

**Writing Matters:**  
**How a Freelance Copywriter  
Can Make Your Life Easier**

**by  
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## Introduction

Good writing in today's business world is a valuable commodity that isn't always recognized as such by those who need it the most. Many business owners and their staffs feel they can get by with little or no professional writing. Common sentiments include: "I can do it myself" . . . "Why should I hire someone just to write?" . . . "It's too expensive to bring in a freelancer" . . . "Good writing isn't that important – why waste our time?"

What people don't realize is that good writing is an investment that can significantly affect their bottom line. A simple sales letter can introduce a business to potential new customers. A brochure can provide information about a product or service to members of the community. An effective training course can teach employees new skills or reinforce existing ones. A well-written corporate profile, newsletter or web site can project a positive image to potential customers and employees alike. Good writing can help businesses compete more effectively and establish a presence in the marketplace, and a freelance copywriter can you help reach your goals.

**"Writing Matters – How A Freelance Copywriter Can Make Your Life Easier"** presents case studies in corporate and small business settings where the need for good writing arises and the principals involved are faced with addressing their challenges. Some business owners realize they need professional help, others are more stubborn. Some anticipate the need, others wait until it's almost too late. In every case, a freelance copywriter comes to the rescue.

For each case, we'll review the scenario and comment on the specifics of each situation. Commentary is shown in blue italicized text. We'll identify the challenges, barriers, any resistance by the business owner, and suggestions for a successful resolution. Enjoy!

## Case Study #1: Wilson Software Industries

### The Company

Wilson Software Industries was a mid-sized software development company. Each month, the company held on-site training classes for its new field technicians. The training consisted of a two-week school covering all procedures and technical requirements. For years, the company had been using the same old training manuals, which had been typed up on an old DOS-based word processing program in the mid-1990s, then photocopied and stapled together for each new class ever since. Any revisions to the manuals were handled by inserting replacement pages by hand.

*It's amazing how many companies are behind the times when it comes to technology, updated content, and even the visual presentation of their materials. Content and appearance make a difference because they are a direct reflection of a company's commitment to being successful and profitable. In Wilson's case, they have essentially abandoned their training program by not keeping it up-to-date.*

### The Challenge

The content in the manuals had been pieced together by different instructors over the years, many of whom were no longer with the company. Although some of the material was coherent, most of it was plagued by poor grammar, spelling errors and inconsistent formatting. Management hadn't given much thought to the condition of the manuals; students never complained about them, they reasoned, so they must be serving their purpose. Then, one Friday afternoon after a class had concluded, Mary, the training manager, noticed several of the manuals left under the desks in the training room. "Why don't they take them home?" she asked one of the instructors. "They usually leave them here," he answered, "or throw them in the dumpster out back."

Mary was shocked. Having been in her position for only a few months, she had been so bogged down with administrative tasks that she hadn't even considered the quality of the training manuals. The manuals were a direct reflection of her department and had to be updated. Furthermore, retention of her new technicians was decreasing and customer complaints were at unacceptable levels. She had a meeting with her instructors and asked them to begin rewriting different sections of the manuals. She gave them two weeks to complete the updates and hoped for the best.

Two weeks later, Mary met with her instructor staff again. Although their ideas were good, their written content was below par. Simply put, the instructors couldn't put their good thoughts into good words. If she used their material "as is," she would only be adding fuel to the fire...more bad writing, more incoherent thoughts, more training manuals thrown in the dumpster.

*Managers often experience a "wake-up call" like Mary did here. Seeing her department's training materials being left behind and tossed in dumpsters made quite an impact on her. Furthermore, with retention and customer complaint issues popping up, Mary had to do something. Her initial response, however, wasn't quite on the mark. At this point, by assuming her instructors could handle the task, she still didn't recognize the need for professional writing. It wasn't until after she wasted more time attempting a quick fix that she realized her staff didn't have the skills necessary to get the job done.*

### The Solution

Mary finally realized she needed a professional writer to rewrite the training manuals as her instructors didn't have the expertise or time to handle the task. And although she was a decent writer herself, Mary knew it wasn't her strength. Whether it be a full-time addition or a freelance copywriter, Mary needed someone to focus solely on writing.

Mary began conducting interviews for a full-time writer, but no one within the company was particularly qualified. She then decided to hire a freelancer to do the project – if other writing projects came up, she could bring in the freelancer as needed. This would save her money over time, and she would always have a good writer at her disposal.

After consulting with a fellow colleague at another company, Mary found a qualified copywriter to handle the project. The writer worked with the instructors and developed new, focused training manuals that were well-written and had a consistent look and feel. All manuals were professionally printed and bound – no more photocopies, no more staples. The project took some time, but it was well worth it in the long run.

*Mary understood she needed a professional writer to work on the project and attempted to fill the position internally. Instead of finding someone only marginally qualified, she had the foresight to hire a writer on a freelance basis. Using her professional contacts, Mary found a qualified copywriter with good references. Furthermore, she was able to use her instructors' expertise as subject matter experts instead of forcing them to be writers.*

### **The Outcome**

At the conclusion of the first class using the new manuals, Mary noticed no manuals were left behind. She even checked the dumpster in the parking lot to make sure none were discarded there. Furthermore, the instructors told her how several students complimented the manuals, saying they would help them do their jobs better and be good reference materials throughout their careers.

Within a few months, the technician retention rate was up and customer complaints were down. The rewritten training manuals had made a big difference and helped improve her bottom line. As an added bonus, her writer-for-hire suggested several other print and web-based training methods that could help her in the future. In a short time, her department's reputation improved significantly – and those outdated, poorly written manuals were finally a thing of the past.

*Mary's revelation that a professional copywriter could solve her problems led to measurable results (increased retention rate and fewer customer complaints). In addition to improving her bottom line, she also increased the morale of her instructors and trainees. Most importantly, she found a good writer who could help her with future projects. It took Mary a while to solve her problem, but at least she knew something needed to be done and took the necessary steps to get there.*

## **Case Study #2: Jay's Coffee Emporium**

### **The Company**

Jay Smith was the owner of two successful gourmet coffee shops in the same county and was looking forward to the grand opening of his third store in a neighboring county forty miles away. His business was growing and potential investors were contacting him about becoming partners in his enterprise. Life was good!

*Some small businesses experience success right away, but they cannot rest on their laurels. In an ever-changing, competitive environment, success cannot be taken for granted, especially when it comes to expanding operations.*

### **The Challenge**

Shortly after his new store opened, however, Jay realized he would be facing new challenges. Whereas his other two stores were established businesses in their respective communities, no one in the new neighborhood knew anything about “Jay’s Coffee Emporium.” Business was slow, the place was empty at peak hours and regular customers were few and far between.

Jay was at a loss. When he opened his first store, there were very few competitors in the area and word spread quickly – soon, everyone knew about Jay’s. By the time he opened his second store, his reputation preceded him, so that location was successful almost by default. Now, he was a stranger in a strange land – just another coffee place trying to survive among the imposing chain establishments. His market research clearly showed that the area could support another coffee shop, but Jay wasn’t going to survive on the reputation of his other two stores.

*It might appear Jay made a poor business decision expanding his business into a different geographic area; however, the real issue was his lack of attention toward promoting his business and distinguishing it from his competitors. Jay achieved success with his other two stores mostly by word of mouth with very little formal marketing. That recipe wasn’t going to work with his third store.*

### **The Solution**

Jay realized he needed to get the word out as quickly as possible – he had to create a buzz about his place and not rely on the success of his other stores several miles away. Jay tried an ad or two, but they didn’t generate much interest. One morning, a customer suggested Jay enlist some professional help, pointing out that Jay’s expertise was coffee, not writing ads. Jay contacted the local Chamber of Commerce and perused their member list for a professional writer. Soon, he hired Fred, a local freelance copywriter, to assist with his marketing efforts.

Ever since he founded his business, Jay never needed marketing materials in any form whatsoever. With his other two locations, he was fortunate enough to have a good reputation in the neighborhood due to his quality coffee, exceptional service and friendly surroundings. Now, out of his geographic comfort zone, he had to adjust his strategy. Fred suggested several approaches, including targeted advertising, a newsletter that could be circulated throughout the community, and perhaps even a web site to handle online orders. Part of Jay’s expanding operations included his own signature line of coffee beans – the ability to fulfill orders online would be quite beneficial.

