

# FREELANCER'S BUSINESS BULLETIN

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This month's Featured Article:  
**'How to Get Started as a Freelance Copywriter'**

Also, winner of January's pricing contest for a free copy of the 2005 Copywriter Fee & Compensation Survey(tm)...

And Chris' new 'Quick Q & A' column: How do I tell which magazine publishers are good copywriting prospects?

[www.FreelancersBusinessBulletin.com](http://www.FreelancersBusinessBulletin.com)

Please add 'Chris Marlow' to your address book so you don't miss a single issue of one of the Web's most valuable ezines for freelancers!

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**Dear Subscriber,**

Last month I asked my readers to tell me what baffles them MOST about the business side of copywriting, and two readers said 'getting started!' So that's what I picked as subject matter for this month's issue.

It's the old 'What comes first? The chicken or the egg?', applied to a new career in copywriting.

One of the major hurdles faced by new copywriters is the 'book' or portfolio. Or more specifically, the fact that there is none.

**How does a new copywriter get samples (and work) if he needs samples to get the work?**

I know how it feels to be in that position...and so does

every freelance copywriter! No one is born with samples.

But unlike the 'pre-Internet' copywriters, who had to figure it out for themselves, YOU can ask your online colleagues!

So here it is in a nutshell...

Three ways you can blast past the number one obstacle to getting started as a copywriter and get work when you don't yet have a portfolio (or even one lousy sample)...

**Solution #1.** This one is the easiest and may even have occurred to you.

Do it for free!

When I started out I quickly learned that small non-profits were happy to accept free creative services. I also knew that I could bargain 'free' for more control.

A common complaint among copywriters is that a well-meaning but misguided client can muck things up, and the end result may be nothing like what you envisioned.

So I told my non-profit client, a small women's shelter, that I'd do a package for free, but I had to have complete creative control.

This allowed me to show a piece in my portfolio that was 'really me.' (In fact, the photo on the front of the envelope WAS me!)

Not only did the experience give me a substantial sample, but it also allowed me to test my direct marketing skills.

The package wasn't a blockbuster. But it didn't fail either. It DID tell me how good I was...and I was slightly deflated with the results. But hey...back then NOT failing was kind of like winning!

**Solution #2.** Look at friends and family. I've never used this idea but many of my coaching students have. They look at friends, family, colleagues...whomever they know in life

or business...and offer to do free work.

Actually, I advise my coaching students to offer to do free work and if the client likes it enough to use it, THEN they should get paid. It's a simple proposition:

'I believe I can help you get more leads (or sales). Let me write a promotion. If you also think it will work, use it. If you use it, you benefit from my work. Only then will you pay me.' (Important: get this agreement into a contract!)

**Solution #3.** Hook up with a copywriter's coach and ask to use their samples. I do this all the time with my coaching students who have no samples.

When the moment comes that the potential client asks for samples, send samples from your coach's portfolio.

Write in the email...

'Here are some copywriting samples. I work closely with veteran copywriter (name of coach) to ensure maximum results for your promotion, and this is the level of quality you can expect from working with me. My site isn't up right now but you can take a look at (name of coach)'s site.'

It works like a charm.

This approach works best when you're working with a coach who has worked in many, most, or all niche markets (like me:)

So this is my unplanned opportunity for a bit of self promotion. (Hey, I'm a direct marketer after all!)

So...if you find yourself in a bind...guess what. You're not!

Just email me at [chris@chrismarlow.com](mailto:chris@chrismarlow.com). You can use an hour of my coaching to get past the #1 hurdle of all new copywriters...getting good samples that get you good work.

We don't lie...I never lie. All we do is 'bridge' using my

samples...your coach, mentor, colleague, and friend.

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End note: This article is available at no cost for reprint as long as it's reprinted in its entirety.

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### **Chris' Quick Q & A**

Kammy, one of my past coaching students, is doing what all smart direct marketers do...she's removing unproductive prospects from her list and looking for new prospects to add.

Recently she got her hands on a hot resource that contains hundreds of magazines in her niche. She says they 'run the gamut from 1,000 to over 5 million circulation.' Her question is one I've grappled with myself:

Logic says magazine publishers can't afford freelance copywriters if their circulation can't support it. How low can we go on circulation figures and expect the publisher to be a good prospect for freelance copywriting?

Well, I think the real answer is out there somewhere, but in the past I've applied mathematical logic to determine some kind of cut off point.

Say a publication has a 50,000 circ and sells for \$15 for a year's subscription...then  $\$15 \times 50,000 = \$750,000$ ...not a lot of money, especially when you back out salaries, expenses, etc.

If the marketing budget is 2 percent of the gross, that's \$15,000. The Small Business Administration (SBA) says that 2 percent of yearly gross revenue is common for small businesses, and for some businesses, the marketing budget might be as much as 10 percent if, say, they're launching a new product.

