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**Stop Struggling and Write Your Article**

**By David Roddis**

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Don't let overwhelm hold you back— follow this expert advice and start writing your promotional article today.

As a writing coach, I frequently work with independent professionals who have great ideas for promotional articles, but no idea how to start writing them. Here are the first three of six essential steps to help you get clear about your subject, kick-start your process, and ensure your article is ready to go.

1. Have something you really, really want to say. It seems obvious, but before you write, make sure there's a point you want to make, a story you want to tell, advice you just have to give. You've got to be a little bit burning to write, or your message will ramble, you'll be bored, and there'll be no connection with your reader.

Before you write, see if you can state the kernel of what you want to say in one sentence. If you can make it intriguing, all the better:

"Here are six guaranteed ways to kick-start your writing."

"Here's why my divorce was hell and how you can avoid that experience."

"The best way to have a tidy office is to get rid of your office."

If you can't state your premise in one sentence, either you're not clear on your message or you have more than one topic. Take some time and get clear on that single thing you want to say. We want one topic in depth, not skimming the surface of several.

If you're stuck on your article, or getting bogged down or confused as you write, you can be sure you need more focus. So take a deep breath and put your article away until you can state your one-sentence premise.

## Stop Struggling and Write Your Article

2. Create an outline. I used to be one of those "jump in, bang ahead and follow your nose" type of writers. And guess what? Every time I tried to write, I'd run out of steam. I'd lose focus, so I wouldn't finish; or, if I did finish, I'd have to edit a huge, rambling mess. Ugh. The whole process took weeks and was extremely discouraging.

You see, I was writing fiction, and I had this idea that it was more "creative" and "artistic" to just jump in. Making an outline seemed so predictable and dull.

My awakening came when I began writing non-fiction articles. Here's why: I had to communicate a message, and communicate it clearly. I had to write coherent, logical paragraphs, in strong, simple language. And I couldn't take weeks to write every article, or I'd be, well, pretty darn old before anything was ready.

So, give me predictable and dull (for process, that is—not results!). Starting with an outline frees up my energy and attention for the actual writing and saves me one to two complete days of editing per article.

A great way to create an outline is to read other people's articles, analyse their structure, and use that structure for your own. Be sure to choose well-written articles by established professionals in your field.

Here's an example of an outline I created by deconstructing an article I'd read:

intriguing introduction

statement of the problem

case history to demonstrate your solution

list of practical tips

upbeat conclusion

Fill this out in point form, making sure that there's a logical progression of thoughts. Then flesh out your points. You can write a first draft of a 1,500-word article in a day or two, put it away for a day, go back and tighten it up. You're done.

Please note—using an article's structure is fine, using someone else's words is plagiarism (theft of their intellectual property).

Here's the great part: You can simply use the same structure over and over. No one will notice, or care, because the content will be different each time.

3. Consider using lists. People love to know the 10 best ways, the five secrets, the 12 essentials. Be honest—don't you always take a peek at an article whose title promises "Five ways to enhance your love life" or "10 secrets to financial independence"? There's something almost addictive about reading

these lists, like nibbling popcorn or potato chips.

Here's my take on what makes lists enticing:

Readers love the tidbit form. The items in the list break up your article into manageable chunks of information, and also provide visual clues for skimming the page. Face it, you've done some of the reader's work for her (and who isn't grateful for a bit less work?).

Lists create an air of authority and credibility. After all, it takes confidence to promise "the 10 best ways" to do something.

This format creates a ready-made action plan for the reader.

For you, the writer, a list makes the process much less daunting. It's less stressful to tackle writing your article if you know that you can divide it into five or 12 info-bytes comprising a paragraph or two each.

And lists force you to be concise and direct.

You can use a list as the structure for your entire article, or you can include a list within a longer, more narrative-style piece of writing. One way to do this is to offer your reader a concluding list of practical tips coming out of your article's premise.

This is a great strategy for staying connected with your readers. If you're discussing "big" concepts that threaten to become too vague, give your reader an agenda:

"Now that we've discussed the importance of being organized at work, here are five actions you can take.

David Roddis, The Writers' Coach, helps independent professionals write killer marketing copy, promotional articles and information products that attract more clients. Go to <http://www.coachdavid.ca/fasttrack1> to join his mailing list and receive a free copy of "12 questions to fast-track your article". For more information, visit <http://www.coachdavid.ca>

### **Struggling to Make a Decision?**

**By Jeremy Gossman**

Every great success story begins when a person makes a decision to do something or not to do something. They make a clear decision to make a significant change.

## Stop Struggling and Write Your Article

Amidst all the opportunity in the world many people either become scattered and try to much at once or don't know where to begin.

So where should people start?

I believe people need to start with themselves. Decide what you want from this life and what you want to be.

1. What type of character traits and skills do you want?
2. What type of things do you want for yourself and family?
3. What are your financial desires for this year on up to 20+ years?

Write out as many ideas as you can for each category then select your top 3 from each category.

You will now have 9 top items. Look at each one and write why you want each of the 9 to happen.

The "Why" is the fuel for change and for you to achieve your dreams.

If your "why" is strong enough, nothing will stop you.

So take sometime today and find your What and why?

Write it down and keep it in front of you and review your list daily.

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