

theory of **craft.**

A NEWSLETTER ON MASTERING SKILL

MENTORSHIP AND GROWTH IN EDITORIAL CAREERS

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About Theory of Craft

The *Theory of Craft* is a personal and knowledge development resource newsletter developed by Society for Book and Magazine Editors of Nigeria. The scope of the topics range from enhancing skills, cultivating talent, improving productivity, freelance business management and knowledge resources. The target audience is the editorial professional to assist them in mastering their skills. The newsletter is managed by members of the society who serve as guest editors. The ToC is a continuous professional development project.

About the Guest Editor

Kezia Agbenyega is a seasoned communications and publishing professional with over a decade's experience in the publishing and nonprofit sectors. Throughout her career, Kezia has successfully led diverse teams in executing content creation, writing and editorial project management projects, while actively engaging audiences with books. Driven by her passion for storytelling and literature, she is dedicated to amplifying voices and forging meaningful connections between readers and authors.

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

As I prepared to produce this newsletter, I spent a lot of time considering what editors need in today's fast-evolving publishing landscape. Reflecting on my own journey, I realised that mentorship and personal branding have been pivotal to my career growth and many of my colleagues. Nonetheless, whether through books or human mentors, mentorship is invaluable for anyone looking to grow in publishing.

In this edition, my goal is to explore what mentorship truly entails and how you can effectively work with a mentor or be one. You will also find insights from my interview with Kirimi Mitambo, a Publishing and EdTech Consultant on how mentorship shaped his career and the benefits of being a mentor. Another contributor, Joyce Ahiadorme, who is a freelance Corporate Communications and Public Relations professional provides valuable advice in her essay on personal branding for freelance professionals.

Finally, I have included a practical guide in the How-to section on how to make mentorship work for you. I hope you find this edition inspiring and feel empowered to seek out a mentor or take on the role of one yourself.

Happy reading!

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ESSAY: PERSONAL BRANDING FOR FREELANCE PROFESSIONALS

JOYCE AHIADORME

Personal branding may seem like a well-worn concept, but for freelancers, it is essential. Whether you define yourself, people will create their own perceptions of you. The key is to take control and shape your own narrative—tell your story and define who you are.

As freelancers, we lack the familiar signposts like job titles or office roles that help define our professional identities. This makes personal branding even more important; therefore, it is up to you to proactively shape how you want to be remembered and acknowledged within your field. Your personal brand is what people think of when they hear your name—it is what sets you apart.

Your brand is about more than just your skills, it is the unique combination of your strengths, values and personality that attracts clients and opportunities. As a freelancer, you are your own publicist, marketer and HR team, so it is crucial to take your personal brand seriously.

Lastly, personal branding is not a one-time task; it is a journey. Just as you evolve, so does your brand. But even as it grows, it is important to be known for something and to leave a lasting impression that reflects the value you bring.

Freelancers are Defined by Value

Your brand as a freelancer is built on the value you create. People will remember you for the problems you have solved. Therefore, focus on delivering high-quality work consistently to build an excellent brand. What makes you unique? Everyone has something distinctive about them, whether it is how they write, onboard clients, or present themselves. Lean into your unique qualities that make you different from others. Shift your focus from your weaknesses to your strengths and a positive and authentic person that people will remember.

Build Your Brand with a Website

A professional website is one of the most effective tools for building your personal brand. It showcases your work, tells your story and enhances your online presence. Make sure it reflects what you do and represent. Also, keep it updated regularly to stay fresh and engaging for potential clients. A stagnant website does not send the right message.

Mentoring as a Branding Tool

Mentoring can also be a powerful part of personal branding. When you share your expertise and help others grow, you create a lasting impression, which will reinforce your brand. Consider mentoring in the fields you want recognition to build visibility and credibility.

