

ONLINE CONTENT WRITING

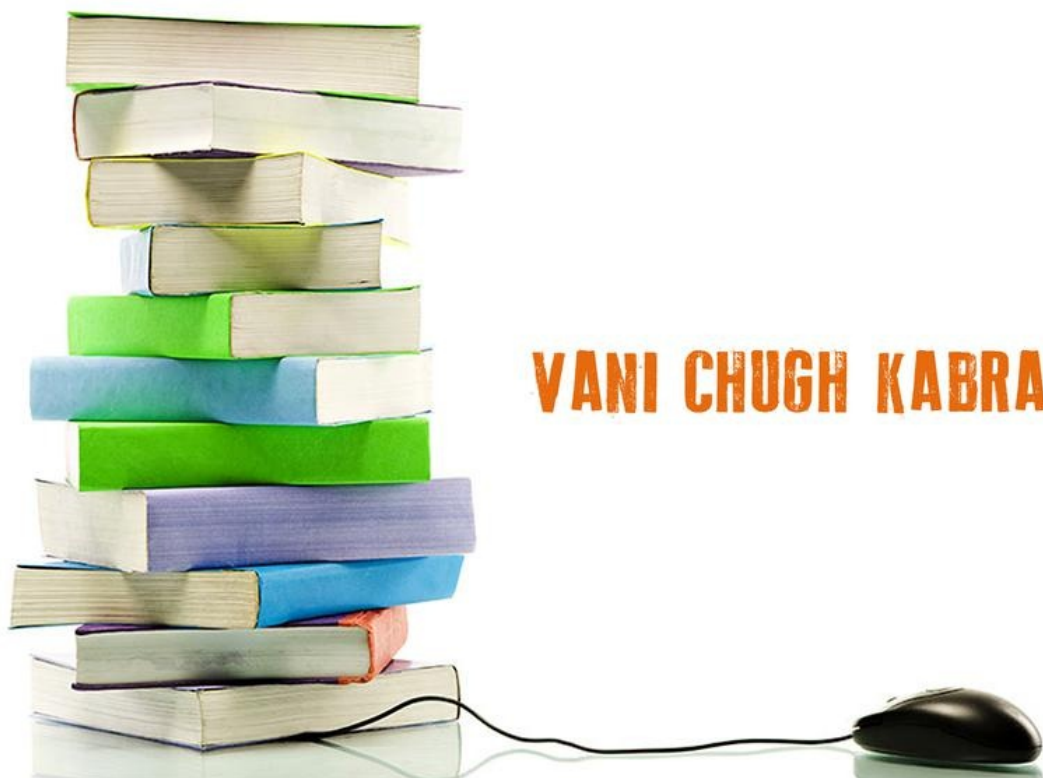
How to 'make money'
through content writing?



VANI CHUGH KABRA

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About The Author

Vani is the owner and manager of a dynamic content writing and organic marketing firm-[vanionlinemedia](http://vanionlinemedia.com).

She started out as a journalist in 2003 and worked for India's top news channels including, Aaj Tak, IBN7 and Star News in her 6-year electronic media stint. She then moved to freelancing for online media and after working independently for two years, launched her own company.

Today Vani has clients all across the globe and has written EBooks, articles, Ecourses and Press Releases for various niche areas. She specializes in NLP and Marketing related content and her client base includes several International life as well as business coaches.

She is also trained in hypnotherapy and tarot (skills she picked up while producing shows on the same theme during her TV news days) and likes spending time with her cards in her free time.

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Online Content Writing

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Dedication

This Book is dedicated to my loving husband Nishant who has always supported me in everything I have done.

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Introduction

Working from home sounds like a great idea, right? It truly is! Though when I started out, I did wonder if it was actually possible to earn a living with only a laptop and Internet connection as your investments?

Over time I have realized that it really is! The only things that you need are: some guidance and training about the latest skills that are in demand. That's exactly what I hope this book will provide you.

Online Content Writing contains the gist of everything I have learnt since I began my career as a content developer and marketer. From, how to write great SEO content to the tips and tricks that will not only help you get noticed by prospective employers but also aid you in building long running relationships with them.

So, Happy reading and hopefully soon you'll be writing happily too!

