What do I do special as a writing coach?

I just woke up to a question/discussion on Linkedin's Promocave:

Carrie Golden, Citizen Journalist/Poetry Consultant to film-makers at Motionpoems, Inc., asked:

> *Writing coach…*
> *Not sure if this group [Promocave] is the right place to post this question but…what exactly does a writing coach do to help writers?*

———-

I wear two hats (on one head): (1) **"court-of-last-resort" editor**, providing a last-chance no-nonsense review of what the writer is about to submit (the final final draft) for book publication and (2) a **first-step writing coach** (before much writing). So here was my contribution to the discussion that defines my view of what different do I offer as a writing coach—and why.

> *[As a writing coach] I think of myself as a nonfiction "what" coach. I prod the souls [rather deeply] through six or so what's (?), then the "how's" make sense (and cents). I'm there if they need me later, more as an action guide and (sometimes) a silent co-planner of their future empire.*

Here's a longer explanation of (2), if you are interested and it helps you (*sans* me) do your own early nonfiction book planning, writing, and publishing.

There's not much mystery about the steps a nonfiction writer can and usually takes to prep and submit a book for

publication. See a hundred books in libraries worldwide that address that, and I have two books that address it too: *How to Get Your Book Published in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days* and *How to Pick the Right Kind of Publisher*.

What distresses me most is the number of smart, organized, diligent would-be book writers who wander about, with perfectly good words and spelling, looking for something to say and, mostly, a reason to say it. Bewildered souls with hundreds of pages (at least it reads that way) of "what's that?" copy that has no clear (or any) purpose (or buyers) presented in sweet-reading, grammatically correct prose. Their command of English is strong. (It's worse if it's not.) What's missing is their grasp of elementary common sense about what a book must do to become a book…

The saddest thing is how easily that could have been prevented if they hadn't been in such a damn hurry to see themselves and their brilliance in print (everywhere), with assumedly a fat advance almost in hand and many years of fatter royalties following assuredly behind.

About six questions will create the structure and map, plus point the writer to the most likely reader, why they would read it, what they would do with it, and how they just saved themselves about 75% in misdirected (or undirected) research, "what's that?" writing, and the one thing they can't get back, wasted time. Of course each question leads to deeper, related sub-questions which, in turn, lead to a dozen related books written (or waiting for you to write) that, combined with speaking, consulting, focus book series, perhaps audiobooks, and so on, can rather quickly create an empire based on their acquired expertise (which began with book one and is further proven and strengthened in subsequent products.)

So I guess that really makes me a **pre-writing and empire-building coach** (if being an emperor or empress is your thing).

That's the longer overview of what my kind of writing coach does. (Most of the others start when the writing itself appears. Bless them.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Leading your idea in print down its most profitable path…

So you've got an article or book idea that you want to turn into both big money and widely-seen expertise presence. That's the way to think! I'd also add that the copy needn't be completely rewritten again and again, so also think reprint, rewrite, reprint of rewrites, and more…

Let's say you want to write about the 2016 Chicago Cubs and their playing in the coming National League baseball playoffs—and perhaps for the pennant, of all things! But, if you can't tell, or wouldn't want to tell, a baseball from a ball of wax, your idea and copy to sell again and again could be about the Trump-Clinton presidential election, kumquat delicacies from the kitchen, or driverless autos driving nonetheless on the streets!

Alas, I've been a baseball fan from/in Chicago almost since the Great Fire and the hapless Cubs haven't won a pennant for 107 years. You know us by the fetching blue, red, and white

"C" hats that we have had to hide in our cupboard for generations. Alas, this is our year, so we dusted them off and wear them on our heads for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and almost all the hours between—until October when we will know if the hex of the billy goat is true. **So I'm picking the Cubs for this empire-building article writ long…** (But if you're reading this in the Philippines, on the Pyrenes, or in Peru, kumquat delicacies might be easier to understand…)

Let's start with an article about the "plight of the Cubs" (or any fetching topic) for an American magazine. You do the usual things: some basic research to find the most interesting angles or slants, pick the best approach, and subject that idea to a two-pronged **feasibility study**—is it feasible to write and is it feasible to sell? (Go to the search box in the upper top right corner and type in **feasibility study** to see how the magazine approach works. The blog copy comes from either ***How to Sell 75% of Your Freelance Writing*** or ***The Travel Writer's Guide***. To read those books, used and sold for a pittance, check the Amazon catalog.) The feasibility study tells how to test magazines vs newspapers, who are the most likely readers, the querying process, and (for magazines), should you get a "go-ahead," how you best present the copy for sale. (If it fits newspaper freelance buying fields too, submit the written article in final form, without a query and sent in ready-to-go fashion.) If the idea is a "go" as feasible to write and sell, send your articles to the best markets in both categories.

If the magazine buys your submission, you can use much of the article's contents again (at least slightly rewritten) two ways: as a reprint or a rewrite. Then if a rewrite is bought, you can send that off to a still-virgin magazine as a reprint. With cunning, you can have several of each of these three partially-completed masterpieces filled in (completed) and in print, all paying you! (Again, go to the Search box above and write in reprints or rewrites to see step-by-step blogs with

more details.)

With newspapers, there are two paths: (1) you can literally sell the first copy to as many newspapers as will buy it as long as they aren't "national" newspapers (like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or the *Wall Street Journal*—sell them one at a time, and, after it is sold, thoroughly rewrite the piece before selling it to another "national") and (2) don't simultaneously sell it two or more regional newspapers within 100 miles of each other ('distribution ranges"). Otherwise, you can sell the very same newspaper article(s) to any other newspaper (except the "nationals") as long as they don't overlap. Just tell the newspaper editor yours is a simultaneous submission and you are selling it outside of their 100-mile circulation orb.

What more can you do with reams of unused copy parts shouting to be read? Throw all the used copy into a cauldron, add the unused gems, mix them up again, and "topic spoke" them to find as many of the other potential eager buyers as will shriek and pay, delightfully, to use your genius and make you rich. Check the blog search for items about "topic spoking" in the 400+ blogs waiting to be used!

