

## AN EIGHT POINT PLAN FOR LANDING YOUR FIRST CLIENTS

Isn't it amazing how easy it is to go above the call of duty for a friend or a client, while completely neglecting our own needs? If you want a strong start in the freelance copywriting business, you'll need to be swifter and more assertive than you might be under normal circumstances. Resolve to do your best work promoting a product you're intimately familiar with – yourself.

### POINT ONE: SELF EVALUTATION

Think of yourself as a product: who is your ideal customer and what unique benefits can you provide for them?

What marketing skills do you bring to the table?

- Are you a great article writer?
- Can you produce stunning videos?
- Are you photogenic or a good speaker?
- Do you have a blog?
- Do you already have deep knowledge of a certain niche?

All of these things can deeply contribute your ability to find and impress clients, so take note of them.

### POINT TWO: TARGET MARKET

What kind of clients are you trying to reach? It's not enough to say "anyone with money" in the Web 2.0 world. People are more interested in customized solutions than ever before.

Put yourself in the shoes of a potential client – if a hotel owner has to choose between a generic writer offering copy for a print brochure for \$500, and someone who has branded themselves as a hotel copywriter who has contacts in the industry and experience creating material for the industry, they'll pay twice as much for the privilege of working for the serious, dedicated copywriter in that industry.

### POINT THREE: LEVERAGE YOUR SKILLS

There isn't a single marketing plan that you can follow like a robot to connect a unique client with your unique skills. So look at your own skills and write down a plan that brings your unique skills and situation to play as often as possible.

If you're handsome and live in an exotic location, set up a camera. Take pictures and videos to build to your brand. If you're a fast writer, or have a strong wit, hop on a forum and give help and advice. If you're a bit more deliberate, pour your energy into blog posts. If you've got a telephone and free time, start sending calls and hand letters to local businesses in your target market.

No matter who you are and where you are, there's something unique that **you** bring to the table.

It's smart to work to your strengths and focus on marketing instead of forcing yourself to learn "new skills."

### POINT FOUR: CREATE A CONVERTING WEBSITE

*Just any website* isn't acceptable. Your site doesn't need to be flashy, but it does need to be professional and effective. Here's how:

First, remember that all the "rules" of good copy apply to your website too. It's amazing how many copywriters stress providing benefits over listing features when talking to clients, but forget to do that when representing themselves. Talk directly to your client about problems they're facing – emails that get unopened, ugly and ineffective website content, low conversion rates on sales letters, and how you can fix it.



Second, give away your expertise for free to generate leads. Write a new article discussing an aspect of copywriting every day (unless you're guest posting for someone else or doing paid work). Write a special report on how to optimize copy for the web or choose a copywriter, and ask potential clients to opt-in in exchange for it.

Third, create credibility. Even if you don't have experience, there are lots of small things you can do to create the appearance of professionalism. A picture of yourself emphasizes that you're a "real person." Testimonials from bosses, coworkers, and clients help too. You might have to use some creative wording if the experience wasn't directly related to copywriting.

#### POINT FIVE: ADD A PORTFOLIO

Your portfolio doesn't need 5 items in 5 different genres, each showing off your mastery of a different style. Keep things basic and write one or two great samples about a product in a niche you have some knowledge and understanding of.

Even if you haven't done any paid work before, you can still deliver your expertise by hiring yourself and demonstrating results. There are a few good approaches for this:

First, create a “before and after” sales letter for an existing product. You can either contact a product owner and offer to do this for free, or you can do it yourself by using the letter for a PLR product. Present both of the letters side by side and discuss your changes in text or via video.

Second, you can go a step further and create your own information product and promote it via PPC or the Warrior Forum. Researching, writing, and selling a product can be a lengthy process – but it’s what business owners deal with every day. Showing that you can deliver results for **yourself** is the quickest way to prove that you can do it for others.

Third, you can simply write a letter for a conceptual product in your niche. This is the fastest way to get something up and in front of clients so you can focus on the next steps of your marketing plan.

