

Carol: Hey, everybody, it's Carol Tice here with my co-teacher and partner in crime, Linda Formichelli.

Linda: Hey, there!

Carol: And this is our first Q&A for the 2016 Pitch Clinic class. We are thrilled to see everybody's virtual shining faces and even the android who signed on -- I'm assuming he's an android phone, but it's fun to think of an android taking my class. And we are here to play America's favorite game, "Let's make your query letter not suck!" This is like the most popular live event Linda and I ever do and it's a ton of fun and I think really gives you a terrific crash course in what the essential elements are that really need to be in there.

We're hoping you have listened to one of our past "Let's make your query letter not suck" recordings, so you already have a bit of the drift and our Story Idea Lab Bonus and stuff that give you a lot of, lot of insight into tweaking ideas to make them saleable. And I'd say, just...

Before we get started, Linda, do you want to give people a little brief pep talk about getting criticism on your ideas?

Linda: Yes. So, yes, I would like to give a little pep talk about getting criticism on your ideas. I'd like to start out by saying, when I first started doing this in 1997, I sent out some god-awful pitches. And I would have loved to get some criticism from editors. And it was actually a piece of criticism that helped me break into the women's magazines when an editor finally took pity on me and wrote telling me what she thought was wrong with my pitch and how she thought it could be better. And after that I broke into **Woman's Day**, **Family Circle**, and **Redbook**, all around the same times.

So criticism can sting a little bit, but it's meant to help. It's not meant to hurt. And also you have to keep in mind that through your freelance writing career, you are going to deal with tons of rejection and tons of revisions. I have gotten rejected at least 500 times -- I did some quick math -- in my career and also we once had Sarah Smith from **Redbook** on here and she told everybody straight out, if you write for the women's magazines or the health magazines or any big consumer magazines, you are going to get multiple revisions, probably starting with your very idea and then going through to the final draft of the article. And it's not a reflection of you. It's just the way they work, you can't guess at what somebody wants and what they're thinking and sometimes you need guidance.

So we're going to critique a whole bunch of ideas here today and I don't want anybody to feel bad if we say anything negative about their story or their idea. We're going to try to be as gently and positive as possible, of course, but everybody is here to learn and

there's no shame in not having a perfect product right off the bat. It's, in fact, impossible to expect.

Carol: Yeah. Don't be like that. And don't be in love with your first idea. If I could give a mindset tip, be flexible about what you are going to write and open to more input coming at you. Because, yeah, everything Linda said is so true for me as well.

As you were saying that, I was thinking of all the ideas I've developed for Alaska Air. There's always been a lot of back and forth. They usually come to me with a really mediocre idea and I'm like, "What about this instead?" And then it kind of goes back and forth from there until we arrive at one we both like.

But I think you'll see as we go through this that there are some common elements that are often missing from pitches that really take them out of the running and I think our biggest hope here is to instill those in you so that you at least send in a pitch that's in the ball park, that has the fundamentals so that the editor might say, "Feel free to pitch me again..." even if they don't like that one. So you're at least at the point where it starts a relationship because they see that you get it, basically.

And before we get started, one -- news flash! -- success story from Amy who apparently just emailed Linda: *Thanks for putting together the Pitch Clinic class. The material is already working. After sending in my story idea for the call today, I looked ahead to the LOI section and I took an LOI and tailored it for a start-up in Austin. I wanted to pitch them a couple blog ideas and they've already responded and want to talk me this week.* That's so awesome.

When we started doing this class and we did the pitch challenge month, we were all like, "Hey, don't expect anything to happen right away." But tons of people got responses immediately and that's really what this class is all about, is getting you to where you really do hear back from people really promptly.

Linda: Yeah, can I mention something? After one of the recent Pitch Clinics we did, I think it was 2/3 of the students who actually went and pitch during the challenge got assignments either during the challenge or not too long thereafter. And that's the main thing. It's like the actual getting out there and pitching and doing the work and that's the scariest part, but it's the only thing that's going to get you gigs.

Carol: Yeah, and that's why we structure this class the way we do where you're going to spend a month writing, hopefully, four queries or LOIs and getting editor feedback and then sending them out. And hopefully... feel free to send more than four. We've done challenges where we made people send eight. Four is like only one a week. That's not a ton, so the more you send... it really is a numbers game, so the more you send out, the more chances you have to get a yes.

Linda: And you'll get critiques on four of your queries from our editors, but of course, you can be sending like 100 queries if you want to. You should be learning how to do this on your own at that point and just really rockin' it.

Carol: Yeah, definitely don't feel limited by what we're asking you to do in the class, by any means.

Anyway, with that, I think we're ready to start taking some ideas and I have the first one from Alice. And her subject line is "Do you know how the west was won?"

Hang on one second here. I've just decided that I want to run a quick Camtasia backup to this to make sure, just doubly sure we have a recording. So let me turn that on. OK. We're good.

Yeah, so on to Alice's pitch: Do you know where the west was won? She's thinking of it possibly for **True West** or **American History**. She says: What we haven't seen before - the Alabama Hills on the eastern side of California's Sierra Madre served as Hollywood's popular backlot for B Westerns for almost 100 years. My feature article highlights filmmaking in the Alabama Hills and the stars who worked there, including Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. She says this story hasn't been told before on a national scope and, Lone Pine, the nearby town's annual film festival is coming up in October.

The bad news on that is that it's too late to pitch for October because most magazines are working five to six months out. So if it's June now, we're looking at December, January issues of things.

But the other problem is Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. I don't know the average age of the people who read **True West** or **American History**, but I'm thinking there may be a substantial portion of their readership who don't even know who those people are. We would need a lot more current-sy to it.

And you say it's been being used for almost 100 years. So like I would flip this and rather than talking about sort of the ancient history of it. What are the most recent blockbusters that were filmed here? Did they film **The Revenant** there? There's been some recent sort of western things.

Oh, and Linda says: *How close to 100 years is it? Is it an anniversary story? We are both big fans of "...ten years ago, this earthquake hit Seattle. What has happened with the rebuilding?"* That always rocks.

Linda: Not fans of the earthquake.

Carol: Yeah. No, but it's like how have people moved forward after the tornado that hit this small Texas town and wiped it out. We love anniversary stories. So, yeah, tell us how close to 100 years it is. There might be something really awesome there.

So that's kind of my thoughts on that is we need to know what's new and hot about how this film shooting area is being used, not what happened almost 100 years ago. Unless it is 100th anniversary story, in which case we would get to review all of it from long ago to what's been happening lately.

So Linda has the next one.

Linda: OK. Sorry, I was just typing. She says it's 1924, so it's not that close unless she wants to wait eight years to pitch this idea. So the anniversary won't work, but it was a thought.

So, yes. I have Laura's idea on "how to save the world from superbugs," with the markets being **Organic Life**, **Prevention**, and **Experience Life**. And she's talking about how the overuse of antibiotics has created new strains of bacteria that are resistant to many antibiotics, something we know a lot about. But her twist on it is that meat is usually raised with antibiotics or certain kinds of it, and she wants to talk about which meat gets antibiotics, why it's used and how to avoid it because that will help you therefore avoid the superbugs that they are creating.

The news hook is on the first completely antibiotic resistant bacteria that was discovered in a woman hospitalized in Pennsylvania -- it looks like it was just a couple weeks ago, so that is an awesome news hook.

My main comments are that the headline "How to save the world from superbugs," makes it seem like your article will be sort of the same old, same old info we've been reading about for so long, so is there some way to incorporate the meat aspect into it?

