

## Freelancing For Success

### Chapter 1

There's a lot of misconceptions about being a freelancer. People think it's someone trying to scrape by while they wait for a staff job. Others think it's for flakes. Those things can be true, but the really strong freelancer is neither of these things. The strong freelancer is as savvy a businessperson as they are a writer. To be only the latter won't get you half as far. You also have to realize that the phone will have as much to do with your success as anything you write. If you take that to heart in this white paper, you will see the kind of success that my other students have had. I've turned people who've never had a byline into published, sometimes while the class was still going, and I've allowed those who are on staff to better capitalize on that credential and turn it into extra cash. I have the same hopes for you!

Let me start by taking you through the dance of going from article pitch to sale (or, sadly, a rejection). This can often take as many as four weeks which is why this class is five weeks—so that we can go through the entire process and learn from student experience. This will be incredibly valuable, even opening up your eyes to writing articles in areas you previously didn't consider. To begin, what is a pitch? It's a mini version of your article, showing enough of your style and what you intend to do to hopefully warrant being assigned an article. But since this is sent through email most of the time (which it should be), the email itself must be crafted as well as the pitch pasted in it. Here's an example of an emailed pitch I sold for four-figures. I'm going to point out its weaknesses and strengths below it:

Subject: Men's Fitness Writer Wonders: Can Your Readers Throw a Knuckler?

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Eric Butterman and I'm a contributor to Men's Fitness and Ramp. There's a fun piece I had in mind today that made me think, "If I saw this on the cover of a magazine I would definitely buy the issue." See if your readers could get into this:

"The Achievables" - Let's face it: there are some sporting accomplishments that might never be us. We might never dunk, or finish a marathon, or throw a

fastball 90mph -- but does that mean there's nothing amazing in sports that we could achieve? Absolutely not. There are a few spectacular feats that every person with two arms, legs and a heart has a shot at.

Thanks,

Eric Butterman  
Address Here  
Phone Here

What changes would I make to it now? First off, my subject line is too long. It should just say something like, "Men's Fitness Writer Curious..." Next, I'd call myself a writer instead of a contributor. I just happen to like the sound of it better. I'd back off "there's a fun piece" and just get into the pitch. I'd also have sources that I'll use—adds a lot more authenticity to your pitch because it shows you're already thinking of the inner workings. Most articles need sources! I also don't attach anything because editors fear viruses and often won't open attachments from people they don't know. They can't read your great email if they don't open it up! Here's what the email looks like with the changes:

Subject: Men's Fitness and Ramp Writer Curious...

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Eric Butterman and I'm a writer for Men's Fitness and Ramp. I was curious if you'd be interested in the following piece:

"The Achievables" - Let's face it: there are some sporting accomplishments that might never be us. We might never dunk, or finish a marathon, or throw a fastball 90mph -- but does that mean there's nothing amazing in sports that we could achieve? Absolutely not. There are a few spectacular feats that every person with two arms, legs and a heart has a shot at. We'll go into 10 of them, checking in with experts ranging from kicking coach John Ryerson on how to kick a 40-yard field goal and Pro pool player Dennis Manters on how to shoot the masee.

Thanks,

Eric Butterman

Address Here

Phone Here

Why do I put Men's Fitness and Ramp in the subject line? Because any credential you have of writing for a similar magazine will give you a leg up. But don't worry, if you've never written for anything similar, you could always put the closest magazine credential or just put "Fitness Writer Curious..." if you have no clips. Bottom line: Just do the best you can! I'll give you another example of a pitch I sold a little later but I want to take you through the rest of the process. Let's assume that the editor never contacts you after you email the pitch. Do you give up? Nope, you're just getting started. I like to follow up with a phone call two days after I send a pitch. Yep, you read right—two days! This way I haven't gotten in their face right away but I also am fresh in their mind. Just because they didn't get back to you doesn't mean they didn't read the email. They're busy people, it happens. I'll call them and usually a conversation will go something like this:

Editor: This is Jen Jennerson

Me: Hi, it's Eric Buttermann. How's it going?

Editor: Good.

Me: I just wanted to check in because I sent you an email about inner city scuba divers and wanted to see if you had a chance to look it over.

Editor: Didn't have a chance.

Me: I just thought it would be really good for the readership because it shows how these students turned their lives around by using a sport you wouldn't expect. I also have a great source in scuba diving instructor Ron Myers—he's involved in the program and he has some great stories.

Editor: Sounds good. Let me try to get to it this week.

Me: Sounds good. Thanks, Jen.

End of phone conversation.

Now you may not think that was an important conversation but it's huge—if you miss this part you will not gain nearly as much from the class as you need to.

Let's break down the conversation. First, I don't start into my pitch, I ask the editor how they are. These are people, not robots, treat them like people! Second, I get into the email and after they say they haven't read it, I don't get alarmed. I use it as an opportunity to do a re-pitch, a mini version of the pitch, with enthusiasm in my voice (very important), reiterating why I feel it's right for the readership and bring up that magical thing called a source. After they say they'll get to it, I don't keep them. We hang

up and I've established two things: 1) I stay on top of things 2) I don't waste their time with a long drawn out conversation.

A writer who is both on the ball and not a nuisance? You just gave the editor that much more reason to work with you, because those are the qualities they look for in a freelancer.

So now let's say they don't get back to you again. How long do you wait? Now you've got to give it some time. I say usually around 12 days. This allows you to remain somewhat fresh in their heads, you're giving them space and you don't seem desperate. This time when you call, it's a much quicker conversation:

Editor: This is Jen Jennerson

Me: Hi, it's Eric Butterman. How's it going?

Editor: Good.

Me: I just wanted to check in about the pitch I sent you on inner city scuba divers. Did you have a chance to look it over?

Editor: Didn't have a chance. I'm definitely getting to it though.

Me: Sounds good. Just thought it would be a really good piece for the readership.

Here you're not re-pitching but you definitely want to still show that enthusiasm. Many an assignment has come after this call. Again, it shows I understand an editor needs time but I remain on top of things.

If after this you still don't hear anything, give it another two weeks before calling back. This is your final call and is almost identical to the previous one. If you don't hear back after this then it's time to move on. But, that's a whole lot different than just emailing a pitch, not hearing anything and giving up, isn't it?

Here's that next cold pitch, which sold for several thousand dollars (not bragging, just want you to know you can make good money at this).

Subject: Maxim and Men's Fitness Writer Curious...

My name is Eric Butterman and I'm a contributor to Maxim and Men's Fitness. I was curious if you'd be interested in a piece on writer/director Brian Helgeland, who has two films he wrote, "The Order" and "Mystic River," coming out in September and October. I'm already slated to interview Clint Eastwood (who is directing "Mystic River") for Maxim, so I'm sure a piece on Brian wouldn't be too difficult to muster. Here is the angle:

"Blood and Guts" - You wouldn't think an Academy-award winning screenwriter's first movies would be "Nightmare on Elm Street 4" and "976-Evil," but Brian Helgeland had a scary road to the top. Now one of the top writer/directors in the business, Helgeland will see two films he wrote, "Mystic River" and "The Order," come out in back-to-back months. We'll talk with Helgeland to find out how he went from Freddy's Nightmare to the Hollywood dream.

