

A very new format for a seminar workbook...

In a now very long past—decades—I must have literally copied and carted 40,000 seminar workbooks (sometimes a half mile, too often up stairs). Most of those workbooks were 12-20 pages long! Too late to complain: that was the way it was done. But yesterday technology finally removed my shackles—and perhaps my blinders!

Some fact-setting now, then a detailed explanation copy of the new format that you may be interested in modifying and using. Explaining the 40,000: I have given more than 2,000 four-hour seminars, most as college/university extended ed offerings, almost all in California. They rarely had less than 20 participants, which meant 24 or so workbooks in case last minute registrants were waiting at the door. Ugh.

But yesterday a different request opened my eyes. I spoke to the **NSNC** (National Society of Newspaper Columnists) in L.A. about "[Publishing for Profit](#)" and, even though I myself had been a columnist several times, I had no way of knowing what other writing experiences the veteran audience had nor which of the dozen or so suggestions I would offer and expand upon they might wish to pursue.

Nor did I want to schlep any workbooks nor published books to sell BOR. (The airlines made that impossible anyway by charging for baggage—and rubbing in more salt by starving me en route!) But I did slip a copy of eight different books into my suitcase to display on a side table so they could see that they actually existed!

I know, I could have run copies off of the workbooks once I reached L.A. But I'm doubly convinced now, the day after, that the new format is many times better and smarter for the

future, it gives the audience more options, and it reduces or eliminates the burdensome task of hauling products for sale. That's why I'm sharing it now, while the fire burns, in case it would help you too. (If you have already discovered this "new" workbook process, congratulations! I'm sure you double agree! Why didn't you tell me?)

The rationale: I knew that all of my attendees were writers, they used computers daily, understood how to find websites, blogs, and could figure out the free-book code. Therefore all I had to do was explain the media or means needed, where the items could be found, the links or addresses for each, and what the resource references referred to. I gave them the instructions needed in the first two paragraphs, where the program was going in the next two, and the broadest of explanations of what the four sections to be covered in the text that followed.

That took a minute or two to re-explain at the beginning of the presentation, but then I could focus on the most important ways columnists might earn more and live happier. When appropriate, I could direct them to one or several of the references and, in some cases, tell them the best subtitles to the critical step-by-step details. There must be 600+ printed pages in the three free books and 200+ in the other items. Thus, by knowing where the information is at hand, almost immediately, they can pick, select, or reject it as they wish—or go back later, if they change their minds.

The workbook: The two-sided page *is* the workbook. In this case the program was designed to show U.S. columnists how else they can share, market, and expand their written gems (now or later) into other lucrative venues or ventures. That is what I talked about. If they need the application guidance, the resources would then send them to the "how-to" support material.

Enough explanation. What follows is the "workbook" they

received.

Workbook as delivered to the NSNC presentation:

Welcome!

I'm Gordon Burgett. It's 2016, we're all experienced writers, and the airlines won't let me schlep boxes of handouts as baggage anymore, so I'm going to use the Internet to let you pick what specific information you think will be useful to you later. At that point, you can download what you want or need, if anything. The most important material is free, there's no shipping or tax, and it'll be in your hands almost immediately!

Thus you have no workbook or piles of paper to lumber through. Just sit back for the first hour and let me explain a sort of strategy and ways that should help you considerably increase your writing income, then I'll answer any questions you have during the remaining 15 minutes. If you have more questions later, please email me at glburgett@aol.com.

My task is to help you fill your coin bags and increase your second-life options by doing more of what you already do very well—and make even more money (heavens!) by doing it.

I think the more-mullah quest starts with you strategizing at whatever point you are along your moneymaking-by-writing trail. I'll address that.

The rest of our oral trek today roughly follows the other four sections on these pages. I've posted lots of backup resources here that you can download if/when you want or need them. The most important material is free—three full core books, three helper reports, four website articles, and 400+ blogs to pluck from. To download most of that information, use our order page

at www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm

Here's how to download or see the resources: (1) find and separately order each **free book** on the order form—but *before* you submit each order write the coupon number [] in the coupon code box on that order form. Then submit the form, the price will drop to zero, and follow the download instructions that follow! (The freebies expire on 8/20/16.) Other items, unless noted, are from the order form and can be ordered separately or together at any time. They are also available from Amazon but if you want the three books free you must follow the instruction in (1). How to get the three **free reports** is explained below. See blog.gordonburgett.com for the blogs listed. Once there, find the SEARCH box, upper right corner under the Twitter logo. In that box enter either the topic you want to see more about (like query letters or niche) or the word I will give you. The **website articles** are from the direct website link location.

