

How Do I Know What To Do Next? (And Then?)

By Rebecca Matter

Rebecca Matter here – taking over *The Writer's Life* this week to answer all of the questions I typically hear from aspiring writers, that can create roadblocks on the path to success.

Yesterday I answered the question, [how do I get started?](#) And today, I'm going to help ensure you know each step to take, so you don't waste any time and money on things you don't need.

The way we're going to do that is by creating a basic roadmap.

I call it a roadmap, because what you end up with is a schedule of activities that move you from where you are now (point A) to where you want to be (point B).

Ready to get started?

First, define where you're going.

It's hard to put together a roadmap if you don't know your destination!

Hopefully you at least have your first path chosen. If not, go back to [yesterday's issue](#) and make the decision once and for all.

Remember, this doesn't have to be your ultimate goal, or long-term destination. You can always add on to your writing business or change direction. The key here is to pick a point B, and get moving.

Next, determine the skills you need to learn.

If you want to start with e-newsletters, you'll probably want to learn how to ...

- Write e-newsletters;
- Put together an editorial calendar;
- Manage/grow a mailing list; and
- Market yourself and your new e-newsletter service.

If you want to be a case study writer, you may need to learn how to ...

- Write case studies;
- Determine which companies have the biggest demand; and
- Effectively sell the service.

You may also decide you want to learn how to lay out a case study (do the design work), so you can earn an additional fee every time you write one.

And, if you want to be a direct-response copywriter, you'll of course need to learn how to write persuasive copy. But maybe you'll want to take it one step further by learning how to ...

- Choose a niche;
- Uncover the "hot buttons" in that niche;
- Gear your copy toward that particular audience; and
- Identify the companies in the industry who value good writers.

And, if you find you're interested in a path, but have no idea what skills you need, other than learning to write that style of copy, don't worry ...

Just get the corresponding AWAI program, and rest easy. We require our experts to include everything you need to know ... from how to write the assignments, to how to land clients who need that service, and everything in between.

Then, make a list of anything else you want/need before launching your business.

Maybe you want a website ...

Or you want to start a blog ...

Or you want to create a stellar LinkedIn profile that potential clients can find when looking for your services ...

Whatever it is you want to do before approaching clients, write it down. You want to know every step you plan to take before you sit down to write your roadmap.

That way you'll never be left in doubt as to what to do next, and nothing will throw you off your path.

Finally, it's time to build your roadmap!

Take out a piece of paper and write down your path at the top.

Then look at the skill-building programs you want to take to acquire the skills you need, and "business things" you want to accomplish before you begin reaching out to clients ...

Organize them in the order you'd like to tackle them, and set a deadline for each step.

If you're new to the game, knowing how long each step takes may be challenging, but just give it your best shot, trying to be as realistic as possible.

If you work full-time, things will, of course, take longer. If you're in a situation where you can dedicate eight hours a day, things will move faster.

And, if you're using an AWAI program to learn or complete any of your steps, we usually indicate how long it takes to complete it in the details of the program.

Here are some examples ...

1. Direct-Response Copywriter Roadmap

Month One:

- Begin *The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*.
- Pick my niche with *How to Choose Your Writing Niche*.

Month Two:

- Finish *The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*.
- Put up my website with Rebecca's help and her *Build Your Freelance Website in Four Days* webinar series.
- Create a professional LinkedIn profile.

**** Launch My Business ****

Month Three:

- Learn how to write copy for my chosen niche.
- Read *Making the Leap* to plan ahead for my transition from my full-time job.

2. e-Newsletter Writer Roadmap

Month One:

- Take *Creating Email Newsletters for Professional Service Firms*.
- Put up my website.

**** Launch My Business ****

Month Two:

- Start an e-newsletter for my own business.
- Identify and contact 50 prospective clients following the lessons taught by Michael Katz in the email newsletter program.

3. Web Writer Roadmap

Month One:

- Complete *Web Copywriting 2.0*.
- Begin following the *12-Step Roadmap to Web Writing Success* from *Wealthy Web Writer*.

Month Two:

- Continue the *12-Step Roadmap*.
- Put up my website.
- Begin *Email Copy Made Easy*.

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Month Three:

- Complete *Email Copy Made Easy*.
- Write sample emails for portfolio.

Get the idea?

And, if you REALLY want to get a gold star on this assignment, take it one step further by breaking it into weeks. Then break down the assignments into the individual tasks that need to be accomplished.

The more detailed you are and the more specific you are with deadlines, the better chance you have of success.

If you'd like to share your roadmap, or have any questions, post them here. Otherwise join me tomorrow so we can tackle the next big question ...

How you get experience and high-quality samples, even if you're just starting out!

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- [How Much Money You Need to Spend to Be a Successful Copywriter](#)
- [6 Ways to Make a Living Writing Emails](#)
- More by [Rebecca Matter](#)
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13 Responses to "How Do I Know What To Do Next? (And Then?)"

Hi, Rebecca. I noticed you're not covering this week the thing that seems to paralyze me anytime I've tried to start up something like this, and that is: the accounting/tax side of the business. How do you categorize a business like this and make sure you're in compliance with tax requirements and do bookkeeping in an efficient way?

