

3 Things I Wish I'd Known When I Started My Copywriting Business

By Kathryn Aragon



When I opened shop as a freelance copywriter, I had no idea what I was doing ... as a business owner, that is.

I was confident I could handle the writing if I could only get a few clients. But where were these elusive clients? How was I supposed to find them? And how could I get them to notice me?

Fortunately, I figured it out ...

But it took time and a lot of mistakes along the way.

If you're trying to start your writing business and are experiencing some challenges like I did, keep reading. Here's three foundational business building pieces of advice that can save you so much time. (I wish someone had given these to me when I got started.)

Priority #1: Your Website Is Your Portfolio

The biggest dilemma a new writer faces is proof.

You know you can write, but without a portfolio, how do you show prospects what you can do?

When I got started, I used Spec Assignments and student projects I did for courses or practice to fill out my portfolio. But today, I only need to show people my freelance copywriting website. I wrote and built it myself, so it shows clients exactly what I can do for them if they hire me.

That's because a good website is filled with copy, sales pages, lead magnets (free content given away when someone subscribes), and blog articles. And your website gets noticed (or promoted) with Search Engine Optimization (SEO), email marketing, and social media.

All these activities show what you can do. And when you do them well, few people ever ask to see your portfolio. Instead, they get right to the point: "Can you help us?"

That's why building your professional website is Priority #1.

At the very least, you need:

- A homepage that tells visitors what you do and who you do it for.
- An About page that tells people who you are, with a focus on why they should choose you over the competition.
- A Services page, describing the different services you offer.
- A Contact page, ideally with a form people can fill out to get in touch with you.
- A blog, where you can show off your skills, share tips and ideas, and get your prospects excited about the possibility of you writing for them.

Fortunately, your website doesn't have to be fancy or expensive. With templates and plugins doing all the hard work, you can easily build a beautiful website in just a few days.

And you don't have to wait until you have a bunch of blog posts or perfect website copy before you go live with your site. Build your core pages now. As you add new articles and pages, it will become a true client getting magnet.

Action Step: Get your website up and running ASAP. If you need help, I recommend AWAI's express course, [*Build Your Freelance Website in Four Days*](#).

Keep it current. I publish to my blog about once a week, and I review and update my web pages 2 or 3 times a year.

Priority #2: Guest Posts Get You Noticed

As a freelance writer, you wear a lot of hats. You've got your own site to keep up, plus client work, outreach, and more. Writing guest posts for free can seem like a waste of your valuable time.

But nothing could be further from the truth.

Guest posts are articles you submit for publication on large websites that cater to your target audience. In short, they get you noticed by the people who could hire you for their next writing project.

No matter how busy you might be, guest posting needs to be a high priority item.

To get the full value from your efforts, it's best to write for blogs that:

- Are respected in your niche.
- Have good traffic and engagement from the people you're targeting with your writing services.
- Publish regularly.
- Are active in social media.
- Accept guest posts.

So, how do you find these sites?

A Google search is a good place to start. Do some searches using [your niche] plus one of these phrases (keep the quotation marks):

- "Write for us"
- "Submit a guest post"
- "Guest post"
- "Guest post guidelines"

Aim to find 10–20 sites that seem like a good fit. Then do a little research on them. (For this, I like to use a spreadsheet.) Visit each website and take notes on:

- Their blog's URL.
- Writer's Guidelines, if you can find them.
- Whether you can contact the editor directly or need to use their contact form. (Note the editor's name and email if it's available.)
- The approximate length of their articles.

- Predominant style of their articles.
- Top categories, and topics they like to cover.
- Any gaps in their topics that you could write about.

Next, reach out to the editor.

Don't be pushy or demanding. Simply express your interest in writing for their blog and suggest a few topics you could write about. If you've started your own blog already, include a few links to your best articles, so the editor can evaluate your writing in advance.

