



ESCAPE

the Content Mills

By Linda Formichelli and Carol Tice
LESSON THREE: Marketing That Works

So far in *Escape the Content Mills*, you've learned about how your knowledge intersects with good-paying markets. You also took a tour of all the types of paying markets available to freelance writers, and learned about more sophisticated types of writing that pay better than blog posts.

Now, the rubber hits the road—you're ready to start reaching out to better clients and getting them to hire you.

We know this may be the toughest part of getting away from the Elance/Craigslist/mill world. It may be the very reason you've been writing for pennies so far. Marketing may terrify you, or you could be overwhelmed by all the different possibilities. Or maybe you've given it a try before, and didn't get any results.

Don't worry. We're here for you. This lesson is going to help you get over the marketing hump. Trust us, somewhere in our list of marketing methods that work today, you'll be able to find effective strategies that you can use.

When you think of marketing your writing, you probably think of lengthy queries and well-researched Letters of Introduction (LOIs). And yes, those are wonderful marketing tactics—and among the most effective—that we'll be discussing in this lesson.

Bonus Tip

Everyone asks, "What sort of marketing is the best kind? Which strategy should I use?" The answer is—the kind you enjoy and are willing to stick with. If you hate it, you're not going to do it—and you need to do some serious marketing, especially at first, to find better clients.

But if you can fall in love with marketing your business—get hooked on the thrill of the chase and the fun of landing a new client—you will earn more, guaranteed. For inspiration, here's the [story of how Carol learned to love marketing her writing](#). As you go through our list of 10 marketing tactics that work, pick the ones you think you will love most—and be willing to do consistently.

But if you want to kick the content mills, you may also need some scrappy, fast marketing methods that will get you gigs ASAP, while you study and perfect the art of writing super-effective queries and LOIs.

Honestly, we could write a whole e-book about any one of these topics! Our goal here is to present you with the fundamentals of each of these types of marketing to get you started, and to give you resources for learning more, if a strategy appeals to you.

Here are our 10 top marketing methods you can use to sell those better types of writing to the kinds of clients we talked about in Lesson 2...in the writing niches you discovered in Lesson 1.

1. Inbound Marketing...AKA Your Website

Most writers think of their site as a place they can send prospects to. But it can also be turned into a powerhouse of passive marketing that sends you good clients without much effort on your part.

We are so high on this strategy that we have a whole Lesson on this next week! But in the meantime, here are a few quick tips you can get started on right now:

- Don't use a free platform, such as Weebly, that puts an ad for themselves on your site. That comes off unprofessional.
- Don't feel like you have to learn how to be a webmaster! There are very low-cost solutions that make it easy and offer support, such as [Writer's Residence](#).
- Know that the words you put in your site's URL, headline and tagline are all highly regarded by search engines. To top a relevant freelance writer search, do some research into which terms are the most highly searched yet not too competitive. A couple of good free tools are [Google's AdWords Keyword Planner](#) and [Wordtracker](#) (which offers a free trial).
- For your main keywords, select a targeted search term where you can get to the top of the search results. "Freelance writer" will probably be tough—there are thousands of us vying for that spot!—but if you're near a major market, you can niche this down by mentioning that locale in your header or URL. Many clients want to hire someone near them. Carol has been hired by more than one major corporation that found her through a Google search, just because she made "Seattle Freelance Writer" her tagline, and kept updating her site until it topped that search. This is totally worth spending a little time on.

- From our own marketing experience, we've come to believe phrases such as "freelance writer" tend to get more searches from prospects than "freelance writing." Clients tend to search for the person they want, rather than a verb. Makes sense, right?

Again, we have much more on website building in the next Lesson, but you may want to get started now tweaking or building your site.

2. Targeting Niche Job Boards

Too many content mill writers flee from sites such as Demand or Fiverr, only to land on job boards like Craigslist, that are full of the same types of lowballing prospects.

