

Welcome Mid-July!

With summer now upon us and a few days of holidays behind me, I'm delighted to pen this issue of "Communications Digest."

In last month's issue, I returned to the second part of an encore presentation of my blog series (2012) on Seth Godin's visionary book, *Linchpin: As You Indispensable?* The story featured Godin's concept of internal "resistance," that can become anyone's enemy when one works-creatively (to be a "linchpin"). I also presented some important advice on how to use and store cell phone safely, from technology and health consultant Meghan Telpner. And from Bryan Garner, I shared why we can say or write "as best" but not "as best as" and still be linguistically correct.

In this issue, I conclude that three-part blog posting, addressing the importance Godin placed on "shipping" one's work, when our "resistance" would rather that we refine it endlessly and obsessively, as perfectionists tend to do.

In "Ask an Expert," I visit some recent tips from North American newsletter guru, Michael Katz, on five blocks to monthly newsletter writing and how to handily deal with them. And from "Word Nerd's Corner," I turn to etymologist Bryan Garner to clarify that confusing term, "mischievous."

Enjoy this issue and the beauty of summer, before the scorching sun reaches us. Again, I hope that a beach, a barbeque and/or some genuine relaxation are on the calendar for you, this month or shortly after!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth

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Article One is the final installment of my blog posting on Seth Godin's *Linchpin: Are you Indispensable?*

Lacking the Motivation of a "Linchpin?" Resisting your Own Resistance in Seth Godin's *Linchpin: Are You Indispensable?* (Part Three)

(From my blog posting on [April 11, 2012](#))

In *Linchpin: Are you Indispensable?*, Seth Godin cites the late Steve Jobs of Apple (a definite “linchpin”) as saying “Real artists ship,” and that “shipping” (or getting things done) is difficult, because of the “resistance.” This article will explore further Godin’s analysis of creatives’ “resistance” and how it can dog you. Again, Godin’s arguments defy easy cataloging, so I summarize here and provide some familiar kinds of examples. As you saw in earlier issues, Godin theorizes that your “lizard brain” is the reason you’re nervous or afraid, why you don’t do the best art we you do, and why you don’t “ship” when you’re ready to do so.

Our “resistance” to our own creative, risky work, Godin writes, is predictable and understandable. After all, society pushes artists to “be” geniuses (e.g. “American Idol” and other “reality” TV shows, and pre-school “education” for babies of ambitious parents). Society tends to value the outward appearance of being seen to be a genius, instead of the alternative of encouraging you as “linchpins” “to allow the genius within to flourish” (107).

Godin suggests that you have to think differently about failure as Creatives, and not let the risk of losing feed the “resistance,” to the point that you think “that you don’t deserve to win” and so that giving up begins to look attractive (115). The truth is that each of us does and will always fail at something, and “the key is not to let that wound you out of working.” If we discipline ourselves to write bad ideas daily, we’ll “eventually find that some good ones slip through” (117). But the “temptation to sabotage the new thing [idea or plan] is huge, precisely because it might work” (122).

Godin argues that “resistance” is a default reaction to cowering in fear. Yet people mistakenly tell themselves that they’re showing maturity and realism when they are out of touch with the reality of the need to “ship” and get on with work. And with cynics, Godin writes, the “resistance” won out years ago.

In this high-tech, hyper-fast world, “[w]hat’s left is to take that resistance (the very same that we embraced and rewarded for decades)” in factories and manufacturing plants “and destroy it” (123). And while fear of that is a self-fulfilling prophesy, so is confidence. Godin argues that if you can identify your fears as manifestations of “resistance,” then you can be confident in your interactions and increase your chances of succeeding.

In fact, he adds that the paradox is that the more you hide and squelch your artistic capacities for safety, the **riskier** your “resistance” becomes: “the less commotion you cause, the more likely you’ll fail, be ignored, expose yourself to failure,” and fail outright.

He cites classic quotations of the “resistance:” “I don’t know what to do,” “I don’t have any good ideas,” “I didn’t graduate from [*insert Ivy League school here*],” “My boss won’t let me,” “[M]y gender/race/health/religion/nationality/handicap/shoe size/DNA don’t make it easy” (129).