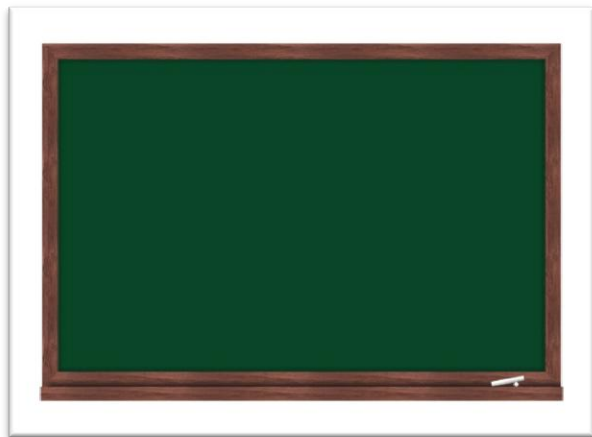
#### POINT SIX: NETWORK LIKE CRAZY

If you’re trying to avoid the stiff competition of online marketplaces, the best thing to do is to work locally. Find stores, restaurants, construction companies, plumbers, HVAC specialists, chiropractors in larger cities like New York, Miami, or Chicago.

Why? Because competition in these cities is stiff, and in order to survive, they usually have to hire professionals to create engaging content and headlines.

Study some of these sites and compare them to each other, and to the basic principles of copywriting.

Now spend time looking at similar sites for businesses located in suburbs and smaller towns. Chances are that once you leave the top one or two sites, the quality takes a nose dive. Usually the people behind these sites are sole proprietors who are doing all the work themselves and really hate writing!



If you have a budget and a little patience, send physical letters introducing yourself and your service. You don't need to charge a lot. Once you've improved the profitability of a couple of websites, word will spread like wildfire.

Look around your local area for business lunches, clubs, chambers of commerce, and networking groups.

These sorts of groups give you a chance to get your face in front of a less jaded audience.

While you might have to spend a little time explaining who you are and why it's valuable, it's much easier to position yourself as an expert. Remember that you're looking for qualified clients. That means active businesspeople that can afford to hire you. Not tire kickers who are "working on something".

Either volunteer to give a short presentation on copywriting for small businesses, or just attend the event, collect business cards, and be ready to explain what you do in casual conversations.

Think up a fifteen second pitch that explains who you are, what you do, and why it's beneficial. Chances are, the person you're talking with will have their own advertising woes (who doesn't need more money), so listen diligently and proceed from there. Remember that you don't need to walk away from the conversation with a check in your hand – give them your website and tell them you'll appraise their website for free if they contact you.

If you're focusing on online marketing, the same general principle applies. Find mastermind groups, Skype rooms, and message boards where product creators are networking and start making contacts.

You can also approach graphic designers, web developers, and other copywriters.

Let them know who you are, how much you like their work (be specific), and that you would be open to working together or bartering in the future. Chances are they've already got plenty of contacts they can refer to you – and as you get more interest as a copywriter, it's always good to have sources on hand that can deliver graphics and other sales elements.

This is an especially strong strategy when working with graphic designers in the Philippines and Singapore, where there are plenty of world-class designers who could still use the help of a strong English copywriter to gain more credibility.

#### POINT SEVEN: BE VISIBLE

The more people see, hear, and read your name, the more value is attached to it. That means you can command more money and better clients. There are so many different ways to market yourself that it would be difficult to mention them all in this space.

But as a copywriter, the bulk of your work is for your clients who have products or services to sell. That's why it's helpful to maintain a blog that works as a calling card and showcases your writing talents to potential clients.

The most difficult thing with maintaining a blog is usually knowing what to write about. As with your sales page and other content, you will start with an in-depth keyword search. Use keywords relating to your niche market that you think the target audience is going to search for.

Don't be afraid to attack a really tight niche in order to stand out. The following are just some of the things you can blog about:

- Tell personal stories about your product.
- Create a "Frequently Asked Questions" section.
- Suggest and refer to other experts in the field.
- Review work from other people, or PLR products.
- Interview customers, bloggers or partners in your niche market.
- Write about your opinions on current trends related to the niche market.

