

WRITE TO LEAD

*10 KICKSTART ACTIONS TO
SHAPE / SHIP / BROADCAST
YOUR DISTINCT MESSAGE*



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WRITE TO LEAD

When you lead with your words, you cannot hide in the back. When you write to lead, you dare to stand up, stand out, and stand for your ideas. When you write to lead, you are willing to start a new conversation and tell a new story.

Maybe you want to tell a new story about health and wellness, or you yearn to start a new conversation about productivity or creativity. Maybe for now you only have inklings of ideas yet years of accrued experience and knowledge. You're not even sure yet what conversation or story is waiting for you to lead it.

That's okay. The act of writing itself is the best means to discover and to get clear on what you uniquely have to say, how to say it, why it matters, and who needs to hear it.

But here's the thing. If you do have ideas and knowledge and tools that could help people, it's time to stop hiding them. Now more than ever we have unprecedented access to information and knowledge. So why would you want to contribute more to the digital detritus? Because above the din and beyond the chaff you have something substantial and useful to share.

You have your own verse to add to the conversation.



When you Write to Lead you

- **become attractive and captivating to more people** who want more of what you have to offer
- **become elevating as your content genuinely improves** the way your people think, feel, act, or live
- **become recognized within your field** by your peers as someone trustworthy to collaborate with and learn from
- **build your platform of trustworthiness** for future revenue streams that add more value to your people's lives
- **open yourself up** to greater unexpected opportunities

YOUR RESISTANCE

You've built or are building your venture, enterprise, or business. You know about blogging. You know or have heard about content marketing. You know about social media. You know online publications exist.

You also know that writing is bar none the most valuable tool for you to broadcast your best ideas.

But how do you get your message out into the digital world consistently and in a way that will help you expand your reach and influence?

If you are like many of the thousands of people I have helped over the past thirty years shape and ship their ideas, one or more of four things stump you.

You resist building your writing muscle each week.

You think your writing has no life or voice of its own.

The strategies of publishing and broadcasting your message strategically online still elude you.

You don't want to add to the din of digital publishing when no one seems to be listening.

FROM RESISTANCE TO IMPACT

I get all of these resistances. Even though I had my first website in 2003 with a growing email list and a book coming out with Penguin the next year, I resisted every other form of the online world for the next six years. Seriously. I thought "surfing" was an Internet bum's waste of time. Facebook seemed like a nightmare of reuniting with middle school friends - a time of pimply puberty. Twitter? Too close to "twit." "Blogging" seemed like self-absorbed diary-keeping.

But in 2009, three things converged.

An editor at Psychology Today asked if I would write a blog based on my research

in and endless curiosity about the science of creativity. The same year I was fiction editor at Tiferet Journal, and the publisher asked if I would write a blog on writing and creativity with my own edge of meaning and practice. I said “Yes” and “Yes.” Both venues gave me built-in audiences, clear content focus, and subject matter not focused on my private lunch fare or early morning neuroses (my broken frame of what blogging was about). My business also launched an updated website that more accurately matched the quality of work we were doing.

The third thing was my agent suggested I at last get acquainted with the “blogosphere.” “When people think of wonder and creativity,” she said, “they need to think of you.” Hmm.

My obsession with wonder – this cognitive and emotional experience that dissolves our habitual ways of seeing things – had already set in. So, I used both platforms as vehicles to test out ideas and to test whether I liked the blogosphere.

I was a little intimidated at first to be publishing at [Psychology Today](#), but here’s what helped me get over it. I committed to writing that blog in my own voice in my own way.

And here’s what surprised me. I loved blogging.

- I have more ideas than I can ever publish through traditional means.
- Blogging helps me get clear on what I have to say.
- Blogging helps me help people with valuable ideas. I love to share ideas. I love making a difference.
- Blogging puts a pleasurable pressure on me to produce and publish.
- Blogging puts me in touch with readers in “live digital time” from around the world.

Then I found my field. I discovered other voices in the field of creativity and the creative life whom I resonated with – [Scott Belsky’s 99u](#), [Jonathan Fields’s](#) early “awake at the wheel” blog, Michael Bungay Stainer’s [Box of Crayons](#) content. I

followed, read, commented on, shared, and engaged their content. Once I saw the way Scott, Jonathan, Michael, and others produced content, I felt lit up to stop hiding. I stood up and stood for ideas burning in me to clarify and share.

