When Zig Ziglar first submitted his book *Over the Top* to his publisher, his publisher sent it back to him.

He asked Ziglar how he could tell people how to live "over the top" when he hadn't identified what living over the top means.

So Ziglar sat down to remedy the problem.

He'd write something ... rip it up ... write something else ... rip it up ... go for a walk ... write something ... rip it up ... and so on.

It went on for a full two months.

Then one day, he and his wife went to visit his wife's sister in a Shreveport, Louisiana, nursing home. His wife's sister has *multiple sclerosis*.

Now Ziglar, being a solutions-oriented person, likes to tackle a problem by breaking it down into steps. But because many people in the nursing home were beyond human help, it was out of his realm in terms of providing a solution. He found it rather difficult to deal with.

However, he says his wife was not burdened with the belief that everyone she meets she has to cure.

She quickly started hugging people, telling them how pretty they were, telling them that she loved them and how glad she was to see them.

Ziglar says people were gathered around her like bees around the hive.

*He* couldn't handle it, though – so he excused himself and walked outside.

There, he said the following prayer to himself ...
"Lord, please give me that kind of heart. Make me have that kind of compassion for my fellow human being. Touch me, so that I will have that kind of spirit."

He went back inside and sat down, and suddenly inspiration came to him.

On the back of a motel bill that he'd just paid, he wrote down the "over the top" words that had been eluding him for so long. It only took him a few minutes. 90% of what follows consists of what Ziglar wrote out that day:

- You're at the top when you clearly understand that failure is an event, not a person.
- You're at the top when you realize that yesterday ended last night and today is your brand new day.
- You're at the top when you've made friends with your past, focus on the present, and are optimistic about the future.
- You're at the top when you know that success, a win, doesn't make you. And that failure, a loss, doesn't break you.
- You're at the top when you're filled with faith, hope, and love and live without anger, greed, guilt, envy, or thoughts of revenge.
- You're at the top when you're mature enough to delay gratification and shift your focus from your rights to your responsibilities.
- You're at the top when you know that failure to stand for what is morally right is the prelude to being the victim to what is criminally wrong.
- You're at the top when you're secure in who you are so you're at peace with God and at fellowship with man.
- You're at the top when you've made friends with your adversaries and have gained the love and respect of those who know you best.
- You're at the top when you understand that others can give you pleasure, but genuine happiness comes when you do things for others.
- You're at the top when you're pleasant to the grouchy, courteous to the rude, and generous to the needy.
- You're at the top when you love the unlovable, give hope to the hopeless, friendship to the friendless, and encouragement to the discouraged.
- You're at the top when you look back in forgiveness, forward in hope, down in compassion, and up with gratitude.
- You're at the top when you know that he who would be the greatest of them all must become servant of all.
- You're at the top when you recognize, confess, develop, and use your God-given physical, mental, and spiritual abilities to the glory of God and for the benefit of mankind.

- You're at the top when you stand in front of the creator of the universe and she says to you, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Once finished, Ziglar realized he hadn't identified what it means to be at or over the top at all.

He'd identified the bottom.

Because anyone who adheres to the things on his list has a firm foundation to build a life doing anything they want to do – whether it's being a writer or studying to be an astronaut.

Powerful stuff, wouldn't you say?

And a worthy set of criteria to aspire to as one moves forward in life.

I hope you've enjoyed this week's issues of *The Writer's Life* as much as I've enjoyed writing them.

Here's to positive thinking and not quitting until you're at the top. If you have any questions or comments for me, post them in the comments below.

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- [Achieve More, Reduce Stress, and Live Happier When You Eliminate Negative Emotions From Your Life Forever](#)
This article just made my day. I admit...I was starting to feel sorry for myself. I'm a successful copywriter waiting to happen. I've planted lots of seed, but as of yet...no clients. I know it's just a matter of time...at least I hope it is just a matter of time. I was lonely...my husband left me (again) on Monday, and there's a long weekend coming up. I've got no money, very little gas. Then this article came into my inbox. I've wanted to check out Zig Ziglar's books from the library...but I haven't written it down, so by the time I get to the library...I have forgotten that there was anything I was actually eager to read. The point is this...your article helped me to see that even tho' I'm "on empty" I'm really full...and now I have a great book to read this weekend...I'm off to the library...Thanks

Guest (Goretta M Duncan) – May 27, 2011 at 5:32 pm

To read Zig Ziglar's insight on positive living, makes one realize that there is always an answer to a question, a light at the end of a dark tunnel, and when you are down you can only go up! Thank-you, for the light for today and tomorrow!!!!!!!!!!

