

Proven approaches to make more money as a freelance writer!

How to make more money as a freelance writer!

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How to make *MORE* money as a freelance writer!
By David Geer

**An assortment of articles and step-by-step, practical advice *with* market-
locating resources, too!**

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Introduction

Six years ago, I was an employee with a regular job—for the last time. Why did I take the risk, take the plunge and go it alone as a technology writer start-up company? The drivers for me were job security, necessity and desire.

I was working as a technician for an ISP. I also wrote for a company newsletter, the technical support database, and a technical training manual while there.

Some months after another company bought us out, we were all laid off. It was difficult to find another technology job, and nearly impossible to find one that paid a living wage.

I had been writing online and for a small magazine on the side in addition to my writing at work. When I got laid off, I got by on my retirement investments, savings and severance pay, and started proposing articles to consumer magazines, business magazines, trade publications, websites and online publications that I thought would pay.

I was writing mostly about technology because of my previous work, which I had enjoyed. This eventually helped to establish me as an expert technology writer.

As time went by, I was increasingly determined to make a living as a full-time freelance writer. I also had to pay the bills, and the longer I was off work, the harder it would be to be re-employed.

The need for income, the desire to be my own guarantee of steady work, and all the pride and emotional rewards of business ownership kept me going. I'd say that there was definitely a strong push and pull going on, moving me in the direction of independent business success.

There are many advantages to this way of life, including:

- * Cutting out the middleman. There is one paycheck and it goes to me. What I earn I get. After taking care of expenses, the rest is mine.

- * Overtime whenever I want it. If I want to make more, I can decide to work longer. If I don't have additional work, that overtime can be spent finding it, and then doing it.

- * Feeling more secure and in control of my destiny. I can work weekends or not, take off a little early or work late. I can take a vacation or take a working vacation that pays for itself (work a little, play a little). So long as the customer is taken care of, all is well.

* The pride and power of business ownership. I and those around me respect it as an accomplishment. Friends admire it as a way of life.

Disadvantages?

There are none. I have no regrets. I miss nothing about being an employee. Believe me, if there were any disadvantages, this would be my chance to share them with someone who might listen and care, and I'd gladly tell you.

Others may feel differently, complaining about:

Not feeling as secure as they would in a regular job

Not being able to count on the same paycheck at the same time every given period.

Having to pay their own medical premiums

Not me. I'm where I want to be and well on my way to more of the same.

Here are some more advantages:

* I can introduce my thoughts and my talents to hundreds of thousands of readers.

* I can go to Google anywhere, anytime and type in my name and produce samples (also called clips or clippings) of over a hundred articles, as well as other references to my work.

* Through my work I provide important input, I make a difference.

The only difficult thing about my profession is that no matter how hard or long I work, or how established I get, some risk will always be there. But, I assume, expect and accept that part of it, so I still have no complaints.

Here's Some More Background and Tips to Help You Along.

Having a Web presence is an important part of self-marketing. My most recent Web design was outsourced to Pamela Sinclair, who did a wonderful job. I wrote the content and she provided an appealing, professional design. I'm very pleased.

I started out designing my own site, working from a template and design done by my friend, Carl Rief. I picked up skills and code from him, from others I had worked with at the ISP job, off the Web and by using Arachnophilia's HTML (version 4) editor.

All other tech knowledge I got from being a technician (DSL, routers, simple business networking, etc), from working on my home network and on friends' computers, by reading and through personal interest.

People find my site through Google, online business directories and the Open Directory Project. Other sites have linked to my site. I proactively contact people for work.

As part of assessing my skills, they often visit my site, which is linked in my e-mail signature. People find me through online articles or personal recommendations. I have also been quoted in a few books on writing.

Some of my articles about writing have been used in college coursework as well. Others have quoted me online or used my articles to promote their corporations.

My top tips are:

- * Plan it – If I had it to do over, I'd save a great deal more, get a business loan or grant, then go into business full-time when I had enough money to live and work on for three to four years.

- * Do it – If you never start, you never succeed.

- * Take Risks – Use your best judgment and take the necessary risks.

- * Persevere – This gets you through when you take the wrong risks and suffer loss.

Expect to learn more by doing than by anything else. If you start out knowing nothing about your new profession, you are just about guaranteed all the failure and humiliation that comes with not knowing what you're doing.

But, if you persevere, you will learn, and you will succeed. You can't really learn what you need to know to succeed except by failing repeatedly in the attempt.

So, who am I and why should I be telling you all this and more about how to make more money from freelance writing?

Well, I'm David Geer. I've published about 300 articles and projects in six years, written for large and small business including Fortune 500 companies. I've increased my income every year by learning how to do just what I'm going to tell you how to do: make more dough with your words.

In addition to the big companies, which I can't name due to NDAs (Non-Disclosure Agreements), I have written for the following publications over the past six years (and this is hardly exhaustive):

Alaska Business Monthly
 America's Network
 Byte.com
 ComputerBits
 Computerworld
 ConsumerSearch
 Crain's Cleveland Business
 CSO (Chief Security Officer)
 Data Center Management
 Digital Magazine News
 Distributed Systems Online
 Government Security News
 HGTVPro.com
 Hostingtech
 IEEE Computer magazine
 Information Security Magazine
 ITWorld.com
 Lakestyle
 Laptop
 MobilePipeline
 Nuts & Volts
 ProAV
 Servo Magazine
 Smart Computing
 Security Management Practices
 SecurityPipeline
 TechEdge
 Technical Support
 TechWorld.com (UK)
 TeraData
 The ACUTA Journal
 The Engineering News-Record
 The Enterprise Open-Source Journal
 The Hosting Standard (Canada)
 UpstreamCIO
 VARBusiness
 Voir Dire
 Wireless Business & Technology

And, while you could argue that I've increased my income by writing for larger and larger numbers of publications and bigger and bigger companies, the fact is I've learned how to get larger sums from the same numbers of clients and publications, big or small.

