



Stet

Independent Writers of Chicago

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JULY MEETING PREVIEW

Look in & link up to do more for your business

The heat has broken, and IWOC has a two-fer for tomorrow's (Tuesday, July 10) meeting. What more could you ask? First IWOC's webmaster, Roger Rueff, will show us how to navigate our redesigned website to get the most from it. You'll learn how to manage your user profile, upload photos and samples, use the Member Forum to trade secrets and get info from fellow members, and more.

Next, IWOC's own Sylvia Alston will reveal features of LinkedIn that will help make it really work for you. Yeah, you're linked up, but what has the site done for you lately? Find out how to upload samples, beneficial (to your work) groups you can join, and other ways to promote yourself to potential clients. That's what you joined it for, isn't it? And we know potential hirers look to LinkedIn to find freelancers.

So come on down to National-Louis University, Room 5033, 122 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, tomorrow night. Networking with snacks and beverages begins at 5 p.m. **The meeting will start**



a half hour early at 5:30 because we have a lot to cover. Admission is free to IWOC members, \$15 for nonmembers at the door or \$10 with preregistration at iwoc.org/calendar.htm. Plan to stay for a buy-your-own dinner at Exchequer afterward. ■

— Joen Kinnan

June Mixer Recap

In June IWOC tried something different from our usual meeting routine. We teamed up with the Chicago Creative Coalition (C3) to meet and mingle at the D4 Irish Pub and Café in Streeterville.

Lured by the promise of buck-apiece sliders and five-buck appetizers, a chatty and festive crowd gathered, and they weren't disappointed. The sliders were adorable: tiny buns filled with Lilliputian patties, and the crabcakes were proclaimed "to die for." Appetizers were satisfyingly large.

The food got everyone off to a happy start, and IWOCers and C3ers were soon sharing work bios — C3ers are a really creative bunch — swapping war stories, and exchanging business cards. Some attendees operated on the "floater" principle: five minutes with this one, five minutes with that one, and meet as many as you can, while others chummed up with a person or two for serious conversation.

Altogether it was an extremely enjoyable evening. If you were there, you probably made a new friend or two. And that was the point. ■

Officers

President

David Epstein 708/567-9705
president@iwoc.org

Executive Vice President

Betsy Storm 312/421-1510

Treasurer

Barbara Dillard 312/642-3065

Secretary

Jennifer Lyng 773/769-5291

Parliamentarian

Roger Rueff 630/428-3857

Board of Directors

Michelle Beuscher 773/478-6778

Jim Hodl 773/777-5710

Ann Kepler 773/761-1858

Joel Kinnan 708/366-8573

Catherine Rategan 312/266-8146

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Jeff Steele 773/481-0010

Katie Valentino 630/946-9500

Programs

Stewart Truelsen 847/962-1393 chair

Karen Schwartz 708/386-3044

Nancy Solomon 773/262-8070

Social Media

Chair open

Jim Kepler 773/761-1858

Writers' Line

chair open

Karleen McAllester 847/644-2524

Rosetta Gervasi 630/637-9383

Web Site: www.iwoc.org

Roger Rueff, webmaster

webmaster@iwoc.org

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Stet Editor

Joel Kinnan

Contributors: David Epstein, Joel Kinnan, Katherine Mikkelsen

OK, So I'm a Groupon Groupie



Oh, not in the usual way. Usually I ignore or immediately delete the Daily Deals that deluge my e-mail. Occasionally, I open one whose headline or lead promises something bizarre (about which more later). I haven't purchased a Groupon since last December.

I was not tempted to buy Groupon stock when it went on the market. I do not trust their business model, as I can't see how either Groupon or the merchants who offer the daily deals can make enough money or generate real new business when they are giving away so much, often to existing customers or one-timers. I had these doubts even before investment experts began to question Groupon's prospects and report that their costs are too high to lead to profitability, and that the renewal rate of retailers signing up for repeat deals is low.