(I) **WRITING—[Travel Writer's Guide](#)** (free ebook)

Explains how to sell 75%+ of your freelance writing (mostly newspaper and magazine articles), how to triple your income by topic-spoking, how to earn more with sidebars, and how to organize profit-packed copy-, quote-, and anecdote-gathering trips...

Related resources:

“4 Proven Ways to Sell 75% of Your Freelance Writing” Go to **blog**, enter 4 proven ways

“How to Sell 75% of Your Travel Writing” (2 cassette program), \$20 + shipping

“25 Professional Query and Cover Letters” (ebook), \$4.99

“Reprints, Rewrites, Reprints of Rewrites, and Resales” (ebook), \$4.99

“The magic of topic spoking.” Go to **blog**, enter topic spoking

(II) **PUBLISHING–Niche Publishing: Publish Profitably Every Time** (free ebook)

A huge percentage of the risk-free, market-guaranteed book money is found here. We made \$2 million from dentists and are now following the same path from K-12 school administrators, supers, principals, and school boards. That process and business plan is explained in this book. If you write and publish, almost all the niche profits are yours. If you find experts in the field, you direct/edit, they write, and you publish, most of the profits are still yours but the fame is theirs.

Related resources:

“12-Step Pre-Test for Niche Publications” (ebook), \$4.99

“How to Test Your Niche Book before Writing or Publishing” (ebook), \$9.99

“How to Get Niche Articles in Print 75% of the Time” (ebook), \$2.99

(III) **PUBLISHING–How to Get Your Book Published in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days** (free ebook). If you’re not niching, use the “open press” revolution plus Create Space/Kindle [Amazon] and Lightning Source as your first or major paths to building your own empire. Publish here, then (perhaps) try the major publishers.

Related resources:

“Open Book Publishing: Almost a Miracle! (ebook), \$3.10

“When Would I Always (or Never) Self-Publish My Book?” Go to **blog**, enter self-publish

“12 More Ways to Turn Your Book into Many More...” Go to **blog**, enter more ways

“Focus books and Selling a Book by its Parts” Go to the **blog**, enter focus

“Sample Focus Book: Rights and Responsibilities of School Principals” (ebook), \$3.99

“Sample Focus Book: How to Create the Best Staff Possible” (ebook), \$3.99

(IV) BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER—Empire Building (O.P., no replacement book yet.) Ultimately, for big money, expand the perception of your expertise through related information dissemination means, like speaking, seminarizing, giving workshops or retreats, audiobooks, classes, consulting, social media venues, radio-TV, guest performances, and so on. Or create/sell little empires along the way. Or align your writing, researching, interviewing, and publishing skills with others’ empires. Or do it all.

Related resources:

“How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar” (4-cassette seminar), \$40+shipping

“Six Special Tools That Get Speakers Booked First” (ebook), \$9.99

MORE FREE REPORTS:
*Lifelong Wealth by Being
Indispensable*
*Finding Indispensable Article
Topics*
101 Niche Marketing Topics

Just subscribe to my newsletter (seldom sent) at <http://www.gordonburgett.com/free-reports> and all three reports are immediately downloaded. Nobody else ever sees your address. Then if you want to escape my elist, just email me to be removed. I'm not offended—I forget names instantaneously.

That's it. If it helps, go to it.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[How to make your friends smile gratefully all day long...](#)

If this were addressed to you, how would you feel if it arrived unexpectedly in your email box ?

This year (2016), I've decided to send one email each day thanking someone who has enriched my life.

It could be someone who is close to me, like a family member or a friend.

It could be someone I have only met once or perhaps admired from afar.

It could be someone I have known for a long time or only momentarily.

