

F r e e d o m W i t h W r i t i n g

**The LinkedIn Goldmine
for Freelance Writers**

**How to Win Clients,
Build Relationships, and Become
a Prosperous Writer**

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How to Find Freelance Writing Jobs on LinkedIn

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Chapter 1: LinkedIn – Your Passport to a Lucrative Writing Career

Do you dream of earning your living as a writer?

Perhaps you'd like to write in the evenings and on weekends to earn some extra cash. Maybe your dream is to take the plunge and become a full-time writer. Or perhaps what matters to you is seeing your name in a byline for big-name publications.

Whatever your writing dream, LinkedIn is your passport to a lucrative writing career. It's a place you can connect with business owners, magazine editors and publishers who are looking for writers just like you.

That's not to say finding writing work on LinkedIn is easy. Sure, there's work aplenty, but you must work hard and dig deep to find it. Remember, the world doesn't owe you a writing career. It's not something that's just going to fall from outer space and land in your lap. Only you can change your life. Only you can make your writing dream happen. Only you can make yourself into a writer – by writing every chance you get, and by being willing to network with the people who can give you the writing jobs you dream of. LinkedIn isn't a magic wand that grants your writing career wishes. Rather, it's a tool you can use to reach out to people who are looking for writers just like you.

Let's start by taking a look at what LinkedIn is.

What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is a social network for professionals. By “professionals,” I mean people who care about their career. If Facebook is where you hang out with friends, and Twitter is where you connect with interesting people, then LinkedIn is where you do your online networking for your career.

That includes for your writing career.

With 250 million users, LinkedIn is one of the world's biggest social networks. Launched in 2003, it's also one of the oldest, pre-dating Twitter and Facebook.

There are probably a significant number of people you already know that are using LinkedIn today to help themselves get ahead in their careers.

LinkedIn includes a number of tools to help you connect with past and current work colleagues, meet new people and start conversations with potential clients. These tools include:

- **Free basic membership.** LinkedIn only works as a social network because it has so many members. To keep its members, it offers free membership. You can do almost everything I'll teach you in this tutorial with the free membership package. Personally, I have never paid for membership. That said, paid membership does offer advantages that you may wish to consider.
- **Automatically adding all your email contacts to your network.** When you join LinkedIn, it searches your email contacts for anyone who is already a LinkedIn member. Then it sends them an invitation to connect with you. This is a good way to get started growing your network. Optionally, you can also invite email contacts who aren't yet using LinkedIn to join you on the network. It's worthwhile adding personal contacts as connections on LinkedIn, because you never know who you might discover in their networks.
- **A LinkedIn profile.** This is similar to a resume in that it shows your key skills and work experience, as well as recommendations from your past employers. In this book, I'll show you how to set up your profile to give you the best possible chance of finding writing work on LinkedIn.
- **Messaging tools for reaching out to new people.** You can send messages within your network for free, and ask anyone in your network to introduce you to one of their connections. InMails – a paid messaging tool – allow you to send a message to anyone with a LinkedIn profile. With thousands of CEOs and marketing managers on LinkedIn, that's a powerful tool to keep in your pocket. With InMails you're guaranteed a reply, or you get your money back. Later in this book I'll show you how you can use these free and paid tools to start conversations with potential clients.
- **Discussion groups for hanging out and meeting new people.** Think of any topic related to business (and many unrelated to business), and you'll find a LinkedIn group for it. You can join up to 50 groups, plenty for making all kinds of new connections around the world. I'm going to show you the types of groups you should join if you want to find clients.
- **Status updates.** These are LinkedIn's version of tweets or Facebook posts.

They're another way of keeping in touch with your network. The more status updates you share on LinkedIn, the more conversations you'll start, so it's worth posting regularly.

What This Book Will Do for You (and What It Won't Do)

I'll show you techniques you can use to connect with people on LinkedIn, grow your network, and start conversations with potential clients for your freelance writing business. The mantra of this book is that *conversations lead to clients*. The more conversations you're starting, the more potential clients you have for your freelance writing business. Not every conversation you start will convert into a new client. Most of them won't. But some of them will. That's what makes LinkedIn worthwhile.

The focus of this book is on techniques to help you with marketing your business. LinkedIn is a tool, and like all tools, there are effective ways of using it.

As such, this book isn't a textbook manual covering the technical side of how to use LinkedIn's features. As you've downloaded this ebook, I'm assuming you're savvy enough to find your way around a moderately complex social network, or at least to conduct a Google search if you run into problems. If you get stuck at any stage, everything you need to know about how to use LinkedIn's features is included in LinkedIn's Help Center.

Why You Must Adopt the Business Mindset

You've probably noticed me talking about your “freelance writing business.” Maybe you've thought, “But I want to be a writer, not a business owner,” or “I want to write so I can escape my job in the business world.”

That's all very well if you plan to write novels in your spare time. You can do creative writing all you like, and if you're lucky, you might get picked up by an agent and have your work published. Again, if you're lucky, you'll earn enough from book sales to pay your rent. Most creative writers earn very little from their work. It's an art, something they do in their free time. If that's the kind of writer you want to be, then kudos to you. But this book probably isn't for you. That said, you can be a professional writer and still write creatively in your free time. This can be a satisfying model, and it's one that many professional writers follow.

If you're serious about making money as a writer, then you must learn to see your

writing as a business. Like any business, you'll have income and expenses, and hopefully you'll make a profit. The good news is that writers have few expenses, so once you start earning, you'll find it easy enough to stay in the black.

Why must you see your writing as a business?

