



NEW IDEAS

by Steve Davis, BWI President

I joined many associations when I first got involved in the business world eons ago, primarily because I was trying to expand my presence in the community by developing more relationships. At the time, I lived in a small town of about 25,000 full-time residents. During the summer, it was a completely different story, but it was during the tourist season when seeing someone from the group was comforting, a sense that I wasn't alone amongst a sea of visitors. A camaraderie developed between members that gave me a sense of belonging.

After a few years that included time as an ambassador welcoming new businesses to the community and hosting members at functions, I began to feel disenchanted, like it was just the same ole people and the same old routine. Nothing was changing and nothing was keeping me involved. Like I said, it was a small community and though I moved away from that small town years ago, the relationships I formed remain.

Joining Boating Writers International was an easy choice when I moved to Fort Lauderdale with my first job in maritime publishing. I'd been sailing all my life but was fairly new to the

writing/editing game. I knew it was my best bet to meet those in the industry and make the connections that would help me in my job. Over the years, being a part of BWI has introduced me to an entirely new community of friends and connections that keep me involved. As I stepped into the president's role, I started thinking how we, as an association, could avoid the "same old thing" and provide members meaningful benefits.

By far, the annual contest is the greatest draw, especially because there's \$15,000 worth of cash prizes. But what else? Over the years, the board has discussed many ideas and we've even tried a few like affinity (discount) programs that had no real takers. Some other initiatives required an impossible amount of administration or were impractical to implement nationwide such as group health insurance.

However, one idea that's taking shape is a press contact list. Many marketing agencies, manufacturers, and maritime entities are difficult to reach although they're the necessary sources to create compelling stories. That's one benefit we feel will really help our writers/photogs

so BWI board member, Kelsey Bonham Bailey, has taken point on the project. Once it's ready, we'll send it out annually in a PDF format like the member directory.

Providing members with tools helps everyone do their best work and it's why BWI exists. Let me know if you have implementable ideas to make your membership more valuable.



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FIND YOUR PEAK CREATIVE WRITING TIME

I suspect many writers have a morning routine that’s similar to those with a “normal” job. They wake up, hit the head, brew some coffee and have breakfast while reading the paper or doomscrolling to find out what horrible things are going on in the world. Then, they check emails before starting to write. I can relate because that’s how I used to start my day early in my writing career.



I would do the old 9-5 routine because I heard you should practice BICHOK (butt in chair, hands on keyboard) and there is some truth to that. Most writers need a disciplined approach to hammer out the necessary amount of words to keep our editors at bay. But is this routine conducive to creativity?

About 20 years ago, I made a horrifying discovery when I was inundated with assignments. I woke up at 0400, went straight to the computer, and by 0800 I had written about 2,000 words, which for me was a good day’s work. Even better, the writing was good and had flow. I realized I was on to something, but what was it? Breaking it down, I realized part of it was the quietude; the phone wasn’t ringing, no one was texting or emailing me. But looking back, I realized that by starting work before my mind got hijacked by extraneous thoughts, I was using more of my subconscious than my conscious brain. I felt like I was channeling rather than thinking of what to write, then clacking the keys. The lesson: don’t squander your most creative time with non-writing morning routines.

I used the word horrifying to describe my discovery because I’m really a night owl. I have to force myself to be in bed at 11 at night, so I only get about five hours of continuous sleep if I’m lucky. But I use this lack of sleep to my advantage. I eat an early lunch, take a nap and take advantage of another burst of creative thought when I wake up. But only if the nap is closer to 30 minutes than an hour. If I sleep too long, I wake up groggy, and I’m not as prolific. To combat this, I drink a cup of coffee beforehand. It takes about 20-30 minutes for caffeine to kick in, and when I wake up, I’m immediately ready for action.

I also take micro naps later in the day. If I feel sleepy, I close my eyes for a minute while sitting at my desk. If I can get any sleep at all — even if it only lasts a minute — it has a restorative effect and often re-sparks my creativity. There’s some science behind this too. An MIT study found that the period that occurs right as you are falling asleep is one of the brain’s most fertile. Thomas Edison used to hold a steel ball in his hand while thinking of a problem he was having with an invention. If he nodded off, he would drop the ball, and it would wake him up. And he found that in that moment, he could sometimes find a solution.

For some people, working late into the night is their magic time, and the common thread is that it is another quiet time with fewer interruptions from the outside world. I can relate. I play guitar, and I find my most creative time for that is after midnight. The upshot is to experiment to discover your golden time to write. It will also help you identify your least productive times. Use those creative lulls to make phone calls, go to the gym or run errands.

If you try the 0-dark-hundred time to write, don’t use an alarm. Wake up organically to avoid interrupting deep sleep.

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And when you wake up, spend a moment thinking about the first sentence you will write before rising; it helps to prime the pump. Another technique to getting straight into the flow is to always leave off knowing what you'll write next.

Another pro tip: it's 0530 now and I'm going back to bed.

BWI board member and past president, Alan Jones

GENERAL NEWS

ADVERTISING OFFERED IN 2026 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 Supporting members. Price is \$300 for a 4-color, full page ad in the front section. Please contact Executive Director, Zuzana Prochazka at info@bwi.org to place an ad or with questions.

BWI IS SOCIAL!

BWI has an expanded presence on social media. Be sure to give us a follow on Instagram @boating_writers_international, on Facebook at Boating Writers International and on LinkedIn @boating-writers-international.

Don't forget to tag us in your posts too, so we can share and repost your stuff. The more we're connected, the more we can keep the world informed about what's happening on the water. For questions, contact Pete McDonald at pete.mcdonald@firebrand.com.

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