**TODAY YOU ARE THAT PERSON.
I APPRECIATE YOUR BEING IN MY LIFE.**

Allen

P.S. Please know that there is no hierarchy here. In the past few days, your name and who you are in the world came to mind. When that happened I realized that I wanted to honor and thank you for enriching my life.

My reaction was delight and total surprise. So rarely is unsought, free kindness sent our way! If you want to use this model or concept, just do it. Change the names, of course. There are no copyrights or restrictions at all.

If your curiosity is stirred, here's a pinch of background. Allen Klein and I are veteran writers/speakers who have met, mostly in passing at presentations, for years. He's very funny and has written many books that I have enjoyed and shared, so I was indeed honored—and quite surprised—when it arrived. The next day it occurred to me that others may want to say the same or something similar to those they know. So I emailed Allen, thanked him for the thoughtfulness, and asked if my sharing the idea with others would be okay. His reply, almost immediate, was “Yes, please *do* share it. Imagine if we all did this! What a great world this would be.”

So now it's in your hands to use as or if you wish!

(Allen Klein's most recent book is *You Can't Ruin My Day*. See more at humor@allenklein.com.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

www.gordonburgett.com

Name(required)
Email(required)
Website
Comment(required)

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

[Little things not to say when you're emceeing ...](#)

There may be a million things not to say when you are in charge of a program or ceremony.

Let me share a half-dozen wee comments that, in themselves, aren't going to get you hooked off the podium, but, done right, they will easily distinguish you as a professional who is comfortable and smooth...

For example, do you know anybody who wants to be introduced last (unless that spot is saved for the highlight of the show)? Even worse, "last but not least." Why not say "final" or "concluding"? Or if you are using numbers, like "first speaker," "second speaker," and so on, just use the number for the last? Like "Many of you may have heard our fifth speaker, ..."

Along the same line, "We've saved the best for last..." Hmm, if I was speaker #3 of five what goes through my mind? I must have bombed, or whatever one does who isn't the best...

Ever hear, "the one and only"? That does convey special esteem, but it also makes the listeners ask, "the one and only what?" Why not tell the audience why that person is held in such high regard, like "the fastest woman in the world, ..." Even there "the one and only" may be one race from being inaccurate. Consider something less transitory like "America's most rewarded Olympic Gold swimmer, ... "

How often have you heard that the speaker "needs no introduction," then they are introduced (usually in great length)! Two points here: (1) surely there are folks in the crowd who have absolutely no idea who the person is, so you have to say something about them or their prominence, and (2) if you are certain that the coming speaker is beyond introduction, prove it. Save the introduction.

But you can't just point at them and grunt or push the microphone into their hands. So a compromise. "____ is well known to most of us..." and complete the introduction with a concise listing of their accomplishments or honors.

Finally, you must remember which is the podium and which is

the lectern. You are standing on the podium, your notes are sitting on the lectern.

A very good emceeing guidebook full of solid advice is Dana LaMon's *Master the Ceremonies* (see www.danalamon.com).

Emceeing is lots of fun—it's also alarming the first times out. The most important thing to remember is that the audience isn't there to see or hear you.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. Want to be an emcee for three or four hours, probably alone and usually non-stop? Give full seminars! Details at "[How to Set Up and Market Your Own Seminar.](#)"

Using humor to sell your magazine articles

Funny you should ask!

One rule always: some editors/publications don't use humor, so don't even try. At best the editor may open her lips to chuckle (or groan), then reconsider and toss the query. I can't tell you which such publications to avoid because I don't read them. But it used to be that the AARP magazines were humor dry. That getting old must be grim stuff. (So when I did write for them I kept surefire rip-roarers, even tepid jests, out of my mind lest one slide down to my pecking finger and be read by the paymaster.)

I can't remember any editor who wanted truckloads of comedy

dumped on their desk. They bought humor in measured bits deftly worked into actual (or near-) truths. Except the **fillers editors** who seemed to weigh jokes by the word so they could be squeezed into advertising holes. They actually did pay a pittance, when they stopped laughing—but I don't ever recall them buying two jokes at the same time. I had a colleague who sold a joke to *Reader's Digest* and included the sale in his credits in every query. One editor wrote back, rejecting his idea, and added, "I bet that *RD* joke was the only thing you ever sold." Mean editors are rare, but they can be perceptive. It was about a third of his freelance bounty.