I didn't even care for the way I was shanghai'd into Groupon. A "friend" gave them my name and e-mail and then pestered me several times until I signed up so he could get a \$10 premium or reward coupon. I then bought four or five, mostly for restaurants. One or two led to enjoyable meals, though I couldn't figure out what the owners were getting in return for their discounts, since we were already long-time customers. In fact, I'm annoyed with one restaurant we used to enjoy because they have made it awkward to redeem the deal purchased in December. It expires July 11, and I may now have to write it off as a loss or go through the process of reclaiming the original amount, which Groupon guarantees, but which they have presumably made awkward and complicated.

The birth of a heretic Groupie

So how and why did I become—and remain—a Groupon Groupie? Because of their Deathful Prose. How could anyone who observes and ponders the ongoing evolution of English Prose resist the following gem?

43% Off Invisalign Treatment

Like glaciers and tectonic plates, teeth are slowly yet surely on the move as they attempt to turn their host's mouth into frozen tundra and then rip it apart like a bite-size Pangaea. Defeat devious teeth with today's Groupon: for \$2,995, you get an initial Invisalign examination, x-rays, impressions, clear aligner trays, and follow-up office visits at [XXX] Dental Studio (a \$5,245 value).

This passage comes from a collection I call "Gems of Groupon," which I began months ago, after reading that teeth-chattering, Earth-shattering paragraph. I used "Earth-shattering" both in the spirit of the copywriter's image of rebellious teeth smashing continents and also the insight this prose gives me into an emerging Web-adapted English that shatters our linguistic barriers!

In a May 2011 *New York Times* article, "Funny or Die: Groupon's Fate Hinges on Words" (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/29/business/29groupon.html?pagewanted=all>), David Streitfeld, a Chicago writer, wrote:

Words are not much valued on the Internet, perhaps because it features so many of them. Newspapers and magazines might

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OK, So I'm a Groupon Groupie

have gained vast new audiences online but still can't recoup the costs from their Web operations of producing the material. Groupon borrowed some tools and terms from journalism, softened the traditional heavy hand of advertising, added some banter and attitude and married the result to a discounted deal. It has managed, at least for the moment, to make words pay.

I submit that, whether Groupon ultimately succeeds or fails, the copywriting style it has fostered does much more. It portends no less than an Epochal Revolution in **Modern American Marketing Prose** (hereby enshrined in the acronym, "MAMP"). And what shapes the future of marketing copy shapes nothing less than the future of The Queen's English (or at least Rick Santorum's).

Herewith some further examples of Groupon Gems for your delectation (emphasis is mine):

For decades Americans have admired French style, which is why **the most popular potato preparation is the french [sic] fry and the most popular art form [?] is existentialism.** Expand Parisian influences to your wardrobe with this Groupon from French Lingerie Outlet.

With a newspaper, you can learn of local events by reading the articles or **by spying through eyeholes cut out of the lifestyle section.** Multitask with this Groupon (which offers Chicago Tribune Sunday delivery for up to 90% off).

To fly a helicopter, one needs strong spatial reasoning skills, thorough training, and **an electric fan duct-taped to a Mini Cooper.** Take to the skies with this Groupon (\$99 for Helicopter Tour of Chicago).

A burrito, like a love letter, is packed with juicy tidbits **and is most surprising when left on a pillow.** Warm the heart and the tongue with this Groupon.

Another example of sparkling dental imagery: "A gleaming smile burns one's image onto retinas, which is useful when making first impressions with prospective friends **but detrimental in police lineups.**"

And consider this classic expression of steroid-era sports ethics: "Exceling at a sport is all about mastering the fundamentals, whether it's dribbling a basketball, hitting a baseball, **or bribing a referee** (Private Baseball, Basketball, or Fast-Pitch Softball Lesson for One or Two—Up to 54% Off)."

