

Carol Tice:

...just little old me by my lonesome here hosting our Pitch Clinic Q&A about letters of introduction and anything else, story idea, or query letter, or freelance writing-oriented that you may want to know about. Let me start off by just talking a little bit about what's going on in class. I just want to make sure everybody gets it. We have a lot of FAQs up and stuff but I'm still getting a lot of questions, so I'm just going to quickly go over it again

The way this class works is you start in Module 1, you get an idea greenlit, you write a query in Module 2. When you get approval there your editor will tell you to send the next draft over to Mod 4, which means that we think it's almost, almost there. And it'll just need what we call a picky edit, which is, we're just going to give you a few tiny tweaks to it. It's 95 percent there.

And then on the LOI side, you post an LOI draft in Mod 3, and if we think it's mostly there we'll tell you to put that in Mod 4, the revision forum. And you need to get approval on a query and an LOI in Mod 4 by, I believe, November 3 is our five-week deadline to get into the four-week eight pitch challenge. So if anyone has any further questions on that. Yeah, if you are still in Mod 1 trying to get a greenlight feel free to post me a link in here, and we may go back in. Yeah.

"Can you put in the link to the full click meeting window?" I'm not sure what that is, Ray. If you want to just make it full chat on your screen you can go in the right-hand corner of chat, and there's the maximize window that looks like a big square. That's what you're looking for? "Can you post an LOI while you are still working on your query or story idea?" Yes. Yes, you need both one LOI and one query approved before you can get into the four-week pitch clinic challenge.

So many of you weren't here when I explored the idea of turning this into Q&A mode so people can just talk their questions to me rather than everybody having to type. Barb, we cannot make it louder. I am pretty darn turned up. It's your computer audio that you're going to have to turn up the volume on. Oh, Ray wants, okay, let me get you the direct link. Somebody occasionally has trouble getting onto it on our site for some reason. Give me one second and I'll get you a link here. Yeah, here's a link.

Hey folks, I should be back now, and I've turned up my audio. I'm hearing that it was low. Very sorry. I thought you guys were hearing me. I accidentally left the event there while I was trying to put in the link that Ray needed to try and look at the site. All right. Back to things I wanted to go over. We went over what's going on. I wanted to give you a couple links to things that I think will be educational and useful.

Here is our first approved query. It's from Saima, who's here on the call. We thought she just nailed this. And I'd love for people to look back through her threads and see how many iterations of this idea she worked through to get to this very interesting story about drinks that give you energy, none of which I had ever heard of. Just really great

research and sleuthing work, and not giving up on the idea when the very first iteration of it didn't excite the editors, and we told her to go back and keep thinking about it.

We find that a lot of times when we do that, that people kind of implode instead of continuing to give us new slants, and new angles, and do a little more research, and find out more about the idea. And that's what we're looking for. We're not telling you your idea is awful, go away and cry. We're just telling you, keep pushing, keep going with it. That link's not working? It's working for me. Popping it right up. Try cutting and pasting. It didn't work for just clicking.

Yeah. So I think that one's really a classic example. And I just did an LOI review this morning, that I just wanted you guys to just see a typical interaction. And the comments I made here I think are comments that you're going to see over and over and over in LOIs. The challenge of LOIs is that you're not fully fleshing out an idea for them, and yet you need to convince them that you're the writer for them and that you understand their publication and their writing style.

And I think the number one thing people don't get about letters of introduction is, they're really a writing audition. You really want to write them so that they can envision your writing in their publication, because that's about all you can do besides call out a couple of real quick ideas on who you talked to for them, because it's impossible to guess at what exactly they want to the extent where it would be worth your time to go fleshing it out.

And yeah, Barb, I like your comment about natural affinity. And I got that comment from some people of like, "Well, I'm a stay-at-home mom, I don't think I have any business experience." I'm here to say that unless you are living in a cave, and growing all your own food, and you're off the electric grid you know things about business. You have hobbies and interests, you shop in stores, you understand retailing, you have activities. Have you ever gone on a vacation? You know something about the travel and tourism industry.

So really think creatively about what you like doing and what you enjoy in life. You don't have to have had some lengthy career in some particular industry. I ended up being a longtime business writer, and I had never really done much. I had like scooped ice cream, and I sold patio awnings for a few months online, I mean, over the phone. I did not have a lot. Very funny, Barb.

Really I think it's hard to find somebody who doesn't enjoy strolling the aisles of hardware stores, or going to apparel boutiques, or something. And Eva is correct, if you write it well and hit it out of the ballpark in your query, in your LOI, they may not even ask if you have clips, if you've ever done this before. I had had it happen to me, really.

And that's why if people are like, "Oh, why are you making me have a news hook?" and, "This is so hard," it's because we want you to get a gig, and we want your article to see

the light of day. I saw we had a question posted from Saima that, what is it saying, wait, I'm going to go back up.

It's from someone who has a article that got accepted, oh, it's from Noelle, and it's been held for six months. This is what happens to articles that don't have a strong news hook where they have to go in the next issue. They're good, and the editor likes it, but everything that has a news hook that has to run in the next issue is going to come in front of it, every issue, and you're going to wait around sometimes a long time for it to get to that moment where they have a hole and they can put it in.

So that's the tough, tough thing about writing something, and we get pitched a ton of evergreen ideas. And it's like, yeah, maybe you could get that placed, but it's going to be really hard, because everything with a news hook is going to go in front of you, every issue, and you're going to get pushed and pushed. And if they pay on publication you're really screwed.

