

Quality over quantity



By [Marion Scher](#)

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When I first started writing, I wanted to know how I could be the best writer possible in my field. The best advice I could find was write every day.

It doesn't matter what you write, just write. I thought at the time that was pretty good advice and I still see the merit BUT I now know that it's not the volume you write that counts it's more a case of making every word worth reading.

Today much of the writing done by 'professionals' and the not-so professionals is content writing - and this often means quantity is king. Just gotta fill the page - don't leave any blank places.

This is what I'm finding more and more when called in either to consult or train existing writing staff. Quality - minimum, quantity - maximum. Result: a lot of words, badly written and often unreadable.

The other problem is whether the subject matter is in fact interesting enough for people to want to read. Once a topic has been in the news for a day or two, often all the angles have been used up, so instead of just rewriting what's gone before, why not try and think out of the box and come up with something original?

Where are the Ws? And the H?

For instance if you go on Twitter right now you'll find numerous links to stories on the situation in the Middle East as well as strikes, kidnapped children and hijacking. All topical, newsworthy pieces. But what happens when you've read the basic story, how many times can you read the five Ws and an H (what, where, when, why, who and how)?

So you look at stories springing from the latest news. If you're writing around current affairs, why not interview someone who's actually lived in Gaza or Israel for their views on the situation and here I'm talking about an ordinary person who has intimate knowledge of what it's like to live either under siege or with rockets coming at them day after day. The real story.

And kidnapped children and hijacking. Maybe a story on what to do if you're hijacked with small children in the car. Where should your children sit in the car so you can get them out easily? How do you deal with this situation?

Or perhaps mob justice, as we've also heard about in the past few days. What is it like living in areas where crime is running rampant and the local police don't appear to be doing too much. The bottom line is get off your chair, off your computer and go out there and find a good story. That is how you become a good writer.

Make it interesting, make it relevant, make every word count

Even if the content you're writing is not around news issues, but perhaps in the banking field. So what's new there? How to avoid being scammed?

Most banking sites have stories on retirement annuities and planning for retirement but what 20 something is going to read that. And it's the 20-somethings who should be reading that!

If you wrote the real story of 65-year-old Joe Soap, who can't afford to retire because he had made absolutely no financial plans until he was in his 50s or 60s (a very real story) you might find more readers. If, next to this you had a infographic of how, by investing a minimal amount of your salary each month from the day you start work, you could be financially independent by 40, you might find those stories are not only read but produce real results.

Look at the Steve and Eugene ads... They have bought enormous business for their banks! Or in Steve's case for the other bank...

It's a case of making every word count and on that note when you're commissioning someone to write for you give them a word count. Don't just say write until you finish, especially if you're paying per word. Rather have fewer words that count than more words that fade away...

ABOUT MARION SCHER

Marion Scher (www.mediamentors.co.za) is an award-winning journalist, lecturer, media trainer and consultant with 25 years' experience in the industry. For more of her writing, go to her Bizcommunity profile or to Twitter @marionscher.

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