Use Social Media for Visibility

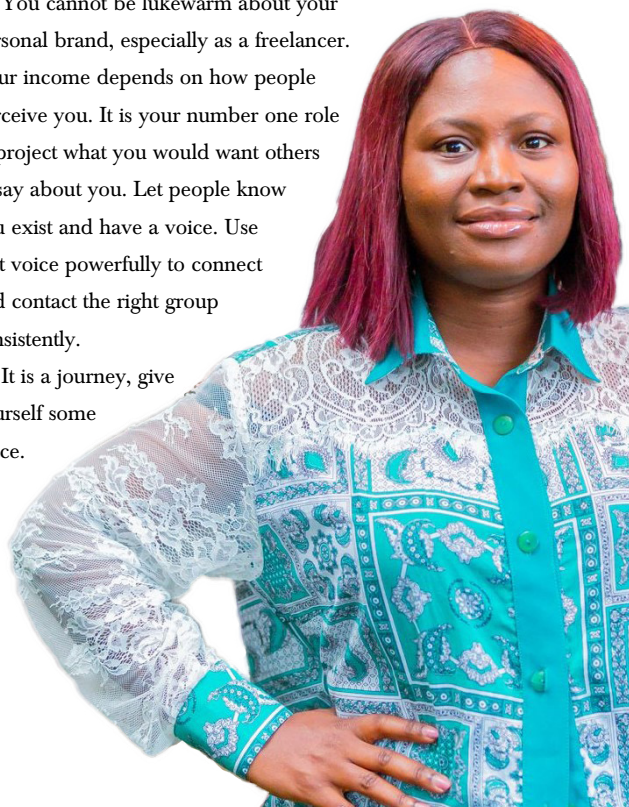
Social media, particularly LinkedIn, is crucial for freelancers. Write posts, comment on industry trends and engage with content that aligns with the brand you want to build. Share your experiences, projects and successes and be consistent.

Networking Matters

Networking may also sound like an overused concept, but it is important. Attend industry events, connect with peers and leave a positive impression. Networking helps to expand your influence and build relationships that strengthen your personal brand. Personal branding is an ongoing process; therefore, be intentional, be authentic and let your brand evolve naturally as you grow.

You cannot be lukewarm about your personal brand, especially as a freelancer. Your income depends on how people perceive you. It is your number one role to project what you would want others to say about you. Let people know you exist and have a voice. Use that voice powerfully to connect and contact the right group consistently.

It is a journey, give yourself some grace.



INTERVIEW



A CONVERSATION WITH KIRIMI MITAMBO

What skills and competencies are essential for new and emerging editors as they progress in their careers?

In today's publishing landscape, digital skills are essential. Being able to use collaborative digital platforms like Google Workspace, Microsoft 365, and ClickUp is key in today's publishing space. Proofreading is another key area, and storytelling is crucial for editors. Editors should be able to share who they are and aspire to be. Lastly, networking is vital. Editors must make it a priority to connect meaningfully with peers and professionals to stay informed and open to opportunities.

How has mentorship impacted your career growth in the publishing industry?

Right after my bachelor's degree, I had the privilege of being mentored by an experienced editor who later became the CEO and Chairman of the Kenya Publishers Association. This early guidance allowed me to gain insights into the publishing industry in Kenya and beyond. With a mentor like that, I learned industry expectations, best practices and the rules, which have shaped my career. Having the right mentor can truly anchor one's career progression, offering invaluable lessons and a clear path forward.

*No matter how much you get paid, always
make sure you learn and practice what you
learn in your own way.*

What qualities do you believe make someone a good mentor?

An effective editorial mentor should possess empathy. They should be able to immerse themselves in the mentee's experiences and challenges to help them become better. Additionally, they should be willing to learn. A lifelong learner stays ahead of

industry trends and is better equipped to guide others. Also, being honest is crucial. Mentoring others means providing genuine feedback, being objective and standing out as a role model.

What strategies do you use to build and maintain professional connections?

Networking plays a pivotal role in growing your career in the publishing industry. It's what opens opportunities for career growth. Embracing networking events, both physical and virtual, has been my strategy. These include publishing fairs, EdTech summits and conferences, publishing and EdTech webinars and other professional platforms. Also, sharing my story, experiences, insights and learnings on LinkedIn has endeared me to the EdTech community, enabling me to address bigger audience.

How should editors stay current with industry trends and adapt to changes taking place?

Editors need to embrace an open mind concerning publishing matters. They need to realise that there isn't any closed way to publishing especially with technology transforming all industries. Being a life-long learner and seeking mentorship is a great approach to personal and professional development in publishing.

