

# Editors need specialist knowledge to be effective ‘goalkeepers’

---

## Guest Blogger

A head of research once described copy editors as goalkeepers; I find the analogy quite apt. Most editors will admit that they spend a fair amount of time making changes that had nothing to do with dotting Is, crossing Ts, or rewriting the dreaded mile-long line. Our list of ‘saves’ includes weeding out incomplete sentences, outdated facts, and glaring errors.

Let me give you a real life example from our work here at our office:

One client analyst (let’s call him George) at a boutique firm preferred working ‘offline’ on his first drafts – off the automated publishing platforms that have now become the norm. He simply didn’t understand the concept of using a ‘template’ and preferred over-writing his earlier reports. highlighted in yellow/ blue/ green, He also liked sending in several ‘revised’ versions of his report within just a couple of hours, each new file containing a portion of text, with no instructions on what was new or revised. No amount of sweet-talking could tempt George to try out the track changes function to indicate which parts had been changed or send us only one final draft. And we weren’t allowed to call him until after the editing was complete and you needed to discuss text that was unclear. Essentially, we lived in version-control hell.

George had been running late with his submissions and told us to do only a quick read of his initiation-of-coverage report on a food products company. A full edit and check of 25 pages of text, tables and charts in 3 hours meant very quick checks indeed. His descriptions of ‘value-added’ food products (pie fillings, lasagnas, cold cuts) were making me slightly hungry (and distracted!) as I moved into the section on risks related to an increase in input costs:aluminum, steel, and plastic parts. Why was a food products company worried about metals prices?

Visions of aluminum ingots and new-age polymers decimated the virtual feast I had cooked up in my head.Something wasn’t right. Had I missed an instruction? The section wasn’t even highlighted and there was nothing in his email, so there was no explanation

When I finally reached George on the phone, I brought up the plastic parts upsetting the dinner party. “Aluminum and steel, you say?” asked George and then went quiet for a bit. “Ah,” he said, “I seem to have ... hmm ... this was my earlier report on ... never mind... This is what I’ve done,” said George plainly. “I’ve been over-writing an old report and I meant to delete that section, but quite obviously I haven’t. Thank you for spotting that.”

I decided to press ahead: “George, you might want to use a fresh template for every new report –

---

that'll prevent this sort of thing from happening again.”

The moral of the story for Research Managers is that although technology makes an enormous difference to the efficiency of the research production processes, it still takes a knowledgeable human editor to catch the errors introduced by analysts and to prevent real embarrassment. The editorial ‘goalkeepers’ are your last line of defense.

#### About Acuity Knowledge Partners

Acuity Knowledge Partners is a leading provider of high-value research, analytics and business intelligence to the financial services sector. The company supports over 400+ financial institutions and consulting companies through a team of over 4,000+ subject matter experts who work as an extension of the clients’ teams based out of various global delivery centres.

We empower our clients to drive revenues higher. We innovate using our proprietary technology and automation solutions. We enable our clients to transform their operating model and cost base.