

## **Steps to Making Approach to Editor (*Magazine Writing*)**

1. You have made an observation of something (whether an occurrence in your daily routine, an item currently in the news, or one you discover through your search of archives or in discussions with persons you know).
2. You have identified the basic story idea that can flow from this observation or research.
3. You have done some additional research to flesh out people and begin to identify an angle for your story.
4. You have identified several publishing possibilities, several magazines that appear to publish the kind of story you have in mind.
5. You have examined the magazines and their online media kit and writers' guidelines to determine their focus and niches.
6. You have evaluated the magazines' readers to determine their needs and interests, as well as their characteristics.
7. As a result of these steps, you have fine-tuned your basic story idea, sharpening the angle further to appeal to particular readers.
8. Now you must approach magazine editors to pitch the story you want to sell.

### **Basic Ground Rules:**

- Start with short department piece (front- or back-of-book, or online)
- Stay attuned to the needs of the young editors of these sections—deliver spot-on stories
- Editors want to help shape stories (for style and tone)—therefore unsolicited not as effective
- Litigation
- Most editors don't have time to review a fully developed piece that, based on their experience, likely will not be on point for the magazine.
- Don't telephone pitch—most editors find it annoying

### **The Idea:**

- Flesh out the story—identify scope of story, sources of interviews
- What is the key mission of magazine?
- Is your piece distinctively fresh, updated
- Look at what the magazine's competitors are doing

- Show you have access to resources (interviews, sources, experts, anecdotes, etc.)

## **Writing**

Writing well and on deadline is *vital*

Some form of letterhead (return address, telephone number, email address—no garish colors)

## **Checklist**

- Double/triple check the information about the editor (name, spelling, position, etc.)
- Magazine writer's guidelines are sometimes useful
- If not sure after research on your own—chick with a phone call (administrative assistance can be helpful)

**Voice** – Work for clarity and precision of language

## **Elements of the Query**

- What is it about?
- Who is it about?
- Who is affected?
- Who will you include as your sources?
- Do you list any experts?
- Who are the real people who are examples of or affected by the phenomenon?
- Is the query letter a combination story summary and sales pitch?
- Think “Headline.”
- Who are you and why should an editor trust you with the assignment?
- Did the author demonstrate the reason for such trust with the nature and quality of their query?
- Does the author conclude the pitch with a summary of any special knowledge or background experience to show that they are the best writer for the article?
- Any unique access to the sources?

## **Form**

- Working title
- Lead – hook the editor
- Synopsis
- Sources
- Bio
- Packaging: letter, resume, writing samples
- Conclusion – Call editor to action. Something like: “I look forward to talking with you about the possibilities,” or, “I look forward to expanding on tis ideas as soon as you have had a chance to consider this topic.”