

Under Your Byline



get
GOODPRESS

7 steps to getting your bylined articles published—
in the publications that matter most

By David M. Freedman and Paula Levis Suita

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Seven steps to writing great articles and getting them published—in the publications that matter most

2010 Edition

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INTRODUCTION

Writing an article under your byline, and placing it in a publication that is read by your clients, prospects, and/or referral sources, can help you build a reputation as an eminent authority in your area of expertise.

“Publishing an article is a logical first step in marketing,” says Ford Harding in his excellent book *Rain Making*. “Professionals first beginning to market [their services] need to build their stature, develop name recognition, and flesh out a resume. Articles do all of [those] things.”¹

In this handbook, we’ll help you choose subjects that are suitable for bylined articles, compose outstanding manuscripts, and place them in the print and/or online media that you target – though not necessarily in that order. Often the most effective way to go about it is to get an article published (that is, get a commitment or at least some assurance that the editor wants to publish it) before you write it.

We’ll also give you tips on writing op-ed pieces and letters to the editor. The latter is an underrated, cost-effective way to get media exposure and demonstrate your value as a source of accurate information and good advice.

You may fear that you don’t have the time or skill to write publishable articles. You do not have to be a great writer to create a great article, however, as long as you have a compelling story to tell or vital information to share. You can collaborate with a coauthor, freelance editor, or ghostwriter who can help you get the story out of your head and onto the page. We will provide resources for finding excellent writers and editors.

We wrote the first edition of this handbook specifically for lawyers, so many of the examples relate to lawyers and law firms. We made sure, before publishing this new edition, that all the information, examples, and details apply to a general audience.

¹ Ford Harding, *Rain Making: a Professional’s Guide to Attracting New Clients*, Adams Media, Avon, MA, 1994, page 24. (New edition published March 2008.)



PART A YOUR BYLINE IN SEVEN STEPS

Step 1: Define your Target Audience

The first cardinal rule of article writing, in the context of business development, is: Write to illuminate, not to impress.

In other words, do not write for the purpose of showing how knowledgeable, experienced, and clever you are. People who approach writing from that self-serving standpoint are usually boring or even irritating. Readers want to learn something that will help them earn more money, stay out of trouble, improve their performance, or solve problems. If you genuinely and consistently focus on helping readers do those things, without self-aggrandizement, they will realize that you are a reliable source of valuable information and advice.

This is why the first of the seven steps is *not* selecting a topic for your article. Step 1 is identifying the target reader. Before you select a topic, you have to know what the reader needs. Many professionals are tempted to write about what they know, with incidental regard for the needs of the audience – a mistake that will not endear you to audiences.

We don't mean to be preachy. But egocentric writing is one of the biggest mistakes that inexperienced writers make, especially among professional advisers and consultants. Your article is not about you, it's about the readers. That is, it's about what the readers need to know. That is the second cardinal rule of article writing. Let's review the two cardinal rules:

Write to illuminate, not to impress.
Your article is about the readers, not about you.

Integrated marketing strategy

If your business occupies a narrow industry niche or a distinct practice area, defining your readers is simple: they are your clients. In that case, you are surely familiar with their needs, and with the publications that they read – those are the publications you want to write articles for (go directly to Step 2).

On the other hand, if your prevailing marketing strategy is to promote a new practice area or industry group, your target audience may be less familiar, so you will have to do market research to find out what they need and what publications they rely on.

Your marketing strategy may focus on developing referral sources, in which case you might have to target several distinct audiences, such as bankers, accountants, lawyers, venture capitalists, and appraisers. You probably can't reach all of those audience segments in a single publication; so unless you want to focus on just one of those segments, you would have to write several articles, or at least different versions of one article, for various audience segments.

Step 2: Identify Target Publications

The best publications to write articles for are those that (a) are read by your clients, prospects, and referral sources; and (b) confer prestige on the author.

How do you know which publications (in print and online) are regularly read by clients, prospects, and referral sources? Ask them. This is a very important step in overall marketing, not just in article writing. A key to successful business development is reading, listening to, and watching the media that your target audiences consume.

Printed publications include newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and professional and trade journals. Online publications include digital news and entertainment media, blogs (some of which accept guest posts), and portals.

When you identify publications that you want to place articles in, first check to see which of them publish articles written by outside authors. Some are exclusively staff-written. If you can't discern that from the author's bylines and bios, call the managing editor or website content manager and ask if they accept manuscripts from outside authors.

When you have identified the publications that matter most to your audience, and that accept outside-written articles, read each publication thoroughly to become familiar with its editorial format and style. When you contact the editors to propose your article ideas, you must demonstrate that you understand what kind of content they want. Of course, what editors want is largely what their readers want, but not entirely – some editors challenge their readers with innovative material.

Avoid proposing an article to a publication that just covered the topic thoroughly two months ago, unless you can offer a fresh perspective or counterpoint. For that reason, you should review several recent issues of each target publication.

Compensation

In a majority of cases, you will write for publications that do not pay authors. Your objective is not necessarily to earn income as a writer, but to establish name recognition, credibility, and authoritativeness – which are worth more than a modest cash payment.

A big advantage to contributing an article *gratis* is that you typically grant first rights to the publisher, and reserve remaining rights for yourself, so that you may get your article reprinted in other publications in the future. On the other hand, if you sell your article to a publication, the publisher may insist on buying all rights, in which case you would have to get that publisher's permission – and possibly pay a fee – to have the article reprinted later. (See page 26 for information about using reprints as marketing collateral.)

Step 3: Conceive Topics for Your Selected Publications

For the purpose of business development, usually the best kind of article to write is what we call a service article. Service journalism, as distinguished from news journalism, aims to teach a strategy, skill, or technique; solve a problem; or provide information or analysis to readers (or listeners or viewers) that helps them earn more money and stay out of trouble. Writing service articles builds both name recognition and a reputation as a trusted resource.

Service-journalism editors want the following kinds of stories from professional advisers, consultants, and service businesses:

- An interpretation or explanation of a market trend, and how to adjust to it or exploit it
- An analysis of a new law or regulation, with tips on compliance
- Case studies, and the lessons learned from them
- Problem-solution stories
- Common mistakes and how to avoid them
- Using new technology to gain a competitive advantage
- How to cut costs
- Choosing and using a professional adviser or consultant
- How to improve job-related skills, and/or where to find classes, training, or workshops for improving skills
- How to work more efficiently, use time more effectively
- Building and nurturing professional relationships

A service piece often provides analysis and interpretation of hard news. That means following a breaking news story with discussion of how it affects a particular audience and what action they can take to adapt, accommodate, comply, or exploit the new development. When you see hard news that relates to your area of expertise, you can take the opportunity to:

- Follow a “just the facts ma’am” news story with a human-interest angle, using success stories, case studies, and anecdotes from your own experience.
- Reveal the local or industry angle on a national or international news story.

Note that many service-type articles have titles that begin with “How to.” The step-by-step, how-to article is the most basic kind of service journalism. There is a huge demand in all kinds of media – consumer publications, business and trade press, and professional journals – for how-to articles written by advisers, consultants, and other professionals. A reader who discovers clear instructions for accomplishing a difficult task, or an ingenious solution to a common problem, will hold the author in high esteem and feel confident about taking his or her advice.

