

Stet

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT WRITERS OF CHICAGO

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IWOC'S JUNE MEETING

Nurture your creative skills at IWOC's June meeting

BY JAMES J. HODL

How many times have you been asked: "Where do you get your ideas?" The answer lies within your own creativity. The trick is how to bring that creativity into play when required as we write under deadline or simply for the extreme joy of it.



If you missed "Nurturing Your Creativity," the topic addressed by featured speaker Conrad Lawrence during the IWOC conference, "The Freelance Writer's Life," last March, you won't want to miss June's IWOC meeting. Lawrence will be reprising his presentation on Tuesday, June 14 at the IWOC meeting.

Lawrence, an IWOC board-member, is an accomplished novelist and playwright. He wrote the best-selling sci-fi tale "Council to Save the Planet." His short stories have been published in literary periodicals as well as the *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*.

Working from his personal experience, Lawrence will preside over an interactive session that will show you how to give birth to and nurture your creative skills. Sections will discuss relating to your creativity, creativity vs. innovation, innate talent vs. learned skill, finding your writing space, and choosing the appropriate level of creativity. And do bring your thinking caps, because Lawrence promises to pepper his presentations with exercises designed to test your creative skills.

"Nurturing Your Creativity" will be the centerpiece of the IWOC meeting on Tuesday, June 14 at The Feltre School, 22 W. Erie St. Come at 5 p.m. to network with other professional freelance writers over coffee and cookies. The program begins at 6 p.m. Admission is free for IWOC professional members and costs \$5 for associate members and \$15 for nonmembers.

Following the meeting, you are invited to a nearby restaurant for a buy-your-own dinner and fun and conversation. ☞

"Nurturing Your Creativity"

presented by
Conrad Lawrence

Tuesday
June 14

The Feltre School
22 West Erie
Networking 5:00 PM
Program 6:00 PM

FREE for
Professional members
Associate members \$5
Nonmembers \$15

IWOC meets for
programs and networking
the second Tuesday of
every month.

iWOC

Independent Writers of Chicago

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Share the wealth—and the toys

BY HARRY J. KARABEL

There were Legos and Nintendos and Marios and Transformers and light sabers and hundreds of action figures with weapons and vehicles and fortresses. There were pink, plastic appliances and Barbies and Skippers and Kens with clothes and accessories and vehicles and dollhouses. My children had everything and it wasn't their fault. My wife and I share the blame.

Like millions of other parents, we decided it was important to give our children all the things we didn't have. We decided that even though their very best friends had the very same things and they could play with those same things together, they should be able to play with those same things apart. It was better that way.

So we invested in the new iteration of the Legend of Zelda where the magic bow would transform dragon's teeth into gold coins that could be used to purchase a potion for the Cloak of Invisibility. We couldn't wait to bring home the new Barbie Dream-RV with its own working elevator, spa and lap pool.

WHEN SHARING MADE THINGS BETTER

It's all a long way from the times I spent with Joey Stuparitz. Joey was my best friend during the greatest days of our prepubescent lives. Raised by parents from the Frugal Generation, we rarely owned the same toys, and we liked it that way. Before we began picking off marauders from the parapets of a backyard fort, we would put our collective weapons in a pile and take turns choosing how best to defend our realm. Sometimes Joey wanted my Daniel Boone long rifle, or my camouflaged 50-caliber machine gun. That meant I got to use his Fanner-50 or his bolt-action M-14.

We spent hours setting up elaborate battles with toy soldiers and here again, we shared the wealth. These were the days before Action Figures. Toy-makers had not yet realized that bigger figures with individual accessories would generate more cash than an entire collection of smaller, pre-molded,

unmovable figures with horses or tanks and landing craft and rugged terrain. I remember one Christmas season, sitting with Joey and the Sears Wish

Book, salivating over the new "Action Play Sets." We had our eyes on two of them: The Civil War play set and The Invasion of Normandy. Joey went for Gettysburg. I chose D-Day.

Sharing was tricky. If we were playing WWII at my house, I had to make sure Joey got some of the best stuff to stage his own battle because then he would do the same for me. We understood, and we worked it out. Sharing made those golden days remain forever golden in my mind. (I grew up to be a pacifist, by the way. Joey didn't make it to 18. Cancer.)



WRITERS CAN SHARE TOO

IWOC gives us all the opportunity to share and for me, that is one of our greatest member benefits. We share business tips and industry trends and writing strategies. But there are a lot of other things we can share.

When a client asks you to do a particular kind of writing you don't know how to do, do you recommend another, more qualified IWOC member? You should. Helping another member is the best way to get help for your own career. It is also a great way to build a better relationship with your client. You have just increased your credibility as a valuable resource.

We are about to launch the new rate survey. Will you participate? Will you share your hourly and project rates so that we can take our consensus to the marketplace and increase our collective billings? Will you help us get new members who want to know what to charge?

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Need some new self-marketing ideas?

BY LES DIMITRI WINIARCZYK

Lynn Hazan, speaker at IWOC's May meeting, is a professional recruiter and natural storyteller. Her storytelling skills in fact helped save the evening when Murphy's Law nearly spoiled the event. But before I elaborate, let me first recap the presentation.

Hazan presented a variety of suggestions for marketing yourself as a writer. What can you do specifically? Well, start by taking a hard look at yourself in the mirror. Give yourself your pitch. Now ask if you'd hire yourself. This exercise will surely reveal what you need to work on. Hazan says we need to be interesting and engaging in addition to being qualified.

A good technique for improving a potentially boring self-promo is the use of case studies. By giving your prospect concrete examples, you emphasize accomplishments in an interesting way. This can be done orally, within a resume, or on a Web site—preferably all three!