And, yes, I stood out. Introverted, private, quiet, quirky me - I stood out in my own way. People in the field took notice. They noticed not because I built a U2-sized stage or grabbed a megaphone or paid for an online billboard with my face on it and said, "Hey! Look at me! Listen to me!"

They noticed because of what I produced and how. Consistently. With my point of view and voice borne from, well, lots of work.

The content I published at [Psychology Today](#) has led to numerous interviews for newspapers, radio stations, and podcasts, which in turn have led to agencies, businesses, and professionals hiring me for consulting and speaking.

That content also led Scott Barry Kaufman, psychologist and Scientific Director of the Imagination Institute at the University of Pennsylvania, to invite me to write a column for his consortium of blogs - [The Creativity Post](#).

In four years, I published over 400 articles on these three blogs as well as on my own at [trackingwonder.com](#), at LinkedIn Pulse, as a guest blogger, and in magazines.

Shaping and shipping content week after week crystallized my thinking and boosted my confidence in other areas of business. I started to listen to and trust more my own vast heritage of experience in writing, editorial, publishing, and psychology.

That confidence and clarity helped me shape signature frameworks for authoring books, shaping brand identities & stories, and productively creating work that matters. I created booklets for clients that later became full-blown field guides for substantial programs.

Writing to lead can help you shape your signature revenue-building collateral.

Those same four years of steady shaping and shipping coincided with my business, Tracking Wonder Consultancy, growing exponentially in its impact. Our clients, our Live The Quest Academy participants, our Quest Community, and beyond

have benefited directly and indirectly from my commitment to write, and to write to lead.

Here's kind of a cool thing: In 2007 and 2008, hardly anyone was talking about or even researching wonder. Now I see people, thought leaders, authors, and scientists frequently reference it and its cousins of curiosity and awe. Grown-ups have permission to wonder and wander out loud. They have an evolving vocabulary to help them track it in the quest of their lives as business artists and professionals, parents and lovers, seekers and misfits.

I could not see that in 2009, but I had to trust, word by word.

Writing to lead makes a difference, and it makes a community.



A GENTLE KICK

I assume you have a blog or other outlet to ship your writing on. If you don't, get one.

[Wordpress](#) has the most robust options for themes, plug-ins, and customer support at reasonable costs. [Squarespace](#) and [weebly](#) offer affordable (sometimes free) options, too, with low learning curves, but if you are in this game for the long run, I suggest you go with Wordpress.

You don't need to know yet what exactly you're going to write. You don't have to have a huge audience. You do need some grounding of expertise to write to lead. By "grounding of expertise" I don't mean that you necessarily are the expert on your topic, but your grounding of expertise does come in one or more (preferably all four) areas:

Experience - in the work force, at home, what you have produced or created, where you have traveled, in your own business and with your own clients and customers (depends upon topic)

Skills - your developed ways of thinking, doing, crafting, technique (depends upon topic)

Knowledge - what you know to be true within your field and on your topic (depends upon topic)

Research - what you are willing to discover and assimilate outside of of the above based on your reading, interviewing, viewing, testing (depends upon topic)

If this excites you, excellent. If this intimidates you, excellent. If this both excites and intimidates you, perfect. That means we're hitting the sweet spot just beyond your comfort zone.

Let's kickstart you into your best work and start writing to lead.

10 KICKSTART ACTIONS

A lot of people have asked me, "How do I start?" They usually have a blog, but it's not really doing anything for them or their venture. Or they've abandoned it. They had no strategy. Few people seemed to notice.

These 10 Kickstart Actions are what I wish someone would have told me when I blasted onto the digital scene several years ago.

Try one or two actions a week. And every week, ship. Ship at least one post somewhere.

Stop Hiding. Start Writing. Write to Lead.

1 Claim Your Content Influence Areas (CIA).

On a large notebook page, draw a large circle. Now.

On the outside of the circle list the words and phrases you do not want to be associated with. Maybe there are certain ideas or concepts you or your brand are currently known for that you no longer want to be associated with. Maybe there are ideas and trends within your field among competitors that you want to distinguish yourself from.

Inside the circle list the words and phrases you want your public persona or business or endeavor to be associated with. These are topics potentially within your field that you are willing to write about, write into, research, and discover what you actually have to say about them.

