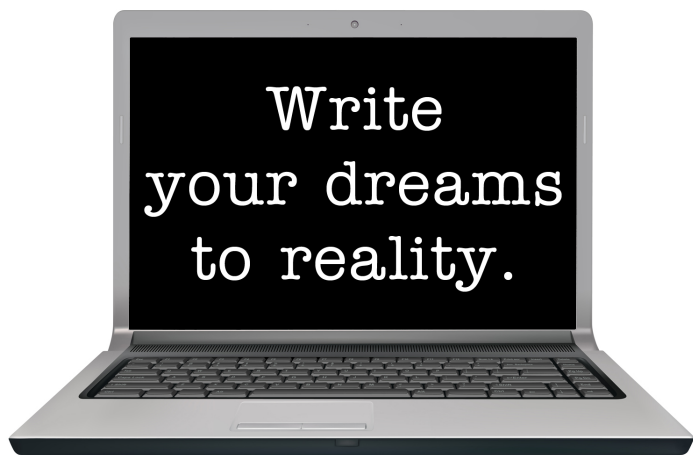


# Writing Online

\*The book I wish I'd read when  
I first started writing online.



*"This book isn't just an inspiration,  
it's a roadmap to owning your  
career as a writer."*

– Jonathan Fields,  
author of *Career Renegade*

## Sean Platt

## WRITING ONLINE

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*This book would not have been possible without the undying support of my wonderful wife, Cindy, and our two remarkable children, who had to deal with a mostly missing daddy for months at a time as I tried my best to figure out all this online writing stuff. I must also thank my writing partner and editor, David Wright, who helps me to grow as a writer and refines my rambles so they're easy for you to read, along with the other three amazing members of my team, Danny Cooper, Tracy O'Connor and David Fowler, who make me infinitely better than I'd be by myself. My online writing career would not have been as focused had it not been for the awesome crew at Copyblogger: Brian Clark, who does online business the way it should be done, the wonderful Sonia Simone who has a wonderful way with words and people, and Jon Morrow who changed my life with an email. Finally, I'd like to thank my business partner, Lori Taylor, with whom I'm hatching a million schemes – every one of them built on words.*

## What Others Are Saying About Sean Platt And Writing Online

*“Sean Platt is a great writer, but more importantly, he has a way of seeing where things are going and what the modern writer needs to get there. This book isn't just an inspiration, it's a roadmap to owning your career as a writer in a world that seems to never stand still long enough to know which way is up.”*

– Jonathan Fields, author of *Career Renegade*

*“The title of this book is deceptively simple. Anyone can write online, and that's the problem. Sean teaches you how to do it effectively, and actually make a living with your words. The fact that he practices what he preaches seals the deal – it's time to get this book and go pro.”*

– Brian Clark, of *Copyblogger.com*

*“To say Sean has a way with words is to say Muhammed Ali had a powerful punch. His ability to make any subject sexy and emotionally appealing is both stunning and humbling. Quite frankly, reading anything Sean has written makes me want to be a better writer. If you've ever believed you had a way with words, read this book and you will know exactly how to make your writing dreams a reality.”*

– Lori Taylor, Million Dollar Copywriter

*“An accomplished writer and creative producer, Sean brings his artistic voice, focus and insight to his writing in a way that inspires. His ability to work on a variety of thematic levels while staying true to his audience most definitely sets him apart. Any writer needing to steer themselves toward a more successful path would benefit from working with Sean.”*

– Eric Paulson, Film and TV Producer

# CONTENTS

1	The Truth About Being A Writer	8
2	Ways To Make Money Writing	24
3	Blogging	41
4	Guest Blogging	77
5	Headlines	96
6	Social Media	106
7	Social Media Usage & Measurement	121
8	SEO	138
9	Voice	155
10	Editing	174
11	Work Habits	187
12	Common Mistakes	223
13	Marketing	243
14	Building Assets	269
15	Building Your List	287
16	Tools	308
17	My Best Advice	320
18	How To Keep Your Dreams From Dying	341

## FORWARD

Pain and struggle.

That's exactly what I *don't want* for you. But that's what it took for me to find writing success – pain and struggle.

I wrote this book to share some of the lessons I learned, without you having to go through all the setbacks and false starts I faced when I raced online in late 2008, brimming with ambition and eager for success, but without a road map to help me find it.

I knew I was a good writer. I had all the potential in the world. What I didn't know, was that potential wouldn't be nearly enough to actually succeed at writing. I found myself going down dead-ends and broken alleys of endless effort with minimal results.

Had I known then what I do now, I would've saved myself from the horror and humiliation that had me juggling too much debt, endangering my family, and eventually losing my house. I would've worked smarter, not harder, and realized my goals much earlier.

Life is wonderful – now. I leaped the hurdles and claimed the future I wanted.

I write when, where, and for who I want.

## FORWARD

I'd love to see the same thing happen for you.

That's not to say that I simply write fiction or poetry while money rains around me. Writing is commerce – one person willing to pay for what another is willing to write. I find warmth in words and love to blaze the keys with everything from sales copy to fiction.

I'm only now in a position where I'm working with companies I want to work with, creating products I believe in, and writing the books I've always wanted to write, rather than chasing cheap, unrewarding work.

