

To students in ENC 4260, Advanced Technical Writing: Please use this student submission as guidance, but do not try to imitate or duplicate its content or wording. Your report should be researched and written in your own style and vocabulary. Also, note that this sample is by no means flawless -- it contains errors of fact, interpretation, and format. It does, however, show solid research into key issues involved with freelance writing as a career.

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ENC 4260 / T. E. Roberts, Instructor  
Assignment 4 Prose Document / 20 April 2008

## Footloose and Freelance Free

### INTRODUCTION

It's ten minutes past three on an average, April day. Like every weekday afternoon, a thirty-something woman sits in her Volvo in the student pick-up line at the local elementary school. In her hand, she dearly clutches, not the latest best-seller, but her laptop computer which she reluctantly sets aside to change gears. While waiting in line, she fine tunes the contract for her next writing assignment. Now, that she's finished, she not only shifts from park into drive, but also from freelance writer to soccer mom in one, adept motion.

“Freelance writers are their own bosses and they can turn down projects, enter new fields, and meet fascinating people. Being a freelance writer is never boring.” ----  
Christine Adamec, author of Writing Freelance.

This scenario may seem too good to be true, but it can be a reality to the ideal candidate. This recommendation report will describe the necessary the steps to achieve a career as a freelance writer while balancing family commitments and maintaining a high quality of life.

### DEFINING FREELANCE

On her website Docsymmetry.com, professional writer Lyndsey Amott defines a freelancer as a writer who is hired to complete a specific task within a finite period of time . She further states that the writer generally adheres to a contract with the employer which defines the

assignment and an agreed upon rate of pay. Freelancing also encompasses the idea of self-employment, which allows the writer flexibility to expand her career while maintaining a fulfilling family life (Parra 271).

Sick kids? Bad weather? No problem. Interviews can be rescheduled or conducted by telephone, fax, or email instead. --Christine Adamec, Writing Freelance

## GETTING STARTED

Years of education and experience are useful when starting a freelance writing career, but they are not the only prerequisites to the job. A freelance writer must have good marketing skills, a lot of business sense, and tenacity to make a profit.



**Self Marketing.** In her book Writing Freelance, Christine Adamec advises “the successful writer never forgets the importance of marketing” (Adamec 107). The writer must



first assemble a Career Portfolio which includes a personalized resume and customizable cover letter, both of which can be tailored easily to the desired objective (Roberts). The portfolio should also include writing samples from which the client can

measure the writer's abilities. In addition, for a minimal fee, the freelancer can choose a domain name and create a personalized website to highlight the writers areas of expertise and attract potential clients (Google Apps). Finally, business accessories such as letterhead, business cards, and envelopes are the polished first impression which emphasize the freelancer's professionalism.

Writing is considered one of the best ways to earn money from home. A number of writers freelance for magazines and newspapers, but the Internet has changed the writing scenario. The Internet has opened up tremendous opportunities for writers to earn a good part-time income from home. -- Rob Parnell, April 2008, PR-USA.net

**The Hunt.** Classified ads, newsletters and internet employment search engines like

Monster.com and CareerBuilders.com. are the usual sources to find job leads. However, a freelancer can take a more active approach to finding assignments by sending out letters of query.

**Always Be Querying.** The term Always Be Querying (ABQ) alludes to Aurther Miller's play Death of A Salesman in which the sales team is instructed to “always be closing.” Adamec believes an entrepreneurial writer should take proactive measures to secure assignments by ABQ: sending letters of query to editors and publishers as both as an introduction and also as an enticement for the recipient to request a full job proposal (Adamec 11, 108).



**Business Basics.** Business sense is the next ingredient to being a successful freelance writer. A freelance writer must incorporate basic business practices into her professional

As companies with marketing departments are laying off employees and implementing hiring freezes, contract employees and part-time freelancers see increase in jobs, more companies to choose from. --Press release from The Copywriting Institute, April 2, 2008

dealings. For example, the writer needs to be contract savvy, proficient in basic accounting, and develop good time management skills.

**The Contract.** The most important business document to a freelance writer is a contract. A contract between client and writer establishes the guidelines for time frame, word count, fees, expenses, and materials used for completing the project (Adamec 223). It solidifies the agreement between the parties involved and clarifies details regarding the outcome of the final product, not to mention the writer's paycheck.

**Time is money.** Time management is the next skill the successful freelance writer must

learn. The father of time management theory Peter Drucker reasons that “until we can manage time, we can manage nothing else (Pollock, 2001).” Flexible work hours are a perk, but to a freelancer, time management equals self management which requires diligent planning and self-discipline (Adamec 17). Keeping a calendar and making a schedule blocking definitive time frames for work activities will increase productivity.

**Tenacity.** Not every lead or query is going to result in a job. Peter Bowerman states in his book, The Well-Fed Writer that a new freelancer will spend 60 percent of the time looking for business and 40 percent actually doing business (34). Bowerman also alludes to a feast or famine phenomenon in the freelance profession but suggests a “stick-to-it” attitude is essential to a successful career (147, 35).

## **RESEARCH, RESEARCH, AND MORE RESEARCH**

Research is a time consuming but fulfilling and necessary component to freelance writing.

University of South Florida Career Counselor Antonia Ripo, advises extensive research

before the first correspondence to a potential client. She

also advises job seekers to contact the human resource

(HR) department company. Specific information from the

HR officer can aid the applicant in tailoring her resume

and better prepare for the interview, and ultimately win the contract.

You will gain a tremendous advantage if you examine the publication for which you'd like to write. Research its style and content in issues that have already been published. -- Paula Benshoff, Florida naturalist, freelance writer, and author of Myakka, in an interview April 8, 2008.

## **PROJECTIONS AND PROFITABILITY**

The U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook predicts the

employment of writers and editors is expected to grow 10 percent from 2006 to 2016 (2008 -

2009). Technical writing is projected at an astounding 19.5 percent growth. Continued corporate downsizing has led to increased outsourcing technical writing projects, with organizations relying heavily on freelancers to get the job done (Bowerman 17)

### Industry Report Data from U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics (2008)

Occupation	2006 Employment	Projected 2016 Employment	Percent Changed 2006-2016
Writers/Authors	135,246	152,522	12.8
Editors	121,511	124,275	2.3
Technical Writers	49,151	58,741	19.5
Media/Communications workers	35,660	39,848	11.7
Proofreaders/copy markers	17,856	18,995	6.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	359,424	394,381	10.4

The amount of money the freelancer makes will largely be determined by the number of contracts completed. The paycheck will vary from job to job, with an average pay of \$50 per hour (Bowerman 122). Additional components to consider when determining fees are expenses such as materials and travel, which should be recorded meticulously (Adamec 233).

### RECOMMENDATIONS

This report recommends freelance writing as an ideal career for the writer with talent, tenacity, and time management skills (Adamec 26). Freelancing allows the writer to be a well-rounded person, with the occupational satisfaction of earning money doing something you love and the personal satisfaction of maintaining a higher quality of life (237).

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