



# How to Start a Successful Freelance Career

A Freelance Newsletter by Inkwell Editorial  
February 6, 2008



## SECTION I: INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR & FREELANCE WRITER MISTI SANDEFUR

Let's get right to it. In this issue, we catch up with author and freelance writer Misti Sandefur. Misti was generous enough to answer the following nine questions in amazing detail.

Your generosity is appreciated Misti.



**1. First off, let me say, I admire anyone who can do fiction writing. My brain is just not that expansive.**

Your nonfiction work, *On the Net Resources for Writers* ([http://www.mistisandefur.com/on\\_the\\_net02\\_sneak\\_peak.html](http://www.mistisandefur.com/on_the_net02_sneak_peak.html)), contains, according to your website: ". . . links to publishing companies, other markets for writers, writing contests, book editors, literary agents, sample query letters, book reviewers, research resources, jobs for writers and a whole lot more!"

**Seems like a lot of work. What inspired you to tackle a project like this?**

Oh yes, it was a lot of work, but I enjoyed it. I have a passion to help others, so when I decided to try something new -- something other than fiction -- I wanted to help other writers in process, and that's how *On the Net Resource Guide for Writers* was born.

I had planned to keep the book updated annually, however, my workload increased and I was unable. I'm still working on the second edition, but once I finish it, I have no plans to continue. As I said, I wanted to try something new but soon discovered that I enjoyed writing fiction books better than non-fiction books.

With that said, I plan to go ahead and finish the second edition, but if a publisher or anyone were interested, I would sell all rights to the book. This would allow them to keep it updated if they want, and they'll gain all the research information and contacts I have for the book. If they were to offer me a fair price for all of this, I'd gladly sign over the rights.

**2. You say on your Life of a Writer blog (<http://mistisandefur.blogspot.com>) that you've been freelancing for 10 years. Tell us about how/why you made that decision.**

I believe writing was what God had planned for me, because I first took an interest in it at the age of eight. At that time, I wrote short stories. As I aged, in school we wrote a lot of essays, poetry and stories in English. My teachers always praised my work, encouraged me to continue, and they even gave me a few tips.

The encouragement from my teachers, mother and grandmother was what lead me to believe that was what God wanted me to do with my life. Moreover, because I enjoy helping and inspiring

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others through words, I decided to make writing my life, but it didn't become my full-time job until 2004.

### **3. What did you do before you became a freelance writer?**

As I said before, I started writing when I was 8, and I never stopped. I was always writing something and filing it. Then when I entered the 6th grade, my mom bought me my first typewriter. Every night -- with a copy of *Writer's Market* in tow -- I would type query letters and browse through *Writer's Market* for potential markets for the stories I had written.

As I grew up and left home, I worked as a Certified Nurses Assistant for approximately three years. After that, I worked as a Home Health Aide, then as a short-order cook, and finally, I became a WAHM so I could write full-time.

When I held a job outside my home, I would write and submit as much and as often as I could after work.

### **INTERVIEW CONTINUED BELOW**

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**Want to learn how to make at least \$250/day writing simple 500-word articles?** Read how here: <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/e11-excerpt.htm>

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### **4. As you do so many different types of writing, what sector(s) are the most lucrative? Least lucrative?**

Since I'm not a well-known author, writing and submitting articles as well as writing blog posts for others seems to be the most lucrative. Although, I hope that changes in the future, because I enjoy writing inspirational fiction novels more.

### **5. How do you get most of your jobs (referrals, email marketing, offline marketing, etc.)?**

Most of my jobs come from e-mail marketing, but a few of my current clients came to me -- I like those best. (\*winks\*)

### **6. As a mom, I know your schedule must get pretty hectic sometimes. Explain a typical day "at the office."**

When the kids are with me and not at their dad's house, I write at night, as usual. Moreover, my kids are older now; therefore, all I have to deal with these days are school activities such as

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Christmas plays, Awards Day and graduations (my daughter graduated from the 8th grade last year).

The thing I've found to be a challenge is when they have something school-related during the day. I work from 9pm until 6am, so I sleep during the day. However, if the kids tell me about their school activities in advance, I do my best to complete the assignments I can ahead of time, so I can retire early.

Nevertheless, this is where the challenge comes into play, as I have trouble getting to sleep at night. I believe it's because my body is use to sleeping of a day, and my mind is more productive at night. (Ideas run through my head if I go to bed early.) With that said, I've attended many school functions on only four hours sleep, but like other writer moms, I manage.

**7. In your October 3, 2007 post on your blog, you wrote about your biggest mistake as a freelance writer? Read the post here: <http://mistisandefur.blogspot.com/2007/10/my-biggest-freelancewriting-mistake.html>**

**Can you explain for readers what it was and what you learned from that?**

I landed my first highest paid freelance writing job, and when I did, I stopped searching for more to focus on that one. Ultimately, that was my downfall.

