

Carol Tice:

Hi, everybody. It's Carol Tice here with the wonderful Linda Formichelli.

Linda Formichelli:

Hello.

Carol Tice:

And welcome to our final Pitch Clinic Q&A call.

Linda Formichelli:

Yes. We are at the final stage of Pitch Clinic. Many of you have moved on to module four for the final picky edits of your queries and LOIs, and that's the module where we do the final polish to really make your pitches shine. Carol is going to talk a little bit later about who's qualifying and moving on. We have a lot of like kind of technical questions about that but I wanted to talk about what I'm seeing in the forums first. And the very first thing is I want to really encourage you to take a look at the critiques we've been doing on other student assignments in the forums. I spent like six hours in the LOI forum today and I think I said the same thing to every single person, which I'm going to talk about below. I find the instructors and I are saying the same things over and over again. So, if you read a couple of these critiques you will learn from them and then you won't make those same mistakes.

And there are a few things I've noticed while critiquing assignments, especially for the LOIs because that's where I was focused today, that I'd like to bring up for those of you who are still working on your assignments. The queries are looking pretty good at this point again so the LOIs is what I'm going to focus on right now. First, many of you are leading in with some sort of statement that shows that you've researched the business and that's really great because you want to show I know your business. I understand you. I can help you. The problem comes when you don't mention right up top that you're a freelance writer so it comes off as a fan letter, like two whole paragraphs of how great the company is and you like this article and you like that, and they don't know why you're writing. In many cases the writer doesn't mention until even the very end of the letter that they want to write for the business and they offer all sorts of ideas for blog posts and case studies, but it's not clear that they want to be the one to write them and the prospect thinks you're just handing them some free marketing consulting like, 'I really like your business and I have some ideas for something you can do.' That's not at all indicating that you're a writer and you want to do this for them.

And the fixes for these problems are really easy. First you can tell the prospects who you are right up top like, 'As a freelance writer who specializes in retail marketing, I loved reading your article on top marketing mistakes college store owners make in your March issue.' And then when you list a few things you want to do for the prospect, and this is something else you should be doing is telling them what they're missing according you your research and how you can do it for them, you want to make it clear you will be the one writing them. So instead of saying, 'I have three ideas for blog

posts.' You would say, 'I have ideas for three blog posts I'd like to write for you.' You just want to be really clear on that.

Another problem I'm seeing is that the LOIs often lead in with flattery, which is usually fine, but the flattery is reading kind of false or the writer is laying it on really too thick, and I know we have a sort of formulative way of building these LOIs and you just kind of want to plug in the information like, okay, flattery here. Ideas here. But you really don't want to just be plugging in information just to fill out a form. You really want to be thinking about it and telling the prospect what exactly it is that you saw in your research and how it resonates with you specifically as a freelance writer of this type. Telling the prospect their business is interesting, beneficial, fabulous and just laying it on thick is not only going overboard, which can allow suspicion, but it doesn't show you know or understand their business.

So the solution to that is to try and find something you really admire that you can compliment. For example maybe you've actually used one of their products or you're passionate about dogs so you especially like an article they ran on rescue dogs, or you have a background in retail and when you worked in retail you saw these particular problems so it was so nice to see it addressed in this article. You want to make it really personal instead of generic. Remember, you're not just like filling out a form and making a really generic LOI. You want it to be really personal and you want to put thought into each piece to make it as convincing...I mean the word I like to use is rich. It needs to be rich with information and telling the prospect how you will benefit them and why you are the best person to do it, and you can't do that with a sort of generic form LOI. And let's see. Oh, Carol, you wanted to mention something here.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I want to mention a lot of things. Excuse my cough. Yeah. I had seen one where the writer said they were the right person to represent this author profile they wanted to pitch, and when you talk that way it sounds like you're a PR person. And a big thing people need to remember is that editors are getting pitched by tons of PR people as well as freelance writers. It's like being nibbled to death by bees, just the amount of PR emails they're getting. You know, 'The client's business is amazing. You should write about it. Blah, blah, blah.' All the time. So you really need to be really clear that you are a freelance writer and the ideas are what you want to write for them or they could easily get confused.

The thing I wanted to say about Linda's point is, yeah, in general on the LOIs just seeing too much sort of by the numbers, you know, 'I read your article about this. It's great. You should hire me. I'm really amazing. Let me talk all about me.' And not enough digging into what is this company doing now? What's a missing piece that they're not doing that you can add? Is their blog abandoned? Do they need case studies? Do they not have any team bios? Do they have an upcoming tradeshow they're going to that maybe they need marketing materials for? And then connecting the dots between things you see that they need and your specific experience, if at all possible.

I mean I saw one where the writer had turned in all kinds of experience of theirs, which was great, but it didn't line up with what she was seeing them doing. Every word in the LOI should be in service of showing them why you are the solution to all their problems and that means the main focus is their problems, which is what they care about. I saw a lot of LOIs that begin, 'I would love to write for you.' Guess what? We don't want to mean to you but they don't care what they would love to do. They don't care. They care about their problems.

We always have to remember this about prospects and go to their problems, and then why you're the solution, and connect if you can your specific knowledge of an industry type of writing to what they need done. 'I know how to do this. You need this done.' We're just not seeing that being done in the kind of way that just nails it where they're going to go...if they're hiring freelance writers they're going to look at it and go, 'This is the person who is the solution to our problem. They understand our writing style because this is written in the kind of way we communicate with our customers and they have the expertise we need and we can just plug them in.'

