



## MARKET CHANGE BRING OPPORTUNITIES

by Ben Stein, BWI President

I'm regularly asked by people who know I work in the boating industry about the health of our industry. So, you might think I'd have a good, succinct, and clear answer. You'd be wrong.

As a person who makes my living in part from the sale of advertising, I am keenly aware of changes in that marketplace. My own anecdotal observation is that although it might have taken longer than I would have predicted, companies are definitely tightening their belts and looking hard at the return they get for their advertising dollar.

As both a reader of and contributor to trade publications, I read the recent reports of declining sales and boat builder layoffs. Plus, I hear from friends and associates who work in both new boat sales and brokerage with uneven reports of demand but a definite downward trend. My standard reply (which may not be well received) is that after three or four years of order taking, now they have to actually sell boats.

What does this mean for all of us as journalists covering this industry? In the short term, it may mean publications, concerned about demand, may be scaling back for a bit. But I believe a longer view shows significant light at the end of our collective tunnel.

Since shortly after the start of Covid, a graph of demand has looked like a hockey stick. Boats sold faster than builders could build them and to a broad mix of new and experienced boaters. Buyers of new and new to them boats also drove demand for services, accessories, and upgrades. So much so that businesses serving boaters didn't need to aggressively market their products.

But now, things are changing. Salespeople will have to sell, marketers will have to market, and companies are likely to take a renewed interest in working with journalists to get their message out. That is our collective opportunity.

I've already started to see and perhaps you have as well, an increased focus on media events and other ways companies can grab the attention of the boating press. As companies must work harder to communicate with the boating public, we have an opportunity to work with those companies to convey their message.

I suspect the boating market, as a whole, is in for some uneven times, but it certainly doesn't feel like we should be bracing for anything like the years around the Great Recession. If we can capitalize on

the opportunity created by a need to reach the boating public, the boating press can flourish in these potentially challenging times.

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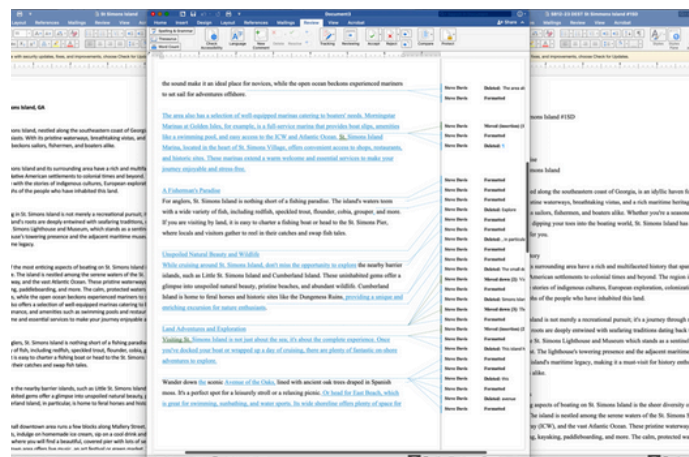
Writer's Tip by Steve Davis

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# MEETING ASSIGNMENT EXPECTATIONS

As working writers, we have transcended the basic beginning-middle-end concept of writing a story and have learned to combine, in varying degrees, the styles of writing (persuasive, narrative, expository, and descriptive) to create a story that will not only interest readers, but also one that an editor will appreciate and publish without too much revision. Included in that writing, the writer's tone, grammar, spelling, punctuation, language, and professionalism all play a role in how the reader and the editor will respond.



Editors, in general, expect writers to submit a column or feature that is organized, developed, and accurate. Whether writing a technical column or describing a destination, the writing must make sense, be interesting, and, dare I say, have a conclusion. So many times, a writer forgets to “end” the story. It’s as important as starting the story; it leaves the audience engaged and wanting to find out more.

I had a project manager when I was in educational publishing that told me she could make anyone’s work better but was useless as a writer. I suppose she had the knowledge of what was required by the client and a handle on writing mechanics, but didn’t feel she could create the content from scratch. Good writing is an art and editors love it when they receive work that meets their expectations and requires little revision. When the submission doesn’t meet those parameters, editors’ responses vary, from sending it back for revisions to not saying a word and making the revisions in-house or, in some cases, rewriting it completely. The latter will likely prevent any future assignments.

What’s nice for many editors who also manage assignments for their publication is the diversity of writers. They have choices when assigning topics. Writing a technical or DIY column is way different than a destination piece or a profile, but writers usually know their forte and will accept an assignment with which they feel comfortable. Still, some say they can write on a particular subject matter and are hoping they can do so to earn income, but many times, it’s obvious their attempt doesn’t fit the bill. That’s when it becomes abundantly clear to make sure that you understand the scope of the editor’s assignment. Interpretations can differ, so if there is any question or to further clarify, call the editor. Don’t assume. You might be writing a feature more than once, not only frustrating for you, but for the editor, which is another way to lose future assignments. If you don’t feel comfortable with the subject matter, don’t accept the assignment. The editor will respect that more than your failed attempt.

- Make the writing clear so it makes sense grammatically as well as expressing your thoughts, so the reader understands what you’re describing. Yes, an editor will review for spelling, grammar, and punctuation, but you’ll make more points with the editor if it’s all correct.
- Be concise and to the point but include all the necessary information. Most main points should be at the beginning and then elaborate; however, avoid extensive paragraphs. You may be trying to meet the word count, but you might lose the reader’s interest.
- Be organized. Yes, have a beginning, middle, and end.
- Be careful of your tone. If you write a negative boat review, you’ll be asked to rewrite it, and don’t try to be cute, unless it’s a satire. **Cont. on page 3...**

- Don't use language the reader won't understand. In many industries, technical terms are required, so a quick definition following the word can help. On the other hand, if it's a very technical column, steer away from being too basic.
- Don't just submit the article right when you finish. Let it rest for an hour or so and re-read it before you send it in. You'll get a better feel for how sentences and thoughts flow together and if your writing meets expectations.

*Steve Davis is BWI board member and Editor-in-Chief of Southern Boating.*

## GENERAL NEWS

### ADVERTISING OFFERED IN 2024 BWI ANNUAL DIRECTORY

It's that time again when we will be creating the BWI Annual Directory which will be distributed this summer. And once again, BWI will be accepting advertising in a special section to highlight our Supporting Member businesses. The digital directory is distributed to all current Active and Supporting members. Prices are \$300 for a 4-color, full page ad in the front section. Please contact executive director, Zuzana Prochazka at [info@bwi.org](mailto:info@bwi.org) to place an ad or with questions.

## MEMBER NEWS

### NMEA ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPO

This year's conference will be held at the Omni Hotel in Providence, Rhode Island on September 16-20. The event will include technical training sessions, educational seminars and networking opportunities.

The manufacturer expo hall will showcase the latest in electronics- 10:45 - 6:30 Tuesday and Wednesday, and until 1:30 Thursday. There will be receptions on the first two evenings and the NMEA Product of Excellence Awards banquet will be held Thursday night.

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