I want you to have what I didn't – the shortcuts, smart strategies, and simple tricks that have made my life as a writer profitable and pleasant for me and my family. And help you steer clear of the stupid mistakes that held me back for far too long.

This is the book I wish I'd read three years ago.

How you read this book is up to you – straight through in order, or chapters out of sequence. The information presented isn't in the order I learned it, but I tried to lay it out in a logical way, keeping similarly themed subjects together. *Writing Online* is also designed to sit on your desk to serve as a handy reference or serve as inspiration when you need it most. Many of these lessons build on one another, and build on your experience as you progress.

If you're anything like me, you'll come back to the text to re-discover gems you'd read but which didn't make sense at the time, or which you forgotten, or didn't have time to try. It's funny how often I'll implement something

## WRITING ONLINE

“new” which I actually learned a couple years earlier. Yet, it's only now that I truly understand the depth of that earlier lesson. Bit by bit and byte by byte, you will get where you're going. This book can help you get there a word at a time.

Don't let anything stand in your way, especially doubt. If you went to college, great. If you didn't, that's okay, too. I know a lot of people without higher education that are making their dreams come true through the power of their words. You can, too.

The world is changing and it's happening fast.

One thing is certain – information has never held more power, nor has the author's ability to broadcast. Once upon a time, there seemed to be endless walls which kept the writer away from the masses. Technology now makes your voice available at the touch of a button, and the fuel to make it viral is inside you.

You have everything you need to be great and build an amazing life. I'm here to help.

This book is for you.

One word of warning before we start. I tend to repeat myself a bit. It's not that I don't think you'll get it the first time, but learning often comes through repetition. Even though I'm a quick study, much of this information took a long time to sink in. Additionally, because the book is built for skimming, there will be times that duplication of information is necessary.

## FORWARD

This is an exceptional time in your life, and this book can give you the keys to the kingdom. Not because I've been shown some secret wisdom, passed down by sages; most of this stuff is common knowledge after you've been doing it for a while. But it wasn't common to me when I first started, or even a year later. The circles I run in are filled with authors, copywriters, screenwriters, marketers, web designers, online entrepreneurs and writers just like you. I hope to gather this knowledge together in a way that no other writing books have done, so you have a modern toolkit to help you do the things other writing books don't tell you to do.

But most of all, I speak the truth, and right now the truth has never been more promising for writers.

Let's do this together.

Let's do it now.

## **You Are A Writer**

You are immortal.

You are Superman.

You are a living, breathing Merlin.

You are creator, superhero, alchemist of the impossible.

You are a writer, born at a time when it has never been easier to gather readers or claim the keys to the kingdom.

Writers have always held the power to push the planet forward. By cultivating thought, driving action, and stirring emotion, writers are architects of feeling, capable of rendering our collective future a word at a time. But now, enriched with technology, the entrepreneurial and creative heart of the modern writer beats with more possibility than ever.

Find your voice.

Amplify your soul.

Connect with your tribe.

Doing so will open doors, shatter the ceilings above you, and help you write the brightest future for you and those you love.

You have the power.

But as Spider-Man learned early on, with great power comes great responsibility.

## FORWARD

You owe a debt to yourself and your talents. Teach yourself daily to understand your creative self better and feel the profound gratification of knowing your voice has value.

Ignore (or embrace) your fears.

Even the most experienced writers have dealt with fear from time to time. You will, too.

Never worry you will sound too much like someone else. Your experience gives your voice its rhythm. It will be impossible to say all you mean or mean all you say; meaning is sometimes misty and thoughts often cruel. But the raw power of language has never been easier to harness. It is the only commodity everyone has equal access to, and whose value is elevated through consistent exercise, concentrated focus, and purpose met with precision.

Magic is in you – your voice is your wand.

Online, some people will love you and others will hate you. Most will be indifferent. Remember, those who love you, will help you build a better life, and you're as capable of greatness as the best writers out there.

Most writers have faced fear, and endured the trials of writing – writer's block, apathy, deficits of time, and dearth of inspiration. The difference between those who make it and those who don't is how they handle these challenges. You can shrink or rise to the occasion.

Next time you're trying to sleep, but your ideas are flowing without pause, don't struggle with the faucet. Abandon the sheets and start writing instead.

## WRITING ONLINE

The next time the tundra of a blank page freezes your momentum, get up and get out! Change your environment, follow the stream of new thoughts, explore whatever ideas come to you. Then return breathing the breath of someone who knows they are immortal, a superhero, and a magician.

Our keyboards are the same. The 26 letters in our alphabet can lead you to infinite possibility. If you're already writing, now is the time to tap what's inside you and create a better life. If you've yet to pick up the pen, there's no better time than today.

Rise and fall each day in the remarkable rhythm that comes with knowing your voice has value, and that every day will bring you closer to your potential.

The future belongs to those bold enough to write it.  
The future belongs to YOU.

## FORWARD

# 1

## THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING A WRITER

Writing is the best job in the world.

What other job encourages you to be who you are, explore life daily, create something from nothing, build a limitless future for you and those you love, while adding to your legacy with every word you write?

Without construction tools, loud noise, or substantial waste, writers create something from nothing that can last an eternity. And the modern writer's ideas can endure even if they never see print. Print On Demand and eBook technology means your work won't go out of print, even if books were suddenly to become archaic as eight track tapes.

