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**7 Deadly Mistakes that Cost You Money and Assignments**

**By Mridu Khullar**

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Sometimes, you just don't get second chances. Freelance writing works a little that way. If you've offended an editor, it's quite unlikely that she's going to work with you again. If you don't muster up the courage and ask for a higher payment rate, you won't get that chance till the next acceptance. And if you sell all rights for less, you write away all future income from the sale of that piece.

These seemingly small mistakes can cost you big money when done repeatedly. Avoid these common pitfalls and you'll not only earn more from each sale, but also ensure that you're developing working relationships with editors who'll look to you for regular work.

**Mistake No. 1: Missing Deadlines**

I've often wondered why writers constantly miss deadlines. After all, if you've landed an assignment—big or small—wouldn't you want to get it in before time instead of after, so that you could impress the editor and secure more work? But many writers often fall short, and editors almost never work with these writers who do so repeatedly. So drop those waiting—till—the—last—minute habits and get into researching mode as soon as you get the assignment.

**Mistake No. 2: Lack of Preliminary Research**

When the editor of a technology magazine wrote in to ask exactly which Internet scams I'd be covering in my "Top Scams on the Internet" article, I wrote back to her within minutes. That's because I'd done my initial research even before I'd sent the query. You don't want to be on the phone with an editor, with no clue about the details of your piece. Be the writer who responds quickly and intelligently with the latest research, having the facts ready, exactly when they're needed.

**Mistake No. 3: Not Negotiating**

Many freelance writers become so excited on receiving their first national or high-paying assignment that the thought of asking for a little more doesn't even strike them. Many of them move on to find out that other writers were paid better for less work by the same publication. Always try to negotiate for a better contract—less rights, more pay, payment on acceptance, kill fees and even a short bio if you can get one. Most editors expect writers to ask for more, so don't worry about seeming greedy or

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money-minded.

### Mistake No. 4: Not Moving On

Initially, you'll need those low-paying, short deadline, payment-on-publication assignments. But take on too many of them and you'll soon be working 90-hour weeks and still have no food on the table. Once you've gathered a couple of clips and some regular high-paying assignments, thank the editors at the small publications and move on. Go beyond your comfort zone and start targeting higher paying markets. You can't live on 30-cents-a-word publications forever.

### Mistake No. 5: Getting Too Personal

It's great to get personal with an editor. In fact, I highly recommend it. But don't take it too far. Your editor is not going to appreciate forwarded jokes, tales of your latest adventures in the Himalayas or

the sob story of your dog's death. However friendly your editor might be getting, do remember that it is after all, a professional relationship. If you wouldn't say it to your boss, don't say it to your editor.

### Mistake No. 6: Letting off the Steam

Your editor's changed the meaning of your review so that it now sounds positive when you clearly intended it to be negative, modified your quotes or hasn't sent payment even after months of bugging her. You'd want to tell her exactly what you think of her, right? Bad idea. While I wouldn't suggest being a doormat and accepting what happened, I wouldn't recommend a fist-session with her either. Go tell her you didn't like what she did, but do so politely. If you're still upset, you can always stop writing for the magazine, or let her know that your viewpoints don't match.

### Mistake No. 7: Not Proposing Another Idea

Once you've written for an editor, your chances of writing for his publication again increase by a huge factor. He's more likely to trust you with more assignments if you come through on the first one. So after the final acceptance, send off a thank you note and another query. Don't give the editor time to cool off and forget you. Strike when he knows exactly who you are, how brilliantly you've done your job and how you'll make his life easier.

So next time you're tempted to accept an editor's initial offer or scream at him for adding in spelling errors, remember that you only have one chance. To keep your clients happy \*and\* earn a living in the process, avoid making these errors of judgment. You'll soon be on your way to a very lucrative career.

Mridu Khullar is the editor-in-chief of [www.WritersCrossing.com](http://www.WritersCrossing.com), a free online magazine for writers. Sign up for the free weekly newsletter to get a complimentary e-book with 400+ paying markets. Also check out her e-book, "Knock Their Socks Off! A Freelance Writer's Guide to Query Letters That Sell," available at <http://www.writerscrossing.com/queries.html>

## **FOR WOMEN ONLY: AVOID MEETING MISTAKES**

**By Beverly Tillman**

### FOR WOMEN ONLY: AVOID MEETING MISTAKES

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Women tend to be super-stars in the work place, but sometimes we make mistakes that could have been avoided for meetings. Read on to see if you make any of these mistakes at meetings. Then learn how to avoid them. What I advise is easy and makes common sense.