Also, I want to encourage everybody when you're coming up with ideas, do a quick Google search on your idea. I did it on this idea with the superbugs and the meat and I actually found that as you have it here, this idea has been done in a lot of outlets like **Consumer Reports**, the **Dr. Oz Show**, and the **BBC**. So you have a good news hook now, which is perfect, but can you think of some way to make the idea more unique or more surprising to editors so that it won't look like what they've already seen.

For example, is there some other more surprising place that superbugs lurk in your food. So we've already heard about meat in the media a lot, well, guess what, it also appears in this other food we never thought of. Or if there's anything else you can dig up that would make this fresher -- and you're going to hate the term fresh, but women's magazines editors use it all the time -- Is there a way to make this fresher or more

newsy or more surprising or more unique? Or is there a different way you can package this that they haven't seen before? So you might want to just do a little more research, a little more digging.

And even talk to an expert or two and say, "What about this don't people know yet? What has not been out there?" And that's a really great way to just cut through the chase and find out what's new. So that's my advice on this. But it's a good seed of an idea and you have a really great news hook.

Carol: Yeah. Linda loves to talk about seeds of ideas and that's always I think a good way to look at them. I personally have a sort of what I call string collecting mentality. I'll see little factoids and things and I'll throw them in a file.

So, Rich just saw a news release of the past day that says, "Doctors have invented a breathalyzer to help slow antibiotic resistance." I would throw that in my string file. Because that in itself is probably not a story. That story is done. It's a breaking news story, it happened. News wires picked it up. Daily papers wrote it up if they were interested. The end.

But I'd be looking for the next thing that's like a new innovative technology that will help with antibiotic resistance. And when I've got three of them, I'm ready to pitch a story of like, "Will these three innovations help you avoid antibiotic resistance problems?" Like **AARP** does stories like that all the time, I'll just tell you. So, yeah.

Anyway, the thing is it's hard as a freelancer to get an article where you basically are just rewriting a press release. As you may know, robots can do that now -- and are getting hired to do that now. Maybe our android listeners and R2D2 will be able to jump on that opportunity, but for human writers, you're going to need to bring more to the table than, "I saw that a study came out..." The thing is if you're targeting like a medical magazine, they saw that study came out too already and you're not telling them anything they don't already know.

And I'm going to say what jazzes editors up is hearing something they don't already know, they didn't already see in their own newsfeeds, which is, "You know there are five innovative new technologies that are being introduced to deal with antibiotic resistance. What about a round-up article on that?" That's way stronger.

So I'm on the next headline, which I don't see who it's from, maybe it's also from Laura. "Medical Marijuana Moves into the Mainstream" is her headline idea and she was thinking of it for ***Pain-Free Living*** or ***Arthritis Today***.

Now when I was a songwriter, there's a concept in song writing called prosody, which is a good marriage of words of the lyrics, of the words you're saying and the music. So like

if you're saying something really serious and scary, it's not like 'happy, happy' music. There's not a disjointedness to that and I feel this has a lack of prosody, that this angle on medical marijuana is not the one that's a fit for ***Pain-Free Living*** or ***Arthritis Today***.

And the fact that medical marijuana has moved into the mainstream is pretty old news. She has a few things that have recently been in the news about medical marijuana, but I covered legal cannabis a lot for a year for ***Forbes*** on my start-up and entrepreneurship blog and the news is out that, not only medical marijuana, but legal consumer marijuana has happened and is becoming increasingly common.

So to me the thing to do is slant this for these publications. The story for them is probably more along the lines of "Could medical marijuana be right for relieving your pain: the pros and cons." That's the kind of thing, if they haven't recently written that, that might work really well for them.

Linda?

Linda: OK, thanks. I've been manning the Chat. One person can't hear, so he's coming back out and in. So, yes, so I have this idea -- I think it's a third one from Laura, but I'm going to cover it right now because I thought it was awesome -- It was "Leaving Libido Loco" for ***Prevention***, ***Women's Health***, and ***More.com***. I know ***More*** is folding, so you might want to check if they're keeping the online version of the magazine. I would also suggest ***Redbook*** for this.

And the gist of the idea is that losing interest in sex isn't always a problem to be solved. Sometimes it's a natural and healthy response to changes in your hormones, life situation, or emotional needs. I'll explain to female readers how to identify when a lack of interest in sex is a problem and when it isn't.

I really love this idea. I call this an opposite idea because every magazine is just about "How to get your libido back..." and here's what you can eat to get your libido back -- I actually wrote that story for Redbook -- how it's such a problem if you just don't want it every night.

So anyway, this is an opposite idea. The news hook, she says, is *Google low libido and all you'll find are cures and guilt trips. Women who are healthy and just not that into sex need reassurance that they're OK.*

So this isn't really a news hook, because that's not news, but a lot of the times, if you have an idea that is surprising and unique enough, then that can serve as the news hook, like this is something totally new that you haven't seen before. So I would go with this idea. I think it's awesome.

Any comments, Carol?

Carol: No, I love it. It looks like you also have the next one from Sarah.

Linda: I do. I have one from Sarah. Yes, it's a question. *Is it OK to pitch a publication for a journalistic piece if you also have a personal monetized blog on the topic? For example, I have a blog on being a woman with ADHD that is of promotional nature, but as a journalist, I still like to be able to report on the topic as well.*

And I have to tell you I think it's actually a plus. It seems like a lot of publications are having a love affair with bloggers. You see them used as expert sources and writers. And now it seems that's a big cred to flaunt, especially if you have a lot of readers. But you do want to keep in mind that you don't want to pitch a topic that you've already done on your blog or at least not exactly that topic because it's technically considered published. So you would want to go beyond what you have there. But just having the blog serves number one as a clip; and number two, it's just a credential that you are an expert and also that you know how to get readers and followers and what they're looking for.

And I was wondering if Carol had any other comments on this or an opposite opinion.

Carol: No, I mean, it's totally OK as long as you disclose that. You wouldn't want to hide that fact. And as long as you keep yourself out of the story and just use your knowledge to know who to talk to, it's fine. Yeah, I think it can be a plus. I mean, I have had people approach me for freelance writing related articles that are like, "Wow, I saw your blog. It's awesome. We thought you'd be good for this." So there's nothing wrong there.

Carol: So I have the other question from her: *In addition to trade magazines being an untapped source for gigs, how about major brands like Red Bull who have embraced content marketing? Do they hire freelancers or are they more into in-house writers and guest posters?*

There's sort of a lot of different questions in there. I don't know that content marketing for brands is an untapped source like trade magazines is. I think many freelance writers are well aware that there's a lot of content marketing work out there and more of it all the time. Every study they do is like, "Are you planning to increase your content marketing budget for next year?" And 87% of people say yes. I've looked at a lot of data on that.

Content marketing is huge and getting bigger and they definitely do hire freelancers. I can't speak for Red Bull in particular, haven't written for them, but I have done long projects for American Express. I recently did posts for Intuit and FreshBooks.

And don't sneeze at doing a guest post on one of these big brand sites because they're terrific visibility and they can pay really well. I'm getting \$300-400 a post writing for some of the big brands. And I know people who are getting 500, so they can be nice markets. And all of the idea pitching skills that you're learning right now totally apply.

Content marketing for brands, it's a lot like what I call brand journalism where a company is running an online magazine and, editorially, they're very much like writing for a magazine. It's not usually like, "Oh and sneak in some references to Red Bull..." or something. If they know how to do it right, they're not salesy and what you're writing is very similar.

Looks like I have the next one also, which is on... I don't know who this is from now. Oh, maybe this is also a pitch from Sarah.

"Five women on surviving ADHD in the workplace." And she was thinking of it for **Fast Company** or **Inc.** And we have a lot of people who have business magazine pitches in here that we'll be getting to and I just want to say these magazines are different. People tend to be like, "Oh, it'll be for **Inc.** or **Forbes** or **Fortune** or **Entrepreneur** or **Wired**..." and these do have different slants and different audiences, so we really want you to read them and look at them.

