

# GETTING THE GIG



Freelance Writer's



**Pitch  
Clinic**

With Linda Formichelli  
& Carol Tice

How Pitch Clinic  
Helped 11 Writers  
Land Great New Clients—  
And Get Paid (Way!) More

The Freelance Writer's



With Carol Tice & Linda Formichelli

## GETTING THE GIG

### How Pitch Clinic Helped 11 Writers Land Great New Clients—And Earn (Way) More

Ever sent a query letter off—and never heard a peep back? We've been there!

Busy editors rarely give any feedback if they aren't planning to assign you an article, and marketing managers just pass you up if your letter of introduction doesn't grab them.

So how can you improve, and learn to create pitch letters that get you great gigs? That's where [Pitch Clinic](#) comes in.

In Spring 2015, we held a session of Pitch Clinic that featured feedback from three working magazine editors, and trainings that cover ALL the fundamentals of what makes a terrific pitch. We made this class a crazy offer: If they did ALL the class homework, including sending 8 pitches in

the month after class in our Pitch Challenge, we'd refund their entire class fee!

Well, that lit a fire under these students. They pitched their brains out...and the results blew our minds! Below we've interviewed just a few of the many students, based all over the world, who saw great things happen from what they learned in Pitch Clinic.

## **New writer scores \$2,000—per week.**

*Cynthia Bowman, Spain*



**You're the student who sent out like a million pitches during the 4-Week Pitch Challenge we held after Pitch Clinic, right?**

I find them really fun. I don't know why, though. I think it's a brainstorming thing. I'm

meeting a new person, trying to solve their problems. I almost like the aspect of getting the work. It's fun to put your ideas out there and get feedback like "Okay, we'd like to hire you."

**And you had a bunch of successes.**

I sold my story to *Celtic Life* right away.

I took a pitch I originally sent to *Furniture World* and pitched it to another pub. They contacted me right away, and I'm now under contract with them for as many articles as I'd like to do for their website. Great client, beautiful website, and I get \$150 for 500-900 word posts on a topic I know well—although if I'm closer to 800-900 words, I can get approval for \$250.

I sent another LOI to a business, and they wanted me full time as writer

and editorial content manager/editor...and although the money was great, I don't want to report to someone full time, so I declined.

Right now, thanks to Pitch Clinic, I went from getting started without a clue to making about \$2,000 a week from a handful of clients, producing seven to eight articles per week. Throw in the occasional monthly magazine job as a cherry on top and I'm a happy camper.

This morning I got two more offers and I looked at my husband and said, "I cannot accept any more work." I mean, I have two contracts which require around three or four stories a week, and that alone is probably \$1,500 a week.

### **High-class problem.**

I tell you, I'm so excited. I've gone from making like a \$100 for an article to saying, "Oh, I can make \$2,000 this week if I want," but I've got to really think and slow down now, because I've got to commit to these clients who expect steady work from me.

**Wow. So what made you decide to sign up for Pitch Clinic? I know you're kind of a boot-strapper, do-it-yourself kind of person, so why did you sign up for a class?**

I've read yours and Carol's blog quite a bit, so I loved getting your emails, and when your email came in about Pitch Clinic I thought, "Well,

this is kind of cool, because I have no idea how to pitch magazines.” I didn’t even conceive that you pitch magazines.

What I love the most is, not only have I learned to pitch a magazine, I’ve taken your skills of pitching to a magazine or writing a letter of introduction, and I can get work even if it doesn’t involve these skills.

### **What do you mean?**

Well, if I come across a blogging job ad on Problogger, I don’t send them the resume and the cover letter that they request. I send them a pitch.

I investigate, I go to their website, I look into what they’re doing, and instead of just giving them a resume, I give them a few suggestions.

### **And it’s worked?**

It’s worked really well.

### **How did you like working with our editor-instructors?**

Amelia from *Health* magazine is so cute. I’ll never forget, when she saw my first pitch, she said, “Oh, my gosh. As an editor, I could never hire you because I’d be afraid you’d go off the rails.” And I loved those words, “going off the rails.” That was one of my biggest challenges, because I have so many ideas and I like to work hard...I like to show people, “Look

at all the stuff I found.”

**It’s hard to not want to cram all your research into there. But I have to say our editors are really, really nice, but they’re not afraid to tell it like it is.**

Yes.

**Did Pitch Clinic help you in terms of learning how to refine an idea or make it salable?**

Yes. Big time. I recently saw a news release on *National Geographic* becoming the most followed brand on social media. I normally hear that and I think, “That’s cool. I’ll put that on Facebook.” But now after going through Pitch Clinic, I’m thinking, “Well, how can I convert that into a story?”

**Do you have advice for other writers who want to do as well as you have?**

You have to commit. I saw this in Pitch Clinic: I loved the community we built, and there were really talented writers there who are going to do well...but there were quite a few people who had a lot of resistance. “Oh, really? I have to interview people just for...” Or people keeping score: “Well if I put this in, how much do I get out of it?” and “How long is this going to take me?”

If you're going to sign up for Pitch Clinic and if you want to be a writer, you have to commit. You have to put yourself out there, and you just have to have faith that you're not going to get burned, people aren't going to rip you off. You're going to get paid, and you just have to put the work in to get it back.

So that would be my advice: Put your commitment in. Put the time. I mean, you've got to pay your dues.

## **From \$50 to a book deal—in India.**

*Rohi Shetty, Pune, India*



**Tell us a little bit about your background, Rohi.**

I'm an MD—I graduated in 1991. I worked for seven years as a doctor. After that I joined a meditation center, and stayed there for 15 years.

I've always been interested in writing, and after I came back from the center in 2007, my parents were ill, and I decided writing was the best thing I can do, to write about meditation and spirituality. I thought it was a natural extension of meditation and my medical practice. For the last five years I've been writing on and off, mostly nonfiction articles for websites. I've not been really consistent.

I had a couple of clients who wanted me to edit their books—I've edited 5 books. I did write through Suite 101, and got some money out of that...about \$50.

Maybe it's lack of confidence, or fear of rejection, but I hadn't really pitched any article ideas to anyone before. I used to write for a marketplace where people can come on and buy your idea. I did well

there, but then I decided to start my own blog. Most of my past clients were just through friends, personal referrals.

### **How did you decide to take Pitch Clinic?**

Actually, I had planned to take a vacation for a month to meditate and think about what I wanted to do...and then I saw the irresistible refund offer for Pitch Clinic and decided to do it, because I thought it was a great way to be accountable. So I postponed my vacation.

### **What were the highlights of Pitch Clinic for you?**

I liked the built-in accountability. Second, it had really short, specific deadlines, with specific assignments. It has three stages—I like that a lot. I liked the flow and the process: There's an idea, then a news hook, which market to pitch it to, and then you describe it, and then you get feedback. That was very inspiring and gave me a lot of insight about how this should be done. I'd read a lot about pitching, but somehow I didn't really get it until I went through this course. There's a checklist, where you do it step-by-step.

