

Stet

Independent Writers of Chicago

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APRIL MEETING PREVIEW

Pros to Give Purr-fect Direct Mail Marketing Tips

According to our ailurophilic (look it up) speakers for the April 8 program, all they know about direct response they learned from cats. "Getting attention from readers, viewers, and web page visitors is no different than getting a cat's attention – it's all about what's in it for them," they say. Direct response copywriters (and cat servants) IWOCer Brent Brotine and Laurel Johnson will take a light-hearted look at the world of action-oriented writing, from sales letters and product mailings to e-mail campaigns and targeted web landing pages.

You'll hear what makes for good direct response copy, where to find the jobs, and how to break in.

You'll hear what separates direct response advertising from other

forms and how direct-response writers use measured results to constantly refine and improve their efforts. You'll understand what background most benefits direct-response writers and what skills you should emphasize when seeking assignments. And you'll learn



what typical pay rates are for direct response projects.

In addition, Brent and Laurel will cover the places where direct-response writers can often find assignments. They'll explain the

prospects at advertising agencies, web firms, and corporate marketing departments. And they'll talk about the pros and cons of online job boards.

IWOCers know Brent Brotine as a former IWOC president and current treasurer and board member. Chicago's direct marketing pros, know him as one of the top writers in the field, an always-reliable – and excellent – copywriter, and a direct-response expert.

Before launching his freelance company in 1995, he worked for ad agencies including Foote, Cone & Belding, Campbell Mithune Esty, and DDB. Today he also toils for three felines – Hershey, Snickers, and Nougat, who don't let him forget what he's learned.

Laurel Johnson worked with Brent at FCB and again on occasional freelance projects since then. Currently, Laurel is working as a freelance copywriter, applying her extensive get-the-sale skills gained from previous work at Frankel, Leo Direct

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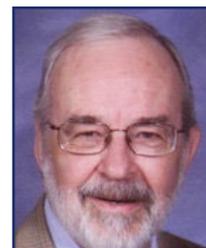
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I Know It When I See It

Ethics. It's a word we don't talk much about at IWOC. That may be because no one sees it as an issue; it's a can of worms best left unopened, or it's viewed as something separate and apart from our day-to-day writing. Maybe the assumption is that we all behave ethically, and so what's the point in discussing it.

Ethics can be difficult to define, but we all have a feeling for what's ethical and what is not. You'll recall Justice Potter Stewart's famous words when attempting to describe the limits of pornography: "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description ['hard-core pornography'] . . . But I know it when I see it." Ethics can be much like that. Different people have differing views, but there's often general agreement about what constitutes ethical behavior and what goes beyond common levels of acceptance.

I've heard of a couple situations recently that have caused me to think about this issue. A message came in to the IWOC Webmaster a few days ago from a former

member: "One of the things I valued about IWOC was the solid connections it made for me — and the folks it also was able to warn me about. Having just been stiffed — for the first time in nearly 21 years — I wanted to make sure this situation didn't befall anyone else.

"It's highly unlikely that the person responsible [name and company withheld] will ever contact anyone at IWOC for assistance. However, should this happen, I would recommend either getting the entire fee up front before working with him or avoiding the assignment altogether. The sum I lost for creating a bio for him was, thankfully, small. However, his dissembling about 'not knowing he had to pay this' (despite being told about this by one of his partners, in addition to me) and refusal to respond to e-mails and voice mail mark him as a bad risk in my book. Thanks for continuing to protect your members."

That's one scenario; here's another: I spoke last week with a colleague who does the same kind



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President's Column CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2.

of work I do, project management and production for books, and we talked about the vicious comments that one of his former clients has posted on some public websites about him and his company. He has, in my estimation, handled the situation professionally, ethically, and reasonably, but the former client is persisting in demanding hundreds of thousands of dollars in unfounded and unwarranted "restitution."

To my colleague and to me, what is happening is simply blackmail to ensure no further public accusations. As we all know, many bloggers are unedited and irresponsible, and what goes up on the Internet stays on the Internet. It never goes away. The damage is done as soon as a mischief-maker hits the "send" key. My colleague is now incurring the expense of suing in order to stop the continuing harassment.

So here's my question to you, fellow IWOC members: How would you handle either or both of these clearly unethical situations? I'd really like to know.

As with these examples, lots of ethical challenges happen all of the time:

1. You overhear a harmful, and perhaps illegal, conversation while onsite with a client.
2. You're asked to pad your hours and pay a kickback

to whomever gave you the particular assignment.

3. Your writing product is falsely claimed as original content by someone else.
4. You're asked both to create an article, for which you'll be paid as a freelance writer, and also to place that article (double dip) in trade publications,

they had worked, with the idea that another member could check with the office (we actually had an office then) before taking on a new client to see whether there was a name match. The two members could then speak directly with each other and share impressions and experiences. Of course, we never made such conversations public; they were strictly one-on-one. Would you like to try that again?