How many books can you pluck from that cauldron (adding in other sources still untouched)? You could write/publish a book for all kinds of Cubs' *aficionados*: one for kids/young adults, one for the regular folk, another for seniors (some praying for the Cubs to win, others incredulous that they are anywhere near the top), another for the Cubs fans focusing on this year and the past two, another putting all 107 years in perspective, and so on.

And because each book requires a mound of research, interviews, anecdotes, photos, and more, you can turn this into new wealth of found and reworked copy and pluck out more articles, and thus more rewrites, reprints, and reprints of rewrites. You can also sell related photos where you sell copy

(check photos in Search), often the same photo repeatedly since they are almost always sold on one-time rights.

Lost in this pile of print are the **directly related spin-offs**, like audiobooks of any or all of those books just mentioned; focus books about specific elements of baseball for the truly absorbed, of the past year or two or of all time, like the pitching, the records set and broken, ERAs, a projection of future years and records of new(er) players emerging in the 2016 excitement; even videos and movies, all being in print before being converted to other media. Then using the most visible of the platform builders, authors speaking about their (new) specialty from the platform: see rallies, speeches, how-to workshops, seminars, talks, and so on…

Every time your champion copy has your by-line attached to your super writing in a newspaper, magazine, or book, you are solidifying yourself as an expert in that field, building a following, and making yourself more wanted by information and product producers. They want to get more good items from you, a recognized "valuable and prolific source" of, in this case, baseball, Cubs, and sports ideas, information, and articulation.

The point here is that **almost any word or idea has lots of legs (and ears) and can be multiplied very profitably many times by many means**. The trick is to create interesting copy about ideas that others want to know more about that is spelled properly and has the facts, quotes, and anecdotes artfully blended into more good ideas. Most exceptional writers don't stray too far from what others want to know, and they churn a fair amount of interesting text into many articles, then books, rather than just making one sale or two before wandering off to find unrelated subjects for articles that are also sold a few times. **It's wiser and fills your coffers faster by turning your related ideas and copy over and over.**

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[More how-to writing, publishing, and speaking stuff at www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm.]

Selling one article topic to 5-8 different publications!

"Could you sell the same text, unchanged, to both magazines and newspapers?" is the most often asked question at my writing seminars!

I suppose you could, but I wouldn't because I wouldn't know how to unravel the rights issues. Anyway, it'd be far more profitable with a lot less work just planning five to eight sales from the same fact (and photo) pool.

Here's how I might sell one topic (in this case, the Chicago River on St. Patrick's Day) **as widely as possible for the most yield and the least amount of additional research, composition, and jpg taking?**

1. I'd first query the idea to the **highest paying magazines** (in order, one at a time). Then I'd write my lead article for the first editor giving me a "go-ahead." This article might focus on a St. Patrick's Day special, a big deal in the Windy City because at 9 a.m. that morning the Chicago River turns orange for a few minutes until (it's said) the leprechauns switch it to green so lush it puts tears in every O'Brien eye—and stupefies much of the rest of midland America as it flows in reverse to the Illinois River and the Mississippi to

and past New Orleans! Some 400,000 visitors a year line the downtown Chicago bridges, then watch the St. Patrick's Day Parade march through the city that day at noon, rain or shine.

2. After that magazine article (sold first rights) appears in print, **I could sell it exactly as is to any other magazine as a reprint**. (If you sold the photos first rights too—or for one-time use—you could also sell them to the same [or other] reprint buyers!)

3. But since I've got a box full of facts and quotes, why not query, then write another main article about a similar happening that takes place the same weekend: the Flower and Garden Show at Navy Pier (nearby, on the same verdant river as it reaches Lake Michigan)? This is **a loose example of a rewrite** since you can slip in the key points about the concurrent St. Patrick's Day festivities. All you have to do is rewrite that used text, which you'd have to do anyway because it must be in a different layout for both publications. Or you could call this rewrite "Chicago's Greatest Gift: the St. Patrick's Day Parade and the Flower and Garden Show Side by Side!" (What a title!) Since this magazine piece is a first-rights sale, **why not sell this distinct offering to other magazines seeking reprints**?

4. **We've still not sold to the newspapers**! I would significantly rewrite either of the magazine articles (or mix and match) in newspaper fashion, give the result a different title, and maybe try for a national newspaper sale first. Since this is a major set-date activity (like Christmas or Easter), most major newspapers look for event-related special articles. So I would query here several months earlier so it can get scheduled, then work out the special submission process with the travel editor.

5. Or if the national newspapers aren't enchanted by the Chicago Journeyman Plumbers' river magic, I'd **send it simultaneously to all of the Midwest newspapers** 100 miles away

from each other to see if I can spin the special event one last time (this year), before the emerald is long gone.

6. And, of course, **I'd handle the photos myself so I could sell them as widely as possible** without messing up their rights!

By March 1, 2016 I will release **a brand new book** about this topic where each of the **resale means to magazines and newspapers** are explained in detail. Those are simultaneous submissions, reprints, rewrites, reprints of rewrites, rewrites of reprints, modified reprints, sidebars, overseas sales, and shorts. Check Amazon Books under Gordon Burgett for the still-undecided title and release date—or email glburgett@aol.com for specifics and cost.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Some thoughts about interviewing...

This is an excerpt (part of a chapter) from my coming book, ***Interviewing****. I talk about tools and means used to interview:*

Interviewing is mostly you asking questions to a person or, rarely, a group, and receiving an intelligible response in return. When you record what you asked and what they replied, that is the thinnest skeleton of a completed interview.

That's a bit simplistic but most of the rest just adds bulk and hope to the process.

A huge percentage of my interviews have involved direct communication with my target person. **More than half were done eye to eye (really mouth to ear)**, and most of those were done when I was learning how, usually on the road last century gathering travel material. I asked and they responded, and I translated and wrote what they said into a notepad, in a kind of shorthand that spontaneously evolved (nouns mostly, other key words underlined.) It was give and take, staccato fashion, one question/a reply, segues… My goal was about five minutes, which was a long time for them and for me. It rarely lasted 30 minutes; an hour interview never happened.

