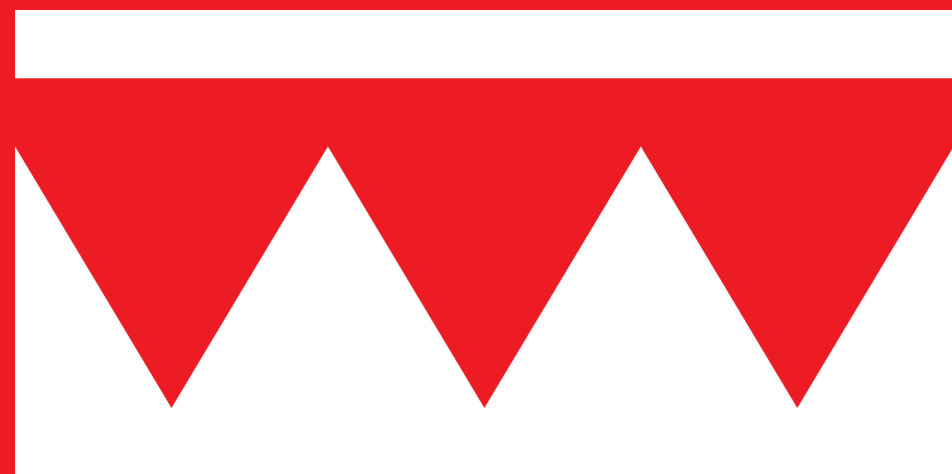




The DrumTM

OPINION GUIDE

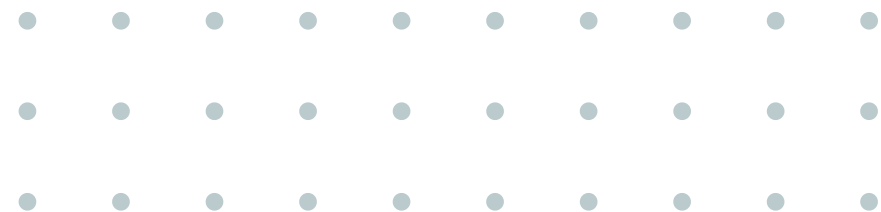
**HOW TO PITCH
&
WRITE FOR US**

03. HOW TO PITCH THE DRUM

10. HOW TO WRITE AN OPINION PIECE
FOR THE DRUM



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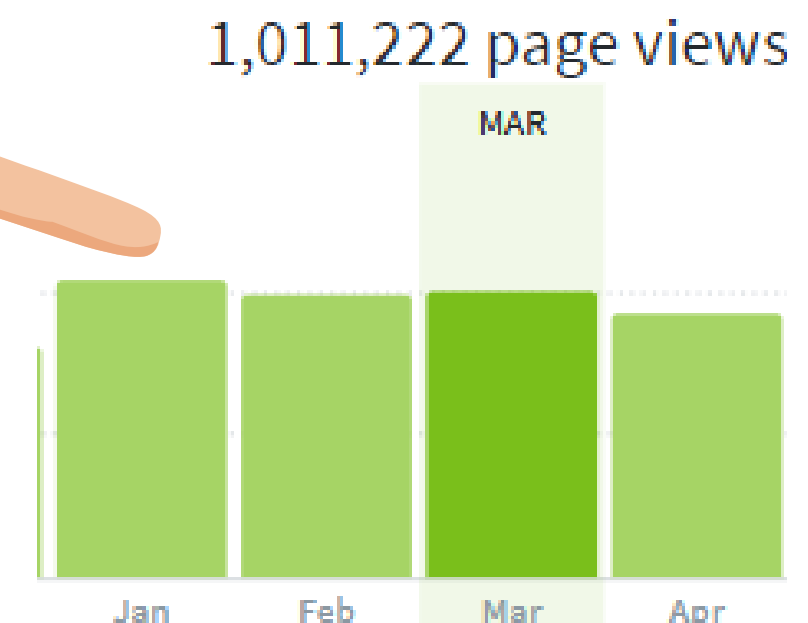
So you want to share a hot take with The Drum opinion section?

