




*Dream of
Travel Writing*

Don't Create Ideas Out of Nowhere: How to Always Find Them When You Need Them

by Gabi Logan, founder of Dream of Travel Writing

A hand holding a vintage brass compass against a blurred background of a mountainous landscape. The compass is the central focus, showing its intricate details and the cardinal directions. The background is a soft-focus view of rolling hills and mountains under a bright sky. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

Today, we're going to
talk about...



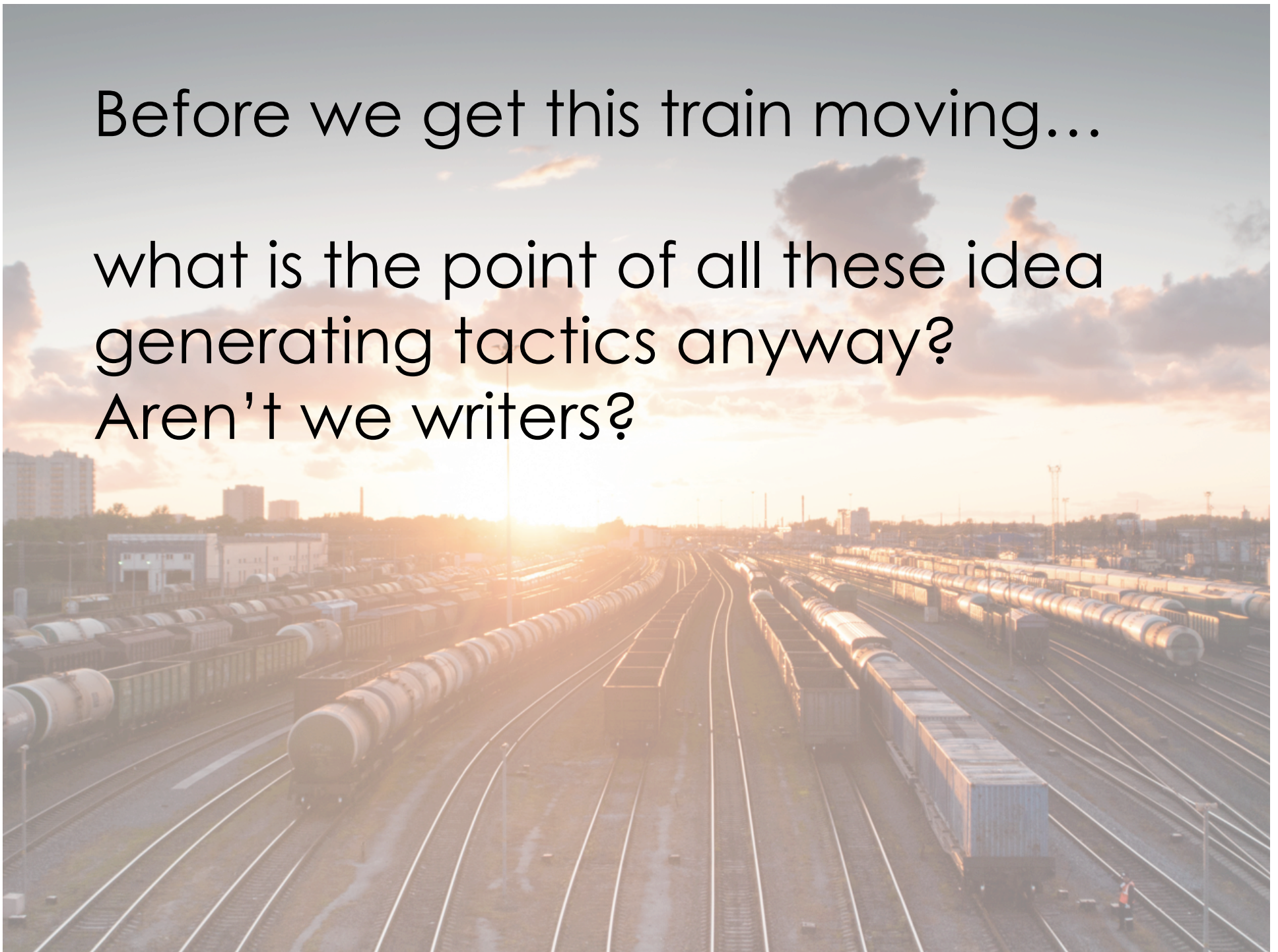
1. Why becoming an idea machine is the #1 thing you can do to kick your writing career into high gear