Well, that sense of brevity may be somewhat misleading because many "interviews" became conversations, and ended when it was comfortable or necessary to do so. If the other person wanted to keep talking I was usually game to do so (unless I absolutely had to be somewhere else right then—sometimes we resumed the exchange later over lunch or coffee.) Other times they just wanted someone to talk to, or were lonely, or were proud of what they had done or seen and wanted to share more of it. That was fine. Often it gave me more, better information and a deeper interview.

Occasionally I was drawn to an interviewee. I wanted to know them better, and (hard to believe) that seemed mutual. They were interesting, often passionate about some cause, and they almost always bubbled or bristled with humor. What they said was worth sharing; it was fun; they were worth knowing. A few of those contacts became lifelong friends, particularly those still living.

But mostly interviewing is fast and focused. It's kind of a dancing duel: you extracting what you need (and hoping for more); them telling you what they want you (and your readers) to hear, hoping they didn't say too much.

In my mind, first interviews should be courteous, painless, and fairly fast, leaving open the possibility of a later

follow-up. But I don’t mention that before or during the first interview other than asking them how I might later contact them should I run into a fact or a phrase that needs clarification and asking for or verifying an address where I would send them a copy of the printed article. (If you offer, do send it.)

Most of my interviews not done eye-to-eye were done by **telephone**. Those weren’t as satisfactory because you couldn’t tell how much of what they were saying was true, a greased lie, or something in between. Nor did you ever know if the voice you were hearing belonged to the actual person you had called. (I don’t think I ever interviewed a stiff or a stand-in, but surprisingly often they grilled me to make sure I was the journalist they were supposed to be talking to and that I was writing an article for such-and-such a publication. Everyday people took me at face (or voice) value, happy to be the one being interviewed. The higher ups were more likely to have their assistant or caretaker vet or check me out first).

Another telephone problem: the tenuous connection between you and the person you are interviewing—one wire—almost invites the other person to simply hang up or disconnect when they have said what they think you should (or need to) hear. It’s a true test of your interviewing (and inventive) magnetism to be able to keep the other person focused and actively responding. Some of that is created before starting the actual interview by getting the respondent’s buy-in to the importance of the exchange so what they say can reach their target listeners’ or readers’ ears.

My restraint to interviewing by phone was personal—and, in my dotage, still is. I grew up weaving waggish humor and pun-riddled, antic wordplay into my everyday conversation. It drove my few friends crazy. But all of that tomfoolery had to be excised when phone interviewing strangers for print, particularly when they envisioned sparks or bolts of radiated global fame emanating from the article (or even book) they

would be in. It was their big moment and they didn't expect mirth or frivolity—any humor at all—then, particularly over the telephone where smiles are never seen and barely heard. So half of what I normally might have said, or how I might have said it, was verboten and probably dumbfounding. However funny, they never, ever would have laughed. They were expecting to be asked to share gems of wisdom, poignant observation, Christian guidance, and household tips. Out the telephonic window flew my witty high jinks, which left the interviewer, me (or you), nearly speechless, jocularly disarmed.

Alas, nothing is incurable when regular eating is at steak. I immediately reverted to my telephone high school date-getting scheme of imploring (or interviewing) by script. My first 100 or so interviews (it may have been 500) were very, very tightly structured, almost every word written or typed. It looked something like this, although where you see ideas below I had complete sentences, short sentences to give them time to respond:

* wee introduction
* reminder of why I was calling and where their words would be shown to the world
* a question
* a second question—these were the most important answers in case something else interrupted the call—it happens often—and there would be no chance to finish… [more on this later]
* [if something relevant in their reply to my questions was said or hinted at I would ask more, prodding queries about it, to provoke more facts or brilliance]
* a third question
* [if they verbally wandered off and what they said would also interest my imaginary readers I let them wander. I only reherded them back into my imaginary readers' corral of interest when they wore out or I still had a final question to ask]

* fourth question (or more) if needed. See above.
* anything else, Mr./Ms. ____, that I should have asked but didn't?"
* "is there a phone number I could use to reach you if I find something I need to verify later?
* "I'll gladly send you a copy of the printed article as soon as it appears—remember, printing can sometimes take months"
* "is ____ the address where I should send the article, in your name?"
* "thank you again, Mr./Mrs. _____, for the information and your time"
* "it sounds like a very interesting article. I appreciate your kindness and your sharing"
* (hang up softly, breathe deeply, wipe brow, hydrate rewardingly, and type out the whole interview then or before nightly repose)

Interviewing by **email**, or even by **social media**, is fast, sometimes too public too soon, and a whole lot less expansive. Combined with **Skype** or other computer-to-computer linking, it's fairly easy and much faster to talk with others now—if they agree to talk with you.

For example, …

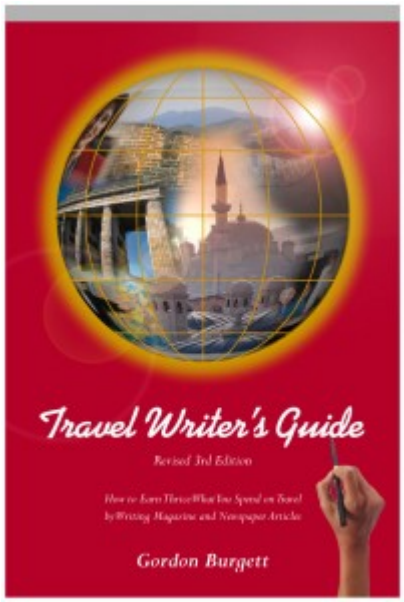
_____

This is an unedited extraction of part of **an early chapter of a book called INTERVIEWING**. Check future blogs for more copy about the topic.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

How you can sell your articles 150% of the time...



I know, **150% of the time?**

Yes, it could be much, much higher, but it seems imprudent to scare you in the title.

Let's focus on magazines here, where the pay is higher and acceptances are harder to get.

(Selling newspaper travel is easier and the possible sales ratio is higher too, but the pay is very modest. The process? Find a fetching location with something new, write a 1200-word "second" article, don't send to the nationals, and keep the submissions 100 miles from each other. A photo or two sometimes helps. Write it once and submit it simultaneously, and since you wrote it once and if you sell it, say, four times, that's 400%. My **Travel Writer's Guide**, available only as an ebook now, at $10, tells all.)

