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# THE STORYTELLERS

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MARTI COVINGTON

ALONIA JERNIGAN

JACQUEE MINOR

**H**ave you ever wondered about the people behind the messages that move you? They're the ones who write the informative brochures, the catchy jingle, entertaining web copy or the powerful speech. You see the successful outcome, but what about the creative voices behind the scenes?

A successful business has to reach its target market through a variety of media. You can build a better mousetrap, but if no one knows about it, it won't generate one red cent. This is the story about the people who manipulate the words and visuals that motivate you to buy a product or service.

## WHERE WRITERS MATTER

Real business success begins with a simple message. Yes, having a great idea is wonderful. It's also good to have the funding necessary to bring your idea to life. But more than anything, you need a compelling message that builds trust and loyalty in your customers. It is this element that tells people who you are, what you're doing and why they should engage your company for the products and/or services you provide; or support you and your ideas.

The savvy business owner knows that a professional writer is essential in today's competitive marketplace. Professional writers are the bridge between a business and its customers. They facilitate meaningful communication. They tell your story on your website, in brochures, newsletters, press releases, broadcast media, feature articles, and in your advertising. They develop speeches, scripts, biographies, blogs and profiles.

They are the talented wordsmiths who present you to the world in your best possible light. This article introduces you to three of the best in the business.

## MEET THE MESSAGE MAVENS

Marti Covington, Alonia Jernigan and Jacquee Minor are masters of messaging. They're also longtime Atlanta Business League members. They craft some of the ABL's most important communications through the organization's publications and events. Each woman has a distinct voice and storytelling style. As such, they are established, locally and nationally, as Atlanta's *crème de la crème* when it comes to conveying messages that build brands, engage minds and subsequently generate revenue for their clientele.



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*- Alonia Jernigan*

## ALONIA JERNIGAN: AUTHOR AND PUBLIC SPEAKER

Alonia is a native Atlantan and a product of the Atlanta Public Schools System (K-12). In addition to The Champion Newspaper, her writing skills were developed at the Housing Authority of Fulton County, Who's Who in Black Atlanta, Clark Atlanta University and Paragon Public Relations. She is also the founding publisher of IMANI Magazine, which was in print from 1997 to 2004. Alonia is known as a witty and captivating speaker. She is a motivational speaker as well as a licensed and ordained minister of the gospel. A self-published author four times over, she released her autobiographical work in the summer of 2011, "The Pursuit of Destiny: Making 'Yes, I Can' a Personal Reality." This is her first work that is not a compilation or a how-to guide.

"People will form perceptions of you and your organization, based upon what you allow them to see," states Alonia, owner of Dream 2 Destiny Enterprises. Her company is a self-help corporation with a mission to educate, encourage and empower organizations and individuals to get from where they are to where they want to be. "I'm a firm believer in assuring that written communications are always on point. It's a necessity."

Alonia is a writer who takes a deep personal interest in her clients.

"It's always a joy to see a client's written communications come to life," Alonia will tell you. "I think I have my proudest moments when I can pull together the whole package: bio, press release, fact sheet, web content and brochure verbiage ... Speech writing is actually one of my favorite forms of writing. (I'd probably like to write a speech as much as I'd like to present one.) My level of sensitivity has proven beneficial in this arena. I think having a good feel for your audience and being able to share with them aspects of different things that are relevant to them has always worked for me, whether I've written the speech or presented it. But really understanding the audience is key for me. If my audience is the king, I know to speak the king's language."

Her fellow writers also appreciate Alonia's skill and communication style.

"I actually saw her work before I met her," writer and video producer Marti Covington says. "We share a couple of clients, and one couple, was excited about the magazine she published featuring their business on the cover. She is visionary in her approach."

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- *Writer Jacquee Minor*

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With the belief that there is good in all people, Alonia makes every effort to illuminate every client's best attributes.

"I am always happy to see the look on people's faces when they read their bio for the first time or to hear the level of pride they have when they have a new resume that they are actually running to put into a potential employer's hands; when I hear that my article brought them to tears, then I know I've served my purpose," Alonia says.

"There is a sincerity to Alonia's messaging that emanates from her desire to make a difference. She has such a good heart and spirit that she brings out the best in everyone and everything she writes about. She is the genuine article." - *Writer Jacquee Minor*

## JACQUEE MINOR: IMAGINATION AND EMPATHY

Jacquee Minor owns J. Minorlogues, a marketing communications business writing enterprise that provides commercial writing, with a specialty in speechwriting, event scripting, and writing narrative biographical profiles.

