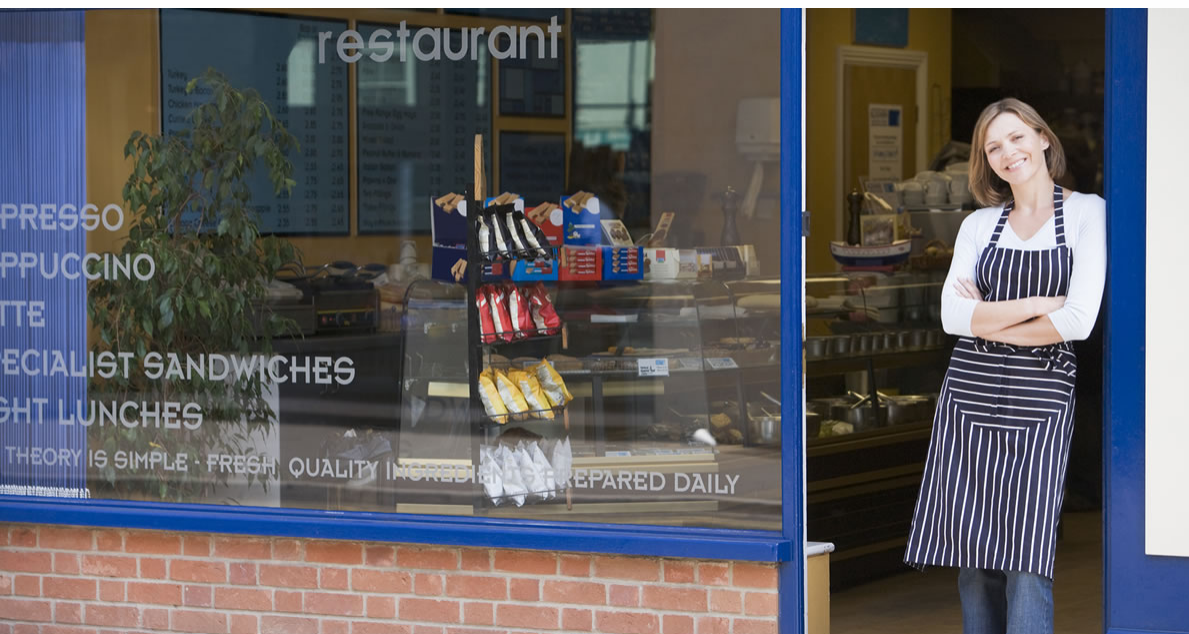


Working with Small Businesses as a B2B Copywriter

By Steve Slaunwhite



As a B2B copywriter, you might work with creative agencies or the marketing directors for mid-sized or larger companies. But there's a third type of client you might work for, and that's small business.

What are the opportunities for B2B writers in the small business market?

Well, first of all, you'll probably hear a lot of different opinions about working for small businesses. You might hear people saying small business owners don't hire copywriters. They may not even know what a copywriter is. They don't understand the value of working with a professional copywriter. They don't have the money, and they won't pay you.

Is that true?

Well, that's true for some small business owners.

But there are just as many examples of small businesses that *do* value great copywriting and content writing. Small B2B businesses in particular understand the value and are willing to pay very good rates.

In fact, my very first client as a freelance copywriter was a small B2B business. They were a small consulting firm. They hired me to write a sales letter and a white paper, and they had no trouble paying me a very good rate. I've had many experiences over the years with small businesses that were great clients.

My best client right now definitely qualifies as a small business. Although he has about 20 employees, he's still a small business. I've worked directly with the owner of this business for over 10 years.

Small businesses can be great clients. But you need to understand what they're looking for in a B2B copywriter and how to structure your services to appeal to small business owners.

So I'm going to give you some tips and ideas and strategies on how to succeed in the small business market.

Before I do, let's define the small business market.

I classify small businesses into three groups as follows:

Solopreneurs

This group makes up probably 80 percent of small businesses. They may work with other professionals part time to fill out their team. In fact, I'm a solopreneur myself, and you may be one also.