Fast Company tends to be more techie, like **Wired**. And **Inc.** is sort of mid-market companies and some start-up stuff. But so her idea is "Five women on surviving ADHD in the workplace" and my big reaction to that is **Fast Company** and **Inc.** do not write about the workplace. They write about business ownership and business management - how to better run your business. They don't really interview a lot of workers in the workplace. They talk somewhat about HR issues.

So this could be spun a couple ways for these. The win is five women CEOs on how their ADHD makes them a better leader. Like if you had five women CEOs willing to talk about that, I would think you could sell that. That'd be a slam dunk.

And the other way might be managing your ADHD workers in the workplace might work. But again, we need a news hook of like why do we need to hear about this now? You'd maybe want to find an interesting stat about how many people with ADHD are in the workforce or something.

So those are a couple ways that could be spun. And Linda wants to take the other ADHD idea she has.

Linda: Yeah. I gotta say, I really love your idea of how to help people with ADHD who work with you or work under you. I think that's a really awesome idea.

So yes, the other idea was "Five ADHD Writers Share Their Best Secrets on How to Focus for E-byline or Contently..." -- I don't even know if I'm saying that right, but I know what it is. It says: *You'd think having too many tools would be overwhelming to ADHD writers, but once they are learned, they become indispensable. Here are some favorite tools from some real ADHD writers in the trenches.*

And as a writer with ADHD myself, I like this idea. It is a huge problem among writers just from the emails I get. I can tell this, as well as anxiety and depression. Just huge. So you could actually spin this different ways for different markets as well. You could do it for people with anxiety, people with depression for different writing blogs maybe because it's such a huge deal.

The other idea was "how to stop yourself from being overworked" for **Refinery 29** or **Hello Giggles**. And she says: *A recent study linking workaholism to ADHD and depression brings to light a disturbing trend. Includes interviews with women in this demographic, their struggles and their advice and tips for coping.*

That is a... I looked at the research and that's a really good news hook. I like the idea, but I'm not sure how well it fits with those markets. I checked them out and they just seem more, I don't know, like light newsy sensationalism kind of stuff. So I would just look into that a little bit more, but I could be wrong. I've never written for them.

Also, keep in mind that the study you linked to says -- and I quote -- "Whether this reflects overlapping genetic vulnerabilities, disorders, leading to workaholism or conversely, workaholism causing such disorders remains uncertain." So basically, nobody knows whether workaholism causes depression and ADHD or the other way around, so you would need to address quickly in your pitch that you recognize that. And also in your subsequent article if you were to get the assignment.

And then your headline "how to stop yourself from being overworked." At first I thought, "Oh, man, that's way to basic." But then I realized that simple headline would probably get a lot clicks because there seems to be a lot good SEO in there, but maybe Carol can address that. But at the same time, it doesn't really indicate what the article is about, so that's something to think about.

Carol, did you have any comments on that or...?

Carol: No, I think you got that one. And I guess you have this final one from her also. And then I got one.

Linda: OK. Awesome. So the other one is "What's the Best Way to Automate My Content Creation for Econtent," which is a trade magazine. *It's a collection of tricks, tips*

and tools that digital content creators use to get their jobs done. Can interview content managers from major brands and see what the best in the business are using.

Unfortunately, I'm pretty sure I've seen this a lot. Especially with a trade, you have to think that anybody who is writing for or editing a trade magazine is way, way on top of everything that's going on in the industry. So if you pitch anything, it has to be super -- I'm going to say fresh and new -- so you might want to look into are there any tools for content creators that a lot of them don't already know about or ways to use them that they haven't thought of and just sort of dig under the surface and see if there's anything there that editors wouldn't have seen already.

Carol: Yeah, I'm thinking the win on this one is "Beta test these five new content creation automation tools..." that are like "Ooh, these are in secret betas and not everybody has them yet and I am bringing that news to you and now you know about it..." Yeah, it'd have to be really fresh.

So, John had submitted a previous query he had sent out and not received a response on. And we kind of prefer not to post mortem pitches you've already sent and failed at before you took this class and started getting these trainings and learning about the fundamentals of making saleable pitches happen.

But it's about a couple that did a remodel of their home and he's pitching it to a business magazine which I guess has like sort of a house and home column in the magazine. It has no headline in it and reading through it, I really don't know what the main point of it is. And then at the end of it he kind of throws in "alternatively, I could write about the woman of the couple's embroidery business..." just like a couple sentences. And I think if you're going to pitch multiple ideas, what you want to do is kind of give a decent size bullet on each one, so it doesn't look like one is sort of a half-baked afterthought you threw on, makes it feel kind of weird and desperate.

The other thing about pitching stories about a home remodel is that you need to know -- I've written for a lot of business magazines and, before it died, for **Seattle Homes and Lifestyles** about just this sort of thing and went to houses with black bathrooms where the door was clear glass until you touched it and then it became frosted. And the couches were like teardrops, like something out of Dr. Seuss -- if you want to write a home remodel kind of story, it needs to be amazing. Really, really innovative stuff.

You need to realize that those editors are getting a hundred pitches a week from construction companies pitching their remodel projects and trying to get them covered. So there has to be some real special something here about this remodel: Their house is built over a creek or -- I don't know -- they did it for \$500 and completely transformed the house. There has to be an amazing angle to it to make it fly, so I'm not surprised to hear that this didn't get a response, especially between the lack of sort of a tight focus

on why this is amazing and the lack of a headline. And it also was mentioning a June issue, so obviously too late on that now.

And it looks like I have another one from Bruce for *Inc.* where he's pitching for their November issue on women. So as we've discussed probably, that's over. Though I'll give you an insider tip that *Forbes* actually works pretty close to deadline. They like to be very current. But I think the bulk of the magazine gets done early, but I've been filing stuff like three weeks before the issue prints for them so that it's really current.

So the headline he has is "How Women Businesses Grow Faster by Selling to Large Companies." And if you saw our training on this, you know that some ideas are too broad and some are too tiny and this one I worry is kind of a book topic. How women businesses sell to large companies and how that can accelerate their growth.

So we need to know what's the fresh slant here. Is it how women owned businesses... technology businesses break into selling to large companies or how janitorial service businesses owned by women can get large company contracts or...? I think it's going to need some narrowing.

And he's also pitched it as "the proposed length for this piece is 1000 words..." and I'm glad you did that because it gives me a chance to tell people that I don't believe in saying that, unless it's a column that has a set word count and saying it shows that you kind of know that and have read their guidelines and read the publication. But in general, if you're just pitching a feature piece, you really want to let the editor decide because they know the size of their news hole and how much advertising they've got, how much editorial space they've got, how interesting this idea is... You're not going to know more than they do about how many word this deserves in their publication. And I always think it comes off a little -- what do I want to say? -- it comes off kind of bossy, that you're telling them how many words it should be, to me. So I just...

He says: *Twenty US companies have declared they spend a billion or more on diverse suppliers, which includes women-owned business, according to the billion dollar round table.* You're going to want to tunnel down and actually contact the women-owned business centers that the US government runs and that office of women-owned business and find out how much business women business owners are doing just as themselves.

And he had a great expert idea for this, Jill Konrath of **Selling to Big Companies**. And I'd say that something that was pretty weak here. We saw a lot of, "I'll interview experts in this." Go ahead and start finding actual live people who would fit the bill, even if they're not the ones you end up talking to. But start getting involved in the process of source identification.

So I have a second one from Bruce, too, which has no headline and is a Canadian business magazine. Profile article of Jason Gaynard -- hope I was saying that right -- and then he basically rattles off a bunch of reasons why he would make a good profile. But there's no headline that tells us sort of what's your angle about why this guy deserves a profile now.

