

# Actiongram

February 2007

910 Currie St. Fort Worth TX 76107 www.livestockpublications.com office: 817/336-1130 fax: 817/232-4820 dianej@flash.net Diane Johnson, executive director

## It's Not Bunny Slippers and PJ's

Urban legends abound when it comes to freelancing. Most freelancing myths don't match reality. Whether you work with freelancers or aspire to be one, I hope the following will help you understand a day in a freelancer's life.

I'll start by saying that everyone's situation is different. My work is primarily graphic design. Freelancing has been the sole source of my household income for nearly eight years. Turns out my cow habit isn't too profitable.

So that you don't think I lost my mind when I took this career path, I'll share the pros first. Perhaps the biggest perk is that I am my own boss. Many trips are tax deductible, but they still come out of my pocket. With recent gas prices, possibly the biggest advantage is my three second commute. I'm more productive than I ever was working in an office and being interrupted by meetings and water cooler talk. However, the lack of social contact was the most challenging adjustment for me.

Freelancing isn't for everyone. Gone are monthly paychecks. You must be able to budget and manage your finances. You must be a self starter, flexible and an amazing multi-tasker. At times, I feel like a circus clown juggling balls. Yesterday (Sunday afternoon), I worked on projects for six clients after lunchtime. Once the phone and e-mails start, I'm often working on something other than what I had planned. Many customers don't understand that their crisis isn't my only emergency.

Numerous people think freelancers have it made. In reality, I work more now than I did in previous jobs. Starting my business was the hardest thing I've ever done. My finances, health and sanity all suffered during the early stages.

Most freelancers I've talked to take home less money. Health insurance options are limited and expensive, and I pay my own benefits. Vacation and sick days are virtually a thing of the past. Uncle Sam isn't friendly to the self-employed either.

Two of you believe I live in bunny slippers and pajamas 24/7, even though I don't own bunny slippers. Although some think I'm close to pajamas in my typical head-to-toe Nike apparel, I've found that you're better off to put yourself in a professional, business mindset to start the day. With that said, I'm more productive when comfortable, and I save money on clothing and make-up. And, I'm really happy video conferencing never took off.

I worked in the office of one of my largest clients four days a week before I started working solely from home. It was a hard transition for them if they couldn't reach me whenever they called. They didn't realize that I sometimes go to the post office, Fed Ex drop or printer in the course of a day.

People often think I have flexible hours. It's true I can get a haircut at odd times. But I must say freelancing isn't that

flexible. I have clients who work from 8 to 5 as well as ranchers who call after dark or at 5 a.m.

In a perfect world, I would have a detached office so I could walk away from the phone/fax/computer easier. The fax rings 24/7, and if customers know they can reach you at any time, the phone will too. Caller ID is a must. You need "me" time and shouldn't always be accessible.

I see many college graduates who dream of starting out as a freelancer. I truly believe you have to pay your dues in a company first. You must have an enormous amount of industry contacts to survive. Setting prices is one of the largest challenges. Industry experience can help with that.

If you're considering freelancing, think through the pros and cons as well as a business plan thoroughly before jumping into the deep end. Most freelancers are willing to share their experiences and hard learned lessons. Talk to several. I know I have listed more cons than pros, but each person must weigh the factors according to his or her own situation. For me, the pros are worth the cons most days. 



By Lisa Bryant,  
2006-07 LPC  
President

### LPC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Lisa Bryant, President

Cowboy Connection  
cowboyconnection@sbcglobal.net

Kyle Haley, 1st Vice President

Limousin World  
limousin@limousinworld.com

Jim Bret Campbell, 2nd Vice President

The American Quarter Horse Journal  
jbcampbell@aqha.org

Marilyn Brink, Secretary-Treasurer

Kanwaka Communications  
kanwaka@powwwwer.net

Lori Maude, Immediate Past President

Gelbvieh World

lorim@gelbvieh.org

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stan@ozarksfn.com

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Angus Journal  
tcotton@angusjournal.com

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adenton@hereford.org

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Food 360

klascala@food360.com

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Seedstock Edge  
christy@nationalswine.com

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Land & Livestock Post  
beverly.moseley@theeagle.com

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donn@boelte.com

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Showboat Graphics

becky@showboatco.com

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Broadhead + Co.  
sveldman@broadheadco.com

Scott Vernon ('08)

Brock Center for Ag Communication  
Cal Poly State University  
svernon@calpoly.edu



# LPC SOUTHWEST REGIONAL WORKSHOP

Workshop will be held at the Radisson Hotel North in Fort Worth  
Meacham Blvd. exit off I-35W (formerly Holiday Inn North)

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION

LPC Members: \$60  
Non-LPC Members: \$75  
Students: \$25

To register simply RSVP via e-mail  
(dianej@flash.net)  
with your name and contact  
information by April 9 or call Diane at  
the LPC office 817/336-1130. You MUST  
RSVP! No shows will be billed!

