

JUNE MEETING

Cold Calling Brings Hot Prospects in a Bad Economy

BY BECKY MAGINN

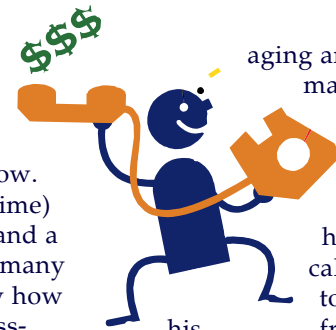
If you haven't done so already, put it in your Blackberry, write it in your date book, or plaster your office with notes to yourself! Whatever it takes. You do not want to miss our meeting on June 9.

Oh, you say you've heard the topic is cold calling, and, actually, it has occurred to you that that just might be the night you'll finally get around to doing the disgusting plumbing job in your bathroom? Well, I'm sure you'll want to reconsider. If you're not at that IWOC meeting, you will be cheating yourself, not only out of potential new income streams, but also out of an evening that is as packed with entertainment value as it is with information. And while you may at last get your bathroom drain running clear, the rest of us will walk away from the meeting with a life-changing infusion of inspiration coursing through our veins! Okay, I can't promise Tuesday night will change your entire life, but I can pretty much guarantee that you will leave feeling newly energized about being a writer and about being in business for yourself.

And that is, pure and

simple, because of Jim Leman, who will be presenting the topic—in case you didn't know. Jim is a past (longtime) member of IWOC and a past president; so, many of us already know how talented and successful he is, and how well organized, warm, and witty. Sound like all the necessary ingredients for a powerful presentation? Well, if you're still torn between spending time under the bathroom sink and listening to anyone talk about cold calling, then I had better let you in on one more fact. A number of our members who have heard this talk before have specifically asked the Program Committee to try to get Jim back for an encore performance. I have heard Jim present on this subject not once, but twice, and that is why I can testify that, even if you've never thought you could (or would want to) make a cold call, Jim, with his vast experience and contagious enthusiasm, can make you warm up to the idea.

He has certainly made it work for himself! He left corporate PR in 1992; lever-



aging an experience managing an outbound call center for an employer, he used cold-call marketing to establish his freelance writing practice. He now specializes in business-to-business writing and public relations services. His primary product is article ghostwriting for clients in the renewable energy, supply chain, resource development, and automotive sectors. (And his clients keep him busy!)

So forget anything else you might have had planned for that night (most of all, the bathroom sink)! When Jim shares some of the secrets of his success, you have got a very special opportunity in front of you. He will discuss specific cold call strategies and techniques, building your confidence in your own ability to use the telephone to reach out to potential new clients. He will also offer some ideas for building customer databases for free, or at a very low cost.

Continued on page 5.

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Stet is published 11 times per year by the **Independent Writers of Chicago**, PMB 119, 1800 Nations Drive, Suite 117, Gurnee, IL 60031, 847/855-6670. Internet address: www.iwoc.org. Copy submissions and advertising materials are due by the 15th of the month preceding publication. All submissions and ideas will be considered. The subscription rate of \$1 per year is included in the annual membership dues. Copyright ©2009 by Independent Writers of Chicago.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN/ROGER RUEFF

On the Impermanence of Information

Like any home improvement project worth its salt, the recent kitchen rehab (about which I have written at length) has left in its foamy, churning wake a turbulent bevy of smaller, spinoff projects, most of them having to do with cleanup. My office desk, for example, which for years I tended like an indoor tropical garden—only infrequently cutting back the thick undergrowth of papers, sticky notes, receipts and so on that grew like kudzu across its surface—is now pristinely empty, its clutter confined to a single, yellow folder labeled “Desktop” that I stow on top of my printer and open daily to see if anything might need my immediate attention. The folder eagerly gobbles up new items as they come in, and its bright yellow surface attracts sticky notes like fly-paper. (No zipper yet... I’m working on that.)

It should not be surprising that I am now more at peace with my workspace when I sit down in the morning with my coffee. The empty desk allows me to focus and decide which Tyrant of Urgency gets bowed down to first.

Prior to the desktop came the laundry room—which, before its reorganization had been on the short list for a new Discovery Channel series... a cross between “Ancient Discoveries” and “Survivorman.” And next up is the garage, which since January has served as a resting place for all things rehab and for the refugees from the Great Garage Attic Purge of 2009. Except for a bit of sacred floor space

where I park the Harley, it is like the garbage patch in the Sargasso Sea (minus the plastic bottles and floating tires). Natural forces gather things there, and they don’t float away.