First, because it allows you to take a professional, detached approach. When your writing is “rejected” (and it will be, time and again), you won't take it as personally. It's just someone choosing not to work with your business. Maybe they don't have the budget for it right now. Maybe they've already got a favorite freelancer they like to work with. Maybe your portfolio isn't the perfect match for what they're looking for. Whatever. You can move on to the next opportunity without getting too uptight about it. Yes, every rejection hurts, but you can't afford to be precious about it.

Here's the second reason for seeing your writing as a business. As a business owner, it's your job to maximize your profits. You'll be less inclined to take low-paying clients, or even clients who offer no fee. You'll focus on finding work you enjoy that gives you a good income. Too many writers are willing to work for peanuts because they don't respect their writing skills as a valuable service.

The third reason for seeing your writing as a business is because that's how the IRS sees you. As soon as you earn your first paycheck from your writing, you *are* a business, like it or not. You must track your income and expenses, and report your annual accounts to the IRS. You're liable to pay tax on anything you earn. This isn't the book for teaching you about the administrative side of running a writing business, but you will need to learn it, or get someone to help you out.

Lastly, and most importantly, by seeing your writing as a business, you recognize the importance of *marketing* your writing services. Unless you put yourself out there as a writer and make connections with potential clients, the simple fact of the matter is you won't get any work. You'll be the same as you've always been, wondering how other writers make it while no one notices your talents. It's time you started tooting your own trumpet!

The good news is, marketing isn't nearly as difficult or scary as it sounds. “Marketing” is sometimes seen as sleazy or underhand, but that's because disreputable sales people have given it a bad name, and because we don't like it when commercials interrupt our favorite TV shows. None of us likes to feel under pressure to buy a product, and few people enjoy commercials. But that's only a tiny part of marketing.

The truth is, marketing is about communication. As a freelance business writer, you'll

be working in the field of marketing.

As for your own business, marketing is mainly about starting conversations with people and showing them what you're capable of. It really is that simple, and that's what this book is all about.

There's even more good news. As a writer, you're putting yourself out there for anyone to see. In that respect, every piece of writing you do is a form of marketing. The more work you do, and the more clients you get, the easier you will find it to get new clients. People will see the quality of your work, and will come straight to you to enquire about how you can work together. These days, much of my new work comes from business owners who have read my writing and then decided to contact me based on what they read.

Doesn't that sound awesome? Believe me, it is.

So stay with me on this. At the moment, finding your first client may seem like a pipedream. But soon enough, if you follow the advice you learn from this book, you'll be reeling in clients like a pro.

Chapter 2: The Writing Jobs You Can Pick Up on LinkedIn

Any type of paid writing work you can think of, you can find on LinkedIn. You could connect with a publisher and get a book deal. You could hook up with a magazine editor and get a regular column writing articles. You could get in touch with a celebrity and become the ghostwriter for their biography.

All these are possible, but in my experience, they're not the typical jobs you'll find on LinkedIn. That's because you're in competition with a ton of professional writers, and people who dream of being professional writers. In the scheme of things, celebrity biographies, magazine articles, and even fiction writing aren't huge markets.

Most of the work you find on LinkedIn will be helping businesses with copywriting. Copywriting, to take Wikipedia's definition, is:

“writing copy (text) for the purpose of advertising or marketing. The copy is meant to persuade someone to buy a product, or influence their beliefs.”

Not only is copywriting the most readily available writing work, it's also the most lucrative. Businesses pay handsomely for wordsmiths who can help them put together the perfect copy to promote their product. And there are far more businesses in the world than there are magazine or book publishers.

You might be wondering, “Why would I want to write adverts?” If you're thinking this, it's worth thinking again. I've earned my living as a copywriter for the past two years, and in that time I've never written a single advertisement. My main work is writing blog posts, web copy, press releases, and ebooks, just like this one. That's not to say I wouldn't love to write an advertisement. It's just that other copywriting opportunities have come my way.

Copywriting allows you the opportunity to earn a good living as a writer while pursuing your creative writing on the side. You get paid to practice wordsmithing from the comfort of your home. The only limit to your earning potential is your ability to pick up clients, and the speed at which you can write.

Many big-name authors started their writing careers as copywriters. These include Dorothy L. Sayers, Steven Pressfield, Elmore Leonard and Salman Rushdie, to name just a few. Copywriting is your opportunity to get *paid* for improving your writing skills. Every time you sit down to write, it makes you a better writer.

So what does being a copywriter look like in practice? There are all kinds of opportunities in the field of copywriting. In fact, what I'm doing right now is copywriting. I'm writing this book, on a pay-per-word basis, to help a business (Freedom With Writing) promote a product (their blog and email newsletter). That's called content marketing. The aim of content marketing is to provide something valuable to your readers. In doing so, you build a relationship with them, and in the end, these readers will become customers. Marketing through content such as ebooks, blog posts, reports and social media updates is big business these days, and it provides a feast of opportunities for writers who know where to look.

Let's take a look at the writing opportunities you can discover on LinkedIn.

Blogging

Blogging is how I earn my most of my writing income. Content marketing is a growing field, and there are all kinds of businesses looking for writers to help them with their blogs. What's great about blogging is that it's a long-term gig. Very few clients will hire you to write a one-off blog post. Most will want you to write a minimum of one post per week, if not more.

To be a good blogger, you'll need to learn how to write in a simple, conversational style (no academic or business jargon here). You'll need to be curious about people, and fascinated by a wide range of topics. You'll also have to learn the art of headline writing, and how to research keywords for SEO. To find blogging work on LinkedIn, connect with A-list bloggers and businesses who promote themselves using a blog. Buffer App is a prime example of a business that uses a blog as its main marketing tool. Take a look at Buffer's blog to see the kind of stuff you could be writing about for clients you connect with on LinkedIn. At the time of writing, recent posts on Buffer include:

- The Habits of Successful People
- 8 Surprising Ways Music Affects and Benefits our Brains
- The Power of Ignoring Mainstream News

- Why Clever and Lazy Leaders Are More Efficient
- 10 Things to Stop Doing Today to Be Happier, Backed by Science

Wouldn't you love to be researching and writing that type of post?

