

FROM

Writer to Operator.

For content marketers who want to survive – and lead – what's coming.

<p>–73%</p> <p>CONTENT MARKETING MANAGER POSTINGS SINCE 2023</p>	<p>+376%</p> <p>HEAD OF CONTENT MARKETING POSTINGS</p>	<p>4.7×</p> <p>CHEAPER TO PRODUCE AI CONTENT</p>	<p>56%</p> <p>WAGE PREMIUM FOR AI- FLUENT WORKERS</p>
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BY

Frank Kalman

CONTENT MANAGER · BLUEBEAM GLOBAL CUSTOMER
MARKETING

AN E-BOOK

FILED UNDER

Content · AI · Careers

READ TIME ~45 MIN

01

FIRST EDITION
APR. 2026

The Imperfect Draft Press, a one-person newsroom operating out of Franklin, Massachusetts.

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Set in *Newsreader* for body, *Instrument Serif* for display and *JetBrains Mono* for apparatus. Typeset on a laptop at a kitchen table, early in the morning, before anyone else was awake.

WORDS	~7,400
SECTIONS	Seven
CITATIONS	48
WRITTEN WITH	A voice memo, a brief and an argument
FILED	Franklin, MA · 07:30 EST

CONTENTS

Seven sections, one argument.

The job you trained for is being priced differently. Here is what it becomes, and how to move there.

01	The Eulogy Nobody Is Writing	04
02	Who I Am and Why I'm Telling You This	08
03	The Clicked Moment	11
04	The Content Systems Operator — A New Professional Identity	14
05	The AI Question Everyone Is Getting Wrong	16
06	The Transition Roadmap	19
07	What's Waiting on the Other Side	22
—	<i>Where This Goes Next · About · Sources</i>	25



“The writer who becomes an operator doesn't abandon the craft. They finally give it the leverage it always deserved.”

SECTION ONE

A diagnosis

The Eulogy Nobody Is *Writing.*

01

The job title "Content Marketing Manager" lost 73% of its postings since 2023. The middle of the content career ladder didn't get thinner. It got torched.

READ TIME · 7 MIN

CITATIONS · 7

-73%

CONTENT MARKETING
MANAGER POSTINGS

-74%

CONTENT MARKETING
SPECIALIST POSTINGS

+308%

VP OF CONTENT
POSTINGS

+376%

HEAD OF CONTENT
MARKETING POSTINGS

There's a version of this story where I'm gentle about it. Where I ease you in with something like *the content landscape is evolving and now more than ever, professionals must adapt*. Where I acknowledge your feelings before I challenge your assumptions.

That's not this.

Here's what's actually happening: the job title "Content Marketing Manager" lost 73% of its job postings since 2023. "Content Marketing Specialist" fell 74%. The roles that grew? "Head of Content Marketing" – up 376%. "VP of Content" – up 308%. The middle of the content career ladder didn't get thinner. It got torched.

And if you're still leading with the fact that you're a writer – in your bio, your LinkedIn headline, your pitch to the next employer – you're competing for a job the market has already decided it doesn't need as many of.

I'm not here to scare you. I'm here because nobody else is saying this clearly enough, and unclear honesty is just another form of dishonesty dressed up in nice fonts.

§ Gripping the Wheel Harder

Let me tell you what I see when I look at the content marketing profession right now. I see a lot of people gripping the wheel harder.

The argument goes something like this: AI can generate words, but it can't generate *my* words. My voice. My craft. My ability to construct a sentence that actually sings. And you know what – they're not entirely wrong. A well-trained writer with genuine editorial judgment does produce better prose than a cold prompt fed to ChatGPT by someone who's never edited a paragraph in their life.

But here's the thing about being right in a burning building: it doesn't help much.

FOOTNOTE 1.1

digitalinformationworld.com
Shift from writing to ownership in content marketing jobs – analysis of 8,000 listings (2026).

4.7^x

cheaper to produce content with AI

[1.3] STRAITS RESEARCH

93%

faster time to publish

[1.3] STRAITS RESEARCH

Because the market isn't comparing your writing to AI writing and concluding yours is better. The market is looking at the cost of producing content at scale – AI does it 4.7× cheaper and 93% faster – and making a structural decision about what kind of people it needs and how many of them. And that decision is not going in the direction of more writers who write.

