

The writer's survival guide and ticket to freedom

Portable Writing: The Secret to Living Your Dreams with
25 Projects to Fund Your Freedom

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PORTABLE WRITING:

**The Secret to Living Your Dreams
with 25 Projects to Fund Your Freedom**

PART 1

WRITE FOR THE LOVE OF IT— WRITE FOR THE MONEY

Chapter One

Get Started with Your Writing Adventure

Exciting is the only word I can think of to describe the writing business. And it is one of only a few businesses that can be truly portable. No matter where you live or travel or what your circumstances might be, if you can write, you can make a comfortable living. It took me a long time to learn how, exactly, but now that I have been living off my writing revenue for almost twenty years I'd like to share the secrets of success with you.

I find that there are two myths that pervade the writing business. Myth number one is that writers don't make money. What? We don't need to eat, too? Myth number two is that writers, or any other business person, for that matter, must operate out of a fixed location to succeed. No! You must have "working for yourself" confused with toiling for a big corporation.

Admittedly, lots of writers do work for slave wages. Some claim they can't seem to make money no matter how hard they work. In reality, anyone who writes for a living can make as much money as they wish—if they really want to! It does take know-how, but this book provides that. Add your own determination to succeed, and you can't fail. As for working in a fixed location, a writing career offers opportunities for everyone—but especially for those who can't or don't want to work at the same job in the same town for the rest of their lives.

There is one little recognized, but common problem that affects thousands of women and more than a few men in this country, alone.

KAY KENNEDY

Many individuals can't get ahead in their chosen profession because of circumstances beyond their control. My challenge was having a military husband who got transferred every few years. One month we were living in a small, hardscrabble town in the outer reaches of Texas—the following in the tropical paradise of Hawaii. We never knew where the next assignment would take us. While fascinating and educational, it was no way to build a career. And forget about building a retirement fund.

Now, new technology has revolutionized the way people work and the choices they can make. Today, those who choose to be writers can take charge of their careers and build secure futures no matter where or how often they move. **There are no geographical limits to earning an income from writing.**

I didn't start out to be a writer, even though that was a dream of mine. An impossible one, I thought. I believed you had to work for a newspaper, television station or magazine to have a writing career. Freelance writing wasn't even mentioned in the high school and college journalism classes that I took. It certainly never occurred to me that I could have a writing career and travel at the same time, and it probably never crossed the minds of my instructors, either! So I took a more realistic approach and majored in interior design. That gave me a leg up on landing a job each time we moved, though not necessarily jobs I would have chosen had I been a long-time resident of each place. There was no choice but to take whatever job I could find and work for two or three years until we were transferred. Then I had to start all over again.

Now, nothing is more joyful than waking up every morning and being able to decide whether to work or play, or what time to start my day. And there's no job as rewarding as working for myself in my own writing business. Writing, especially when partnered with desktop publishing capabilities, offers individuals a great living and positions them to advance as far as they wish.

There are millions of people married to someone whose job involves transfers every so often. They can't gain seniority, get promoted or build a substantial retirement fund because they must constantly change jobs. And people who move often can't realistically expect to start a business because most are not portable and might be difficult to sell when transfer time arrives. Spouses of military

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personnel and corporate employees who have to relocate every so often to move up the ladder of success are but two examples of those caught in similar circumstances.

There are also those individuals who decide mid-career to do something different with their lives and move across country in search of their ideal lifestyle. Maybe divorce or a death in the family forces a change.

Retirees who want a more meaningful life or need extra income can certainly find new purpose with a writing career. They can practice their craft and earn income wherever they choose to live or travel, or they can use their newfound skills in a volunteer position, if they wish.

Finally, there are those free spirits who want to travel and not be shackled to a job or business that will keep them tied to the same place and activities every day for the rest of their working years.

Anyone who is searching for a way to earn a living while raising a family, moving about the country or traveling around the world can become successful by learning the skills needed and applying them to their own life. As I'll show you in this book, writers can prosper anywhere.

Choose your lifestyle

You may have no desire to work anywhere but in the community where you've always lived. If so, you'll find this book was written with you in mind because none of the projects offered here is dependent upon your ability or willingness to travel. And it doesn't matter where you reside. You can live in Muleshoe, Texas or Humptulips, Washington and still employ every one of the exciting methods of earning income from writing that are covered in this book.

On the other hand, if you dream of seeing new places while you're young enough to enjoy them, you'll find this book was written for you because every project mentioned can make money no matter where you travel.

While most of you reading this book are probably not RVers, I realize that some might already have their own rig and wish to use it to travel while they earn income. Throughout the book, you'll learn the mechanics of writing for money. And for those unfamiliar with RVs, you'll learn more about them in Part Two.