With magazines there are no grapeshot submissions, the competition is tougher, the article space rarer, and you must change hats to earn that extra 50%—but often you can stick

with the same topic!

Getting on their pages depends very much on how you ask. (If you don't ask the editor in advance—you just write something and send it in—your selling percentage plummets, or you're selling wee items now and then for wee pay.) For a full article you must ask the editor if you can send your masterpiece (but don't call it a masterpiece). You need a "go-ahead," a positive response to get through the buying gate. A go-ahead isn't acceptance—yet. It says that the editor agrees to give your idea and its preparation full consideration for one of the 4-8 article slots still open for a coming issue. (The copy will probably be in print several or many months away). In other words, you write it and in the "let me see it" response the editor is saying "I'm interested enough to give it full consideration." Not an assignment but if you do it right it's almost a sale.

What is "doing it right"?

1. Probably half of your selling time is spent pre-query, the other half is sending on time what you promised in the query. (A day late, the ship probably hasn't sailed. No apologies, but scold yourself. Late a week or more, wave goodbye—and stay out of that editor's sight for 18 months or longer.)

2. Find a topic that is irresistible for that readership. Study earlier issues to 4-6 months back. What is the editor buying? Write down six topics. Find the cutting edge, new facts, new studies, trends about to break, laws changing, a look-back 100 years, celebrities or leaders the reader must know, what fits the season 4-6 months ahead? (Check to see that your choice wasn't on those pages in the past two years.)

3. Don't know much about it? Learn. You need facts, quotes, and anecdotes. See what others are saying—and aren't. Think like a reporter. Build a fact base, list people who are leaders in the field or are current bright lights.

4. Then write a one-page query letter that asks the editor, in essence, “Would you be interested in an article about?” Make the topic jump off the page, cite the experts you will quote or interview, tell what’s new or different or what excites you as a reader, include a short paragraph about your credits (if none, say nothing) and that you can have the piece in their hands 2-3 weeks after a go-ahead. (Check my blog **“Nothing sells more articles than a great query letter”** from 3/14/2011—write the date or “query letters” in the search box at the top of this blog.)

5. One precaution before querying: see if the editor ever printed humor. If so and it’s your style of writing, inject something funny in the query and in the final copy. If they don’t, don’t.

6. Write other query letters to other editors about other things while you await a reply.

7. If/when the editor writes back an eager response, study the last two issues, pulling apart at least one article in each. (The blog **“How to study a printed magazine article”** will help here. It appeared on 3/31/2011.) Get the idea and words together and write your piece like the authors wrote to be in print in the target magazine issue you studied. Stay in the same ballpark. If the editor gives you specific instructions or suggestions, do them. Edit and edit again: make it as light and tight as a drum. Then mail it off, as clean as a Dutch stoop. (If photos are an issue, get them off too. Ask the photo/art editor if there’s a submission protocol, and follow it.)

8. Then if that editor just can’t or won’t say yes, don’t worry about it. They can have 100 legitimate or ridiculous reasons. Find a similar magazine, remold your query to its readership, and query again. (But only one query at a time.) That’s why you don’t fully research and write the article until the editor gives you a go-ahead.)

But if you score a bulls eye, super. You go the gilded nod. Write and rejoice. You only write the winning manuscript once—that's your 100%. Query letters are door-knocking. Congratulations! You've done it like the pro's do. Neither you nor they have time to do the full prep without having at least the 50% chance you get with the query and go-ahead.

The other 50% (which is really 100%, 200% or 500%)?

There are two paths (and a combo) into this post-sale heaven: (1) you sell the very same article described above (after it has appeared in print) as a reprint (also called second rights), (2) you significantly redesign the just-sold article (again, after it has appeared in print), then you rewrite its query letter so you can submit your redesigned article after you get a "go-ahead." You can rewrite the subject as many times as it can be configured into a distinctly unique article. And (3), you can sell reprints of the rewrites too.

The reprinting and rewriting can actually be more profitable than selling the original article, but it's seldom as exciting!

Let me share the specifics about the **"Profits from reprints, rewrites, and reprints of rewrites"** in a blog by that title printed here a few days back, 2/7/15.

I know that all of what I'm telling you works because I put two sweet daughters through grad school, plus fed several suffering wives, by doing it. Now it's your turn!

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

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4 proven ways to sell 75%+ of your freelance writing

MAGAZINES and NEWSPAPERS

1. Here is the two-item formula for selling nonfiction copy to magazines and newspapers: (a) You sell more than 75% of your freelance writing by writing *only* when you have better than a 50% chance of a sale, and (b) You have better than a 50% chance of a sale by either querying your prospective market, and writing *after* you receive a positive reply, or by writing to markets where you can simultaneously submit the same manuscript.

2. You can also increase your sales percentage and income by simultaneously selling reprints or rewrites of the published material—or reprints of the rewrites[Reprints, Rewrites, Reprints of Rewrites, and Resales].

3. Fiction is excluded from this 75% claim in magazines, newspapers, and books. Nonetheless, if points made on these pages seem appropriate to selling your fiction, try them, but know that the selling ratio in fiction is very low.

4. The most important tool for selling to magazines is the query letter. [25 Professional Query and Cover Letters] You do not query to newspapers (except to their magazines); you need cover letters to sell to them. If you are selling to big-house book publishers, at least a query letter is required. If you are niche publishing and pre-testing, you will need a sales letter, a small note, and a prepaid response mailer.

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Items in orange are explained in far greater detail in blogs from blog.gordonburgett.com. Go to the blog and insert the highlighted word in the search box, upper right, title page. Often the search will bring up many blogs related to the topic or word you seek. For example, if you are looking for more information about "query letter" (a good thing to know about) and you type "query letter" in the box, it will probably bring up a five or ten full blogs, one after the other. Please use all of the information that applies.)

Items in magenta are the subject(s) of related products. The product title is in brackets after the reference. There is more information at www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm.

For more assistance, see www.gordonburgett.com and glburgett@aol.com.

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NEWSPAPERS

5. Usually the copy (and accompanying photos) sold to newspapers will be about travel [How to Sell 75% of Your Travel Writing] , editorial commentary, food, reviews, and (very rarely) columns. That's about all newspapers buy from freelancers. Mostly they buy travel.

