

5 WAYS TO GET YOUR PERSONALITY INTO YOUR WRITING

Translating Ideas from Brain to Page with Language That's Yours Alone

OVERVIEW: DON'T BE MEH

The World Wide Web is buzzing with flies, listlessly droning about in search of some tender scraps to nibble on. It's gross!

But not you. You're a spider, for goodness sake, not a fly. You're not going to chase trash and get stuck in some dumbass web. You're *weaving* the web, and you're going to make it as big and weird as you please.

Because you're much more dynamic than a good old industrious spider, even. Your venture, your business, your brand, your SELF is a goddamn spidercorn. Which, yes, I just invented. But that doesn't make it any less potent or impressive.

YOUR MISSION: BE A SPIDERCORN

A spidercorn, of course, is a fearless spider that's not afraid to be singular and fabulous. It's either a spider with a unicorn horn or a unicorn with eight legs. I'm still waiting to hear from the focus groups.

But that's beside the point right now. The point...

The point! The point is that there are many ways to get your SELF into your writing. Ways to avoid the chase for the chum in the blood-red sea amongst the look-alikes and sound-alikes and be-alikes. Ways to be YOU and truly stand out.

AND SO IT BEGINS

Here I offer you four more of those ways. "DON'T BE MEH" is TIP #1. Is that allowed? Hell yeah, it is! Also, don't ask so many questions. That's TIP #2, Nosey McNoseyPants.

Just kidding. That one's for free! But we *are* going to cover

1. HUMOR
2. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE
3. SOUND
4. STORYTELLING

and some other related stuff. So read on!



Interesting...



Ummm...what?



That's it!

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2. Use Humor! (AKA: How to Be Seriously Funny at an Oxymoron Convention)

Just be funny. Easy, right?

Some have said that talking about comedy is like talking about sex. But in truth they're completely different. Sex is embarrassing to talk about.

Case in point, I'm both giggling and incredibly anxious right now, just from typing the S-word – and it's only *mostly* because I was raised Catholic.

Comedy, on the other hand, is not embarrassing to discuss – it's simply difficult. Lucky for you, I'm incredibly smart and have spent years ignoring sex in favor of studying comedy. My loss is your gain!

So here are 3 ways to be funny:

#1: EMBRACE INCONGRUITY

What's funnier, an alligator in a swamp or an alligator in a hipster barbershop? I don't need to say any more about this.



Embrace it!

#2: LET THE AUDIENCE PARTICIPATE IN THE JOKE

Everyone wants to be included, and everyone wants to feel smart and funny. You can give that to them, and subsequently they will like you because they will feel respected. This is often linked to the self-deprecation concept (next!).

So, toss softballs and let your peeps tee off. And resist the urge to explain your joke. Remember, a .300 average can get you in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Apropos fictional conversation example!

Me: *Everybody knows the exercise fad is just a play by BIG SHOELACE to move more units.*

You (knowing it's a joke, feels included and empowered): *Totally. Exercise is tacky. I've actually trained a panda to carry me up the stairs of my castle.*

Other person (clueless, not your ideal client): *Ummmm, exercise is really important. There are many studies from reputable institutions that say so.*

Sigh. Beat it, "other person"! You're bumming me out...

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2. Use Humor (continued!)

#3. SELF-DEPRECATE LIKE AN IDIOT

Do you know why *America's Funniest Dads Getting Hit in the Nuts* is still so popular? It's not because of the dads getting hit in the nuts by whiffle bats, Frisbees, etc. – it's the cutaway to the victim sitting in the audience smiling and shrugging. We like him because he's us!

It's no secret that if you can laugh at yourself you're instantly more relatable and accessible, and that people will feel comfortable coming to you with their needs.

Which is the foundation of ANY business.

But Remember: Humblebragging is the Worst

Don't confuse fun and self-aware self-deprecation for humble-bragging (AKA the thing that will make everyone hate you):

Hey you guys oh my gosh I came in first in the Humblebragging Regional Championships and I only spent like ten minutes on the application, just did it as a joke lol lmfao ups fedex nba! Cray!

BLEGH. I just threw up in everyone's mouth so you didn't have to bother, mama-bird-style. Just don't! And never do.

Section 1 Wrap Up: The Big, Silly Picture

It's all so simple! Relax and be vulnerable in a funny way, and those that get you will find you. And those that don't get you can go brood in the corner with their self-serious podcasts and their baloney sandwiches. Ta-ta, I say.

Let me put it this way. Ferrets are kind of funny.

But the story about a ferret stealing your wallet (or your girlfriend!) is absolute gold.



photo credit where credit is due: Celene

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3. Use Figurative Language and Leap, You Adorable Baby Bird!