And much like the home remodel story, PR people are pitching company owners to be profiled every single day, every minute. Profile stories are easy to write and everybody wants to be the subject of a profile. So once again, there has to be something kind of astonishing and amazing and fascinating about this particular serial entrepreneur, which is actually I think the strongest of the major angles he throws out in here, which are: *he has networking tips, he's doing innovation in the events business by running a costly mastermind* -- which frankly, Linda and I were invited to join that's \$12,000; there's plenty of pricey masterminds out there.

And the thing that's really missing and needs to be in all business pitches about companies is, so he has a \$5000 mastermind, what's he earning from it? Is he earning 50 grand a year or 5 million a year off of that? We need to know. So you always want to be checking with people for business stories to see if they're willing to share revenue information and/or there's a public source that could cough it up for you because otherwise, they're not going to be interested.

So we are up to Linda.

Linda: Yes, so we have one from Vanessa called "Not Dead Yet: The New York City Garment District," for magazines like **AARP**, **Apparel Magazine**, **Forbes**, **New York** and **More**. So first I want to say, if you do end up pitching **AARP**, you probably don't want to have "not dead yet" in the headline. I don't know if that's... I know it comes off as a little bit of a cliché about old people that they probably wouldn't appreciate.

Also, the headline doesn't really indicate what the article is about, which Vanessa says is, "How the garment district businesses are hiring older workers," which I think is a really cool idea, so you might want to work on the headline a little bit.

Also, the markets you have are widely different markets that would require completely different angles and pitches and articles and everything. You've got a consumer mag for seniors, a trade magazine, a business magazine, a women's magazine and a local publication. You kind of got the whole gamut there, which is kind of cool. But I would pick one type and focus on that. And I was hoping Carol would suggest what the best market would be. I was thinking clothing industry trades would be cool, like **Apparel Magazine**, unless this is old news to them, no pun intended. Carol?

Carol: Yeah, I worry that they've already written about it. For **AARP** you could maybe spotlight older garment workers, but my bet is with them, it would probably be a roundup of people who are still doing interesting trades of different types in different parts of the country.

When you're thinking of national magazines... it might work for **New York Magazine** to do some old garment workers, but for something like **AARP**, it's going to be a pattern cutter in New York and a blacksmith who's 75 in Texas and something else in California. They're going to want different examples of different interesting older people in interesting trades in different regions of the country.

So that, yeah...

Linda: But I think she's got a really cool idea and a really cool thing that's going on here. It's super interesting.

Carol: Right. And so she has some idea variations on that, interested in doing a piece on the decline of skilled labor like tailoring and pattern making, but wanted to put a positive spin on it for a market like **Experience Life**. I'm thinking there are programs where young apprentices are still learning tailoring and blacksmithing and stuff and you could find a bunch of those and that that would be really cool and uplifting. I think Seattle, just to give you a lead, has got a lot of blacksmithing going on. And...

Linda: It sounds like a hipster thing, sorry.

Carol: Totally. It's a total hipster thing. They're making incredibly groovy lawn railings and things... yeah, it's totally still going on.

So Linda has another variant of hers.

Linda: Let's see, which one is this? Oh, is this is the one, number two? *On a slightly different vein, I would like to do a roundup of apparel technology that allows the consumer a hand in the design of the garment, virtual fitting rooms, "me-tail," fits.me and so on...* I was wondering what type of market this is for, because it looks like it could be kind of cool for trade magazines in the apparel industry, because I went to *fits.me*, I think is the one I went to, and it looks like an app that online clothing retailers would use to help people figure out whether clothing will fit and then, of course, be more likely to buy it. So that's why I was thinking it would be good for a trade magazine.

Again, check and see if a roundup of this type has been done in the trades, because again, they are way on top of what's going on in their industry, so you need to make sure that they haven't already covered it. But I like it. Carol?

Carol: Yeah, sorry, typing there...

Linda: I know you're in the Chat. I see you.

Carol: So her other idea was, *I could also focus more specifically on NY based small businesses that are still going strong as opposed to many recent articles that bemoan the shrinking garment district, decline of locally owned businesses and lack of products still made in the US. And there's a lot of TV and film production in the city that provides business and income.*

So we got about three, four different ideas in here. And this is another common issue is kind of trying to pack too many different angles into one story idea. These are like all interesting stories that could potentially be written for the right market. You don't have any headline for me here, but I just want to say you could develop an idea about thriving small businesses in apparel that are still going strong in New York. You could write the small business scene is thriving in New York City right now. Here... the start-up scene is thriving. Here are five great examples of new hot companies. Or you could do "here's seven great companies you've never heard of that are still making products in the USA," not necessarily all in apparel, but likely a mix of things -- look at this light manufacturing groovy thing I found in the meat packing district where they're making gourmet something. Once again, not all the apparel industry, the apparel industry, but like different types that show the vibrancy and diversity of it would crush at that.

Linda: Yeah, so you know what, we're running short on time, so I wanted to move ahead to Lisa's and if we have time, we can go back and get the people who have submitted multiple ones, if that's OK.

Carol: Yeah.

Linda: Alright. 'Cuz, yeah, we've got like 20 minutes left, or a little bit more and we're not even half way through. So...

So, yeah, Lisa has an idea: *I intend to pitch "Fly Internationally with a Baby Without Losing Your Mind" to Babble or Scary Mommy. Summer travel is upon us and more parents are taking their babies abroad. A reported essay with my experience taking a seven month old to London and Paris while he was getting his first tooth. So it would include practical information about flights, such as how to get a bassinet or if you should book the baby his or her own seats. Will interview airline agents for their perspective. Also talking about sleep and jet lag.*

So these publications you mentioned probably have a pretty short lead time since they're online, but you might still be a bit late for talking about the Summer. Might be worth looking into.

Also, if you look up flying with baby overseas, you will find tons and tons of articles that address this. I like the "without losing your mind" aspect in the headline, but that's kind of implied in all these articles I found online, is you want to know how to survive this overseas trip with your infant.

What's also really weird is that we fly overseas a lot. We've gone several times in the last few months with our seven-year-old and what's really weird is that we always see babies on the flight and you never hear a peep from them, possibly because the flights are red-eye, so it's making me think maybe it's not as scary as people assume. That's just something to think about, maybe an opposite idea there.

But you could also make this work by looking for really surprising tips. All these articles had stuff about the bassinette and about when to feed and bringing... what to bring and things like that. So if you could find something more surprising, that would be cool.

Or what if you did a roundup of really crazy things moms have done to keep their babies quiet, happy and healthy while flying overseas. And then maybe you could have a small box or section on moms' horror stories about flying with infants overseas. It seems that these online women's and parenting publications really go for the sort of "real mom" advice, "real mom" experiences and everybody loves to hear crazy tips and horror stories, so that's just my suggestion on that.

And it's you, Carol.

Carol: Yeah. So Rich is pitching me "Seven secrets of successful serial entrepreneurs" for *Inc.*, *Entrepreneur*, *Forbes*, *Fast Company*, *Wired*. As we've discussed, different publications that would need different slants on this. I believe I may have written this exact story at some point or something very like it.

But you don't seem to have any sourcing in it. You don't... you have your brother-in-law is a serial entrepreneur and you might ask him for some referrals. For all of these national magazines, they would need to not all be in Texas, so I don't know how well that's going to work. But, yeah, you could definitely ask on HARO or talk to Angel Investor organizations in different cities could totally steer you to people. And/or some of them will be themselves former serial entrepreneurs, because that's usually how angel investors get the money to start investing.