Action Step: Getting started is the hardest part. But it all starts with research, so open a spreadsheet and start a list of the best guest writing outlets for you. Then politely reach out to the editor.

Priority #3: Who You Know Matters

I recently lost a major client when their budget for freelancers suddenly dried up. (Sadly, it happens!) After giving myself a minute to let reality sink in, I shot off a few emails to people in my network.

Over the next three weeks, I had coffee with several movers-and-shakers, and within a month, I had two new clients to replace the one I'd lost.

This proves that who you know matters more.

All my best projects happened because I was referred by someone my clients respected.

In one instance, my new client told me they rarely hire as quickly as they did with me. But the recommendation they got made a difference, and how I presented myself on our phone interview sealed the deal.

As writers, we can get stuck in a creative zone where we don't interact as much as we should. That's especially true if you're an introvert like me.

But networking matters.

Make yourself visible to your niche. Write guest posts. Interact on social media. Be present and active, so people know who you are and what you do.

Go to events, too — but not for the sake of finding clients. Go to meet people and find out how you can help them. Focus on adding value: introduce people, do favors, and stay in touch.

That keeps you top of mind. So when someone hears about an opportunity you can fill, they'll call on you.

By the way, movers-and-shakers could be celebrities and thought leaders or newbies who are just getting started. One of the best events to start building your network with all types of movers-and-shakers is AWAI's [FastTrack to Copywriting Success Bootcamp and Job Fair](#). To this day, I have valuable interactions with the people I met my first year at Bootcamp.

One other thing I recommend: Join AWAI's *Circle of Success*. As a COS member, attending Bootcamp for free is a huge benefit, and you get to know your fellow students on a much deeper level. Not to mention the advanced training you'll get. My COS membership is the smartest investment I've made in my writing career.

Action Step: Make a list of the events your best clients and peers tend to go to, and pick one or two you can attend. Start watching social media to see who else will be there. Make a list of the people you want to meet.

If you get a chance, say hello. But remember, don't be a fan, just a friendly person. Then before you part ways, ask if there's anything you can do for them.

After the event, connect with people on social media and stay in touch. As a writer, you can easily reach out for quotes or to share ideas.

In other words, give. Then give and give some more.

Bottom Line

Freelance writing is a wide-open opportunity, but it's not always easy to get started.

Ironically, finding clients *isn't* the best place to start. Instead of wishing and worrying over clients, start building name recognition and credibility by:

1. Building a professional website.
2. Getting your name on respected blogs.
3. Building relationships with movers-and-shakers in your niche.

If I could go back in time and give myself some advice, this is what I'd tell myself. So let me tell you as well ...

Make these three tasks your top priorities, and everything else will fall into place. In all likelihood, clients will come to you.

What help or guidance do you need to move your freelance writing career forward like Kathryn? Comment below and let us know how we can help.

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5 Responses to "3 Things I Wish I'd Known When I Started My Copywriting Business"

Hi Kathryn, I just wanted to let you know that this was a terrific article. I'm right there, right now . . . Getting started. Your insight into this business of getting started helped me to breathe a little easier knowing that it doesn't happen overnight. I can see that the three categories you mapped out takes time and consistency. With your tips, you also provided a well lit path that will take me from point A to point B.

Thanks so much, John Morelock

JJ Morelock – over a year ago

Kathryn, I just want to thank you for the great article with some very practical advice. The step by steps guidance for guest posting is just what I needed right now!

Bernadine – over a year ago

Kathryn, I just wanted to say thanks for this great article. The step by step guidance for guest posting is "right on time" for me!

Bernadine – over a year ago

Thank you for that awesome advice! I'm working on my website now because I understand how very important it is to my success! I will definitely follow your advice! Thanks again ??

Linda Beauty Marks – over a year ago

I plan on building my website next week and I'd like to place my samples there. However, I really need someone to give me constructive criticism before I put them out there for all the world to see!!

I'm really nervous about this. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Guest (Ariella Safer) – over a year ago

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