

## Welcome Mid-April!

After so many weeks of such a "mixed bag" of weather, Saskatonians are outside, full-force, enjoying the sunshine and milder temperatures. Dare we hope that spring has finally sprung (for good)? Who isn't prepared to leave our long, grey (albeit mild) winter behind.

Over the Easter long weekend, I shared some time with family and visiting (out of town) friends, which involved enjoying delicious dinners that now have me paying for them at my local gym! I hope that you also had a relaxing and enjoyable Easter holiday.

In last month's issue, I featured ways to become physically active, while we work. I included some highlights from Daphne Gray-Grant's newsletter on walking while we think, and from Dustin Pratt's crowdfunding platform on the "Ombee" standing desk.

Thanks to accomplished writer and editor Wilf Popoff for sending me an article that indicates that standing desks haven't yet earned conclusive approval: they may not be the answer to too much sitting. But too much sitting, at any rate, continues to threaten our long-term health. And daily walks (more than standing) certainly benefit us all. So if (like most of us) you're still sitting for long periods at work, please seriously consider breaking them up with some daily walking!

And last month, I also checked in with Bryan Garner on using the modifier "only" (that *only* causes problems, it seems).

This month, I feature an article whose content comes from copywriter Michael Katz, on strengthening one's solo business by securing clients more easily; I turn to Inc.com writer and coach, Jason Selk, on three ways to avoid post-winter "burn-out." Finally, I also revisit a recent blog by tuning in to etymologist Bryan Garner on how to use "otherwise" correctly.

Enjoy this issue and the beauty of early spring. I hope to see you on the trails, but look out for the cyclists! Let's be sure to soak up spring's wonderful sunshine.

Sincerely,

*Elizabeth*

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## For Solo Entrepreneurs: 5 Ways to Get Clients More Easily, From Michael Katz . . .

I began writing this newsletter nearly two years ago (including some early issues that preceded the online format). At the time, I had been impressed by the book, *Enewsletters that Work*, by North American's newsletter specialist, Michael Katz. I've continued to receive Katz's newsletter ever since. In my own newsletter, this month, I'm going to share five pointers that Katz recently shared on how a freelancer in any field can secure better quality clients, more easily.

Taking on this topic means that this article is more directed toward my colleagues and competitors than towards clients. But there will be overlap and I always value sharing amongst peers. Katz's tips continue to enable me to serve my clients better.

Katz says that contrary to freelancers' frequent belief, it's getting clients and not one's own capability that is the limiting factor in running a business. Although what follows may sound like just another listicle, Katz shares five tips that may challenge your assumptions. These are ways to "stay in front of the people you know, over and over again, in a way that positions you as a likeable expert" (Katz).

(1) **Build and nourish your relationships:** In a circle surrounding your clients and prospects, you have colleagues, relatives, vendors, friends, former co-workers, partners and pre-prospects, many of whom may never be your clients. But they very much could refer or lead you to them. Katz says that it's easier to get a referral from someone you know than to do painstaking gymnastics over social media with people who are largely strangers.

With people whom you know, Katz recommends that you build and nourish relationships by adopting about four prospecting activities that you find tolerable. They could include the following:

- (a) Have coffee or lunch with this person, twice a year
- (b) Send them a friendly card three times per year (e.g. April, August, December)—handwritten notes take a little effort and involve a cost for stationery and postage, so they are not shrugged off

And very few solo professionals (or anyone else) still bothers with surface mail. Your card will likely get a 100% open rate, which outperforms social media and even email. Katz recommends mailing one note a day for 28 days

- (c) Send a "hello" email three times per year
- (d) Promote organic newsletter sign up (on your website)

(2) **Explain simply what you do:** Katz recommends drafting a one to two sentence version of your elevator pitch that will feel like “oversimplifying what you do.”

Use this statement when networking casually or simply when you meet those outside of your field—such times when others would be overwhelmed by hearing your full elevator pitch. For e.g.: “I’m an advisor on leadership. I specialize in helping mid-level managers climb the corporate ladder faster.” Or “I’m a writer who specializes in helping large businesses improve their communications and marketing materials, so as to get them more and better clients.”

(3) **Position yourself as an expert** (even though you may not feel like one): Try to narrow your focus to a particular niche, because “narrowing eliminates the competition. The more you can be narrow and bring different elements together to your marketing, the better,” Katz says. So focus on case study writing, or become known as “The White Paper Guy,” rather than trying to be a “jack-of-all-trades. . . .”

(4) **Make more money:** Add a retainer-like “subscription” revenue to avoid repeating endlessly the “do-one-project-then-nothing” cycle of freelancing (which tends to perpetuate the feast/famine cycle).

A subscription is repeatable and brings security at the beginning of each month. Services could include newsletters, coaching, maintenance, affiliate revenue, membership programs, “crisis” consultations or availability, etc.

