote a cold pitch that landed an anchor client who has paid about \$10,000 a year for the past three years.

"I'm lucky in that I have a lot of self-employed friends from various parts of my life who are occasional procrastinators too, so I rotate buddies a lot," Batchner says. "You have to be a little bit afraid of each other or afraid to look like a slacker."

In the past, she and a friend scheduled Zoom sessions. They shared to-do lists and set a timer to work in 50-minute increments with 10-minute breaks to chat or cover challenges. But she cautions that if you work together for too long you might start having too much fun chatting and not work as much.

Another option Batchner suggests is "Focusmate," a virtual coworking app where strangers meet for focused work time, set session goals, and work quietly via video with accountability check-ins.

"There's an actual term for this, 'body doubling.' It's very helpful for people with ADHD or really for anyone who is just feeling very distracted," she says.

Have a Plan B

When ASJA member Valot hits slow periods, there is a moment of panic that the slump will last forever. Most recently, she learned a sizable long-term project was about to end. Part of her strategy for managing slowdowns is savings. She regularly puts money into a savings account to carry her through an extended tough time, which she says she has been lucky has never happened. But she recognizes not everyone can do the same. Taking on a side hustle or temp position can help—in more ways than one.

"I have a (writer) friend who got a lot of story ideas out of working at a Rite Aid for a Christmas season," she says. "I've never had to do it, but I think some freelancers worry that it's a bad thing to take an unrelated job to get through. My 'backup plan' has always been, 'I can always get a job at Disneyland!' There are benefits to getting out there and seeing the world through a different lens."

She also takes a deep breath and reflects on similar previous experiences. In most cases, every lull has ended with an opportunity, often a better one than before. She also uses slower times to work on other projects.

"Slow times allow space and time for growth, and this will give me a chance to work on a personal project that I've been putting on the back burner," she says.

Reach Out to Writer Friends

Last September, Goforth Gregory had zero work booked for the coming weeks. After a moment of intense panic, she jumped into action. A post on her freelance writing blog entitled "How I Went from a Slow October to a \$27K November" explained her strategies, including asking other writers for help.

"I only reach out to people I have sent work to. If I can't take a job because it is too low paying or not in my niche, I almost always refer it to somebody. When you do that, it's OK to ask," she says. "I also only ask people I have a personal relationship with."

She recently had coffee with another writer who asked, "what kind of referrals are you looking for so that I can keep an eye out for that type of work?" It opened the door for Goforth Gregory to ask her the same.



"Slow times allow space and time for growth, and this will give me a chance to work on a personal project that I've been putting on the back burner."

SUSAN VALOT, ASJA MEMBER





“Helping other writers is more than sending leads. It can also be helping them with brainstorming. Some of the most successful help I’ve gotten is not work, but an idea for a niche, how to get some clips, etc.”

JENNIFER GOFORTH GREGORY,
ASJA MEMBER AND AUTHOR

“What she did was brilliant. I went home and looked for leads and sent her a few. It was a beautiful way to ask for referrals,” she says.

Finding opportunities to share can be as simple as forwarding a LinkedIn post, a Twitter call, an Indeed post, or a lead from Sonia Weiser’s Opportunities of the Week newsletter. The weekly ASJA Virtual Coffee Chat is another way to develop relationships with other writers.

“Helping other writers is more than sending leads. It can also be helping them with brainstorming. Some of the most successful help I’ve gotten is not work, but an idea for a niche, how to get some clips, etc.,” she says. “It could also be helping someone with pricing.”

Finding ideas through learning

Temporarily having less work gives freelance journalist and ASJA member Cheryl Maguire a chance to tackle other writing-related projects. For example, she watches interviews with editors, listens to podcasts, takes classes, and reads about the craft and business of writing.

She finds editor interviews in the *Writer’s Digest* magazine and the Facebook Group UPOD, reads the *ASJA Magazine* and subscribes to newsletters she would like to write for to gather ideas and tips for growth.

“Often during these times, I end up thinking of a pitch,” she says. “Once I watched an editor interview on the ASJA website for HuffPost, thought of a pitch that was accepted

and is the article, ‘The Surprising Reason Why I No Longer Get Angry About My Daughter’s Messy Room.’

There are countless books on writing. Some of Maguire’s favorites include:

- *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer* by Roy Peter Clark
- *The Essential Guide to Freelance Writing: How to Write, Work, and Thrive on Your Own Terms* by Zachary Petit
- *Dreyer’s English: An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style* by Benjamin Dreyer
- *Writing & Selling Short Stories & Personal Essays: The Essential Guide to Getting Your Work Published* by Windy Lynn Harris
- *Why We Write About Ourselves: Twenty Memoirists on Why They Expose Themselves (and Others) in the Name of Literature*, edited by Meredith Maran

“I also use these times to do a humor essay, which doesn’t pay well and is hard to find places to publish, but I enjoy it,” she says.

Settling into a Slowdown

It’s human nature (and totally normal) to feel nervous during a lull in work. Finding the strategies that work for you can help you take action to rebuild the momentum.