Watch for more details to follow.

- 8-8:30 a.m. • **Registration and Welcome**
- 8:30-9:30 a.m. • **Where the \$\$\$%^\$\* did I put that file?**  
Organization and workflow in a digital world.  
Panel Discussion
- 9:30-9:45 • **Break**
- 9:45-10:45 • **Can't we all just get along?**  
How to get your editor to think like a designer and get  
your designer to think like an editor
- 10:45-11:45 • **Telling the whole story**  
Taking and designing pictures that make your copy sizzle.
- 11:45-1 p.m. • **Lunch**
- 1-2 p.m. • **How do you tell the same old story over again?**  
Generate the right ideas and match with tantalizing copy  
and brilliant design to engage your reader.
- 2-2:15 p.m. • **Break**
- 2:15-3:15 p.m. • **Being Right**  
How to get everyone in your organization trained to look  
for AP style infractions in your publication.

## Opportunities from other industry organizations...

### Ag Relations Council (ARC)

Join us in Corpus Christi to participate in the 2007 Ag Relations Council winter meeting as we explore this shift in attitudes related to consumers, producers and the entire food and fiber chain. Network with fellow PR professionals and reap the benefits of outstanding professional development sessions, case studies and ag tours This program is open to all public relations and communications practitioners.

#### Thursday, March 29

Afternoon Session begins with a corporate responsibility discussion from retail, restaurant and food industry leaders.

Evening - Welcome Reception at the Texas State Aquarium.

#### Friday, March 30

Morning Session -- Start the day with a case study involving a pet food manufacturer and the crisis they endured during the 2005 Christmas season. Then a Ag tours to the Texas A&M Research Center and the King Ranch including a real Texas BBQ.

#### Saturday, March 31

Morning Session – ARC business meeting  
Closing Luncheon and meeting adjournment by 1 p.m.

To register go to [www.agrelationscouncil.org](http://www.agrelationscouncil.org)  
Hotel: Omni Corpus Christi Hotel - Marina  
361/887-1600; cut off date, March 16, 2007

### The Association for Communication Excellence (ACE)

ACE is now recruiting participants for the first class of its Leadership Institute.

The Institute is designed for individuals who have several years of experience as communicators or information technologists and aspire to, or are new to, mid-level management. It will provide knowledge and skill building that help participants develop the vision, leadership abilities, and management competencies that are needed to excel as a leader in these professions.

Those selected to participate will make a one-year commitment that includes three site-based trainings, a self-directed project, ongoing interactivity and collaboration via distance education technologies, and learning opportunities to be arranged at each participant's workplace.

To learn more about the Institute and obtain an application, please visit <http://www.aceweb.org/institute>.

### American Agricultural Editor's Association (AAEA)

Be sure to mark your calendar for the AAEA Webinar on Digital photo management on **Tuesday, March 6, 2:30—3:30 p.m. EST, 1:30—2:30 p.m. CST**

A new Webinar sponsored by the American Agricultural Editor's Association promises to make you an expert at managing digital photos! Presenters will discuss editing and archiving processes for both Mac and PC users.

Registration information will be up on the AAEA Web site soon at [www.ageditors.com](http://www.ageditors.com). Nominal fee for non-members.



## AMS NEWS:

# NEWS About You

## AMS Idol to Debut at Louisville Meeting

by Den Gardner, AAEA Executive Director

### *Live, from Huber Farms, it's AMS Idol!*

OK, so it's not exactly Hollywood. And it's unlikely **Taylor Hicks, Ruben Studdard, Carrie Underwood, Kelly Clarkson** or **Fantasia Barrino** will be attending. But who needs them? We'll have celebrity judges – Quasimodo; we'll have two hosts that will make **Ryan Seacrest** look like a poor imitation of **Mitch Miller – Diane and Den**; and a lineup of talent that will make us dream for the days of Ted Mack's Amateur Hour.

Although the details are still a little sketchy, here's a likely tentative scenario for our own AMS Idol. The show will be Sunday at Huber Farms, outside of Louisville. We will firm up details in the near future, but for now here's some information:

- A maximum of 10 acts will participate in the AMS Idol. Each act will audition ahead of time by sending an audition tape by June 1 to: AMS Idol, c/o AAEA, 120 W. Main St. New Prague, MN 56071
- Each audition tape should contain two songs – one to be performed in the first round and one if selected for the final three and the championship round. The judges will pick the three finalists and they will compete again and a winner will be chosen. The audition tapes will be judged in Minneapolis (Prince and Jimmy Jam/Terry Lewis, along with Bob Dylan, Gary Puckett and the Union Gap, The Trashmen, Yanni, The Blenders, etc., have been contacted.)
- This is only an instrumentation and/or singing contest. Contestants are required to bring a guitar, harmonica, fiddle, keyboard, etc. No Karaoke here!
- There will be fabulous prizes for the three finalists, and parting gifts for the other performers.

