

Carol: Hey, everybody, if you're just joining us, it is Carol Tice here with Linda Formichelli.

Linda: Hello...

Carol: And this is our second Q&A for Pitch Clinic and we have a focus on this week on writing the lede of a query. That is our official homework, but we are definitely here to review story ideas, answer freelance questions...

Mary, no, there is not a slideshow. And I see people like turning on their cameras and we're not doing live talking heads. We're just talking about ideas. Totally don't look at me. I don't know, I don't look too bad. I washed my hair and everything, but we're not doing talking heads.

We're just here to talk and to focus our minds on words and listen and think about what people are doing with their ideas and with their ledes and make them better. That's what we're here for. And we have quite a cache of things and...

Linda: I can take this first one, too, Debbie's.

Carol: Yeah, go ahead.

Linda: Yes, because I just read it really quickly, but we've been doing this for years, so we can get some good impressions. So the idea is "The Five Tabletop Games to Bring to the Winery." And it looks like it is for On Tap magazine. It looks like you already sent it off, actually, maybe you didn't hear back or... I'm not sure, but I think this is actually a really cool idea. I don't know if you know that my husband is the news editor for Board Game Geek, so we are all about the board games over here.

OK, she said it's a draft to be sent. So I think, of course, I think anything about board games is really cool, but this seems like a really interesting twist on those articles you see all the time on like, "The best games for your game night..." and "The best games for your kids..." I mean, the best games for a winery, that is actually like a market that probably hasn't seen this idea yet. And that's a really great way to turn an idea from stale into saleable is -- and I just made that up, by the way, patent pending 'TM' -- is to find a market that, to them, this is new like, "Oh, table top games. I hadn't thought about that."

And I see you have, yeah, Machi Koro and other games. Kid-friendly, I'm not sure if you would want to mention kid-friendly for a winery unless they allow kids. I don't know.

But also you might want to talk to some experts and let them know who you're going to be talking to, just to bring another viewpoint into it because it's not all about you. You're

going to have to talk to experts and see what they say and what they recommend as the best games for this type of an environment.

And if you want to interview my husband, I know he would love to do it because he's their media guy. So, anyway, I think this is a great idea and it's nicely done, except for I would put in some experts.

Carol: Yeah, I noticed that too. And I think that's another common thing we see a lot of is people just kind of popping off a whole article draft off the top of their heads, they know a lot about it. That doesn't tend to be the kind of article that gets you buck a word. The money is in fully reported stories where you are not the expert and you are interviewing experts. So, yeah...

Linda: And another thing about this pitch is I would actually... once you talk to the experts and get their input on "these are the games we think are best for that type of environment," then I would separate them out with maybe bullet points or little clever subhead or something and give a very brief description, because the editors also don't know what these games are. So you say the intellectual party game concept, kid-friendly Machi Koro, and things like that, but they really don't know what any of these are or how appropriate they are, except for your very brief description, so I would go into a little more detail there. And we talk a lot about this in the class, kind of showing, not telling, just to give them an idea of, "Oh, this is now it's going to look in the magazine. Very nice..."

You could even kind of break out a couple of them and do more full descriptions as if you were writing the article. Maybe two of them and say, "The other ones I'll be talking about are blah, blah, blah..." and just list them. But you really want to give examples to show how you'd be writing them up; how you'd be packaging it. It's very important.

Carol: Yeah, and who you'll be talking to; where that data will come from. [4:42 \[crosstalk\]](#)

And I also wanted to hit... I don't know if this is a question from Debbie or someone else, but, right at the top of my sheet now it says, "I'm new to interviewing. Do you have articles, webinars, resources to help me?" Why yes we do. If I can draw your attention to this week's module: Anatomy of a Killer Query. If you look at Unit Five, it has two different interview handouts with all of our interview tips. I am a real student of the interview process and had to interview just a bazillion people in the course of writing three, four articles a week every week for twelve years as a staff writer. And all of those gems are right in the class for you. So, go crazy...

And my big tip about interviewing, is practice. Really, people become good interviewers by doing a lot of interviews. So find a friend you can interview and all that stuff.

So Amy had had a lede last week and she was all excited and we talked about it, but actually the deal had kind of fell apart because she pitched... they wanted a thousand to 1500-word blog post and she pitched that she wanted to write a 500 word one or 700 word one and so they moved on. So just want to say, I think it's a teachable moment that it's important to remember that when you're first interacting with people, you want to follow their directions, not say, "Oh, you want this, but I'd like to do something else instead."

You really want to just get in the door. Your job is to just do that thing they're asking for and then you're in a position to say, "OK, now that we all love each other and everything... now let's talk about what I'm doing."

OK, I can see that something's up with my -- whoops -- with my audio settings because I have unmuted regular participants going on, so...

Linda: And did you see that Amy has a resolution that happened today?

Carol: Oh, what happened... no, I didn't. What's the resolution?

Linda: Yeah, I posted into the document in blue up above. It said she reached back out to them based on your advice and they decided to move forward with their writing proposal. They agreed on \$400 for a 1000-1500 word blog post. That's actually pretty good fee right there.

Carol: That's nice.

Linda: Yeah. And if I can mention something as well, if you feel like you know a lot about a certain topic or a certain genre of writing and you feel like maybe the client is shooting themselves in the foot and you want a gentle way to say it, you could say, "OK, I'm happy to give you an estimate based on that and here it is. But I also want to let you know that based on my experience with X, Y and Z, I found that posts of this size to be more effective and for that I would charge this."

So instead of just giving them one option, like, "No, I want to do this other thing..." kind of just break it to them gently and give them the option to choose either one. But it shows your expertise [8:08 \[audio drops\]](#) ...

Carol: Ahh! Hang on... I muted a bunch of people, but it included Linda. Hang on, hang on... Sorry, Linda. "It shows your expertise" and...

Linda: It shows expertise and gives them options without stepping on their feet.

Carol: OK. Cool.

Linda: Yes.

Carol: Alright. So I had some notes on... is this post from Amy about the Austin duck farmers who built a straw bale home? Maybe that... I don't remember if this is Amy also or if it's someone else. It's just under her name.

But her headline is "Austin Area Duck Farmers Build a Straw Bale Home." And she was thinking of it for Edible Austin and since it's about construction rather than food, I'm thinking probably no for them. The Last Straw: the International Journal of Straw Bale and Natural Building -- possibly. I'm thinking Modern Farmer, myself, maybe. Austin Home, maybe. And then she said, "Maybe something like Cooking Light." I don't see that, but maybe Austin Home; maybe Modern Farmer I thought might be the sweet spot for this.

I guess this is just an idea pitch... What you'll read that you haven't seen before: *Two central Texas duck farmers have built a straw bale home on their farm. One of the first of a handful of straw bale structures in Austin. Obviously straw bale construction has been around for ages, but now it is coming to this region.*

And she says, "Why does this story need to be written now? This maybe the beginning of a building trend in the central Texas area."

And this is a big theme I kind of want to hit in this call because I'm seeing it a lot, is you can't tell an editor, "This might be a trend..." and expect to get an assignment. You're going to need to prove in your pitch that it is a trend to get the assignment. So you need to... is there an expert who you could get to say that? Once again, it's the lack of interviewing people and we're just kind of guessing at things. I'm seeing that a lot too.

So yeah, she says, "The experts are the farmers who have the straw bale house built." No, they are the real people sources. They are not experts in straw bale homes. The builders who built their home will be totally self-interested. You might get a quote from them, but they're not your expert, really.

"Experts in straw bale construction" -- yes. Maybe a city of Austin or EPA official to see if there's any government push for this practice. I would doubt that would be true, but you might find out what it takes to get that permitted in Austin. There might be some ins and outs you need to know there.

The questions I had is, is this the first straw bale house in the area? And if not, why is it special? Why is *it* the one we're going to write about and not the first one? And if there are three -- you indicate there are several -- then it might do better as a roundup of, "Hey, yeah, straw bale homes are coming to Austin..." for like Austin Home where you

would spotlight several property owners and why they decided to go with this and how does that work. Does it really keep their house cool enough?