Email Newsletters

Email marketing has been around as long as email – which is more than two decades now – but there are no signs that it's going to disappear anytime soon. On the contrary, email is one of the most effective tools businesses can use to market their products or services.

According to research by Convince and Convert, 44 percent of email recipients bought something last year (2012) because of an email they received. What's more, Experian has calculated that for every dollar a company spends on email marketing, it sees a return of \$44.25. To get that kind of return on money in your bank account over the course of a year, you'd need to be earning an interest rate of over 4,000 percent. Crazy, huh?

The problem for business owners is that even though they know email is lucrative, they don't have time to write emails to their customers, or they don't know how to write effective emails. That's where you, as a copywriter, step in.

If you're planning a career in email marketing, then you will need to learn about subject lines that get attention. According to Convince and Convert, 33 percent of email users open an email based on the subject line.

Ebooks

Speaking of email marketing, businesses want to get customers signed up to their email list. The bigger their email list, the better their chance of making sales when they send out an email.

How do they get people to sign up? By giving away a free incentive. Often, this free incentive is an ebook. Freedom With Writing, the publisher of this ebook, often gives away free ebooks in a bid to expand its email list.

How would you like to be paid to write a book? Not only can you then claim the title of “author,” you will also have learned what it takes to sit down and write a book. When

you've got a client expecting results, you have no excuses for writer's block.

Not sure you've got what it takes to write a book? It's worth noting that ebooks are often under 10,000 words – less than a quarter the length of a typical paperback, and the equivalent of around 20 blog posts. You might be pleasantly surprised at what you're capable of. Writing a book can be easier than you imagine.

Web Copy and Landing Pages

According to website monitoring service pingdom, over 50 million new websites were created in 2012. That's over 100,000 websites every day. And a typical website has dozens, if not hundreds, of pages. Someone has got to be writing those web pages, and I don't just mean the html code!

Businesses need writers who are willing to write engaging copy for their web pages and product descriptions. Keeping readers hooked to the screen is an art that not many people have, and if you know how it's done, you've got a valuable asset.

Writing landing pages is a particularly lucrative form of web copywriting. It's essentially a sales page designed to get visitors to do one thing. That one thing might be signing up to an email list, or buying a particular product. If you've got what it takes to write a compelling landing page that converts visitors into sales, then you're essentially in a place where you name your fee.

If you plan to get into this field, then it's worth taking time to study the art of copywriting. Selling products through the power of words alone is a particular skill, and it's one that takes dedication and study to get good at.

Social Media Updates

Does posting tweets and Facebook updates for a company count as writing? I'd say it does. It's the perfect education in copywriting. You must learn how to be concise and engage your readers. With everything you write, you get immediate feedback through likes, comments and retweets.

The world of social networking is here to stay, and businesses are increasingly starting to see that if they want to stay ahead in today's world, then they need to be on Facebook and Twitter. But business owners don't have the time to spend updating social networks, and they're not sure what types of updates would best engage their customers. If you

enjoy spending time on social networks, and you like writing concise, crisp copy, then this could be the perfect writing job for you.

Real World Copywriting

You've probably noticed that all the writing opportunities I've listed so far are on the worldwide web. That's because these days, the Internet is where most opportunities are for writers who are starting out.

That said, there are still plenty of writing jobs out there for physical publications, including promotional brochures, business magazines, press releases, white papers and case studies. If the sensation of holding something you've written in your hands is important to you, then this could be the work for you. In my experience, it's a little harder to break into, but the work is there.

Now that you've seen the wide range of writing jobs you can find on LinkedIn, it's time we got into the nitty gritty of *how* you can find these jobs. What practical steps must you take on LinkedIn to get attention and start conversations with potential clients? That's what we'll look at in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: How to Get People to Sit Up and Notice You

To win writing clients on LinkedIn, you want to get business owners, marketing managers, publishers and editors looking at your LinkedIn profile. On your profile, they'll see what you're capable of as a writer, and they'll want to get in touch to find out about the writing services you offer.

How can you get people to look at your profile? There are several answers to this question, all of which are important, and which we'll explore through the rest of this book.

But one of the keys to getting profile views lies in just 120 characters of text known as your LinkedIn headline.

Why does your LinkedIn headline matter so much?

LinkedIn is about talking with people. You'll join or start conversations in groups, in statuses you share, in comments you make, and in messages you send. When you take part in a conversation, the other participants in that conversation will see only three pieces of information about you (aside from what you're posting):

- Your name.
- Your photo.
- Your LinkedIn headline.

Unless your name is really unusual (You're not called Blaze Macaroni, are you? If so, awesome!), it's unlikely to grab attention. Likewise with your photo. That said, your photo should look professional, otherwise you'll stand out for the wrong reasons.

Your only chance to grab attention is with your headline. If people like your headline, they'll be curious to know more about you and will click through to check out your full profile. LinkedIn sends you a notification whenever anyone checks out your profile, which you can use to your advantage (more on that later).

As such, your headline is the most important part of your LinkedIn profile. You've only got 120 characters – that's shorter than a text message – to grab attention and demonstrate the value you offer to potential clients.

