

# How To Sell To Foreign Markets

# A few keys to successfully tapping into foreign markets.

- Airline inflights and airport magazine shops offer potential opportunities.
- Think of one of your previously written stories that might work as a department piece. I seldom pitch original story ideas to foreign publications. Since most foreign magazines typically pay less than North American publications, the effort of making an original sale may not be worth it (especially if it needs translation).
- Never send the entire story as an attachment or in the body of the e-mail unless the guidelines or editor specifically says to. Use a

- Query someone down the list on the masthead first to introduce yourself and enquire about querying procedures. If that doesn't get a response then try the next person up the masthead until you get to the editor. I never query the editor first unless the guidelines say to do so. I usually pick one of the backup editors. Address the query to that person even if the e-mail address is info@...
- The biggest reasons most queries fail is that they are just too long. In my workshops, I stress the importance of queries being no longer than 150 words. Most queries I critique are 400–500 words long. Few editors in North America or anywhere else in the world have the time

- Always e-mail your query. The days of the SASE with reply coupons have gone the way of the dinosaur. Besides mail service in most countries takes weeks.
- Make sure your query is timely or seasonal. Don't send skiing stories at the end of winter. Assume that the magazine has at least an eight-month lead-time for seasonal issues. Remember that seasons are reversed when dealing with publications south of the equator.
- Put a grabber title of no more than four words in the subject line of your e-mail. Not cute, but punchy. Remember that foreign editors don't think the same way as North American editors. They may not understand cute. Assume that most foreign editors are more businesslike than NA editors regardless if it's

- Open your query with the opening line or two from your story. Or with a provocative question. Something that grabs the editor's attention and makes him/her want to read further.
- Never mention that you are award-winning unless it's a Pulitzer. Most NA writing awards mean even less to foreign editors than they do to NA editors. There are literally tens of thousands of meaningless contests worldwide. It just uses up words you don't have. Most editors care only about the story IDEA and ASSUME you can write it. The query provides the idea and the samples show your writing ability. LESS IS MORE.
- Sample clips are important but not as important as in North American markets. Having a website is a huge plus or even a must. Provide links to your website samples in the e-mail. E-mailing clips can be difficult for two reasons; English probably won't be the first language of the person you are querying and many foreign magazines don't have

- Having a good selection of photos for your story is a definite must. It could mean the difference between making a sale or not. Most foreign editors love photo/text packages. It saves them time and money. Also, many foreign magazines don't pay extra for photos. They pay one flat fee for the package (they will, however, pay extra for images used on the cover). Take it or leave it. Foreign photo/text packages range from US\$300-\$800.
- Never attach photos with your query, but mention that you have a good selection. Include the link if you have some on your website. I usually send a link to a lightbox of lo-res images relevant to the story.
- Mention if you have the capability of providing

- Never use one of those 30–word sign–offs used by many writers. The ones listing accomplishments as authors, writers, photographers, bloggers, websites, rocket scientists and all the awards you have won for the last ten years. This just uses up words and is meaningless fluff to most editors. Remember that editors are only interested in two things; your idea and your ability to deliver the story on time.
- Since most foreign magazines only ask for language or country rights, you are free to send the same query/idea to editors in dozens of different countries. I'll do one sample lightbox of images and send the same query (or slightly modified) to dozens of overseas markets.
- Follow–up after three weeks and if still nothing follow–up again after another week. If still nothing then use the same process to query the editor again with a different

# Potential Travel Destinations and Markets

- As travel writers we visit many destinations each year, but most writers view those destinations in terms of accumulating information and photos they need for a story in one of their local NA outlets. Few view the destination as another market or potential outlet for their work. Even worse few writers take enough photos