1. **DEADLY MISTAKE #1:** Arriving late for the meeting when you are either the facilitator or an attendee. This is very disruptive and often contributes to meetings going over time. **HOW TO AVOID LATENESS:** First of all be sure you leave plenty of time to stop your previous task so you can get to the meeting on time. Many times women arrive late to morning meetings, because they have to take their children to school or sitter. Be sure you leave in plenty of time to drop them off early. Many women also consider it rude to end a previous meeting advising that they have another meeting to go to. The best thing to do in this case is to advise the person(s) you are meeting with ahead of time that you must leave at a certain time to get to your next meeting. Also you might want to have your secretary buzz you on your cell or the land phone notifying you that you have another meeting. This will bring heightened attention that you have something else planned that is also just as important even if it is just getting back to your work.

2. **DEADLY MISTAKE #2:** Arriving without a "written" agenda and especially if you are the facilitator. Even if you are not the facilitator it is still a good idea to have your own "written" agenda planned with your possible questions, but be sure your agenda is consistent with the main agenda items. Agendas should always have a timeframe associated with each item. This keeps participants focused on not only the agenda item, but also the time. **HOW TO AVOID HAVING NO AGENDA:** The only way to avoid this one is to write an agenda "prior" to the meeting. Do not under any circumstances start writing the agenda at the meeting. When this is done, you look unprepared and unprofessional. Also if you are the boss you send the wrong message to your employees: I am unprepared. Professional women should appear totally prepared for meetings at all times unless there is a major catastrophic event involving you...prior to your arrival!

3. **DEADLY MISTAKE #3:** Speaking about "things" (and that is exactly what they become "things" when they are non-agenda items) that are not on the planned agenda. Sometimes it is appropriate to add items to the agenda, but request permission of the group to discuss the additional item. This statement also applies to the meeting facilitator. **HOW TO AVOID SPEAKING ABOUT NON AGENDA ITEMS:** As the facilitator and also as a participant you always have the right to request tabling discussion of non agenda items until the group meets again or to direct the group to hold an off line or ad hoc meeting to discuss other topics.

4. **DEADLY MISTAKE #4:** Assuming other people will arrive prepared. Most of us have been to meetings where we are prepared but others are not. This contributes to all kind of confusion! **HOW TO AVOID OTHERS SHOWING UP FOR THE MEETING UNPREPARED.** There are a couple of things you can do here. First send the agenda to all participants "prior" to the meeting. Next you can personally contact or have your assistant contact other principle participants of the meeting to remind

## 7 Deadly Mistakes that Cost You Money and Assignments

them of specific agenda items. Additionally, it is often a good idea to send an email ahead of time asking the participants for their input. "Of course you might not need their input", but they will actually be in preparation for your meeting.

5. **DEADLY MISTAKE #5:** Allowing an outsider who has nothing at all to do with your meeting interrupt the meeting. Believe it or not, most of the time interruptions are not necessary. Often women allow it, because the interrupter is the boss or some one else we highly favor for some reason or another. But if the person is not a formal participant of your meeting any interruption other than an emergency should not be put up with! Note that most interruptions are not emergencies. If there is an emergency ask one of the participants to step out of the meeting to take care of the emergency. Or if you as the facilitator of the meeting have to step out, ask another person in the meeting to take over until you return. **HOW TO AVOID INTERRUPTIONS FROM OUTSIDERS WHO HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE MEETING.** This actually is easy to do. Just tell the person you will be with them at the stated time of the end of the meeting or at the break time. I have also found that if a high level person interrupts, they usually gain more respect for you when you tell them you will get right back to them "immediately" as soon as you finish the meeting. Telling them "immediately" puts their needs at a very high level and maintains respect for their position. One of the problems that women often have is standing up to authority. Authority often respects a woman more, when she respectfully takes her authority!

**SUMMARY** Avoid mistakes especially now that you know the common ones. Also take the lead and even be in charge at making meetings run smoothly even if you have not called the meeting. Also let me know what you thought about this article.

Dr. Beverly Tillman, author and speaker, teaches business and professional women how to gain more independence and become "outrageously" successful in their business. She is the transformational and energetic Speaker and Work Shop leader all women groups should invite to speak. Look for her new book in late November: **FOR WOMEN ONLY: How to Become "Outrageously" Successful in Business.**



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