One kind of article you should *not* write, as a general rule, is a story about yourself. In most instances it is preferable to let someone else, such as a reporter, tell the story when you *are* the story. Rather than toot your own horn about a successful engagement or *pro bono* project, for example, readers are usually more impressed when it comes from the pen of an objective source, so it doesn't feel like self-serving promotional literature. In those instances, you would be better off *pitching* the story to the media, and letting them write it, rather than writing it under your byline. An exception to this rule is using a case study (your case) to support a premise, where the focus of the article is the premise rather than the case.

Article topics

You may have one or more article ideas in mind, but before you narrow and fine-tune them, study your target publications and get a good feel for the range of topics they cover, the style and graphic presentation, the way authors approach their subjects, the angles and the slants, length, and level of technical sophistication. From reading a few issues of a publication, you can form a clear picture of what the readers want and expect. Then you can match your article ideas with the appropriate publications, narrow them down, and fine-tune them.

You may be tempted, for the sake of expediency, to neglect reading issues of each target publication. Don't be negligent. Investing time now to read the publications – it's the author's due diligence – will save you from rejections and re-writes later. Proposing a topic that closely fits a publication's editorial needs, and writing articles in the style they use, will earn you the eternal devotion of editors!

Contact the editor of each of your target publications and ask for (a) writers guidelines, if available, and (b) their editorial calendar, if they have one. Then try to match your story ideas to their calendars. Some publishers post writer's guidelines and editorial calendars on their websites. If no written editorial guidelines are available, pick up the phone and ask the editor for guidelines; and if that's not an option, you'll have to rely on reading several issues of the periodical – or collaborating with a writer who has worked with the editor.

Step 4: Focus and Structure

Do not start writing an article before you create a detailed outline. Professional journalists who have been writing articles for three or four decades still make outlines before they

begin writing. The outline provides a structure into which you can arrange your ideas, research, and notes. You might revise the outline a few times before and while you write.

If you have trouble conceiving a structure for your article, we can suggest several “formulas” from which to start, including the following:²

The List (or Checklist). This is the most basic of formulas, and one of the easiest to use. The most hackneyed version of this formula is the Top 10 list. Some studies by publishers and marketers have found that the number seven is the most compelling of all – as in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, a long-running bestseller (and in the subtitle of this handbook, come to think of it).

Dissent. You disagree with someone else’s premise, opinion, method, or conclusion. You can methodically refute it, and ideally demonstrate the superiority of your point of view or approach. This structure works very well online, especially in response to a blog post – you can respond on their blog or on your own blog, or both.

The Miniature Case Study. A question or problem is raised, and the answer or solution is described in one to three brief case studies. The cases can be real or hypothetical. If they’re real, be careful to disguise the identities of the parties, if necessary to protect confidentiality and privacy.

The Q&A Interview. The question-and-answer approach is commonly used when the subject is well known or eminently accomplished. It is particularly prevalent in staff-written trade journals. Being the subject of an interview can have a higher value than writing a bylined article in building your reputation, because the Q&A format implies you are eminently authoritative. If you are to be the subject of an interview, you may propose questions in advance, or ask to see the interviewer’s questions in advance, so that you can prepare succinct answers. In fact, some journals will publish an interview totally written by the subject (i.e., both questions and answers) or the subject’s PR consultant.

The Trend. Whenever an emerging trend sweeps a profession or industry, articles explaining the trend to different audiences appear everywhere. Articles on the latest tax shelter or investment approach, for example, appear in magazines targeted at doctors, lawyers, parents, college students, and almost any other identifiable group that might constitute a market. To distinguish your article from all the others, you should simplify, add insight, or illuminate for a niche audience.

Survey Results. These articles report findings of a survey or other authoritative study. One key is to summarize the conclusions at the beginning of the article, and then support the conclusions by elaborating on who conducted the survey, how it was conducted, who were the respondents, what questions were asked, and what were the responses (using tables instead of prose whenever possible). Another key is to address the survey’s

² Some of these “formulas” are adapted from Chapter 1 of *Rain Making: The Professional’s Guide to Attracting New Clients*, by Ford Harding, (Adams Media, Avon MA, 1994, page 24), with permission of the author. Harding’s website: www.hardingco.com.

credibility: Was the survey method scientific or anecdotal, did a representative sample participate, and were the authors of the study unbiased? Avoid merely repeating someone else's citation of a study, without digging into the original study (i.e., use original sources, not derivative sources).

How-to. Like a recipe, this kind of article usually involves numbered steps, providing instructions on accomplishing a task or objective. To write this kind of article successfully, you must put yourself in the shoes of the reader who has never done the thing before – which is a lot harder than you might think if you have done it 100 times. Imagine all the ways the reader might misunderstand, get confused, or screw up, and provide remedies. Good how-to writing is an art.

The Contentious Premise. If you have an idea that is novel, contrarian, or challenging to readers' sensibilities, don't hesitate to put it out there – you might become known as an innovator or pioneer. Just be sure it doesn't offend your firm's clients, first of all. Also, you must support a contentious premise with water-tight logic as well as hard facts, data, cases, experience, and/or authority.

The ABCs. The fundamentals, basics, primer, etc. Often accompanied by a glossary. To write a good article, you must approach it from the point of view of someone who knows nothing about the subject.

Step 5: Query First, Compose Second

We recommend that you query your target publication before you write an article, and get encouragement from an editor if not a commitment to publish it. Querying first not only avoids wasting your time in case the article is universally rejected, but often results in a much better article. When an editor gives you the go-ahead, he or she will likely provide guidance regarding the focus, theme, structure, and/or style of the article. Some editors help their contributing authors with background research, fact checking, and peer review.

If you write an article before you know where it will be published, you may have to substantially rewrite, adjust the focus, tweak the premise, and adapt to the publication's style. If you are, in fact, unable to place the article at all, the writing may have been a waste of your time. Editors reject a very large number of manuscripts submitted by professionals and consultants of all kinds, even professional writers. You will get rejections.

Writers who have had dozens of articles published might not feel the need to query before composing. They might be confident that their articles will be accepted, based on their past success, so they write speculatively. Keep in mind, though, that many professional writers who have had hundreds or even thousands of their articles published still routinely query before composing.

The conventional query

We're going to show you two different methods of querying editors. The conventional method is writing a one- or two-page letter, or (more commonly these days) an e-mail message of equivalent length, in which you propose a single article idea. The unconventional method is to propose three or four story ideas at once, still limiting the length of the letter to two pages. In the multi-topic query, the topics are not as thoroughly developed, but it gives editors more choices.

Occasionally an editor will reject the story ideas that you propose but nevertheless be so impressed with the query letter and your credentials that he or she will invite you to write an article on a totally different subject. These are opportunities on which to pounce. This also stresses the importance of a well-written query letter.

If you have already established a relationship with an editor, you may be able to query by phone. Otherwise, a query letter should be printed on your letterhead or that of your firm or your PR firm, or e-mailed, according to the editor's preference (not your preference). How do you know what editors prefer? Ask them.

If you send a printed letter, keep in mind most editors are not very concerned about trivia like typeface or the color of the stationery. They want a succinct, clearly written letter with good story ideas that will help them increase their circulation, period.

