

LCN Workshop Proposal

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Charlie Kadado
contact@charliekadado.com
C: (248) 270-7018
O: (248) 924-4854

Effective Blogging & News Writing

Good Writing Attracts Good Readers

- ❖ Distinguish between creative writing and AP style – don't try to mix them into one piece.
- ❖ People like lists. (Ex. 9 reasons to attend the LCN Convention)
- ❖ If it bleeds, it leads. This doesn't mean you can't post feel-good stories and content, too.
- ❖ Catchy headlines will generate clicks. (Ex. This Lebanese wedding entrance will amaze you!)
- ❖ Always have a call-to-action. (Ex. Visit my site for more information, donate to this awesome organization, follow us on Twitter, etc.)
- ❖ Just because people will read about Shakira's newborn baby, don't only post about Shakira's newborn baby. Offer a healthy variety, but remain consistent.
- ❖ Build a strong base and the audience will come to you.

Professional Design Attracts Returning Readers

- ❖ Carefully customize website design and page structure. Your readers will notice if your logo is not centered, for example.
- ❖ Use canva.com to generate easy and unique graphics.
- ❖ Make sure your website is mobile friendly! More than 60% of your readers are likely on your mobile site.

How Competition Benefits You

- ❖ Lebanese Examiner surpassed every major competitor in less than 6 months by identifying competitor weaknesses and entering untouched markets.
- ❖ The top 3 competing newspapers had scattered content and covered too wide of a scope. We honed in on their weaknesses and captured supplementary markets.
- ❖ TIP: Don't feel obligated to copy your competitor. Look for your own creative content and let them try and copy you.

Social Media Marketing

- ❖ KEY to business marketing: your reader will 'unlike' and 'unfollow' if you simply *promote* your business.

- ❖ TIPS: Use analytics, thank your readers, post at the right time of day, use multimedia, call-to-action posts, recognize your competition, don't post from your phone, use JustUnfollow and Hootsuite, buy your domains and register your social media accounts before someone else does.
- ❖ KEY to blogging: if you're in it for advertising revenue, get out.
- ❖ TIPS: Display social media prominently, import your RSS feed on LinkedIn and Twitter, join blogger groups on Facebook, help other bloggers promote their content, be yourself, be consistent, get ideas from your audience.
- ❖ TWITTER TIP: Literally treat others the way they treat you. If someone follows you, follow back. If someone retweets you regularly, retweet them a couple of times. If they unfollow you, unfollow them. Respond to everyone that mentions you in a tweet!
- ❖ FACEBOOK TIP: Facebook is perfect for photos, videos, and graphics. Avoid status updates without including media or links.
- ❖ LINKEDIN TIP: Post samples of your work! If you're an engineer, show a project you've worked on. Follow companies you're interested in. Fill out your profile completely – don't neglect languages, awards, patents, projects, community service, etc.
- ❖ INSTAGRAM TIP: Don't create an Instagram account for your business just because Instagram is popular. Be prepared to stay active and tell your brand story without selling it. Instagram reaches a younger demographic and new generations are known to be sensitive to over-promotion. Don't annoy your users. Use relevant hashtags. Don't beg for likes.

'Professional' vs. 'Personal' Social Media

- ❖ Unless your accounts are on private, delete irrelevant and ill-suited photos. Your profile photo tells a lot about you – post yourself giving a speech, not smoking argileh.
- ❖ Watch what you're tagged in. Un-tag yourself from unappealing photos and advertisements. (And never advertise your business or event by tagging a whole bunch of people)

Dealing with the Press

How to Get Press Coverage

- ❖ Watch what you tell journalists – especially if they're not recording you. (Ex. A few months ago, a Lebanese newspaper reporter interviewed me and didn't record or write down a single word I said. She ended up badly misquoting me. Don't talk to those people.)
- ❖ Develop a good relationship with journalists and guide their stories. Make it easy for them to give you press coverage. Send them press releases, photos and videos they can use, possible interview contacts, etc. They will appreciate it and make you look good!
- ❖ Suggest story angles and ideas, and try to connect your story with something presently happening. (Ex. When I got the 3 major networks to

advertise our church Lebanese festival, I suggested that we do an in-studio interview and teach viewers how to make hummus on live TV. All 3 stations picked up the same concept.)