You can see that Groupon, long after it vanishes, has already launched a Linguistic Upheaval that will leave a Lasting Legacy for future American Literature.

I wanted to capture the secrets of MAMP (see above) to share with other IWOCers, so I Googled for "Groupon copywriting guidelines." I found a promising link titled "The Public Groupon Voice Guide" (see [www.uie.com/brainsparks/2011/01/25/the-](http://www.uie.com/brainsparks/2011/01/25/the-public-groupon-voice-guide/)

[public-groupon-voice-guide/](http://www.uie.com/brainsparks/2011/01/25/the-public-groupon-voice-guide/)), but when I tried the link at the end of this item, I got this ominous message from



Google Drive: "We're sorry. This document is not published." It clearly had been once.

Searching further brought me to "LEAKED: Here's Groupon's Secret Copywriting Guide" (<http://www.businessinsider.com/groupon-secret-sauce-2010-12?op=1>). The author, Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry, writes, "We originally found it on Hacker News and can't vouch for its authenticity, although we do hear it's authentic (and we think it would be pretty weird for someone to make something like this up). We're trying to dig up more info." Wisely, he adds, "Since we assume the document might be taken offline soon, we're reproducing it here." There are many other links if you want to pursue this topic, and two weeks ago, Media Bistro started a discussion, but so far it has only two posts.

So now the secrets of MAMP are yours. This Brave New World is yours for the taking. ■

Did you know...



More fun with the origins of phrases that people use all the time without thinking.

Lock, stock and barrel – (the entire thing). Refers to the parts of a musket; the lock is the firing mechanism, the stock is the wooden butt end and the barrel is the cylindrical tube. Its origins may go back to 1891 when Rudyard Kipling wrote in *Light That Failed*, “The whole thing, lock, stock, and barrel, isn’t worth one big yellow sea-poppy.”

In the sticks – (in the country). Literally refers to a place with lots of twigs or sticks; in other words, the backwoods. One of the most colorful uses appeared in a 1935 issue of *Variety*: “Sticks Nix Hick Pix” which meant that people who live in the country don’t like films about rural issues.

Not my cup of tea – (not to one’s liking). First uses of this expression in Great Britain in the early 20th century were positive; a cup of tea was a synonym for acceptability as nearly everyone in the tea-crazed U.K. has high regard for the drink. During World War II, the negative implication began and continues to this day. ■

— Katherine Mikkelsen

Probably not everything you need to know about smartphones

Today, anyone who doesn’t have a “smartphone” is considered a pitiable creature who’s probably waiting for the invention of fire to emerge from the cave. So, I thought I’d investigate smartphones and the current controversy regarding which operating system (OS), i.e., Android or iPhone, to buy.

Just what are smartphones anyway?

Smartphones, for the really uninitiated are cell phones built on a mobile computing platform, with advanced computing ability and connectivity. The first smartphones mainly combined the functions of personal digital assistants (PDAs) and mobile phones or camera phones. Today’s models also add the functions of portable media players, compact digital cameras, pocket video cameras, and GPS navigation.

At the moment, there are two technology giants duking it out for your hearts and minds, but principally your wallets. Giant A is the iPhone based on an OS developed by Apple; Giant B is Google, which offers the Android OS based on Linux. (Microsoft has introduced smartphones that use the Windows 7 OS, which puts Microsoft Office users on familiar ground, but while critics like these phones, the public has largely ignored them, so they aren’t part of our comparison.)

I have no dog in this hunt, since I’m one of those pitiable creatures who has neither system. The info below is based on recent, expert commentary.

Open Source vs. Proprietary Systems

Linux is open source, meaning anyone can use the system and write apps for it, so many

manufacturers offer Android phones and a slew of apps for them. If you choose an iPhone, you must buy it from Apple (or an authorized dealer/carrier) at their price, and apps can only come from them. However, there are tons of apps (some free, some at a price) for the iPhone too. Apps for Android phones can come from anywhere, not just from Google’s official Android market, called Google Play. (One

caution on Android apps: because anyone can offer them, not all Android apps are as secure as they might be.) So score a point for Android for being more democratic, but give one to iPhone too for having a bit more security in the apps.