You can join trade organizations, which puts you in touch with people who are potential business contacts. Pursuing opportunities to speak in front of business groups can accomplish the same. Hazan also emphasizes being true to yourself and joining causes that are dear to your heart. By doing what you're passionate about, you also increase the pool of human contacts that may bring you business in unexpected ways.

HAVE WEB SITE, WILL WORK

We also need to be professional and current with technology. Having a Web site (with case studies, of course) and a professional business card can serve as an important entry point for establishing communication.

Some attendees mentioned that, in their experience, human interaction tends to get new business, not necessarily a slick card or Web site. But Hazan's point was that although such tools may not close the deal, a lack of them may close the ini-



tial door of opportunity. For example, she recently received a phone call out of the blue that resulted in a new client. Someone from the east coast had found her Web site through an internet search. So we need to be human, interesting, and qualified, of course, but we should also take advantage of every tool available to us.

LEARN TO SPOT MARKETPLACE TRENDS

In addition, Hazan shared some insight into where the action is in the marketplace. As a recruiter she has a unique perspective on the "pulse" of business trends as they relate to hiring.

Business areas needing and seeking independent writers include internal communications, marketing communications, IT, sales and new business development, and publishing. Growth areas include healthcare, applied sciences, and medical education. Ethnic markets are also emerging, where a knowledge of Spanish or Chinese is a plus. The consumer sector of the market is currently not very strong, but business-to-business and non-profit are doing better.

Hazan says there is currently a lack of qualified talent available, which means opportunities abound. And since the use of independent contractors is also on the rise, IWOC members can pursue their businesses with optimism, a freshened arsenal of tips, and insight into trending business needs. For more details, see page 4.

Lynn Hazan's expertise stems from being a Chicago-based recruiter of communications and marketing professionals (www.lynnhazanandassoc.com). She is also a professional storyteller, which is worth noting because a misunderstanding left her without access to a projector for the evening's presentation. In spite of the missing tools, her speaking skill and enthusiasm helped her deliver an effective "story."

Her goal was to give everyone at least a couple new ideas to work with, and by all accounts, she was successful! ☞

President's message, continued

What about your time? Are you willing to share that? Any organization anywhere will tell you that if you want to get more out of your membership, you have to get more involved. In the fall, we will need new committee members and chairs, and maybe even new Board

members. (Although I am here, publicly and officially, asking all the Board members to stay on, if they are able). Is it time for you to get involved? Or, if you are a long-time member who has "been there, done that," is it time to pitch in again?

As independent business people, every day is D-Day and Gettysburg. The marauders are constantly trying to storm our parapets. With each other's help, we can do more than simply survive. With each other's help, these can be the golden days we always remember. ☞

FYI

MORE MARKETING TIPS FROM LYNN HAZAN



Assignment: Fine-tune the way you market yourself

Lynn Hazan provided us with several assignments and challenges to make IWOCers better marketers of their services. Try the following:

1. Stand in front of a mirror and take 30 seconds to tell the mirror why it should hire you. Then try the same exercise in 60 seconds.
2. Identify non-writing skills where you need work, for example, personal presentation skills (eye contact, firm handshake, speaking with confidence), and developing client relationships (small talk, getting to know the client's needs and business, planting seeds for future business opportunities).
3. Take another look at your resume. "People hire people, not resumes," Hazan says. Highlight your accomplishments; use concrete examples. And if you have a capabilities brochure or a Web site, use case studies to showcase what you've done.
4. Always, always, always send a cover letter with a resume and *never* say "I look forward to hearing from you." Take charge of the situation and state when you'll call to follow up. And make sure you do it!

Be Creative in Finding Opportunities

You may already be successful in finding writing jobs, but there is so much more that can be done if you expend a little more effort. Hazan had a number of suggestions and success stories about how to position ourselves better for attracting business.

1. Start writing a blog. Be recognized as a person who has a point of view and something valuable to contribute.
2. Google yourself. Are your name and your business "out there" where people can find you and will want to call you?
3. Get involved in causes and issues you truly care about and you'll find many networking opportunities. Think about organizations where you can make a difference, and also rub elbows with influential people. The added benefit to being involved in something other than writing is that it keeps you fresh and helps energize you.
4. Be your own PR machine. Think about starting a listserve, explore speaking engagements, develop case studies that demonstrate how you can help companies and send them to a targeted e-mail list.

by Ellen Krupp

AND DON'T FORGET . . .

You can post your writing samples or ask the Webmaster to create a link to your site at IWOC's Web site at <http://www.iwoc.org>. And the Members Only Writers' Line lists jobs and potential projects. Have you visited lately? You can make [iwoc.org](http://www.iwoc.org) part of your own PR machine.

Calendar

June 14 (2nd Tuesday)

IWOC monthly meeting: "Nurturing Your Creativity" with Conrad Lawrence. Novelist, playwright and short story writer Lawrence will preside over an interactive session that will show attendees how to give birth to and nurture their creative skills. At The Felte School, 22 West Erie, Chicago. Networking at 5 PM; program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates \$5, nonmembers \$15.

July 12 (2nd Tuesday)

IWOC monthly meeting: To be announced.

August 9 (2nd Tuesday)

IWOCFest—IWOC's annual summer get-together—brings together old friends and new for a night of food and fun. Details will be announced on IWOC's Web site www.iwoc.org and in your e-mail.

The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted. The groups welcome nonmembers.

June 2 / July 7 (1st Thursday)

IWORP monthly breakfast: Join the Rogers Park IWOC contingent for breakfast at 9 AM at the A&T Grill, 7036 N. Clark St., Chicago. For more information, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

June 23 (4th Thursday)

IWOOP monthly lunch: The West Suburban group meets at noon at Poor Phil's at 139 So. Marion, Oak Park. Contact Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065.

*Check out
IWOC's Web site at
www.iwoc.org*