

Dealing with Criticism and Brass Knuckles (separately)

Tuesday, Oct 10th, 2023



No matter the job, we all deal with criticism.

Our writing seems to be an especially sensitive topic— probably because it feels like our thoughts are laid bare.

As a professional writer, I've developed a healthy attitude towards criticism. Hopefully, my experience can help you take criticism less personally.

That's the hard part, "don't take it personally." Easier said than done. **When working on a business project, I'm not pouring my heart out—I'm solving a business problem.** If you're writing your business's website, you want to make your brand look good, of course. But a website has objectives: convert leads, inform your prospects, and establish your authority.

So the question isn't "*is my any writing good?*" It's "*is my writing completing the objectives?*" It changes your mindset from personal to professional.

Secondly, treating writing projects as business projects helps us feel more confident in our work. A friend of mine expressed their relief after submitting a big proposal. It took them several all-nighters to complete. As he worked in this compressed timeframe, his inner critic ate away at him. My friend excels at his job but not writing (his words, not mine). So when he needed to write something, he reverted to what he did in school.

Pacing out writing projects into different phases, like a research phase and an outline phase, helps us write better. If we give projects their necessary time, then we will feel more confident. That won't cure criticism, but revising a well-thought-out paper is easier than salvaging caffeine-fueled ramblings.

Lastly, when receiving criticism from someone, understand their perspective. It helps make their criticism more constructive. Once, an engineer critiqued my word choices in a case study. He found them simplistic. He wanted longer, more technical words. But I was not writing for engineers; I was writing for non-technical people. My job was to explain their complex solution in easy-to-understand ways. We discussed it, and the criteria changed from technical writing to an accurate explanation.

At the end of the day, criticism (when given in good faith) is good. It helps us improve, even when it doesn't feel good. It's just part of being human (or a bunny).

Marketing Misadventure

"You know what we should put in our press kits? Brass knuckles!"

Yes, someone said that in a board meeting and never consulted their legal department. Let me explain.

In 2009, the game publisher Electronic Arts Inc. (EA) planned promotions for their latest video game. In the game industry, big publishers send press kits to

game journalists and reviewers before release. It normally carries an advanced copy of the game along with swag.

Whether or not journalists should disclose these expensive gifts in their publications is a different ethical debate. **EA included a set of brass knuckles in the press kits for *Godfather 2*.** They were not toys, fakes, or prop replicas— they were real metal weapons. *Godfather 2* placed players in charge of a mafia crime ring, so the knuckles were at least in the spirit of the game.

They shipped weapons to dozens of journalists across the country and broke quite a few laws. In California, where EA is based, it's illegal to ship brass knuckles. They are also illegal to possess in 21 states. 17 states require a permit, and 12 states just don't care. What baffles me is how a massive corporation got so far without consulting a lawyer. A cursory Google search could've prevented this!

EA (probably at the behest of a very angry legal department) requested every press recipient send back the brass knuckles so they could be “properly disposed of.” Again, sending a metal weapon through the mail is legally dubious.

What consequences did EA face for their crimes? We don't know! Their legal department stepped in and kept the rest of the scandal under wraps. EA has a history of generating controversies for news coverage. So they probably thought, “all publicity is good publicity.”

Useless information

Why is October the 10th month when its prefix “Octo” is Latin for eight? Well, in ancient Rome, it was the 8th month. The Roman calendar only had 10 months, from March to December.

Julius Caesar (yes, that one) reformed the Roman calendar by adding two months (January and February) before March, creating the Julian Calendar. The Julian calendar lasted from around 46 BC to the 16th century. Pope Gregory XIII further reformed it into the **Gregorian Calendar**, which we all know and love today. The Gregorian calendar also created the modern leap year system.

Over two thousand years ago, October was the 8th month. But Caesar added two more months and we never changed the naming system.

Sincerely,
Austin

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