



# How to Start a Successful Freelance Career

*A Freelance Writing Newsletter by Inkwell Editorial*

January 16, 2008



## **SECTION I: 20+ Years of Writing Experience: An Interview with Sharon Hurley Hall**

Right off the bat, I've been reminded once again that every so-called setback is only a stepping stone to greater things to come. What the heck am I talking about?

Well, in this case, this issue's interviewee, Sharon Hurley Hall. This issue was supposed to be published last week, but the freelancer who agreed to be interviewed never got the questions back to me.

I take full responsibility (in spite of this particular freelancer's lack of professionalism), but in all my years of interviewing freelancers, this had never happened to me before. So, in a panic, I posted a notice on my blog looking for freelancers to interview, and voila, Sharon responded. I felt as if the gods had smiled on me.

For those of you who may be new to freelance writing, Sharon is what I call a freelance writing rock star. She has the skills, the experience, the knowledge and the visibility in the industry that many of us strive for.

There are a few names that are instantly recognizable online in freelance writing. Sharon's is one of those – in my book. Here's here interview – and thanks again Sharon for agreeing to be interviewed at the last minute.

## **INTERVIEW WITH FREELANCE WRITER SHARON HURLEY HALL**

I like to start with basic questions first, so in that spirit:



**1. As you're what I consider a "rock star" in the freelance writing sector, I know you freelance full-time. What I don't know is how long you've been doing it full time. Please tell.**

I've been freelancing full time for about three years. Before that I 'freelanced' while I was teaching journalism, but over five years that only resulted in a couple of articles, because the teaching was very demanding.

I soon started to miss writing articles for regular people instead of just academics.

Can you shed a little light on it, ie, describe the day you knew that it was time to make the leap (eg, was there a specific incident that occurred, a particular project you landed, a boss who pissed you off, etc.)?

It was a combination. The working environment had deteriorated and I began to think more and more about my dream of making my living from writing. Once I started dreading going to work,

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I knew it was time to make a change. The day I made the decision was one of the most liberating of my life. I knew it was the right move and I have never regretted it.

**2. I can tell from your very impressive resume ( <http://www.sharonhurleyhall.com/resume/>) that you've always been interested in writing/media/publishing and that you have vast experience in a number of areas, eg, academic writing, consumer finance, etc.**

**For this interview, however, I want to focus specifically on SEO content writing. Since I've put it out there that I've had a lot of success doing it in a relatively short period of time, the questions have been pouring in. So, I guess I'm asking you to help me fill in the gaps; give another perspective. Here goes:**

**How long have you been writing SEO content?**

I've been doing that pretty much since I started freelancing full time - three years. At the start, it was new to me because when I stopped working as a journalist, most of my writing was offline. How much things changed in five years. :)

I'm glad, actually, because writing for an online audience suits my preferred style.

### **INTERVIEW CONTINUED BELOW**

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**Want to know how I started making \$250+/day as an SEO content writer – after marketing for just over a week?** Read all about it here: <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/e11-excerpt.htm>

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**3. How do you find clients? (Please describe which marketing method has worked best for you).**

When I became a full time freelancer, I put a lot of effort into creating a website to showcase my work. I dug out copies of old work, listed the work I had no copies for, and used article marketing to create clips and drive traffic to my site. One of my articles on parenting led to me getting my first commission which was to do with education.

I also started blogging, which in hindsight was the best decision I ever made. I made a lot of contacts with writers and publishers through my blogs - and I'm still in touch with many of them today. Making those contacts created additional opportunities for self promotion, which brought clients in. Squidoo has also been responsible for sending a couple of clients my way.

Now that I've been going for a while, a lot more people find my site and approach me for work. I have relationships with a couple of agencies as well. I don't believe in putting my eggs in one basket.

**4. Compared to other kinds of freelance writing you have done, how well does SEO writing stack up pay wise?**

At the start, it was abysmal, but I was glad of the experience. Because I'd been writing for so long, I was able to make a good impression very quickly, and I soon started getting better paying jobs.

**5. As rates for this type of writing seem to range from the ridiculously low to the extremely well-paid, how did you decide what to charge?**

Setting rates is always difficult, because you have to balance between pricing yourself appropriately for your skills and being in line with the market. At the start, I took some low paying jobs because I wanted the experience, but now I tend to avoid the rock bottom jobs and quote a figure I can live with. I have an ideal figure in mind, but I sometimes accept less if I really need to. The trick is to be flexible, while keeping your goal in mind.

**6. What do you like most about writing SEO content?**

I enjoy building an informative article around a single keyword or a couple of keywords, especially if the client is focused on human readable content.

**7. What do you like least about writing SEO content?**

Keyword stuffed articles - you know where you have to use an unnatural keyword phrase 15 times in 500 words. I can do it competently, but it's not as much fun as other writing.