Just another general rule I'd like to throw out there is that when you're pitching a single business, a single house construction or remodel project, it's always harder to get those assigned than if it's a roundup of several interesting things in this category because editors worry that they sound like an ad for that one builder or that one farm or... They have advertisers who would love to get a profile written about them in the magazine and if that person isn't an advertiser, they're going to be like, "What the heck?"

So there's a lot of kind of politics to doing single source profiles that you overcome by having a truly extraordinary story. You can totally write a profile about a house, a company, but it has to be amazing. It has to overcome that whole, "Well, why wasn't it about me? I advertise in your stupid publication." It has to overcome that objection that advertisers are going to raise. We all like to think there's a magical, impenetrable wall between advertising and editorial, but I think that's a problem that's pretty real at a lot of publications.

So Linda has the next one.

Linda: Yes, let me unmute myself and it is Stacey. And the article would ideally be for a magazine like Redbook, Cosmo, or Cleo -- shooting high, she says. And it says, "We all know that Netflix and Chill is a euphemism for a steamy evening..." and I actually had to look that up because I'd never heard of it. Maybe I'm too old.

But I'm wondering if, first of all, this is something that adults are saying? Because when I looked around online, it sounds like something teens are using so their parents don't know they're hooking up. And it also seems to be more about inviting someone over for casual sex as opposed to committed couples, so I think depending on the market you're writing for... like Redbook is for married ladies, so you have to make sure to keep that in mind.

So anyway, she goes on to say, "The problem: these evenings are becoming less steamy and more about curling up on the couch in front of the TV, meaning more Netflix and less chill. Now that we can watch almost any show or movie at any time of the day or night, we're choosing to spend our time living vicariously through others instead of connecting with our partners."

And then she has a survey saying that couples between the ages of 16 and 64 were only having sex three times a month in 2010, compared to four times in 2000 and five times in 1990. And I was actually wondering about this stat because it's such a huge age range. It could be all like the 16 year olds having sex and... you know what I mean? It's hard to know what that means for people in the magazine's demographic. So if you

can find anything that's more relevant to say women in their 20s through 40s, depending on which magazine it is, that would be really great.

And so the article is basically on how to get back to reconnecting with your partner and... let me see... and she said she's seen it has already been picked up by a bunch of websites... wondering if the magazines would still be interested if I was to consult an expert and provide tips for couples to help them put down the remote and head to the bedroom. And she has a sexologist and sex educator in mind as a source.

So right now, I think you have a really good premise, but then it ends up, when you really get down to it, it seems like just another article on how to connect sexually with your partner more and that's just a staple of the women's magazines. And what I would do is talk to this expert you have in mind and see if they have any unique tips that the editors wouldn't have heard time and time again. Because again, it's been done a lot, but if you can find advice that editors have not seen, that's maybe a little more up-to-date, a little more newsy, that could be really great.

Or maybe choose a market for whom this would be new. Cosmo and Redbook write about sex every single month. A lot of the women's magazines do, so are there any markets out there where they're like, "Oh, wow, I haven't heard that before. Let's go for it." I think you've got a really good seed of an idea here and it just needs a little bit of work, but I think it's nice.

Carol?

Carol: Yeah. Cool. I just see a question in Chat about do we record our interviews? I think you mean for like articles. I don't usually and I know Linda does, so Linda why don't you talk about this.

Linda: Yes. I record my interviews just because I can type fairly quickly. It looks terrible, but I can read it. But I find that if I'm typing during an interview, so much of my attention is focused on the typing that I can't really kind of go with the flow and ask additional questions as they come up. And that's really where a lot of the juicy stuff comes up is not in your prepared questions, but in things that come up during the interview and you want to be able to catch those.

So I have been using CLK transcription, but there's a lot of services. This one is about a dollar per audio minute, which is also a great incentive to keep your interviews down. And, also, to look for articles that pay more. So I try to keep my interviews down to 20, 30 minutes and I also try to keep a minimum floor of \$400 for an article. So...

Carol: Yeah, same...

Linda: ... that's what I do.

Carol: Mine's 500. So Judy says, "If I don't record interviews, what is my process?" Well I had a formative experience early on where I found myself at an event covering it and there was my idol, Bob Pool, of the LA Times Metro section who I had been reading for years and just thought was amazing. They made him do everything -- be a store Santa, all kind of weird things -- and he would just write something amazing no matter what they threw at him.

And he had this teeny tiny notebook and no recorder. And I was just like, "Wow, Bob, you don't record." He said, "I gotta file at 4:00. I don't have time to listen to a transcript. I gotta go." And he was out of there. And I was like, "Yeah, recording and transcribing really increases your workload in this gig."

And I took a like speedwriting class and learned to take little fake hand notes that I understand. And I also type super fast. So I type like 120. And I'm a pretty good multi-tasker. My fingers are actually typing; my brain is like not even engaged in that. My joke is it goes like from my fingers to the spinal cord and back. Doesn't get to my brain at all. And so I just... I go for it.

Unless it is like a super... I'm talking to the CEO of Nordstrom or something where I don't know if I'll ever get the opportunity again. Then I will record just as a backup. But in my normal life, I don't record because it creates time and cost and stuff.

So I'm up to Sarah's pitch, "Beta Test These Five Content Marketing Tools." I don't know if Sarah is on the call, but I don't know what market this is for. I'm not seeing her.

This sounds to me like a blog post for somebody. But I kind of need to know to give it an intelligent opinion, but her lede is: *Just when you think you have all the content marketing tools you need, somebody else comes out with something that makes you shout, "Shut up and take my money!"* I'm not sure I follow that and the tone of that is... I need to know what market you're thinking of.

She says: *Here's the latest crop of content automation tools and new features on existing ones to take out for a test drive this season.*

I mean, this is what I would call sort of a serviceable lede, except for that "Shut up and take my money" thing. I don't know what that is. And mostly when new things like this come out they have a freemium model, so usually I wouldn't be shouting, "Shut up and take my money." I would be signing up for a free trial of it. So I think there's a disconnect there.

But then she says: *CoSchedule's upcoming social automation tool is said to have some functionality overlap with Meet Edgar.* And as I said above, this makes it sound like you are guessing at that. As a journalist, as an article writer, you need to be bringing your editor the definitive word on whether it overlaps with Meet Edgar, not a guess at it. And if it's upcoming, then it doesn't sound like I can beta test it. So it just sounds like some wrinkles need to be ironed out here.

And I just think the lede could be stronger. These are a sort of general open. And also, you're talking to me without knowing much about me. Just when **you** think **you** have all the content marketing tools **you** need...

I used to have an editor who had a saying about this which was, "Leave me out of it... Bring me some new information. Maybe a specific example of someone who uses 10 different marketing tools, but they're ready to try out some more ones. It's just not very lively when you kind of speak in generalizations like this in a lede. And we saw a lot of that in this homework.

So I will let you... Oh, it looks like I have the next one too, which is Mary's: *The Blue Collar Blues: Combat the Stigma of Reclassification to Non-exempt in the Wake of the New FLSA Overtime Rules.*

She was thinking of it for Forbes or Entrepreneur or HR Magazine. And I'm here to say that Forbes and Entrepreneur are not going to write this story. They don't care about blue collar people. They really write an amazingly small amount of the time about HR issues. Forbes maybe more than Entrepreneur, but Entrepreneur is all like startup, startup, startup. So it's totally not for them.

The HR Magazine, I think the challenge is they already know all about this and you need to know what your fresh angle is that you're going to put on this that they don't already know and haven't already covered and aren't already planning to cover around December when the law takes effect.

And just in general, I want to say this is a very jargon-y inaccessible headline. And even trade magazines that are writing to an audience that really knows their stuff, do not write headlines like this mostly. And it's just a really long headline, too. It's like a line and a half long. So I would challenge you to boil it down and make it snappier, like, "Are your employees getting reclassified in December? Five tips you need to know." Just make it simpler for me to digest.

But the phrase "blue collar" is like never going to appear in either Entrepreneur or Forbes. Just want to say...

Linda: Hey, Carol...

Carol: Yeah...

Linda: Did you mention maybe an HR trade? Would this work for something like that or...

Carol: Yeah, she said HR Magazine.

23:04 [crosstalk]

She could develop a unique slant maybe. Maybe there's a particular industry or a best-practice in HR about how to migrate these people. Are there maybe marketing experts who could talk about internal communications with these employees so that it goes smoothly? If there's some practical advice... and I'd say that's another big thing I'm not seeing is these stories boiling down... getting to the practical advice that the readers can use.

