



Stet

Independent Writers of Chicago

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JANUARY MEETING PREVIEW

Score More Clients: Are You Pinterested?

Writing a catchy ad campaign? A medical manual? A tech-laden White Paper? Piece o' cake. Ah, but selling yourself — and your actual writing services? Aw, gee, do we have to? In short, yes. But how do you expand your client base? Remain fresh in the minds of current clients? It takes 21st century marketing savvy. And that's what we all

hope to acquire at the next IWOC meeting on Tuesday, January 14th, when star social media strategist, coach, and entrepreneur Sue Koch will be divulging the "Top 5" marketing tips for your business.

Chief honcho of her own firm, Soaring Solutions, Koch is a veteran speaker, providing "edutaining" presentations at conferences and industry events, such as So-

cial Media Week. Her technology, marketing, and entrepreneurship expertise has helped clients improve both their personal and professional lives, running the gamut



from Mom 'n Pop shops to global enterprises. In addition to the Top 5 tips, Koch will impart the importance of networking, as well as how indie writers can use technology to grow their biz à la FB, LI, Twitter, Pinterest, and Google+.

Let Koch help your business "soar" in the ways that hers has. Come on down and learn how!

The IWOC meeting will take place Tuesday, January 14th in the Page Smith Room, off the lobby of the Gratz Center at 126 E. Chestnut St., Chicago / 115 E. Delaware. We're just west of Michigan Ave., adjacent to Fourth Presbyterian Church. Discounted parking (after 5 p.m., with validation) is located at the 900 N. Michigan Avenue garage. (Pick up your validation at the Gratz Center.) Networking begins at 5 p.m. Main program, 6 p.m. Free admission to IWOC members. Nonmembers, \$15. (\$10 if pre-registered). Click [HERE](#) to register.

Both Pinterest and Google+ plus are new to many writers as business tools, so you won't want to miss this meeting.

Following the meeting, join us at nearby Frankie's Scaloppini in the 900 North Michigan Avenue building for an always enjoyable buy-your-own dinner to further discuss writing-related topics or to continue networking. You'll be glad you stayed. The food's good and the conversation's always lively. ■

Laura Stigler & Karen Schwartz

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It's good enough. Don't believe it!



WARNING! Rant Ahead!

There appears to be a new standard among many communications professionals who use the services of independent writers: It's good enough.

I spoke recently with a textbook publisher at an awards dinner at which he took home for his company a couple citations for outstanding editorial and design achievement. As we talked, I asked him how much his company now relies upon social media when marketing and selling their books. He said major portions of their promotion and advertising budgets now are devoted to social media. Then he dropped a stunner: "We're really saving lots of money using that approach. Do you know we can get a 500-word blog entry for 25 bucks?" Well, no, I didn't. I thought that kind of payment might get you a two- or three-word greeting card and not much more.

close-of-day, and I have copy on my desk in the morning." Actually, he didn't say copy; he said content. More about that later.

But, said I, knowing I should have quit while merely behind, is it usable? "Well," he replied (and I physically felt it coming), "It's good enough. The spelling's lousy, and the grammar's worse. But I get it for 25 bucks! Overnight! I spend five minutes editing it, and off it goes to our customers, possible buyers, shareholders, and everybody else on our marketing lists."

There's just so much wrong here. I figured if he's editing crappy copy at the rate of a hundred words per minute, he's a terrible editor and most likely doesn't know much more than the writers he's paying. And somewhere in those marketing lists—and, importantly, among his shareholders and management—there must be somebody

Knowing full well what the answer would be, I stupidly asked my question anyway. How did they do that?

"Oh," he said, "we use a service in Asia (I don't remember whether it was India, Pakistan, or the Philippines—it doesn't matter) that has hundreds of writers. They turn out blog copy for us overnight. I send them a topic just before

who can see that his penny-pinching is doing his company a disservice. It's a textbook company, for Pete's sake! Presumably their purchasing audience is reasonably well-educated. What must they think when they see their company portrayed this way?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3.



President's Column

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2.

Don't shed a tear quite yet, though. I had a LinkedIn message just today saying that this guy has been promoted. I despair.

So let's take a look at this hot new word content, which, as we all know, is not all that hot and certainly not new. Ah, but doesn't it sound trendy?