Only dysfunctional companies—99% of which pay lousy—advertise on mass job boards where they know they will have to wade through 300 responses from writers begging to work cheap. Carol explains this in detail in her post [Why Freelance Writer Job Ads All Pay Crap](#). Quality companies—the kind you want to write for—don't operate this way.

Instead, find better-quality prospects by using niche job boards. Yes, they may take a little sleuthing to find, but it's worth it.

They might be exclusive to members of a writers' organization or an industry association in your niche, or they may be simply an online site or service. For example, [Freelance Writers Den](#) has a Junk-Free Job Board where the admin team vets job postings to make sure they're legit and offer decent pay.

[Gorkana](#) offers a job board that occasionally lists freelance gigs. Carol got a lucrative blogging gig with a major broadcaster

through Gorkana and made well over \$10,000 from the account. [Morning Coffee](#) is a solid daily digest of freelance job alerts.

One tip to finding job boards that are worth looking at is to search for sites where the prospects *pay* to list their ads. They're serious about hiring, have money, and want quality.

And here's a secret not many writers know: Sometimes, you can have luck searching the full-time writing job ads on sites like LinkedIn. If you see a market that's a great fit for you, email the contact and ask if they'd consider hiring a freelancer...or if necessary, just apply and ask if they use freelancers, too. Carol used to do that, and got a nice \$1-a-word trade journal client out of it.

3. Calling

Calling up prospects out of the blue sounds scary—but if you can muster up the courage, it *works*. Few writers do it, so it's a way you can stand out.

Linda loves the book [Real Skills, Real Income: A Proven Marketing System to Land Well-Paid Freelance and Consulting Work in 30 Days or Less](#) by Diana Schneidman, which gives detailed information about how to land freelance clients by cold calling.

Linda once recommended Schneidman's book to a mentoring client, and the client agreed to start calling as many prospects as she could. The mentee started calling trade magazine editors—magazines are *not* the kind of client you would typically call, by the way—and got an assignment her first day! So again...this *works*.

The gist of cold calling is this: You simply compile a big prospects list, and then call the prospect at each one—more on who exactly to contact below—and ask if they use freelance writers. As we mentioned in Lesson 2, think about targeting businesses with \$10 million-\$100 million in revenue.

You can find all kinds of business lists for free online, or look through the business directories at your local library. You could browse this [list of business directories from HubPages](#), check out [SuperPages](#), [EuroPages](#), or find a business list in your country at [Kompass](#). No in-depth research into what the company is doing is required. No muss, no fuss.

If you're wondering how to figure out who the good prospects are, a few basics: You're looking for companies that sell a real product or service in the real world, not an online platform looking to earn ad revenue off your content. If it's an online business, they should have something they sell—courses, consulting, widgets. Ideally, they've been around a while and have solid sales. Another good category is startups that have gotten venture-capital funding and have money.

If you need more resources for qualifying prospects and finding out what their revenue is, check out Carol's and Linda's [How to Get Great Freelance Clients](#) e-book.

Who should you reach out to within these companies? Typically, the people who are in a position to hire freelance writers have titles like Marketing Manager, Director of Marketing, and Director of Communications. If you're having trouble finding the contact info for the right person, try the contact person on their press releases, which is usually the Director of Communications.

The trick to cold calling is to call in *volume*. In her book, Schneidman recommends setting a goal for 50 calls per day. It usually takes you a few calls to become comfortable and get on a roll, and they get easier and easier the more you do. Carol has a post called [One Writer's Top 5 Lessons from Making 461 Cold Calls](#) that offers some valuable tips and motivation for calling like crazy.

Besides Diana Schneidman's book, another great resource is [Freelancing 911: Turn Your Business Around With Cold-calls](#) on the Tuts+ blog.

Developing your prospect-finding research skills will help you with many of the other marketing techniques below, too.

4. "Warm" Calling

Hate the idea of cold calling prospects? Then don't! As we mentioned earlier, you want to try the marketing tactics that you think you'll do consistently. If you don't have the stomach for cold calling, try warm calling instead.