So Emily says there was a dialogue about send it out now versus wait for the pitch challenge. Good question. If you want your query to count in the pitch clinic challenge you have to wait until November 3 to start sending it out. And if you have a scenario where you think waiting two weeks is going to radically change the outcome for that piece let us know, and we may make an exception for you.

Gee, I love it. Amy says, "I just got hired to write some content for a mold mitigation company. I don't know anything about mold except it's gross." Exactly. I have written about surety bonds, and you know. My joke is, give me 24 hours and I'll be your expert. There's the Internet now. You can learn a lot in a short timeframe.

So Christy says, "Can we count this initial query as part of our pitch challenge?" Yes. Yeah, we are expecting that the query and the LOI that you write in this class for approval will be two of the eight you're going to send out ordinarily, so you will need six more besides. And they need to really be different. It can't just be like I'm sending basically the same LOI template six times. That is not going to get you there.

And Linda is the queen of pushback on that. You'll get her polite yet firm letters saying, "Yeah, we're not going to count this one, because it's just like that other one we just saw," so I don't want that to happen to you. Oh, the other thread I wanted to call out, I'm going to have to go dig it out, is the one about cattle rustling. I really loved this one.

Because she did go ahead and send it out, and she got the feedback that the geography she picked for it wouldn't work for the magazine, and she needs to start over and source it in a different state to make a sale with it, but they were really interested. So it's kind of another great example of how stories may get iterated and how editors may come back at you and ask for something a little different. Here is the post I want you guys to take a look at. I'll pop it in the chat. Ding.

This was a great story. That publication, Susan, turned out to only cover a particular half, they only cover the West, and I think she had it in the Midwest, and they were like, "Our readers are all in the West, and we want you to source it in California and talk about people who are rustling cattle in California." So she's looking to see if she can document that there.

Anyway, so I wanted to get to one question I saw on the forums and it wasn't in the right forum. So I put it into my script so I wouldn't forget it. And that is the masthead question. Okay, "I'm interested in a magazine, I've written my query now. And I'm looking at a masthead that has 15 different editors on it, and which one am I supposed to send it to?" So I think we go over this a bit somewhere in our materials. But I'll give you my spiel on how I figure it out.

The first thing to know is that top line editors are usually too high up. The editor-in-chief or just editor, whoever's at the very top of the masthead, usually doesn't really do any editing any more. They take a lot of meetings, and plan sections, and meet with the ad side, and plan special issues, and they're kind of not in the fray any more. If there is an editor who covers your particular topic, there's a health editor, a food editor, and that's what you're pitching, that's always the best choice.

Beyond there, if there is a features editor, an articles editor, and if you can't figure it out my favorite is always managing editor. That phrase, managing, means he is a hands-on editor. And I always end my queries with, "If you're not the right editor for this particular thing, I appreciate you forwarding it over." And my main piece of advice is, don't spend hours spinning scenarios in your head about which is the right one. Go with your most likely one and press Send. Don't make a huge project out of trying to figure out who it is.

You'll never really know. There's no real way to find out, so don't over-belabor that. So the other question I got that I wanted to get to first, and then I'm going to go to the questions that were left ahead of time on our forum, which were awesome, is when to send an LOI and when to send a query. Or the scenario where it's technically a custom publication or a trade publication, but maybe they seem to have writers' guidelines or they just come off very much like a consumer pub.

Examples would be the airline magazines, which are technically custom publications, but they really function more like a consumer magazine and get a query, and things like Costco Connection where it's aimed at consumers. All of those, the hospital magazine, you could consider sending them a query. For the hospitals I think probably an LOI with a couple of ideas still. But if it's a huge circulation thing or it's a splashy airline magazine you're not going to make it with an LOI. They are expecting a whole query out of you.

But if it's Pizza Today, or Martial Arts Management magazine, or any of those where you're really not going to be able to figure it out, you're going to write an LOI to them. So those are the two I wanted to do right at the top. And now I'm into the questions that are on the forum, and then I'm going to put this in Q&A mode and see if people want to talk and look at the questions that are here live in chat.

And Christy says, “I looked at the writers’ market trade journals for 2016 and the local phone book, and I feel underqualified. Well, I think we talked about this. There’s things you know about. You shop, there are things you enjoyed studying in college. And yes, you can do eight queries if you want. That’d be great. And yeah, Karen had said, “What if a trade has writers’ guidelines?” Then yeah, follow that.

And yeah, “If you don’t have a business background, how do you frame your LOI? I’ve had health articles published in consumer papers, but I don’t have any educational health credentials. Can I still write an LOI for a health trade?” Certainly. And you can certainly use those consumer clips you’ve done to show that you know that industry. “I once got an article in an optometry trade mag by sending them a query.” Awesome. And another example that all these rules are sometimes made to be broken.

“Is it ever a conflict of interest to send an LOI to a trade that you currently work in?” She says, “I work in TV news production. Can I target broadcasting trade mags?” As long as it’s okay with your employer, yeah. Absolutely. I used to run by my editor when I was freelancing on the side at the business journal, I would just tell them, “Yeah, I’m going to sell this story to Nation’s Restaurant News, you know.”

And in some cases I’d be recycling stuff I had written for them, but for a different audience, different slant, and they’d be like “Yeah, sure.” So anytime you get an oogy feeling that you’re not sure if what you’re doing is good, the answer is always just to disclose and ask, and a lot of times they’ll say, “All right, that’s fine.” So Anna says “From what I’m gathering from the LOI webinar it seems the LOI is more for someone who actually has some experience to fall back on.” Not necessarily.