5 TYPES OF WRITING GROUPS »

That Can Benefit Your Business

I've been in many different types of writing groups over the years. Being a professional writer can be isolating. Having a group of people you can count on helps you feel less alone and can also help you be more successful in your writing business. A writing group is a community of people who share a common writing profession. Here are some different types of writing groups:



CHERYL MAGUIRE

Freelance Writer

Cheryl Maguire holds a master's degree in counseling psychology. She is married and is the mother of twins and a daughter. Her writing has been published in *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *The Washington Post*, the *Boston Globe*, *Parents* magazine, *AARP*, *Healthline*, *Your Teen Magazine*, and many other publications. She is a professional member of ASJA. You can find her on Twitter @CherylMaguire05.

No >>> 1

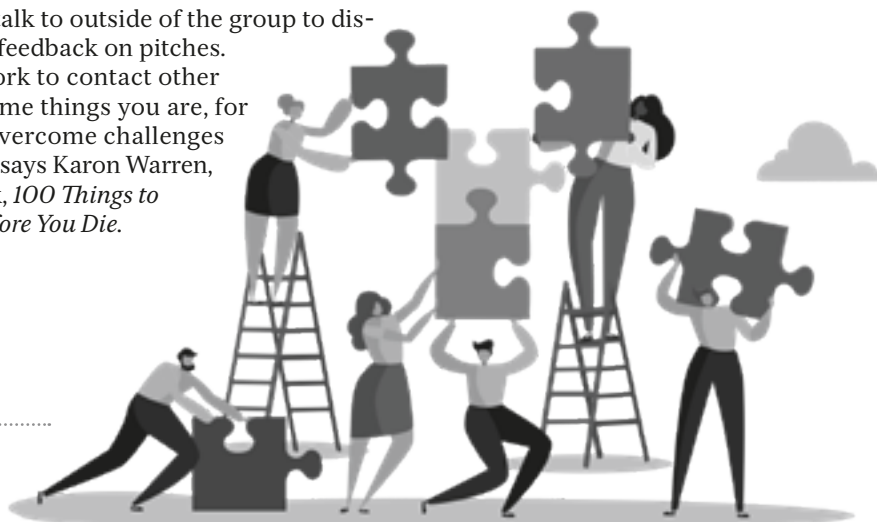
Drop-In Group

A drop-in group sometimes consists of different people, but it regularly meets at the same time and day. Recently ASJA added a drop-in writing group called “Virtual Coffee Chat.” The primary purpose is to share a writing-related struggle and then receive feedback from the other group members. The ASJA group meets every Tuesday at 2:30-3:30 p.m. EST through Google Meet, and any ASJA member can participate.

Another drop-in writing group is called the London Writers’ Meetup. This group meets 2:30-4 p.m. EST on the second Tuesday of every month through Google Meet. Online, the group description states, “This group is a great opportunity to connect with other writers, share writing resources, ask a question, be held accountable, or just chat about your work.”

Benefits: I’ve benefited from ASJA’s Virtual Coffee Chats. I’ve met members whom I have continued to talk to outside of the group to discuss editor information or to receive feedback on pitches.

“To be able to have a writing network to contact other writers that are going through the same things you are, for me has been invaluable to help me overcome challenges and to continue to grow my business,” says Karon Warren, ASJA member and author of the book, *100 Things to Do in the North Georgia Mountains Before You Die*.



No >>> 2

Support/Discussion Group

A support or discussion group usually consists of the same writers (about 5-10 people) who meet regularly to discuss a set agenda. These groups could be in person or online through Zoom or Google Meet. ASJA has specific chapter writing groups that typically meet in person. Warren has been attending the ASJA southeast chapter writing group that meets in person (but met online during the pandemic).

Benefits: Research has shown that support groups can help improve your physical and mental health. “It’s that sense of community with your other freelancers that I find the most valuable for me,” says Warren. “It reminds me that I’m not alone in this.”

Networking with other writers is also a benefit. “When you’re in a writing group, people get to know who you are, your work ethic, your writing style, what your niche is and then they are very often ready to send referrals your way, or refer you to a client that may be looking for the type of writing that you specialize in. And that has been very helpful to grow my business,” says Warren.



It’s that sense of community with your other freelancers that I find the most valuable for me. It reminds me that I’m not alone in this.”

KARON WARREN

ASJA MEMBER
AND AUTHOR

No >>> 3

Challenge Group

A challenge group is typically time-limited and centered on a specific challenge or project. One example is National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo). Each November since 1999, writers try to complete the challenge of writing a 50,000-word novel in 30 days. Another example is The Writer's Games, a six-week short story and poetry competition.

You could also create your own writing challenge group with a specific goal, like submitting one pitch daily for 30 days. I started a challenge like this with another writer. The challenge was that we would submit at least one pitch per week to any section of either *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*. By the end of the month, I finally had my first pitch accepted by the *Post*.

Benefits: This type of group was highly motivating. Since I made an agreement and commitment with another writer, I felt compelled to follow through even if I didn't feel like it. Also, the more I thought of pitches, the easier it became to think of more angles.



No >>> 4

Accountability Group

This type of group usually focuses on creating goals and then following up to see if you worked toward those goals. Recently Pam Moore, a freelance health and fitness writer and intuitive eating coach based in Boulder, Colo., created a type of accountability group I attended in which you spent the first ten minutes discussing your goals in a Zoom meeting. Then for the next two hours, group members left their screens on and worked on the goal they discussed.