I started pitching in a way I'd not understood before. The best thing about Pitch Clinic is it made me take action. One light bulb moment was your emphasis on making sure there's a news hook in the article. I'd never got that before, the idea that you need to make the editor want to publish your article right away. I found it's not as difficult as I thought it

would be to develop news hooks, once I learned.

Another part I learned is to find the publication first, and then design a query for it, after studying the publication. That's very useful. Studying the pub does give you ideas—you read two or three issues and it gives you ideas on what to write about, and what they've published, so it increases your chances of acceptance.

I was a very inconsistent writer before this class, partly because of lack of ideas. It's also just lack of initiative, and lack of strong processes, which I got a clear idea of in Pitch Clinic.

**If you had to choose one top highlight of Pitch Clinic, what would it be?**

You get really specific feedback. And being able to read all the *other* ideas by the other students, and the feedback they got—that was one of the biggest benefits of the course.

Also, to get a chance to interact with you and Linda... you exemplify the values I admire: resourcefulness, dedication, humor, credibility. It's like getting one-on-one mentorship from you.

**What happened with your writing as a result of this class?**

Two of my pitches were accepted! I also plan to use the lessons I learned

in Pitch Clinic to pitch guest blogging.

I did get a lot of confidence on the first two pitches I did in the pitch challenge—and my first pitch was accepted. I did get stuck after the fourth pitch for a couple days, and then I started reading all the posts again to get some inspiration. Then I did some investigation and found someone to send an LOI to, and got going again.

Getting the two assignments was a big boost.

**Tell us more about the two assignments you got out of the pitch challenge.**

The first one was to a naturopathy magazine, on how to lose weight without losing your peace of mind. I went and met the editor personally, and he said he wanted me to send the whole article, and he accepted it. While I was there, I pitched another idea to him.

My second pitch was to a health and wellness website in India. I'd already submitted several articles to him which were accepted. I'll be meeting with him next week.

One LOI was to the head of the institute where I used to work, and he responded and gave me the opportunity to edit and translate a book! My original proposal was to do website copy. It's a very good project, on a topic I enjoy. I'm writing and editing that now.

Then, I'll be meeting with this website owner and start working on my blog, and plan to restart [my blogging] and get to the stage where I can start guest blogging—that's where I'll be using what I learned in Pitch Clinic.

## **A regular gig for \$1,000 an article—goodbye, content mills!**

*Debbie Sullivan Reslock, Evergreen, CO*



**Tell us a bit about your background as a writer, prior to taking Pitch Clinic.**

I've written several articles for the *Denver Post*. I have a degree in urban planning and an MBA, plus an undergraduate degree in journalism. I worked my career in planning and business, but always wanted to write. I was at a place in my life last year where I thought I could give it my best shot to do freelancing, and I found Demand Studios. I only did three articles for them, and that's how I found Carol. Somehow, on the Internet I came across her saying, "You don't have to write for content mills."

**Talk about the classes you've taken before, and what got you interested in Pitch Clinic.**

I joined Freelance Writers Den, did the bootcamps, and tried to absorb as much as I could. There is so much on the Internet, and this was the first time I felt I found something legitimate. I had taken Linda's Write for Magazines class, the email version. That was really useful, but when I

saw Pitch Clinic—every once in a while I'd think, "I could write an article" about some general topic. I would haphazardly send a query to some major publication. I did one because I play golf, to *Golf* magazine, saying, "I could write about golf, would you like me to do that?"

I really felt like I had a good comfort level with your group, being in the Den for a year. But the refund offer played into it for me. I was hesitant to spend that kind of money and not come away with something. That made it feel risk-free, from my side.

**What did you discover to improve your pitching process in Pitch Clinic?**

So much. It's the kind of thing where you don't know what you don't know. With Pitch Clinic, I realized these editors don't know me and have no idea if I can write. And I'm giving them no indication in my query. It just clicked, what I have to do. It's a huge risk that editor is taking, and I had no idea how many queries they get!

**What were some of the most important things you learned in the class?**

I think narrowing down the focus of the topic. I was still generating ideas that were way too broad, and hadn't really thought about them enough. I learned in the initial part of the class to really think through what you'd be writing about, who'd care about that, and who would you

interview.

I was hesitant to do interviews—I don't want to bother anybody when I don't have the assignment. But as you taught us, I found people love to talk. I didn't have anybody turn me down. First, doing a story on walking groups, I talked to a doctor, and a therapist from Walk Therapy...they were all happy to talk. I got over the interview phobia hump. That made a big difference, actually showing I could get quotes and talk to people.

Before Pitch Clinic, I had no idea how to do an LOI, and I was curious how to approach trade magazines. That was a great experience, to understand how you crack that market. Also learning how to find an editor—in the past I always just sent my terrible queries to editor@magazine.com.

### **What was your biggest writing challenge?**

Choosing the topic. Even when I thought I'd narrowed it down, the Pitch Clinic editors would say, "It's too broad." Learning you really have to narrow it down, and then look at it again, and make a tighter focus. That, and getting over the fear of picking up the phone and interviewing.

Once I took the Pitch Clinic training I started seeing ideas everywhere. I read the newspaper, and three things would spin out of it. That was solely from Pitch Clinic, just seeing ideas everywhere. Some, I would go through the process and see they'd work, and some you find out, no,

that wouldn't go anywhere.

### **How did you do in the 4-Week Pitch Challenge after the class?**

It was hard, sending 8 pitches. This was one of the hardest classes I think I've ever taken, but I'm glad it was set up the way it was. It's easy when you're starting out and don't have a lot of confidence to find other things to do, and you never send that query out.

I pitched the local magazine here in Denver. Got a great response on the trades I pitched. Not a commitment, but a positive response—they wanted to think about it and get back with me. When you get a response, that feels like a positive thing.

### **What do you think was the key ingredient in Pitch Clinic that made it work for you?**

I'd spent a lot of time reading and taking webinars, and getting overwhelmed. But it can stop you from actually writing. In Pitch Clinic, you made us *write*. And it was tough. Doing the eight pitches, there were times when I thought, "I'm not going to be able to do this. Five, maybe." It's hard work! I never thought writing would be easy, but that was an eye-opener, of what it takes. You've got to put hours in. It doesn't come easy at this stage.

I'd never written a headline, ever. I never wrote subheads. That made

such a difference. Even thinking up the subject line you're writing in the email. What would make someone open up that email? This is your audition—it totally is. You're showing editors, "This is what I would do."

**Tell us about what happened with the pitches you wrote in the pitch challenge.**

I wrote an LOI to a national trade publication for people who deal with long-term care and assisted living facilities. That got an immediate response from the editor, saying it was one of the best pitches she'd ever seen! I was shocked I got a response, and one that quick. She just loved the ideas—I had three ideas I'd fleshed out a bit, and then asked if I could write one of them for her.

