

Fan your passion & ideas into money-making magazine articles.

From Spark to Flame: Fanning Your Passion & Ideas into Money-making Magazine Articles that Make a Difference

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/3915.html?s=pdf>

FROM SPARK TO FLAME

**Fanning Your Passion & Ideas
into \$Moneymaking\$ Magazine Articles
that Make a Difference**



by

Dr. W. Bradford Swift

Founder, Life On Purpose Institute

© 2005 W. Bradford Swift and Porpoise Publishing, All rights reserved.

Visit Life On Purpose Institute's web site for free yet valuable resources: <http://www.lifeonpurpose.com>. This book may NOT be freely distributed or included into other publications without written permission. For discounts on multiple copies contact Life On Purpose Institute at publishing@lifeonpurpose.com.

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	I
<u>CHAPTER 1 -- THE WRITERS TAFFY MACHINE</u>	1
<u>CHAPTER 2 -- WRITING ON PURPOSE WITH PASSION AND PLAY</u>	5
<u>CHAPTER 3 -- THE SPARK OF PASSION-FILLED IDEAS</u>	14
<u>CHAPTER 4 -- THE MARKET: THE COMMON GROUND BETWEEN PASSION AND IDEAS</u>	21
<u>CHAPTER 5 -- FANNING THE SPARK: DEVELOPING IDEAS</u>	37
<u>CHAPTER 6 -- HOW TO SELL EVERY ARTICLE YOU WRITE</u>	53
<u>CHAPTER 7 -- YES, NO, AND HANDLING THE BIG R (REJECTION)</u>	67
<u>CHAPTER 8 -- DELIVERING THE GOODS</u>	72
<u>CHAPTER 9 -- COUNTING THE CASH</u>	81
<u>CHAPTER 10 -- THE POWER OF WORDS TO CREATE A LIFE ON PURPOSE</u>	88
<u>APPENDIX A SAMPLE QUERY LETTERS</u>	A

Chapter 1 -- The Writers Taffy Machine

Growing up, one of my favorite places to spend summer vacation was along the coast of North Carolina at Atlantic Beach, and one of my fondest memories is of watching the automatic taffy-pulling machine. Into one end of this magical machine the owner would pour the ingredients for making taffy that, of course, included a lot of sugar. He would then turn the machine on and after a few minutes, it would begin churning out multi-colored strands of taffy, ready to be boxed and sold to a line of salivating children, including me.

Because of that cherished memory, I now have upon my office wall what I call my “Writer’s Taffy Machine.” At one end I pour in the sweet blend of ideas and passion, while the other end churns out checks from magazine publishers. Between these two ends are all the steps we’ll cover in detail in this book.

By the time you finish reading, you’ll know how to build a writer’s taffy machine, and, if you accept the coaching and do the assignments, you’ll be well on your way to building one for yourself.

At this point, ask yourself a couple of important questions:

- Am I interested in building my own taffy machine?
- Will I do the necessary work to maintain my machine and have it churn out moneymaking magazine articles?

Take a few moments now and answer these questions for yourself. Then, get a notebook or journal to use in conjunction with this book and make your first entry a

written statement of what you intend to accomplish from our working together through this book. Be as specific as possible. If you're unsure whether or not you're ready to commit to doing the work, that's fair. Write that down. This is just a starting point, and you can always revise your intentions later. I encourage you to stretch beyond what you think you can accomplish. Remember, part of my job as your writing coach is to improve your performance beyond what you can accomplish on your own.

Now, let's look at the components of a Writer's Taffy Machine— the machine that turns your ideas into money. What are some of the steps between your sweet ideas and the even sweeter checks?

Blueprint for Building Your Taffy Machine

Every article starts with an idea. One of the questions writers hear most from aspiring writers is, "Where do you get your ideas?" One of the most talented and prolific writers I've ever met, Harlan Ellison, would often facetiously answer such a question by replying, "Why, I buy them from a man in Poughkeepsie. Ten ideas for ten bucks."

But even before asking the "where" question, I suggest looking more deeply at some "why" questions. Why are you writing? Even more important, why are you here? In Chapter 2 we'll explore the vital importance of purpose for writers. While one purpose for writing is to make money, I'm going to suggest it's simply not enough. After all, there are far easier ways to make money, and a lot more of it than most people ever make writing. Now, I'm not saying you can't make a good living as a freelance writer. What I am saying is that spending some time to become clear what your purpose is for writing and how it ties in with your greater life purpose will make all the difference in your writing, and in your life. In fact, a clear sense of purpose will act like

a magnet that will attract to you the perfect ideas to develop into money making magazine articles.