So Linda, why don't you take Lucy's. And I will look in the Chat.

Linda: Okey, dokey. Lucy has "Laughter Yoga Injects a Much Needed Shot of Energy and Mental Positivity." She says it's for a pitch she already sent out to 2 or 3 magazine with no real word back, but she likes the concept so much, she would like to give it another try. But she's having difficulty finding more markets. She's already queried Alternative Medicine, Healthy Living, Natural Awakenings and Health Magazine and a yoga magazine.

And actually, I've read a lot about laughter yoga and Yoga Journal actually covered it in 2007, so close to ten years ago. And it's been really well covered by the media since then. And also your news hook was that we live in stressful times and I'm afraid that it's not enough of a news hook to bring this one back because life is always stressful to lots of people no matter where or when it is. But, like a lot of these cases, this is a really great seed of an idea and if you can use this idea to spin off something editors haven't seen, you might be able to get away with a news hook about stress, especially if you have some good stats to show stress levels are getting higher.

And I was looking around online about this and there've already been roundups on the craziest types of yoga like hot nude yoga, and "doga," I guess, where you do yoga with your dog. But, for example, you could do something like "top ten surprising ways to inject laughter into your daily life" and you would go beyond the old advice to watch a funny movie that you see in every darn article. And then the laughter yoga could be one of the tips. So... and that's just one example of how far you might have to deviate from your original idea to come up with something new and saleable. But I don't want anybody to ever think that their original idea is horrible or unusable or worthless,

because it's always valuable as a jumping off point for coming up with something that is going to be saleable. You're like, "OK, I have laughter yoga. It's been done. Craziest types of yoga -- it's been done. Where else can I go with this? The article might not be about this exact thing, but I can incorporate it into something else." So I think you might want to think about other ways of kind of freshening up this idea.

Carol?

Carol: Yeah. I'm just looking through and seeing many people saying, "Did you get my idea? Did you get my idea?" If you're worried about it, if you could just restate the headline of it in the comments. I could probably tell you, but I haven't memorized them by name. We have like twenty pages of stuff here to go through, so please help us.

So let me talk about Leslie's idea. "It's never too late to start boxing after age 50." And she was thinking of it for maybe Costco Connection, which I just... I don't know. Not something I normally see with them. It's usually like food and decorating and more related to the things they sell. "I gather," she says, "they do sell boxing kits..." but it's a pretty arcane item for them to do a whole story around.

And I think her other idea was AARP and I'll just tell you AARP tends to do roundups on interesting exercise trends and stuff. And Costco sells all ages, not just over 50, so they wouldn't be 'boxing after 50,' they might be 'get your whole family into boxing.' It's going to be a totally different thing.

And, yes, Mohammed Ali just died, so that kind of also raises some interest. But, yeah, AARP is a lot more likely to do "Five Hot Exercise Trends for Boomers" and boxing is one of them, just to say.

And the other thing is, I want you to bring me some hard stats about the rise of boxing in people over 50.

You said, "Boxing is all the rage for everyone. It's no longer considered dirty and mean." Who says? Who says all this stuff? Once again, we just pop off some generalizations with no attribution and that won't fly, to sum up a lot.

So think on these a bit more. I'd love to see this fleshed out for AARP with several other... I loved that dog yoga. I was like totally cracking up. What other things are becoming an exercise 'thing' for seniors that weren't?

While I'm at this, let me take a quick lede question from Janine: *I noticed in the webinar that the ledes you gave as examples varied in length. Is there a general rule regarding how long ledes should be? I read somewhere online it shouldn't exceed 40 words.*

I'm going to just encourage people to not grab random things they hear somewhere online because there's a lot of misinformation floating around out there. I'd say my philosophy on ledes is you want them as short as you can get them, but they need to be as long as they need to be to make me read the story. The job of the lede is to make me read on, so something incredibly compelling needs to happen in that lede. I've written ledes like, "Cindy Williams remembers the first night she became homeless." Are you going to stop reading now? I don't think so.

So something that really grabs you by the gut and won't let go. And it might take... I've done ledes... I think that lede about being homeless actually is about three paragraphs long. But it was for a 1500-word story or a 2000-word story.

It depends in part on the length of the story how long you have to kind of wind it in the lede before you get to the nut graf and tell us what it's all going to be about. But I don't have any rule of thumb. How about you, Linda?

Linda: Sorry, I had to unmute myself. No, I don't have any rule of thumb. I think you don't want to let what Carol said though kind of be an excuse to go off the rails, because like she was saying, you want to keep it tight. You want to cut out the fat. You want it to be really compelling. But sometimes, like she said, yeah, that does take a little more space. So...

Carol: Looks like...

Linda: Did you get this other idea of hers? The "Love Your Stuff?"

Carol: Yeah, the "Let It Go..." one?

Linda: No, no, this is another one, actually. We've got two kind of opposite ideas about minimalism this week.

Carol: Oh, yeah, talk about that one.

Linda: Yeah, so this one also from Leslie is "Love Your Stuff." And of course, I love it because it's an opposite idea and last week somebody even brought up -- and we're going to talk about that next -- about a minimalism idea about why you would want to be minimalist and so on. And it's been going on so long and it's such old news, it's like why not flip it around? So this is an example of that.

It's "Why Get Rid of the Things You Love? Despite the popularity of Marie Kondo's life-changing magic of tidying up, another espousal of minimalism, there's a lot to be said for keeping and displaying your treasures."

Carol, you said... yeah, she's using that as an example of an opposite, so... Everybody likes the Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up, but hey, we think you should keep your stuff. It's a contrarian article going against the grain of getting rid of things. She has some experts.

A couple of things, one is you also mentioned Costco Connection as a market because they sell stuff and I don't think that's enough of a link there, because everything's about stuff. So I think maybe the wellness magazines, the spiritual magazines, or even the women's magazines love this kind of thing. But in any of these cases, you're going to need some service, not just the why, like, "Oh, why you should hold on to your stuff..." but the 'how,' "OK, we've convinced you that you want to hold on to some stuff that's valuable or that has sentimental value or for whatever reasons your experts came up with... Here's how to do it in ways that look nice and keep you happy and aren't a pain in the butt like all the minimalists are saying.

Other than that, I think you just need a different market. I also don't think it's right for AARP. Carol also agrees with that. So I think you need a new market, but I think it's a very cool idea.

And Carol, you have Janine... Oh, we just did that.

Carol: Whoops. Why don't you talk about her "Let It Go" idea?

Linda: Yes, yes. So we have Janine, the "Let It Go" idea. "Let It Go: Easier Said Than Done." So it was her story last week about minimalism and based on feedback, she changed it to this. She said: I'm now planning to look more critically at the concept of letting go of emotions and material possessions.

And the lede is: *Conventional wisdom has it that to be truly happy and content, you need to "let it go." Even Disney has taken up the mantra, but what does letting go really mean and is it even possible.*

And this is a little bit difficult for a lede because, first of all, the "Let It Go" song has been around for a couple of years and it's just not really new and fresh for the magazine market anymore, so I would rework that. I mean, I think the idea is really cool.

And also your lede isn't really indicating what it is you're letting go of. So I think you need to decide whether it's going to be emotions or material possessions. I love that this is now an opposite idea, but right now it's a little bit vague. I, personally... yeah, I would focus on material possessions or bad feelings and I really like the bad feelings one because you're always reading in the wellness magazines, in the spiritual magazines about how grudges and anger and jealousy are bad for you and you should just drop them. And of course, there's that huge positive psychology movement that everybody's

talking about still. And old classics like *The Power of Positive Thinking* and all that.

So my question is, despite all of what these people are saying, can you really just wipe bad feelings out of your brain and is it really beneficial to do that? I mean, sometimes these feelings spur you to take positive action or keep you from getting screwed over again or hurt again or whatever was the situation that caused you to feel that way. And maybe you want to talk about how to know when your negative emotions are hurting you instead of helping you and what you can do about it. I mean, it's a huge topic.

