

The Secrets Behind Getting News Published at *SIGNAL*!

Contact info:

Maryann Lawlor

mlawlor@afcea.org

(703) 631-6178

WHAT TO KNOW:

1. First, the company/organization must have **NEWS**. We do not publish white papers or case studies. If a program or project has been around for six months, it's no longer news.
2. Keep in mind that the **writers are assigned articles about 10 weeks before the issue** date of the magazine. This means that if an organization is interested in being considered for a specific issue, the info must be in my hands to present at the line-up meeting no later than 10 weeks prior to the issue date.
3. All of our writers respect **embargoes**. If a program or technology is in the offing but hasn't been formally announced, tell us that. We would like to have your announcement and our issue date coincide.
4. Be sure to check the editorial calendar early and often. Be aware that **ad closing dates** and **editorial deadline dates** are **different**. If you do not have an editorial calendar there is one attached to the notes from this session. [Asia-Pacific/Australia anecdote.]
5. Each issue has **two focus areas**. This means **that two or three articles** will be written in those categories. They are likely to be written by different staff writers.
6. THAT SAID, **each issue also includes three or four stories about the topics we regularly cover**. These include command and control, C4ISR, information security, intelligence, communications technologies, networking, cyberspace, sensors and homeland security...to name a few.
7. **DO NOT get stuck on the focus areas**. If the story's a good one, we'll want to get it in the next possible issue.
8. Writers will need to **interview a member or members of the military or government for input for the story**. Be sure you have someone WHO IS WILLING TO SPEAK ON THE RECORD for a story. You don't have to make the interview arrangements, but it is helpful to have the name and number of a person the writer can call.
9. Competition to get into an issue is stiff. It's just a fact of publishing. At each line-up meeting, we consider 20 to 30 story ideas for 10 slots in a given issue. Do not let that stop you. In fact, read on...

WHAT TO DO:

1. Review the entire **editorial calendar** and **start planning**. Whether the story you have to offer falls into one of the upcoming focus areas OR one of our other coverage areas, send me a to-the-point e-mail that includes:
 1. **Brief description** of the technology or program.
 2. **When** did the program begin or when was/when will the technology made available for use?
 3. What problem does it **solve**?
 4. **Who** is using it and who is available to speak on the record for a story?
 5. **So what?** Why should we write about this? What makes it exciting and important?
2. Know the **availability of the expert at your organization** that the writer will need to interview. We need to talk to program managers, scientists, researchers or tech developers who have been directly involved with the technology/program. **Please avoid** setting a writer up with a business development or marketing person; we can't quote them.
3. Have **photos or artwork** in mind. The writer will need this to complete the story.

WHAT HAPPENS THEN:

1. You will **receive acknowledgement** of receipt of your story idea.
2. You will be contacted with any **additional questions**.
3. If the story idea appears to fit *SIGNAL*'s editorial needs, the material will be **presented at the subsequent line-up meeting**. (Meetings generally take place on the 20th of each month three months prior to the issue date.)
4. **Be ready** to get a call from a writer. Working on stories can be time-consuming simply coordinating schedules. Be prepared to set up interviews within two to three days of receiving the writer's call.
5. Double check the **interviewee's name spelling and title**. The writer will ask for this information during the interview, but it is good to have on hand.
6. Provide the writer with high-resolution **photos/artwork and caption material** as soon after the interview as possible.
7. Send the writer the **MAILING addresses** of the interviewee(s) and your mailing address so that copies of the issue that includes the article can be sent when it arrives in our offices.

DON'T OVERLOOK OTHER PUBLISHING OPPORTUNITIES:

1. *SIGNAL* Magazine is only one of AFCEA's publications. The writers also work on the monthly online publication *SIGNAL Connections*, *SIGNAL Online* and *SIGNAL Scape*, the blog available on our Web site. These three venues also offer opportunities for news publishing.
2. Articles in these e-publications are written for an online audience that wants their news and wants it quickly. As a result, **articles are 600 to 800 words** in length and **include hyperlinks** within the story so readers can instantly click through to additional information.
3. Although the online articles are shorter than those in the print magazine, they have the **advantage of immediacy**. In general, the writers will turn around stories within days of assignment.
4. **Guidelines are generally the same** as for print magazine stories; however, interviews will be considerably shorter.
5. Photos for these articles are always welcome, but **low resolution pics** are acceptable.
6. It is not always possible for the writer to notify story sources when the article is published, so **it is important to check the Web site often** for the latest issue of *SIGNAL Connections* or entries on the blog or *SIGNAL Online*.

ONE LAST ITEM:

1. The answer is yes when appropriate. The question is: Do we **publish articles written by non-staff members** in the magazine and online? However, articles must be NEWS and must be written in a news format. See writers guide.
2. Articles written by **public affairs, public relations, marketing and/or business development people** are **NOT** accepted. The author(s) must be directly involved with the project or development of the technology in some way.
3. The articles must be **written in third person** (see Top Ten Errors Made by Outside Authors) and should include quotes/input from the military or government.
4. **Opinion pieces** are accepted, once again only if the **topic is newsworthy** and the author is writing about a general topic, not a specific product or technology. These articles will be labeled as Viewpoint or Analysis.
5. When articles require **approval** from a company or command prior to publication, the approval **MUST BE acquired BEFORE** being sent to us for consideration.
6. Once an article has been accepted for publication, the author can review it at AFCEA headquarters (located in Fairfax, VA) **FOR FACTUAL ACCURACY ONLY**. This is true for staff-written articles as well.