On page 11 is a sample single-story query letter. It resulted in an article being published in the Home & Design section of a suburban weekly newspaper. (The author's and editor's names are withheld at the author's request.) Here are the elements of an effective query letter or e-mail message that proposes a single story idea:

- Address each letter individually with the appropriate editor's name, title, publication, and address – no photocopied form letters. (This doesn't necessarily apply to the multi-topic query.)
- In your introduction, say you would like to write an article for the publication on a certain topic, and suggest a working title. (Keep in mind editors often re-write titles, that being an art.)
- Explain why the publication's readers need such an article – this is the crucial benefit statement. To make this statement compelling, you must be familiar with the publication's readership and their need for information and advice.
- Describe the basic structure of the proposed article. This can take the form of a brief outline or a paragraph describing the main parts of the article, like this:
 1. The first part establishes the premise that..., and tells how that will affect readers.
 2. The second part supports the premise with examples, anecdotes, and cases, including...
 3. The third part of the article tells reader what action they can take to exploit or adapt to the situation....

If the editor asks in advance for a detailed outline, enclose or attach one.

- List your qualifications and experience that make you an authority on this topic. If you've written previously on the topic, enclose (or attach to e-mail, but only if approved in advance) one or two clips (published articles). You can also mention seminars you have taught and speeches you have made on the topic. Resist the temptation to enclose or attach a long bio. The editor wants just enough information about you to determine whether you are qualified to write the article.
- If the publication has featured articles on this topic recently, tell why yours is different.

Multi-story query

In a two-page query with three or four topics, each story idea description has to be very tightly written. It requires more artful writing – like the skills of an advertising copywriter – to sell the benefits of each topic to the publications' audiences.

On page 12 is an example of a successful multi-topic query used by Alan G. Orlowsky, a tax and estate planning lawyer and CPA in the Lincolnshire, IL, firm Orlowsky & Wilson (www.orlowskywilson.com). All three story ideas eventually became published articles under the byline of Alan G. Orlowsky, the firm's principal.³ Note that it is not addressed to any individual editors, and it was mailed as a photocopy to about a dozen publications, a few of which had routinely published Orlowsky's articles. With the help of a media relations consultant, he mails out similar query letters three or four times each year; and almost all his multi-story queries result in at least one published article – often in weekly and biweekly newspapers in nearby, high-income suburbs, but also in national publications.

³ “What to Do if Your Parent is Incompetent,” along with the sidebar “And What If You Become Incompetent,” was published in Pioneer Press newspapers in the Chicago suburbs, May 25, 2000. “Gifts of a Lifetime: Four Generation-skipping Tax Strategies” was published in *Vital Times* (a local monthly senior citizen newspaper), October 2000. “How to Be the Best Trustee” (originally the sidebar idea) was published in *Personal Finance* (a national semi-monthly newsletter), December 13, 2000.

Sample Single-story Query

[on firm letterhead]

Dear [name of editor],

I would like to write an article for the Home & Design section of [name of periodical] on the rights of home buyers to conduct property inspections, and the obligations of sellers to disclose defects, before closing a deal. My working title is “Property Inspections and Disclosures.”

In many cases, people are so in love with a house or condo, and they’re so eager to sign a contract and close the sale, that they gloss over the inspection process. Even when they take the inspection seriously, some people are not aware of the seller’s disclosure and remediation obligations and the buyer’s right of rescission if those obligations are not met. Being aware of those legalities helps to protect the buyer’s investment and minimize delays and legal hassles.

The failure to inspect thoroughly can be very costly. Fixing a serious defect such as asbestos or water contamination could cost you tens of thousands of dollars. In the worst cases, families have had to move out shortly after moving in, due to such a catastrophe.

My article will cover the following topics:

- The obligations of sellers under [name of state] disclosure law to complete a disclosure report, what kinds of “material” defects they must disclose, and how (and when and to whom) they must make the report available
- What kinds of defects the sellers are *not* obligated to actively look for or correct
- Guidelines for sellers for hiring building inspectors
- Provisions of a sales contract that relate to inspections and defects, such as a contingency clause
- Buyer’s rights and options when a material defect is discovered that was not disclosed

I have been practicing law in the area of real estate for 34 years, and have represented buyers, sellers, inspectors, and contractors in disputes over property inspections and defects.

If you are interested in my proposed article, please call or e-mail me. I would be able to complete the manuscript within a week. Thank you for your consideration.

[signature]

Sample Multi-story Query

[On firm letterhead]

March 27, 2007

ESTATE PLANNING – THREE NEW STORY IDEAS

Alan G. Orlowsky, a Lincolnshire attorney and CPA, has been counseling people on estate planning for 28 years. He also writes extensively on the subject. Here are three new story ideas. Each one evokes rich anecdotes and case histories. Alan would be happy to write an article for your publication on any of these subjects.

Four generation-skipping tax strategies. Provide for your grandchildren without incurring onerous generation-skipping transfer (GST) taxes. Take advantage of GST strategies such as (1) annual and lifetime gift tax exclusions, (2) college tuition and medical expense payments, (3) GST gift trusts, and (4) dynasty life insurance trusts. Together they can save hundreds of thousands or even millions in estate taxes. Sidebar: How to help grandchildren pay for their education.

Dealing with incompetent parents. What can you do if you think one or both of your elderly parents are incompetent? If you do nothing in order to spare their feelings, you may be jeopardizing their health and well-being, not to mention your inheritance. But having an adult declared incompetent (and the resulting guardianship arrangement) can be an emotionally and legally agonizing process. This story would be based on an actual case, providing human interest. Sidebars: (1) What to do if you are afraid *you* are going to become incompetent; (2) What to do if your children try to declare you incompetent.

Advice on choosing trustees. Thanks to the booming economy and wealth creation, trusts are being used more than ever in estate planning. What are your alternatives and restrictions in selecting a trustee? What should be the selection criteria and qualifications of the candidates? What are the advantages and disadvantages of selecting an institutional trustee vs. a family member or individual adviser? Your choices should conform to your overall plan and make you feel warm and safe. Sidebar: How to be the best trustee.

Please contact [name of author, media relations manager, or PR consultant] to discuss these story ideas. You can visit Alan Orlowsky's website at www.orlowskywilson.com.

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Matters of form

Do not let a query letter out of your hands until you have carefully proofread it! If you are not a competent proofreader, ask a professional editor to review it. If your query letter is poorly written, why would an editor believe you could write a good article?

Some PR advisers believe in enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) with a hard-copy query. We believe that is not necessary, because if an editor wants your article he or she will be delighted to pick up the phone and call you or respond by e-mail, usually within eight weeks. If you want to get rejection notices, go ahead and enclose the SASE. But few editors these days will bother sending rejections, and fewer still will let you know in their rejection letters *why* they rejected your proposal. If you want to know why, pick up the phone and call them.

Here are the most common reasons why article proposals are rejected, and how to avoid rejections:

- The topic is too broad, so your article will inevitably be superficial. Narrow down the focus so that you can use lots of details, examples, anecdotes, and case studies.
- The subject has been thoroughly covered in the press already. In this case, try to pick a fresher subject or a fresh angle.
- The article doesn't add any new information or insights. Try to look at the subject from the audience's point of view. What do they need to know that they don't already know?
- The article does not serve the periodical's specific audience. Choose a periodical whose readers are in your target market.
- The query letter is obscure or incomprehensible. Hire a professional writer to compose the letter (and the article), drawing on your expertise, experience, and research. See page 15 for tips on working with a ghostwriter.

