

Carol Tice:

Hi everybody. I'm Carol Tice and I'm here with Linda Formichelli.

Linda Formichelli:

Hey.

Carol Tice:

Welcome to 8 Ways content mill writers can earn more fast. We have got a useful training for you on how to find better paying markets than you find on places like Elance and Writing for Revenue, places like Examiner, or content mills like Demand Studios and we will also be sharing data from our exclusive survey of over 500 content mill writers.

Before we get into the meat of this, we thought we'd introduce ourselves real quick and just tell you a little bit about our own freelance writing experience, just in case you are new to us, starting with Linda.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. So hi everybody, this is Linda Formichelli and I have been a full-time freelancer since 1997, which means I've been doing this for 18 years, which I kind of can't believe.

I have written for magazines like Family Circle, Health, Web MD, US Weekend and Writers Digest and I've also written for a lot of corporate clients like Sprint, Travelocity, Onstar and Pizzeria Uno. I run the Renegade Writer Blog. I'm the author of a book called The Renegade Writer and I partner with Carol over at <http://www.usefulwritingcourses.com>.

I started writing and broke in with a zero experience and zero clips and a master's degree in Slavic Linguistics, which was super fun, but not the most useful in terms of getting writing work.

So I'm pretty confident that if I can earn well as a writer, with this background that anybody can. Carol will introduce herself and she has a good story, as well about her background.

Carol Tice:

I'm glad you like my story. I am Carol Tice and I write the Make A Living writing blog and am Den Mother of The Freelance Writers Den support and learning community. I am a self-taught freelance writer, as well.

I am a college dropout and former songwriter, former starting songwriter I should say who first fell into freelance writing in the 90s with the LA Weekly and the Los Angeles Times and I have been full-time freelancing again for the most recent decade.

I just realized that it's been 10 years now since I got back into it and I had 12 years of staff writing jobs in between.

My lack of a journalism degree hasn't stopped me from freelancing for Entrepreneur, Forbes, Costco, American Express, Alaska Airlines, Seattle Magazine, and many others.

Honestly, the main energy I've got going on now is that I'm just a passionate advocate for fair writer pay and against writer exploitation. I worked my way up the slow, hard way and it is a thrill for me to help writers get there faster than I did, Linda.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. So see, love her story. So we're going to talk about the survey. We surveyed over 500 writers who worked for content mills in the past week and unfortunately, the news is not so good.

The most common content mills writers worked for are Elance, Demand, and Techs Broker and then, there was Fiber, Examiner and I-Writer following up the lead, but we had a other field where people could fill in the content mills they worked for if we didn't list them.

There were at least 50 or 60 other sites that writers consider content mill bid sites, or revenue share sites, so these exploitative sites are really kind of everywhere and Carol has some really good stats from this survey on what people think about this, Carol.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. There's kind of two big reasons that we're here and I've got a slide up right now that gives you a look at reason number one and you can take any traffic ranking platform you like and run any content mill, any mass content site you like, www.about.com, Demand Studios and you're going to see a chart that looks a little bit like this and why is there this crash?

Last fall, this is Google changing its algorithm to exclude these kinds of sites from its search results because it has figured out that these are collections of low quality content that searchers are not happy to get onto and they feel like Google has not been nice to them when they get to E How or something, trying to find out how to do something and traffic at all of these sites is plummeting.

The problem is that these kind of quick, cheapy articles based around key words do not deliver traffic anymore. So if you rely on writing a lot of those for your living, the problem you've got is this opportunity is shrinking and it never paid well to begin with and writers deserved better.

So reason number two is just the reality of writing for content mills based on what you told us and I've been accused of saying oh, well, you've never written for mills, so you don't know what you're talking about here.

So this isn't about what I think about content mills, the rest of these slides. This is what you thought, people who actually wrote for content mills and we did this in two survey trenches with over 500 total responses and they were all pretty much the same as you see here.

To just get started, you see that the majority of these writers have only been writing for these more well paid platforms for about six months or less, but you get more than 20 percent have been at it for three years or more,.

So to cut right to it, here is one of the more shocking slides to me, anyway, from our survey. You'd think if people are doing this for years that there must be some pay improvement that happens, but that is not what we see here.

Forty percent of the writers said that they make \$5.00 dollars an hour or less writing for the mills and you got about another 25 percent earning \$6.00 to \$10.00 bucks an hour. Now, professional freelance writing rates start at about \$35.00 dollars an hour and \$35.00 to \$50.00 bucks an hour is what we consider what you should earn your first minute as a writer.

You can see almost nobody here earning in that category and what you want to do is progress to where you're making \$75.00 to \$100.00 dollars an hour and nobody's seeing that happening.

So that just makes me want to cry. Honestly, I didn't know it was going to be this bad. I've talked with a few people that say, hey, I make \$25.00 bucks an hour, so this really shocked me. Apparently, those people earning \$25.00, \$35.00 dollars an hour, that mills are really outliers.

So you'd think if the pay was really low that people would do it because it's just really, really fun and awesome and they love how they're treated, but we also don't get that result. A very, very tiny percentage of people, I think it was under three percent saying, I love working here and maybe eleven percent said I'm fairly treated.