How can we oppose this “resistance?” Godin says that “When you feel the resistance, the stall, the fear, and the pull, you know you’re onto something. Whichever way the wind of resistance is coming from, that’s the way to head—directly into the resistance” (131).

I find Godin’s arguments a powerful antidote to anxieties one can have about prospecting or about submitting “final” work to clients. Many copywriters would be “linchpins,” but are too perfectionistic to get there. Recall all of those team or committee members you’ve worked with, who insisted on revising a document many times over, late into the night, etc.: Godin’s prescription “to ship,” and not to try to perfect your work, is a great antidote.

In our efforts to stamp out our “resistance” we mustn’t try to be too perfect for our projects or organizations. Because the fallacy of perfection only feeds the “resistance.” “Perfect,” Godin says, “is bad, because you can’t top perfect. The solution lies in seeking out something that is neither good nor perfect. You want something remarkable, nonlinear, game changing and artistic” (70).

And here’s one of his best injunctions to close—“Tolerate no rational or irrational reason to hold back . . . on your art. The only solution is to start today, to start now, and to ship” (149). (I sometimes read that before I make those dreaded cold calls . . .)

Please share how you’ve identified and overcome “resistance” in your association. Leave me your thoughts on my “comment” page. I hope you’ll use Godin’s insights to draw your own road-map to success. And good luck with “shipping” your current work!

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Wordsmithing with Bryan Garner

The word “mischievous” is so spelled. “Mischievious” is a common misspelling and mispronunciation. For instance:

- (1) “I could not imagine them driving, getting mouthy, moody or *mischievious* [read *mischievous*], let alone going to drinking parties at the homes of friends whose parents were out of town.” Eleanor Mallet, “The Tranquility of School Age,” *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland), 25 Feb. 1995, E1.
- (2) “Mayan Indians considered this place hell’s fun house, inhabited by *mischievious* [read *mischievous*] gods who had to be soothed with heaping food bowls and the occasional human sacrifice.” Judith Wynn, “Lodge Guests Settle In Among Tropical Wildlife,” *Boston Herald*, 26 Dec. 2002, 38.

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ASK AN EXPERT:

Five Major Blocks to Writing a Monthly Newsletter and How to Overcome them, Quickly (from the North American Expert Michael Katz)

Michael Katz has produced a humorous and thoughtful online newsletter every two weeks for nearly 15 years. His book, *Newsletters that Work*, is commonly recognized as the Bible on the genre. An expert in marketing and copywriting, Katz offers online courses on newsletters and other forms of creative marketing that draw high praise from participants.

In a recent article, he discussed five major blocks that prevent entrepreneurs from writing a monthly newsletter, and how to overcome them. I reduce his three page article to these five, scannable points:

- (1) “Having Nothing to Say”: Katz writes that most entrepreneurs know more than they think and yet commonly fear they have no material or will “run out” of material quickly. Katz writes: “I have never come across anyone who knew enough about a particular industry or topic to start a business in it, who didn’t also have a nearly endless supply of content to choose from.” Don’t assume that your clients and prospects who are interested in your field of specialization know all that you do. They “have questions. You, on the other hand, have answers, opinions, experience and perspective” to create the “nuggets” of content that a good reader needs.
- (2) “Newsletter Production Involves Too Much Technology”: Katz acknowledges that an enewsletter has a “lot of moving parts,” such as a “mailing list to manage; links to set up; images to lay out; responses to track; and dozens of other small pieces to coordinate and fine tune,” as you compose and send a regular newsletter. So yes, this process requires having to use some technology. But there are now dozens of email vendors who for a small fee will help you use the technology, so you don’t need technical skill to produce your newsletter.
- (3) “Publishing on a Regular Basis is a Chore”: Because you understand that the value of creating and sharing content regularly is important, many fear that the ongoing need for new content may be too great to meet. Katz recommends publishing monthly, so that the less frequent schedule will “reduce the burden,” while still being close enough for you to be reading and gathering content, regularly. Secondly, he says to be sure to keep a publishing schedule, by booking it into your calendar. It can be fun to gather insights and sources for your next issue.
- (4) “Fear of Writing”: Many entrepreneurs say they’re “lousy writers” and cannot handle writing a newsletter. But Katz says that creating an enewsletter is really much more like talking than writing. He likens the process to sending an email or to posting over social media. The copy should mimic speech; newsletters are really “simply glorified emails” that need to have an “authentic, friendly, spoken manner,” so that your prospects come to appreciate your perspective and what you have to say. Don’t worry about the style and grammar. Aim to “break down the walls between you and your potential clients.”