I had the job for about one year until something unexpected happened that caused me to lose it. Since I chose to depend on that job and one other client I had at the time, my income plummeted; I went from earning \$800 a month to \$100 a month.

Months later, I was finally able to land a few new clients to solve my financial problems, but if I hadn't stopped looking for writing jobs in the first place, I may not have had to suffer the financial heartache.

My advice to other writers is this: You can't always depend on freelance writing jobs to last forever, because some companies, publications or etc. may not make it, some will pay for a while then one day stop paying, or something unexpected may pop up that causes you to lose that writing job.

With that said, you should ALWAYS have a few other clients as well, just in case one doesn't work out. With no other clients under your belt, if something happens that causes you to lose the only big freelance writing job you have, then you lose a big chunk of the income you've been depending on to pay bills, feed your family and etc. Though, I don't suggest that you take on more work than you can handle.

Only take on what you can manage, but make sure that if something happens with your biggest

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paying client, you'll still be financially stable until you can replace the client you lost with a new one.

### **8. Where do you see yourself in five years as a freelance writer?**

My goal is to focus more on writing inspirational fictions books, and if I achieve it within five years, I still plan to continue blogging and writing articles, but I hope to have at least three more inspirational fiction books in the market by then.

### **9. For new writers, what is the number one piece of advice you would offer them.**

Don't give up on your dreams, work toward them. To reach those dreams, all you have to do is write often and study the craft frequently. The more you write and study, the better writer you will become.

**Thanks Misti!**

It was my pleasure!

### **MISTI SANDEFUR BIO**

Misti writes with the intention -- that through words -- she'll help, inspire and entertain many. As a dedicated writer, she composes articles, SEO content, short stories, e-books, print books and personal essays for regional and national publications, book producers, businesses and fellow writers who have too much on their plates and need assistance.

Furthermore, she's the publisher and editor of the *Coffee Break for Writers* e-zine (<http://www.coffeebreakforwriters.com/>), author of two books (published under Misti Jackson), and she blogs regularly for Teevieto and Pure Blogging.

Misti Sandefur and her husband (a veteran of the United States Marine Corps) share their country home with her 20-year-old stepson, 15-year-old daughter, 13-year-old son, 12-year-old son, two ferrets, two Pomeranians and a blue heeler. She also has an 18-year-old stepdaughter who currently lives on a military base with her fellow Navy friends.

You can find out more about Misti on her official website (<http://www.mistisandefur.com>) and on her Life as a Writer blog (<http://mistisandefur.blogspot.com>).

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**SECTION III: FREELANCE WRITING CONTEST & OTHER NEWS**

**Freelance Writing Contest: Win Money!**

Freelance writer Bridget Butler of GreenThumbArticles.com is having a writing contest for the most contributed articles:

She explains: I have started a small niche gardening article directory. For the month of February, I am having a writing contest with the following prizes:

\$25 to the person who writes the most articles;

\$15 dollars to the second place winner; and

\$15 for the person who refers the most authors.

You may check out the site at <http://www.GreenThumbArticles.com>.

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**DESPERATELY SEEKING Freelance Writing Websites & Blogs That Accept Ads**

If you know of a website and/or blog that would be ideal for freelance writers to advertise their product/service, please send me the link so I can check it out.

Send link to at [info@InkwelEditorial.com](mailto:info@InkwelEditorial.com) with “Ad Site for Freelance Writers” in the Subject line.

Thank you.

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**INTERVIEW SUBJECT NEEDED: Moderately Successful Affiliate Marketer**

**For the March 19<sup>th</sup> issue**, I'd really like to interview someone who earns the bulk of their income from writing, blogging, drawing, etc., but who's had moderate success with affiliate marketing, eg, \$750/month or more.

If you are that person or you know of someone, please email me. It's an email interview consisting of 8-10 questions. Contact me at [info@InkwelEditorial.com](mailto:info@InkwelEditorial.com) with “Affiliate Marketer Interviewee” in the Subject line.

Thanks in advance.

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



I realized when I started to put together this issue that this is the 10<sup>th</sup> release since I started republishing the newsletter again last June (I published one a few years ago). Wow, time has flown!

From writing white papers, to SEO writing to making money blogging to writing for the B2B sector, the variety of freelance professionals who've shared their knowledge in my little newsletter amazes me.

Once again, a sincere thank you to all. I'm truly humbled by the willingness of freelancers to share so freely. FYI, links to all previous issues are listed in SECTION IV below.

Oh my goodness, I have so much to impart, but I'm going to try and keep it brief – and relevant.

One of my freelance writing goals, as listed in the last issue, was to make SEO writing at least 50% of my income this year. Well, for the month of January, I accomplished that with flying colors. SEO writing made up the bulk of my income.