Warm calling is reaching out to someone you've researched and for whom you have a specific offer you've built based on their needs—as opposed to cold calling, where you're just calling everyone on a list and trying to make a sale.

Here's how to do it: Scan your prospect's "in the news" or "media" page on their website to see where they've appeared in print. Or, look at local business pages to find company names.

Take a quick look at their marketing materials, especially their website. Seriously, spend maybe 5-10 minutes.

Armed with this background research, reach out to companies that fit your target niche by phone, referencing their media appearance. For example, you might say:

"I noticed the story about you in the *Times*, and it made me take a look at your site, as well as that of several of your major competitors. I noticed your site doesn't have any _____ (case studies/press releases/product descriptions/a strong 'about us' page/executive bios/whatever's missing). Could you use some help with that?"

Then, close with information about how your writing would help drive more business, and offer to send links to samples. (Don't have samples? Just don't mention it!)

5. Killer Query Letters

A query letter is a sales letter you send to the editor of a magazine or online publication describing your article idea—and why you're the best person to write it.

Queries work for pitching posts to paying blogs as well. If you're thinking you'll get in by just emailing to say, "Hi, I'd love to write for you," sorry—that's not going to work. Some sites, you'll be submitting your completed proposed post, and others you'll need a strong query (and for online articles, you'll need a [super-strong headline](#), too).

Too many writers craft weak queries—they feel that just because it's "only a query" and not an actual assignment, they don't need to put much effort into it. Query writing is a learned skill, but it's a skill you want in your marketing toolbox, because great queries are very effective at getting assignments. As we write this, we just wrapped up a session of our [Pitch Clinic](#) course, and we had about

20 of our students get *immediate* assignments when they sent out strong queries!

If you think you need "contacts" or "connections" to get in at a magazine...you don't. Your strongly written query is your ticket in the door. You may not even need any past article samples, either! We've seen writers get assignments without them, just by playing up their work or life experience in a topic.

Your query needs to address four key points:

- What you want to write
- Why it's important to the magazine's readers
- Why it's important NOW
- Why you're the best person to write it

Start your query with a lede (yes, journo-types spell it that funny way, when we talk about the first paragraph in an article!) that mimics the article ledes you see in the magazine itself. You can figure it out by reading some back issues.

Do enough research that you can include a few compelling quotes and statistics, just to show that you know how to interview, you have some good sources (interviewees) in mind, and you can prove that the article will be important to a good percentage of the magazine's readers. Quickly scan headlines of recent back issues, but don't drown here. An hour tops should do it for research.

Yes, creating the query often means reaching out to experts and doing some quick interviews! But don't worry—you'll be surprised how many experts will be happy to help you with that.

Also, remember a query is a writing audition. Most magazines have a conversational style, so you'll want to have the same. (Too many writers make the mistake of writing in a stiff, formal style!)

Big Tip

Don't attach anything to your query email! Editors are crazy paranoid about viruses, and will often delete unread any emails with attachments from people they don't know. You might think you need to attach a resume, C.V., or clips—but don't. Include links to a few relevant clips or a link to your writer site or portfolio on LinkedIn, or offer in your query to send the editor clips...if she requests them, THEN you can send them as attachments. Otherwise...no attachments.

Be sure to give the editor a glimpse of what you're offering instead of just telling her. For example, instead of just saying, "I'll offer five tips from experts, each with a clever subhead," actually write out a couple of them—including the subheads—just as you would if you got the assignment.

Caution!

Don't raise issues in your query letter such as how long your article should be, or what pay rate you want (usually, the editor will tell you their rates, anyway). Your query's job is to get an editor interested in working with you! You'll work out these other details if the editor wants to give you an assignment.

Finally, don't be afraid to tout any credentials you have. Don't tell the editor what you CAN'T do (I've never been published, but...I have no experience in the topic, but...)—tell her what you CAN do.

Which editor should I contact?

