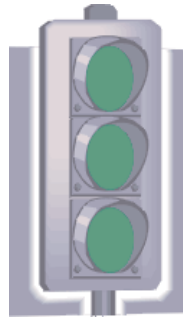


# Stet

OCTOBER 2006  
VOLUME 25 NUMBER 10

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INDEPENDENT WRITERS OF CHICAGO

## OCTOBER MEETING



### Get More Clients: Surefire Methods of Boosting Traffic to your Website

BY JAMES J. HODL

MAKE YOUR WEBSITE WORK FOR YOU. LEARN EASY, OFTEN FREE, WAYS TO GET FRONT-PAGE LISTING ON SEARCHES.

Hit me!" As freelance writers, we long to say that phrase ... as it applies to our promotional web sites, that is. The more hits we get from potential clients, the more chances we writers have to sell our services.

By now even confirmed Luddites know that being on the first page of Google or Yahoo virtually assures an increase in traffic. But how to get there? IWOC's marvelous October 10 program "Optimizing Web Site Hits," brings two experts — Jim Grosspietsch and Jim Leman — who will teach us guaranteed methods to boost our websites up the search-engine ladder. Even if you don't yet have a website you'll want to file these tips away for future reference.

Jim Grosspietsch has more than 15 years experience in B-to-B marketing communications as a marketing director/V.P. with small and/or venture capital-backed firms whose websites achieved front-page status under his direction. He is principal of The Prairie Studio, a marcom firm based in Barrington and co-founder of Studio G Interiors. Grosspietsch holds a bachelor's degree in marketing and an MBA from UIC.

Jim Leman, IWOC board member and a freelance writer for the past 14 years, currently operates his own writing business, the Newsletter Bureau, in Grayslake. Leman has a B.S. in Journalism from Ball State University. On the IWOC board, he has strongly advo-

cated optimizing the website to direct potential clients to our members.

Both Leman and Grosspietsch will talk about techniques they have successfully used to promote their own — or their clients' — websites. Many of these methods cost absolutely nothing except a little time on your part. (There are ways to climb the ladder that do cost money, and the speakers will touch on these too.)

The October 10 meeting is at the Chicago Athletic Club's 7th Floor Lakeshore Room, 12 S. Michigan Ave. Networking is at 5 p.m., the program at 6. Admission is free to all IWOC members and \$15 to nonmembers. Plan to stay for the buy-your-own dinner afterward at a nearby restaurant. ♦

### IWPA Book Fair

Saturday, Oct. 21 at the Chicago Cultural Center, 77 E. Randolph. It's free and open to the public. Emceed by Cheryl Corley of NPR's Chicago Bureau. Books for sale; 30 Illinois authors, including some from IWOC. They will sign books. For more information, visit [www.iwpa.org](http://www.iwpa.org). ♦

### Evanston Supplier Diversity Conference

Thursday, October 12, 8:30-1 p.m., Best Western University Plaza, 1501 Sherman Avenue. Women- and minority-owned and Evanston businesses invited to introduce themselves as resources to City of Evanston, City of Chicago, CTA, METRA, Kraft, Exelon, many others. For more info, call Lloyd Shepard, 847-448-8078. ♦

### Short and Sweet

IWOC past president Jane Ranshaw served on an IWPA panel in September ... IWOC veep Roger Rueff has a play *Grande Hysterie* in production at Chicago Dramatists through October. For tickets, call 312-633-0630 ... *Chicago Manual of Style* is now available online. Free 30-day trial. Info at [chicago-manualofstyle.org](http://chicago-manualofstyle.org). ♦

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN BY HARRY J. KARABEL



# Fall Ahead



When I was a Boy Scout, October was one of my favorite camping months. The woods were on fire with color. Blinding reds and yellows melted like wax from tree limbs. The late afternoons were languorously warm and yellow as buttered popcorn. There was a bite to the evening air, as crisp as a tart apple. We would build a campfire early, and let it burn late as we played Jack's Alive, told ghost stories, or set toy soldiers on burning logs and watched them melt into oblivion. We understood fall was a transition time. Summer camp was behind us, and the shivering weekends of winter camping were ahead. There was a balance to those fall days: the mild afternoons and comforting campfires and perfect sleeping weather.

I have not camped in a while, but I still love the fall. Right now, the red horse chestnut and maple trees in my front yard are just beginning to turn, looking like someone slapped paint off the end of a brush in their direction. Horse chestnuts yield those beautiful little nuts called buckeyes that you can't eat but look too pretty to throw away. Some people carry them for good luck. When they fall off the tree, I toss them into the pile of mulch around the tree's base. The crabapple and chokecherry and elm trees are already dropping leaves. I have never had to rake leaves in the front yard, and I'm not really sure why. They fall and blow away before I get to them (it is, after all, football season). Or they get ground up in the last pass of the lawn mower.