2. Three ways to generate “new” ideas from magazines’ past content

3. Three ways to create “new” ideas out of other pre-existing sources—but make it look like you came up with them yourself

Before we get this train moving...

what is the point of all these idea
generating tactics anyway?
Aren't we writers?



“If you’re not developing article ideas, you’re not serious about earning well as a writer.”

- Carol Tice



A glowing lightbulb hanging from a string against a bokeh background. The lightbulb is the central focus, emitting a warm, yellow light. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and blue bokeh, suggesting an outdoor setting with trees and lights. The text is overlaid on the image.

The Two

MOST DREADED

Idea Snafus

The editor email:

*“This idea isn’t quite a fit for us/
we’ve already got a similar story
in the hopper/we’ve covered
this topic too recently, **can you
send me some other ideas?”**”*

The “that was my idea” sadness:

That moment when you open a magazine and see **the exact** idea you'd been thinking about pitching it.

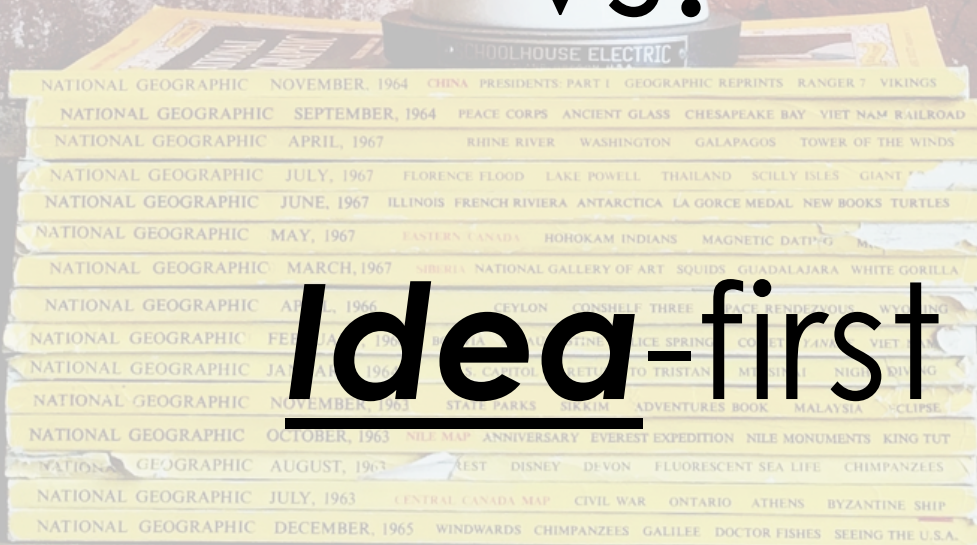
A top-down view of a person's hands holding a white mug of coffee. The person is wearing a watch on their left wrist. On the wooden table in front of them is a bowl of granola, a blue and white striped napkin, and an open magazine. The magazine has the headline "SPLENDOR IN THE GRA" and some smaller text below it. The overall scene is a cozy, lifestyle-oriented setting.

3 Magazine-First Idea Generation Formulas

Magazine-first

VS.

Idea-first



Fill-in-the-[CITY]

- ***b.inspired:***

- “Discover Belgium” is a 200-word article highlighting a town in Belgium. It’s written in third person. There are three subsections called “Where is it?” “Why should I go there?” and “What should I do there?” Example towns from previous issues include Durbuy, Tournai, and Wonck.
- “Barrio” is a 400-to-600-word article covering things to do in a particular city. It usually lists seven-to-eight bars, restaurants, museums, and shops including their addresses and websites. They are written in third person. Example destinations from previous issues include Edinburgh, Cotonou, and Barcelona.
- “The Big City Guide” is a 700-word travel story. It’s written in first person and includes details like the names of restaurants, hotels, and websites. Example destinations from previous issues include Hannover, Basal, and Granada. The feature comes with two sidebars pertaining to the destination featured. “My...,” plus the name of the city, is a 200-word profile of a local blogger or business owner. The second sidebar is a 100-word round-up of three events in the city in the month of publication.