And that's what you need to understand. In the world of freelance writing what they're looking for is plug and play, and your job is really to convince them that you will bring that. They can just wind you up and off you'll go and you'll take care of this blog for them, you'll write case studies for them, and they won't have to think about it again. That's sort of the win you're going for.

Linda Formichelli:

I saw a really good example of this in the forum that I was very impressed with. It needed a little bit of work. I did have some comments and I can't remember who the writer was because my memory is awful, even though I critiqued it like 10 minutes ago, but she was writing an LOI to a chiropractor and she mentioned that she's a chiropractic patient and health writer but she also dug and saw not only do they not have any case studies and here is why you want case studies, but she looked into their seven biggest competitors in the area and saw that none of them had any case studies so if they did it they would be ahead by being the first. So I thought that was really cool that she did that much research and really I think it's very impressive to the prospect.

Carol Tice:

That's a great angle. I've noticed none of your competitors are doing X or I've noticed you're competitors are doing X and you're not.

Linda Formichelli:

You're not.

Carol Tice:

Both of those work really well. Here's a way you can stand out and/or you are lagging behind what is standard industry marketing in your sector and you need to catch up. Both of those totally rock.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. So another thing I wanted to mention is not to forget to make an ask at the end, which is where you tell the prospect what you'd like them to do or what you want to happen next. A lot of writers are leaving this out so the letter kind of fizzles out without the prospect knowing what to do. And another problem I'm seeing is that a lot of writers and with the ask, 'If you're interested give me a call,' and that puts the onus on the prospect to decide that they need you, they want to hire you and then they have to pick up the phone and call you up. And it's such a big commitment on their part that it's a very easy way or a very easy ask for them to just say no to, which totally shuts down the conversation.

Your goal with LOIs is not necessarily to get an assignment right off the bat, which is not always going to happen, but to build a relationship with the prospect. So if you end with an ask like, 'Give me a call if you're interested,' if they're not interested then that's the end of the road. Instead, try to think of an ask that makes it easy for the prospect to say, 'Yes.' Just a small ask because that opens the door to a conversation in a relationship which is really what leads to assignments. One of my favorite asks is, 'May I send you some clips,' although there are many other ways you can do this as well.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Before you go into your last point, the other reason I hate, 'If you're interested give me a call,' is because like how do you followup on that? How do you ever know when the end of this is where they weren't interested?

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. That shuts it down.

Carol Tice:

You're just waiting for the rest of your life for them to give you a call. There's sort of no good way to follow up. Along with, 'May I send you some clips,' I think another way to roll is, 'I'll call you next week to see if you're interested,' particularly with business LOIs, and they don't have to do anything. If they're interested they kind of put it on a pile and they go, 'Oh, this person is going to be calling me. Okay. I'm going to hang on to this,' and it's all on you. Remember you're the one who wants the gig. My least favorite is when people say, 'You should go check out my website and then give me a call if you like what you see.' Like way too much work for them.

Linda Formichelli:

Right. And you know Cindy has a question I'd like to address right now. 'Is asking for the gig at the end too big of an ask?' I think when you're talking about writing a query letter or something to a magazine editor saying, 'May I write this for you?' is not too big of an ask, but I can't put my finger on why. What do you think, Carol? Because I always end my queries with, 'Can I write this for you?'

Carol Tice:

It's the point of the letter is that you want a gig, so I guess I don't find that weird to at the end to say, 'May I write this for you?' It's not a closing I personally have used but I don't see anything wrong with it.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. But for an LOI it's somehow different. If you're writing to a business and you want to write some blog posts for them we usually want to end with an ask that's going to get a yes and start building a relationship. Are you there?

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Just trying to help someone here that's not getting their audio to work. I am. So, let's talk about how the last week of class is going to go.

Linda Formichelli:

Wait. I have one more point.

Carol Tice:

Oh, you're not ready for that. I'm sorry. To your last point.

Linda Formichelli:

No. It's just one more thing I'm seeing almost every LOI is that for some reason when it gets to talking about your credentials suddenly writers start getting all stilted and business like, and they also go on and on and you want to keep your credentials really short. But writers are saying, 'I am a freelance writer. Here. I have written for this. I am really great.' And you know contractions go a long way towards making your writing conversational and reader friendly, which works for most magazines even trades, and I know it sounds like such a tiny thing but just the difference between writing 'I am a freelance writer and I would like to write this for you,' and instead saying, 'I'm a freelance writer and I'd like to write this for you,' the difference is huge. That's it.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. It is amazing and conversational tone is the way business talks now. People just don't sound like a stiff business letter from the '50s anymore. I know so few companies and situations that sound like that anymore. I think a lot more companies around sound like MailChimp which when something goes wrong something emailed that says, 'Eep, eep. Something's wrong.' Business tone is just getting more and more casual all the time. So, really keep that in mind. I'd say that I didn't have that sense that people are really going for the writing style particularly in the LOIs that it was all...and that's the other thing that makes it feel pretty rote and like a template. You need to take our template and then read their site and read their marketing, and then write it like they would write it because that's what gets you the gig.

Linda Formichelli:

Like you should write it.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. This query letter, this LOI is a writing audition and every word in it matters, and yeah, whether it's a contraction or not. You may just think we're being insanely picky but it makes a difference. It really does.

