



# How to Get Great FREELANCE CLIENTS

Learn how to earn more—  
find quality clients  
and get the gig!



By Carol Tice, Linda Formichelli & Chris Marlow

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# Why did we decide to write this book?

We asked members of Carol and Linda's [Freelance Writer's Den](#) community what one topic they would most like to learn. What haven't we covered, we asked? Overwhelmingly, the answer was: "I need to know how to find better clients!"

Top earners don't start their month biting their fingernails and desperately grabbing onto any gig they're offered. They start the month booked up with work from ongoing clients who pay them professional wages — \$75 to \$100 an hour, and more.

What's the difference-maker? Targeting quality clients. They're the dividing line between six-figure freelancers and everyone else.

This e-book is filled with all of our tips for finding, qualifying, pitching, and working for better clients, which we originally taught live as the Freelance Writers Den bootcamp *How to Get Great Clients*. Many writers participated live in the original Webinars, and they asked lots of good questions — so we included those Q&A sessions at the end of each chapter.

We hope this e-book helps you to grow your freelance writing income!

# About the Authors

## *Carol Tice*



I'm Carol Tice, nonfiction book author, and writer of the award-winning [Make a Living Writing](#) blog (recently named a Top 10 Blogs for Writers winner for the third time). I founded Freelance Writers Den, the community where writers learn how to grow their freelance income — fast.

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.

My mission is to do all I can to help freelance writers discover how to earn more from their writing.

## *Linda Formichelli*



I'm Linda Formichelli. I've been a full-time freelance writer since 1997, and earn a living working less than 25 hours per week.

I've written for magazines like Redbook, USA Weekend, Health, Writer's Digest, and WebMD, and for businesses like Sprint, OnStar, Pizzeria Uno, and Wainwright Bank.

I'm also the co-author of *The Renegade Writer: A Totally Unconventional Guide to Freelance Writing Success*, and run [The Renegade Writer](#) blog.

### ***Chris Marlow***



I'm the original Copywriters Coach... yes, before all of the others. I self-studied in 1979 while still in college, and was one of eight people on the board of the Oregon Direct Marketing Association at its start in 1990. Now, more than two decades after graduating from Portland State University, I'm a highly accomplished, award-winning, direct response copywriter with an extensive portfolio of successful direct response campaigns and controls. I've also been an industry-leading business coach since 2003 at [ChrisMarlow.com](#), and an Internet entrepreneur with my own products, mailing list, and courses.



# Chapter 4: Writing for Great Clients: 28 Great Niches

*Carol Tice and Chris Marlow*

**CAROL:** One of the most important parts of working with great clients is in knowing what types of work they want — and pay good rates for. In this chapter, we'll explain 28 different types of well-paid writing you can do for businesses. Some are sales-y, but most are not.

## 1. Brand Journalism

In business writing today, one of the hottest things going on is brand journalism. This is where you're writing articles, just like those you would write for any magazine — you report them, you talk to sources. The difference is, your client is not a magazine. You're working for a company. Often, it's for a company website. Sometimes, it's for a company magazine, online or print.

For instance, I worked on a brand journalism project a few years ago for American Express. They were launching a new website they had created for the mid-market, for mid-sized companies.

A lot of people know the AmEx Open Forum site, which is their small-business platform. They wanted to expand this because of its success. The articles we wrote didn't talk about credit cards, business finance, or American Express. AmEx is not in any of the articles. They didn't tell us what to write, either.

They hired an editor, and, in every way, the writing process was like a newspaper or magazine assignment, except that articles appeared on a branded website.

AmEx is huge into this. Intuit is huge into this. More and more companies are seeing that informational articles are a great way to get the right type of viewers onto their webpages. They just host it.

As far as skills, there's nothing new you have to know. If you can write an article, you can do brand journalism.

## **2. Social Media Management**

This covers a range of tasks, such as scheduling tweets for companies, updating their Facebook page, or pinning things for them on Pinterest. If you are someone who's already involved in these activities, you can simply transition to doing them for a client.

If you do these things for your own blog and have had some success where your posts get a lot of traffic, make the case to the client that you could manage their social media. Include a link to your own posts to show you know how to do this.

I can tell you there is so much hunger out there in the business community for people who understand social media. Tweeting for people doesn't tend to pay well, but if you're involved at a higher level, in planning and implementing their entire social-media strategy, pay can be good.

## **3. White Papers**

I love big research projects, so one niche I personally love is writing white papers. One white paper I did was for Microsoft's charity division, Unlimited Potential. It shows how great Microsoft is for having a program that encourages computer recycling, where if you donate a computer to charity, Microsoft gives the charity a low-cost version of Office. So the company documents their charitable program, and talks about an issue they support — that people should strive to keep PCs out of landfills.

Another white paper I did was for a company that facilitates small business loans. The paper went into all the ways you can get money for your business, including a couple the company owner uses at his company. But the paper was cast in the format of simply providing useful information to business owners who need to borrow money.

To me, if you can do good interviews and research to find relevant statistics and studies related to the topic, you can write white papers. They document an issue or problem, and then tell how that company solves that problem.