They pay \$1,000 an article, which to me was like, "Oh my gosh. I can do this!" I wouldn't have gotten that before. The editor said she never gets pitches like mine—she gets broad ideas. "You really thought this through," she said. I had looked at past issues, and she said, "I could tell you really had, because you were writing like we write, and the style of your pitch matched the magazine." She said sometimes she gets queries that say, "I've read your pub," and she knows they haven't. They propose something the magazine ran a month ago.

It wasn't just empty flattery. She could tell I had actually done my homework. We talked a few more times and she asked if I'd like to write for them regularly. I'm going to write every month and start out with

\$1,000 a month!

After that happened, I thought, “This is the way for me to go. Not beating my head trying to get into *Oprah*.”

Another query I did in Pitch Clinic was for a local mag in Denver—*5280 Magazine*. I got a response. It took them two or three weeks, but they are considering my piece on urban walking groups. So I got interest.

I had a response from an LOI too, from a business I offered website help to. The response I got was, “Boy do we agree with you! We’re reworking it.” They said they’d keep my name for the future. This is what makes freelance writing into a business, is to get some regular clients like that, and build from there.

### **How did Pitch Clinic compare to other classes you’ve taken?**

This was definitely the best. It’s very hands-on. Sometimes you feel doing things online, there’s a big disconnect between you and the instructors. With all your question-and-answer calls, and the editors, and Carol and Linda, it was REAL. It was real people reading what you’re writing, and giving really good feedback. I thought it was really fair—I always appreciated the criticism.

It’s a simulated editorial environment. Because you’re not going to write something and have people say, “This is amazing.” I’d look at the draft

and think, “You’re right, I forgot that. I didn’t understand that. I didn’t make that connection.”

What I appreciated most was an instructor saying, “Nope, you’re not there yet. Keep trying again.”

### **How are you moving forward with your writing since Pitch Clinic?**

I am committed to at least starting sending two well-thought-out queries a week. I feel like I’ve gotten a real boost here, and I want to get some traction and keep it going. Having to do eight was really a challenge for me, but it showed me I could do this. You have to push yourself and it’s not easy.

I’m being disciplined on doing that, and trying to make sure I’ve researched the publication enough and the idea is honed down enough. You’ve got to give them the best you have, because the odds are against you. You have to shine with everything you put out there.

It created a habit of pitching. If you’d asked for two or four, I don’t think that would have pushed us enough.

**Any advice for writers looking to develop that pitching habit?**

Take Pitch Clinic—really. You don't learn in a vacuum. If you don't have the interaction like we had in Pitch Clinic, reading articles or listening to webinars, you're going to keep doing it wrong.

## **A writer learns to “show, not tell”—and lands her first assignment in a print magazine.**

*Christine Yu, Brooklyn, NY*



**Tell us a little bit about your freelance writing career up until Pitch Clinic.**

I'd say that it's probably only in the last year or two that I've decided to really try to pursue freelance writing. Prior to that, I freelanced in consulting, providing consulting work primarily to non-profit organizations. I used to do a lot of grant writing, and report writing, and that type of thing, but I wanted to focus more on health, fitness, and wellness work.

So in just the last two years or so I have started to try to do that more—and it's more of a side thing, for sure. I have some clients that I work with on a regular basis, but it's primarily online markets...some that pay okay, some that don't necessarily pay that great, but I figure it's a good foot in the door.

And I got lazy in the last year. In terms of marketing, I have editors that I work with that come to me with assignments, and obviously, that's really great and easy—but that often meant I wasn't really expanding the markets that I was pitching to. So it was stagnating a little bit.

I tend to have trouble with story idea generation and coming up with a good, interesting angle and a great news hook. So I wanted to do Pitch Clinic to challenge myself because I knew if I want to do this, I have to do this.

### **Did you look at any other classes?**

I looked at a couple others, like “30 Pitches in 30 Days” or something like that. It’s probably two things that made me choose Pitch Clinic: One was that you were involving actual editors as instructors to give feedback, and that was something that was very attractive to me in terms of being able to get into their mind and see how they look at stories and queries, and what weaknesses they see.

And it was mind opening seeing how many different topics, and news stories, and studies they all are aware of. That made me realize, wow, there’s a lot of work that needs to happen to put together a really great pitch that’s going to get their attention.

And honestly, the other thing was the money-back guarantee. It definitely put my bum to the fire to keep me accountable to doing it because my husband’s like, “If you’re going to do it, you’re getting your money back.” So that was definitely an attractive feature.

**What was the biggest challenge for you in learning how to write a query when you came to the class?**

Like I said, part of it was molding the story as far as the idea itself...so that it wasn't a *topic*, it was a *story idea* with a really unique angle that was timely and interesting. The packaging was something else I feel like I thought about a lot more during the course than I had previously.

And then, I think, coming up with a headline that really encapsulated the idea. Also, coming right out and not burying the idea within my lede...I think that took me a little while to get.

**Did the instructors help you with that aspect?**

I think so. There was one point when I was just going back and forth with Carol. In my mind, it was super clear what I was trying to write about, and when Carol was reading, she said, "I don't get it." And I was like, "Oh!" Because obviously I needed to step out of my own head and make sure that I am conveying my idea a lot clearer from the beginning.

**And you completed the 4-Week Pitch Challenge, sending eight different pitches in four weeks. Have you ever pitched that much before?**

No. Never. It was very stressful. I wanted to get it done, and if I was going to do it, I wanted to do it well. I didn't want to just half-ass it.

And in addition to the idea that I worked on during the class, I think I had maybe three more fleshed-out article ideas. So it was nailing down my sources that was the challenge. It took almost a month to nail down one of my sources, and then I had to make sure everything came together the way I envisioned it.

**Right, and we really did push back on a few people who were half-assing it, and made them redo things. So I was wondering if taking the time and effort to put out *really good* queries...did you see a difference in the responses you were getting?**

Oh, definitely. I would say that that's probably one of the biggest differences I've seen.

**What was the most surprising thing you learned from Pitch Clinic?**

The whole process that goes into forming the story idea and how you play with it to come up with different angles and different ways to present that information. It opens up a lot of doors, instead of just being like, "5 ways you can X." You need to think about different ways you can present that same information, but in a totally new and innovative way that hasn't been done before.

It was really helpful having someone like Amelia [the Associate Editor at *Health* magazine], who is an editor in the niche I'm interested in—and

seeing how she thinks about the different ideas and what she's heard a million times before, what she hasn't, what she's looking for, and that type of thing.