*Jay recognized he needed to promote his new store, but didn’t know how to do it. By hiring a freelance copywriter, Jay could focus on what he did best – running his stores! Fred suggested some fundamental marketing approaches, none of which Jay had previously implemented on his own.*

### **The Outcome**

All of these suggestions were relatively low cost, yet effective methods for spreading the word and establishing a presence in the community. And best of all, Jay had forged a new partnership with his professional writer that he could use as needed – he didn’t have to worry about paying someone full-time to handle his writing needs. Soon, Jay’s marketing arsenal included professionally written ads, customer-focused brochures, an entertaining and informative monthly newsletter, and a simple web site to promote his three stores and sell his coffee beans. Once the community knew who Jay was and what his store was about, business picked up significantly. And with Store #3 doing well, Jay could focus on expanding his profitable enterprise like he planned all along!

*Fred’s goal was to help Jay establish himself in the community with simple yet effective methods – targeted advertising, brochures, a newsletter, and the ability to order his signature beans online. The lesson here is that the small business owner can’t always do it alone, and good writing can help*

*sustain a successful business over the long haul.*

## Case Study #3: Western Payroll Services

### The Company

Western Payroll was a large payroll services firm serving companies nationwide. Its human resources department had recently gone through a period of transition with several new staff members coming aboard. With the transition came an unanticipated wave of confusion and uncertainty among the staff members, mostly due to a lack of communication between management and staff.

*In corporate America, reorganizations and other periods of transition are often plagued by a lack of communication. Because the work doesn't stop, management often overlooks telling its employees what's going on. Whether this happens unintentionally or deliberately, the employees suffer when they're left in the dark.*

### The Challenge

The problem appeared to be twofold. First, several staff members were unclear of their job duties. Secondly, reporting hierarchies were informal and undefined. Management was busy with its own challenges and failed to recognize the great divide developing within the ranks.

With formal communication severely lacking, rumors began to develop. David, a ten-year benefits specialist, was told by a coworker that the new people were “taking over.” Bill, one of the new supervisors, heard through the grapevine he would have to fire some of the longtime employees. Julie, a pension plan administrator, heard the entire department would be outsourced to another company within six months. She and several others began updating their resumes.

Soon, the rumors made their way to Susan, the Human Resources Manager. Susan had been with Western for several years and recently promoted into her position from another department. Susan knew she had been lax in keeping her staff informed during this time of transition, but had no idea things had gotten so out of hand. As a starting point, she scheduled a meeting with her direct reports.

During the meeting with her staff, Susan learned the problem was bigger than just rumors. With some job roles undefined, day to day operating procedures were falling by the wayside. Rumors were one thing, but the daily business of the department could not be compromised. Her next step was to meet with the entire department in an effort to put everyone at ease.

At the department meeting, Susan faced a barrage of questions: “Is the department closing?”...“Is Joe in charge of Benefits now?”...“Do I report to Mary?”...“What’s the real reason John left?” After dispelling the major rumors and reassuring the staff the department wasn’t closing, Susan asked for suggestions on how to get a handle on things. “We just need to know what’s going on,” someone chirped from the crowd.

One employee raised his hand and suggested a monthly print newsletter might help matters. “It wouldn’t have to be anything fancy,” he said, “as long as it includes useful information each month.” Susan thought it was a great idea, but didn’t have any writers on staff to handle such an assignment.

*In this case, Susan was at first somewhat oblivious to the frustrations of her staff; however, she was wise enough to meet with her direct reports and then the entire department to sort things out. By asking for input, Susan allowed the employees to vent their frustrations and come up with possible solutions.*

### **The Solution**

A few months earlier, Susan had received an email from Elizabeth, a local freelance copywriter. In the email, Elizabeth simply offered her services if Susan ever had any occasional or ongoing writing work. Elizabeth later followed up with a short letter with her business card enclosed, just to keep in touch. Fortunately, Susan saved the business card and decided to give Elizabeth a call.

Susan met with Elizabeth to discuss the newsletter idea. Elizabeth had written a few corporate newsletters in the past, so she had relevant experience. She explained how she worked and said she would email Susan a quote after determining how long the project would take. Susan breathed a sigh of relief as Elizabeth seemed to be really on top of things.

*Without a writer on staff, Susan needed someone to work on the newsletter right away. Fortunately, Elizabeth had contacted Susan on two occasions and made a good impression. Elizabeth's simple solicitation approach, with appropriate follow up, meant that Susan didn't have to waste any time looking for a good copywriter.*

### **The Outcome**

After beginning work on the project, Elizabeth interviewed Susan and other supervisors to clarify what was going on in the department. In the resulting premiere issue, the department got just what it needed.

The newsletter featured sections on new employees, promotions and an updated organization chart, outlining all job duties and reporting hierarchies. Other regular pieces included a summary of new procedures and practices, staff acknowledgments and a column written by Susan herself. Susan was extremely pleased with Elizabeth's work and hired her on a continuing basis to handle subsequent monthly issues. With everyone on the same page, so to speak, morale improved and the department got back to doing what it did best.

*Elizabeth's efforts helped restore order to a department that was in disarray. Simple, timely communication in the form of a monthly newsletter cleared the air and eased the minds of the employees. And because she did such a good job, Susan retained Elizabeth's services on a monthly basis to make sure her staff would always be informed.*

## **Case Study #4: Siciliano's Restaurant**

### **The Company**

Siciliano's was a new restaurant in town operating out of a large, recently renovated commercial space. The premises included not only a restaurant, but also a full banquet hall facility and gourmet Italian market. Run by brothers Richard and Peter Siciliano, the two had big plans for their business.

*Siciliano's has great potential to succeed as it possesses three potential profit centers in its restaurant, banquet hall, and Italian market. The key to its success is successful promotion of all aspects of the operation.*

### **The Challenge**

With no other Italian restaurants or banquet facilities in town, Richard and Peter assumed their establishment would immediately fill a void and attract all kinds of customers. Although business was good at the restaurant from the outset, it was as if the banquet hall and market didn't exist. Richard sized up the situation and knew they needed a formal plan to promote all facets of the business. He

approached his brother with several ideas, but Peter wouldn't hear of it. "People will tell other people," he reasoned, "and that's how we'll get business." Peter pointed out he had successfully operated a restaurant in the past, albeit under different circumstances with much lower overhead.

A few weeks passed and business was still flat overall. The restaurant was doing well at dinner (patrons loved the food), but the banquet facility was rarely booked and the Italian market was a ghost town. Siciliano's had a lot to offer, but the word wasn't getting out. Richard met with his brother again and expressed his concern, "People love our food, but it's not helping our market or banquet hall. With the rent we pay, we need to do well across the board." Peter was still resistant, but conceded they couldn't survive on the restaurant alone.

*Many small businesses operate in a vacuum when it comes to marketing themselves. Sometimes the owners feel the minute they open their doors, the whole world will walk in. In this case, two partners (who happen to be brothers) don't see eye to eye on how to promote their business. Richard realizes a formal plan is necessary, whereas brother Peter prefers to leave their fate up to word of mouth. With only one facet of the business doing well, the business wasn't going to survive without thriving in all areas. At least in this example Peter is a voice of reason; many small businesses fail to react when times get tough.*

### **The Solution**

Richard knew what needed to be done – successful cross-promotion of the restaurant, banquet hall and market. He also wanted to publish a small magazine featuring family recipes and how Siciliano's could serve the community. He outlined his plans, but was too busy to do anything more. He needed some help – he needed someone to put his ideas into words. Richard told Peter he was going to hire a professional writer to help with the ads, magazine and other marketing materials. "A professional writer?" Richard argued, "Why do we need to hire someone? Anyone can write." Richard didn't back down. "Okay," he said to his brother, "if we don't hire someone, then you or I will have to do it, and we're too busy running the business...and we're not good writers!" Frustrated, Peter finally gave in. "Fine, hire your writer," he said, "but it better be worth it!"

Richard attended a local business owners' breakfast meeting and was referred to a freelance writer named Jennifer. Jennifer met Peter at the restaurant for a free consultation and reviewed his plans. She was impressed with the banquet hall and market and quickly surmised Siciliano's was much more than just a restaurant. "We need to highlight all aspects of your business," Jennifer concluded, "You have so much to offer." Richard almost jumped out of his seat, "That's what I've been telling my brother the last two months!"