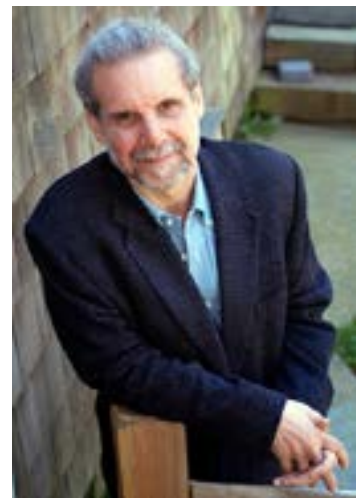
Choose and refine the 3-5 areas you are most committed to exploring, researching, and writing into. These 3-5 topics will become your Content Influence Areas. They are the areas in which you want to have the most influence through your writing.

Consider Daniel Goleman. You likely have this frame in mind when you Daniel's name:

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE = DANIEL GOLEMAN

Daniel did not “invent” emotional intelligence, nor did he conduct the seminal research. In the early 1990s, two psychologists - now both university presidents - wondered how an intelligent person such as a politician could make such stupid decisions. They published a seminal article on their findings in emotional intelligence - in a very obscure article.

When Goleman - an ever-inquisitive journalist - read the article, he said, “All kinds of bells went off.” His book *Emotional Intelligence*, originally published in 1995, has sold over 5 million copies.



Goleman's popularization of that science has led to a global movement.

Daniel's hub topic is "Alternative Intelligences," and he has since elaborated on his Content Influence Areas to include:

- Emotional Intelligence
- Social Intelligence (another book)
- Social & Emotional Learning
- Leadership
- Workplace

and his latest curiosity - **Ecological Intelligence** (tied to our economic choices).

INTROVERSION = SUSAN CAIN



[Susan Cain](#) is a Harvard-trained lawyer. She also is an introvert. If you've heard of her, you likely have this frame in your mind:

Introversion = Susan Cain

So, anytime someone asks you for resources about introverted children or work mates or partners, you likely will send them to Susan's influential NYT best-selling book *Quiet* or her website [QuietRev.com](#).

Susan's hub topic is introversion, but as QuietRev's menu shows, she has divided that central CIA into five other areas:

- Tribes
- Parenting
- Work
- Life
- Learning

Your turn. I suggest your five CIAs relate so you start to shape a coherent brand over the course of a year or more.

- What areas are you really curious about exploring in more depth for the next year or more?
- What areas do you know something about borne from your experience, skill set, and / or research?
- What questions have puzzled you perhaps for a long time? Maybe some variation of one of these questions has lingered with you since childhood or teenagehood.
- What areas are directly related to where you envision yourself leading within the next year?

2 Take your True Stance.

Now, what do you have to say about your CIAs?

Maybe you have a CIA such as “Authenticity” or “Vulnerability” or “Habits.” That’s okay. That’s a start. The tricky thing is, though, that mounds of other people – some influential and some not-so – also write about those topics. These are massive buzzwords. “Authenticity” has been bandied about since before my first book with Penguin, *The Journey from the Center to the Page* included “authentic writing” in its subtitle in 2004.

And there is one seminal thought leader who has more or less “owned” the idea of “vulnerability” the way Goleman’s brand owns “emotional intelligence” and Cain’s brand owns “introversion”: [Brené Brown](#).

It’s fine if you want to play in these fields, but if you do so it’s all the more important that you are willing to discover, shape, and take your stance as opposed to parroting another existing thought leader’s stance.

“Own?” you ask. “Can someone own a word?” Not exactly. But part of leading a conversation on an idea is that the more your name becomes synonymous with a word or phrase or concept, the more you, your business, and your brand do – more or less – “own” people’s cognitive space in that area.

The risk in choosing a buzzword or, worse, another thought leader's leading CIA - is that you will look and sound like a copy cat - or what my colleague Todd Henry calls "a cover band."

So, take on one of these big CIAs if you're truly committed to contributing your verse to the conversation, but then give it your true verse and voice and point of view.

Take "compassion," for example. Big subject. The Dalai Llama kind of owns it. He's a smart branding agent for Tibetan Buddhism that way.

Or take "trauma." Another big subject. But neither of them are exhausted.

Tara Brach took stock of her years of experience with her own self-sabotaging, her extensive meditation practice, and her deep study, and came up with her signature CIA that combines self-compassion and trauma: Radical Acceptance.

