

The Greener Pastures (and the in-between pink, blue and yellow ones)

by

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January 5, 2009. Monday, 8:45 a.m. As I stood at the coffee machine spewing its awful-tasting contents (the management called it “coffee”) into my mug, I dreamt of a life where I could write all day about the things that mattered to me, and be paid good money for it.



This was about two years ago when I was working at a 9 to 6 (plus two hours commute time one way) corporate job. My resume boasted of big words – Communications Manager, Instructional Designer – and I had a befitting pay check to show for it, too. But somehow, despite the good life, I wasn't truly happy.

So, I decided I had had enough of the bad coffee and quit my job. (Not on the same Monday, but many Mondays later.) I spent the following year whiling away my time (I called it “learning by observing”), enrolling in a creative writing course, studying the freelance market, sending articles to publications, and being repeatedly rejected.

I even worked for free for a major publication just to see my name in print (when I asked for a fee two articles later, the Editor said she didn't want my style of articles any more), and worked on ghost writing projects. In the meantime, I took feedback earnestly. My creative writing course tutor helped immensely, as did some writer chaps I met through an online forum. And I wrote something every day, regardless of its sale value or even publish-worthiness. Finally, well into my second year of doing everything but making money from writing, I managed to sell my first article – with a byline and a fee. Since then, there's been no looking back.

So what's the one lesson that I learned through the course of this journey? To get to the greener pastures, you have to pass the in-between pink, blue, and yellow ones, too. And today, I'm going to reveal how to do just that. Here's how to find those writing jobs and make money off your writing.

The Green Pasture: Getting a byline

The Other-colored Pastures: Writing without getting one

Yeah, I know: You're probably thinking, what the heck! Why would anyone write without getting a byline? I did, and you would do too, if you eventually want to get your name published under an article. Just like with all other jobs, experience counts in the writing business too. And how do you get experience as a writer? Work on projects that suit your style, even if they don't offer good money initially and a byline. When you have a dozen or

so such articles, approach the publications that offer a byline and boast of the work you've done. Get client recommendations, if necessary, to vouch for your professionalism, work ethic and writing style. A word of caution: Some of the glossies may not offer a payment to new writers – if you think you must get a byline and be paid for the article as well, be upfront and tell the Editor so. It could mean losing out on the job, but you know what you're worth. And now, the Editor does too.

The Green Pasture: Getting paid to write

The Other-colored Pastures: Writing for nondescript publications

I'll make it short: Never say never to *any* market, and you'll never fall short of paid work.

This may seem like daunting advice if you've been freelancing in a niche area, or think you're good at writing for only so many markets. However, as a writer, you should be able to write – anything! And unless you attempt a genre, how will you know how good or bad you are at it?



Markets that remain unexplored, and thus underutilized, need freelance contributions all the time. So your chances at getting published and paid for your effort are very high. Think in-flight magazines, travel brochures in hotels, or trade magazines in exhibitions.

And while you wait for these magazines to respond to your query letter, hunt for content management companies that require an article here and there. No long term commitment required – you work when you have the time, and only take up projects that interest you. On the flip side, no byline, but there is good money.

Some newspapers and magazines also pay for their readers' letters – there hasn't been an easier way to make some cash!

The Green Pasture: Writing assignments flooding to your inbox

The Other-colored Pastures: Finding writing jobs and selling your craft shamelessly

In an ideal world, chocolate would grow on trees and writing assignments would flood your inbox. Wait a minute... Chocolate – or some form of it – *does* grow on trees (shrubs, plants, whatever)! So writing jobs also must flood your inbox? Yes, they do. But to get to that green pasture, you must pass through the in-between pink, blue and yellow pastures.

No matter how big a celebrity your dogs think you are, the world at large still needs to know about your writing talent. To do that, first, you must find writing jobs. Apart from the sources stated above, google for websites that offer a chance to advertise your skills for free.

Submitting content on websites that are run purely on a contribution-basis is a great place to start. Look for ezinearticles.com, suite101.com, Wikipedia.com, articlesbase.com, eHow.com – read each website's submission guidelines and copyright information carefully before you submit your article.

Once you have an expanding directory of work online, use social media such as Twitter and Facebook to divert traffic to your specific URLs. (Tip: Twitter is a great place to find jobs too! Just use the hash tag (#) before phrases such as "writingjobs" or "editing" and hit Search.) Putting up a link to your blog or other such place through which people can reach you ensures that you get writing offers delivered to your inbox!



In conclusion, don't be shy of crossing the other-colored pastures, or even staying on them for a while. They are the ones that led me from my bad coffee days to the ones where I choose not just my coffee type (black for Mondays and Wednesdays, latte for Tuesdays, and mocha for Thursdays and Fridays), but also what I do while I drink it.

It's a life you don't want to miss!

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