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WHILE YOU WERE WRITING



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Journalist, or Gentleman Blogger? Who Qualifies As a Journalist these Days?



WHILE YOU WERE WRITING

While You Were Writing – 10/05/12

JUNE
13,
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How to Crack the 'Source' Code

By [Carrie Anton](#), under Make it Work. Carrie Anton is a full-time freelance writer focusing on health, fitness, and sports. She's been published in Self, Women's Health, Oxygen, and Maximum Fitness.

7

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Pop quiz: An editor wants her freelancer to secure a quote from a female parrot owner living alone in a studio apartment in New York City. Where should the writer turn to find such a source?



“There are more ways than ever to get in touch with sources—from [Facebook](#) to [Twitter](#) to [MySpace](#) to e-mail to good old-fashioned phone calls,” writer Brenna Ehrlich said [in a Mashable.com article](#). “Still, it can be difficult to find the right sources for [a] particular story when there are so many people out there and so many channels to go through.”

While sources are now just a mouse-click away, freelancers need to use resources that are trusted and reliable. These tips can help any journalist crack the source code:

HARO

For the freelancer looking for a mix of experts and real people to satisfy specifications, [HARO.com](#) (or “Help A Reporter Out”) is the place to turn.

“[HARO] attracts thousands of people who would like to be in

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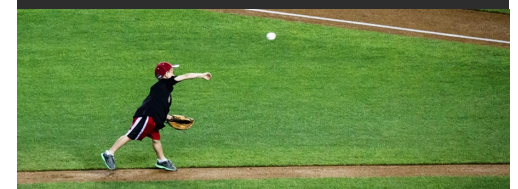
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the media, whether they're experts or not," Linda Formichelli, co-author of *The Renegade Writer* wrote [on her blog](#). "Be as detailed as you can in what you're looking for—I'd say you can't be too clear. In my experience, potential sources often skim the listing, so the clearer you are, the less likely you are to get lots of off-topic responses."

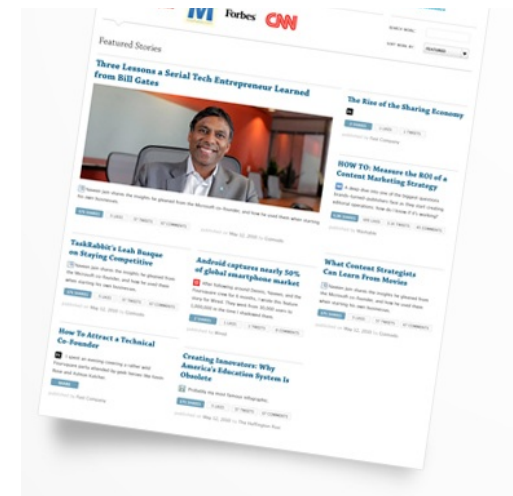
ProfNet

According to parent site [PR Newswire](#), ProfNet has access to more than 14,000 public relations professionals and their represented experts, which makes the sourcing process quick and simple. As a free service to journalists (the experts foot the bill), ProfNet is a crucial resource for elite experts.

"I've found [ProfNet] to be a little more formal and business-oriented than HARO—not in the way they run things, but in the sources I find," [Laurie Pawlick-Kienlen said](#). "I use ProfNet for my 'hard' feature articles, in which I need doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, etc."

Social Media

Since social media can be a maze all its own, a writer's best bet is Facebook and Twitter as they are the most used. When Marcia Layton Turner, freelance writer and executive director of [Association of Ghostwriters](#), needs a quick response, she turns to Facebook first. "Posting a request to friends and



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family frequently leads to a number of referrals,” she said.

Twitter is great for breaking news and story ideas, but it requires freelancers taking active roles. They need to follow potential sources—musicians and indie bands if they’re music writers, chefs and restaurant owners if they’re food writers, and so on. When these people share news, they then become potential sources.

Bloggers

The Associated Press began recognizing bloggers as credible new sources in 2010, which means freelancers should, too. “When I’m looking for sources for an article, I Google the topics I’m writing about and contact bloggers who write about the subject,” Pawlick-Kienlen said. “They’re excellent expert sources *and* real people! ... Some bloggers have even written books and given talks about their subject, which increases their credibility.”

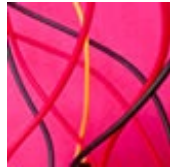
Forums

If there’s a topic of interest, then there’s probably a forum for it. Say the assigned writer mentioned above was looking for that parrot-owning female, a quick Google search could lead to [ParrotForums.com](#), [BirdBoard.com](#), and [PricelessParrots.com](#) just to start. “When you find [a forum], do a little lurking to figure out if this is a good place to

post your request, Formichelli said. "... It's always a good practice to e-mail the moderator asking if it's okay to post as a journalist looking for sources; that way, when you post you can mention that you have the permission of the forum administrator."

Image Courtesy of Flickr, Vestman

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