Most people use their LinkedIn headline to display their job title. That's a good idea

for those in long-term employment. But if feeding yourself depends on finding new clients, then you've got to do more. Unless your headline is up to scratch, you'll struggle to get people looking at your profile and connecting with you. Remember, you need people to connect with you so you can start conversations. And conversations lead to clients.

David Ogilvy, one of the greatest copywriters of the 20th century, said the following:

“On the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. It follows that, if you don't sell the product in your headline, you have wasted 80% of your money.”

Your writing services are your product. Ensure you're giving your product the best possible chance of success by writing yourself an attention-grabbing headline.

The good news is, headline writing is a *must-have* skill of any writer. If you can't write good headlines, your articles won't get read. Working on your LinkedIn headline can be your first step in mastering the art of headline writing. Let's take a look at how to get attention with your LinkedIn headline.

How to Write an Attention-Grabbing Headline

So how can you write an attention-grabbing headline? I recommend devoting at least one full hour to crafting the headline that works for you. If you come up with more than one great idea, you can save it for later – you'll see why in a moment.

I recommend the following structure for your headline:

Job Title – Who You Help and How You Help Them

Your job title is there to give people a sense of what you do. It could be “blogger” or “freelance writer” or “copywriter.” Make it related to the type of writing you do so you get the attention of the right kind of clients.

In your headline, focus on how your writing business helps clients. What do you help them achieve? What business results will your writing deliver? Of course, when you're starting out, you might not know the answers to these questions. But you should have an idea of what you want to help businesses to do.

You should also be as specific as you can. Name your ideal clients in your headline – whether that's A-list bloggers, Fortune 500 companies, or construction businesses in your city.

Here are some examples for writers following the structure I outlined above, that focus on how the writer helps clients, and that keep things specific:

Web Copywriter. I help online entrepreneurs write landing pages for digital products. 30%+ conversion rate.

Freelance Mommy Blogger. I show busy moms how to juggle all the demands on their time.

Finance Writer. I help businesses in the financial sector sell their products in simple, everyday language.

When you're writing your headline, you should include *keywords*. These are the words potential clients might use when they're doing a LinkedIn search for someone with your skills. To choose the right keywords, think from the perspective of a client. How can you do this? Here are three ways:

1. You're a writer, so use your imagination! If a business owner was looking for a writer with your skill set, what might they search for?
2. Talk to potential clients! Reach out and find out what they need from writers. You can do this on LinkedIn, in online forums, via email, or by picking up the phone and talking to them. You'll discover exactly what they're looking for in their own language.
3. Head over to Google AdWords and use the keywords planner, which you can find with a Google search. You'll be asked about the kind of business you run. Fill in the details, and it will suggest keywords for you. In the results, you'll see how often the various keywords are searched for. These statistics come from Google rather than LinkedIn, but they're still a helpful indication of what your clients will be looking for.

A final tip on writing headlines – you don't have to follow my rules. Look at the headlines other writers use on LinkedIn, and see which resonate with you. It's always helpful to get inspiration from others.

Why You Should Always Keep Your Headline Fresh

Try to come up with several good headline ideas. That way, you can change your

headline every couple of weeks, and track which is the most effective at eliciting profile views. LinkedIn lets you know whenever someone views your profile, so pay attention to how many people are looking at your profile to see which headline gets you the most profile views.

An added bonus of switching up your headline on a regular basis is that every time you do it, your contacts get an email telling them about it. So, updating your headline is a good way of continuing to get noticed after you've made a connection. Once you've added potential clients as connections on LinkedIn, you can stay on the radar by updating your headline regularly.

How to Write an Effective LinkedIn Summary

Aside from your photo and headline, your LinkedIn summary is the most important part of your LinkedIn profile. Your LinkedIn summary is a 1-5 paragraph introduction to you, your services, and how you help your clients. By default, your summary is the first part of your LinkedIn profile that clients will see when they click on your headline. For that reason, you should never leave your summary blank. Even if you only write a few sentences, put something there to introduce potential clients to who you are.

Your aim with your summary is to hook potential clients into scrolling down your profile. As such, what you write must grab and hold the attention of prospects. LinkedIn is a professional network, but that's no reason to make your summary boring. Put on all your writerly charms to let clients know how you can help them. As a writer, your words are your service. Clients will look at how you write your summary as an example of your writing style. This is your chance to show off your ability to write compelling, engaging copy.

If you struggled to keep things concise when writing your headline, this is where you really get to let it rip! Any information about you that you couldn't fit into your headline, you can put into your summary.

Here are some top tips for writing your summary:

- **Tell stories.** Stories are all about overcoming conflict and difficulties. What problems have you helped to solve in your professional life? How did you help to solve them? As well as giving insight into what you've achieved, stories are a great way of keeping readers engaged.

- **Highlight your key professional achievements**, especially those related to communications, marketing, or your writing niche. You don't have to be shy or hold back here. If someone's reading this, they've clicked through to see your profile, so they want to find out more about you and what you're capable of. Toot your own trumpet!
- As with your headline, **make your summary keyword rich**. Be sure to include any search keywords you couldn't fit into your headline, plus any extras you discovered in your keyword research.
- **Use short sentences and paragraphs**, as you would for all online writing. This helps readers to scan through your summary and learn about who you are quickly. Big blocks of text will send people away before they've even given you a chance.
- **Include a call to action**. Want potential clients to get in touch? Then ask them to! If you tell people what you'd like them to do, they're more likely to do it.