She, too, is a writer who is equally comfortable writing for both print and spoken forums. Whether writing a biographical profile or a keynote speech, Jacquee excels in constructing a narrative that captures the imagination. Her ability to tell a compelling story also sets her apart as a scriptwriter, because she makes every voice authentic. Jacquee is adept at capturing the speaker's delivery style, sense of humor, everything about them. Her skill resonates with the audience.

"The first trait you notice about Jacquee is her composure. She has a quiet calmness that really inspires confidence. With that calmness comes a mind capable of really intense concentration which she applies to her work. It really is a bonus for clients because she has the ability to think with them," - Writer Marti Covington

"I fell in love with language at a very early age. As an only girl in a family of three boys, books were my most civil companions," Jacquee recalls. "The stories helped open my mind to a world much bigger than the one I knew in my hometown. They made me want to explore and experience all these exotic people and places. I spent a lot of time living in my head."

"My greatest satisfaction comes from helping my clients achieve their goals. The story we crafted for a client recently helped him win a national award as Funeral Director of the Year (2011.) Another client was elected to the Fulton County Commission, in part the result of messaging we developed for her campaign. The best practices handbook developed for another client will help to institutionalize the most effective strategies for recruiting minority male mentors. We try to live up to our tagline for my company that says we create "Words that Speak Volumes."

"I'm fascinated by the power words have in our lives. When you think about it, words can heal, inspire, move us to action. They can bring people from disparate backgrounds together on common ground. A well-told story has the power to transform us. I believe that words, when used correctly, can forge bonds

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between us. I love the ability to help clients articulate their message in a way that connects with consumers. That’s where the magic happens,” she explains.

Jacquee says there’s nothing better than sitting in the back of a room watching the audience respond to her words, even though no one may ever know she wrote them.

“It’s very gratifying to know that you helped the client make the connection. That’s enough for me,” Jacquee says with a smile.

Alonia adds, “Her calmness is actually a compliment because Jacquee has brought a wonderful aura to every project I’ve seen her work on. I’d describe it as a certain sophistication, a certain level of mystique that causes one to take a second look. That’s classy all within itself.”

## MARTI COVINGTON: MAKING MEDIA MAGIC

While Jacquee and Alonia spend most of their time at computer keyboards, Marti’s storytelling specialty falls in another arena.

“I work with images and sounds, in addition to words,” explains Marti. “I understand how to incorporate visuals and graphics to tell a tale. I think about how a person holds their head or uses their hands when I write speeches, and of course, I think about how a viewer or listener will respond when I build video and radio products. I see these skill sets becoming more needed as people adapt their stories to web, social media and other non-print formats. It’s why the slogan for my company, MarChasCo Productions says M CCP takes ‘the write approach toward your speech writing, audio and video production needs.’ Real communication invokes an emotional response and good business communication starts with the vision of a final result and then barrels toward that goal. I have been a television anchor, feature reporter, executive producer,

script writer, radio talk host, set producer and national communications officer. Those experiences have given me the ability to be very detailed and efficient when I approach a project.”

“Marti has a very visual mind. It probably comes from all the years working with video. You can literally see the images come to life in her head as she’s throwing out her ideas. And, her energy and enthusiasm are downright contagious. It’s pretty amazing to watch her mind at work,” marvels Jacquee.

Kansas born speech writer and broadcast producer, Marti Covington is president of MarChasCo Productions LLC. She earned a degree from one of the oldest journalism schools in the country and a regional Emmy in segment producing from WTBS. She finds that speech writing comes naturally after spending years writing copy to fit the voices of news anchors at CNN International, WSB-TV and other stations around the country.

“The final goal is to make the speech sound like the speaker, but with the power factor pumped up. My video background also allows me to incorporate sounds, visuals, text and music into a presentation using the screens behind the podium. I seek out the individuality of the product or person in every project I approach. That’s really important in a sluggish and competitive economy.”

“Marti is definitely innovative in her approach. She brings the components of excitement and intrigue into the stories she tells, which always creates a sense of expectation. It’s almost like you’re waiting to see how she’s laid everything out; you can’t wait to see it unfold.”  
- *Wrtier Alonia Jernigan*

Marti credits years of newsroom experience for her ability to work quickly and not miss client deadlines.