One idea might be to... because I know I've seen things about "anger's not that bad for you..." so there's already a little bit of this out there, but what if you were to turn it into a charticle or some other format where you talk about the different types of bad emotions we're supposed to be deleting from our minds. What's actually good about them, how to know when they're hurting you and what to do about it. That could be an interesting take because now the packaging is unique. You've got a roundup that's unique and you've got the opposite idea going on. Because in bits and pieces, lots of this has already been done, but like combining it in different ways can make it unique again.

But then again, just, yeah, I would ditch the headline because the movie and song are no longer new and just pick one of the things to go with -- the possessions or the emotions.

Carol?

Carol: Yeah. So Samantha has a question: *So with regard to submitting for literary magazines, would we go through the same process by submitting a pitch, query and lede or is there a different process?*

If you're submitting a short story to a literary magazine, you're going to send in your story. If you're looking to write a reported article for a literary magazine, you're going to follow the same process we're talking about here. Since fiction is not part of Pitch Clinic -- because it's usually not pitched -- we don't get into it, but I hope that answers the question there.

So here are two ideas from Leslie and they are for -- I want to find the markets -- either *Fresh Cup* or *Barista* or *Caffeine*, the like coffee industry trade magazines for coffee shop owners or in-flight magazines and airlines and charters flying into Jamaica. And her idea is... or here two ideas are: "How Yoga Is Capturing the Interest of Jamaicans...;" "Jamaica: Sun, Sand and Yoga."

It's apparently hit Jamaica about 20 years ago and there are... there's a yoga association and a bunch of different kinds of yoga going on. And I feel like that could be of interest. The thing to know about an in-flight magazine -- this one obviously isn't for a

coffee magazine, but for an in-flight -- the trick is that the in-flight magazines write about their advertisers. We were talking about that before. The thing to know is airline magazines are custom publications by a company. They're not impartial consumer magazines. So if they have advertisers that are yoga companies, that are yoga studios, that might be terrific to get them into a roundup. You'd need to look at your publication. I think it would be a harder sell if none of them are advertising. And I'd think we'd just want to know about the variety of what types of yoga can I do. Can I do yoga on the beach in Jamaica? Or can I do hot yoga while I smoke pot in a hundred-degree basement in Jamaica? What is the range of yoga experiences I can have?

So her other one is "Cafe Blue: Jamaica's Answer to Starbucks." And this is the one that might be also for the coffee magazines and trade pubs do like regional market reports. I've done that quite a few times for Nation's Restaurant News. Like, "Here's six interesting new restaurants that are opening in Seattle," with really, you know, name chefs behind them.

With the in-flight magazines, once again, it's the is this chain an advertiser in the in-flight magazine? And if not... and there's some other coffee house chain that is, then you probably have a problem. But once again, it's a single business profile. It's Cafe Blue is the chain I want to profile in Jamaica.

I think that another possible problem for this with doing an in-flight magazine is just that they tend to be pitched kind of upscale and going to a coffee shop is not that upscale. They tend to be about the amazing five star restaurants and stuff. So I'm not sure it's a fit for their audience, which is generally a 60, 80K income and above business traveler is who they're really writing for on these mags a lot because they do the most travel. So those are my thoughts about that.

Linda: Yeah. Hey, Carol, you have whole bunch of...

Carol: And the other thing to know is often you can do these kind of profiles for places like Entrepreneur, but Entrepreneur only covers US based companies. I have had so many great stories go down in flames with them because they will not write about companies based other places.

Go ahead.

Linda: Oh, I was going to say, you have a whole bunch of ones in a row coming up in the queue, if you want me to go one of the ones I took, I can... if you're tired of talking, I can jump down...

Carol: Yeah, go ahead. Why don't we [39:44](#) [crosstalk]

Linda: Alright, let me go down, down, down, down, down to Jedha. Jedha, it's your turn. So last week she had "Herbal Supplement Cons: Natural Doesn't Always Mean Safe." And we talked about how that's just been done a whole lot and is there any way she can kind of freshen it up?

And she changed it to: *Your Need-to-Know Herbal Supplement Safety Guide. This charticle will now list... will list how different herbal supplements react with different pharmaceutical meds.* So we talked about this last week. That seems like a much tighter and yet more unique idea. Now your headline doesn't really reflect what the article is about, because it's really about the interaction between the pharmaceuticals and the herbal supplements. So you want to somehow get that idea into your headline.

Your lede... Now she has an anecdotal lede about a woman named Beverly standing out at the checkout and she suddenly started getting dizzy and, luckily, she got better and she was one of the lucky ones because she discovered she had had an interaction between an herbal supplement and a medication.

Now first of all, nicely done lede because it was very gripping and the women's and health magazines really love this kind of anecdotal lede. However, I'm wondering if this is somebody you actually interviewed and this really happened to them... because if not, it needs to be. And then, in that case, you need to have that person's last name, their age, and their location. And whatever other information that magazine tends to give, for example, they might have the number of kids or what they do for a living or whatever.

Also, you said: After a visit to the doctor, she discovered that the herbal supplement recommended by her friend was clashing with her contraceptive medication. I think you would want to state which ones there, because it's kind of leaving a little bit too much mystery, like what one was it? So I think this is a really great lede, but if it's not real, you need to find somebody this did happen to. And if it is real, you need to give details so that the editor knows it's real.

So that's a very nice idea, a very nice lede and... Ah, she said: *If I am to write a charticle rather than an article, would I still talk to an expert or just quote research at the end? How would that work?*

Yes, you would do it just like a regular article. You might not be able to kind of shoehorn quotes into there, depending on how you format the charticle and how much space you have. So how you're planning to do it. I've definitely done charticles where I have quotes. You might say... One of your columns might be "what the experts say..." and then you'd have a quote for each one of those things.

Otherwise, I've done it where I have a charticle, but then at the end, there's a box that says, "The experts we consulted for this article are X, Y and Z." So you have to decide

how you want to format it and then how you're going to cite your sources and then kind of try to give an example of that in your pitch. And I know it's really hard with a charticle, but you can do it with... You can definitely make a little table that will work out fine in an email. You just have to test it and see how it works out. So...

Do you want me to do this one, Carol?

Carol: Which?

Linda: I have one from Nikki here right below this one or do you want to take one up above? We're out of order, but I wanted to give you a break.

Carol: I want to rip through these ones that Amy put because...

Linda: Rip through is not the right way to say it.

Carol: Sorry. Well, they all... I'm saying that because I kind of grouped them all in my head.

Linda: No, it sounds like you're going to rip them apart... which she's not, Amy...

Carol: No, no, no, no... Not that they need to especially to be ripped apart. But they all have, I think, a common... some common issues that I think I can talk about.

So the first one is "What survivors of Texas's deadliest mass shooting have to say about Orlando." And her idea is that this might be for USA Today or for Reader's Digest.

I just want to say Reader's Digest does not do negative stuff like this and does not follow breaking news. They do do that drama in real life stuff, but that would be about someone... that would have to be written by someone who it happened to, not by you.

And for someone like USA Today, it's just so unlikely to be able to get that assigned as a new freelance writer they don't know. It needs to be written very fast by someone with strong journalism skills and they're going to tap someone they already have a relationship with who probably writes for a daily in Orlando. I just think that's going to be tough.

And her idea was to go back and talk to people from the Luby's shooting, which is 25 years ago. And they're not going to go back that far. They're going to go back to the last one that happened a year ago or two years ago that was big -- Sandy Hook or Virginia Tech or something that's much more still in our minds.

The other two are just kind of evergreen ideas and actually I had this question in the Chat about how to make an evergreen idea fresh so you can get it assigned. And you do have to do something to it.

So one of hers is "10 Interesting People Whose Remains Were Fought Over." And she didn't have a market for it. I feel like this is the kind of stuff you see on sites like CNN or Gawker or something and I'm not sure there's a lot of money behind it, but her idea was to maybe do it around Halloween, which I think has a valid connection. The question would be finding a decent paying market for it.

And her other one was "How to Survive the ACL Festival" -- which I do not actually know what that is -- and still enjoy Austin. Or could also be done with "How to Enjoy..." "How to Stay Away from South by Southwest and Still Have Fun." I like this idea, especially for locals, for the local alternative paper, if there's like an Austin weekly or something.