In the beginning

You may already be a writer and own all of the equipment necessary to run your own business—you just want to know how to make more money! If so, start from where you are right now using the methods I outline in this book. If you don't already own a computer, here's hoping you will get one and learn the basics so that you can become more productive. Computers are not difficult to learn and you'll only need to master a couple of programs to become a more efficient and better writer. Certainly faster—which will help your bottom line! Computers that have enough power to meet all of your needs now sell for less than five-hundred dollars.

Some readers may not be writers yet, but it's something you've always dreamed of doing. Almost everyone has done some writing—either in school or on the job. Your only limitation may be that you haven't done it professionally, so don't know whether you write well enough to get paid for it. The only way to find out is to try. It's really not as difficult as you might think. And it doesn't matter what your background might be. In fact, the larger the variety of jobs you've held, the greater your chance for success since they will give you an expanded world view and experience pool to draw from for writing ideas and possibly, more contacts.

Is freelance writing for you?

First of all, you might wonder whether becoming a freelance writer is really for you. Will it pay enough? Does it require any special training that you would have to get before you start earning a living? Will it meet the criterion that you perceive as being most important?

Try this exercise to find out. Make a chart with five columns that compare what you now do for a living, what you can do based upon education and previous experience, and what your dream job is (in this case, freelance writing). In the left hand column list your current job and wish list. Head the second column: training needed. You can include the amount of training time or type of training that might be needed. The third column will be for time commitment—how many hours per day or week the job will consume. The fourth column is the stress level, if this is important to you, or any other standard you

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choose. It could also be used for commute time required, if that's important. The last column is for first year potential earnings.

Current/dream job	Training needed	Time/week	Stress level	Expected earnings first year
<i>Interior designer</i>	<i>Continuous</i>	<i>40-50 hrs.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>\$30,000</i>
<i>Mfr. sales rep.</i>	<i>None</i>	<i>50-60 hrs.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>60,000</i>
<i>Color consult.</i>	<i>Updating</i>	<i>Flexible</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>20,000</i>
<i>Art consultant</i>	<i>Updating</i>	<i>35-45 hrs.</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>30,000</i>
<i>Freelance writer</i>	<i>1-6 months</i>	<i>Flexible</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>15,000+</i>

The chart above is similar to the one I devised for myself back in the mid-eighties while trying to decide on a new career. At that time, I was only thinking about writing for magazines. Creating a business-writing career wasn't even under consideration. I just knew I was tired of having my lifestyle dictated by the amount of time spent on the job. I desperately needed a new career!

As you can tell from the chart, I definitely didn't choose a new career based on income expectations, at least at first. In fact I went with the lowest income potential for that year. My biggest handicap was using a portable typewriter, which meant that everything had to be retyped at least three times, sometimes more, to get a clean enough copy to mail to a publisher. Don't let the low figure in the chart scare you off because with the projects outlined in this book and a computer, you can make several times more money during your first year. Easily!

The **only** two requirements for my new profession were that it not be stressful and that I could have control over the final product. Yes the buyer would have ultimate say, but with careful upfront discussion I could decide whether the project fit my guidelines before I signed a contract.

KAY KENNEDY

While interior designers appear to have exciting, flexible, rewarding careers, the fact is that between initial design concept and final installation there is room for a multitude of problems. I couldn't control whether furniture would be damaged when it came in, or fabric have flaws and need to be re-ordered—only to discover it had been discontinued. And paperwork was never-ending. With hours spent meeting with clients and contacting manufacturers, plus keeping on top of potential problems with workrooms and installers, there was a lot of stress involved.

As a manufacturer's representative, which I tried for a while, problems included endless paperwork, manufacturers on the East coast calling at 5 a.m. because they didn't realize I was on the West coast, and local customers calling until late at night. If one wants to make money, this is a good way. But some things were worth more than money—like a life of my own.

Color and art consulting were both fun things to do, but not for long term.

Writing offered everything that appealed to me. I could work at my own pace. I could control the finished project (more or less). And I could regulate the amount of stress by scheduling according to my needs. I also knew that the more experience I acquired, the more money I would make. Remember, this was the mid-eighties, and it was a year or two later before I discovered business writing and its potential earnings. There's still plenty of paperwork, but it's manageable.

Try the exercise and see what you discover about yourself. You may think of more columns to include in your chart and your criteria might be different. You'll certainly want to earn more than \$15,000 your first year, but with the more than two dozen writing projects that you'll learn about in the following chapters and a healthy dose of ambition you can set your income goal as high as you wish. Certainly as much as you're presently earning, and probably much, much more!