Many writers are boggled when confronted with a big masthead (list of editors) at a publication. Don't let this stop you! A few basic rules:

If there's an editor for the specific section or topic you want to write on—a health or food editor, or an articles or features editor—choose them. If not, you usually want to pick an editor that's lower than Editor-in-Chief or Editor (they usually don't work with freelancers unless it's a very small pub). Carol's go-to choice is Managing Editor. Linda usually pitches a Senior, Deputy, or Associate Editor.

Don't stress about it too much—Carol ends her query emails with, "If you're not the right person to contact, I'd appreciate it if you'd forward this to the person who is."

Tip for earning more: Send the same query multiple places at once. This is called [simultaneous submissions](#). Editors will tell you they don't want you to do this...but you've got to eat. And often, ideas will be too dated if you wait 6-8 weeks for an editor's response, which may never come. The secret is to give each pitch a slightly different slant, or to send it to noncompeting markets (like one national trade pub and one city magazine). But don't worry about what'll happen if you get more than one "yes" from direct competitors – in our experience, that rarely happens.

For more info, Linda has hundreds of posts on query writing on [The Renegade Writer Blog](#). One of the best is [Top 5 Query Mistakes Freelance Writers Make](#). Linda is also the co-author of [The Renegade Writer's Query Letters That Rock](#), which includes a

query writing FAQ as well as two dozen actual queries that landed gigs, plus comments from the writers and their assigning editors.

6. Letters of Introduction (LOIs)

Letters of introduction are a great way to show off your writing style and your ideas as you connect with prospects. You can use LOIs to target both magazines and corporate clients.

Magazine LOIs

While queries work great when you have a strong article idea for a consumer magazine, there are some situations where you might not want to use a query. One example is when you're pitching custom publications. These are magazines put out by companies—think *Costco Connection* and Hannaford supermarket's *Fresh*—where the topics will be driven by the business's own agenda. They tend to have editors come up with the ideas, so slaving over a query here is usually a waste of time. Though Costco does their own magazine, most custom pubs are outsourced by the company to specialty custom publishers—you can see them on the [The Content Council](#) website.

You also don't typically need to write a full query for a [trade publication](#). These are magazines that cover a particular sector of business—two you may know are *Ad Age*, for advertising executives, and *Daily Variety*, which covers showbiz. Linda has written for many other trades, like *Pizza Today*, *The Federal Credit Union*, *Sanitary Maintenance*, and *FunWorld*. Believe us when we say every industry has at least one trade magazine connected to it!

You can pitch universities with an LOI as well—Linda connected with one college client by sending an initial LOI followed by an offer of a sample white paper she wrote on social media marketing for universities.

Instead of a query, try sending an LOI, ideally one in which you state 2-3 quick ideas in a sentence or two. No need to research in-depth or fully flesh them out—they're just there to show the editor you understand their audience. There are five main points to cover in an LOI:

1. Do a bit of research, and show you're familiar with what they've recently published.
2. State your 2-3 brief ideas.
3. Explain why you're the writer for them—you know their industry and are interested in writing about it.
4. Close with a Call To Action on what you want to see happen next. Linda likes to close with "May I send you some clips?" and Carol likes "I'll give you a call next week to gauge your interest." Notice that both of those CTAs put the onus on the *writer* to do something, not the prospect. Don't ask them to jump through a lot of hoops—make it easy for them to say "yes" and start building a relationship with you.
5. Write your LOI in the style of their publication, so they can see you understand their audience.

You can contact the same types of editors we mentioned in the Killer Query Letters section: a Managing, Deputy, Associate, or Senior Editor. If it looks like a small magazine or has a tiny staff, you can go ahead and contact the Editor or Editor-in-Chief. And the great news: You can often find trade and custom pub editors' email addresses pretty easily on the magazines' websites!

Corporate LOIs

LOIs to corporate prospects work the same way as magazine LOIs, except that instead of offering a few article ideas, you're going to research the business's website and offer what they're missing, just as we discussed in the Warm Calling section.