So we know many people have questions on how this final week will work. Everybody has until Thursday, the 30th to get in homework if you want to qualify for the Mastermind Call bonus that we are having in a month and to stay in the running to be a possible case study and receive a class refund. I already saw someone said, 'Can't it be Friday?' In reality, the last day is today and we have extended it to Thursday. It's been five weeks. So that means you have written one query and one LOI and you have gotten an editor's okay in all four modules, or if we went crazy in mod two or three and just said, 'That's awesome. You're done.' If you could just post a note in mod four with a link back to that so we can help keep track of who got through all the modules cause we are going to need to sit and tally that all up coming up at the end of the week. But so that means you've posted in mod one and someone said, 'Go to mod two,' and you posted in mod three, in two and three people said, 'Go to mod four,' and then we did a picky edit or we said, 'You're good to go.' If we just have a few picky edit suggestions we'll let you know that you should just clean it up and send it and it's basically ready to go. If you have a question about whether it is all signed off on just post at the bottom of your mod four with that question and we'll let you know.

Please realize that it will continue to take up to 48 hours to get a response from our team which means that in reality all of your homework really needs to be posted today to guarantee yourself that it's getting done through us on Thursday. If you post something today and we don't get to it and it's our bad we will count it. Don't worry. But if we get 500 ideas tomorrow or mod two queries you're really pushing the envelope of whether we're going to get to them. We cannot make our editors work around the clock. They have day jobs and are here to do the amount of work they do and there has been five weeks to write one query and one LOI and that is a big hunk of time, and if you want to do this for a living you're going to go a lot faster than that. As you'll see in the coming months we're going to be asking you to send out two of these every week, essentially, on average or eight of them all in one week I guess if that's your style.

So April 30 is the official end of the homework review portion of this class but Linda and I do look at drafts after the official end of our classes so we will be peaking our heads in. In May you can continue to learn and get feedback though our turnaround times may not be as fast.

Linda Formichelli:

Our editors will be gone.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. The editors will be gone. Your access to the forums and the materials will not expire as long as you have made all your payments, _____ (17:51) people and you are also free to participate with future Pitch Clinic classes at no additional charge. We know some gurus who make you pay again but we do not. So you've got that as well. And the

first thing I want to get to is that we have two different people asking about how different their queries need to be. Vanessa wanted to know if she could write many queries all about _____ (18:18). Linda, what do you want to say?

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. One thing I do want to say is if you're going to write a completely different query on a completely different aspect of the same place, I guess we should count it. It's kind of gray area but in reality you are not going to make much of living writing about one extremely narrow topic like your hometown so we would love to see you branch out because the point of this whole challenge is not just that we want everybody to get refunds but we're looking for case studies. We want people to be successful at the end of all of this and to do that you need to really kind of broaden your focus a little bit so we'd love to see you doing that with the eight that you send after class.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. And to get a lot of wind as a freelance writer and really to get to the level where you do this for a living you need a lot of ideas, and it's just unlikely you're going to be able to get assignment after assignment and they're all going to be about one tiny topic about how to deal with your autistic kid's one issue or one town you live in. And the important thing is to learn to iterate a lot of different ideas about different topics and different things.

Linda Formichelli:

They can be in the same field or the same niche.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. But you're going to need more than one idea essentially. We also had the question of, 'What if I'm sending a query to a market I've written for before?' I don't think we have the bandwidth to do the sleuthing work to find out who has written for who before. So I'm not going to be able to hire an investigator to detect all that. I'd say that if we see you sending six different queries in a row to one place we may start looking at whether, yeah, you've already written for them and whether this is all kind of bogus. But what we'd like people to do is not sit around thinking of ways to game the system here, but as Linda said, think about ways to get a lot of wins in May, and the way you're going to do that is to iterate a lot of ideas and send them to a lot of different markets.

And we have never offered this guarantee before so, like Linda said, they're kind of just a little gray area here and what I'd recommend is you want to stay out of our gray area if you want credit for your pitches. So the focus starting today is to wrap up homework if you can and then to move on. As of today you're good to go to send queries out of BCCF if you want. It counts. Today you can send something out.

Linda Formichelli:

And let me say we don't want to hold people back in any way so we are going to try to push people through as much as we can. So if you posted two days ago and we still

haven't got back to you, we're not going to be like, 'Sorry. You're not going to finish.' We are going to make it happen so don't worry.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. If it's our bad that we're behind, don't worry, but if you're still posting ideas in model one realize that it's highly unrealistic that in the next two days you're going to get through four modules of this class that were supposed to take five weeks to get through. So enough about that. Let's go to some regular old questions. Do you want to take Suzanna's?