Learn writing skills in six easy steps

If you want to get articles or a book published, acquiring writing skills is easy. You already know the basics from school, and possibly your workplace. The rest can be picked up by simply reading,

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observing, and taking advantage of any classes and writer's conferences available in your area.

Then read, read, and read some more. Seek out help wherever you can find it. Take a writing course if you've never had one. There's a lot of valuable information that can help beginning writers not only master their craft but also put what they've learned into practice. Even if you become busy making money hand over fist before you complete a course and there's no time to study, make time. You'll be glad you did.

If you complete all six of the following steps, you'll be well on your way to becoming a paid writer. Your objective is to become a sponge. Absorb everything you can about committing words to paper, and then simply do it.

Quick Notes: Learn to write in 6 easy steps

1. Learn how to write articles. Read every book you can find on article writing and buy the best ones for your personal library. Take notes for future reference and file them, then take them out and read them occasionally as you learn more about the writing craft. Mark important passages for quick reference. Check the online workshops from the publisher of *Writer's Digest* at www.WritersOnlineWorkshops.com and WritersWeekly.com.
2. Brush up on grammar. Learn the mechanics of writing a good sentence and paragraph, and then make sure your grammar, spelling and punctuation are flawless. Take brush-up grammar classes at your local community college, if necessary. Some punctuation rules have probably changed since you were in high school and most writing for publication is more casual that we were all taught, so also learn what editors expect.
3. Learn what sells. Go to the library and thumb through magazines on writing to get up-to-date information on who's buying and the type of articles being bought. See *Writer's Digest* and the *Writer* magazines. You may want to subscribe to one or more to keep current. While you're at the library

read articles in the magazines you want to write for so that you can study trends and styles of writing.

4. Learn how to write query letters and format manuscripts. Books are available in libraries and bookstores that tell how to perform these two important steps to getting published. Make sure you read them. Better yet, buy them for your own library.
 5. Learn how to find markets for your articles. Take classes that teach not only how to write for publication, but also how to find outlets for your articles. Purchase a copy of *Writer's Market*, a yearly directory that lists magazine and book publishers.
 6. Attend writer's conferences. Not only will you meet and learn from published writers, but you'll also meet editors who might give your career a boost.
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Start writing!

Join a writer's group where you can read aloud what you've written and have it critiqued by others. You'll soon have an idea about whether you possess the skills needed to produce something to sell. Don't become discouraged if at first you don't get the positive reinforcement you expected. Keep writing and honing your skills until you get it right. I've known people who could string words together in a clever and entertaining way, but they lacked punctuation skills. Or their spelling was dreadful. Or they lacked the self-confidence to send their manuscripts to a publisher. Any of those problems (or excuses) can be overcome with practice.

Spelling and grammar checkers on your computer will help with some errors, but don't depend on them to catch every mistake since typos that still form a word (such as *hard* or *hare* instead of *harp*, or *care* instead of *car*) won't be caught. Neither will most mistakes in usage, such as *or* instead of *are*. Word processing grammar checkers can help catch clumsily worded sentences, but use them to double-check your sentences and not as definitive experts on your prose. Sometimes they find problems that don't exist and offer outlandish

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suggestions. Obviously, these high-tech tools aren't perfect. They do draw attention to potential problem areas, though, so study the sentence that has been highlighted to see if you can word it better. Find your weaknesses and cure them. Soon you'll be writing like a professional.

Next, find a non-profit organization or church group that needs help with their newsletter or fund-raising campaign and volunteer to produce it. Not only will you be performing a good deed; you'll also gain experience and acquire some samples of your work to show prospective clients, which will build your confidence and provide credibility. Start submitting manuscripts to newspapers and magazines as soon as you're comfortable with your writing skills.

Get down to business

No matter where you start, you'll need to know how to operate your business and find new clients. After you get up and running, plan to spend twenty to forty percent of the business week marketing your services if you want to keep plenty of projects in the system. Until then, you'll probably spend almost every day combing the woods for work. Set aside time to do marketing every week, and stick to it. This might involve making calls and setting appointments, sending out query letters to magazines or mailing introductory letters and making calls to businesses, depending on the type of writing you plan to do.

Whether you are stationary or mobile, you'll need to always plan on marketing your services because the needs of your existing clients will change. Businesses close everyday. Individual contacts will change jobs and some clients will no longer need your services for various reasons. That's life, so plan to go with the flow. If you can't stand change you will probably be happier working for someone else. Just remember, though, that with a job you're always at the mercy of your boss and the company's fortunes. Changes happen in jobs, too. Very few are permanent anymore.

