



How to Start a Successful Freelance Career

A Newsletter by Inkwell Editorial

June 6, 2007



SECTION I: \$10,000 in One Year with Elance.com!

Interview with freelance writer Michelle L. Devon about how Elance.com helped her successfully launch her freelance writing career.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: I first encountered Michelle on AssociatedContent.com (AC). I was impressed with her body of work and read her articles when time permitted. FYI, she dispenses excellent, first-hand advice about freelance writing.

What prompted me to contact her for an interview, however, was a post in the AC forums about Elance.com – the freelance job site. I'm not a fan of bid-for-job sites, as I write about here: http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/32067/3_reasons_not_to_bid_for_freelance.html.

But, Michelle mentioned that Elance had helped her successfully launch her freelance career. So, I contacted her and asked if she would mind being interviewed about her experience with the site. Following are her gracious, in-depth responses to my questions.

Here's to duplicating Michelle's success!

Sincerely,
Yuwanda Black, Publisher
InkwellEditorial.com
InkwellEditorial.blogspot.com

INTERVIEW WITH MICHELLE L. DEVON

Michelle:

Thank you for agreeing to shed some light on Elance.com for other freelancers. This type of first-hand advice is extremely helpful to others, as I'm sure you know.

First, let's get some background questions out of the way:

1. How long have you been a full-time freelancer and what type of freelancing makes up the bulk of your income (editing, copywriting, book publishing (royalties), etc.)?

[Michy Says:] I have been self employed for 14 years part-time and full-time for the last four years. The majority of my income comes from my editing jobs (both per job with clients and royalties through publishers).

2. What made you decide to become a freelancer?

[Michy Says:] I had been helping a friend of mine with some editing work on a book she was writing, and she loved my work, so she gave me a referral to a small publisher, who hired me to work on a novel with a new author.

How to Start a Successful Freelance Career: A Newsletter by Inkwell Editorial

I loved it! I was immediately hooked. In addition to my full time job, I had worked part-time at home for many years, and knew that I could make money in administrative services to cover expenses if I pushed it, so I took the plunge and quit my job and started freelancing full time. My health and being home with my son were probably the biggest motivators my decision.

3. What did you do before you were a freelancer?

[Michy Says:] Immediately before freelancing full time, I was a contract/proposals coordinator for a multi-billion dollar international company.

Prior to that, I was the Victim Services Coordinator and chapter director for a national non-profit organization, providing criminal justice advocacy and services for victims of violent crime, as well as teaching classes and providing public awareness about crime-related issues. Prior to that, I worked in executive management in a variety of non-profit, social services agencies in my area.

Now about Elance.

4. About Elance.com: What made you sign up with them?

[Michy Says:] A friend of mine had been using Elance for about six months, and she turned me on to Elance. She was behind on a project and asked me to help her with it for part of the payment, and I agreed. After working with her on it, I figured Elance was something I could do, so I checked them out, signed up, and the rest, as they say, is history.

INTERVIEW CONTINUED BELOW

Get the FREE Report *How to Make \$100/Day as a Freelance Writer*. Go to <http://www.FreelanceWritingWebsite.com> for full for details.

5. How long did you use their services?

[Michy Says:] I used Elance almost exclusively for about a year, then part-time for odd jobs for another year, before I finally had a good customer base and website developed and branched out to provide direct client services, using many of my Elance clients as references for securing contract jobs.

6. What are the top three things you think freelancers should know before they sign up with Elance.com?

[Michy Says:] Using Elance is not free, so you need to find a plan that provides the best return for your investment. I learned early on that the Select Package was not worth the money unless I was doing a consistently high volume of jobs through them. It was much less expensive to pay for the extra bids on the Professional plan than to pay the Select plan upfront, no matter how much Elance tries to make the Select Package look more attractive.

Page - 2 -

©Inkwell Editorial: 2007. All material in this newsletter is copyrighted. It may not be reproduced, reprinted or republished in any manner without the express, written consent of the publisher. Violators will be prosecuted.

How to Start a Successful Freelance Career: A Newsletter by Inkwell Editorial

The second thing to keep in mind is that, like any job or new business venture, it takes time to build up a client base and portfolio with references. You have to be willing to take a few jobs that are not exactly what you want to do or pay a little less than what you want to receive in order to gain that all important feedback and history built up so that people will trust you with the higher paying jobs.

Your bids on freelance bidding sites are like mini-job applications. Bidding takes time but is part of the process. Bids should be handled professionally, briefly, but provide enough information to make yourself appear knowledgeable about the job. One Elance client of mine said that some bidders on Elance only gave price and time - no other information at all. Make your bids detailed and professional for a better chance of being selected.

7. You mentioned in the AssociatedContent.com forum that you made about 10K via them in one year. What types of projects were those, more or less?