I write content.

Don't we all?

The content of a blog article or any other piece of writing is nothing more than the words contained therein. It's not as though anything magical happens when you rechristen words as something other than what they are. They're still words, and they still carry a message, whether by their literal meaning or less obviously by how they're arranged, used, or misused.

The fellow I described above is probably somewhere around 50, not young, not old. It's important to my point, though, because I find that "it's-good-enough" attitude most prevalent among 40-, 50-, and 60-year-olds. My observations are totally subjective and unscientific, I'll admit. I don't, however, find the same outlook so much among

recent graduates and those who have been in the work force for no more than 10 or 15 years. I have no explanation for this; it's just what I've witnessed. But I do find it encouraging.



concern about how that audience perceives their company.

What we all do is a bit like teaching. We write, sure, but we also advise, and often we get farther with a client, particularly one eager to learn, by demonstrating that the it's-good-enough approach won't help him or her in the long run. Buying on the cheap costs time and money in the end. Was my publisher guy saving anything? Not really. He had to take the time—albeit not much—to rewrite what he had already paid for, and he risked the good name and reputation of his company. Not much of a bargain, I'd say. True, it got him a promotion today—go figure—but what will it get him tomorrow? ■

I'd like to think that younger editors, proofreaders, copywriters, and others in the writing game aren't as terrified by budgets as their older coworkers. It could be that they're more attuned to their audience, which is very likely closer to their own age and education cohort. So they may have a greater

Editor's note: While searching for graphics to illustrate this column, I came upon two examples of real ads advertising these cheap writing services. I couldn't resist either the one with the grammatical error or the "say what?" text on the other. So they're below.



This ad is for a bunch of crooks who write essays for students seeking admission to college. I don't see Harvard or Yale — or maybe not even Local Yokel U. — in the future of anyone dumb enough to hire them no matter how cheap their cheating services. Do you? As for the other one, all I can think is that their writers **come from** another planet far, far away from intelligible comparisons.

— The Editor





Your 2014 Website Resolution

Most IWOCers have websites, and those who don't should. But many of us work like dogs (or pay someone) to get it up there and then more or less forget about it. How often do you check your analytics to see how many hits you're getting? And from whom? Where does your site rank? If you're not getting hits, the site might as well not be there. So here's a New Year's resolution for you: I **will** work to boost my ranking, and I **will** make sure my site is up to date when those swarms of potential clients beat a path to my door.

Ever helpful, this month's *Stet* features two articles on using short- and long-tail keywords for maximum traffic. Don't know the difference? Aha! You'll learn something. The shortie is below, and the long-tail is on page 6. ■ — *The editor*

A Word By Any Other Name May Get You Nothing

When selecting keywords for your website, you should have three goals in mind: 1) to accurately describe your content; 2) to use words that other people would *actually* type in; and 3) to use words that aren't found on bazillions of other web pages.

Ideally, your keywords should reflect your branding, goals, and your potential clients' needs. Start by listing the keywords that you think are relevant. Then ask your current clients and your IWOC friends what words *they* would use to find freelance services like yours. You may be surprised at what they come up with.

Once you have a list of potential keywords, you'll want to analyze their effectiveness. Google's AdWords free keyword tool offers useful but fairly basic keyword analysis. It's geared toward potential advertisers, but the AdWords tool can tell you how often a keyword was searched in the previous month or year, and how competitive the keyword is. Plus, it can give you a list of related keywords you

might not have considered. This no-cost info can be very helpful.

If you want more in-depth analysis, it's fairly pricey, but consider this: one client you wouldn't otherwise have had will more than pay for the service, and the services below offer monthly rates as well as yearly.

WordTracker and Keyword Discovery provide advanced keyword analysis in terms of effectiveness. Both call this KEI, which means *Keyword Effectiveness Index* at WordTracker and *Keyword Effectiveness Indicator* at Keyword Discovery.

KEI is a number based on how often a keyword is used in searches and on how many web pages the word appears. A high KEI ranking indicates that Web searchers use the phrase with some frequency but there aren't many pages that contain the word. That's what you want: the higher the KEI, the better your chances of being found with that particular keyword or phrase.

Experts recommend you use more than one keyword analysis tool because none

is perfect, and they all use different methods of gathering data.