Thanks,

Eric Butterman  
Address  
Phone Number

This pitch I wrote better than the first. The subject line I wrote perfectly and the intro line is right except for contributor—again, these days I like “writer.” Normally I’d say go right to the pitch but in this case I wanted to preface it with the timeliness and why I’m specifically right for the piece. It’s the right move because they have to know when the movie is coming out and why I’m a good choice to cover this person, but it would have been better to put it after the pitch. This pitch ended up taking me quite a few follow-up calls to sell, but the persistence paid off. Again, if you just rely on the pitch and not the connection you can make by talking to an editor, giving them a chance to hear your enthusiasm, intelligence and that you’re not a weirdo, it’s not the right move.

So when to make the follow-up call? I like Tuesday-Thursday between 10:30 and 12:30 and then again during 2:30-4:30. This way you’re not catching someone just when they arrive to work, when they’re getting ready for lunch or just coming back from it, or just on their way out the door. Also, Monday they’re swamped from what they left behind for the weekend and Friday they want to get out for the weekend. Not a good time to call.

## Chapter 2

I don’t teach anything that I don’t do myself. Therefore, let’s begin by looking at some of the things I did this week, so you can see my thought process. I sent a pitch last week to a magazine I’ve written for and didn’t hear anything back. Did I wait to hear back and assume if I didn’t hear anything that it was a pass? Nope. I simply called them up and the conversation went something like this (I use vagueness as not to give away who I work with):

Editor: Hello?

Me: Hey, it's Eric Buttermann. How's it going?

Editor: Good.

Me: I just wanted to see if you had a chance to look over so-and-so pitch.

Editor: Yeah, actually I liked this one because I think it will work well with this. I was just about to call you.

Me: Cool. How many words would you like it to be?

Editor: This many words for this amount of money.

Me: Great. Could you just send me an email that says the word count, the pay and the due date?

Editor: Sure.

Me: Talk to you later.

Okay, let's look over the conversation. First, do you think the editor was just about to call me? Probably not. The truth is that pitches can go in and out of an editor's mind because they have so many things to do. The truth is, if I don't call him I may not get that assignment at all. Second, why do I ask him to email me a confirmation? Because many times magazines don't send out their own contracts or forget to send them. In an age when magazines can go under at any second and editors get fired every day, if you have no proof of the assignment you can lose out on money.

Prime example: I had been assigned pieces by a magazine and two weeks later they went under. In the email to all writers explaining this, they said they wouldn't pay for basically anything the writers had done. I'm now getting paid because I requested an email that said the details of the assignment – that email serves legally as my contract. With every other writer they can say they were never assigned anything or that it was speculative. With me, because I got the editor to immediately send me an email with the details, I am going to get paid. That email is a legal contract. And if the editor forgets to send the email detailing your assignment then you send them an email with the heading, "Written description of our phone assignment." In the email you detail when the editor made the assignment and what the word count and pay was. This kind of paper trail will save you money, believe me. They can't refute evidence like that most of the time.

Onto the next conversation with another magazine:

Another pitch to a magazine that doesn't call me back on a pitch. I call the editor and they say another editor is looking it over. I email that editor and explain my enthusiasm for the piece – I get the assignment. Again, I take the initiative and make sure I'm not waiting on editors because they can forget about pitches. This is a part of the job of a freelance writer. If you don't do these things, sales that would have happened won't. These two deals don't happen without me doing what I did.

## **Networking**

Networking almost seems like a fairy tale. How can just talking with people with a drink in hand make any difference? For me the difference has been huge financially. Latest example, I was out at a Mediabistro event and was talking with an editor I had never met before. I told them about myself as I learned more about them and they talked about how a private company was looking for some technology writing (which I told them I did). Did I just ignore this lead? Nope, I followed up with the editor the next day, got the contact person of the private company and two weeks later I had an assignment in the four-figures. Not bad for the cost of a beer and a little conversation.

I actually talk to almost everyone I meet at an event. You never know who can help you, but also it's fun to meet people. Have there been events where I came away with nothing but a good time? Yep. But what's wrong with that?

So how do you meet almost everyone anyway? Many of these events have name tags with their company on it and I simply just will go up to a group, provided they're not in heavy conversation, and I look at their name tags and simply ask them what they do at their company or what their company does. I've never had anyone not answer me and almost every time they're quite friendly. If you google my name, you'll see a piece I wrote for iVillage – got that assignment through an Ed2010.com event I networked at. Get everyone's card and email everyone the next day so you're fresh in their head and make a connection. I was even offered a high-profile publishing position based on someone I met at a networking event. Believe in the fairy tale!

## **The Every Categories**

Obviously you're not in this business for the money, because finance could be more lucrative for you. Still, you'd like to do as well as you can. We'll talk about how business writing fits into this later on in the course, but we'll focus on consumer today since that's what people seem to be more interested in. If you open up consumer magazines and pay attention, you'll realize there are certain topics that are in many magazines: health, finance, entertainment, travel and technology. There are others like politics, but let's focus on the five I mentioned. If you google me, you may find I'm engrossed in all five. Let's look at how it happened and what I've done with it, so you can see why I recommend you do the same. I'm known as much for health writing as anything I write about.

How did it happen? I pitched a piece to a magazine that I knew was open to new writers—they made me do an outline to get the assignment, but I got it. It paid me four figures—which means sometimes you can do well out of the gate. It was on weightlifting and was a piece many people could have written, but I suggested sources and went out and got them. From that piece, I immediately emailed all competitors of this health magazine with pitches. I call this “Coke-Pepsi mentality.” Coke is always interested in getting who works for Pepsi and vice versa. You instantly have earned credibility with the one piece in a category and you should cash in that credibility. Here are just some of the places I've written health pieces for since: Shape, Men's Fitness, Glamour, Men's Health, Oxygen, Muscle & Fitness Hers, Arthritis Today, Backpacker,

Tennis, Muscle & Fitness Hers, ClubLife, Taste For Life, Muscle Planet, Muscle & Fitness UK.

And with all of these places, I emailed pitches to editors to begin our relationships and followed up with phone calls. Ask yourself if you've pitched this many other places in the categories you've written for if you have clips. Okay, let's look at one more Every category: Entertainment. One specialty I have in entertainment is film directors. My first: Since I was a health/sports writer I emailed Ramp Magazine about doing a piece on a sports film director, Ron Shelton. From that first assignment, I immediately went to every other magazine that did entertainment and immediately pitched doing pieces on film directors. Just did one on Richard Donner for 16 Blocks with Bruce Willis for Maxim Online. The point is that I recognized entertainment as an Every category, one that shows up in everything from Newsweek to the New Yorker. But if I just stopped at the one piece on Ron Shelton and didn't try to market doing other pieces like it then it's only a one-time sale and I lose out.