If your proposal is accepted, congratulations. Do not be surprised if the editor wants you to submit the finished manuscript on a very close deadline, and be prepared to compose it (or have your collaborator compose it) on short notice.

Pay to play?

Many publications – including some respected trade journals as well as small-town and suburban weekly and monthly periodicals – give preferential treatment to authors who are also their advertisers; and some in fact will not accept authors who do not advertise with them. Do not advertise in a publication for the sole purpose of getting your article published!

One way to get an article “published” is to buy ad space and place the article in that space. Usually the publication is obliged to label the piece an advertisement, so readers can distinguish between real editorial content and paid advertising. Perhaps some readers don't know the difference or don't care, but for many readers there is an aura of desperation about paying to get your article in the publication. However, the bottom line

is, do you get a return on your advertising investment? If so, who can tell you that paying to play is not a great way to develop business?

Step 6: Compose the Article

Every good publication has its own style – some are formal, rigorous, and dry as a bone; others are conversational, anecdotal, and occasionally jocular. Each publication has a unique mission and appeals to readers of a particular level of sophistication. Some publications want the author to support (with data or authority) every claim, allegation, position, and opinion expressed; while others assume that the author’s deep experience and eminent reputation provides all the authority needed.

If you want to write articles for a particular publication, first learn and try to conform to that publication's style, approach to the subject, audience sophistication level, and journalistic standards.

General composition

We’ll present tips for professionals and marketers who (a) want to develop their journalistic writing skills, and (b) those who have neither the skills nor the time to develop writing skills, and want to work with a collaborator or ghostwriter.

A. Tips for developing journalistic skills

Some professional advisers spend a lot of time writing reports, correspondence, or legal briefs. But they generally have not written for magazines, newspapers, newsletters, and online media.

One of the hardest adjustments for professional advisers to make is writing in an engaging style, rather than a technical style. Make your readers feel comfortable; let them know that you are human just like them, and you speak their language. They want an adviser who is personable and direct, not pompous and abstract.

Here are two common mistakes that professionals tend to make when they write articles for a lay audience: (a) the third-person syndrome and (b) the passive-voice crutch.

First vs. third person

Except when writing for scholarly journals, write in the first and second person, as though you were talking to an individual over lunch. When writing for most audiences, refer to yourself as I (or we if you really mean two or more people), and address your readers as “you.”

Referring to yourself in the third person – for example as “the author” – sounds pompous and distant to most readers in the business and consumer media, and usually in the professional media as well. Writing in the first and second person is more engaging and makes readers more comfortable.

When you write an article, you may explain, clarify, and illustrate your premise by using success stories and anecdotes from your own experience. You may tell those stories in the first-person voice. The purpose of talking about your own experience is not to stroke your ego; it is to support your premise. So, even when you are talking about your own successes, keep the spotlight on the message that readers need to hear, the lesson they need to learn, rather than on yourself.

Active vs. passive voice

Another common mistake that novice journalists make is using passive voice. The following classic example illustrates the difference between active and passive voice:

Passive: “Mistakes were made.”

Active: “I made mistakes.”

A writer or speaker using passive voice tends to be perceived by audiences as weak, lacking accountability, evasive, and indirect. Writers and speakers who use active voice are perceived as confident, accountable, trustworthy, and direct. Most of the time, you can change passive to active voice and make the message more compelling, without altering the substantive meaning of the message.

If you plan to do a lot of writing, invest some time and money to develop your writing ability. Many local community colleges and extension programs at universities have non-fiction writing workshops, some designed specifically for professionals and executives. Also look for workshops offered by local writers’ organizations, and national seminars offered by such reputable firms as:

- SEAK (www.seak.com) offers customized training specifically for lawyers. The regular faculty includes lawyers who are published authors.
- Writer’s Digest (www.writersonlineworkshops.com) offers online workshops.
- The Writing Exchange (www.writingexchange.com) offers public seminars and private coaching.
- The London School of Journalism (www.home-study.com) offers distance learning programs in feature writing, attended by CNN and BBC staff among others.

Nobody is born a good writer. You can become a good writer by learning the fundamentals, then practicing.

B. Tips for authors who want to work with a collaborator or ghostwriter

You can develop your article writing skills over the years, but how about getting an article published this month? If you have neither the skill nor the time, consider collaborating with a ghostwriter.

There is nothing deceptive about working with a ghostwriter, as long as the article’s substance is based on your own knowledge, experience, research, and insight. An

experienced journalist acting as a ghostwriter can compose an article under your byline using notes, research materials, and rough drafts that you provide.

Many lawyers prefer to work with local writers, because the collaborative process can require frequent meetings, interviews, and voluminous research materials. Others, however, have worked successfully with collaborators whom they've never met face-to-face (even some in other hemispheres), thanks to e-mail and collaborative websites.

If you can compose a decent first draft, you may only need an editor – if you don't have one on staff, you can hire a freelancer. Do not assume the editorial staff of the publication you're writing for will do a good job of editing – you must ensure that your article is outstanding *before* you submit it to the publication. Your reputation is not boosted by getting decent articles published – it is boosted only by authoring outstanding articles.

Even if the publication you are writing for has a peer review process, you should show your manuscript to at least one peer before submitting it to the publication. The worst thing that could happen isn't failing to get your article published. It is getting your article published and then it being attacked publicly for having a poorly supported premise, faulty reasoning, biased research, inappropriate citations, or overreaching conclusion. Put your manuscript on the witness stand and ask a colleague to cross-examine it!

We know how agonizing it can feel to get an article severely criticized by a peer, and have to substantially rewrite it. Consider it an opportunity to improve your writing skills.

Choosing & using freelancers

If you do not have very strong writing and editing talent on staff, here are recommended ways to find freelance ghostwriters and editors:

- Ask colleagues who have worked with freelancers for referrals.
- Get referrals from the editors of your target publications.
- Ask your professional or trade association for referrals.
- Look in the Yellow Pages under writers, editors, public relations, and editorial services.
- Place a help-wanted ad for a freelance writer or editor.
- Search Elance (www.elance.com), a marketplace for freelancers of all kinds. You can find English-speaking writers all over the world, some of whom charge a small fraction of what U.S. writers charge.

Before you hire a writer, ask to see published writing samples, preferably in the subject area that you want to address. Beware: The samples you receive might look wonderful, but a quick call to an editor might reveal that the writer's submitted draft needed major revisions, and/or the writer missed his or her deadline and was difficult to work with. You do not want to work with those kinds of writers. So call their editors – if the writer won't give you the editors' contact info, don't hire them.

Of course, ask for references from other professionals with whom a ghostwriter has collaborated.

Ask writer candidates how many years of journalism and feature writing experience they have. Don't hire marketing communications consultants who have never worked as journalists. Marcomm people tend to have a promotional orientation and are prone to writing in generalities without supporting detail; while feature writers (and many PR professionals) are oriented to giving readers what they need in depth.

Top-notch writers won't just follow your instructions. They will guide you in creating an outstanding article, and challenge you to improve the concept, the structure, and the substance.