You likely took high school English, and perhaps you were awake for the section on poetic devices. Awake and not making eyes at that coy dreamboat, Cody Spoonmaster, that is! Sorry... lost myself there for a second. Figurative language!

Figurative language is, of course, the use of language that is beyond literal. Ideally, it is clearly so. It calls attention to itself with the purpose of enhancing whatever it's being used to describe.

It does this by creating an experience for the reader by connecting to the senses, often through **connotation** – the bundle of emotional attachments a word or phrase delivers beyond its literal, annotative meaning.

And THAT is accomplished by taking a big old leap off of the normalcy cliff.

There are many forms of figurative language. Here are the most common:

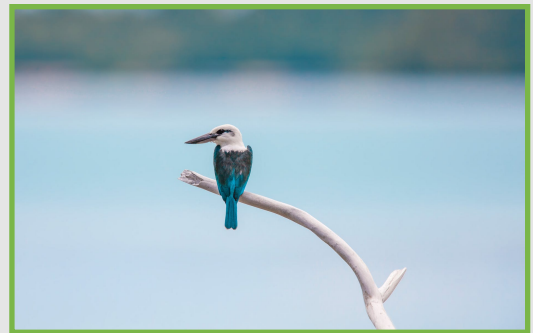
- **SIMILE:** comparison of unlike things using "like" or "as"
 - example: *Like a tornado, he snatched up homes seemingly at random.*
- **METAPHOR:** comparison of unlike things without using "like" or "as"
 - example: *The day's schedule was a casserole assembled by infants.*
- **PERSONIFICATION:** giving human qualities to something non-human
 - example: *The broken toaster vomited bagels across the kitchenette.*
- **HYPERBOLE:** extreme exaggeration
 - example: *It was so cold the penguins were wearing actual tuxedos.*

Section 2 Wrap Up: Leap Away!

What do these all have in common? A great leap from the literal to something wholly new and weird. And it is the direction and distance your words stretch away from the literal that announces your unique and wonderful personality.

Show your reader how your mind works, along with the images and attachments that are tumbling around your subconscious. Stride away from the crowd. Be you and you alone.

Let me put it this way: literally, figurative language is your friend. Figuratively, literal language is a drunk anteater. What? Exactly. Spread your wings, you weird little bird.



It's you! Now leap, leap away!

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4. Use a Mound of Sound by the Pound

Get your Hip Lips in the Mix!

You know why the Rolling Stones can go to Argentina or Japan and people who don't speak English go bananas? It's not Mick's lips, though, sure, people of all walks get jazzed by those flapping mackerels.

It's the sound. It's the music. The groove, baby! Because it translates. And in the same way a good poet infuses music into a line when there's no instrument in the room, you too can inject music into your writing. And in doing so you can attract, lull, and entice readers.



*Bleeeeeehhhh!
I'm Mick Jagger!*

But Be Subtle!

You certainly don't want to overdo it and turn your heartfelt call-to-action into a Seussian apocalypse (though that *could* work in the right context). But if you pick and choose your spots, sound can be a powerful way to connect to a reader.

Since picking your spots is crucial, the most efficient and effective place to embrace sound devices is in your headers and subheaders, whose purpose is to grab attention, connect to readers, and yank them towards the text beneath.

And you can do this with your own sonic thumbprint, and yours alone, conveying your ideas AND your personal musicality. Start here:

ALLITERATION: the repetition of initial consonant sounds.

Blah header text: **Visit Florida for Good Times and New Relationships**

Rewritten w/ alliteration: **Find Friends and Fun in Florida!**

ASSONANCE: the repetition of vowel sounds.

Blah header text: **Download Our Meditation App**

Rewritten w/ assonance: **Create Headspace Today**

RHYME: the repetition of word endings. [yes I'm simplifying]

Blah header text: **Driving this Car Will Make You Happy**

Rewritten w/ rhyme: **Turn the Miles into Smiles**

The various sound devices combined with your unique overall word choice can have a powerful effect on tone and mood. So use deliberately!

Ultimately, though, sound devices are another way to separate yourself from the pack by getting more of your DNA into your language. Figuratively, of course. *Literally*, you want to keep your DNA away from your keyboard.

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5. Don't Be Shy, Stress the *WHY!*

In a nutshell, people don't buy what you're doing or making – they buy *why* you're doing it or making it. There are lots of quality widgets and tasty street tacos and delightful electricians and affordable "get a great ass in a week" programs.

Your thing might be better or worse than the competition's but you know what they lack? *Your* story and *your* motivations. Your *why*. And it's your why that is going to connect you to your ideal customers, and send the rest (thankfully) wandering elsewhere looking for a better love match.

