

NOVEMBER MEETING

Experts to Tell How to Make Business-to-Business Writing YOUR Business

BY STEWART TRUELSEN

IWOC gets down to business at its meeting on Nov. 9, with an outstanding panel discussion of the challenges and opportunities in business-to-business (B2B) communications. With this year almost over, isn't it time you considered this vibrant market for freelancers in the next year?

Did I say "vibrant" market for writers? Okay, maybe the word *vibrant* has been downsized in this economy, but our panel is truly upbeat about business communications. Panelists include Tim Hodson of Scranton Gillette Communications, Don Marsh of Penton Business Media, and LeJane Carson of Carson Stoga Communications. The moderator is Don Talend, IWOC board member and B2B specialist.

Both Hodson and Marsh work for major publishers of trade magazines on the editorial side. Hodson is editorial director of *Greenhouse Product News* and *Lawn and Garden Retailer*. Marsh is editor of *Concrete Products* magazine. Carson is a principal in a marketing and public relations agency. She oversees client relations and event management at the firm. Clients include leading companies in consumer products and services, hos-

pitality, and technology. Talend specializes in industrial B2B public relations, editorial, and marketing work.

Most of us associate business-to-business communications with the trade press or controlled circulation magazines. There are hundreds of these targeted publications covering everything from the Automotive to Zoos. (www.tradepub.com is a good place to check on what's out there and subscribe for free if you meet the criteria). These publications are the staple of business-to-business writing, but the field also extends to trade shows, social media, and web content.

What sets B2B writing apart from standard journalism, according to Marsh, is its narrow focus and use of day-to-day nomenclature of a particular industry. It provides content that is generally not deliverable through mainstream media. One advantage Marsh sees is that interview subjects are more likely to open up and offer compelling insight to an editor or reporter representing an established brand, rather than a community newspaper or big city daily.

A writer has to be knowledgeable of the subject matter, but that doesn't mean

you have to be an expert. "I know what my readers need to know, and I have to ask the right questions to get that information," says Hodson. His advice for someone looking for work is to contact the editor of a publication you have in mind and see if he or she needs help or knows someone who does. "I run across companies in the industry (horticulture) that have great information, but no one to write it," he added.

Carson's experience with B2B writing currently is from the agency side, working with media that serve the needs of her clients. Her agency relies on referrals and networking to locate writers for projects. She mentioned LinkedIn, the business-oriented social networking site, and contacts made through professional groups like IWOC and Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). "Everything that we do involves writing, whether it's writing press relations, preparing media kits, writing social media content, or developing pitch letters. We definitely need those skills from someone," said Carson.

While writing is the basis for much of B2B communications, as Carson said, the successful pro has to adapt

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN/ROGER RUEFF

The Point

It's been a whirlwind few months in Me-land... between marriage and moving (and alliteration). So at first glance, it seems like there must be a lot to write about... and there certainly is. But sometimes (as most writers have experienced at some point in their writing lives) when there's a lot to write about, it can seem like there's nothing at all to write about. It's analogous to what the Pointed Man told the innocent, young Oblio in an ABC Movie of the Week called *The Point* (1971): "A point in every direction is the same as no point at all." (I'm not invoking this reference to be haughtily obscure. I loved the movie as a kid and even owned the soundtrack, with music by Harry Nilsson.

The story involves a land in which everyone has a pointed head. The main character, Oblio, is born with a rounded head but somehow manages to become popular despite his obvious deformity—too popular, in fact, because when he inadvertently disgraces the son of an evil count, the count appeals to the king to reaffirm the law of the land—that everything must have a point. The king's compliance makes Oblio a criminal, and he is banished to the Pointless Forest, along with his faithful dog, Arrow... thus beginning a journey of discovery

and the meeting of wise and interesting characters, including the Pointed Man.)

And as long as we're on the subject of pointed heads and ridiculous laws passed by people acting out of negative emotions like jealousy, hatred, and fear... yesterday was the date of the national mid-term elections, and it appears this morning that the Republicans have retaken the U.S. House of Representatives and the Democrats have retained slim control of the U.S. Senate.

Some of the



Republican victories were won by adherents of the party-that-gets-history-wrong-in-its-moniker—a.k.a. the "Tea Party." (I can't call them "members" of their party, because the party is a party in name only (we've all been to those, right?) and is really better referred to as a "movement," like the Civil Rights Movement the victories of which some of them hope to reverse. And the fact that their leaders chose the name Tea Party certainly lends itself to snappy comebacks by those who oppose them,



la: "Tea is the new Kool-Aid." In the sound-bitten times we live in, that might come back to haunt them someday, but yesterday was certainly not that day.)

