

Working For A Living: The Workplace Beat

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**PATRICIA KITCHEN, Newsday**

Hi everybody, I have to say I did leave off the most important thing from that bio and that is that I have a miniature Dotson named Lilly. I want to get a little plug in for her.

I don't know how to tell you this but I think we're all looking for the same thing, something that's trendy, something that's new, something that hasn't been written about too much, something that's people oriented, something that really resonates, something that has that little surprise zing to it. Um so I don't know how you're gonna handle that. We're looking for similar things here.

I see myself as a consumer writer, very service oriented. I kind of picture the way that people use my stuff is if like on Sunday they get the paper, they spread it out on the floor at home and then somebody sees it and says, 'oh my god look at this, you've got to read this, this is gonna help you', or 'we've got to send this to your cousin Sally'.

Of course it's all sent by email now and everybody's reading it online, it'd not on their floor anymore but I'm seeing things that way, I'm seeing teachers thinking like, 'oh yeah I'll make copies and use it my class' or what have you. So when you send me press releases about some like esoteric human resources technology solution or you know, stock options for C level executives that doesn't fit into that picture you know, people emailing the column about the flood. It's not like something that's really gonna help them in their daily lives. So I think, you know, Mackenzie put it well, I'm in the business section but I don't see myself in business terms at all. It's really all about people.

And so I thought maybe what'd I'd do is just tell you some of the stories, some of the great pitches that I've gotten from PR people and why they've worked. Of the ones that I get it's just really a small percentage that hit the mark but the ones that do have been fabulous. Like I'll see them or here them and it just kind of takes your breath away. And one of them, actually a couple of them have been from Lisa. One, and I don't know if this was a phone call or an email but she said 'you know in our office we have five people named Lisa. Oh my god it's like this is, I think this is it

4 Lisa's and 3 Katie's and so this is something that's in front of everybody, we all, how many people have like 4 Jennifer's and you know 2 Ginger's. So you know then you have Jennifer 1, Jennifer 2, Jennifer 3. What is it like to be one of those Jennifer's? How do you distinguish if you're the first one and what happens if you sit next to one another? It was just, that was a wonderful idea and I thank you again for that.

Is that right? See now there's another thing there. Do people named Lisa just automatically go to PR?

So that's the kind of thing that I love. I was having lunch with a friend of mine, Charlie Rock. I think you may know her, she's not here today and this was a couple of years ago. This was in the bad economic days when, oh my god, everybody's struggling, how her husband and some of his buddies down on Wall Street, some of the trader types, they were brown bagging their lunches to work. Now you don't think of, you know, Wall Street Trader, analyst types bringing their lunch to work but that was like one of those fun little quips. I love those little things that are right in front of our eyes that none has really written about, no one has really done anything with so those things.

Last year or the year before I got a thing about, and I like things too that tie into some event, some upcoming holiday. And I heard about an office, British Air Ways that has, oh god, I can't remember the exact details. But the year before they had, I don't know, 6 people get engaged, 5 people get married. And so you have to wonder what was that office like with all those young women planning weddings, having showers. They ended up having the little shower decoration that they just recycled from person to person. One case two of them were getting married on the same day, what do you do? It was a wonderful story to write about them, what the office dynamic was like at that time.

Lets see what else do we have here on this list? Oh, then there's this restaurant called Cereality and what do they sell? You tell me? They sell cereal. You go to this restaurant, that's all they have; it's you know, Coco Puffs, it's Kix, it's Wheaties and it's you know the real cereal. And then they make like Sundays out of it and whatever. They were gonna do a catering job here in New York for the Pajama Gang over in Philadelphia. And so you might think, 'where is the career story there'. Let me tell you, I can find a little career angle anywhere. You show me a really interesting story and you can kind of root around a little,

you know. You can do that; you can root around, you can find a story somewhere. So send an interesting thing

So anyways come to find out that the guy, one of the founders of Cereality, this cereal restaurant happens to be from long Island, which is a beautiful thing, and so I write about that. So then they're about to franchise; they're franchising this thing. So I write this story, oh every body loves this thing. They're talking about it, they're buzzing about it all day. So then I get a call the next day from somebody who says, 'hey I've got a great franchise story for you', and it's about franchising something that I can't even remember. I forgot it the instant he said it, it was that boring. And I said to him, 'you know this story was not about franchising it was about cereal. It was about people eating cereal in the middle of the day. So that's the kind of thing that kind of brings it to this wonderful level

And they wore pajamas to work. You just can't get much better than that. Let me know when my time is running out because I've got a few more here. There's this one, oh I heard from the fellow from the theater development fund, his name is David LaChe, this was either last year or the year before. One of the chief cashiers at the TKTS ticket booth had written a one man play, it was going to be performed at the fringe festival and the name of the play is 'Do You Have Anything Closer?' What is the big question that those people hear all day? Do you have anything close?

So it was all about him and his career and it was just another fabulous story. And it wasn't about me writing the story, it was one of those things that the story was so good that just about anybody could write it, it was one of those things. So I went with a video guide, we videoed him right at TKTS. We went to the rehearsal of his play that night. We did this big video thing and it was...

That story had so many wonderful entry points. Everybody knows about the TKTS ticket stand whether you've been there or not. So it's got that real notoriety and it's about a guy who went to, you know went in... He wanted to be a playwright from day one but he has a family, he gets into this line of work selling tickets; it's funny. And then he, eventually at a certain age he just starts realizing his dream. It's like a, on many levels that was a wonderful story.

And it had that great visual, I mean we love the visual element and B role. I wanted to mention that too for the cereal story. If you have something that's visual and you have B role we're doing so much more on the website these days so keep that in mind.

And the blog yeah, okay so, well it's kind of, I'll wrap up with the blog then. You know a lot of things that I get, you know, like some of those things like the stock options for executives, those are very easy to deal with and I don't mind them. Because I do just ex them out right away; it makes me feel very decisive and very productive so I don't mind them. And I love these other ones, you have great ideas.

But then there's a whole body of emails which I do prefer that are kind of in the middle. You know there's maybe a little something there, it's not enough to be exciting. I may keep it around for a while and I'm finding some of these things can make good blog items. Like the one I have there today has to do with lettuce. That didn't come from a PR person that came from my own office; we're growing lettuce in my office, don't ask. And uh but other things sort of like a fascinating, quirky, little survey, that's a perfect item for a blog. So, I guess that's a good thing there.

And one more thing I'd like to say; when you send an email, especially for the emails right away or that I don't file until must follow up with. A lot of time what happens is I like to save them because I don't know what I'm going to do with them yet. Then I get this email from, you know the Tribune email police saying 'your mailbox is over the size limit'. So what I do is I go and I can organize them all by size, you know the biggest to the smallest. And if you're press release or whatever is up at the top with 12 billion, you know, whatever those things are because there are all these attachments that's a really good candidate for me to get rid of. So it's good to send things but not huge things. That's it for now and I'll look forward to your questions, thank you.