For example, if the prospect has a blog that hasn't been updated in six months, you expound upon the benefits of an updated blog, and offer a few post ideas with killer headlines. If you notice their competitors have case studies and the prospect doesn't, that's what you offer. And so on.

If you need more details on how to write LOIs, we teach LOI writing in great detail in our [Pitch Clinic](#) course—and you can get feedback from real editors on your draft, too. We find that can make a huge difference in really "getting" how to nail these.

7. Networking

Do you like meeting new people? How about eating and drinking? If so, networking may become one of your favorite ways to find clients.

Person-to-person

A lot of freelancers avoid in-person networking because it's time-consuming, and you don't always find the best prospects. Carol's tip: You may need to kiss a couple frogs, but it can be so worth it.

If you can do in-person networking, we strongly recommend you give it a try. There's something powerful about saying, "I'm a freelance writer" out loud to people for a couple hours for building your self-confidence, even if you don't get any good leads at a particular meeting!

Attend a wide variety of events, until you find the ones where your ideal clients hang out. Carol tried local chambers, [BNI](#), and several other groups that were full of broke solopreneurs before realizing she needed to go into downtown Seattle to bigger meetings. She struck gold with [Media Bistro events](#), where she met the editors of

Costco Connection and Microsoft Office Live, among others, and got one longtime \$300/article client. Strangely enough, the other hot meeting in her town was the Seattle Rotary Club's, where she discovered the CEOs of Nordstrom, Ben Bridge Jewelers and other top local companies hang out.

You'll want to go to networking events with business cards (see #8), a firm idea of who your ideal client is (people will ask you!), and a "[me speech](#)" that quickly describes what you do.

If you're shy, just ask other people what *they* do, and then let them talk! You'll learn a lot if you chat with pro networkers. Also, consider bringing a friend to help calm your nerves. (More tips on this are coming in Lesson 5 on Overcoming Fear.)

Bonus Tip

Don't think of the people you meet as potential prospects. Think of them as referrers, and ask them to refer you. People love to introduce people to each other—it makes them feel useful. And it's a lot less nerve-wracking to ask for referrals than to ask for work! Remember, networking is just that—a chance to build your network, so more people know you are a freelance writer. And when you ask for a referral, don't be surprised if you get the response, "Well, I think I might need some writing done myself!" You can sometimes get clients this way—without having to be obnoxious or pushy.

Another way to make in-person events work for you is to speak at an event for writers, freelancers, or the industry you want to write in. Linda once spoke at a panel for magazine editors on how to

work with freelancers, and ended up writing for one of the editors there, because he remembered Linda when she sent in her pitch.

Finally, conventions and conferences for a particular industry can be a great place to prospect. At many, you might also cruise the vendor booths for possible clients. Here are a couple posts on how to work a conference: [Two Easy-Fun Ways Freelance Writers Can Find Great Clients](#) on Carol's blog, where Kimberly Rotter also contributed [How I Find Writing Clients at Conferences—On the Cheap](#).

Going virtual

If it's hard for you to get out, virtual networking can be a gold mine, too. Carol is in an epic Skype-based bloggers' mastermind that's been an incredible source of new relationships and referrals for her.

Search [Google Groups](#) or [Yahoo Groups](#) for email lists that are likely to have your target prospects as members, and don't forget to Google for forums, masterminds, and other online groups and events you can try.

Hosting a networking event

Networking in-person or online is an effective way to land writing clients. But we know of something that's even more effective—by far.

Instead of merely *joining* a writer's group or a networking group, you can take action to put yourself in the spotlight by organizing events for writers, editors, and potential clients.

Linda once co-founded a writers' group in New Hampshire called Way North Writers and invited editors to speak to the group. One

of the editors, of a local lifestyle magazine, recommended Linda to another editor she knew at a supermarket's custom publication. That editor hired Linda to write an easy article at \$1 per word.

One mentee of Carol's has a husband with a winery business, so she decided to start a quarterly writer-editor networking event in her town, hosted at the winery. She sent invite postcards to every editor in her town, and they all soon started to recognize her name. This gave her an automatic "in" when she wanted to pitch them ideas!