Did you also notice how I was able to jump categories? That's something a lot of writers wonder how to do. I call the solution "lily pad theory." Imagine you're a frog who can only jump 8 feet and two lily pads are 10 feet apart. You're stuck, right? Well, not if there was another lily pad that floated in between them which could connect you. Okay, now imagine you're a finance writer who wants to be a science writer. How can you possibly do this? Well, what if you pitched a science magazine on a piece about how to keep a science laboratory financially stable? Now the next time you pitch a science magazine you can use that clip to market yourself as a science writer, not a finance writer!

Think about how you could do the same thing with tech, travel and other categories.

### **Chapter 3**

One of the most important things you can learn in freelance writing is something I call future value. It's looking at not just the pay of the article you're writing, but how much money it can make you by how you're able to market it for future articles. In one of my earlier classes, I told students that I was writing a boxing article for less than my usual rate because I felt that it would allow me to write for bigger sports places like ESPN.com. Though I had written sports for years, you need big places like this on your resume to be seen as a "true sportswriter." With a credential like ESPN.com, it could be worth tons to me in future value, because of all the other assignments I would get from it. Sure enough, within about a month of the article coming out, I was able to approach ESPN.com and get a boxing assignment. I had pitched them countless times in the past and yet this time I was able to break through.

Why? Because I marketed myself as a boxing writer, an area they had very few writers to cover. If I went for baseball instead, they would have more than enough. Think of doing the same thing with the magazines or sites you want to write for. If you know there are a million health writers at a women's magazine, but not many beauty writers for a magazine then try to get that beauty clip and break in that way. Once you establish



yourself at the magazine with a clip it's that much easier for them to assign you something in the areas of the magazine you'd like to write for more. My latest future value clip? I'm doing a car piece, because I've never done one before—immediately opens me up to a ton of assignments in this area. If I get more than ten car assignments in the future then this piece could be worth tens of thousands of dollars to me.

### **Web Site Writing**

Web sites are really the equivalent of the front of the book for magazines. It used to be many freelancers would start off by writing the smaller pieces in the front of the magazine in the hopes of landing a bigger feature later. Now you can do the same thing by writing for the magazine's Web site—it gives that same company the experience of working with you, which, again, leads to more (and bigger) assignments, whether in the magazine or on the site. An example that combines this theory and future value: there was a magazine that I was trying for years to break into and yet I couldn't do it. I thought to myself: they don't know how good I am to work with, so how can I show them? I decided to do a few pieces for the Web site, which was a lot less than their print magazine pays.

After doing them, the next pitch I sent to the print side was accepted for a four-figure fee. Why? Because I included my clips from the Web site and was able to tell them I had worked with editors that they knew and passed in the halls every day. And I was able to use that magazine to land tons of other assignments elsewhere since it was such a powerful credential to other magazines. See, it all fits together! One of the drawbacks of Web site writing is it usually pays less than the magazine counterpart, but if you're trying to get clips at the start of your career, the advantage is that it could be posted online 2-3 weeks from the time of the assigning, as opposed to a magazine which could take 5-6 months to publish your piece sometimes.

### **Free Writing**

Should you ever write for free? Yes, if you think that sample piece could help your career. Let's say there's a site that gets a lot of traffic and they'll allow you to write about a topic that you need a clip for and would net you future articles—that might be a piece worth writing. One of the things I liked about the boxing article I wrote for little pay is I knew they'd let me write it the way I wanted to, fashioning it into a clip that I could use, instead of hoping that they didn't cut it in ways that may not be to my advantage. Again, never think of an article as just one-time pay, ask yourself how much it's likely to pay you down the road.

### **Calling Problems**

Because you know I stress phone calls, let's go over some problems you're likely to have when you call an editor about a submitted pitch. One of them is making those calls

to begin with. You may feel shy about the phone and say, “I got into writing because I’m not a good talker.” Well, that’s why you start by pitching to magazines you don’t care about as much—so you can use them as practice. Remember, every phone call gets easier. Just like a tennis player would need to do 100 swings at balls before they’d know if they were any good, you have to look at phone calls the same way.

Don’t think to yourself, “I’m bothering them.” You’re only bothering them if you aren’t brief, like the model I showed you in earlier lectures. Yes, there will occasionally be an editor who will be annoyed, but this is much more the exception than the rule. Also, try to avoid leaving a voice mail...try to get a person, even if you have to call a decent amount of times over a few weeks. Voice mail is like death valley to editors and you want to make that human connection with them. I find out about assignments with my editors by calling them every once in a while and seeing what assignments they’re looking to fill. They tell me and then I try to tell them what I can add to a piece and suddenly I have an assignment. If I left a voice mail, I can’t show them my thinking or the enthusiasm I can bring. One of my big features this year came from me talking things through a few times with an editor on the phone. I went with just being considered along with many writers for a gig, to becoming the only writer considered. I couldn’t have done this by just emailing and hoping.

### **It’s About Relationships, Not One Assignment**

We’ll get into this more in the last few lectures, but remember that you’re not trying for one assignment, but to get as many magazines as possible to want you to work with them every issue or at least every other issue. This is how you make real money at this business, by the ten assignments you get from a place, not one. You do this by being active in your pitching towards them, sending pitches a few days after you turn in your last assigned article. You don’t do it by waiting on the editor to approach you. Think of yourself as an editor’s aspirin: any way you can be of help to your editor—like coming up with pitches or taking on extra assignments—relieves their headaches. Those are the writers they’re likely to think of when they can assign a feature to anyone they want.

### **Chapter 4**

The bread and butter for making money in freelancing is in feature writing. I don’t recommend suggesting low word counts to your editors because that just gives them an opportunity to pay you less. You may have to do a small front-of-the-book piece to earn the right to a feature in some editor’s eyes, but if you can start with a longer piece then why not? What scares many freelance writers is how much time can go into writing long-form pieces, but there are several strategies that can cut your time investment in half. Here are tips that can help, some of which came from a story I contributed to the Society of Professional Journalists:

## **Don't Wait On Interviews**

Unless you're interviewing the only expert on the subject you're covering, you should have calls going into at least five different sources. Though it's very easy for one person not to get back to you the same day, the chances of five people all being busy is not very likely. And if they all get back to you, your editor will love the fact you had extra sources in your story. A no-lose situation.

## **Time Your Interviews**

Other than when you're doing a 2000-word Q & A, there's no reason to be spending tons of time interviewing each of your sources. If you are, it means either you're not asking the right questions, or you're being a little too chatty, or you're letting your source get off the subject. Listen to the tape of your interviews to see where the "jabbering" is occurring, so you can quickly correct it. Don't misunderstand me: always treat your source like a person and be genuinely interested in them. But you can do that in a few minutes, instead of 50. Also, sources are likely to call you back for future articles when they know you'll only take 5-10 minutes of their time as opposed to most of their lunch hour.