Puns sometimes worked, but if I used one I used two so they knew it was intentional. I've sold 1,700+ freelance articles but only once did I use a full-out joke in an article, and that was about 10 or 15 words long and the joke was the article's lead! (Alas, it must have been far below my personal humor standard because I can't remember a word of it!) On the other hand I wrote a travel short about 800 words long about eating guinea pig sandwiches that were cooked on the street in Quito, Ecuador. (At least they looked like guinea pigs.) I found out years later, through a Peace Corps kid stationed near Cuenca, that one of his projects was to help multiply the stock of domesticated guinea pigs to increase the meat available on the local table. (Whatever it was, it sure tasted good.)

Here was my system of weaving humor into an article's otherwise deadly prose.

(1) Mostly I lifted deadly prose appreciably heavenward by keeping the tone light and the descriptions spry (good synonyms adorned with festive adjectives helped).

(2) I relied a lot on word play, but you have to spread it out and only do that now and then. For example, I might refer to Buffy, a wee, yapping dog, as a furry feral killer-companion or a drooling pet growler. Or a woman's date as her knight of

the night. That's enough wit: the blog censors just told me to stop—they are thinking of your humor health.

(3) A funny, related thought to what is being said in a paragraph almost always ended that paragraph.

(4) It's hard to give isolated examples. Find an article that intentionally makes you laugh and highlight every funny item in it with yellow underliner. You'll see that the humor is discretely bundled in 93% topic-related facts.

(5) Just as the writer did in (5) above, if the subject had humor wanting to get out, I made the content worth reading, and let some of that humor escape.

(6) I always put some humor in the query letter, in the actual selling message, so the editor knew there would be humor in the copy that followed. I'm convinced that the humor helped sell the query. But you can't overdue it.

(7) As a friend who teaches journalism tells his wards: if you can't keep your humor in control, get a talk show!

Some loose how-to's but I hope it helps. Life's a whole lot more fun when you're part of the wit and mirth. It's even better when you get paid to share it.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

How can I make my self-published memoir a big seller?

It's doable but very hard. It takes a combination of good things, some not much in your control.

A starting definition is required: what is a "big seller"? Almost everybody will agree that if your book has "many, many thousands of sales; royalties in six-plus figures; a book-based movie, and spin-offs of book fame like Charlie Rose, the morning shows, and widespread name recognition, that's a big seller.

All of that can happen, despite the self-publishing (which too often is linked to poor production and artwork, weak marketing, little or no selling pre-prep, and reluctance by book distributors to keep the book in stock and sight).

Your book is most likely to break out big if you are well known or you say things that lots of book buyers want to read—and repeat to their friends. Those sales can be quickly magnified if the timing is right—the topic excites readers eager to know more about what you are saying. (I'm presuming your prose is tight, true, and flawlessly professional.)

I think I heard you say, "Fat chance! No way my message will hit the headlines—and what would Charlie Rose, or even Tokyo Rose, ask me even if they could find me?"

Yet there are self-publishers who define being a "big seller" differently, though they'd be happy to be "found" if the world started spinning in reverse. They have already sold a few

thousand copies, pushed through Kindle and CreateSpace. One suspects they are about as happy as they'd be if they'd won a Noble and Pulitzer Prize and Miss Spenser, the senior literature class teacher, had given them a posthumous "A." Their books are well written, to the point, and spotlessly proofed. But the covers aren't bookstore stuff: free artwork, Arial type, more cartoonish than befitting a true big-house tome.

They all did pretty much the same thing. They told stories, about themselves, their families, some friends. One book was sad. It was a true story. It was patched together with such gentleness and determination that it was hard to put down. A book you gave your spouse or your aunt even though none of you know the author. Or like your friend who told you to buy it—"you've got to read this."

The other two popped with humor. Both worked because the dialog sounded true—and was funny; it was how men, the key protagonists, talk—one book, three brothers and an older sister in a tense, disintegrating family all sliding apart on strings of love; the other, a loose tale of a not-so-good magician working the subway, the bus station, and a bewildering corporate bachelor party, realizing that the weaker his magic was, the funnier was his patter.