What about you?

You have a point of view. You view the world a certain way. You value certain qualities in human beings and in business over others. You believe in what you do or in what your business is about. But your service, your business, your product, your event is not your thing. All of your stuff needs you to take a stance.

You do not have to be the originator, and you do not have to be absolutely original in your point of view. You do need to be you, and you do need to aim to be distinct, even daring.

I see far too many bright men and women hide their point of view to be nice. People who change ideas and hearts worry less about being liked and care more about having their voice and view heard and respected.

To take a stance, begin by examining the field you are playing in. If your message or business is about guiding young women to come of age with a certain strength and power, then your job in part may be to see who is currently leading that conversation.

- What are they saying? How can you contribute your verse to the conversation?

- What values do you and your business stand for? What values, trends, or conventions do or your business stand against?

If you offend someone and stir up conversation, you know you are doing your job.

3 Get obsessed and get devoted.

Jon Mertz published the book [Activate Leadership](#) and continues to lead the conversation in cross-generational leadership, but he hit all kinds of obstacles along the way - self-doubt, time crunch, family matters. What drove him to stick with it?

What has kept corporate consultant [Cindy Henson](#) and farmer & business owner [Lee Rankin](#) to stay driven to finish the first drafts of their memoirs - which are seminally tied to their unfolding leadership?

Part of their internal drive is more than passion. It's a bit of obsession mixed with devotion. Devotion is a "profound dedication." At its root is the word "voc" and "vow." Your speech, your word, your promise lines up with your choices and actions.

It's not a quality that always bull dozes you through brick walls. But it is a quality that grants you the courage, the heart fuel, to surmount unpredictable difficulties.

Here's the curious thing about the attention of devotion. It extends your focus beyond yourself. You become devoted to your craft, to your idea, to the people whose lives you genuinely want to change.

"Without devotion," Gandhi writes, "action and knowledge are cold and dry, and may even become shackles." Pavarotti said that people thought his discipline was the secret to his success. "It is not discipline. It is devotion. There is a great difference."

Even amidst fires and hospitals, brick walls and blocks, storms of self-doubt and despair, empty bank accounts and broken ankles, it's possible for you to shape if not master a meaningful creative life borne from your devotion to write to lead.

So much is possible.

4 Give Your Readers a Slice of P.I.E.

I will encourage you to write crap. I will encourage you to prototype and not perfect. But I also will talk with you about getting better at what you do as you write to lead. We feel alive when we excel, when we find that sweet spot beyond our comfort zone, that right-enough stretch of our abilities in learning something new or learning how to do something even better.

In the [Writing Den](#), we share several strategies for busting out of conventional, default, biased ways of approaching a topic. I will share numerous ways to challenge Den members' thinking so they think like a thought leader, converse like a conversation leader, and tell a story like a story leader.

One way to improve your writing posts: Consider its purpose.

I break down most content into one or more of three purposes:

To provoke - to challenge an assumed way of thinking, acting, or feeling; to rattle; to instigate or agitate; to stir up trouble for the greater good; to oppose or contrast for the greater good

To offer insight - to give valuable tips; to impart valuable knowledge and information; to recombine or synthesize existing ideas into a new pattern

To entertain - to tell a story; to muse; to surprise; to arouse delight

Provocation. Insight. Entertainment.

Framing your content this way reminds you that you are ultimately crafting experiences for your readers. To write to lead means you are doing more than expressing your views or personal experiences.

When you have drafted a piece and discovered the general content, use these questions to help you rewrite, edit, and craft a piece:

PROVOCATION:

- Do I want to challenge an assumption within my field that has influenced my audience's thinking? Do I want to challenge an assumption my audience may have about my subject or about one of my CIAs?
- Is there an idea "floating in the air" within my field or CIAs that I think may be harmful to my audience that I would like to question?
- Do I want to stir up fresh conversation because I may have more questions than answers?

INSIGHT:

- Do I want to present new information, knowledge, or research to my community?
- Do I want to offer tips or calls-to-action or inquiries?

ENTERTAINMENT:

- Do I primarily want to elicit more feeling than thought in this piece? Do I want to prompt laughter or sorrow - some deep feeling that awakens my community from the normal reading experience?
- Can I tell a story that elicits imagination, wonder, and surprise?
- Would a song or poem related to a CIA surprise my community and provide a pause from information?

