

FREELANCER'S BUSINESS BULLETIN

January 2005

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Dear Subscriber,

Welcome to the January 2005 issue of Chris Marlow's Freelancer's Business Bulletin (FBB).

This month I'll share two financially ruinous negotiating tactics often made by beginning copywriters. Both came from my coaching students just this week.

Financially ruinous negotiating tactic #1 comes from a successful book author who is adding copywriting to his writing skill set. Here, paraphrased, is a comment he made to me on Monday:

"My client seems unhappy with the work. I'm thinking of telling her she doesn't have to pay the final 50 percent."

My response:

Copywriting is part science and part "art." And it's the subjective aspect of assessing copy that leads writers to feel responsible when a client is not happy.

However, time (and expertise) is all the copywriter has to sell. A client contracts for that time and uses it, and must respect it with the agreed-upon pay.

Is the copywriter always right to demand payment when a client's satisfaction is unrewarded?

If the copy is indeed poor, then of course the client shouldn't have to pay anything at all. But in the case of my student, a Creative Brief was used, and in fact, filled out by the client herself.

Thanks to the Creative Brief, the Web site copy was "on target," and since I reviewed it as a "copy chief," I know that first draft copy was very good.

However, the client's email noted that the "voice" was not sufficiently hers, that she did not feel that her positioning as a "rural GP" came through strongly enough, that her bio seemed overly altruistic, and that it was clear that she would have to take the copy "in house" to finish.

When a copywriter gets this kind of feedback, his immediate response is often one of confusion, and sometimes deep insecurity. These emotions cause him to react defensively, instead of studying the response.

Rather than throw in the towel and lose half the copywriting fee, I advised my student to call the client and offer to add what she perceived to be missing from the copy.

Unless the copy is way off mark — and it shouldn't be if the writer used a Creative Brief — the solution is to make changes and edit until the work is acceptable and meets expectations.

The take-away: DON'T offer refunds or partial payments. DON'T get defensive. Instead, study and analyze a client's response. Get a clear picture of what the client is complaining about, then fix it.

If the client can't specifically tell you what's wrong, then it becomes obvious to both parties that it's the client who is failing in the communication process. Revisions, refinements, and editing are a natural part of the copywriting process and their function is to "fix what's wrong" and perfect the piece.

(In this case, the small two-person operation exhibited characteristics typical of small business...they were unsophisticated about marketing and its processes, and unclear about the value of copywriting. They confirm my timeworn advice to avoid small businesses and seek work from more marketing-savvy mid-size and large companies.)

Financially ruinous negotiating tactic #2 comes from one of my recently "graduated" coaching students.

She asks: "Do you always quote based on your time or do you quote based on the value the project has to the client?"

The answer is to always quote based on the value to the client. If your work makes the client many thousands of dollars, or more, then you should be fairly compensated.

In cases where your work is directly linked to leads or sales, it helps to view yourself not so much as a "copywriter" but as a sales pro. Get the fact that you're a writer out of your head and see yourself in a different light.

Who are the most important individuals in any for-profit entity? Those who bring in the business! Everyone else's salary depends on them. That's why they're usually paid more than anyone else. YOU are in that category.

UPDATE on the 2005 FREELANCE COPYWRITER FEE & COMPENSATION SURVEY — the world's first and only comprehensive survey on copywriter fees and economics...

After months of compiling and analyzing Survey results, the Survey is finally finished! It's being offered to Freelancer's Business Bulletin subscribers before anyone else, so watch for an announcement and link to the sales microsite in the next few days!

Coming soon...

***A request to update your opt-in subscription to the Freelancer's Business Bulletin.

New software will allow us adapt technology that can enhance your subscriber experience. When you receive our request to "opt in" once again, please do so we can continue your free subscription to the Freelancer's Business Bulletin!

Special Announcements:

***JOHN AND KEVIN FINN of Finn Communications in

Redondo Beach, California, are agents to copywriters who work on commission only and/or earn incomes in the \$200,000 to \$1,000,000+ range.

If you fit this category, please contact John at john@johnfinn.com or Kevin at kevin@finncom.com, or call 310-373-0743. If there's a "fit," John and Kevin will thank you with a recently published marketing encyclopedia by Jay Abraham valued at \$10,000.

Other Important Stuff:

*** Send this newsletter to your freelance friends! The Freelancer's Business Bulletin was conceived for copywriters, but contains the same information any business freelancer can use to build their business.

*** Got a burning question about some aspect of building your freelance business? Send it to chris@chrismarlow.com and it may become a newsletter topic!

*** Did a friend send you this newsletter? Get your own subscription at <http://www.TheCopywritersCoach.com> where you'll also get the valuable complimentary Report, "The Secret to Successful Projects Every Time - Guaranteed!"

To your freelance prosperity,

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Veteran freelancer and award-winning copywriter, Chris Marlow has written for the nation's leading businesses for over 20 years. She also offers business coaching and master-level copywriting instruction to new and aspiring copywriters and other business freelancers who want to accelerate their success. Check out the benefits of coaching at:
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