- Provide tips on how to solve issues your target audience will have.
- Help solve potential issues with the product you're selling.

Now that you know how to create your blog and what topics to write about, it is time to start writing posts. You should aim for writing on the blog at least twice a week, but more often in the beginning to get the blog running is a good idea. You want to reach your target audience on a more personal level, showing how passionate you are about the subject.

You should also portray your expertise on the subject and let you become a well-known expert in the field. If you find it difficult writing posts, create a schedule or to-do list where you are writing a blog every few days or once a week on the same day. If you know you write a blog post every Sunday night, you will remember to do so each week.

In time, researching and writing each blog post will be a simple process that takes less than an hour a week to do. Small price to pay for the amount of free traffic you will get in the long run by doing this. There's nothing wrong with hustling for clients and quick money, but you don't want to stay there forever!

It's also important not to become insular.

Post insightful comments on small business blogs – tools like Google Alert will give you instant updates when a popular blog has a new update, so you can write an insightful post early on, leave a link to your website, and enjoy the extra visibility.

You can look for opportunities to write guest blog posts, too. Google phrases like “[your niche] + write for us” for places that are looking.

Commenting on discussion forums is a good strategy, too – just make sure your posts have personality and content, and aren't just “white noise” with a signature attached.

#### POINT EIGHT: ALWAYS FOLLOWUP!

Remember that few customers are going to place an order with you on your first contact with them.

When someone signs onto your mailing list, make sure you have an autoresponder sequence ready to give them further advice that leads towards the sale. When reaching out to offline clients, make sure you call them after your initial contact.

If you haven't met them in person, *create the initial contact* by mailing a letter that offers a free consultation or report. If you can include a small item (like a die or a few coins) in the letter, it increases the chances that the owner will open it out of curiosity and remember you when you call down the line.

This seems like a lot of work – but it's easier than it sounds.

If you're strapped for time and need to pare things down, simply ask yourself:

- Who can hire you for the job you want?
- What do they need more than anything else?
- What can you do to convince them that you can do it?
- Where are these people hanging out?
- What medium can I use to give them your message?



The trick is to put the same energy in selling yourself as you would a client. The process can be slow going for the first week or so, but you'll quickly create exponential results and find yourself facing more potential leads than you imagined.

Of course, this presents its own problems. After all, you're a writer – do you have the skills and know-how needed to negotiate the rates that you deserve? Don't worry – in the next chapter you're going to learn how to completely master this vital element of your business.

## HOW TO WRITE WITHOUT GOING BROKE

Control the market, or the market will control you.

And trust me, you don't want that to happen.

It's an absolute certainty that there's someone out there willing to do your job for less money than you. Spend a day on a website like ELance and you'll see hordes of copywriters offering to do lengthy sales letters for a pittance. The only reason to compete with those people is if you like being poor more than they do.

The typical working stiff will spend months – or years – at a job that drastically underpays them in the hopes that experience or results will bump them “up the ladder”, only to feel frustration and disappointment when that bump never comes.

They might feel their employer doesn't really care about them – and they're right. The boss at the typical job *cares* about you as much as you might *care* about two competing brands of generic toilet paper.

It might have been drilled into your head that experience was the best way to demonstrate value to a business. But one look around at all the “experienced” people getting laid off to make room for cheaper talent should tell you that's less true than ever.

You must have the confidence to proactively create value for yourself. Market yourself as a person who is uniquely qualified to help a client or employer. If you're too afraid to do that, you'll always be seen as a common commodity - and you'll be treated accordingly.



Furthermore, if you can't even get the going rate on your own work, how on earth will you be able to sell anyone else's?

Let's talk about ways to increase your perceived value before your first negotiation:

### IMAGE IS EVERYTHING

There are plenty of brilliant, high dollar copywriters with ugly websites.

But chances are, they made their mark without using the internet to generate their first leads.

Invest in graphics, business cards and images that scream "high dollar professional". They don't have to be expensive, but they do have to look good – remember that as a new copywriter, you're creating value out of thin air. Good looking collateral will really leave an impression on visitors.