## **Figure Out The Subjects You'll Hit**

While I agree that some great parts of stories come from what you don't plan for, it's good to have an idea of the different subjects you want to cover before you begin. This will also allow you to keep your interviews on task and help you to tell a story, rather than just list random things as they come to you. It will also not make the length of the story seem so daunting...If anything, sectioning off your piece with subjects might even make you write too much (a better problem than coming up too short).

## **Take A Typing Class**

If you can't type faster than people talk then you have to take a speed typing class. I can't remember how many times I watched fellow journalists press rewind on their tapes for hours while I had long since turned in my story. Also, typing fast means sources won't feel compelled to talk slower, something that may be polite but also has a tendency to stop their train of thought right in its tracks.

## **Do Assignments On Short Deadlines**

One of the best ways to waste time on stories is to have a lot of time to do them. By training yourself to be comfortable doing stories in only a few days, or eventually a few hours, it will force you to see how efficient you can be. Author admission: some of my best work has been done on quick turnaround.

## **Hit Your Weakness First**

Most fitness trainers will tell you to hit your weakest body part first in the gym, because you always have the most energy when you start your workout. The same can hold true in writing. Whether it's writing your lede, or calling for interviews, or doing a rewrite, take on that beast first or you may have to deal with the ultimate timewaster: procrastination.

## **On A Side Note**

Sidebar are a great way to keep your feature fresh and offer ways to help you meet that word count when you're coming up a tad short. Often quick bullet points can be used here, but it's also an opportunity for your editor to add more visuals to spice up the piece, too.

## **Learn To Say No**

Since the financial recession of the journalism business, many scribes have felt saying no to an article simply isn't possible. But remember this: even with these time-saving tips, you can only take on so much. Although it may hurt to turn down a \$1500 article, if you know that magazine will require endless revisions during a time when your calendar's already full, you just have to say no. It's better to lose a little money than risk being late on five other pieces to squeeze it all in. Remember, even the best writers can be one missed deadline away from missing out on future assignments.

*Now on to...*

## **Projects**

Another possible bread and butter can come from getting a long-term project assigned to you. I created a blog that I approached *Men's Fitness* with and it was accepted fairly quickly. I pitched it in similar fashion to how I would an article except I explained how I could fill five entries a week instead of a one-time article. I offered up the different subjects I would hit, why I was the right person to write on each of them and the kinds of sources I would bring in to the blog. Why couldn't you do the same with a relationships, food or finance column for print or online?

You should also realize that video is quickly coming on the scene and many journalists are/expected to take advantage of it. Do you have a video camera and editing software? If you can become comfortable in front of the lens, you could do a video blog and approach magazine Web sites or online magazines with it.

In general, you should be willing to embrace on-air if you're going to be a part of the journalism future. If you look at much of ESPN programming, you'll find many

sportswriters are also doubling on-air (which can also double the money they make, if not better). Rather than just considering yourself a magazine writer, think of yourself as a content provider and communicator, whether print, online video or on TV. The reality is that people want their information in many forms and only the ones willing to give it to them in all those forms will have the most success. The business is changing: you can either be a part of it or be a victim of it. I think you can figure out which is preferable!

Here are some web sites that may be helpful for magazine writing:

First, for jobs and new places to pitch:

[www.ed2010.com](http://www.ed2010.com) -- whisper section

[www.mediabistro.com](http://www.mediabistro.com) -- jobs section

[www.journalismjobs.com](http://www.journalismjobs.com) -- magazine section

Specifically for pitching:

<http://www.mediabistro.com/content/archives/howtopitch.asp> -- can get the pitching info of close to 200 magazines with \$49 avantguild membership

<http://www.whorepresents.com> -- can get many agent and director publicists through this site for a monthly subscription.

<http://www.comingsoon.net/movies.php> -- tells you when movies are coming out so you can pitch the star, directors or angles in advance. A November movie article probably needs to come out in the November issue.

[http://www.writersmarket.com/index\\_ns.asp](http://www.writersmarket.com/index_ns.asp) -- subscribe for a fee or can buy book Writer's Market – lists tons of editors.

Examples of how to search for magazine listings in Google:

1) Type into Google – Fashion Industry Magazine

First URL that comes up gives many fashion magazines:

[http://www.apparesearch.com/online\\_news\\_magazines.htm](http://www.apparesearch.com/online_news_magazines.htm)

2) Type in Google -- Fitness Magazine Directory

First URL that comes up gives many fitness magazines:

<http://www.getbig.com/magazine/magazine.htm>

## Chapter 5

So now that we've learned something about the long dance that getting freelance work can be, what are the different ways to make it work for you? First, let's look at those of you working a full-time job. Important: I don't encourage any of you to quit your job and just go blindly into freelance. The best way to end up switching to freelance is if you have been making more money from it than what you make at your current job (and over a long period of time). Then it gets to a point where it's stupid not to be a full-time freelancer.

Also, don't get fooled by certain times of the year being better than others. Remember, there is usually a slower time halfway through the summer when people go on vacation and from a little before Christmas to a little after New Year's. You must figure these slow times in when calculating how much you're making. If you've been hot from March to May, don't get cocky! However, if you've had a full calendar year of success...okay, get a lil' cocky.

How do you find the time while you're working full-time to make phone calls? Try dealing with people in a different time zone than you. That means that when it's not your work hours it's still theirs and that means you can interview a subject or call an editor about freelance work without risking your own job. How can you guarantee you get the most work possible? Provided they're quality pitches, the more pitches you send out to more places then the more chance of work (straight forward, yet many people miss this point). You also have to keep an open mind to subjects that wouldn't first come to mind to write about. Business writing isn't for everyone, but it sure can help pay the bills, thus, allowing you to work on other things you love.

But another great part about freelancing is that it can lead to full-time magazine staff work, if that's what you desire. The way to accomplish this is two-fold: have a long track record of success with a magazine and also let them know you're interested in full-time positions. Recall how I said editors magically give me assignments sometimes when I simply open the door by saying I'd be up for other assignments? Same thing applies for full-time work. However, you still have to get past those pesky interviews.

Here are a few interviewing tips that I've found work well in the magazine world (and probably in other worlds, too): 1) Know that magazine to the point where you can mention a few past issues 2) Show you have ideas but don't take the attitude that you're going to make this magazine tons better (it's their baby and no one wants their baby criticized too much) 3) Here's the most important one—realize that your life will go on either way. Part of the reason I think I landed an associate editor gig at 22 is that I was relaxed during the interview. I didn't apologize for not having any magazine clips, instead I used a few online articles I'd strung together and talked about my passion for magazine writing. If resumes were all that mattered then they wouldn't bother having

interviews. Remember how we use the phone to show our enthusiasm for our pitches? It's the same kind of opportunity in an interview!

### **Freelance Organization**

One of the keys to being successful at freelancing is having good organization. Some of the things I do: I have a date book which doesn't just tell me when assignments are due, but also says when it's time to follow up on a pitch. I also created a few spreadsheets to keep track of who owes me, how much I've made in a particular quarter for tax purposes and also see where I am in major projects I want to complete. You have to stay on top of who owes you what, because publishing companies can easily forget when it's time to pay you. Also, be smart about keeping those writing-related receipts since they'll come in handy when it's tax-paying time. If you're buying that new computer for freelancing, that creates some money to write off of your freelancing income.

