



How to Be a **WELL-PAID** Freelance Blogger

Earn \$50-\$100 a Post
and More



By Carol Tice, Annabel Candy, Sean Platt & Greg Ciotti

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Why Did We Create This Book?

We see a lot of questions about blogging from writers in my [Freelance Writer's Den](#) forums. Questions like:

“How can you find blogging gigs that pay more than \$5, \$10 or \$20?”

“How do you find blog post ideas?”

“It takes me eight hours to write each blog post. How can I speed up?”

To answer these questions, I got together with some other well-paid bloggers and hosted a series of five one-hour presentations about what it takes to land great-paying blogging gigs — not the \$5 kind, but the ones that pay \$100-\$250 a post and more.

In this e-book, you get to listen in on those conversations. Members of my [Freelance Writers Den](#) writers' support community got to hear these chats live. They asked some great follow-up questions, so we've included those Q&A sessions as well, at the end of each chapter.

We hope this guide helps you grow your writing income!

—Carol Tice

Meet the Authors

Carol Tice



I'm Carol Tice. I've been a full-time freelance writer since 2005. I was a staff writer for 12 years before that, and freelanced for several years at the beginning of my career, too. I've earned more every year since I returned to freelancing in '05, straight through the downturn, hitting six figures in 2011. I write the [Make a Living Writing](#) blog and founded the writer support community [Freelance Writer's Den](#). Besides my own blog, I've guest-posted for Copyblogger, Problogger, LifeHack, Write to Done, and many more. Paid blogging clients include Entrepreneur, Forbes, FreelanceSwitch, American Express, Dun & Bradstreet, Lending Tree, and many small businesses.

Annabel Candy



I'm Annabel Candy. With an MA in Design for Interactive Media and 17 years experience in Web design and copywriting, I help dynamic entrepreneurs and creative personalities tap into the power of blogging. I blog at Get In the Hot Spot and have worked with brands such as Coca-Cola, the Canadian Tourism Commission, and Commonwealth Bank. I wrote [Successful Blogging in 12 Simple Steps](#) to help other small business owners use blog marketing effectively and share blogging tips at [SuccessfulBlogging.com](#).

Sean Platt



I'm Sean Platt. After spending three years as a ghostwriter, I have written it all: memoirs to fiction, sales letters to info products (and everything in between). I have designed and polished editorial calendars for successful blogs that have driven revenue, increased sales, and dramatically improved traffic and search engine rankings for my clients. I've written copy for some of the largest writing and lifestyle blogs on the Web. These days, I write fiction serials for Amazon. Check me out at SeanMPlatt.com.

Greg Ciotti



I'm Greg Ciotti. I am the marketing strategist for [Help Scout](#), the invisible email support software for startups and small businesses. I have years of experience in content strategy for startups.



Chapter 1: Turn Your Blog Into a Client Magnet

21 Tips to Attract Great-Paying Blog Clients

Carol Tice and Annabel Candy

CAROL: Many, many writers have blogs. It seems like almost every writer on earth has a blog, but very few of those blogs — in my experience reviewing hundreds and hundreds of writers’ blogs — are really set up to be a good writing sample for getting quality freelance blogging gigs. And the great thing about having a blog is that if you have no other samples at all, you can use that blog to get some nice clients and blog for them.

Certainly that’s exactly what my friend in Nigeria, Bamidele Onibalusi of the blog [Writers in Charge](#), has done. And I find there’s a big gap of knowledge out there about how to set up your blog, so that if prospects come to your blog, they are impressed with what you’re doing, and they see you as a professional that they want to hire.

And we’ll be learning about how to get them to your blog, too.

Here are our 21 tips on how to take your blog and turn it into a strong writing sample. I'm thrilled to have Annabel with me on this because she has a lot of experience in this area, too.

1. Have Your Own Blog

CAROL: When you own your blog, a prospect can look at it and see that you know how to physically do this. You're posting your posts as posts, and they're not on static pages. You understand the basics of how blogging works.

It looks nice and clean. It's got a big readable font. It looks consistent. The client glances at it and they get the quick idea, "Okay, you have a blog. You're blogging," and that's step one.