(5) **Take control of your life:** Don’t see yourself as some kind of second rate employee who lost their “real” job. “Your clients need you as much as you need them,” Katz urges. You have the power to set policies that make your work more enjoyable. Some examples could include:

- No *pro-bono* workshops
- Don’t take a client you don’t feel good about
- Never work without a contract
- 100% due up front for consulting engagements
- Don’t publish pricing on my website
- Never send pricing first
- Proposal pricing is only good for 30 days, etc.

Katz observes that when you work for yourself, you manage everything and so will need these five steps in order to be consistent with your marketing. “Marketing is like exercise,” he says. It’s not a quick-result kind of activity, but instead is “a habit whose benefits occur over time.”

By developing Katz's pointers, you'll build a simple enough approach to securing clients that you will be able to do these activities, "all the time."

*Would Katz's recommendations make your solo business stronger? Please share your comments on the "contact" page of my website ([www.elizabethshih.com](http://www.elizabethshih.com)). I'd be delighted to hear from you.*

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## "Word Nerd's Corner": On the Varying Uses of "Otherwise":

In his recent blog, "Word Tip of the Day," American Etymologist Bryan Garner discussed the various confusion that dogs our use of the word "otherwise."

(1) He argues that "pedants insist that *other* is the adjective, *otherwise* the adverb—and that it's wrong to use *otherwise* as an alternative to an adjective" (such as in the example: "He felt no real impact, substantial or otherwise"). But this latter use is so firmly established that using only *other* sounds incorrect to most educated speakers (e.g. "Cowboys simply aren't cowboys—urban or other—without a pair of boots between them and the ground" -- Dan Barber, "Boot Bonanza," *Dallas Morning News*, 11 September, 1997, A33).

It wouldn't sound right to say "Cowboys simply aren't cowboys—urban or other—without a pair of boots . . ."). So the common usage here is preferable.

(2) Garner notes that "otherwise" can also rightly function as an adverb—(eg. "Paul Sanchez . . . said his business has been booming, financially and otherwise"--Dave Snyder, "Vendors Confident Fair Will Be Successful," *Albuquerque Tribute*, 5 September, 1997, A8). No dispute there.

(3) "Otherwise" is often misused as a conjunction that means "or else," often in British English—(e.g. "It's got to be attractive, otherwise [should read "or else"] people won't go there"--George Martin, "Why My Monserrat Is More than Just A Home for Retired Rockers." *Evening Standard*, 11 September, 1997, 23).

Garner says that this "slipshod" use of "otherwise" tends to create "run-on sentences," because it connects two clauses in a compound sentence, such as this: "But they must believe that their view is correct, otherwise [should read: "or else"] why would they bother to put it forward?" (revised from Garner).

*Have you confused the uses of "otherwise" in your mind? If so, do Garner's pointers help?*

*Please send me your usage issues and bugbears on my "contact" page and I'll use them in a future blog or issue!*

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## "Ask an Expert": Getting Past Professional "Burn-out" with Jason Selk . . . .

From Inc.com, writer and professional coach, Jason Selk, suggests changing some of our attitudes toward our colleagues, clients and work, in order to reduce the chance of “burning out” in our daily routines. These strategies may not be wholly original, but they’re useful and well-stated:

Selk says first that “if you allow yourself to get burnt out, you are letting your job run you, rather than the other way around.”

He suggests instead regaining the concept of “**showing others how to treat you.**” If you feel that your colleagues or other people are “constantly interrupting” your work, they have learned that you’ll allow them to break your focus. Instead, he recommends setting time in your calendar specifically to address distractions from others that arise throughout your day.

You can have two “catch all” periods (say, 30 minutes each) in which you will return emails, answer phone calls, send texts and deal with other, “unforeseen issues that pop up in your day.”

Selk recommends taking a half-hour, in the late morning and a second half-hour, in the last afternoon, for these "catch all" periods. Inform those you work with that you have blocked out this time to deal with their requests, and be sure to enforce this practice consistently.

Selk stresses that there’s rarely if ever a problem that “couldn’t wait an hour or two.” Many problems have blown over by that time.

And if this blocked time isn’t needed (ha! how unlikely is that . . . ), you can use it to attend to projects that you've set aside from your daily work.

Secondly, Selk recommends “**maximizing**” not “managing” **your time**, so as little of it gets wasted as possible. He says that “maximizing” time means teaching people how to do more with the time you already have.

Selk says that we all have short blocks of time in our workdays that become wasted if we don’t recognize them (e.g. A client is five minutes late. Or you arrive at the meeting 10 minutes early.) He suggests that the length and number of periods of time you waste are inversely proportional to your income (e.g. “Million dollar income earners allow only three-minute periods to be wasted,” by contrast to those earning, say, \$100K, who may waste “up to 20 minutes at a time,” potentially several times, throughout their day). Many do worse, still.