As a B2B copywriter, you're looking at solopreneurs that are already making \$100,000 or more in business income. That's the threshold where they're able to afford to work with professionals like you and me.

Micro businesses

These are businesses that usually have fewer than 10 employees. There may be one central person in that business. A small consulting firm, for example, may have three or four partners and a few other support staff.

Large small businesses

These businesses have more than 10 employees. They probably have more than a million dollars in sales, maybe up to 10 or 12 million in sales. Those businesses have larger budgets when it comes to marketing.

Now, in all three types of small business, you're almost always going to be working with the business owner. They may call themselves the senior partner or co-director or CEO or something like that.

Now, what are some of the advantages of working with a small business and working with the business owner?

#1. You're working with the decision maker

One of the appealing aspects of working with a small business is you get to work with the ultimate decision-maker of the business. They can make a decision right there on the spot, which I love.

So when I'm talking to a business owner on the phone about his project, and I've established value and he's excited about working with me, then I can quote a price. I can get a "yes" right there on the phone. And that's really all the go ahead I need, so we are away to the races with the project.

Contrast that with working with a larger company when you're working with a marketing director. The procurement process for hiring a freelance copywriter can be more complex. So the marketing director may say, "I got your quote and I've submitted the budget to our executive team to review. I'll get approval in a couple of days. And then you'll get a formal purchase order approving your proposal."

#2. You get more respect

Business owners tend to listen to your advice, and they love getting your input. You can really get into a good collaborative partnership with the business owner where they're treating you as an expert.

Do I get that from marketing directors of larger companies? Yes, sometimes. But with the business owner, you're much more likely to get that mutual respect which makes the client relationship much more meaningful and satisfying.

#3. You'll be their hero

Business owners have a personal stake in their own business. They really appreciate it when you do a great job. When you rewrite their website and they read the new homepage, they say, "Wow. You've really articulated what we're all about." And they feel it emotionally. And you get a great level of satisfaction.

Now, of course, if you don't do a good job, the opposite reaction occurs.

#4. You're helping them grow their business

What I really find fulfilling is that I'm helping them grow their business. One of my best clients has more than doubled his business over the years I've worked with him. He went from 10 employees to 22 employees now. And I played a role in that as a copywriter and marketing adviser.

What's the downside to working with small businesses?

Some business owners may not have a lot of knowledge when it comes to marketing and copywriting. So they may need a lot of hand-holding and additional education. They may need a lot of advice that you might not be prepared to give. They may want a lot of extra help you may not have anticipated for a project.

For example, let's say you write their website. When you send them the copy and they might ask how to upload the new copy into their WordPress site. And you may have to offer that advice or point them to another resource.

When I work with small business owners, I'm very clear what the deliverable is. I actually spell it out for them. I tell them that I deliver the copy in Microsoft Word format. That way, they can review it and revise it. They can send it back to me for revisions if necessary.

I make it very clear what I do and what I don't do. For example, I don't handle design, although I can recommend a good designer. I don't handle illustrations and graphics, although I can recommend people to do that. I don't upload it into WordPress or into their blog. That way, the business owner has clarity in exactly what they're getting from me.

Now, I may be a little biased here because I like working with business owners, but I think there's more upsides than downsides when it comes to working directly with business owners.

So let's talking about writing B2B copy for these three types of audiences.

Working with solopreneurs

They'll often have a very tight budget. They're usually doing all the marketing themselves, and they need help. They can't afford to hire a full-time marketing director, so they're wearing the marketing director's hat and doing all the work themselves.

Let's say you write white papers and you quote a solopreneur who's making \$100,000 a year in their business \$6,000 to write a white paper.

You're asking them to spend 6% of their income on a white paper. They already have to spend money on a website and other marketing activities. That's a big chunk of change, so it better be worth it.

But that doesn't mean you can't work with solopreneurs in other ways. You've got to be creative about it.

One way you can work with solopreneurs is working with them as a copywriter who advises and consults and rewrites their materials. I know a lot of copywriters have been successful with this model.

