



*Tell Your Story Newsletter (TYSN):*

Specializing in Entrepreneurial and Organizational Storytelling

*Let me tell your story!*

### **Welcome Mid-September, 2019!**

As we experience the last few "dog days" of summer (today's forecast is for 30 C!), the leaves are turning and signal that autumn is nearly here. I am grateful to have had a productive and happy summer and hope you have, too.

Since rebranding my business last January through the training of the Praxis School of Entrepreneurship, I have enjoyed developing career document workshops and writing services for under-served communities, including international students, economic immigrants and clients with disabilities, to name several, growing sectors.

This month's feature article offers some hands-on tips for working when one has a disability (or, as many now say, "differing abilities").

What projects have you begun, this fall? Do you need a writer's and editor's eyes to help? Please don't hesitate to reach out for a quotation without obligation.

Even with the shortening of the days, fall brings its own, distinct beauty. I wish you a program year filled with professional accomplishments and many good clients, as well as meaningful contacts in our community.

Sincerely,  
*Elizabeth*

Principal  
Storytelling Communications

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**Article One: Are you a reluctant entrepreneur? Meet one such writer who's succeeding**

Not all entrepreneurs are born with a mind for business.

American copywriter and editor, Hilary Jastram, is a good example. She edits the work of numerous highly productive entrepreneurs, has blogged for the *Huffington Post*, *The Mighty* and written for other US-based publications.

But she describes herself as a “reluctant” entrepreneur.

Her accomplishments speak for themselves. But entrepreneurship found Jastram, not the other way around. In 2014 she was diagnosed with multiple chronic illnesses, including Lyme Disease; saw more than her fair share of the failures of the medical system; and found she could no longer maintain a traditional, 9-5 job.

As she says in an interview with the brilliant American copywriter and coach, Ed Gandia, the adversity has ironically been “the best thing” that happened to her. Although she had previously worked in her “dream job” as a marketing manager, she has since launched an influential not-for-profit, organization, “[Sick Biz](#),” which offers support to entrepreneurs with disabilities. She also excels in her freelance copywriting and editing company. She has “tripled” her former salary! And found ways to accommodate the vicissitudes of her health, such as sometimes recording her podcast from her own bed.

If her story appeals to you, I encourage you to listen to the podcast of Gandia's empathetic interview of Jastram at <https://b2blauncher.com/category/podcast/>

I can think of no better source for inspiration and advice for entrepreneurs with disabilities whom I meet in Saskatchewan, and as an entrepreneur myself who manages a disability. In the US, where Jastram is based, six out of 10 people have at least two chronic illnesses. In Canada, 6 million people have a mental or physical disability, only half of which participate in the workforce.

Entrepreneurship, as Jastram shows us, can be an alternative.

When Gandia asked Jastram what tips she could provide to entrepreneurs who run businesses while dealing with chronic health issues or disabilities, she shared the following nine points:

- (1) **Keep going:** Jastram says that she makes a conscious decision every day to pull herself out of her pain and “keep going.” Work functions as a distraction. She also knows that she has a family to feed and a home to keep running.
- (2) **Adapt to the needs of your health:** if she is too tired to type on a screen, Jastram will dictate an article into her smartphone—even if she has to work from bed.
- (3) **Be honest with yourself:** recognize and cope with the challenges you face on any given day. “Show up as your best version of yourself on that day,” but be aware that the version will vary, “from day to day.”
- (4) **Change your standards:** know that sometimes you have to reduce what you measure as “success.” It might not appear the way you previously expected it would.
- (5) **Work smarter, not harder:** because you'll have days when illness reduces your productivity, work as efficiently as you can, when you can, to make optimal use of your energy and strength.

(6) **Build extra time into every project:** Jastram recommends adding a cushion of “an extra two or three days” before a deadline, in case if you need them. Don’t try pulling all-nighters, as you once might have done.

(7) **Block your time:** it’s OK (and often essential) to build breaks into your day. Get some fresh air; stretch tired muscles and take a brief rest if you need it, before returning to work.

(8) **Seek support from others:** find a local community of people who share similar challenges, so that you won’t feel alone. In SK, we have the [Northern Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre](#) (NSILC), which has its own entrepreneurial with disabilities program. (I’ve written many of the entrepreneurial success stories on its website.)