I know you love books. Me, too. Always will. Yet, in many ways, books as we've known them are a primitive way of delivering ideas. It is easy enough to imagine a world in the not-so-distant future that has developed a col-

## WRITING ONLINE

lective amnesia toward the notion that we must be able to turn the pages, or smell the paper and binding, or feel the texture of a book cover in order for a book to have value. Anyone can publish to e-readers. That alone is not remarkable.

When writers learn to anticipate the needs of their audience, take the time to nurture their crowd and deliver something unique and valuable, there's truly no limit to the worlds that can be built or the amount of money they, or you, can make. *That* is remarkable, as is the time we live in.

Writers want attention. They long for their words to be heard and recognized, yet the modern writer is fortunate enough to have what no artists in world history have ever had before – instant access to a global audience.

With easy-to-use and freely available tools, you have access to worldwide attention in minutes. Learn how to harness attention, then convert it to currency. Your words will be read, celebrated, and rewarded.

The same tools that make it easy to get online, make it simple to see the reward. Sales letters are no longer subject to risky postage and printing costs because they can be placed on an online landing page in minutes. The same skills that get people to read your copy can get people to share it; driving traffic to your site, converting readers into buyers, buyers into fans, and fans into devoted evangelists. It won't happen overnight, but stick with it and it will.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING A WRITER

I know a lot of writers who are also millionaires. You can be one, too.

Despite the myth of the tortured writer (which I don't buy at all), the writers I know are among the happiest people I've ever met. You could argue that it's the money that makes them happy, and I would agree that money definitely helps! But I think the true source of their happiness is the fact that they rise each morning to do what they love – write.

Writing for a living is truly remarkable, but only if you do the hard work to establish yourself, get known, and fuel the attention that will drive you forward.

### **How To Succeed As A Writer**

To succeed as a writer you must not only have passion, you must also be clear about what the profession requires. Ambling through years as a freelancer will make your life difficult. You will chase clients, worry about money, and postpone your dreams for far too long, finally wondering where the time went and why you've done nothing for yourself?

Passion points you toward a destination. It may not give you an exact roadmap, telling you step-by-step how to get there, but it can be a picture-perfect postcard in your mind, helping you to focus on where you're going, then giving you the drive and determination required to get there.

## WRITING ONLINE

Ask yourself: What do you want most from your writing career?

Your goals will change as your career evolves, but it's best to have a vision *before* getting started. Would you like to become known and build a stable of freelance clients to help you pay the bills and fund your passion projects? Or maybe you'd rather write the Great American Novel? Maybe you want to build information products, coaching others for a large return on your investment of time?

Whatever your goals, they must be fueled by passion. Chase the money and your audience will know. Feel true passion for everything you create, however, and you will create loyal fans who will be happy to buy from you over and over again.

The common denominator for nearly all successful people I know is passion.

True passion followed by drive and determination leads right to results. And a steady string of results will always lead to success. You've probably read enough books by now to know that success is the safest way to a happily ever after.

### **What Being A Writer Is**

Being a writer is hard.

It's important we get that out of the way immediately. False illusions leave no benefit behind.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING A WRITER

Too many writers start their online adventure with delusions of grandeur, believing they will get discovered overnight, secure a strong stable of steady clients or an enormous audience hanging on their every word, even though they've not taken the time to build one. Then, a month into their new profession, they're scratching their heads wondering where all the readers or clients are?

The good news is, building your online identity does get easier.

What starts hard, is soon simple. Tools that are difficult to use and concepts that seem difficult to master become as easy as learning your ABCs. Connections that seemed hard to make at first, become as simple as pressing send.

Then one day, seemingly out of the blue, you will go from having few opportunities, constant struggle, and a crushing schedule, to turning down lucrative offers on a daily basis.

But you must build the road brick by brick, then walk it step-by-step. Even if you are fortunate as I was, to have friends and colleagues to help pour the concrete and walk beside you, you will be there for every moment of labor and difficult step forward.

Yet, it's all worth it, even the struggle. Better than the eventual success is the constant reward of self-discovery. There's no better way to know yourself than through the words you lay on the page. You could spend years on a psychiatrist's sofa, but it would cost you thou-

## WRITING ONLINE

sands of dollars and you wouldn't know yourself nearly as well as you will when tapping into the human emotions that drive buyer behavior, or set your hero on a journey and put words into the mouths of characters you've created.

Sitting at your desk, then picking up the pen, or letting your fingers fly across the keyboard will teach you an infinity about who you are. Pay attention, and it is immeasurably satisfying; more so for me than the many premiums I've earned in my short success as a writer.

Being a writer has helped me grow, not just as a writer, but as a person, husband, parent, friend, and partner to any team I'm lucky enough to be part of. Being a writer is awesome without measure, especially if you're smart enough to know what being a writer isn't.

### **What Being A Writer Isn't**

Being a writer isn't easy.

If you've bought into any of the pixie dust being sold online that shows an entrepreneur kicking it with his laptop on sandy beaches, exchanging his golden thoughts for money, wrapped in serenity and swallowed by overnight success – I'm sorry, that writer isn't real.

The writers *I know* making it big are some of the hardest working people I've ever met in any profession.