Chapter 4: Make Your LinkedIn Profile Sparkle

Your LinkedIn profile is your calling card to the world. Profiles are indexed by search engines, so anyone who's doing a Google search and looking for a writer could stumble across your profile and get in touch to hire you. Even if this doesn't happen – and admittedly, it's unlikely – you must polish up your LinkedIn profile to make it sparkle. Your LinkedIn profile is like your sales page. When you start connecting with potential clients on LinkedIn, they'll look at your profile to see if you're the kind of person they'd like to work with. Your profile shows your work experience, and samples of your writing work. But more than that, it shows your ability to write and market yourself. If your profile is shabby, incomplete, or contains spelling mistakes, clients will be unlikely to trust you with their marketing materials. Whereas if it's written in an engaging, easy-to-understand way, then you're giving a good account of yourself.

The Components of a Sparkling LinkedIn Profile

When you sign up to LinkedIn, you'll be guided through the process of setting up your profile.

Your Photo. This is nearly as vital as your headline. Make sure it's a headshot of you smiling. Showing your face builds trust. If you don't show your photo, clients will wonder, “What has this person got to hide?” The more professional your photo looks, the better, so if you've got a friend who's a dab hand with a camera, ask for them to help with taking your photo. Dress professionally for your photo, too. You don't need to wear a business suit, but you should look smart.

Your Work Experience. For each job you've held, LinkedIn allows you to write a short description of the work you did. All of your past jobs, no matter what they were, are a chance to demonstrate your writing skills. When you're writing your work descriptions, focus on how what you did relates to your writing business. What communication or marketing skills did you use? What did you learn about customer service? Did you write reports, emails or other business documents?

Your Skills and Experience. Here, you list your skills – for example, “writing,” “editing,” “html coding”. Once you list skills, your connections will be given the

opportunity to endorse you for those skills. I recommend breaking down your writing skills into the different services you offer. For example, if you write blog posts as a service to clients, include “blogging” as one of your skills. If you’ve got experience writing press releases that make headlines, list “press releases” as one of your skills. The more skills you list, the more likely that potential clients will come across you when they’re searching LinkedIn for help with a writing project.

Here's a handy hint: It's worth endorsing your connections for *their* skills, especially if they're connections who could hire you. When you endorse someone for a skill, they receive a LinkedIn notification, so you are getting their attention. What's more, by endorsing others, you're spreading good karma, and the people you endorse are more likely to endorse you. It goes without saying that you should only endorse people for skills that you know they have.

A Creative Portfolio. This is an optional add-on to your LinkedIn profile, but as you're trying to pick up clients, I highly recommend including it. Your portfolio allows potential clients to see for themselves what you're capable of. The creative portfolio is image-based, so for each piece of writing you plan to include, you'll need to have a relevant image to go along with it. Use it as a way of showing your best work.

A List of Your Publications. As with the creative portfolio, the publications module is optional on LinkedIn. If you've not been published on a blog or in a magazine, then you've yet to pick up any bylines and you might be best to leave this section off your LinkedIn profile. But if you've ever had anything published – from an article to an ebook – then add the module and list the work you've had published. Like your portfolio, it shows clients examples of your skills and abilities. It's always best if they can see this for themselves. Telling people you're a good writer is one thing. Showing them that you're a good writer is far better.

Recommendations. Recommendations allow your connections to leave you a testimonial. These are so important, we've devoted a whole chapter to them. Read on to find out how you can use recommendations to your advantage.

Before we get into recommendations, I'd like to look at an important question many writers face when they're starting out.

What If Your Writing Is a Side Hustle?

What if your writing is a part-time gig, and not your main source of income? Should

you feature your writing business on your LinkedIn profile? Or should you focus on your current job? Depending on the job you do, and how you plan to market your writing, you've got three options.

Your first option is to use LinkedIn under your real name to promote your writing services, and leave the rest of your professional life off your LinkedIn profile. The advantage of this is that it's likely to be more attractive to prospects who want to hire you as a writer. The disadvantage is that if your main employer connects with you on LinkedIn, they may question why you haven't listed your current job on your profile. It's also unhelpful if you're using LinkedIn in any professional capacity aside from as a writer – whether that's looking for a job, networking, or recruiting.

Your second option is to use LinkedIn under a pen name. This allows you to stay anonymous from your work colleagues. The only problem with using a pen name is that it is against LinkedIn's terms of use. If LinkedIn finds out what you're doing, you could have your account suspended. Additionally, you may find it more difficult to collect recommendations when using a pen name.

Your final option is to list your main work and your writing business jointly as your current job. This has the advantage of transparency, a fact that makes this the best strategy for most people. Transparency has an added advantage. Being open about your main line of work could help you find clients, especially if they're looking for the type of expertise you've got from your professional life. You can also ask for recommendations from your current work colleagues. The key disadvantage to this approach is that you'll struggle to stand out as a writer on LinkedIn, because your writing may be overshadowed by your other professional achievements.

Now you know everything you can do to set up your profile for success, let's look at how others can help you create the best possible profile.

Chapter 5: Don't Make the Mistake of Leaving This Out of Your Profile

To get clients to consider working with you, your profile must have one thing, above anything else: recommendations. LinkedIn Recommendations are a tool that clients, former employers, and people you've worked with can use to give a testimonial of their experience working with you. These testimonials are displayed on your LinkedIn profile for anyone to see. The more of them you collect, the better.

If you've read even a little on marketing your writing services, you'll know the vital role testimonials play in helping you pick up new clients. Testimonials act as a form of social proof. In other words, when potential clients see that others people have benefited from using your writing services, they'll be more likely to hire you.

None of us makes a decision in a vacuum. We like to make the *right* decisions, so we seek advice from others. This often includes seeking advice from people we don't know. Think about the times you've looked at online reviews before buying a product or booking a vacation. Every time you do that, you're harnessing the power of social proof.