The biggest answers were, I should be earning a lot more, the pay is insulting, and this is not an ideal situation. So given that people are not that happy, our next question was how interested are you in moving on from this and the majority answered, I would definitely like to be earning more, 50 percent and another 38 percent said, I urgently need to escape.

So given that, you can see from the hourly rates that this niche is really a dead end, that's kind of not a huge surprise, but here was something that interested me. So given how unhappy and low paid mill writers are, you would think more of them had made an attempt to get out and market themselves, but over 60 percent said they have never tried marketing themselves beyond these writer platforms. So that kind of surprised me a little bit.

So I was curious to learn more about what content mills writers abilities were to market themselves would be. What do you got to work with here, to start pitching and getting better clients? So this is a little bit of a positive surprise. About 45 percent said they do have useable clips from the mills.

Often, as you can see on this chart, people are doing ghost writing or they're under a nondisclosure agreement, or they're kind of not clear who the end client is, or they know for sure they're not going to be able to use these clips.

Even if you are using them and are able to use them, part of the problem is the reputation of these sites is so bad that it can actually hurt you with a lot of other writers, but we have at least nearly half of people who at least have something they could work with, so that was good.

Our next question was, can you get testimonials or referrals from these clients because that is sort of the first step in marketing. Testimonials are highly converting for prospects and referrals, obviously, are one of the easiest ways to get new clients.

Hey, who doesn't want to just have a client send them another client, but a very small number of people thought they could do that, only about 17, 18 percent, or so and the rest either thought they could not get testimonials or referrals, or they weren't sure how they would go about that. So this makes mills really a dead end where it's not even building your portfolio, it's not building your reputation, it's a problem.

So what keeps you from leaving the mills? We have a lot of answers. I have got it over two slides. The top answer you can see here, I don't know how to market myself and I don't know who to approach at the places I'd like to write for, that actually surprised me how many people felt like that was the big barrier.

Then, a few more answers here that were popular, fears about putting myself out there. It seems to sadly always be popular among freelance writers. I feel unqualified to write for better places. I'm not sure what kinds of writing pay better.

I just want to say before we leave this survey that, the comments, there were also a lot of narrative boxes people could feel in and they were just heartbreaking to me, what people had to say. One that just really stuck with me was, I feel like a commodity, which in fact I am and that is the nut of it because as long as you do a type of writing, that is a commodity.

Thousands of writers all over the world could easily replace you and you in your place, you can never earn a good rate, you're never valued. You have to start writing types of things that not everybody can write to earn more.

So that said, we are going to move on to the meat of our presentation here, 8 Ways to earn more than you make at content mills, bid sites, revenue shares, Craigslist and all of these low paying places. I just need to find where I am in my script.

Linda Formichelli:

I'm here, but I wanted to add something. You know, depending on your background or where you live, for a lot of people, you may be looking at some of these content mill rates and saying , hey, \$10.00, \$15.00 dollars an hour writing, that's a really good rate, but what you have to consider is that you can't compare what you made at your last job.

As a writer, if you want to freelance full-time, you need to make a lot more because number one, when you work 40 hours a week, you are basically getting paid 40 hours a week, but as a freelancer, not all of your hours are billable.

Then, then, on top of that, you have your healthcare costs, your expenses and so on. So to even match what you were even making at your last job, you need to be making a lot more as a freelancer per hour, which is why we're recommending, at the very minimum \$35.00 to \$50.00 dollars an hour. So I just wanted to mention that in case people were thinking like, well, that rate doesn't sound so bad.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. We hear that a lot, but people aren't realizing how many unbillable hours of work you're going to have.

Linda Formichelli:

Marketing, administrative, sometimes, you don't have any work.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. It's not comparable to a day job where you're guaranteed 40 paid hours. It's nothing like that. This is being in business for yourself and it works differently and even people on content mills, I know people who are like, I sign on and there's nothing available now. Yeah. I couldn't write anything today. So this is why hourly rates must be more.

Before we dive into 8 Ways, I just want to say, one of the big questions that we got was, how do get paid, physically, how to get paid. Some people were in countries that don't accept PayPal, which actually isn't my favorite way to get paid by clients anyway.

You can do a bank transfer. You can get their bank to just send the money, fired straight into your bank. They can airmail you a check. I also know people in countries that don't have PayPal that have friends who middleman for them where you pay their friend and they send them a check.

So there's always creative ways to get around that and to deal with that and there's more than one way to get paid. You can make this happen and you can work it out. If you saw our case study report, you saw a writer who's in Pakistan where they don't

accept PayPal who is doing fantastic and earning \$1,500.00 dollars an article, got a multi-book deal. If you haven't seen that report, be sure to check it out.

Anyway, onto 8 types of writing markets that are open to newbie's and pay better and I guess I have number one. Did you want to say something before I dive into that?

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. I have actually some things to say. I just wanted to mention that one problem content mills writers have is that they are used to getting paid fast and it may be pennies, but at least those pennies are coming in quickly.