Chapter 1

How To Write Saleable Content

So you think you can write? Then before anything else let's see whether or not what you are writing at present is saleable. Here's what you need to do. Open any 500-word piece you have written lately and answer the following questions:

- Do most of your sentences fit into the 30-35-word range?
- Do you make frequent use of ellipses “...” instead of commas and periods?
- Read what you have written aloud, does every sentence make complete sense?
- Have you made frequent use of passive voice in the text?
- Have you made frequent use of present continuous?
- Does the average length of your paragraphs exceed 5 lines?

If the answer to most of these questions is yes, you have quite a bit of ground to cover before you can launch your content writing career. If you have answered most questions with a 'No', congrats, your fundamentals are correct! Now, all you need to do is to learn your SEO basics, refine your style and learn content writing etiquette.

Two Common Mistakes Made By Rookie Content Writers

I have hired and fired many content writers in the last two years and have taught tricks of the trade to several interns and trainees. The following are two of the most common mistakes I have come across:

1. Writing as you think

Our thoughts do not follow the rules of punctuation, so what makes perfect sense in our minds, looks like a bad case of verbal diarrhea in print. For example,

here's an excerpt from a copy I edited sometime back:

"I'm going to Try this one or I'm trying this new program, for so many years this is what came out of my mouth "I'm trying this new Pill, Shake, Supplement, Program" etc etc."

Now, in the writer's mind the sentence probably sounded okay, but when you read it aloud, it sounds rather odd, doesn't it?

2. Using Big Words

Another problem that I come across often, especially when it comes to pieces written by non-native English speakers, is that of random usage of big words.

What they forget is that one of most important elements of great content is 'flow'. A reader can make out easily if certain words and phrases are inserted only to make the piece sound impressive. Instead of adding value, these words create a jarring effect and break the flow.

To give you another example, here's an excerpt from a piece one of my trainees wrote:

Although the quality and endeavor in content writing has been making rapid strides of late, there are some inherent myths that have plagued its onset.

There are several problems with this excerpt, but I'll start with the most obvious one: the desire to impress is obvious and rather off-putting.

If I were to read something like this on the web, I would first yawn and then hit the back button even before I managed to close my mouth. The passive voice in the end makes the sentences even more boring.

You have to remember that big words don't impress the readers much! What will create a great impression is your ability to connect with your reader.

How to make your words work?

Unless the readers are able to connect with your content, it won't do you much good. Based on my personal experience, here are the top content writing techniques that I would recommend:

- Write in a conversational tone, so that the readers can connect with you. For example, instead of writing, "Content writing endeavors can bring result in triumph for writers..." write-"To be successful in content writing..."

- Big words that you don't use as a part of your everyday language are best left for legal documents. In your articles, it's best to keep your language simple.
- Using humor in your articles is a great way to connect with your readers. However, be careful while using this tool, don't ever joke on the reader's expense and more importantly keep their sensibilities in mind.
- Keep your sentences short and to the point, long rambling sentences can be quite annoying from a reader's point of view.
- Get to the point fast; beating around the bush for too long will make your reader lose patience. For example, if your article topic is "How to boil eggs", don't waste time talking about the nutritious benefits of eggs.
- Avoid the use of passive voice. You will be able to connect better with your readers, if your sentences are direct and energetic.
- Add new information in every sentence. I have often come across writers who repeat the same thing in several different ways in a single article. While the writer may think that he/she is being very smart and making the article longer without doing additional research, the readers can actually see through the ploy. So, if you want your articles to sell, make sure that each and every sentence adds something new to your piece.
- When in doubt leave out. Clichéd as it may sound this is an excellent rule to follow in content writing. Whether it's words or facts, you should only incorporate those that you are 100% sure about. For example, a writer once sent me a copy that started with- "*To abridge the gap between technology and need...*" now the usage of the word abridge here is completely inappropriate. The word she should have used is 'bridge', 'abridge' means to shorten or edit.

Content Writing Jargon

Before we move on and get into advanced content writing skills and job-hunting tips and tricks, there are certain key terms that you must be aware of.

- **Backlinks:** When you click on an underlined word and a new page opens up, it means you have just clicked on that page's backlink. Once you start professional content writing you will realize that after you send your articles to the client, he/she publishes them with backlinks embedded in the text. For example, if you saw the following text in an online article, '*content writing*' would be the word containing the backlink to my business site.

If you are in need of [content writing](#) services, you must get in touch with the expert.

