

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF JOURNALISTS AND AUTHORS

VOICES ON WRITING
DINAH LENNEY

REBELS WITH A CLAUSE
BANNED BOOKS WEEK

MILLER McCUNE REBORN
PACIFIC STANDARD

IN REMEMBRANCE
NORA EPHRON

The **asja** Monthly

VOLUME 61 • NUMBER 8 • SEPTEMBER 2012

 **HOW I LEARNED TO**

LOVE 

SOCIAL MEDIA

BY BRUCE W. FRASER

WE WRITE WHAT YOU READ



CONFIDENTIAL

FOR MEMBERS ONLY

HOW I LEARNED TO

LOVE



SOCIAL MEDIA

BY BRUCE W. FRASER

On a routine workday several months ago, I was discussing with my computer mentor which publications to approach for work. CNBC.com came up. We searched my LinkedIn contacts with keyword “CNBC” and found an editor who was a second-degree connection—we had one contact in common. I sent him a connection request, saying, “Hi, do you know if CNBC still uses freelancers? I wrote for them ‘back in the day.’”

Even though he didn’t know me, he volunteered the name

and email of the person I should contact. After some hesitation, I worked up the courage to email that editor who gave me an assignment, soon followed by another. No doubt what also helped was the fact I had written mutual fund stories steadily for the site several years go. So I wasn’t a total unknown.

Still, it was the first of several triumphs using LinkedIn and other social media sites. In some cases, rather than me going out searching, I was “found” through my LinkedIn profile and other profiles on sites like Media Bistro, Zerply, or Google+. One such experience on LinkedIn resulted in my significant other, photographer Beryl Goldberg, and I lurching at the Ritz-Carlton in New York with two executives from India. Beryl wasn’t the target of the encounter, but she landed an assignment.

Of the various social media available, LinkedIn and

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Bruce W. Fraser, a financial writer, lives in a Latino neighborhood on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and is taking Spanish lessons. He loves trying out his Spanish on his new friends there.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Eance are the ones I prefer. I don't use Facebook and think Twitter would just impede my workflow.

I find the real value in LinkedIn has been the ability to post updates and examples of my work regularly, link up with editors, generate respondents to my ideas, locate sources for stories, correspond with contacts in a professional but up-to-date manner, and join groups of like-minded people (such as oth-

on Eance during first quarter 2012 rose to 260,000. As I found out, it can take a fair amount of time to learn the ropes, and many of the jobs are low-paying.

Bidders can range up to, and sometimes pass, 100 for each job, including people in low-wage countries. Competing with them on price is folly.

But don't be scared off. Keep in mind that contractors want competent people working for them. Building a strong profile with great work samples makes it possible, in many cases, to bid

I'm working this year on getting involved with more social media outlets, but can tell you that Facebook has been a boon to my career.

er writers). Frequently, these groups, many of whom post daily, also post job listings. Most members like me are professionals who can lead me to work if mined correctly without self-promotion.

Besides the CNBC.com experience, another LinkedIn contact, a headhunter who discussed writing work for a Big Seven accounting firm, found me through my profile. That's pending.

Other ASJA members, however, report better results using Facebook, Twitter, as well as blogging, to promote their books and articles.

Eance (elance.com) essentially is a job site offering scores of freelance jobs in different categories. Contractors tend to be small to medium-sized businesses. Users are invited to bid on jobs, giving dollar amounts by the project or hour, and Eance takes a cut of those bids that are awarded.

Reportedly, the number of new contractors who registered

above their price at market rates. As members of ASJA, we already outshine most freelance writer bidders.

On one Eance job, I bid well above the asked bid. I obtained the job, writing a series of press releases, as well as a "thought leadership" piece for which I was paid in advance. Beryl landed some media work with the same client.

Both ASJA members Irene S. Levine, Ph.D., and Mickey Goodman have found Facebook and Twitter work best for them.

Using both, Levine, a psychologist, author, and blogger, says she quickly recruited more than 1,500 respondents to a survey on female friendship that helped her form and shape the content of the manuscript to her book on the same subject.

According to Levine, her blog about friendship (TheFriendshipBlog.com), which also serves as a vehicle for book sales, garnered over 200,000 hits from nearly 200 countries last year, and nearly 250,000 hits in the first half of 2012 alone.

Social Media Tips

A number of websites offer tips on how to best use social media, such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. Following are a few of those websites and tips they offer. Some are written geared to business practice, but are certainly relevant for writers

Twitter Tips from twitertips.org

1. Optimize your Profile to get more followers.
2. Avoid being filtered from Twitter Search. Do not send the same message every few seconds. Don't spam.
3. Do not send senseless messages. It's reported that even seasoned twitters do this.

LinkedIn From forbes.com's "27 LinkedIn Tips"

LinkedIn Best Practices for entrepreneurs with much useful information for anyone:

- Make sure your name is correct with no extra information to cause confusion.
- Continue to update your Profile and attach a Skill Set along with links to your work.
- Connect with new contacts via email, voice mail or an exchange of business card. Tell them you plan to connect via LinkedIn as well.