**Right, and you sold an article during the challenge to *Triathlete* magazine. Can you tell us a little bit about that?**

This pitch was on how you can incorporate yoga into your training routine to help maximize performance...the idea being that your yoga practice actually needs to change during your training cycle as much as your swim, bike, and run training does. It was an idea that I actually had before Pitch Clinic, and I'd written it up prior to this clinic and had sent it out to maybe two different places.

I never heard anything back, but then after Pitch Clinic, I reworked it. I did more in terms of "showing, not telling," and sent it off to *Triathlete* magazine. I heard back within two days from the editor there, who was interested in running it.

This will be my first print clip, which I'm very excited about. I'd been trying and trying to break into print prior to Pitch Clinic.

**Was the pay good?**

I think it's \$200 for 400 words. Hopefully it will be a good entrée with them and their larger family of publications as well.

### **Any other successes from Pitch Clinic?**

I recently received an assignment from *Runner's World* that was the result of a conversation that started from one of the pitches I sent to the editor as part of the Pitch Clinic challenge.

### **Has your experience in Pitch Clinic changed how you're going to work from now on?**

Definitely. I'll be a lot more deliberate in how I put together my pitches, really making sure that I put together something that is interesting, and newsworthy, and that's going to catch the editor's eye. I'll also really think about the packaging.

### **Do you have advice for other writers who want to have success with their pitches?**

You can come up with a really interesting idea—or what you think is a really interesting idea—but I think a lot of it, which I learned from Pitch Clinic, is really digging into it. It's doing the pre-interviews. It's doing some of the research to really make sure that there's a story there...and yeah, it's a pain in the neck because you're investing all this time and energy into doing it.

But even if you're writing up just a short little paragraph or something

as part of an LOI [Letter of Introduction], it makes the idea so much stronger because you have an idea of what you want to write about, and how you envision it going forward—and I think that comes across for the editor as they're reading it.

**Is there anything else you wanted to let us know?**

Yes. I also just heard back from the editor at *The Training Edge*, which is a custom publication. I sent them an LOI as part of one of my eight pitches. The editor is keeping my ideas in mind for their next round, but he offered me some smaller assignments to see how it goes.

## **\$150 per blog post, writing part time.**

*Vanessa Rombaut, Ghent, Belgium*



**Tell us a bit about your background and your writing.**

I was doing master's degree long distance, and I'd been looking into writing since the beginning of the year. I picked up a small gig writing for the city of Ghent last year—it just came my way. So I'd been doing it for a year, but wasn't focused on it until 2015.

I'd sent full articles: "Here's my full article, do you want it?" I'm embarrassed to say that now! It didn't yield any results for me.

**How did you find out about Pitch Clinic, and why did it appeal to you?**

I became friends with a bunch of expat freelance writers here in Ghent, and asked one of them, "I've just written an article, should I send this to a magazine?" She said, "You need to pitch a magazine first," and she recommended Linda's *Query Letters That Rock* book. Then I saw you were going to do Pitch Clinic, and that looked really interesting.

I had this idea that I'm going to be a creative writer and sell fiction, but I've got kids' mouths to feed, and a mortgage to pay. This Canadian

woman said she wrote for agriculture trade pubs, and I thought maybe this is something I could do. I took one pro writing class 10 years ago in my bachelor's degree, for feature writing and how to write AP Style. So I had a fair idea how to write a feature. But I knew nothing about pitching.

**Were there other classes you compared Pitch Clinic to before deciding to take it?**

I didn't really look around. I did need to think about it. You wonder, "Are these people dodgy?" But looking at your websites, I saw it looked legitimate, and went for it.

**How did Pitch Clinic help you understand the world of pitching magazines?**

At first, I went through every forum post I could find, seeing how other people did it. I studied creative writing, and taking English Lit gets you thinking you have to write the perfect product the first time! So it helped to see the process, and all the rewriting going on.

I was coming up with ideas about things that happened in my pregnancy, and personal essay ideas. I didn't have news hooks. I had prepped myself a bit with idea generation—a lot of people I saw had problems with that. I'd spent at least a couple months racking my brains!

In Pitch Clinic, I learned everything about story ideas: It has to be interesting, not too broad, not too narrow, a news hook has to be there. That's incredibly important. How to track down those editors and get those emails and really fire it at them—because if you go to the slush pile, you never get an answer.

I learned that I had to loosen up my language. Don't write a 1950s-style business letter. You think you have to do that. Back when I was job searching in my early 20s, that was what you did. The world has changed completely—you have to be relaxed and conversational and show you have a storyteller's voice. That really helped me. It's still hard to make that click—I want to “impress.”

**What did you think of the 8-Week Pitch Challenge after the class, and what results did you see?**

I was really excited to do the eight pitches! I was so prepared from the class, I thought I could take on any pitch. I wanted to try a broad range of them, and I had a lot of fun looking around for things I thought were interesting. I was really positive about it.

In most of my pitching, I'm focusing on startup companies that might need a blog. I've gotten interest from one in Germany to write blog posts at €120 for 300-word posts, at least one a week. They rent out motor homes and RVs online, so it's writing about motor homes, and traveling

in your motor home.

My other big success: The editor of the *International Travel Insurance Journal* hire me to write an 1,800-word feature for €500, from the LOI I wrote in class. The contract is signed, so it's really happening!

I sent the story idea I developed in class, on Ghent travel, everywhere. I sent it to *Roads and Kingdoms*—they pay \$150 for a feature. They gave me feedback that they need more of a narrative, where the reader follows a person. That's a positive sign they liked my pitch, and I take it they'd like me to pitch them again. Positive rejection. Really made my day!

I've been using Yesware to see who opens your emails, a tip I got in class. I was wondering what was happening. Now I know if they opened it and nothing's happening, to try somewhere else. I sent one to *Brussels Air* and she said, "Great!" and then I didn't hear for 2 weeks, and then she said, "At the moment, we don't have the room for it." That pitch was strong enough to get attention, but it got bumped.

### **How did you feel about seeing these responses?**

I was really surprised that I got results, because I didn't expect anything straightaway. I thought maybe in a month, two months, I'd hear back. And I started really high, at big pubs like the *New York Times* travel section. I'm always happy when I hear from an editor. At least they're

responding to me.

### **What's your freelance writing life like now?**

I'm doing this part time when my kids are asleep, but my youngest goes to preschool beginning of next year. I want to be earning a reasonable income, and I've got some trade mags and some online blogs I'm working for now—and every now and then I get a big magazine.

I've continued pitching. I have a massive list of magazines and a list of which pitch should go where, and I sent one to two out every single week. I'm interviewing a woman this month about organizing home offices. I'm still chugging away. In the class, the instructors said it's like this in the beginning, and it'll get easier as I build relationships.

### **Got any advice for writers who want to make a living freelancing?**

Be really persistent. You really have to be. Sit down, even when you don't feel like it. Get out *Writer's Market*, or get out your prospect list. Look at the market you want to write for. Really read and reread your queries before you send them out. One grammar error can make you look like a goose! I'm guilty of that.