### **Last Pitch Tip**

After you establish yourself with a magazine for a bit, you can send them a single email with a bunch of pitches. These pitches are usually a little shorter and don't necessarily need the sources to win that editor over, because you already have by doing quality work. Still, I would include sources if you have the time. Here's an example of six smaller pitches I sent out to an editor I was established with and they took me only a couple hours to think up. Five of six of them eventually sold, proving that pitches don't have to always be complicated or take forever to write. Check out the format:

"Train Your Trainer" - Secret: Trainers are not mind-readers. With countless clients, you have to be prepared every session to know what you want out of your trainer as much as vice versa. We'll talk with top trainers to find out how their clients can best make the most out of them, what are unreasonable expectations and a sidebar on the advantages and disadvantages of using a trainer vs. solo training.

"The Sporting Edge" - Maybe your turf is the softball diamond, or the b-ball blacktop, or the flag football gridiron. They may be called recreational sports, but that doesn't mean you show up to lose. We'll look at workouts catered directly to your sport of choice -- turning you from the player who just shows up to the one who goes home a champion.

"Dealing With What Your Delt" - Fact: Deltoids are one

of the most genetically-influenced of muscle groups. Some shoulders seem to be carved with definition but little size, while others are like boulders yet have no separation. We'll take a look at the most common shoulder types and show you the corresponding workouts to make your weaknesses finally shoulder the load.

"Going Home" - Many people forego the gym because it isn't close enough to home -- then why not make it in your home? We'll show you the minimum pieces of equipment you need to turn a corner of a room into a training palace, and how it may actually save you money over the course of your lifting lifetime.

"Seeing Red" - It wasn't so long ago that red meat was considered a death sentence. Now it's not only being tolerated, but encouraged as a muscle gainer when eaten in proportion. We'll talk with trainers and nutritionists on how they're incorporating it into their diets and to doctors on why this meat won't make you meet your maker.

"A Strong Life" - Have you ever wished you could make the same gains in other parts of your life as you do with your body parts? Well, why can't you? We'll talk with top psychologists and strategists to show how the same positive attitudes in the weight room can carry over into the board room or even the bedroom.

Remember to be proactive in your pitches. If you can't find that editor's phone number or email online then call up that company or editor and ask for it. Also, don't let rejection stop you because the only cost of pitching is the time it takes you to write the pitch and the follow-up phone calls—is it really that much to lose? Finally, be confident. After you get that assignment, pitch those magazines more articles a few days after you turn your article in if they liked the first one. Keep yourself in the consciousness of that assigning editor and you could find yourself with a larger amount of work. In the end, it's not about that first assignment, but hopefully landing long-term relationships with many publications and the steady work that goes with it!

## **Advanced Section**

### **Chapter 6**



Now that we've learned the basics, it's time to take it to the next level. What I've taught you to this point can help you make good money on magazine newsstands and major Web sites, but this advanced course goes beyond that. We're going to maximize every opportunity and turn that into even more opportunities, we'll do work behind the scenes for corporations, we'll constantly tap into more business.

So let's get right into it:

## **Custom Publishing**

This is a wellspring of assignments right here. Custom publishing is any kind of magazine, Web site, brochure or anything else put out by a company to further their brand—and most pay at least \$1 a word. To be successful at this, you first need to put out of your mind the ideas of journalism. It's not—it's advertising. A custom publishing article's sole purpose is to make that company money, whether directly or indirectly. Once you accept that you're ready for the custom publishing council site—<http://www.custompublishingcouncil.com> and click on the link near the top called “find a custom publisher.” This council represents the majority of the top custom publishers and I made five figures in custom alone last year by literally emailing every last company on the list, introducing myself to the contact person, inquiring about assignments and listing my clips at the bottom in a URL. It's also allowed me to count more billion dollar companies among my clients and, the easy part, you don't usually send them a pitch to get assignments. You see, you *can't* pitch them most of the time because the client's needs are always changing and they just want willing writers to fill those needs. (Hint: it's also very important that you're open to technology writing because I've found that to be their greatest need).

## **Where Did They Come From?**

When working with your editors, it pays to know where they worked before—literally. One example: I had been getting top-paying assignments from an editor with very little trouble and I kept saying to myself, “If only every place I worked for could be this way.” Then I thought, “Hey, where did they work before? Maybe they could get me work there, too.” By googling my editor's name, I saw the previous publication they worked for and then emailed my editor to see if they'd refer me to someone there. Just one of many results: I was offered a \$4500 assignment. Remember, your editor isn't going to think to get you assignments on their own. They may not know you want the extra work and it's not their responsibility to ask you if you want a break—It's your responsibility to ask for one.

You also need to reverse the scenario. I saw on a journalism site that there was an advertisement for a position at a magazine I work for—one that my assigning editor holds. I immediately called them up to find out what's up. They told me they were

leaving for a larger company and I pitched them on why I could help them there. Now I have many new assignments coming to me and if I hadn't called then I might never have found out where they were going or what their contact information is.

### **Speaking Of...**

Speaking of that editor, they're one of the many who never answers email and only assigns over the phone—when you can even get them on the phone. We've gone over how important the phone is, but what about with editors you already have written for? The key when you call them is to have two things to pitch them in case the first one doesn't fly. You only have so many times you'll get them on the phone so you must be ready. At the same time, you can't go past two ideas or you're taking too much of their time and will be seen as a nuisance.

Another phone call tip is you should always keep every email containing your pitches so you can use it as a call list. On a day I'm calling editors to follow up on a pitch, I simply just open up my "sent" folder and start clicking on each pitch until I've called everyone. Works a lot better than trying to remember who I pitched by memory.

### **When Your Editor(s) Get Canned**

It's a tough day when the whole staff of a magazine gets fired—tough for you, too, if you freelance for them. The new people who come in may want to do things in a new way so old freelancers could be seen as the enemy. If you don't want to lose this client, here's what I've found works if you're not getting any response from them: give them 6 months and then come back to them without bringing up that you used to work at the magazine. Just make like it didn't happen and they probably will, too, and never ever remark: "well, they used to do it this way..." Nobody cares about the past and if you're not on board with the new way, they'll find someone who is.

But sometimes it's just not going to work, or not just the staff gets fired but the whole magazine goes under. Once upon a time 50% of my freelance work was coming from two publications—who went out of business within a month of each other. That convinced me: you should always be trying to get *more* clients than you need because you will lose clients at some point no matter what you do.

### **Check The Want Ads**

The want ads aren't just great for full time but could give you a hint as to freelance possibilities. If they're trying to fill a position it means they could need help in the meantime from freelancers. One such inquiry landed me a contributing editor position. An ad also could tell you about magazines you've never heard about before. You're only limited in clients by the amount of publications that are out there—I still don't know them all but wish I did.