You write for a newsstand magazine and with the revision process that goes on forever and waiting 30 days after acceptance, you could be waiting months for your check. For example, it once took me nine months to be paid by Redbook. It's like yeah, it was a couple thousand dollars, but it was nine months.

So in the list of great move up markets that we're going to be talking about for content mill writers, we try to choose types that pay somewhat faster and we also have tips for getting paid more quickly, so that excuse for staying with the content mills is gone, that you can't move up because you're relying on a fast check.

Is there anything else you want to say Carol, or should we...

Carol Tice:

Yeah. No. I mean, while you're on that, the one thing I'll also say about that case study report is one of the big things we learned in it that was kind of a surprise to me was that it did not take these people very long to make the leap off of content mills and into having their own client.

It was like a month, three months, no it took two years to figure it out. You can do this if you can get over really a pretty modest hump and make it to getting into better paying clients.

So let's talk about 8 different types of markets that pay better and give you better clips and what they are and how to connect with them, what to pitch them, who to pitch at them and I have number one, which is the alternative weekly's.

You probably have at least one of these in your town. I'm showing The Village Voice, which is probably the best known alternative paper in the world. There's also LA Weekly, Seattle Weekly, almost any major city has at least one of these.

They often have more than one and you can learn about them and find local ones at the Association of Alternative News Media, or AAN, or just check out your newsstand and see what your free papers are.

Some of these are very arts and culture focused and some are more politically left leaning and talk about politics in the city and some are kind of a mix of both. They pay from \$50.00 to \$300.00 bucks.

I've done cover features for all papers that were \$300.00 dollars and for a long time, I did book reviews for \$75.00 bucks a piece for one, books I was interested to read anyway.

They generally pay once a month. You might have avoided these because maybe they seemed flaky to you because they're free to the readers, but their ads support it. They have money coming in.

They have staff, a little bit of staff anyway and most of the alt pubs may seem like scrappy local papers, but in fact, most of them are, at this point, part of chains, like Seattle Weekly is owned by the Village Voice. So they've got an accounting department, they're cutting checks. They're not fly by night operations.

As far as breaking in, all these papers tend to have very small staffs and are always looking for freelancers to cover events in town. They could never possibly cover them all on their tiny staff, everything from controversial issues and protests to the latest play or new restaurant.

I recently, personally broke in at one alternative paper by entering an essay contest they were having and then, I just pitched them more ideas and at the other one, I just called the managing editor, or I can't remember if he was the managing editor, or just editor was his title, but whoever it was, kind of near the top of the masthead and I just said, hey, do you have anyone going to this protest? Would you like a write up on that?

He said, sure, how about 500 words for 100.00 bucks? I mean, this was something I was going to go to anyway and he didn't say, oh, send over your portfolio of clips. He was like, I'll take a look at it.

Alternative paper editors are just way more approachable and available in my experience and sometimes, you can just, yeah, kind of catch them answering their phone, or you could send them a quick email query about an event.

If you're the kind of person who goes to city council meetings anyway, or would like to see the newest play, or you eat at the latest restaurants, it can just be an opportunity to get paid for doing things you're going to do anyway and get some writing clips that are a bit nicer and better respected, Linda.

Linda Formichelli:

Cool. Yeah. I just wanted to add, you know, you mentioned how accessible they are and I think what holds a lot of content mill writers back is they're like, oh, if I approach these big markets, I have to do this big query and they're just so inaccessible.

Yes, at the national magazines and really giant companies, the people you want that will hire you are kind of inaccessible and you have to go through the whole pitching process, but in the move up markets that we're talking about here, a lot of them are smaller, so they're super accessible.

Sometimes, you could just call. Sometimes, you could just walk right in. We're going to be talking about in each of these markets, so I just wanted to add that. So should I go onto number two, or did you have anything else to say?

Carol Tice:

Yes, go for it.

Linda Formichelli:

Okay. All right, so number two is smaller, local publications like the job papers, like Working World. We have niche newspapers like Seattle Medium that serves the African American community. Senior News like Boom here in North Carolina, I see outside the local café. Local Women's Weekly, also here in North Carolina. We have Triangle Style, which I have written for.

There are local parenting magazines, like Chicago Parent. City magazines like Seattle Weekly. I mean, if you just look around, you will see tons of these publications and like with the alternative weekly's Carol was talking about, sometimes, they're really cheap or free so you think they're flaky, but a lot of them do pay.

The pay varies widely, but typical is low end of \$50.00 dollars up to a high end of \$1,000.00 dollars an article. On the lower pay end, I've gotten \$40.00 dollars for something like this. Carol has gotten \$200.00 dollars for short piece features in a job paper and as much as \$1,500.00 dollars for long features in Seattle Magazine.

A lot of these publications are small and they can have a hard time finding really good writers at their pay rate, so they're open to newer freelancers than the big newsstand magazines and because you're local, you have an edge.

You know what's going on in your community. You know local people in businesses. You know what people are talking about around you. You're kind of the person on the street that can bring them the news they need. You can come up with some good article ideas for them.