I'm the first to say that if you make it, it'll be worth every minute of misery. Being a successful writer can make

## THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING A WRITER

you happier than you ever imagined. But I'll also be the first to tell you the truth. At times, carving a living from copy is like climbing a chalkboard Everest with a handful of nails.

But there's no need to make it more difficult than it needs to be. Know what to expect and it will make the hard work a little easier. Understand what being a writer is, and what it isn't, so you don't reach for a romanticized notion of what it might be, rather than the reality of what it must be if you expect to succeed.

There will be days when you have nothing to say.

There will be days when you feel so empty you'll swear there's nothing left inside you.

There will be days when clients are asking for revisions on your best copy as the pillars of your personal world start to crumble around you.

Being a writer isn't glamorous, at least not at first. Perhaps one day you'll fly first class and live from your laptop, lounging on the sunny beaches of Brazil. But before you do that, expect to wear out the paint on your keyboard, drain your bank account dry, several times, and fall into fissures of frustration, infinitely deeper than you ever imagined.

Without great risk, there is no great reward. Work hard and be ready for both.

## **The Future Is Written By Writers**

Future writers will look back at this time and marvel.

Before the Internet, writers needed publishers, publicists, marketers – entire teams devoted to ensuring their words reached as many eyeballs as possible. What the extraordinary, yet still primitive, Internet started, chat rooms, forums, blogs, and social media have nurtured into a promising future, pregnant with possibility for anyone who can weave words.

Writers didn't change the game, but they'll be writing many of the new rules.

The online engine of commerce is fueled by communication. Businesses need content to connect with their audiences, hold their attention, and help the audience spread their messaging to other like-minded friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. A working writer who knows how to navigate the Web and network throughout its many channels will never starve for work. Yet, once a solid foundation has been established, a writer never need trade his time for money again, at least not directly.

Writers are getting the power that others once held.

Once upon a time, published writers surrendered their copyright. Not anymore. Now, smart writers will have a choice. They can choose a mainstream publisher who will help them with their marketing and publicity in fair exchange for profit and copyright, or they can self-publish and produce their words as products.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING A WRITER

Self-published writers must assume all the responsibility for their marketing and stacking assets higher and higher until they're finally writing whatever they want, whenever they want to write it. Make no mistake, this isn't easy and isn't for every writer, but at least we now have the option.

The future looks brilliant for writers, and I couldn't be more excited. I'm also excited that you're coming along for the ride, and that together we might realize your unlimited potential.

### **The Unlimited Potential Of The Writer**

The modern writer has unlimited potential.

You'll hear me hammer this message over and over, not only because it's true, but because it's important that you get it. Learn to write well and internalize the rules of audience engagement. This will lead you toward tremendous personal satisfaction and wealth, so long as you're willing to build it.

There are three non-negotiable skills you must learn: Build your audience, consistently add to your portfolio of assets, and learn basic entrepreneurial and online skills.

Nothing is more important than building your audience. If you can't do this, you will be reliant upon ye olde gatekeepers. This has no bearing on the quality of your

## WRITING ONLINE

work, but it does mean you must play by their rules, if you can even get their attention, that is.

Build your own audience of avid fans and publishers will come to you. This means you need to engage in social media. For most people, it means you need to start a blog, (or even a microblog such as Tumblr) at a minimum. You will also likely benefit from other forms of social media including (at the time of this writing), Twitter, Facebook, and video at websites such as YouTube. You need to find where your audience is and build your brand in those places.

One of the best benefits of building your online audience is that once you bond with your readers, they become evangelical in spreading your word and helping you grow. It's one thing to write in isolation, or to a small crowd, but build a large following, and before long you will see an exponential effect where everything you write spreads with the speed of a sneeze.

Once you have an audience, you must build assets to keep them happy. You can spend your life writing for clients, but if you have more than a single creative molecule inside you, which you do, the novelty will wear thin and you will find yourself wanting to write for yourself. Especially, as you see other writers in your community making good money and getting great attention. And to make matters worse, many of those writers won't be nearly as talented as you!

Building assets may sound complicated or rather businesslike, but it's easier than you probably imagine.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING A WRITER

Every website you start, email list you build, book you write, or product you create, is an asset that can make you money even when you're not on the clock.

Knowing how to leverage those assets is where your basic entrepreneurial and online skills come into play. Some people are born entrepreneurs. They smell opportunity and embrace risk without flinching. For others, it's learned behavior.

Building your business is something you can master, but before you do, you'll have to make it through the first year.

### **The First Year**

Your first year will be rough.

Of course, I base this on my own experience, but I also base it on that of everyone I've met online, both successful and those who have long since surrendered.

Most of the online millionaires I know, used good writing to get where they are, but none did it in less than two years. For most, it took most of them at least three. Be ready for the challenge, and willing to see it through, and the finish line will feel like a first kiss after a long courtship.

You'll start out hopeful; your voice strong and your drive stronger. Whether your audience is small or large,

## WRITING ONLINE

you will feel the unique, yet immeasurable, reward of having someone pay attention to you.

Word will spread, your list will grow.

You will fall to sleep at night thinking of the many opportunities that lay ahead. Books, movies, clients, a rapidly climbing hourly rate. Your dreams may come true, but they won't happen fast. Because things take longer than you thought they would, and you're working harder than you probably ever have, you will find yourself wandering down the lonely road of discouragement.