I think this is due to two things: (i) January is a slow month for other sectors; and (ii) I've been concentrating all of my marketing efforts in this niche.

If you freelance, then you probably know that it is a seasonal industry, running like this: From about the third week of January through May is high season. Things slow down in June, July and August. They pick back up in September, and go strong through about the second week of November. Then, they don't pick back up again until the end of January/the beginning of February, thus completing the annual cycle.

SEO writing has not followed this pattern whatsoever. I've been busy since the end of November, when I first started to heavily concentrate on this market. There are days where orders come in so fast that I can't outsource them fast enough – they have to wait until the next day.

**I made over \$4,000 from one client alone in a 30-day period** (read more on how to do this here: <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/make-money-writing-seo-content.htm>). I have seven that I do work for on a regular basis now, and all I can say is – thank goodness for outsourcing. Otherwise I wouldn't be able to keep up.

While this is a good problem to have (too much business), when you're trying to fit in family time, concentrate on nurturing other income streams and update blogs, produce newsletters, etc., it can be a disaster.

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For about a week, I literally didn't know my head from my tail. I had to get out of the eye of the storm to create some structure. Now that I have that, things are running a bit smoother around here. Feedback from other SEO writers bear out the fact that this is normal in this sector. Whew!

Regarding freelance writing goals, nobody took me up on my offer in the last newsletter to send in their 2008 freelance writing goals. In every issue, I'm going to leave mine listed. This serves two purposes:

- (i) It keeps me on track: As I wrote in the last issue, the best way to achieve a goal is to tell the world about it. This holds your feet to the fire; and
- (ii) It'll hopefully inspire you to keep working on your goals – and, if you don't have any for this year, to make some and get going on them!

### **My 2008 Freelance Writing Goals**

- 1) Monetize my sites more; (**UPDATE:** I still have to figure out how to get moving on this other than AdSense. I'd love to do better with affiliate marketing, but I've never had a lot of luck with it. I'll keep thinking on this).
- 2) Make SEO content writing at least 50% of my income; (**UPDATE:** for the month of January, exceeded this goal; will continue to track every successive month)
- 3) Finish the two ebooks I'm working on; (**UPDATE:** Am 20% done with one)
- 4) Start two minisites; and
- 5) Get one ebook on Amazon.com.

**Site/Blog Growth!** I'm so psyched about my website and blog growth. I've had my website since 1999, for better or worse. There was one point where I didn't update it for almost two years, yet it remained live.

I've never really cared about website or blog stats – I still don't really because I make the bulk of my income from actual projects. But, as I have an increasing interest in creating passive income, it's something I'm trying to pay more attention to.

Once I can really afford it, I'd like to hire a professional firm to take over the whole thing – ie, optimize it perfectly, redesign it and add all the relevant bells and whistles. Until I'm completely debt free though (except for my mortgage), I don't want to spend money on this.

So for now, I'm just doing what I can to nurture the slow growth I've got going.

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### **How to Track Your Website & Blog Growth**

Doing what I can do, I started to really pay attention to my website again in late 2006/early 2007. From some techie stats like Technorati and Alexa, my website and blog are becoming more popular.

I've moved from a website Alexa rank of almost 3,000,000 to just below 900,000 now. And my blog rank is just under 250,000 on Technorati. While these aren't great stats, for just the little amount of promotion I do, it works. Primarily, I do the following on a regular basis.

### **4 Things You Can Do to Increase Traffic to Your Website/Blog**

*Social Bookmarking:* I use Digg, Propeller and recently StumbleUpon. I also manually add my URL to Google. The link is here: <http://www.google.com/addurl/?continue=/addurl>

*Blog Update & Article Marketing:* Finally, I update my blog on a regular basis and post articles to sites like AssociatedContent. Lately, I haven't been using the free article marketing sites because I simply don't have time to post.

*Blog Commenting:* I've started to be more social, ie, commenting on other blogs, where appropriate. I should do this much more, but again, I just really don't have much time to devote to website/blog marketing.

*On a more personal note,* I'm back in training for this year's marathon. I did my first one in 2006, missed last year's due to a combination of a car accident and laziness as far as training. I walked 13 miles a couple of weekends ago (in 30 degree weather no less) and 11 miles this past weekend with my sister.

I was so sore on Sunday that it was a good thing that all I'd planned to do was lay on the couch and watch the Super Bowl. I have until November to get back into shape to run 26.2 miles. And now, gotta go squeeze in some treadmill time.

**Next Issue:** Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>. Be good until then everybody!

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.

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**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 IV: 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**

**Issue 10:** January 16, 2008 can be found at <http://www.inkwelleditorial.com/Newsletter/1-16-08-freelance-writing-newsletter.pdf>  
Topic: **Spotlight on SEO Content Writing**; Featured Freelancer: Sharon Hurley Hall