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. Hold on a second. Suzanna says, 'Learning so much. Awesome. Though you've been advising us not to pitch to big name pubs is there any harm in sending out some of our pitches to both the market we've been working through in Pitch Clinic and a long shot?' And I'm thinking I don't think that was me recommending that you shouldn't pitch to big guys because I'm all about why not? I've had people break into magazines like Self in Woman's Day with no clips at all. So, I say if you want to send to whoever it is that you are proposing to send to in Pitch Clinic and you want to send it to a long shot, yeah, absolutely. I mean the worse they could do is say no, so you have nothing to lose.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I mean we're fans of simultaneous submission. About the only time I tell people maybe you want to pitch down the scale to maybe a regional, a more niche national with a smaller circulation is if you've been trying the biggies and you're not getting anywhere, nothing is ever happening that maybe it would help you to come in with some clips, and it's just easier. They just get pitched less. I mean it works for some people to just kind of start at the top and for some people...I did it the old fashion way. Like first I wrote for a business weekly and then I wrote a monthly business magazine, and then a monthly city magazine, and then I wrote for Entrepreneur, and I think that is pretty typical in what ends up happening is you start at a smaller market and you work your way up the chain and this could help you. But yeah, if you have something you just think is so absolutely perfect for Costco Connection or Parade or one of the big guns just send it to them.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. And she has a second question. 'Of course our email address should be professional rather than silly but does the domain make a difference? I'm about to leave my academic job and have a Gmail account. Any problem with a Gmail or do you recommend getting something else?' I actually have a blog post on this called Do You Have an Editor-Repelling Email Address? Which I'm going to post in the chat right now, and I've actually interviewed editors about this and they all agreed that while having your own domain name is absolutely the best and they recommend against domains like Yahoo and Hotmail, Gmail is kind of like the one that's okay of all those three email systems, and they can't put their finger on why but it's just this impression that Gmail is cool, Yahoo not cool. So, don't shoot the messenger. I didn't make that up but I've been using a Gmail address for years.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I think it is weird how Gmail doesn't seem stupid to us but like AOL and Hotmail and Juno...if you have some antiquated provider that you seem like a dork, and we don't know what...there's nothing to be done. So Cora says, 'It's becoming more popular in the UK to contact editors with a pitch on social media. Well, it's not just the UK. Would you recommend this?' Well, yes, but not that you're trying to send the whole pitch on social media. You connect with them in social media and then you move it to email to do your whole pitch. She said, 'I guess that's another whole course on how to fit your pitch into 140 characters.' No. Do not try to actually pitch your idea in 140 characters. LinkedIn to me is the most common place this goes on and to reach out on LinkedIn is like, 'Hey, are you the right person to send a story idea about this topic?' And you see if they respond. Like 'If so I'm happy to mail you the whole thing or just send it to you on regular email.' Linda, what's your reaction?

Linda Formichelli:

Well, I was going to say, she said in the UK people are actually pitching on social media, and it's like well, if that's the way they're doing it there and you're pitching a UK publication or business, sure, but here I'd say editors are still probably not cool with getting a whole pitch over Twitter or Facebook, or whatever. It was several years ago though that I interviewed editors on this and they gave me some guidelines like definitely don't pitch on Facebook and LinkedIn is okay. But yeah, you definitely want to make the contact first and then ask, 'May I pitch you and are you the right person? And if so can I do it here or would you rather give me your email address?'

Carol Tice:

Yeah. The thing I notice is just when people try and do that on Twitter where they write the like part one, continued, and _____ (26:41) it looks like five different tweets that has a message in it. I just think everyone thinks they are such a loser and they're just like, 'Okay. You just do not get how this works at all.' So, I don't know. I guess I have never tried to lay out a whole pitch like inside social media especially not without first just connecting. The number one thing to know is that social media is about socializing and connecting and creating relationships, and you kind of want to do that part on social media and then if they invite you to go ahead and try and pitch them in one tweet or something and that's what they're into, then yeah, go for it, but most people I know are like, 'Yeah. Here's my email to send the query.'

So, I think we have answered some of these questions about how the class is working, and yeah, Beena, if you're confused about whether your mod four is signed off on just ding us in that thread and we will get to you. And like we say, no one is going to not get an invite to the mastermind because we are slow. If it's in today...

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. We are starting to get people who are posting and then like bumping it up a few hours later because they're freaking out because it's the end of class, and we have 100 posts going up per day and we will get to it.

Carol Tice:

We are dancing as fast as we can. Chris says, 'If we've contacted editors before pitching them and finding the correct editor to submit to should we mention the prior contact in the pitch?' If you mean the thing where like you asked Joe Smith and he said, 'Oh, yeah. The person for that is Alecia Jones.' Yeah, I always do that. I say, 'Oh, Joe Smith said you were the person I should talk to about this.' Yeah. Absolutely.

Linda Formichelli:

Or if Chris might be saying if you contacted the editor and they said, 'Yeah. I'm the right person.' I would say, yeah, email. I would start with, 'Thank you for letting me know...or we were in contact last week and you let me know...' Yeah, a little reminder would be helpful.

Carol Tice:

So Sarah says, 'When calling _____ (27:45) I found that if they're traveling sometimes they want to refer to me to someone else for quotes but if I really want to speak to them is it appropriate just to say so and suggest scheduling a time when they return?' Well, if you have time to wait till they return. I'm often on deadlines where that isn't going to fly. If you've got all the time in the world to wait you can just tell them that. 'Oh, yeah. We can do it in two weeks when you get back,' and see if they'll do it. I don't know, Linda.

Linda Formichelli:

Sorry, I was looking at the next question. Yeah. I was going to say the exact same thing you said. If you have the time, yeah.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. So can you say anything about pitching to the online version of a big magazine versus the print version? Is that a good way to break in? I found it was. Actually, I went the other direction. I was in the print first and then online.

Linda Formichelli:

Me too.

Carol Tice:

But I do think it can be a farm club for getting into print. Actually on Forbes I did do the blog first and then I got in print.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. And you would pitch them pretty much in the same way especially if it's just a big print magazine and they have additional content online that looks just like the print stuff but it's online only. I would pitch it the same way.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Online, often it is a different silo and often I find the online ones are more accessible, and the other thing is you don't have the whole six months' nightmare of how timely...how you have to somehow cook up a story that'll be timely six months from

now cause online it's like the lead times are more like six weeks than six months, or three weeks. So, I think sometimes there are just ideas that are a better fit. Yeah. Yeah. Joan had said, 'Friday is May 1st. Can that be the dead line for mod four acceptance?' No. As we said, we have extended it from today to Thursday. I think we've been over what mod four acceptance is. Somebody says, 'Yeah. You're good to go.'