## 4. Case Studies

These are a bit shorter and simpler than white papers, but they're related, in my view.

Case studies document how a customer selected and used a product or service, and how it helped make their lives better. Often, these are done in business-to-business companies, so the case study would document how the client's business was improved by choosing the solution. It's straightforward interviewing.

**CHRIS:** Case studies are one of the best markets to be in. I've had students who made enormous amounts of income by working with technology companies, because they're a little more complicated. The more complicated the work is, the higher the pay.

**CAROL:** I did one for a mergers and acquisitions firm. It documented how they helped a startup company sell their business, when it was still in startup stage. Despite still being in startup mode and not having revenue coming in yet, this M&A firm sold the company for good money, and the case study detailed the process they used. I got \$750 for maybe six hours' work.

**CHRIS:** It's very good money, and people who have a journalism background do really well in that space. It's not always required to interview somebody, either. I've done lots of case studies where I never interviewed anybody. The information was just handed over to me.

**CAROL:** That's true. In fact, with the one I just did for the M&A firm, they had a series of Skype interviews they'd already done, documenting the case for YouTube. They wanted that spun into a written case study. I emailed them a few follow-up questions, and, otherwise, it was a boil-down from the Skype calls. Sometimes, the client hands you a stack of stuff and you're just digesting it into a case-study format.

**CHRIS:** Right. There are people who just do case studies. That's all they do.

## 5. Textbook Supplements

**CAROL:** Textbook supplements are teacher guides that tell the instructor how to teach from this textbook. They can include exercises to give students, questions the teacher should ask the class, or quizzes they should hand out. If you have a background in teaching, or if you have a bunch of degrees, this can be a great niche. There are a select number of publishers that specialize in creating these supplements. Market your expertise to those companies to get the gigs.

## 6. Ghostwriting Books

Book and e-book ghosting can also be a super-lucrative niche. I'm in one writers' group where they regularly put out contracts in the \$20,000 to \$50,000 range, mostly for big CEOs or marketing gurus who want their books ghosted.

Breaking into this niche is all about connections and knowing the people who want to do it and have that kind of budget. You can also connect with publishers — they do get reach-outs from agents working with CEOs looking to get paired with a writer.

If you've written long articles, you're probably in good shape to ghostwrite books or e-books. In the print book I recently co-wrote, *How They Started*, I contributed eleven 3,000-word articles. There're no special, new skills there.

One caveat, though. Many people want a writer to ghost their e-book for a pittance. I'm always hearing about Craigslist ads to write e-books for \$300, or even less. You do not want to go there. It might seem like easy work, but it isn't. And often, these gigs fall apart in the middle.

So be wary of people who'd like you to write their life story for a few hundred bucks, because it will be a ton of work. Look for deep-pocketed individuals, or companies that can pay professional rates. Qualifying the client and having a carefully defined contract is essential.

## 7. Grantwriting

Many writers have had the experience of volunteering to write a grant for a tiny local charity. But grantwriting at the big-charity level, where they're going after million-dollar grants, is a highly specialized and well-paid niche.

Early in my career, I wrote a couple of grants, and both got funded. At the time, I didn't realize I'd done something valuable, and that maybe I should pursue it as a writing niche.

**CHRIS:** Yeah. I know a copywriter who did the same thing. He actually wrote one to get himself a writing grant.

**CAROL:** I did that, as well. I got one grant to have an intern at the alternative paper I was editing, and the other was to write an article series about a particular social issue. The key, I found, lies in carefully reading the grantor's guidelines, and following them precisely. You can also look at who that funder previously funded and for what, to see if you're a fit. Then, pitch your grant request so that it's right up their alley.

I didn't need any special skills to do it successfully — I just followed directions! I know it's hard to break in, but there are always small charities you can write for, for the experience and a testimonial.

## 8. Corporate Newsletters

Writing for corporate newsletters is another favorite writing type. I've made some decent money doing articles for them.

There are two types. One set is written to customers, and the other is aimed at employees at very big companies. An example is Disney Newsreel, the newsletter for Disney employees.

I did a series of profiles of new executives for the employee newsletter at TrueBlue here in Seattle, which is a big temporary hiring company — they used to be known as Labor Ready. They were easy, fun, \$750 articles. I also earned \$2-a-word, writing articles for Costco's business services newsletter. They were interesting and fun pieces to do! In one of them, I interviewed a woman who had Costco car insurance. Her car caught fire while she was driving it.

## 9. RFPs for Government Contracts

I run into a lot of writers who have done Requests For Proposals at a past job. They might have worked at a construction company or janitorial company, and the company was bidding on state or federal contract work.

There are companies looking to task this out to freelancers, if they don't have anyone in-house who's done successful RFP bids.

And they're not real tough to write — to me, it's very similar to grantwriting. Read the specs and description of the project out for bidding, and follow the instructions carefully. Often, these companies hire pro writers, because they want somebody who can write a compelling story. The problem with most RFPs is, they read pretty dry and boring, if you don't have a professional writer involved in the process.

**CHRIS:** I haven't done any RFPs, myself, but I had a student who did only RFPs. We worked together for six months, getting him more deeply into the better places of that target market, where the money is.