6. You are more likely to sell to newspapers (particularly in travel) if your piece is short (600-1500 words; 1200 words is a good target) rather than long (to about 3000 words). The longer feature articles are usually written by the section editor, or one from another publication.

7. You can simultaneously submit the same material (copy and photos) to newspapers (unless they tell you no) if they are not "national" newspapers—like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *Newsday*, where you submit

to them one at a time—or where the newspapers overlap in prime circulation (usually within 100 miles of each other), where you submit to *only one* newspaper at a time in the circulation radius.

8. Study others' in-print newspaper articles in your target selections and write (and punctuate) like the original writers did to get in print. Focus on the topics [Finding Topics That Make Your Articles Indispensable], conciseness, quotes, timeliness, length of paragraphs, and the writing voice of the articles. The voice means: first person, I; second person, you; third person, he/she/it. (You mostly write salable copy in third person.)

9. Send your newspaper copy, ready to use, to the respective section editor with a cover note/page that tells the unique features in the copy, its timeliness, your credits (in a phrase: "I've sold 600 newspaper travel pieces"—don't lie, say nothing if it's nothing or very modest), any exceptional photos, how to get back to you—email and phone, and that you are marketing simultaneously (no nationals; to you solely within a 100-mile radius). If you are sending to a national newspaper, submit to one at a time (until bought). To national newspapers (or those few that insist), you are selling first rights to them only.

10. If you have the respective section editor's newspaper email address, send your submission digitally—the cover note/page, text, and sample photos or link to a sample photo page. If you don't, snail mail your submission to that editor, and include an SASE (stamped, self-address envelope). If that editor replies by email, you then have their email address. Remember to write out the full address to the photo links.

11. Assuming your salable photos are .jpegs, in your cover note (a) offer to send them if they want to review them, but you can briefly describe one or two extraordinary shot(s) in the note, (b) include a b/w or color page with samples of the

best 6 or so with the note, or (c) post the best you have, very best first, on a cloud or website page where they can link and peruse. Let them pluck what they want to use and pay as the piece and art are published.

12. There is no firm photo submission protocol, so use the publication's guidelines—or common sense. (Sometimes the guidelines are listed in *Google*—or the editor will tell you if you ask.) Let the editors decide if they will use the shot(s) in b/w or color. With the camera, seek clarity, get bright colors, focus on key items you wrote about. Remember, in newspapers, particularly for shorter submissions, the text is what they buy. (They might buy photo-first if you have an original shot of Napoleon—or something like that, or older.)

13. Newspapers pay from about $100-225 for short items, $200-500 for longer pieces. They pay after the submission is published. For photos, it may range from $35-150. But some may pay less for the items above and some of the larger newspapers will pay more. You have no bargaining power here but if you sell often to the same newspaper, the editor sometimes increases the pay as your value to them increases.

14. **Do you see how selling simultaneously to newspapers lifts you well above the 75%+ goal?** If you send a sharp article to six cities all distant from each other and four buy it (some with photos), you have sold the article 400%! It's hard to top that sales ratio. What a shame that the articles themselves don't pay much more…

MAGAZINES

15. Magazines do pay more. You usually know their pay range (several hundred to a thousand dollars and up) and the size articles they seek because most of the magazines that you will

write for are found in the current-year ***Writer's Market*** (in print or online version). That and a ton more information is explained in ***WM***, so you should have that source accessible where you write. Also, if you check *Writer's Digest Magazine* (in the library) it lists new markets every month—and updates current listings.

16. To get on the 75% magazine path find an idea you want to write about, then create a feasibility study. Think of the study as two boxes next to each other, both sharing the same idea. In one box you answer, "Is this topic feasible to write for X magazine?" In box two you answer "Is it feasible to sell an article about this topic?" If it's a "yes" to both, you will write a query letter to the #1 market. (See "How to Prepare and Market Magazine Articles That Sell.") [Travel Writer's Guide, ebook edition]

17. There is no need for a feasibility study for newspaper direct submissions because you will know if it's feasible to write because you will, in fact, write it and send the prose to one or many markets simultaneously. And if it sells, that's your answer to the second box.

18. To answer box 1, see if and where magazine articles appeared in print about your topic. Find copies of those articles and study what they contain. (See "How to Study a Printed Magazine Article.") [Travel Writer's Guide, ebook edition] You will likely need updated information, new quotes, or new examples to add to the information already in print. See if you have or can get access to that new information. If nothing has been in print, study the topic and list what readers would want to read about it. This should take several hours, not weeks or years. If you have a strong sense that if you queried an editor about that topic knowing what you can provide that he/she would say "yes, then move on to box 2.

19. "Who would buy an article about this topic?" is the focus of box 2. See the many categories of publications in the **WM**

table of contents and list those where your topic might appeal to its readers. Let's say there are six such categories; list all of them. Then go to the listed publications in each category and write down the magazine titles in that category where you think the reader's interest would be greatest. Let's say there are two magazines in each category, so you would end up with 12 possible magazines to query before you write.

20. Because you can only query one magazine at a time from your 12 possible candidates, you must prioritize the 12. Put the most likely first and the least likely last, and sort the rest in between. What criteria do you use to prioritize the list?

21. If you want to top a 75% sales plateau, then when the editors of those magazines pay for articles is the most important criterion. So put all of those that "pay on acceptance" (this information is in the **WM**) at the top of the list. Paid freelancers only query editors who pay on acceptance since that means if they accept your manuscript, you will be paid right away or within a month (when they churn that month's checks). The other editors "pay on publication," which means your finished manuscript (and photos) will sit in that editor's "to use" pile until it fits, and then you will be paid after it sees print, which means another additional 60 days to get your reward. Even worse, those that pay on publication usually pay less, and a rare few forget to pay at all.

22. So once you know when your 12 possible markets pay, list the pay on acceptance publications on top (say six of them), with the remaining six that pay on publication on the bottom. Now ask the second question, "How much do they pay?" The highest payer of the first six candidates goes to the top of the list, the lowest payer is #6. (Don't worry about the last six on the list right now.)

