



Article from  
**Reinsurance News**  
March 2019  
Issue 116

# Letter From the Editor

By Jing Lang

“Nobody wants to read your work” is the most powerful lesson I learned about writing, marketing, art and commerce of all forms. People have limited attention spans and are bored easily, myself included. When we—writers, creators or marketers—have something to say, we are asking readers for a donation of two very precious and nonrefundable resources: their time and their undivided attention. We must provide something compelling in return.

How? Here are three things you can start doing today to hone your creativity:

## BE CONCISE AND TO THE POINT

We don't have to be Michelin-starred chefs to appreciate good food, and we don't have to be Pulitzer-prize-winning authors to appreciate good writing.

In *The Elements of Style*, Strunk & White wrote: “Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts.”

W. Somerset Maugham, renowned British playwright and novelist, wrote: “The secret of play-writing can be given in two maxims: stick to the point, and, whenever you can, cut.”

So, how do you start? The next thing you have to write—a comment to a LinkedIn article, an email to your boss, a memo on variable annuity pricing—before you submit it, look at it again. Did you stick to your point? Could it be more concise?

## MAKE IT FUN: COMIC STRIP, ANYONE?

We all have our amusements—things that happened that make us laugh, stories we tell over and over again. What if these stories could be turned into comic strips? What if we could make a connection via this powerful form of visual storytelling?

Can't draw? No worries. Me neither. This is where collaboration comes in. If you have an idea, script it out. I can connect you with a network of cartoonists who can turn your idea into a comic. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1

Accelerated Mortality?<sup>1</sup> by Eric Sondergeld at LIMRA.



Commentary from author: Mortality experience is expected to deteriorate under accelerated underwriting, but in the grand scheme of things, it's all a timing difference (since everyone dies eventually).

## BROADEN YOUR AUDITORY SCOPE

Not yet a podcast listener? I was skeptical for a while too. Here are some benefits I have since recognized and appreciated:

1. It doesn't take additional time. A podcast is a great secondary activity where you can listen while commuting to work, exercising or running errands.
2. It's free.
3. There are many niche topics: news (*The Daily*), long-form interviews (*The Tim Ferriss Show*), business (*Business Wars*), meditation (*Waking Up*). Your choices are limitless.
4. I learn something new.
5. There's little disruption—uninterrupted original content.
6. Episodes are flexible in length. Depending on the show, an episode can range from 10 minutes to more than four hours.

Already a podcast user? Excellent. Subscribe to the Society of Actuaries podcast. In 2018, SOA Reinsurance Section released three interview-style podcasts:

- Episode 3: Blake Hill, "How one actuary turned marketer is transforming the insurance industry."
- Episode 2: "Communicate, and preparing to communicate." Jim Miles shares his mojo from 40+ years of actuarial career.

- Episode 1: Peter Liebwein, "Natural catastrophes, alternative capital and the crossover from L&H to P&C."

As podcast producer for the Reinsurance Section, my goal is to have in-depth conversations with influencers of our industry. The planning for 2019 podcasts is well underway. We expect to have two more episodes released by beginning of March. Subscribe and stay tuned.

## SUMMARY

I hope this article gives you some creative inspiration: Challenge yourself to write more effectively, open your mind to visual expression, and give podcasts a go. Again, if you have an idea about a potential comic strip or a suggestion for a new podcast or feedback for any published podcast, please let me know! ■



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## ENDNOTE

1. Sondergeld, Eric. Engaging Mortality, [https://www.limra.com/Research/Abstracts/2018/Engaging\\_Mortality.aspx](https://www.limra.com/Research/Abstracts/2018/Engaging_Mortality.aspx) (accessed January 1, 2019) (LIMRA member access required).