**CAROL:** It can be a worthwhile niche, because there's so much money on the line. It's well worth it to these companies to hire a pro writer, if they feel it could greatly increase their chances of landing a big government contract. The writer fee is pin money by comparison to the revenue they might bring in.

## 10. Annual Reports

At this point, the vast majority of major corporations are doing social responsibility reports, besides the typical annual report, which essentially says: “This is what revenue and expenses were last year, and this is how our company is growing and changing, and what we’ll do next, and why we’re awesome.” And, “Here’s why you should invest in our public company” is part of that, too, if they’re publicly held. I love writing annual reports and their cousins, corporate social responsibility reports and confidential information memorandums.

Every public company needs to do an annual report. Many other types of enterprises and organizations create them, as well. They want an annual report for their shareholders, to let them know what income and expenses were, and what moves they’ve been making in the business — expanding, closing stores, what else they’ve done and what they plan to do. Annual reports are often a celebration of their organization’s culture and people. They used to be pretty dry documents, but have become real sales pieces about the company’s greatness.

The newer cousin to the annual report is the corporate social responsibility report, which documents how a company is reducing their carbon footprint, how they’re planting trees to offset that, how they’re using more responsible suppliers, and how they treat employees. Every year, many companies are documenting steps they’re taking to become more responsible global citizens.

These are large writing projects that pay very well. I did a \$13,000 contract to write two annual reports for Sound Transit, the regional transportation agency in Seattle. They do two different types of reports that come out each year, a Transit Improvement Plan, and a more traditional annual budget report on their proposed budget.

**CHRIS:** One of my colleagues was only writing annual reports, and making \$180,000 a year. Then he added corporate social responsibility reports, and he was up to \$200,000 the last time we talked.

**CAROL:** Nice! Yes, social responsibility reports put a happy spin on how we are good people at the company, and have good values.

One skill in writing annual reports is an ability to deal with facts and figures, because these are usually pretty chart-and-graph-heavy, while text explains what the numbers mean. If you have a business reporting background and understand how to read a quarterly and annual report, that’s a strength.

Mostly, companies hire pro writers for their storytelling ability. As with RFPs, annual reports can be dry and boring if a pro writer isn’t involved. With my Sound Transit reports, I was specifically hired to translate Sound Transit’s previous annual budgets from the transit-ese they speak at transit agencies into something their accountability council -- actual bus riders who are ordinary man-on-the-street people — could understand.

There is a real need for an outside eye that can break a company or agency out of their jargon. They want a writer who can interview their people and tease out the story of why they're a great organization.

More recently, I've done a couple of confidential information memorandums (CIMs). This is an annual report-like document startups create when they want to sell themselves. It's aimed at a buyer or new investor, rather than shareholders or the public. I've gotten \$3,000 and more for about a week's work, writing these. Companies usually need them *fast*, once they realize now is the perfect moment to find a buyer, so remember to charge premium rates.

The key reason these startups need a pro writer is so the founders can tell a compelling story about their company's history, and their product's or service's uniqueness in the market. It needs to read like a fascinating profile you would find in a top business magazine. Their staff is incapable of creating CIMs — they know too much about the company.

## 11. Business Plans

Another niche related to annual reports is writing business plans. This can be a great niche, especially when they're for companies seeking venture-capital funding. As with RFPs, that means lots of money on the line, and the few thousand dollars they'll pay you to help tell a compelling story is pin money to them.

They're trying to get investors to give them millions, so they need to take it beyond their charts and graphs and tell a great tale. They're stories similar to those found in an annual report. The basic pitch in a business plan is explaining the company's revenue and, often, their projections for "how we think it's going to grow, and that's why you should give us money. Then you'll make lots of money, and so will we."

If you ever want to look at some business plans to research that niche, visit [Bplans](#), a site with a lot of samples.

**CHRIS:** I know somebody who's been doing business plans for many years, and he's making a lot of money. It's a very corporate thing, but again, it's valuable because your writing is helping a company make something big happen. When you can get people to fund a business or go into partnership, your value is huge.

Many copywriters charge a lot less than they should be getting, but I'd like to encourage people to think about the value of what they're doing, and put an appropriate price on the work. Sometimes, you might even get into royalty arrangements where you get a percentage of the funding.

**CAROL:** The great thing here is, if you worked with a small startup on a business plan, and they got funded — that's what every startup is looking for. Ideally, show these companies that what you write gets companies funded, so they'll feel that working with

you will get the funding they want. If you're interested in this niche and are ever in a position to do a sample business plan, it could be well worth it.

## 12. Research Reports

Investors want to know all about that new CEO — where's he been and how well-regarded he was. The researcher's job is to go to all of the CEO's past employers, figure out who worked there at the same time as this CEO, track down former co-workers and get these sources to tell you what they thought about the guy.

This is an arcane niche I've done and made real nice money. I was hired by an investment firm that focused on analyzing fairly young, small-cap public companies. Whenever the CEO changed, they wanted a research report on whether that change was good news or bad news for that company. That insider intelligence would then give investors a sense of whether they wanted to stay invested in this startup.