A peer-reviewed study tracked Upwork freelance job postings in the 15 months after ChatGPT launched. Writing jobs fell 30.37%. That was the steepest decline of any freelance category. Steeper than design. Steeper than development. *Writing*. The thing you built your identity around.

§ The Comforting Lie

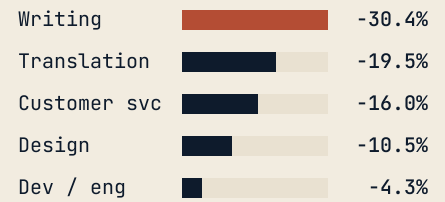
The romantic myth of the writer-as-hero in content marketing was always a little bit of a lie. Not a malicious one – a comforting one, the kind you tell yourself when you're talented and underpaid and trying to make meaning out of a job that sometimes asks you to write 800 words about cloud-based procurement software.

The myth said: *if you write well enough, clearly enough, originally enough, the work will speak for itself*. And for a specific, finite window of time, that was mostly true. SEO rewarded volume and quality. Google rewarded long-form. Audiences rewarded expertise.

That window is closing. Not closed – closing. There's a difference, and it matters, but only if you move now instead of arguing about whether the window is closing at all.

FIG. 01

Upwork freelance postings 15 months post-ChatGPT



[1.4] Brookings / Org. Science, peer-reviewed.

A BIFURCATION

“ The content marketing profession is bifurcating into two futures, and *only one of them has real upside.* ”

ONE FUTURE

The writer who stayed a writer.

Producing content that AI can approximate well enough for most purposes, competing on craft in a market that increasingly treats craft as a commodity. Getting squeezed.

THE OTHER FUTURE

The operator.

Directs AI tools the way a film director directs a crew. Builds systems, editorial philosophies and distribution strategies. Thinks about ideas before sentences. Getting hired – and paid – at a premium.

What the numbers actually say: mentions of "writing" as a required skill in content marketing job postings fell 28%. The No. 1 requested skill for senior content roles is now analytics. AI is named as a baseline expectation in 34% of senior content listings [1.2, 1.7].

SECTION TWO

A disclosure

Who I Am and Why I'm *Telling You This.*

02

It's 7:30 on a Friday morning. I'm driving home from daycare drop-off in Franklin, Massachusetts, talking into my phone like a crazy person. Later, I'll drop that voice memo into Claude.

READ TIME · 6 MIN CITATIONS · 4

A CREDENTIAL, IN FIVE BEATS.

2010	Medill MSJ. Write fast, write accurately, don't fall in love with your own sentences.
2011–17	Trade magazine journalism. Manufacturing, construction, B2B tech. Nobody reads you for prose; they need to know something <i>now</i> .
2017–22	Content marketing. Content strategy consulting. Managed writers. Killed bad ledes.
2022	The ground starts shifting. People producing the most content aren't the best writers. They're the best orchestrators.
Now	Content manager at Bluebeam. AI-augmented content ops built from the ground up.

Not a podcast. Not a call. Just me, out loud, working through an idea that's been rattling around since I read something the night before. Half-formed sentences. A lot of – *wait, no, actually* – The dog-ear of a thought I keep losing and finding.

Later, I'll drop that voice memo into Claude – an AI tool I've been working with long enough that it's starting to sound a little like me. Which is not an accident. Over the past year or so, I've fed it dozens of writing samples from nearly 20 years of professional journalism and content marketing. Trained it on how I construct an argument, where I put the jokes, how I land a paragraph.

And in the process, something interesting happened: it started giving me back not just my voice, but a slightly sharper version of it. Turns out there are writing moves I'd been suppressing for years – a harder edge here, a weirder aside there – that professional contexts kept sanding down to something customer-friendly. The machine found them in the archive and handed them back to me.

So when I say this playbook is AI-assisted, I mean something specific: the ideas started in my car, formed in my voice, got shaped through iteration and argument and a lot of cutting, and landed here. *The machine didn't write it. It helped me figure out what I was trying to say* – which, if you think about it, is what every good editor has always done.