Top-notch freelancers (don't hire anything less) charge by the hour, page, word, or project. Typical hourly fees for U.S. freelancers range from \$75 to \$125. You can easily find writers who charge less, but you might not be satisfied with the results.

Alternatively, top writers might charge in the neighborhood of \$200 per single-spaced manuscript page (half that for editing), or 80 cents to a dollar per word. An experienced writer should be able to estimate the total cost of the project in advance. In your agreement with a writer, be sure to include a provision that deducts fees for missing deadlines.

Step 7: Submit the Article and Work with the Editor

After you submit the finished manuscript, the editor may ask you to make corrections, additions, or revisions. In fact, count on it. An editor who accepts your manuscript uncritically is not doing you any favors. A skilled editor who takes the time to study and understand the subject and significantly improves the quality of your article can be a pleasure to work with.

An editor should let you review an article that has been substantially edited prior to publication. If you are not satisfied with the revisions an editor makes, you can explain why, but you can't compel an editor to revise according to your dictates, unless you have an excellent relationship with the editor. If you demand total creative control over an article from submission through publication, a smart editor will probably refuse to work with you.



PART B

WRITING COLUMNS AND OP-ED PIECES

Every media relations professional hears this plea from clients: “Can you get me a regular column?”

Columns are great if you can land one. They put you in front an audience on a regular basis, usually with your smiling head shot. People look forward to reading your column in each issue, and they rely on your insights. It’s hard work – you have to come up with something new and brilliant each time – but the reward is very strong name recognition.

Mark Pearlstein, a real estate lawyer in the Chicago firm Levenfeld Pearlstein, has been writing the “Condo Law” column in the Sunday edition of the *Chicago Tribune* for several years, and that has “resulted in great growth in that practice area,” says Bryan Schwartz, Levenfeld’s chairman.

Legal advice columns

Getting a job as a columnist is difficult, however. Darrell Ehrlick, editor of the Winona, MN, *Daily News*, says he receives so many proposals from lawyers – many of them from out of state, which doesn’t make any sense – who want to write legal advice columns, “they’re a dime a dozen.”

When editors decide to hire a new columnist, they don’t usually take applications. They generally try to recruit the most prominent person in the field, often the president or director of a professional or trade association. The *Tribune* originally approached Pearlstein to write the “Condo Law” column because he was president of a trade association at the time.

Nevertheless, if you believe you have an opportunity to land a regular column, here is what you should include in your proposal:

- The theme, suggested title, and how the column will benefit readers
- Why you are *eminently* qualified to write it
- The format – will it be problem/solution, Q&A, or straight exposition?
- A list of topics for the first full year of publication (or the first 12 topics, whichever is less), allowing flexibility for later insertion of more timely subjects

- The word count, frequency (it does not have to appear in every issue, but it should appear on a regular schedule – most importantly, how often do readers want to hear from you?), and duration (how many months or years can you guarantee?)
- Three sample columns, edited and proofread
- The rights that you are willing to give the publication – exclusive or first time only (the latter is preferred if you intend to publish a collection of your columns some day, or offer them to a second publication for reprinting)

Op-ed

Another kind of article that you can write under your byline is the op-ed piece, which is a guest editorial, essay, or opinion piece that usually gets published on the page opposite the editorial page in printed news media. The distinct benefit of getting an op-ed piece published is that it establishes the author as a “thought leader.”

Op-ed articles can be very satisfying to write because you can express your passionately held beliefs and opinions. They are usually more difficult to write, however, because they have to be more artful, tactful, and persuasive than service articles; and they are more difficult to place because there is limited space available.

The Los Angeles Times receives hundreds of unsolicited op-ed submissions every day and publishes only one or two of them, according to Susan Brenneman, deputy op-ed editor. But Brenneman advises, “Don’t give up.”⁴

Op-ed case study

One lawyer who did get an op-ed piece published in a daily newspaper is David C. Levy, who practices real estate and environmental law with Baird Holm LLP, a 75-lawyer firm in Omaha, NE. Levy is a prolific writer, especially in the area of city planning.

On August 14, 2006, the *Omaha World-Herald* ran a story about various contentious reactions to a judge’s decision in a zoning case. Baird Holm’s director of marketing, Danielle Dubuc-Pedersen, recognized an opportunity and asked Levy if he would write an op-ed in response to the *OWH* article. When Levy acceded, Dubuc-Pedersen contacted *OWH*’s editorial page editor, Geitner Simmons, to see if he would consider publishing Levy’s op-ed in response to the article in question. Simmons encouraged her to have Levy submit it, with no guarantee that it would be accepted for publication.

Levy wrote the piece and, after making sure it would not pose a conflict of interest (that is, it would not offend any clients of the firm), submitted it to Simmons on August 16, two days after the original op-ed ran. It was published two days later in both the morning and evening editions. A slightly condensed version of it is on page 24. (You don’t have to read the original article to appreciate Levy’s response to it.) You can see that it was very well written, and is an exemplary op-ed piece.

⁴ “*L.A. Times* Insider Shares Eight Tips for Successfully Pitching Op-Eds to Leading Newspapers,” Bulldog Reporter’s *Journalists Speak Out on PR*, April 20, 2005.

Levy and other Baird Holm lawyers received some phone calls from their clients in response to the op-ed, so there is no doubt that people read it and were motivated to call the attorneys.

As a routine, Dubuc-Pedersen creates reprints of all bylined works to hand out at seminars and speaking engagements, or to include with RFPs (requests for proposals).

Op-ed guidelines

Simmons distinguishes between op-ed authors who live within the newspaper's circulation area, and those who live outside the area. Outsiders typically include advocacy groups and lobbyists, who "constantly churn out op-eds, especially relating to federal legislation, most of it not related specifically to local or regional interests – so they have a low chance of getting published in a regional newspaper like *OWH*," says Simmons.

The subjects of op-ed pieces tend to be more controversial than most news and service articles, and op-ed authors (unlike Levy in the above example) typically advocate a point of view. When they do, editors often try to balance one viewpoint with another author's opposing viewpoint on the same topic, within a few days of each other.

Op-ed writing tips

Op-ed pieces are personal in style, and they do not necessarily have to be pegged to the day's news. They can be about anything interesting, moving, inspiring, or controversial. Simmons says that 90 percent of the op-eds that he publishes deal with public issues, such as the need for more physicians in rural areas; while 10 percent are human interest stories like people's relationships with their pets.

Criteria for op-ed submissions, such as length, vary widely. But here are some general tips for getting your op-ed piece considered for publication:

- Offer an op-ed piece exclusively to one publication. If that publication rejects it, you can offer it to another.
- If your piece is pegged to a holiday or special event, submit it early – several days before the event for daily newspapers, longer for weeklies and monthlies.
- During the summer, Thanksgiving, and the December holidays, newsrooms tend to be short-staffed because reporters go on vacation. That's a good time to submit op-ed pieces because the publications need to fill space.
- If your piece is pegged to news of the day, act very quickly – next Monday it may be stale.
- Some publications want you to query first. But many don't require a query letter; just submit the finished piece with a cover letter. If you e-mail it, include the piece in the body of the e-mail message, not as an attachment. Always include your contact info, including office and cell phone numbers, and a short bio.

The following op-ed piece appeared in the August 18, 2006, issue of the *Omaha World-Herald*. It is reprinted here, slightly condensed, with the author's permission.