Yeah. Bump up anything that we haven't looked at. I am actually going through the forms and targeting...my whole priority is anything that is more than a day old to try and make sure that nothing sits around for too long. So I'm dancing as fast as I can on that but I discovered that my tool only takes 50 things so it's possible I don't see them all but I have two different admin tools we're using. We're scanning through them constantly trying to prioritize and make sure people are not waiting. So trust me. We are working, working on it.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. But if it's two days old, bump it up. It might have _____ (31:35).

Carol Tice:

Yeah. That should have been dealt with.

Linda Formichelli:

I apologize for that. Yeah.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Are some story ideas typically a hard sell for a new writer like an exposé or a controversial topic? Yeah. Absolutely. Big investigative story is, 'I'm going to prove the lies of the right wing...I'm going to prove there's a scandal going on in local government.' It's very hard to get these assignments without a journalism degree or a track record writing for daily papers. They really worry that you don't understand the ethics. With controversies they worry that you have an agenda and you're going to favor one side of it. You're not going to understand how important it is to get everybody's different opinions into the story _____ (32:25) journalistic balance. So yeah, they are tough.

I think in my step-by-step guide, bootcamp, if you're in the Den or the eBook if you're not, I talk about a whole bunch of easy sell, new writer ideas. A, you found one really interesting business or personality, you know, book reviews, play reviews, restaurant reviews. I mean these aren't the kind of things for Pitch Clinic because those you tend to just write up and send in and maybe they use them, but one-source stories and/or you go to a city council meeting and write up what happened, and for somebody you get an assignment to go do event coverage. You cover a thing that's happening and you say what happened. The fewer sources, the shorter the length the easier is it to not make a mess out of it and the more an editor can maybe take a flyer on you.

Linda Formichelli:

You know what? Let me take this question from the chat. Rachelle says, 'But we can't pitch online versions of print magazines for the purposes of Pitch Clinic, correct?' That is incorrect, Rachelle. Yes. You can definitely pitch online magazines. Absolutely. Online versions of print magazines, online only magazines. We don't care.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. What we want is paying markets. Not like I'm going to send this idea to Pro Blogger's blog.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. Not just post freebies, stuff like that, but yeah.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. A lot of the online exclusives that magazines put up pay real nicely actually. I mean I used to get 600 bucks for reported stories I did for Entrepreneur's blog that were feature articles. So, yeah. Absolutely. We don't care. And we're also not going to be able to vet whether or not the business or charity you're pitching an LOI to has in fact a marketing budget and can pay writers or would want you to do it pro bono. That's a gray area where we throw in the towel there. Hopefully you have the sense to pitch a charity of a size or a business of a size that would be likely to be able to pay you some real money because you want to get paid, yes.

Linda Formichelli:

Yes. And you know what? Melinda has this question I just want to get to. 'If our first idea was greenlit but we've hit a snag is it too late to start with trying to get a fresh idea greenlit to qualify for the testimonial and refund?'

Carol Tice:

Probably.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah, because we really want everything in, everything, today because we need two days to basically critique everything.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I mean posting something like first thing tomorrow morning is really pushing the outside envelope of...we kind of need 24 hours, 36 hours to get through everything. So, that's the deal on that. Let's see. Hang on. I need to scroll down. It says, 'What happens if we get a response other than cartwheels? Could we post a question if an editor asks something I don't understand?' I guess. But hopefully you'll understand everything and if you don't understand you'll ask that editor to clarify. I think people are always just so terrified to talk to their editors and they don't understand that pros...an editor calls me and says, 'Oh, I want you to write this article. It's about how to pick a retirement home.' And I'm like, 'Okay. So there's like four different types of retirement homes and we need one of each and they need to each be in a different market Alaska flies to and do you

have some advertisers I need to talk to, and do I need to make sure it's not too depressing and about like the nursing home level?'

I'm asking questions and questions, and that's what you should do when you get an assignment. I talk to my editors a lot about sourcing. Who do you think is the kind of expert for this? What about this book author or what about this academic, or what about this blogger? Do you think they work as an expert? Just ask, ask, ask. Use your gut in this. It's like really super important. If you get that twinge in your gut where you're like, 'Oh, this makes me feel nervous,' ask your editor. 'I was thinking about quoting this guy as my expert. Is that okay?' Like I remember for Alaska Air I wanted to quote Ramit Sethi from I Will Teach You To Be Rich, and he has a big blog but he also has a best-selling book but he's really young, and so I just didn't know if he would work for them so I just said, 'Hey, I just think this guy would really work for your retirement tips for 20 year olds section of this how to plan for retirement article, and what do you think?' Just bounce, bounce, bounce the ideas off them.

Linda Formichelli:

And now Cynthia wants to know if we have a blog post about the process after an editor greenlights a project, and in fact I do. It's called Holy Crap. I Just Got an Assignment. Now what? And I just posted it in the chat and it's all about the things you need to think of before you accept an assignment because often an editor is going to give you all the information except for the most important to you, which is how much they pay, what rates they're buying, when they pay. So that's all in that post.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I have one too. Here it is.