This is the hardest part to get through. Which is why so many people give up.

Millions of blogs are started each year, though most of them are quickly abandoned. It's easy to start with the best intentions and undiluted dreams. But it is also easy to get distracted, discouraged, and eventually, despondent. I could probably count the success stories I've seen first hand, but could not count the friends and colleagues I've lost along the way, who started out strong only to wither upon the blogging vine.

For most writers and bloggers, the six-month slog seems to be hardest. This is perfectly normal and will probably happen to you. Break through that first wall and things tend to get easier. Just know, getting started is simple. It's making it through the first year that's truly difficult. Taking time to mentally prepare now can make all the difference in the world later.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING A WRITER

### **Mental Preparation**

Mental fitness is everything.

Start out ill-prepared, and as much as I hate to say it, you'll end up like so many other writers, surrendering your dreams to a stack of manuscripts gathering digital dust on your hard drive.

You must have the right mindset to make your dreams come true, but you also need it to build the profitable business and online writing career you deserve. It may seem slightly pie-in-the-sky, but it's precisely what I've done for myself. You can do it, too.

The key to getting it together is having the right blend of goals, timelines, and conviction.

Goals get you where you're going. They're not a map to tell you how to get there, they are the mile markers along the way. Your timeline is important because it stamps your goal with specificity, and that specificity makes it easier to drive toward your destination in a straight line. I'd love to see Italy. I've wanted to go there since I was a teenager, but I've not yet been. Saying I'd like to visit Italy someday is a goal; saying I'd like to see the canals of Venice by the winter of 2014, is a timeline.

Attach your goal to a timeline and it will far more likely become your reality.

It's impossible to make it through without a fair amount of conviction. Many people in your life – friends, family, and even those you thought had your back no mat-

## WRITING ONLINE

ter what, will wonder to your face and behind your back whether you've completely lost your marbles.

No, you haven't.

You are more sane than they, for you realize where the future is going and are making a conscious decision to get there ahead of the crowd. Yet, just because you're doing the right thing and know it in your heart, doesn't mean it will be easy. And when things are at their worst and you feel like you're sinking, only faith in yourself and your decisions will keep you afloat.

Mental preparation is key. If you don't feel as though you have the right mindset for this adventure right now, that's okay. Take time, read up, breathe deep. You can always return to the dream later. But under no circumstances should you start before you are ready to see it through.

For those with the stamina to see their dream through, though, I assure you, the hard work is worth every ounce of sweat and every tear of frustration that you shed. You will be living a life that's easy to love, the kind most people only get to dream about.

### **It Will Be Worth It**

My first two years online were testament to the fire and ice truth of being an entrepreneur. Most millionaires chew a few mouthfuls of gravel before they ever sip champagne.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT BEING A WRITER

But that's what being an entrepreneur is – living a few years of your life like most people would never dare to, so you can spend the rest of your life living like most people never will.

Wherever you are, keep going, so long as it's forward. No matter how hard it might be, it's worth it. If it's truly difficult, keep going. Chances are, you're at the edge of a breakthrough.

I've no idea how many nights I fell to sleep with a knot in my stomach, then rose in the morning with soaking bloodshot eyes, steeped in weary and worry (more than I'd care to admit).

Always do your best, even when doing the most insignificant of jobs. Every success makes you stronger and drives you forward. You never trip over the mountain, it's the pebbles in your path that stand in your way. Dodge enough and soon, you'll learn to waltz right by.

Will it be worth it?

Absolutely. But only if you believe, refuse to surrender, and promise yourself that even if you fall down 1,324 times, you're willing to stand up 1,325.

# 2

## WAYS TO MAKE MONEY WRITING

Even if your goal is to move mountains of fiction, you'll probably start your online writing life as a freelancer.

Working freelance means you must always keep your eyes open to new opportunities and remain relatively flexible with what you're willing to write about. Keep reaching for the diamonds in the mine, but stay on the lookout for the less glamorous jobs that will help you build a solid base as you're banging away at your dreams.

An entire book could be filled with the different markets and projects for freelance writers. Actually, there is one: *The Writer's Market*, published yearly by Writer's Digest Books. But here's a brief overview anyway.

### **Magazine Writer**

While magazines have staff writers, most of them also buy stories from freelancers. Pay varies widely, de-

## WAYS TO MAKE MONEY ONLINE

pending on the size of the magazine and the market. Trade publications are often more lucrative than consumer publications, though you may need certain credentials to be considered.

In general, freelance writers send editors a query letter (although these days it's much more likely to be an email) describing the topic of piece they'd like to write, alongside other details such as length and overall slant. Queries should be short, polished, and contain a hook that will pique the interest of the editor.

### **Professional Blogger**

Many of the larger blogs outsource work to freelancers. Pay varies from \$5-\$10 per post on the low end to hundreds of dollars at the peak. Depending on the niche, blogging can be fast-paced with a tremendous amount of pressure to either break a story or be first with a relevant take on a hot topic. Writing about something a week after the fact, long after all the big blogs already commented on it, might work for magazines, but blogging is about timeliness. Stay on the cutting edge of your niche, break news, or be among the first to comment on big stories, and your writing will be in demand and you can command a higher rate.

Blogging is one of the few arenas where you can craft your own style, mixing journalism techniques with conversational style to create your own identity. Develop

## WRITING ONLINE

yours, but when writing guest posts for other blogs, play by their rules and write to their audiences.

Many blog owners look for writers on job boards, by advertising on their sites, and through word of mouth. Establishing a strong online network will help ensure you always have plenty of work.

### **Web Content Writers**

Websites require large amounts of content, from “About Us” pages, to product descriptions, to reader-friendly FAQs. While some opportunities are advertised on job boards, word of mouth and a strong network are necessary to secure the most lucrative leads. Often, web content writers are subcontracted by the site’s designers, so it’s also a good idea to make a few connections in the web design world. Find the right partners and you could find yourself teaming up on many projects.

Many writers look down on writing Search Engine Optimized keyword articles, while others find them a source of steady work to fill in the gaps between more rewarding assignments. Pay ranges from dismal (\$1 for a 500 word article) to acceptable (\$10-\$12 for a 500 word article).

A fast writer can make a fairly good hourly rate, as long as they’re willing to write uninteresting, keyword-driven copy.

## WAYS TO MAKE MONEY ONLINE

### **Books**

Whether you're writing your own books or ghost-writing novels or memoirs for others, there's plenty of options for freelancers in books. In some cases, it's possible to send your book proposals directly to a publishing house. Others require you to go through a literary agent.

A growing number of writers are skipping the publishing houses and agents altogether. It's never been easier for a writer to self-publish and market their own material, using the same skills you'll learn by reading this book. The rapid rise of user-friendly e-readers has opened the market wide and given writers the ability to self-publish without having to spend thousands of dollars on printing and fulfillment.

Though the gap narrows by the day, self-publishing still has its downsides. Most writers don't have the expertise (or deep pockets) that publishers do, meaning that they either have to pay someone to handle things such as layout, formatting for print and eBook distribution, and cover creation, or learn to do these things themselves. Costs can add up quickly, cutting into whatever profits a book might earn. On the flip side, you can learn to do many of these things with advice freely available on the web. The learning curve can be frustrating, but if you spend some time now, you can save money later.

Another benefit traditional publishers have over self-publishers, is a wide distribution and promotion network which can not only put your books into stores but

## WRITING ONLINE

publicize your book to millions of people. When you go the indie route, distribution and promotion are entirely up to you. Fortunately, print-on-demand and social media have made it easier than ever to compete with the “big boys.”

### **Corporate Work**

Companies need writers for a wide variety of jobs including: newsletters (email and print), annual reports, product brochures and manuals, speeches, and press releases. Some of these jobs are advertised on job boards and freelance sites. Again, it’s having a strong network that will open the back door into most opportunities.

Build a strong professional network, establish an outstanding reputation and keep your eyes and ears open for new opportunities. It only takes a few steady clients for most writers to get their business started right and growing strong.

Most advice aimed at freelance writers would suggest you pack as many clients into your stable as possible. I disagree, at least if you have dreams of writing a book or building streams of passive income. Writing for others is great. It’s wonderful to have people pay you well for your time and your way with words. But writing for clients probably isn’t your dream, and chasing freelance work can quickly grow into a full-time job that pulls you further from your purpose, inch by inch and day by day.

## WAYS TO MAKE MONEY ONLINE

It's best to book the client work you need to get by, then use the rest of your time to write a better future. Ask yourself: How much business do I actually need?

### **Make The Most Of Your Time To Make The Most Money**

Unfortunately, many writers make the mistake of thinking they need a massive audience or long list of clients to be profitable. This is a stumbling block for many freelancers, and business people in general.

But that simply isn't true.

You must be smart and strategic if you expect to truly grow your business and pull your dreams closer to you. Good writers can make a great living online, but the stronger your foundation and strategy is from the beginning, the more you increase your odds of success.

Let's say you want to make an extra \$20,000 a month. That's nearly a quarter of a million per year, which most people would consider a great living.

You can reach \$20,000 in countless ways, but don't make the mistake of believing your income must all flow from one-off writing jobs. Building your own assets is the best way to arrive at a large and growing income, by far.

If you were to try and make \$20,000 a month, you would need to either write an impossibly-high word count

## WRITING ONLINE

each month, or have a top-percentage rate to even come close.

Let's say you were paid \$20, per article, you would need to write 1,000 each month to make quota. Assuming you're working six days a week, that's more than 40 per day.

If that's not impossible, it's pretty damned close.

What if you were to make \$50 per article? Much better, right?

Sure, it's better, but you'll still have to write 400 articles, or 16 per day. This can be done, but you'll be burned out in no time. Believe me.

If you shift your aim and worry about building assets instead, your numbers become much different.

Sticking with \$20, you still need to move \$1,000 units, but now you're not skinning your nose against the grindstone for every nickel dropped in the jar. EBooks, affiliate commissions, newsletter or membership subscriptions, etc. – are all excellent ways to help you quickly build the numbers you deserve. And that's just based on \$20.

EBooks articulating your expertise, affiliate commissions on products you use and respect, and membership subscriptions. Assets can be slow to build and won't necessarily get you where you want to go overnight, but if you take the time to lay the bricks, you'll be running down the road in no time.