Look for an application blank in the near future on the AMS web site. We are eager to showcase all the talent that is waiting to bust out of all our attendees of AMS. Yes, this means you! For more information, contact **Den Gardner** at 952/758-6502 or [ageditors@aol.com](mailto:ageditors@aol.com). 

■ **Bill Newham** has joined Farm Journal Media Publishing as Vice President and Livestock Group Publisher. In his new position, Newham will oversee the company's livestock operations, including managing the Elite Producer Business Conference.

Newham is a Missouri native and earned both a Bachelor of Science and Master of Education degrees from the University of Missouri.

Prior to joining Farm

Journal Media, Newham's professional career includes extensive management experience in a variety of roles including as Editor (*Pork*); Publisher (*Pork, Swine Practitioner, Bovine Veterinarian, Meat & Seafood Merchandising*); Vice President, Publishing Director (Food Systems Group); and, finally as Senior Vice President (Food360), Vance Publishing.

He and his wife, Peggy, and their teenage daughter and son reside in Leawood, Kansas. 

## Prepare for BOMBARDMENT

*The college students are coming!*

Help students apply what they're learning in the classroom to real-life publication and agency situations by participating in the **second Office Bombardment Day, to be held Friday, March 30.**

On this day, LPC members across the country can open their doors for students to drop by for a visit. This informal event will allow ACT members and students to see what life is like in agricultural communications. It's also the perfect chance for you to promote internships in your organization to talented students ready to take on the challenge!

Once you've registered for OBD, we'll let agricultural communications programs know your doors are open. A representative from each college will contact the office they plan to visit with information on how many folks they can expect. And we'll provide you with guidelines on how to prepare. This is sure to be a great learning experience for students and great fun for all. **The deadline for LPC member registration is March 1. Register today!**

To participate, please contact **Christy Lee**, Seedstock EDGE, at [Christy@nationalswine.com](mailto:Christy@nationalswine.com) or 765-463-3594. 

## Upcoming Events

- March 1:** Deadline for dues
- March 20:** Deadline for entries for Critique Contest
- March 29:** Writing and Design Workshop, Des Moines
- March 30:** Spring Office Bombardment Day
- April 10-13:** NAMA Conference, Dallas
- April 18:** Writing and Design Workshop, Fort Worth
- July 28-Aug. 1:** Ag Media Summit, Louisville, Kentucky

# Critique Contest FAQs

The LPC Critique Contest is ready for your entries! For the first time in many years no changes were needed for this year's contest. This hopefully will make it easier for you as you don't have to learn new rules or categories!

The key point to realize is this contest is designed to help you make your publica-

tions better. We know that the recognition is important for each publication, but even more important are the comments that you receive with each entry.

There have been noticeable changes seen in your products, be it editorial or design, which also means the competition just keeps getting better and better each year. So keep up the good work!

In an effort to help with your entry submission, we have compiled this list of frequently asked questions about the contest. Feel free to contact us with additional questions.

## Q: Who can enter the Critique Contest?

A: Any LPC publication member or service member whose dues are paid for the calendar year of 2006 and 2007 is eligible. New members who join LPC in 2007 may compete if 2007 dues are paid.

## What's an eligible entry in the Contest?

The sky's the limit as long as the entry is livestock-related. "Livestock" refers to any aspect pertaining to the industry and the production and marketing of beef cattle, dairy cattle, horses, swine, sheep, goats, llamas, and ranch/game species such as elk, deer and bison. Acceptable entrants could include meat, by-products, livestock equipment, livestock pharmaceuticals, livestock feeds, rodeo, etc. Many categories exist to suit your projects, however if your project does not seem to fit any category, it may be entered in #39 "Miscellaneous Writing" or #62 "Miscellaneous Design."

## Q: Which editorial category does my story fit in?

A: General category descriptions are included at the bottom of the rules information located at [www.livestockpublications.com](http://www.livestockpublications.com). At the top of the page, click on the "LPC Critique Contest Forms" link. Then click under one of the links for rules.

## Q: How do I submit my entries?

A: Official guidelines are located at [www.livestockpublications.com](http://www.livestockpublications.com) by following the links mentioned in the previous question. For categories #20-#39, submit entries as tearsheets. Tearsheets should be mounted on lightweight cardstock (any color) no larger than 12" x 17". Design entries should be mounted on lightweight cardstock (any color) no larger than 12" x 17" with the exception of oversize entries and complete magazines. The purpose of the cardstock is to protect the entries when they are transported. For those entries, place the label on the back of the entry or submit the entry in a clasp envelope. Those entering design entries are asked to submit a pdf sample of each entry to assist with the critique book and contest presentation. Company logos on a disk are requested along with editorial submissions.