Benefits: "If I can do work in a community, then I have a reason that I have to show up because there's no one calling your attention and there's always a million things to do," says Moore. She explains that this type of group holds her accountable to focus on her goals instead of the other "million things" that can easily distract her from her work.

This idea is built on the concept of "body doubling"—a concept from the ADHD community that two people doing the same task helps to anchor them to stay focused. I don't have ADHD, but I found this type of group helpful. There was something comforting about knowing that another person was working simultaneously with me. Being in this group reminded me of when I worked in an office with other people. It helped me to focus on my writing work instead of being distracted by social media or my kids.



If I can do work in a community, then I have a reason that I have to show up because there's no one calling your attention and there's always a million things to do."

PAM MOORE

FREELANCE HEALTH
AND FITNESS WRITER

5

Online Group

This kind of group meets in a private online forum to discuss issues or share their successes, such as where they have been published. Often these writing groups are on Facebook but could be on any online website. Currently, ASJA has a Facebook group of about 600 members, who have asked questions, shared their published work, and reflected on their writing business.

I'm also in many other online writing groups. Two groups that I recommend are UPOD Academy and Parenting Magazine Writers. Anyone can join, and I've improved my writing business by being a member.

Benefits: Lauren Rowello, a freelance journalist, is a member of UPOD Academy, where she met other writers and formed a small writing group. "From a business perspective, I've learned so much, like discussing rates, and how to find ways to self-advocate when it comes to discussing money with editors, or discussing scope and workload if money is lower than expected or lower than

desired, and how to negotiate those terms."

Iyna Caruso, an ASJA member, had a similar experience. "I've learned negotiating strategies that helped me be a better advocate for myself," she says.

Online groups are a great way to network and meet other writers. I've met a lot of other writers this way, and we often direct message each other questions or ask for feedback on pitches or articles.

In the UPOD group, you can also purchase editor interviews. I've done this for several editors and had pitches accepted as a result. Online groups are also a great way to receive a quick re-sponse from a variety of people or share writing tips that you found helpful.

My first paid article resulted directly from being in an online writing group. Through the group, I learned how to pitch and edit, and most importantly, I gained the confidence to submit my first article. I attribute my successful writing career to my various writing groups.



THE COMPANY YOU KEEP

*Some of Our
Most Notable
ASJA Members*



BONNIE REMSBERG

Freelance Writer

Bonnie Remsberg is an award winning writer of books, magazine articles, films, television scripts and plays. She is a career-long member and former board member of ASJA, who was described by the editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal* as "the best ordeal writer in the business." She holds the ASJA Career Achievement Award.

The idea for this piece came to me one evening while watching "60 Minutes." It was a fascinating, well-reported segment on an African American family in the South who had bought an estate to house their reunions. After extensive research, they learned (to their shock) that it was the very place where their ancestors had been kept as slaves.

Asked about previous delving into their ancestry, the central organizer said, "We never looked into any of it until *Roots* was on TV."

I had a lightbulb moment: "Alex Haley wrote the book that spawned that national phenomenon," I said to myself. "Alex Haley was a proud member of ASJA. I'll bet many present ASJA members don't know that."

Just as quickly, another member writer's name popped in: Betty Friedan. Then another: Isaac Asimov. And I was off and running. I'm a very long-time ASJA member and, over the years, I've had the privilege of meeting all three of these writers at ASJA functions. If you didn't know that they are a part of your organization's history, you should.



ALEX HALEY

For many years, Haley served in the U.S. Coast Guard, to (as he was frank to say) “make a living.” To combat the boredom of long months at sea, he wrote. And wrote. Other sailors paid him to write love letters to their girlfriends. (Listen, when you freelance, you write what pays and what you can sell—am I right?) He advanced in the service to Chief Petty Officer, then to a rank created for him and held only by him: Chief Journalist.

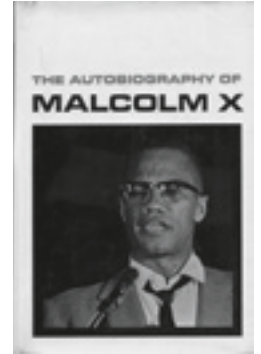
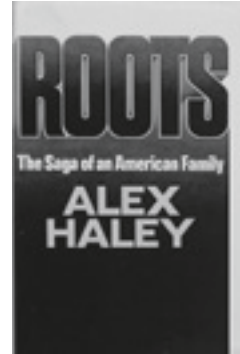
After retiring from the Coast Guard, Haley started on a path many of us have walked—or fallen off of. He wrote for *Reader's Digest*, then, after numerous rejections, he connected with *Playboy* and did *Playboy* interviews. Some of his interviews garnered enormous attention, including Miles Davis, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Quincy Jones, Muhammed Ali, Johnny Carson, Sammy Davis, Jr., and George Lincoln Rockwell. Interestingly, Rockwell was the leader of the American Nazi Party and agreed to the interview only after Haley assured him that he was not Jewish. Still, Rockwell sat for the interview with a loaded gun on the table between them, a scene recreated for the TV version of *Roots*, with James Earl Jones playing Haley and Marlon Brando as Rockwell.

Haley's book, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was named by *Time* magazine as one of the 10 most influential books of the 20th century.

