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Writers Workshop

17 JAN 2013

<http://asc.army.mil>

Our Mission

To serve the Army Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology community by educating, informing, motivating, and instructing the AL&T Workforce, in support of the ASA(ALT) and Principal Military Deputy and with guidance and direction from the *Army AL&T* Editorial Advisory Board.

Army AL&T Magazine Writers Workshop

- Welcome everybody to our very first Magazine Writers Workshop and presentation of the first annual *Army AL&T Magazine Awards (ALTies)*.
- Since December 1960's *Army RD&A Magazine*, making *Army AL&T* a professional journal of record for those who develop, procure, field, and sustain the materiel that supports our Soldiers has been a Team Effort.
- No one person can write the articles, nor take the photographs, nor illustrate *Army AL&T* processes, much less put all that together in a single volume four times a year. Without you, there would not be a magazine!
- What's the purpose of the workshop....

Workshop Goals/Agenda

- General Guidelines for *Army AL&T* articles
- Writing (the good, bad, and ugly)
 - What makes an article good for *Army AL&T* Magazine? Better?
 - Five questions to ask yourself.
 - Fact Checking (GIGO).
- Headlines
- Photography/Graphics/Ads (we're here to help)
 - What makes a photo or graphic good? Better?
- Upcoming themes and article planning.
- Finally the ALTie awards: the best of the best in *Army AL&T* articles, headlines, commentary, photos, graphics, and ads as decided by the writers and editors of *Army AL&T* Magazine...

Army AL&T staff

- **Nelson McCouch:** Editor-in-Chief; 25+ years in communications, public relations, corporate communications. Bachelor of Journalism (Broadcast) from the University of Missouri (Columbia), M.A. in Communications, and a Masters of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College.
- **Margaret (Peggy) Roth:** Senior Editor; B.A. in Russian language and linguistics from the University of Virginia with more than a decade of writing about the Army in particular and more than two decades' experience in journalism and public relations.
- **Robert Coultas:** Department Editor; a retired Army broadcaster with nearly 40 years of combined experience in public affairs, journalism, broadcasting and advertising. Army Keith L. Ware and DOD Thomas Jefferson Award recipient.
- **Catherine DeRan:** Creative Director; 14+ years in strategic communication. Bachelor of Fine Arts in photography from the Rochester Institute of Technology and an M.A. in Publication Design from the University of Baltimore.
- **Uri Bombasi:** Layout and Graphic Design; 10 years in graphic information and design; B.A. in art and visual technology from George Mason University.
- **Darlene Powell:** Layout and Graphic Design; 13 years of graphic design experience and has a BFA from Howard University.
- **Langston Willis:** Writer and Editor; B.A. in Journalism from Norfolk State University; 9+ years experience.

General Guidelines for Army AL&T articles

- Basic parameters:
 - 1,600 words, give or take maybe 50.
 - 3-4 photos and/or graphics.
 - Command and OPSEC approval (and, now, Functional Lead approval).
 - See Writers Guidelines and Army AL&T Overview at asc.army.mil.

- Each issue of *Army AL&T Magazine* has a topical theme. The editorial calendar is based on guidance from the *Army AL&T* Editorial Advisory Board of senior AL&T leaders.
 - Themes are chosen to support ASA(ALT)'s key messages and the Army Themes.
 - Articles must be “in line” with current ASA(ALT) priorities.

- We accept articles on both theme and non-theme topics. But, theme articles get better play.

- No “quick-and-dirty” news stories; the “inverted pyramid” doesn’t apply as a structural guide in organizing the article.