Lawmakers Must Make Tough Zoning Decisions

BY DAVID LEVY

The author is an attorney with Omaha's Bair Holm law firm, where he practices in the real estate, environmental and litigations sections, focusing on zoning and land use issues and environmental law.

Neither side appears to be happy with Otoe County District Judge Randall Rehmeier's decision in the Otoe County reciprocal zoning case....As with everything, however, there are two sides to every story.

On the one hand, the court recognized that it is important for local governments to try to balance competing and conflicting land uses such as housing and agriculture. Both land uses are critically important to the people and economy of Nebraska. As the population increases, and urban residents spread to more rural areas, conflicts between these land uses are certain to increase. The existing reciprocal zoning rules that Judge Rehmeier upheld help protect agricultural operations from encroachment by residential or urban uses, and protect residential and urban users from potential future unhappiness or conflict with agricultural operations. Perhaps more importantly, they do so in a codified, regular manner that reflects a reasoned public policy choice by the elected legislative body.

On the other hand, the court recognized that it is a bad idea to give individual private landowners the right to veto or allow various land uses by waiving zoning restrictions or agreeing to certain, otherwise prohibited, land uses. Such a right amounts to the abdication of responsibility by the elected legislative body and the impairment of the rights of all citizens to have important decisions made in the open legislative process where they can have input. Allowing individuals to veto land uses and waive zoning restrictions also fails to account for the fact that people frequently move and transfer property. Something that is acceptable to one landowner may not be acceptable to his successor, or his neighbor.

Moreover, in such case-by-case, limited-interest decision making, the loudest voice often gets what it wants, which may or may not be good public policy. In many areas of the country, where nearly every land use decision is hotly contested, elected officials have come to rely far too heavily on this "neighbor complaint meter" theory of decision making. It is a failure of our system that often results in bad public policy and unfairness to developers and citizens alike, who simply ask for, and rightfully deserve, certainty and reliability in the decisions that affect their lives and property. Judge Rehmeier's decision puts the onus squarely on the elected officials to make these decisions, rather than leaving it up to individual landowners.



PART C

WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The July 4, 2005 issue of *Business Week* ran an article titled, “A Patent War is Breaking Out on the Hill.” The article focused on “patent trolls,” which *BW* defined as “companies that game the system by snapping up critical bits of technology, then shopping for settlements from companies that might be infringing on the patents.”⁵ The article said:

Tech and financial-services companies are rallying behind the Patent Act of 2005...The bill would make it easier for big companies to challenge the validity of patents – and tougher for patent holders to win permanent court injunctions that keep allegedly infringing products off the market. The goal, says Microsoft General Counsel Brad Smith, is to curb “abusive litigation” that can shut down a product line.

J. Matthew Buchanan, a patent lawyer in Perrysburg, Ohio, thought *Business Week* had missed the bigger picture. He wrote a letter and e-mailed it to *BW*, and it was published, essentially unedited, in the “Readers Report” section on July 25. The letter said, in part:

[The article] properly focused on “patent trolls” as the most controversial issue surrounding the...Patent Act of 2005. It’s unfortunate, though, that the injunctive-relief provision of the bill has garnered the majority of the spotlight. The bill includes many other reform provisions that are designed to greatly improve the quality of patents issued by the Patent & Trademark Office....

Unfortunately, the controversial injunctive-relief provision, which had not been part of the discussions during that effort and appeared on the political doorstep only upon release of the working draft, stands to jeopardize progress on the quality issues. This is what I consider to be the real problem.

–J. Matthew Buchanan
Fraser Martin Buchanan Miller LLC
Perrysburg, Ohio

Editor’s note: The writer is a patent attorney and maintains a blog on the issue, Promote the Progress.

⁵ The author was Lorraine Woellert, and the article appeared in the Washington Outlook section of the magazine.

Buchanan had noted at the end of his letter that he was the proprietor of the blog because *BW's* guidelines, which appear at the end of the “Readers Report” section, specify:

Writers should disclose any connection or relationship with the subject of their comments.

The *BW* editors decided to include the name of Buchanan’s law firm and the message about his blog. Immediately after his letter was published, Buchanan noticed a significant, sustained increase in traffic to his blog (<http://promotetheprogress.com>).

Cost-effectiveness of letter writing

There is no way to precisely measure the marketing value of Buchanan’s letter to the editor, but we know that (a) letters enjoy high readership in most publications, and (b) his letter boosted traffic to his blog, which has loyal readers coming back time after time to view his new content. The blog increases his visibility and helps establish his reputation as an authority in his niche.

The marketing effectiveness of some letter-writing efforts can be measured more accurately. James B. Fishman, a New York City attorney, has had 10 letters published in the *New York Times* and one in *Newsweek*, and has received dozens of calls from prospective clients in response to those letters. Fishman, a partner in Fishman & Neil LLP who practices in the area of consumer rights, privacy, and tenant/landlord relations, said one *Times* letter alone resulted in “30 or 40 calls, mostly from potential clients.”

The time required to write a publishable letter is not trivial (it might require some research), but it is not half as time-consuming as writing an article. So the cost-effectiveness of writing letters to the editor is nothing to sneeze at.

Letters appear in search-engine results

Letters can also keep working for you long after the day or week or month that they first appear in print. Most major magazines, newspapers, and newsletters maintain archives of their content online, including letters to the editor. They are included in search-engine databases, so they will appear in the search results, especially if they are “optimized” for that purpose.

Letter-writing diplomacy

Writing a letter to the editor is a great way to (a) correct a mistake, misquote, omission, or distortion in a recent news story about any subject; (b) illuminate one or both sides of a current controversy; (c) comment on how proposed regulations or policies may affect your clients; or (d) try to create interest in a subject that has not been covered and that should have been by the media.

If you are responding to a news story, write and submit your letter as quickly as possible, preferably well before the next issue goes to press.

You may send the same letter to more than one media outlet, but you'll probably have to revise and customize it for each outlet, because they usually have different formats and styles. You can usually find guidelines printed in the letters-to-the-editor column itself, or on the air when letters are read, or on the media outlet's website. If in doubt, call an editor and ask for guidelines. If that doesn't work, simply read or view the letters that others have written, to get a feel for the different formats and styles.

If your letter is critical of a reporter or the media outlet itself, and you think your letter might alienate the reporter, think twice before sending it. You might be better off calling the reporter first to discuss the issue. Either or both of you might change your opinion after you hear each other's point of view, and the reporter might even *invite* you to submit a letter challenging the way a story was handled.

