USING DIGITAL INSTRUMENTS TO SING A GLOBAL EDITORIAL SONG

Using digital instruments to sing a global editorial song (transcript)

Welcome

Hello and thank you so much for inviting me to join you! It really is such a pleasure to be here! So today I'm going to be talking about how even non-techy practitioners can use digital tools to sing a global editorial song – one where we use our voices and our knowledge to build trust, create connections, find work and increase income.

First, though, a little bit about me. I'm Louise Harnby and my pronouns are 'she' and 'her'. I started my professional editing practice in 2006 although I've been working in publishing since I graduated in 1991. I'm a fiction editor who works exclusively for independent crime fiction, thriller and mystery writers, most of whom are self-publishing,

I'm also an Advanced Professional Member of the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading. I co-host The Editing Podcast, post regularly on The Editing Blog, and I also create courses and write books about editorial business practice and the craft of fiction line editing.

Introduction: What's changed

So what's changed since I started out? One thing I'm certain of is that digital developments have transformed my business into something that's almost unrecognizable from where I started back in 2006. Back then, my editorial life revolved around pens and paper – and correction fluid. Marketing meant writing a lot of letters. I even remember telling a client that having a website wasn't really a priority for me! That's seems extraordinary now but, at the time, that way of working made sense for me.

And, of course, it's true that editors sometimes still work on hard copy, and letter writing's still a great way to get noticed by potential clients. And even if you don't have a website, there are other online spaces where you can make your presence felt. But there's no doubt that the digital revolution has expanded our choices and our opportunities.

It's changed the face of publishing, too, allowing independent authors to be their own publishers and control every aspect of the publishing process, including

editorial. And since that's a global phenomenon, all of us now have access to a client base that's hugely expanded.

The tech's become a lot simpler, too, since I began my editorial practice in 2006, and there's lots of support to help editors work more efficiently using digital tools.

We can learn and network digitally too. I don't have to hop on a plane in order to be able to join you today. And what this says to me is that professional editing has never felt so *unlimited* by geography and nationality, and that's incredibly exciting.

So, when I first started thinking about all the things I might talk to you about, it seemed like there was so much to choose from – too much. And so I decided to focus on the things that put a smile on my face and that I know from personal experience make a difference. And we can sum those up in three words:

Speech | Teach | Reach

I want to share with you how those concepts have enriched my editorial practice and how I think they can enrich yours. Maybe some of you are already embracing them, in which case I hope I'll be able to convince you to stick around and consider how you and I have approached things similarly *and* differently. If you're not embracing them, perhaps I can inspire you to give them a go!

What I want to be clear about is that I'm not going to talk about those things as someone who's a tech genius, as someone who's had design training, or as someone who has a qualification in computing and programming. I'm none of those things. I'm just an editor with a willingness to give it a go!

Singing a global editorial song: Speech

So let's talk about how we might use speech. By speech, I'm talking about using our *actual* voices and the power of the spoken word.

Some of you might know about the podcast I host with my pal Denise Cowle. It's called The Editing Podcast, and our first episode was broadcast on 9 January 2019. I won't bore you with details about what those 130+ episodes discuss, or the techy detail of the writing, editing and publishing process. Instead, I want to tell you about the impact of that content and the difference it's made to our businesses.

The thing is this: Voices have power. They help listeners get under the bonnet of an editor. The written word is brilliant for creating messages about what kind of

editing we do, which kinds of clients we work with, what genres we work in, what qualifications we have, but if you want to make that stuff personal and help the reader make a deeper connection with the very real human being underneath all of that, audio content is superb.

Denise and I often receive emails that say things like:

- 'It's like you're right there in the room with me.'
- 'I can listen and learn while I'm doing the school run or the washing-up.'
- 'I love how I can give my eyes a welcome rest from the screen.'
- And 'I love your accents … especially Denise's.'

Yeah, we get that one a lot. I mean A LOT. When it comes to accents, Denise wins every time. Frankly, if I didn't think it was useful for listeners to be able to differentiate us, I'd probably have had voice-coaching by now so I could sound Scottish too. Not that I'm insecure, you understand, but there's a limit on how much a person can take!