He put 12 years of research into *Roots*, traveling and writing. It was eventually published in 37 languages and, in 1977, Haley was awarded a special Pulitzer Prize. The TV miniseries on ABC reached a record-breaking 130 million viewers. It, along with its sequel, sparked a great, measurable interest among all peoples in genealogy, which is exploding today with technology to which Haley didn't have access.

Every one of us who met Haley at ASJA award ceremonies over the years remembers him as gracious, warm, and charmingly surprised by the massiveness of his success. And, in case you are wondering if he was truly one of us, you should know that he wrote *Roots* on yellow legal pads.

Haley died at 70. In addition to many other memorial tributes over the years, the Coast Guard named a cutter after him. I'm quite sure he would have liked that.



QUOTES BY ALEX HALEY

“In this country, we are young, brash and technologically oriented. We are all trying to build machines so that we can push a button and get things done a millisecond faster. But as a consequence, we are drawing away from one of the most priceless things we have—where we came from and how we got to be where we are. The young are throwing away the older people.”

“I knew I wanted to write. I had dreamed about it for years. I wasn't going to be one of those people who die wondering, ‘What if?’ I would keep putting my dream to the test—even though it meant living with uncertainty and fear of failure. This is the Shadowland of hope, and anyone with a dream must learn to live there.”

“Many a young person tells me he wants to be a writer. I always encourage such people, but I also explain that there's a big difference between ‘being a writer’ and writing. In most cases these individuals are dreaming of wealth and fame, not the long hours alone.... ‘You've got to want to write,’ I say to them, ‘not want to be a writer.’ The reality is that writing is a lonely, private and poor-paying affair. For every writer kissed by fortune, there are thousands more whose longing is never requited. Even those who succeed often know long periods of neglect and poverty. I did.”



BETTY FRIEDAN

When Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963, it arrived into a much different world from the one we live in today. Friedan grew up in Peoria, Ill., where she suffered from anti-Semitism and asthma.

Like many, if not most, females in those days, she went off to college, with the charge to "get your MRS degree" ringing in her ears. She did (in addition to editing the school newspaper). She had a baby and got a reporting job at the union newspaper UE News, from which she was fired for being pregnant with her second child.

Like many of our members, Friedan handled the work-and-family challenges by becoming a freelancer for women's magazines. She joined our organization early and remained active her whole life. I once had the honor to present her with an award and introduced her by saying, "[Betty] has kicked down the doors that so many of us are walking through today." It was, by far, an understatement.

Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* was then, and still is, credited as the founding text of modern feminism. She is named on nearly every list as leader of the Second Wave, following the brave souls who took on votes for women. Friedan did far more than write about the subject. She co-founded the National Organization for Women and was its first president. She fought (oh, how she fought) to abolish gender stereotypes that were confining so many women in so many ways. She pushed non-stop for women to have equal pay for equal work, to end sexual harassment in the workplace, and to legalize abortion.

Friedan was known deep within ASJA for her anti-war views. She pushed hard for our organization to take a loud, public stand against the Vietnam War. She didn't win that battle (pardon the expression) because other members and the board felt we shouldn't take on non-writing related causes.

Friedan died on her 85th birthday; how's that for a sense of story?

A news item caught my eye as I was gathering material for this article. It was a report that, for the first time in United States history, the currency will be signed by two women. Janet Yellen is the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, and Lynn Malerba is U.S. Treasurer. Malerba is the first Native American in that position. Think any of that sort of thing would be happening without there having been a Betty Friedan? Think again.

Betty Friedan a writer and activist was a central figure, designated an honored guest, at a large rally in Grant Park, Chicago, attended by scores of thousands to urge passage of the Equal Rights Amendment on May 10, 1980.

"When she stopped conforming to the conventional pattern of femininity, she finally began to enjoy being a woman."

BETTY FRIEDAN





ISAAC ASIMOV

The year Isaac Asimov won the ASJA Outstanding Author Award, I had the staggeringly good fortune to win the Article of the Year Award. (At that time, there was only one award given). I got to sit next to Asimov at the ceremony. He was a man of short stature, but long vision. Witty, insightful, and well-nigh adorable.

For a long time, the rumor had circulated among our members that Asimov had multiple typewriters arrayed around his writing room, and that he had a different story under construction in each one. In his acceptance speech, he confirmed the rumor, but insisted, "It's only nine or 10 typewriters; they like to say it's a dozen. And yes, I do get up and move from one to another. I think this makes it efficient."

During the question session, Asimov was asked about a scene he'd written in one of his ground-breaking science fiction stories, in which he'd described a computer that covered an entire wall. (This was, of course, before nearly every teenager had a tiny computer in a pocket.) Asked about the workings of this computer, Asimov said, "If you notice, I described its exterior. I have no idea what's inside it."

He also confirmed the rumor running around the sci-fi world, where he was a household name, that he had to be persuaded, in fact, kidnapped, by family and friends to take a break from writing.

To say that Asimov, in his lifetime and after, dominated the sci-fi genre, would be an understatement. Asimov, a professor of biochemistry at Boston University, wrote or edited nearly 500 books. His *Foundation* series, filled with predictions of innovations that have come to pass or are on the drawing boards, is often cited in lists of the most important books published in modern times. Asimov pioneered the idea and the vocabulary of robotics. His *Three Laws of Robotics* defined rules for humans and robots to coexist, principles more relevant today than ever.