2. Unclutter Your Design

CAROL: Then step two — and there's a reason this is up so high in the list. Compare most writer sites to [Zen Habits](#), one of the most uncluttered sites on the Internet. On most writer sites, you see all kinds of unnecessary clutter — bars full of little pictures of your Facebook friends, your metadata is showing, you've got a search bar.

Most writer websites do not need a search bar. There's not that much stuff on a writer website. It's not that hard to find things. It's just another distraction.

Often, there is an index of miscellany in the sidebar. There are buttons for organizations you belong to.

The thing about Web pages is you want them each to have only one goal, and that goal should be obvious, what it is you want people to do on that page.

In the case of writers' blogs, what you want them to do is check out your blog and see how they can hire you. You want to cut the clutter and not have black backgrounds with white letters in teeny type. You want to present something that's simple, easy to read, and isn't full of distractions that take them away from digging the way you blog and clicking to hire you.

3. Limit the Options

ANNABEL: When I'm talking about options, what I'm really talking about is the number of navigation buttons or pages you've got at the top of your website. I was looking at someone's website yesterday, and they must have had about 10 links at the top and then on the left they had about 20 or 30 sections within that blog, and it is too confusing for people.

I recommend that you have fewer than eight navigation links or tabs on your blog, so that people can quickly find the information they want, whether it's contact details, the "Hire Me" page, or the topics on your blog. Remember to have a call to action on the end of your pages or at the top of your pages, so people actually know what to do. That's the whole point.

The fewer static pages you have on your blog, the easier you'll make it for people to find out what to do and how to get in touch with you. People are very busy, so you've got to help them find the information that you want them to find, because that's probably what they want as well.

So minimize the number of pages on your blog, and the call to action can be something very simple like, "Call me to find out more," or "Email me if you'd like to get a price quote."

CAROL: Make it so I know what to do. Because when I come on your site, I'm sort of dumb. You have to take people by the hand.

You've got about five seconds to let them know what you want them to do, or they get frustrated, give up, and leave.

4. Include a Good Photo of Yourself

CAROL: This is so important. A lot of people like to use a logo or maybe they have a photo of their pet or just a blurry photo, and you can't really see them. The whole personal aspect is really important, that you show you're actually a real person and have a friendly, smiling photo of yourself.

One of my favorite writer website photos is from [Oscar Halpert's](#) writer site. This photo has it all. It looks professional. He's got a suit on but the jacket is flung over his shoulder. It's casual, approachable, friendly, smiling, and he's

not a movie star, and you don't have to be. He just looks natural and happy to be a writer, and that's really key.

ANNABEL: I always recommend people smile in their photos. Some of those cool shots, you know you might end up looking unfriendly and you definitely want to look friendly. You want people to think if they pick up the phone and call you, you're going to be happy to speak to them.

CAROL: You wouldn't believe some of the photos I have seen. Recently, I had one where it was a photo of the person taking a photo of themselves with their phone. I've seen photos of people scantily clad, as well as photos that were very dark and barely readable.

The photo is hugely important. When I first started my blog I thought, "I'm writing a blog for writers, and it's all about my beautiful words, and design just doesn't matter," and it was so wrong.

Every single change I have made to make my blog look better and more accessible, my subscribers went up and up, and interest in what I was doing from clients skyrocketed.

Design really matters. The good news is you can just keep it simple with a simple, beautiful photo of you. It doesn't have to be complicated.

ANNABEL: Simple is always the best. I really want to get some professional shots. I haven't done that yet, but that's the next step for me.

CAROL: Well, yours are pretty friendly, and you're smiling. They're clear, and you are in focus. A lot of them aren't.

ANNABEL: You can make sure you do all of that even without a professional shot.

5. Use Blog Style

CAROL: As someone who came out of journalism and magazine article writing and newspaper writing, maybe I'm particularly attuned to this. But blogging has its own style that's different from writing a newspaper article.

This is one of the big things I find clients are looking for is whether you understand blog style. The thing is that a large number of people are skimmers on the Internet rather than readers, and they need to be guided through your piece with guideposts.

You can't write big fat paragraph after big fat paragraph and expect them to stick with you. People just won't do it. It's more tiring on your eyes to look at a screen than at a printed page, and that's why blog style has developed the way it has.

Good posts have subheads, bulleted or numbered points, and paragraphs that are really short. A lot of the great bloggers write one-sentence paragraphs online. I'm thinking of [Liz Strauss](#) and Brian Clark from [Copyblogger](#).