Those are also paths to "best sellerdom" for the unchosen. There are as many, or more, winning paths in non-fiction too. I suspect there are thousands of writers of wee books who are puffing with pride just having the best they can do available digitally or in paperback. They'd take the fame and chat with Charlie but in the meantime they can scarcely hide their smile when somebody whispers, "I read your book. It was great."

And what happens if only a handful of people buy or read your book. Don't brag too loudly about your fan club. There's no reason to say anything. Keep that book in your goods box to give your grandkids. You wrote and published a book. How many

others in your family are in print? Or your friends? You count.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

What do you do if a promised article interviewee finks out?

If you are writing a one-interview piece, a sort of bio plus, and the fink is the purpose of the article, apologize to the editor as soon as possible. You needn't make excuses for the person but do try to reschedule it right away...

Since queries very often suggest interviewing three people to get differing viewpoints, if one backs out at interview time, find another person to substitute who is equally as well informed. Tell the editor what you did and why, and try to maintain the same pro-con-middle balance if that's what's expected... Do you tell #2 that he/she is second choice and the first choice ratted out? If it's well known that there was a #1 choice, of course. They will find out anyway and wonder why you weren't more straightforward. But if it's still early in the planning stages, probably not. As usual, it depends...

You might ask the editor if they have a suggested replacement for the absentee if the piece is due far enough in the future—or if travel is involved. Or offer to find a substitute and check it with the editor—preferably before.

Don't promise the editor that you will interview the Queen for your piece unless the Queen has agreed...any queen! Then don't dawdle. But don't panic unless the person is that caliber or is super reclusive. The world (1) will not stop spinning, and (2) is full of well-informed folk who love to talk and will be delighted to see their words and wisdom in print, even if that wisdom is questionable.

Sometimes editors get excited about a highlight series of interviews. Some years back I wrote about 15 articles related to animal orientation—dogs, cats, goats, and so on finding their way home over long distances. It was a new discipline and almost all of the top human experts in the field were alive and active. The author of a key magazine was enthusiastic too, and suggested that we pose about five central questions and ask each to reply, separately, in different articles. Unfortunately, once the schedule was ready, the questions were defined, and press drum rolls were an issue away from stirring up excitement in the readers about the coming special features, reality set in. They each wanted to know what the others were going to say first! Then Z wanted B (nobody knew who he was) included—if Z was going to participate. And C would only do it, with reluctance it seemed, if the pay was enough. At which point the editor shook her head (or so I imagine; we never met) and within months the leaders started getting too old, too forgetful, or too dead—and the editor and I were off somewhere else.

There's another point worth sharing here. Figure out the best way to conduct the interview, for you and them. During most of my article days it was either by phone or in person, though now it can also be done by Skype or other visual means. I found that the more famous the person was, the more they didn't want a one-on-one talk—unless TV or video were involved. So phone was it. Politicians were the reverse: true flesh-pressers. The wariest and prissiest were the academics, and the weariest were the athletes, often exhausted trying to find different, intelligible, clean answers to the two or three worthwhile questions you might ask them. And a personal bias, since I interviewed in Spanish and Portuguese too: in person, please. That was a double win, though, because I got to meet and see them laugh as well.

Just some scattered thoughts. Hope they help.

Gordon Burgett

P.S. I have several other “interviewing” blogs here. To read them, just write “interview” in the search box at the top of any blog—and all will probably appear. (In fact, you can do that with other themes or words too. A great time-saver for all.)

Why was your article query rejected again?

Who writes **articles** in 2015?

At least **1,486,000** writers had a journal article published in 2010. Some were written by two or three authors. And that's just journals. And that was five years ago.

2,000,000 blog posts will be written today. **Today**. Another 2,000,000 tomorrow, and so on...

The difference is that articles must be accepted by someone to see light, while blogs can be your own and there's no stopping them. But if it's somebody else's blog you want to be a guest in, ugly acceptance (the kind side of rejection) rises again.

I've had about a zillion articles in print (I tell my grandkids) and I've been rejected .5 zillion times (I don't tell them). Mostly, from 40+ years, much as an editor, let me tell you why the editor wants you to go away.