If you hate working for someone else and intensely dislike office politics, then being in business for yourself is a no-brainer!

An overview of writing projects that make money

Perhaps your dream is to write what you want, when you like, and as little or as much as you wish. Possibly you want to write a book. While you're doing that, though, you may need to earn steady income to keep the family fed. In that case, there are many opportunities to make money with your writing skills. Any type of writing you do will improve your skills in all other writing areas, so at least consider trying every project that comes your way, as long as you feel capable.

You can help business owners and professionals with their marketing and promotional materials, such as brochures, newsletters and ghostwritten articles for trade journals. Maybe you can write a procedure manual, employee manual, or a booklet about a company's products and services. Many manufacturing and software companies need technical writers who can turn complex subjects into simple-to-understand instructions. You need never be out of work if you have a technical background.

Businesses that want to send a newsletter to their clients and prospects might be happy with a generic one featuring articles that will interest their clientele along with one page of personalized material to advertise their business. Or they might want to join with three or four complementary businesses to produce a joint newsletter. Some entrepreneurs would like to have a regular weekly column appear in the local newspaper, but can't write. You'll find instructions for producing all of these products in later sections of this book.

Opportunities exist in almost every community to produce special anniversary articles and booklets for townships, businesses, non-profit organizations, churches, schools and clubs. Sometimes they'll want a full-size book written to celebrate their milestone.

Individuals who long to write their life story for their heirs often need someone like you to help them put the words down on paper. Genealogists need writers to take their research papers and notes and turn them into family history books. Family groups frequently want a book featuring old, handed-down family recipes and fond memories for a reunion. You may even want to compile your own book of regional recipes, favorite dishes, quick and easy meals, or on any number of other themes. Cookbooks always find an audience. Maybe you can partner with an up-and-coming chef to create a best-selling book. You

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might even convince restaurant owners to let you compile a book of recipes from their menu to sell to customers.

Opportunity knocks

How do you find business? The easiest way—open your mouth. Tell people what you do. If you see a business brochure that looks outdated, ask the person in charge if they've thought about having a new one written and designed. If they say yes, you have an opening. The worst they can do is say no, and the word *no* has never killed anyone that I know of!

Visit the neighborhood copy center and ask if they have any customers who might need writing services. Since they probably do copy work and printing for many of the small businesses in the area, they will be familiar with their customers' needs and possibly have some leads to offer you. Be sure to quickly follow up any leads you receive and schedule a meeting.

Once your business is established, if a regular client who always pays promptly approaches you with a big project, schedule a meeting as quickly as possible. If making money is your goal you'll want to keep your priorities straight. I remember being told that eighty percent of my income would come from twenty percent of my clients. This has definitely proven true. I'm sure it will prove true for you, too. Don't ignore or reject small assignments, but always make time for your most reliable and profitable clients.

All sorts of opportunities will emerge if you keep your eyes and ears open, and if you open your mouth. I'll go into more specific details about marketing in the following pages and chapters.

Networking—make it pay

Networking is the most effective method I've found for finding new clients. However, I've heard others say they've never had any luck with it. I guess it all depends on what you put into each meeting and expect as an outcome.

Attend business meetings with the goal of being helpful to the people you meet. Most organizations will allow you to visit, but you

should join and attend regularly to get the best results. Introduce yourself to as many people as possible and find out what they need. Talk about their business. Be a good listener.

After you've heard their business goals, dreams, and maybe a few other things you didn't need or care to hear, let them know how you can help. If you have a portfolio of your work, take it with you so that if someone asks to see samples, you can show them. Even if no one at the meeting mentions an upcoming writing project, give two business cards to everyone you meet. If you've made an impression, they'll probably either call when a project comes up or pass your card on to another business owner who needs your services. Sure some won't, but a few will.

By the way, you probably shouldn't confuse prospects at a networking meeting with the words, "I'm a writer." For some reason, most people don't realize that writers can help their businesses become successful without having it explained to them. Tell prospects that you help business owners market their products and services by producing brochures, newsletters and news releases (or publicity) for them. Then they can relate.

Choose words wisely

When my business was incorporated (1989-1994), I chose a motto that was used on all of my marketing materials. It was "Our business is making your business look good in print." That said it all. If you decide to create a slogan, think of one that explains your business in as few words as possible and that would appeal to prospective clients. By the way, it's probably not necessary to incorporate your writing business. Consult with an attorney or tax professional before you make that decision. It's a big step, and most writers don't since it means shuffling more paperwork.