(5) “Fear of Competition”: Katz writes that “as recently as 15 years ago, few people or companies published content. Today we do it all day long across [many] platforms.” So you have many more prospects who can read your work and there’s also a lot of competition for their attention. However, no one reads less than they did five or 15 years ago. A good enewsletter sent to your house list will still be opened by a quarter to a third of the people it’s sent to.” That amounts to “10 to 20 times higher” than the number of people “who visit your blog, read your Tweets or . . . your LinkedIn updates.”

The enewsletter is still the most cost-effective way to show your expertise, to make a connection with others and to become “top of mind” to “everyone you know.” No, it’s not as easy as it was 10 years ago. But it’s still the best way “to leverage your relationships (and build new ones).”

Katz concludes by refusing the model of the entrepreneur who plans and collects material and waits for months to launch their enewsletter, “until everything is ‘just right.’” Waiting to collect a larger mail list, until you’ve “stockpiled enough columns so you’ll never run out,” and so on, is really just perfectionism and one’s own personal resistance.

Most newsletters have some error or flaw when they go to launch. (Consider the typos that I occasionally let slip into my copy!) What’s more important is that newsletters get out there and “in the game.” The cost of minor errors (as I know well) is relatively small. Writing something that reads less than perfectly “won’t result in catastrophe.”

Secondly, timing is crucial and the sooner you reach your contacts, the sooner you’ll see the results. With enewsletters, “you lose much more by waiting than you gain by perfecting.” Finally, Katz says that “experience is your friend,” so that you’ll really benefit from newsletter production in the doing of it, not in preparatory research. And when your readership read and comment on your work, the feedback will tell you that you have created relationship marketing, which is exactly what entrepreneurs now both need and seek.

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Shop News . . .

Thanks go out this month to business advisor at Women Entrepreneurs of SK, Lori Jestin Knaus, for leading another year’s “Mentoring Circle” of solo women professionals. We ended our year’s seminars with a delicious lunch at a local café that is run by a remarkable woman entrepreneur. Very apropos.

Thank you also to Kent Smith Windsor, Executive-Director of the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, for sharing a compelling article on mental health issues for entrepreneurs, published in Halifax Chamber's "Business Voice" magazine. The link, shared with members of the Saskatoon Chamber's Health Opportunities Committee, has motivated me to think more deeply about my work as a workplace mental health advocate.

A friendly nod to friends and family who gathered for a family birthday, very recently. It is a great joy to be reunited with family who live hundreds or thousands of miles away, even when it is rare.

Thanks go (in no particular order) to Ashleigh Mattern, Katherine Duncombe, Julie Barnes and Leanne Bellamy, fellow women of the Roundtable Freelancers' Group to which I belong. We share highs and lows, tips, best practices and "things/people to avoid" in our work. The support and friendship are great and each of us is blazing our respective trails of work and life.

I continue to attend as a community participant and communications advisor to the city's Neural Health Project meetings, spearheaded by Integrated Medicine specialist, Dr. DeeDee Maltman. We have extended conversations about what our community needs to foster good mental health--discussions crucial to our future. Did you know that per capita, Saskatchewan spends the least of any of the 10 provinces on mental health care? And yet we suffer some of the longest winters and greatest economic challenges of any region in the Western Hemisphere. Stay tuned to this newsletter for updates on this work.

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About Us . . .

Since 2011, Elizabeth Shih Communications has provided B2B marketing and communications 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).

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).