WordTracker will set you back \$429 a year or \$69 by the month. Bonuses include two e-books: *Keyword Basics* and *SEO Made Simple* plus a "Profit from Keywords" video series and a keywords webinar. There's also a free seven-day trial — one could do a lot in a week — and they'll give you your money back after 30 days if you don't want to keep the service.

The cost of Keyword Discovery ranges from \$599.40 to \$1895 a year or \$69.95 to \$199.95 a month for "standard" and "professional" services respectively. And, there's a tutorial. Their pricing is pretty steep, but they do offer an indefinite free trial with limited results and features.

I've looked at both sites, and WordTracker has a nicer-looking and easier-to-follow site, but I can't say who gets better results. I plan to take my own advice, though, and give my lost-in-space site a boost. ■

— Joen Kinnan

IWOC Members Learn to Leverage LinkedIn for Lots of Lucrative Labor

It'd be nice if all IWOC members were current on the latest developments in the evolution of LinkedIn, and could use the site's considerable social media muscle to its fullest potential in growing their professional contacts, reaching that elusive client, and adding to their workload and billings.

Alas, for most of us, the daily tasks of researching, writing, proofing, revising, and invoicing get in the way of staying up to the minute on LinkedIn best practices.

That's what made the November IWOC presentation such a valuable session for those who attended. Guest speaker Brandon Lewin – vice president of business development for marketing agency Image Perspective – is a LinkedIn expert who shared his insights in leveraging LinkedIn to gain clients and link blogs and articles. He also addressed how to choose the time to spend on LinkedIn and how to participate in LinkedIn groups. Plus, he outlined the value of using the premium version of LinkedIn and the importance of continually updating your LinkedIn page.

Your LinkedIn profile is an important marketing tool, and you should show the world a freshened version every three months, Lewin advised.

Status updates, which might focus on a blog or article you wrote or perhaps an interesting piece you recently read, can be added on an ongoing basis, as long as they provide value to your LinkedIn world.

Your photo should also be updated regularly. You should be depicted in

that photo in whatever attire and pose makes you comfortable, Lewin said. Also feel free to post a video providing what he dubbed an "elevator pitch," giving the reasons clients should hire you. Just make sure the audio quality is top notch.

Your profile summary should be a written version of your two-minute eleva-



tor pitch. It should be penned in first person, but without overuse of the word "I." Endorsements and recommendations "are huge, and if you have a lot of recommendations, it will be a great positive for you," he noted. "That's actually market research for those who might like to hire you."

Content, such as that you might impart through a blog, is an enormous and growing part of the online world today. LinkedIn allows you to be part of 50 groups, and you can post your blog to all 50 of those groups. But remember when it comes to blogs, quality is king, and bringing value to readers is key. If you are blogging for someone

else and want to use those blogs to demonstrate writing ability, the place to showcase the blogs is in "publications."

When writing blogs, don't advance your own thoughts on politics and religion, but do "give away the farm," Lewin suggested. "You have a community that wants information, and if they like what you offer, they will share it."

There are three ways to participate in LinkedIn groups. You can do so via your own blog posts or published clips, by asking a question of group members, or by participating in a discussion. Some discussions may have dozens of comments. You don't have to read all of them, but you shouldn't needlessly parrot others' comments.

At this point in his talk, Lewin turned to a topic audience members eagerly anticipated: How to use LinkedIn to get business. "There are really simple ways to do this," he said. Say you're searching for a potential client to approach in a manufacturing company. Targeting vice presidents of marketing for such companies, you would search on the right side for the word "marketing." Then move to filters to the left and click on "second-degree contacts" and location.

Then type in "manufacturing," and you can drill down further. Tell your second-degree contacts why you want to connect and whom you have in common.

Continued on page 7.

Did you know...



Do you think visually? Check out these writing tools that will spur your right brain.

Merriam Webster Visual Dictionary, <http://visual.merriam-webster.com> –

This is the online version of MW's book by the same name. Plug in a search term, for example, "tibia" and hit "go to." A number of thumbnail images will display including a skeleton of a gorilla, a horse, and a human. Click on any of the thumbnails to enlarge the image. Use the previous and next buttons to look at different views of the image. For instance, for the tibia, you can see anterior and posterior views. You can also search by theme (astronomy, transportation, plants, etc.). Very handy if you need to know the parts, say, of a hydraulic shovel.