I think not as much for a monthly because the timing of their cycles. She was thinking Austin American Statesman or The Austin Chronicle. Is the Austin American Statesman their daily, I'm thinking? It might work as a freelance piece for a daily. A monthly, probably not because it's like... they can't time it right. But we have Seattle Weekly and The Stranger. There's The Village Voice. If you have a paper like that, this might be something that they would totally be interested in.

Linda is posting in Chat some tips for dealing with evergreen ideas you want to pitch again.

So her other one like that is "10 Corporate Acquisitions That Made No Sense." I believe I have written that story, possibly more than once, and it's usually written every year towards the end of the year... Let's review the stupidest M&A deals, the biggest wastes... The places where they have written down the most good will. They've already like written off the price of it. So that happens a lot and the question is what's your angle?

Her news hook is like Microsoft's acquisition of LinkedIn. *It would be a piece on 10 highly publicized acquisitions that seemed unusual like that one or it could be a "where are they now" of highly publicized acquisitions.* And she has a lot of other if/or/and... Find a theme that you think would work because you're going to need to pull this together and make it kind of cohesive. And just know that a lot of these get pitched...

Business Insider, yeah, they do stuff like this all the time, so you'd need to figure out why they're assigning it to you. And I want to ask you, Amy, if you have read a lot of SEC documents and know how to pull numbers out of them because you're going to need to do that for that kind of story. You're going to need to find how much good will

they wrote off and what was the closing actual price of the acquisition and what is the value of it today or did they spin it back out again? You're going to need to read a lot of legalese and parse some finances to make one of those work.

Did you take this one from Laura yet about medical marijuana?

Linda: No, let me go back up. Let me find it... Laura... There you are. OK. Yeah, so, Laura, I first want to let you know that when this email came through... and also Bruce, whose query we have in the queue, your paragraphs are all kind of stuck together with no space in between. And you need to, in an email, use hard returns instead of relying on your Word formatting to make spaces between paragraphs. And maybe test it out. Send it to a friend, send it to another email address of yours just to make sure there are no formatting issues before you send it for real because it was really difficult to get through.

So Laura's idea is about using medical marijuana for pain. And your... so you have your pitch here... It's coming off like a reported essay because you talk about what happens with your 78-year-old mother when she decided to use it to treat her chronic pain. And those actually are very pitchable and used in a lot of markets and you would have to make sure that the markets you're pitching... in fact you have a magazine in mind here - - that they run this type of article.

And for those who don't know, a reported essay has some elements of an essay, like it might be an anecdote about yourself or somebody else you know and you kind of weave yourself into the story a little bit. But it's also reported where you talk to experts and you give facts and there's service to the reader. "This is how you can use this for you." And if you look up Women's Health magazine and my name, you'll find a couple that I've written for them that will give you a good example.

So I think that a reported essay on this idea could be good. The medical marijuana thing has been going on for a while. It's been widely reported on and you would think a magazine like, I think it was called Pain-free Living, would definitely would have touched on this, since that's kind of what it's all about. So I would also look for any way you can to make this idea a little different and a little bit newer.

And Carol, I know you've been... you know a lot about this or you're reading on it or... because we talked about it last week.

Carol: Yeah, I actually did a ton of cannabis reporting for Forbes.

Linda: Ah, that's right....

Carol: ...for about a year on my blog on entrepreneurship and startups because, yeah...

Linda: Is there a way to make this fresh here because I mean, the idea's out there and she's got some good anecdote and good things to say, but like an editor might see this and say, "OK. This has been done." So can you think of any way to make it more newsy or...

Carol: Well, what I want to say is, who are we writing... this is for Pain-free Living, but our lede is "When church-going grandmothers are using medical cannabis, it's probably safe to acknowledge that it's entered the mainstream." So that doesn't relate to our topic. That doesn't relate to the readers of that publication, unless they're using medical cannabis for pain relief.

But what's your evidence that church-going grandmothers are using that? You can't use your own mother to extrapolate that many church-going grandmothers are doing this.

The other thing I wanted to get to was there's a tone in this one that's problematic in this lede. She's says things like, "I've found a 2016 John Hopkins Bloomberg's survey of patient registries that indicates the majority of users are over 50." That's not how you cite. You are not in the story.

Linda: Even... can I mention, even if you're to do a reported essay where you are in the story, you wouldn't cite, you wouldn't bring yourself in when you cite something.

Carol: Yeah, just cite. Don't... this isn't about your research journey of what you found out. You are not what's interesting here, hopefully, in this story. Hopefully, your story is what you have discovered is what's interesting and what you want to shine.

But we get like three paragraphs about my mother-in-law uses it to help her sleep at night and then I found some studies and I'm proposing an article of 800 to 1000 words. We haven't gotten to the nut graf. The thing about the lede is it ends in a nut graf. Hopefully in a paragraph or three, you're at the nut graf, you're saying, "In my article, this headline, I will... readers will learn X." You're getting to that summation that... The lede got us interested in the topic and, is it me or is there no headline for this one? We need a headline.

Linda: Actually, yeah, if you don't have a headline, coming up with one is a really great way to narrow down your idea in your own head to make it easier to write the pitch. Because right now, you have a lot of really good ideas in here, but they're a little bit disjointed and unrelated to one another, so you've got one about older people using it and then you've got how it's entered the mainstream and how it's used for pain and you need to be really focused and if you write up a really good headline, that will help you focus because now everything has to be in service to that headline.

Carol: Yeah, absolutely. So yeah...

Linda: She said: This isn't my lede, I misunderstood and it's a pitch modeled after the ones in the book, the eBook. Which eBook is it?

Carol: Yeah, what eBook are talking about where... we're kind of confused too.

It seems like there is a lot of confusion going on because it seems like some folks have not read the homework assignment for this week, which is to write a lede for an article. So we seem like we're getting full drafts of articles. We're getting long explanations about things. What we were hoping to do... we have a query eBook in the module. OK...

Linda: Oh, is it the Renegade Writer's Query Letters That Rock? I can't even remember. We have so many query books; it must be that one.

Carol: I think that is.... I think that is [54:24 \[crosstalk\]](#)

Linda: Yes, and it's a good idea to model your lede after another one that you see, but if it's not working for your topic, then it's not going to work for your, so, yes, an anecdotal lede works out really well, but the anecdote needs to reflect what the rest of the article is going to be about, which also needs to be reflected in the headline. So it's all basically one narrow topic, your headline, your lede, your nut graf are all in service to "this is what I'm going to be writing about."

Carol: Yeah. So I'm just taking a look at the clock and wanting to move on because as usual we just have so many great ideas.

So Bruce, I think left me a note that this idea is for Canada Business and it's "Layoffs Beyond the Oil Patch: Navigating Life After Bombardier, Blackberry and Target Canada." The thing about business magazines is they don't talk to workers. They talk to business owners, so they're not going to talk to workers who were laid off from Blackberry. That's just not where they go.

Mike has a great question. *What's the difference between a lede and a headline?* I feel like maybe you haven't listened to our trainings, Mike.

And John Greaves, Linda, says: *I forward you an email of his on something [55:55 \[...\]](#)* John can you just tell us what the topic was. That would really help us.

So the headline is the headline. You've all read a newspaper, you know what the headline is, right? The lede is the first paragraph or two or three at most that set up the story. The thing I was talking about, "Shirley Williams remembers the first night she became homeless...' I'm going to tell you a little story about homelessness that

wrenches your heart and makes you care. And then I'm going to say, "Sherry Williams isn't the only one who hit the streets in 2016. Our Seattle homeless count last month showed 4500 people are homeless right now. The most in years." That's the nut graf is we're talking about now I'm defining what is the issue here we are going to get solutions to.

Kelly, tell us what the headline is. So we did these box again. Minimalism ones. And you want to talk about... Did you talk about this herbal supplement safety guide? I think you did.

Linda: We did and actually, Kelly, if this is you with the "Good Health Begins at Home," I have that in the queue. But let me go... where are we at now? Which one are you asking me to look at?

Carol: I think... Oh, Leslie has a couple of ledes based on her boxing idea and her minimalism idea that we haven't taken any notes on, but I think we need tweaks about what publications these are for for the boxing one because we had some problems there, but we have "Minimalism is all the rage. It seems like people are heaving garbage bags into dumpsters right and left..." did you do this? -- "... all in search of life-changing magic, but maybe you shouldn't be so quick to pitch. Learn to trust your own good taste as you break new aesthetic ground and learn to show your best stuff with the world by sitting at the feet of some master collectors."