It’s just what you need to do for trades and for businesses, because you can’t possibly guess at a full-blown idea that they would want. “Although the query seems to be more work I actually feel more comfortable with a query when I don’t have the clips to back up an LOI. It seems like queries are for newbies and LOIs are great for someone with a little more experience. Is that a fair interpretation?” I wouldn’t think so.

Clips and evidence of accomplished writing make a query or an LOI stronger. I think it applies equally to either format. “So if the only clips you have are consumer should you still mention that you have clips?” Yeah, absolutely. Clips are always better than no clips. Then from there clips that are more directly relevant are better than ones that are less directly relevant. But yeah, if you have anything you have had published that went through an editorial process it is always great to have.

So “Should I send my LOI through LinkedIn, call the number on the masthead to get the editor’s e-mail address, or both?” Charlene, my quick answer would be, “Neither of those.” I’m not a fan of sending an entire LOI as an InMail on LinkedIn. I think you reach out to people on LinkedIn InMail and connect, and hopefully from there you’re getting their regular e-mail to actually send them a pitch. I don’t hear about anybody who’s having a lot of success pasting a whole query or LOI into an InMail on LinkedIn.

And then calling the masthead to get the editor's e-mail address is pretty much the last thing I try, because it's so easy to find it online. And at the end of this class, I think in the final module, you'll be getting our How to Get Editors' E-mails handout that has all our different techniques at how we turn them up online. It's really not that hard once you know where to look. So Annalise says, "I'm thinking some custom pubs are more like consumer pubs and get a query." Yeah, we covered that.

VIA, the AAA magazines are another good example where yeah, a query even though technically it's a custom pub. Annalise says, "My clips are mostly from custom pubs, an airline and a hotel. I've thought of this as a weakness." I don't know. I don't. I love writing for Alaska Airlines magazine. "But maybe I should spin this as a positive for LOIs." Everyone should always be spinning everything about their background and their past clips as a positive.

The whole point of queries and letters of introduction is to show you in your best possible light. So Annalise has a great question about custom pubs. "Many are published by a firm that does many different pubs, like Rodale does a bunch. I used to work for Lebhar-Friedman, which did a bunch. Meredith I think has a bunch. Is there a way to try to approach the layer above the editor and introduce myself to the publishing company?"

Yeah, it sounds like that would be great, and then you could get assignments from five publications at once or something. But in practice I don't really hear of anybody winning at that. It's really about reaching out to the individual editor. Once you're in with the editor of one of the magazines, that's when you ask for a referral from that editor to sister pubs and start working your way around that organization.

But likely at the publisher level, unless you have a persona friend at the publishing level, which would be great, I think it's not going to be as productive. So Saralee says, "Are there examples of LOIs for people breaking into a new field that might not have the experience to back it up? I like the Patterson example." This is James Patterson's letters that are in the resource library in the Den where he pitches a cupcake company and stuff.

"But not everyone is a seasoned writer. How can we use industry experience to show we can help businesses and custom pubs?" Well, that's all about leveraging your background. I see that Sarah's tagline says she's an elementary teacher, so I'd be looking to pitch teacher trades and businesses that serve the education market where you can leverage your personal experience.

So Annalise brought up a great thing. We mentioned Muck Rack as the way to find editors, but Muck Rack sadly since we made that training has changed its model. And it is now a paid model, and it has become a less useful way, but you can still do Google searches for thing like editors on Twitter and find best of lists that you can jump on and

discover some people that way. You can also just Google editor's name on Twitter and find it.

Susan says, "Can you clarify what a contributing editor is? Can I write an LOI to ask to be a contributing editor?" No. Yes, Costco puts out a monthly magazine, Connections, I think it's called. Yeah, Costco Connection is what it's called. Susan. Costco Connection is one, along with AARP is the highest circulation, most competitive, and most difficult to break into publication in the country. Maybe a lot of people don't know that about Costco Connection. Huge circulation, very, very competitive publication.

And you really don't write to anyone to ask to be a contributing editor. Contributing editor relationships grow out of longstanding ongoing assignments. What you want to do is get an assignment, and another assignment, and another assignment. And after a bit of this you say, "Gee, you know, I notice that some of your other regular contributors get a contributing writer or a contributing editor line on your masthead. Could I be added?"

And I've had people do that for me. But you're going to want to write a half a dozen things for them at least before you have that conversation. So Fiona says, "When I write an LOI I try to start with either a recent news piece about the company or an award they recently won." Oh, and her question is, "How old is too old when it comes to that?" It needs to be pretty recent. And when I say pretty recent, I mean like in the past month.

"When contacting a venture capital-funded company or startup is it okay to mention that I read that they received VC funding?" Yeah. I guess I'd try and find something else to say, ideally, because they're going to be getting a lot of letters that say, "Oh, I see you got VC money. Why don't you spend some of it on me?" essentially. So you might want to think of something a little more creative so you don't sort of end up in a slush pile with that.

"Can I say that I read their LinkedIn company profile and use this as a warm opening?" I wouldn't. I would read their company website. She says, "How long until I follow up on an LOI? I was thinking every one to one and a half months." I don't follow up on queries and LOIs I send at all ever, I just send more of them. There's no requirement that you follow up on them.

But if you are the kind of person who likes to follow up, and I know people who say they get gigs that way, I like to set up LOIs to say, "I'll call you next week to see if there's interest." A month from now they're not even going to remember you sent that. So Amy says, "Could I use an LOI for a local city magazine like 5280 in Denver?" No. This is a consumer magazine, and you're going to need a fully fleshed out query.