So what you want to do is walk around your town, or the closest city to you and just gather up armloads of these publications you find outside of cafes and restaurants and on street corners and those free racks and don't forget the free paper boxes where you pull down the little thing and you grab the paper. These are your target. You can read them and figure out if there are any that you could possibly write for.

Now, as for getting paid faster, if you're interested in getting paid fast with your business, check out Publications Guidelines online if they have them and choose those

that pay on acceptance because some publications pay on publication, meaning you get paid when the article is published and you don't have any control, you don't know when that's going to happen. It could never happen.

When you have pay on acceptance, that means you get paid when the final article is accepted. You've been through the revision process and you're done. You can break in a lot of these types of publications with a query letter, but for small publications like these, you can also use what we call a query flash letter of introduction, hybrid, which is much easier to write than the traditional query letter.

You basically introduce yourself, outline a few quick article ideas and you're good. At the small pubs, you can even try calling the editor and giving your pitch over the phone. Editors at these smaller, local publications are much more accessible than the editors at national magazines.

As for who exactly to contact at these publications, many are so small that they have tiny editorial departments and you'll reach out directly to the editor, the main person, but for ones with a bigger staff, and you can see that by looking at the mast head, which is the list of employees at the beginning of the publication.

If they have a bunch of people, you want to contact somebody more in the middle, like a senior editor, an associate editor, or a managing editor. Carol, anything you wanted to add?

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I'm getting a little bit of background noise, I don't know if you can move to a quieter spot.

Linda Formichelli:

Sure. What are you hearing?

Carol Tice:

I don't know, if kids are playing or cats are crying.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. Okay.

Carol Tice:

See if you can move somewhere quieter.

Linda Formichelli:

I do live next door to a playground. Okay.

Carol Tice:

So Mary's asking where do you find these publications, newsstands, library? Yes and yes. Yeah, newsstands are a great starting point and libraries are a treasure trove. If

you haven't looked at their magazine section lately, often they subscribe to just 100 magazines in there for the benefit of the public. So they are a great place to take a browse.

Linda Formichelli:

You know what, let me mention that I have gone to our local hairdresser, and made the deal where I could pick up all of their outdated magazines and I will get stacks and stacks of them. I talk to all my neighbors and had them put the magazines they were going to recycle on my front porch.

There are a lot of creative ways to get your hands on magazines you've never seen before and if you haven't seen them before, you know what I mean, they're kind of small, they're probably a pretty good market to break in with.

Carol Tice:

Right on. So I have Way number three to earn more and this should be fairly intuitive to people who are writing for online writer platforms and it's paid blogging and when we say that, we mean better paid blogging, \$50.00 to \$100.00 bucks a post and up.

If you don't believe that exists, I have a blog post coming tomorrow about four different writers making more than \$200.00 dollars a blog post. So be sure to check that out on Make A Living Writing.

In fact, rate for better quality blog posts have been going up. I think there are more and more markets that pay well, based on the feedback I'm getting from writers in the 1,500-member Den community.

The top and bottom graphic that you see here on this slide are both places I have written for. I actually helped launch what is now, The LenCred Blog, they rebranded and I know people who write for The Penny Hoarder.

There's really a wide variety of topics and I guess my point is, I know a lot of people who are blogging for free for exposure and I'd like to just introduce the idea to you that you can also get great exposure on sites that pay.

In fact, in many cases, better exposure because paying sites tend to have better quality content and better cache and I have a list of 140 websites that pay writers. Google that phrase and you'll bring it right up. There are really are a lot of places to look at and increasingly, \$50.00 bucks a post is like a floor. I actually pay that on my own blog.

I'm just hearing from more and more writers who are earning real rates and it's partly due to the rise of longer, higher quality posts being more desirable, Google indicating that it ranks both more highly and values that content more and clients are responding to that and realizing I need to pay real money for these blog posts and get a 1,000-word post and pay \$200.00 dollars.

So there really are opportunities and these online blogging gigs tend to be pretty email driven. You're usually sending a pitch, or a lot of them have a forum that says write for us and we pay and you can just put your draft into the forum.

What I love the most about finding good paying blogging clients is that these can be really ongoing, steady gigs that can really be the answer to getting off of content mills because you can get some regular income coming in.

For a long time, I was getting about \$300.00 bucks a month writing for Freelance Switch before they became Microlancer, writing like \$75.00 to \$150.00 dollar posts of various lengths for them and for two and a half years, I was on a contract to write \$100.00 dollar posts for Entrepreneur and I was writing 12 a month.

Linda says she used to get close to \$500.00 bucks a post for a big protein powder manufacturer, great example. There's a wide variety of topics you can get paid well to blog on and if you read our case study report, one writer in there found a lucrative blogging client in the niche of bariatric dating, if you can believe that.

So like, I've had the stomach surgery and I want to date someone else who also has and can relate to that. So really, it's amazing how much opportunity there is if you start looking around.

My big tip for finding small business blogging clients like this is to target abandoned blogs. How often have you looked at some businesses website and you found they have a blog and you click the tab and like the last post was in 2013.