- ❖ TV TIP: Steer the story and make it really easy for the producers/reporters to give you airtime. Always give suggestions.
- ❖ NEWSPAPER TIP: Provide a more detailed press release and high-resolution images.
- ❖ RADIO TIP: Don't bother with radio unless it's paid advertising on a hugely popular program. A radio 'news story' for event or business promotion is usually ineffective, unless you're trying to market to old conservatives.
- ❖ Never send unsolicited press releases or content. Call the station or reporter ahead of time and customize your message.

Credibility. Connectivity. Consistency.

The Credibility Factor

- ❖ Make it seem like a large team of people are behind you. (Ex. Our Advertising Team will get back to you within 24 hours. This team could be 2 people, but it's still a team.)
- ❖ Thank your readers for congratulating you on your 1-year anniversary.... even if no one congratulated you. (This makes it seem like you're hugely popular.)
- ❖ Be transparent with your readers/followers/customers/etc. If you make a mistake, admit to it and move on.
- ❖ Have confidence in your product. You will never become 'the leading source for 24-hour news & community coverage' if you don't constantly repeat it.
- ❖ On a non-digital level, professionally dressed and confident people build commanding credibility.

The Connectivity Factor

- ❖ Make it easy to contact you. Prominently display your contact information and social media links and offer several ways to connect.
- ❖ Lebanese Examiner offers content on our website, our Apple & Android apps, on Facebook, on Twitter, and on our e-newsletter. Readers like to have many choices.
- ❖ On a non-digital level, when you offer potential employers many ways to contact you, you are showing diversity and availability.

The Consistency Factor

- ❖ Create a detailed business plan for your personal or professional endeavor. Consider all options.
- ❖ Create posting rituals for your blog or business. (Ex. Lebanese Examiner posts article links with 'Read More:' at the end of each post.)

- ❖ Create a fixed template. (Ex. Don't alter your e-newsletter design every month. Create one design that perfectly brands you, and simply add content to each edition.)
- ❖ On a non-digital level, consistency keeps you focused and determined.

Public Speaking – What to Say & How to Say It

Confidence

- ❖ Look at the people who are looking at you. Making eye contact with the people who nod while you speak will boost your confidence.
- ❖ Be prepared to make a mistake and move on.
- ❖ Think of the worst that could happen and how it really wouldn't be that bad.
- ❖ Be expressive with your emotions and interact with the audience.

Elevator Pitch

- ❖ Always be prepared to speak on the spot.
- ❖ Practice an elevator pitch that works for your personal life, professional life, and your business, organization, or blog.

Add Contacts on Facebook and LinkedIn

- ❖ Stay connected to the people you speak to on Facebook and LinkedIn.
- ❖ Recommend them on LinkedIn and give them a few endorsements.
- ❖ 'Like' their photos on Facebook (even if you don't actually like them) and send them an occasional message. Remind them that you exist!
- ❖ Don't ask people to follow your business, if you don't plan on following back.

Digital Networking Tips

Testimonials are Powerful

- ❖ Testimonials are credibility boosters that often give a candid reflection of a product or a person.
- ❖ Ask for a testimonial or recommendation. People will rarely just give it to you.

Write Professionally

- ❖ Watch and review your grammar and spelling. You won't look good if you can't spell correctly.

Help your Friends

- ❖ If you meet someone your friend or colleague could benefit from, refer your contact and encourage him or her to connect. Your friend may return the favor in the future.

Craft Memorable Messages

- ❖ Always follow-up after receiving someone's business card.
- ❖ Attach your photo to a post-networking message. When someone meets 20 people at one event, he/she is not likely to remember details about every person. Your photo may help them remember you and recognize you at future events.
- ❖ Add some genuine personality to your message. "I hope you're doing well" is old school.

Why Connecting to Lebanon is Important

Cultural Identity

- ❖ Having a cultural identity makes you unique and memorable on a personal and professional level. Mention your Lebanese roots to employers or potential contacts when you can. It will make your meeting more noteworthy among the other ordinary people that he/she meets.

Networking with Lebanese Newsmakers & Businesspeople

- ❖ There are 14 million Lebanese people in the world and only 4 million in Lebanon. Many expatriates are remarkably successful people.
- ❖ Network with these people and mention your Lebanese roots. In many cases, landing an internship at a Lebanese-owned company will be easier than getting an internship at a mainstream corporation.
- ❖ Learn the trade (and the tricks of the trade) from these Lebanese business owners. Many of them built their own success stories from scratch.