Often, we found former co-workers through press releases on [LexisNexis](#), which the client paid for me to access. I would find releases and see who else worked with the CEO. Then I would find those people. Sometimes, it was like free therapy for those sources.

I heard everything, from “That was the most toxic SOB I ever saw...” and “I had a nervous breakdown. He made me sob at my desk,” to “I am so glad you called me, so I have a chance to tell someone that he was the most inspirational mentor and leader I have ever worked under.”

As the researcher, you write a report of what the interviewees said, and what you found out. Sometimes, I'd hear, “Oh, they really got fired, but it was hushed up.”

I was paid between \$1,500 and \$3,000 for these reports. The small ones, where I vetted one person, paid \$1,500. If I was researching a couple of execs who were hired together, it would be \$3,000, and maybe a 40-hour workweek. I found it easy, fascinating work.

Though it's a bit of an arcane niche, it's a good one if you have strong research and interviewing skills, and a background in business finance, venture capital, or investing, and you enjoy digging into people's lives. I found this to be fun sleuthing work.

## 13. Informational Web Copy

So many companies need to develop tons of copy. Lots of portals post hundreds of pages of basic how-to stuff. “What to do after a car accident,” for a legal site, for instance. This copy is created to help sites rank in searches for relevant keywords, and get eyeballs on the page, while visitors get useful information. I would consider the 'About' page of most companies' websites to be part of this need for informational content.

I have written hundreds of pages of this kind of content for different clients, and it's fairly simple work, gathering and organizing facts, much like article writing. Often, I would interview an expert on the company's team, or do research in a way they guided me. Or I talked to their customers. To me, it's a fairly easy niche to get into. If you can put a little creative writing into a topic to make it an interesting read, there's so much how-to work out there for you.

Everybody needs content on their website, and they need it refreshed, updated, upgraded, changed. [Ed Gandia](#) told me website refreshes are his favorite projects, where someone has 50 pages and it all needs to be rewritten.

These are the better-quality clients you want to prospect for. These projects pay well.

There are a lot of gigs where some startup wants to pay \$100 for 50 pages of copy. That's not what we're talking about here. Do this for a billion-dollar company, and you'll be paid \$200 to \$300 a page, and more.

**CHRIS:** They have a budget and they respect the writer.

**CAROL:** They know that what you're doing will make a huge difference in getting clients. The writing conveys their authority in their niche and reputation, and it's important stuff. It's not quickie, junk content.

## 14. Articles for Company Magazines

I've discussed writing for company newsletters, but articles for company magazines are also a great niche. There are more of these than you think. For instance, a lot of people don't think of airline magazines as company magazines, but they are. And they pay well and are fun to write for. I've written for the flight magazines for Alaska Airlines and Horizon Airlines.

In some cases, you'll find a masthead with an editor, and the query process is quite similar to pitching a consumer magazine. In other cases, a custom publisher may be involved who puts out the magazine for the company, and you'll need to track down their contacts.

## 15. Business Blogging

This niche is exploding, from big companies like Intuit and American Express, to small companies blogging to stand out from their competitors. At one point, I was earning [\\$5,000 a month](#) just from business blogging clients, including BNET, a big business site run by CBS.

I wrote a whole e-book about how to get into this niche — [\*How to be a Well-Paid Freelance Blogger\*](#). But to give you the two-minute version: Write great content on a blog of your own, in a focused niche, and guest post on the most prominent places you can, blogs you think your prospects might read. Business owners will find you off those guest posts, and then they'll check out your blog.

You can also proactively prospect to find blogging clients. One of the best ways is to research a niche you know well, and find sites that have an abandoned blog — one that was started but isn't being updated. You know they need blogging help!

## 16. Content Strategy

**CHRIS:** These days, businesses want sales and they want leads. But what's changed is now they want engagement, too. About a year ago, a large technology company called me up and said, “I don't want leads on this one. I don't want sales. I want engagement.”

Content strategy is a really interesting niche that businesses are using to tell their stories and build engagement. I haven't done anything in it myself, but I have been studying it, and I worked with a student this morning who — when they read the information I had on becoming a content strategist — decided to become one.

Content strategy refers to the planning, development, and management of information content. We all know that there is a need for high-quality content, like never before, and that puts major pressure on brands.

There is also a need to be efficient, because businesses try to be efficient. Repurposing that content is also part of a strategist's job.

The content strategist is concerned with maximizing reach. If you like the idea of doing content strategy work, the role entails doing content research. You'll put a strategy together for all of the touchpoints, and you'll work mostly in online environments, such as the Web, apps, and social media. You'll be figuring out ways to repurpose their content to keep it cost-effective, and to meet their marketing goal.

You might even play a part in content creation, or in building the site and overseeing the designers. So it's pretty hands-on.

In smaller businesses, you might even be responsible for the deployment and monitoring of this content, and report back about goals reached. That is something you should always offer on your website, so that people understand when they come to you that you have an ROI, or return-on-investment, mindset. That's really important to companies that think more in terms of direct response marketing and response rates.

In my research on this niche, I found a lot of companies looking to hire someone full-time. That's not us, but it does illuminate what's going on out there in the marketplace. If mid-size and large companies are looking to hire people full-time and pay them as much

as \$139,000 — that’s the highest yearly salary I’ve come across — then you know the value is there.