But lost (at least to me until this morning) in the all of the political posturing, crowing, and defaming on all sides of every race, including talk about taking the "prize" of President Obama's old senate seat (like the whole thing was a huge game of Capture the Flag and had nothing to do with actually governing the country—seriously, are we all still in junior high school, and does it really matter if Josh made out with Kristin at Brenda's party?) is this little item... the voters in Oklahoma passed State Question 755 by a margin of 70 percent to 30 percent.

Whew! Thank heavens! If that "legislatively referred constitutional amendment" had not passed, it would clearly have been the beginning of the end of civilization as we know it, and every slope we've ever hoped not to slide down would have gotten a lot slipperier.

What, you ask, does the passage of State Question 755 mean for the citizens of Oklahoma? Well, here is the exact wording on the ballot: "This measure amends the State Constitution. It changes a section that deals with the courts of this state. It would amend Article 7, Section 1. It makes courts rely on federal and state law when deciding cases. It forbids

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Search Me, Says Google, and We Hit the Jackpot!

BY JOEN KINNAN

If you use your computer for more than a perch for your cat, then you've got to be familiar with Google. Right? Well, as we found out at the October meeting, probably not *really* familiar.

Nearly 60 IWOCers and friends crowded into Google's snazzy Chicago headquarters where we snacked, drank, and mingled with members we thought might have moved to Tanganyika, we hadn't seen them in so long.

Then came the program, and it was fabulous! Google's Midwest Manager for Communications and Public Affairs, Jake Parillo, gave a fast-paced 90-slide presentation that showed off Google's tips and tricks. And there are options aplenty that go far beyond the standard type-in-a-search-phrase-and-hope-to-hit-something-relevant strategy we're used to.

Google Trends

For example, who knew that Google has separate search sections that put tons of related information in one place? Type in google.com/trends and you find a two-column screen labeled "Hot Topics" and "Hot Searches," respectively, and you'll find what everyone's talking about today in real time. "Illinois governor" is a hot topic today. Click on it, and the information — there's a lot — may update as you're reading. (It strikes me that someone could use this location to get ideas for articles to pitch.)

Google Images

At google.com/images, type in "black cats" and you'll get literally millions of pictures of black cats in less

than a second. Decide you'd rather have a pic of a white cat? Just click on the white square in the color-picker, and voila! Pictures of white and partly white cats. Try purple, and the cats won't be purple, but the background will be. (This image site is a great boon for people looking for graphics to spice up a newsletter, etc. Not all the images are free to download, but many are.)

Google Uncle Sam

Try google.com/unclesam, and type "office of the president," and you'll find photos, stuff about the White House, speeches, and even the President's schedule. Just about every branch of the federal government is at your fingertips at Uncle Sam.

Google Scholar

[Google.com/scholar](http://google.com/scholar) is another biggie. There you'll find articles (with or without citations), patents, and much more. For example, Scholar has the entire case law of the United States. (Take that Lexis/Nexis, and Google is free.) You can limit your article searches to specific time-frames, and if what you want is unfortunately written in French or almost any other language, you can get it returned in English. (Google even does translations of Klingon for you Trekkies. Honest.)

Google News

Want to know what's going on in the world right now? Go to google.com/news. (Nine minutes ago, a plane made an emergency landing in Mumbai.) You can choose

from a boatload of categories to narrow your search, and you can add categories to tailor future searches to your own interests.

Google Reader

Here's a real time saver: At google.com/googlereader, you can collect all the sites you regularly visit, like Twitter, FaceBook, LinkedIn, and any other site you check in with often — iwoc.org, for example — and read them all in one place. You do have to have a Google account to do this, but signing up is easy and free.



Standard Search

Though the special sites are wonderful, you can also do more with a standard search than you think. If you're typical, you tunnel right into the search results without a glance at the left-hand column, but there's where you can turn your plain-vanilla search into a tutti-frutti. Search for "election results," for example, and on the left, you'll see that you can select "images," "videos," and "news" relevant to election results. "More" gives you further options. Try the "timeline" (under "more search tools" on the left), and click on any segment to get results from that period. (Choose the 1780s, and you'll find remarks by Thomas Jefferson.)

Advanced Search

Once you've got a handle on the standard search tools, try the "advanced search" feature on the search page.

Have a hankering for an article written in your native tongue, which happens to be Swahili? No problem. Want to do a search that *doesn't* contain certain words. Easy as pie. (Parillo recommends using "advanced search" if you can't find what you're looking for in the first ten pages of a regular search.)