§ What I Actually Noticed

The ground started shifting somewhere around 2022. Not when ChatGPT launched – that was just the moment the general public caught up to what people in the industry had been quietly watching for a while.

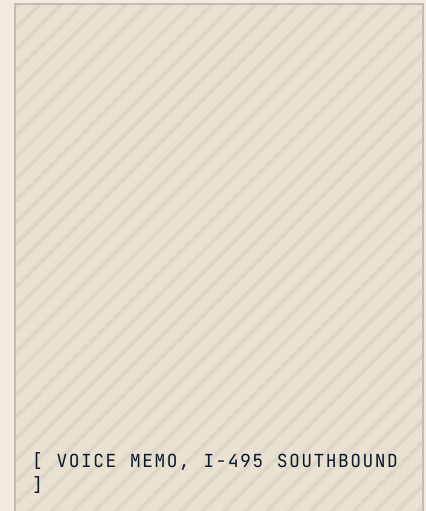


FIG. A workflow beginning in the car.

59.8%

of marketers worry AI will replace their jobs – nearly double the 35.6% in 2023.

[2.1] INFLUENCER MARKETING HUB

I started noticing that the people producing the most content weren't necessarily the best writers. They were the best orchestrators. They had a clear point of view on what they wanted to say, a strong editorial instinct for when something was working or wasn't, and a willingness to use every tool available to get there faster. *The writing itself – the actual act of generating sentences – was becoming less and less the differentiating factor.*

Meanwhile, I was watching my professional community have a very loud, very emotional conversation about AI that was almost entirely focused on the wrong question.

THE QUESTION EVERYONE
WAS ASKING

Is AI going to replace writers?

THE QUESTION NOBODY
WAS ASKING

What does the job actually become when AI handles most of the execution layer?

Those are completely different questions and they lead to completely different places. The first leads to anxiety and op-eds. The second leads to a real answer about what skills are actually scarce and valuable right now.

§ What I've Built

At Bluebeam, over the last two years, I've built the following from essentially nothing: an AEO/GEO editorial playbook. A suite of executive content programs. An AI-augmented long-form production workflow. A content brief generator built with the Anthropic API.

None of that required me to be a better writer than I was in 2020. It required me to think differently about what the job is.

83%

of AI Overview searches now end without a click to any website.

[2.2] CLICK-VISION.COM

WAGE PREMIUM

Lightcast
1.3B job postings

+28%

PwC Global
~1B job postings

+56%

[2.3, 2.4] The premium for editorial rigor *plus* AI fluency.

SECTION THREE

A realization

03

The Clicked *Moment.*

A colleague was trying to write her way through a logistics problem. The job had stopped being about writing. It had started being about directing.

READ TIME · 6 MIN

CITATIONS · 9

83%

ZERO-CLICK AI OVERVIEW SEARCHES

-61%

ORGANIC CTR W/ AI OVERVIEWS

1B+

DAILY CHATGPT QUERIES

-25%

SEARCH VOL. BY '26 (GARTNER)

I was in a meeting – the kind where someone has a slide deck and strong feelings about content calendars – and I was half-listening, because I was also watching a colleague struggle through something I'd been thinking about for months. She was a good writer. Genuinely good. Could construct a sentence, hold a reader, land a point.

And she was completely drowning.

Not because the work was too hard. Because the work had changed and nobody had told her. She was being asked to produce content for six channels simultaneously, in formats that barely overlapped, at a cadence that would have been insane even with a full team, while also tracking how it performed and optimizing accordingly and oh, also, could she look at this LinkedIn post real quick.

She was trying to write her way through a logistics problem. *And it clicked.*

§ The Old Model Was a Lie We Told Ourselves

Great writing wins. Produce genuinely good content – authoritative, well-crafted, optimized for search – and the audience will find it. Quality is the strategy.

And look, it wasn't entirely wrong. In a world where one channel dominated content discovery and one format dominated content consumption, the writer who could produce clear, authoritative copy on a deadline had legible market value.

That system is gone. Not dying – gone.

83%

of Google searches with an AI Overview end without a click.