For example, you can have a program where you advise the client how to write their website. You can give them tips on how to write the homepage, their key sales pages, and their About page.

You might even have an article or a how-to guide they can work through so they can write their own website. And then they can send their draft copy to you for you to review and rewrite. In fact, copy rewriting is a service that solopreneurs are likely to buy.

This is a great model. And it helps solopreneurs afford professional copywriting services.

You can probably take anything a business owner writes and rewrite it with your knowledge of B2B copywriting techniques and best practices. You can make it much more effective, clearer, and more compelling fairly easily and at a much lower price.

So if you normally charge \$5,000 to write a website, you can probably work with a solopreneur and charge \$1,000 or maybe \$1,500 to rewrite what they've written. And you can probably make just as much money per hour.

So keep in mind — solopreneurs have tight budgets. If you want to work with them, you've got to find creative ways to share your expertise without having to offer full-service copywriting.

Working with micro businesses

Micro businesses have employees, but they probably have fewer than 10 employees.

One thing I like about working with micro businesses is that they are real businesses. A solopreneur can have a real business, but they can suddenly drop everything and take two months off during slow times.

But when a micro business has employees, they have to keep the sales coming in because they have a payroll to meet. So that means they're more willing to pay good money for professional help for marketing and copywriting.

Now, unlike the solopreneur who may hire you to advise them on writing something, a micro business owner is probably too busy to write the copy themselves. So they're going to want you to write the copy.

And they do appreciate marketing advice. In fact, they kind of expect free marketing advice from all the people they work with. They'll ask their graphic designer and their printer for advice because they really can't afford to pay for high-level strategic advice.

So if you're writing copy for a micro business owner, be prepared. They're going to pick your brain for marketing ideas and advice.

So if you can offer some good ideas and insights in addition to your copywriting services, micro business owners really appreciate that. You can add a lot of value by doing that freely.

Working with large small businesses

These businesses have more than 10 employees. Their sales are probably in the seven-figures or perhaps low eight-figures. They may or may not have a marketing director on staff. But even if they do, you're still going to work with the business owner

quite a lot.

The great thing about working with large small businesses is that they do tend to have a marketing budget. And they do tend to be able to afford to work with a professional copywriter and pay professional rates.

These large small businesses can be great clients because they have money. And they tend to be more sophisticated with their marketing. They probably have an actual marketing plan they're working. And they do a lot of marketing to support and grow their business.

In my opinion of the three different types, some of the best opportunities for you will come from the large small businesses. They tend to be very loyal to copywriters. And there also is a high likelihood of repeat business simply because they do a lot more marketing and they need a lot more help.

So those are some tips on how to work with small businesses. Keep these tips in mind if you want to work with these businesses so you can succeed in this very large market.

There are nearly 30 million small businesses in the United States and Canada. So you'll never run out of prospects.

This article, [***Working with Small Businesses as a B2B Copywriter***](#), was originally published by [B2B Writing Success](#).

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4 Responses to "Working with Small Businesses as a B2B Copywriter"

I've only recently started the Accelerated course and it seems to me that as a newbie copywriter this is the ideal way to get some good experience and sample copy for my website. Thank you for a great article. Now going to copy and paste it to my file of reference articles.

Fredley – over a year ago

Hi Steve,

Thanks for this. Have you ever worked with government entities? Small? Medium? Large? Local? State? Federal? I understand that you must apply for contracts and that they usually want to hire someone with experience. How could one get experience in the first place? If you can get in the door, this could be a very lucrative business. I know you are in Canada and the process may be different there.

Nora King – over a year ago

Fredley, thanks for your comment. I'm glad you found the article helpful!

Steve Slaunwhite – over a year ago

Nora, I don't have a lot of experience writing for government entities. I'm mainly a B2B guy! I'm sure that somewhere in the AWAI community there is an expert. I'll check into it and get back to you.

(Readers: When I find out more, I'll share it here.)

Steve Slaunwhite – 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