Writing

- First, think about writing articles for *Army AL&T* as a collection of puzzle pieces:
 - Start with the “**Big Idea**”: the main reason for the article, the challenge that is central to the article. It provides a glimpse of the solution and key implications for the reader.
 - Next, **related items**: These are the subheaded sections covering key aspects of the article topic such as methodology, lessons learned, next steps, and future challenges.
 - Finally the Conclusion: This “ties” everything together and summarizes the issue for the reader.
 - Bonus feature: Add a “for more information” paragraph pointing readers to a book, presentation or your website for even more context. (QR codes are great for this!)
- Show, don’t tell: Details are good; don’t skip the good stuff.
- News you can use: We’re a magazine of record, but not a history program. Focus on program challenges and lessons learned.
- Analysis: Provide ground truth of how one process, procedure, or technique has worked better than another.

Bad Writing

NOTE: There are at least 20 glaring errors of spelling and grammar here. Try rewriting the passage yourself, eliminating as many errors as you can find.

“The amount of grammer and usage error’s today is astounding. Not to mention spelling. If I was a teacher, I’d feel badly that less and less students seem to understand the basic principals of good writing. Neither the oldest high school students nor the youngest kindergartner know proper usage. A student often thinks they can depend on word processing programs to correct they’re errors. Know way! Watching TV all the time, its easy to see why their having trouble. TV interferes with them studying and it’s strong affect on children has alot to due with their grades. There’s other factors, too, including the indifference of parents like you and I. A Mom or Dad often doesn’t know grammer themselves. We should tell are children to study hard like we did at they’re age and to watch less TV then their classmates.*”

*error-filled paragraphs courtesy of Rob Kyff (Wordguy@aol.com) from his column in the *San Jose Mercury News*.

Bad Writing Corrected

Here is one possible rewrite:

“Students today make an astounding number of grammar, spelling, and usage errors. If I were a teacher, I'd feel bad that fewer and fewer students seem to understand the basic principles of good writing. Neither the oldest high school students nor the youngest kindergartners know proper usage. Students often mistakenly think they can depend on word processing programs to correct their errors.

It's easy to see why many students are having trouble: they're watching too much television. Time spent watching television cuts into study time, so students' grades fall. Also, some parents may be indifferent to their children's errors because the parents do not know grammar themselves.

We should tell our children that if they want to succeed in school, they must study hard and watch less television.”

Good Writing Examples

“Scientists studying new ways to squeeze more energy from batteries are making great strides in developing new methods and materials to potentially increase the energy density of batteries by 30 percent.”

Or

“You are a buyer for a large buying activity. Your installation continues to grow substantially because of a recent Base Realignment and Closure decision. To keep up with the energy demands of the base, your installation commander was able to secure funding to build a state-of-the-art, high-voltage electrical substation. You have been given the task to buy all the equipment for this substation.”

5 Questions to Ask for a Better Article

- First, how can you make a good article better? Ask yourself these questions:
 - Does the article provide information not available in other publications, or from your own STRATCOM media?
 - Does it go “behind” a program or process to offer a program manager’s detailed, analytic perspective that another program manager would appreciate?
 - Does it describe a problem solved or challenge met, in a way that could help other program managers solve other problems or meet other challenges?
 - Is the article a “good read”? Does it tell a clear and compelling story with authority?
 - Is it filled with jargon, buzz words?

- If you aren’t sure, don’t hesitate to ask us!

Headlines

- Headline writing is an art form. Good headlines capture the essence of the story in 5 words or less (eat your heart out Twitter).
- A good headline attracts the reader's attention!
- Use subhead (longer headline below) to communicate the 2Ws and 1H of the article:
 - Who
 - What
 - How

Bad Headlines*

- 4-H Girls Win Prizes for Fat Calves
- Air Head Fired
- Arson Suspect is Held in Massachusetts Fire
- Bank Drive-in Window Blocked by Board
- Blind Bishop Appointed to See
- British Left Waffles on Falkland Islands
- Dealers Will Hear Car Talk at Noon
- Drunk Gets Nine Months in Violin Case
- Fund Set Up for Beating Victim's Kin
- Safety experts say school bus passengers should be belted
- Iraqi head seeks arms