There needs to be something to this that gives it a freshness. Could you round up seven serial entrepreneurs who recently sold their companies for big money? Are there some changes to the tech environment and you could talk to some serial tech entrepreneurs for *Wired*? So we need a little bit more tweaking.

And I just challenge the idea that you're going to discover secrets I've never heard before about how to be a successful business person. And I can tell you haven't talked to anybody yet, so I worry that we're over promising a little there. So I would dig into this more and see if you can't niche it a bit and give it some freshness, because it's pretty generic as it is.

So George has a question: *I don't have any publications in particular in mind that I want to write for. I write well and I want to be paid well and based on that, please tell me a few publications or a category of publications I would do well to study and query.*

We have... I used to have a joke when I was a secretary that mind reading is an extra fee. I really would need to know a lot more about you to be able to answer that. But... and I really don't know anyone who's successfully built a freelance writing career based on "I'm just going to target markets that pay well." You really need to follow your interests and life experience and things you have a natural interest in.

I mean, **Forbes** pays a buck fifty a word, but are you going to try to write for them just because of that, even if you have no interest in business? That's probably not going to work out because they're looking for people who are super passionate about business dork stuff, like me who just think it's awesome to learn about advanced washing machine technology or the fine points of crowdfunding or something.

So make a list of your interests and topics that you know a bit or are interested in. And then, what I used to do to find new markets, is take the **Writers Market Online** -- which I highly recommend and affiliate sell on my blog -- and online, you can take their five dollar sign tool... and they're dollar signs of how much do they pay, where it goes from one to five -- set it to five dollar signs and leave it wide open and click search and look at all the publications that pay really, really well. And use them as sort of your starting point to look through. I think you'll see some you think, no, and others you'll think, "OK. That's interesting." So that's a way to sort of qualify higher paid publications.

Linda.

Linda: OK, sorry. I was just manning the Chat. And we're at Diane, who just texted me. "Five Easy Things You Can Do About Painful Sex." And she mentioned she forgot to talk about who she would source for this [46:10](#) [...] don't worry about that.

So the markets would be **Women's Health**, **Women's Health and Fitness**, **Prevention**, **WebMD**, and various magazines found in waiting rooms. I want to mention that these are good markets, except maybe **Women's Health and Fitness**. I looked it up online and if it's the Australian magazine that I found, it doesn't seem like quite a fit for them, but of course, I could be wrong.

The idea is there are varying degrees of painful sex with a variety of causes. For women in their 40s through women as young as 20... although women as young as 20 can be affected, a condition known as vulva-vaginal atrophy (VVA) is a particular problem. Every year 6000 women join millions of VVA sufferers and most will suffer in silence. But many wouldn't have to suffer at all if they took at least one of these five easy steps.

You have some very, very good statistics there. So as for the particular idea, the five easy things you can do about painful sex, I'm wondering first of all why now? For example, is this incidence increasing? What makes it new? Because I actually have seen this addressed a lot in the past in the women's and health magazines, so you need to figure out is there some new research or a new book... or again, is the incidence of VVA on the rise? Is there anything at all new about that? I would dig and see if you can find anything that makes it fresher.

Or is it that you have easy solutions whereas in the past, the solutions were complicated and expensive. And if so, you might want to add that information to your pitch in a quick deck so the editor sees, "Oh, this is what makes this idea different from what I've already seen." And a deck is, if you look at a lot of the women's and health magazines, they'll have just a quick sentence underneath the headline that explains what the article is about so that gives you like a little extra bit of space to kind of sell the editor on it.

Also, we're not really going to critique full pitches right now, but I looked at your pitch, and I just want to give the quick tip that you don't offer any examples to the editor, so she has to just trust that your five tips will truly be easy and unique and interesting and relevant and doable.

So we always suggest fleshing out at least a couple of the tips that you're going to have, so you might need to do some research, maybe quickly talk to a couple of experts. And then write them in the style of the magazine and in the format you plan on pitching, whether it's subheads or a chart or whatever. So I think this is a really good idea, you just need to figure out... just give more information and talk to a couple of people and find out if you really do have some easy tips, if they're really out there, and if so, flesh out what they are.

Carol?

Carol: Yeah. Exactly. So, Leslie has the headline: *One smart shirt - how technology will revolutionize what you wear.* She was thinking of it for **Costco Connections** December issue which focuses on electronics and apparel or for **Hawaiian Airlines** magazine because a lot of athletes use techie clothing and they go to Hawaii for Iron Man, was sort of her thinking on that. I think that's a pretty loose connection to Hawaii. But for **Costco Connection**, you'd have to probably be talking about tech shirts they sell, I believe is the secret sauce on pitching those kind of trend stories at Costco.

Linda: You've written for them, right?

Carol: I haven't, but I've written for another part of their business, not for the magazine. I wrote for their business services newsletter.

But I'm just not getting anything new out of this. She's like: Imaging a bra that can check your heartrate, a shirt that cools you down on a hot day. Yeah, we all know apparel technology has happened and is out there. It's not really how technology will revolutionize what you wear, it would have to be more like "is" revolutionizing what you wear. This is... we're not ahead of this trend, so I just don't know. I think there'd have to be something new to say about apparel tech here and I'm not sensing it yet in this, but maybe there are some fun things. But you'd have to tell us more.

Linda.

Linda: Yes, I have Jade's idea for ***New Scientist**: How one little pill is going to sucker punch scabies or how moxidectin -- a new anti-parasitic drug that is also being developed as a vaccine against river blindness is also being developed as a single dose treatment that can eradicate scabies once contracted.*

I looked it up online because I'd never heard of the drug and if I'm correct, it looks like it's been used in pets for a really long time to prevent heart worm and other issues. So I was wondering is this a new use of that? And if so, and if this idea hasn't been done already, I thought it was kind of cool. Carol, did you have any comments on it or...?

Carol: No. Keep rolling...

Linda: I liked it. I mean, if I just like do a really quick critique then I think it's fine. I'm not like shortchanging anybody if I have comments or critiques I will definitely let them know. So also is Rachel's idea: "Road Trip Survival Guide - 7 Tips Every Pet Parent Needs to Know" for consumer pet magazines like ***Modern Dog, Dogster, Bark, Fido Friendly*** or ***Best Friends***. Could be flipped for feline version, which is always an awesome idea to try to re-slant in that way.

The thing is, this has really been done a lot. In fact, I'm pretty sure I pitched this same idea myself like 15 years ago when we went cross country with our pets. So is there any way you can make it new and/or more surprising -- I know I sound like a broken record, but that can really turn an idea that's been done into something saleable.

Maybe you can find some tips that people don't generally know yet and make sure that that's clear in your headline because if an editor reads this headline, they're going to be like, "Oh, seen it." So make sure it's clear that you have something new.

Maybe talk to a couple of experts really quickly and ask them what are their most surprising tips for going on road trips with pets. Maybe you'll turn up something that people haven't seen yet. So again, an easy way to a sale.

And also, for your information, **WebMD** magazine, at least the print magazine that I used to write for, has a pet section as well. I've written for it several times, so you might want to look into that.

Jade has another one, but I'm going to move on to Tory first and then we'll circle back if we have time for people with additional pitches.

Tory said: *You mentioned to go with your gut and first idea. Right now I feel that is trite because I can't find the right magazine to send to, especially since **More** closed. Nor do I feel I have an immediate call to action on the news hook...*

So, you know what, don't worry about those things yet, because again, the reason we tell you to just go with your gut and your first idea is that the first ideas we normally come up with -- just pop into our heads or whatever -- are usually seeds of ideas and then you need to kind of like let them simmer and think about them and... I know I'm breaking up the metaphor here, but just think about them and play with them and tweak them and think about places to send them to that are unusual or... and you'll find a way to make it work, typically.