**8. What advice would you give to writers who want to break into this niche?**

Get a website or profile page and write a couple of examples of the type of SEO writing you want to do that you can show to clients. It may take a few months, but eventually they will find you.

**BIO:** Sharon Hurley Hall is a born again blogger who has been writing for more than 20 years. She is a freelance writer and ghostwriter who specializes in ebooks, SEO articles and blog posts. Sharon runs the freelance mentoring blog, Get Paid To Write Online, which can be found at <http://getpaidtowriteonline.com>. You can also find out more about Sharon at <http://sharonhurleyhall.com>.

Thanks again Sharon!

**SECTION II: My Freelance Writing Life (aka Yuwanda's Corner)**



2008 has started with a bang! I landed three new SEO clients the first week of the year, and have proposals out for two more that I'm waiting to hear back from.

Being featured in two major online news outlets highlighting online businesses is a distinct possibility, but I don't want to jinx anything (and it's always so iffy when you're dealing with major publications), so I'm remaining mum. If either comes through, you all will be among the first to know.

As I wrote in the last issue, my theme for 2007 was focus. I've decided to continue with this theme because it's gotten me on track to achieving some real life dreams.

And, just what are those? Overall, to create passive income streams.

Also, to let you in on a little secret, my passion in life is traveling. For that, you need money, time and flexibility. I have one out of the three, and am working on lining up the other two.

You see, my ideal job would be to host an adventure travel show; I'd be the one going on the trips – climbing snow-peaked mountains, running marathon desert races, rafting down the Nile, etc. I like to push myself physically and I love to travel. To combine these two would be awesome!

I'm trying to talk my fiancé into trying out for *The Amazing Race*. He says it's not physical enough for him. I'm still pushing though, convinced he'll come around.

In order to accomplish my dream, I have to get to a point where my business doesn't require as much day-to-day hands-on management. I'm slowly getting to that point. I think I'll finally get there in three to four more years (at least, that's the plan).

Enough about that.

Did you make a list of freelance writing goals for this year? I composed mine last night. I always have 10,000 things on my to-do list, but narrowed it down to the five definites I want to accomplish this year.

They are . . . drum roll . . .

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### **2008 Freelance Writing Goals**

- 1) Monetize my sites more;
- 2) Make SEO content writing at least 50% of my income;
- 3) Finish the two ebooks I'm working on;
- 4) Start two minisites; and
- 5) Get one ebook on Amazon.com.

What are yours? At the end of the month, I'm going to post all responses I receive (including mine) on InkwelEditorial.com. That way, you can check in from time to time to see how you're doing.

Many of us have a tendency to write down goals and neatly tuck them away – never to be seen again (or achieved at all).

**Success Secret:** One of the best ways to achieve success is to declare it to the world. Why is this? Because you're held accountable. So, come on, don't be chicken, what are your freelance writing goals for 2008? Tell them to the world – and get busy achieving them.

Send an email to [info@InkwelEditorial.com](mailto:info@InkwelEditorial.com) with the subject line, "2008 Freelance Writing Goals."

Finally, I want to end with a list of some of the things I've done recently to create more passive income. One of the questions I always get asked, is about income, ie, how much I make, how, doing what kinds of writing, etc. Hence, the following:

### **3 Things I Did Last Year to Create Passive Online Income (You Can Too!)**

**1. Set Up an Amazon Store on My Website:** I had one of these years ago when InkwelEditorial.com first went live. The technology now is so much better than it used to be. It took about 20 minutes for me to set up, but could have gone a lot quicker (I played around with it for a bit).

It can be accessed here: <http://astore.amazon.com/inkweedito-20>. At your mousetip ☺ you have all the books on freelance writing Amazon offers. There are also books on how to make money blogging, how to make money selling info products and how to make money online.

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**2. Started a New Blog:** I started a new blog, <http://www.money-making-vidoes.blogspot.com>, and literally saw a 15-20% increase in my AdSense income. Now, it's nothing to write home about to begin with, but that 15-20% helps to make my income goals each month. And, as it's pretty much passive income, it's worth it.

**3. Redirected My Career:** I started to do SEO writing. I've written about this a lot over the last few weeks, so I won't regurgitate it all here (you can read some details here: <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/make-money-writing-seo-content.htm>).

This has been the biggest change. So much so that I'm cutting back on other projects and am shooting for making this at least 50% of my freelance writing income this year.

In this industry, multiple streams of income is always a good thing. That way, you're never at the mercy of one client or one website or one blog.

## **How One Blog Publisher Lost \$250,000 in Revenue Practically Overnight**

Speaking of blogs and multiple streams of income, did you hear that as of January 31<sup>st</sup>, publishers who live outside the US, Canada and Japan will no longer be able to earn revenue from Google's AdSense program?