## **Be True To Your School**

If you graduated from college, your alma mater may be willing to pay you back for your patronage—through their alumni magazine and newsletters. Most pay fairly well and are almost completely written by former graduates so your competition is somewhat limited. The best way to break in is by finding a subject who hasn't been profiled recently and who few know even went to the school at all. Type your school's name and the word "graduate" into Google and it may help you find the pitch that breaks you in.

Bottom line, to succeed as much as possible at freelancing, you need to be interested in every type of writing. Wal-Mart has their own publication, case studies for technology or finance are some of the highest paying opportunities—find out who assigns for these "secret" publications and contact them to see if they can use some help. Many people start off just thinking of newsstand magazines, but it's combining that with working for these other avenues which will give you the best chance to make a great living.

## **Chapter 7**

Hopefully you've started on the missions I've given you. One mission I gave a student for an in-person class involved closing a deal with a particular medium-size magazine and then having them go to their biggest competitor as soon as they did. That competitor paid them \$4,000 for a feature. This course is about creating strategies as opposed to just selling an article. So here comes another one:

### **Have Something To Say**

One of the largest untapped markets for writers is writers conferences. Every year, hundreds of these events are held and scribes are flown in, lodged and paid to speak about their profession so other dreamers can benefit. It can also be a source of income for years to come, because conferences will often book well in advance if their next conference is already full. I've actually been booked for four figures when the event was two calendar years ahead. You will pitch to the conferences in a similar fashion to custom publishers, pitching yourself instead of an article.

If they already have speakers for the subject of getting into freelance, pitch specific to a genre. If health writing is your thing, for example, pitch a health seminar and have URLs to your health articles at the bottom. They may need a syllabus to be convinced if they're on the fence, but that's as simple as a brief one-page outline going into basic topics you'd cover, exercises for the audience to do and mentioning the possibility of a handout (having one of these is a huge advantage). Now where do you find many of these conferences? The URLs for Shaw guides and the Association for Writers and Writers Programs:

<http://writing.shawguides.com/>

<http://writersconf.org/memdir/dirConf.php>

And I know what you're saying: I went into writing so I didn't have to speak. Most people, in fact, are afraid of speaking in public. And why is this? Because they never do it.

By getting out there and getting experience, it becomes easier and easier. In addition, there's an incredible amount of future value in it. Everyone who hears you speak can hire you as can everyone they tell about you. For example, students in my classes (classes are public speaking) have often told people about me which led to work and that could never have happened if they never met me, right?

## Organization

There are a few organizational tips which can go a long way. First, buy a date book just for your freelance writing career. Every time you get an assignment with a deadline circle it in your book so that way you can always look ahead to see if you've booked yourself up too much. Also, it helps you figure out what point in the month each editor seems to assign you. Say it's always the 15th in your date book—then write down on the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month that follows that you need to pitch that editor if you don't hear from them by that time. Finally, if you don't see a lot of due date circles it will signal to you that you need to pitch more.

I also have two simple Excel spreadsheets I use for motivation and organization. They are my sales and payment sheets—one lets me know weekly whether I'm getting the amount of work in I need, the other is great for my accountant and also to remind me whether I've been collecting payments in a timely fashion (companies will forget to pay you, it's up to you to remember). Here's a template of what they look like:

## Sales

12/3-12/7

Magazine A

\$xxxx

Magazine B

\$xxxx

Magazine C

\$xxxx

12/10-12/14

Magazine A

\$xxxx

Magazine B

\$xxxx

Magazine C

Magazine D

\$xxxx  
\$xxxx

## Payments

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter

Magazine A

\$xxxx

Magazine B

\$xxxx

Magazine C

\$xxxx

(divide it into 4 quarters)

Speaking of collecting payment in a timely fashion, it doesn't necessarily mean the day after you're owed. One great thing about getting a ton of work is you're not as desperate to get any one payment check right away and that makes you more money—you read right. Why? Because the freelancer who constantly is on their editor to get their check will not get the priority a laid back writer will. Think about it: why would you want to give work to somebody who makes your life hell every time a payment's a week late? Answer: ya' wouldn't.

## List\$

When a student says to me that they don't know where to pitch, I bring up one of the world's greatest four-letter words: list. There are several pitch lists out there which add up to many assignments. I've already told you about the How To Pitch Mediabistro section which has more than 100 magazines, many of which I've written for because I read that section religiously. There's also Wooden Horse Publishing with 2000 listings (costs something like \$5 per day) and a couple free ones like these, the first listing 780 mags:

[http://www.writingfordollars.com/Guidelines\\_Lookup.cfm](http://www.writingfordollars.com/Guidelines_Lookup.cfm)

[http://www.absolutewrite.com/freelance\\_writing/markets\\_online.htm](http://www.absolutewrite.com/freelance_writing/markets_online.htm)

The lists are also a great way to learn to pitch quicker. The leading reason many get stuck on a pitch is because they're afraid they'll blow it with that magazine and there will be no one else left to hire them. These lists remind you that you only have literally 1000s of chances left to get it right with someone else.

## Keep All Doors Open

Many deals which could be made in our business don't happen because writers decide to be hardliners, draw a line in the sand and say, "it's either this or nothing." Ahead, a few situations where this happens and an alternative, more profitable solution.

Problem: They offer you less money than you want.

Solution: Ask them for a higher rate but never say it's either this or nothing. Just ask, "Would it be possible to do this rate?" Many times, if you're not asking for a crazy amount, they'll agree, but if they don't, you can still decide on the lower rate or try to meet in the middle. By saying right off the bat, "I don't do anything under x a word," you've backed yourself into a corner where there's only one outcome that can be positive (same thing applies when you'd like more lead time to get an article done than what they're offering).

Problem: You call them and find out they've turned down your pitch and when you told them your 2<sup>nd</sup> idea they turned that down, too.

Solution: Normally there's nothing more to say, but here's a final thing you should bring up. Ask them, "If you had to choose one area where you wish you had more pitches on, what would it be?" This gives you a great opportunity to no longer be guessing what they need but to know. They'll even appreciate this question because it says you're willing to help them out with their most difficult freelance challenge.

Problem: You've finished an assignment for a regular client and find you don't want to work with them anymore because you're making too little by the hour.

Solution: A week after all edits have been done on your final assignment, talk to your editor about it. Maybe they can offer you more money or can offer assistance that will reduce the hours the project takes, thus paying you more by the hour. If you weren't going to work for them again, anyway, what do you have to lose by giving them a chance to improve the situation?

## Chapter 8

Sometimes the best thing I can do is be specific as possible about what I want you to do and tell you exactly why. So I will do just that—if you at all have the time, I want you to send out 5 pitches a week for the next year and follow up with the right amount of calls on every one. Yes, I'm actually telling you to send out 250 pitches by today in 2009.

Let's break it down. If your average payment per article was only \$500 and you were to score even just 20 percent of your pitches, or one a week, that would be \$25,000. Several years ago, I had a magazine which used to assign me one or two articles a month with an average pay of \$1500 for pieces that took me no more than five hours. And it

wasn't an incredibly competitive magazine to break into either. How did I happen upon them? I pitched them along with a ton of other places.