Little by little, I’m working my way through the patch and, in the process, finding artifacts of eras I’d almost forgotten—my college engineering texts, my graduate research lab notes, short stories from early in my writing career, yellowed clippings of theater reviews I wrote for a suburban newspaper, divorce documents that remind me of a tumultuous time.

And telling bits of computer hardware.

No, I’m not in the habit of saving my old computers... although, come to think of it, I did for a time save my first notebook PC (it had a black-and-white screen). But over the years, I have saved the equipment and media that I used to transfer data between machines—equipment and media so rarely in use today as to make the technology nearly useless. Three-and-a-half-inch “floppy” discs—so named because their 5-1/4 inch predecessors were truly bendable. A Zip drive, astounding at the time of its introduction because of the amount of data that could fit on one disc... a full 100 megabytes (about five percent of what will fit on a new IWOC flash drive). A backup tape drive and a set of tape cartridges containing files I abandoned long ago.

What intrigues me about these artifacts is not how quaint they seem now when compared to current technol-



ogy... it’s what they have to say about the impermanence of information—especially with regard to the tape drive, because its driver existed on a 3-1/2 inch disc that I no longer have the equipment to read, and its connection to the computer was made by means of a parallel-port connector... and computers don’t come with those, anymore. (I could get a USB adapter, I know, but that’s part of the point... that I’d need to.)

So the backup tapes contain programs, pictures, words, thoughts, articles, notes, and God knows what else encoded in magnetic ones and zeroes that I can no longer access without doing a heavy-duty Internet search for the appropriate hardware and drivers. The data is permanently beyond my reach, and the information is as lost to history as any hieroglyph-ridden artifact still waiting to be found beneath the sands of the Egyptian desert.

And the issue goes well beyond my garage. Somewhere in the world exist early computer programs encoded onto cards or paper tape. Floppy drives with programs for the Apple II computer and Commodore PET. Game cartridges for the Mattel Intellivision. Plastic tabs containing programs for the early HP and TI programmable calculators.

Dust in the wind.

I encountered a similar issue last year, when I found at the bottom of one of my

Continued on page 4.

PR Pros Can Be a Freelancer's Best Friends

BY JAMES J. HODL

No freelancer can do it alone. Just being a skilled writer isn't enough. One needs contacts not only with editors who can give you assignments, but also with sources who can provide you with the best possible information to make the resulting article a must-read.

One of the best places to make all these connections is with public relations professionals who are not only lines of communication to information sources and resources, but also to editors and publications that are interested to your work. So said the Public Relations Panel that addressed attendees during the May 12 IWOC meeting.

Sitting on this panel were Kim Manning, account director with Loop-based public relations firm Taylor Johnson & Olesker; Kate Koziol, president of marketing and public relations firm K Squared Communications in Chicago's Edison Park neighborhood; and Kimberly McCullough, director of community and media relations at Concordia University Chicago in River Forest. Moderator Jeff Steele and PR pro Noreen Kelly questioned the panel.

According to all, PR pros need help from freelance writers to get the messages of their clients out to the public through print publications and online media. And they can also get freelancers assignments writing PR releases for their clients.

Key elements of the more

than one hour panel discussion are as follows:

Question: How can PR pros help writers get information or ideas for articles to pitch to editors?

Manning: Say for instance a freelancer has been assigned to do a real estate story. My agency has been in this business for more than 30 years. We have good relations with all the papers and trade magazines covering this market. Tell us your idea for your real estate article. We can tell you if it's good or if it's been done within the last two years. If the latter is true, we can help the writer come up with an angle that is fresh or can put a local perspective on it. Call us and we'll brainstorm.

McCullough: We also can help writers turn a national story into one with a local angle. Even better, we can provide writers with sources for information for that story, thus making your life a little easier. These can be sources at Concordia University or other universities in the area. And we can help you secure interviews with these and alternate sources. As university faculty members aren't good at returning calls, I also help you get them to call back.

Koziol: Freelancers have become the best way for our clients to get their message out. So our agency has assembled a large data base of writers. We find out what topics writers specialize in, and the publication to which they contribute. Then we bring these writers

to the attention of agencies that produce information on those topics.

Question: Can PR pros help writers find out which publications are buying?

