

How A-List Copywriters Form Big, Control-Beating Ideas

By Julie Hassett

It's Julie Hassett here with you for the first *Writer's Life* series of 2015.

And I'm sharing the top five lessons I learned that took me to six figures in 12 months.

Yesterday we talked about never being the smartest person in the room and how crucial that is in order to keep getting better at what you do.



Today, I'll highlight something that every A-list copywriter I've ever met has in common ... something that has also helped me advance my freelance career quicker than I originally planned.

You've heard the term "starving writer," right? While no one wants to be that, we should all want to be known as "hungry writers."

Hungry for what, you may ask?

For the world at large.

Lesson #2: The best copywriters in this industry have a deep-rooted hunger for learning, idea creation and information seeking.

If left to their own devices, they could spend all day, every day devouring books, journals, novels, newspapers, studies, you name it ...

Pop culture. History. Psychology. Foreign affairs. Health and fitness. Spirituality.

They're hungry to know what's going on inside people's heads ... to understand why they do what they do ... buy what they buy ... and say what they say (even if they don't mean it).

They are students of life. Perennial learners. The world is their classroom and laboratory.

That's because every bit of incoming information gets indexed in a big "potential copy ideas" library in the back of their brain.

When the time is right, these fragments of knowledge rearrange and connect in new ways – and that's how big, control-beating ideas are formed.

The beautiful thing about a freelance lifestyle is that you can work this exploration of the world into your daily schedule.

Personally, I used to struggle to sit down and read a book or watch a movie. I always thought I should be up and "doing something."

But now, I consider reading, listening and watching to be part of my job description. A really fun part!

If you're already a voracious reader and consumer of current and world events, good for you. You have a leg up in this business.

If you're at all like I was and you need a little structure to spur your hunger, then set reading goals for yourself and write them down.

Mine are to spend 30 minutes each day ...

- Reading daily news online
- Reading for business (copywriting/marketing classics)
- Reading for pleasure (more on the weekends!)
- Listening to a podcast while walking the dogs

Every month, I choose three books to read – two copywriting-related books and one fiction or non-fiction that's purely for pleasure.

So, for January, what books are you putting on your must-read list? Does reading every day sound easy or challenging? Share your thoughts and help inspire others in the comments.

I'm looking forward to tomorrow when we'll talk about contracting your first employee – PLUS, how to get them to **work for free**! Don't miss it!

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18 Responses to "How A-List Copywriters Form Big, Control-Beating Ideas"

I am currently reading a book that everyone looking for success should read. it is called THE "LAW OF SUCCESS" by NAPOLEON HILL, the original 1925 edition. all aspiring copywriters should read.

FRIERSON – over a year ago

Interesting, Julie. I found the EXACT secret on my way to the six-figure mark. Even wrote an article about it (The Anti-Writing Secret I Discovered on My Way to Six-Figures) here on AWAI.

One tool that helps me stay on track is the Audible App for my phone. The app lets me listen to books at 3x speed. this means on my 20 minutes drive to the gym and back, I get a book a week "read" in that drive time.

This week's book:

Mastering the Money Game by Tony Robbins

Sean McCool – over a year ago

@Sean - Oh, I'm so excited to read that book too! Alright, you've inspired me to try Audible. I've trained my brain to listen to podcasts at 1.5X and sometimes 2X so far. Did it take a bit for you to get up to 3X? Thanks for the comment!

Julie Hassett – over a year ago

Actually a question. Not knowing yet how many parts there are to the accelerated program I find planning for its conclusion a shot in the dark. Any help?

Guest (Jack) – over a year ago

Hi Julie, Thanks for the validation of what I already love to do--learn! I read a ton for pleasure (I'm a fiction writer too) but like the idea of adding the daily goals for news and industry related books. Nice post thank you! I'm just starting on my career (still have the day job) and your success is inspiring.

Elia – over a year ago

I love the gift of being able to read and evolve into the copywriter I know I can become. At this present time I am reading, Teresa Iezzi's, The Idea Writers. Reading about such industry greats as David Droga and others helps me have a star to shoot for.

Vanessa McKinney – over a year ago

Seven days into the New Year and I've read seven books, ranging from 63 pages to 1346 pages. Despite my passion for self-help, I'm an eclectic reader. In the "Accelerated Copywriting Course," we're taught that creativity is the art of combining old ideas in new ways. To succeed at that, I need a fertile garden of ideas.