Always health conscious and forward thinking, Asimov led a campaign within ASJA to ban smoking at meetings. It was a brutal fight, but he won, leaving some members lighting up out in the halls cursing him.

Asimov died of AIDS, which he contracted from a blood transfusion during heart surgery. Both Asimov and his wife wanted to release this information, reasoning that it would help calm the hysteria over the disease. The doctors, however, wouldn't agree. After Asimov and his doctors had died, his wife went public with his cause of death.

While working on this piece, I've come across three different puzzles where the clues were about writing, and the answers were all Asimov. Now that is fame!

To our institutional credit, ASJA recognized these giants while they were still with us, and active, giving the Outstanding Author Award to Haley in 1978, Friedan in 1982, and Asimov in 1984.

I recently encountered a scene from a play in which performers walk patterns around the stage, each holding a book by a venerated writer. They lay the books on the ground, spacing them to form a path. This is the path that makes us who we are and sets us on our way. All three of these fellow members of ASJA were game changers. They changed the world in huge ways. But don't we all do that in ways big and small? Aren't all the words we put together invitations for people to think, to access, to evaluate, to change?

Remember to walk tall, my friends. You're in some pretty impressive company.



QUOTE BY ISAAC ASIMOV

"I was dissatisfied. Nixon's resignation preserved his pension and numerous perquisites, and I was not impressed by the argument that it had spared the nation an ordeal. To my way of thinking, the ordeal was necessary to make certain it would never happen again. I felt that by taking the easy way out, we were storing up troubles for ourselves in the future."



THREE LAWS OF ROBOTICS

The first law is that a robot shall not harm a human, or by inaction allow a human to come to harm. The second law is that a robot shall obey any instruction given to it

by a human, and the third law is that a robot shall avoid actions or situations that could cause it to come to harm itself.

These three laws first appeared together in the short story, "Runaround," included in the *I, Robot* collection published in 1950.



Tools of the Trade

DESCRIPT

I prefer writing over speaking any day of the week, but when it was time to start marketing my book, I embraced virtual speaking opportunities to reach a wider audience. On several occasions, I was asked to record a video presentation for an online summit or conference. To ensure my presentation was polished, I searched for tools to help me easily edit the material. Fortunately, I stumbled upon Descript, an AI-powered media tool, and was highly impressed and satisfied with all it offers.

Whether you are looking to transcribe interviews for an article you are writing, prepare presentations to market your book, take on multimedia assignments for clients, or launch your own podcast, Descript (descript.com) could be precisely what you need to get the job done, no matter your technical skills. While it initially gained popularity for podcast production, Descript can be used for many more projects like educational videos, marketing presentations, social media posts, and transcription services.

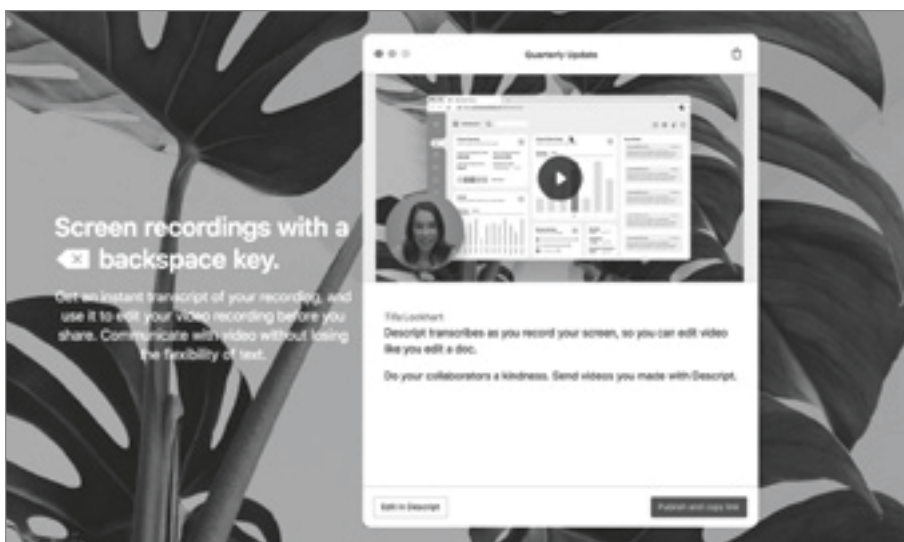
Most audio and video editing tools are complicated and time-consuming and require a fair amount of training. Many people hire a professional for editing services, but that can get pricey. Given its easy-to-use editing program and reasonable pricing, Descript offers a solution to those who do not have the time or patience to learn audio editing or the budget to hire someone.



SANDI SCHWARTZ

Freelance Writer

Sandi Schwartz is an environmental author and freelance journalist published in *BobVila.com*, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *Verywell Family*, *Scary Mommy*, *Green Child Magazine*, over 70 regional parenting and women's magazines, and many other publications. Her book, *Finding EcOHappiness: Fun Nature Activities to Help Your Kids Feel Happier and Calmer*, has been featured in *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Good Housekeeping*, *National Geographic*, *Library Journal*, and more. Sandi has been an active member of ASJA since 2019.