How can you maximize your time? Selk writes that you'll do it “once you’ve identified what you can accomplish in shorter time blocks,” and use those blocks of time, thereby “reducing the time you waste each day.”

Finally, he speaks of the need to “**always pursue improvement.**” Improvement, not perfection, will fuel progress. If you constantly set the bar at perfection, you’ll fall short and miss opportunities to simply improve at what you do. This leads to discouragement, after which you can easily burn out.

Instead, Selk says, aim to learn something new frequently that improves on your present work.

He says you can “train your mind” to focus on “relentless improvement,” by asking yourself two questions, daily:

(1) What is the one qualitative thing I want to improve tomorrow? Limit yourself to only one thing, or else this will be too daunting. (For e.g., “I will assert myself with that late-paying client.”)

(2) What is the one thing I can do that could help make the above improvement happen?

Here it’s important to be as specific as possible and to focus on something small and do-able. (For e.g., I will take 5 minutes before I call my client[s] to write out and review the important points of my fee policy and to remind myself that it must be respected if I am going to accept the project.)

While these three main points aren’t especially original, Selk validly uses them to say that each of us can take more control over our schedules, time and productivity than we usually recognize.

When we take an active role on these fronts (expecting others’ respect for our schedules, maximizing our time and pursuing our own improvement), we can go a long way toward “avoiding burn-out.”

Ultimately, although our greater goal may not be competitiveness, our control over these factors will allow us to “banish burn-out” and thereby gain an edge over those (including our competitors) who do not participate actively in securing their own success, happiness and/or health.

*Do you worry about burn-out? If so, do you find Selk's pointers applicable? Please reply on the “contact” page of my website: [www.elizabethshih.com](http://www.elizabethshih.com)*

*I'd be delighted to continue this conversation.*

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## Shop News . . .

My thanks again go out to Monica Kreuger, Chief Visionary Officer of the Praxis School of Entrepreneurship, for discussing entrepreneurial strategy with me, and for her flexibility, as I've continued with late stage editing the school's business curriculum.

When a project spans many months in duration and is held in tandem with other work, every editor dreams of finding such a client, who is flexible enough to extend deadlines! So thanks to Monica for allowing me the freedom to carry that work alongside other contracts.

I am also nearing the end of another year of editing faculty and graduate student articles, papers and theses, at the University of Saskatchewan. Thanks to my colleague, artist and editor, Kat Bens; and editor Mick Ellis, for taking overflow projects, when they arise.

Special thanks go to business advisor Lori Jestin-Knaus of Women Entrepreneurs of SK, who offers advice and wisdom through the monthly "mentoring circle." She creates value out of our diverse contributions (and digressions). Our most recent discussion of "business challenges" in our businesses was illuminating and encouraging--much like Lori, herself. Women Entrepreneurs offers valuable training and networking opportunities that provide hopeful community, especially for those who work as solo professionals.

I've been intrigued to hear from Praxis Chief Visionary Officer, Monica Kreuger and entrepreneur and facilitator, Deanna Litz, about their new initiative: to build a Saskatoon's own "GroYourBiz" board (after the Bank of Montreal-sponsored program). The board will encourage women entrepreneurs to grow and mentor each other. The cocktail launch occurred two nights ago and conversations drew rave reviews. I hope to join next year's cohort of entrepreneurs who will begin in one year's time.

And I'm grateful to several other groups/ individuals, this month. The Northern SK Independent Living Centre (NSILC) provided me the some financial support to participate for another year in the Raj Manek Business Mentorship Program (2016/2017). And its business advisor continues patiently to oversee my bookkeeping, highly welcome during tax season!

I also want to thank Ernie Quintal (CEO, On Q Resolutions) and Bob Pitzel (painter and COO, Failure Prevention Services) for their friendship and referrals. These two gents continue to blaze the trails of their respective fields and remind me of the importance of community among peers. Thank you, Ernie and Bob, and renewed good wishes for your work.

I continue to thrive, working on your writing and editing projects this spring. And I will continue thus throughout most of the summer. So please contact me with your ideas and projects!

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About Us . . .

Since 2011, Elizabeth Shih Communications has provided B2B communications and marketing services on the Prairies and across Canada.

Do you need help writing your “marcom” materials? Please contact me through my website, via the CASL-compliant email form, on the right-hand side of each page ([www.elizabethshih.com](http://www.elizabethshih.com)).

After I have received your permission, I’ll be pleased to discuss projects with you!

I help small- and medium-sized businesses create e-newsletters, blog postings, promotional emails, press releases, case studies and related documents that secure good clients. Please visit my website for more information ([www.elizabethshih.com](http://www.elizabethshih.com)).