**CAROL:** Recently, I heard from [Greg Ciotti](#), and this is exactly what he talked about. Going from “I’m a blogger,” to “I’m a content strategist” totally transformed how much money he was making.

He realized that, basically, he was doing content strategy but pitching himself as a blogger, even though he was managing the social side of it, and conceptualizing what they should post. He was really serving as a content strategist, but he wasn’t marketing that. Once he started saying that he was a content strategist, his whole pay structure changed.

**CHRIS:** Absolutely. It’s all in the words. I have a list somewhere of all of the things that are real catchphrases for making clients happy, and they include “save time, save money, make money, become more efficient.” They’re what businesses really respond to.

If you’re next to another writer they’re looking at, and that person’s doesn’t say anything about content strategy and yours does, then you’re going to be the one they tip towards.

We’ve got 1.7 million businesses out there in the sweet spot for freelance writers — that are mid-sized and work a lot with freelancers. They’re not too small for us and not too big for us. What you want to target are companies that have the money, know they need you, respect and want you, but they can’t afford to hire somebody full-time for that job. There are lots of opportunities for you to get out there in the marketplace as a content strategist.

## 17. Landing Pages

Landing pages, order pages, and lead generation pages, are my world. They either get leads, or they get orders. Typically, if it’s a lead-gen site, they’ll be shorter, because you don’t want to give away the whole story, only enough to tease them. That’s why lead generation copy is attractive to copywriters who like shorter copy.

When you’re trying to get a sale, it’s a different thing. We’ve all seen landing pages. This is the kind of market where you’ll see a lot of direct-response copy. If you want to understand how to write landing pages, then study sales letters, because, basically, it’s the same thing but applied to a webpage. The pay is very high, unless you work with individual entrepreneurs. They know they need you, but they can’t afford you. So, again, we want to target companies in a higher income range.

How you price things that have to do with lead generation and order generation is through “value” pricing. I mentioned this concept a little earlier — that you can have a range for what you like to get paid for a job, but look deeper at the company and what

they're getting for the work that you're providing. When you do that, you'll probably want to up your rate. I've done that many, many times.

I got \$3,000 for a landing page, one time.

**CAROL:** I was on a call where [Naomi Dunford](#) said she charges \$2,000 for one sales page.

**CHRIS:** Easily. Look at the opportunity in the marketplace, and you can get paid \$75 an hour, at a minimum. There are copywriters I personally know who have hit the \$1 million mark, writing this kind of stuff. It's all about how good you get at direct response copy.

## 18. Direct Mail

This is another one of my favorites, because it's fun and pays really well. I think, with the exception of white papers, this could be one of your highest paydays. You must know direct-response copywriting, because this is an expensive medium. They want to know they're working with somebody who knows how to meet their goal.

There's a high level of creativity in this niche, because you need to come up with concepts, and figure out the pieces. You need to determine the sizes, the folds, and other elements, like stickers or bulky items. Whether it has a live stamp. How much color to use.

All of this is within your control, and it's a lot of fun to do. By the way, direct mail is the most effective marketing, when it goes head-to-head with email. You will hear people in the online world argue that email is bigger and better than direct mail, but it isn't. The response rate is always much lower. Both are good for what they're used for.

In recent years, people have tended to put direct mail down, but, in fact, it's a \$45-billion business. There's an enormous amount of business-to-business work going on, and you may not be aware of all of it. You see what's in your own mailbox. Some local businesses do direct mail — they're the junk-mail guys, so don't think that's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about sophisticated, good-looking stuff. Not junk mail.

Certain B2B niches are big into direct mail -- technology, insurance, finance, real estate, health, and nonprofits, for instance. Given the choice between short and long copy, you'll find that many B2B companies and nonprofits want long copy.

If you do a direct-mail package for someone, the range you'll be paid runs from \$1,000 for a simple one-page letter in a plain envelope, to about \$10,000, for something much more complicated.

## 19. Video Sales Letters

These are the hot, new thing. They are very powerful direct-marketing sales letters, and they are often very long, as much as an hour long. And they're hypnotic, if you've ever encountered one.

I'm an expert direct-response copywriter, I know exactly what they're doing, and it still pulls me in. They have a script that you read online, and at the same time, somebody with a nice, compelling voice is also reading that script to you. So you get it both ways. You're reading it visually, and you're hearing it aurally.

Often, there are no pictures. There are no distractions, just text that's constantly moving off the page. They're often selling something that is emotionally charged, which is why they hook you so quickly. Money and investing products and programs are very common in this niche. But, without a deep background in the investing niche, it's a very tough business to write to.

**CAROL:** But if you have a broadcasting background, where you've been writing things that are read aloud, that would be helpful.

**CHRIS:** People get angry or excited — with video sales letters, they're looking to punch your buttons. If you have an illness, you're clinging to every word, because they seem to be promising a cure. Or it's promising a business opportunity. Everybody wants more money. That's a gigantic market, and most of us are pretty emotional about business and our income.