Why does hosting rock? Starting a group or organizing an event shows that you're proactive, organized, and professional. EVERYBODY wants to get to know the host, and comes over to thank them at the end of in-person events. It's a guaranteed way to get a high profile and meet a lot of people—fast.

If you'd like to start your own group, you can organize one cheaply at [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com). Want to keep it virtual? Try [Google Groups](https://groups.google.com) or [Yahoo Groups](https://groups.yahoo.com), both of which are free. Or start a LinkedIn group...[here's how](#).

8. Business Cards—with a Twist

Carol recently sat in on a webinar with two major corporations that meet frequently with small businesses looking to sell to them. These corporate executives said it's a running joke with them how little advantage most solopreneurs take of their business card.

You paid for both sides—so use them. Make sure your card has ALL your information, including phone number, street or PO Box address, your blog and writer site URLs, and anything else pertinent, such as specialized certifications you might possess.

Bonus Tip

Get a professional-sounding email address, not sexypants@hotmail.com. You won't be taken seriously with one of those! See Linda's post [Do You Have an Editor-Repelling Email Address?](#) for more details on this.

One way to make sure nobody ever throws your card away: Make an offer on the back. A free 30-minute consultation, a link for a free report prospects can download from your site, or a QR code box that leads to more information are all good options. (If you don't know what QR codes are, [here's a short training](#) from Social Media Examiner. And here are [22 examples of clever cards that used QR Codes.](#))

Want to get even more creative? (That's what prospects pay you for, right?) You can invest a little money on a standout business card...then turn it into a refrigerator magnet, or a T-shirt to wear—or get it blown up to plate-size and wear it around your neck at events. Carol knows one networker who does that last strategy, and you can bet everyone there has to come up and meet him!

You can get inexpensive business cards (and other printed materials like T-shirts) at [VistaPrint](#) (just steer clear of the free products that have the VistaPrint logo on them, which look as cheap as they are). If you want to spend a little more for something really interesting, Linda likes [StreetCards](#) (though they offer only business cards, not T-shirts and the like) or [Moo](#) (which has flyers and other paper products as well).

Finally: Say something creative on your card! You're a writer, after all. Use this little rectangle of real estate to be memorable and stand out. For years, Carol's said "CEO & Janitor," and Linda's

said, "My clients think I'm swell." Think of something that would get a laugh or start a conversation.

9. Social Media

Many writers spend hours putzing around on social media. Why not make it work for you instead of letting it be a time suck?

We've found two social-media platforms that we've seen good results on: LinkedIn and Twitter. If you only have time for one, we recommend LinkedIn. It takes the least effort, and is the only social-media platform where it's OK to overtly network and ask people to help you find gigs.

Bonus Tip

For the do's and don't's on connecting with editors through social media, here's a post Linda wrote where she interviewed actual editors on their preferences. This information can be extrapolated to prospects of all kinds.

Here are some tactics you can try on both LinkedIn and Twitter:

Scan Your Followers

Whenever Linda notices a local business following her on Twitter, she sends them a Direct Message asking if they need a writer. A few years ago, this landed her a gig doing copywriting and editing for a local hospital. How she did it: Linda wrote to the follower asking if they needed a writer, and he forwarded her information to the marketing director. She in turn hired Linda to write a brochure and do some editing, and then passed her name along to a sister hospital in Virginia, which hired Linda to write web copy at \$500 a page.

Follow prospects

It's easy to find prospects on social media platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn. Without being a stalker (we know you wouldn't do that!), follow people you'd like to write for and start building a relationship by commenting on and sharing their posts.

When you're ready to pitch, you'll be a known quantity to the prospect. And you can reach out via InMail on LinkedIn, or an open tweet or DM on Twitter, asking if you may send a pitch via the social media platform or if they'd prefer you to pitch by email. (Whatever you do, don't try to cram an entire pitch into a Tweet or InMail!)