Here's the thing. **If you show someone your true self and they reject you, remember that, in fact, you rejected them first** – by being honest and open about who you are and why you punch the clock on your venture every day.

So, step one. **Figure out who you are and why you're doing what you're doing. Since that's the hard part, though, let's skip it for now!**

But once you've got that down, do these three things:

#1: SHARE YOUR ORIGIN STORY!

Was there an A-HA, cloud-parting, beam-of-light moment that imparted you your business idea? Or maybe it was a slower exposure to crucial stimuli that shaped your venture. Whatever it was, share it!

Because chances are these beginnings are small and humble, which, of course, is relatable. **You share these beginnings to define the distance from then until now, from nothing special to something awesome.**

Unless of course your daddy wrote you a blank check just to get you off the yacht for the summer and you've built a half-ass luxury ascot marketplace with it. Maybe save that for the fellas at the jai alai meet-up.



Probably relatable in one way or another.



Same.



Sure.



Nope.

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5. Stress the *WHY!* (continued!)

#2. SHOWCASE YOUR STRUGGLE!

You remember that best-selling novel where the main character got whatever she wanted with little to no opposition? Sure you do. They made it into a hit movie called *Successful & Beautiful People with Everything Handed to Them*...? No?

I think you see where I'm going with this.

Take the motivation and conflict out of a story and you know what you've got? Last year's J. Crew catalog on an old sofa next to half a ham sandwich. It's boring! Why? Because **without conflict there is no story**. And without struggle there's nothing to relate to, nothing to overcome – no motion, no spark, no life to a narrative.

Why People Buy Things

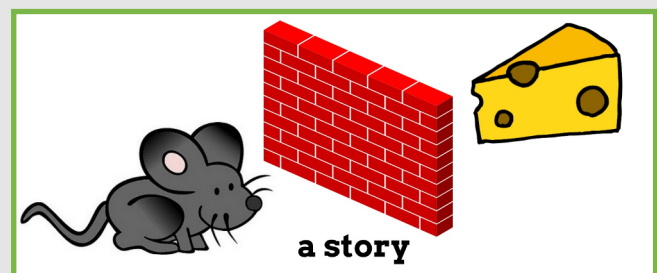
People buy things because they have a problem or a struggle or a void. Not because things are perfect.

So, stress the struggle! Talk about what you overcame to get where you are. Chances are, you're your own ideal customer – or you were before you solved a problem with the solution you're trying to share with the world.

That means your best audience will have faced similar obstacles. Be their inspiration by being honest and vulnerable about where you were and what you faced along the road to now.

Not only will this highlight your personality, story, and journey, but it will immediately legitimize whatever you're offering. *I scraped my way up this hill, and so can you.*

This should explain everything.



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5. Stress the *WHY!* (continued AGAIN!)

#3. PEDDLE YOUR PASSIONS!

Hmmmm... yes, that sounds vaguely prostitutional. But hear me out! If you incorporate the things you care about into your storytelling, your content, and even your site themes, logo, color palette and so on, you're much more likely to express yourself with a genuine voice.

Why? Because you'll be speaking from a platform constructed from the materials of your own singular, one-in-a-million self. The recipe of you is absolutely yours alone.

In turn, this singularity will help you avoid sounding like everyone else (booooo) and comparing yourself to everyone else (stop it!), both in your writing and in your own head. Then again, if you want to be lame and hate yourself, have at it. Ugh, that's not even funny. Stop it now! (and please refer to *spidercorn* figure 3, page 1.)

A Helpful WHY Summation:

So here's what you do. Whether it's cartoon labradoodles, East German sitcoms, or cartoon labradoodles penning fan-fiction about East German sitcoms, just embrace the quirks and passions that make you who you are. And look for subtle ways to work them into your public presentation.

Because if you don't own who you are, then you've got nothing to sell, friendo.

Hashtag truthbomb.



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A CONCLUSION, IF I MAY!

Use all of these relatively sparingly. But use them. :)

The big takeaway of all this: be yourself! In this you will

- **Exude uniqueness**
- **Inspire trust**
- **Spread joy**
- **Be relatable**
- **Gather fans**
- **Feel good**
- **Stop lying**
- **Not go insane.**

But if the good stuff gets lost between your head and the keyboard, don't fret. If you need a word shepherd or just someone to yell at, reach out to me at Moran Writing for any consulting or writing help you can imagine. We'll sort through it together.

Until then, keep dancing, you goddamn spidercorn.

All my best,
Marty Moran



Marty Moran is a copywriter and language consultant for benevolent small businesses. He has an MFA in Creative Writing and exceptional femurs.

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