"Can I use people in this class for my story?" Sure. Yeah, if they are a real person source that fits what you're doing. So this is the last question in here, and then we're going to go live to what's going on in the chat. Susan says, "A friend of mine works for a university, and she says the literature written for the public are written by vendors, a list

of people who have written for them before. Do I write an LOI for that if I want to get on their vendor list?"

I think what you want to find out is who are their vendors. Because often what that means is, you're going to need to get on with one of those agencies and write through them. Likely they are not individuals, they're a few agencies that they delegate that to so that they don't have to vet, and do paperwork, and send 1099s to thousands and thousands of writers. So I think that's what they mean by that.

Microsoft is a great example of a company that only works through like four approved vendors, and if you're doing copywriting for Microsoft you're hooked up with one of those agencies. So it's about identifying those and getting on with them. All right. I'm going to turn this into Q&A mode, which I believe is going to allow people to raise their hand if they would like to unmute their audio and ask something that way. I'm going to roll back to the top of chat here and take the questions that I have in here.

There's a lot of stuff at the beginning that sort of wasn't questions. Just going down. Ah, Laura says, "If your story changes as you do research and interviews for the query should we repost the idea under the idea forum or go ahead and write the altered query in the query forum?" If you were given a greenlight for the query you should come in the query forum and say, "Here's what happened as I researched my idea, and now I think the idea should go this way. What do you think?"

I mean, you could do it in either of those. You could go in the idea one, or you could go in the query forum. But just get an okay before you spend too much time on it. Charlene says, "Speaking of geography, what if we can't get to a place to get in-person interviews? For example, would it be silly to pitch a West Coast-based magazine with a story when they are closer to the sources than I am?" It really depends on the type of story.

The national magazines kind of don't expect you to do in-person interviews, because obviously if Entrepreneur's requirement is that I interview a business owner in each of the three major regions of the country they're not expecting me to fly there, to like spend \$1,000s flying around the country to bring in the story. They're expecting you to talk to people on the phone. So it might be a West Coast-based magazine, but what kind of story are you talking about?

If it's a story where I'm going to do a profile of a West Coast-based person and I really need to follow them around for a day and go see what their office is like, it just depends on the type of story whether you need it. And yeah, as Mike says, I have done Skype calls with people and had them pick up their laptops, and walk around their office and show me what it looks like. I actually did that for one of my Forbes pieces where someone was in, I don't know, Nebraska or somewhere.

Amanda says, "Speaking of airline mags, how easy or hard are they to break into?" I think they're pretty dang competitive, especially if it's a travel story. The thing to do with

airline mags is to look at the other sections and things that they write about. Because they get 1,000,000 travel pitches. I have written for Alaska Air about personal finance. They like to do a big feature about every other issue in the back about the ideal market, or something for sort of well-heeled middle class Americans with retirement accounts.

They can't find people to find those. I'm constantly trying to refer them around and people are like, "Yeah, too busy. Too hard of a topic." So that's one. An easy way to break in is to take a different topic than travel. And some of the airline mags actually don't write about travel, they're more like celebrity, they're like People Magazine. They're all different, so take a look at that.

"This is a story that could benefit from a roundup of profiles of three angels on the Pacific Crest Trail." I'm probably assuming that you're going out on the trail with those people and watching what they do for an afternoon, Charlene. So I think if you aren't near that trail I don't know how you're executing that story.

Barb has a great question. "What kind of gigs do you get with a business LOI, write their brochures, Web pages? Do you have to know what kind of writing you're going to do?" I think we go over this in the training. But to me the easiest thing to do is to take a look at their website and see what's missing. They don't have any team bios, they used to do white papers but they haven't done any for two years, they started a blog but it hasn't gotten a new post in a year.

And then I say, "Hey, I could, you know... I noticed that you started this but you haven't done any recently. Like could I help you out with that?" That's to me the easy ask. But you can pitch them whatever kind of marketing you do. If you write _____ (36.05) and you think that's what they do. Hey, let me give voice to Susan for a minute. Let's see if this'll work. Susan? Just speak up if you're there, and I'm going to look up questions. We find it can take a minute. So it's waiting for user response.

Susan:

Hello.

Carol Tice:

Hey.

Susan:

Can you hear me?

Carol Tice:

We can. Go ahead and ask your question.

Susan:

Okay. I typed it also. My question is, what if a trade mag is race-based and I'm not of that race? Can I still LOI or query since it's asking for queries?

Carol Tice:

I don't understand. What if a trade magazine is what?

Susan:

Race-based. It's for African Americans.

Carol Tice:

Boy, that's an interesting question. I have not personally tried any of those magazines. But I guess it would depend on your knowledge of the community. I don't think they're necessarily checking skin color. But I knew a girl who was, I don't know, she was growing up in a black family, and she looked totally white.

So I don't know that it would matter, because how would they even know? There's lots of African American people who are actually really light-skinned. And I don't know how they would give a litmus test on that. But I'd assume you'd want to have an amazing idea that's so, so for that particular market.

Susan:

Okay. So if they ask for a query instead of LOI then just send in a query?

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Absolutely. I find it's a good policy in general to give editors what they want. Any time an editor says, "You know, I wish you could send me an idea about this. You know, I never get any pitches about that, and I would just love to have a story about that, you know?" the thing to do is jump on that. Oh yeah, I see yours now.