Experts say that the iPhone is the one to buy if you plan to play a lot of games.

Also, most people seem to think the iPhone takes better pictures. On the other hand, if you want more control over the way your homescreen looks or what the interface looks like, an Android phone is the better choice. Keep in mind, though, that when you’re comparing the two systems, you’re comparing an apple to a whole bag of oranges. The iPhone is the iPhone, whereas there’s a wide selection of Android phones from different vendors and wireless carriers. So you’ll want to compare the features of one Android phone with another’s as well as with the iPhone’s features.

Comparing Costs for Phones & Services

Comparing costs of phones and services is another way to choose. Top-of-the-line Android phones are somewhat less pricey than the iPhone, but there are a multitude of really inexpensive Android

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Smartphones. *Con't from page 4.*

phones too. All the major wireless phone services — AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, and Sprint — discount their expensive smartphones steeply to get your business, as do many smaller carriers. So you might get a \$900 iPhone for \$200. The catch is that you're almost always locked into a two-year contract, and monthly costs can add up quickly, especially if you choose a plan that offers access to internet data. (Exceeding one's data limit and incurring additional charges is common. **See sidebar for ways to conserve your data use.**)

Be aware also that, while some carriers offer plans with "unlimited" data usage, often only a certain portion of it is at high speed. Be sure to read the fine print so you know what you're actually getting.

Let's say you're really drooling over the cool features of smartphones. You get lost trying to find your mailbox, so you hanker for that GPS feature in the worst way, but you don't use your cell that often, and the cost of monthly plans seems prohibitive. Well, there might be an answer for you. T-Mobile offers prepaid (you deposit money in your T-mobile account) pay-as-you-go plans that don't require a contract. Depending on your needs, you pay two or three bucks a day, but **only when you use your phone**. And you can get some pretty spiffy — but not the spiffiest — Android phones at a discount with these plans. No iPhones, though. T-Mobile isn't a carrier for them.

Do the math, and you'll see that pay-as-you-go is more expensive per use than a monthly plan, but if you use your cell only occasionally but still want to be able to access the internet when you do and also get some bells and whistles on your phone, you could get both for a relatively modest cost. And if you find yourself becoming addicted, you can always switch to a monthly plan since there's no contract.

If you're an infrequent cell user, and you only want to text and make calls, T-Mobile offers a prepaid, no-contract plan that's about the cheapest around. You just add money when you've used up your minutes. Put in \$100 initially, and you don't have to refill for a year if you still have minutes left. But then you don't need a smartphone. ■

— *Joan Kinnan*

Five Tips to Minimize Smartphone Data & Save \$\$

- 1 Say no to downloading apps on the go. Instead, use your home computer to get your apps and songs. Experts say that can save up to 10 percent of data usage right there.
- 2 Use manual settings for e-mail. If your phone has the "push" setting on, it is constantly looking for new e-mail, which is a data drain. Change to manual and only get e-mail when you want it.
- 3 Use mobile versions of websites. These sites are data-streamlined for smartphones. Instead of typing "www" before the address, type "m".
- 4 Measure and compress your data. Use an app like Onavo (see article below) to monitor your data usage and compress the data from the apps that are running.
- 5 Watch streaming video on Wi-Fi networks rather than wireless broadband. Those data-heavy videos could send you way over your GB limit if you're not careful.

Ten great work-related apps for iPhones and Androids

There are literally hundreds of thousands of apps for both Android phones and the iPhone. We've chosen ten of the top hundred *useful* apps (no games, travel, or commercial sites, etc.) as rated by *PC Magazine*.

For the iPhone

Find my iPhone (free) — locate your lost or stolen iPhone. If the phone is nearby, it makes a blaring noise.

