Freelancing 101

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About Ruth E. Thaler-Carter

- Full-time freelancer since 1984, part-time since high school
- Services: writing, editing, proofreading, desktop publishing, website management, speaking
- Clients/Projects: magazines, newspapers, newsletters, websites, annual reports, law & PR firm documents, associations, nonprofits, publishers, authors
- ACES, EFA, NAIWE, AWC, SPJ, AIIP, RPCN, GSLABJ, Chamber of Commerce member; past STC, CWA, IABC member
- Creator of the annual Communication Central conference for freelancers
- Author of two booklets about freelancing
- Contributor to Rich Adin’s book about The Business of Editing
- Columnist about freelancing for An American Editor blog
A message from Ruth

My heartfelt thanks to Jennifer George Maybin to stepping in to make this presentation, and my apologies for not being able to join you.
Why Freelance?

- No one is safe
- Personality issues
- Burnout/Boredom
- Laid off or fired
- More money
Rewards

- Variety – never bored
- Freedom
- Flexibility
- Comfort if not a corporate type
- Time for family
- Unlimited income (if you do it right)
Why *not* to freelance

- Self-discipline
- Working alone
- Working more
- Lots of bosses
- Less money initially
- Responsible for all expenses/supplies
- Not easy
- Selling yourself
- Competition
- Record-keeping
What you need

- Skills/Training/Experience
- Super-strong grammar, usage, punctuation, spelling, etc., knowledge
- Style manual knowledge – at least one
- Chutzpah
- Tact
- Persistence/Perseverance/Patience
Danger zones

- Savings
- Health insurance
- Time management
- Boundaries, office hours
- Rights to your work
- Isolation
- Taxes – filing quarterly
Preparation

- Start now! (Moonlight if OK with current job)
- Network/Make connections – get known
- Save money
- Get website domain name, business cards, e-mail address, computer/software of your own
Setting up

- Look professional – business cards, website, separate office space, professional voice mail
- Promote yourself
- Set rates
- Market all the time
- At home or outside office? Alone, with a partner, with subcontractors?
- Specialist or generalist?
- Don’t whine!
First steps

- Convert current employer to freelance contract
- Volunteer with nonprofits, offer to present to build portfolio, skills, visibility
- Do presentations for visibility
- Look for organizations to join for training, project leads/referrals and visibility
- Blog?
Finding work

- Tell everyone you know that you’re freelancing!
- Carry cards everywhere
- Join associations such as ACES, the EFA, NAIWE, etc., that have job services for members (many non-freelance organizations have freelance sections)
- Join the Copy Editing List
- Join copyediting.com
- Make cold calls
- Market all the time
- Be active in social media – Facebook business groups, LinkedIn, Twitter
Responding to listings

- Don’t apply if not qualified
- Respond to specifics with how you match up
- Have a plain-text résumé ready and up to date at all times
Websites

- Gotta have one.
- Domain name and hosting in your name on your credit card!
- Keep it simple.
- Barter services with a designer.
- Update it regularly.
- Check with clients before posting anything you’ve done for them.
- Use testimonials from clients instead of samples.
Getting paid

- Always have a contract/letter of agreement – doesn’t have to be lengthy or legalistic
- Ask individuals for advance/deposit
- Submit invoices!
- If possible, don’t do new work until paid for previous work
- Have an attorney
- Don’t threaten, but be prepared to go to Small Claims Court if needed
Add value/Diversify

- Learn new skills to offer in case editing work slows down
- Partner to offer additional skills and services
Common concerns

- What to charge – divide current salary + value of benefits by 1,950 for starting hourly rate; see EFA rates chart
- Defining a “page” (250 words or 1,800 characters) – check all mss. before committing to rate or deadline; ask for whole ms.
- Working for students – understand ethics, get paid in advance
- Timing for ESL projects
- Finding work – look beyond publishing houses
- Websites/Online sources of work – often pay little, can be sketchy/scammy
- Taking editing tests – OK if reasonable; don’t edit an entire chapter
- Providing samples – check with clients first
- Setting boundaries – you determine how much you work and when, availability, schedule
Resources

- https://americaneditor.wordpress.com/?s=So+You+Want+to+be+an+Editor
- https://americaneditor.wordpress.com/2014/02/10/on-the-basics-tips-for-getting-started-in-editing-or-freelancing/
- Tools such as Jack Lyon's Editorium macros (www.editorium.com), Paul Beverly's macros, (www.archivepub.co.uk/macros.html), Daniel Heuman’s PerfectIt (intelligentediting.com) and Rich Adin’s EditTools all enhance productivity, speed, accuracy.
- ACES, Editorial Freelancers Assn., National Assn. of Independent Writers and Editors, Editors Canada, Bay Area Editors Forum, Red Pencil, etc. - all have job services, meetings, colleagues who are potential clients or referral sources. Organizations like the Society of Professional Journalists, American Medical Writers Association, National Association of Science Writers, etc., have freelance sections.
- Editors Association of Earth Facebook group.
- Louise Harnby’s Proofreader’s Parlour blog and marketing books.
- Grammar Girl blog (but not Grammarly!).
- Copy Editing List.
- copyediting.com job/project listings.
- Katharine O’Moore-Klopf’s Knowledge Base (www.kokedit.com).
- Colleagues and vendors often have or know of projects. Hobby, church and alumni groups often need your skills. Agencies are worth checking, but charge fees and might not pay until clients pay them.
- Writer’s Market, Literary Marketplace for publications or organizations that might need your editing services.
- The Internet – YahooGroups, publisher/publication sites, craigslist, guru.com, e-lance.com - offer opportunities and listings, but often for very little money, sometimes scams.
Questions?

Contact Ruth at: Ruth@writerruth.com