The good news is, you can ask anyone in your network for a recommendation, as long as you've worked with them or studied with them. You don't have to have done writing work for someone to get a recommendation from them. Yet every recommendation you pick up will help your writing business.

You get to screen every recommendation you're given. Once a contact has written a recommendation for you, you can choose whether or not to display it on your LinkedIn profile. So you don't need to worry about someone leaving you a less-than-ideal "endorsement" of your abilities.

Before we get started, you may be wondering how you can get recommendations if you're still searching for your first freelance writing client.

What If You've Never Had a Client?

If you've yet to work with a freelance writing client, you've still got two options for picking up recommendations.

First, you can ask people you've worked with in previous jobs or studied with to give you recommendations. You can even ask them to focus the recommendation on skills that are relevant to your future writing clients. This is exactly what I did when I relaunched my freelance writing business. I'll show you how I did it in a moment.

Second, as soon as you've picked up a writing client and finished working with them, ask if you can connect on LinkedIn. That way, you'll maintain contact in case they need your services again, and you can ask them for a recommendation. Asking is scary, but if you get into the habit of it, you'll find that it becomes a breeze. What's more, psychology research shows that when people do nice things for you (such as writing a recommendation), they like you more. So asking for a recommendation is a win all around!

How to Ask for Recommendations

What I particularly like about recommendations is that it's totally normal to ask for them on LinkedIn. While it can feel awkward asking a client for a testimonial out of the blue, once you've connected with someone on LinkedIn, asking them to leave you a recommendation is par for the course.

If you need a recommendation to highlight a particular skill, there's no shame in asking about that. For example, when I started promoting my freelance writing business on LinkedIn, I reached out to my university classmates asking them for a recommendation. I explained that as a freelance writer, I'd particularly appreciate if they focused their recommendation on my skills in research, writing and meeting deadlines. They knew about my skillset in these areas, so they were happy to help.

Not sure what skills you'd like to highlight? Then browse the profiles of other writers on LinkedIn, and see which skills are emphasised in their recommendations. You can use what you find on other profiles as example recommendations to include with your recommendation requests.

Recommendations come with an added bonus. When you ask a previous client for a recommendation, you've kickstarted a conversation. Once you've got talking, you can find out if they need any more of your services.

Here's the template I use when I'm asking for recommendations:

Hi [Friend],

How are you?

I'm updating my LinkedIn profile, and I'd be honored if you'd write a recommendation for me as a university classmate.

As I'm working as a freelance writer, the skills I'd like to highlight are research, writing, meeting deadlines, making complicated ideas simple, and being an all-round good person to bounce ideas off. I'd be great if you could comment on some of these in your recommendation.

I've copied a couple of example recommendations below in case you need help finding inspiration.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks in advance for helping me out, and please ask if you'd like a recommendation too.

David

[Example recommendations here.]

Reaching out to ask for recommendations can be scary! But remember, if you don't hear back after a request, you've not lost anything. And if they leave a less-than-ideal recommendation, you've got the choice of whether or not to display it.

If you don't feel confident asking for recommendations, just start giving recommendations to others. You'll find that lots of people return the favor.

Now that you've got your profile set up with recommendations, you're ready to start looking for writing work. I'll show you how that's done in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: The Real Secret to Finding Work on LinkedIn

You've set up your LinkedIn Profile. You've created a stunning, attention-grabbing headline. You've written an engaging summary section. You've completed your full profile, you've made sure you've put up a photo of your beautiful, smiling face, and you've collected testimonials.

The world now knows you're a writer. That's a brave step to take, and you should be proud you've got the courage to take that stand.

Will work just start rolling in? No way, Jose. You might know that you're a good writer, but no one else does. Not yet, anyway. And sitting around waiting to be discovered won't help you in the slightest.

Writing is a competitive business. There are thousands of writers out there, many of them more experienced and with extensive portfolios. The chances of a business contacting you out of the blue are extremely thin. If you're just going to sit and wait for clients to roll in, it's akin to waiting to win the lottery, *when you haven't even bought a ticket*.

Only once have I been contacted with a work offer by someone with no prior connection to me because of my LinkedIn profile. They were a recruitment agency, so they likely contacted many writers. I followed up and sent in my resume (why they requested a resume when they could see my LinkedIn profile wasn't completely clear). No work came of it.

Writing is a hustler's game. That doesn't mean you've got to be pushy or salesy. You won't need to cajole anyone into buying something they don't want. But you will need to work hard. You will need to be active on LinkedIn. You will need to reach out to people, start conversations, and be willing to subtly promote your services.

All the work you've done so far is just laying the foundations. Without a properly completed profile, you're wasting your breath and your time talking to people. So if you've yet to fill out your profile, stop reading and get it done now. Otherwise, you'll be wasting your time.

Yet it's only after you've completed your profile that the real work begins.

You're ready to start talking to people.

Remember: *Conversations lead to clients.*

How to Talk to People on LinkedIn

If you start reaching out and messaging people on LinkedIn, won't they be bothered that you've interrupted their day? They might be, if you start sending out spammy sales messages, or demand that people hire you. But if you follow the advice I set out below, most people will be delighted to hear from you.

LinkedIn is a *social* network, so people are expecting that you'll talk to them. Don't you love it when you get a new message from a real person in your email inbox? Social networks and email are addictive because we crave connection with others. By reaching out, you're giving people something they're looking for.

Talking to people in my network has been the most effective way I've found of finding clients on LinkedIn. I never act salesy, and I'm never pushy about my services. All I do is message people to find out how they're doing.

Here's my real secret to finding work on LinkedIn: I message people when they first connect with me. It's an ideal opportunity, because I'm not starting a conversation out of the blue. I've got a reason for messaging them.