## Q: Who judges the entries?

A: Judges are carefully selected according to established criteria. Judges should have at least five years of experience in the industry of the category they will be judging and are selected from across the country. Judges must agree to present critiques in required methods and are limited to judging no more than two categories. Some judges are from outside the livestock industry while some are from within. Those from within the industry are meticulously assigned to categories in which they have no entries or competitors' entries to ensure that the evaluation is unbiased and fair.

## Q: Is the Contest a fundraiser or a service to members?

A: It's both. Your entries help to keep LPC projects going and also help you and your staff to develop a greater product. The Critique Contest is one of three primary LPC fundraisers that also include the Ag Media Summit and membership dues. The critiques are designed to provide members with constructive comments that will help them to achieve a greater end product.

## Q: If I have questions, who do I contact?

A: Questions may be directed to Critique Contest Committee Chairman Jim Bret Campbell at 806/376-4888 or [jbcampbell@aqha.org](mailto:jbcampbell@aqha.org) or LPC Executive Director, Diane Johnson at 817/336-1130 or [dianej@flash.net](mailto:dianej@flash.net).

**Don't forget that the deadline for entries to BE RECEIVED is March 20.**

Ship all entries with payment to:

Melinda Findley, LPC Contest

Dept. of Ag Ed and Communications

Texas Tech University, 15th and Detroit, Lubbock, TX 79409



# The Nuts and Bolts of Ag Communication

## Midwest Regional Design & Writing Workshop

### Registration Fee:

\$60.00 (members)  
\$75.00 (non-members)  
\$35.00 (students)  
(Checks only)

### Deadline:

March 22, 2007

Hotel rooms are reserved at the Fort Des Moines Hotel, downtown Des Moines. \$89/room  
Contact Diane to make reservations or for other information.

dianej@flash.net or  
817/336-1130

### Planning Committee:

Cindy Cunningham, chair  
JoAnn Alumbaugh, co-chair  
Gene Johnston  
Mindy Williamson  
Julie Olson  
Debbie Hoge  
Cheryl Oxley  
Jeff Caldwell  
Karen Simon  
Teresa Roof

### Sponsored by:

Livestock Publications Council and American Agricultural Editors' Assn.

### Thursday, March 29, 2007

Offices of Meredith Corporation • 1716 Locust, Des Moines, Iowa

- 8-9 a.m. Registration**
- 9-9:55 a.m. Fiction as a Tool for Educating Readers**  
**Kate Iola** is a long-time Iowa farm reporter who published her first novel, *Deadstock*, last year. It chronicles a many-tentacled fictional bioterrorism attack on the U.S. through the eyes of a long-time Iowa farm reporter, Tike Lexington.
- 10-10:45 a.m. Design workshop: Discovering Fresh Design**  
**Mick Schnepf**- Designing women and men will learn the basics of good design from one of the top designers in the Meredith Corporation. Learn how to utilize new design techniques and discover how to make your publications fresh and appealing.
- 10:45-11 a.m. Refreshment Break**
- 11 a.m.-Noon Photography workshop: Working Under Pressure**  
**David Lundquist** is a professional photographer for CHS Land O' Lakes. He has been recognized as AAEA Photographer of the Year numerous times and has encountered a variety of situations in regard to lighting, subjects, equipment, and other constraints. Attendees will see some of the exceptional work David has done and will learn from his experiences.
- Noon-12:55 p.m Lunch**
- 1-2 p.m. Expand Your Creativity**  
**Bill Boon**- A professor emeritus at Iowa State University, he taught a class for many years entitled, "Introduction to Creativity 129." He will show you how to apply some creative techniques to help you develop a new attitude toward your work in particular and your life in general.
- 2:05-2:55 p.m. Career Panel: How to Adapt and Stay Motivated**  
**Cheryl Oxley, Dean Houghton and Karen Simon**- Each of us has faced change that has affected our direction, but how we handle change and continue to be effective keeps us "on top of our game". Three livestock publishing professionals offer their insights in this panel discussion. Each will share how they've adapted and continued to grow in the face of change.
- 2.55-3:15 p.m. Refreshment Break**
- 3:15-4:15 p.m. Writing Workshop: Digging for the Truth**  
**Chris Clayton**- This award-winning writer has produced investigative articles with fresh, unique perspectives that grab an audience. Chris will share his reporting techniques for getting to the heart of a story, and how effective reporting can "feed" your writing.

## To Register:

Complete the form below and mail with check made to:  
Livestock Publications Council, 910 Currie St., Fort Worth, TX 76107 (sorry no credit cards)

I am a member of: AAEA LPC ACT Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_ Title/position \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