**What difference do you think Pitch Clinic made to your writing career?**

I really enjoyed Pitch Clinic so much—Carol and Linda were extremely supportive, and know so much about the industry. I think it would have taken me YEARS to figure out all the information you gave us! I would have been sending out subpar pitches and not knowing what I was doing wrong. And Pitch Clinic has a really nice group atmosphere with the other students. I was sad when it ended!

## Prospects want to hire this writer—full-time!

*Jenny Chen, Washington, DC*



**Can you tell us a little bit about your freelancing writing career so far?**

I worked as a journalist for a little bit, but I took the leap into fulltime freelancing this January 2015. I had actually worked with a coach before that, to get started, because I had no idea how to freelance at all. Her pointers were really helpful in getting me started, and with her help I was able to write for *The Atlantic*.

When I read about the Pitch Clinic I was kind of like plateauing. I was like, “Well I’ve already gotten coached, and maybe Pitch Clinic is just for beginners.” But when you guys did the offer I thought, “Why not try it out?”

Pitch Clinic *way* exceeded my expectations. You and Carol really pushed the participants, in a way that was really helpful. With the number of students you had, it would have been easy just go through a checklist of things for each person to hit, and if they did they were fine...but you really looked at each pitch and made sure that it was the best that it could be. It really challenged me to up my game and really polish my

pitches in a way that I had been getting lazy about before.

The LOIs were something I had never done before, and that was really helpful. My first LOI draft was kind of bland, like, “Hi, this is who I am. I have some ideas for you.” But you really pushed us to step into the other person’s shoes and to bring it all—to be funny, be interesting, and think really deeply about ideas.

The LOI I sent that got the job offer, I spent over two hours on it, and I don’t think I’ve ever spent that much time on an LOI or a pitch before—but now I realize that that’s what it takes.

**I know you got offered an actual full-time job and you didn’t really want it, but did you get responses from any of your other pitches?**

**What was your biggest challenge in Pitch Clinic?**

For the LOI, something Carol had said really sparked something for me. In one of my drafts, I offered sample blog post ideas I would write for this person. Carol said, “I don’t really think these are SEO friendly,” and that you have to think about what readers would click on. I never really thought about it that way. I was just thinking I would come up with blog post topics for the company—not for the client that the company is trying to reach—so that really helped me think about it in a different way.

## **How did you like the 4-Week Pitch Challenge we did after Pitch Clinic?**

I really appreciated the feedback after we were sending out actual pitches. Because we're still learning, even as we're sending out pitches. It doesn't end with Pitch Clinic. In one email you were telling me that I needed to proofread, and obviously that's important, but I'm always just so tired after writing a pitch...but you really pushed me to reread.

**Offering feedback on pitches students were sending out to prospects wasn't something that I was planning on doing...but I just can't help myself. So: you were offered a full-time writing job in California from somebody you sent a LOI to. Can you give us some details on that?**

I'm really passionate about the environment, and at the time I had been really into cosmetics as well. I came upon this environmental cosmetics company based in California, and wrote them an LOI.

It's funny because it was really hard to find the email address—I had to do a lot of Googling—and I really didn't expect a reply back. I wasn't even sure if the email was correct. But the prospect wrote back and said, "You're a great writer. I love your ideas. We're actually looking for a copywriter right now. Would you be interested in coming to California?" That's when I emailed you guys and was like, "Is this supposed to happen?"

I didn't end up taking the job. I emailed him, per Carol's advice, and said, "I'm not looking for a full-time job right now, but I'm interested in freelancing for you, if you're looking for someone to help out until you find a fulltime copywriter."

He said sure, and we've been working on doing a blog.

**Had you ever gotten a response that was quite that positive?**

No. No. No. No, not at all.

**Do you have any advice you'd like to share with our readers?**

Yes. Definitely take Pitch Clinic, for one. Then, just practice a lot.

## **From zero to \$.50 per word: this writer discovers new markets—and profits.**

*Christine Galeone, Grafton, MA*



**How long have you been freelancing, and what sorts of writing had you done, prior to taking Pitch Clinic?**

I started in late 2013. I'd mostly been writing for local pubs, local newspapers, one website locally, and one international one. I would say they paid from zero-\$.10 a word.

**How did you get into freelance writing?**

I got into it the way a lot of people get in: I worked for one company as a corporate librarian for a consumer electronics company. A lot of corporate libraries are being eliminated, and that's what happened. I got my first article published less than a week after I got laid off.

**What got you interested in taking Pitch Clinic?**

I wanted to be able to make a living as a writer, eventually. I wasn't looking to make a lot, just enough to pay my bills. I needed to step up. To get 15 or 20 cents a word would be great. I don't need a lot—I'm single and have a cat—but I wanted to make a more regular income.

## **Had you taken other classes before?**

I did take a copywriting class online at the beginning of 2014, to see what that was like, but I didn't go anywhere with it. It covered getting clients to an extent...but I loved the fact that in Pitch Clinic, we had to actually send out the query letters, and we learned about the query/LOI hybrid. I loved the practicality of this class—that's what really made a difference for me. Sometimes, when you take classes you think "Oh, there are some great ideas here, and I'm going to use them." But then you don't.

Pitch Clinic was great on its own, but the 8-pitch month after class was *fantastic*. It was one of the best classes I've ever taken. It actually made a difference.

## **What were some of the big takeaways you got in the Pitch Clinic trainings?**

I'm glad now that I know queries should be much more detailed. I wasn't having any luck querying before, even with editors I'd written for before!

With my editors, a lot of my own ideas wouldn't be taken, and they would sometimes give me their assignments. I really wasn't thinking of how much a story idea needs a good news hook. I loved learning about

that—now I know that boosts my chances of getting my pitch accepted. I wasn't putting enough into the query, writing it like I would write an article. I wasn't putting enough detail, and wasn't putting my lede into the query.

I didn't know about the query/LOI hybrid format before, so learning that was great. Also learning that trade magazines are a good market. I also wasn't good with coming up with story ideas before. I liked some of the suggestions in the class for news hooks, and I've latched onto the idea of doing anniversary stories.

### **What were your biggest challenges in Pitch Clinic?**

One was coming up with solid story ideas. I learned to tweak the ideas or let them go for now, until I can come up with a way to make them work. Another challenge is doing a pre-interview for a query—I hadn't done that before at all, and I did several in the class. I know it's a good idea, but it's tough, honestly. I don't want to disappoint the expert, if I can't place the article!

One woman I interviewed was a nutritionist—I found out they get lots of questions, and they're OK if it never turns into an article.

**What did you think about the pitch challenge, where you were asked to send out eight different queries and LOIs in four weeks flat?**

I had never done that in such a short time! That was great. I do want to pitch more going forward. The ones that haven't gotten responses, I want to try other markets.