"Any tips on working with Alaska specifically," Courtney? I've passed about the last three times that they hit me, because I didn't like the topic or the timing was horrible. It's just super-competitive. Bring them an amazing idea. The big thing to know about all the airline magazines is, get the map online of where they fly to, because that's what they want you to write about.

They want you to develop ideas they haven't seen before on the markets they fly to. They want you to pitch them a story about things to do in Boston that nobody knows about yet, that kind of deal. They love those kind of stories. If you can hit a story that hits more than one of their major hubs, that's like awesomely excellent. Okay. I got to this one. Talked about what to get... Too much posting. Let's see.

"If queries are more appropriate for the publications I'm targeting should I submit a second query for Homework 3 instead of an LOI?" No. We want you to write one just for the exercise. Just pick a business, pick a trade, hub. We want you to do it to do it. Ray says, "What happens if you have no clips?" Then we come over to your house, and we like dance around on the lawn and chant, and make them magically appear. I'm not sure what you mean.

What happens if you have no clips and they ask you for them? You say, "You know, I don't have any clips yet, and I'm happy to do this for you on spec if you have any concerns." But if you don't have any clips your job is to get some clips as soon as you humanly can from some small business you know in your town or some local tiny newspaper. Just get something, anything, some online blog that has a good reputation. You just want to get yourself some clips of some description as quick as possible.

Barb says, "Or with a trade journal LOI what kind of writing would one do?" For trade magazines, you're writing articles, but they're aimed at an audience of pharmacists, or pizza restaurant owners, or... They're not aimed at the general public, is the difference. So Paulo says, "What if I only had case studies and ghostwriting sources as my clips?" Case studies to me tell a good story if they've been done well. I wouldn't have any qualms about submitting that and just say, "You know, I'm moving into editorial now."

Barb says, "So ask on LinkedIn if they're looking for a writer and then send your LOI if they say yes?" Yes, exactly. Say, "You know, I have a couple ideas I'd like to send you." Usually when you do that back and forth on InMail there's a box you have to uncheck if you don't want the other person to end up with your e-mail. So if they say yes, often you get their e-mail in the process, and if not you could just ask.

Terry has a great question. "LOIs to nonprofits. How do you find nonprofits that have a real budget for writers?" Let me give you a couple resources. And by the way folks, this Q&A is still open. If anyone else would like to ask a question with their mouth I'm happy to take it. The Foundation Center has a good database for finding out who's got a lot of money, and GuideStar is the other one I always used to use. Let me pop these into the chat for you.

And Charity Navigator is sort of a newer one that some folks like. I'm not the biggest fan of them, but it's another place that you can look. You want ones that are large, basically. People want to know if I will come dance on their lawn. Maybe I'll make a video of myself dancing on my lawn that I will share around. Not sure how to scale that for all the people who might want it. Let me go back to questions. I would like to hear some other actual people on here. Oh, I think I went too far.

"I only have academic writing and ghostwriting." Ray, if you've done ghostwriting but you don't have a nondisclosure agreement you can claim it, especially if you have a testimonial from that client that helps indicate that you wrote it. And yeah, people were asking about Freelance Writers Den. It is opening to new members in about two weeks. We just put up a countdown clock on the Den so you can see.

Get on the waiting list, because the waiting list has 6,000 people on it, an idea which just makes my head explode every time I think about it, we usually only tell that list, because we only take about 300 people at a time. So that's usually enough people to tell, and we don't have to bother anyone else. So on to that.

So Deborah says, “Re the conflict of interest discussion, are there times where you may want to get the okay from your employer in writing, permission from anyone in some form that you can actually prove you obtained? Is there ever a time you could regret just getting a verbal go-ahead?” I have never done anything except just orally asked, and I’ve never had a problem.

Because the point is that you’re making your employer aware that you want to do X, or you’re making your market aware that you work for X. And they’re going to say, “That’s okay,” or “It isn’t okay.” They’re not going to say it’s okay now and then later say it’s not. That doesn’t happen. So yes, as Katie says, you can get on the waiting list of the Den, and you can be in the door. Let’s see here.

“What is your professional opinion on writers who use ghostwriting or academic writing as clips? Honestly, you really can’t use school papers, or dissertations, or stuff as clips for freelance writing. It’s just too completely different of a type of writing. But ghostwriting, I say unless you’re sworn to secrecy you get a testimonial and you use it. Let’s see here. Yeah, and I mean, if you’re truly desperate self-create a sample. I mean, send them a blog post from your blog. Cook up a sample.

If you haven’t either grabbed my Step-by-step Guide to Freelance Writing Success e-book or taken that Bootcamp inside Freelance Writers Den, that is my four-hour training of how to start with nothing and quickly assemble a portfolio, and get paying gigs. So I don’t want to go over and over everything in there. So “For all my e-book writing clients I apply with a book that I’ve written and published on Amazon.” Good deal, Genesis.

Yeah, exactly. I think I was just saying that to someone in a forum the other day. Just write yourself a short e-book if you want to market yourself as an e-book writer and, yeah, pop it on Amazon. I see people are connecting on Twitter. Awesome. I’m #ticewrites on there, if anyone has not found me. Amy says “I’m stuck at identifying markets for my story.” Do you want to give me your voice?

Here, let me give Lisa K. a voice for now, at the moment, because I see she’s up in the voice queue. Lisa? Oh wait, it’s still waiting to hook up. It takes a moment. Mona says, “What’s the best way to record a conversation after getting permission?” We have threads a mile long in the Den about this. It depends on how you’re talking to them. I tend to talk on Skype and use Skype call recorder plugin, and other people have many other ways. Do a Google search and you’ll find many awesome solutions to that.