# Aspects of our Business Few Consider

- Few of us, for whatever reason, don't seem to have enough time to properly prepare for a press trip.
- Few of us ever think of the destination we are visiting as a potential new market for our work.
- Few of us think about searching local magazine shops for potential magazine/publication outlets before hitting a cantina or souvenir shop.
- Few of us use pre-flight time to search the magazine racks at airports for potential foreign markets.
- Few of us think of the destination we're visiting as an outlet for stories from our home country.
- Few of us think of the destination we're visiting as a destination that other foreign markets might be interested in.
- Few of us make photo shot lists for possible story ideas before reaching the destination. As a result few of us take enough photos to properly cover a destination

# Good Photography is a Must

- As writers, our biggest hurdle with foreign and NA publications is good photo coverage. This is a major concern for most writers because most don't take enough photos to get magazine-type coverage. Perhaps this is because most NA travel writers work for newspapers or blogs where there is less emphasis on good photography coverage. While newspapers use up to three photos, NA and foreign magazines will typically use 12 or more images with their stories. You may be able to get around this when pitching a North American story because you can always get extra image coverage from the CVBs/DMOs. If you're pitching a foreign destination then chances are the foreign CVB/DMO won't have the pics you need to help illustrate and

# Getting Paid

- Getting paid is not that difficult with foreign markets. You have about the same chance of not getting paid as have with a NA magazine not paying you. Yes sometimes you don't get paid, but that happens in this business. That is why I treat foreign markets as reprint markets. Having said that, I have published about 150 stories in foreign markets and I think about four stiffed me.
- I find that foreign markets are more businesslike because they need good content

# Paid By Check

- Some magazines will mail a check and when you deposit it your bank will usually put a hold on the funds until it clears. This can take a month and is the least preferred way of getting paid. On top of this, if the check is in a foreign currency you will usually have to pay currency conversion fee. I try to avoid this method of payment at all

# Paid By Money Order

- The odd magazine will pay by money order. This is complicated for most magazines because it means a magazine staffer has to go to a bank or post office to buy a money order. It's okay for you because it's like cash when you deposit it. But you don't see much of this anymore.

# Paid By Bank Transfer

- My experience is that most magazines prefer to pay in US\$ via direct bank transfer. It is the easiest and least costly method than a check/money order and they can usually do it from their computer or phone. However, YOUR bank will charge you for the transfer at the receiving end. I just received a \$300US payment from Dubai and the bank charged me \$10. So the final deposit into my account was \$290.00US. Despite this, it is one of my most preferred options because I don't have to do anything.
- Of course this method means you have to give out your personal banking information to someone overseas that you hardly know. The best way to handle this type of overseas payment is to open a separate work US\$ account and keep a very small balance in it like \$10 to

# Paid By PayPal

- My most preferred way of getting paid is PayPal. You open an account with your email address and some banking info and give your PP account to the magazine. They transfer money from their PP account into yours. You then transfer the money from your PP account into your US\$ bank account. The whole process takes about two weeks and you only pay a very small handling fee. Not only is it a fast way of getting paid, you don't have to hand over any banking information and you can do

# Ask For US Dollars

- By far the biggest problem with foreign markets is the currency. Always negotiate to get paid in US dollars even if it means a few less dollars. The US dollar is the standard currency for international money transactions. Asking for payment in any other currency (even Canadian \$) just complicates things on both ends with



# What If You Don't Get Paid?

- If you don't receive payment try a few times to collect. If that doesn't work **MOVE ON.**

# Finding Foreign Markets

- Search the web for travel markets in foreign countries (e.g. search Australian travel magazines).
- Search travel writing websites like <http://www.refdesk.com/paper.html> <http://www.webwombat.com.au/magazines/index.htm>
- I use <http://www.worldwidefreelance.com> a fair bit. They charge for access to their publications database, but the fee is worth it. Also they publish an annual listing of all airline inflight magazines with all the contact info.
- The next time you travel to any destination outside Canada plan on spending some time at a magazine/newspaper store or the newsstand at the airport. Not only will you find publications from the country you're in, but you'll also find publications from other foreign destinations.