Edit by script and scene

Have you ever typed anything? Then you know how to use Descript. Your recordings are automatically transcribed so you can edit them like a doc. Then you can arrange visuals like you would on a slide.



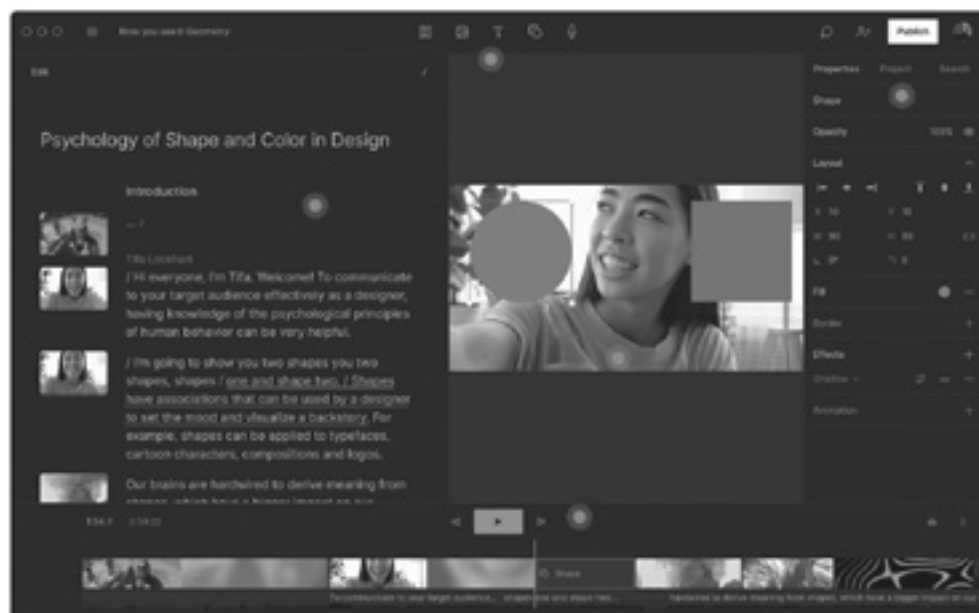
The Manatee is one of the ocean's great wonders. They wander vast mangrove forests like giant sea cows.



These creatures have evolved, very much, to fit with their environment. Saltwater estuaries and mangroves...



They are often referred to as the Cadillacs of the sea for their swift swimming ability and striking appearance.



Several aspects of Descript set it apart from other tech tools:

Simple File Import

Although you can record directly into Descript, you can also upload an existing audio or video file, such as a Zoom recording, and the software will quickly transcribe it using speech detection AI with 95% accuracy. It works in 22 languages, too. This process is incredibly efficient, and you can edit the text to use as a transcript of a meeting or presentation, or you can edit the actual audio and video by tweaking the Descript file. With video files, Descript links the transcription to the video frames so you can change the video by changing the corresponding text.

Text-Based Editing

As a writer, I find the text-based editing feature to be the most impressive part of Descript. It is essentially a word-processing tool, allowing you to edit audio or video as you would edit a document in Microsoft Word. Instead of viewing audio voice files as waveforms, you can view and edit them as text files. You can delete a word, sentence, or entire section. Yet if you change your mind, you can undo the edit and restore that audio or video.

AI Technology

Not only does the AI technology quickly transcribe audio and video files, but it also provides some impressive benefits. With a push of a button, you can purge all filler words such as “um” “uh” and “you know.” With Descript’s Overdub feature, you can clone your voice. If you forgot to say something, you can use this feature to add new audio content in your own voice simply by typing the words. You can also choose a stock voice. For example, you can add an introduction to a podcast in a voice other than your own.

Studio-Quality Sound

Descript provides studio-quality sound options so you can easily record from the comfort of your home and sound professional without expensive equipment. Descript Studio Sound uses AI technology to remove noise from audio files and enhance the overall audio quality. You can also finetune the audio through loudness normalization and noise cancellation options.

Easy Export

Finally, Descript offers multiple options to export an edited audio or video file, whether you want to upload a podcast interview to your hosting service, embed a video on a website, publish a transcript, or add a social media post. And it exports in seconds.



GET STARTED

Try Descript's free version, which gives you access to all video and audio editing features but limits transcription to 3 hours. Other pricing options paid annually include:

- **Creator (\$12/month):** Includes everything in the free version with 10 hours of transcription per month plus the ability to export videos without the Descript watermark.
- **Pro (\$24/month):** Provides all the features in the Creator plan with 30 hours of transcription per month. It also offers unlimited Overdub, batch file export, custom branding, and pro publishing and editing features like detection and removal of filler words.
- **Enterprise (custom pricing):** This level is for teams of video editors with more than 10 users.

There are also monthly payment options that are slightly more expensive than if you pay annually.

Learn more at www.descript.com



Cari Shane



ASJA MEMBER AND VOLUNTEER SINCE 2017

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

I write about whatever interests me. And, since I'm naturally curious, that's a wide net. While I'm a generalist, I have health and science tendencies.

