



Swanwick: The Complete Article Writer - Workshop 2 Handout

MARKET ANALYSIS

- **Adverts** - what are they advertising? Who are they advertising to? What age range does the average reader fall in to? (This is easier to determine in some magazines than others.) What life stage is the reader at? How well-educated is the reader - generally, or about the subject matter they're reading about? (Gardening magazines - do they use the common names of plants or the Latin names?) How wealthy is the reader? What impact does this have on your topic?
- **Contents page** - Who are the staff? Do their names appear regularly throughout the publication?
- **Strapline** - does the magazine have a strapline? What does it suggest?
- **Letters page** - this is info from the readers, so what are they writing about? Where are they writing from?
- **Magazine Template** - does the magazine follow clear defined sections (News, travel, fashion, money, home, etc)? If so, where will your idea best fit?
- **Other Page Objects** - what else accompanies the articles? Photos, boxouts, sidebars, information panels? Do these follow a set theme?

Spending time analysing a target publication for freelancing opportunities is never time wasted. If it takes you half an hour to realise that a magazine has no freelance opportunities, then that half an hour has saved you from wasting several hours writing something that the editor will reject.

Step 1:

- How much of the publication is written by staff? Compare the names of the article writers with those that appear on the staff list. The more names that don't appear on the staff list, the more freelance potential there is.
- Look for magazines showing who 'This Issue's Contributors are' because these will be freelance writers.
- Study more than one issue of a magazine. This will help identify which 'columns' or 'slots' in a magazine may be freelance written, but also which ones are written by the same freelancer in each issue. (Avoid these.)
- Check the staff list for a 'Commissioning Editor' - this is a good sign! A Commissioning Editor commissions work from outside - in other words - freelancers! So, if there is a commissioning editor - they use freelance written material.
- Some of the glossier magazines seem to have many editors: An Editor-in-Chief, or Editor-at-Large, then an Editor, a Commissioning Editor, or a Features Editor. When approaching a magazine with an article, or idea, send it to the commissioning editor, or features editor, rather than the Editor-at-Large, who won't be involved in the day-to-day running of the magazine - and may actually oversee three or four different publications.

Step 2:

- Now go through the magazine looking at its template. Looking through two issues of the same publication at the same time can be immensely helpful. Turning the same pages in both issues simultaneously will illustrate the publication's template. You'll see the same 'sections' on the same pages (and possibly even the same adverts). Get an understanding of these sections. Is the magazine split into clearly defined pages - Health, Gardening, Homes, Food, etc? If so, be clear where your idea best fits.
- As you go through, identify any articles or sections where you think freelance opportunities exist. Turn the corners of the pages, or stick Post-It notes on them so you can refer back to them quickly.

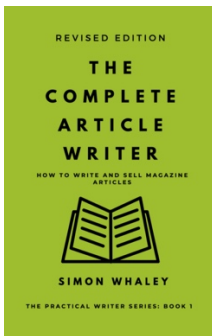
Step 3:

- Now analyse those freelance written pieces. What do you notice about them?

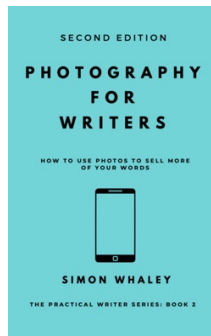
- Are the words provided by one person, and the photos by someone else - or does one person provide both?
- How long are the articles?
- Count the number of words in a paragraph.
- Then divide it by the number of lines in that paragraph to give you a rough 'words-per-line' count.
- Then count the number of lines in a column.
- Multiply this by the number of columns.
- Then multiply by your 'words-per-line' figure to get a rough word count.
- Round this to the nearest 50.
- Study the style of the article. Is it written in first person (I did this, I did that) or the second person (you can do this, you can do that) or is it written in the third person (he did this, he did that)?
- How long are the sentences?
- How long are the paragraphs?
- What sort of language do they use? Do they use words of three or four syllables? Do they use technical terms? Do they explain all technical terms, or is the readership qualified and educated enough to understand those technical terms?
- What are the titles like? Are they to the point, a play on words, or sensational?
- What are the opening and closing paragraphs like? Do they grab the reader with a startling fact, or do they set the scene, quite gently?
- Do they use quotes from experts? If every article you see uses quotes, then you know your article will need them too.
- How does the article look on the printed page? Are there sub-headings, bullet points, or extra information panels? If so, you need to be thinking about providing the same for your piece too.

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