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The Stuff E-mail Queries are Made of

By Mridu Khullar (<http://www.WritersCrossing.com>)

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Your mother always told you how first impressions were extremely important. That's why whenever you go to meet an editor, you dress impeccably, walk confidently and talk as if you just got out of training with Oprah Winfrey.

But as you sit down to write that e-mail query, you forget everything your mother told you and send editors a query that inevitably brings home rejection. The subject line reads "Query" or something in close proximity with the language spammers use—"Become Debt Free Today". You write your e-mail address and Web address, but leave out other information such as your postal address and phone number. And of course, since it's an e-mail query, you don't include clips. After all, the editor explicitly mentioned no attachments, right?

After sending out a dozen queries of this sort, many writers sit in front of their computers hoping that some editor will respond. When no one does, they wonder why their queries aren't getting enough response, even though they did everything right.

But you know what— there's a better way. E-mail is the way to go today, so your queries should hit the mark right away. Here are some tips that will melt the toughest of editors.

For starters, get the subject line right. You're a writer—so be creative. Instead of writing "query" or "submission" or even the name of the magazine, how about using the title of your article? And I don't have to tell you that the title you choose should be informative, witty and creative, do I? It doesn't always have to be funny, but it has to be interesting. Here's the format I usually follow for my subject lines:

Query: Creative Article Title

Try to avoid titles that read like spam. "Lose Weight Easily" can be rephrased as "10 Ways to Keep Fit". Similarly, "Discover Singles in Your Area" is a line spammers love to use, so you could use something more attention-grabbing and less spam-seeming such as "The Top 10 Places to Find your

Soul Mate." Notice the difference?

Write your e-mail query as if you were writing a normal query. Induce in it the same passion, the same commitment and the same confidence that you would like to project in a query sent by snail mail. Forget the mantra that editors will delete long queries. Not a chance. If you've sparked the interest of an editor, do you think she's going to stop reading simply because it exceeded her one page limit? Nope.

As in a mailed query, take the time and space you need to get the editor's attention. But refrain from rambling. Generally, your query (e-mail or otherwise) should fit into two pages or less. More than that, and you're giving away too much. They should be succinct, to-the-point, and if you've done your job well, you'll have the editor asking for more. Always include your address and phone number should the

editor feel like calling and giving you the assignment.

Remember how editors are busy people? That's why, instead of sending them hyperlinks of all the articles you've ever written, send in three or four relevant clips of your best work. And yes, attachments are strictly prohibited. Instead, include your article as text in your e-mail. But what about the pretty pictures and the beautiful fonts? Well, that's why, above the article, include the link to the article. If the editor has the time or the inclination, she can go online and view it in its full glory. If not, you're sending the material in the email so she doesn't have to wander around cyberspace looking for your great creations.

E-mail queries aren't much different from snail mail ones. If your query is professional, presented in an original style and makes the editor sit on the edge of her seat, you've got a winner. And always remember what mom preached— first impressions do count.

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Mridu Khullar is the editor-in-chief of www.WritersCrossing.com, a free online magazine for writers. Sign up for the free weekly newsletter to get a complimentary e-book with 400+ paying markets. Also check out her e-book, "Knock Their Socks Off! A Freelance Writer's Guide to Query Letters That Sell," available at <http://www.writerscrossing.com/queries.html>

Marketing 102 - Aiming vs. Spraying

By Marsha Kopan

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Pick up the stack of mail that you receive in the mail today. How much of it do you consider "junk" mail? Do you stand over the wastebasket and take the "he loves me, he loves me not" approach to it tossing about every third piece in the trash

without even opening it.

For the next week, rather than tossing that junk in the trash, hang on to it for evaluation purposes after reading this article.

After tossing out what you have considered to be junk mail, do you still have stuff that you've opened but goes immediately to the trash without reading it? Ok, for this same next week set that stuff in another pile.

Now after putting all the other mail in its proper queue lets see what's left. You now may have some mail left that needs your attention but not in terms of paying a bill, answering a client or depositing that customer check.

What is it? It is mail that perks your interest to build your business, give you a new perspective on success or makes an offer you just can't pass up. How did this mail bypass the garbage?

First of all 99.9% of it was in an envelope personally addressed to you with a real stamp or it was someone or a company that is of interest to you. The mere presentation could have been the key to your opening it. Examine this mail very carefully to see why you decided to open it and if you would take any action on it. Go back and evaluate the other batches of mail that you've saved. Decide what makes you immediately discard it.

Now, when developing your direct mail advertising consider what you've just learned about yourself and keep in mind that 99% of others do the same thing.

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