► **In which publications/outlets have you been published?**

Until recently, the *Washington Post Magazine* (sadly, it was shuttered at the end of 2022), *Scientific American*, *Business Insider*, *Fodor's*, *Fast Company*, *Fortune*, and *Leaps.org*. My portfolio is CariShane.Contently.com.

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

A very proud pitching/writing moment was an article I wrote for *National Geographic Traveler* earlier this year. The editor I pitched to got right back to me, telling me she was interested in my pitch on the pawpaw fruit, but she warned that she would need to get sign-off from the other editors on the team, which was not guaranteed and could take weeks. The following day she assigned the story saying she'd never received such a quick and resounding "yes" from her team in all her years at NatGeo. She added that they all commented on how organized and outlined my pitch was and that they wanted the article to flow exactly as I'd laid it out. The article I submitted came back with only a few minor edits, and they were so thrilled with the entire process that they ended up paying me more than was initially contracted — a bonus for doing such a stellar job, they said.

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

I believe I became a member in 2017 (but I honestly can't remember).

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

I started volunteering in 2019 when I realized just how much ASJA offers to its members.

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

I started volunteering a few years ago as a Virtual Pitch Slam (VPS) host. Then I became a host for Virtual Client Connections (VCC) and eventually began volunteering as a host leader for VCC. And last year, along with my co-chairs, Denise Caiazzo and Sarah Ludwig Rausch, I volunteered to organize the annual meeting's signature event — Client Connections (CC). I'll be a co-chair for next year's CC, which will be a virtual event (and will continue to be a virtual event every other year, as will the annual meeting).

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

The time these different volunteer responsibilities take varies. Organizing Client Connections

is a big undertaking; CC alone takes about 2 to 5 hours a week, depending on the week and the month. Being a host leader/host takes only a few hours.

► **Why do you volunteer for ASJA?**

I'm a doer, and honestly, it's easy to volunteer from my office chair! I've worked as a full-time freelance journalist for five years, and volunteering has given me a community. But beyond that, the organization is incredible, and it brings me true satisfaction to help. I also love sharing the names of editors with other writers whom I've gotten to know, even if only by email.

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

Sometimes when I can't figure out how to start an article or wrap my head around a pitch, I find tasks to do that change my headspace — this could be anything from working out, doing laundry, walking the dogs, or working on a Client Connections task. Since I have type-A tendencies, I need a way to shift my focus away from the next pitch or article to clear my head. My volunteer jobs give me that excuse to take a break, and



"I've worked as a full-time freelance journalist for five years, and volunteering has given me a community."

CARI SHANE

usually, with my head “empty,” I come up with that elusive lead or the outline for a pitch. It’s a total win/win.

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

One of the most significant benefits to volunteering for Client Connections is, without a doubt, access to the database filled with six thousand-plus names and emails of editors. Plus, when you work as a host for VPS, VCC, and Client Connections, you’re the liaison between the editor and the member. That means you have a direct link to an editor — including phone/Zoom conversations — whom you may want to pitch in the future. That personal connection is priceless.

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

I swim twice a week at DC’s free indoor (and outdoor) pools. I just got into hot yoga, and there’s a studio four blocks from my house, so I do that two or three times a week. I also ride my bike to a nearby gym a few days a week. My kids are grown, so I visit them in their respective cities, and I have two huge dogs who need to be walked separately (because they have a pack mentality and are tough to handle — but I love them), so that takes significant time each day. Since I live in the District, I love going to museums, hanging out with friends, and discovering new things on my bike. But, because I have a skiing addiction (and I’m a ski snob), I go to Colorado to ski each year. I’ve fashioned a budget-friendly system: I dog and house-sit for people in a straight barter — they give me their house and a car, and I take care of their dogs and plants for them. I’m going out this winter for seven weeks! I write articles in the morning (unless it’s a powder day) and ski all afternoon. It’s the best! After writing an article about “The Seniors of Summit County” for *EatingWell* magazine and another about blue zones for leaps.org and joining the group “50-Plus, Ski with Us,” I’ve made many friends! I also have an Airbnb in the basement of my DC rowhouse, so that’s a great side hustle.

We love to give away money to deserving writers in need!

The Writers Emergency Assistance Fund (WEAF) is here to help writers through hard times brought on by illness, natural disaster, or other emergency. Since 1982, WEAF has awarded more than 160 grants totaling approximately \$400,000.

You Can Help:

- If you know a qualified writer who is experiencing an emergency, let them know about WEAF.
- If you have had a good year, think about making a tax-deductible donation to WEAF.
- If you want to have a long-term impact, consider naming WEAF as a beneficiary in your estate planning.

To find more information about the WEAF application process and making donations, click the WEAF link on the ASJA website: **ASJA.org**.



MASTHEAD MEDIA



For more than 20 years, Karon Warren has provided content for both journalism and content marketing clients for consumer and trade audiences. In September 2022, she published her first book, *100 Things to Do in the North Georgia Mountains Before You Die*, with Reedy Press. She has been a member of ASJA since 2010.

"Masthead Media is a full-service content marketing agency, and we provide editorial magazine-quality content to clients across a number of different verticals," says Caila Ball-Dionne, vice president of editorial operations for the New York-based company.

Projects start with a content strategy, largely completed in-house, but they could tap subject matter experts and editorial experts to contribute to the strategy. Content deliverables vary by client but typically include articles for the client's own channels and white papers.