Seriously, though, what this demonstrates is how audio content increases engagement. It adds a personal feel to communication that the written word just can't replicate. And so if we want to help clients and colleagues trust us, connect with us, want to engage with us, audio is a fantastic way of supplementing text.

And that's brilliant when we have a specific goal in mind. So maybe you care deeply about celebrating different Englishes, or promoting diversity and inclusivity in our profession, or raising awareness about professional editing, or helping people understand how to handle certain types of text or deal with specific problems … whatever it is, audio is great way of communicating your message in a way that really grabs people.

Some of you might be wondering whether it actually makes business sense. Will it lead to work and therefore income? All I can tell you is that Denise and I both get work as a result of The Editing Podcast. Writers contact us, wanting to discuss projects because they've heard us *actually* speak, and they figure that if we've gone to the trouble of using our voices to demonstrate our knowledge, we must know our stuff. And those writers don't just come from England and Scotland, where we come from. They come from other places on the planet too.

What's more, the digital tools you need are in software you likely already have access to – Microsoft's PowerPoint or Zoom, for example – so it doesn't have to be expensive.

And so I want to urge you to use your voice – your speech – so that the world can *hear* – as well as read – what you've got to say about the business of editing and what you bring to the table.

Singing a global editorial song: Teach

Now let's turn to another thing that puts a smile on my face – teaching. Back when I started my editorial career, online learning had arrived but wasn't anywhere near as accessible as it is today. And what *was* available seemed to be created by organisations and institutions who had resources – resources that I didn't have.

But, in the past two decades, developers have realized that there's a market that's way bigger than the corporate one – one made up of individuals like me and you who have knowledge to share but not the time and skills to build our own learning platforms.

These days, there are a lot of options to choose from – Udemy, LearnWorlds, PayHip, LearnDash, Thinkific, and my favourite: Teachable. Those are done-for-you platforms that handle the tech so we don't have to.

And that means any of us can teach.

We don't need a physical classroom. We don't need coding skills. And it doesn't matter where we live as long as we have a computer and an internet connection.

But I don't have the knowledge to teach, some of you might be thinking. And if you're at the start of your editorial career, that might well be the case. I say 'might' because being a new entrant to the field of editing doesn't necessarily mean you're without knowledge.

So think about this: Before you started editing, what knowledge did you acquire that you've used in your editing practice? Were you a nurse practitioner, or a lawyer, a professor at a university, an accountant or a veterinarian, for example? Do you currently edit texts with language that relates to that career, and use what you learned in your previous working life to enrich your practice? Or do you have business or technical skills that you use in your practice and that help you work more efficiently and productively?

If so, might you use those to create niche multimedia training that helps colleagues and potential clients develop their editing and writing skills.

Or maybe you're a more experienced editor, and along the way you've developed knowledge or created specialist frameworks that help you and your

clients. The question then is: are there other editors who'd benefit from being taught your approach?

I've studied branding, content marketing and fiction line editing, for example, and I've turned what I learned into training for others so that they can improve their practice.

That's something I couldn't have done twenty years ago – the tools just weren't there. Now that they are, I've been able to expand my practice beyond the one-to-one transaction between editor and client and into one-to-many between editors and other editors and multiple clients.

I'm not alone – other editors are offering niche training to colleagues and clients on aspects of editorial practice that are their particular niche wheelhouses.

Now, creating courses can seem overwhelming if you've never done it before, but let me ask you this: Have you created a slide deck and presentation for a conference or for another editorial society? Have you given a presentation at a local chapter/branch meeting? Have you explained complex editorial concepts to a client in a report? Have you written a series of blog posts or articles that solve a specific problem that you regularly come across? If so, that's a webinar in the waiting right there. It's your content – your knowledge. What's stopping you from repurposing it and putting a price tag on it so that others can learn from you?