**You said Pitch Clinic really made a difference—what happened after class?**

I had more confidence writing queries. I felt I would get at least one assignment, and I got two!

With one, I pitched a current client, but I pitched an editor I hadn't worked with before, because the paper had been bought. I had written about a car show last year, and wanted to write about it again, but I had to find a different angle.

I found a school that had just reached its one-year anniversary, so my pitch was "Car show helps build school." Accepted! It got into the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, a big daily paper.

Then the other assignment was for an animal sheltering trade magazine—that was one you helped me craft in the class. It was about the Operation Roger animal rescue group's 10-year anniversary.

They paid \$.50 a word. I couldn't believe it! My jaw dropped. I wasn't aware of their rates, I was just looking for animal rescue magazines online, and it didn't say what they paid. I just thought I'd give them a try. It's a shorter article, but five times what I was making!

Another thing I hadn't thought about for magazines is to build a relationship with editors, instead of just trying to get the assignment. I definitely want to try to pursue more trade magazines, research more carefully on markets, and send better, more detailed query letters.

And I still have the Pitch Clinic template—downloaded that!

I do feel more confident because of this. There was just so much I didn't know.

**What would you like writers to know who're not getting results on their queries?**

I would definitely recommend they take Pitch Clinic. Absolutely!

## **A well-paid gig for a trade magazine...at just the right time.**

*Maureen Mackey White, Portland, OR*



**Tell us a little about your freelance writing career.**

Most recently I was employed as a senior editor for a web media company. Although I got an hourly wage that wasn't too bad, it still felt like content mill work to me—my time was completely scheduled and commandeered, and I was burdened with the responsibilities of a full-time job without the pay or any benefits. Prior to that I freelanced writing magazine articles, and even a few brochures and newsletters for small businesses, but the work was spotty and I always bid low to get the job, so it wasn't remunerative.

**Why did you decide to sign up for Pitch Clinic? What were you hoping to get out of it?**

I signed up for Pitch Clinic because my husband recently lost his job, and I was faced with the prospect of needing to make money. I wanted to use my writing skills to earn income, and I needed flexibility with my time. I also wanted to prove to myself that I could still make money as a

writer.

Signing up for Pitch Clinic was an act of faith, and expressed a hope that I still was capable of earning money as a writer if I could just get some career retooling and current market information.

**What reservations did you have about signing up for Pitch Clinic?  
How did you get past them?**

My main reservation was spending a couple of hundred dollars for a class that may or may not be effective in helping me reestablish a writing career when my husband was out of work. I also hesitated to commit to the class because I had a lot going on in my life at the time. But since my daughter-in-law wasn't due to deliver her baby till June 24, I figured I had lots of time to take the class and do the coursework before I would be too distracted by family events. (Boy, was I wrong!)

**What was the biggest challenge for you in learning how to write a great query or LOI?**

My biggest challenge was summoning up the confidence and courage to line up experts and approach them for an interview when I didn't have an actual assignment.

### **How did you overcome that challenge?**

Pitch Clinic addressed that challenge with the concept of a pre-interview, and the class helped me brainstorm the best way to find and reach experts for my pitches.

### **What was the most key thing you learned in Pitch Clinic about developing ideas?**

I've always been an avid magazine reader—I subscribe to lots of different publications and I'm always picking up free ones whenever I can find them—so I've never been short of article ideas. But in Pitch Clinic I learned the difference between an idea and a fully-fleshed out pitch tailored to a specific publication.

### **As you went through the course, is there anything you realized you had been doing wrong in your pitches?**

Yes! Prior to Pitch Clinic I had at various times submitted queries to different publications, with very few successes. I realized that I hadn't been really thinking my pitches through—making them broad enough, or targeting them carefully enough. I hadn't thoroughly researched the magazines I pitched to get inside the editor's head, so that my pitches matched the magazine's tone, style, and readership. I hadn't given my queries headlines, a simple step that makes them much more appealing. And I hadn't looked hard enough for national experts to give my queries

a broader appeal, especially for the service pieces. Crafting a successful query takes a lot more work than I realized before Pitch Clinic!

**You wrote eight pitches in four weeks. Had you ever pitched that much before?**

No, I hadn't. I think the volume of queries was a major factor in my getting an assignment. Not only did it up my odds, but I found that coming up with that many ideas in month got my brain working faster. I actually had ideas for about 10 pitches, and developed nine.

**Do you think this pitching frequency had anything to do with your success in getting an assignment?**

Most definitely, yes—I learned not only how to pitch faster, but also how to pitch better.

**You got a 1200-word assignment at \$.25 a word after you “summoned the nerve,” as you put it, to send out the LOI you worked on in class to a coffee trade pub. Can you tell us a little about how that happened?**

I wrote an LOI with three carefully thought out ideas, each with a snappy headline and dek. Those three ideas were culled down from six—once I got going, the ideas kept coming, so on Carol's advice I selected the three strongest ideas to include in my LOI. I was actually

surprised by the editor's choice!

**Did you have any other successes after that?**

I got another assignment, this one for *Backyard Poultry Magazine*, as a result of query I worked on and submitted during Pitch Clinic. The editor responded with the assignment when I checked back with him after hearing nothing for a couple of weeks.

**How is your experience in Pitch Clinic going to change how you work going forward?**

Because of Pitch Clinic, I'll work faster, generating more ideas and putting in the necessary work to make them full-fledged pitches. I'm also going to concentrate on markets with lower profiles, as opposed to the glossies—trade pubs, regional and niche publications, and even businesses. (I'm learning more about diverse markets in the Escape the Content Mills beta course I'm currently taking.) I'm also learning, thanks to you and Carol, to just keep going, and not angst over the fate of my queries once I've sent them out.

**Have any advice for other writers?**

My advice is to be open and willing and humble enough to learn from other writers, newbies as well as those who've been around a while, no matter how experienced you may think you are. It's also important to

have confidence in yourself, no matter what hang-ups you may have—for me it's fear of irrelevance and my age—and how many rejections you accumulate. After all, the rejections mean you're in the game! Like Babe Ruth said, "Every strike brings me closer to the next home run."

In order for me to be successful, I had to reconnect with what I've always loved about writing—learning new things, talking to people I wouldn't otherwise meet, getting a chance to hone and practice my skills of expression. I've always loved the variety inherent in being a freelance writer, and the autonomy of a freelance career. But it can be rough, too—the affirmations are few and far between. That's why an encouraging community of writers and the opportunity for mentoring, like we experienced in Pitch Clinic, are so important.

## **A brand-new freelancer gets off to a powerful start.**

*Louisa Fitzgerald, Chicago, IL*



**Can you tell me a little bit about your freelance writing career up until Pitch Clinic?**

I was in marketing at a university for 6 years, and I quit my job in January to pursue freelance writing. So I'm brand new; I've been doing this for four months. When I quit,

I had been attempting to build up clients, and I had couple writing and social media clients...but when I put in my two weeks, my highest-paying client decided to close her business.

