

Writer's Block

by *Howie Flomberg*

How does one write about not being able to write? Ok check Wikipedia. Wiki says that: "*It can be trivial, a temporary difficulty in dealing with the task at hand.*" Yes, that's what I've got. I can usually take the topic and maneuver it to cover what I want to write about. This one has me stumped. Back to Wiki – "*Under stress, a human brain will "shift control from the cerebral cortex to the limbic system."*"

OK, what is my "limbic system? I go back to the Internet. Aha, the definitions for the limbic system are all over the globe. It seems to be associated with the "Fight or Flight" response. I'm not dealing with an invading grizzly bear. I'm dealing with writing a 500-word essay. Note, I've expended 135 words complaining about the topic – I need to come up with 365 more words without saying anything

What am I doing anyway? I am an essayist. My mind works in five hundred to one thousand word essays. I looked back at my most recent book, *Management, American Style*. It is composed of a series of stand-alone essays that are loosely connected by topic. When I sit down to write, which is a daily activity, I pick a topic, or in this case, review the topic that has been selected for me. I try and think about where I want to go with the topic. There are some magnificent tools that will enable this – Wikipedia will always give me a good head start. However the validity of Wiki is not dependable. Then there are the old standbys, a dictionary and a thesaurus. In the dictionary, what are the second and third levels of definition? The dictionary definition of writer's block is "being unable to think of what to write." There is no entry in the thesaurus for the phrase "writer's block". So I can reliably define Writer's Block as "having writer's block."

OK back to Wiki and an "Aha" moment: "*A project may be fundamentally misconceived, or beyond the author's experience or ability.*" I don't think that the project is fundamentally misconceived. But perhaps it is beyond my experience or ability.

When faced with an obstacle I can usually find a way to go over, under, around or through that obstacle. My limbic system does seem to take control. At this point I can rant and rave and use some of my favorite literary quotes. For some reason the opening from Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities* comes to mind. "*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.*" Perhaps: *It was the best of essays, it was the worst of essays.* Every instinct of my "limbic system" is telling me to trip and be unable to go to Monday's meeting. It's not like I am facing a congressional inquiry? Pardon the political jab.

If my calculations are right, and I am reading the word counter that MS Word supplies, I have just written five hundred words without saying anything. I have succeeded.