Guidelines

There is no guarantee that your letter will be accepted for publication or on-the-air coverage, but you'll have a better chance if you follow these guidelines:

- Avoid expressing a point of view that might offend your clients or prospects.
- Your letter will be edited, at least for spelling, punctuation, and grammar, and possibly to shorten it. Some letters are severely condensed. The shorter and more succinct your letter, the less likely parts of it will be excised.
- Newspapers commonly recommend a length of 200 words or less, which translates to about 20 lines of text. However, they often publish letters that are much longer than 200 words, if they're well written and well reasoned (or if you're a friend of the publisher). If you're a good writer, you can make a powerful statement in 50 words.
- Focus on one central point. Letters are too short to cover more than one point adequately.
- If you are responding to a published article or program, in your first paragraph refer to the title, author, page number, and date of the publication or broadcast.
- Try to discuss a controversial issue as objectively as possible. Your own bias may be apparent, but it's usually best to show respect for both sides of the issue.
- Use facts and examples to support your premise or point of view. Cite the sources of your statistics. If you make statistical claims without support, your letter will be rejected or else the stats will be deleted.
- If you are correcting a reporting error, be good-natured about it. Don't alienate the reporter or editor.
- If you disagree with an opinion expressed in an article or another letter, don't make it a personal attack. Challenge the facts and/or logic, not the writer's motives. If you accuse someone of a conflict of interest, you better be able to prove it.
- Sign your name and city, at least. As a general rule, don't ask that your name be withheld for privacy reasons or any other reason. For one thing, you'd lose the publicity benefit. For another thing, anonymous opinions are often discounted (perhaps unfairly). If you're not proud of your viewpoint, reconsider it.
- Humor is usually welcome, but it is very difficult to write good sarcasm or satire.

- Open your letter with a strong premise. This isn't the place for chatty, anecdotal leads. Close with a restatement of the premise, which you've supported in the letter.
- Include your credentials, either in the body of the letter (in a modest way) or after your signature. If you express an opinion, it's important to establish credibility and authoritativeness.
- Provide your mailing address, e-mail address, and phone number, in case the editor needs to talk with you before publishing the letter. Some editors will call you to verify the authenticity of the letter.
- Proofread. Ask a colleague or literary friend to review it and offer suggestions for improvement.
- Submit letters by e-mail whenever possible. Not only is it faster, but it's easier for the editor to process (cut and paste) and edit.
- Don't write many letters in a short period of time to the same media outlet. Editors have policies that limit how frequently they will publish letters from an individual or organization.

If your letter does not get published, keep writing letters. It may take five or six tries before a publication publishes one of your letters, especially if it has a large circulation and receives many letters each day.

When your letter does get published, make photocopies and send it with a cover letter to clients, prospects, and referral sources who have an interest in the subject.



PART D

LEVERAGE YOUR BYLINED ARTICLES FOR MAXIMUM EXPOSURE

When your bylined article is published, who will see it? If not everyone in your target audience actually reads the publication or website in which it is published, then your exposure is limited. This might be the case especially when you appear in an obscure journal or small-town paper.

Ensure that your articles are actually seen by all the people who matter most to you: clients, prospects, referral sources, alumni, colleagues, internal staff, and other media outlets. If the article is available online, alert your audience by e-mail, giving them a hypertext URL so they can link directly to the Web page where the article appears. If the article appears in print, disseminate it in the form of reprints (printed or PDF documents) and/or a posting to your website. These activities multiply your exposure in the marketplace and maximize return on investment.

In your e-mail message or cover letter, be sure to state a benefit to motivate your recipients to click on the link or read the reprint, respectively. Will the article help them comply, compete, or profit?

Send alerts and reprints only to those people who will genuinely benefit from your article. Avoid the appearance of a mass-produced, indiscriminately distributed alert or reprint. If your article appears in *Accounting Today*, send the alert to accountants, not to everyone else.

If you are a member of LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking site, notify your connections that your new article has been published and is available, by updating your status and profile, and mention it (without being overtly promotional) in group discussions. If your article is posted to your own website or blog, facilitate “hyper-syndication” with sharing and bookmarking tools such as Digg (www.digg.com), ShareThis (www.sharethis.com), Delicious (www.delicious.com), and others.

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Before you reproduce and disseminate your bylined article, make sure you have the right to do so. If possible, reserve those rights before you submit the article to the publication. Otherwise, after it is published, contact the managing editor or publisher (or, at a large publishing company, the permissions editor) and request permission to reproduce the material for distribution to your client mailing list. In some cases the media outlet (or

whoever owns the copyright) will grant permission without blinking, but in other cases you might have to submit a formal written request, specifying exactly how and to whom you plan to disseminate the material – and in rare instances pay a fee, especially if there are photographs or illustrations in the material.

As a condition of granting permission, the copyright holder may require that you include a credit notice, that is, place a note on the photocopy or PDF file stating that the article “originally appeared in the November 2006 issue of...and is being reproduced with the permission of...” In fact, you should include such a statement even if the publisher doesn't require it, to let your audience know in what publication you originally appeared, and as a courtesy to the publisher.

High-quality reprints (no bleeding)

Photocopying an article or a letter to the editor for distribution is usually easy. It can get a little tricky if you are copying a newspaper article that runs in 16-inch columns, and there are ads on the back of the page that “bleed” through. Spare no effort to make the reprint readable, attractive, and navigable – cut and paste carefully, and use a lighter exposure setting on the copier to avoid bleed-through. If the article contains a photo that does not reproduce well on a photocopier, you may be able to obtain the original photo from the publisher or the photographer, and “strip” it into the photocopy. Ask a local quick-printer such as Kinko's to help you with that.

Most trade and business journals offer professionally produced reprints for a fee. (The sale of reprints is often a significant profit center for those publishers.) These reprints are usually printed in color on the same high-quality paper stock as the periodical itself, and features the journal's masthead, banner or nameplate at the top – they can be quite impressive. The fee is usually reasonable if you order hundreds of them. If you don't need such a large quantity of reprints, the unit price can be prohibitive, though. Prices depend on the length of the article; whether you want it in full-color, two-color, or black-and-white; and what sort of customized layout and design work you need for promotional purposes.

If the publication itself does not offer high-quality reprints, third-party reprint services may be able to provide them for you. The YGS Group,⁶ for example, supplies reprints for more than 700 publications on a contract basis. Their minimum order is 100 for black & white or 500 for full-color reprints. Most third-party reprint services also offer “e-prints,” in either PDF or HTML format, as well as posters, plaques, and postcards.

More and more publishers are archiving their past issues online. You can provide your own website visitors a link to those archives that contain your articles. If the publisher's archives are available only to paying subscribers, warn your visitors about that. If you do post a link on your own website to a publishers' archives, check it from time to time, to be sure it is still valid, and delete the link if the publisher phases out the issue with your article.

⁶The website is www.theygsgroup.com/reprints/

No dumping

You should also post the articles on your own website. Do not simply “dump” the article online in the same form in which it appeared on paper. For one thing, people’s attention spans are shorter online, so you should try to condense the material as much as possible. For another thing, people tend to browse online instead of peruse, looking for the information they need. So you should use more descriptive subheads and, for longer articles, place a table of contents near the top with internal hyperlinks to the beginning of each section, so people can jump directly to the material they need (see example on page 32). When you post long articles, you should make a printer-friendly version available too, because some people would rather print out the article than read it on-screen. Finally, your webmaster should “optimize” the HTML code and metatags so that people will find the article using relevant keywords in a search engine.

Many trade and professional journals routinely provide authors with PDF versions of their articles, just as they appear in print. In most cases you can post the PDF file on your websites and/or use it to create an unlimited number of reprints.

Reprinting in other publications

Once you get an article published, assuming you own remaining rights, you are free to get it published again and again in other publications. Whereas many publications feature only original articles (never before published), many others accept previously published material (edited or adapted for their particular audiences) as long as it hasn’t been disseminated too widely. A couple of tips:

- Let the next editor know about every publication in which the article has already appeared. Some will not use it if they know it has been published by a competitor. If you fail to disclose this information and they discover it later, they might never work with you again.
- Update and customize the article for each new publication.