The best person to reach out to? As with the other types of marketing we've talked about, you'll want to try to connect with someone in the marketing or communications department.

Target editors on Twitter

Strangely, editors who never answer their phones are sometimes reachable on Twitter. Our tip: Ask an innocuous question to start a conversation. Carol once got a \$14,000 article contract by asking an editor if she was the right one to pitch for a corporate writing project, for instance. (She was.)

Try connecting with the editors most likely to hire you. For example, if you're a health writer, reach out to the Health Editor if they have one. If you can't find the perfect title, try the Deputy, Associate, Senior, or Managing Editors.

Carol has two tip posts on using Twitter: [How to Get Noticed on Twitter: 15 Tips for Writers](#), and [5 Ways to Find Freelance Writing Gigs on Twitter \(With Sample Tweets\)](#).

Take advantage of free InMail

LinkedIn reports that InMails get a 30% response rate, which is pretty darn good. The bad news is, InMails are only available to paying LinkedIn members.

Want to know how to get *free* InMail on LinkedIn? Here's a secret: [LinkedIn for Journalists](#). Apply to join this group if you have any previous publications experience. (They've gotten pickier about who they accept, but give it a whirl if you think you've got any shot.) Attend one of their free monthly phone trainings (which are *full* of valuable info for writers), and at the end you'll get details on how to get a free upgrade for a year to LinkedIn for Business, which includes free InMails.

Also: If you can't get into LI for Journalists and haven't done any other LinkedIn promotions in the past 12 months, you can [try their Premium level free](#) for 30 days. Then, you could InMail like mad for a month, get going, and see if this method is for you.

Use "Who's Viewed Your Profile" on LinkedIn

One of the easiest ways to market on LinkedIn is to use the tool [Who's Viewed Your Profile](#) to see who has visited your site. (This is another place where getting the Premium level will help you, as the tool will reveal more actual contact names.) If they smell like a prospect, send them a quick InMail like this:

Hi, I noticed you were checking out my profile. Were you looking for a freelance writer? As it happens, I have solid experience in [their industry]. Let me know if you need any help! —Carol

No, it is not creepy or stalkerish to do this. Carol's done it scads of times, and never had a complaint. Most people are fascinated that you knew they were checking them out because they're not aware of this LinkedIn feature! It's a great conversation starter.

For more on LinkedIn usage, see Carol's article [10 Ways Writers Can Use LinkedIn to Find Freelance Gigs](#). and this guest post from Susan Johnston of the Urban Muse: [5 LinkedIn Features Every Freelance Writer Should Use](#).

10. Networking with Other Freelancers

Many writers consider other writers their competitors, but smart writers know writer relationships are key to running a successful freelance business. Other writers (and other types of freelancers) can be a source of referrals, and are invaluable for getting a sense of going rates. Here's how to connect:

Work the forums

Several years ago Linda joined [Freelance Success](#) (which costs \$99 per year), and over the next few years she earned more than \$40,000 from the contacts she made there. She also made a ton of writer friends who would answer her questions, recommend her to their editors, and generally support Linda and her freelance career.

And don't forget Carol's [Freelance Writers Den](#), which boasts a busy forum for writers to connect (along with a ton of other goodies).

Not sure about forum etiquette and how to make forums work for you? Linda wrote an article for *Writer's Digest* magazine called How to Get The Most Out of Writers' Forums, which you can find on [The Renegade Writer blog](#).

Partner with other freelancers

Forming marketing partnerships with other freelancers is another great way to find steady work.

When Linda was starting out as a copywriter, she teamed up with a graphic designer in Boston and he recommended her to his clients who needed writing; Linda ended up writing a radio ad for a liquor store and a brochure for a bank.

Contact designers in your area and ask if they'd be interested in trading referrals (since some of your clients will likely need graphic design help). Check out Peter Bowerman's book [Profitable—by Design!](#) for more tips on building your writing business through designer partnerships.

What about my resume?

