

How I learned to make my writing pay, and you can do it too. Copywriting is easy money

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By Angela Booth

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Summary: Want to make great money from your writing skills?
Become a copywriter (a writer for business).

How come there's so much writing in the world, but most writers are poor? It's because writers are writing the stuff that makes other people rich. If you're writing novels for major publishers for example, you're pouring money into the bank accounts of giant corporations, but the stream of money, by the time it reaches you, is a slow drip, not a river.

If you want to make money from your writing, you need to write the words that sell. In other words, you need to become a copywriter.

Copywriters write everyday words, the words you see and hear around you every day --- advertising, press releases, catalogs, newsletters, and radio spots. I've been a writer, and a successful one if you count publication credits, for 20+ years, but it wasn't until I made copywriting the foundation of my business that I started to feel relaxed about paying my bills.

If you're an experienced writer, you can add copywriting to the writing you do, and start making money without much effort. The skills of both fiction and non-fiction are necessary when writing copy. If you're a new writer, just starting out, the skills you learn when writing copy are easily transferable to other kinds of writing.

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The brilliant news about copywriting is that copywriters can make excellent money, with the most experienced, enterprising, and productive copywriters scooping in a comfortable six figures annually.

You don't have to be a great writer to be an excellent copywriter, but you do need to recognize and be able to use the attributes of both fiction (evoke emotion) and non fiction (be clear) in your writing. Of all the writing I do, I love copywriting most. It's fun, it's easy, it's creative ---- and the biggest plus of all, it's usually short.

Here's the successful freelance copywriter's mindset.

You:

* know that you're surrounded by copy every day, everywhere you look.

Radio, TV, the Internet, newspapers, food product labels, signs: they all contain words, and a copywriter wrote them. To most people, copy is so ubiquitous it's invisible. To you, copy signals a market. You're observant and aware, and every time a message catches your eye, even if it's only a street sign, you're thinking: "Hmmm... a potential market";

* are interested in getting your client's message across;

* are prepared to market,
and then market your services some more.

Kick-start your freelance copywriting services business

You can kick-start your freelance copywriting services today, in three steps:

1. Become aware of all the copy around you, and start thinking about the kinds of copy you could write and have fun with;
2. Develop a prospective clients database;
3. Write your first direct mail letter advertising your services.

Copy is everywhere

Copywriters write for businesses. They write to sell. Your first

step is some market research, and when it comes to market research, copywriting is a doddle. Unlike novelists who have to slog to the library or the bookstore to read the latest bestsellers, and magazine writers who keep themselves poor by buying dozens of magazines, you get your market research for free, delivered to your door. If you have a little "No Junk Mail" notice on your letterbox, scrape it off.

On my desk right now, I have six flyers from six local real estate agents. The flyers were stuffed into my letterbox over the past two weeks. Here's a taste of the copy: "Don't buy a home until you see our exclusive range". Another one's headed: "Do you want the best price when selling?" Their copy is obviously being written by someone in-house, so they're not getting the ROI (Return on Investment) they should be getting.

My calls to local printers established that they're paying around \$1500 for 15 000 flyers. Not a lot of money. On the other hand, what results are they getting? If they invest in an hour of my services, charged at my base rate, I'm positive I can substantially increase their response rate from their flyers. I haven't entered these six real estate agents into my Prospective Clients database yet, but I will.

That's how I started copywriting. I rewrote advertising, because I thought I could do better. You can do the same thing to start your own copywriting business. Become aware of all the copy around you. Just for fun, and to get some writing samples, rewrite some of it. If this gives you a real buzz, and you find it easy, you've just found yourself a new profession. Here's a newsflash: most copy is basic and uninspired. Display creativity in the copy you write, and clients will line up to hire you.

Develop a prospective clients database

Your prospective clients fall into two groups: businesses which write their own marketing communications material in-house, and the advertising industry --- agencies for advertising, public relations, graphic design, and marketing.

Start out by targeting the local companies stuffing your letterbox. The competition will be minimal. Chances are you'll be the first copywriter to approach them. The writing experience and confidence you gain from doing this work will encourage you to move on to bigger businesses.

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Here's your business prospecting process in a nutshell:

- * find a prospect;
- * enter the prospect into your Prospective Clients database;
- * brainstorm how you can offer the prospect a better ROI;
- * phone and/ or send a letter to the prospect outlining what you can do for him;
- * follow up.

You need a way to keep track of your prospects, so create a prospects database. Your Prospective Clients database doesn't have to be fancy. I use a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. You can keep your database in a word processor, if that's what's easiest for you.

Write your first direct mail letter advertising your services

The easiest and cheapest way to get clients for your new business is

to write personalized letters. In the future, when your business is well established, you may want to invest in a commercial list, and send your letters to a few thousand advertising or PR agencies at once. When you're starting out however, sending personalized letters is cost effective, and you won't find yourself with more work than you can handle.

Each letter you send out addresses a specific need you perceive the business has. When I send out a letter to the real estate agents I mentioned earlier, for example, I'll be using the copy from their flyers, and making suggestions as to how the copy could be improved. (I'll be doing this extremely diplomatically, of course.) I'll be emphasizing "retain-ability", how to get the people receiving the flyers to keep them.

Each letter I write will take me around half an hour. Why? After all, I could just do a mail merge, and send out 100 letters in that time. The reason I don't do that is because when you're writing a direct mail letter, you need to think like the person who's receiving your letter. Everyone in the world has a single mindset: "What's in it for me"? Therefore, you need to show what you can do for their particular business. You have to provide something of value, up front.

A week or so after I've sent out the letters, I'll call the

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businesses to follow up. Not every business I target will use my services. However, a number will. They'll either have work for me immediately, or within a few months.

Get started today. Give copywriting a try. Although you don't get a byline for your work, you do get the gratitude of your clients, and real money for your writing.

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Australian author and journalist Angela Booth writes about business, technology, health and creativity for print and online publications. She also writes copy for businesses large and small.

Is It Easy for You?

By Mary Wilkey

Is It Easy for You? by Mary Wilkey

Is It Easy For You?

Is it? If it isn't, then consider doing something that is! Let me explain: if what you're doing isn't easy right off the bat, don't give up, and DON'T consider doing something else—I mean, there's a learning curve to everything!

What I'm getting at is, once you've applied yourself and learned that you have a natural aptitude for doing something, **STICK WITH IT!** It becomes easier and easier, and you'll enjoy your work.

BUT—and this is a **BIG BUT**—if, after you've applied yourself diligently and worked through the learning curve, it **STILL** doesn't feel like your niche—if you're still not comfortable with it—if you do not enjoy it thoroughly

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to the point that you really look forward to doing it, THEN—and only then—switch to something else.

Now I'm not talking about any particular program or product. I'm talking about WHAT you are doing!

For instance, if you're just not comfortable writing ads and marketing online, then QUIT! But only AFTER you've made sure that you've given it your best shot.

I mean, if you have diligently studied copywriting and marketing techniques and APPLIED what you've learned, and if it still gel—if it is obvious that you don't have a natural aptitude for it, THEN quit. But be absolutely sure that you've exhausted every avenue and every resource.

Rule of thumb: if you haven't made it in online marketing after doing it DILIGENTLY (daily for several hours) for at least a year, then don't waste any more time.

Because no matter what the product is that you're advertising and marketing—it is all about writing highly persuasive ads and marketing effectively, consistently, and persistently. If you are unwilling to do that, forget it!

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