How do you balance the demands of mentoring others with your own career growth?

I consider mentoring others as a responsibility. As a beneficiary of great mentoring, I make time

to mentor others while upskilling for my career progression. By mentoring others, I have been able to learn and gather insights key to my personal and professional growth.

What memorable mentoring experience influenced your professional development?

In 2013, just after I had left mainstream publishing to test waters in the EdTech space one of my mentors looped me in on the Digital Literacy Programme (DLP) baseline study that was commissioned by the Kenyan Ministry of Education. While this was not a paid job, my current career point is a result of the learnings I gathered then. My mentor told me that, "No matter how much you get paid, always make sure you learn and practice what you learn in your own way." This has been my philosophy ever since.

Finally, what advice would you give an early or emerging editor who aspires to grow?

Humility is key; stay grounded on your values and principles and never sacrifice your humanity for importance. Be passionate. If you can't do what you're doing without pay, change course. Be willing to learn and be taught; always stay hungry and foolish. Only the hungry look for food and the foolish seek knowledge. Keep abreast with the industry trends, exposure is the breeding ground for innovation. Lastly, build networks. You never know what the person you shake hand with can bring on the table until you try.

HOW TO: HOW TO FIND AND WORK WITH A MENTOR TO BOOST YOUR EDITORIAL CAREER

Mentorship is a valuable tool for building a successful editorial career, offering guidance, support and insight from someone more experienced. Whether you are starting out or an experienced professional, here are ways to find a mentor and make the most of the relationship.

Identify Your Goals and Needs:

Before looking for a mentor, clarify what you want to achieve in your editorial career. Whether it is improving your skills, gaining industry insights, or overcoming career challenges, having clear goals will help you find a mentor whose expertise aligns with your needs. For example, if you are interested in developmental editing or EdTech in publishing, seek a mentor who specialises in those areas.

Mentorship Through Books and Other Resources:

If finding a personal mentor is not immediately possible, books and other materials can serve as valuable mentorship tools. Many experienced editors and publishing professionals share their knowledge through books, blog posts and articles. These resources allow you to learn from industry veterans at your own pace. A recommended book is *The Subversive Copy Editor* by Carol Saller.

Be Proactive and Open to Feedback:

After securing a mentor, take an active role in the relationship. Schedule regular meetings, prepare questions and seek constructive feedback. Being proactive will engage your mentor and increase their investment in your growth. When you receive advice, apply it and share the results. This shows your mentor that you value their input.

Show Appreciation and Give Back:

Regularly show gratitude for your mentor's time and wisdom. Look for opportunities to offer value in return, whether by sharing resources, making introductions, or simply expressing thanks. A reciprocal relationship will make the mentorship more fulfilling for both parties.

Leverage Your Network:

Start by looking for a mentor within your existing network—colleagues, former managers, or industry contacts. If your immediate circle does not have potential mentors, attend industry events, webinars, or join editorial organisations like SBMEN. These platforms will connect you with experienced professionals who are eager to offer guidance. Social media platforms like LinkedIn are also useful for identifying and approaching potential mentors.

Reach Out:

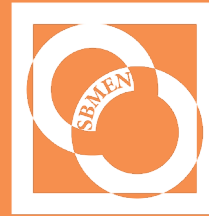
Once you have identified a potential mentor, reach out with a clear and professional request. Explain why you admire their work and what specific guidance you are seeking. Show that you have researched their work and be respectful of their time. Be open to a mentorship structure that works for both of you.

Set Boundaries and Expectations:

Establish clear expectations with your mentor from the beginning, including time commitments and communication preferences. Discuss how often you will meet and the format of your meetings. Address any concerns openly to ensure the mentorship remains productive. Mutual respect and flexibility are key to a successful relationship.

In conclusion, as you advance in your career, consider mentoring others. It not only strengthens the industry but also reinforces the lessons you have learned from your own mentor. By seeking out guidance, being proactive and giving back, you can build a mentorship that elevates your editorial career.

The Society for Book and Magazine Editors is a non-profit organisation that represents editorial professionals with headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria. It was founded in 2017 and registered in 2018 by Anwuli Ojogwu and Enajite Efemuaye. SBMEN offers training, resources and events to editors to enhance their professional development.



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