



Catapult your content with a named writer

like Rodney Gedda

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About this report

This report is a guide for using a named writer for content marketing and communications. It was developed by Rodney Gedda (see About the author). Gedda regularly updates and maintains this report. Comments and suggestions are welcome, but the report is produced without any influence or bias from a third-party. The content in this report is copyright of Rodney Gedda.

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What is content marketing?

- Content marketing is broadly defined as:

Objective content designed to attract a target audience to build brand awareness, trust and, if desired, ultimately lead generation and sales

- For content marketing to be useful, the content must be independent, objective and build a rapport, or “halo”, around the brand.
- Content marketing is the “flavour of the month” in 2014, but has been around for a long time.
- Content marketing can be delivered with new and existing channels. E.g., whitepapers, newsletters, blogs, social media.
- See the free report *An Introduction to Content Marketing* by the author for more information about content marketing.



Content, journalists and writers

- The content in content marketing is wide and varied, and can include opinion pieces by subject matter experts and commentators.
- Journalists are ideal for content marketing as they understand the value of independent editorial and have usually built up interview contacts.
- Another card journalists have up their sleeves is a public “face” that attracts and audience.
- Many journalists have broaden their focus to include opinion pieces, books, copyrighting and content marketing.
- Brands can take advantage of content marketing writers by doing what the traditional media has always done – put the writer’s name on the content.



What is a named writer?

- More experienced journalists often write opinion pieces and step up to become key influencers.
- In addition to contacts, writers also build up audiences that agree and disagree with their views.
- A “named writer” is simply a writer who has an established reputation as an influencer among a certain demographic – general or specialised.
- Many named writers fall into the profession after a career as a celebrity, scientist, business leader or, dare I say it, sporting hero.
- Named writers work for both “traditional” media companies and for brands under the guise of content marketing.
- Many named writers also have their own blogs and social media channels to communicate with their audience.



What is a ghost writer?

- Anyone can write copy, but journalists who do so are often referred to as “ghost writers” as they have chosen not to put their name on top of the content.
- When I’m training cadet journalists I often find myself striking a red pen through their byline above advertorial pieces. They are keen to get noticed, I say keep your reputation.
- An MD of an IT services firm once said to me “I need some ghost writing done”. I immediately replied “call me Casper”.
- If you’re happy with the content produced by your named writer, feel free to offer ghost work as well. Just don’t expect the same type of outcome.
- The acceptance rate of ghost writing will depend a lot on how much work the writer has going at the time.
- I won’t go on about copywriting, that’s for another report.



Why use a named writer?

- Named writers can add credibility to general marketing and content marketing activities.
- They are distant from the brand, but can tell interesting stories around the brand's messaging.
- Named writers can build brand audiences and bring their own network of followers along too.
- Good named writers can become a champion of your brand without being overtly commercial about it.
- Named writers can be used for one-off projects like books and whitepapers or fit nicely into an ongoing content marketing strategy.
- Named writers spur debate internally and externally
- Named writers should spice up boring content!

Named writing ≠ celebrity endorsement

- Some brands go out of their way to promote celebrities, most notably singers and actors, into positions like “evangelist” or “chief designer”.
- This is very much an advertising strategy and offers little in the way of objective content.
- On a recent trip to Australia to promote his beloved bottle of Vodka, Dan Akroyd made *Media Watch* for not answering many questions about his career and just talking booze.
- It can produce immediate benefits like media coverage, but can also leave a sour taste with the brand – tread carefully.
- Named writing does not need to as advertising focused and goes beyond endorsements to more objective content.
- Good named writing promotes freedom of expression, not “stand next to this sign while we take a photo” advertorial.

How to engage a named writer

- Like most media professionals named writers are generally on the look out for freelance work, but that doesn't mean they will accept every job on offer.
- I have refused quite a lot of work recently (named and ghost) mostly from numerous cost-driven media startups looking for cheap, but credible, content.
- A good way to approach a named writer is to talk up the credibility of the content piece or program the person will be contributing too.
- Emphasizing the independence of what the named writer will be contributing is also key.
- Journalists generally despise being told what to write and named writers are no exception.
- It's fine to give the named writer a brief, but avoid a "I'm paying for this so you'll write what I want to hear" tact.
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The art of storytelling

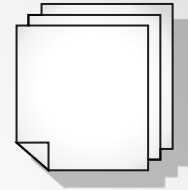
- What I enjoy about being a named writer is the freedom to capture the reader's attention by telling a story around the brand, content or program you are supporting.
- The concept of "storytelling" has been popularised along with the recent surge in content marketing.
- Marketers are now urged to take their prospects on a journey of enlightenment rather than simply telling them what is for sale.
- Named writer stories can help build that path of discovery, particularly for brands with weak, or disillusioned, positioning.
- Like any form content, storytelling still has to be meaningful to have a positive impact so I caution jumping in without a plan.
- Try and tie in named writer stories with a few brand objectives, not just one.