For more, visit: socialmediaexaminer.com/LinkedIn-tips-business-building

Facebook Tips from facebook.com/facebooktips

1. Join the New to Facebook group to have your questions answered.
2. If you are not sure what a feature or setting does, you can go to FacebookGlossary

Mashable.com/guidebooks/facebook Includes:

1. Facebook 101: The basics
2. Managing Your Facebook Wall
3. Using Facebook for Business

eLance Tips from elance.com

- Create a compelling profile and post a photo.
- Provide a detailed description of your past experience.
- Craft a winning bid, and respond with a clear plan of how to complete each step, giving a deadline.
- Above all, don't undervalue your services.

"Its Google ranking has made me the go-to expert for media inquiries on this topic," says Levine.

More recently, Levine has moved into travel writing and developed a travel website (moretimetotravel.com). Travel editors, she says, "won't even consider hiring travel writers who aren't social media-savvy," and use 'hits' as a measure of a writer's value to the publication.

"Participating in social media is as important as having a website or business card," says Levine.

Goodman says she has a "love-hate" affair with social media. "Love keeping up with friends and online writer buddies, but hate the magnetic appeal that lures me away from work."

On the other hand, she says, Facebook was a major factor in the launch of her book with Holocaust survivor Eva Friedlander (*Nine Lives of a Marriage - A Curious Journey*). "I created a fan page and invited people to our launch party at the Breman Jewish Heritage & Holocaust Museum in Atlanta. Nearly 300 turned out; it was the largest turnout for any signing at the museum ever, and best of all, more books sold than ever before (a portion of the proceeds went to the museum). I credit Facebook for spreading the word."

ASJA member Lisa Iannucci, a prolific book and article writer, says she mostly uses Facebook, although she has a presence on LinkedIn, and has been using Twitter for a short period of time. "I can tell you that on Facebook, I've actually made money. It's because I searched up old editors, found editors that I worked with before and lost touch with, found sources for articles and promoted my work, which has led to new clients. I'm working this year on getting involved with more social media outlets, but can tell you that Facebook has been a boon to my career."

Business writer Janice Fioravante, a budding user of social media, represents many of us freelancers today, myself included, transitioning into the digital age.

Says Fioravante: "I have made halting progress. I've joined groups and saw for the first time that if you need to get in touch with a source and he is a member of one of your groups, you can send a message through the group. So by slow exploring and desperate need, I'm beginning to see the usefulness of social media."

A long the way in my journey into social media, I've engaged several computer mentors who have helped me overcome my phobia about technology and coached me on social media. After I advertised with Stuyvesant High School's guidance office, I was contacted by a student who

arrived at my apartment door in the East 20s accompanied by his mother. He helped me build my first website and worked for me through his senior year, and even occasionally during his years at Cornell. I was able to repay the favor partially by giving him a good recommendation for the CIA. Wall Street won out.

His sister also worked for me for a time. In fact, the superintendent of my building, observing this attractive young woman entering my apartment for the third time, soon after knocked on the door under the pretense that he may have left his keys as he had been working there earlier. He was visibly disappointed to see her working industriously at my computer.

There were others, all college students at best one-third my age. Sarah Beck, my current computer mentor, is a pre-med student in her 30s at City College (CCNY).

Bless gentle Sarah. She began our acquaintance six months ago by emphatically ordering me to give up my AOL email.

"It dates you," she said. So far, I've resisted—but I know she's right.

Besides helping me learn LinkedIn procedures, one of her biggest contributions was to overhaul my website, (bwfrascr.com), making it more user-friendly. It's been a factor in my social networking and been instrumental in helping me gain work. My homepage contains a short description of my talents with a landscape image. Sarah recommends I post my photograph there, and also on my LinkedIn profile. Folks won't hire me if they see a writer with gray hair, I said.

"Nonsense," Sarah said. "They want to see who they're dealing with."

She added 50 skills to my profile, many of which I actually possess. That feature alone has resulted in several inquiries about my services.

I've been schooled at ASJA social media forums and other venues to offer up useful information to peers, instead of blatantly promoting yourself, and understand that it can eventually pay dividends. The New York Chapter of ASJA has sponsored some social media forums that I've found useful.

Besides Beryl, two of my best friends in ASJA, Norman Schreiber and business writer Fioravante, have encouraged and supported my efforts.

Perhaps the greatest benefit I have gained is a newfound confidence. I am now engaged in turning a millionaire's book project into an ebook, and am researching another book project on successful entrepreneurs.

Social media has changed my whole outlook on technology for the better, as it has for many other ASJA members.

Maybe I'll change my AOL address, after all. ♦

The
asja Monthly

is now searchable.

**To find a past article, author, or mention
in back issues of *The ASJA Monthly* ...**

The ASJA Monthly archive is here:
www.asja.org/members/newspriv

A searchable index is here:
www.asja.org/members/newsindex
(on the menu left side of most member pages)

The ability to search the pdf files is here:
www.asja.org/members/newspriv/search.php