Daniel G Taylor – over a year ago

I am currently reading The Motivation Manifesto...and working on 2 courses here. That's about all the reading I can fit in around "the job" at this time. Love the ideas for future planning though!

Dawn Engler – over a year ago

Thanks for your mail Julie. I have been a journalist for over 20 years now so I kind of read, write, and rewrite copies on current affairs, business, sports etc for 8 hours everyday six days a week. And outside that I read literature (fiction and non-fiction) for a minimum of three hours every day. These three hours are the most precious for me because this is where I learn, enjoy great prose and grow and a writer. I am interested in your programme and would like to know what is the best route for someone who already has a reading and writing background.

Guest (Reader) – over a year ago

"..students of life,..the world is their classroom and laboratory"..and everything else you said in your post described exactly me. I was a "starving artist" in my younger years. Now I'm a "hungry writer." What's wrong with me? I'm full of ideas but I can't seem to finish anything. I'm now in my waning years. Thanks for your post, I'm inspired once more. (Urell Odama is my pseudonym).

Leo Blanco

Leo Blanco – over a year ago

Great article and thanks for bringing this up. These days it's a lesson from "A Course in Miracles" first thing in the morning. Then I scan the headlines and read several articles from 5 or 6 newspapers/apps on my smartphone.

During breaks or in the evening it's Dan Brown's "Angels and Demons". Prior to that it was "Warrior Pose ~ How Yoga (Literally) Saved My Life" by Brad Willis.

About to read "Social Poetry" by Joel Comm. And re-read "Copy Logic" by Michael Masterson & Mike Palmer, and "Great Leads" by Michael Masterson & John Forde.

And since I just got out of spinal surgery I'm reading "The 7-Day Back Pain Cure" by Jess Cannone. TheN "Arthritis Reversed" by Dr. Mark Wiley.

And then there's the music ...

David Tomen – over a year ago

Wow, I'm scribbling down book suggestions like crazy, right now! Thanks for sharing your schedules, reading lists and challenges. @Jack - I would contact someone in the AWAI office to ask about when you should expect to reasonably finish the Accelerated course. Based on how much progress you are making in a day, I bet someone could help you plot out a timeline.

Julie Hassett – over a year ago

Julie, 3x speed is easy to get used to because many of the narrators are too slow. So 3x on Audible is probably similar to 2x on a podcast.

It takes about 15-30 seconds when I start a book for my brain to catch up. Then it's weird NOT to use 3x on Audible.

Sean McCool – over a year ago

I'm reading "Instinct" by TD Jakes. It talks about getting t the core of who you are and following your instincts to achieve greatness in life.

Karen E – over a year ago

My insatiable appetite for reading and information made me feel like a "jack of all trades and master of none" as far as subject mastery. That my knowledge is too broad, not useful. Grateful to know this isn't the case. Thanks Julie!

My reads are: The One Thing by Gary Keller: Fantastic guide to focus on the main priority.

Motivation Manifesto by Brendon Burchard: Insightful advice on living your true nature.

Copywriting by Mark Shaw: Many great samples of writing and visual presentation.

Mike S – over a year ago

Julie thank you for your insight into growing stronger as a copywriter.

At this time I'm reading "Ogilvy on Advertising", as well as I'm going through the Accelerated course for Six-figure Copywriters. With that I'm reading emails from AWAI like the one you wrote in a series as well as "The Barefoot Writer". So

my plate is somewhat full, but I always find sometime for little pleasurable excursions into the fiction and non-fiction world.

Curtis David – over a year ago

Thanks again Julie for your excellent thoughts and ideas. This month I am reading 2 books by Bob Bly. Secrets of a Freelance Writer and the Copywriter's Handbook. I had already finished Steve Slaunwhite's book "Start and Run a Copywriting business"(having borrowed it from the library) but now have my own copy found on Amazon for a steal. Next month I will read Katherine T. O'Connor's classic- "Woe is I".

FrankG – over a year ago

Thanks, Julie, for your excellent writing skills.

I am new here and have a ton of books on my Kindle. Reading the The Art of War by Steven Pressfield and the Power of Habit by Charles Duhigg and finished the The Robert Collier Copywriting Course and the My Life in Advertising by Claude Hopkins. Since I found out I have ADD, am also reading The Gift of ADD by Laura Honos-Webb.

ron nats – over a year ago

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