Linda Formichelli:

Too funny.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I do think people concentrate so much on getting sort of the nibble and then they sort of fall off a cliff if they actually get the assignment, and we do see people train wreck where then they turn something in and it's not good, and it's a big problem. Then they blow up their relationship. Yeah. So Alex says, 'I found the other day one of my intended pubs doesn't pay that much. Still going to send it through.' Yeah. Go for it. How do you find the editor for an online magazine? Open up our handout that's in mod five for this week called Seven Ways to Find Editors' Emails, and enjoy. There are many, many ways to track them down.

Linda Formichelli:

I just pasted a bunch more questions into the document that came up in questions. One is, 'Should I mention in queries that I have a bachelors in journalism?' I don't see why not. You could just mention it really quickly. 'I have a bachelors in journalism and I've written for X, Y and Z.'

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I don't know that they care so much but if it makes you feel happy...if it makes you feel confident doing it, do it.

Linda Formichelli:

One thing they don't care about and I've interviewed editors on this is I'm a member of ASJA or I'm a member of NWU, or I took AWAI certification course, or you know. No.

Carol Tice:

No. Patty says, 'Can you give examples of great email subject lines? I'm wondering if you want to post if it's for a query or is it for an LOI.' I mean some of us just go with freelance writer with a story idea for you or freelance writer from Forbes, Entrepreneur and More with an idea for you. I think most of the pitches I've ever sent out I just use my headline cause as you may know, I'm obsessed with headlines and I work really hard on them and write ones that I think are really sexy. And the fact is if you've done your headline right putting your headline in the subject line should get it opened because the editor is going to go, 'Ooh, that's a topic that would interest our readers.' So, any of those really work. I don't know. Other thoughts, Linda.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. Well, I would definitely start with pitch from a freelance writer because they get so many PR pitches that even if you just put up the subject, your title and it sounds really good it could sound like you're the person's representative and you're just trying to pitch them as a subject or...

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I mean it is important to have something good in there because, like me, most editors are getting 100, 200 emails a day and they're going through and they're deleting a lot of stuff without reading it, just like I do. So, yeah. You want it to be something that's going to get their attention, not in a silly way like, 'Read this or I'll shoot the dog,' but you know, in a professional way.

So Tory says, 'For LOIs do you need expert quotes in a hybrid LOI? I thought you did not and that was biggest setback in the homework.' Usually a quick mention of who you would talk to I think does it because you just don't have space if you're doing a couple three quick ideas within an LOI.

So Rebecca has a good Pitch Clinic question. 'Do the query and LOI we have posted in the homework count as two of the eight pitches you can send?' Yes. You can use those as two of your eight ideas.

Linda Formichelli:

You should.

Carol Tice:

We're hoping those are going to get assignments after all the work we had to do in helping you make them awesome. Let's see. 'Some sites only accept queries through a form. You submit the whole essay instead of a query.' That's a personal essay submission. That's why personal essays aren't part of Pitch Clinic is because you don't query. You just send in the essay.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah, but her question is if they have a query form should she use the form or should she sidestep it and email an editor even though they specifically say they want the form? If they have a form just for queries I would probably just use the form.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I don't know. Yeah. Leann says, 'We can't pitch to mags we've already written for during May?' I'm not sure who that is but as we've gone over, we do not have the detective resources to detect who you may have already written for so you can pitch them. 'Can we post questions in the general forum?' Yes. If you get editor questions that you have questions about. 'Thanks for being willing to look at our stuff in May as well,' says Barbara. No problem. 'Experts for LOIs. For some reason that's been harder because I can't find them on LinkedIn.' I'm not sure what you mean.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. You don't need to contact experts necessarily for LOIs unless it's such a key expert that you absolutely have to have them in there and the idea would fall apart without them. The LOI is usually just...and this is the trick I use. I'll interview experts like...and then you mention a couple, but you're not saying you're going to get their in particular but you've done your research, you have some good ideas, you know who you'd like to approach, and that's good enough.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. So if we post the homework but it's not looked at before April 30 then that's our problem. If it's posted by end of day today...I mean the problem that you have is what if we want you to rewrite it again and then it's like we're past the end. So, hopefully you're at mod four and it's just like a picky edit and we're just going to have a couple of quick little suggestions for you cause otherwise I think you're going to run out of time. Let me hit refresh here and then the questions.

Linda Formichelli:

Aliza says, 'Isn't it an online form for queries like the black hole email address?' I kind of feel like if they went to the effort of setting up a form and they say, 'We really want you to pitch through that form,' I would do it, but you know all of these things...like we cannot tell you 100% what is the answer. We don't know. We contradict one another. We might say one thing today and another thing tomorrow because it's all a gray area where you need to go with your gut as a professional writer. Does this form looked like to me something that an editor is going to look at? Do I have this gut feeling that I should circumvent it and go directly to an editor? I mean it's really all up to you. We cannot tell you hard and fast answers on a lot of these things.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I mean I can tell you with like Pro Blogger they have a form and I filled it out and stuck my post in and they ran it. I mean, sometimes it pays to just work with the system. But if I put something in there and I never got any response from them I might try hunting up an editor's email and feeling like maybe that doesn't work. So Chris says, 'Can we still post pitches in forums of ideas that we want to use for our eight? I know most editors would be gone but I'd hate to waste a _____ (45:45) because I overlooked something as I start.' As we said, today is about the last day to kind of get feedback. I just know what our bandwidth is going to be. We're really set up to help you do one query and one LOI a piece, and we're hoping that all the materials we have provided you and all of the forum reviews you can read really give you the basics of what you need to know.