*Peter had good ideas he wanted to implement, but didn't have the writing skills or the time to see them through. He knew a professional writer could help, but brother Richard disagreed. This kind of resistance is common in the business world, especially among small business owners. Some don't see the value of professional writing and don't feel it makes a difference. Richard's "Anyone can write" argument is probably superseded only by the "I can do it myself" mantra – both opinions being equally flawed. Good writing skills are rare in the business world and most business owners, even if they have the talent, don't have time to do it themselves. A good copywriter allows business owners and executives to do their jobs and not worry about writing tasks. Peter realizes hiring a good writer is an investment, not an expense, and his business will benefit greatly by having a dedicated person in this role.*

### **The Outcome**

Within a few weeks, Jennifer wrote three different ads, one focusing on the restaurant, the other two highlighting the banquet facility and market, respectively. She also helped Richard create the first issue of Siciliano's quarterly magazine. Featuring recipes, interviews with the staff, and information

about all aspects of the business, the magazine was distributed freely throughout town where anyone could pick up a copy.

Soon, customers began filtering into the Italian market and banquet reservations picked up considerably. Richard and Peter heard the same comments over and over: “I didn’t know you had a market”...“You mean I can have my banquet here with your incredible food?” One day, a customer stopped by the market and asked, “I hear you have a restaurant, too?” Richard caught his brother’s eye. “Okay, okay,” Peter said, “you were right, good writing does make a difference.” “I’m glad you agree,” Richard said as he put his arm around his brother, “Now let’s get back to work!”

*Jennifer was able to transform Peter's ideas into tangible marketing pieces, all written to highlight Siciliano's unique selling proposition – not just a restaurant, but a banquet facility and Italian market as well. Furthermore, the quarterly magazine would help establish and maintain Siciliano's presence throughout town on a regular basis. Without a formal marketing effort, Siciliano's was doomed to fail. Fortunately, Peter had the foresight to do what needed to be done, and hired the right person to make it happen.*

## Case Study #5: Northern Investments Group

### The Company

William was the training manager for Northern Investments Group, a large financial planning firm. William had been in his job for only two months and was still getting acclimated to his surroundings. His first big challenge was to develop a proprietary training program for his financial planners. Until now, the company used a third party software program that covered basic principles, but could not be modified to address procedures specific to the company.

*Most training managers in large companies deal with outdated materials, outmoded technology and a changing business climate. It's easy to ignore these dynamics and continue business as usual; however, by failing to react accordingly, they will only fall behind further, thus affecting their bottom line.*

### The Challenge

In his previous job at another company, William had used a freelance copywriter for developing content for various training programs. Without a dedicated writer on staff, William thought he could bring someone in right away to help with the project; however, he learned he would first have to convince the departmental vice-president of the project's value.

William met with Jeff, the vice-president, but things didn’t go too well. Jeff couldn’t understand why William wanted to get rid of the existing online courses. William tried to explain that they didn’t meet the needs of the trainees, but Jeff failed to see the value in creating new courses. “Why waste time rewriting everything?” he argued, “We’re getting by with what we have.” William continued to plead his case, but Jeff’s mind was made up. “People don’t really read the course material anyway,” he said, “so let’s focus on other things.”

*William's experience is a common one in corporate America, especially in the training area. Big bosses sometimes fail to see the long term benefits of updating materials and meeting the current needs of their trainees. It's easy to say “We're getting by with what we have” when the adverse effects of poor training materials don't manifest themselves immediately. Jeff is ignoring the issue for the time being, preferring not to spend the time or money to rewrite the materials.*

### **The Solution**

Down but not out, William decided to hire his copywriter, Janet, to work up some samples. Janet knew it might be a very short assignment if Jeff didn't approve the new training program, but William needed tangible proof that good writing makes a difference. To illustrate his point, he asked Janet to rewrite different sections of one of the training courses. Once this was done, he would prepare a presentation comparing the old course material to the new samples. Janet came up with excellent examples of what good writing could accomplish. Whereas the old material was generic and outdated, the new material was well written, up to date and company specific in its content and scope.

*Frequently, the best way to illustrate the value of good writing is to compare it side by side against poor or ineffective writing. William knew his only chance of changing Jeff's mind was to show him in black and white. In this case, the old materials were outdated and too generic; Janet's rewriting brought the training materials into the twenty-first century.*

### **The Outcome**

Jeff wasn't keen on meeting with William again, but decided to hear him out. William had his Design department create compelling visuals comparing the writing samples side by side. With members from the Design group and Janet in attendance, William had a united front to help make his case.

This time the meeting with Jeff went very well. With samples in hand, William showed just how poor the old content was compared to the rewritten samples. Somewhat reluctant to admit it at first, Jeff finally realized the online courses needed an overhaul. "The old content is too vague," he observed, "Your new samples are much more focused and sound like they've actually been written by our company for our employees." "And better training materials will improve our bottom line," William added. "Yes they will," Jeff replied, "and I'm sure we'll see proof of that after we revamp all of our courses."

*When faced with comparing the old content with the newly rewritten samples, Jeff had to admit the old courses weren't up to par. Reluctant to spend the time and money on such a project, Janet's writing showed him the benefits of updating and personalizing the course content. By sticking with the old materials, the trainees would suffer and the company's bottom line would ultimately be affected. Jeff wasn't going to change his mind on his own, but William's persistence and Janet's writing saved the day.*

## **Case Study #6: Master Computer Solutions**

### **The Company**

Alan, Dave and Joe were three computer technicians who had recently formed their own consulting firm. They had all been successful as sole proprietors and looked forward to establishing themselves in the community as the preferred choice for computer service for the technically challenged.

*Small businesses are often founded by multiple individuals who bring their unique talents and experience to the table. They often bring their customers, too, which helps the new business get off to a good start.*

### **The Challenge**

The trio joined the local Chamber of Commerce and began attending various meetings and mixers, spreading the word as much as possible. Although there appeared to be a need for their services, the three had trouble articulating the benefits of their expertise. Other than business cards and a

nondescript web site, they lacked any other formal marketing materials.

*Alan, Dave and Joe are all computer technicians, not marketing specialists. And even though their business had a built-in client base from their sole proprietorship days, they would need to market their new business to ensure future growth. Joining the local Chamber was a good first step.*

### **The Solution**

After a few weeks, the partners realized they couldn't sustain themselves solely with their existing client base – they needed some help. Bill, a fellow Chamber member, suggested they hire a freelance copywriter to create some targeted marketing materials to stimulate business.

Bill recommended Allison, an experienced copywriter who had several Chamber members as clients. Allison met with the partners to determine their needs and how their business could serve the community.

Allison discovered the trio had unique talents among its individual members. All had general technical prowess, but each had his own specific area of expertise. Alan was a hardware expert who could repair any CPU, printer or other peripheral imaginable. Dave was a software wizard, familiar with Windows and Mac operating systems and assorted programs under both platforms. Joe was a networking specialist who could get any kind of network up and running. Among them, they could offer either specialized or full-service solutions for virtually any type of business.

*The Chamber membership paid off with a referral to an experienced copywriter. Allison had worked for other Chamber members and came highly recommended. She was able to distinguish the specific skills of each partner and envision how to market them to potential clients. Acting initially as a consultant, Allison offered a valued skill before she had even written a word.*

### **The Outcome**

After learning about their skills, Allison authored a series of brochures highlighting each partner's area of expertise. She also wrote additional pages to be added to the web site to illustrate exactly what Master Computer Systems could do for its customers. With this focused approach, the company's services were clearly communicated and potential clients could easily understand how the company could fulfill their needs.

With formal marketing materials in hand and their business's purpose clearly defined, Alan, Dave and Joe felt more confident promoting themselves and explaining how they could help potential customers. Consequently, business among Chamber members increased considerably. And soon, word spread throughout the community that Master Computer Solutions was the one-stop, full-service provider for all computer related needs.

*Allison helped Alan, Dave and Joe define themselves as a company and market their services accordingly with professionally written content. With someone else taking on the writing duties, the three could concentrate on serving their customers. Allison not only acted as consultant and writer, but also helped instill confidence in the partners, which in turn would lead to new clients to sustain the business.*

## Case Study #7: Ben Wilson, D.D.S.

### The Company

Ben Wilson was an accomplished young dentist living in a suburb of a mid-sized metropolitan area. After three years of working in an office with two other dentists, Ben had recently opened his own practice in the same town. Although Ben liked and respected his colleagues, he felt they were set in their ways and resistant to any changes in technique. Ben, on the other hand, wanted to take advantage of the latest technological advances in his field.

*Recently educated in his field, Ben has decided to break free from the constraints of working in an office slightly behind the times. It is a bold move, but, like many new small businesses, he feels he has the expertise and confidence to be successful.*

### The Challenge

At the outset, a few of Ben's patients from the old practice followed him to his new office. Although an encouraging sign, Ben knew he needed to reach out to the community to build his practice. He advertised in the local paper, but his ads did little to distinguish his practice from others in the area.

