



Manuscript Solutions

Overview of this session:

Decisions about manuscript length, tone, voice and focus need to be made before you can start detailed editing. Solve the big issues in a manuscript first.

Common Manuscript Issues:

- Writing style
- Manuscript focus
- Word choice
- Tone
- Assumptions
- Transitions

(pages 57-61)

Style

How does the article fit into the whole content package?

Is there a different type of article/style that would be better?

Manuscript Focus

Too Long:

Before you start trimming – strategic look:

- Does it cover too much material?
- Does it need focus?
- What is essential for the reader?
- What can you do with extra information?

Manuscript Focus

Too General:

- What is memorable about the story?
- Is there a specific example to focus on rather than general information?

Tell the story of many through the story of one, who can represent the many.

Manuscript Focus

Too “Thin” (superficial):

- What questions will the reader have?
- Can you dig deeper to add meat?
- Make sure captions/sidebars add to story. (more on that in a later section)

Short can be impactful and memorable.

Tone and Assumptions

- Negative tone - Is there a way to incorporate hope, even in a hard story?
- Assumptions –
 - Special knowledge your reader might lack?
 - Terms that aren't widely understood?
 - Digital – embedded links to supplement

Audience Focus

- Will some of your readers feel left out?
- How can you make the article inclusive to touch more readers?
- Use a variety of voices

Voice

- **First person narrative** - writing from the "I" point of view.
- **Third person narrative** - writing from the omniscient point of view. He led a Bible study. She mentored younger women.

Example of changing voice:

3rd person:

- *Going on a short-term missions trip is a great way to serve and grow as a disciple. Tim had been on several mission trips, and during a trip to El Salvador he had felt particularly used by God and didn't want to lose that experience of impact. As he returned home, he felt like God was telling him that there was work for him to do at home. ...*

1st person:

- *Going on a short-term missions trip is a great way to serve and grow in our relationship with Christ. I have been on several mission trips and have been stretched through the experience. On a trip to El Salvador I felt God working in and through our team—when I returned home I didn't want to lose that experience of living a missional life full of impact. That mission trip was life-changing for me. ...*

Voice to connect with reader:

Example - unedited:

- I fall SO short every day. What kind of follower of Christ am I, anyway? And you, what kind are you? Aren't we more wanderers than followers? How can God possibly want us?

Edited:

- I fall SO short every day. What kind of follower of Christ am I, anyway? I feel more like a wanderer than a follower on so many days! How can God possibly want me?

... then later brought in "us"

Example - handout

Compelling story but voice kept changing throughout.

Consistency and clarity in voice is important.

Review:

Manuscript solutions

- Big picture editing before you get to finer details.
- Sequencing your steps helps your workflow and efficiency.

Practical Application:

- Do you have a specific step for big-picture manuscript changes before you get to detailed edits?
- How can you incorporate consideration of voice, focus and audience into your editorial cycle?
- Do you have some articles you can experiment with? Do you usually have 1st person and want to introduce some 3rd person articles? Or vice versa?