Beena says, 'If case studies are meant to track our success after class how will they be measured as we're unlikely to get assignments in May?' Well, we think you are likely to get assignments in May if you do the stuff we've taught you. I think we're pretty confident looking at some of the terrific queries that we have seen and LOIs that folks are going to have some wins for starters, but there's more than one way to quantify success. It could just be I feel super confident. I have a lot of ideas now. I've gotten off my...the paralysis is over. I'm doing my marketing now. So, we know it could take months for some of this stuff to pay off but that's not an issue in qualifying to do the case study and to get a refund.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. There are lots of different ways that we qualify success and it's not always getting an assignment because yeah, some of these queries and LOIs that are going up are so good that we think, yeah, we're going to see some success, but you can't control how fast an editor or prospect gets back to you and sometimes there's just this long, slow process. But you know the fact that you gained confidence or finally know how to write a query or learning how to write them fast, I mean they're all successes to us.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. And we know it might take time and I guess what we're hoping is if you go through all this in May and you do a case study with us, and after we do your interview you get a win, please tell us so we can update your case study, because yes, it would be very nice to know, but it's not a requirement for doing the case study and getting the refund, that you got a win. So Joe says, 'I'm behind but if I feel confident in my pitch idea and market can I submit it directly into mod two?' No. You need to start in mod one. Sorry. Honestly, we saw very few things in mod one in this entire class, hundreds and hundreds of ideas probably in this one session, that were ready to go. Really.

Linda Formichelli:

As is.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. It's so rare. 'I know it's subjective but if someone is diligently producing queries and LOIs how long does it take to build up a part-time and full-time income?' There is just no answer to that. It's so, so personal. How well are you writing those queries and LOIs? How well are you matching those ideas to those markets? How well are you qualifying those LOI prospects and making them a good fit for your background, your experience? There's so many variables there that I cannot speculate. Anyway, I haven't looked at what's going on in chat so I want to look in there.

Linda Formichelli:

Michelle said, 'You'd be the first to know even before my husband.' Darn tooting, Michelle. You now it.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Overall, I want people who have been working really hard and are in mod four and they've gone through one, two, three. They're in mod four and they've done revisions to just not worry. Okay. If you have posted by today and you're at the picky edit level you're going to be fine. We're going to get to you and it's all going to be swell. Okay. Linda says, 'This has been helpful to answer some of my questions that were hanging me up.' What questions were hanging you up? 'When you started how long did it take you to write a pitch or LOI?'

Linda Formichelli:

Forever.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Like forever. One of my first clients that I sort of blundered into, I wrote an essay for the LA Times Real Estate section and then he wanted me to write for him, like write cover features for a section of one of the three largest papers in America, and I was absolutely petrified. And it would take me like eight weeks to do each of these assignments and at first he would just give me an idea and then like we would talk about it cause I wasn't even at the point where I could figure out an idea. Yeah, it can take a long time.

I'm sure everyone here realizes that we made this refund offer knowing that many people would not be getting a refund because obviously we've paid editors...the fact is this is hard. If it wasn't hard everyone would be a freelance writer writing for magazines, wouldn't they because it's fun. This can be a really fun way of life. Becoming an idea generator and understanding that match of your knowledge and the marketplace, and this idea and the news hook need, and there's a lot to it and that's why most queries fail and why most people who wished they were living the freelance writer lifestyle aren't living it because it's difficult.

Linda Formichelli:

You and I went through this the long way. I mean I learned all of that stuff through trial and error over 17 years. There were not courses like this that sums it all up in five weeks.

Carol Tice:

Right. I mean the thing to know...and this is why we want you to send eight in May. I love that we added this to the class and put this refund on the line for it, is because you're going to see that, that is going to be...if you think the class part was hard, this is going to be hard but this is what you need to do is _____ (51:53) lot of ideas all the time, every day. My 60 pages of potential ideas for my Forbes blog. You need a lot of ideas.

So Chris says, 'What method do you use to maintain relationships with sources and editors when work doesn't send you their way? Ways to keep the plate spinning in case something comes up in the future.' I mean keep pitching them ideas. Send them interesting articles that you noticed. I had this one prospect for years that I always wanted to get in with. They were so perfect for me. They did marketing for franchisors and I was covering franchising as a reporter. Like they were a perfect business client for me. It never ended up happening but I stayed in touch with them for years just if I saw an interesting article about franchising or I wrote an article about franchising that I thought they'd be interested in, I would just send it to them and just stay in touch. The other thing is now we have social media to retweet their stuff. Chat with them a little on Twitter sometime or on Facebook. There's so many ways to stay in touch. Linda, do you have other thoughts on that.

Linda Formichelli:

Actually, Shawanda has a really good point. She says, 'Such an awesome perspective, Carol. This is hard and I think there are many of us that are feeling bad about the fact that it's so hard I think it's easy to think it's only hard for us because there's something wrong with us.'

Carol Tice:

No.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah.

Carol Tice:

It's hard because it's hard.