Their posts rock, and it's because blog posts need the white space around them for people to be able to absorb the words on the screen. I find this is huge. Clients really want to see that you are a pro blogger before they hire you, and that you have this understanding of style.

ANNABEL: It doesn't really matter how good your words are. You could be a Pulitzer Prize winner, but if it's not laid out right, no one is going to read it.

CAROL: The other thing is that the way you write is businesslike and not kid-like or amateurish. You don't have 10 exclamation points in the story, three different colors of fonts in your links. Don't make your post look like some gushy note a high school girl is passing her friend in class.

The other thing is that you understand linkage. Your links are words you've enlivened that go to appropriate related material, either within your site or outside your site.

Your links should not be naked or dead. Naked links are where you write out the whole URL: <http://www.yourlink.com>. That's not how you want to cite links on your blog.

And when you click the links, they actually work — they're not dead links. You want links that are enlivened on a word and that are working, and that's another technical thing that prospects are attuned to.

ANNABEL: You can get the [Broken Link Checker](#) plug-in. You have to test them before you put the post up, but there's also the broken link plug-in,

which is useful because some links stop working. You don't know that sometimes, people take their sites down or change their permanent link.

6. Write Great Headlines

CAROL: This one is a real obsession of mine, writing powerful headlines.

Any business blogging or publication client that's looking to pay big money for a professional blogger, one of the big skills they are looking for is that you know how to write headlines that get a lot of attention – that will get them found on the Internet, get them some natural search traffic, and get their post retweeted [shared on Twitter].

If you haven't already, grab [Jon Morrow's Headline Hacks report](#) and read that. The Psychotactics report [Why Do Most Headlines Fail](#) is also good reading about how to construct a headline that works on the Internet.

This is another big, big difference between print and online writing. In print you can write a newspaper headline like “Goodbye to All of That,” but then a subhead tells what it's really about. It's about everyone throwing away their used computers, or whatever it's really about.

There are no subheads on the Internet, and the headline has to do it. It is its own form, and I could easily spend the rest of this e-book telling you how much I want you to learn to write really strong headlines because it's super-important. It makes a huge difference. You're not going to get those 1,000 retweets for a client — which is what they're looking for and why they're paying you money — if you don't know how to do this.

A quick tutorial: Blog headlines need keywords that readers for your type of blog would search on to find information. For instance, most headlines for my blog have “freelance writer” or “blogging” or “writing” in the headlines, so writers can tell, “Oh – this post is for me.”

Headlines need to tell us what we'd learn if we clicked, without revealing *everything* we'd learn right in the headline so that we don't have to bother to read the post. Great headlines use words that spur strong emotions.

7. Write Great Posts

CAROL: Your posts need to be compelling and well-written. What you write has to keep people reading.

You have to demonstrate that you're ready to write quality, high-level, moving stories and fascinating interviews. You get paid better for creating content that's a cut above the giant mountain of robot garbage that's out there.

What I did when I started my blog — and what I recommend, if you want to get paid well as a blogger — is that you write every post like someone has given you a \$1-a-word magazine article assignment.

Think about how much time you would put into that and put that much effort into your post. It sounds crazy and is a big time commitment, but if you are looking at your blog as a writing sample, then what you want on this blog post is incredible samples, especially if you don't have other samples.

This is your opportunity to create great samples, right here. Just because it's a blog doesn't mean you can't put up an incredible feature story as a post as long as it's formatted in blog style. Then that's what your prospects will read when they visit your site.

8. Find a Niche — and Stick to It

CAROL: The next thing — and this is a problem I see a lot — is that you need to stick to a niche. It's not that vital what that niche is. It might be gardening. It might be horses. It might be your love of inline skating or tattoos. I gather tattoos are actually a great niche to monetize!

What matters is that you demonstrate with your niche blog that you understand niche blogging. Anyone who is going to hire you that pays good money is going to want to see you know how to stick to a niche. I'm not talking about these junk websites that say, "You can write about any topic that you want."

(That's because they don't have a business model, and they don't know what they are doing, by the way. That is why you can write on anything that you want.)

Real businesses that sell real products and services in the real world, and successful magazines, have a topic that they need to stick to. It's all about medium-sized business finance, or it's about gardening in the Western U.S.