[3.1] CLICK-VISION.COM

-61%

organic CTR when AI Overviews appear. (25.1M impressions, Seer)

[3.2] SEARCHENGINELAND.COM

A METAPHOR, WITH APOLOGIES

“ The operator's job is not to write the blog post. It's to know what the tools can produce, when the piece needs what, and how to *shape the output*.

CLAUDE

Long-form reasoning.

Voice work, argument structure, tonal fidelity across a 2,000-word piece.

CHATGPT

Ideation + structure.

Quick outlines, variations on a concept, headline stress-tests.

GEMINI

Research synthesis.

Factual grounding, pulling together primary sources into something usable.

PERPLEXITY

Source verification.

Shows its sources. The one that saves you from confidently hallucinated citations.

A peer-reviewed study in Science Advances found AI-assisted content is measurably 5% more similar to other AI-assisted content, even when individual pieces are rated as better-written. Individual quality up. Collective diversity down. The operator is the person who resolves that tension. [3.5, 3.6, 3.8]

SECTION FOUR

A new identity

The Content Systems *Operator.*

04

There's no LinkedIn title for what I'm describing. The job is real. People are doing it right now, getting paid well for it. The identity hasn't caught up.

READ TIME · 7 MIN

CITATIONS · 11

FOUR STAGES NOBODY TALKS ABOUT HONESTLY.

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Stage 01 | <i>Writer.</i> The value proposition is mechanical: produce good sentences quickly and accurately. Real satisfaction. Real ceiling. |
| Stage 02 | <i>Editor.</i> Responsible for whether other people's sentences are doing what they're supposed to do. Structural vs. stylistic problems. |
| Stage 03 | <i>Strategist.</i> "Why are we publishing this at all." Point of view, audience, business outcome. |
| Stage 04 | <i>Operator.</i> Everything in Stage 3, plus the systems layer: AI workflows, editorial architecture, AEO/GEO infrastructure, distribution, measurement. |

A Content Systems Operator is the person who decides what gets said, shapes how it gets said, directs the tools that say it, and builds the architecture that makes the whole thing sustainable and discoverable at scale. *That's the job. Everything else is detail.*

§ What Transfers and What Doesn't

Editorial judgment transfers. The ability to read a piece and know, at a bone level, whether it's working – not just grammatically but argumentatively, structurally, emotionally. This is the single most valuable skill in an AI-augmented content operation, because AI produces a lot of content that is grammatically correct, confidently phrased and subtly wrong. Someone has to catch that.

Audience instinct transfers. Twenty years of writing for actual humans gives you a calibration no prompt can replicate.

Voice discipline transfers. If you've developed a real voice, you have something AI genuinely can't manufacture from scratch.

What you need to *build*: AI workflow architecture. AEO/GEO fluency. Analytics fluency – now the No. 1 requested skill in senior content roles. And an editorial philosophy that holds everything together.

§ The Sincere Part

The operator identity is not a retreat from craft – it's a promotion of it. You're putting the thing you're good at at the *center* of a bigger operation and giving it the leverage it always deserved.

\$161.5K

median senior content marketing salary in 2025 – up 54% since 2023.

[4.1] SEMRUSH /
DIGITALINFORMATIONWORLD

40%

boost in AI visibility from GEO tactics (Princeton / Georgia Tech).

[4.2] ACM KDD 2024

4.4×

conversion rate of AI search visitors vs. traditional organic.

[4.3] SEMRUSH 2025

SECTION FIVE

A wrong debate

The AI Question Everyone Is *Getting Wrong.*

05

AI versus human writing, soul versus algorithm, craft versus efficiency – it's the wrong debate. A category error dressed up as a moral position.

READ TIME • 7 MIN CITATIONS • 12

HUMAN-DIRECTED VS. UNEDITED AI CONTENT.

Traffic Human-directed content earns 5.44× more traffic than pure AI output. [5.3]

Social Unedited AI gets 41% fewer social shares. [5.4]

Trust AI-generated articles earn 43% lower trust ratings. [5.5]

Memory NielsenIQ EEG: measurably weaker memory activation. [5.6]

Picture a LinkedIn comment thread. Someone has posted something reasonable – a case study about using Claude to draft a thought leadership piece. Good stuff. Real. And then, like clockwork, here comes the reply guy.