### BE A PROBLEM SOLVER

In the same way that you can specialize in a niche, you can specialize in solving a specific problem. Don't be afraid to highlight a problem you think your potential clients might face and present yourself as a person who specializes in solving those problems. Maybe you specialize in a certain industry or writing a certain style of sales copy. Stress it!

### ONLY WORK FOR WHAT YOU DESERVE

How much money do you need to keep afloat every month? How long does it take for you to write a good piece of copy? How much time do you have to devote to writing?

Once you've combined those numbers, you've got a good idea of how much your time is worth *at minimum*. You may be surprised at how high a number it is – and you may be even more surprised that you're probably *still* lowballing yourself a bit.

## OFFER TIERED PRICING

Ask yourself whether you can offer a little “extra” for a client who is willing to pay above your minimum rate.

Perhaps you’d be willing to do a little extra work, get the job done on a shorter timetable, or give other services like SEO promotion, social media, blog posts and articles, graphic design, or website setup (remember that these tasks can either be outsourced or handed to your contacts).

Creating one or two “premium” packages for your clients indirectly increases the value of your main offer – it’s easier for a client to say “I think your rate is too high” than it is for them to say “I think your *lowest* rate is too high”.

## HAVE DOWNSSELLS AT THE READY

Imagine getting a quote for oral surgery from your local dentist. You may be in excruciating pain, but his prices are way out of your league.

“It’s okay,” he says calmly. “I can still work with you. I have a few budget options that will ease the pain...”

Smaller packages for things like email auto-responders and sales letter rewrites are a great way to get your foot in the door – while raising the perceived value of your work. Remember that doing a great job for a paying customer can benefit you in the long run in terms of referrals and repeat business, regardless of their budget.

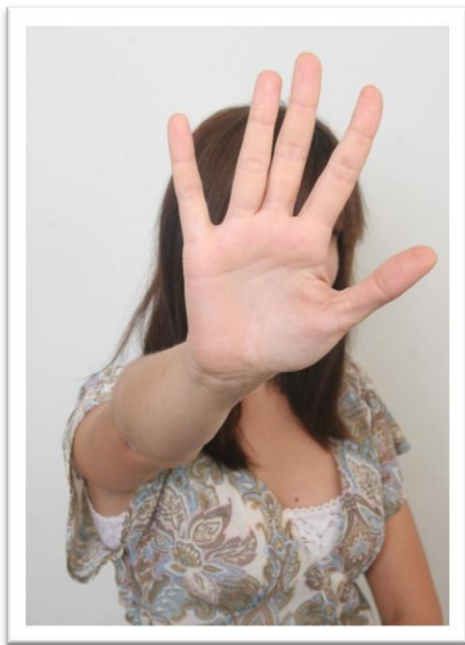
## AVOID “POISONOUS” CLIENTS

Taking on a bad client can be a bit like drinking poisoned water in the desert – it feels good for a few seconds, but it can quickly eat you from the inside out. Cast a skeptical eye toward:

- *Clients that talk about how bad all their previous copywriters were.*  
Remember, there are other factors in sales besides copywriting, like traffic and a good offer.

- *I'll pay you from the profits!* Don't do this to yourself. If someone doesn't have the resources to compensate you, they probably don't have the resources needed to do the many other things that go into an offer.
- *This is a great opportunity for future business!* Treat future business as imaginary leverage and hold out for paying work.

Saying “no” is one of the HARDEST things you'll have to do, but it's vital to your long term success and sanity. The harder you work to establish your value, the less effort you have to put into making sales, and the more you ward off bad



clients. But once you finally close the sale, you'll have another challenge – delivering on your promises and writing copy that sells.

Luckily for you, if you've taken to heart the tools and ideas presented so far, you'll have a good idea of the principles used to build empathy and credibility with buyers.

But before you put pen to paper on any sales material, it's important to know your market and the needs behind them. You can ask a client these questions at an initial consultation, or really impress them by doing the research yourself, presenting what you already know,

and asking for their insight.