Visual Writing Prompts, <http://visual-writingprompts.wordpress.com> –

If you do any type of creative writing, this nifty blog written primarily by blogger Luke Neff, provides you with an image along with a writing prompt. A recent example includes a photo of a house covered in snow and the prompt: "You realize you are merely a character in a snow globe. Convince your neighbors to help you break out." You can sort by type of writing (persuasive, descriptive, dialogue, etc.) or subject (arts, math, technology, science). Hours of fun just scrolling through the entries.

Visual Online Dictionary, <http://www.visuwords.com> –

Insert your search term and a kind of star diagram will pop up with related terms and words. Terms are color-coded by parts of speech, and like terms, examples, and even antonyms are linked by spokes from the search term. The key on the left side of the page helps you decipher what you're viewing. For extra merriment, manipulate the diagram and watch the image gently bob about on the screen. ■

Katherine Mikkelsen

Long-Tail Keywords: Fewer Website Hits, More Clients

Ranking well for competitive keywords is incredibly tough for freelance writers. Most everybody uses words like "freelance" and "writer," so it's pure luck if a prospective employer finds your needle in that haystack. That's where more specific and less-competitive keywords come in. We're talking about long-tail keywords. Never heard of them? Well, "head" terms like "freelance writer" are most often searched, but there are also way more writers using them. Long-tail keywords are

longer and much more specific, e.g., "physician-oriented freelance medical writer." That won't get you many hits, but when you do, bingo! you'll be among a select few — maybe the only one — with that orientation, and very likely to get a "conversion"

(client) or at least a crack at one. Experts cite conversion rates of 70 to 83 percent conversions with appropriately chosen long-tail keywords.

So, identifying the best long-tail keywords for your biz can separate you from the pack. Below are seven ways to help you do that. There may be some overlap between the suggestions here and the ones in the article on page 4, and the ideas may sometimes be interchangeably applicable to short-, mid-, and long-tail keywords.

1 Use Google-Related Searches

You know those Related Searches that appear at the bottom of the search-engine results page? In the Google search box, type in some potential search terms, then see what Google has added. See if any of them are a fit for you.

2 Use Keyword Research Tools

The free [Wordstream Keyword Tool](#) gives you 30 free searches before they slap on a hefty price tag, but if you plan ahead, you can make those searches count. This tool is purported to generate more long-tail keywords than most other tools. Their free [Keyword Niche Finder](#) works the same way: 30 free shots and after that, you pay through the nose.

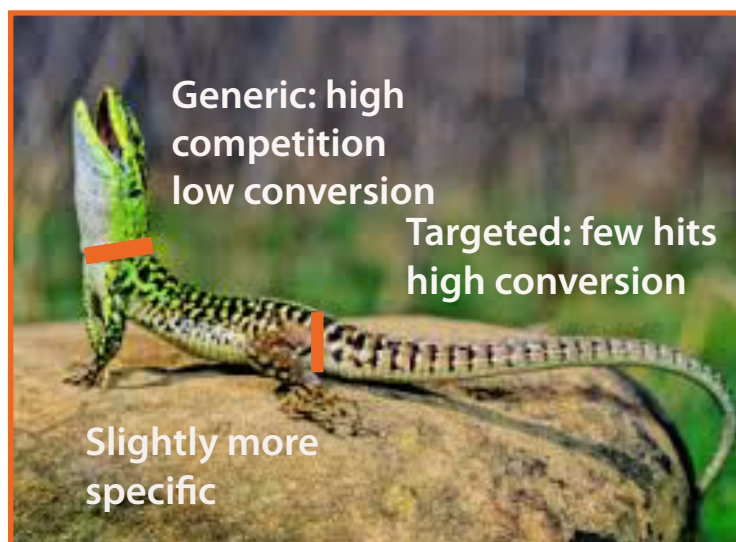
3 Try Google Trends

[Google Trends](#) tells you what topics are hot. Use it to see what searches are currently popular. I tried this, and it seems to be useful only if you enter topics you write or blog about. Here is a [link](#), though, to an article you might find useful. It's on how to use Google trends for SEO.