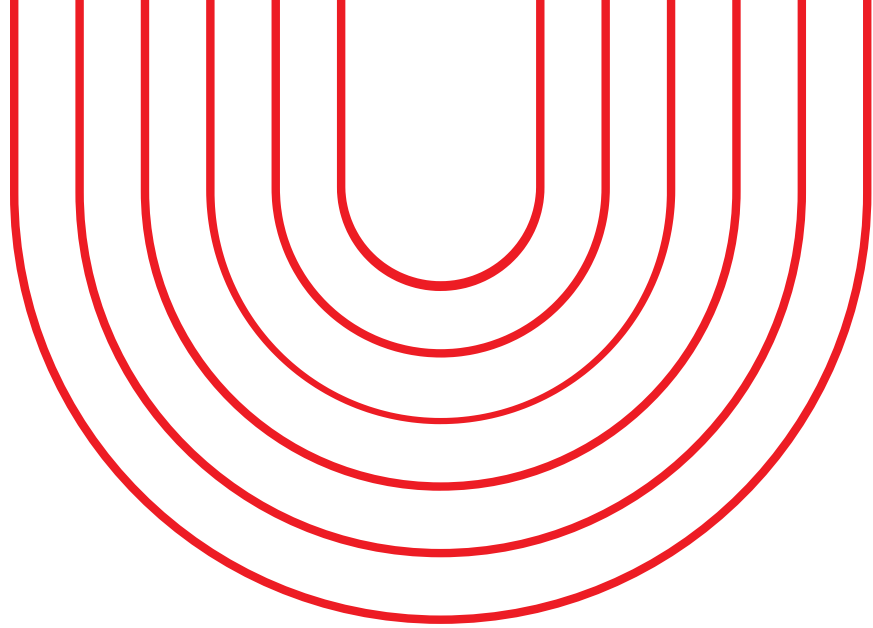
Our 1m+ a month global marketing audience is smart, passionate, engaged. They want inspiration, answers, entertainment and a debate.

We hold a mirror to this absurd industry, which often prefers the comfort of self-deception, misconception and endless hype over dealing with today's real issues. Readers recognize this. And I love giving them it.

Don't just take our word for it, look!

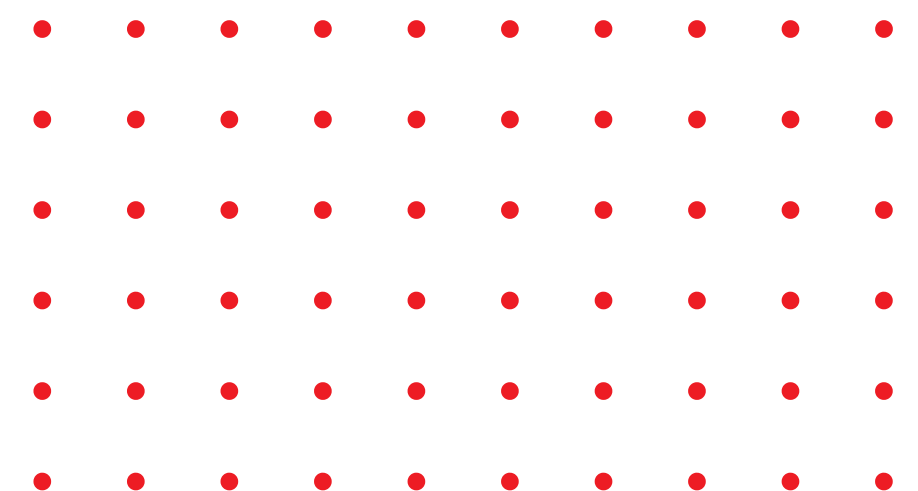
John McCarthy, Opinion Editor





DO YOU TICK OUR BOXES?

- You're an expert. That doesn't mean 'senior'
- Actually HAVE an opinion on the topic
- Can share said opinion, 'oh the things I could say'
- Opinion is relevant or has a cultural hook
- Can explain why we need this opinion now
- Can provide an engaging read

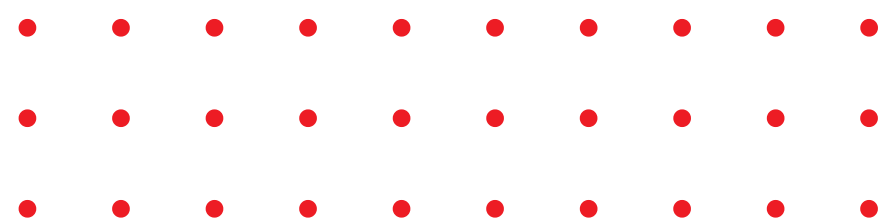


GET TO KNOW US

This might sound obvious,
read us to know our tone and
what we are covering

[https://www.thedrum.com/
Opinion](https://www.thedrum.com/Opinion)

Subscribe to the email
briefings
[https://beat.thedrum.com/ne
wsletter](https://beat.thedrum.com/newsletter)



TOPICAL

Vital. We're all busy. Or lazy, sometimes both.
tell people what they **NEED** to know **NOW**.
That's how to get read.