The back yard is a different story. The only tree in the lot when we first moved here in 1986 was a tulip tree, the state tree of Indiana. Near it is a maple tree that I transplanted from one of the lots nearby that was still empty sometime in the late eighties. At one time we had a Golden Retriever who gnawed the maple tree down to a stick. But today the maple and tulip trees stretch beyond the second story of the house and almost reach the roof.

And their leaves don't go anywhere. They pile up thick and gold and red, get splattered slick with rain and sometime before Thanksgiving turn brown. I usually pick a sunny November day, or at least a partly cloudy one, where it feels good to go out and work up a sweat raking and piling crunchy leaves into a wheelbarrow and carting them to the southeast corner of the yard where the Norway spruce is planted.

The spruce was a gift from my best friend's son. He raised the tree from a sprout and gave it to us when it was about three feet tall. Our home burned in 1996 and he gave us the tree as a housewarming gift when we moved back in a year later. Now it's about twelve feet tall and takes up a 10' x 10' spot in the corner of the yard. These trees need a lot of room to grow. So when we put it in the ground, I put brick edging around it and killed all the grass inside the edging.

Each fall I dump the crackling tulip and maple leaves around the base of the spruce and think about how much the tree, my friend's son, and my own son have grown (they're the same age). By spring, the fluffy mounds of leaves have been weighed down with snow. The bottom layer of leaves has disintegrated and is feeding the growth of this tree that serves as a healthy reminder of how much time has passed and how far we have come.

We have much to learn from nature. No matter how well something grows, or how beautiful it becomes, change is inevitable. I feel a change underway in my business. One longtime and lucrative client has had a bad year, and I find myself scrambling to replace that business. I'm not a great scrambler and replacing that business is taking a lot of time and energy and learning and anxiety.

But it's probably a good idea, every once in a while, to cart away what has fallen and died and use it to grow something new. I speak about my skills and my ability to contribute to bottom-line business with a lot greater confidence than I did a decade ago. My samples are more interesting and more current, and I've worked for an even wider variety of clients. Rejection and unanswered phone calls, e-mails, and voice mails still hurt. But I am becoming more thick-skinned about it. And while my new clients are not yet replacing that old client, they will, as long as I keep trying to grow that business.

More important, I'm doing what I should have been doing all along. If I don't keep a thick

*Continued on page 4.*

## Hard Work Grows a Healthy Business



YOU CAN DO IT! PICK UP THAT PHONE AND GET STARTED. PRACTICE MAKES PROGRESS.

Last issue I challenged you to set up and practice a cold-calling program to grow your client base. I offered dinner for two if you could prove to me it didn't work for your business.

While cold calling is the silver bullet that will propel business growth for most of us in this business, it isn't magical. A lot of hard work and sometimes frustration must go with it.

It's not easy or comfortable to pick up the phone, dial the number, and introduce ourselves to strangers. It

feels awkward and too often what we hear ourselves saying simply sounds downright stupid!

Even after doing this for 16 years I still have calls and days like that.

Because it happens to you isn't sufficient evidence you can't do this. You can!

Remember this when ready to toss in the towel: Practice makes perfect...well, practice makes progress, anyway.

To make calls you have to have a list of potential clients to call. Some freelancers struggle with where to get such a list for their businesses. I have to believe most of us could put

our fingers on the contact information for dozens if not hundreds of potential new clients if we really tried to.

Surf the net for companies in the industries you write about. Visit the local library and scour business directories for company data.

Cast your net wide. Look for companies perhaps not directly related to your area of expertise.

Years ago I had a farm equipment client. Handling that account, I also learned about farm lifestyles, soil conser-

vation, crop management, animal feeds, and the like. I got business from these related industries for years.

I have yet to hear any IWOC member report, "I earn too much income." I have tried very hard to be the first. I have spent money on advertising in the Yellow Pages, in local business periodicals, on direct mail, and networking.

By far, the most effective, most affordable, most profitable and most measurable way for me to grow my business has been by using the telephone.

My challenge to you to use it yourself to grow your business still stands. ♦

*Jim Leman, a former IWOC president and board member, has been a member of IWOC since 1993. He writes for the automotive and management consulting industries. [www.lemanbizwriter.com](http://www.lemanbizwriter.com) or [lemanBIZwriter@comcast.net](mailto:lemanBIZwriter@comcast.net).*

## Marrying Design & Writing

BY PAULA SHEVICK

DESIGN POSSIBILITIES ARE LIMITED ONLY BY THE IMAGINATION, BUT THERE ARE RULES.

Do you remember that crisp red, white, and blue Ameritech brochure you once got in the mail? That could have been the work of Pat Noonan-Hastings, independent graphic designer of Evolution Communications Design - and a writer lucky enough to work with her.

Noonan-Hastings has had a career in design for several decades, beginning with the Field Museum. Her talk on design was drawn from a very rich academic vocabulary which she qualified by saying that there's not any one method in the creative process. It's highly personal and encompasses creativity, logic, intuition, trial and error. And a good night's rest! But despite the subjectivity of the design process, Noonan-Hastings suggested that there are interesting ways for a writer and designer - or a writer working without the aid of a designer - to foster the marriage of words and design.

