



| Mary Stephenson: May 2018 Barefoot Writing Challenge Winner



BY MINDY MCHORSE

2018, WRITING CHALLENGE WINNERS

Congratulations to Mary Stephenson for Winning the May 2018 Barefoot Writing Challenge! (Your \$100 prize is on its way!)



The challenge was to write an essay that answered this question:

Imagine you are the marketing director at a million-dollar firm and have to choose from a group of well-qualified writers to craft your Web copy. Aside from excellent samples and testimonials, what one characteristic will be most important to you in making your decision?

Mary offered a unique take on how to hire someone for long-term success as a writer. Enjoy her winning submission:

8:47, the start of a new day as I stare out the second-floor window of my office. Cars are pulling into the parking lot.

I return to my desk.

Apprehensive, I glance at the interview questions I will soon spring on the hopefuls waiting in the lobby.

Their skills are impeccable.

The ideal employee I choose will require something compelling to sway my decision.

In my position of marketing director, I encounter many challenges.

The objective now is to find a well-qualified writer to propel the company into a multi-million-dollar firm via innovative web copy.

With myriad experienced writers with stellar samples and dynamite testimonials from Fortune 500 companies each juggling for the lead position as our web editor/writer, the last three weeks have held a daunting task: to narrow the list to the top seven candidates.

Applicants' credentials range from a BA in marketing to SEO optimization wizardry, social media expertise, copywriting skill, and a journalism degree.

The decision is crucial. We need the right person in this highly sought-after position.

I read their samples and testimonials, went over their extensive portfolios and applications, secretly wondering why they don't have my job.

Grateful that I am not the one having to compete today.

But how do you identify the ideal person with a brief interview?

What if I pick the wrong person?

How many qualified people end up being a disaster on the job?

Most important...

Do they work well with others?

And the unanswered questions keep pounding in my brain...

Can they brainstorm with fellow employees?

Are they humble enough to welcome suggestions from their subordinates?

Are they idea people?

Male or female is irrelevant.

They have to be compatible, likeable, and easygoing. Superhuman! Well, that is a tall glass to fill. Even the most eager beaver is entitled to feel frazzled at times. Although a meltdown is not okay!

My pursuit has been intensive, like trying to find the perfect mate. The requirements are similar. The new employee will be someone I will spend most of my waking hours with during the workweek.

What if I get it wrong?

The ultimate choice is someone who can make me laugh and find my English humor endearing or at least tolerable.

Only one characteristic stands out as a quality I admire: genuine happiness.

Happy people are optimistic.

Unimportant matters are easy for them to dismiss.

They don't take someone's negative comments as a personal attack.

Happy people face each day as an adventure.

When events are not going well, they regard it as merely a temporary situation.

They brighten the day with zeal and enthusiasm.

I whisper a short prayer to find the right person.

It is now 9:05.

Taking a deep breath, I press the button on the phone. "Please send in the first candidate."