Generic thought leadership doesn't work. It's
often dull, and why click now?

React to the news, and/or things marketers
have the emotional availability for.

Example: No one's opening a piece about
Cannes Lions after the sunburn's healed up.

WHAT TO PITCH

SOUL

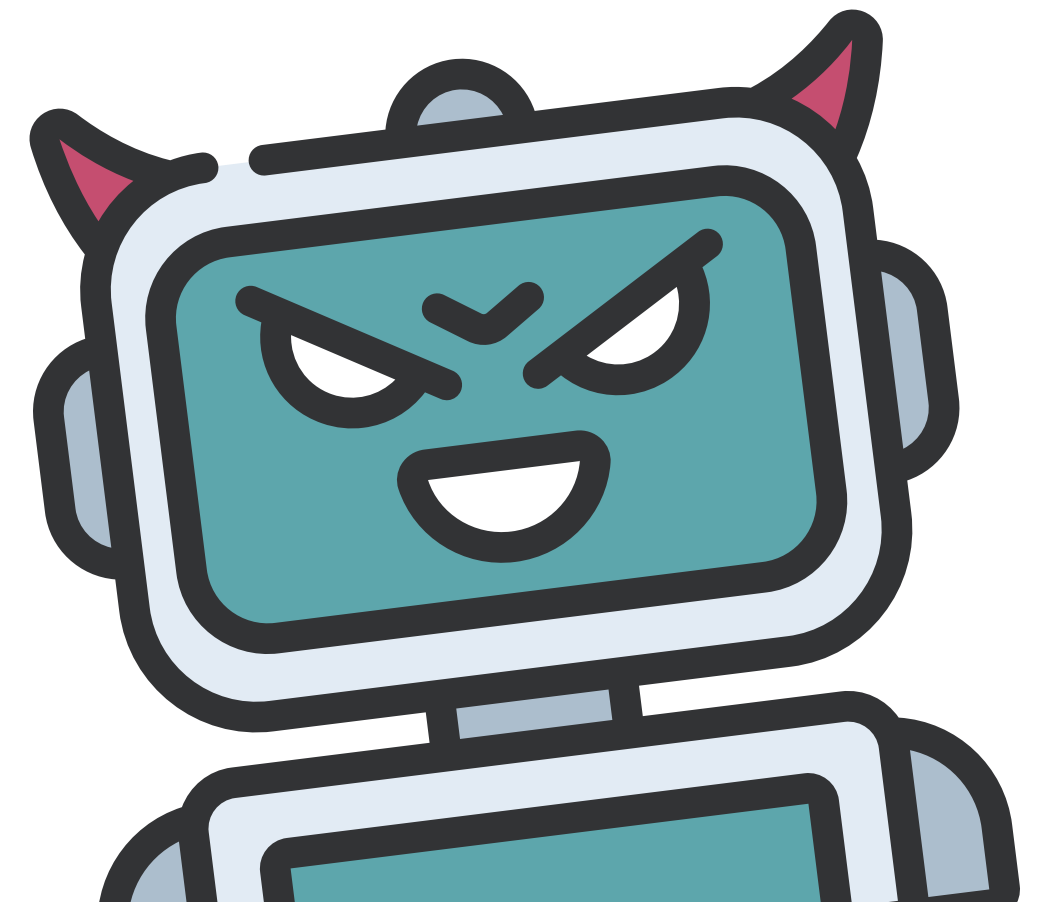
Fraudsters, fakes and phonies generate word soup using AI. Millions of these pieces a day, clog feeds. And they are rubbish.

If you need to ask a random word generator what your opinion is, this isn't for you.

Be someone. Stand for something. Say something. Be bold. This will be a huge differentiator going forward.