The ways of creating a design are limitless and you can use almost anything for inspiration. For instance, you can get ideas from books, magazines, or art books. Or you can generate an idea for a design from opposites like the words "machete" and "rose." But the infinite muse can turn into a monster unless limits are imposed. And setting limits is the way to create a sense of energy in your creation. One way to set limits is to do a reality check on your imagination by asking yourself: what is the true essence of the company/client? Does this design reflect that?

Another very important limiting aspect of design is information. All the fabulous colors and shapes in the world won't disguise the fact that you don't know what you're talking about. Yet strangely enough, Noonan-Hastings often finds it very difficult getting information from her clients. When she asks a client, "What is this project about?" she's often answered by a blank stare.

Another crucial question that should be clarified with the client is "what is the marketing plan?" The esthetics of a design shouldn't exist in a vacuum but should incorporate the way the product reaches customers.

Adhering to a budget is another way to set limits. Once the maximum price is set, your design scheme falls into place more easily. And one trick to working within a limited budget when there isn't much money for pictures is to substitute typography. In this way, but in many other ways as well, typography is one of the most important elements of design.

When you've chosen all the elements in your design, you must aim for continuity. While you might start with opposites like "rose" and "machete" to generate an idea, the final

When a limited budget prevents using photos, try substituting eye-catching typography for visual punch.

Continued on page 4.

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## Marrying Text & Graphics

Continued from page 3.

product must be either rose-like or machete-like. If you use yellow to express optimism, then you can't have letters growing farther apart to express alienation. You must aim for a very clear tone or style.

But what if your client feels that yellow expresses alienation? People have strong, personal feelings about what different colors, letters, and designs mean.

This is but one example of why in collaboration, communication is important, or things will start to go awry. And why, to be successful, a designer must not only be skilled at her craft, but adept at human relations as well. And see clearly that clients want you to listen to them.

Noonan-Hastings loves to work with writers, and she uses the phrase "designer-writer duet" to describe her feelings. To have a good working relationship between a writer and designer, both parties must respect boundaries. For instance, one of her pet peeves is a writer with a little bit of knowledge about design who tries to tell her how to do her work.

Boundaries are also set by establishing who takes the lead and who is responsible for what. Together, both designer and writer should establish how to approach a client. It is necessary for writers and designers to respect whose client it is.

In conclusion, Noonan-Hastings makes designing and working with a designer seem like a lot of fun because of her dictum that almost anything and everything is possible in design, because of the way she justifies limits in human terms, and because of her frank assessment of people she has worked with. ♦♦

*Editors note: Due to the malfunction of the projector, Noonan-Hastings was unable to show the visual part of her presentation. We will make that available in the online wrap-up of the presentation in IWOC Events.*

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## President's Column *Continued from page 2.*

carpet of leaves or mulch down around that Norway spruce, every weed imaginable sprouts up around it. This, too, happens every year. I never see the weeds until they are out of hand and then I have to spend a couple hours pulling them, hauling them away in a wheelbarrow and spreading weed killer. I have to spend more time and money on mulch than I would have if I had just stayed ahead of the weeds.

Each year, the pile of maple and tulip leaves gets bigger and prettier. Each November, that afternoon chore takes a little longer. I get tired near the end of it, wishing the work wouldn't take so long. But as I thought about it and wrote about it today, I learned something. If I continue to nurture those trees, their collective gifts will one day be deep enough and thick enough to last from one October to the next. Not too long after that, there will be too many leaves to pile up around that Norway spruce.

When that happens I hope I'll remember to pick another spot, and plant another tree. ♦♦

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## Calendar

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### October 10

**IWOC monthly meeting.** Learn how to maximize hits on your website to generate more business. Speakers are Jim Grosspietsch and Jim Leman. Chicago Athletic Association, 12 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Ample parking and the El nearby. Buy-your-own dinner follows at a nearby restaurant. Networking at 5 PM, program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates free, nonmembers \$15.

### November 14

**IWOC monthly meeting.** IWOC's annual roundtable, where members and guests tackle real-life writing and business-related issues. Bring your problems. Jim Kepler is moderator.

### December 12

**IWOC's midwinter holiday party. Save the date.**

*The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted, but call ahead in case of cancellation. The groups welcome nonmembers. If there's no group in your area, why not start one? Contact [webmaster@iwoc.org](mailto:webmaster@iwoc.org).*

### October 26 (4th Thursday)

**IWOOP monthly lunch.** Join near-west suburbanites at noon for an outdoor lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park (summer location). For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065.

### November 2 (1st Thursday)

**IWORP monthly breakfast.** Join the Rogers Park IWOC contingent for breakfast at 9 AM at the A&T Grill, 7036 N. Clark St., Chicago. For more info, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

## IWOC WELCOMES NEW MEMBER

**GARY WISBY**

## It's Happening on the Web!

**Check Out Writers' Line**

**Browse Resources**

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**WWW.IWOC.ORG**