Profile photo taken at a conference in 2019. Headline: *"Storyteller / Brand Voice / Human-First Content."* He's very concerned. He wants you to know that AI content lacks soul. That readers can feel the difference. That he, personally, will never compromise his craft by feeding it to a machine.

He posts this from his iPhone. Which was designed by a team of thousands, assembled by robots and optimized by algorithms he'll never see. *But sure. The chatbot is where we draw the line on authenticity.*

§ What Directing Actually Means

I use Claude. A lot. I also use ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity, each for specific things I've learned they're genuinely better at. The idea starts in my head. I work out the argument before I open any tool. *This part is non-negotiable and cannot be outsourced.*

Then I build a brief. Not a prompt – a brief. A structured document with the argument, the target reader, the tone, the specific claims, the data to cite and the structural shape I'm after.

Then I rewrite. A lot. The final piece shares maybe 30% of what the machine first produced. The rest is the accumulated judgment of someone who's been doing this long enough to know when a sentence is lying to him.

WAGE PREMIUM, 2025

Lightcast
1.3B postings

+28%

Fortune
headline no.

+30%

PwC Global
~1B postings

+56%

[5.7-5.9]

+240%

YoY growth in prompt engineering demand on Upwork.

[5.10] UPWORK

THE UNCOMFORTABLE COROLLARY

“ AI compresses execution. It does *not* replace judgment. Execution used to be the barrier. Now *judgment is*.

FLUENCY

No longer scarce.

The ability to produce grammatically correct, structurally coherent prose was the scarce and valuable thing. AI just blew the bar off its hinges.

JUDGMENT

Newly scarce.

Point of view. The willingness to make a claim and stand behind it. The commodity got cheaper. Your competitive advantage got *scarcer*.

The operator isn't the person who abandoned writing. The operator is the person who figured out what writing was actually for.

SECTION SIX

A roadmap

The Transition *Roadmap.*

06

Six steps. Six months of deliberate work. None of this requires a budget — just time, attention and the willingness to be bad at something for a while before you're good at it.

READ TIME · 10 MIN CITATIONS · 11

SIX STEPS — DO NOT SKIP AHEAD.

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Step 01 | Audit your current identity — honestly. LinkedIn headline, bio, intro. What words did you lead with? |
| Step 02 | Build your editorial philosophy. <i>What will this brand refuse to say?</i> |
| Step 03 | Map your content ecosystem. Formats, channels, cadence, AI discovery. |
| Step 04 | Build your AI workflow. Brief, not prompt. The 30% rule. |
| Step 05 | Develop your AEO/GEO lens. Citations, statistics, direct quotations. |
| Step 06 | Reposition yourself. Title. Bio. Rate. |

We've done the diagnosis. Now comes the part where I have to actually be useful. This is not a 30-day challenge. Give yourself six months of deliberate work before you judge the results.

§ Step 1 — The Mirror

Pull up your LinkedIn headline. Your bio. The last time you introduced yourself professionally. *What words did you lead with?* If you're still selling yourself as a writer, you're leading with the thing that's getting cheaper.

§ Step 2 — The Belief

"We believe in innovation" is not a belief. A belief is something specific enough to be *wrong* about. 81% of companies struggle with off-brand content – and that was before AI made it trivially easy to produce content that sounds like no one in particular.

§ Step 3 — The Map

The operator doesn't try to win everywhere. Pick the formats where your specific voice has the most leverage. Build for real behavior, not idealized behavior. Frequency without quality is just noise.

WORKSHEET 6.A

The mirror, *part one*.

- What's my LinkedIn headline?

- Which three words lead my bio?

- What skills do I *actually* use?

- Which of those does the market still price?

- Which gap is real – and which is just unfamiliarity?

- What does my company refuse to say?

- Where does my voice have the most leverage?

Freelance writing income dropped 11% YoY in 2025. [6.1]

§ Step 4 — The Workflow

Everyone wants to start here. Don't. Steps 1–3 are what make Step 4 actually work. An AI workflow without an editorial philosophy is just a content vending machine.