Guest (EllenB) – over a year ago

Greetings Rebecca,

We (my wife and I are a team) recently landed a job to re-write an email. Long story short, the first draft was rejected ("didn't like the tone of it") and he cancelled the job with out a chance for a revision.

I would like to send someone all of the correspondence, the control email and my rewrite to see what went wrong.

My wife has just about completed the 6 week course and I am a member of the barefoot writers. I feel that the letter would have done well, but I am not the client.

Can we get a little review help from someone?

Thanks.

BillG56

BillG56 – over a year ago

Any info for skills needed and roadmaps fo Emails?

I think that's for me!

Thanks.

Guest (Candy Colley) – over a year ago

Hi Rebecca! I really love this series! I am currently working through Secrets of Writing High Performance B2B Copy.

What's my Roadmap? How do you write an Enewsletter for your own business when you are brand new? That's one of the areas that I want to get into. I am thinking about blogging my own transition from where I am to my own writer's life though.

I have given myself a year and four mos to create my version!

KarenB – over a year ago

@ EllenB - I always recommend you talk to an accountant to make sure you're covering your bases. We also have a lot of information in our Freelance Writing Success program in the catalog. Many writers just give it a shot to see if it's going to be a fit before worrying about all the business/accounting details. And then when they land a few clients and realize this is for real, they invest some of that money into hiring an accountant who can answer their questions and ensure everything is set up properly. The key is not to let things like that stand in your way - they can become roadblocks that stop you from every moving forward. Good luck! Rebecca

Rebecca Matter – over a year ago

@BillG56 - Which course? If it's Email Copy Made Easy, Jay offers to critique copy on the groupsite. If it's Six-Figure, you can post it to that groupsite and ask for feedback.

Realize too that copy is completely subjective. What one marketer thinks is great, another marketer will reject completely. But in the end, only the market will tell us whether or not the copy truly did it's job. Opinions simply don't matter!

It's a shame they weren't willing to test it. My only guess is that they have a tone/style they want to preserve regardless of who is writing the copy. That's definitely a challenge of writing in someone else's voice, and one that goes away the longer you work with a client.

Good luck and don't get discouraged! Rebecca

Rebecca Matter – over a year ago

@Candy Colley - here's what I would do...

Month One:

- * Start and complete Email Copy Made Easy.
- * Begin following the 12-Step Roadmap to Web Writing Success from Wealthy Web Writer.

Month Two:

- * Continue the 12-Step Roadmap.
- * Put up my website.
- * Send assignments to Jay for feedback.

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Month Three:

- * **Revise assignments as Jay recommends and post as samples to my website.**
- * **Begin contacting potential clients identified in the 12-Step Roadmap.**

Jay is a great resource for succeeding in the email business, and is available on the Groupsite that comes with his program. Good luck! Rebecca

Rebecca Matter – over a year ago

@KarenB - The B2B path is a pretty well defined ...

Month One:

- * **Finish the High Performance B2B Program.**

Month Two:

- * **Work through Getting B2B Clients - do all 7 steps within the month!**

**** Launch Business ****

Month Three:

- * **Choose a B2B service you want to add to your business (case studies, white papers, etc.) and learn how to write them really well while you're working on landing clients at the same time - using the plan you mapped out with the Getting B2B Clients program.**

You'll figure out if a newsletter is a good idea when taking that B2B Client program. And I would recommend putting the blog idea aside for now and just focusing on your B2B goals. That way you can spend 100% of your time moving forward.

Good luck! Rebecca

Rebecca Matter – over a year ago

Dear Rebecca,

Thank you much for these tips on building a roadmap. It is helping immensely. My question is what type of business software would benefit a copywriter in setting up their business. For example, should one get project management software? What other software would make the job easier? I want to start budgeting the costs into my roadmap plan.

Keep up the excellent work.

David Haimerl – over a year ago

Dear Rebecca,

My wife has engaged in direct selling/MLM business distributing health products from big company in the US. What should I do first before putting up a website or a road map for this matter.

Rey – over a year ago

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Rey – over a year ago

I just joined last night with the special offer offered to me. I consider myself a writer and have been told that I am a good writer. I have 3 children's books self-published within my portfolio, and I also write often for various contests and Internet sites that offer feedback, etc. However, I feel a bit lost with all the information offered here that I am not sure where to start! I am retired (age 66) and I want to make good money doing something I really enjoy but don't necessarily need to make 6 figures (although that would be awesome if it happens). I know I can do this, I have the confidence, I just need some direction as to the best fit for me. Please advise.

BlingSkyWrites – over a year ago

@BlingSkyWrites - welcome to AWAI! I understand the overwhelm ... this industry is HUGE. And the opportunities are vast. I recommend you first go through the AWAI Method on your member page. It will give you a good overview of the steps you'll take to build your writing career. And then let us know what questions you have - our Member Services Team is available to help you along your journey. Just click on contact in the navigation and let us know what you need! Good luck - and we look forward to helping you (and celebrating with you!) every step of the way. Rebecca

Rebecca Matter – over a year ago

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American Writers & Artists Institute

220 George Bush Blvd, Suite D

Delray Beach, FL 33444

(561) 278-5557 or (866) 879-2924