

GAMA International Journal: How to Become a Volunteer Author

The award-winning GAMA International Journal (GIJ) now reaches 9,000 field leaders around the world, offering news they can use, financial services industry best practices in a variety of areas, reviews of the latest books about leadership, and other business-building information. Unlike with most other business association magazines, the majority of the features and columns are generated by the GAMA members themselves on a volunteer basis. But the member doesn't have to be a professional writer or even have a B.A. in English, because GAMA staff will lend a hand.

Below are some common questions potential volunteer authors have:

Who generally writes the stories for GIJ?

There are three categories of authors:

- Practitioners like you
- GAMA Resource Partners (consultants, trainers, software providers, and others)
- Third parties, such as LAMP main-platform speakers

Where do most practitioner articles originate?

It all starts with your recognizing something that you or your firm does extremely well and that you are very passionate about. It could be a system, process, recent training experience, or some other proven business tool or method that you have used effectively, believe in, and realize might work for fellow members too. Here's your chance to tell them about it.

What could the article be about?

Pretty much anything that includes best practices to help field leaders manage and build their businesses. Possible subject areas include:

- Recruiting
- Selection
- Retention
- Producer development
- Leadership development
- Practice management
- Performance coaching and mentoring
- Culture building
- Compliance
- Training
- Sales and marketing
- Supervision and accountability
- Business strategy and growth
- Succession planning
- Use of social media

How long would the article need to be?

It depends on how much information you may have to share. Features are 2,500 to 3,000 words (roughly six to eight manuscript pages), and columns are 500 words (about two pages).

What are the different column opportunities for volunteer writers?

There are currently five columns that present short volunteer-written articles:

- “LoTT Spot” (articles by those in the under-40 member demographic)
- “Recent Developments” (best-practices pieces too short to qualify as a feature)
- “Social Media” (anything on that subject)
- “Have Your Read” (book reviews)
- “Word on the Street” (opinion column)

What else does *GIJ* offer members?

It features such regular columns as “Washington Watch,” covering legislation and regulations; “Leading Indicators,” which tracks industry trends; “Inside GAMA International,” on association offerings and developments; “Inside the GAMA Foundation for Education and Research,” on foundation goings-on; “President’s Message”; and “Talking Points,” a Q&A column highlighting prominent industry figures.

How else can a GAMA member participate in *GIJ*?

Answer questions for the “Top 10” column (for instance, “Top 10 Interview Questions for New-Advisor Candidates”), which runs at the back of each issue and includes the question for the following issue. Also, refer other GAMA members who may have a strong story to tell.

Say I’ve thought of a great story idea. Now what?

You would contact executive editor Peter Craig (571-499-4325; pccraig@gamaweb.com). He will talk the idea over with you, send you author’s guidelines, and probably ask for an outline to help you focus and organize your material before you start writing. He’ll also set a deadline and work with you to help achieve a story that everyone is happy with, including your company’s compliance department!

Any particular tips for writing a best-practices feature or column?

Offer lots of examples to help illustrate and prove your points. If a new process helped improve your sales, say by how much and over what period. If managers or advisors helped you develop a new recruiting system, what was their exact role and what is the chapter-by-chapter history of how it all came together? And, again, what have been the measurable results? Also, if you have data that could be converted into a nice chart or graph, send it along with the story. Most important, try to have fun with it all!

Would my story run in the very next issue of *GIJ*?

Probably not, since we try to work ahead and the next issue would likely already be set. But the opportunity wouldn’t be too far down the road, and the main idea would always be to run your story in an issue with other articles that together present a nice balance of great information for GAMA members.

Note to Committee Members

Following are some *GIJ* staff/committee goals to consider:

- Maintaining an average of three feature articles per issue
- Reaching and maintaining an average of 2/3 member-written articles
- Identifying strategic partners within GAMA who could regularly join in on *GIJ* calls, such as the LoTT Committee chair (who already helps source articles from LoTT members)