

Handout from Branding Your Writing: A Workshop

Presented at ASJA2019 by Estelle Erasmus and Sherry Beck Paprocki

Estelle Erasmus, an award-winning journalist and writing coach is a guest editor for Narratively.com. She has written for Next Tribe, Next Avenue, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Family Circle Magazine, and more. She is the former magazine editor-in-chief of five national consumer publications and a longtime member of the American Society of Magazine Editors. Estelle hosts/curates the podcast, [ASJA Direct: Inside Intel on Getting Published and Paid Well](#). She is an adjunct writing professor at New York University (NYU) and teaches pitching, and personal essay writing for Writer's Digest.

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Offer: If you sign up for my newsletter of editor interviews, publishing tips and tricks at <https://bit.ly/2w1P9MX> I will analyze your **first five sentences** of a piece of writing up to 500 words and tell you how to make it better.

Sherry Beck Paprocki is an award winning editor, author and journalist. In 2018, she was named among Folio's Top Women in Media and the Folio:100 for creative thought leaders. She is the immediate past ASJA President. To learn more about the art of the successful freelance launch and the science behind building a strong business, contact her at paprockilt@cs.com or text (614) 537-7159.

Offer: Those attending today's workshop are entitled to a free 10-minute consultation via phone or Zoom regarding freelance brand strategy, career building or a favorite slow journalism project. She offers coaching on a limited basis. @sherrypaprocki

Crafting Your Brand

Craft and voice are what elevates a writer above all others. Establishing your professional voice, or your professional writing brand, requires you to understand some basic tenets of branding.

Define Your Niche Brand:

- Be authentic. It's OK if you have one main specialty in writing, but you can veer away from that to do other projects, too.
- Be transparent. It's OK to talk and write about other hobbies and passions, even if they are not among your top writing specialty areas.
- Understand that all professional brands are global. Anything you post on social media or the web will live on forever.

Defining Your Writing So It Stands Out:

- Add voice to your short pieces, with a beginning intro (doesn't have to be long, just a few sentences, and an ending conclusion with a personal slant (again, doesn't have to be long).
- Start to add journalistic bits to all of your pieces (research, quotes from experts or associations, or new authors or authors in the field).
- See if you can get a column at a smaller site, so you can then say to bigger US publications "I have a column in..."
- When writing align with the expert and comment on it—i.e. the expert told me—reminds the reader that the writer is still there.
- Consider asking to get a column in a UK site or other international site, and then you can tell your US clients or editors that you have a column. It makes you more of an expert.
- Try to focus your new pieces for the sites you already have relationships with only in the bucket (health, fitness, beauty, tech, you are interested in
- If there is a big name on the site you are writing for, reference that person's column in your writing. It will increase your reach.
- Pitch one off pieces to big sites to build your platform. Try sending to The NYT, The Washington Post, anywhere from the Op-Ed project, magazines. Check mastheads and do google, twitter and linked in searches for names. For FOB (front of the book) the pieces are very short--around 300 words. For those pitch 3-5 ideas at a time

Understand your target audience:

- Your readers and potential readers
- Your clients

Know your branding story and polish your elevator pitch.

- What is the three-sentence introduction you use when you meet someone who doesn't know your writing specialty?

Form strong bonds with your target audiences. Here are some ways to connect:

- Keep social media posts professional, even if they're personal.

- Share your articles on social media to make sure your audience always sees them and so that you can grow additional audience for your publications and books. Use Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.
- Be transparent on your professional website and your LinkedIn profile.
- Do podcasts and videos only if appropriate for your specialty area. Not every writer presents well on film, so be sure a video enhances your brand before you release it.
- Consider creating a regular email blast to update clients and other fans via Constant Contact or a similar program.
- Touch base with clients regularly via email. Ideally, always be gracious about the work this client provides to you.
- When appropriate meet clients for coffee or lunch. Get to know them on a personal level. A strong client will last a lifetime.