Fill-in-the-[CITY] (cont.)

- **Delta Sky:**

- “Wheels Up” is broken up into seven to eight smaller sections. One subsection written by a contributor is a 250-word, second-person piece called “Trending” about a popular city to travel to, like Mexico City, Ottawa, or Oakland.
- “1 City 5 Ways” showcases a city in five different ways to appeal to five different tastes and preferences in a second-person, 700-word long article. A recent article featured Boston and broke the city down into the categories of those who identify as a foodie, historian, sports fan, adventurer, or modernist. Within each category, the writer suggests where to stay, where to eat, and what to do during the morning, afternoon, and evening. Other cities that have been featured include Rio de Janeiro, Seoul, Nashville, and Anchorage.
- “Profile” looks deeper into a specific city and is broken up into three smaller sections ranging from 500 to 1,000 words. Q&A is an interview with that city’s governor, business focuses on the industries and companies shaping that city, travel features the facets of the city that are appealing to travelers, and sports goes into detail on the sporting culture in that city. Cities are mostly in the United States. Recent cities that have been featured include Minneapolis, Titusville, and Atlanta.

Just like _____, but with _____

- Great for features
- Let's transform:
 - a photographer covering rebels in Papua New Guinea
 - a woman who sailed solo around the world at the age of 16
 - a British adventurer who embarked on a perilous two-month trek to the South Pole alone
 - “The Principality of Hutt River” (about how Leonard Casley declared his farm a principality and how it has grown into a tourist attraction)
 - “Katherine” (about how the town of Katherine in Northern Australia has grown to become one of the country's largest mango producers)
 - “Walking by Water” (about the writer's experience of a four-day bushwalking exhibition through islands off the coast of Tasmania)
 - “Paris on a Platter” (a round up of eight restaurants in Paris where you can find the best of the new bistronomy trend)
- Feature idea format: [noun] [transformation]...just fill in two different words

The Story Behind The Story

- Works best converting short to long and visa versa
- Can also combine with “just like ____, but with _____”
- Almost universally applicable and one of the best way to come up with ideas quickly in an editor-wants-to-know-what-else-you’ve-got situation
- The covered-too-recently caveat

A person in a dark shirt and shorts stands on a rocky shore, looking out at a calm lake. The lake reflects the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise over a range of mountains. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds, and the overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

3 Ways to Generate “New” Ideas from “Nowhere”

National to Local:


- Great for trends, current events
- Showing how something macro is affecting something micro
- Works both on a geographic and topical level
- Best for nicher magazines but can also apply to focused pieces in national/international pieces like the city-focused items we discussed earlier

Local to National:

- Focuses on finding excellent stories that are underexposed
- This is where the “stealing” feels like it’s coming in (or the Turkey tale)
- Works well when combined with a **basket of kittens**
- Always pick up local titles when you’re traveling to find these stories on a profile or business level—let someone else start the reporting for you

Revisiting Big Events

- So many options:
 - Recovery: 9/11, Paris attacks, Kenyan attacks, Emilia earthquakes, Japanese tsunami
 - New: ____ has opened—how has that changed things
 - Even political (a bit of national-local here): One year after Trump, how has travel been effected
- A spin on the age-old anniversary idea, but easier to use than anniversaries, which are a hard sell on their own

A person's hands are shown holding several magazines and books. The background features a blurred image of palm trees. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

A quick note on
generating **lots**
of ideas for the
same magazine

Thanks so much
for joining us today!

It was a pleasure chatting
travel writing with you 😊

Whenever you need to double check an idea fit, your assumptions about editors, or your self doubt on whether your idea is good, email questions@dreamoftravelwriting.com.