You can earn around \$10,000 for a video sales letter, and it's pretty common to get royalties, as well. Around three percent is considered normal. Royalties mean you're getting money off the profit, in addition to your \$10,000 fee.

Just like other big pieces in the direct-marketing world, you go back and tweak it and make it better, so you can keep those royalties coming in.

This is the kind of work that millionaire copywriters go after. There are not a lot of them out there, but there are a lot more than people realize. You can offer this to just about any client.

## 20. Lead-Generating Sales Letters

These letters easily bring \$1,000 per page. Most are two pages, so you would be getting around \$2,000 for this type of work. If you get good at them, you can make a higher hourly rate, because they're short. I've been able to earn as much as \$200 an hour in this niche.

CEOs are a common target. Since they don't read, sales letters are always one page, just enough to get the prospect interested. We talked a little bit earlier about lead generation, where you don't want to give everything away. That's why these letters are short. A lot of the \$45 billion-dollar, direct-mail business is just simple sales letters.

## 21. Order-Generating Sales Letters

A lot of the principles of lead-generating sales letters are also true for order-generating letters. The only difference is that most order-generating letters are longer, because they have to make the sale, too. They have a very specific structure — concept, benefit, objections, guarantee — and if the copywriter is really good, they try to get some storytelling in there.

A classic example is the *Wall Street Journal's sales letter*. It's said that brought in \$1 billion.

That particular letter is absolutely loaded with sales psychology. I have deconstructed it in another course that I teach. It has storytelling, a cliffhanger, it appeals to ego and exclusivity, it offers benefits — and has not one but two guarantees.

So, that said, sales letters can earn you from about \$1,000 per page for a short one, to \$4,000 and up, if you have as much as eight pages.

## 22. Social Media Strategy

What a mess social media can be! And whenever there's a mess, it's always good for writers. It used to be low pay and a lot of confusion. Now we have metrics that prove social media produces significant ROI. So, pay has come up to the level of anything else in the direct-marketing world. It's really exciting!

**CAROL:** If you can talk to a business conceptually about how they should do Facebook and Twitter, you're sitting on a gold mine.

**CHRIS:** Right. I had a student who reported back that her client asked for four blog posts, one article, and 24 tweets, and paid \$3,500 for that. And that is ongoing, every month. That's what is so good about social media — it needs to be done on a regular basis.

This is just doing the work. It's not the strategy work. This is just the copywriting work. To do this kind of work, look at the companies that are pure-play Internet companies. All of their business is done online. Examples are companies such as HubSpot and Constant Contact.

You can easily charge \$75 an hour, if you're starting out. It used to be \$30 and \$45 an hour, but not anymore.

## 23. Print Ads

Print ads feel like a dinosaur, but they're still around. There are a lot of them out there, mostly targeted to consumers. Agencies are pretty big on print ads. You could focus on marketing your services to ad agencies, and specialize in print ads.

But there is a lot of ad business in the B2B side that you don't see, because you don't get those industry trade magazines. They're very concept-driven, so they're great if you like conceptualizing.

The pay is great.

A product related to ads is called an advertorial, where there's a lot more copy. It looks like an article and it's designed to get an order. You've seen them. The value on an ad like that would be around \$3,000 to \$5,000. So, print ads are worth looking at.

According to my survey of nearly 400 copywriters responding to 95 different jobs that copywriters can do, for an 8 x 10 print ad including conceptualizing, rates range anywhere from \$500 to more than \$2,500; the largest percentage of respondents indicated a price range between \$1,000 and \$1,099.

## 24. Marketing Emails

**CAROL:** There are some really great marketing email experts out there. One I enjoy learning from is [Ben Settle](#). He's a super-successful email marketer, and he teaches email marketing. He always does crazy subject lines, like this one he recently sent me: "Why you should send threatening and aggressive emails." These subjects are designed to make you *have* to click and read this email, and that's what email marketing is all about.

A lot of times, you need to show some personality to grab people and express your persona, because people are really buying *you*.

**CHRIS:** One of the things people should look at with email is the fact that a lot of smaller businesses have trouble getting their emails through. That's because the ISPs treat big companies like Microsoft and Bank of America differently. So, if you want to give yourself an edge as an email marketer, I would get educated on that aspect and how you can help your client get more emails delivered, because it's a big problem.

## 25. Email Auto-Responders

**CAROL:** Auto-responders are an e-mail series.

**CHRIS:** Again, this is the arena of the entrepreneur. These are the emails you get when you sign up for a newsletter.

Often, there are two or three auto-responders, after you make a purchase, for instance. But in some Internet businesses, you can have many auto-responders, and that's where the bigger money comes in. Those auto-responders have all the responsibility of making a sale that a direct mail package or a landing page does.

So, their value can be very high, depending on what you're selling. My survey showed that people are charging \$251 to \$275 for an auto-responder. And if they do a package of, say, five to seven emails, they're bringing in \$1,200 to \$1,299.

## 26. Lead-Generating Websites

This niche is similar to informational websites. Lead-generating websites are ubiquitous, because the world is split between B2B and B2C.