Linda: Yeah, that seems like a lede for the one we were talking about earlier where I was saying it needs service, so that actually does bring in the service. So now we're going to talk to some master collectors about why you want to keep some things and how to do it, so I think that's kind of cool.

I would just say, "Minimalism is all the rage..." like all the rage is kind of a cliché term and it's not really quantifiable to the editor, so I would either just leave that out or somewhere maybe down below have a stat of some sort showing how big minimalism is and then you kind of break into like, "But wait, actually, this might even be better..." or whatever.

Carol: Yeah. You want to avoid clichés and generalizations like the plague they are that will get your ideas disapproved. "It seems like people are heaving garbage bags into dumpsters..." It seems like to who? Why does it seem that way? Editors deal in the world of facts, not in the world of suppositions, generalizations, clichés that... "We all understand this..." no we don't. No, you're never going to get that past an editor. You're going to need to prove it is really happening in some way.

Linda: And then there's the "Boxing has gone mainstream..." lede. And it's basically... so it's, "No longer shunned in polite company as dirty, mean and low-down, boxing has

gone mainstream. Are you curious about this ancient sport that's now a fitness fad? Are you worried that you're the wrong age, the wrong body type or the wrong gender? Stop worrying, the sweet science is for everyone."

So again, I would look around at this a little bit because I can't remember if we talked about this last week, but I looked up the boxing trend and it seems to have been going on for a couple of years now and has actually been reported on quite a bit. But, what's great about this idea, is if you can find a market to whom, once again, that this would be really unusual, like, "Oh my god, we never thought about boxing." That could be really cool. So I would take a little bit of a look around because... especially if you can prove that it's still growing because I know it was a couple of years ago that this kind of hit the media. And I know that there's a lot of boutique boxing gyms and things like that, so I would look for a market that hasn't done it.

Carol: Linda, John says his pitch, "Everyone needs an off season..." That he was waiting for an answer. I thought we talked about it in the call last week.

Linda: I remember having it in the call. [60:29](#) **[crosstalk]**

Carol: I feel like we talked about it already.

Linda: No, you know what, I think I might have just taken notes and maybe we accidentally...

Carol: Maybe we didn't say them out loud?

[60:37](#) **[crosstalk]**

Carol: Linda will send those over to you.

Linda: No, actually... but I actually remember what the idea was. It was about how if you're a professional body builder or professional fitness pro, you have an off-season, but all these people right now are into CrossFit and really hard-core things, P90X -- I don't know what's hot right now -- but they don't know that you need an off season because they're not pros. So here are the benefits of doing it and how to do it. I thought, by the way, that was an awesome idea. I think it's really great. There are a ton of fitness magazines out there for women, for men that I think you could pitch this to. I think... I would look around a little bit and see if it's been done, because to me it sounds kind of cool and new, but I could be wrong about that, but I thought it was really well done.

Carol: Yeah. So do we have a headline and lede from Kelly. That's not ringing a bell... Oh, "Good [61:31](#) **[crosstalk]**

You have that? OK. Have we... did you already talk about Jedha's herbal supplements safety guide thing?

Linda: Yes...

Carol: Yeah. Yeah, she has a great opening anecdote. Jedha, we loved it. OK? I want to roll forward here to "Potatoes: From Staple to Superfood." You want to take that?

Linda: OK. Yes, hold on... Let me find it. Potatoes... Yes, this is Nikki's idea. "Potatoes: From Staple to Superfood. 10 Surprising Health Benefits of Potatoes." And she actually did some digging online and found some really cool health benefits of potatoes, which I thought was great. And I love the idea because, of course, I've done a couple of similar articles. I did one called "Hidden Nutrition Superstars" about the health benefits of the white foods like potatoes and mushrooms and things like that. We're always hearing about the "rainbow of foods" and you need colorful foods and we forget that these uncolorful foods also have health benefits, so I sold that. Editors are always love surprising information on things we use and see every day and kind of take for granted. So I thought that was really great.

I would try also... I see you have some South African magazines, I think it was, but you also mentioned a couple of American ones. I would maybe try Eating Well and the other American nutrition and health magazines, Fitness and all those. And the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website at eatright.org -- at least they used to take freelancers because I used to write for them; they paid really well. -- so I would look into this because I was looking at the site today when I read your idea and it seems up their alley.

Carol: I'm sorry, I was reading Chat. Was that Nikki's tea tasting idea?

Linda: No, that was the potatoes idea.

Carol: Oh, right, potatoes. OK. I'm going back to Nikki's idea, which is, "Tantalizing Tea Tasting Journey..." or "Tantalize Your Tea Taste-Buds..." or "Tea: The New Taste Frontier," which is actually the one I like best, that last one.

"Beer, coffee, wine, cheese, chocolate tastings are all popular in South Africa. What's the next [63:32](#) [...] thing? Tea tastings." And she has some places where that is happening. I think that's totally awesome and the reason I got confused because I thought all those other magazines you were rattling off might also be interested in that trend story, Eating Well and... I would think if you could find examples in other countries, that you might well do that in a national magazine too. I didn't know there's tea tasting and I am a total tea addict, so I thought that was great.

Linda: Me too!

Carol: Yeah. I thought that was terrific.

So Tabitha has a pitch, "Why Being the Cat in a Dog Fight Is Best for Business..." that she wanted to pitch to Inc. or to Marketing Today. And it revolves around the news hook for it is that there's a book coming out in January, "If You're in a Dog Fight, Become a Cat. Strategies for long-term growth." And that appears to be the only expert she plans to use in it and that's a problem.

It's basically sort of a thinly disguised review of this one book or conversation with this one book author. And that doesn't tend to be how business articles are set up. You're going to need more people who would agree with his point of view, so maybe there are some and... I feel like... what's that old book, Purple Cow, is like that. So if you could flesh this out a bit more, I think it would work. But it can't be, "I'm going to interview this one author about his philosophy of being a cat instead of a dog in business." It'll need to have more.

So, you want to take Benjamin's one about bilingual summer camps in the US?

Linda: Yeah, let's see. Where are you? Yes. "A growing trend of bilingual summer camps in the US" for the Guardian US website. And the gist of it is, "In this era of globalization, foreign language skills are becoming more important than ever. Foreign language summer camps which aim to immerse campers as young as six or seven in a foreign language environment are springing up all over the country." Why now? Just in time for summer camp season.

So I have to say, if you're pitching... So you said a website, the Guardian US website, so if this is a news piece and a website, that could work out well. If you... I think this would be good, if it hasn't been done, for a parenting type of magazine, in which case, though, it wouldn't be the right time for it because, obviously, they work six months or so in advance and it's a little bit late for them.

But if it hasn't been done in the parenting magazines, I would also maybe hang on to this for next year, because I think that's really kind of a cool trend. My son actually went to a Chinese summer camp a couple of years ago. And it could be really interesting. Then you could have a sidebar of where to find them in your area or some of the biggest ones or something like that. I think parents would be very interested in that.

But Carol, in terms of the Guardian US website, do you know much about that market?

Carol: I have to say I don't. And what I'm looking for in this story is for you to prove to me that it is a growing trend that there are bilingual summer camps or have there been ones forever and ever, or are there fewer now than there used to be?

You can't just say, "Hey, this is a growing trend!" We're getting a lot of this in our pitches. You'll have to prove that. Call up the summer camp association of America and find out how many bilingual summer camp members they've got now versus 10 year ago or five or 20. [66:58 \[crosstalk\]](#)

Linda: I'm looking online and I see lists of Spanish language learning summer camps from 2011. So find out is this growing, definitely. And it may be it's just growing in a single area and you could write for a regional magazine for that area. For example, I see "15 Language Summer Camps for Seattle Kids" on parentmap.com. Maybe this is something that's growing in Seattle.

[67:22 \[crosstalk\]](#)

Carol: Great point. We talk about this in story idea lab -- which I'm getting a feeling some people have not listened to yet -- but you always want to think about whether you could nationalize a local story or localize a national story as a way of making it fresh. Maybe it's been all over the national news, but you could tell how it's playing out in, yeah, the northwest or the Midwest or in Texas or in Hollywood or something and you get a different story. You get a different angle on the story and a different set of readers who haven't heard this story yet and are interested in it. So, yeah, that's a good idea.