If you're dead set on trading time for money, you'll want to raise your rates and limit your availability as

## WAYS TO MAKE MONEY ONLINE

quickly as possible. Focus on the type of copy that has the highest reward and over-deliver with everything that leaves your desk. Good enough isn't. Make sure your clients love the work you do and they will come back for more.

There are plenty of jobs for press releases, SEO copy, and even blog copy that pays \$200 or more for around 500 words. This rate is perfectly reasonable, but you must be highly focused on securing the work, diligent in getting it done, and delivering something beyond ordinary, while staying undaunted when work is scarce.

But even if you're getting \$200 for copy that takes two hours to complete, there is still plenty of room to grow. If you want to hit \$20,000, you'll have 100 pieces of copy to move through. That's 200 hours. A great living, sure, but it's also a full-time job that leaves you little, if any, time to write for yourself.

Don't think of your \$100-an-hour rate as the finish line. See it as a new beginning instead. If you can command \$200 for a page or so of copy, you can command substantially more as a consultant.

There are many companies with large consulting budgets who will pay good money to understand the online space. What if you are a consultant to those companies? A \$2,000 fee per month is reasonable to them, and a great boost to your income (while only requiring an extra 10 hours a month from your schedule). Add a couple of com-

## WRITING ONLINE

panies to your queue, and social proof can double your rate.

Of course, even this is still trading time for money and allowing someone else to dictate your schedule, and therefore not as powerful as building assets. The point is, don't get trapped behind thick walls of limited beliefs, and don't get stuck in the same rut as many writers, letting the hamster wheel spin as you do – the same things over and over with diluted results. There is no end to the number of ways you can make money. Stay focused, work hard, and never sell yourself short. Draw on the talent and skill set that makes you unique, then charge accordingly.

Success is never an accident. Decide how much you want to make, then set a plan to make it.

### **The Single Most Important Lesson You Should Learn**

You **MUST** build an email list.

This is another one of those points you will hear me stress again and again. Sorry for the redundancy, but even if you forget every other thing I wrote, remember this – you **NEED** a list.

Though building a list is key to unlocking online limitations, it took me more than two years before I actu-

## WAYS TO MAKE MONEY ONLINE

ally started to do it for myself. Well, at least two years before I did it right.

I followed the advice early, but went about it all wrong. Yes, you want to build a list. More importantly, you want that list to get populated with potential buyers. I read the advice to “start a list” and so I did. But my list was filled with readers from my first online adventure, *Writer Dad*. They loved my writing and perspective on life, but they weren’t buyers. And even if they were, I had nothing to sell.

The list you build must be congruent with the products you wish to promote. If you don’t know what those products are yet, give it some thought. Choose a topic you feel passionate about, a subject you could speak on for a long time without getting bored. Your list (or lists) can be extremely lucrative, and readers who opt-in to receive your communication should still be giving you value five years later, provided that you’re still providing value to them.

The right way to build a list is to listen to the needs of your market, give your audience something of tremendous value that they couldn’t get elsewhere, then continue to groom and grow your crowd until they are eager to hear everything you have to say.

This is both easier and harder than it sounds.

Building a list is easy. Every successful person I know online can do this. Yet, doing it well is something else entirely. Fortunately you’re a writer, which means that the one skill most required to both groom and grow a qual-

## WRITING ONLINE

ity list – excellent communication – is the one skill you don't have to worry about.

Because building a list is extremely important there'll be an entire chapter devoted to it later. For now, know that having a qualified list of quality buyers you build yourself and maintain by the strength of your own voice might be the single most important thing you do.

Fortunately, growing a list online is the best possible place to do it.

### **How To Build Your List**

Building a list used to be expensive.

Once upon a time, you had to build, buy, or borrow a list. This took a lot of time and even more money. The Internet makes it easy, as long as you know what you're doing. Websites are easy to build and cost next to nothing, especially if you use WordPress. A quality lead magnet, a highly-optimized landing page, and a few pages of quality copy will give you everything you need to start generating a list.

In less than 24 hours, you can have everything you need to build your list, except traffic.

Traffic is its own beast, and we'll cover that more later, but even this can be straightforward as long as you place a bulls-eye on your strategy and avoid the helter-skelter traffic-generating techniques that keep many nov-

## WAYS TO MAKE MONEY ONLINE

ices running in circles. Your website will cost next to nothing, and traffic can be free or cheap. This means you can build your list fast and at an extremely low-cost-per-lead. Yet, the best thing about building a list online isn't the speed with which you can build the list, it's how fast that list can be optimized.

In that same once upon a yesteryear when you had to build your list person by person and stamp by stamp, you would only be able to improve upon your list by sending out new batches of mail, then split testing those results. This is key to maximizing any list, and online isn't any different.

Split testing and list segmentation are everything, the difference is that online, split-tests can be done in real-time. Free tools such as Google Optimizer, allow you to track what your leads are doing and make the necessary tweaks on the fly.

Split testing has never been easier. You can rotate copy, images, and even the lead magnets (lead magnets are the free quality reports, eBooks, or other giveaway which you offer visitors in exchange for opting in to your list) your visitors see. Whichever giveaway has the highest conversion becomes your control. You can then ditch the rest and start a new test, always improving on the responsiveness of your list.

Constant tweaking leads to superior results. The Internet makes it easy to do more than you thought possible with your list in less time than you ever imagined. But

again, it comes down to quality and intention. You can have the biggest list in the world, but if you're not training your readers to buy, or treating them with respect and over-delivering value at every opportunity, size won't matter a single bit.