By sending them a message to say thank you for connecting, I'm showing that I'm available to talk, and that I'm approachable. Often, it leads to a conversation about my services.

When someone connects with me on LinkedIn, they're either a new contact (someone I don't recognize) or they're a connection from the past.

If someone I don't recognize adds me as a LinkedIn connection, I drop them a message to say thank you for connecting, and ask how they came across me. Usually, one of three things happened:

1. They remind me how we know one another. This is a little embarrassing. I reply to let them know it's great to be in touch again.
2. They explain that they're growing their network, and I seemed like a good person to know.
3. They say they're curious about my services, or they're thinking of hiring a writer. In this case, I find out more about what they need. If I'm a good match for their needs, I offer to quote for their project.

When someone I recognize adds me as a connection, I send them a message to thank them for connecting. If they're someone who might be interested in my services, I let

them know that I'm a writer, and give a short overview of my services. Again, this has led to conversations about how I might help them, and to me being hired as a writer for their project.

Never make assumptions about where work will or won't come from. Don't assume that because you've known someone for a long time that they won't have work for you. I once connected with a blogger friend who I'd known for several years on LinkedIn. We'd had contact by email in the past, and on our blogs, but never on social networks. In my initial message on LinkedIn, I thanked him for connecting, and asked if he'd ever considered writing an ebook. He said he'd been wanting to do so for a long time. This conversation led to us working together writing an ebook.

How to Bring Up Your Services in Conversation

Talking with a new client can be a bit like the early days of a new romance. You don't want to say the wrong thing for fear of scaring the person you like away. However, you do want to let them know you're interested. But not *too* interested, because that might freak them out.

The first thing to note is that the important thing is the conversation. If someone is interested in your services, and they're taking the time to talk to you, they'll usually make the first move. Business isn't dating. It's typically far less complicated, so there's no need to blow it out of proportion.

Also, think back to all the work you've already done on your profile. By starting a conversation with someone, you're drawing your profile to their attention. They can see from your headline how you could help them, and if they want to find out more about you, they can always look at your profile. Let your profile do the heavy lifting.

With all that in mind, when you're in the middle of a conversation with a client, it can still sometimes feel like they're waiting for you to make the first move. The more people you talk with, the more you'll get a sense of when this is happening.

During the conversation, you'll learn what they might be looking for. You can glean further information from their LinkedIn profile about their business. You can also look at their website to see if they need a writer. Do they have a blog that's rarely updated? Do they have a blog at all? How about an email newsletter? Is their copy up to scratch? Would writing an ebook help them better demonstrate their expertise?

When you've noticed what they need, you can use a simple question to bring your

services into the conversation.

Have you ever considered...

For example, you can ask:

Have you ever considered...

...writing a book?

...starting a blog?

...putting together a sales page?

...doing a case study of how your business helps your customers?

Then leave the ball in their court. They may ignore the question. They may say they've considered it, but it's not for them right now. Either of these responses is your cue that they're interested in being part of your network, but your services aren't for them right now.

On the other hand, they may say they've considered it, but they don't have the time. Or they don't know where to start.

Bingo! That's your cue to say, "I can help with that." You can ask if they'd be interested in scheduling a Skype conversation or a Google Plus Hangout to talk more about how you can help them.

How to Talk to People Outside Your Network

On LinkedIn, you're not limited to talking to people who are already connections. You can reach out in many different ways, making new "virtual" connections. Most of my clients I've never met in person. I'm used to building business relationships and trust virtually, and if you want to find work on LinkedIn, you'll need to be comfortable with that too.

Here are three ways you can reach out to people on LinkedIn:

- **LinkedIn Groups.** We'll look more at LinkedIn groups in chapter 7. For now, it's worth noting that when you join a group, you can send a message to any member

of that group. So every group you're a member of broadens your network.

- **2nd Degree Connections.** These are “friends of friends.” You can ask any of your connections to introduce you to one of their connections.
- **InMail.** With InMail, you can send a message to *any* LinkedIn member, whether they're a hippy street artist, or the chief executive of a Fortune 500 company.

InMails are a paid service. It costs \$10 to send an InMail, and you get your money back if you don't receive a reply. Alternatively, a handful of InMails are included with LinkedIn's premium membership packages. I've never tried using InMails, but if you know exactly who your ideal clients are, then they can be a worthwhile investment.

Other writers have found InMails to be a fruitful source of new clients. Kelly Parkinson of Copylicious tried her hand at InMails, sending out 32 over a six-month period. Of those, 13 replied (so at \$10 per InMail, the total cost was \$130), and six became clients. I don't know the average value of Kelly's clients, but I know she works with businesses as a copywriter, so I imagine the investment paid her back many times over.

Chapter 7: How to Grow Your LinkedIn Network

Hopefully by now you will have the mantra of this book engrained on your mind: *conversations lead to clients.*

The simple math of LinkedIn is that the more connections you have, the greater the potential for starting conversations, and the more clients you'll pick up.

So how can you grow your network quickly while making sure all your connections are meaningful?

I recommend you start by connecting with everyone you already know in the real world. As I've mentioned, when you sign up to LinkedIn, you're given the option of inviting all your email contacts to become part of your network. Do this! It's a quick way to give you a foundation of connections, whether that's 10, 100 or 1,000.

You should add new people you meet too, as soon as possible after you meet them. Whenever you make a new contact in the real world, or online, connect with them on LinkedIn. By adding them as a LinkedIn contact, you professionalize your relationship. What's more, it's a subtle way of selling your services. Instead of having to give an in-depth explanation of your writing business to people you meet – which can be intimidating and feel like you're being salesy – add them on LinkedIn. Then, if they want to, they have the option of looking at your profile and checking out your services.