Onavo (free) — compress your data so you use less and save money. Also available for Androids.

Repeat Timer Pro (\$1.99) — Use it when you're on the clock with work. More functionality than built-in timer.

SugarSync (free) — Get access to your phone files on your laptop, desktop, tablet, etc.

Awesome Note + ToDo (\$3.99) — Choose colors, fonts, icons, etc., to make to-do lists and notes. Comes with a graphical calendar.

Card Munch (free) — If you're a LinkedIn member, put a business card on the phone screen, and it transforms the card into a Contact or a full LinkedIn profile if available.

iPassword (\$9.99) — Store all your passwords, and create one mega-password to get to them. Once set up, you only need to tap the app to log in.

Dragon Dictation (free) — Transcribe what you say into text that can be copied and pasted into other apps. Write a tweet, tap the screen, and there it goes.

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A Freelance Resource

If you haven't heard of the Freelancers International Academy, you might want to visit their website (internationalfreelancersacademy.com). They offer a whole raft of seminars, how-to videos, advice, and other materials. They also sponsor International Freelancers Day. Aside from the fact that they don't put an apostrophe in Freelancers when it's possessive, they seem very savvy. They have great stuff, and most of it is free, though there are books for sale. Joining *is* free, and you can sign up for helpful e-mails. The Academy isn't geared to writers *per se*; it's more about the business of freelancing, but Ed Gandia himself is a successful writer. ■

— The editor

ANOTHER WAY OF LOOKING AT PRICING

How to build the confidence to go for higher-paying clients

As freelancers, we sometimes put self-imposed limits on how much we should charge and which clients we can pursue. Could we really pitch ourselves to huge corporations or highly prestigious clients? Do we dare to ask top dollar for our services, especially in this economic climate? Perhaps we can. Our reluctance — and sometimes fear — to go for the brass ring often stems from the way we value our services.

In an interview with Ed Gandia, a founding partner of International Freelancers Academy, motivational speaker and trainer/coach Jennifer Lee said that she often hears freelancers say, "I don't think I can charge that much," or "I'm probably not qualified to call that client." According to Lee, the problem is that writers usually base their fees on their ideas of the value of their services, rather than the benefits that accrue to the client from a successful project.

Lee says that the first step toward over-

coming self-imposed limits is to detach one's personal value from the value of the outcome. For example, let's say a potential client company wants some promotional materials to attract customers to a fancy new spa they're opening. What would a customer pay for a week's stay at the spa? Conservatively speaking, probably \$1000 or more. So if your project brought only one new customer a week beyond those the spa got from other advertising, that's \$52,000 per year the spa's owners wouldn't otherwise have had. Looked at from the perspective of the value to the client, we'd probably all agree that the project would justify a hefty fee.

Lee suggests that we writers present our projects from that perspective when pitching our services and setting our fees. "They'll get it," she says.

In the interview with Lee, Ed Gandia chimed in with a corroborating phrase, "Never sell with your wallet." He added, "Don't assume you and your prospects

are using the same criteria. You have no idea what their budget is. They might be used to paying a heck of a lot more, and then you come in with a \$1,000 figure when they were expecting somewhere between \$5,000 and \$10,000." Lee even suggested that, if your figure is too low, the prospect may think you don't know what you're doing.

Another caution from Lee: don't base your fee on how long it will take you to do the project; again, base it on the value to the client. (That will probably strike home with all of us who work on hourly rates. Is it re-evaluation time?)

The interview was quite long, and Lee made a number of other cogent points that there isn't space for in this issue, but I can continue in next month's *Stet* if people are interested. Although we all may have heard similar advice before, I thought these people were particularly articulate, and they're in the biz. So if you want more, say so. ■

— Joen Kinnan

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Smartphone Apps

Keynote (\$9.99) — Create presentations similar to PowerPoint's directly from your iPhone.