Christy says, “I’m having trouble finding a need to fill. Can I make one up?” I’m not sure what you mean. “For example, I’ve targeted the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation and the Homeschool Legal Defense Association. They’ve really got their acts together. Are large organizations open to my mentioning a new angle?” I don’t know what you mean. Do they put out a magazine or, I’m not totally clear what you mean there.

People are posting all kinds of most useful links here. Got to this race question. Yeah, the race question is sort of like a woman writing for Esquire, which totally happens. Lisa,

it's not letting you, I need you to unmute or turn up, or say yes. It may have a little box that's up asking you to accept that I'm giving you voice. Let's see. Yeah, don't pretend you're black if you're not. We all saw how that played out in the news recently. We talked about ghostwriting.

Paulo says, "Does it make a difference between pitching a magazine whether it's online, offline, or both?" I'm not sure what you mean, but I see you're here in the voice queue, so I'm going to take Lisa back because it's not making her live, and see if I can get you live on here, and you can explain further. Let's see. Oh, "What are some examples of lucrative LOIs for you, Carol?" I wrote one that I made \$6,000 off of, since you ask. I'll just pop that in here for you.

It was for a website that American Express was launching, and I connected with the editor on Twitter. She had written for Entrepreneur and I had written for Entrepreneur, so I was like, "Hey, you know, I have done that too. So I heard you're doing this project, and you know, can I pitch you some ideas?" and she said, "You can, but we don't really take any pitches. We're assigning the ideas we want done."

So really hard sell environment, but that was like waving a red flag at a bull for me, because I'm the story idea queen. I think of awesome, awesome ideas. And so I put together a query, really more of an LOI with three quick one-paragraph bullets, and they bought all three of them. So yes, LOI's been very, very good to me, and I usually find that I can get a response on them, even if it's just, "This isn't for us." I can at least get some kind of response. But yeah, you get gigs off LOIs, absolutely. Let's see.

"I have a gazillion ideas," says Lisa. "Do I write and flesh out the ideas and then target multiple markets, or research the market first?" It's really up to you. I tend to think of the market and then think of ideas for that market. And I see a lot of people flailing around coming up with these ideas that have no market. Ideas about teenage parenting are really big with that. Oh, it looks like Paulo might be on. Say hello, Paulo. Hello. Are you there? It looks like it thinks you're on, in Canada.

So say hi if you're there, Paulo, because I think we should be able to hear you. "How much is The Writers Den?" It's 25 bucks a months, no obligation, leave any time, for access to 100-plus hours of trainings. Yes, that is crazy, but that is how I roll. I love it. Karen has a great one. "Any tips on finding stronger news hooks? I'm finding it tough to find a news hook for my Mod 1 idea about training your brain to get creative." Yeah, news hooks are the hokey-pokey. They're what it's all about. Hopefully you listened to our story idea lab, because we talk a lot about how to slice ideas and make them fresh.

Paulo:

Oh Carol, can you hear me?

Carol Tice:

Oh, there's Paulo. Yes.

Paolo:

Here I am. Hi, Carol.

Carol Tice:

Awesome. It's great to talk to you live. So yeah, explain more...

Paolo:

Finally. Which question, the one about writing online or offline?

Carol Tice:

Yeah.

Paolo:

Yeah. I'm wondering if the pace in publication would vary between the two, or with an offline publication it's normally sent by snail mail?

Carol Tice:

Not necessarily any more. In general I'm not sending anything by snail mail any more unless their writers' guidelines say send it by snail mail with a self-addressed stamped envelope, which I did for Parade. And then they e-mailed me back their answer. But I think it's like a personality test.

Paolo:

That makes it a lot easier, especially if you're writing from out of town or something. Yeah.

Carol Tice:

Sure. So the online versus offline, I'll just tell you my little Entrepreneur magazine story on that. I was writing for the magazine, I was getting \$2,000 for cover features, and life was beautiful. And then they went through a whole editorial changeover, word counts really shrank, it got harder and harder to get assignments. And I ended up gravitating over to the online side, where I was making 1,200 bucks a month blogging for them.

And then they started assigning \$600 online exclusive features, and I made way more money on the online side with Entrepreneur than I ever made writing for the magazine, and I used to do a couple grand a month for the print side. So the answer is, it really depends on the market. Increasingly a lot of publications as their ad money gravitates online and they line up sponsors for special sections online, they're ending up paying more for online content.

And also it's a lot easier sometimes to get in on the online side, and sometimes you can then go from there to the print side, and that's actually exactly what happened for me with Forbes. They actually poached me from the Entrepreneur blog to write for their blog as a beat reporter, and then eventually we developed a new special section for the magazine on franchising, which was my beat, and I ended up writing for the print magazine.

So I guess I see online editors as a lot more accessible, and there's a lot more opportunity, because those pixels are free. They're developing a lot of content on there that doesn't fit in the magazine, and just trying to build an online machine like Forbes has done where they have a ton of traffic. And so I tend to be platform agnostic. I'm not like, "I only want to be in print magazines," or "I think online is awesome."

I just go where the money is in that publication, and where the opportunity is. If I'm pitching the print magazine and I'm never getting responses, and I try the online side and they like me, I'm going there. So you kind of just have to do a little sleuthing, and maybe hit one side and then hit the other side, and just kind of see where you get a response would be my advice on that.