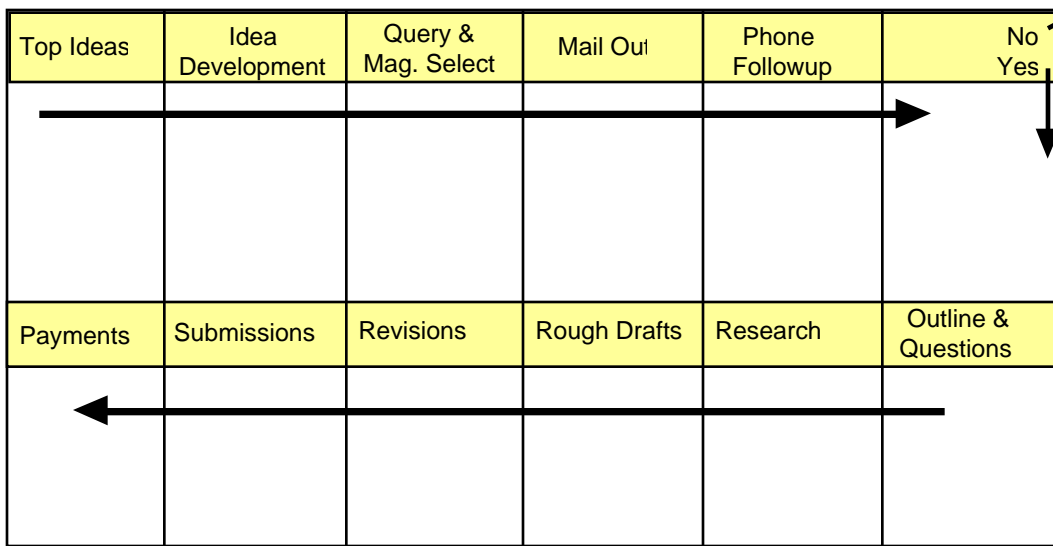
Following most chapters are suggested ways to put what you've just learned into action in your writing life. It's completely up to you as to how many of these suggestions you take. As your writing coach, I must tell you that the more suggestions you take, the more impact this book will have on your writing. These suggestions will work, if you work.

Ready to get started? To begin, we'll examine how you can use the flint and metal of passion and ideas to ignite your sparks and get you on your way to writing powerful and entertaining magazine articles that sell.

Call to Action Assignment

Create your own Writer's Taffy Machine, or its equivalent. You might decide that your 'system' will be a flower garden, with ideas being the seeds you're planting. Or you could work with a stream metaphor, with the ideas being fish making their way from the small mountain pond down to the ocean (where they turn into checks). I recommend using a corkboard that's at least 24 by 36 inches, displayed on a wall in the area you've designated for your writing. Use either the blank backs of old business cards, or cut 3 by 5 inch note cards in half or thirds. Use a new card for each new idea you find.

Writer's Taffy Machine Display



Chapter 2 -- Writing on Purpose with Passion and Play

What's your life purpose? Relax, I know that can be quite a heady question. I also know that for many writers, the answer might be "to write." I'd like to invite you to try on a different perspective. While the entire process of clarifying your life purpose is beyond the scope of this book, you can consider this chapter as a crash course in getting started. For a proven, systematic approach to clarifying your life purpose pick up a copy of *Traveling the Purposeful Path* (www.travelingthepurposefulpath.com)

You may be asking what this has to do with writing money making magazine articles. My response is EVERYTHING, because without a clear sense of purpose, your writing career and your writing will be missing the passion that turns so-so writing into the type of writing editors are willing to pay good money for. And let's face it, making a living as a writer isn't always that easy. In fact, most professional freelancers would probably say it's NEVER that easy. Without a clear sense of purpose, it's too easy to get discouraged and end up throwing in the towel. But the clearer you are that your writing is an expression of your true purpose for being on planet earth, the more unstoppable you become.

Now, let's look at a couple different perspectives of life purpose – the cultural perspective, what most people would say a life purpose is, and the Life On Purpose Perspective.

The Cultural Perspective

Over the years I've surveyed thousands of people asking them one simple question: "What is a life purpose?" While I've received many interesting answers, the

most interesting observation is that the vast majority of the responses had this common theme: “A life purpose is what I’m here to **do** during my life.” What that equates to is that most people consider their purpose in life as either their job, career, or profession such as writer, corporate executive, or physician. Or they may consider their life purpose to be some significant role they play, like being a good parent, a good employee, or community member.

