

Freelance Writing For Ad Agencies Can Make You Rich

All businesses are in constant demand for marketing materials to increase traffic, boost profit, and raise their own awareness to the public. Although most businesses, large and small, have their own marketing departments, they still rely on ad agencies to assist with their marketing efforts, especially before and during busy seasons. Ad agencies hire freelance copywriters to work on marketing materials, such as writing brochures, direct mail, press releases, ads, sales letters, etc.; as opposed to writing strictly editorial content, such as feature articles and how-to articles for magazines.

If you land a gig with an ad agency as a freelance copywriter, you can expect excellent pay and repeat work if you do a good job. Average hourly rates range between \$25 and \$45 per hour for a copywriter who has three or more years of experience; copywriters with a decade or more of experience can command \$55 to \$75 per hour (sometimes higher). The downside is you do not get a byline and most ad agencies outsource work as "work for hire," meaning you do not own what you create.

Most ad agencies will not hire amateurs. You need to be a professional copywriter with related experience and have a portfolio of relevant samples. Many amateur copywriters break into writing for ad agencies by interning or temping first, working on small projects, or teaming up with a freelance graphic designer; then they use that first experience as a stepping stone to get a freelance gig.

To locate freelance copywriting jobs, your first step is to go to Indeed.com, a job search engine that pulls jobs from all over the Internet. You can also search Craigslist.com. Many ad agencies post their "help wanted ads" on Craigslist because Craigslist specializes in "locality." As you will discover, some ad agencies require you to work locally. Type in the phrase "freelance copywriter" (without the quotes) and see what results come up. You can also use the phrase "ad agency" for a broader search. Peruse through the listings to see if your copywriting skills match up with any of the ad agencies seeking freelance copywriters.

Don't be disappointed if you don't find a match with an ad agency that matches your skills or specialization. Sometimes it will take patience. You will need to repeat the same search over again each day or at least once a week.

If you yield no results, the next step is to market yourself and create your own opportunities. Securing work is more about how well you can market yourself and make yourself known to ad agencies, than it is to replying to random job posts. Professional copywriters are master marketers. Most professional copywriters secure work and repeat business by networking, word of mouth, and constantly marketing their services with online and offline promotional material.

Go to Google.com and type in the phrase "advertising agency" + (your specialization or skillset) in the search field. Google will list all ad agencies that may match your specialization or skillset. Also, search using the phrase "marketing agency" + (your specialization or skillset) as this will come up with more results. Visit each website and contact the person in charge (usually it is the creative director or owner). Send an e-mail addressed to the person, stating that you are a professional freelance copywriter who can assist with their overload and you can exceed their expectations. To make this work effectively, you should have your own professional website that includes samples of your work, results of your work, client list, references, and testimonials. If you do it right, the creative director will either contact you for immediate consideration or tell you he will keep your information on file for future consideration. Whatever the outcome is, you should always follow up by mailing a letter of introduction and your business card to the creative director.

Google won't spit out everything for you. The other way to generate freelance copywriting work is to find it locally. Locality gives you an advantage anyway. Ad agencies are more likely to outsource work to you if you live locally or nearby.

Using an online directory or your local Yellow Pages, you can locate ad agencies in local cities. Contact every ad agency and e-mail the creative director an inquiry, proposal, or your contact information with a resume. For Google, I use the keywords "New Jersey" (plus) "advertising agencies," and Google will pull up results of ad agencies in New Jersey. I can also use the keywords "Atlantic City" (plus) "advertising agencies" and Google will give me results of ad agencies in this city.

Ad agencies are always evolving. They are constantly losing clients and gaining new clients. The best way to secure immediate work is by either replying to a help wanted ad or finding out when an ad agency wins a new client (also referred to as a "new account"). Usually when an ad agency wins a new account, they begin hiring more employees or outsourcing more work to freelancers to assist with the account. PR Newswire publishes a weekly feature called "Agency Roster Lead," a weekly roundup of news releases highlighting account wins at public relations, investor relations and advertising agencies. To read this roster, go to Google News and type in "Agency Roster Lead" + PR Newswire and click on the current Agency Roster.

While you are at Google News, type in "advertising agency" and this will bring up results of ad agencies with new accounts. Make sure Google sorts the results by relevance, not by date. Now that you know which ad agencies have won new accounts, see if there is a match with your services. If so, locate the ad agency's website and contact the owner or creative director. Pitch yourself as the copywriter who can fulfill all of their needs and desires.

I recommend three books to help you with freelancing as a copywriter. The first book is "Secrets of a Freelance Writer, Third Edition: How to Make \$100,000 a Year or More" by Robert W. Bly. The first edition, published in the early 1990's, is the one book that helped me break into freelance copywriting. It will help you too. Also buy Bly's book, "The Copywriter's Handbook: A Step-By-Step Guide To Writing Copy That Sells." All freelance copywriters own this book. It shows you exactly how to write different types of copy for clients. The third book I recommend is "The Well-Fed Writer" by Peter Bowerman. This is another excellent book on freelance copywriting.

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