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Introduce Yourself to Local Markets

By Kay Bolden

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A minor political scandal broke in the small Mississippi town where I was living, and the local paper scrambled to cover all the angles. Unfortunately, most of their writers lived in larger cities at least 50 miles away — which, if you know Mississippians, might as well be in another country.

The initial stories were peppered with inaccuracies about the town and the political scene. Like the rest of the locals, I was irritated by all the errors, and almost stopped reading the paper altogether. But then, one day, I noticed little sprites, dancing all over the paper. Could those possibly be ... dollar sign\$?

I sat down and dashed off a bold letter to the editor, proposing a follow-up story with quotes from residents and an interview with the political whistleblower — who just happened to live 2 houses away from me, and often gave me gardening advice. I had no clips at the time, unless you count the poetry contest I won in 11th grade.

But within 24 hours, I had an assignment.

Weeklies, small dailies and regional tabloids lack the cachet of the big, metro papers or the national glossies; they are often overlooked by freelancers. A working writer can find some golden opportunities with a simple letter of introduction and a few follow-up phone calls.

1. Identify the editors of small newspapers, shoppers' guides and local publications in your area who need to produce regular features, news items with a local spin, and home-grown human

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interest stories. If you live in a very small town, take a look at the next county as well.

2. Don't forget about businesses that send out regular newsletters, like the tourist bureaus, the Rotary Club and the local junior college. Someone has to write that copy -- why not you?

3. Pare down your list based on your own writing skills and interests. If you understand education issues, pitch a school resource guide to the Chamber of Commerce; they get requests from new residents and visitors all the time. If finance is your beat, write a piece called "How to Make Your Vacation Pay for Itself" for

the regional travel mag. Like to write about food? Propose a new cooking or restaurant column to the weekly paper.

4. Introduce yourself! Write a short but powerful letter of introduction to each potential market, personalizing each letter with the editor's correct name and title. This one has worked for me:

Smiley Face News

Anytown, USA

Dear Editor –

I am a freelance writer in Anytown, specializing in travel and in parenting issues. My work has been published in numerous print and online publications, including ABC and XYZ. As you can see from my clips, I have covered a wide range of local and regional topics. Additional samples are available on my professional website, www.myname.com.

I am currently available to work on a variety of assignments, including feature stories, guest columns, interviews and round-ups of regional events. I believe my experience and abilities are well-suited to your publication.

I look forward to discussing your current needs! May I contact you during the next week to propose a few articles? If you have any questions, or need more information, I can be reached at 111-222-3344.

Sincerely,

Writer With A Purpose

5. Make those calls! Be charming, professional and brief. Have a few ideas to toss out. Make an appointment, take your relevant clips and figure out how you can help this newspaper or mag better serve its readers this year.

A final note: do your best work and meet your deadlines. One happy editor leads to another, and another, and another ...

Kay Bolden publishes FamilyFest Newsletter, a free online magazine for families of all shapes and sizes, and is the author of Think Outside the Minivan: A Guide to Travel with Kids, available at <http://www.kaybolden.com>. She earns vacation money by writing for weekly newspapers and travel agencies.

What Can Go Into A Plot?

By Nick Vernon

Creative Writing Tips -

We all tackle plotting differently. How you plot will be individual to you, as it is with every writer.

Below is an outline of what can go into a plot. How much you choose to develop each point is entirely up to you.

So some basic questions to ask are... Briefly what your story is about The theme? Main Characters

For main characters it's best to write a full biography of them. Secondary Characters Who are

they? What will their role be? What is their relationship with main character? Beginning of the story

Viewpoint - who will be telling the story? Setting - where will the story take place? How will you

introduce main character? How will you introduce other characters? How will the story begin? What will happen in the beginning? What is the conflict? What is the character's goal? How will the conflict prevent the character from reaching his goal? What's motivating the character? Middle of the story What will happen in the beginning section, of the middle of your story? How will this be tied to the beginning of your story? What will happen in the middle section, of the middle of your story? What will happen in the end section, of the middle of your story? What events are going to occur? How will you show your character's personality? What problems are you going to introduce? (List each problem and how the character solves it) How are you going to make things harder for your character? What will happen in the climax? End of the story Will the character achieve his goal?

How will he or won't he achieve it? What's going to happen in the end? How are you going to end

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your story?

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Or if you prefer you can plot in scenes...

First, figure out how many scenes your story will contain. Then plot each scene.

Scene one Setting Introduce characters Introduce conflict Introduce goals What will happen in the first scene? How will your first scene develop the character and the story?

Scene two Introduce first problem What does the character feel about this? What does he think? Have the character solve the problem Begin making things harder for him How will the second scene develop the character and the story?

Scene three Throw another obstacle in your character's path Have him solve it How will the third scene develop the character and the story?

Etc...

How you plot doesn't matter. The most important thing is To plot.

Besides his passion for writing, Nick Vernon runs an online gift site where you will find gift information, articles and readers' funny stories. Visit

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A Third Of Us Real Estate Still Appreciating  
The Biggest Internet Marketing Mistake Ever  
Bull Markets And Bear Markets  
Profitable Websites for Exclusive Industries

Write Around The World FREE!

Insider Secrets to Flea Market Profits  
Baby's First Year –What Parent Needs To Know  
One Million a Year  
The Toaster's Handbook



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