It's hard to talk a business into starting a blog from scratch where they don't yet understand how a blog could help their business, but these abandoned blogs are golden opportunities. I have seen writer after writer get hired off of these.

They pay more because this content isn't written for SEO algorithm robots to read. This is quality content written for people that builds a company's authority and posts are more detailed and in depth/

You know, I talk to a lot of writers who write for the mills, who end up writing really quality posts just because that's their own personal value system. They just can't write garbage and if that's you, you should just be targeting better clients and getting paid better for blogging.

The great thing here is often, doing these, gives you a high profile and you get more blogging clients off of it. It becomes a marketing tool for you and that has totally been the case for me. I get a lot of clients who have seen me blogging for pay on big sites.

As far as getting in touch, if it's a business you're doing instead of like a site like the Penny Hoarder, you might reach out directly to the owner if it's small, or if there's a marketing manager at the company, then, they're probably your contact, Linda.

Linda Formichelli:

Awesome. Yeah. I don't have anything to add on that, so I'm going to go right into number four, great move up markets for content mill writers, which is local businesses you frequent and I think a lot of people don't think about this, but you know these businesses.

They may know you if you go in there. They need newsletters, and blog posts, and brochures, and articles just like any other business, but because they're small, they might be trying to do it all themselves.

So this is where you come to the rescue and offer to write for them at a reasonable price, but one that is still way better than the content mills. I mean, you could be getting a starter writer rate of \$50.00 dollars for blog posts as Carol was just talking about.

You could be getting \$100.00 dollars for press release, or \$200.00 dollars for a case study. You could be getting \$70.00 to \$100.00 dollars per page for web pages, at a minimum and these prices are actually pretty low for copywriting, but the plan is that you'll get a few clips, which is samples and eventually move up to the \$100.00 dollar an hour rate that many copywriters command.

Even at these lower rates that local businesses can afford to pay, it's still beats the heck out of the \$5.00 bucks you get from Fiber, or I heard they take 20 percent, so that would actually be \$4.00 bucks.

The awesome thing that a lot new freelancers don't know if they haven't written for businesses before is, when you write for a business, you can get a 50 percent up front deposit, so we're talking about getting paid fast and we know that's what keeps a lot of people in the content mills is that fast pay, but you cannot beat getting paid before you even start writing.

Carol Tice:

I love that.

Linda Formichelli:

Right, so yeah, targeting businesses can be a really great way to get some quick cash to help tide you over as you start to transition out of mills. As for how to break in, since you're local, you could always just waltz right into these businesses and ask if they need writing help.

Another option is calling them up, telling them you're a local writer and just asking if they need help writing with press releases, newsletters, blog posts, or whatever, you just want to do a minimal amount of research on the company before you call so you know what products or services they offer and what they're already doing marketing wise that you might be able to help them with, or what they're missing that you might be able to add.

You know, Carol was talking about the abandoned blogs. We've had students contact their local chiropractor and say, hey, you know, I looked at your competitors and they all have case studies and you're the only one who doesn't.

So something like that is a really good way to break in is to find out what your local small business is missing and then, why it's important and how you could be the person to provide it.

Another option is emailing them a letter of introduction that introduces yourself as a local freelance writer and offers up a few ideas of what you'd like to write for the business. So for example, to go back to the blog example.

If you notice your local cupcake shop has a blog that hasn't been updated in six months, you tell them why it's important to have an updated blog, how you can help and then, the secret sauce is that you have a few really cool blog post ideas.

It shouldn't take you a whole lot of time, just a really good headline and a quick paragraph and you send it off and that's the letter of introduction, which is a great option. So there's walking in, calling, letter of introduction and you could also try social media.

If you're reaching out to small businesses, you'll want to go directly to the business owner, but for bigger businesses, like more medium-sized ones, then, you would want the marketing manager, the chief marketing officer, or the director of communications, are the people who usually will be hiring people to write their marketing materials. What do you think Carol?

Carol Tice:

Yeah. If you're boggled, look at their press releases and see who the contact name is.

Linda Formichelli:

Yes.

Carol Tice:

There's always a cheap way to find a starting point that will be logical.

Linda Formichelli:

I've done that.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I've totally done that.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. It's usually the corporate communications person.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. I mean, I just quickly want to say that you know, if a business needs their website rewritten and it's 10 pages, that's a \$1,000.00 dollar project. I just got a minimum on a bad day, a \$100.00 bucks a page for web content rewrites is like the least I ever want to see people getting.

Just this morning, I actually got an email from someone who said, I'm becoming disabled and I need to leave my job and I need to know how I can earn \$700.00 bucks a month. If you could score one project like that a month, you would be earning that, but better than that, you know, a lot of businesses have ongoing work.

Once you rewrite the web content they realize they should have press releases coming out. These can also become nice ongoing gigs, like we were talking about, which are good when you trying to replace the mill paycheck.