The outcome is a passive-income stream that bolsters your business, while at the same time signalling your professional competence. And, as with speech, teaching opportunities are global, not local, precisely because digital training materials don't have geographical barriers. Time zones don't matter when a student can access your self-paced course at their convenience.

And so what I'd say is this: Although creating a course with content that people rave about requires time, commitment and care, actually delivering that training to students has never been easier. And that's an opportunity that just doesn't make sense to ignore.

Singing a global editorial song: Reach

Finally, let's talk about reach. Here I'm talking about creating digital resources and publishing them on our websites so that we can increase our global visibility and build trust.

Why is it worth it? Because when we give free access to useful stuff, we show rather than tell colleagues and potential clients that we understand a problem and know how to solve it.

Let's say you're a medical editor. You want to work with people seeking to publish medical conference papers, doctoral theses, journal articles and books. Sure, you can ask publishers and project management agencies to put you on their freelance lists. But how about if some of those authors were to come to you direct?

Yes, your website makes it clear that you're a medical editor, but so do lots of other editors' websites. And being a medical editor in itself doesn't make you stand out from the crowd. What *would* make you stand out from the crowd is being a *helpful* medical editor who solves medical writers' problems by providing useful content that demonstrates your expertise.

And like the power of the voices that I talked about before, problem-solving content is impactful. It affects people emotionally. It makes them feel grateful, relieved, more in control of their project. And when we make emotional connections with people, they're more likely to want to build a business relationship with us – hiring us to edit for them, for example, or buying our teaching materials.

But perhaps the most important outcome of creating this content lies in its reach. Where we live doesn't matter. End of. Google doesn't give a hoot whether you live in Canada, the UK, India, Italy, South Africa, the US … wherever. It only cares about whether you're providing content whose headings have key words and phrases that match the key words and phrases web users type into Search.

And that means that by creating useful, problem-solving digital content, you can pick up clients from anywhere. You're accessible to a bigger pool, which means you get to be pickier about who you work with and what price you set or accept.

Here are some examples from my own editorial stable:

- Different types of editing (video and booklet)
- Conscious language resources (booklet)
- 5 reasons to use one-line paragraphs (blog post)
- Punctuating broken-up dialogue (blog post)
- What narrative distance is (blog post)

I specialize in working for commercial fiction writers, so the free content I've published explores things like punctuating and tagging dialogue, using lyrical

tools such as anaphora and polysyndeton, managing viewpoint consistently, working with beats, and decluttering prose.

Maybe you specialize in legal texts, so your free content could explore different citation styles, writing precisely and efficiently, using active or passive voice, drafting a scope and sequence, and printing and binding requirements.

It doesn't actually matter what type of editing you do. What matters is that you think about the problems your ideal clients are most likely to search for advice on via the search engines, and then create the solutions.

Those solutions don't need to just be in text form, though they could be – a blog post or a PDF booklet, for example. But you could also use the power of your voice and turn that written material into additional audio content. Or you could go one step further and video yourself discussing your advice.

Yes, it's yet more work, but here's the thing about the digital age and the global reach that comes with it – the opportunities are greater than ever, but that means there's more competition too. And when you go the extra mile and create solutions to people's problems, you get found and you stand out.

And that means the age of bare cupboards or empty plates – the concept of famine and feast that editors often talk about in discussion forums – is something you can wave goodbye to.

The thing I always like to remember about this is that it might take me seven hours to research, write and publish a great blog post, but I only have to do it once. After that, it works for me forever, and even while I'm asleep. And I can't think of another type of marketing that's this affordable and works while we're snoozing!

So, is it an effective strategy? If you're solving the problems people are searching for answers to, yes it is, because that's how Google's algorithms are designed – to find solutions. From personal experience I can tell you that I've not been without the work I want for years, and at least once a week someone sends in a request for editing services that includes something on the lines of: 'Your website is amazingly helpful' or 'I found you via your blog post on whatever.'

And so my final call-out is to ask those of you who aren't creating useful content to think about the impact it could have on your global reach. Google is possibly *the* most valuable digital tool on the planet. If you understand how it works, and create problem-solving resources that respect its design, you'll see gains for your editorial business that stretch into the long term.