Of course, you've probably guessed that some of the best content leaders weave all three slices. They can provoke, offer insight, and entertain all within the same piece. In fact, I would argue that just about every popular TED Talk does these three things to varying degrees.

The question for you is at the very least, "Which slice is most important?" What's the piece's main purpose? Use your response and these questions to help you tweak and craft a better, more artful - and more memorable - reading experience.

5 Comment on & Add to the Big Picture.

If you're going to lead the conversation, you need to situate your verse within a greater context than your personal experience. Your personal experience does count for a lot in how you establish your platform as a leader of your pack, and we will talk about strategies for bringing forward your personal experience in the content you create. But here's my invitation: Dare to ground the idea you want to champion in a greater context. That idea deserves that kind of care and consideration.

Look at the field or industry you're playing and writing in. Every field, every industry, every "idea" starts to develop certain trends. Take "vulnerability" in the personal growth field or "creativity" in the business field or personal growth field. Brene Brown's *Daring Greatly* helped popularize this idea in our relationships and communication, but more than likely numerous people have misunderstood and over-simplified the nuances of Brown's research. A thought leader in this field might identify one of these misconceptions, delve more deeply into the subject in ways that are valuable to his readers, and situate his take on the subject within a larger context.

In the field of creativity, there have been no less than three books and countless articles since 2014 on the necessity to take risks and fail. Failure has become normalized in our conversations. A thought leader will take a fresh take on this subject and perhaps examine the nuances of when and under what circumstances risk is essential or perhaps offer a fresh take on how to "predict" failure or "fail on purpose."

Look back at your CIAs in the context of your field or industry.

- What 2-3 trends can you identify happening?
- What are the common conversations people within your field are having about your CIAs?
- What do you have to observe, question, say, and add to one of these trends?

6 Test it & Ship it.

Prototype. Don't perfect. Business artists learn like scientists. They get messy and experiment. They surmise and hypothesize. And then they test.

Your writing to lead is, frankly, one big experiment. You might as well enjoy it and be a little daft like a mad scientist in a laboratory of your own making.

Write crap. You do not - you do not! - have everything you have to say all figured out before you start writing. You draft to discover what you have to say and how.

The act of writing itself helps you get clear. Seth Godin writes every day. He would do it, he says, even if 5 people instead of a million people read his blog. Why? He says writing his blog helps him get clear about the conversations he wants to have with people he cares about.

"Bar none, writing a book helped me get crystal-clear and on-message." That's what Andy Ray told me. Andy is author of the book [Radical Impact](#), a guide for middle managers to transform their work, career, and life. He's kind of "rocking it" in having his own impact now through consulting, speaking, and a global Radical Impact Academy that the corporation that hired him has designed for him.

But you don't have to write a book yet to get clear about your distinct message. Your fingers tapping on the keyboard with your eyes following the letters coupled with whatever you want to call "thinking" or "imagining" or "feeling" leads you to a clearing in the woods. You have to treat writing - or drafting - as that act of clarifying and clearing.

You don't have to publish crap, but you will never publish perfection. Ever.

You learn by shipping. You learn by testing out in public. When your work is public, and you've declared that you are, in fact, not a dabbler, not a hobbyist, not hiding behind false humility (which is an evolved defense mechanism, thank you), then you have stepped out of the Amateur Bubble and into the Apprentice Lab and possibly into the Artist Arena.

You craft to design experiences for your readers. If you don't know how to craft experiences, this you will learn in the [Writing Den](#).

For now, commit to testing and shipping. Each week. These days, a blog post once a week will suffice. If you're building your content and community, commit to the same day of the week - like a weekly radio show that your community counts on. Imagine they are waiting for what you have to publish. If you want to post and update your blog beyond once a week, even better.

Some of my colleagues will disagree, but your best vehicle for community engagement and build-up remains a regular email message. That regular email message might be a Sunday post, letter, newsletter, or vlog accessible only or at first to your email subscribers.

You also might already be showing up once a day to raise a question or conversation or share an idea related to one of your CIAs on one of the following channels:

- Quora
- Your LinkedIn blog or a LinkedIn forum
- Google + or a G+ Community
- Facebook or a Facebook Group

Don't fret if you don't know yet how to use any or all of these channels. All in good time and with strategic discernment at the [Writing Den](#).