IWOC could, as a professional organization, lend its stature and influence to a member who might find himself or herself in a dispute or even having to initiate or defend a position in legal proceedings. Is that something that you believe would be helpful to you?

Please send me a note about some instances in which you had or have questions about

again for payment but, in this instance, as a public relations consultant.

The list can go on and on. Granted, we don't face these dilemmas on a daily basis, but from time to time, they do come up in one way or another. And it's certainly true that ethics is a two-way street: infractions can — and sometimes do — occur on either side of the client/contractor relationship.

At one time we asked members to send in a list of clients for whom

the behavior of a client or another independent contractor. Let me know whether, how, or to what extent you think IWOC should involve itself in situational ethics with and for our members.

The board of directors will conduct a one-day retreat in May, and I'd like to share your responses at that time. Anonymity is okay; it's the scenarios I'm interested in. The board is always looking for ways in which IWOC can best serve our members. ■

A Sneak Peek at American Writers Museum

The March IWOC meeting was the first presentation of its kind for Nike Whitcomb in her role as executive director of the American Writers Museum. Appointed to the position just two months earlier, Whitcomb was anxious to share details of the ambitious plans for this national literary attraction here in Chicago.



She was joined on the program by Northwestern University arts and humanities professor Reginald Gibbons, a member of the museum's advisory council.

Whitcomb began with the startling fact that there are 17,500 museums in the United States and not one of them is dedicated to American writers, except for a number of homes of writers that have been opened to the public as small museums. Ernest Hemingway's home in Oak Park is one example.

It took Irish-born Malcom O'Hagan, an engineer and business leader with a love of great literature, to foster the idea for a museum celebrating all the great American authors. Chicago was

chosen as the site for its central location and place in literary history. The American Writers Museum is hoping to open in temporary quarters in late 2015 or early 2016 and is looking for 10,000 square feet of space in the Michigan Avenue corridor. The permanent museum will require around 100,000 square feet of space for its exhibits..

The mission of the American Writers Museum is to engage the public in celebrating American writers and explore their influence on our history, identity, culture, and daily lives, and it is already doing that. Gibbons, a

poet, fiction writer, and literary critic, previewed "From Our Neighborhood, Four Chicago Writers Who Changed History." This traveling AWM exhibit features four great Chicago writers: Lorraine Hansberry, Studs Terkel, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Richard Wright, who inspired social change and made America a better, more tolerant society. The exhibit opened at a branch of the Chicago Public Library in March. It will appear in other locations through September.

Whitcomb's career is in non-profit fund-raising, serving as a consultant, feasibility expert, and fundraiser, where she serves as a fundraiser for many arts and cultural institutions. Arts and cultural proj-

ects suffered more than the overall economy during the Great Recession, said Whitcomb, but she is confident it is making a comeback. She said there are opportunities for freelance writers with nonprofits in grant writing, blogs, newspaper and magazine articles, websites, fund-raising, and promotional materials. AWM is looking for volunteers to help with authors who are touring the Chicago area; publicizing events; greeting people at events; talking about the AWM; access to book clubs to build attendance, and branding. Our IWOC members were able to sign up to volunteer after the program. It can also be done online at the AWM website, www.americanwritersmuseum.com. The design plan for the museum, which includes exciting, state-of-the-art interactive exhibits, also is online now after being unveiled to IWOC. ■

— Stewart Truelsen



Photo from Chicago Creative Expo

Did you know...



Check out these April dates in the literary world:

April 23, 1564 and 1616: Both the birth and death dates of William Shakespeare. His actual birthdate is unknown, but we know he was baptized on April 26, 1564. April 23 is his known date of death. Poor Bill, he didn't know if he was coming or going.

April 20, 1841: Edgar Allen Poe's short story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" appears in *Graham's Magazine*. In the tale, Monsieur Dupin uses deductive reasoning to solve the murders of two women in Paris. Most scholars recognize this as the first detective story ever published. Without Poe, no Sherlock.

April 18, 1924: the first crossword puzzle book was published by Simon & Shuster. April 19, 1924 was the first day puzzlers threw said book across the parlor in a fit of frustration.

April 13, 1953: *Casino Royale* by Ian Fleming was published, spawning a James Bond 007 franchise that continues to this day. Readers everywhere imbibe martinis that are shaken not stirred and are titillated by tongue-in-cheek female character names.

April 3, 1955: the ACLU announced it would defend Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* against obscenity charges. The 1957 court decision declared the book not obscene, and also heaped praise, stating the book had "redeeming social importance." You're welcome, *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

April, 1984: "It was a bright, cold day in April and the clocks were striking thirteen." So begins George Orwell's prescient, dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-four*. Yup, Big Brother is watching, just ask Edward Snowden. ■

— Katherine Mikkelson

IWOC Introduces a New Perk

Oh, the advantages of attending an IWOC meeting: The invaluable information! The stimulating networking! The free snacks! And yet, as much as we all wish we could always be present, there are times we just can't, due to deadlines, vacations, flooded basements, whatever.