I remember a few years back, when I toyed with the idea of becoming a copywriter's agent, I tried hard to get work for

a copywriting colleague whose accomplishments are so legendary as to appear in mainstream copywriting books. (Hi Tony :)

I had a hot lead with Police magazine and I even drove to Torrance California (two and a half hours from Palm Desert where I live), to seal the deal.

But I couldn't make it work. They WANTED our information. But they were too small to find it in themselves to pay for it.

I don't know what their circulation was then but it's probably not much different now. Police magazine is highly niched and its circ will never match the circulation of the mass magazines.

All I can say to Kammy's question is go for the largest circulations and work your way down, until you get to magazines that appeal to a niche that is fairly small. Do a quick 'logic calculation' to see if there might be room in the budget for a copywriter, as outline above.

And don't be afraid to eliminate! The number one mistake I see new copywriters make is working for individuals, entrepreneurs, and small businesses. They can't afford you!

And often times, they need to be educated. Educating is NOT your job. That's what college is for. So go for the gold...start at the top, and work your way down.

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If you're a freelancer, or a copywriter, or both...what else should you be subscribing to?

John Forde's Copywriter's Roundtable is an industry classic. What a gifted writer John is! Not only will you gain sophisticated copywriting knowledge, but you'll be entertained at the same time. It simply must be on your reading list.

If you're not already a subscriber, I encourage you to sign up for the CR at:

signup@jackforde.com

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If you're an entry level copywriter you should also sign up for the Steve Slaunwhite's 'For Copywriters Only' ezine. It's light, breezy, and smart.

I just spent \$500 with one of my previous coaching students in research. I asked the talented Kim Stacy to find the best ezines for copywriters on the ENTIRE WEB...

And guess what?

There aren't that many (and none that I already knew about!... Oh well.)

One of the few really good ones is Steve's ezine, so sign up here:

<http://www.forcopywritersonly.com>

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My short, anonymous Survey for non-profit copywriters is drawing to a close. There's room for only ONE more participant! If you're the one, please go to:

<http://tinyurl.com/adv8l>

But please participate ONLY if you consider yourself niched into non-profit either part or full-time. When the Survey closes, I'll share some insider info about what our copywriter colleagues have told us about the TRUTH of working in this mysterious and intriguing niche!

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And according to Jackie Robinson (my incredibly efficient and highly valued office manager), the winner of January's drawing for a free copy of the 2005 Freelance Copywriters Fee & Compensation Survey(tm) is subscriber Jodee Spalding!

Jodee responded to my request for new pricing suggestions for the 2005 Freelance Copywriters Fee & Compensation Survey, since its introductory price of \$125 is drawing to a close.

I had many responses...and thank you all! It helped us determine the price most of our readers wanted to pay, and VERY soon the price for the 2005 Freelance Copywriters Fee & Compensation Survey (plus Bonus Report) will go to \$179.

So if you want to take advantage of the introductory price of just \$125 for the 2005 Freelance Copywriters Fee & Compensation Survey, the time is now. By the time you get my next email, the Introductory Price will be history and you'll lose your chance to save \$54 USD!

Here's what you get in the Freelance Copywriters Fee & Compensation Survey. Statistical pricing on...

- \* lead-gen sales letters
- \* order-gen sales letters
- \* lead-gen classic packages
- \* order-gen classic packages
- \* catalog copy
- \* full page print ads
- \* quarter page print ads
- \* home page copy
- \* web site copy
- \* email letters
- \* self-mailers
- \* magalogs
- \* newsletters
- \* lift notes
- \* publisher's renewal series
- \* order forms
- \* lead-gen microsites
- \* order-gen microsites
- \* email letters
- \* concepting

To read more about the Survey Report, go to:  
<http://www.FreelancersBusinessStore.com>

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Two coaching time slots are now available

Where do YOU belong in the world of freelancing? What niche market is waiting for your arrival?

I write copy for clients AND I help copywriters, coaches, and other freelancers find or create profitable markets for their freelance business. Sure we can leverage your past...but did you know it's equally effective to leverage your passions? Or a copywriting talent? Check out my coaching program at:

<http://www.TheCopywritersCoach.com>

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\*\*\* Send this newsletter to your copywriter and freelance writer friends. They'll thank you, and so will I!

\*\*\* And talk to me! I want to know what's on your mind, especially the PROBLEMS you're trying to solve. Email me at [chris@chrismarlow.com](mailto:chris@chrismarlow.com) and your business problem may become the subject matter for a future Freelancer's Business Bulletin.

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To your freelance success,

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Veteran freelancer and award-winning copywriter Chris Marlow has written for the nation's leading businesses for over 20 years. Visit her copywriting site at:  
<http://www.chrismarlow.com>