So her idea is "Gray Pride: Youthful Soul and Gray Roots, Embrace It with Three Surprising Ways to Be a Modern Gray." First of all, I like your title. I think your deck is awesome. I like the idea, but then the tips that you give: updating your wardrobe, updating your makeup and using bobby pins and loose braids and other on-trend hair options -- those tips don't really seem all that new. I know that I've seen all of them before. So maybe... I know I say this all the time, but just talk to a couple experts -- and I know from your query that you are an expert yourself -- but see if they have any tips that editors wouldn't have heard.

And also, as you mentioned, it's true there are not many magazines left for women in their 40s and 50s. **More** is folding and that's pretty much the only one. If you can find a statistic saying that a good percentage of women in their 30s get gray hair, there are lots of magazines for that demographic, so it could still work, like, "Oh, you're 35 and you're starting to see your first gray. Here's how to wear it with pride." So that's an option that could work.

And, oh, and your news hook is that scientists believe that they have found the gray hair gene so we may be closer to reversing gray. So I think that's a really cool kind of news hook. I think if you could figure out a way to make it work, you should jump on it.

Carol?

Carol: Yeah, I'm going to... I'm skipping over Bruce's thing. I've asked him a question. It kind of doesn't have a headline and said it was in process, I think, so I've asked him for bit more info so you can go on to John's other one. Or I think we've done one from John already. I don't know. You might want to go down to Janine.

Linda: Oh, sorry. Sorry, I was just in the Chat talking to Jade.

Carol: No problem.

Linda: You want me to go down to who now?

Carol: Um, Janine... I think the others we've gotten an idea from already.

Linda: Ah, there you are. *My very first idea for Pitch Clinic -- yay! The headline is "More for less: the benefits of a minimalist lifestyle" for a magazine called **Well Being** in Australia. And the story will be about finding joy and peace by decluttering and reducing reliance on material possessions. This particular subject hasn't been written about in this publication as far as I can tell. The news hook is that the minimalist movement is fairly fresh and the concept is still relevant due to growing consensus about the need to protect the environment. A lot of people who feel alienated by consumerism are searching for alternative ways of living and minimalism is attractive to them.*

So I'm not sure where you're located. You have a really good seed of an idea here. I like the idea, but I disagree that the simplicity movement or the minimalism movement is fairly new. It's actually been going on -- at least in the US -- for a really long time and the benefits are widely known, have been heavily reported. We've got blogs like **Zen Habits**, tons of blogs that focus specifically on simplicity and minimalism as a main focus and they've been around for a long time and they go well beyond the reporting of the benefits because by now, they're kind of self-evident.

But, maybe you're in Australia and your focusing on Australian magazines and this is new to them and this is a new movement there, in which case, I think it's an awesome idea. If you also want to focus on magazines in the US, then I would try to think of a new hook for it.

It's great that you researched the market and found they haven't done the idea, but you want to develop an idea that will fit will several different possible markets, just to up your odds for a sale, because it really stinks when you come up with this huge pitch and there's only one magazine that it's right for and they don't get back to you and they turn it down. It's just... it's a disappointment and a huge waste of time.

But if you want to reach some US magazines, I was thinking what if you tried some of the tricks we talk about in the class. For example, you could write about the surprising benefits that people don't already know about.

Or even, what I think is cool, would be to go with an opposite idea and talk about why minimalism isn't sometimes 'all that.' And maybe interview people who've run into trouble when trying to simplify their lives. Or who ended off worse in the end because here in the US the trend has been going on long enough that there's probably some people who tried it and really aren't that happy with it. So that's just a thought, but again, good seed of an idea.

Oh and also you mentioned one of your experts is the author of **The Joy of Less** and I looked it up and the book is six years old, it's from 2010, so you might want to see if there's anything newer out there.

And that's it, though.

Carol: Yeah, I'm glad you brought that point up. I recently had somebody pitch me one for Four-week J School, where they were using some 15-year-old study and I was like, "Yeah, that's not going to work..." Fresh data is really important and, yeah, new books coming out are good.

So I'm going to hop to Karen's headline: *Time sensitive networking: Will it upset the oil field automation applecart, or 5 ways time sensitive networking will impact oil field automation.*

Linda: I'm like, "Carol, you take that one."

Carol: Yeah. Linda's like [58:41 \[crosstalk\]](#) And her target publication is **Automation World**. And so at first I thought this was about like going to a networking event as a business owner, but it's about a technical refinement to a communications protocol. It's a very heavily techie fine point story. And my question is, why only is it about oil fields? If time sensitive networking is a communication protocol advance that's coming, I would think **Automation World** doesn't sound like it's only for oil field operators and I would think you would want to talk about several industries that this protocol upgrade is going to change.

Linda: Can I mention an idea? It could also be for... well, you were actually... you already said that. Never mind, I stole it. The oil and gas trade, sorry.

Carol: Yeah, or... yeah, or pitch this idea to an oil and gas trade. They are always looking for people, I swear.

When I used to look on ads on Gorkana all the time, they were always advertising for staffers. I think it's really a tough technical boring kind of low glamor industry and they can get enough people. So definitely find some oil and gas trades to maybe pitch that specific 60:11 [...] it to.

We know we're at the top of the hour, but we... I can keep going. Linda, you have a hard stop maybe coming? Can you keep going? We like to try and keep these to an hour, but we do not always succeed. And you guys have a ton of ideas, which is awesome. Linda, you still there?

Linda: Uh, yes... So are we on Jada's idea?

Carol: Jada, yeah and 60:37 [crosstalk] I was wondering how long I have you for?

Linda: Oh, I'm going to say like another 10 minutes because, yeah, childcare thing. 60:45 [crosstalk]

Carol: I can stay longer. I don't have anything drastic.

Linda: Awesome. So yeah, Jada's idea for publications like *Natural Health* in Australia, *Well Being* in Australia, *The Art of Healing*, *Women's Health Magazine* in the US and so forth. The idea is "Proven alternative treatments for depression."

And it says "recent research that's hit the news around anti-depressant medications has really highlighted their over prescription, particularly since the research has shown that the medications are not much better than placebo.: So I think this is a really good seed of an idea. I have to say the thing about the medications not being better than a placebo is not news. I think it was either in New York Magazine or The New Yorker that did huge expose on it several years ago. The fact that they're being over prescribed I also don't know if that's new, but you say it's just hit, so I would make sure to check and make sure that really is recent, like within the last several months for your news hook.

But then again, the idea is pretty basic. I've seen a lot of this online. It's just really huge, alternative treatments for depression, what herbs can we use, can we use yoga. You mentioned green space, psychotherapy, diet and exercise, mindfulness and other proven methods. These have been around and have been reported on as alternative treatments for depression for a really long time.

So I'm going to say the same thing I'm saying to everybody else. Look for something surprising. Is there an alternative treatment that's been used successfully that nobody knows about yet? Or can you go with a different type of packaging? Could you talk about the different types of alternative treatments that are out there and the pros and cons and what to watch out for and how much they cost and turn it into like a chart or

something... could be a new way of presenting it. So again, cool start to an idea, but I would just work to make it something that editors haven't seen before.

Carol: Yeah.

Linda: And she has a question as well. *If you notice a magazine's publishing schedule in their media kit, which months should you pitch it for? I notice Linda said about six months' out. Is that right?* I mean that's a pretty safe bet for a lot of consumer print publications, but some are faster, some are slower and online ones tend to be faster. So you could always go with the six months as a benchmark and be safe about it or you could always call and ask, "What's your lead time for articles? I want to pitch something for December. Is it too late?" A lot of people are afraid to call publications, but when I push my mentoring clients to do it, they usually have success and people are nice to them and everything, so...