Guest (Hear Hilda) – May 27, 2011 at 6:06 pm

Thank you for this inspiring information John. You gave me something to think about. I am not sure if I want to become a writer, but I love giving information that would empower and encourage as well as enhance the lives of people I come into contact with on a daily basis.

This is great....

Guest (Charmaine) – May 27, 2011 at 6:11 pm

Well done, John.

It seems the bigger the struggle, the stronger the motivation, and the greater the success.

Thank God for great developers of the human potential like Zig who bring ample, powerful inspiration to the
masses, and great writers like yourself who send us timely, gentle reminders.

Jerry Bures – May 27, 2011 at 6:41 pm

Dear John I already typed out a bunch of autobiographical material. I am not sure if it got sent or not. Basically I am living testimony that to save your life you must lose it as at age 19 (I am now 56) I was suicidal shooting myself in the head. Miraculously the .22 caliber bullet did not touch my brain. To make a long story short I am now on disability and am deciding whether or not to 1) accept the status quo or 2) Try to be a literary writer 3) try to be a copywriter. I could very well end up doing all three.

Your writing and your sharing your knowledge from Brian Tracy, Joe Sugarman, and Zig Ziglar with your commentary inspires me.

Thanks, keep up the great work

Tom Lumsden

Guest (Tom Lumsden) – May 27, 2011 at 8:07 pm

John,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for contributing such an inspiring article here. Good job.

It is often in our darkest moments that we receive the keenest insights about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The subconscious mind weaves a magic spell when the conscious mind can work no longer. The solution magically appears seemingly out of nowhere.

This is a common experience, not just the monopoly of "creative" people.

Have a good one. Cheers to your life.

Archan Mehta – May 28, 2011 at 5:17 am

Thank you all for your responses. Even though I’m only a messenger for Zig’s wisdom, your words inspire me to no end.

If I could knock on each one of your doors and shake your hand and/or give you a big hug, I would.

I wish you only the best in the future. May we all get to that place where every day we’re living our lives "over the top."

As Shania says, "Up, Up, Up, there’s no way but up from here."
Yes, multiple sclerosis is daunting. My wife is quadriplegic, on a ventilator, due to MS. She is handling it heroically, and I have written a tribute to her, Ting and I: A Memoir of Love, Courage, and Devotion.

A preview version is available for free download at tingandi.com

Guest (Douglas Winslow Cooper) – May 28, 2011 at 11:06 pm

Good article, John, and a good reminder of his "See you at the top" attitude. I've been a Zig fan myself for 25 years, especially after seeing him in person once.

Steve Roller – May 29, 2011 at 5:17 pm

Hi John:

A privilege to read your article. I have read Zig's books, and found them to be very inspiring. I can fully identify with Zig's wife, for visiting nursing homes and volunteering there has been my way of life for many years. What a pleasure to brighten others otherwise dismal lives!

Guest (Ruth) – May 29, 2011 at 10:49 pm

John

After being inspired by your copy, I took action. I now have three small businesses to approach all who I do personal business with to write classified advertising for. Customers get a discount with the ad and I get a percentage of net sales created by the classified ad. I do have to sell them on the value of advertising. All three need business. My question to you and the AWAI community is on my take, what percentage of net sales from their ad should I ask. I am suggesting run the ad for 10 days that means an outlay of ~$150 I anticipate about 7-8% increase in gross sales for each business. Is that a ballpark figure?

Tom Lumden

Tom Lumsden – May 30, 2011 at 11:28 pm

Hi Tom. Congratulations on taking action. The question you pose is a good one. I haven't had any experience writing classified ads, so it's difficult for me to give you an exact percentage. A starting point in the negotiations might be to estimate the sales revenue you expect to generate and determine a fair percentage from that based on what you're comfortable making for your efforts.

Of course, it all depends on what percentage your client is comfortable with.
Because you anticipate boosting their revenue, perhaps structuring a higher percentage for the 7 to 8% increase you predict makes sense.

When negotiating, of course, it always wise to start off a little higher than what you"ll settle for. If you've done a good job selling that this is incremental business, they should be more than willing to negotiate with you till you hit the "magic" number.

Not sure what I just typed helps, but good luck with your negotiations.