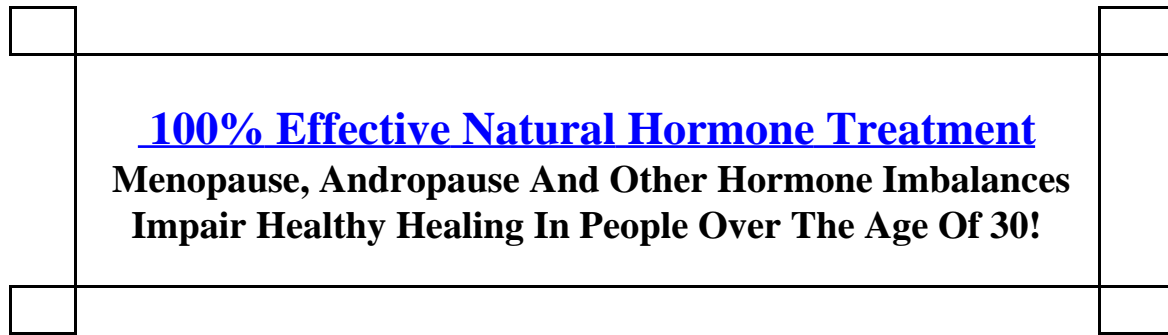


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Editorial Freelancing: 5 Must-Know Tips to Getting Your Foot in the Door

By Yuwanda Black

Editorial Freelancing: 5 Must-Know Tips to Getting Your Foot in the Door

by: **Yuwanda Black**

So, you want to freelance as an editor, writer, copy editor, copywriter, graphic designer, proofreader, etc.? But, how do you go about it?

My mother was fond of saying, "If you want to know something, go directly to the source." Taking this advice to heart, I interviewed professionals in the industry for the e-book, How to Really Make a Living as an Editorial Freelancer.

Publishers, editorial directors, human resource managers and editors, among others were a vocal lot regarding freelancers and what they should/should not do to get their foot in the door.

What nuggets of information can you glean from them? Here are five concrete points about which they were adamant.

1. Know your craft: Most clients like to see direct experience. This usually means working in the industry full-time for a number of years before going out on your own as a freelancer.

A vice president of publishing at a major trade publisher says, "Experience is key for us. Three to five years minimum, with a proven track record on our types of books. We don't linger over education, but I suspect most have a four-year degree."

As an editorial recruiter, I generally advise two to three years of full-time experience in the position/discipline for which you want to freelance. Five or more is better. Also, provide samples — published or unpublished. If unpublished — say so.

2. Time: Don't pester and/or waste the time of those in a position to hire. One editor responded, "Don't call me and call me and call me. I would actually NOT hire someone who calls me after I've said I'd call them."

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Additionally, find the right person to contact. Most agreed that you should bypass the human resources department and contact the editorial department directly. Why? It is rare that materials will be passed on to the right person, especially if they are in another department.

3. Rate: Most companies have pre-determined rates and wiggle room is tight, if nonexistent.

An editorial director at an educational publisher commented, "We have a standard freelancer's rate for whatever discipline is involved -- copyediting, graphic design, etc. Occasionally, a project will come along for which we'll make special arrangements. These can include special rates, working on premises, etc. I also try to be flexible while working within departmental budgets."

Usually, after you've worked with a client for a while, you can adjust your fees. Although, not by much. Editorial, especially general trade, is notoriously low paying.

4. Contact: Email seems to be the preferred method. However, to cover all bases, if you contact via email first, send a follow-up note with your credentials via snail mail. Remember, keep all contact brief and to the point. And please, do not send samples unless/until they are requested.

I personally have received books, an envelope full of clippings that weighed more than two pounds, and a magazine or two before I ever spoke with a prospect.

These are not more likely to get you a call back. If anything, it's presumptuous and can frustrate a potential client. Desks are usually pretty full without figuring out where to put more stuff. Above all, if you send it, do not expect it back; even if you send a SASE.

If your skills are sufficient AND a client has the need for your type of service, your resume / credentials alone will get you an interview.

5. Professional Presentation of Material: A Director of Public Information at a large nonprofit noted, "This should be implicit, but I wouldn't be mentioning it if in fact it was -- any material that is sent should be neatly presented and visually clear with no typos, correct grammar, etc. Material should demonstrate that: (1) you know your job; and (2) you care about it, hence the potential client will care also."

An editor at a financial magazine added, "On a resume, I look for copy editing accuracy and consistency (if you can't copy edit your own resume, how can I count on you to copy edit my magazine?)."

I know you're sending out tons of materials to many contacts. To avoid this problem, try to spend one day organizing and preparing your material, and another day to do the actual mailing.

I've found that most errors occur when you try to do everything in one day. Breaking marketing down into parts helps to simplify the process, thereby cutting down on the chance of mistakes.

So, there you have it. Although no one method can guarantee success, focusing on these areas will

boost your chance of landing more clients.

Original, copyrighted material. May be reprinted with inclusion of the following in full: Parts of this article are excerpted from the e-book, *How to Really Make a Living as an Editorial Freelancer*, by Yuwanda Black. It is available for immediate download at

Yuwanda Black owns Inkwell Editorial, an editorial temporary staffing agency in New York City. She is an entrepreneur, author and syndicated small business columnist. Yuwanda has been an entrepreneur for 11 years and has over 16 years experience in the editorial industry. Contact her at

for interviews and/or a link to the book for review.

The Work Flow Cycle of the Editorial Industry

By Yuwanda Black

As an editorial professional, I'm sure you're aware of the market slump right now. What you may not be aware of is that this is due to more than just the economy.

Editorial work is a seasonal profession. From mid-June through Labor Day and from Christmas through the end of January are usually pretty slow.

If you are a regular reader of a newspaper, ever notice how thin it is during the summer — especially the Help Wanted section?

What is the point in bringing this to your attention? First, to get you to relax and not worry.

And second, focus on preparatory work during down times. For example, rework your resume; order new supplies; take care of administrative paperwork, etc. FYI, there are some great resume tips geared specifically toward the editorial industry on Inkwell Editorial's site at

I hope you find them helpful.

May be reprinted with inclusion of the following: Yuwanda Black is an entrepreneur, author, speaker and syndicated small business columnist whose focus is controlling your destiny through small business ownership. Her most recent e-books, *How to Really Make a Living as an Editorial Freelancer* and *Advice from Successful Freelancers: How They Built Their Careers & How You Can Too!* are available for immediate download at

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