23. There are two more criteria that could move your target

markets up or down. One asks, “What percent of freelance material do they buy?” The other, “How many issues do they publish a year?” Clearly, you’d rather be considered by an editor that uses 95% freelance copy than, say, 5%. The same with a magazine that comes out weekly rather than annually—it buys 52 times more copy! Resort the top six into their most desirable order—for you.

24. Now you are ready to query. You will write a full-page letter asking the editor of the top magazine on your prioritized list if she would be interested in an article about _____. (The query letter will make the topic jump with excitement and the editor jump with hope to get your writing genius on her pages.) If, in truth, the editor says “yes, let me see it,” that’s almost as good as putting the money in your bank because the “go-ahead (and write it)” is given seriously, with the expectation that you will provide ready-to-go copy that fits in the slot saved for you. But if the editor says “no,” however kindly, you will move to #2 on your list, read its write-up in the ***WM***, and send its editor a query letter (often adjusted some to meet that new readership’s needs). You keep moving down the top six until you are out of “pay on acceptance” rejecters.

25. Why not just continue down the list of publication editors for this new article? It’s not worth the time for the risk involved. You will sell your reprints (or reprints of rewrites) to the bottom six. That’s what they often, sometimes only, buy. Better yet, you can sell reprints (or second rights) simultaneously as long as you tell the others that yours is a second rights sale.

26. A couple more points. Let’s say the first “acceptance” editor wants your article. Have you lost the buying potential of markets 2-6? No, just approach the topic from another slant or create another article idea from that topic, and query about that possible article. In other words, you can rewrite that first topic and query letter and start it down the

selling ladder to those “pay on acceptance” editors that are still uncontacted. And what if you do that all six times and all six editors buy their own unique articles? Bingo, you just sold the same stretched idea 600%, rather than 75%. (And you’re still not done because each of those six articles can be sold as reprints of the rewrites! Heavens, you may get rich with just five or six different, fecund ideas!

27. But we are getting the cart in front of the horses. All we have done is have a kindly editor say that he/she wants to see our article—on speculation, which means, no obligation. So we still have to write one or many excellent articles that the editor(s) must embrace, buy, and use. Still, a “go-ahead” from most editors means a sale as long as you provide (in the article) what you promised by the date agreed, and perhaps also with the promised photos.

28.. Which means enough late-night oil, interviews, facts found and verified, anecdotes generously inserted—whatever is needed to make the article hum in print. It also means close scrutiny of the target magazine to see what that editor wants on his/her pages before you write. Thus, if this query-led system is followed, **almost all magazine articles suggested and written will be sold** since you will not write them without a prior ”go-ahead.” And with the reprint and rewrite fall-back sales, you should be **far ahead of your 75% goal**.

BOOKS

29. It used to be that selling any percent of your freelance writing through book publishing was as likely as having your books come out of a cloud. Guess what? Now it’s simple to publish 100% of your freelance book writing—you can just do it yourself. And it can sit in a cloud to sell once it’s written

and prepped. Who knew?

30. Less than a decade back the chances of the Big 8 or 5 or whatever the number was of the big-house publishing firms picking up a random freelance book was like 1:1000. Even with agents or even with a solid writing reputation. Then you sent query letters with attachments.. You may as well have been sending pick-up laundry chits.

31. These days it's hard to figure any strong case for going first to the big houses (which simply aren't so big anymore nor are they so appealing). They pay poorly, it can take months or years for the book to appear, and their bookstore allure has faded as the bookstores themselves have disappeared. It's kind of upside down now. Freelancers publish the book themselves [How to Get Your Book Published in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days] and they earn a fast and decent return. Then if it smells of success the big houses will get in line to pay for the product—and often all the additional products that writer/publisher can create. So why would a freelancer go back to the earlier days when a big-house sale meant a meager royalty, poor sales, payment a couple of times a year, and no control?

32. If we are talking sheer percentages, you write a book that others want to buy; get it proofread; hire artwork and covers and some selling postcards; get the book designed; print some in-house stock to sell directly; save the final copy in .pdf, and send it to Create Space and LSI to get it POD printed and sold commercially through their giant selling machines, like Amazon and Ingram. In the meantime, you convert the original text into .epub, modify the covers a bit, and you create an ebook to sell yourself, at Kindle, Nook, Kobo, Smashwords, and elsewhere. And all the while you worm your way into the social media world to churn up some fan interest.

33. There are two ways to sell 75%+ in the regular book world now. The new open publishing world I described in 29-32. And

you can do it the old way too. You sell the book to the big houses or other publishers pretty much the old way: you send queries and packages and proposals, alone or agent-aided, and you don't write the final book until you are contract-protected, then you wait for the book to appear. **That's a 75%+ approach.** Hard to imagine 25% of the publishers wouldn't honor your contract.

34. But here's the problem, even if you freelance and produce one book and you have another produced by an established publisher under contract (which is 75%+ twice), there's no guarantee that any of that will make enough money to keep you fed, much less famous and prospering. So despite the fact that you bat 100% selling the copy that you create, and you do it many times with paperback and digital versions, all sold by six different publishers (plus you), most of the self-published general market books don't make much money. They don't even do much to imprint a perception of your expertise. Stir in platform-building, branding, You-Tube, Facebook, and all the rest and can still be a big disappointment.

NICHE (BOOK) PUBLISHING

and EMPIRE-BUILDING

35. Let me share the **best way to sell 100% of your freelance book writing** and make reliable money **while you simultaneously build an empire** that will feed, clothe, and support you very well for a long time. It can be built around your book or books—or you may not have to write much copy at all. You might use others' expertise and writing, plus your editing, managing, and publishing skills, as the core of his niche publishing. [Niche Publishing: Publish Profitably Every Time]

36. It’s not the writing or publishing, per se, that distinguish niche publishing. It’s the existence of a niche, or tightly-linked group of people, that share common needs, interests, and lifestyle. For example, Chicago Cubs fans are a long-suffering niche. So are dentists, Norwegian ancestors in Wisconsin, and meat cutters. The niche often has a vocation, hobby, focus of interest, ethnic bond, social communality (like octogenarians or octogenarians in Tulsa), an ailment or cure (like prostate cancer survivors), or membership (in the Moose or in almost any thing or group.)