Linda Formichelli:

I didn't think about that. I've done a lot of corporate communications writing like this, they don't just come to you with one thing, now, you're writing everything for them.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Once they like you, then, they're like, oh, could you write our internal emails to our employees? Could you write this newsletter? Can you write email blasts for us. There's so much pent up demand in the small business marketplace for marketing help, it would blow your mind.

Anyway, moving onto number five, a place I worked for both as a staffer and a freelancer, The Business Weekly's. I kind of broke these out from all the other types of pubs in your town because I think they're a little special and I think they're great to write for.

They lend a lot of credibility, good clips, they're known as good gate keepers, good editorial staff and they pay \$50.00 to \$200.00 bucks an article and up. I actually was just told that my...I did some intel research on pricing for this and I was told actually, that my local one is up to paying \$300.00 to \$500.00 bucks for a long feature. So I think their freelance rates have actually gone up.

You may also think of these as sketchy, local publications, but in fact, over 40 of the biggest ones in the US are owned by one company, American City Business Journals. I think they pay pretty on time. They pay at the end of the month.

There's also a national niche of business weekly, such as Sports Business Journal, where it covers a business niche across the whole country and one of the reasons I love these over daily papers is, Business Weekly's have not undergone the kind of implosion that has affected daily's.

Business Journals have an audience. Advertisers are dying to reach business owners who have money and need products and services to do their business as profitably. So they're ad revenues have stayed pretty stable and they don't get pitched a lot, is one of the great things.

So you don't have to write a full blown, elaborate two-page query letter like you do for a big national women's magazine. I found one-pagers are fine and one of the easiest ways to break in here is to pitch to them if you find a really innovative, interesting, or newly opened business in your town, especially if it's one that's attracting investors, or venture capital, or the owner did some previous business in town that everybody knows.

Just pitch the managing or articles editor a business profile over the phone, or with a short email that makes the case for why that business is notable and why you're the writer to do it.

You love covering business. You used to work in this type of industry. You patronize their store and know their products, really a tiny dose of personal connection to the topic on this sort of thing goes a really long way.

Another way is to spot a trend, you know. I've noticed that there's three new ice cream shops that have opened up that all make your ice cream instantly in 60 seconds while you watch it happen. Trends, if you can spot a new trend in town, that is huge, Linda.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. I wanted to add that I think we have a lot of people on this call who are not in the United States and we use a lot of American examples of magazines and businesses and I just want everybody to know that this applies worldwide.

We have students in other countries, I know at least one of them who is on the call right now who are writing for local papers and local magazines in their country where they live. You can write for American publications and papers and businesses, but also, this applies no matter where you live.

Carol Tice:

It's true. I know there are business journals, country business journals, city business journals everywhere. There are daily's and parenting magazines, all of this is really everywhere. Obviously, there are businesses everywhere.

So you've got number six.

Linda Formichelli:

I do. I have number six of our move up markets for content mill writers, which is to write for your local daily newspaper. I've gotten \$40.00 dollars for a feature story for a small town daily when I was beginning my freelance writing career. Carol's gotten \$200.00 dollars for real estate section features, so the pay is pretty varied.

When you're pitching ideas to a daily, you want to think of their department sections rather than the front page. You don't want to be pitching news. They have people for that, but you want to be pitching the travel section, the business section, the real estate section, the food section.

I know one writer who makes good money and gets sweet trips, I'm talking really sweet trips, like to Armenia and stuff, writing travel stories for various Massachusetts newspapers. I know another writer who's written for the food section of The Boston Globe and the Washington Post. These make really nice clips.

What you want to do is contact the section editor, so whoever's editor of the section you're pitching with a quick query, or because they move so fast in newspaper land, you can call the paper, ask the person who answers the phone when their deadline time is, where are they most crazed and then, call the editor at a time when he's not close to deadline and just pitch it over the phone.

Do you have anything to add to that Carol?

Carol Tice:

Yeah. That tip is good for the business weekly's too. Find out what their cycle is and yeah, don't call him the day they're putting the paper out, or email them, to really up your odds.

I know a lot of people think daily papers are over and they imploded and they are really quite a few daily papers left and they are struggling and down staffing, which you can benefit from because it means they're assigning out more freelance when they have less staff.

I know plenty of folks concentrating on the bigger city papers and still getting some pretty nice article writes. So is this me, yes. I have point number seven. I'm only madly confused, which is to think about organizations you belong to, particularly if they are national in scope.

You might be volunteering or a member of a professional organization and you have a local chapter, but the national level of that has a real marketing budget, even large national nonprofits, they have real marketing budgets just like businesses.

Your tiny local one wants you to do it as a volunteer, but think national and a great way to kind of booth drop into the system, maybe write something as a volunteer for your local chapter and then, use that clip to pitch up to the national level.

We know people who've been pitching 4H and the ASPCA and a lot of professional organizations put out magazines like California Lawyer for the California bar members, so that can be a great way to get some nice clips.

Oh, what I meant to say about daily papers is that daily paper clips, you may have gotten paid \$50.00 bucks, but they have a lot of credibility. They're real portfolio builders big time because people know, they're old school, they've got a real editorial staff, they're really fact checking and they just consider them a real legit place. So I just think everybody should have a few daily paper clips if they can get them because they're really good for your portfolio.