1. 85 people contacted the editor wanting to be in the next issue of their publication. Only **one** will make it that day, or **8** in a magazine that month. For starters, the editor really wishes you'd just disappear.

2. But you probably won't. You think you're useless if you're not on those pages, and damnit... At least **contact the editor the way she/he wants to be approached**. If they want an old-fashioned query letter ("would you be interested in an article about...") sent by snail mail, half the war may be won by finding a stamp and a mailbox.

3. **Don't think the editor will make an exception for you** if you send a query by email. You have to get his email address for starters (you can't just send it to info@publication), and

if he/she doesn't want emails from the unwashed, getting that address will be harder to find than Harry Truman's middle name.

4. **Have you even read the publication** you are hounding? Did you wonder why the editor says (Read our publication first to see...) Read it to see what they use, how many words they want, do they use humor (if not, the joke's on you)...

5. **When was the last time the editor ran an article about the very topic you want to hawk?** See if there's an index you can find through Google telling what they've published. (Whenever I used a travel piece about Montana I got 10 queries in 10 days about Montana. We included Montana once a year because we had six subscribers from there. Did you wonder why there were almost no Montana articles in the index?)

6. If you **did read the last three issues**, did you get a sense of what the editor probably needed and wasn't in the index? Make that topic leap off the query letter for two paragraphs like an O'Henry short story (but give the ending). Just don't tell the editor that you know he/she needs that topic.

7. **Rejections come from these things:** no query, a query longer than one tight page, the editor has no idea what you will write about...or how you know that...or which three "experts" you will interview...if you've ever been in print anywhere...profanity and bad sex on their pages upset the advertisers...you forgot periods and commas...you signed, from your buddy!...there is clear evidence that you are insane...there is not a *got a* of appreciation for the editor giving your rantings full consideration...threats don't work before (or after) lunch...and the editor doesn't care (in fact, quietly applauds) that you will quit journalism forever if he/she doesn't give you a go-ahead.

Just in case you were wondering.

But don't give up—where will journalism be? There are still

1,485,999 article slots to be filled. (Also, spell the editor's name right and if you don't know about their gender, call them by their last name preceded by Editor... Editors need at least one laugh a day.)

Keep at it,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. You wonder what a legitimate professional query letter looks like? For \$5 we'll let you [download](#) 20+5 of them. Please at least rewrite these queries before you try to reuse them again!

[A paid speech you can book at every association any year...](#)

I call it **the "state of the art" speech**, but it could have lots of similar names. And if you do it right, the sponsor is very likely to ask (perhaps even beg) you to give it again and again! (You can even build your own empire around it.)

An example helps here. Let's say there is a Lighthouse Management Association, there are 50,000 lighthouses, and twice as many members who are involved in keeping the light lit and the coal stacked. (You can see what I know about lighthouses, born in suburban Chicago!)

The core of your "state of the art" lighthouse management presentation would **answer these three questions**:

(1) How did lighthouses and their management get to where they

are now? That's mostly quick history, some "march of time" visuals, problems along the way, and their solutions. Call this **IN THE PAST**.

(2) It's 2015. How are the managers and lighthouses doing today? Numbers, budgets, the most common or most serious 5 or 10 current problems, plus visuals of several model lighthouses. Maybe a summary of the best and worst job requirements for the chief honchos. A look at salary ranges, lighthouse-related courses in colleges, anything they want to know more about across the country (or is it shore to shore?) This is **RIGHT NOW**.

(3) **IN THE FUTURE** might be at set dates (5, 10, 15, 50 years from 2015), or in the near future and the far future (provide realistic time spans like 2020-30 and after 2030...). Here you focus on changes afoot now, possible need solutions likely implemented in the future, long-range needs decades away and how they might be met... If possible, maybe even some sketched visuals of how lighthouses might look in 50 or 150 years.

Compiling (1) is pretty much a history dig, some search tools, lighthouse history accounts and books, a few retellings of relevant "as it was" stories by the pioneers. Humor helps here, as does brevity. (Summarize it in the speech, but you might do full research and write "the" or "a" key book about it in the future. That's another foundational brick in your empire.)