Seminars and other opportunities

Look for other opportunities to leverage your media appearances as well. If you teach a seminar or workshop, or speak at a conference, you can use reprints as handouts. Offer to let other reputable seminar speakers and workshop instructors hand out your articles too.

Lincolnshire, IL, attorney Alan G. Orlowsky (introduced on page 10) seized an unusual opportunity to disseminate one of his articles through a state senator who was speaking to local groups on the subject.

Immediately after the conclusion of the Terry Schiavo case in Florida in Spring 2005,⁷ Orlowsky and his associate attorney Patricia Deemer wrote an article titled “Health Care Powers of Attorney and Living Wills in Illinois,” which appeared in the June 7 issue of

⁷ *Theresa Maria Schindler Schiavo (incapacitated) vs. Michael Schiavo (guardian)*, 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 05-11556, March 23, 2005.

Vital Times, a Chicago-area, biweekly senior citizen publication. Shortly after the article was published, an Illinois state senator⁸ organized a series of free educational seminars at area senior centers on the subject of health care powers of attorney and living wills. Orlowsky's media relations consultant contacted the senator and suggested that she distribute copies of the Orlowsky's article at the seminars, which she did. A prominent public figure can lend a lot of credibility to your article.

⁸ Susan Garrett, D-29th District, Lake Forest, IL.

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Health Care Powers of Attorney and Living Wills in Illinois

Avoid the heartbreaking "Terri Schiavo dilemma"

By Alan G. Orlowsky, Attorney and CPA
and Patricia L. Deemer, Attorney

[printer-friendly version](#)

In Illinois, a living will *cannot* resolve the kind of dispute that involved Terri Schiavo's husband and parents. The only way to resolve such a dilemma in this state is with a power of attorney for health care.

Illinois law recognizes both of those documents – powers of attorney for health care and living wills – as "advance directives." An advance directive is a written statement that you prepare about how you want your medical decisions to be made in the future, if you are unable to make them for yourself. The power of attorney for health care is, however, the *only* advance directive that can address the issue of artificial nutrition (feeding tubes) and hydration.

Powers of attorney for health care

A power of attorney for health care (sometimes called a health care proxy) is a document in which you appoint an agent – typically a relative or trusted friend – to make health care decisions for you, if and only if you lose the ability to make them or express them yourself. You do not have to be terminally ill or in a coma for the power of attorney to take effect. In other words, if you cannot speak for yourself, your agent can speak for you.

In exercising the decision-making authority, your agent is required to consider your specific instructions regarding the care that you want provided or withheld.

When you create your power of attorney, you can give your agent broad discretion or limited authority. You can write it so that it covers only certain kinds of medical situations or treatments. To avoid a heartbreaking scenario like the Terri Schiavo case in Florida, however, you should give your agent broad authority to make

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[Resources:](#) Illinois Public Health Dept. & advance directives law

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The table of contents on the right side of this Web page (above) helps online readers find the information they're looking for quickly. Clicking on one of the internal hypertext links takes you directly to the section you want to read.

Cover letters

When you mail reprints to people on your contact list, enclose a concise cover letter with a personalized message. Without a cover letter, you are just dumping unsolicited literature on people.

The letter should occupy no more than a single page of your letterhead, and it should accomplish the following:

- Draw attention to the reprint or other reproduction enclosed, mentioning the title and the media outlet where it originally appeared.
- Let readers know *how* the subject is relevant to their businesses or personal lives.
- Provide an “executive summary” for people who don’t have the time or inclination to read the whole piece. Let’s be realistic – many people will put the reprint on a pile, where it will rot.
- Give *very brief* additional comments, clarifications, corrections, or elaboration that you didn’t have a chance to include in the original piece.

Internal dissemination

Don’t neglect to share your bylined articles with your partners, associates, and staff. Large firms that get dozens of media hits per month typically distribute an e-mail memo (with a title like “Firm Name in the News”) each month to everyone in the firm, listing the lawyers’ media appearances, with hypertext links to those that are accessible online.

This is more than mere crowing and esteem-building. From a practical perspective, it makes lawyers aware of reprints and other materials, written by or featuring other lawyers in the firm, which they may want to distribute to their clients. In large firms, the marketing department should maintain an indexed, central repository of all the reprints that are available for dissemination.

You should not hesitate to distribute reprints that feature another lawyer in your firm. Use the same cover letter described above, but add a short bio of the author if the recipients are not familiar with him or her.

Publish Your Bylined Articles Directly to Your Website? – Not So Fast

The quickest way to get an article published is to publish it yourself. Simply write it and post it to your website. There's just one problem: People might not take it seriously.

Much of the self-published literature you find on the Internet is inaccurate, lacking authority, poorly written, difficult to comprehend, and—worst of all—self-serving. There is so much self-published junk online that readers scrutinize articles for evidence of credibility and authoritativeness before reading them. They place much more credibility in articles that have been published in a respected periodical.

Third-party validation

If, on the other hand, you first get your article published in a respected magazine, trade journal, newsletter, or newspaper, and *then* post it to your website (assuming you have the right or permission to do so), you've gained two big advantages: (a) it's been edited for grammar, style, punctuation, spelling, and clarity; and (b) it's earned third-party credibility.

When you “reprint” your article on your website, you should give credit to the original publisher, just below the title and byline – like this:

This article was originally published in *The Respected Journal*, May 2006, page 39. It is reprinted here with permission of the publisher.

For greater credibility, provide a hypertext link to the journal's home page, in case the reader hasn't heard of it.

If the article requires updating from time to time, do so – do not *ever* let it become obsolete or inaccurate, or you'll shoot your credibility. After updating an article, at the end of the aforementioned reprint notice, add something like this: “Updated by the author January 2005.”

Damn the editors, post the manuscript

If your efforts to get your article published in *The Respected Journal* are unsuccessful, is there ever a rationale for posting it on your website anyway? Sure, but only if you first do three things:

- Have the article reviewed for accuracy and authoritativeness by at least two knowledgeable colleagues.
- Ask a professional editor or proofreader (not an office administrator or marketing coordinator) to review it and fix mistakes.

- Include a brief bio at the end of the article (with a hyperlink to it from the byline) that establishes you as an eminent expert on the subject.

The worst thing you can do is establish a reputation for inaccuracy, sloppiness, and poor communication skills.

Note: This sidebar, written by David M. Freedman, originally appeared as an article in the February 2005 issue of Professional Marketing magazine, page 25, published by PM Forum (www.pmforum.org).



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David M. Freedman (www.freedman-chicago.com) has worked as a journalist since 1978, specializing in law, finance, and technology. He has served on the editorial staffs of professional, business, trade, and consumer magazines and newsletters, both in print and online. As a freelance writer since 1999, he has written hundreds of articles under his byline. He has also served as a media relations consultant to lawyers and financial advisers, and has collaborated with professional advisers on dozens of articles published under their bylines.

Dave won a Your Honor Award for public relations from the Legal Marketing Association in 2001. He has won awards for legal journalism, feature article writing, financial magazine editing, and website content.

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Paula began her career as a news reporter for the *Eagle-Tribune* daily newspaper in North Andover, Massachusetts.