Could you work a full time job and still write an article a week? Probably. You may even be able to quit your job some day if you're bold enough to send out more than 250 pitches a year. The number one reason freelancers don't see the results they want is not that they're not a good enough writer (I estimate 80% of my students are), not that they're not a good pitch writer (you have samples I've given you to follow), it's that they simply don't pitch enough. Why? You know why—you hate being turned down. It's almost like you take a deep breath, like preparing to go under water, you write the pitch in a furious struggle and then come to the surface, gasping for air, the life taken out of you, to the point where you need another day before you can hold your breath again. You think you'll be successful this way? We both know the answer.

Look at those numbers again, ask yourself if you can afford to throw \$25,000 away. \$25,000 that could buy you a house after enough years, send your children to college, or maybe just get you out of your parent's house if you're still living there. It comes down to one question: do you think you're worth it? The answer is yes. If you think it's no then you need to buy every self-help book it takes, do anything to make yourself believe you deserve this success...because it's literally costing you \$25,000 a year for one article a week, and you don't have the right to deny yourself that kind of financial freedom. When you feel you can't pitch, when you feel rejection is too painful, I want you to read the above, I want you to get back in there, I want you to put out enough pitches to give yourself a fighting chance.

This may seem like new age crap, but if it gets you to the point where you finally do a phone call after every pitch, to the point where you don't skip that second follow-up phone call after the first one didn't get the sale, there's a chance your freelance income will double. How's that for a reason?

## **The Other Values**

There are certain things a magazine can offer you that doesn't cost them a penny. If you've been writing for a title for a while, say eight articles, ask them if they'll make you a contributing editor, which is just a fancy way of saying you write for them regularly. However, you can use it on your resume and it also will get you into magazine events that only magazine staffers can go to. If you're on the masthead, you're considered one of the team. I have a few contributing editor positions and it's made me a lot of money by the events I've gone to and the connections I've made through them.

Another value: travel. If you like to take off every once in a while, take a chance after eight articles or so and ask them if there are any travel opportunities. They may have a bunch of staffers who have seen more of their suitcase than their family and would love the chance to have a break and have you go cover something in their place.

## **When An Editor Is Costing You Money**

It happens very rarely but occasionally an editor will try to screw you out of money. Who knows why? Maybe they went over their freelance budget, maybe they just want to feel important, maybe there's another maybe. What's not a maybe is you need to get paid but you also need to preserve the relationship. When you're getting nowhere with an editor, one way to deal with the situation is to go to someone who can help you but who isn't their direct boss. Contact the head of contracts. They decide payment matters many times and can often have this situation resolved in a simple way. Never start off combative, just state the problem, show them there was an agreement in writing and give them a chance to take care of it. Chances are they may get you the check without the editor ever having to know they were involved—you just avoided a mess and just got your money, a win-win!

Never, and I mean never, start off by getting on your high horse and telling an editor how awful they are, that they're the devil, etc. I've managed to avoid burning most bridges and it's helped me in my career—the few times I did burn bridges I've almost always regretted it. Tell yourself that you don't need to tell them off, you just need to get paid.

### **If You Know You'll Hate It...**

I told you once that you need to turn articles down when your plate is full. You also need to when you just know you'll hate doing it too much. Now, look, there's a difference between "not my favorite" and "this is eye-gougingly painful." You're only one bad article away from being on the outs, so if your gut just says you can't put your heart into it then save that relationship and lose the boring article.

### **A Word About "Good Enough"**

I hear students tell me all the time, I'm not sure if I'm good enough to write for a certain magazine. Then I ask them to explain. "Well, I don't have enough experience, why would they give me a chance, I'm a nobody." Then I ask them if they think their work would be the worst thing to ever run in the magazine. Suddenly, their eyes light up. "No, not at all. I read this piece that sucked. I mean suck-k-k-k-k-k-ked! Oh, and did you read the one about the biosphere, that was garbage ala mode." And on-and-on they go and they finally start pitching these magazines they previously stayed away from. I'm not giving you permission to write garbage but I am saying sometimes you have to give yourself a break. I estimate that 50% of my students are good enough to write most anywhere and many of the other 50% can get good enough if they'll practice. Figure out which one you are and act accordingly.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Map It Out**



One of the main reasons people don't succeed in this business is because they spend too much time feeling they have no course of action. Much of your career should be planned out in your mind, leaving just enough room for improvisation. A great way to do this is through something called a career map—just as Mapquest will show you the many turns and highways you need to take to get to your destination, you need one for that magazine you ultimately want to write for, that better pay rate or that job. Here's a career map sample, which you will see uses many of the different strategies we've talked about.

Goal: Writing/Working for Top Women's Magazines

Present situation: You have clips but they don't relate very much to your goal. Let's say some are science related.

Question: What are the different areas of women's magazines?

Answer: Beauty, Fashion, Health, Relationship Advice, Profiles of Empowered Women

Highest Need: The guess is beauty, because less people want to write about it than other areas so they're receiving less pitches.

Directions to Goal

Use lily pad theory to get into/ahead in beauty writing by pitching a story to any applicable publication on the science of creating beauty products—using your science clip as a way to help get the article. Interview a female scientist who works in this area and you have created a hybrid. Why? Because women in science is a potentially helpful profile clip for women's magazines since they are underrepresented in the sciences—you've killed two birds with one stone. Pitch this story to sites small enough to give you a chance but known enough to be of interest to women's magazines.

Once you break in with a smaller women's site or magazine with one article, immediately employ Coke-Pepsi theory and go to all the other competing small women's sites with pitches. But try to knock off all the other areas now. Let's begin with fashion. You can lily pad again to be safe and pitch an article on how beauty artists work differently in fashion than other fields and use that beauty science clip to get you in—remember, your clip will be seen as purely a beauty clip to every new place you go.

Now that you have a few clips under your belt in the women's area, it's time to look for other writers on the same level as you who have clips from places you don't. Email them and offer to trade editor contacts and to use each other as a means of introduction. An email that says in the subject line, "Referred by \_\_\_\_\_, Julib.com writer curious..." will always have a better chance than no referral at all.

You should also be expanding to publications that have sister publications so after a few articles you can go to your editor and say, "I see you have these other publications

at your company. Do you know any editors at the other publications...?" From there, ask if you can say you were referred by them—again, it makes a difference.

You should also be knocking off all the rest of the categories. Health? Here's an article: Can putting on beauty products before you go out be good for your health? If beauty products can make you feel better about yourself then..." See, another lilypad. Relationships? You get that health clip and then you could pitch about when working out together is good or bad for a relationship.

Now you have a clip in practically every area of many women's magazines. What does this do? It means you can pitch any women's magazine and have a chance to get in somewhere. It's also now made you in control for an interview. Imagine when you hand them a clip book for them to keep and every article fits into an area of what they do. Or, no matter what part of the magazine they may specifically want you for, you have something that applies.