*Striking out on your own is never easy, even when you retain some of your old clients. Ben senses from the beginning he needs to be proactive in promoting his practice. Rather than sitting on his hands waiting for new patients to find him, he attempts to get the word out through ads, but has little success.*

### The Solution

Ben knew what he had to offer, but articulating these benefits in ads or marketing materials was not his strong suit. After a meeting with his staff, he decided to hire a freelance writer to help steer his efforts in the right direction.

Ben didn't know where to find such a writer, so he spoke with a few colleagues and other business acquaintances. Some suggested he check with the local Chamber of Commerce, others recommended writers they had used in the past. Ben needed someone who could effectively summarize his benefits and determine which marketing efforts would work best.

After considering his options, Ben hired Jim, a local copywriter who had experience writing marketing materials for professionals in the medical and dental fields. Jim met with Ben and made a list of the benefits Ben offered compared to other dentists in the area. Jim discovered that all of the practices were similar in most respects, but Ben was the only dentist offering state of the art laser cleaning techniques. As opposed to the old-fashioned scraping and scaling approach, the laser method was not only more effective, but also more comfortable for the patient. Jim thought these benefits and services put Ben ahead of the competition.

Jim suggested a variety of marketing pieces, including ads highlighting Ben's services, informative brochures that could be mailed to local residents, and other descriptive materials that could be circulated at professional gatherings and local community functions. Jim felt if Ben presented himself as the state of the art dentist in town, his reputation would become known throughout the community.

*Ben realizes he's not the person to do the writing for his marketing materials. After checking with his colleagues, he finds a copywriter who has writing experience in the medical and dental fields. Jim, the copywriter, uncovers Ben's unique selling proposition – a state of the art cleaning technique not used*

*by other dentists in the area. Now this might have been something Ben took for granted, but Jim's objectivity allowed him to discover what set Ben apart from the competition. By highlighting this benefit in the marketing materials, Ben's practice would be seen in a unique light.*

### **The Outcome**

Once Jim finished writing the materials, the new ads were placed and the brochures mailed to select residents. The response was good – the number of new patients increased and existing patients were surprised to learn about the additional services Ben offered. In turn, many patients told their family and friends about Ben, which helped spread the word throughout town. With Jim's help in defining Ben's unique benefits, Ben's marketing plan was a great success!

*The response to Jim's writing was positive and measurable. If Ben had continued to promote his business on his own, he might have never caught on to his unique benefit and wasted a lot of money on ineffective ads in the process. By enlisting Jim's consulting and writing expertise, Ben ensured the right message reached his potential customers.*

## **Case Study #8: John Davis, CEO**

### **The Company**

John Davis was Chairman and President of a large restaurant chain and had recently celebrated thirty years in the industry. Known as a pioneer in his field, John was approached by the local business journal about writing a series of articles about his management style and experience in the industry. It was a great opportunity for John to educate others in the business community and he accepted the offer without hesitation. If the series of articles was successful, he felt, perhaps he could use them as a springboard for a book on management.

*Successful business people are often asked to impart their wisdom on others, especially after a distinguished career. John Davis has had a long career with great success and is regarded as a innovator in his field – a prime candidate for passing on his management secrets.*

### **The Challenge**

The publication gave John several weeks to write his first article, with subsequent articles due accordingly on a monthly basis. He made a list of potential topics and outlined his thoughts. John had no trouble coming up with ideas; in fact, he realized with his years of experience, he would never be at a loss for content.

John's one concern was his ability to write the articles in a clear, concise manner. He was a decent writer, but understood his limits and wanted to make the best impression possible. The business journal offered a staff writer to work with him, but John declined. Considering the articles could lead to publication in other periodicals, or perhaps a book, he wanted a writing partner he could work with regularly for the foreseeable future.

*After being a successful businessman for decades, John knows what he can and cannot do. To make this venture worthwhile, he didn't want to rely on his merely passable writing skills – to really make a mark for the articles and any future projects, he wanted someone who could really write!*

### **The Solution**

Through his contacts, John compiled a list of several writers with varying levels of experience. Because he envisioned this as more than just one writing project, he had a specific person in mind. After interviewing the candidates, John selected Cynthia, a freelance copywriter who had worked on

executive ghostwriting projects in the past.

John knew how he wanted to write the articles, but was open to Cynthia's recommendations. He understood she was the hired professional and respected her input. Cynthia's approach was to interview John about the topic at hand so she could get up to speed. From there she would prepare a draft for John's review, and then both would participate in the editing phase. The process worked like a charm and soon they completed the first article and submitted it to the business journal.

*John approached the task of hiring a writer very carefully. He knew what he wanted and intended on selecting someone who could be a long term partner. Many freelance copywriters handle ghostwriting for business owners and executives. This might include short form items such as trade articles, and lengthier projects such as memoirs or books. Cynthia had ghostwriting experience and John deferred to her expertise accordingly. If John was the controlling type who didn't allow Cynthia to do her job, the relationship wouldn't work and it would waste everyone's time.*

### **The Outcome**

The business journal was very pleased with John's initial article and readership response was good after its publication. Subsequent monthly articles were also successful as John and Cynthia developed a strong working relationship. Eventually, John submitted the articles to other business publications nationwide, which increased his exposure accordingly. Cynthia also suggested submission to several key business web sites. After a few months, John had a collection of articles he could use as the foundation for his book. And with Cynthia as his writer, he knew his book would become a reality.

*With Cynthia at the helm, John's initial articles were well received and he established a new outlet to pass on his expertise. And by using Cynthia's suggestion to submit to key business web sites, he added an online presence he might not have envisioned otherwise. Finally, after amassing several months of articles, his book was well on its way. Without Cynthia, John would have never experienced this kind of success.*

## **Case Study #9: Southside Travel Agency**

### **The Company**

Southside Travel was a successful travel agency operating in a suburb of a small city. Southside had been in business for almost a decade and had a corner on the market with no competition in town. Southside's biggest selling point was its personalized service. With several experienced customer service representatives on staff, Southside was well known in the community and had a good reputation.

*Being the only game in town is an ideal situation for any business . . . no competition, no pressure, no reason to do anything differently. Unfortunately, the business world is a dynamic place, and nothing stays the same forever. The smart business is the one that stays ahead of the game, even when things are going well. Becoming complacent and taking market conditions for granted can be disastrous in the long run.*

### **The Challenge**

Business was going well until word hit the street that a new travel agency was opening nearby. Bob Owen, Southside's owner, was somewhat taken aback by this news. He wondered how it would affect his business and tried to learn more about his new competitor. According to the local business bureau, "Express Travel" would be opening its doors in four weeks.

Bob didn't want to panic, but met with his employees to discuss the matter. "We need to keep doing what we do best," he told them. Everyone was upbeat, but at the same time slightly unnerved about a new travel agency infringing on their territory.

The next four weeks flew by and soon Express Travel opened with great fanfare. The office's design was sleek and modern and nearly twice the size as Southside's space. Express's first week featured incredible airfare and hotel deals and business was brisk. Bob stayed the course and assumed the novelty would wear off eventually.

Bob's business model did not focus on the lowest price, but instead personalized customer service and developing long term relationships with its customers. Southside had established itself as a customer-friendly business and a charitable member of the business community. Despite holding fast with this proven approach, unfortunately Bob noticed a decline in business the first month Express was in town. Southside maintained a good share of its loyal customers, but many people switched agencies solely on price. Bob didn't understand how Express could continue to offer great deals on a regular basis, but knew he couldn't stand on the sidelines any longer.

Bob had been fortunate over the years. As the only travel agency in town, he didn't need to do any formal marketing or advertising. Of course, Southside didn't prosper by default; it was a well-run, profitable business with a dedicated, competent staff. Bob would never knowingly become complacent, but it was obvious this turn of events caught him off guard.

One day a customer came in to book a business trip and said he was glad to be back at Southside. "I tried Express," he said, "but they don't have that personal touch." He went on to explain how Express made a mistake on his last booking and didn't even seem to care. "They're too busy for their own good," he said, "You're just an account to them, not a real person."

Bob finally had some insight into what he was up against. Express was beating him on price, but clearly missing the mark on customer service. Bob knew he needed to get the word out and remind the community why Southside was the preferred choice. Without ever having to write or create any marketing materials during his tenure at Southside, however, Bob didn't know where to begin.