So I went from assuming I was going to have a certain amount of money every month to having a third of that, which was fine. My husband carries the health insurance, so it was not a big deal.

I am a blogger. I started to go down the road of I'm going to try to monetize my blog, which was just too much. There are so many mommy bloggers, and I felt like I was constantly online and constantly doing social media...and I don't like social media that much.

So right before Pitch Clinic, I started to think, "What did I really quit my

job to do?” And it really is to write. My dream has always been to write for magazines and media outlets, and I would love to have brand clients as well.

I kept seeing the Pitch Clinic offer, and I kept reading it, and I think it was probably the fourth or fifth time that I saw it that I finally was like, maybe I should sign up for this. Maybe I could get my money back.”

### **Did you look at any other pitching classes?**

I have taken MediaBistro classes. I think what I liked about Pitch Clinic was that it was less expensive, because MediaBistro classes are insanely overpriced. They’re really expensive.

### **What was the biggest challenge in Pitch Clinic?**

Yeah. I don’t think I had any idea what I was doing. I think I had Googled like “how to write a pitch,” and I had gone so far as to say, “I have this person, and this person, and this person to interview”—but I never did the pre-interviews.

I know when I would read through the forums, a lot of people got stuck on this idea of not interviewing or being afraid to ask for an interview from the expert.

[In my pitches that sold], I didn’t even mention clips, and no one has

asked me for clips—and I think it’s because the query letters were strong enough that they knew that I could write. They saw that I had already interviewed the experts. I was halfway there.

So I feel the practice for me was great. I loved getting feedback. I loved being able to rework my query with three to four professionals looking at it and telling me, “This is what you need to do.” I think my background actually gave me an advantage...even though I’m a newbie in many senses, I feel like I don’t get emotionally attached to what I write. So I’m okay hearing it needs to be changed.

So I think the only part of the process I got tripped up on was when I decided on a market, and then I got confused about whether or not it was the right market in terms to be sending to. Researching the markets was actually one of the hardest parts, because it’s so time consuming.

**Tell us about your Pitch Challenge success story.**

*The Atlantic* said it was really well written, but they passed. So I immediately started sending it to other outlets, and *Jezebel* opened it...I sold it within 24 hours of *The Atlantic* telling me they didn’t want it. And I feel that if *Jezebel* had decided to pass, I had four drafts of emails ready to go out to another batch of editors, and I felt it would sell.

**Yes, the trick is to have so many pitches out there that you're not sitting by the phone going, oh my god, why isn't *Jezebel* calling back? So, you also sold a blog post to *Midwest Living*, right?**

Yes. That was actually another idea that I had in the forums that got a pretty good response. I sent it out and I got a response from the editor within a few hours.

**Were you surprised at the response you got from your pitching?**

Yes. I felt like I had a good shot at getting somebody to listen to me, but I was surprised that I got responses as quickly as I did. The things I never got responses on were never even opened—so I felt like if something was opened, I had a pretty solid chance of making a sale.

**Do you have any advice for other writers who would like to have a success like you did?**

You know, this class helped me tremendously. I don't know what I was expecting when I started, but I wasn't expecting to have actual assignments at the end. I know that was the goal, but I didn't actually think I would be one of the students who landed assignments.

So if someone goes through a class like this, I think the things that made me successful were being able to hear feedback, and not getting emotionally attached to my writing, and not being upset when someone

didn't like my idea—and just moving on.

And I think another thing that made me successful—and this may not be a best practice by any stretch—I went about finding experts the way that you told people to pitch: I would email like six places at once, and I would say, “I need an expert. This is what I'm looking for. Please let me know.” And nine times out of ten, I would hear back from one person.

People were so hesitant to contact experts, but I just went and blanketed places just to find somebody. When I was doing the gun pitch, I literally emailed six places at the same time because I figured, who knows what's going to happen here?

And the person who picked up the phone and called me was the guy at Harvard. I nearly fell over. I mean, he didn't even email me back—he just picked up the phone and called me, and that gave the pitch a lot of weight. Not only did I have an expert, I had a professor from Harvard commenting and was able to put those quotes in. If that never would've happened, I'd probably had been emailing one expert and waiting for a response....emailing another expert and waiting for a response...

**Is there anything else you wanted to let us know?**

Just that I loved you guys. I thought you were all really great. I mean, it honest to God is probably the best class I've ever taken.

## **Former corporate worker pitches outside the box— and gets gigs.**

*MeLinda Schnyder, Wichita, KS*



**Can you tell us a little bit about your  
freelance writing career so far?**

Sure. I've been a full-time freelancer for the last 3 years, and I had previously been a full-time freelancer about a decade ago and got talked into going to work for one of my clients. So I went back into the corporate writing world and then came back out in 2011. Most of my income comes from the aviation industry. That's where I worked in corporate setting. I have been able to retain a lot of my clients that I used to work for, and now I work for them on a freelance basis.

The rest is just writing some general business stories for local newspapers, and trying to pitch some of those I find that I think have a national appeal to wider audiences.

What I consider my third niche is travel writing, and I've been trying to get into that more and more.

I've got plenty of local assignments from my city magazine and the local

newspaper, and then I started to kind of get my foot in the door with the state magazine, but it just does not pay well at all.

The main reason I would say I wanted to do pitch clinic is to help me get the confidence to pitch to national travel magazines, because I do think being in the Midwest, I'm in Kansas, that there's a lot of things to write about in my backyard that people aren't writing about. So I feel like I have a little bit of a niche I guess within the travel industry to try to pitch to and at the middle fly over states, that people like to call us.

### **Why did you decide to take Pitch Clinic?**

I did have a little hesitation because that month was really busy for me with client work, so I was worried about whether I'd be able to keep up with it. But I eventually convinced myself that I was just making an excuse and that there was always going to be other paid work to do, and that I needed to do this class—because I was just stuck in research mode with a lot of pitches.

**You finished the class and you wrote eight pitches. With your full workload, I think a lot of people are going to want to know how you found the time to do all that.**

I honestly just worked a lot on the weekends and put in some extra hours during that time. I just felt like I needed, I really needed a push.

And the deadlines were really the main benefit for me of the Pitch Clinic. I'm very deadline oriented and I can set my own deadlines, but I know that they're BS...so the fact that you guys had deadlines for me—that's the only way I got it done.

**Is there anything you learned to improve your travel pitches in the class?**

I'd say the biggest thing was to talk to some sources ahead of time and try to include a quote or two, if you can. That is something that I hadn't considered doing before.

Pitch Clinic also helped, one, realize that if you write a headline and dek, that helps you narrow your idea down. That really helped me. And then, two, I realized I've got to just have more confidence that yes, I'm pitching things that everybody here around me knows—but if I'm pitching the same ideas to national magazines, they're not as widely known.