[Michy Says:] I had two accounts on Elance, one for writing and editing and the other for administrative services. I did a lot of eBook editing and formatting jobs on Elance, which was probably my primary source of income. I also did many keyword SEO article batches. Transcription work was very lucrative on Elance, where I regularly received up to \$75 per audio hour for transcription of audio files, and even had hired contractors under me to help handle the workload.

8. Overall, would you recommend Elance for newbies or experienced freelancers?

[Michy Says:] My take on it is this: for an individual freelancer without a business and contractors under them, Elance is a great place to break into freelancing and help find leads. I stayed with Elance long enough to build up a good freelance portfolio and client base with references, then branched out on my own, only using Elance occasionally to fill in gaps between customers I could secure on my own, and eventually, I was so busy from my own website, I no longer needed Elance.

However, I know many people who have hired contractors under them and continue to have a very lucrative business by bidding jobs on Elance and then assigning them to contractors who don't know how to or want to handle the business end of freelancing and only want to do the work assigned.

For me, my experience is that Elance is a good foot in the door, but I found I can earn more freelancing on my own now versus using a bidding service like Elance.

9. What is the number one piece of advice you'd give those who want to be a successful (ie, profitable) freelancer?

[Michy Says:] Freelancing is a business, not a hobby. In order to make enough money freelancing as your sole source of income, you have to treat it like the business that it is. You wouldn't expect to be paid a full-time salary on a job for working part-time hours, and

How to Start a Successful Freelance Career: A Newsletter by Inkwell Editorial

freelancing is the same.

Dedication, keeping your commitments and meeting deadlines, and maintaining professionalism and quality in your work are essential to being a successful freelancer.

Thank you for your answers Michelle.

###

BIO: Michelle L. Devon (Michy) is an author, novelist, writer, poet, humorist, and screenwriter... she's also a professional dreamer.

In addition to her personal writing for sites such as Suite101 and Associated Content, Michelle L. Devon, through her company, Accentuate Services, has recently contracted editing with major publishers, independent small publishers, and several editorial / literary review agencies, and continues to expand her company's full-service editing, proofreading, rewriting, and ghostwriting services.

"Writing is more than a profession," she says, "it's a lifelong dream and a passion. Who could ask for more than to wake every day to do what you love the most and get paid for it too! I am a writer. It's not what I do; it's who I am."

Suite101: <http://www.suite101.com/profile.cfm/michelleldevon>

Associated Content:

http://www.associatedcontent.com/user/11173/michelle_l_devon_michy.html

Accentuate Services: <http://www.accentuateservices.com>



How to Start a Successful Freelance Career: A Newsletter by Inkwell Editorial

SECTION II: Find Freelance Work – A Freelance Job Site

Ka'ching!

FYI, Michelle has a job forum on her site. She writes:

“I have created a forum that's been around for about a year or so now, but I've just recently started posting paying writing jobs in one of the threads there..

You can see the jobs at:

<http://www.accentuateservices.com/forum/>

For those who write poetry, there is a paying poetry listing that will give you 6 full pages of paying poetry markets that I've found around online - most pay about \$5, some as much as 10-25 per piece.



How to Start a Successful Freelance Career: A Newsletter by Inkwell Editorial

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



Here, I will post ramblings about my freelance life and my personal life (a little). My hope is that it will shed some light on what goes on in the life of a freelancer.

It's around 9:30pm (EST). I wanted to have the newsletter out this morning, but I got an unexpected assignment last Friday that I've been working on. I expect to finish tomorrow.

Even though this is my newsletter and I could have put it out tomorrow, it's important (and respectful) to keep your word to your audience. This builds trust, which over time leads to sales (if this feels like a lesson, it is).

FYI, this is probably why the look of the newsletter will change over the next few issues. I haven't had time to devote to "the look" of it; I've been so busy and focused on the content.

On a personal note, I'm still fighting with the insurance company over the car accident I had in February. The settlement they're offering is laughable. I'm wondering if my attorney is on the beach in Jamaica enjoying my money because I haven't heard from him in almost a week. I should probably call.

When I'm on deadline, I tend to have laser focus and push everything – even important stuff like this – to the side.

Jeez! If I ever get in an accident again (pray tell not!), I'm going to handle it myself. I figure if you're honest and are not trying to do the fake injury stuff, you'll come out ahead by dealing straight with the source.

Until next time,
Yuwanda

P.S.: In the Next Issue (June 20th): In the second issue, Inkwell Editorial interviews Clark Covington of Internet Research Associates (IRA). IRA is a writing company that hires freelancers to do work for all types of companies -- from real estate agents to e-commerce store owners. Writers are hired to produce web copy, e-books, SEO articles, etc.

P.P.S.: Get the FREE Report *How to Make \$100/Day as a Freelance Writer*. Go to <http://www.FreelanceWritingWebsite.com> for full for details.

Want to read all issues to date? Subscribe by sending an email to info@inkwelleditorial.com with the message, "Yes, sign me up using this email address!" The most recent issue, with links to all previous issues, will be sent immediately.