*Bob's situation at Southside Travel is not unique. Many businesses face the day when a new competitor arrives on the scene. Initially, Bob didn't react at all, preferring to see how events transpired before doing anything. But while Express Travel was enjoying a successful grand opening, Bob was forced to look at his own business and discover what made it tick. Even though Express caught him off guard, he didn't ignore the situation. He didn't panic when he started to lose customers, yet it was a returning customer who shed some light on what he needed to do. If one customer returned because of his customer service, then why not others?*

### **The Solution**

One of Bob's loyal customers was Lauren, a local freelance copywriter. Lauren had noticed the decline in business and offered her services to Bob. Bob needed an expert and Lauren had the experience he desired. After speaking with Bob and his staff, Lauren discovered Southside's rates weren't much higher than Express's, but the perceived value in lower prices was putting Southside at a disadvantage. With experience and customer service added to the equation, however, Southside clearly had the edge. The challenge was communicating this value-added benefit to potential customers.

With no marketing materials in existence, Lauren had a clean slate and many options to consider. She narrowed the focus to a few key areas, including advertising in the local paper and creating

brochures highlighting Southside's benefits. She also recommended a series of ghostwritten articles, under Bob's name, discussing the travel industry for publication in a regional travel magazine. This, in turn, would be good exposure for Southside by presenting Bob as an industry expert. Bob was thrilled with Lauren's ideas and understood how this approach was the best way to go with Express seemingly content focusing solely on price.

Lauren got to work and came up with effective copy for the ads, brochure and two different articles. She knew once Southside's unique selling proposition (personalized customer service) was communicated to potential customers, business would pick up accordingly.

*Fortunately for Bob, a loyal customer named Lauren happened to be a freelance copywriter. Until now, Bob never had to look at his business objectivity and identify what it did best, let alone write any marketing materials. Convinced he was losing out to Express solely on price, Lauren's analytical skills helped narrow the distinction between the two agencies. In the process, Lauren discovered the difference in price was negligible at best. If she could successfully communicate Southside's finer qualities, the community would respond accordingly.*

*By unearthing Southside's unique benefits and contrasting them with the competition, Lauren came up with a variety of marketing materials designed to bring in more business. Bob was the forgotten man behind Southside Travel, and it was time to remind the community of who he was and what his business had to offer.*

### **The Outcome**

With the new marketing materials in circulation and Bob stepping up his networking efforts at the local Chamber of Commerce, business began to swing back in Southside's direction. Over at Express, the low prices alone couldn't carry the load and business leveled off. It was obvious the discriminating traveler would have a much more satisfying customer experience at Southside, and this is what Lauren was counting on when she created the new materials. Bob and his staff had not only weathered the storm, but also positioned themselves as a valued member of the business community for years to come, no matter what challenges lie ahead.

*With a varied, targeted approach, Lauren successfully reintroduced Southside Travel to the community, bringing back old customers and attracting new ones. If Bob had stayed the course or attempted to write the materials on his own, he might have gone out of business. Fortunately, he sought professional writing help and allowed Lauren to do her job, which led to a rebirth of sorts for his agency. Lauren proved herself not only as an effective copywriter, but also a valued marketing consultant.*

## **Case Study #10: Richfield Mall**

### **The Company**

Richfield Mall is a privately-owned shopping mall operating in the small, middle class town of Richfield. The mall opened in 1985 and is in good condition, but is also beginning to show its age here and there. Although the mall has no competitors in town, a new big box store (Mega-Mart) recently opened twenty miles away and has taken away some customers. The mall is owned by the Pearson family, a well-respected member of the business community. With an aging structure, some tenants hinting at vacating their store fronts and a shrinking customer base, the Pearsons realize they need to act quickly to stay competitive and avoid a dire situation down the road.

*The only thing certain in today's business climate is change. Even when things are going well,*

*companies have to plan ahead in order to survive. For Richfield Mall, the storm clouds were gathering – an aging facility, a big box competitor, restless tenants, and a decreasing customer base. Instead of whistling in the dark, however, at least the Pearson family knew what was happening.*

### **The Challenge**

Mr. Pearson, known as “Pops” throughout town, is nearing retirement age and has been grooming his son, Joseph, to take over the family business. Both are astute businessmen and know they are in a predicament – with income decreasing, they can’t afford to remodel the mall; yet, without remodeling, they can’t keep or attract the tenants they desire. The only feasible solution is to promise existing tenants that a renovation is in the works and hope the tenants will trust them to follow through.

The Pearsons had been fortunate over the years operating as the only retail center in town with little competition. Although somewhat dated now, the mall had thrived for many years and was still quite charming. With the opening of the Mega-Mart store the previous year, some stores in the mall closed and others moved into more affordable retail space in outlying areas. Joseph and Pops understood the unique challenge ahead of them: they had to convince both merchants and customers of the mall’s unique benefits compared to the impersonal Mega-Mart several miles away.

Joseph and Pops decided the best approach was to let the community know they were aware of the problem and intent on addressing the situation. The marketing campaign would include articles in the local paper and targeted direct mail letters to businesses and the public. Most importantly, existing mall tenants needed to be reassured that the mall’s future was in good hands.

*The Pearsons wanted to be as proactive as possible within their financial limitations. Although a total renovation of the mall wasn’t feasible, minor upgrades and a concerted marketing effort might be enough to retain tenants and bring back customers. If the Pearsons sat on their hands and merely hoped for the best, the community would surely notice and respond by staying away. In turn, merchant tenants would feel the owners didn’t care, therefore they would have to leave in order to survive. The Pearsons’ goal was to reintroduce the mall to the community.*

### **The Solution**

The Pearsons knew what they wanted to do, but realized they didn’t have the writing skills to effectively complete the tasks at hand. They had used a local copywriter in the past to create some ads and promotional materials, so they knew who to contact to handle the new project.

Pops and Joseph met with their copywriter, Marie, and solicited her input on the matter. Marie was a longtime Richfield resident and was aware of the mall’s benefits and shortcomings. The obvious benefit was the mall’s proximity to its customers – with the Mega-Mart a half hour away, this was a strong selling point. Furthermore, the locally owned and operated mall was a fixture in town – Richfield residents had pride in their community and were very supportive of local businesses. The mall was also quaint and inviting, not sterile and impersonal like the Mega-Mart. Marie felt the homespun appeal alone was more important than anything Mega-Mart could offer twenty miles away.

*Fortunately for the Pearsons, they could turn to a copywriter they had used in the past. Marie had grown up in Richfield and was familiar with the mall and the Pearson family. In this instance, a local perspective was beneficial as Marie could analyze the situation not only as a writer, but also as a customer and Richfield resident. By putting herself into the shoes of the residents, she understood the Mega-Mart alternative was far from ideal for several reasons. By highlighting the mall’s unique benefits, Marie’s writing could help win back customers and merchant tenants alike.*

### **The Outcome**

Working with the Pearsons, Marie wrote three different direct mail letters – one to existing mall tenants, one to other local merchants, and a third to town residents. The theme of the letters focused on the mall's benefits and the revitalization plans, including new landscaping, painting and interior redesign. Marie also wrote an article for the local paper announcing the makeover plans and the recent efforts to reach out to the community.

The article and letters created a buzz in Richfield, almost as if a sleeping giant had been awoken. Existing tenants and other merchants in town were reassured that the mall's future was secure, and the public knew its mall would remain a vital part of the community. As the renovations began, the mall came back to life and business picked up. Despite Mega-Mart's looming presence, the Pearsons and their copywriter successfully conveyed the right message to the community, focusing on the benefits that would make the Richfield Mall the preeminent place to shop for years to come.

*By having a prior working relationship with Marie, the Pearsons understood how she worked and what she could deliver - copywriters who establish long term relationships with their clients are invaluable for this reason. Marie's letter-writing efforts helped bring Richfield Mall back in the forefront of the community. By emphasizing the mall's benefits, remodeling plans and clearly distinguishing it from the impersonal corporate giant several miles away, the community was reassured that Richfield Mall was here to stay. Sometimes you have to remind people you're still out there, and you can't stick your head in the sand when things get rough. By being proactive and using their copywriter to convey their message, the Pearsons weathered the storm and reestablished their place in the community.*

## **Case Study #11: Miller Accounting**

### **The Company**

Miller Accounting was a small accounting firm operating in a large metropolitan area. An upstart company, Miller had experienced great success in its ten-year existence. Alan Miller, the founder, was a hands-on manager and had good relationships with all of his employees. He believed in a true open door policy, where anyone could come to him for any reason, and his employees trusted him implicitly.