**You finished the challenge—you wrote eight pitches in four weeks. Have you ever pitched at that frequency before?**

No, I haven't. Honestly, eight pitches to people that I don't really know well is more than I've probably done in my career. I've been really lucky that work has come to me, and so that's one of the key reasons that I continue to do the aviation niche.

**Your success story is that you got TWO \$500 article assignments from *King Air* magazine. Can you tell us a little about how that happened?**

The magazine goes to owners, operators and fans of the Beechcraft King Air turboprop airplane made here in Wichita. I'd written some operator profiles for them in the past, but Pitch Clinic gave me the confidence to pitch an unusual article to the editor.

As you can imagine from the name of the magazine, they rarely run anything about airplanes besides the King Air. I was pitching an article about the B-29 bomber. Because of Pitch Clinic, I contacted the folks doing the restoration and asked if there was any King Air connection to their project. I expected maybe some key volunteer was a current or past King Air line worker.

What I found was even better. The head of the project had worked for years on the line and the rest of his family had too, including his mother being a Rosie the Riveter. But the big news was that a part from a King Air was actually being used on the refurbished bomber. When it flies this year, it'll be only the second airworthy B-29 in the world right now.

I thought, "Oh, the editor is definitely going to go for this." That's probably something I wouldn't have done without Pitch Clinic. I wouldn't have even called the source ahead of time, and that really

helped me get the assignment.

Then while I had the editor on the line I thought, okay, if she's interested in that, which is not her normal type of feature, maybe she'll go for a travel piece, which she also normally doesn't run—but I like to write. So I told her I was going to be visiting an aviation museum that had a King Air and some other Beechcraft memorabilia, and she was open to that idea, too.

**Do you have any advice for any other writers who would like to have success like yours?**

I would just say that if you do the Pitch Clinic, really follow along with the deadlines. Because that's what we all need. Accountability is one of the biggest parts of this class.

## **A seasoned journalist pushes himself—and gets great new clients**

*Allen Taylor, Central Pennsylvania*



**You came into Pitch Clinic with a lot of journalism experience—I know you’re a former staff writer and editor.**

That’s right. I was called up in the National Guard in 2005, and I’ve been freelancing since 2006, in partnership with a guy I was writing for. It was low-paid wholesale content—that’s how I got started in Internet marketing.

I’m a journalist by trade, so I wanted to do more high-quality work, but we were doing fairly well. So I didn’t venture out on my own until two or three years ago. Now I’m full-time freelancing on my own and struggling to get the types of jobs I want. I still have some blogging clients and I’ve increased their pay rates, so I had \$25,000-\$30,000 in ongoing clients.

I’ve been managing blogs, starting at \$10 a post, and worked up to \$25-\$30. Now I don’t do anything for less than \$50. Most of my clients are \$50-60 and now I’m pushing myself up higher, to the \$100-\$300 rate.

## **What made you decide to take Pitch Clinic?**

Two reasons: To pick up on ideas—I always wanted to challenge myself to improve my skills—but also primarily to motivate myself. A lot of the stuff you ladies teach in Pitch Clinic I know how to do, I've done it in the past, but I don't always push myself. I wanted to motivate myself, and it actually worked! You got me motivated to do more of what I knew I should be doing all along.

## **Did you compare Pitch Clinic with other classes before deciding to join?**

I didn't compare it. In late 2013, I joined the Freelance Writers Den and started working the Junk-Free Job Board there, and that increased my client base, so I already knew Carol.

## **How did Pitch Clinic help you?**

Pitch Clinic showed me things I was doing *wrong*. You honed my approach so I could focus on the benefits of my service to the people I'm pitching to. I have a greater eye for looking at the opportunities based on what the client's needs are, looking at their website and saying, "This is where I could benefit them, and these are my skills, and this is what I have to offer." And then packaging that in an email where it's effective and gets you in the door.

I really learned a lot about how to evaluate a magazine to determine its readership and come up with an idea that would match the interests of those readers. Probably the area where I learned the most was how to write a query letter. Wasn't anything I knew much about, as someone who'd been a staff journalist.

It was enlightening to me that I could come up with an article idea, but then you have to hone it so it makes sense for that readership and the editor is going to be interested. You opened up my eyes to how that process works.

I've spent the last couple years prospecting on job boards. I had some success, but as you pointed out, that's not where the best jobs are. I wanted to push myself to go after a higher quality client. Pitch Clinic helped me figure that out.

**What was your reaction to the 4-Week Pitch Challenge we held after the class? You actually did more pitches than required!**

It felt pretty good to do ten pitches. I never really thought prospecting should be that systematic necessarily, but having been in sales, I should have!

**What results have you seen out of the pitching you did in class?**

I actually got a gig from one of the LOIs I sent after the initial eight. I

kept going during the challenge, and this one was #11! I acquired a list of fastest-growing businesses in my area in South Central Pennsylvania, and looked for companies I thought I would enjoy working with. Got a couple nibbles on some of those.

I started ghostwriting blog posts for one client at \$100 per 500 words. I'm now writing a series of articles with interviews for \$300 each, and this client has since given me a LinkedIn recommendation and a testimonial for my website.

I was really surprised when I called to follow up on an LOI I sent one lady who's an executive recruiter for IT companies. She was quite exuberant—just ecstatic over the letter I sent her!

### **Are you still pitching?**

Yes. I just set myself a routine—every morning before I do anything else, I sit down and look at the list of businesses I want to pitch. I might look at LinkedIn and go through some of the businesses there, or look for a trade journal.

My goal for this month is two LOIs per day, but I'm going to actually exceed that. I've challenged myself to be more aggressive with my prospecting. I've also got a magazine article to write for a regional magazine and plan to pitch them two more ideas in the next month, so I see this area of my business growing based on what I learned in Pitch Clinic.

It's a numbers game—you have to work on what you can control, and I can control my own activity. If I'm doing more, I have more chances to succeed. I spend at least a couple hours a day prospecting or looking for opportunities, and then crafting my LOIs and pitches and putting them out there.

**Would you recommend Pitch Clinic to other writers?**

I think if you are a writer who struggles with marketing yourself, then Pitch Clinic is an absolute necessity. You should give serious consideration to investing in your own professional development, and Pitch Clinic is a good place to start.

I'm glad that I did it, because I typically think I know enough to do things on my own—but I realized I can always improve.

## Now it's your turn...

We hope you've enjoyed these inspiring stories of how Pitch Clinic helps writers create better queries and LOIs and get better-paying gigs from businesses, magazines, websites, and blogs! As you can see, once you get feedback from real editors and learn the fundamentals of writing a strong pitch, lucrative assignments quickly follow.

A [new session of Pitch Clinic](#) is starting soon—to learn more, click that link, or the graphic below:

