

Professional Writing: Five Silly Mistakes To Avoid

Want to build a professional writing career? If you enjoy writing, you can. Writers are in huge demand on the Web, so you can build a great career quickly. However, there are pitfalls. Discover how you can avoid five common, silly mistakes.

Mistake 1. Taking on too many writing jobs at once

It's tempting to take on every writing job you're offered. However, we're all limited by the same 24 hours in each day. Over time, as your experience grows, you'll develop the skills of writing faster, and managing your writing time. However, as a new writer, avoid taking on too many writing jobs at once.

There are two reasons to avoid this common pitfall.

The first reason is that unless you're extremely disciplined, you'll procrastinate and won't meet your deadlines because you're under so much pressure.

The second reason is that each writing job you complete gives you another writing credit. As your credits build and your experience grows, you can charge more. It's just as easy to write for \$100 an hour as it is to write for \$20 an hour, so avoid taking on too many low-paying jobs.

Devote time to marketing your writing services, so you can take on high-paying jobs as quickly as possible.

Mistake 2. Taking non-paying jobs with a promise you'll get paid in the future

"We're a new company and while we can't pay right now/ can't pay you much, but/ there'll be many paid jobs to follow" is always a lie. Yes, always.

I've yet to meet any writer who went from unpaid status to paid status with the same company, and I've been writing for 30 years. It never happens.

However, this isn't the worst damage such a scam causes you. The greatest damage is done to your self-esteem and confidence when you realize that you've been had.

So treat such promises with the disdain they deserve.

Mistake 3. Accepting offers to work up-front as a "test" or so they can "assess your skills"

This one is a classic. I've seen "buyers" on the out-sourcing sites asking for complete chapters of an ebook as a "test." Or complete articles written as a test. No prizes for knowing that if they can get ten writers to write for free, they've just saved themselves hundreds, if not thousands of dollars.

Mistake 4. Quoting before you know the scope of the project

Every writer makes mistakes when quoting on a project. I've been busy, misread a brief, and discovered that whereas I thought I'd committed to a four-hour project, I'd committed to a ten-hour project. It happens.

Therefore, when you're quoting, make sure you know exactly what you've promised to do. Not only can you make mistakes in estimating the time and resources a project will take, some clients pile on additional work they "forgot" to mention once you've accepted the project.

If you make the mistake, you may need to just get on with it and chalk the mistake up to experience. If the client tries to dump more work on you for the same fee, learn to say "No" politely but firmly.

Mistake 5. Not managing your time efficiently

Your writing muscles develop over time, so the more you write, the faster you'll write. Nevertheless, writing takes time and energy. So develop good time management practices. Use a calendar and planner.

When you're a full-time writer, invest in a whiteboard, so you can see all your projects and deadlines at a glance.

So there you have five silly mistakes to avoid in professional writing. You may not avoid all of them. However writing is a great career, with unlimited opportunities, so if you make a mistake, move on quickly to your next (highly paid) project.

About the Author

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