So I think Linda has number eight.

Linda Formichelli:

I do, I have number eight of our move up markets, which is online magazines. So here we have all those stand alone online magazines, plus the online versions of print magazines, which are easier to break into than the actual print version of the magazine because they pay less.

So although that is the case, many of them still pay pretty decently, especially if you're moving up out of the mills and just looking to get your feet wet and get some clips.

The pay is all over the place, but it all beats content mill rates by a mile. I pulled up some examples of online magazines and what they pay. So for example, XO Jane pays \$50.00 dollars, Cosmo online \$200.00 to \$500.00 dollars for an article.

Daily Beast pays around \$250.00, Washington Post on parenting section pays \$100.00 dollars, The Atlantic Online Health Department pays \$200.00 dollars, Daily Worth pays \$150.00 dollars and The New York Times Motherlode pays \$100.00 dollars.

So these are not bad. Carol has done tons of online exclusives, fully reported articles for www.entrepreneur.com that paid \$600.00 dollars.

Carol Tice:

Yes and we have a couple of resources in the class, in Escape The Content Mills for how to find paying online magazines and paying blogs.

Linda Formichelli:

Cool. So the way you break into these online magazines is with a solid query letter, or a query, LOI Hybrid that we talked about before. Those are what will get you assignments with these sites. You want to read through some of the archives, think about what you know about the topic of the publication and develop an idea you can pitch.

Also, there are other ways to connect. When I talk to other writers, when I hear about ways they've gotten assignments, sometimes I can't believe it. I know one writer who broke into a really big online magazine through Twitter. So any way you could be reaching out to those clients and editors will be good.

A lot of these websites for magazines and stand alone websites have guidelines that will tell you who to pitch, but your best bet is to search Google or LinkedIn for an editor's name and reach out to them.

You can ask if you can pitch them or if there's someone better to handle your idea, but if you can't find the exact person that way, with most types of publications, the senior associate or managing editor are often good bets because they're not too high up, that they're not dealing with freelancers and they're not too low down where they're also not dealing with freelancers. What do you think Carol?

Carol Tice:

Yeah. Right on. So if you need to learn more, if you are one of those people who maybe told us in our survey that you urgently need to get out of the mills, if you hopefully have been enlightened a bit by this presentation and hearing about the kind of rates you make in other markets, know that this has just been really, a quick introduction to entry level markets that could be good first steps out of the mills, or fairly easy to get into and give you clips.

You need to start pitching way better markets. These really lay the groundwork for pitching the dollar a word, \$100.00 dollar blog post, \$200.00 blog posts, \$100.00 dollar an hour copywriting type of clients.

I hear from a lot of writers who say, well, when I do these more complex pieces, the hourly rate doesn't work out any better. So I just want to respond to that and say, it may not at first, but the point is, you're building really pro clips that are paving the way to way more pay, over time and not even that much time.

As we said, the writers we talked to said it took a month, it took three months, and we are up to the questions. I love when people ask this question. Are some content mills better than others, as to pay, or clips, or prestige?

I wish I could say there's a good content mill out there, but there isn't. They really all are pretty close to equally bad. There's not one that's like, oh, that's the good one. There are a few things that I call move up mills, places like Contently and Ebyline where there are some better rates, but the thing to remember is as long you're not finding your own clients and you're using intermediaries, you're always giving up a cut of that revenue to somebody else instead of keeping all the money.

So Linda, you want to take a question?

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. I don't know if you're starting from the bottom, but I'm at the top and I've gotten this question. She says, as a new freelance blogger, I worry about making mistakes and appearing foolish in front of clients. I am therefore hesitating when it comes to actively marketing myself and looking for my first clients.

I have been considering writing for content mills to gain some experience in paying blogging, but I'd like to know if there's another way to develop my skills and build my confidence without writing for mills?

So I need to tell you that when you first start out, you are going to make mistakes. We have all made mistakes. When I was first starting out, I sent some queries to Family Circle that make me cringe when I think about them.

The thing is, you are going to learn from those mistakes and not only that, but often, an editor won't even notice what you perceived as a mistake and may give you an assignment.

So if you can just move past that fear and pitch anyway and know that yes, you may be taking a risk of looking foolish, but you are going to learn and the only way to gain confidence as a writer is to actually get out there and start pitching and dealing with clients and dealing with editors and dealing with marketing communications directors and so on.

You cannot think yourself into becoming more confident and losing that fear. I don't think that content mills are going to make you any more confident because really, there is no editorial direction, so there's nobody there who is helping you become a better writer.

They're not there to mentor you and take you under their wing, so you'll be writing for pennies, but you're really not going to gain a lot of confidence out of it, or a lot of useful skills that you can use when you want to move up, Carol.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. You know, the feedback we get from mill writers in this survey, these comments is that, mill writing destroys your confidence, not builds it in many, many cases.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah.

Carol Tice:

People say, I suddenly got thrown off this site and I wrote hundreds of articles and made \$5.00 dollars and now, I feel bad. I have to think maybe I'm just not very good. I just think it's an ego killer, not an ego builder in so many cases.