• • • • •
• • • • •

Our readers like to hear from people. Not corporations. Not brands. They like people who write for people, avoid needless jargon, and don't try too hard to sound smart. They especially like hearing about real examples rather than abstractions. A problem shared is a problem halved and all that. Just be useful to your reader.



WHAT TO PITCH

SUBSTANCE

Do your thinking and reading. Form a strong opinion. No one's clicking your view from the fence seat.

Readers don't have to agree. Maybe they'll change your mind.

Can you add a new dimension to our reporting? Or are you bringing a perspective, perhaps something we missed?

On this gonzo unmoderated internet filled with bots, baddies and bullshit, people argue but rarely make good arguments.

DIVERSITY

A majority of pitches are from older white dudes. Keep pitching. Golden words on a deadline. Keep them coming! I live for that.

We need more pitches from women and people of color. Everyone deserves a shot at the soapbox. And we all need fresh takes that deepen our understanding of, well, everything.

+ if you are a minority person working in marketing, don't feel pressured into writing about that. If you want to write about an ad, do it!

HOW TO PITCH THE DRUM

We have a very high bar at The Drum. We are in the privileged position of being pitched a whole book's worth of pieces a week.

We owe it to our audience to put the best words in front of them.

The slots are in high demand, but don't let that deter you.

Give it a shot with a synopsis via email or DM.



HOW TO PITCH

- _____ Your topic of choice
- _____ Your opinion on it
- _____ Your bio + why you
- _____ Why reader should read it now
- _____ Give me a taste of your best bit

This helps us make faster decisions. We use this method internally. It's killed a great many pitches and features. It's improved more.

Get us editorial@thedrum.com
Or me john.mccarthy@thedrum.com

THE REST

Don't be dissuaded if you don't immediately hear back. We try.

We don't mind getting nudged. Usually.

Don't take it personally. A lot of factors go into selection. Try again.

We'll try to give constructive feedback.

Please sign up for a TheDrum.com account. It's free, tells me you 'get' us and saves me time during the upload and edit.

We decide what works with our audience. It doesn't make your words 'bad' or 'wrong'.

This means juggling what audience likes, what platforms distribute, and what views need to be out there.

We're biased towards: topical, bold, well written, new, reasonable word count, engaging. And sometimes, I just commission things I want to read.

If it's no, try our commercial options like The Drum Network or take to LinkedIn <https://product.thedrum.com/the-drum-network/>

02.

**HOW TO WRITE A
REAL GOOD
OPINION PIECE
THAT PEOPLE WILL
ACTUALLY READ**



OK, HERE'S THE DEAL

In the last few years, everyone in marketing and their dog launched a Substack, a newsletter, a vlog, a blog, a show, a comic, and more. Having a big old think, making something and putting it out there is thrilling. At least... once or twice.

This should have spelled the end of the humble B2B trade publication. The people all have printing presses, information has been stolen from the corrupt MSM gatekeepers. Boo!!! The opinion editor should have gone the way of the dodo. But thankfully, that didn't really happen.

Instead, everyone finally realized how difficult it is to create and distribute content that generates attention, leads and respect. Those winning the digital game usually already had profiles built by legacy media. Did you not notice that?

And the reader, spare a thought of them. How are they supposed to keep up with all this nonsense? All this stuff? Well, they're not. I am, because I am literally paid to read all this stuff. I am your reader. Sorry. Our job is to find all the interesting stuff and, in one way or another, put it all in one place. It has to be good stuff. When it isn't, loyal readers suddenly unsubscribe. It usually happens when I write something. I am sure that's just a coincidence.

Our team has combined hundreds of years of experience putting interesting ideas in front of audiences and having them create a splash. Those weren't a fun few hundred years either, let me tell you.

So bring us the words and let us handle the edit, the hosting, the publishing, distribution, and all the other bits I should be doing instead of writing this.

THE BRUTAL TEST OF WORDS

A good litmus test for whether a piece will resonate. Imagine it in a social feed, a newsletter, or a webpage with a headline and image in place.

Would you click that?

It's a harsh exercise. We do it with everything we publish. Trusting that instinct works. If you wouldn't read that piece, don't assume anyone else would.

DON'T BE DULL

Our readers work in marketing. Cut them a break.

Zoom meetings, client reviews, make the logo bigger. Yawn. Thought leadership does not have to be boring. It should not be boring. And boring does not get read. It does not get shared.