The brief, not the prompt. A brief includes the core argument in one sentence, the target reader described as a specific person, tone and voice parameters, specific claims and data to cite, structural shape and definition of success.

The 30% rule. Aim for your final piece to share no more than 30% of what the machine first produced. If you're above that, you haven't done enough work. This isn't a personal quirk – it's the threshold between directing the tool and being rewritten by it.

Quality control, in four passes. First: does the argument hold? Second: is the voice right? Read it out loud. Third: is the structure serving the idea? Fourth: facts and sources. AI hallucinates citations with the confidence of someone who definitely didn't just make that up.

§ Step 5 — The Lens

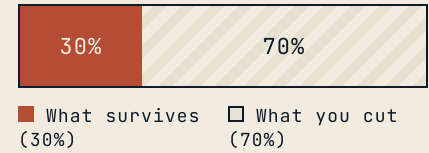
AEO is Answer Engine Optimization. GEO is Generative Engine Optimization. The Princeton/Georgia Tech research found the three most effective strategies are: citing sources, incorporating specific statistics, adding direct quotations. *Notice what's on that list. Not keyword density. The things good journalism has always done.*

§ Step 6 — The Reposition

"Content writer" is a job category. "Content systems operator" is a positioning statement. Lead with what you build, not what you produce. If you've become an operator, ask for what the market is paying.

FIG. 02

The 30% rule,
visualized.



If your final piece shares more than 70% of the machine's first pass, you didn't do enough work.

+42%

more content per month published by companies using AI-augmented workflows.

[6.9] DAILY AI MAIL

SECTION SEVEN

A vision

What's Waiting on the *Other Side.*

07

A regular Wednesday, eight months from now. You're running a piece of long-form from brief to publish-ready in the same time it used to take to write a halfway-decent first draft. You're done by noon.

READ TIME · 5 MIN CITATIONS · 4

THE COMPOUNDING ADVANTAGE.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Year 01 | Editorial philosophy drafted. AI workflow stood up. First AEO/GEO optimizations shipped. |
| Year 02 | Every piece calibrates against a clearer philosophy. Each workflow iteration teaches you something about what the tools can't do. |
| Year 03 | Authority signals compound. The writer who stayed a writer is working just as hard. The operator has built something that <i>gets more efficient without proportional effort.</i> |

In three years, the content teams that survived and thrived will look like small media operations run by one or two operators with a sophisticated AI stack. Not a team of eight writers producing mediocre content at scale. *One operator producing excellent content at scale.*

Interbrand calculated \$200 billion in unrealized revenue left on the table by the world's top brands in 2024 alone from prioritizing short-term content volume over brand distinctiveness. That money doesn't disappear – it flows to the brands that figured out how to be genuinely distinctive.

§ The Sincere Part

I've been pretty spiky in this playbook. Intentionally. The writing-first nostalgia has a loud enough lobby that making the case gently felt like a disservice to the people who need to hear it clearly.

But I want to say something directly, without the edge, because I mean it and it matters.

The people reading this – the ones who made it through 7,000-plus words on a transition that might feel threatening and uncertain and uncomfortable – are not the problem. *They're the solution.* They built real skills over real years, developed editorial judgment that can't be faked, care enough about doing this well that they're still reading a very long document about how to do it differently.

The content marketing profession needs more of them, not fewer. It needs operators who give a damn about whether the work is actually good, not just whether it was produced efficiently.

That's you. The judgment is already there. The transition is real work but it's finite work, and you're starting from a much better position than you think.

\$200B

in unrealized revenue left on the table by top brands in 2024 – from short-term efficiency over distinctiveness.

[7.2] INTERBRAND

+44%

more per hour for AI-fluent freelancers.

[7.4] UPWORK 2025

\$300M

annualized value of AI-related freelance work by late 2025.

[7.3] UPWORK

A CLOSING LINE

Go build *something.*

*“The writer who becomes an operator doesn't abandon the craft. They finally give it the **leverage** it always deserved.”*



COLOPHON

WORDS

SET IN

TYPESET

From Writer to Operator

≈ 7,400

Instrument Serif · Newsreader · JetBrains Mono

Franklin, Massachusetts

AFTER THE ARGUMENT

Where this goes next.