You can always design and print your own business cards to hand out if you have desktop publishing capabilities on your computer, but once you're established, have them professionally printed. I suggest having two cards designed: one that says you're a freelance writer and another that says *business marketing consultant, writer & marketing consultant* or something similar. Then you leave room open for discussion about what you can do for prospective clients. Or if you

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want to concentrate on a specific type of project, such as newsletters, have something like *newsletter writing and production* printed on your card.

Use networking meetings to establish relationships, which will lead to referrals. You may even be able to schedule an appointment with a prospect after the first meeting. The appointment is where sales are made, so make sure you keep it. Also, follow up on any referrals you might receive at the meeting. And ask a couple of fellow attendees if you might meet for lunch sometime to get better acquainted. Building relationships will gradually build referrals and business profits.

Even if you're just starting out, you should appear professional, poised and polite. That and consistency will pay off for you eventually.

If you've just begun you might not have any published examples of your writing to include in a portfolio. If not, create something. If you have desktop publishing capabilities, you can produce samples that look professional or ask a graphic designer for help. Write an article about something, anything, and format it to look like a published article. If you have a scanner, scan in a photo or two and write captions for them. Remember, prospects will be interested in whether you can write, not whether an article was actually published. If someone asks where it was published, be honest. Tell them it wasn't—yet! You don't have to mention that you've never been published or written for a client before unless they ask. They probably won't. Most prospects are looking for someone who can write better than they—not another John Steinbeck.

You can even write an article about yourself and your business to hand out as a promotional piece. I know one writer/photographer who has had great success doing just that. He wrote his business biography in third person, as if he were being interviewed, and formatted it into a one-page article. He hands a copy with his business card attached to everyone he meets at networking meetings.

Place a copy of any book or manual you've authored, or at least the cover, in your portfolio. If you've written newspaper columns, have copies of those to show. Anything that will prove you are a capable writer is good. Anything that has been published or printed will provide an even more convincing presentation of your talents. As soon as possible, set up a Web site for your writing business and include some clippings or samples of your writing skills along with a list of ways your skills can benefit business owners.

Speak up!

Another way to make networking pay is to ask to be a speaker at one of the meetings, and then come up with a program that will educate attendees. Your talk can be about any project you want to highlight. However, your intent should be to teach something that also informs listeners about the benefits of what you do. Don't plan a talk that is only an unabashed advertisement for your business. Talks on subjects such as how to attract more business with brochures, or how to get free publicity with news releases will get listeners' attention while subtly communicating that you're an expert in these areas.

At the end of your talk mention that you have brochures (or other information pieces about your business) and can answer any questions. If you give a talk on news releases and one that you've written has recently been published, be sure to have a copy for your audience to look at. Nothing offers better proof that you can get results for your clients!

One of the greatest benefits of networking will be getting to know people who you can rely on for business information, help and advice, as well as for referrals.

Organize and get ready for assignments

Organize your business so that you can be prepared to go to work at a moment's notice. That way, if you get a sudden rush project you can jump right in and complete it.

First of all, have an area set aside specifically for your writing business where you can work comfortably and store supplies nearby. If you need a dictionary, thesaurus or any other helpful writing tool, make sure you have it handy. Keep plenty of printer paper and ink cartridges on hand so that you don't have to stop in the middle of a job and run to the store to pick up supplies. It's too easy to get sidetracked once you get out of sight of your computer. Like checking out that fabulous half-off sale at the mall you pass.

Also, set up a resource file that will be useful when you get a writing assignment. It could be filled with articles and good examples of brochures, newsletters or any other types of projects that you want to create. Sometimes when I'm stuck for ideas, all I need to get started is

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to thumb through my “ideas” file to gain new perspective. Now, that definitely doesn’t mean recycling someone else’s material. That would be wrong, and a copyright infringement. Sometimes all it takes is a word, color, subject matter or some random phrase in a piece to spark a new idea for a project. Use your file for inspiration, then use your imagination.

Research materials are as near as the Internet or your local library. Many libraries have short hours and are closed on weekends, especially in smaller communities, so you’ll want to be aware of their hours of operation before you need them. This is why you’ll also want to have research files in your office. Also, most libraries will require that you join before you use their computers to access the Internet. Sometimes they’ll charge a small fee to join. They will usually allow you to print out what you need or furnish a disk for you to transfer information to. You’ll be charged for copies or a disk, but it’s a nominal fee.