If it all feels too much

So what if doing some of those things feels a bit overwhelming? I'm pretty sure that there's a larger than average number of introverts in our industry, and so I thought it might be useful to share a couple of tips with those of you who think you might fall into this category.

Partner up

The first is to partner up with someone. That's what Denise and I did with the podcast. We were both completely new to podcasting and while we were comfortable coming up with ideas, when it came to sitting down and actually speaking and recording, we were both furiously nervous, both suffering from huge attacks of impostor syndrome, both worried about looking, or sounding, stupid. But the difference was, we were nervous *together*; we experienced our impostor syndrome together; and we knew that if we made fools of ourselves, we'd make fools of ourselves together. And that was transformative. It didn't take away the nerves, but it did give us courage.

The partnership route works for speech, teach and reach! You can create audio material with a friend, create a course with a friend, or do other types of content creation with a friend. Two is better than one. Just make sure to pick the right person: someone you trust, someone who will take on a fair share of the work; and someone who's on the same page as you in terms of your business goals.

Think in ones

Another idea is to think in ones. By that I mean focus on one thing at a time, or one task from a single project at a time. So for example, if you decided you'd like to build a teaching programme, that might feel overwhelming. But if you scope it out, and break it down into all the various components, then you can apply the think-in-ones strategy.

So to create a teaching programme, you'd need to consider lots of things:

> **MACRO FOCUS: Create a teaching programme**
>
> - the core theme of each and every course
> - the audience
> - the various modules
> - the learning outcomes
> - creating the content for each module
> - the types of media that are most appropriate for those modules
> - the teaching platform you'll use

- the price you'll charge
- what your engaging title will be
- the branding and imagery
- the marketing blurb
- who your beta testers will be
- how you'll sell it
  and so on …

And all of that can feel like a massive amount of work that needs to be squeezed into your life along with your editing and personal commitments. Just a huge mountain to climb. And it can mean that some people simply decide not to bother.

But, if instead, you focus on each of those tasks as if they're a project in themselves, and you allow yourself to do them one at a time, when it's convenient, they become far more manageable. Instead of focusing on the bigger picture and the end goal, and *all the things* that need to be done, you pull your gaze inwards and home in on the micro baby steps.

MICRO FOCUS: Do one component at a time

- Project 1: Decide on a theme for ONE course
- Project 2: Identify your audience
- Project 3: Required modules
- Project 4: Learning outcomes
- Project 5: Content for module 1
- Project 6: Content for module 2
  and so on …

And given that editors and proofreaders are often tasked with thinking about the micro detail, it can be a useful strategy if you're prone to feeling overwhelmed by a grand project.

Summing up

I'd like to wrap up by inviting you to consider how you might use the three power concepts I've discussed today – speech, teach and reach – so that you can sing a global editorial song and ensure that your target audiences can hear it and hum along!

More resources

➔ Visit Louise's website to find out more.

Fiction editing training courses	Business-development training courses
• How to Edit Slurs in Dialogue • How to Line Edit for Suspense • How to Punctuate Dialogue • How to Write the Perfect Fiction Editorial Report • Narrative (Psychic) Distance: A Toolbox for Writers and Editors • Style Sheets for Fiction Editing • Switching to Fiction	• Blogging for Business Growth • Branding for Business Growth • Editor Website Essentials • Emotional Marketing that Gets Editors Work • Marketing Toolbox for Editors
Fiction editing books	**Business-development books**
• *Editing Fiction at Sentence Level* • *Making Sense of 'Show, Don't Tell'* • *Making Sense of Point of View* • *Making Sense of Punctuation*	• *Business Planning for Editorial Freelancers* • *How to be Visible with Social Media* • *How to Brand Your Editing Business* • *How to Build an Editorial Blog* • *How to Develop a Pricing Strategy* • *How to do Content Marketing* • *How to Earn Passive Income* • *Marketing Your Editing & Proofreading Business*