But I’d like to offer you a different perspective; one that many people have found to be key to enhancing their life. Consider that a life purpose could also be viewed as **the context, vessel or container into which you pour your life.** In other words it’s a context for your life that then shapes your life and all that you do. Not just your career, not just the important roles of your life, but each and every moment. When you look at your life from this Life On Purpose Perspective, then it’s possible to be living true to your life purpose in all of your life, not just when you’re writing, not just when you’re being a parent, but each and every moment. This doesn’t mean that your writing, your parenting, and all the other things you do aren’t important. They are! Your job, your roles in life, everything you do become the various ways you express your true purpose.

For example, while I still spend a lot of my time writing, I also spend time as the founder of Life On Purpose Institute, as a life purpose coach, as a husband and a dad. But none of these activities is my life purpose. My life purpose, the context that gives shape and form to each of these activities is to live a life of purposeful, passionate and playful service, a life of mindful abundance balanced with simplicity, and spiritual serenity.

Living a life of service, simplicity, and spiritual serenity becomes the vessel into

which I pour my life. The result is that not only do I experience such a life, but my actions become an expression of my life purpose. Before moving on from the Purposeful Path, there is one other point that's too important not to touch on, and that's the relationship between purpose, passion, and play.

Purpose, Passion and Play

When you're clear what your true purpose is in life, you're then able to use that purpose to tap into a wellspring of passionate energy that then propels you forward in all the different ways you choose to express your purpose, including your writing.

You may be thinking at this point, "But can't I get published writing about something I am not passionate about and doesn't have anything to do with my purpose in life?"

The answer, of course, is yes. I've done it, and the stories were published. In fact, those experiences enabled me to understand the importance of identifying and writing about topics that I *am* passionate about. And what I discovered is that I want to write—as often as possible— about topics that fuel my passions.

The hard lesson I learned about passion came fairly early in my freelance career. I had sold my veterinary practice and was striving to become stable and profitable as a full-time freelance writer specializing in writing magazine articles. At the time I lived in Greensboro, North Carolina, which was also the home of a magazine publisher of an in-flight magazine. Because I lived close by, I mustered up enough nerve to visit the editor, a nice woman named Maggie Oman. This was my first face-to-face meeting with a magazine editor, and I was nervous as a groom standing at the altar.

Maggie must have picked up on this and made it a point to be gentle and cordial, so I survived the meeting without any undo embarrassment. After that, I started

sending her ideas for possible articles. After sending four or five different ideas, I received a call from Maggie, offering me an assignment. She told me that she liked my writing style but that none of the ideas quite hit the mark. She did, however, need a piece on the trend of business suites. I didn't know much, nor did I care much, about business suites, but I figured an assignment was an assignment. After all, I didn't have a long line of other assignments. I could use the money, which was good, and the clip, which was even better. (A clip is a copy of a published article you've written. You include copies of your clips in future queries to other magazines to show editors that you can, indeed, write well enough to be published.)

I took the assignment. I worked hard on it, interviewed a lot of suite experts, and turned in what I thought was a credible article. Before too long, I received a check in the mail and a new assignment.

This one was on office technology. I love gadgets, so the subject was fairly interesting. I wrote it, received the check, and a new assignment. This went on for four or five different articles, each one business related, and each one less and less interesting. The worst one I remember was about office furniture. Even though I lived within thirty minutes of High Point, North Carolina, the furniture capital of the world, I had no passion for the subject. But I took the assignment anyway and churned out another article.

What I didn't realize at the time was that my lack of interest about the subjects was having a grave effect on the quality of my work. In short, the articles I submitted were poorly written. I hadn't bothered to look at the published articles, or I would have seen that they were being heavily edited by one of the magazine editors prior to publication. I was too busy for such nonsense, not to mention that by the time I finished

the articles, I was bored to tears with whatever the subject had been.

After finishing the last assignment, several weeks went by without a word from Maggie. True, I hated working on those articles, but I needed the money. I finally called her and in my most pleasant, up-beat voice said, “Hi, Maggie, I’m calling for my next assignment. What do you’ve?”

There was a long pause on the other end of the line before Maggie replied, “Well, frankly, Brad, there won’t be any other assignments.” She then went on to describe in some detail how far short my articles had fallen. She told me that she’d kept hoping I would learn from their editing efforts what they were looking for, but since I hadn’t shown any inclination in that direction, she felt it would be unwise for the relationship to continue.

I was devastated, although deep inside, I wasn’t surprised. Somehow I knew I wasn’t putting forth my best effort, just the best I could muster for topics that sparked no passion in me. It was one of the most important lessons I learned in those early days.

Do I still take assignments that I am less than passionate about? Yes, once in a while, but not without knowing the dangerous ground on which I’m treading. In those cases, I make it a point to find something about the article that does interest me, something about which I can generate a bit of enthusiasm. And I strive to keep such assignments to a minimum by always having a lot of great passionate ideas circulating to many different magazines.