You read 7,000-plus words about the death of the writer-first identity and what comes after it. Either this resonated or it didn't. If it did, here's where the conversation continues.

01

NEWSLETTER · LINKEDIN
WEEKLY-ISH · 5 MIN

The Imperfect Draft.

Editorial frameworks, AI workflow updates, AEO/GEO experiments, case studies. Short enough to read on a commute, specific enough to actually use.

FOR *Content leads, editors, strategists*
FORMAT *One idea per issue. Written to be used.*

→ [linkedin.com/newslette...](https://www.linkedin.com/newsletter/) | SUBSCRIBE

02

SUBSTACK · ESSAYS
IRREGULAR · 10-20 MIN

I'm Going to be Frank with You.

Longer, stranger, more personal. Essays that don't fit neatly into a professional context. Also sports, politics, culture, music – whatever creeps into my dome on any given week.

FOR *Readers who want the whole person*
FORMAT *Long-form. No content calendar. No rules.*

→ [frankakalman.substack...](https://frankakalman.substack.com/) | SUBSCRIBE

ONE ASK

If this playbook landed for you – if it said something you've been thinking but couldn't quite articulate – send it to one person you think needs to read it. Not for my benefit. Because the writer in your network who's quietly scared and publicly dismissive probably isn't going to find this on their own. And they're exactly the person it's for.



FK
AUTHOR

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frank Kalman.

CONTENT MANAGER · BLUEBEAM GLOBAL CUSTOMER MARKETING

Medill-trained journalist and content marketing strategist. Runs editorial strategy, executive content and AI-augmented content operations for a global construction-tech software company out of a kitchen table in Franklin, Massachusetts.

Frank writes about content, AI and the slow collapse of everything he thought he knew about both. He is the founder, sole staff writer and copy editor of *The Imperfect Draft*, a one-person newsroom that publishes in two places because he can't decide which one is for grown-ups.

He believes most of the anxiety in the profession is downstream of a single bad metaphor – *writer-as-artist* – and most of the clarity is downstream of replacing it with a better one. He is trying, in public, to work out what the better one is.

LINKEDIN	linkedin.com/in/frankakalman
NEWSLETTER	The Imperfect Draft
SUBSTACK	frankakalman.substack.com
PREVIOUSLY	Trade journalism · B2B content strategy · MSJ '10, Medill

CURRENTLY

APRIL 2026

ON THE DESK	Drafting a follow-up on editorial philosophy as a hiring signal.
IN THE QUEUE	Rereading <i>The Elements of Typographic Style</i> , Bringhurst.
ON ROTATION	Wilco's <i>Cousin</i> ; a lot of the Drive-By Truckers.
IN THE CAR	The voice memos that become the next piece.



Frank Kalman

FRANKLIN, MASSACHUSETTS –
18.IV.2026

APPARATUS

Sources.

All claims marked with bracketed reference numbers in the text are sourced below. URLs abbreviated; prepend <https://> to access.

§ 01 THE EULOGY NOBODY IS WRITING

- 1.1 Content marketing job-posting trends – 73% decline in Content Marketing Manager roles, 376% growth in Head of Content. *digitalinformationworld.com*
- 1.2 Writing skill requirement decline (28%); analytics as No. 1 senior skill. *digitalinformationworld.com*
- 1.3 AI produces content 4.7× cheaper and 93% faster. *straitsresearch.com*
- 1.4 Writing jobs fell 30.37% on Upwork in 15 months following ChatGPT launch. *brookings.edu / Org. Science*
- 1.5 AI-skilled professionals command a salary premium. *fortune.com, 2025*
- 1.6 AI-assisted content 5% more similar to other AI-assisted content. *Science Advances, Doshi & Hauser, 2024*
- 1.7 AI now expected in 34% of senior content marketing listings. *digitalinformationworld.com*