When someone accepts my request to be a new contact on LinkedIn, I drop them a message, as I outlined in the previous chapter. This starts a conversation, which as you know by now, can lead to work.

I'll add one caveat to this section. Don't feel obliged to add *all* your family and friends as LinkedIn connections, particularly if they're likely to be critical of your career choice. Family and friends can be excellent sources of work, but only if they're willing to support your writing business. If their aim is to drag you down, then you can leave them out of your LinkedIn network. LinkedIn is for your professional relationships. Family and friends who don't support your business can stay in touch on Facebook.

Should You Add Your Clients as Connections?

Should you add people who are already your clients as LinkedIn connections? Is there

any reason to do this, when they've already hired you? In answer to both of these questions, I give a resounding "yes!"

Adding your current clients helps you in a number of ways:

First, you can ask them for recommendations. As you know, you'll need recommendations to help you pick up new clients in the future.

Second, by hooking up with your clients on LinkedIn, you've established a long-term connection with them. When your current contract finishes, LinkedIn provides an easy, no-obligation way of staying in touch. You're more visible on their radar, so if they need your services in the future, they're more likely to hire you again.

Third, by connecting with clients on LinkedIn, you become part of the network of all *their* connections. These are called 2nd degree connections. As you learned in chapter 6, you can ask for introductions to 2nd degree connections to start conversations with them.

Other People You Should Add as Connections

When you use LinkedIn regularly, you'll start to meet new people. Should you add these as connections? Use your personal judgement in this. In general, the bigger your network the better, but there's no point in having people in your network that you don't know and that you've no intention of getting to know.

I add the following people as connections:

- People who have checked out my profile. By adding them as a connection, I can drop them a message to ask why they chose to look at my profile.
- People I've talked a lot with in groups. Groups are fantastic for meeting new people and growing your network.

As a general rule, I usually accept contact requests, even from people I don't know. That's because sometimes people add me as a contact simply because they're interested in working with me. If I refused requests from people I don't know, I would miss out on work opportunities.

How to Meet People in LinkedIn Groups

LinkedIn groups are communities of like-minded people who get together online to

discuss a topic they're interested in and to meet new people. As I've said, LinkedIn groups are ideal for growing your network, especially if you have a limited professional network in your “real” life.

There are groups on all kinds of topics – from mindfulness to sports science to university alumni groups to writer's groups. If you're interested in it, you'll find a group on it. And if a group doesn't yet exist, you can create one.

You can join up to 50 groups, which is more than enough to keep you busy growing your network and meeting potential clients.

Which groups should you join? I recommend you join groups:

- **On topics you're interested in.** That way, you have a motive for hanging out there, and you're more likely to enjoy your interactions.
- **Where your potential clients hang out.** Hint: these are unlikely to be writer groups. Instead, think about the groups your ideal clients would join. For example, if you're a finance copywriter, join groups on finance.
- **Where you can meet other writers.** Writing groups have their value. You're unlikely to find clients there, but you will find moral support. And sometimes businesses post writing jobs to writer groups.
- **With active discussions.** If you see a group you like, but the last discussion happened several months ago, then look for a similar group with active members. Joining dormant groups will not help you grow your network.

If you want to grow your network fast, look for Open Networking or LION (LinkedIn Open Networking) groups. These are groups that are designed to help you meet new people. You can add any member of these groups to your network of connections. At the same time, you will get requests from group members to become one of their connections.

When you join groups, stay active in them. The more you do, the more visible you will be. Then when you reach out to potential clients, you'll be a familiar, friendly face they already know and trust.

Chapter 8: Bonus Hints for Finding Writing Jobs Quickly

Reading this ebook, you've learned the secret to finding work on LinkedIn. It won't happen overnight, and it will take persistence. You'll get some things wrong, but you'll get many things right, too. And when you get your first commission from a LinkedIn connection, you'll feel awesome.

There are no shortcuts to finding work quickly. Growing a network of contacts takes time. But if you need work right now, there are some things you can do to improve your chances of finding clients fast. These tactics are time-consuming, but they can give your business the kick-start it needs.

Here are my top tips for finding work fast:

- **Browse the jobs boards.** Look for writing jobs, but also search for jobs that required writing skills, such as social media marketing roles. Most positions advertised on LinkedIn are permanent full-time jobs. However, if you see a post that matches your skills as a freelance writer, it's worth getting in touch to ask if they've considered working with a freelancer. Focus on the benefits of working with a freelancer – you're only paid for the hours you work or the results you deliver, and you bring a fresh, outside perspective to the table.
- **Keep a close eye on groups.** Businesses do post ads for freelance writers in groups. To be in with a chance, you've got to be quick off the mark to reply. Your best bet is to be the first response, so have an email template ready you can adjust to respond to job adverts. Always customise this email template to reflect what the client is looking for.
- **Be an open networker.** Growing your network at speed takes a lot of time and energy, because you'll be starting conversations left, right and centre. Also, open networkers are less likely to be on the lookout for a writer, because they've probably got a writer in their network already. But remember, conversations lead to clients.

In this book, I've shown you how to use LinkedIn as your passport for a lucrative writing career. I've gone in-depth on how to set up your profile for success, and I've given

you practical tips on how to start conversations with potential clients.

All you must do now is implement this advice.

Maybe you're scared. Maybe you hadn't even *heard* of LinkedIn before you picked up this book. Maybe you're daunted by all the work ahead of you.

I've been where you are. I know it's hard. My only advice is to sit through the discomfort and keep plugging away. There are plenty of opportunities out there, and eventually you will make it.

Best of luck for your writing journey!

About David Masters

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