B2B companies are lead-generating companies. They have to get leads. And getting leads is one of the biggest marketing pains there is in the world of business. Every few years, the cycle for processing leads gets longer. It used to be, you could process a lead in maybe five or six “touchpoints,” as they call it. Now they're saying it's more like 18 or 20. As we continue to evolve in the marketing world, it gets worse.

**CAROL:** But that only means they need more writing done.

**CHRIS:** Yes. They need more writing, and they need more *smart* writing, because there are lots of ways to engage a prospect, get them on the page, and get them involved. Involvement devices include free reports, demos, signups for some giveaway, where you put in your email. What are you giving them for that? A lot of companies are so lame, they don't even have a signup — and we're talking about smart companies.

**CAROL:** I can't tell you how many sites I've been on where I can't even figure out how to contact them if I wanted to. It's incredible.

**CHRIS:** It blows my mind. I have students do research on this when they're working in my program, and usually the number comes in at around 97 percent of the sites don't even have contact info.

## 27. Self-Mailers and Postcards

This is part of the direct-marketing world, although you see a lot of design firms getting this work. Often, they're sending out weak stuff, because they don't have good writers. I wouldn't want somebody to just take stuff that's in their mailbox and think it was worth studying. That's because often, with postcards and self-mailers, the designer leads and the copy comes after. It should be the other way around... the writing comes first, and the design comes second. So, many postcards tend to be a little bit weak.

For a very large self-mailer — 11 x 17 folded down — my survey says \$1,200 to \$1,299.

## 28. Magalogs

These are big, tabloid-style, print, glossy, magazine-like direct mail pieces. They're often 18 pages or so, and they usually have outrageous, sensational copy. They often sell something having to do with health or wealth, topics that appeal to a mass audience. They're very expensive, and they get mailed out in huge, million-prospect drops.

## Q&A

### ***What did you get paid for brand journalism?***

**CAROL:** I'm glad you asked, because I got \$2,000 an article for a package of seven articles. It was an interesting set of topics to work on, all around mid-sized business challenges such as outsourcing manufacturing, green business, and relocating executives, and the stories were fun to do. They were longish — as I recall, they were 1,200 words, so they paid more than \$1 a word. One of the few times I've gotten that rate.

### ***Do you have any more thoughts on where to link into the RFP writing market?***

Most of the people I know who have gotten into it did it as part of a day job, or found themselves knowing about a charity looking to do government contracting. Think about what industries you know that do government contracting, and start learning about the process of becoming a qualified contractor, federally, and in your state. You have to be pre-approved to bid.

***When your ghostwritten blog post is published, what's the protocol about notifying your audience that you wrote it, and sending that link?***

I don't notify my audience that I wrote it, especially if I have signed a non-disclosure agreement and can't say I'm the author. But I might retweet it, especially if that's part of my contract. The clients are usually thrilled to see you spreading it on social media. I've never had anyone object to that. But I don't usually say, "Psst — I really wrote this."

***I've got some questions about writing research reports. How much research? How many meetings?***

I didn't take any in-person meetings to do research reports — it's all online research, and then phone interviews. It was the equivalent of maybe a 40-hour week, but spread over two or three weeks to get those done. It's a lot of online research to find names, track them down, and then call them.

***Where do you find opportunities for annual reports and corporate social responsibility reports?***

The one I had reached out to me. They were looking to hire someone with a business writing and reporting background, and knew my work from the business weekly I had written for as a staffer. But, sometimes, you can get these opportunities through your network. I think they often grow out of existing client relationships. And if you've done business reporting, you're holding a strong card for convincing clients you're right for annual-report gigs.

***Do you need graphic design or Excel ability for those?***

No, I have none of that. I can barely, barely use Excel.

***Do you need to be in the same city as the business for whom you're doing a plan, to meet in person?***

I did go in person for the one I did. Concentrating on local businesses is probably an easier way to get started. In my case, this state transit agency definitely wanted someone they could have in for meetings, and who understood Seattle's civic culture.

***I have written grants, white papers, RFPs, and business plans, but I sometimes think I could market better if I specialized in one of them.***

I don't know. If that were me, I would do a tab on my website for each of those, because they're all really lucrative.

**CHRIS:** Right. I tell people to put in their services page everything they could possibly do. And things they haven't done yet — because you can always get help from a coach.

**CAROL:** I do know people who say, “I'm a case study writer, that's all I do.” If you have more clients than you can handle, to me, that's when you think about saying I'll just specialize in X. Until that day, I would continue to promote and market all of those services. Those are all really great niches.

***In the research reports, did you include the negative as well as the positive? Did you name the people you talked to?***

Heck, yeah. That was exactly what they were hiring me for: To find out the real story.

I absolutely named the people I talked to. These were top-secret, eyes-only reports seen only by that investment firm's clients. And that's how I got people to talk. In some cases, the subject still wouldn't go for it. Then, we maintained their anonymity, describing them as “a former middle manager at X company,” but I couldn't do that too often. They were paying me to get people to go on the record for these reports.

***What range do you think is reasonable for a monthly blog post that takes about an hour to write? Does \$100 seem fair?***

That's what I used to charge when I did a lot of small-business blogging, \$100 a post, at a minimum. But I try to avoid gigs where they only want one blog post a month, because that's not going to do anything. That's not enough frequency for them to drive any traffic.