Paolo:

Yeah, it sounds encouraging.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Every publication kind of operates a little differently and has a different level of sophistication in where they're at with online strategy. They don't...

Paolo:

Now while we're on the subject...

Carol Tice:

Some are in the Stone Age and some have a very sophisticated separate online strategy going on, and some have all different editors for online, and some the editors are going both ways. My Forbes editors were doing both my blog and my print, so sometimes the same editor has a hand in both places and it's really easy to cross over that way. So it's kind of all over the place. So I hope that answers.

Paolo:

It does provide a lot of good answers here. Now may I ask one more question while on the subject here?

Carol Tice:

Sure. Go.

Paolo:

Now this is my biggest, biggest obstacle when it comes to magazines, and somebody suggested projecting ahead and looking at media kits or editorial calendars, but I find them very, very limited. And I noticed you said somewhere, I can't remember which module or what unit, whatever, you said you're not a big fan of that when it comes to researching and they haven't gotten printed yet.

Carol Tice:

I'm sorry. Say that again. I was answering a chat thing. I'm very sorry.

Paolo:

Okay. Somebody suggested if you want to come up with an idea for a magazine you want to look ahead at the media kit or editorial calendar and see what they're going to publish in the near future in that magazine.

Carol Tice:

Yes.

Paolo:

And then you mentioned somewhere that you're not a big fan of editorial calendars or media kits. I can't remember why or...

Carol Tice:

No. No, it's not that I'm not a fan of those, it's that I hate seasonal stories, is my thing. That, "It's Christmas now," those stories? "It's Valentine's Day." I just don't write any of those stories, personally I just hate them and think they're boring. It's just a personal thing. No, media kits, I love for people to read media kits, because you will learn a lot about who the readers are. I love it.

So let me see if I can get Amy alive here. And while we're getting her cued on, be sure to click the little thing that says Accept this offer to talk live. You should get a little box that does that. Yeah, Sarah says, "I've noticed some hubs only pay for the print side." Yeah, obviously those aren't the place you want to check to write online. You want to write for their...

Amy:

Hello.

Carol Tice:

Hey, Amy. Ask your question.

Amy:

My question was about identifying markets for my stories. So I just threw that idea up there, and it seems to be getting fleshed out a bit. I haven't identified a market. So is there an easy way to do that or a...

Carol Tice:

What was your idea that you're trying to find a market for?

Amy:

It's the I'm Not Pink, when you don't have a tie-in to cancer.

Carol Tice:

I thought we went through that and we found some cancer pubs, like Cancer World. I thought that would rock for that.

Amy:

I don't think that was me.

Carol Tice:

I could have sworn I left an elaborate...

Amy:

Unless it was posted ... if it was like today or late yesterday, that's why I haven't seen it yet. But it didn't get a notification. So I'll check.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Everyone please, please be sure to watch or subscribe to your targets so that you'll know.

Amy:

Yeah, I did. So I just didn't see anything come through, and I've been on my computer all day today, so...

Carol Tice:

Weird.

Amy:

...I'll look again.

Carol Tice:

Well, put your post back up, because I could have sworn I dealt with this and that you found a list of all really cancer-focused pubs that I thought would be great. So if it isn't written there you can just write, "Carol said this would be fine." Okay? Go for it. I want to go to, I think Judy was actually on before Mike, so I'm going to try her. Because we're coming up on the hour, and I want to get everyone in who's got their voice. I can't figure out how to post a link, to join what? What are you all joining here? I feel like I missed something.

Going back to the comments. Hey Judy, are you there? Judy? Say hello. My machine says you're there. Lisa says, "If I just read a lot of news and blogs then I think of 1,000,000 ideas." Yeah, that's my story. I always want the brain operation that would make fewer ideas enter my head, because when I think of them I totally want to do them, and it's never going to be possible to do them all. Oh, Barb wants a repost of my idea about how to write the same story for different publications.

So I took the case of Angelina Jolie gets a preemptive double mastectomy and talked about how different markets would do it. Because people tend to get depressed, they're like, "Oh no, I saw this was in Time magazine now, so now it is over." No, no, no. It means it's over for Time, but a million other markets exist that want their own take on it.

Judy, are you there? I'm going to try Mike if I can't hear you. I want to know what people are talking about joining, if you'll fill me in. Hey, I'm a joiner.

Oh, it's a Firelighting Google Group Focused on Accountability for Pitch Clinic Writers. Wow, awesome. You're forming your own like group that can continue after this session ends. That's awesome. Judy says she cannot seem to enable audio, so I'm going to try Mike. Give that a minute. I think I'm up to date on questions. If there's anything I haven't done... Oh, I know what I haven't done is, some people said they need Mod 1 approval. Let me go back and find those links if I can. Sometimes it doesn't let me go back far enough.

Mike:

Hey, there.

Carol Tice:

Mike. Hey, what's your question?

Mike:

Well, this has come up in both the queries and the LOIs now in terms of closing, you and Linda have mentioned keeping it informal, keeping it clever, memorable even. And so I actually have a thread going on in general questions. I don't know if it's supposed to go to the forum. But I'd like to just talk about how informal, and funny, and memorable it can be. I mean, some of the ones I spun were like, "All best from the West," "Don't eat the wishbone," "A pirate's life for me." I'm obviously a lot more...

Carol Tice:

I know, I saw those. I saw those.

Mike:

...unusual.

