



Struggling with Content that Stinks? LMA-LA Content Makeover Program

by Amy K. Spach, [AS Written Communications](#)

Here's the good news: the content in LA law firms is pretty good.

Want the better news? The content could be great.

How to transform good to great? Create a narrative, use lead paragraphs that grab audiences, shorten sentences, and think horizontally for the online scanning reader.

Those are the headlines from the first-ever, user-generated content program, "**Struggling with Content that Stinks?**" presented by the Los Angeles Chapter of the Legal Marketing Association in February 2012.

Don't Hide Your Headline

The importance of not burying the headline was an oft-repeated message during the content marketing program which showcased "Before and After" versions of attorney bios, client alerts, case studies and more.

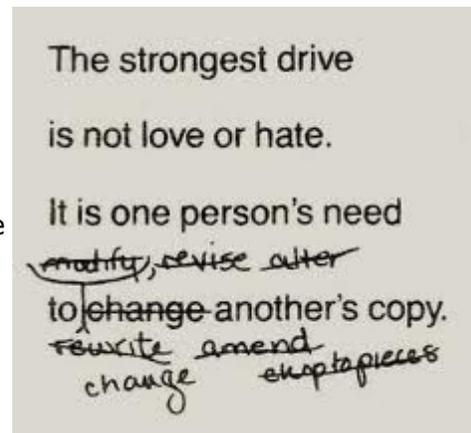
Prior to the program, legal marketers submitted their Before copy for review to this panel of law firm content marketing, writing and website development experts:

Per Casey, President, [Tenrec](#)

Erik Cummins, [Media Relations](#)

Amy K. Spach, Principal, [AS Written Communications](#)

Tracie Thompson, [Pillsbury Winthrop](#), Marketing Communications Manager



This ensemble of communicators presented and detailed the After versions. The makeovers demonstrated content edits and web page redesigns to improve messaging, marketing and business development efforts on all platforms - blogs, websites, social media and even print.

The 140-Character Version

All creative pursuits, including marketing collateral and websites, are subjective and writing styles are personal. But there were some universal ideas and practices that all panelists endorsed. This is how one program attendee, Heather Morse (@heather_morse), director of marketing at [Barger & Wolen LLP](#), tweeted her impressions in real time:

- ♦ Main themes: strong openings; conversational copy; Telling a story, Being timely; attracting the scanner reader; using content hooks

- ◆ Bios are the most valuable real estate on your law firm's website
- ◆ Most readers are only going to read the top and the end.
- ◆ Don't hide what you do in the lead. What do you do and for whom do you do it?
- ◆ Divide bios into areas of expertise and list representative matters under them.
- ◆ Prune the overgrowth of these extensive and long bios.
- ◆ How to get lawyers on board: rewrite the bio and just show them what a better bio will look like.
- ◆ Having a bio template will allow for uniformity throughout the website.
- ◆ Using first names v. mr./Ms. No right or wrong. Personal style. Based on the firm's culture.
- ◆ Avoid random acts of tooting your own horn. Have them tie into what you are saying.
- ◆ Use headings (HTML 1 or 2). Keep bullets short and scannable.
- ◆ More tips: short words, short sentences, short paragraphs. Want it fresh? Start from scratch
- ◆ Final tip: for web, think horizontal, not vertical. Tell a story. Specifics engage readers, distinguish firms.

The 140+ Character Version

Interested in digging deeper than a Twitter thought? LMA Members can check out the Before and After copy in the program handout and PowerPoint [here](#). (view in slide show mode).

Thank You Gift with Purchase

It's not easy to put your work up to public scrutiny, and the panel expressed gratitude to those who did. Hopefully the payoff - new and improved copy - was a welcome "thank you gift with purchase." In fact, one firm adopted its newly edited practice description the very same day.

On behalf of the panel, we thank the legal marketers who trusted us with their content: Marie Hsing of Allen Matkins, Jann Dudley and Jackie Guevara of Archer Norris PLC, Tiffany Truffo of Haight Brown & Bonesteel LLP. Erin Finley of Morrison & Foerster LLP, Sharifah Z. Williams of Murchison & Cumming LLP, and Julie Kaplan of Perkins Coie LLP.

Amy K. Spach drew upon her content creation experience with law firm marketing, public relations and business development professionals for her contributions to the panel. Contact her at [AS Written Communications, amy@aswritencom.com](mailto:amy@aswritencom.com) 323.876.6374.