4 Check Out Your Analytics

Your analytics will reveal most of the keywords and phrases that have led visitors to your site. By pawing through these terms you may find some long-tail queries that are already driving traffic to your site. You can also see if you've had visitors at all. (Oddly, the majority of sites never have.)

Continued on page 7.



November Meeting Recap

Continued from page 5.

LinkedIn has 15 filters. Six you get for free; the rest you pay for. "However, you can drill down quite a bit by using the six free filters," Lewin said, adding that by paying for additional filters, you won't get specifics about an individual's needs.

You can also examine your connections and reach out to inquire about one with whom he or she is connected, who just might be seeking a writer.

"Offer to reciprocate; the more you give, the more you get," Lewin revealed. "You can also look through the connections of your connections and actually do a search for parameters like 'groups,' 'interests' or 'publications' that might interest you."

A perk obtained by popping for LinkedIn's paid version is the ability to see who is looking at your profile, which can alert you to connect with that person. "Perhaps you met five people at a networking event, and



you see one of them looked at your profile," Lewin said. "You know which one to contact."

The paid version also grants you three free "In" messages per month, which allows you to message someone with whom you are not connected. If they don't respond within a week, you pocket a refund.

One of the great things about LinkedIn, Lewin concluded, is that it isn't as time-consuming as some of us might have feared. "You should spend one or two hours a week on LinkedIn," he said. "And that's really not a lot."

Reach out to Brandon Lewin if you like at Brandon@imageperspective.com. His phone number is 224-244-5198. ■

— Jeff Steele

Long-Tail Keywords ...

Continued from page 6.

5 Browse eHow

Why do that? Well, sites like [eHow](http://eHow.com) use powerful algorithms to find long-tail keywords that they can rank for hyper-targeted content. You don't have their data sources or content algorithms, but you can learn from their methodology. If eHow is targeting a long-tail phrase, you can bet it has search volume.

6 Take a Look at Wikipedia

[Wikipedia](http://Wikipedia.com) ranks right up there as one of the most optimized sites on the 'Net. I typed in "Public Relations" and on the main page also got "marketing" and "publicity," not exactly long-tail keywords, but on the PR page itself, I also came up with "audience targeting," "messaging," "social media marketing," "strategic public relations," "audience focussed/centered," "integrated com-

munications," and "mass communications." Again, pretty short-tail, but perhaps useful. Depending on what you write about, it may or may not work for you, but it's worth a try..

7 Borrow from the Competition

Start with head and mid-tail terms. Then see what keyword variations are used on the pages that rank in the top five to ten spots. (For just plain "freelance writer," IWOC ranks fifth, you'll be happy to know.) The word "hire," appears often among the top ten. Other interesting possibilities include: "trusted by 1M+ companies (choose your own variation)" "get free quotes," and "flexible and cost-effective." These still are pretty short, but they do set the brain to working.

Happy tailing! And let me know if any of this stuff works out. ■

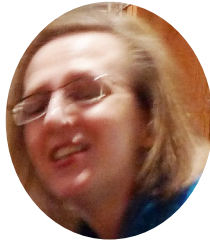
— JPK

Some Stats

Since this issue has two articles on improving hits to our websites with keywords, we thought we'd give you some stats on how people use searches. Some of what follows refers to "organic results," which are listings that come up on the search engine results page because they're relevant to the search terms. They are not ads, which are inorganic. Okay, here's what we found:

- 70% of the links that searchers click on are organic.
- 70-80% of users ignore the paid ads on the search results page.
- 81% of businesses consider their blog to be an important asset to their businesses. (Tip: learn how to blog.)
- "Search" is the #1 driver of traffic to content sites, beating social media by 300+%.
- Scoring biz through "you-do-it" pitches by direct mail or print have only a 1.7% success rate, compared to a 14.7% success rate for websites that have gussied up their key words, etc. ■

Holiday Party Honored Founders



In the next issue. . .



- **Feb. 10, IWOC Monthly Meeting.** IWOC member Barbara Barnett will reveal the secrets of becoming a successful blogger.
- **President's column:** Don't miss reading what's on Jim Kepler's mind. It's always interesting and sometimes provocative.
- Helpful tips on software, hardware, and/or just plain biz practices, and much more.