Carol: Yeah. So Jada also asked, "What's a side bar?" A sidebar is a little sort of extra feature to your article, usually 100, 300 words, something like that, that illuminates some side point or related issue to the story. For instance, I did a story for Alaska Air on how to choose a retirement home for your parent and it had a side bar of resources, of government and non-profit agencies that you could consult with to help you with that search. So that's a typical side bar.

And she also asked, "Is it common for publications to pay on publication?" Yeah, they love to, but yeah, as Linda said, you can negotiate.

Linda: Yeah, when I was starting out, everything was pay on acceptance and from what I hear -- because I don't write for any pay on publication magazines -- from what I hear, it's becoming more and more common, which stinks.

Carol: Yeah. Not that happy. And, yeah, I have successfully negotiated for 50% on acceptance and 50% on publication, so I'm at least not waiting for all of it 'til the end of time.

So I have a pitch from Jane. And I'm not really seeing a publication. She says it could be for **Money Magazine** or a self-help men's or women's magazine or a home decor magazine. I think this one needs some focus.

It's "What happy home sellers know: Maximize your home's selling potential before it goes up for sale, using advice from industry experts." Besides the fact that that's a too long headline, the big problem is where would you publish this for an audience of people who are about to sell their home? I just think there kind of is no such magazine.

But there are magazines for home stagers, which she talks about in some of her details of how to max... one of her angles is how to maximize your sale price and shorten your time to market. That's more for a realtor trade, so that realtors can help those owners do that. I don't know how you directly reach just people who want to sell their house. And I don't know how much general self-help magazines do stories about selling your house. I feel like I've never seen that.

Linda: She mentioned it could be a money or finance piece because from what I hear, the real estate market is going nuts right now and you look at some of these houses and you're like, "Holy crap. People need this advice." So if you could find somewhere for it, it's a cool idea.

Carol: Yeah. And so her fresh angle, she says, might be how to like stage your house using what the seller already has and that might work, that might be a great angle for an audience, a trade publication for home stagers. I'm sure there's more than one of them.

Then Seskia has one that says, "Bombo's shows us how healthy eating isn't a trend." And it's for ***Edible Community South Florida***. It's basically a local fruit market run by a guy from Guyana who has been selling juiced drinks for a long time. It really... it basically smells to me like it isn't showing us anything about being a trend or not. It's really just a business profile of this particular business. And I'm not really getting... I'm not really getting why it's super interesting.

He says, "It's near an area of booming gentrification where foodies run rampant and pay \$15 for health drinks, but most don't know him." The problem with that is it starts to sound like you're part of his PR team and you want everyone to know how great he is because he should sell more and stuff and that's not really a reporter's point of view on it.

Is he like the cheapest smoothie in town? It's really hard to sell single business stories. I just want to say that generally. When I was at the Business Journal and I used to get hit by PR people to report on them, I used to call this pitch, "Look at this company. Aren't they neat?" 'Cuz you would just get this day after day after day after day. "You should write about this business. They're really awesome!" And there'd never be anything really that you put your head around about, but why are they so exceptional?

She says her news hook is *Places like this border gentrified areas, but many of these locals over non-pretentious and long standing traditions of healthy eating*. So, to me, I would think if you could find two other places like this that are like undiscovered gems that have affordable healthy, maybe ethnic food or something, that would make a great round up. I don't think it's working as a single.

Guys, if you have put an idea pitch or there was a question we haven't answered in Chat -- I feel like we've answered a lot of them in the Chat -- repost it so that we see it right up top.

So Jude had pitched: *Release your inner caveman - a surprising way to make social media work for your brand*. I don't really know what that means. I don't know what my inner caveman is, so I feel like we need a better headline that's going to help me understand this topic, which I gather is about kind of the psychology of social media and why we like social media, which is to me, really just a lot of background. What we need to know is what can I apply practically in my business, in my social media marketing.

She says her news hook is "to give small businesses a different perspective and strategy to prepare their social media marketing messages." That's not really a news hook. We're always looking for that and social media has been around for a decade. I'm not quite getting... It sounds like there's sort of an angle to human psychology that you want to present, but that would have to be like the background and the meat of the article would have to be how to use understanding of our caveman brain to improve your social media marketing, which could be a really great, fun article. I know Sean D'Souza at ***Psychotactics*** is like all about this; all about sort of primal brain psychology things and how they make you buy online.

She has some good ideas for experts lined up, though it looks like they're all like doctors and psychologists. You kind of probably want a mix of types of experts. You might want someone like Sean who runs his business based on those principles and teaches about them online, rather than just all academics. It tends to get a little in the weeds when it's all academic expert sources.

So you want to take Lulu's question?

Linda: Can you hear me? Let's see. Where is it? Where is it...

Carol: How essential is it to have a website?

Linda: Oh, yes, yes. There we go. Yes, sorry. I'm just scrolling down. Yes, *how essential is a website to my pitch package? Are strong clips enough? WordPress or other?*

So I have it from an editor at ***Writer's Digest*** that when he is getting a pitch from somebody and he's on the fence about whether or not they can pull it off, he looks for their website. He Googles them and if he sees that they don't have a website, that's kind of a negative point because it makes you seem like you might not be as professional or they really just can't get any more information on you when they want to.

That said, you don't have to have anything super fancy or expensive. It could be a free theme. WordPress is fine. I've seen people use Weebly. I'm not really up on this stuff, but as long as it looks professional, I think it's fine.

And you mentioned, "Are strong clips enough?" Again, clips always help, but if they want to look you up, they're going to want to find your website. It also gives you a way to control what people see about you. So the first thing that comes up about you will be your website and not maybe what other people have written about you or social media you were hoping editors don't see and so on.

You say, "I have a lot to say, do I add a blog?" A lot of people ask this question. I don't think you need a blog, unless you're specifically selling yourself as a blogger. If you already have clips, then a blog is just redundant. And then, in order to have a successful blog that is going to sell for you, you need to have a topic that you are so passionate about that you don't even need to ask the question, "Should I have a blog and what should I blog about?" because it should be something that you love so much that you are willing to write a thousand posts on it over the next several years and you won't get burned out and you won't get bored. And that is a lot to ask, so in terms of just having one to use to impress an editor or as a clip. I don't think it's worth it.

Carol: Yeah.

Linda: Just another thing is she has several questions about how she had an opportunity with various publications that sort of fell through the cracks and what should I do? And you know what, just call them up, just call them up. If you made a mistake in the past, as you mentioned, just come clean, "I was working for you last fall. I know I made a mistake. I would love to work with you again. Is there anything I can do?" Editors are people. Just get in touch and come clean. There is no secret here. So, anything else, Carol?

Carol: No. I just feel bad that... So folks now, I'm going to go through the Chat and we'll look through this and if there's pitches we didn't get to live, we will try and email you about them.

I wanted you to get to... God, there's one in the Chat that...

Linda: Yeah, yeah. I wanted to get to it too and then I have to run, unfortunately.

73:50 [crosstalk]

Linda: I've been pasting them in up at the top. Do you see that? It says "Questions in Chat." Buh, buh, buh, buh, buh, buh... Is it the *Working Mother*?

Carol: We're overwhelmed with all of your creativity! This is really awesome to see so many ideas coming out.