So why don't you take Lisa's "Keeping Your Baby Quiet on a Long Flight."

Linda: Oh, there we are. Sorry. I was muted. Yes, so Lisa has "Keeping your baby quiet on a long flight is easier than you think." So we talked last week. She had this idea of surviving an international flight with your kid -- er, with your baby and I went online and I find that already had been done all over the place and then my son and I and my husband had flown internationally several times in the last six months and we noticed that the babies are always quiet, like they just sleep; it's not an issue. So we're wondering how we could turn that around and she has this "Keeping your baby quiet on a long flight is easier than you think. You know about feeding at take-off and landing and the pros and cons of bassinets, but you've read enough stories to know your fellow passengers dread a fussy baby on a flight, especially if it's long. Last year a New Zealand family with six month old twins took a 17-hour flight to the USA. The girls were fine the whole flight. If you're nervous about taking your baby on an extended plane trip, check out these surprising tips from flight attendants and experienced moms."

Now this is going a little bit too far in the other direction, where it's like, "You don't have to worry about anything. It's actually fine." Even if that is a lot of the case, there's not a

lot of a story there, because you're like, "Oh, don't worry about it. The kid'll be fine." So I'm wondering if it could kind of go back a little more towards the middle and be something like, "Simple ways to keep your baby happy on a long flight..." and then you could say, "You don't need to do all these crazy things you're reading about because babies are pretty easy to keep entertained and they're usually fine on flights. And we talked to flight attendants and moms and got some really simple tricks that'll keep your baby from being fussy..." or something like that.

Does that make sense, Carol? Am I making any sense?

Carol: Yeah, absolutely.

Linda: OK, because I'm not sure if I'm like... I sound like I'm going back and forth, but right now it seems to be saying like, "Don't worry about it. Nothing to see here."

69:56 [crosstalk]

Carol: Yeah, if it's really easy, I don't need to read the article, but...

Linda: So it could be easy, but it needs... not too easy.

Carol: Yeah. It needs to be like, "It's easy if you know the secrets of how to make it easy..."

Linda: Yeah, that's nice...

Carol: ...which we will now tell you." Now I'm all ears. "Oh, it's easy and you can tell me how? Because my kid's a nightmare: scream, scream, scream....," then we're totally excited.

Linda: Yeah, because maybe these parents had secrets that I didn't know about. I mean, we just saw the baby sleeping the whole time in the bassinet. Maybe the parents did something. We don't know. So, yeah, good point.

Carol: I just want to congratulate Judy on getting an OK to do a pre-interview. And that's really missing here. I'm not sure I've seen one single pre-interview in here.

Linda: I'm not sure if that comes until the next lesson, though, when you're doing the body of the pitch.

Carol: That's true. Yeah, sometimes they're not in the lede. 70:44 [crosstalk] Is that a real family or a made up family? And if they're a real family, we need their names and ages and...

Linda: Oh, yes, we need all that information; they always want that.

Carol: Yeah...

Linda: And maybe if they had a little tip, that would be cool to include. And I could also do Kelly's idea on "good health begins at home."

How to Create a Space That Supports Your Well-being. The article will delve into the science behind designing spaces to promote the health and well-being of its occupants. This is a relatively recent trend -- so once again... I mean, I know this is just a description of your idea, but you are going to need stats to show that -- and one that looks at buildings holistically to understand how occupants use them and how they can be tweaked to promote positive behaviors, elevated mood and better direct physical health. Will include tips on what the typical homeowner can do now to practically improve their home for better well-being. A sidebar of eight to ten simple decor design and organizational hacks can be presented.

I actually really like that and she said: It will go deeper than the typical "why decluttering is good for your health" angle. And I also think you want to go... you want to make sure that they're not going to be like, "Oh, another feng shui article about not putting a mirror at the bottom of your stairway..." or whatever.

I think this is an awesome idea. I did one several years ago for Woman's Day called "The Ohm of Organizing," I think it was called. And it was about how to turn your home into like a Zen-like oasis where you can be calm and feel happy, so... If they bought that... I think this is a really awesome idea. I really love it. You just need to make sure that they, yeah, that they're very clear on this isn't the typical decluttering article, this isn't another feng shui article. This is something new. And the onus is on you to prove that in the pitch, but I think this is good.

Carol: But did you look at this lede?

Linda: I don't think it's a lede.

72:31 [crosstalk]

Linda: Oh, I didn't see your... OK. "It's a lot to digest, so to speak. There are so many things to consider when attempting to live a healthy life. New studies come out that contradict each other: germs are to be avoided at all costs, and everything crammed into our bathroom drawers is toxic, whether you choose vegan or paleo, drugstore or herbalist, one thing we can all do to live healthier lives is to make small changes to our home."

I mean, I like the idea that we're confused and we read a lot about the dangers, but it seems a little bit off point and it gets me thinking immediately that you're going to be talking about how it's not all that bad, don't worry about germs, don't worry about the toxic stuff -- which I've actually written about before for Women's Health. So I would rework it to be a little more on point for what you're writing about and I think that...

I like the idea. I think you should go for it. Once you get into the body of the article and you start talking to a couple of people, you might have some better ideas for what you can put in that lede, because maybe there's something there about how you walk into your home and you immediately, your stress ratchets up because you're looking at this and that and the other thing. Or maybe your home is not designed right and I'm going to give you ways to fix that, sort of thing, if that makes sense.

So another good, that reminds me, another good thing for these women's and health magazines and all that, they love when you sort of put the reader into the story and they can visualize it. Like you walk into your home and you see your kitchen and you just want to go lie down, things that we all feel. And then you offer to fix it for them.

Carol: Yeah, and just it has these same kind of problems. It is kind of off topic, "Vegan, paleo..." what does that have to do with how I'm laying out my house? And just this lead sentence, "It's a lot to digest, so to speak..." I don't know what you're talking about there. And if it's a lot to digest, I'm probably overwhelmed now and I want to go. It's very general and vague and I kind of don't know what's going on.

Linda: But then she has another lede: It took me until moving into my 15th home to realize that the depression and anxiety that overtakes my normally cheerful disposition from time to time is linked to how light and bright my space is.

That is cool. Right there.

Carol: Yeah, that could work. I saw that.

Linda: Yes. I really like that one. I would like chunk it up a little bit. Take some of the fat out, but I think it's... because there's more to it and it's a little bit long. But I think that's much better. And I agree, I had the same exact realization myself. I think a lot of people could really relate to that.

Carol: Yeah, it actually walks into a lede: It's not just me. Psychologists, health researchers and even ancient practitioners have long known that light spaces harness positive energy and promotes serenity.

Once again, big generalization. You'd actually want to find us a fact, a recent study of it, something.

Linda: And also if it's really that obvious, maybe use the same idea for your lede, but come up with something a little less obvious. Like maybe there's something else you noticed in your home that brings you positive feelings or that used to make you feel bad, because the light thing, yeah, a lot of people do know that low light is linked to depression and so on. So if you can't really back that up with a stat or make it a little more specific, maybe think about something else you can put in its place. But the idea of the lede is good. I like it.

Carol: So I wanted to jump on Joy's post. I asked her if these... I have three different headlines that seem like they may be different articles, I'm not sure. And then she has a list of about 10 different publications she'd like them to be for, which range from Modern Dog to the Humane Society Magazine to local city magazines. And our first thought for you is just that each of those would probably require a different slant and a different story. You're not going to write the same thing...

Linda: Yeah, some are for dog owners.... [76:32 \[crosstalk\]](#)

Carol: ... that you're going to write for a city magazine. So she says: What it's about -- I was unclear if this is three story ideas or it's one story idea...

Linda: No, I can see it. I can see it. It's one story idea.

Carol: It's one idea. She has "Dogs Playing for Life" or "Allowing Dogs to Be Dogs" or "More Homes for Shelter Dogs." And she says: *Shelter dogs can be socialized and ready for adoption through a game changing behavior program called "Dogs Playing for Life."*

So where is this program? How widespread is this program? Is it a brand new program? Is it just rolling out nationally? Does it have a track record of success you could talk about how many dogs that otherwise might have been euthanized that they have gotten adopted through it?