Igniting Passion through Purpose

Why so much emphasis on passion? There are several reasons. Writing about subjects that interest you and ignite your passion is a whole lot more fun, and the articles are easier to write. Besides, the final product is likely to be much better.

A few years ago I discovered that I'm passionate about writing profiles, interviews, and other kinds of articles about people who are committed to making a difference in the world. I had also determined by that time that the whole subject of purpose was part of my life purpose, so in an effort to bring more purpose and meaning to my writing career, I created Project Purpose: To write and publish articles about people and institutions whose lives and missions are dedicated to a bold and inspired purpose or vision.

I started to focus my efforts on getting assignments that would fit Project Purpose. About three months after creating the project, I received my first official Project Purpose assignment to write a profile of Bo Lozoff of The Human Kindness Foundation in Carrboro, North Carolina. The assignment came from *New Age Journal* (since re-named *Body and Soul*). At the time, it was the largest assignment I'd received, both in the prestige of the magazine and the size of the paycheck. In fact, the check was close to double what I had so far received for any other single article.

Perhaps the most interesting phenomenon was that receiving the payment was the proverbial icing on the cake. I loved doing the research for the article, which involved traveling to Carrboro to interview Bo, his wife, Sita, and other people whose lives had been touched by this incredible couple.

The writing was a joy, both challenging and fun. Even the revision process was virtually painless because I was doing something close to my heart. Then the check arrived—the icing on an already delectable dessert, and I knew I had hit upon something really important. As Greg Braendel of Career Dreams, Inc. and another Project Purpose profile subject says, "Passion always sells, obsession never does."

The other reason I encourage aspiring writers to tap into their passions is because

the profession of freelance writing is a tough one. There's a lot of competition. Busy, often over-worked editors are not always as nice as they could be. And the pay . . . well, there are easier ways to make money, as I've said. I've seen and talked to too many freelancers, both part-timers and those doing it for a living, who have become jaded about their work. In many cases, that happens because they sell out by writing too many articles that they find boring and uninteresting just to pay the rent. They find subjects they can write about that, even though uninspiring, still bring in the bacon. But years of writing just for the money can desiccate the staunchest soul. Don't let it happen to you.

Tapping Into Your Passion

What stirs your passion? The question isn't as silly as you may think. Many people have lost touch with their passion, the inner spark that ignites them into inspired action. The best they can muster is a mild curiosity or a passing interest.

The following exercise will help you get in touch with your passion and help determine what's really important to you. I recommend that you take out your notebook and find a nice quiet place to go through this exercise. Find a place where you can be sure you won't be disturbed during the short time the exercise will take. Here's the set up:

The Passion Police are on the way to your home. In just a few minutes, they'll knock on your door. Their mission is to take away everything you're passionate about. Your only hope is to write down those things in life that are really important to you. If it's not written down, the Passion Police will take it away, never to be in your world again.

You must be as precise as possible about what you write. For instance, if

relationships are important to you, write down which relationships are important. If you're passionate about nature, write down the specific aspects of nature that matter the most to you. If you love animals, which ones do you love most? Describe the specific details of your passion. What do you want to have in your world after the Passion Police leave? It must be written down or, after they've left, it won't exist in your world.

They're almost at your door. You now have five minutes to record in your notebook everything that you're passionate about. Check your watch and start writing. Remember—five minutes of writing as much and as fast and as precisely as you can. BEGIN!

How did you do?

It's likely that as you look over your list you'll realized you missed some important things that you want in your world. Okay, take one minute and add those to your list. The passion police were a little slow today. Once you've made those additions, look over the list again. While you may not have listed everything you're passionate about, it's a great place to start getting ideas you could write about.

Purposefully Playing with Your Writing

Is it really possible to make a living doing something you love and have a lot of fun in the process? YES -- if you set your intention to purposefully play with the ways you express your life purpose. The secret to purposeful play is to not get overly attached to the results you're out to produce. While it may sound paradoxical, it's possible to be committed to your writing career while at the same time not taking it too seriously. When you stay committed and unattached, you'll probably find you're much more effective at producing results. Now that's a paradox worth grappling with.

Call to Action Assignment

Continue to add to your Passion List. Add things that mean a lot to you as well as things that you find interesting or that you're curious about. Then, from that list, make a top 10 list of what you're most passionate about. Keep this list visible where you write.

Fan your passion & ideas into money-making magazine articles.

From Spark to Flame: Fanning Your Passion & Ideas into Money-making Magazine Articles that Make a Difference

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/3915.html?s=pdf>