Manning: We know our business from top to bottom. We know who the current editors of publications are, and what these publications (print or online) need in the way of future articles. We find a lot of this out by going to lunch with editorial staffers. And we can share what we know with freelancers.

Koziol: There are 17 gazillion publications and blogs out there, and most have staffs that are shrinking. We can point writers to where there is a need.

McCullough: We keep on top of all publications, general interest or specialized. And we are always looking for new writers to get the word out on topics like healthcare and higher education.

Question: What mistakes do writers make with PR people?

Manning: Most writers are great, but there are a few psycho and bipolar writers out there. They call us too often to get return calls from sources we recommend, not realizing it takes time to get through to sources and to arrange interviews. Please give us as much advance notice as possible to let us get the job done. And be aware that sometime we can't get the job done in the allotted time, so don't burn your bridges with PR people by sending snide e-mails.

Koziol: I've had no bad experiences with writers. I used to write for magazines, so I know what help writers need. As I see it, if I help writers do their job, you help me do my job of getting client's information out before the public.

McCullough: Be clear on your deadlines, need for information sources, and need for photos. If I can't help you, I will point you in other directions. I want you to call back for when I can help you. The only bad experience I had was with an impatient writer who tried to bypass channels, then got mad when potential sources kept referring him back to me to set up interviews.

Question: Is there a market for freelancers to do PR writing?

Koziol: Our clients need freelancers to write brochures, letters and white papers. While our clients know their market, they can't write well, so they need professional writers. They might hire you on a per-project basis or as a timeshare employee hired for 20 hours at a time. The best way to promote such jobs is to get samples of past work or writing before these people.

Question: What's the best way to get samples before people who can give you PR writing jobs?

Manning: I'll look at anything writers send me. Send samples of work where you wrote about an idea.

McCullough: Put your

Continued on page 4.

work online. If I like what I see, I may contact you. I'll also check out the writing you do on Facebook and Twitter.

Koziol: I ask writers to write a sample PR release announcing that you have been hired by us. Some of the sample releases I get are funny.

Question: How do you write PR?

Manning: Good writers can write anything. A good PR release is equal to good web or newspaper copy. As newspapers shrink, more original online content needs to be developed. Online writing requires that you use keywords that make the article easier to find with search engines. The best PR releases are written like news articles so editors can run them verbatim.

McCullough: When developing a PR release, you should ask what idea you want to convey to the reader. Know that idea and spell it out.

Question: If you don't have any printed writing samples, how can you get work?

Koziol: There are billions of places where you can write. Write for your local church bulletin or even for the IWOC newsletter. And you can contribute to social media websites and blogs in your spare time. These writings can establish you as an expert in your field and can lead to paying jobs.

Manning: By following contributions to blogs, I can get an idea if the bloggers can do a story I need written. If I think they can, I will pitch them for a paying assignment. ♡

President's Column *Continued from page 2.*

of my late father's file cabinets a small spool of 1920s recording wire that I think might contain the voice of my mother when she was a child. But the hardware no longer exists to play the recording. So the sound of her young voice is gone forever... even though the magnetic information to reproduce it still exists on the wire.

The mild irony of the situation is that electronic recording—especially digital recording—is supposed to provide a permanence that physical recording cannot. Photographic negatives become brittle and crack, and their images fade as the chemicals onto which they're encoded

degrade over time. The light inside a movie projector takes its toll on the film each time a movie is shown. Paper and parchment turn yellow and crumble, eventually turning to dust. Digital information, on the other hand, is unchanging. Part of the charm of an old radio recording or celluloid film lies in the cracks, pops, and scratches that place it in historical context. Digital technology has traded that charm for consistency. Play a DVD a million times and—if it's properly taken care of—the images and sounds will not change.

Until someday in the future when the technology to read and interpret them is forever abandoned for something else, rendering them useless.

The lesson here, I suppose, is that when it comes to information, permanence depends on three things—media, hardware, and soft-

ware. In the case of the tapes in my garage, the media is in fine shape, but the hardware is useless because the software is gone, so the information is lost. Same goes for the wire recording of my mother's young voice. Media fine, software (in this case, built into the hardware) gone. Information out of reach.

And it has ever been thus.