Important question, she says: *I am a district leader volunteer for Human Society of the US, does that create concern if I want to write about animal issues?*

Not if you disclose it and certainly not for the Human Society Magazine. They'd probably think that was just terrific, but for someone else, you just need to disclose that and see if they care or not.

Linda: A lot of the times they don't care.

Carol: Yeah, sometimes they don't care and sometimes they do. It depends. Is this a Humane Society program that the Humane Society developed? Because then it's almost seeming like you're a PR person for the Humane Society and not a freelance writer, in which case, they're going to want to not pay you, so you want to watch out for that.

Linda: Yeah. I see they have a website that has a lot of information on it. And it looks like... I mean, I just gave it a really quick look, but it looks like it's meant to kind of socialize shelter dogs, if I'm not incorrect. And this could be really cool for some of those consumer magazines like Modern Dog and Dogster, if you maybe turned it into how regular people that already have dogs can use this system to help train their dogs in a new, unusual way. That could be really interesting.

Or you could go with the... I don't think this is linked with the Humane Society, but it could be good, like you were mentioning for the Shelter trades where this is something that lots of shelters are using to successfully train what they thought were unsocializable dogs. [78:43 \[crosstalk\]](#)

Carol: This should be for a like animal shelter trade magazine.

Linda: That's what I just said.

Carol: Did you just say that? Sorry. Reading the Chat. Yeah, they're the ones who care about, "Oh, there's an innovative program as someone coming to a shelter to adopt a dog, I probably am not getting that deep into the weeds about how they were made ready for adoption. I just don't know that people are going to get that into it.

Anyway, I want to move on to Martha's one where I guess she posted the whole article and it was, "Do You Make These Four Gardening Mistakes?" or "Four Gardening Mistakes You Don't Know You're Making." And she said it was for a gardening magazine and she's just getting into the Writer's Market, but this is a blog post headline, not a print article magazine. So get those magazines and study them.

But the other thing is, I think as I went through this, the four mistakes were really all just sort of not gardening mindfully when you summed them all up. "Not stilling yourself to prepare to choose plant locations." "Not creating a vision for your new..." It was all sort of mindfulness stuff, so it was really more like a one tip story to me, so that's kind of been done.

Ooh, but I want to hop on Michael's, "Five Ways That Drones Are Your Friend." I love that. There's a good contrarian idea because a lot of people are like, "We hate drones. We want them banned." A lot of places are banning them or shooting them down or

stuff. I don't see a market for this, though, Michael. I don't know if you're on the all. Looks like you maybe are, so if you can tell me who you were thinking of with this.

He says: *I searched Google and see seven, eight articles about this topic. Is it worth it to look for a nugget in them I can use to form an original idea?*

You might scan them to see what's already been done and ways you could do it new. And see where those have appeared to see if there's a different type of publication maybe that you might do it for. Are drones the friend of restaurant owners and they're going to do restaurant delivery for them?

Linda: That would be good for trades. I like it.

Carol: Yeah, that could be kind of awesome. Yeah, drones. Are they for your business? Think about who's already done it. And who might want to know about it that maybe doesn't yet have information about drones.

He says: *It could also be Five Ways Drones Can Help You Do X.* kind of thing.

Three important things... So other ideas: *Three important things Google can't answer for you.* Where does that appear? What publication does that appear?

Linda: And I want to know what the things are because and I see you in the Chat. What are the things, what are the things? Otherwise we can't really critique the idea.

Carol: Yeah. What is it? And then, "Not Your Grandparent's App: these social media apps are replacing Facebook for young people." The Rise of Peach and Snapchat, etc. Boy, I think that was about three years ago.

Linda: I never heard of Peach, but Snapchat our exchange students have been using forever... [81:52 \[crosstalk\]](#)

Carol: I'm not sure what... and who it's for. You don't have any markets. So, Mike, start thinking about who are you writing for and then pick that up or get on line and read it and see what they do.

Snapchat is passing up Instagram. Yeah, I've heard that. Who doesn't know that yet that you could write that for? And why do they need to know that? Where is the actionable information besides just stating, "Snapchat is more popular than Instagram for young kids now?" What do I get that I take to my life to make it better? That's the question.

I think we've done it, incredibly. You guys are pistols. I want to say, lot of fantastic seeds of ideas and lots of meat. I can tell you're working on it. Everyone, please listen to story

idea lab and Eleven Ways to Make Your Queries Irresistible and look at our interviewing handouts and... yeah, this is... you guys are a cracklin', live wire of a group and it's really fun to work with you.

Linda: And like we said last week, don't take it personally when we critique something because even if an idea isn't working as is, there is usually a way to make it work and we're just helping you find ways to make ideas that aren't quite there more saleable. And we have your best interest at heart. And believe me, an editor is going to be a lot more harsh than we would be. So... But I think everybody's doin' great.

Carol: Yeah, and you don't realize... yeah, Mike says: *I'd rather get beaten up. That's how I learn.* Yeah, we are here to make your ideas sell. We're not here to pat you on the head and say, "Oh, awesome."

We're here to kind of think about it like we know editors think about it and to poke holes in our ideas so that when it gets to the editor, there aren't any holes left and they go, "Wow! Amazing trend story idea. Great. This is a perfect fit for my audience. I need to run this now." So that's where we're headed with this.

Jade says: Did you get to "Baby Milestones No One Talks About?"

83:53 [crosstalk]

Linda: Yeah, sorry. I'm looking at it right now.

Carol: If there's anything else like that that you didn't hear and you've waited all this time, please 84:03 [crosstalk]...

Linda: We're like jumping back and forth. Yeah, so, "Baby Milestones No One Talks About" for Babble.com or Parenting. And it's: *Sure, everyone talks about your baby's developmental milestones. New moms especially are expected to know up to the minute whether their babies are in front of, in line with or lagging behind averages for development hurdles. But what about the baby milestones no one talks about?*

And she says: *The article will cover several of these milestones in a lighthearted, humorous manner that will be entertaining for the reader. And the milestones are like the first time they wipe their nose on you. The first time they climb out of the bathtub. The first time they eat something they shouldn't.* And I think what's missing here... I don't really know much about Babble, but for Parenting... I thought Parenting was gone, but I think it like rolled into Parents or something.

What's missing here is the service. So unless they run just kind of funny essays -- I think this is a cute funny essay -- but if they don't, then you're going to need to have some

service in there in terms of, "The first time they wipe their nose on you in public..." like, "What do you about that? What does it mean?" The first time they climb out of the bathtub... How are you going to keep them safe from now on? The first time they eat something they shouldn't.... How do you know if it's dangerous?

I mean, it could be... if you could find some service that actually makes sense with some of these, I mean, it could work out really well.

Carol: Yeah, I love how you're spinning that. Yeah, to me the big milestone is that time you place them on the bed and go off to do something and they roll off. [85:27](#) [**crosstalk**]

Linda: That happened to a friend of mine and he had to bring his daughter to the emergency room. Oh my god.

Carol: Or you see that they could roll off. You see that like, "Oh my god, I can't just put them there and expect them to stay there and be there when I get back. They're now mobile.

Linda: And it happens to all babies. This happens to everyone, so it is a milestone, but it's the one nobody talks about because you can't brag about how, "Oh, my daughter is so far ahead she can stack three blocks in a row..." It's like nobody talks about these ones, but again, yeah, there needs to be service. [86:00](#) [**crosstalk**]

Carol: Yeah, they climb out of the crib, says Diane.

Linda: Oh my god, that ended up in emergency room visit for us.

[86:06](#) [**crosstalk**]

Carol: OK, fabulous. Everybody send us more emails. I'll just pop in the fourweekpitchchallenge@usefulwritingcourses.com email one more time. Send us more ideas. And yes, for everyone who asked, we are still taking headlines and basic story ideas. And now ledes and next week, I believe we're looking at nut graf of stories.

Linda: I believe bodies too -- nut graf and body.

Carol: Yeah, so go through the material and it will help you. And then send us your stuff to that email. As you can see, the earlier you send it, the earlier in this call, you're going to hear the answer. Thanks, everybody. Thanks Linda.

Linda: Thank you! 'Bye.