They have a niche audience, and they need to see that you get that and that you can generate a lot of topics on a single theme. That's what they're looking for as they scan through your headlines which is why, circling back to the headlines, they really need to have keywords.

As the prospect scans through, they immediately see "Oh, yeah, this blog is all about Italian recipes that you've put together, and look at how there are all of these different angles, and it talks about restaurants that you went to."

They see immediately that you understand niche blogging. You're not wandering off to post a picture of what cute things your kids did or a weird YouTube video of a pig doing something funny. I find the biggest problem is people want to blog about a wide variety of things they like and their personal life and whatever else. Do you find this also, Annabel?

ANNABEL: Yes. To begin with, it takes a while to find your niche, actually. I think that's why it happens. People get started and write about anything. It can take a while to drill down and find out what your niche is, but I totally agree with you. You've got to find it and you've got to stick with it.

9. Leverage "Social Proof"

ANNABEL: This is important. One thing that makes me so sad is when I get someone's blog and I see on every single post zero comments, zero comments, zero comments, because it instantly makes it look as if no one is reading their blog.

Maybe no one *is* reading their blog, but if that's the case they could either turn off the comments for now, or stop displaying the number of comments on their home page.

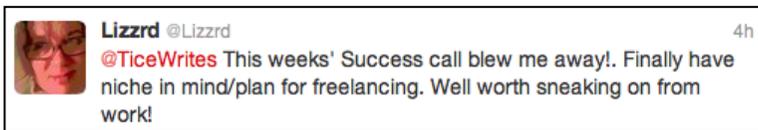
What I recommend you do is to find a blogging buddy and comment on each other's blog posts, so that you'll always have one comment. If you reply, then you'll be up to two comments on your blog post, and already you've got a little bit of social proof going on – you're making it visibly obvious on your blog that people read your posts.

Getting some comments coming in is important, and it's easy to do. All you need is one person commenting to begin with and everyone can manage that.

CAROL: I love that strategy. Some social proof I've been creating lately that I'm in love with is “tweetermonials.”

When someone makes a comment on Twitter about my blog, I take a screen shot of that and hang post it on my blog, in the sidebar or on the About page. And I love this because it doesn't need a live link.

Often when you get testimonials, it implies that you are going to give a live link to that person giving the testimonial. But in this way I am able to credit the people who talked about me. I'm showing the world their Twitter handle, so that promotes them without putting a link. I'm always asking people to do this instead of emailing me a testimonial. Here's an example:



A “Tweetermonial”

ANNABEL: That's great — now you've got a shot of someone else smiling on your blog as well as you. What I actually do in Twitter is that I “favorite” [similar to Facebook's “like”] all those nice tweets that people send me, recommending me or thanking me for something, and that works nicely, too.

And anytime someone checks out your favorites, they'll see a bunch of glowing recommendations for you, so that's fun.

And when my blog was very new and it had very few readers — this was partly to motivate me and keep me going — I set up this Raving Readers page. I put all the emails or comments that I had that were really good on this

one page, and that's a great way to leverage social proof and show people that you've got readers and that people love what you're writing about. That's another very simple thing to do that will show other people you're good.

The third way to leverage social proof is to tell stories. Even if no one has actually recommended you, you should be able to write some stories about how you've helped other people with your writing, even if you just helped a friend by editing their website, for example, or writing their content for them.

You can mention that in the story without going overboard and boasting about it. Just telling that story will show that you've worked with other people before, that you like what you do, and that you're good at it.

I've got one more thing about leveraging social proof, which is incorporating media. If you've got any little mentions about yourself on other websites or in the print media, even if it's only your local paper, It's really good to put those up there. If you haven't been mentioned in your local newspaper yet, make that a challenge for yourself and see if you can get in there, so that you've got a bit more social proof going on.

10. Use Social Media

ANNABEL: Use your social sharing buttons and get active in social media. Hopefully, everyone has got them set up at the bottom and maybe the beginning of their blog posts so that your clients will see that you know how to retweet posts and that you'll be helping promote your content on both your blog and on their blog. Make sure that's all set up, and be active on Twitter and on Facebook, because you need to build up a following and that takes time. Nobody expects you to have hundreds of people to begin with. But by being active, you will slowly build up followers.

BUY THIS E-BOOK NOW!