Compelling internal communications

- Producing content for external marketing is a mature strategy, but most organisations can also benefit from independent content produced for internal communications.
- Engaging a named writer for internal communications can give a “third-party” viewpoint that can be digested by staff more fervently than just another “message from our CEO” type of communication.
- Talk to your named writer about aligning an opinionated internal communications program with company objectives (e.g. fostering team work and collaboration).
- Named writers can also heat up a debate amongst staff. “The name writer says our industry is headed for decline”. It’s then up to staff to prove the point wrong – “this is how we will remain relevant”.

Series are stronger

- I generally won't recommend using a named writer for a "one off" piece unless it's something like an essay or foreword.
- Named writers bring the most value when they are contracted for a series that can attract a following and the resulting brand awareness. E.g., one blog piece a week or month can be easily made into a series and even given a name. E.g. "Stuchbury's stance".
- Think of themes for your series that are relevant to your audience and look for a named writer that can spark some critical thinking around it.
- Like sitcoms, named writer series have a limited lifespan. Don't try to stretch it out beyond its obvious used by date. When it starts to look stale, wrap it up and move onto the next topic.
- Like all content, the shelf-life of a series is generally good, but it can always be sun-setted if deemed no longer relevant.



Fire up a foreword

- As noted, the solitary use of a named writer is best for a book or report foreword.
- A named writer can give a longer content piece an independent viewpoint, and tell a story, from the outset.
- Ironically, I have also written quite a few ghost foreword pieces in my time, however, having the personal brand of a named writer delivers more impact.
- The named writer doesn't need to steal any thunder and its not uncommon to see two forewords – one by a named writer and one by a CEO.
- Again, the writer should be given the freedom to write about the topic at hand and not be a mouthpiece for the content in the book or report. Pieces about social and industry trends, and how they relate to the content, make better reading.



Quintessential quotes

- It's been quite fashionable for marketers to include positive quotes from journalists about their products or services.
- You need to tread carefully with quotes from contracted writers to avoid obvious cases of comment missteps.
- Years ago a computer vendor tried to do a shifty by including in one of its radio ads some positive comments about a product from a "respected IT journalist". The tight-knit IT journalist community immediately raised the question, who might this person be?
- Like most marketing-driven content, quotes work best when they are about an issue or trend and not just about a vendor's product or service.
- And, like named pieces, I recommend building up a relationship with the writer over just throwing an odd quote into your marketing material.



Byline beware for branded content

- Many journalists do copywriting as a way to apply their trade to a known market demand for content.
- Most (good) journalists will refuse to put their byline on a copywriting, advertorial or branded content pieces.
- Make a clear distinction between copy types and how a named writer can contribute and add value to the varying styles.
- If the named editorial is independent then journalists won't run the risk of damaging their own reputation with the intended audience (or worse ending up on *Media Watch*).
- To maintain a good relationship with a named writer, marketing managers should appreciate this divide – which actually makes the messaging more powerful.



From byline to bio

- It's not unusual for a named writer to include a short biography at the end of a piece.
- This is a quick and easy (but not guaranteed, of course) way to show the writer's independence from the brand.
- Short example of a bio:

Rodney Gedda is a Sydney-based business and technology analyst and writer. He has written two books about digital disruption in Australia.

You can reach him at: rodney@gedda.info.

- That snippet sums up the named writer without specifying where he works or where his pay check is coming from.
- Naturally, a writer's bio may vary depending on the piece being written and the audience it's written for.
- Named writers can also introduce themselves to answer the "who?" question.



Named writing gone wrong

- Like any form of editorial associated with brands, named writing needs to be kept in check to remain credible.
- Some named writers have fallen into the trap of putting their name on specific content, typically books, about a brand where they have a vested interest in the success of the product.
- Note: it's fine for a named writer to want their client to be successful, but when their pay check hangs on it the independence becomes muddy.
- Avoid "Celebrity chef syndrome" where the stars become champions of specific products rather than the content or wider brand.
- All these activities quickly can the credibility of the content – and the writer!

‘Futurists’ and other charlatans

- What do you get when you cross a celebrity with a named writer? A self-proclaimed futurist, or something like that.
- Having interviewed numerous ‘futurists’ in my time, they almost always offset their thought-provoking claims with dashes of bogus untruths for good measure.
- No one can predict the future and it only takes one technological or social change to turn the present, and thus the projected future, on its head.
- I’m not saying avoid them like the plague, but just be wary your brand could easily be associated with outrageous (and later false) claims if you engage with a so-called futurist for external marketing.
- Like celebrities, they can be good for attracting immediate publicity, but can leave a trail of rubbish in their path.

About the author

15 years experience as a:

- Journalist
- Editor
- Copywriter
- Named writer (well, duh)
- Marketing reporter/editor
- Analyst (marketing, IT & business)
- Report writer
- Creative manager
- Book author
- Blog, social media producer
- Marketing and business development professional

Rodney is available for:

- Writing and content production (named and ghost)
- Content marketing strategy
- Editing
- Blogs, newsletters and social media.
- Content distribution strategy

Contact details:

- **E:** rodney@gedda.info
- **P:** +61 417 697 219
- **W:** www.gedda.info

About the author (cont.)

Rodney has written for, or been quoted in, many national media outlets