“Video and broadcast production are still forms of writing. You just don’t rely on words,” she points out.

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## JOURNALISTIC FOUNDATIONS

Each of the three featured writers got their start as journalists.

Jacquee Minor earned a Broadcast Journalism degree from Louisiana State University and worked as a radio news reporter for five years. She held the prime time spot anchoring afternoon drive newscasts.

Alonia honed her feature writing skills as a features writer for DeKalb's Champion newspaper. She earned her bachelor's degree in English from Spelman College, which she attended because of an essay writing scholarship.

Marti has been a video and radio journalist, both in front of and behind the camera or microphone, most of her professional life. In fact, it's her voice you hear at the start of many Atlanta Business League programs. She has an undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

The shared journalistic foundations mean each woman approaches writing projects with a disciplined and professional mindset. But from there, their individuality blooms.



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## ATLANTA BUSINESS LEAGUE TIES

The Atlanta Business League has employed all three writers profiled in this article for multiple assignments. ABL CEO and President Leona Barr Davenport says each brings different strengths to any project, but all are extremely professional.

“Alonia is insightful and dependable. She offers a perspective that you can’t find with everyone. She is also a dynamic speaker and an experienced public affairs coordinator. That means she knows what’s expected when she sits with a client to build a presentation package or a live speech,” Ms. Davenport states.

Alonia has written many articles for the ABL including one about former teachers who have changed careers. She also writes many of the newsletter articles for the organization and proofs the copy.

“Jacquee Minor can write anything. She can make words jump off a screen or paper. Sometimes the messages she conveys are absolutely magical in their effectiveness and power. I am never disappointed with a final result when I come to Jacquee Minor,” says Davenport.

Jacquee was the ABL’s first events scriptwriter, starting with the CEO Luncheon in 2001. She scripted every event for years and has also written articles for the newsletter, the Resource Guide, drafted letters and press releases. Jacquee has written speeches for ABL board chairs and currently ghostwrites a monthly Atlanta Business League business column.

“My writing experience is broad and deep. I operate in both public and private sectors, business and non-profit. We have experience in consumer packaged goods, financial services, food service and hospitality industries as well as education, business development, community development, federal and local governments,” Jacquee says.

“Marti has the ability to be really creative. She’s able to take ideas and really bring them to life. Her strength is the fact she loves to delve into what makes a person or a concept real. That’s what I appreciate about her writing and the way she goes about it. She’s also takes deadlines very, very seriously and meets them, even when they seem impossible for almost anyone else,” Leona says.

Marti has been the de facto speech writer for all of the major Atlanta Business League programs since 2008. She also wrote the feature Resource Guide article of 2009 (which was edited by former Atlanta Journal Constitution professional, Sharmen Gowens) and has

worked individually with several ABL members as a speech writer or video producer.

“MCCP is very client oriented and has more than 94 percent of our video and speech writing clients re-use our services or provide referrals,” Marti said. “Right now we are building full half hour TV programs for clients and hope to do more in the future.”

## WRITERS UNITED FOR THE GOOD OF THE FINAL PRODUCT

The Minorlogues’ mission statement, to enrich the human experience through thoughtful communication, and to create avenues for human connection, is a shared goal for all of the women profiled in this article.

There are other points of agreement. They are on one accord in the need for collaboration, both with each other and with other forms of media, noting that print, web, community outreach, radio and video messages ideally should overlap to reinforce branding. The three worked together closely on this article. In fact, they interviewed each other and cross edited themselves to develop this storyline.

Jacquee Minor of J. Minorlogues; Alonia Jernigan of Dream 2 Destiny Enterprises and Marti Covington of MarChasCo Productions routinely work effectively with other marketing professionals, and serve a wide range of clients, among which are: The Coca-Cola Company, Delta Air Lines, the Army Corp of Engineers and Boys and Girls Club of America. There is also a long list of individuals who rely on the expertise and discretion these women provide.

When it comes to messaging, none do it better. That doesn’t mean, on the other hand, that you will always see any of their names associated with final products. These are women who work wonders with words, but behind the scenes. And that’s fine with them. Their goal is to make memorable messages. When that’s accomplished, these exceptional writers are satisfied.

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