For instance, when I started writing to lead at trackingwonder.com/blog, I aimed to post an article every Monday. I now publish a weekly personal letter each Wednesday designed usually to offer insight. Each Tuesday, I post an article on [LinkedIn](#) Pulse. I post a provocation almost every morning at 6 am ET on Tracking Wonder's [Facebook](#) page.

7 Fashion your voice.

I don't think any writer "finds" her one authentic voice. That suggests you only get one and that it is lost or buried somewhere for you to excavate, dust off, and put out there in fixed form.

And as you get more versatile as a business artist, you'll discover that you can have many writing voices depending upon the occasion. Do you have the same voice for a six-year-old little girl that you do for diplomats that you do for Fortune 500 CEOs? I didn't think so. So, why limit yourself to one voice as a leader of an idea, conversation, or story?

Voice is not fixed but fluid.

That means that just as you draft to discover what you think or have to say, so you will fashion a voice made from the scraps and heaps of words across the screen. Your writing voice will evolve, and at times it will change. And, yes, you might find you have in fact more than one writing voice. That makes you versatile - possibly the greatest virtue for a business artist in the early 21st century.

In the [Writing Den](#), you will have ample opportunities to learn some of the tools of the writing trade.

One way to begin fashioning your voice is simply to consider tone. Tone is the texture and sound of your voice on the page or screen. It's subtle, this tone thing, but it's profoundly influential on how people experience your ideas. For it's often not what you say but how you say it that makes the difference between whether someone agrees with, remembers, and then wants to share your writing - or just tunes out.

Imagine one of your reading fans reads your writing for the next six months. What three adjectives would you want that fan to use to describe your writing voice?

Here are some tone words (Hint: They're all adjectives - words that describe or modify nouns. Yes, I just condescended you with a grammar lesson, perhaps, but I don't want to assume you're a grammar geek just because I am, nor do you have to be to be here.):

- hysterical
- provocative
- deep
- whimsical
- approachable
- conversational
- lyrical
- humorous
- blunt (Note: I do have a piece about bluntness [here](#).)
- thoughtful
- measured
- friendly
- exuberant
- joyful

Here's the cool thing: You get to create a writing persona. You get to test out how that writing voice sounds on the screen. Sometimes a piece will land right. Other times, a piece might hit an off-chord. That's okay.

This is an experiment.

8 Ask & Listen.

Your role as leader of an idea, conversation, or story of course is not simply to dispense information. We addressed that under #4 and in some other areas about crafting experiences for your readers.

To write to lead in this experience economy, engage your people. The best way to engage them is be genuinely curious. Academy Award-winning Brian Grazer (*A Beautiful Mind, Apollo 13*) basically built his big life by holding a series of curiosity

conversations with fascinating strangers – spies, scientists, business people. Great fodder for his films.

If you want to lead a conversation, ask questions you genuinely don't know the answers to, and raise them to the people you care about.

Your “patch of the planet” is the people you care about whose lives and minds your message improves. Social media channels are really avenues for you to learn more about your patch so you can serve and lead them better.

You can ask your patch of the planet a question in a few ways:

1. Raise a question at the end of an article. This has become a fairly standard way to try to generate comments in the blog comments section. But don't raise a question simply to get comments. Actually, listen to the responses. Be open to responses you are not expecting. See what you can learn from the comments that might lead you to new research, thinking, and writing in your next piece.
2. Raise a question related to one of your CIAs on your targeted social media channel. Facebook has become good for this. So is quora.com – a platform designed for influencers to raise and answer questions. Again, be genuine in your curiosity and open to the responses.
3. Crowd-source an article. This approach is similar to #2. If one of your CIAs is “Teamwork,” and you want to become known for your ideas and knowledge around optimal workplaces and collaboration, you might want to write an article about improving work place meetings. Part of your research may be to ask members of a relevant forum on LinkedIn or Google+ or Facebook if they have specific examples of painful meetings or of exceptionally effective meetings. Gather the responses. They might help you shape the content and lead you to new research. More importantly, follow up to ask if you can use some of the ideas and examples in your article either with attribution or anonymously. With permission, link to respondents' websites or preferred social media channel. You're doing them a favor by their giving you content. And your readers get a well-rounded article. Win-win-win.

9 Search again.

You cannot lead a conversation if you're unfamiliar with the existing conversation. You cannot lead or change your field if you are not familiar with the field conventions.