§ 03 THE CLICKED MOMENT

- 3.1 83% of Google AI Overview searches end without a click. *click-vision.com*
- 3.2 Organic CTR dropped 61% when AI Overviews appear. *Seer Interactive / searchengineland.com*
- 3.3 Gartner: traditional search volume to drop 25% by 2026. *gartner.com*
- 3.4 ChatGPT processes more than 1 billion queries per day. *nerdynav.com*
- 3.5 AI-assisted content 5% more similar; individual quality up, collective diversity down. *Science Advances* – SEE ALSO 1.6.
- 3.6 63% of consumers say most brands seem the same. *Kantar U.S. MONITOR, 2024–25*
- 3.7 NielsenIQ: AI-generated content rated more boring and less likeable; measurably weaker EEG memory activation. *nielseniq.com*
- 3.8 Brand differentiation = 57% of long-term sales growth. *Google/Kantar Differentiation Dividend, 2025*
- 3.9 TikTok creators minimizing creativity to pander to algorithms. *Design Research Society, 2023*

§ 02 WHO I AM

- 2.1 59.8% of marketers worry AI will replace their jobs, up from 35.6% in 2023. *Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024*
- 2.2 83% of AI Overview searches end without a click. *click-vision.com*
- 2.3 Lightcast: AI skills command a 28% salary premium across 1.3B job postings. *prnewswire.com*
- 2.4 PwC: AI-fluent workers command 56% wage premium across ~1B job postings. *pwc.com*

§ 04 THE OPERATOR

- 4.1 Senior content salary median \$161,500, up 54% since 2023. *Semrush, 8,000-listing analysis*
- 4.2 GEO strategies boost AI visibility by up to 40%. *Princeton / Georgia Tech, ACM KDD 2024*
- 4.3 AI search visitors convert at 4.4× the rate of traditional organic. *Semrush, 2025*
- 4.4 Analytics now #1 skill in senior content roles. *digitalinformationworld.com*
- 4.5–4.7 Kantar 63% / Google-Kantar 57% / Interbrand \$200B. *kantar.com, Interbrand*
- 4.8 *[Entry not used in body text – number reserved for source-list alignment.]*
- 4.9 81% of companies struggle with off-brand content. *Lucidpress/Marq*
- 4.10 *[Entry not used in body text – number reserved for source-list alignment.]*
- 4.11 Only 16% of brands track AI search performance. *position.digital*

§ 06 THE ROADMAP

- 6.1 Freelance writing income –11% YoY 2025. *Superpath Content Marketing Salary Report*
- 6.2 Upwork writing demand –21%; AI editing +180%. *upwork.com/research*
- 6.4 58–65% of Google searches end without a click. *SparkToro / Similarweb, 2025*
- 6.6 GEO strategies boost AI visibility up to 40%. *arxiv.org/html/2311.09735v3*
- 6.8–6.9 AI saves >5 hr/wk; +42% monthly content output. *CoSchedule, 2025 / Daily AI Mail, 2026*
- 6.10–6.11 28–56% wage premium; \$161,500 median senior salary. *pwc.com; digitalinformationworld*

§ 05 THE WRONG QUESTION

- 5.2 More than half of new online articles are AI-generated. *Graphite/Surfer, 65k articles, 2025*
- 5.3 Human-directed content earns 5.44× more traffic. *poolerdigital.com*
- 5.4 Unedited AI content gets 41% fewer shares. *BuzzSumo / Siege Media, 2025*
- 5.5 AI articles earn 43% lower trust ratings. *Edelman / Influencer Marketing Hub*
- 5.6 NielsenIQ EEG study: AI-generated content produces measurably weaker memory activation than human-written content. *nielseniq.com*
- 5.7–5.9 PwC 56% / Lightcast 28% / Fortune 30% wage premiums. *pwc.com, prnewswire, fortune.com*
- 5.10 Upwork: AI editing +180%, prompt engineering +240% YoY. *upwork.com/research*

§ 07 THE OTHER SIDE

- 7.1 Senior leadership +376%, mid-level –73%. *Semrush*
- 7.2 Interbrand: \$200B unrealized revenue, 2024. *interbrand.com*
- 7.3 AI freelance work > \$300M annualized by late 2025. *upwork.com/research*
- 7.4 AI-fluent freelancers +44% per hour. *upwork.com/research*