*Some small companies thrive on informal management and operations, much to the delight of their employees. In this case, the corporate climate at Miller Accounting is a reflection its owner, Alan Miller. By being respectful of his staff, he has earned their respect in return and built a very successful business in the process.*

### **The Challenge**

One month recently, Alan encountered some unique human resources issues that hadn't come up in the past – one employee requested to go out on family leave, another needed extended time off for an illness, and a third recently returned to the company after a two-year absence and had questions about his vacation and benefits. As a small firm, Miller had neglected to publish a formal human resources manual and relied on a piecemeal collection of standards and practices referred to on an as-needed basis.

Alan regarded his employees as family and always handled personnel matters with the utmost care and adherence to the law. Despite this, it wasn't good business practice to operate without a formal human resources manual. All of the pieces were there to create a manual, but it was an unorganized collection of papers and binders sorely in need of rewriting and updating. Alan had plenty of accountants around and a dedicated human resources specialist, but no writer to speak of.

*An informal management style can have its drawbacks, especially when certain situations arise. For years, Miller Accounting got by without a formal human resources manual, which wasn't really a wise move on its part. Fortunately, no troubles had arisen because of this, but now Alan is faced with a variety of HR issues that need attention and clarification. By having to refer to a loose-leaf collection for its HR protocol, Alan wasn't presenting himself or his company in the best light.*

### **The Solution**

Alan realized if he wanted a professional manual, he would need to hire a professional writer to get the job done. Alan's HR person, Mary, had worked with a freelance copywriter in the past at her previous company and offered to contact him. Alan trusted Mary to find the right person and told her to set up a meeting.

Mary contacted Robert, a copywriter who had experience in working with human resources related content. Robert was finishing a project for another client and said he would be available to meet in a few days.

At the initial meeting, Robert requested to see the existing content to determine the scope of the project. He discovered everything was basically there, albeit in fragments, and Mary could act as the subject matter expert for any clarifications or updates. After assessing the situation, Robert said he would contact Mary and Alan the next day with a quote. Alan asked why he couldn't make an estimate on the spot; Robert explained he needed to take into account all aspects of the project – writing, concepting, meetings, revisions – in order to make an accurate estimate. He explained he always worked this way in fairness to the client. Alan understood.

The next day, after carefully reviewing the available content and determining how much work was required, Robert emailed his quote to Alan and Mary as promised. The quote outlined the work involved, a timetable for completion, as well as his fee. Alan thought the estimate was fair and Mary vouched for Robert's writing skills and work ethic. The project was on!

*Alan was smart enough to realize he needed a professionally written manual, and he delegated the task of hiring this person to his human resources specialist, Mary. By trusting others to do what they did best, Alan could focus on what he did best. Mary was well versed with HR procedures and knew a good copywriter who was familiar with HR content. Robert assessed the situation and made recommendations accordingly. Although Mary understood how Robert worked, Robert had to explain the process to Alan, including how he would arrive at quoting a price. Clients often need this kind of education, especially if they have never used a freelance copywriter before.*

### **The Outcome**

Robert worked closely with Mary and, a few weeks later, completed the first draft of Miller's new HR manual. Alan was impressed with Robert's writing and grasp of the subject matter. As an added bonus, Robert recommended a graphic designer he had worked with in the past to put some finishing touches on the look and feel of the manual. Although Alan hadn't budgeted for any design work, he trusted Robert and agreed to meet with the designer. The ensuing meeting was beneficial and Alan decided some graphics work would definitely improve the final product.

After revisions, design work and printing, Miller Accounting finally had a real human resources manual it could be proud of. And with a reliable copywriter and graphic designer available for future projects, Alan had made two valuable business contacts he could use for years to come.

*With Mary as his subject matter expert, Robert completed a first draft of the new manual relatively quickly. Because he had worked with her in the past at her previous employer, the process went quite smoothly, which is one of the intrinsic benefits of using the same copywriter on an ongoing basis.*

*Robert also recommended a graphic designer he had worked with in the past to handle the artwork, something Alan hadn't even thought of when the project began. By tapping into his network, Robert added value to his services and helped forge a lasting relationship with Miller Accounting.*

## Case Study #12: The Ultimate Workout

### The Company

Jeff Jones was the owner of The Ultimate Workout, a small fitness center operating in a suburb of a large city. After an unsuccessful six-month run as a traditional health club, Jeff decided to focus on a specialized workout routine as opposed to operating an all-purpose facility. The routine, devised by Jeff and dubbed "The Ultimate Workout," featured a series of intense exercises designed to tone the body and improve cardiovascular health. With several other health clubs in town, Jeff felt he had a niche that would attract those looking to get something more out of their workout experience.

"The Ultimate Workout" was designed to exercise all of the important muscle groups in one 30-minute workout per week. After researching his competitors, Jeff was certain his facility was the only place in town offering this type of program. He also felt there was a sizable target market for those wanting an effective workout routine that required only one visit to the gym each week.

*In this case study, Jeff realized he wasn't going to make it as a traditional health club and modified his business plan accordingly. By deciding to pursue a niche, he improved his odds of surviving in a competitive marketplace.*

### The Challenge

Jeff closed his doors for a week to swap out equipment and change his signage. When everything was ready, he reopened with little fanfare. His regular customers were impressed with the changes, but no one else in the neighborhood particularly noticed. Jeff and his staff distributed flyers and spread the word throughout town as best they could. Jeff thought he could handle promoting the business on his own, but it was obvious he needed some additional support.

After a few quiet weeks, Jeff decided to attend a local Chamber of Commerce meeting to do some networking. He was already a Chamber member, but hadn't taken advantage of any of the monthly mixers or meetings. At a breakfast mixer, he met several other local business owners and promoted his fitness center with great enthusiasm. Everyone was intrigued by Jeff's unique spin on the traditional workout experience and he handed out several business cards, but unfortunately he had no marketing materials to leave behind. Ideally, a brochure or fact sheet highlighting his club's benefits versus his competitors would have been beneficial. Jeff felt the mixer was useful, but realized he missed a golden opportunity by not having any marketing materials on hand. With nothing more than a business card, how would anyone remember exactly what The Ultimate Workout had to offer?

*Jeff is not a marketing expert. And with virtually no marketing materials, he's at a significant disadvantage, despite his unique niche. Even though he could effectively communicate his unique selling proposition in person, without any marketing materials to leave behind, his pitch would likely soon be forgotten.*

### The Solution

Back at the club, Jeff considered his options. Although he could talk a good game about his business, neither he nor anyone on his staff had the writing or marketing expertise to put together any promotional materials. He perused the Chamber's membership directory and searched for a writer. He found a name and checked out her web site. Jeff was impressed with the writer's portfolio and

gave her a call.

During the initial phone call, Sandy, the copywriter, asked about Jeff's writing needs. Although he knew he needed something, he wasn't sure which type of marketing materials would work best. To assist in narrowing his focus, Sandy emailed him a set of discovery questions that would help quantify his needs and give her a clearer picture of what his business was about. Jeff asked how much all of this would cost, but Sandy explained it was too early in the process to discuss price, especially without any specific projects determined yet. Considering Sandy's consultation was free with no obligation, Jeff set up a meeting and said he would have the answers to her discovery questions at that time.

At their meeting, Sandy became better acquainted with Jeff and his business. She described how she worked and made some recommendations on how to get the word out and increase his customer base. The first marketing piece, she suggested, should be a direct mail letter sent to all Chamber of Commerce members and select local residents. In the letter, Sandy would distinguish Jeff's Ultimate Workout from the traditional workout experience. Next, she suggested publishing a short newsletter offering health and fitness tips, in addition to promoting the facility. Jeff had many years of experience and the newsletter would be a good vehicle for presenting him as an expert in his field. Finally, she would create a new flyer/fact sheet that could be distributed at Chamber meetings and made available at the club for walk-in customers. Jeff thought these were great ideas, but wondered if they were worth the cost and would make a difference.

Sandy understood Jeff's apprehension and explained to him that although he had a unique product (compared to other local health clubs), no one really knew about it and business wasn't going to pick up on its own. Jeff had some budgetary concerns, but Sandy pointed out her writing services should be looked at as an investment, not an expense. Jeff thought back on Sandy's online portfolio and remembered she did good work. Furthermore, she was pleasant to work with and seemed genuinely interested in helping him succeed. He realized she would make a good business partner and decided to hire her.

