

## Think before you write: Tips for the amateur freelancer

by Shefali Sunderan Harsha

If my [earlier post](#) about being a full-time writer knocked your socks off, and made you want to jump on the writing/freelancing bandwagon too, here are some tips that'll stand you in good stead.

- You are the boss and employee. This means you have to think management stuff such as increasing business, strategy for dealing with competition, etc., while writing, meeting deadlines and answering phone calls. If you can't multi-task, you either need to learn or forget about this business.
- Discipline is key. Just as in a day job, you have work hours, time off and holidays, you must have these as a freelancer too. It's OK if you don't want to stick to a 9-5 schedule, or can only work a certain number of hours per day, but maintain those hours strictly. Also, let people know about your hours, so friends know when you're at work and clients know when you're on holiday. Don't forget it's your job – take it seriously, and others will too.
- Get organised. Maintain project status sheets, payment charts and time logs. Keep time aside each day (or at least twice a week) for admin work and follow-up activities. Use your computer's (or phone's) reminder service to make To Do lists. (I usually just slap on a Post-it on my Mac each morning, but I'm still old school in many ways!)
- Even when you aren't working on a project, or are having a lean period, remember there's loads to be done. Blatant self-promotion (via Twitter, Facebook and other such online social networking forums) is a must to survive and get noticed. Writing for free article repository websites such as Ezine, Burrrp, Suite 101, Wikipedia etc. allow you to build your brand online, and list these in your resume.
- Forget about the big glossies and send articles to smaller, lesser-known publications, if you are a new writer. Some good places to find such obscure publications are travel brochures in hotels, in-flight magazines on aircrafts and trade magazines in exhibitions. These are more likely to accept your articles without prior published work, and the experience you gain while writing for these can be used when you approach the glossies. Also, the rejection rate will be low if you start small, thus building your morale and confidence.

The most important thing to remember is that you should never give up. Sometimes, editors take months to even acknowledge an article, leave alone publish it. Don't fret, keep sending reminders up to a certain time, and let the editor know you will be sending the article to another publication after a certain date. Think of several different ways to pitch your article, so you can approach many publications with minimal modifications in the article. (A word of caution: Never, ever send one article to several different publications at the same time; what if they all decide to publish it?!)

Good luck, and do keep me posted on how your journey has been!

*(This post is also published on Shefali's blog at <http://discordantthoughts.wordpress.com/2010/12/15/tips-for-the-amateur-freelancer/>.)*