

## **Dos and don'ts of writing for Arts Professional**

This short guide will help you to avoid some of the pitfalls and steer you towards perfect copy.

1. Always read your brief carefully. Please, please don't go beyond the maximum word-count. We are almost always tight for space and we will simply have to cut what doesn't fit.
2. Remember the readership. They are fellow arts managers who want to know how and why, not a potential audience who will rush off to buy tickets on reading your article. Avoid:
  - a. Superlatives such as 'stunning', 'exciting', 'fascinating' etc., when talking about your own work (the readers will judge for themselves);
  - b. Cutting and pasting marketing, press release, brochure or funding-application copy into your article;
  - c. Extensive audience quotations ("fabulous theatre – I loved it!") which belong more properly in your brochure. Quotations which illuminate an aspect of your work ("your project on prison literacy has changed my life, and I am now a published novelist") are fine;
  - d. Jargon or technical language which may bamboozle a reader from another branch of the arts sector – ask yourself: "would a dance specialist/curator/theatre education practitioner know what I'm talking about?" and edit or explain accordingly.
3. Staying with the readership, make sure you cover what they're interested in. This seems basic, but we do sometimes find articles missing the point about what is most relevant about the subject in hand. We want to read about:
  - a. Issues and practice of interest to arts managers – systems, new ideas and approaches, risks that paid off;
  - b. Policy and how it affects the arts – how local, national or funding policies have helped or hindered you, or how you've been able to take advantage;
  - c. Artistic practice and how arts professionals support or respond to it;
  - d. Business and developmental ideas including marketing, education, outreach, managerial styles and systems, etc.;
  - e. Initiatives which other arts managers might emulate, join or develop, such as regional, national or international partnerships, gaining

- funding from a new source, or breaking into new areas such as regeneration;
- f. Research which adds to our knowledge and may affect practice or policy;
  - g. New ways to engage people, whether audience, participants, schools, Board members, stakeholders, or whoever they may be;
  - h. The practicalities of working with particular groups, such as Deaf people, older people, corporate groups, rural communities, etc.
4. Keep it legal. It's perfectly legitimate to criticise a person or organisation as long as you avoid personal attacks, libel or misrepresentation.
  5. A conversational tone can work well, but it often means wordy copy. "The first thing that we got together and decided to do was..." can be cut to "First, we jointly decided to..." This leaves you more space to give us more facts and ideas.
  6. Please avoid quoting yourself in your article. "We had a tough time but we pulled through in the end," said John Smith' looks very odd in an article written by John Smith.
  7. Don't forget to supply a byline at the end: "Flora Fanakertipan is Director of Zoots Theatre Company. t: 01234 567890; e: [flora@zoots.org.uk](mailto:flora@zoots.org.uk); w: [www.zoots.org.uk](http://www.zoots.org.uk)." You don't have to give all these contact details: please let us know which ones you would like to include. You may also add a short explanation such as "Zoots works exclusively with animals and children on the Gower Peninsula". Please avoid, however, "Zoots does fantastic work with animals and children as part of an innovative and ground-breaking programme on the Gower Peninsula". Again, the readers will be the judge of how fantastic or innovative you are.

### **A few notes on AP house style.**

Please use your own style when writing – we don't want to hamper you in any way. When your piece reaches us, we will make certain changes, editing it into house style, with a given font and spacing. We will get back to you if there is anything we don't understand.

We will add a 'standfirst' or short explanatory line above the title. We might draw this from the first paragraph of your article.

We might change your title if it's too long or if we think of something frightfully witty. If you can't think of a title at all, we'll add one.

We do not use italics or bold script at all. For titles of shows or other works, we prefer single quotation marks. We use double quotation marks for quotations from speech or writing.

Your current editor is allergic to the exclamation mark, unless it is used at the end of an exclamation ("how pedantic!").

We often close up short paragraphs so we have fewer, longer paragraphs. This saves space and means fewer cuts. Similarly, we will often turn bullet-points back into prose, especially if there are a lot of batches of them in the article.

If you send us images we will try to use at least one. If we find we haven't got room to put an image with your article, it might appear in the left-hand contents column on the front page.

### **A note on copyright and re-publication**

The copyright of what you write remains with you. Although we will not publish material which has already appeared elsewhere (except under very unusual circumstances, such as its having been published abroad), we are happy for others to re-publish your piece. However, we do request that any re-publication should carry the following line:

"First published by ArtsProfessional magazine, day/month/year.  
[www.artsprofessional.co.uk](http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk)"

Thank you again for writing for us.

Catherine Rose, Editor  
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