Well, hey, guess what? On those occasions when you can't come to the meeting, let the meeting come to you!

IWOC is now posting high-quality audio podcasts of the meetings in the Members Resources section of www.iwoc.org.



Download and listen on your computer, laptop, or mobile device. And as soon as they're available, usually right after the meeting, you'll also be able to download PDFs of any presentation materials — handouts, PowerPoint visuals, and more.

Just one caveat: You have to be an IWOC member to have access. Of course, nothing replaces attending a meeting and:

- interacting with fellow freelancers, exchanging business cards, advice, laughs
- having your questions answered directly by the speaker
- did we mention the delicious and free snacks?
- continuing the conversation at a post-meeting dinner with the guest speaker (at a great Chicago restaurant, mind you).

However...

On those rare occasions when you simply cannot attend, from now on you'll never have to kick yourself for missing the business-boosting info that all our special guest speakers provide. And even if you do attend, the podcasts will serve to refresh your memory or fill in any blanks. IWOC Meeting Podcasts. Just another great perk that —

- 1 Adds even more mileage to your IWOC membership
- 2 Gives you another outstanding reason to join if you're not already an IWOC member!

Members: Go to Member Resources on our site and check out the IWOC Meeting Podcasts from November 2013 (Advanced Tactics to LinkedIn); January 2014 (Marketing Your Freelance Services Via Social Media); February ([*Becoming a Successful Blogger](#)); and March ([*American Writers Museum](#)). They're already online! For asterisked podcasts, presentation materials are also available. ■

— Laura Stigler Marier

Get Purr-fect Direct Mail Marketing Tips

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.

and other direct marketing agencies to her healthcare and financial clients. Laurel's commitment to getting measurable results for her clients has given her a strong track record of writing direct response that makes sales copy and press releases get opened and read. Her projects run the gamut from a web site about restaurant ice cream machines to press releases about high-speed trading to a hospital booklet about new-baby care. She specializes in fund-raising, membership, publishing, and patient education, and she's comfortable writing direct mail, Web, print, collateral materials, and, of course, blogs.

IWOC monthly meetings are held at the Gratz Center, 126 E. Chestnut Street, adjacent to the historic Fourth Presbyterian Church. Start-

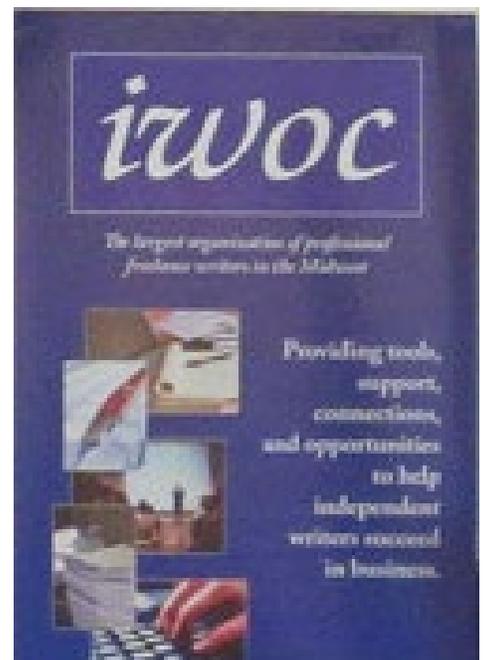
ing this month we have a new room: 4B on the 4th floor. Networking with snacks and beverages begins at 5 p.m.; the program at 6. Visitors are cordially invited. Nonmembers pay \$10 with online preregistration, \$15 at the door. Discounted parking after 5:00 p.m. is available (with validation coupon from the Gratz Center) at 900 N. Michigan Avenue. After the meeting, all attendees are invited to join IWOC members at a buy-your-own dinner at Frankie's Scaloppini, where we'll chat, pick up more tips, and in general have a really good time.

This program promises to be the cat's meow, so plan to attend on April 8. (But you'll have to leave your own puss-in-boots at home.) See you there! ■

— Joen Kinnan

Expo Update

Our table-staffers had a great time at the Creative Expo, and we had a lot of visitors, many of whom showed an interest in IWOC. No new members so far, but quite a few signed up for further info. We also have a really slick new sign that we displayed. See below. ■



“Never use a long word where a short one will do.” — George Orwell

In the next issue. . .



- **May 13, IWOC Monthly Meeting:** Writing is a “know” brainer. Speaker Gerald “Solutionman” Haman will tell us how to use our whole brains to think better, faster, and smarter.
- **President’s column:** Don’t miss reading what’s on Jim Kepler’s mind. It’s always interesting and sometimes provocative.
- Helpful tips on software, hardware, and/or just plain biz practices, and much more.