Dog medicine

The toughest pill to swallow is always best wrapped in a sweet treat. Marketing opinions follow the same rules as canine pharma. Yes, that's a stupid point. But it sure is memorable. Point made?

MAKE A LIFE OR JOB EASIER

Solve a problem. Help us think about the world in a new way. Blow a mind. Help readers impress their bosses – or get a wage rise. Let them know their struggle is more universal than they thought. Inspire or motivate them.

Once they've read your piece, what idea do they carry away?

BE CONFIDENT

Fuck imposter syndrome. We're all here to learn and grow. Do it.

WE WILL EDIT IT

... for facts, legal, readability, house style, and *jazziness*. Get your thoughts on paper and let The Drum team war over correct comma placement.

DON'T ZZZ THEM

Opinion shouldn't sit on the fence. Jargon is for oddballs.

I keep hearing advertisers talk about 'creating culture'. They then write a 600-word lullaby. Change your own culture first my dude.

The piece will sit in social next to a cat wearing a wig and a Gen Zer doing an interpretive dance to defeat capitalism. Act accordingly.

WRITING TIPS

YOU WILL DIE!!! if you don't start strong! My point is, do not take the reader's attention for granted.

Read aloud to edit out clumsy words.

Smart = not trying to sound smart.

Omit words ~~that~~ you could ~~feasibly~~
~~learn to~~ live without.

Stay on your point. Most religious people haven't even read the holy book that sits center of their existence. Can you really justify a sidebar about your breakfast?

Don't lose your YOU on the page.

Rhythm and alliteration elevate a dull sentence.

Try sticking to Guardian house style.
<https://www.theguardian.com/guardian-observer-style-guide-a>

We write in US English. Tell your spell-check/word processor.

Word count: usually 800 words. More words = more editing = less opinions published.

Download Grammarly. Good writing tool. Freeish.
<https://app.grammarly.com/>

Be opinionated. Have you seen the internet? In this polarized world where idiots rule, should you be pulling your legitimately righteous punches?

This isn't branded content. If you want to talk about your great business is, we have commercial options.

Don't let comms/leadership ruin your words. I am not obliged to run a bad piece.

Link to any research you reference. No Statista. Sources help SEO too.

The conclusion is a final chance to sell your idea, end strong. Echo with intro or headline if possible.

Best idea first. Don't expect reader to dig for it.

Take a break and read later with fresh eyes.

I prefer word and text files. Send images separately.

We do not accept guest posts that are based in whole or in part on interviews.

Don't write your piece in ChatGPT. I'll know.

Proudly share the piece.

You're not paid for your words. A placement on The Drum, my consultation, editing, distribution and placements have value. Let's call it a draw?

Inform me of any conflicts of interest you may have with your chosen topic. Readers don't like being deceived. Nor me.

**As a reward for completing this guide... here are some hot opinion pieces I like.
May they put you in touch with your muse.**

[AI gave Sudanese Barbie a gun, beware the bias](#)

[I was axed as Oatly's creative director - here are 5 arguably useful lessons](#)

[Wondering what's wrong with the ad industry eventually led me to Liquid Death](#)

[Come with me and you'll be in a world of pure AI imagination](#)

[It's time to be real about my fake ads](#)

[What the rise of Bluey tells us about kids entertainment in 2024](#)

[Pot Noodle: why our slurp doesn't suck](#)

[I shouldn't need a nanny just to work in an ad agency](#)

[Why marketing's wellbeing agenda does more harm than good](#)

[Soiled briefs: your parody ad won't make a mark, here's the fix](#)

[It was adland's worst Super Bowl in years, but everyone is too afraid to tell you](#)

[Marketers prefer 'girl' over 'woman'. It's time to grow up](#)

[7 out of 10 OOH ads don't work. Here's why and how to fix them](#)

[No, the British Army shouldn't run recruitment drives on Fortnite](#)

[We need to talk about Jeremy Allen White's tighty-whities](#)

[Glass and a half of tears: VCCP's rules for those Cadbury ads that hit you in the feels](#)

[Hey creatives – don't take the Mickey](#)

[How brands – and capitalism – killed nostalgia](#)

[Activists need to be more like Howard Gossage and less like Just Stop Oil](#)



**If you've any feedback or fancy a chat,
don't hesitate to get in touch**