When I first started writing, I made pennies per word and never an hourly rate. Today, I make up to \$2-per-word and often an hourly rate of \$75-per-hour.

I learned the hard way what works and what doesn't. And I've put it down in words for you, giving you a path to follow, perhaps even a short cut to the top!

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#21—Subtract These Activities from Your Day (To Add Income to Your Career)

The following list includes items that may be taking up space throughout your workday, but probably aren't generating any income. Take these things away and you'll have more time to practice good writing habits that will bring in the moola!

1. Worry.

Any kind of worry, when taken to extreme, can be debilitating. It doesn't have to be a work-related worry at all. The kids may be sick, the dog may be sick, may be the dog bit the kids, or may be even the kids bit the dog!

If you're a worrier then you know you don't even need something plausible to worry about, as pretty much anything will do. Worry uses up the space in your head that should be filled with creative activity.

Worry is to creativity what the California forest fire of 1993 was to what used to be trees. Put it out! Good. Now get on with your work.

Having trouble? Hold on. There are many ways to get your worries or worrying habit to subside long enough to get some work done. Meditation is a good place to start.

Lean back in your chair or on the couch and close your eyes. Lay your hands at your side and chant with me, "Publish...publish...publish..." I never liked "ohm" anyway and besides, perhaps you can subliminally bring about your publishing success!

2. Checking up on queries or manuscripts too often, too soon or both.

Not only is this a time sink but it can drive income away. If you're a pest, you can be replaced. Have faith in your work and just keep creating and forwarding new queries to their appropriate destinations as fast as you can.

Get a move on those assignments too. Good work will get you that return call or e-mail you are looking for, and some dough.

You may be spending enough time each year checking up on queries and submissions to have completed one paying assignment. Would you rather have the money or the response that, "No, we haven't gotten to it yet, and, boy, you sure are a pest!"

3. Chatting by e-mail, phone...and chat!

Socializing can be addictive. If you were someone's employee you'd be concerned about not letting them down or else not getting paid. You are your boss and the source of your income. Don't let yourself down; get off the phone (or other means of communication) and get writing!

4. Procrastination, from a different angle

Writers put off generating ideas, querying, marketing and writing for a number of reasons, two of which in particular come to mind.

One is the fear of rejection or failure. Actually the two are combined in our line of work. Expectations of failure and rejection can bring on the fight or flight syndrome.

That can cause us to take flight away from that which we fear, namely that risky query letter or finished assignment that could bring rejection just as easily as it could generate a nice, fat check.

Withhold judgement and fear about the future. Fear won't keep that rejection from hurting if it does come, and it certainly won't pay the bills.

Another reason for procrastination is the kind of overconfidence that impaired the hare in his race with the tortoise. If you think financial success as a writer is a sure thing because "you think you're all that", you probably need to think again, get humble and get to work.

Your head may be in the clouds, but that blank piece of paper or that blank computer screen is still waiting for you here back on earth.

One last pointer – add to this list of things you should take away, and create a list of things you should add or continue doing. Forgive me for saying it, but the money will start to add up!

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#22—Lessons from a Lyricist on Successfully Writing Prose

I was a songwriter before becoming a freelance writer. I worked hard to learn my craft. I was set on writing a hit song.

After several years, the pain and defeat of failure as a commercial songwriter led me to give up my pursuit, and kept me away from writing for a while.

However, the experience taught me lessons about writing, and the challenges of writing as a business. It gave me perspective. What I learned from song writing eventually helped to make me a better prose writer when I became a freelancer.

Lessons About Writing - First, I learned that good lyric writing is not simply singable poetry. Good lyrics are smooth, rhythmic and symmetrical, yet clear, concise and conversational. The words and phrases are carefully selected to be easily sung.

This way, the artist won't sound tongue-tied, and listeners can readily (usually) sing along. Song lyrics should flow. Good lyrics employ a subtle balance of literary tools like alliteration to entice listeners and draw them in.

All these things are applicable to nonfiction writing. Enjoyable prose is made of these traits. Easy reading, clear communication, and entertainment are qualities of good nonfiction as well as good songs.

Lessons About the Business of Writing - In commercial song writing, the rejection comes always or almost always and is often more cruel. (Somehow music executives don't have a problem telling you that your work sucks.)

You have to persevere longer in song writing with less to show for it to even get anywhere, and the anywhere you get to is usually still nowhere.

Failure as a commercial songwriter gave me a perspective that has been invaluable. It is so much easier to be a truly successful, financially self-supporting freelance writer than to be a financially viable songwriter.

Don't be taken aback; freelancing isn't easy and I don't discount the work that others have done. But, songwriters number in the hundreds of millions. Many write hundreds of songs a year.

They must submit entirely on spec and with a much greater up-front expense in the form of demo recording and mailing costs. All this to have a chance at filling a space for a song on an album, a space that opens up much less often than in magazines for freelancers.

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