(9) **Set boundaries:** know that not everyone in your environment will understand your situation. “Accept it and set boundaries with people who are toxic.” And I’d add to “set boundaries” with anyone who expects more from you than you can manage—whether they sound toxic or not.

Jastram says it’s important to have a determined mindset. But “when you don’t have a safety net—when you have no other options—it’s amazing what you can do.” Some entrepreneurs whom I know might find the extreme context of that claim frightening. I suggest to them that we consider that we all have inner passions and interests we can develop, from which we can find energy, enthusiasm and stores of motivation to excel at what we do.

Locally, Saskatchewanians are fortunate to have access to the “[startSMART](#) program” of the Praxis School of Entrepreneurship. (Full disclosure: I teach occasional seminars on business communication there and am an alumna of the program.) Programs like Praxis accommodate those with both mental and physical disabilities (which we prefer to call “differing abilities”), as well as those without.

So to those readers who are searching for a career that can accommodate differing abilities, as Jastram’s story shows, you needn’t be a dyed-in-the-wool entrepreneur, or come from a background that is in any way privileged. A “reluctant” start can yield unexpected success.

All it takes is your passion, interest and the dedication to make entrepreneurship your reality.

**STORYTELLER'S CORNER: Words, Stories and Riddles on Writing and Editing . . .**

“GrammarGirl” blogger and podcaster, the American Mignon Fogarty, recently wrote a posting about “Semantic Bleaching”—when the powerful meaning of words dilutes over time, due to repetition and overuse.

Consider the word “awesome,” so readily bandied about, even by seniors whom I meet in the community. The term originally denoted “full of awe, profoundly” and “reverential,” Fogarty writes. But it is commonly used now to mean “cool” or “nifty.”

There are less obvious instances, as well. “Terrible” that in the 18th and 19th centuries meant something that “inspired fear or dread,” now means simply something “unpleasant” or dislikable.

There are many other examples in current North American parlance: “Uber,” “adulting,” “horrible,” to name a few.

As someone who trained in Academia, I rankle not only at the effect of “semantic bleaching,” but also at the connotations of “bleaching” (e.g. white-washing, colonialism) that are discriminatory and insidious (e.g. highly problematic terms, like “ethnic cleansing”; “being disappeared” and so on).

*And now it's your turn: are you aware of “semantic bleaching” and do you give into, or resist, it? Please write in on the “Contact” page of my website. I'd be delighted to hear from you.*

**SHOP NEWS:**

Special thanks this month to the [Women Entrepreneurs of SK](#) (WESK) for capably organizing Saskatoon's monthly "Shaken with a Twist" networking event. Special thanks in particular to WESK CEO, Prabha Mitchell, Business Advisor, Lori Jestin Knaus, and Program Administrator, Colleen Gnyp for their contributions to last Thursday's discussion on improving entrepreneurship for the women of Saskatchewan.

It was fascinating and inspiring to hear the stories of Prabha and local entrepreneur extraordinaire, [Rachel Mielke](#).

Special thanks, as ever, to other event sponsors: the Virtus Group, BDC, Miller Thomson LLP and the NSBA.

Special thanks also go out to bookkeeping maven, Heather Stuart, whose intelligence and savvy with both Sage50 and QuickBooks is always welcome! I recommend Heather's bookkeeping services, if you need assistance in taming your financial records!

A hearty nod also, this month, to [NSILC](#) Director, Chelsea Wisser; and Employment Advisor, Ebonie Becker, for inviting me to revise client resumes with them, this month; and to offer a talk and workshop on career documents, later this fall.

## **ABOUT US:**

Between 2011 and December 2018, Elizabeth Shih Communications chronicled the stories of B2B marketing and communications on the Prairies and across the country.

Effective January 1, 2019, I rebranded as "Storytelling Communications." I now write career and communications documents and lead workshops that help newcomers (and others) land their first, better or ideal jobs; that help SMEs to close more sales by communicating more effectively; and that help promote companies' legacies.

Interested in learning more? Please contact me through my CASL-compliant website ([www.elizabethshih.com](http://www.elizabethshih.com)).

After I receive your message, I'll be pleased to discuss projects with you!

Please visit my website for more information ([www.storytellingcommunications.ca](http://www.storytellingcommunications.ca)).