Linda, do you have any other questions you want to take?

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. I want to take Patricia's question. She says my rate as a writer for both up work and freelance is \$10.00 dollars an hour. I decided on an intermediate rate because I've already been published at least a dozen times.

I haven't had any success at all in both sites. My friend says I should start at \$1.00 dollar an hour first and eventually work my way up as I earn more stars and client recommendations. Should I follow his advice?

So first, we don't have any recommendations for how to make more money in the mills because we want you out of the mills, but I did want to bring up that \$10.00 dollars an hour, as a freelance writer is not really an intermediate rate.

We discussed before how you need to be making much more as a freelancer because you have so many fewer billable hours and you have so many more expenses, so we want to encourage you to start looking for work that pays at least \$35.00 to \$50.00 dollars an hour.

Is there anything you want to add Carol?

Carol Tice:

No. Yeah. That question made me cry when I saw it. That's one of the other reasons we talk about the content mills not being a confidence builder is yeah, you get the idea in your head that \$10.00 dollars an hour is an unreachable hourly rate where we know writers who are writing \$250.00 dollar blog posts in an hour. So you got to watch out.

Someone said is content lead bad on the questions.

Now, I think they're okay. They're kind of a move up market if you're writing for \$5.00 an article, if you can get in there.

So Darrin says, what's your advice for breaking into paid markets?

I think we just gave if for half an hour, Linda.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. One of these questions is, how do I know I'm good enough to move beyond the mills and charge some of the prices you talk about? What if I'm fooling myself and I'm no more a writer than Peter Rabbit was a saint?

I mean, you could sit there and think about it and think about it and think about it and wonder how do I know if I'm any good, or you can let the market decide, which means, you are out there pitching and if you are doing one particular type of pitch and it's just not working for you, you need to come back and analyze what it is you're doing and how you can change it.

You might need to get a little bit of help at that point, but the only way you're going to know if you're any good is to start getting out there, try and get clients and if you start getting work, then, you know you're doing something right and if you're not getting any work, then, you're doing something wrong, Carol.

Carol Tice:

Honestly, the only people I know who ask that question are completely competent writers. I've never had a really incompetent writer say to me, I worry that I'm not a competent writer. They don't know. They don't care that much about it to even ask the question.

So I just think if you're thinking that, you know, the reality is, we all get better as we go in writing and wherever you're at now, I'm telling you, there are some small business owners who you write so much better than them and you have the time to do it and they would be so happy to meet you. Wherever you are in the market, there's somebody who you could probably connect with.

Linda Formichelli:

I have one from Shawna. It says, I read one of your students, included the link to what she done for a mill on her LinkedIn profile after taking down the name of the mill. I have several clients who bought my work through Copy Press, can I legally link to the pages where my work appears, even though I don't have the byline?

Yes because when you think about it, even if you're working for a \$100.00 dollars an hour for a corporate client, your name is not going to be on those clips and they are perfectly useable clips.

Most prospects are going to understand you are not trying to put one over on them. If you say these are your clips, then, they're your clips and there's nothing illegal or legal about it, that's just not even a question. It's perfectly fine to do that. You're going to end up with a lot of examples that don't have your name on them.

Carol Tice:

Yeah. It's true enough. What you want to do is get a testimonial to go with it and that sort of makes the case to everyone, if anyone's wondering that you definitely wrote it.

I have someone in one of my coaching programs who just did that, who took my tip to stop saying I write for Ezines and Examiner and Demand Studios and she put, I write for IBM and USA Today and she immediately got a client off her LinkedIn profile when she changed that.

Linda Formichelli:

Because those were the end clients.

Carol Tice:

Right. Those were her end clients. So yeah, absolutely, if what you wrote for the mills ended up anywhere good and I know we have this in our class materials, yeah, drop those names because a lot of editors, they see you saying, oh, I'm writing for X content mill. I've written for E How, they just don't even read your query.

They just think of you as a completely different category of writer, even though, I personally know many long-time newspaper reporters who are now writing for content mills, trying to eek out a living.

They make an assumption that you are not a very good writer when they see that. So we talk about this more in our marketing module about how to present yourself coming out of these kinds of sites to position yourself better.

Linda Formichelli:

Yeah. Can I take Ellen's question?

Carol Tice:

Yeah.

Linda Formichelli:

She's in India, that's cool. We have people from all over the world on here. She said, I'd like to break into content marketing writing, is it imperative to have a website before I start?

It is imperative to have a website, but it is not imperative to have it before you start. I don't want anybody to think that a lack of anything should keep them from pitching. You will have a website. You should build a website, but you can still pitch right now and you can possibly land clients.

If you read our PDS of six case studies of people who moved up out of the mills, I actually had one guy who started without a website, without a LinkedIn and he started making some pretty good money.

Carol Tice:

So I think that's about what we got. I'm going to wrap it up because I don't like running long. Thanks Linda. Thanks everybody for good questions.

Linda Formichelli:

Thank you everyone. It was fun.