Dictionary.com (\$2.99) Find what you need immediately on this locally based dictionary. No need to wait for it to load.

For the Android

Downloader (free) — For error-free downloading, use this crash-free downloader that can pause and resume.

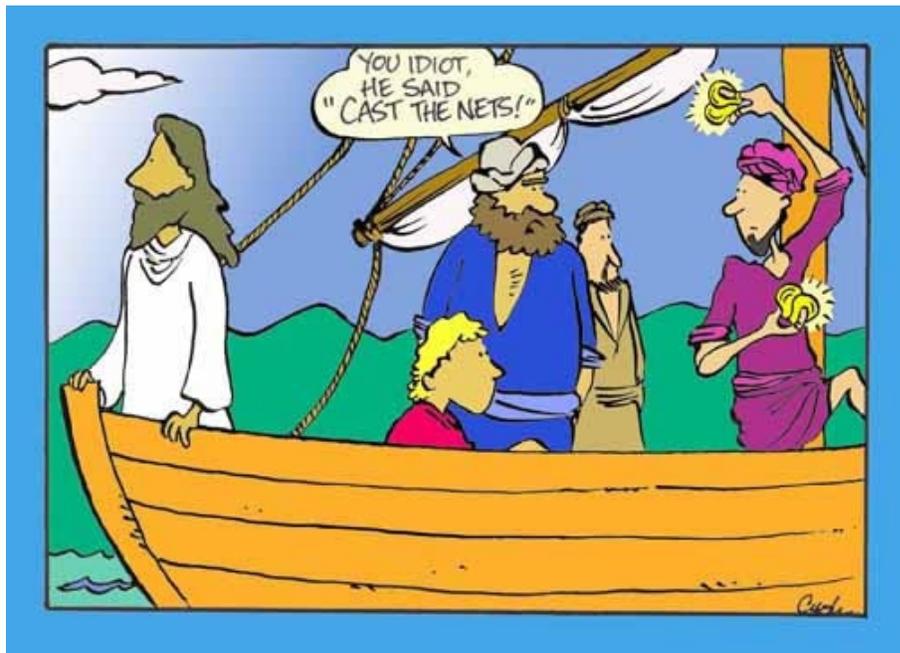
Auto Memory Manager (free) — Set memory usage priorities when the going gets sluggish.

Beautiful Widgets (\$2.99) — Customize your phone's homescreen with artsy weather, clock, battery status, and other really pretty widgets.

Cam Scanner (free) — Take a picture of a document, such as a receipt or driver's license, and save it as a PDF. You can send it via SMS or e-mail or upload it to a cloud server. And it's password-protected.

History Eraser Pro (free) — Delete all the junk on your phone in one shot.

Juice Defender (free) — Disable most battery-draining components when the phone is idle. Though the basic



version is free, *PC Magazine* suggests that folks shell out the \$4.99 for the Ultimate version. Among other things, Ultimate lets you customize when to disable signals.

Lookout (free) — Find your phone when it's lost, and autobackup and restore with this app, but for \$2.99 a month, you also get secure browsing, remote lock/wipe, app permissions management, and advanced backup too.

Mr. Number (free) — Block unwanted calls and texts, blacklist numbers, and report spam.

Xplore (free) — Look at your file system; create, copy, and rename folders; zip and unzip files; and more.

Tiny Flashlight + LED (free) — Turn your phone into a powerful lantern using the screen's brightness and the camera's flashbulb, so you can see even in the darkest places. (So weird, I had to put this one in.)

Some of these apps are available for both iPhone and Android, so if you see one you like, check out whether your phone has it. I purposely tried not to duplicate functions. ■

In the next issue



- **August 14 IWOCFest:** Join IWOCers and friends at Pegasus for a kick-back night of fun.
- **President's column:** Read Dave Epstein's always interesting and informative remarks.
- **Tips, tricks, and other useful information:** Don't know what it will be yet, but it will be handy to know.
- And much more.