37. This might be easier to envision by using an example. To keep it simple, let’s use ultramarathoners, and let’s make that nationwide. And let me invent typical components of a niche and ascribe them to the poor sore-legged ultramarathoners (who share in common long-distance running, longer than a marathon, often 50-mile or 100-mile runs). They can be done by either sex and any age, though it’s not likely they are teens or under or very rarely 65 or older.

38. What makes niche publishing profitable is that members of the niche and supporters about the niche topic can be easily contacted. Core ultras, let’s say, are members of a national association (UOA, Ultramarathoners of America) and smaller associations in, say, 40 states (Minnesota UOA, etc.) The associations have a national convention, 18 have state conferences, and they informally gather at the dozen major races a year. They also have a national newsletter, office holders in the larger units, a membership address list (digital and standard direct mail) and a surprisingly large group of ultra aficionados and supporters who sell products and services (like special shoes, attire, diet and health additive programs, insurance, and much more. And as long as I am creating a model group, let’s say there are 25,000 members and possibly 2,000 others who sell products and services to ultras, plus many thousands of marathoners who regularly show interest in expanding their own running challenge.

39. To show you what a niche published book might be like in this niched setting, let's say Bob has been an UOA member for 10 years—and, in vocation, he's a life-style nutritionist. Over the years he has created an ideal diet-supplement-training program that has been very enthusiastically used by a dozen of his local group members, plus it has become widely applied by marathoners in his region. Let's just call it the DST for Ultramarathoners (or DSTU).

40. Bob wants to write a book, sell it to ultras and marathoners nationwide (he calls it DSTM for marathoners), and he'd like to expand the book into classes, perhaps podcast/video components, a practice logbook and workshops, speeches, and breakout sessions. He would also like to expand his product base to include distance-running shoes, attire, special caps, and related diet and supplement components.

41. His strategy is to create the book first, and in its distribution (and early promotion) he will quickly expand into making his video/podcast programs and logbooks available. From his niche book he will roll out his empire to include speaking widely once the book is printed and promoted, and from speaking spread into workshops and classes. As he creates his buyer contact base (mostly through free subscriptions to a bi-monthly ultra newsletter) he will promote his product base. His long-range goal is to expand these activities into the DSTM group, for marathoners nationwide (even perhaps worldwide).

42. An aside here. Bob in our example can both be the expert writing the key book that helps practitioners meet important needs or solve frustrations and then build his own empire from the expertise recognition that his book brings him. Or if Bob wants to create his own empire doing the other activities we've mentioned, including publishing the book, he can hire an expert to write the book (that Bob might also edit and distribute) that his new ultramarathoning publishing and product company can grow from. Thus Bob wouldn't really be

using his running expertise—freeing any niche publisher to do the same about any topic. In fact, Bob could publish a string of ultra books using as many experts as members of his publishing family. How would the experts earn money? They would receive royalties (often 10% of the net received) plus they would get the speaking fees, and perhaps a special discount on their own books (or all the firm's ultra books) sold back-of-the-room at the programs. A last thought, he could run parallel publishing programs in the ultra and marathoning fields, allowing him to double or multiply his empire-building base while the experts create the core books.

43. But the most appealing element of a niche publishing book is that it can be pre-tested (the format, price, contents, author, and purpose) on a sample list to guarantee its financial viability before any part of it is written or major production expenses are incurred. [How to Test Your Niche (Publishing) Market First]

44. Bob sees that the size of the ultra market (its contactable members) is 25,000, and that the three other ultra books have cost $19.95, $24.95, and $49. He decides to conduct a direct mail pre-test with 210 Nth-selection addresses from the ultra association mailing list. He figures that the entire pre-test might cost him a maximum of $700.

45. For the pre-test he needs a clean-looking one-page information sheet (with a reduced book cover on it) that includes the book's title, subtitle, table of contents, a small photo to accompany Bob's bio, an fact box (with ISBN, format [cloth bound], and the estimated number of pages and cost), and selling content copy that explains the book's purpose and its benefits to readers/users. He also prepares a one-third page greeting note and a return postcard with two key questions, each followed by yes or no: would the card receiver be interested in purchasing a book about… and if so, would he pay $ X for the book. In this case X would be three different prices: 70 packets would have $19.95 on their info

sheet and on its mail-back postcard, 70 would say $24.95, and 70 would say $29.95). The postcards would be addressed back either to Bob or (better) the name of his new niche publishing firm (like Ultramarathoning Publishers of America). Bob would also prepare a #10 envelope for each packet, stamp them, and adhere the direct mail address to the outside of the packet.

46. So Bob mails all 210 packets and in 20 days he has almost all of the replies he will receive. By day 20 he has received the following responses from each of the three price levels sent 70 recipients: 13, 10, and 7. So the potential buy income would be, respectively: $92,768, $81,196, and $74,875. (The calculating example in the 10-buyer case would be 10/70=14.3%x$24.95×25,000=$81,196).

47. The most profitable rate would be $19.95 which would bring in $92,768. Thus, if the preparation of the book and the mailing of the full 25,000 packets cost 50% of the gross income (here, $92,768) this book would result in a profit of $46,384.

48. It would be a modest empire with a kitty of $40,000 or so. But remember that Bob intends to expand into classes, videos, logbooks, workshops and speeches, ultra accoutrement, and diet and health additive programs. Plus a free digital newsletter to control his customer list and for bi-monthly promotion.

49. But what isn't visible here is a huge market sitting right below the ultras: the U.S. marathon market, where indeed his book might apply as is or rewritten, and the other items should also be salable. How big is the marathon market? There were 541,000 finishers in US marathons in 2013 (despite the terror attack at the Boston Marathon). And the average entry cost is $75, but trending up to $100. A determined niche publisher might tooth on the ultramarathoners to test the market and response, then quickly back into the marathon world—and keep both going if there are common themes.

50. That’s it. **How you can sell 75%+ of your freelance writing**. At least three systems (or four, depending on how you count them) that will keep you off the no-income paths and close to where money can be earned and multiplied by wordsmithing. All of this stuff works—if you do!