*Jeff wasn't going to hire Sandy on the spot, but Sandy knew how to make a good impression to a potential client and demonstrate how she could help him. By using a set of discovery questions, Sandy could learn more about Jeff's marketing objectives, and he could narrow the focus at the same time. Many business owners don't know where to begin when faced with promoting themselves. By encouraging them to self-examine their specific situation, certain projects will come to light.*

*After meeting with Jeff, Sandy was better equipped to recommend various projects, but Jeff still wasn't convinced his money would be well spent. Sandy explained to Jeff the value of good writing and how his business would benefit in the long run. Realizing he wasn't getting anywhere on his own, Jeff trusted Sandy to help him achieve his goals.*

### **The Outcome**

Sandy began working on the fact sheet and direct mail letter, and also met with Jeff again to discuss newsletter topics. Within a few days, she completed both items, plus an outline of the first newsletter. Using the Chamber of Commerce directory, Jeff and his staff began sending out a few letters a day. He also attended another Chamber meeting with new fact sheet in hand, clearly describing what his business was about. Response to the new materials was good and Jeff noticed an increase in foot traffic and telephone inquiries. Now that he had effectively communicated what set his health club apart from the competition, his business was truly reborn.

Over the next few months, memberships increased and Jeff continued to use Sandy for his bi-monthly newsletter, which was prominently displayed at the club and became a big hit among members. Jeff became known in the community as the health and fitness expert that he was, and The Ultimate

Workout took its place among the town's most successful businesses.

*Many small businesses assume customers will find them, and they often go out of business in the process. Having already failed with a traditional health club setup, Jeff tapped into a unique spin with his Ultimate Workout, but had no idea how to promote it. With the assistance of an experienced copywriter, he was able to implement a simple yet targeted marketing campaign that introduced his club to the community. The money was well spent as it brought his business to life and brought in new customers, too!*

## Case Study #13: Allenford Center for the Performing Arts

### The Company

The Allenford Center for the Performing Arts was a recently refurbished theater in the community of Allenford. Long in disrepair, a generous endowment from a local resident gave new life to the once-proud facility. After a two-year restoration, the Center had reopened three months ago to great fanfare and celebration.

Meredith Stevens was the Center's Public Relations Director and supervised an enthusiastic support staff. The theater featured mostly plays and musicals, with the occasional pop or jazz artist stopping by. Although the calendar was booked for the first several weeks after the reopening, the novelty of the restoration was already wearing off. Keenly aware of this, Meredith knew it was imperative to keep the Center in the forefront of the community and its residents.

*Some new businesses experience great success after opening, whereas others struggle from the outset. Initial success is wonderful, but it can be fleeting. In this case study, the newly refurbished theater rode the wave of its reopening for a few months, but now it was time to buckle down and learn how to prosper after the newness wore off. Fortunately, the theater's Director of Public Relations is aware of this and understands what needs to be done.*

### The Challenge

With Meredith's staff mostly administrative in nature, she had relied on an ad agency to handle the bulk of the PR work leading up to the Center's reopening. Although the agency did a decent job, Meredith felt the Center didn't get its money's worth and needed to go in a different direction.

Part of the problem was the ad agency hailed from an adjacent metropolitan area with few ties to Allenford; consequently, its "big city" style didn't come across well in the promotional materials. For the Center to thrive beyond its reopening, Meredith felt a local perspective was necessary. She wanted to embrace the history of the old theater and position it as a first class performing arts center for years to come.

To achieve her goals, Meredith wanted local creative talent – nothing flashy, nothing fancy, no big agency headaches. She looked to hire a writer and graphic designer to handle projects on an ongoing basis. Meredith envisioned several promotional items, including a booklet highlighting the history of the center, a quarterly newsletter featuring coming attractions and reviews of recent performances, and a web site incorporating the same elements in a classy, sophisticated design.

*Meredith knew she didn't want to work with an ad agency again. Many business owners continue to use their same support people - whether it be an agency, writer or designer - even if they're not entirely pleased with their work. Making a change is a difficult, but sometimes necessary decision. Meredith felt the agency didn't communicate effectively to the theater's target audience in its marketing*

*materials. Preferring creative talent who would provide more personalized attention to her needs, Meredith wanted to hire freelancers to handle all future projects.*

### **The Solution**

Meredith spoke with some of the Center's leading benefactors regarding writer/designer referrals. One gentleman recommended a local writer he had used to help promote his business. Although the writer no longer lived in Allenford, he had grown up there and maintained close ties to the area.

The next week, Meredith met with Charles, a freelance copywriter with experience in writing web copy and other marketing collateral. He had been in business for himself for only a short time, but had previous corporate writing experience and a solid portfolio. Meredith was impressed not only with his writing skills, but also his marketing expertise. He offered a fresh perspective regarding her ideas and made several good suggestions of his own. Meredith soon realized Charles would be much more than a writer; he would also be a valued consultant.

Meredith asked Charles about graphic designers and he recommended someone he had worked with in the past. He also knew a reliable printer who could assist with all facets of that area. Meredith was thrilled with what Charles had to offer – experience, insight, and even a network of professionals to make her life easier.

*In hiring Charles, Meredith found someone with all the qualities she desired: a local perspective, relevant experience, keen insight, and professional contacts to provide a turnkey solution to address her needs. Charles understands that these are qualities that any client would appreciate, which is why he was experiencing success in his new business and developing a good reputation throughout town.*

### **The Outcome**

As soon as all parties were available, work began on the first project. Meredith wanted to start with the theater history booklet, which would be made available on-site at the Center and also through the new web site. Charles interviewed staff members and some longtime Allenford residents to learn more about the theater's rich history. After putting together a first draft, Meredith was pleased with his work and had very few changes. Rebecca, the graphic designer, came up with a simple yet classy look and feel, and the project progressed nicely.

As the theater history booklet took shape, Meredith, Charles and Rebecca began brainstorming about the newsletter. In addition to a print copy, Charles suggested it also be distributed online to season subscribers and anyone who joined the Center's mailing list. The entire process ran smoothly because Charles and Rebecca worked so well together, and Meredith couldn't be happier.

Within a few weeks, the theater history booklet and premiere issue of the quarterly newsletter were completed. The history booklet was displayed prominently in the lobby and became a big hit among patrons. It featured an engaging narrative and elegant design, along with several archival photographs of the theater throughout the years. The first newsletter touted the publication of the history booklet and previewed the performance calendar for the coming months. Next on Meredith's list was the web site, which Charles and Rebecca looked forward to working on as well. The site would feature an online version of the newsletter, as well as other common elements culled from the history booklet.

In a short period of time, Meredith had added several key elements to the Center's public relations repertoire, establishing a print and soon-to-be online presence that didn't exist previously. Furthermore, she had established a great working relationship with a talented writer and graphic designer, both of whom she planned on using for years to come.

*Charles and his peers worked well together because they had worked together often in the past. By providing a team solution for Meredith, she didn't have to worry about micro-managing any of the projects. She also knew from the outset she was working with a group of dedicated professionals who wanted to help her reach her goals.*

## **Case Study #14: TM Retirement Planning**

### **The Company**

TM Retirement Planning was a small, family run financial planning firm focusing on the investment needs of people nearing retirement. Owned by Tammy Miller, she had been successfully running the business with her sister and mother for the past three years. In addition to managing client accounts, Tammy also offered retirement planning seminars to help promote her business. Operating out of her home office, Tammy was considering renting office space and adding support personnel to handle the various administrative tasks that were bogging her down. With her sister and mother busy with clients, Tammy knew she couldn't do it all and needed to adapt accordingly to help her business grow.

*Many small businesses thrive with small staffs, but if they intend to grow, staff additions and adjustments are necessary. In this case, Tammy is bogged down with tasks she shouldn't have to worry about. By expending her energy in other areas, she can't effectively promote her business and attract new clients.*

### **The Challenge**

With the prospects of adding staff, setting up payroll and looking for office space, Tammy no longer had time to handle the marketing duties to bring in new business. In the beginning, TM grew by word of mouth, mostly through family and friends. In recent months, Tammy had advertised locally and added a few clients, but clearly a more organized, targeted marketing effort was necessary. TM had no formal marketing materials and lacked any sort of online presence. Although Tammy couldn't afford to bring in a writer or marketing consultant full time, a contract or freelance hire was feasible. She realized her business wasn't going to prosper much longer on word of mouth alone.