Other Google Features

Google has dictionaries, charts (many of which you can embed in your own documents), flight info, currency converters, time and temperature for any city in the world, weather, pages from lots of old newspapers, and here's the pièce de résistance: "Google Earth lets you fly anywhere on Earth to view satellite imagery, maps, terrain, and 3D buildings from galaxies in outer space to the canyons of the ocean." How about them apples!

Google Tips

Google search doesn't care whether you capitalize or don't, which can be a problem if you want to search for a capitalized acronym instead of all words with that letter combination. The solution: Put quotes around your capitalized letters.

Don't want a definition for your search term(s)? Put a minus in front of them.

Scary Google

A few last mind-boggling facts: Google owns YouTube and Captcha; it's the largest machine translator in the world; and — get this — humans don't make decisions on what things look like on Google. It's all done by a machine. If you don't like the colors or the layout, talk to the droid. 🤖

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to changing technology. Hodson, for example, videotapes and edits segments called HORT-TV that are webcast on www.gpnmag.com, the *Greenhouse Product News* website. He also appears on the other side of the camera from time to time—it's all in a day's work for this B2Ber.

Talend, the panel moderator, agreed that IWOC members have to be on top of the changes. "Technology is having a huge impact on freelance writing, including B2B communications. Nobody knows exactly how developments such as social media and changes in print media will affect freelancers in the years to come, but one thing is for sure: we all need to be flexible in terms of expanding our skills."

The first place to start to expand your skills and understand the business-to-business communications market is the IWOC meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 9. You'll hear much more from our insightful panel and be able to ask your own questions. The meeting is in Room 5006 at National Louis University, 122 S. Michigan Ave. (across from the Art Institute) in Chicago. Networking with snacks and beverages begins at 5 p.m., the program at 6 p.m. The meeting is free to IWOC members. Nonmembers are invited to attend for a charge of \$15. Plan to stay around afterwards for a buy-your-own dinner at a nearby restaurant where we can continue our conversations. 🍷

President's Column. Continued from Page 2.

courts from considering or using international law. It forbids courts from considering or using Sharia Law." That's right, Sharia Law, which is described simply on the ballot as being "based on two principal sources, the Koran and the teaching of Mohammed."

So from now on judges in Oklahoma will have render their judgments based on "federal and state law" when deciding cases. To which I say: It's about damn time! My question is, what can be done to reverse all wrongs that have already been committed by Oklahoma rulings based on Sharia Law, of which there must be thousands, considering that Oklahoma is nearly one-hundred percent Muslim (depending on how you round the census figures after the decimal point) and is a known haven for adherents of radical Islam. What bothers me still, though, is all the laws that the judges of Oklahoma are *not* barred from using... like the Code of Hammurabi, the Code of Lipit-Ishtar, Roman Law, the Laws of William the Conqueror, and the "precepts of the prefect, the lord Ptah-hotep, under the Majesty of the King of the South and North, Assa, living eternally forever, [Egypt, 2200 B.C.E.]"... not to mention the Law of Averages and the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

I smell a slew of new ballot initiatives in 2012.

In the meantime, though, I commend those who spearheaded the effort, led by Brigitte Gabriel, author of *They Must Be Stopped: Why We Must Defeat Radical Islam and How We Can Do It*, for spending taxpayer dollars on this ballot initiative instead of frivolous pursuits like, say, the education of Oklahoman children.

It's a resounding hammer blow against all forms of theocracy! What's that?... Seriously?...Uh-oh. 🍷

Calendar

November 9

IWOC Monthly Meeting. A three-person panel of B2B experts, moderated by Don Talend, will discuss the B2B marketplace. The meeting will be held at National-Louis University, Room 5006, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Program at 6 p.m. Networking at 5 p.m. Nonmembers, \$15 at the door, \$10 with online preregistration; IWOC members free. Buy-your-own dinner follows. Nonmembers welcome. For more information, call 847/855-6670 or visit www.iwoc.org.

December 14

IWOC Holiday Party. IWOC's annual midwinter holiday bash. Gifts, wonderful food and drink, great conversation, and a used-book exchange. Don't miss this party. Save the date. Details on location to come.

The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted, but call ahead in case of cancellation. The groups welcome nonmembers. If there's no group in your area, why not start one? Contact webmaster@iwoc.org.

November 23 (4th Tuesday)

IWOOP Monthly Lunch. Join near-west suburbanites for a noon lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park. For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. Check before you come. This lunch is monthly only if there are enough people who can attend. Note: The lunch is now on the 4th Tuesday, not the 4th Thursday as it had been in the past.

November 4 (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 info, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

It's Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers' Line

Browse Resources

See What's Doing in Coming Events

WWW.IWOC.ORG