Linda Formichelli:

Any job you learn is going to be hard at first. You know what I mean? But people somehow feel really bad if this is hard.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Alex says he's worked 35 hours on Pitch Clinic this month. I would think that's not too out of the ordinary.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. When I was starting I worked that much per week.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Easily. 'I've learned so much about news hooks this past month.' Yeah. No kidding, Aliza. Yeah. And that's the number one thing that's just always missing and people don't understand that editors...I just always have this memory of my first editor at the Puget Sound Business Journal's desk, and it just had piles like four feet high. One pile was competing publications he should be scanning and learning from and picking up ideas from, and one was like administrative stuff he needed to deal with, and one was like maybe ideas that didn't need to be assigned now, and then there's the ones that have a news hook and they get assigned. And the problem is without that news hook you end up in that snowdrift of, 'Well, this is kind of a solid idea. Maybe we could run it sometime,' but it doesn't have to be run now and it just never happens, and/or it gets assigned and it's that article that gets pushed from issue to issue to issue, and if you're paid on publication you're just never getting paid.

And I guess that's why I have such a news hook obsession and I'm sure people have seen me in there saying, 'I don't know. I just don't see this working.' And I see the other editors saying that too. Peggy and Amiria saying, 'Just not seeing it. Too evergreen. Nothing new. Not time peg on it. It's not going to happen.' And like we'd love to pat you on the head and say, 'Oh, yeah. Send this out.' But we wouldn't be doing you any favors doing that because it's not going to happen.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. It is so awesome having editors in there to give us sort of their perspective as somebody who can accept or reject ideas for a living.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I mean people asked at the top of the call if we knew how many people have stuck with the class. I mean I guess we'll find out on Friday when we start adding this up.

Linda Formichelli:

It's going to be a pain in the butt.

Carol Tice:

Kendal said, 'I've been trying to have eight different LOIs and queries by today.' No. Just two. I wondered why you were posting so many ideas. I thought maybe you didn't like the one idea and you were moving on to the next idea.

Linda Formichelli:

Who said that?

Carol Tice:

Kendal. I get it now. Yeah. We are trying to not review...hi, Travor. We are not to review everybody...we cannot review eight ideas for everybody. That would be 800 ideas.

Linda Formichelli:

All of our guest all got unmuted. How do we mute everybody again?

Carol Tice:

They did. Oh.

Linda Formichelli:

It says our guests have all been unmuted and now I can hear a lot of noise. That is not my kid.

Carol Tice:

I got it. I got it now.

Linda Formichelli:

All right. Thank you. I wanted to mention something that somebody said in the chat. Let me go back to it. Rachele said, 'I wrote an editor once saying I ran across some old stuff I wrote and was grateful for the gig. Right after that she sent me an assignment.' You know, I know I said this in the first call but I want you to take heart that your goal as a writer is to not have to write these darn queries and LOIs anymore because you have relationships with a huge table of editors and clients that you can just reach out and say, 'Hey, I have some time in my schedule this month. Is there anything I can do to help you with?' and you get an assignment. _____ (57:15) forever.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I think people forget. People do this and they're like, 'It's taking me eight hours to write a query. How will I ever make a living?' And you're not understanding that you're going to write maybe one or two of these to an editor and then, yeah, it's going to kind of get more to the casual chat level where you say, 'Hey, you know this thing is happening and I thought I could write about it because it has this music and this is why our readers would like it. What do you think?' You're going to be writing three sentences and getting an assignment or calling them on the phone, or you'll just be on the phone with them talking about this article you're doing and you'll say, 'Hey, while I have you on the phone I have a couple of other ideas. What do you think?' It all gets way, way more easier and I was the queen of that, of wanting to just build the relationship and then pitch to people who knew me and get a ton of assignments from them.

Have we done it? I think we may have reached the end of the questions. I think I'm going to email out...like I feel like we kind of added some FAQs here on how this is all going to work and maybe I'll...

Linda Formichelli:

Put them on the forum, yeah.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Maybe I'll put them on the forum and/or add to the permanent FAQs as well so we don't forget them. I think we've done it. Tamara also says she thought that all eight ideas had to go through. No. I mean we're hoping that the experience of going through

one LOI and one query with us in the depth that we have been doing that there's a lot of learning there and that you're kind of ready to _____ (58:54).

Linda Formichelli:

And that reminds me. I do want to say that if we start getting an impression from any students that they're just kind of whipping out queries and LOIs without doing their best job because they want to reach their eight, we are going to push back on that. We want to see really good stuff.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. If you're sending out stuff that's like an obvious joke that you sent to try and get to number eight, that's not going to fly. So, and just don't shortchange yourself. Be focused on the real thing because if you get one article assignment it paid for this class. So that's another way to get yourself a refund for the class, only more than the class. Get two or three gigs and more than pay for the class. Think about it that way and really write queries and LOIs that you think have a real good shot at it and put some effort into it.

So Rachel says, 'What if I have questions about my picky edit?' Ask them today and/or first thing in the morning. I'd say Pacific Time and at that point pretty much that's kind of the end of it. Yeah. Michelle says, 'That's the best way to get the refund.' Exactly. Instead of thinking, 'Oh, I want to get a refund in this class because I whipped out eight pieces of junk,' go, 'I want to write eight amazing queries and get \$1,000 worth of assignments.' If people are thinking too small about the potential of this exercise in May to give them income is what I'd say.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. And you know this is a lot of class for \$300. I mean three editors on board and like just the amount that goes into it, and then you get one assignment and it pays for it. It's just so...but yeah. I want to see as many people get through it as possible.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. And we want to see you get the wins. So, use what you've learned as you sit down to write these eight, and good luck everybody in May. It's going to be really awesome.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. Thanks everyone.

Carol Tice:

Thanks everybody. We'll see you back on the _____ (61:04).

Linda Formichelli:

Bye-bye.