My best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

How do you find interviewees for your articles?

You almost always need **at least one interview** for a magazine or newspaper article. But it makes much more sense to get three or four, and even many more if you plan to rewrite the original piece again and again. (And if ***Reprints, Rewrites, or Reprints of Rewrites*** are your plan: bravo. My $2.99 Kindle book, just out, by that name should help.)

Most articles need more than quotes, of course. They need facts, quotes, anecdotes, and artwork (photos, drawings, charts, graphs, and so on). Sometimes no artwork, sometimes no anecdotes, but if you also leave out the facts and quotes it’s hard to keep that word house from tumbling down or blowing away from skeletal inadequacy.

The people you will interview might be those who know enough about a topic to be an expert. Or a celebrity, a person with a new idea or invention, someone who was a first-hand witness.

If your article addresses a two-sided argument, you either get the strongest proponent of each side, plus another person or two that each suggests. Or just one side of the issue.

Beyond what the interviewee says, **there's another solid reason for getting quotes**. Those interviewed give your facts a source of origin. Readers want to know first-hand information from a person who knows first hand, or is at least considerably closer to it than they are. If your piece begins, "Melinda Moore saw a sailor levitate for almost two minutes at Benny's Grog House last night," you must mention that Melinda is the daytime bartender at the Grog House. Then you find anybody else who can attest to the same levitation, with details about the incident, plus where they live or work or what they do. Your questions will mostly be about the levitation, how long the sailor has been doing it, did he float anywhere as he levitated, how high did he rise, how long he was he air-bound? You might also ask about the sailor's (and the witnesses') sobriety at the time. It will sound like a fish tale if you don't also interview the sailor. Who is he, how long has he been levitating, how did he do it, what did it feel like, and on what date (and at what time) does he plan to repeat the happening?

The example of Melinda and the sailor is fairly obvious. But in truth, it's no more difficult finding the best people to interview for almost any article. Ask yourself, what would you (or the editor) want to know about the topic or incident? Who knows about that best? You're half way home!

If you interview your postman or a gas station employee, those are easy to get. But the more famous your interviewee is, the more likely they are to ask, **"Where will it appear?"** So if that's likely to be the first (and major) hurdle, query first, get a "go-ahead" from the editor of the target publication, then the article has more than a 90% chance of being used on those pages.

Is it easy to get a person to agree to be interviewed? It's never easy, but with the correct explanation of where it will be used and the benefits it will bring to the person and the editor, it's not hard to arrange.

Four tips: (1) ask the question that must be answered, but make it the second question—unless that question is a door-slammer ("Is it true that you rob the poor box in every church enter?"), then you ask it last. (2) don't talk about yourself in the interview. The editor won't buy an article about you. (3) you don't have to prearrange most of your interviews if the person featured is an everyday person. (4) I've never paid for an interview.

A few thoughts about the **scariest thing for newcomers in article writing**: the interview.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Profits from reprints, rewrites, and reprints of rewrites

As long as you have written a fetching **article** that an editor wants readers to read on his/her pages, why not sell the same blend as **reprints**, then mix the same magical facts, quotes, and anecdotes into a **rewrite** or two with different slants? You could even sell some **reprints of the rewrites** later on!

Lest that sound like a hapless hodgepodge of word play, it's precisely what professional writers have done for decades to

squeeze much more honest pay out of ideas, facts, interviews, photos, lists, and historical slants, plus similar retellings elsewhere in the world.

I blush only slightly to admit that my reprints and rewrites kept me and my family alive (and the girls later in college) for many years until books and speaking came to the rescue!

Alas, what baffles writing novices is how it's done, where second-rights markets hide, how reprint-seeking editors are approached, and how copyright toes aren't stepped upon. So I've tried to mentally untie the strings in **30-page wee ebook**, now offered almost instantly by **Kindle** or us for the shameless sum of $2.99. It's called **Reprints, Rewrites, Reprints of Rewrites, and Resales: Sell What You Write Again and Again (and Again)…**

Want some quick peeks under the printed sheets?

Think **newspaper** (or **magazine**) travel where almost any site almost anywhere has four or five different slants to be seen anew, or to be reborn in comparison with four other like places or three different epochs. "Downton Abbey" begs to be slanted a dozen ways (each an article or a spin-off), like fashion, class, downstairs/upstairs, pre- and post WWI… Or the Life of Lords in the 1100s; in the days of Shakespeare; in France, Russia, Sweden, or Spain (or any of them in comparison with Julian Fellowes' currently created TV society and castle)…

Or the **sidebars** accompanying any article above: specifics about how to actually visit any site suggested, the state of health and medicine then or there, the life of children at any point or place, or of women, or the lame, the gifted, the odd. Sidebar shards gathered like caste-offs from unused research, then re-grouped to fill readers' by-product curiosity and questions.

When are **query letters** needed (mostly for full articles), or

how **cover notes** cover newspaper simultaneous submissions—see four samples in the ebook—or if/when you send sidebar copy, unannounced, with the expected text—when it's short and you can't bring yourself to throw it away!

When **reprints** are welcome (by "pay on publication" editors) and how their arrival is announced. Can you make changes in the reused copy? When should you? Which **photos** can be sold (any not bought by the original buyer). How many more complications arise when you sell the **reprint of a rewrite**?

And the breadwinners, the shiny new **rewrites**, mostly restructured, words and ideas in new places, a different article sharing many common bricks (and sometimes a few quotations). But how much must they be rewritten? Or whether they are rewrites must be said at all. And those photos again—just remember that those sold are toxic to resell.

A final point, if reprints and rewrites seem akin to journalistic thievery. The best return in writing for money comes from **niche publishing**, which can be the baronial foundation of empire building, where just one set of words about one need or frustration met can indeed be very rich mortar. Most of that long-life paying mortar comes from reworking and reusing the same words and ideas again and again, the same we are discussing here, but in niching more than the same.

Best wishes unraveling!

Gordon Burgett

P.S. If "**Writing Travel Articles That Sell!**" is the kind of four-hour seminar you might need, and Santa Rosa, CA, is within driving distance, I will be offering the program from 1-5 p.m. on Saturday, February 7. Please check the details here.