More ideas for generating writing income

One of the first contacts you might want to make is with the editor of the local newspaper. It’s best if you approach the editor with some ideas, such as for a column on a specific subject. However, if you lack ideas, simply ask if there are any needs that you can fill. Maybe the paper would like freelance articles on local customs or history and is looking for someone like you to write them. After you’ve established a working relationship with the paper you can approach the editor about sending back articles featuring your travel adventures, if you later decide to roam.

If you’ve never written for a newspaper, be prepared to show some samples of your writing skills. If they say yes you’ll receive minimal payment, but you’ll also have the thrill of seeing your name and article in the newspaper and get published clips to show prospects.

Maybe you can come up with an idea that would interest readers in other parts of the country and can syndicate your columns. Think Dave Barry, and you have an idea of the type of writing that attracts a universal audience in syndication. You can find books on syndication at the library.

KAY KENNEDY

When I started writing a newspaper column I had no experience except for the few decorating columns I had written for a local, small town weekly when I worked as an interior designer, and a newsletter I wrote for a volunteer organization. I approached the editor of a regional business newspaper and was told he didn't need my services.

A short while later I attended a networking meeting where the publisher of that same newspaper was a speaker. I took copies of my past columns and when I got a chance to speak to him, asked if he needed a writer. He told me that his business-profile writer was leaving and wanted to know if I thought I could do that. Of course I could! I never had before, but I knew I could.

I promptly interviewed a local business owner, took photographs and wrote a sample column. The editor liked the article and used it. Soon I was doing all of the business profile columns for the paper plus occasional feature articles. If I hadn't attended that meeting and approached him, even though the editor had already turned me down, I would have missed a great opportunity. This proves something that you'll hear many times—newspapers (and all publishers, for that matter) have continuous changes, and you shouldn't give up if you're turned down the first time.

Mine your own backyard

You might find writing possibilities in your own neighborhood. A brochure that is outdated would be obvious, but if you let business owners know what you do they may have form letters that need rewriting or other jobs that aren't so obvious.

Never say anything negative about any written material that a prospect shows you. You might be talking to the person who wrote it. If they say that they know it's really bad, offer positive feedback, then let them know you can make it more effective.

Surprisingly, another way to find clients might be to join a local writing group. Fellow writers probably won't be interested in your commercial writing services, but if they don't do business writing (and believe me, most don't—that's why I'm writing this book) they may know someone who needs your expertise. Many people who belong to writers groups, I've found, are either thinking about writing for magazines or dreaming of someday penning a best-selling novel.

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The bottom line about writer's organizations is that it doesn't matter if you join a group of unpublished writers or a professional association. They still provide a connection to the community and probably know business people that you don't know. They may know of writing jobs that they aren't interested in tackling. Mainly, they can vouch for your credibility when they get to know you.

Sometimes you hit pay dirt and join a professional group that will offer support and help keep you motivated, something you may need to stay focused on your goals.

Your winning strategy

Don't make writing more difficult than it is. This business is easy—really. It's as simple as following instructions. Follow the ones given here and then experiment on your own. Read other books and magazines on writing (*see the Resource section*). Get ready to build a writing business that will take you as far as you want to go.

Remember this amazingly simple, winning strategy: Your goal is to help your client's business succeed. You can't help but create a successful writing business with that attitude.

PART II

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER AND TAKE IT ON THE ROAD

Chapter Fourteen

Traveling and Writing—the Ultimate Lifestyle

Travel America from sea to shining sea. See all its beauty from the windshield of your own RV. Stop whenever you want. Stay as long as you wish. Spend time at the seashore or in the mountains, and travel the back roads to find all the hidden treasures that our country has to offer. Skip the part about having to continually pack and unpack bags and sleep in strange beds. And earn a living as a writer while you're doing it. Can that be possible?

Almost everyone dreams of traveling, but most people are limited by jobs that only give them a week or two off each year for vacation. And most of the business owners I know don't allow themselves that yearly vacation of even a week or two. So how cool is being able to travel wherever you want for as long as you wish? Everyone knows it takes money to travel and most people can't see themselves ever saving enough to be able to roam extensively. However, it is being done by millions of people. As a writer, you can make it happen, too.

RVing and writing is the ultimate match. John Steinbeck toured the country in a camper when he wrote *Travels With Charley* and William Least Heat Moon traveled in a van to write *Blue Highways*. John Ratzenberger, TV host, writer and producer, travels by RV while he reports on the *Made in America* series on the Travel Channel. Erle Stanley Gardner even did it back in the 1930's while he created his famous characters, Perry Mason and Della Street. His entourage of five rigs included extra trailers for secretaries who traveled with him to enable him to churn out an average of 6000 words per day.