You may have noticed that we haven't said a word about polishing up your resume, maybe to camouflage the low-paid mill work you've been doing recently or your stint on Elance?

That's because when you start proactively reaching out to clients and using the marketing methods above, your resume generally won't come up. And we don't advise you send it out, unless you absolutely have to. That's because your resume is generally NOT a good sales tool—especially when it has gaps in your career or mill writing on it. Instead, be brilliant at networking meetings, write killer queries—and let your marketing convince your clients.

If you feel you need something like a C.V. or a resume, consider doing something more [like this](#)—tell a story that hits the highlights of your talents and experience, instead of using a traditional resume format.

Putting it all Together: Your Marketing Plan

There's something magical that happens when you write down your goals and plans. Whenever Linda revises her business/marketing plan and looks at it six months later, she often finds that she's met many of her goals without even trying.

Your marketing plan doesn't need to be fancy; Linda writes down her top business goals, obstacles to achieving those goals, and ideas for overcoming those obstacles (which are usually marketing ideas). She goes over her old plan and creates a new one every six months.

Gwen Moran's book [*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Business Plans*](#) can help you devise a plan for your writing business, and you can get even more info tailored just for the freelance writing business from Carol's e-book [*Freelance Business Bootcamp*](#).

We recommend that you seriously consider compiling a business and marketing plan for your freelance writing business.

HOMEWORK

Somewhere within these 10 marketing tactics for writers, we know you'll find a handful that you'll want to try. So here's what we want you to do in the next seven days:

Select three marketing tactics from our list and get started! Use the list you made of possible prospects in the Lesson 2 homework, and choose a marketing approach. Then, go for it! Give them your *very best* try. Remember, succeeding as a freelance writer is all about *volume*—the more you market, the better your chances are.

For example, you might select any three of the following:

- Do 50 cold calls in one day.
- Write one kick-butt query letter and send it to several magazines or online publications.
- Follow editors and other prospects on LinkedIn and Twitter, and start building relationships with them.
- Apply to five freelance writing gigs you find on *high-quality* job boards.
- Attend a local business networking event.
- Start a group for freelance writers in your area.
- Write and send five LOIs to different prospects.
- Apply for the next LinkedIn for Journalists training. (When you have your free InMails, which takes a few weeks after the training, you can start reaching out to prospects.)
- Write a marketing plan for your freelance writing business.
- Order business cards with an offer on the back, and hand/mail them out to at least 10 prospects in the following week.
- Start building your writer website, being sure to target good keywords. (More on websites in the next Lesson!)
- You probably have other ideas we haven't thought of...get creative!

Bonus Tip

Consider finding an accountability buddy among your writer friends to keep you on track. Linda used to have a "goal buddy," and every week or so they would do what they called a "boot camp" where they called one another every hour to talk about what they accomplished in the last hour and what they planned to do in the next hour. This is a GREAT way to stay motivated and on track.

How long should I keep at this plan?

Once you get through that first week of marketing...keep going! We like to see at least 2-3 months of consistent marketing activity in your chosen methods.

Then, it's time to take a look at whether what you're doing is working. If it is—keep it up! If not, it's time to rethink and either learn more about how to win at your marketing approach, or maybe try other marketing strategies.

You may get some results right away, but if you don't, keep plugging! Often, prospects will hang onto your name and realize they have work a month or two after your first contact. Linda has heard back from prospects with gigs more than a year after she first contacted them!

Don't get discouraged. Realize that if you want to be well-paid and leave the world of mills behind, it will take some effort on your part...and a little time to get rolling.

Trust us, you won't have to market this hard once you get more established with your own client base—this is just an initial push that's needed to get your name out to better prospects. Once you start getting gigs, chances are your clients will come to you with projects again and again so you don't always have to hustle.

If you need inspiration to keep you going, put up pictures of the lifestyle you want to lead on the wall near your computer, or of family members you want to provide for.

Finally—remember to have fun! Think about how much more money you'll be able to make once you get in the habit of marketing your writing.