Carol Tice:

I saw those, and you know what, I like unique signoffs. And I think they're good to come up with, and I think a lot of the best ones are one word. Chris Marlow signs all of her e-mails, Warmly. I think that's really awesome. And I tend to sign mine, Enjoy.

Mike:

Oh, okay.

Carol Tice:

Just so you're not saying like, "Sincerely" or something super-dorky. I don't know how crazy you need to go with it. But yeah, I am a fan of finding something that's a little styling, because we're writers, hello. We should be showing it, doing it. Oh yes, Cheri was saying, "Would you advise me to write something and save it as a clip to use as a sample even if it hasn't been published?" Only as a very last resort.

So Barb says, "So if I write an article because some magazine requests that you submit a whole one, can you use it as a clip?" Well, hopefully they'll publish it. and then you'll use it as a published clip. But if you are submitting articles on spec that's kind of a red flag. Good publications don't tend to make you do that. Oh, tips for searching for possible publications. Writers Market is huge. I said, use the Google. I find Googling health magazine, health trade magazine, you can just go crazy.

Yeah Paolo, we all thought you were going to rock some amazing Spanish accent. We all feel kind of gypped. I know you're in Canada, so maybe I should have known better. I'm going down to the bottom and just see what else is there maybe. "Thanks for your time." "Look forward to your feedback." I know people who sign their queries, "Thanks for taking the time to look this over." All right, I know we're past the hour.

What we're going to do now is just quickly hit a few links that people gave me to take a look at, particularly Mod 1s that haven't gotten an okay. Let's see. I'm looking at Rebecca's post here. I'll fire in the link in case other people want to follow along. I'm looking at Rebecca's post about, it started as ways to get more flexibility at work, and I think it morphed into when your significant other works 24/7 how to keep the relationship alive. Peter Carbonara had some interesting comments.

Then we got The Glass Slipper, how some women swap work-life balance for the custom fit ... Rebecca. So I don't know if you're on this call still. Her idea was, why work-life balance isn't all that. I think we left it at, let us know how you'd like to present this and for what type of magazine. I think you're almost there. So let's see. Ugly cries and frustration. But what's wrong? I thought Linda gave some nice feedback here.

Maybe you can comment while I go on to look at this other one. Wait, Don't Toss Out Those Weeds. I have a neighbor who actually grows dandelions on purpose so the deer will eat those instead of their other plants. Weeds in your garden ... have a source. This is for places like Edible San Diego, Edible Orange County. Yeah, it lacks a news hook, as she says herself. This is Katie. "I'm touting this as a drought-friendly option, mostly banking on it being a surprising idea."

I think you'd need a different headline like, How to get your omega-3s from your backyard weeds. I think that'd be fun. I think that's unexpected enough. I mean, I know that like dandelion greens are healthy and stuff, but omega-3s, I guess I don't think that's so well-known. I mean, it isn't a super-strong news hook, and you'd need to come up with, yeah, five different weeds that can be grown in the region of the magazine you're pitching. Why don't you repost, Katie, and name five that have omega-3s?

And see if there's any new news about the benefits of one of those. Look for health research, and see if you can find it, okay? I'll post my notes of kind of what I just said at the end of this call, but let's back up from that. I think that's a doable story that somebody would buy. I tend to Google, yes, statistics, omega-3s, weeds, 2015 or 2014, if I'm at the beginning of a year, and see if I can find anything, or statistics on vitamins in weeds, or something like that.

Yeah, I think everyone's talking about zinnia, and there's a bunch of these, Next Issue, and places where you browse a lot of magazines. I'm going to hang onto that one and go to idea number two from Amy, which stems from her own Hodgkin's lymphoma experience. You were kind of going back and forth on whether you want to do that as a reported essay or you just want to talk to other people. And I said I think you're almost there. You said you're going to flesh out the markets for it.

Maybe this is one of the ones we needed to look for markets for. Yeah, because you just said Health magazine. And I saw a great comment Sarah gave where she ran down like all the women's magazines or all the health magazines and explained exactly how they were. Like, this one wouldn't take this kind, and this one would only take this kind. They really are each different, and we really want you to study the market.

Yeah, this is the I'm Not Pink one, and I did respond to this on the 12th, and you said you were going to look at markets. And maybe someone else had found a list of things like Cancer World and magazines like that. You're right, maybe that wasn't you. But yeah, I mean, one option is to look at one like that. Yeah, you can't use the Breast Cancer Awareness Month as a news hook. Way too late for that. That would have been six months ago. But I would think that Prevention might be a good way to go.

How to get support when you have a different cancer, yeah, or just Health, or Women's Health. Nothing wrong there, just do a little market research and this thing's ready to go. So then I'm up to Annalise's Rats that Eradicate Land Mines. Five surprising ways humans are harnessing animals' innate talents for good. She had originally thought of this for YES! Magazine, but I think it's kind of a little oogy for them, not as uplifting as they like to be.

And now we have it for Sierra Magazine. Super-service animals, surprising ways that animals' talents are harnessed to do good. I think of Sierra as more of a like outdoor life magazine. I don't know. Have you seen pet-oriented stories in Sierra, Annalise? You were on here, live on the call. Yeah Barb, I think the local parenting mags you might need to put in the whole article.

All right. Well groovy, folks. I think we've done it. Wait, I think I had one more. Oh, I had an LOI for Charlene I think that I will look at when I get off the call and leave some comments. And I'll let you guys go. This has been awesome. It was great to hear some folks live, and I will see you all on your forums. Thanks a lot everybody. Bye.