*By experiencing word of mouth success early on, many business owners are lulled into thinking this kind of good fortune will continue indefinitely. However, to continue to succeed, businesses have to adapt to changing market conditions and other challenges. Tammy wants her business to grow, but no longer has the time to handle the marketing duties. And without formal marketing materials, she's jeopardizing both future growth and retention of existing customers.*

### **The Solution**

Tammy was a member of the local Chamber of Commerce and decided to attend a mixer to look for a writer. At a breakfast meeting, she met Joseph, a copywriter who had been a Chamber member for several years and had done a lot of work for fellow members. During their initial conversation, Tammy rattled off a few ideas and asked how much it would cost to develop the materials. Joseph explained he didn't quote a price without knowing the scope of the projects, and Tammy understood. "I'm not sure how all this works," she confessed, "but I really need your help with this stuff." Joseph scheduled a meeting where they could flesh out her ideas and get a clearer understanding of what Tammy wanted.

The next week, Joseph met with Tammy at her home office. Tammy explained how the business was growing and she could no longer act as the "marketing person" on a regular basis. Furthermore, she wanted to project a professional image in her marketing materials to attract new clients and ensure further growth.

Joseph asked Tammy several questions about her business and sized up the situation; he had done some writing for financial services companies in the past and had a fair understanding of the subject matter. Tammy's immediate needs fell into three areas: a web site highlighting services offered, a brochure for direct mail efforts, and support materials for her seminars. At the moment, all Tammy had were business cards and a hastily written brochure she had set up on her word processing program. As for the seminar materials, they were made up of assorted photocopied documents desperately in need of rewriting.

Tammy was impressed with Joseph's keen marketing sense and helpful consulting skills; he was clearly much more than a copywriter. Joseph explained the process, how he worked, and how he would determine his fee. He said he would email her a detailed bid letter outlining the fee structure and project benchmarks. Tammy had some concerns about who would handle the graphic design work, but Joseph reassured her he knew a good web designer who could do the design work as well. Tammy was pleased to be dealing with an established professional who was going to make her life easier during this critical time.

*Tammy knew she needed help and wanted a professional copywriter who could help improve her image. Although she admittedly didn't know how things worked with a freelance copywriter, Joseph was very helpful in explaining all aspects of the process. Tammy wasn't sure exactly which kind of marketing items would work best, but Joseph reassured her they would figure that out together. It's this kind of personalized attention that sets a freelancer apart from an ad agency or PR firm. Joseph was able to take the time to identify Tammy's needs, and also bring in additional support (a web designer) to handle other tasks.*

### **The Outcome**

After finalizing the project agreement, Joseph began working on the web site and brochure. After conducting interviews with Tammy, her sister and mother, he had a good foundation to go forward. Working with the web designer, the new site came together quickly and soon TM Retirement Planning had the online presence it lacked previously. The brochure soon followed and now Tammy was projecting the kind of professional image she desired.

The last of the initial projects was the support material for the seminars. Comprised previously of a binder of photocopied handouts and fact sheets, Joseph worked with the designer to develop a consistent look and feel, and planned on having the new binder ready for Tammy's next seminar. Overall, Tammy was thrilled with Joseph's work and knew his efforts would help take her company to the next level.

With a professionally written and designed web site and brochure, Tammy finally had some marketing materials to help her compete more effectively. And with the new seminar items in the works, her company's image would be seen in a whole new light by that audience. The best part, however, was she had found a new business partner in Joseph and his network of professional contacts. She looked forward to working with him in the future on additional projects he recommended. With the marketing side of things under control, Tammy finally had time to focus on what she did best, namely serving her clients . . . and finding that new office space, too!

*Tammy understood she had to make adjustments in her operation in order to grow, namely hiring freelance help to develop much-needed marketing materials. Some business owners continue to do everything on their own to the point where they're exhausted and it adversely affects their business. After meeting Joseph, Tammy knew she was in good hands with a professional copywriter who would make her life easier. And with his professional contacts, she now had a full service network she could use whenever needed. By looking at professional writing as an investment, not an expense, Tammy*

*improved her professional image and freed herself up to devote time to her clients.*

## Summary

In these scenarios, we've seen a consistent pattern of challenges, solutions and outcomes. Not all business owners value good writing and, in turn, they don't realize what a freelance copywriter can offer. Let's review the common reasons business owners don't value professional writing versus the advantages of using a freelance copywriter.

### Why Some Business Owners Don't See Value In Hiring a Freelance Copywriter

- **“I Can Do It Myself”:** Some business owners are used to spreading themselves thin, and often fail to see the need to bring in professional help. Even if they have good writing skills, they may not have the time or energy to devote to necessary writing tasks. By hiring a freelance copywriter, business owners free themselves up to focus on what they do best.
- **Budgetary Concerns:** Although certainly an important concern in businesses of all sizes, money spent on professional writing is money well spent. If the funds aren't there, that's one thing, but often decision makers simply feel good writing isn't worth the cost. What they don't understand is good writing is an investment, not an expense, and it can affect their bottom line. With professionally written materials – whether it be a brochure, web site, newsletter, or training course – a company can present a more professional image and compete more effectively.
- **Failure to Recognize the Problem:** Some business owners go blissfully along, not realizing conditions are changing. By not acknowledging new competition, obsolete technology, outdated materials, or a changing marketplace, businesses can lose their footing quickly. By hiring a freelance writer to communicate their unique benefits, they can tackle these issues and survive.
- **Maintaining The Status Quo:** Whether it be stubbornness or just a desire to stay the course, many business owners don't want to rock the boat. What they don't realize is that methods that worked yesterday might not work tomorrow. It's important to stay proactive and ahead of the curve to remain competitive.
- **Unappreciative of Good Writing:** If a company has gotten by with either poorly written or no marketing materials at all, they often don't see the value in good writing. If the tendency is to accept what they have or feel they can get along with nothing, they're risking their bottom line. Often, it takes strong writing samples compared against what they have to convince them to invest in good writing.
- **“I Don't Know Where To Find a Good Writer”:** For those who understand the value and have a need for good writing, they often don't know where to find a good writer. A good place to start is with professional organizations, such as a chamber of commerce or other local business groups. Frequently, fellow members will have copywriter referrals, and, in many cases, writers will already be part of the membership. It is also good to check with peers and fellow employees in other departments as they, too, may have used someone in the past. Finally, good copywriters stay in front of potential clients via email, regular mail and networking efforts. Keep an eye out for them! They will typically have a web site with writing samples and other pertinent information, so the prospective client can learn more about their background.

## Freelance Copywriter Benefits

- **Professional Writing Skills:** Rather than going without or trying to do it on their own, businesses need to recognize good writing makes a difference . . . and so does a good writer! Someone with a solid portfolio or experience in a specific industry can be a valuable staffing addition on an ongoing or occasional basis.
- **Relevant Experience:** Many freelance copywriters specialize in particular industries or fields (such as health care, financial services, marketing, or training), which can be an ideal fit for the hiring company. By bringing in someone already familiar with the subject matter and vernacular, the entire process will go more smoothly. Conversely, some copywriters have expertise with certain types of projects, whether it be web copy, newsletters, trade articles, or training courses. Again, by matching your needs with a copywriter's particular expertise, you can really streamline the process.
- **Consulting Skills:** Good copywriters are also valued consultants. With varied professional backgrounds, they can help define your goals and recommend appropriate projects.
- **Reduced Costs:** By hiring a freelance copywriter, businesses can get the project-specific help they need when they need it. Furthermore, they don't have to worry about sick pay, vacation pay, salary, or other benefits.
- **Project Recommendations:** Good copywriters see beyond the project at hand. By taking a broad overview of a client's goals and needs, the copywriter will often recommend other projects that logically follow. For example, if the first project is a brochure, why not add a web site with the same kind of information?
- **Professionalism:** Copywriters are business professionals. They take their jobs seriously and strive to maintain a professional image at all times. Furthermore, they pride themselves on being reliable, respectful, and dedicated to their craft. This is reflected in their web sites, project estimates, correspondence, and how they work with their clients.
- **Web Site with Writing Samples:** If prospective clients are interested in reviewing a copywriter's writing style or specific project samples, he or she will typically refer you to their web site. With this and other valuable information available online, it makes it easier to decide whether the writer matches your needs.
- **Professional Contacts:** An established copywriter can provide turnkey solutions for all your project needs. He or she can refer you to a graphic designer or printer, or even bring in these fellow professionals to work on the current project. Often, all parties have worked together before, ensuring the entire process will go smoothly. By providing a full service creative solution, it will make your life easier and you can focus on what you do best!

*Writing Matters* is a monthly ezine published by John Paul Tancredi Writing & Editing. Each issue presents scenarios where good writing by a freelance copywriter saves the day in a corporate or small business setting. This e-book is a compilation of the first year of issues. To view the current and past issues of *Writing Matters*, please visit: [www.JohnPaulTancredi.com](http://www.JohnPaulTancredi.com).

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