I see too many otherwise potentially influential people hide behind the guise of "authenticity" and simply "speak their truths." Yes, you can "hide" behind other people's research and simply report other people's ideas for the next two years, but this might surprise you: Often, people who claim to be speaking their truth are really speaking the truth of other thought leaders who have put in their due hours of study, conversation, and writing. Some people claiming to be authentic are really covering other people's territory.

Again, if you really want to lead in your field and be taken seriously, do your due diligence and bone up on the core reading in your field or fields.

- What are the top five books in one or more of your CIAs that you need to be familiar with?
- Who are top 3 current experts - scientists, teachers, consultants - in your field whose work you need to be familiar with?
- How can you make Write To Lead Research a weekly pleasurable habit?

10 Tell stories more than sell stuff.

I was talking to a health service provider reluctant to promote her effective programs for people with chronic conditions.

This accomplished practitioner's programs have worked for the hundreds of people who have come to her center in the city where she lives, but she had been unable to reach many people beyond her geographical region. Many people she spoke with knew they needed the extended programs but kept resisting.

When I invited her to focus instead on changing people's attitudes and actions by focusing on the Story she had to tell, on the Story she could stand up for and stand behind, she lit up.

“How do I do that?” she said.

We didn’t start with clever taglines and mission statements and elevator pitches. We started by delving into her creative history and identity. Why there?

Because she’s the one creating the Story that will move her people to positive action. So she has to know how she best captivates her people. She has to know what themes, burning questions, and challenges she herself has lived since she was a young innately creative girl. Otherwise, she’ll be tempted by the World of Buzz’s marketing gimmicks and shiny objects with no center to help her discern her choices.

From there, we examined her playing field - the field of potential competitors, collaborators, and peers - so she could own that her business does not exist in a silo. She also could see how she could contribute uniquely to her field and to the conversation of her field as a health service provider and as one contributing her own verse to her field.

Third, we fleshed out who exactly her audience is. If she focused from her heart and radiant mind, she could better salve the people she cares most about.

From here, we could begin to see how she could connect with her patch of the planet through empathy and an intelligent macro-Story.

For you, for now, this might mean you take stock of stories in three areas relevant to your CIAs that you could weave into future articles:

- Your personal experiences
- Your clients’, customers’, or community members’ experiences
- Experiences from other people - famous or not - that you research and mine from other sources

In the Writing Den, we share simple tools to build the story-telling muscle. For now, make a list of experiences in these three categories.

CODA

You might have noticed that you have found here zero gimmicks, tricks, or hacks to boost your website's traffic or search engine optimization or social media numbers. We can discuss those things in the [Writing Den](#), but you should know up front I am gimmick-averse. If you want or expect short cuts to building your influence, you're in the wrong place and can find ample online articles and programs making such phony promises. I'm not in this work for the sprint or flip.

I am in this work for the long haul. I am in it to change conversations, ideas, and culture while also earning revenue to sustain my ventures and further spread my message. I think you are, too. That's why you're here. That's why we're running together.

And that's why, between running and hunting as a pack, we converge, converse, if not conspire in the Writing Den.

Grateful to run with you,

Jeffrey



Join a supportive pack of peers and expand your message's influence and impact. [Click here](#) to learn more.

THIS IS SOME OF THE WRITING AND THOUGHT LEADER CRED I BRING TO THE GAME FOR YOU:



- published over 400 blog articles in 4 years on 5 blogs & channels (That's about one article on average every 3 days for 4 years.)
- published a break-through nonfiction book with the Big 5
- co-founder of Aligned Thought Leader Immersion
- published with independent presses and in journals and magazines around the U.S. and in London
- consult and mentor authors who have landed handsome advances for books that reached the NYT best-seller list and on Oprah's list
- write for Psychology Today, The Creativity Post, and other outlets

Psychology Today **THECREATIVITYPOST**

- have helped clients reach Top Thought Leader recognition in their fields & convert content into media recognition & 6-figure revenue
- regularly interviewed for views on creativity, innovation, writing for major magazines, newspapers, podcasts, and radio shows
- has taught professional and creative writing in university grad programs and at leading conferences in four countries
- am known for building meaningful online communities

And I raise two little girls with my active entrepreneur wife – so I “get” the time-crunched deal. Most of all, I completely light up when I see people like you show up and shine with your best ideas and best work.

Thanks for running with me,

Jeffrey