Now isn't a career map far different from just haphazardly sending out pitches or occasionally using one of the strategies we talked about? Couldn't you do the same thing in entertainment, business or whatever category of writing you want to excel at? The options are almost limitless this way.

### **Deadlines Aren't Always Dead**

Another thing of beauty is occasionally trying for deadlines that have a range or can even give you extra months of time if needed. When could you use this? When interviewing high-profile people. Their schedules are often so hectic that they could disappear for weeks when at other times they are very much available. When a magazine wants me to get one of these people and the deadline for getting them nears, I try to see if they'd still want that article a month or two months later. Many times magazines will keep high-profile articles "in the can" in case they need back-up, so any time you can get the article would make them happy. If you just assume it's either the deadline or nothing, you only have one way to score the article.

### **Keep Up The Good Work**

Many times writers will do a bunch of work for one issue and then all of a sudden they're scaled back. Part of it may be your fault. If you did two articles of at least 1,000 words then you need to make sure you send them at least three pitches for the next issue (one may not fly) and make them the kind that could be at least, you guessed it, 1,000 words. You should never assume you can just be assigned that amount of work from the magazine's own ideas, unless they always come up with things in-house. The worst thing you can do is get too comfortable and believe a magazine is always going to take care of you—pitching is always a good way to show them your worth.

### **In With The New**

A huge mistake writers make is to only look for established publications. It stinks when you get in with a new publication and then it goes under—as so many news ones do—because then all the time you put into a relationship is gone. However, when you're with them right at the beginning they tend to give you the most work from that point on. Remember, magazines aren't looking to replace strong talent, because that takes time, along with trial and error. Look for new magazine announcements in Wooden Horse Publishing and other publishing news circles because the opportunities are there. Also, look for when a new editor in chief comes in somewhere or there's a change in ownership. When a new sheriff comes to town, they are often looking for new people they can mold to do it their way. Consider yourself Play-doh and start pitching.

## **Chapter 10**

As we wind down our final lecture and chat, what you need to realize is that these tips are not the end but just the start. It's the idea that you combine everything we've learned with as many quality pitches as possible to see maximum results. Now let's get into other possible situations which will occur and how to deal with them:

### **If You Don't Get Someone On the Phone**

Some of you I've told this to, but many I haven't. So you have it written down—If you don't get the editor after a few tries, leave a message. In that message should be the same things you would have said had you talked to them. End the message with your phone number, a pause and then hang up (a pause so the machine doesn't accidentally cut the number off). After you hang up, immediately email them with a subject line, "Left a Message, \_\_\_\_\_ Writer Curious..." In the email, it should say:

I left you a message – just wanted to see if you had a chance to look over the pitch I emailed you (forwarded). (then the next sentence before the forwarded email should contain some enthusiasm, maybe talking about how you think the sources would be good for the article, just something that you sincerely feel good about—don't ever fake that).

By leaving messages by both phone and email, they're guaranteed to see it and have a much higher chance of feeling compelled to return the message. Phone messages can be like death valley on their own.

### **Never Suggest A Higher Word Count Than...**

...what's good for an article. Honestly, if you're stretching for 2000 words then the article won't be good. You don't want to lose your client on the first one because you turned in crap. At the same time, don't sell yourself short if you can go for more words, which can give you more opportunity to expand the article. Still, only suggest a word count if forced by the editor. If you suggest a word count right in the pitch, you're

painted into a corner. If you say 2000 words and they would've given you 500, they may not assign it because they feel you won't give it the same effort because you had your heart set on a feature-length story. If you say 500 and they would've given you 2000 they might only give you 500 because they'll think, "Maybe he doesn't believe in the project enough—yeah, maybe it is only 500 words." You've sold them all right—on selling your article short!

### **When You Get a Ton of Work...**

...from one magazine. In this situation, I would consider not working for their toughest competitor. Many times in a space a magazine will have one or two main rivals—if they've given you 10 articles over five issues do you want to risk that future over one article assignment from their competitor? I wouldn't. Your assigning magazine may not say they have a problem with it, but at a certain point they'll feel loyal toward you and feel you should be the same. They can't stop you from working for others but they can stop giving you assignments. Again, it doesn't mean don't work for every other magazine of a similar theme, just pick one or two that you know really gets that mag's goat and stay away from them.

### **If There's an Editor You Don't Like...**

Sometimes you have a great assigning flow with an editor and then another editor at the magazine wants to assign you something else who you don't like. Do everything you can to avoid taking an assignment from them. Why? Because you're only one bad experience away from being on the outs with a magazine. I don't care if you do 20 articles in a row that go great, if one goes bad it could be the end of your relationship with that mag. You know in your heart when you just don't jive with a person's way of doing business—don't fool yourself into believing it will go well when it won't.

### **Organizational Spreadsheet Extras**

Have you been keeping that spreadsheet on sales? Let's add a few columns now to make it a little more complicated (and helpful). The first additional column is how you got the sale—are they a new client that you emailed and called, did they contact you first, did you meet them at an event, are they a magazine that hired you before? You need to keep track of this to know how much of this work is you bringing in new clients and how much is luck. Many times we lull ourselves into thinking we're doing better than we are—if every article you're getting is from established relationships or magazines contacting you, that's bad, because the odds are eventually that some of your clients will go under or your assigning editor (and maybe your assignments) will leave.

You need to keep bringing in new clients to make sure you can handle a few lost publications. You also want to be aware of how you're getting deals so you can see where your weakness is—that's where the second column comes in. I want you write

down when the sale occurred: was it after your first email, first call, second call, etc. If all are from first emails you may think you're doing great but that signals that you're probably avoiding making calls, not good. By looking at where all sales come from and why, the truth will set you free and, just as importantly, make you more money.

### **It's All About Numbers**

This is all about the long-term, not the short-term. You can have a bad week, even a bad month. It also means the opposite is true. I've had a week in which I've sold five times my normal week and I've had others where nothing happened. I didn't get cocky when the first occurred and I didn't get down when the second did. Remember, in the short term anything can happen, but with a strategy, the long term is more consistent than many people think. Consider it this way—let's say you got up to being successful at selling 50% of the time. Have you ever flipped coins where it seems it came up tails a bunch of times when you're calling "heads?" Remember the same thing can happen in trying to sell articles.

Finally, when you get incredibly advanced then you can start skewing pitches towards the things you like writing about the most, but that should come when you have more work than you need. It only makes sense that if the demand for you is there that you should do more of what you want to do. But, again, make sure you're in demand long-term and not short-term. Those "not as exciting" articles you're turning down now may look pretty good three months from now if you're struggling and a magazine may not be offering them later if you always tell them no.

### **To Close**

Hopefully you've learned in these five weeks that there are still more avenues open to you and still more to come. This business is constantly changing: a magazine goes under, another launches, someone quits who gave you work, another person is hired who could give you work. Success in our industry is partly about knowing its rhythm and recognizing an opportunity when it's there. And just when you think you're out of options, remember...you can always send out another pitch!