KAY KENNEDY

The best thing about RVing is that you can take your office and equipment with you on the road and be as comfortable as you were at home. In fact, RVing is like traveling in your own home, but you get to change the view and neighborhood any time you like. You're always meeting interesting people and gathering new ideas for articles, books, and projects. You can travel to your clients. You never get stale. And no matter how far you roam, you're always at home!

Don't care to travel?

What if you don't want to travel? There's certainly nothing wrong with that. Everyone knows you don't have to travel to become a successful writer. In fact, traveling writers face a few more challenges than those who stay in one place. This chapter is written for those who stay at home and for those who roam, with extra tips and information thrown in for those who choose the road for their writing venture. At home or on the road, writers will find plenty of opportunities to earn income to finance their dreams—whatever they might be.

Find work anywhere

When I first started writing twenty years ago, I had no idea how I could ever become a fulltime RVer. I knew I wanted to continue writing while I traveled, but technology hadn't caught up with my dreams. Today, my job is easier than ever, what with high speed Internet connections available almost everywhere in the United States.

Writers are always in demand if you know how to find the people who need your skills. Any place business transpires, there is a need for your services. There are literally hundreds of ways to earn income from writing on the road. Only a few of them are covered in this book. And while writing can pay for your extended journey, you can double your income by offering a complete writing and design package if you possess the skills or are willing to learn.

If you were unsure about how to promote yourself and your services, you should have learned answers to most of your questions in previous chapters. Much of your business will probably come by way of referrals, but you'll have to make the initial contacts to get the ball

rolling. Some marketing can be done by mail. And you can find “cheerleaders” who’ll help sell your services to help their business (see Chapter Three). Finally, networking always works. No matter whether you’re in your own hometown or some small community far across country, you can win assignments by getting together with business owners and others to network.

Don’t like marketing?

If you find that you don’t enjoy marketing your writing skills by networking with strangers, you can always write informational booklets and sell them by mail, start your own newsletter and sell subscriptions by mail, or even set up an e-magazine or newsletter on the Internet. You can even sell your books via the Internet, if you prefer. You can run classified ads or put up flyers to interest prospects in your writing services. That way, you don’t have to ever sell your services or products face-to-face. However, I think you will enjoy meeting people and promoting your business, especially on the road. You’ll find that people all over our country are friendly and eager to meet someone from “away.” If you’ve built a portfolio of your work or have letters of reference, you’ll find that a company on the far side of the continent will welcome your ideas and proposals with open arms (or at least an open mind). And thanks to new technology, no matter how far you travel you can still work with clients back home.

If you’re a new writer who has a book idea or wants to write for magazines, you may find that money comes in very slowly. Writing a book takes an enormous chunk of time and you may need to earn income while you’re creating that literary masterpiece. Unless you have lots of experience writing for magazines, payment for articles won’t finance a lot of traveling because most magazines don’t pay all that well. It would take approximately ten published articles per month at an average of \$350 each to finance a reasonably comfortable RV lifestyle, depending on your own personal spending habits. Remember, you’ll have to also pay taxes and other business expenses out of the fees you earn.

Very few writers sell every article they write, so plan on coming up with at least three good ideas for every manuscript that you sell. That would mean working up thirty ideas each month, of which ten

would have to be complete manuscripts that get published. Where would you find time to travel with a writing schedule like that?

It's certainly okay to write for magazines. In fact it's a good thing, but you should develop other ways to earn income. Magazine article writing can supplement your income in the beginning, and as you get more experience it can provide an even bigger income share as you sell to higher-paying markets. However, pay probably still won't compensate your time and effort until you learn how to turn each idea into several articles for various markets. But in the meantime, you may want to look at other writing avenues to provide the bulk of your income.

If you're afraid you won't make enough money at first from your writing, or it's taking awhile for the money to come in, you can always find a job on the road. In fact, work-camping is a popular choice for many RVers. I'll explain more about it and why it's sometimes a worthwhile pursuit in Chapter 17. Since you already write, though, why not find more ways to earn a living from writing.

I've known writers who were always looking for new ways to increase their income. In reality, there are more income-producing options than most writers have time to pursue. I've shared some of those ideas with you. I have described in detail every writing avenue I have used that earned income and I've shared some types of projects that made money for my writing friends. You are welcome to use any or all of them. Many of the ideas are so simple you're probably wondering, "Why didn't I think of that?" Believe me, if you want to travel and finance it with your writing skills you CAN do it!