*Courtesy Little Calimity.tripod.com

Good Headlines*

- KILLING A FLY WITH A SLEDGEHAMMER
- DOTmLPF + dotMlpf = DOTMLPF
- THE 'NEW' ACQUISITION WORKFORCE

*Courtesy Army AL&T

Photos: Good Art, and Better Art

- Get beyond the obvious: There are much better ways to depict support for the mission than the classic grip-and-grin or ribbon-cutting photo.
- Good photos depict a key aspect of your article in a clear and visually appealing way, with creative, well-balanced composition and effective lighting.
- We all know a good photo when we see one:
 - The photo of a huge massing of combat vehicles taken from an unusual angle.
 - The colorful close-up of an intricate, high-tech circuit being fabricated in the lab to create a flexible, wearable display for Soldiers.
 - The tunnel-view photo of a C-17 Globemaster full of Container Delivery Systems ready to be parachuted down to the Soldiers who need them.
- There are many fantastic opportunities for good photos in the day-to-day activities of *Army AL&T*. If you are in the habit of looking, you'll find them.
- Feel free to overwhelm us with images; choice is a luxury!

Photo Examples of what to Avoid



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Good Photo Formulas

Show multiple systems.



Good Photo Formulas (cont.)



Add people.

Good Photos Format (cont.)



Send a variety of photos.



Making Good Photos Better



Use dramatic lighting, natural elements such as mist, fog, or cloudy sky.

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Making Good Photos Better



Have a lot of static equipment to show?

Making Good Photos Better



Try a different angle.

Making Good Photos Better



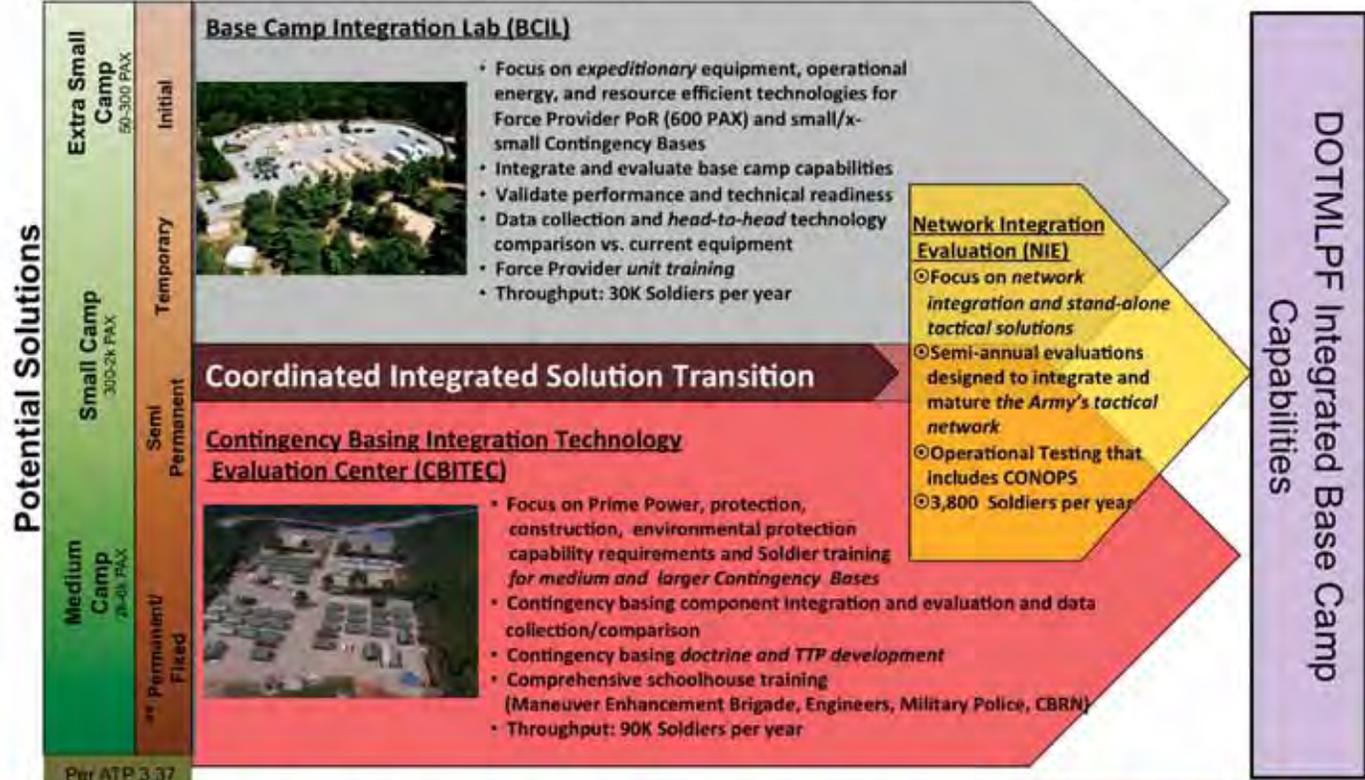
Add action or engagement.