### **What Kind Of Writing Moves You?**

How do you want to make money writing?

Both fiction and nonfiction writers can benefit tremendously from the online writing environment. Up until recently, nonfiction writers have had the edge because they could offer the simple solutions most online searchers were looking for. They could build the info products, coaching programs, and step-by-step programs that could improve the lives of their target market. Fiction, on the other hand, was still just a pipe dream.

As with so many other things in a world that's never zoomed faster, this too has changed. 2010 was the first year when eBooks outsold print books on Amazon.com. This is extraordinary, and a game changer for writers like you and me. As of this writing, most of the top 100 selling books on Kindle are fiction.

If you're driven by money, it doesn't matter what you choose. Both fiction and nonfiction can be remarkably lucrative. The key is to tap into your true passion. Miss this and it's like sitting in a sailboat without any wind.

## WAYS TO MAKE MONEY ONLINE

Audiences are getting smarter and can see through thinly-veiled attempts to cash in. It isn't the loudest voice that wins, it's the most passionate. Put the *true you* behind everything you do and you'll constantly inch closer toward the largest possible reward. If writing fiction makes you happy, write fiction. If answering people's problems makes you happiest, there's no doubt that's exactly what you should do.

For the first time in history, it's possible to be passionate, profitable, and prolific, all at the same time, while passing the publishing gatekeepers who once ordained only the anointed, thereby issuing a silent decree as to what most writers could and couldn't write.

I want to write everything. Fiction, nonfiction, children's stories, suspense, murder mysteries, horror, how-to's, biographies, memoirs, poetry, romance.

Maybe you're like me and want to write a little bit of everything, too, or maybe you just want to write in one genre over and over again. Cool thing is, you don't have to decide right now. Just get started. Your mind will change along with your momentum.

My writing queue is entirely different now than I imagined it would be two years ago. I have no idea what it will look like five years from now. That's okay. Get an idea of where you'd like to start, whether it's freelancing or diving deep into writing your first book. Then get going.

## WRITING ONLINE

Waiting for inspiration or the perfect idea will murder your momentum. You don't have to be great to get going, but you do have to get going to get great.

### **What You NEED To Make It As A Writer**

Not to oversimplify too much, but I believe you only need three things to get started: The right mindset, a working computer, and a reasonably set schedule.

We've discussed the right mindset required to make it big online. This is non-negotiable. If you think you can enter war without a sword and shield, you'll quickly find yourself among the broken bodies that litter the battlefield. It's going to be hard, and you'll need to be ready.

How deep you want to immerse yourself in this writing life is entirely up to you. Maybe you have a full-time job and you're only able to write on the side. Perhaps you're using every waking hour to build your writing career, hurling yourself into the unknown with your arms in the sky and eyes on the horizon.

There is no right answer. Every writer is different, as is every situation. Know what you're doing and why you're doing it before getting started. This is the best way to make fewer mistakes and gain early momentum.

You need a computer. Yes, writers can get by on pen and paper. I wrote my first children's book of around

## WAYS TO MAKE MONEY ONLINE

40,000 words, entirely in longhand. Stephen King wrote all 800+ pages of *Dreamcatcher* in longhand while laying in bed with a broken body after being smashed by a van. But eventually, someone has to enter the words into a computer (assuming you're not sending off a typewritten manuscript to a publisher).

Sure, it can be done. But it isn't just about the writing.

You're a modern writer and a modern writer needs modern tools. You must be able to put your finished writing in a place where other people can easily find it, and you must be able to network with the readers, fans, and evangelists who will help you get noticed, land lucrative jobs, and, ultimately, sell your assets.

You don't "have to" do any of this, of course. But if you don't want to, or are unwilling, you should probably stop reading now. My whole purpose in writing this is to show how online writers can go from good to great and do more than they ever imagined, fueled by their mind, fingers, passion, and drive.

You need to draft a schedule, then do everything you can to stick with it. I'm not gonna lie – this can be hard. And unless you've already started freelancing, this is probably harder than you realize. Modern life is frantic. Most of us have trouble keeping up with our day-to-day obligations, let alone adding *The Great American Novel* or a full-time freelancing career to our plates.

## WRITING ONLINE

Your schedule will need to be easily adjustable and able to roll with a lot of unexpected punches. Don't get started until you can set aside a consistent time of day, preferably six days a week, where you can count on being able to focus on your new life as a writer.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Platt is author of the books *Four Seasons*, *Penny to a Million*, and co-wrote *Available Darkness*. As a copywriter and Creative Director, he has designed and polished effective social media strategies that have driven revenue, increased sales, and improved traffic and search engine rankings for his online clients.

In addition to being a regular contributor for *Copyblogger.com*, the Web's premier content marketing site, Sean has written copy for some of the largest writing and lifestyle blogs on the Web.

A new breed of publisher, Sean writes and publishes nonfiction to fiction, in several genres ranging from children's books to horror. Sean is a co-founder of the publishing imprint Collective Inkwell Media.

He is available for speaking events aimed at writers, publishers, and creative entrepreneurs, as well as for individual consultation.

Sean is living the writer's dream in Ohio with his wife and two children.

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