“The common thread of what our clients are looking for is high-quality editorial content written by subject-matter experts, and this content is informed by and optimized for search, which is where we integrate our SEO department,” Ball-Dionne says. Word counts vary by assignment but range from 1,000 to 2,500 words for a pillar (informative) article, with white papers between 3,500 and 5,000 words.

While Ball-Dionne would not share rates, she did say rates are competitive, and the agency is clear in freelance talent contracts regarding the maximum number of revisions required and the total scope of work. All contracts are work-for-hire contracts, with payment terms of net 60 days upon approval.

The first step for those wanting to work with Masthead Media is to fill out an application on the agency website. Once your information is in the system, it will be reviewed. If you are accepted, a project manager will reach out when there are projects that fit your experience and skills. If your application is not accepted, someone will contact you to see if you have other clips that could better match their needs. “I do think the vast majority of your members will certainly be a fit,” Ball-Dionne says.

To get noticed and accepted, Ball-Dionne says the best steps are to keep your portfolio up to date and submit clips that showcase the breadth of your expertise and skills. She also says to take the time to fill out the “Tell Us About Yourself” section of the application, sharing your approach to writing and what you bring to the table.



“The nature of how Masthead Media is set up—specifically with a large pool of vetted freelancers—enables us to provide those specialty matched writers to meet the needs of the clients in a range of industries.”

CAILA BALL-DIONNE



MASTHEAD MEDIA AT A GLANCE



Content lengths: Articles: 1,000-2,500 words;
White papers: 3,500-5,000 words

Rates: Vary by client and deliverable

Payment terms: Net 60 days upon approval

Rights: All rights; work made for hire

To apply: Fill out the application:
<https://airtable.com/shr1haa4e2qz9FTfN>

Contact: Jo Ann Liguori, editorial talent coordinator
joann.liguori@mastheadmedia.com

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- NBC
- National Sleep Foundation
- Parade
- Prudential
- Reebok
- Road Scholar
- Trafalgar
- Wired



STEPHANIE
BERNABA

Freelance Writer

Sources and Their Expectations



Conducting interviews with any source can be a slippery slope. Some may be unwilling to talk, some may be elusive, and others can be downright uncooperative. But the group that vexes me the most are the sources who believe the news reporter is their personal concierge.

Writing about nonprofit organizations, human interest stories, and profiles of artists and artisans in various genres often puts me in the unique position of trying to share news in a balanced way without sounding like I (or the publication for which I work) am promoting the business.

Don't get me wrong – I am thrilled to present new businesses to the community and share the dear missions of local nonprofits, but situations can get out of hand quickly once sources begin heaping requests on me.

I've learned over many years in this business that there's a fine line between coverage and promotion, i.e., free PR. It often proves challenging to present a balanced account without sounding like an advocate.

As a rule, and due to the nature of the stories I write, I try only to interview people who wish to speak to a reporter. The flip side of that, then, is vetting the people who do.

I am obligated to myself, the news outlets for which I write, and the general public to maintain my journalistic integrity while upholding my dignity. Still, I've been put in fixes many times.

One source asked me to clip out an article in which they were featured and mail it to them. More often than not, I'm 'asked back' to cover a future event or asked if my paper can cover it. One group focused on historic preservation asked for me to cover all of their stories exclusively after I had written about one of their initiatives.

Last week, I was invited to a book signing. When I explained to the author I was unavailable, they asked me instead to a photo op where I could shoot pictures of them giving out the book to occupants of a residential care facility. That was a no. I'd much prefer an organic interaction to a staged situation.

Then there are the nonprofits. I am grateful and lucky to be invited to learn about their missions. I am even more grateful to talk to the folks who carry out those missions. But the situation becomes dicey when I'm asked to send an article back to an organization for review before publication, I'm asked not to share something they discussed on the record, or the source attempts to control the tone or direction of the finished piece.

Last month, I spoke to an executive at a 501(c)3, and after they spent over an hour chatting with me on the record, they decided the world was not ready for what they had to say. After the article was sent to the printer and the online version was live, they asked us for revisions that would have changed the entire tone of the piece. That was also a no.

It's a fine line, and I learned to walk it with a measure of grace, dignity, tact, and firm boundaries.

Though I can share good news with the community, that coverage unfortunately does not come with white glove service.



"Don't get me wrong – I am thrilled to present new businesses to the community and share the dear missions of local nonprofits, but situations can get out of hand quickly once sources begin heaping requests on me."

»» Stephanie Bernaba is the owner and principal at White Orchid Media, based in southern Rhode Island. White Orchid Media provides journalistic/photojournalistic coverage as well as marketing, communications, development, and event support. You can find her work at platforms including *Redbook Magazine*, *Care.com*, and *Yahoo Entertainment*. Stephanie gives back to her professional community by mentoring with the National Press Photographers Association and judging ASJA's Annual Writing Awards.

Psst... It's No Secret: ASJA's Blog Keeps You in the Loop

Visit ASJA Confidential for the scoop on issues that matter most to freelancers.

As freelancers, we know how important it is to stay up-to-date on the latest happenings. And when it comes to timely information that can grow your business, Confidential helps you stay in the know.

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