It begins with a book

How does a dream to travel first begin? Well, mine all started with a little book, *The Boxcar Children* that my second-grade teacher read to the class. I began to imagine then how much fun it would be to travel across the country, stopping wherever I wanted for as long as I wished. Of course, I envisioned a fully equipped, comfortable boxcar with windows for sightseeing. And I guess I thought a train conductor would stop anywhere I wanted. I was six years old so what did I know? And never mind that the boxcar in the book was parked. It didn't go

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anywhere. No matter, I was hooked on an idea—a dream that would not die!

When my husband and I got married, we immediately began planning for a future of traveling and sightseeing. Luckily, he and I shared the same wanderlust. When we finally became aware of all the options available for traveling in comfort by motorhome or travel trailer, we were hooked and could hardly wait for the day we could start a full-time journey on the road.

A lot of people feel a little lost when they cut the strings to their home, church, and the community where they've lived all of their lives. I'll admit it was a little difficult for me during the first few months. I even went to work for a publishing company as a writer after less than a year on the road. Then I realized that although I loved that job, it was even more limiting than my land-locked business had been because they expected me to be there every day. Can you imagine that? So, on a cold day in January amid sleet and snow, and after only a few months on the job, I left it and headed out on the road again.

A typical day

My typical day on the road is much like it was when I worked at home, except for the days when we travel. I usually have something scheduled to do, and I set about doing it as soon as I'm dressed and ready to work. If I don't have a project going at the moment, I sometimes buy a local newspaper and check for business networking meetings to attend. However, that's very rare any-more because I always have so many ideas churning around. I usually only have to go through my files and make a few calls to get into another project.

I make notes anytime a new idea pops into my head—which might be for a magazine article or some other project. Some of the ideas get started, then scrapped when more research determines they might not work as I originally envisioned, like the RV advertising newsletter I planned to produce (Chapter 4). Others become actual articles or this book, for instance.

Your typical day without a project in the works might include going through your ideas file, contacting former clients to see if they have a project in mind, checking the newspaper for meetings you can attend and scheduling them on your calendar, then going downtown to

talk with your friendly copy center operators. Introduce yourself to some other business people in town and leave a business card and brochure. If you don't end up with assignments after a day spent in town, go home and work up a joint newsletter idea and a list of businesses you can approach. If you don't have a sample newsletter to show, create a dummy along with a marketing letter that explains the benefits of a joint venture. Then start marketing your idea.

A typical day might include any of the above, or working up other projects like those mentioned in previous chapters. It also could include a trip to the library or researching ideas on the Internet. Or you might check out some local tourist attraction and work up a query letter to send to an editor. Look for the unusual when writing travel articles, because editors get overwhelmed with queries about the usual attractions. Talk to locals and ask them what's special about their community. Sometimes, you'll discover some real jewels like the time I learned about a local musician who was a legendary figure in the world of folk music. Our first meeting turned into a great article plus a warm friendship that lasted until his death.

As a writer, the choice of how you spend the day is yours alone.

Lonely? Never!

To say that you might get lonely traveling about the country would only be partly true. You can get lonely if you hole up somewhere and never leave your coach. Some people might find it a very singular lifestyle. But, no matter where you stop in the country, no matter what RV park or campground, you'll find plenty of activities and lots of people who will welcome some friendly companionship. And if you travel often, you'll have lots of stories to share. You can also learn about other people's RV experiences, such as: best areas to travel, what to avoid, best places to eat, and how to fix that annoying water leak.

According to a 2005 University of Michigan study, eight million U.S. households own RVs, and contrary to the popular assumption that most are driven by retirees, more are owned by 35-54-year-olds than any other age group. In all, there are thirty million RV enthusiasts, including those who rent or borrow RVs each year to travel. Many young couples with kids are hitting the road full time, educating the

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youngsters as they travel and finding temporary jobs along the way, telecommuting, or operating a business on the road to support their lifestyle.

Most RVers are warm, friendly people. I'll guarantee that if you go out and raise the hood on your truck or motorhome in an RV park, you'll soon have a helpful neighbor stopping by to offer advice or to look your rig over. If you travel with a pet, you'll meet plenty of fellow campers when you walk your little goodwill ambassador around the park.

In short, RVing will be whatever you make it. It can be a wondrous trip filled with new sights and sounds and friends, or it can be a solitary journey into yourself. Personally, we had to start a new address book to hold the names and addresses of acquaintances we met across the country during our first year on the road.

RVing is like a magic carpet ride that takes you wherever you want to go. What else offers the freedom to travel and an opportunity to earn a living without having to give up the comforts of home? Use the techniques discussed here to build a wildly successful writing career on the road or at home—no matter where you happen to live.

The writer's survival guide and ticket to freedom

Portable Writing: The Secret to Living Your Dreams with
25 Projects to Fund Your Freedom

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