I read about this last night on ProBlogger.net. Read the entire post here: <http://www.problogger.net/archives/2008/01/16/dear-adsense-you-broke-my-heart-my-open-letter-to-adsense/>

For those of you who don't know, Darren Rowse is the publisher of ProBlogger.net, THE authority blog about how to make money blogging.

As cited in this *Wall Street Journal* article, in 2007, Darren made over \$250,000 in AdSense revenue. As of January 31<sup>st</sup>, because he lives in Australia, this revenue stream will be gone.

The article states:

“Darren Rowse, the Melbourne, Australia-based writer of ProBlogger.net, a popular blog that teaches other bloggers how to make money, earned roughly \$250,000 in 2007 off ads on three blogs he writes. Mr. Rowse says he makes the most off traditional display advertising, where advertisers pay a fee to appear, but he also has used affiliate ads and Google AdSense.”

Read the full article here:

[http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120036638439890355.html?mod=todays\\_us\\_marketplace](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120036638439890355.html?mod=todays_us_marketplace)

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Now, if that doesn't shake you into developing multiple revenue streams, I don't know what will.

**Next Issue:** Wednesday, February 6<sup>th</sup>

Editorially yours,

Yuwanda Black, Publisher

<http://www.InkwellEditorial.com>

<http://www.InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com>

<http://www.SEO-Article-Writer.com>

<http://www.SEO-Articles-for-Sale.com>

<http://www.money-making-videos.blogspot.com>

**P.S.: Want to start making \$100-\$200/day as a freelance writer -- right away?** Log onto <http://www.FreelanceWritingWebsite.com> for details.

**P.P.S.: Be featured in the newsletter!** How? Send an email to [info@InkwellEditorial.com](mailto:info@InkwellEditorial.com) with a "Yes, I'd like to be interviewed for the newsletter."

**Who do we like to interview?** Successful freelancers — eg, writers, graphic designers, illustrators, web designers, copywriters, editors, reviewers, etc.

We look for "success/how I did it stories." The main goal of the newsletter is to give readers first-hand information on how others achieved freelance success. Discovered a new niche? Snagged a big client? Used a marketing technique effectively? Tell us about it.

Your story doesn't have to be unique; it just has to be something you tried that worked. Upon receipt of your email stating your interest in being interviewed, you will be contacted with all the details.

We hope to hear from you soon.

**Your Ideas Count!** Send in your comments/questions/suggestions, etc. Have a freelancing issue you'd like to see covered? Send an email to [info@inkwelleditorial.com](mailto:info@inkwelleditorial.com). We'll do our best to cover it.

**Want to read previous issues?** Click on links below.



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**SECTION III: PREVIOUS ISSUES**

**Issue 1:** June 6, 2007 can be found at <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/newsletter.pdf>  
Topic: **How to Make Money with Elance**; Featured Freelancer: Michelle Devon

**Issue 2:** June 20, 2007 can be found at <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/Newsletter/6-20-07.pdf>  
Topic: **Get Paid to Write SEO Articles, Web Copy & More**; Featured Freelancer: Clark Covington of Internet Research Associates

**Issue 3:** July 18, 2007 can be found at <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/Newsletter/7-18-07-freelance-writing-newsletter.pdf>  
Topic: **How to Make Money Blogging**; Featured Freelancer: Paula Mooney

**Issue 4:** August 15, 2007 can be found at <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/Newsletter/8-15-07-freelance-writing-newsletter.pdf>  
Topic: **How to Make Money Writing for the B2B Sector**; Featured Freelancer: Meryl Evans

**Issue 5:** September 12, 2007 can be found at <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/Newsletter/9-12-07-freelance-writing-newsletter.pdf>  
Topic: **How to Make Money Writing White Papers**; Featured Freelancer: Gordon Graham

**Issue 6:** September 26, 2007 can be found at <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/Newsletter/9-26-07-freelance-writing-newsletter.pdf>  
Topic: **How to Make Money as a Freelance Cartoonist**; Featured Freelancer: Dan Rosandich

**Issue 7:** October 17, 2007 can be found at <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/Newsletter/10-17-07-freelance-writing-newsletter.pdf>  
Topic: **How to Make Money Freelancing for Newspaper**; Featured Freelancer: Sue Lick, Author of *Freelancing for Newspapers*

**Issue 8:** November 7, 2007 can be found at <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/Newsletter/11-7-07-freelance-writing-newsletter.pdf>  
Topic: **How to Make Money as a Freelance Ghostwriter**; Featured Freelancer: Amanda Evans

**Issue 9:** December 5, 2007 can be found at  
<http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/Newsletter/12-5-07-freelance-writing-newsletter.pdf>  
Topic: **A Roundup of Freelance Writing Salaries from around the Web**