Linda: Yeah. So I have an idea from Carmen here that was in the Chat, so I hope this is the one you're talking about. It's for **Working Mother**. The headline is: Go ahead -- hand your kids the iPod. It's a contrarian article, which you know I always love, which says that actually scree time is fine for toddlers and little kids if it's handled correctly. I pre-interviewed Patty Summers author of **Toddlers on Technology**. *I think it might be good now because there are a bunch of articles coming out which say that all this panic about toddlers on screens is more about guilt tripping mothers.* So that's actually a reason why it might not be good for now because you're kind of saying what they're all saying, it seems. *But Working Mother just did a whole thing on breastfeeding and pumping that seems to be in the same vein. They did it as an interview with a single author. I think it would be good to do this article in the same way.*

I mean I actually really like this idea because it is contrarian, but if everybody is doing this contrarian thing, then it's not contrarian anymore. If they're all saying, "Oh, the screen time thing is hogwash. It's just trying to guilt trip mothers..." You know what could be really cool, though, and I'm just obviously going by the seat of my pants since this was in Chat, but maybe a round up of different things that have been shown that are guilt tripping mothers that you don't really need to be doing, and you mentioned the breastfeeding thing and you mentioned the screen time.

If you could round up five or six of these, including some that aren't really in the news right now, that could be really interesting, like, "Hey, you actually don't need to feed your kids. That's a guilt trip." So I think that could help, if this has really been in the news a lot already. But I think it's an awesome idea. And I would pitch it beyond **Working Mother**. Look at all the different parenting magazines that are out there. There's a lot of them.

So Carol, I am going to run because I have my own kid that I have to pretend to feed, even though I'm just being guilt tripped, obviously.

So, but we are like almost done with these and if you go to the top, I pasted in questions from the Chat that people have left.

Carol: Cool. You know, what I'm hoping is that even if we haven't gotten to one of your ideas, if you did multiple ideas, hopefully by now you're picking up on some patterns about the need for a focused narrow topic that is a really good fit for the publication you have in mind, that you have studied and that you're not just sort of throwing something at the wall, you've talked to some experts or done some research so that you know that it's a real thing and that you've got something we haven't seen before.

And I'm going to stay on and keep rolling and I will bat clean up on this too, if there's anything we did not end up getting to. And yeah, if you haven't... if it's something you hadn't posted in to the email address -- let me put it in again -- do us a favor and also email it over to the four-week pitch challenge

Linda: Yeah, because we could always do them next week to. I don't think we'll get nearly as many questions next week, so we'll have plenty of time to do these as well.

Carol: Yeah. There's usually like an explosion of stuff at the beginning here and then next week we're just asking you to pitch us a lead for, as I recall, for a potential query letter, just like one line, or one paragraph.

Alright, we'll see you Linda.

Linda: Thanks, everybody. Bye.

Carol: I'm still here, though. And I wanted to get to some basic questions that Michael had. He wants to write for like **Wired** and **Ars Technica** and other national magazines, but most of his clips are from a local arts and entertainment pub in Toledo and he wanted to know if he should just pitch the big ones or if he should focus on more regional statewide kind of things first. And I guess my answer would be to do both because you never know if you have an amazing, amazing focused pitch, you might score at a national level right away. But in general, yes, things like **Seattle Business** is a farm club for writing for **Entrepreneur**. **Seattle Magazine** is kind of a farm club for writing for **Redbook**. So that's how it usually works.

So he says: *My interests are technology, economics, health care, culture, urban development and marketing. Is this too wide of an interest area? Should I narrow my focus?*

I have a post I'm going to throw in the Chat for you about this very issue of worrying about what your niche is kind of why you should stop -- whoops, I sent it privately; let me send it to everybody. Your market experience will tell you what your successful niches will be, so feel free to pitch around in all of your interest areas and just see what hits...

His other question -- and we get this a lot -- is: *On average, how many pitches should one create in a given week or month? And how many different publications should I target?* And the thing is, there is no 'one;' there's only 'you.' There's no general, universal 'we.' There's no universal benchmarks. Compete with yourself and try to send as many as you can. Try to send more this month than you sent last month. How many you need to send to get the clients you need is very individual. Your level of experience, your writing level, how strong your ideas are...

So he also had the "do you recommend starting a blog," so he... so Linda answered that on another one.

He said: *I want to break into freelance writing for government. How do I pitch those avenues?* Great question. And it's a huge market; it's like a third of the economy. You need to become a qualified government contractor to bid on government contract freelance writing work and there's Google-able stuff online about how you do that. And don't just think federal, there's also city, county, state level government that needs writing done. And you can also look up who has won past bids and it's often marketing agencies and you can connect with those agencies to see about subcontracting with them.

He said: *Are there similarities -- I totally can't talk -- between proposal writing -- for grants, like grant writing -- and pitching to trade pubs and magazines?* Not really, pretty specialized thing, writing grant proposals.

This course is geared toward pitching article ideas, but what about pitching blog posts, white papers, case studies to digital B2B markets? We do cover that a bit in our LOI training that's coming up I think next week and the LOI format works really great for that and can totally be adapted to that. We had one success story where someone got 20 grand of work doing that from one client.

I'm having trouble coming up with good idea pitches, but I'm a really hungry writer and think I just need to learn how to think about doing things. What advice can you give me? Listen to our story idea trainings. We really talk about... that story idea lab recording, we talk about dozens and dozens of ways to iterate ideas.

So Lisa's idea is "Alternatives to synthetic thyroid medications." And she said: *Struggling with a news hook.* Yeah, I was going to say they'd have to be new ones that are just coming out that we all haven't heard about yet, if we're someone who needs them.

So Daniel says: *My biggest stumbling block is picking a niche.* So see my post about how the market will tell you your niche. Pitch in everything you find interesting and see where you get a response.

So... a story idea: *Three tips for reusing, recycling and repurposing your content ideas.* I've written that story, only I think it was more like 27 tips and ran it in **Copyblogger**. That's something we've seen a lot, a lot of times, so it would have to have something we haven't seen before, a market that hasn't done that before. Maybe an industry where they're doing a lot of blogging and content marketing for an industry trade; maybe they haven't done that thing before.

OK. Yay! I think I've hit the end of what's come in on the email, but... Oh, so some questions in Chat here. Judy says: *Why did you reduce the number of queries from eight to four for this Pitch Clinic?* Well, I don't know. Lots of reasons. Few people completed it. We found there was a lot of stress and intensity around that. And we really just want you to send tons of them, but we want you to have four reviewed by our editors and we think after that...

The way it worked before is you only got two: you got one query and you got one LOI reviewed by the editors. And then you pitched and didn't get a lot of feedback in the pitch cycle. So instead, we have you're getting four pieces of feedback and we think that's going to be more helpful.

So Rich says: *One pitch at a time to an individual editor?* Not necessarily. I'm a big fan of multi-pitch where you send three ideas in one pitch. You don't want to pitch them every day a new email with a new pitch idea.

So, yeah... how many pitches to aim for... yeah, I kind of talked about that. Talked about "Hand your kids the iPod..." We talked about how to find publications in the Chat thread. I think I've hit everything except what's live in Chat.

Will we be able to listen to this again? Yes.

I'm just looking through quickly... I don't know, if there's any final questions, final pitches you want me to look at in Chat... Oh, I wanted to get to this one that I saw. Which is from Elena for an airline magazine, which is "How to get your health on in Los Angeles." It would definitely want to be someone who... an airline that flies to... has Los Angeles as a major hub, because that's all they care about at airline magazines is whether they fly to the thing they're talking about. But you say, "I would do a roundup of LAs trendiest spa treatments, eateries, classes, sweat lodges, elixirs..." It sounds kind of all over the place to me. Maybe you could identify three hot health trends: now they're doing yoga while in a bath of ice cubes or whatever that we haven't heard about yet. I mean we all know a lot of emerging trends come out of LA, so that could totally be cool.

Alright. I'm going to cut this off, because this has gone on long enough. And... I assumed you did. I'm from LA and well aware of what goes on in LA, but I think we hit everybody. And I'm going to double check and I will try and hit ones we haven't got to.

Thanks everybody. And, yeah, feel free to use that email address and send us more questions and more story ideas for next time. We will definitely continue taking them.

Thanks, all.