So, whenever I got that offer, “We'd like you to write one blog post for us,” I would say, “I don't do that, because it's not successful. You need to do a package of four, one a week at a minimum, for several months. That gives you a chance to build an audience.” That was my pitch, and I charged \$500 a month for four posts.

### ***What is direct response copy?***

**CHRIS:** There is a certain language that direct response copywriters learn, and it's all based on psychology. We've learned over time what words work best to motivate people. In fact, there are seven big ones: Greed, guilt, exclusivity, ego, pain, salvation, and fear. These are the things we think about when we sit down and think, "What will make this person act?"

For instance, if I'm trying to sell somebody something that has to do with business, then I will go for greed. They want to make money. So I will really work hard on letting them know in my copy that they can make money, and give them a guarantee. I'll use some great words like "free" and "new."

### ***What is the sales range you consider for the sweet spot, where they're big enough for a budget, too small to hire staffers?***

I tell my coaching students that if the company has fewer than 20 employees, you should probably pass. There is no real strong upper limit. I did give you a figure based upon census data, which was from 2008. But the basic criteria is simply to avoid the small potatoes.

Even if they want you, they can't afford you, so forget it. Go after the companies I call large-small companies, the mid-sized companies. Those are the best ones to prospect.

You can go higher if you want to, but it's harder, so why do it? Just go with the biggest pool of resources. I did, at one time, try to work just with Fortune 500 companies, and even though I had a lot of work with Fortune 500 companies in the past, and it would have given me the leverage I wanted, it didn't work. It was way too hard.

**CAROL:** Interesting. I agree with you. I've had some Fortune 500 company opportunities come my way, but in terms of your own prospecting, I think that sweet spot is really the place to prospect.

**CHRIS:** The Fortune 500 people will find out about you, and they will come to you on their own. That does happen. But to go after them is harder.

### ***Can you quickly explain the difference between case studies and white papers?***

**CAROL:** A white paper is usually more about an issue, and a case study is the story of how a customer used a product or service and how they benefited.

White papers tend to be far more complex, and might examine more aspects of what's going on in the industry. One I did document for a civil employees' union how

workers were treated, and detailed best practices in handling employee firings. It was commissioned because this union was about to have another round of layoffs, and they wanted it handled better by the city. That was the agenda of the white paper.

The topics can vary. But white papers tend to be much longer and more complicated, and involve more research data and interviews than you'll find in a case study. You're more fully fleshing out an issue.

**CHRIS:** Case studies can be a page or two.

**CAROL:** Yes. Case studies are shorter. And simpler. You're usually just talking to one source, maybe two.

### ***What are some books you'd recommend for copywriting, or websites?***

I read Copyblogger a lot, myself.

**CHRIS:** Copyblogger is really good, but here's the short answer for how to learn direct response copy: become a face-to-face salesperson. It's all based upon salesmanship. There's a wonderful book that I absolutely love, *Unlimited Selling Power: How to Master Hypnotic Selling Skills*, by Moine and Lloyd. Even though they're talking about selling face-to-face, if you read it, you'll see it's really about copywriting, too.

It's a great way to learn the principles of copywriting or salesmanship, and also see how they use copywriting to make it all come alive. It's fantastic.

### ***What is the minimal amount to charge for a rewrite, per page? I know it should vary by difficulty and length, but do you have a minimum figure for self-respecting copywriters?***

**CAROL:** I don't. Every client is so different. I've had situations where I did website rewrites for a \$100 a page, because it was a client I loved, I could tell it would be easy, and I still made \$100 an hour. It depends on so many factors.

**CHRIS:** Well, it depends on a lot of things. How long is the page? How complicated is the subject matter that you're writing about?

Because you could be writing about some kind of technology that you need to understand, which is a lot more involved than writing for somebody who's a coach. But I do have an answer for that in my survey. It has 95 questions that copywriters answer, and one of them is, "What do you charge for a home page?" and "What do you charge for the other pages on a website?"

**CAROL:** My approach has always been to simply charge more every time. I just worry about competing with my own past price, and making the next price better. I found that works really well for me. I ended up making good rates over time. Just keep going up.

**CHRIS:** Right. And I always kept track. In the early years, I had a spreadsheet and kept track of every job I did, and know exactly how much I made on every job. I was able to identify one client who was giving me a lot of work, and I thought he was a good client, but the hourly rate I was getting was so much lower than my other clients, I had to get rid of him.

**CAROL:** Right. The thing to do is analyze the hourly rate you're making, and if you didn't make a good hourly rate, next time you've got to charge more. It's that simple.

***What's the best way to learn about the metrics, to measure how well your copy is working for the customer?***

I feel that's gotten easier with the Internet. A lot of times, if you're clicking to a unique landing page, they have the data from Google Analytics, or whatever they use, on how many clicks your landing page got them.

**CHRIS:** That's true. I don't measure my copywriting when I'm working for clients. But I make sure I have a system that I follow when I finish a job. I don't put the job away. The job is not finished until I get a sample, and until I get information on how well that work did, so I can turn it into a case study.

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