The association may be your biggest helper in **composing and organizing (2)**. It's always amazing how little most practitioners know about the larger field they serve. (They are busy doing what they do where they are at. To know more is probably why they are at the convention you would address.) Gathering the present-day facts is another blog. Lists are good: lighthouses and managers (or how to find them quickly), money in and out (global to wee beamers), personnel job descriptions, most common local and national problems

(financial, political, directional, technical), equipment (present, problems, solutions), and so on. The listeners should know in 20 minutes the current state of the lighthouse art (where they are, why, how they are the same and different—you fill it in.)

Number (3), probably the last 10-15 minutes, **is the testiest** because it's "maybe" stuff and usually anybody's guess. Of course the listeners will wonder if you are just pulling the guesswork out of the air—or their leg. One way to handle that is to say that you contacted 100 scattered lighthouse managers with a questionnaire, plus of course you asked the associationfolk and a dozen recommended "big names" in this field (you actually have to do it!) and here are the 10 trends or innovations or areas of most likely change they saw in the future. List the 10. You might place them on a horizontal "future line" with dates every 5 or 15 or 25 years when they would most likely be started or implemented. Then you discuss all 10, most in some depth (with source links, if available), a few shorter "who really knows but..." comments.

Why would associations or related sponsors jump at the chance to book this speech or seminar? Because it's exactly what the members want to know. And in a small part because you are objective and aren't likely to be pumping some company line. (The questionnaire will help you see what they do want to know. Just ask, "What do you really want to know the most about..." and "How will your lighthouse look in 50 (or 100) years?—or "ideally, how might your lighthouse (or your job) look in 50 (or 100) years?"

Why would they hire you to speak if you can't tell a lighthouse from a farm house? Because if you present yourself and the topic right, they need to share that information. It would be easier if you were a 40-year lighthouse manager, or at least a manager, knew lighthouses, were an association soul, were a federal officer dealing with lighthouses, were a futurist and you did "state of the art" speeches (preferably

about lighthouse management), taught lighthouse history, and so on. But an experienced speaker with a long interest in lighthouses might be plenty. (Long might be relative. Perhaps long vertically, with book jamming your new passion.)

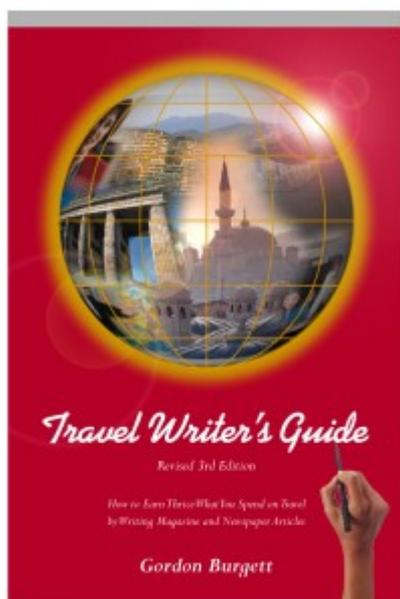
Where does the empire fit in for you? If what you say on speech day is a resounding (or even moderate with clapping) success; it was honest, instructive, and even (heavens) enjoyable; it made huge sense to all listening, and they want a follow-up in two or three years (with more emphasis on (2) and (3), that's a warm roar telling you to write a book in the general lighthouse management area. And from that book you spread out with more books, more speeches (why not a next-year follow-up about technology, management, and lighthouses, another related need the following year, and on the third year, "state of the art" again?) By that time you're an "expert" in your defined ("state of the art in...") area and attendees eagerly fill your hall to hear about themselves again. Emperors or empresses open the door with expertise, then expand it (and add other information dissemination means to sell more of it, like books, a newsletter, blogs, workshops, public speeches (at lighthouses?), videos, and so on...) An excellent way to begin the financial fiefdom is by starting with "a paid speech you can book at every association any year..." (Just pick one you at least really care about!)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. I'm half done with a how-to "state of the art" book. I will run an occasional blog on this topic too. If you want to know more or know a "state of the art" speaker whom I might interview, send an email (glburgett@gmail.com) or get on my free, every-two-month, easy-to-escape [newsletter](#) and I will add you to the "state of the art" elist and tell you when the book has seen light. You'll get a discount too!

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