Take, for example, the Dream Stela rediscovered in 1925 between the paws of the Great Sphinx of Giza and attributed to Tuthmosis IV, who is credited with restoring the



Sphinx (it was not called that at the time) sometime around 1400 BCE. The stela tells a story (possibly an early bit of political propaganda) of how on a hunting trip Tuthmosis IV fell asleep at the base of the Sphinx, which was at that time covered up to its neck in desert sand—and how the Sphinx spoke to him in a dream, promising him riches and power if he would only remove the sand from around it. In this case, the media consists of stone and chiseled images, the hardware consists of sunlight and a pair of human eyes to read the hieroglyphs, and the software consists of the knowledge to interpret their meanings... knowledge that was lost to the modern world until 1798, when a French soldier serving in Egypt unearthed a large slab of black basalt that we know today as "The Rosetta Stone."

Or consider the massive pyramid at Chichén Itzá, the very construction of which contains astronomical data. Each of its four sides includes a set of 91 steps leading to the platform at its top. Ninety-one times four is 364. Add the platform at the top and you get 365... the number of days (approximately) in a year. Here, the media is a 75-foot tall structure and the steps carved into its sides, the hardware again is sunlight and human eyes... the software is the ability to count and a knowledge of how long it takes for the earth to orbit the sun.

And finally, there is Shakespeare, whose phraseology permeates the modern world. "Forever and a day." "All that glitters is not gold." "Brevity is the soul of wit." "All's well that ends well." "Star-crossed lovers." Phrases so much a part of modern conversation that we no longer think about their origins.

Where is the media for Shakespeare? In the original manuscripts? Hardly. According to scholars, they don't exist, yet the information contained in them has made its way across four centuries intact. In the Yale Shakespeare that sits on my bookshelf? Or the free application on my iPod that contains his entire catalogue of works? Or the millions of printed copies of his plays that litter the globe? Or the films and television shows whose characters have quoted him (unwittingly or not) over the years? The answers are yes, yes, yes, yes, and yes. The media for Shakespeare is everywhere.

And the hardware? That's easy. Sunlight. A reading

Continued on page 5.

President's Column *Continued from page 4.*

lamp. A computer screen. An iPod. An Amazon Kindle. An audio tape. And, oh yes, the original wireless connections... eyes and ears.

Which brings us to the software—in this case, the most critical component. Simply put, the software of Shakespeare is inside us—not only in the knowledge of whatever language is used to convey his words but in the commonality of human feelings that allows us to ascribe meaning to the words and imbues them with gut-level resonance. Shakespeare survives because he encoded his words in the universal language of human feeling. The software of Shakespeare will survive as long as humankind.

So in the end, it looks to be all about the software. And the permanence of information depends not on the ability of any particular hardware or physical medium to withstand the ravages of time—but rather on the ability of the information to disseminate into human culture and copy itself like a virus into a multitude of individual human brains.

Is it odd that the permanence of information depends on such fragile and temporal vessels? Not really. We are, after all, the ones who decide what's worth knowing in the first place. 🐦

May Meeting *Continued from page 1.*

In this economy, what could be better than the chance to learn a brand new marketing skill and be totally reenergized in the bargain. Come join us!

The meeting will be held in Room 5008 at National-Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue (across from the Art Institute). Networking and refreshments begin at 5 p.m., the program at 6 p.m. Nonmembers are cordially invited. The meeting is free for IWOC members and \$15 for nonmembers. Plan to stay for a buy-your-own dinner at a nearby restaurant after the meeting. 🐦

Calendar

June 9

IWOC Monthly Meeting. “Cold Calling Can Bring You Hot Prospects” Past president and former IWOC member Jim Leman brings his tips and tricks back by popular demand. Tuesday, June 9 at National-Louis University, Room 5008, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago. Program 6 p.m. Networking 5 p.m. Nonmembers, \$15; IWOC members free. Buy-your-own dinner follows. Nonmembers welcome. For more information, call 847/855-6670 or visit www.iwoc.org.

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.

June 25 (4th Thursday)

IWOOP Monthly Lunch. Join near-west suburbanites for a noon lunch at Poor Phil's, 139 S. Marion St., Oak Park. For more info, call Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. Check before you come. This lunch is monthly only if there are enough people who can attend.

July 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.

It's Happening on the Web!

Check Out Writers' Line

Browse Resources

See What's Doing in IWOC Events

WWW.IWOC.ORG

IWOC Welcomes New Members

Dawn Klingensmith

Kate Koziol

Tom McCauley

Sara Wolski