Good Art, and Better Art: Graphics

- *Army AL&T* is prime territory for creativity in charts and graphs. We need your sharp eyes and great imaginations!
- Good graphics make the arcane details easier to understand than just text. They capture and condense key points cleanly, clearly, and colorfully.
- Some of you produce fantastic briefing slides for your commands. We will consider those charts and graphs for reuse in *Army AL&T*.
- Be bold and daring! Use the many software programs now available for graphic design. If you don't have the tools you need, chances are that we do; let's work together to make good graphics!

Closer, but not quite....

Contingency Basing—Evaluation & Training



The Army is evaluating and integrating solutions to address Contingency Basing challenges and Capability Gaps.

IIP: Tactics, Techniques and Procedures CBRN: Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, and Nuclear DOTMLPF: Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leader Development, Personnel, Facilities
 PoR: Program of Record (acquisition program) ** this block refers to construction standards of the base

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Complex idea made simple...



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Advertisements

- Ads are a quick way to promote what your command does and why they are important.
- Can change each quarter to match priorities and upcoming events.
- Should be compelling and make the reader want to find out more about what you are doing.
- Less is more...don't tell the whole story, just enough to grab the reader's attention.
- Did we mention they're FREE?

Less is more...

UNDERSTAND
the Battlefield
Enable Decisive Action.

Mission
Provides affordable, world-class
Sensor and Electronic Warfare
capabilities enabling rapid
situational understanding
and decisive action.

Vision
A team of dedicated
professionals driving
innovation and exceptional
value in understanding and
shaping the Battlespace.

Intelligence - Electronic Warfare - Sensors - Situational Understanding

Program Executive Office
Intelligence, Electronic Warfare & Sensors

PEO
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<http://peoiew.spp.army.mil>
Find us on

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Upcoming Themes and Article Planning

- The next deadline for article submissions is 1 FEB, for our April-June 2013 issue.
 - The theme for April-June is “Better Buying Power” -- what that means across the spectrum of AL&T programs, activities, and facilities. The overarching focus is on the BBP priorities set out by Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Mr. Frank Kendall.
- The theme for our July-September 2013 issue (submission deadline: 1 MAY) is “The Acquisition Workforce.” The issue will spotlight workforce challenges and successes throughout the employee career path, from recruiting and hiring, to development and advocacy, to retention, with a focus on efficiencies and lessons learned.
- *Army AL&T* is adding a proactive step to our submission process. We would like to see a concept draft of the top three or four paragraphs for each article at least a week before the submission deadline. Objective: To let you know whether we’re likely to publish the article in the upcoming issue, before expectations of being published get too high.
- We need more Commentary and Field Expedient articles. A good Commentary poses an important issue clearly with well-supported opinions and useful insights. For Field Expedient, we’re looking for on-the-ground reporting of innovative solutions to pressing problems.

Got an Idea?

Let us know! We'll be happy to discuss.

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