- **Fixed Price Jobs and Hourly Jobs:** Content writing jobs in the virtual world can be divided into these two categories. Hourly jobs involve logging the time you spend on a job with the software tools provided by the job-hunting platform. Fixed price jobs, on the other hand, are those wherein you get paid a pre-decided amount once the job is finished.
- **SEO (Search engine optimization):** SEO is the purpose of almost all online content writing jobs. Most people post article-writing jobs, so that they can use the same to improve their business website's search engine ratings.
- **Indexing:** Your articles will appear on search results and the backlinks therein will be acknowledged only after search engines index them in their database.
- **Article Spinning:** Spinning means playing around with the words of an existing article to create several different versions of the same. Spinning tools prompt users to enter different synonyms of almost every word in the article.

The spun article is thus the same article re-worded, so that it looks different. Ideally a spun article should at least be 60% different from the original. For example, *‘Usually, a spun piece of writing ought to be in the least sixty percent different from the actual one’* is a spun version of the last sentence.

As you can see from the example above spun sentences can sound a little awkward. Also, there are some ethical concerns about spinning, so you shouldn’t spin an article unless your client specifically requests for it. Finally, you must remember that spinning an article written by someone else and posting it in your name is considered to be plagiarism, so stay clear of that.

- **Copyscape clean:** Copyscape is the standard plagiarism checker tool. *‘Copyscape clean’* thus means an article that has been cleared by this tool.
- **Article Marketing:** Posting articles online with embedded backlinks helps in improving a website’s search engine rankings. Article marketing is the term given to this particular marketing strategy.

How To Write Saleable Content Worksheet

Exercise 1: Identify what’s wrong with the following excerpts:

Excerpt1: *Content writing marks the glowing dawn of giving descriptions of any product, service, or review. Here we can easily read its potency to take charge from the traditional media of newspaper and television. Today e-media caters to the needs of each one. These days the online media have got prime importance from the youngsters to gather information on any subject, technology etc. In a word, it has become a school away from school. It opens a window to peep into the past, observe the present and imagine the future.*

Excerpt 2: *The cause of Content writing has come a long way from its humble beginnings in the last few years of the just concluded millennium. From a restricted and niche target base it has instrumentally spread its wings to every nook and corner of the globe.*

Excerpt 3: *The effort and duration that is invested into any literary achievement when it comes to IT, has been transformed with the emergence of Content writing. The wordpress market is undergoing transition way too rapidly to sustain consistency in any particular style. Yet there is plenty of room for improvement in this high demand for quality in content.*

Chapter 2

Essential SEO Skills For Content Writers

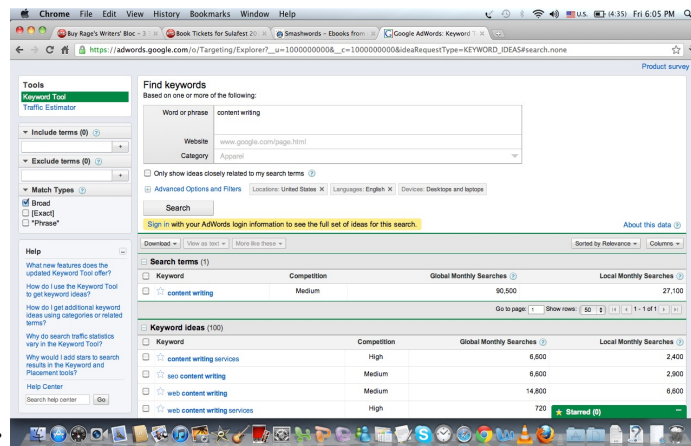
For a content writer seeking to excel in online writing, the knowledge of SEO is a must. Fact is that no matter how great your writing is, if it isn't search engine optimized, you won't be able to find too many buyers for it.

Key SEO Terms You Must Know

Contrary to popular belief, SEO writing is not too complicated or technical. However, before we proceed to specific SEO skills, you must first understand the key concepts of SEO:

- **Keyword:** The keyword is the word or phrase that users in your niche area prefer while looking for relevant information. There are of course hundreds and thousands of keywords that people may use. However, for SEO purposes, you will need the keywords that are likely to be the most productive. This is where keyword research comes in.
- **Keyword Research:** This involves using keyword research tools like the [Google keyword](#) tool to study the popularity and competition levels of various keywords in your niche.

For example, let's say you have to write articles on *Content writing*. Now, when you enter the same in the search box, the software will not only give you the statistics for the keyword you entered but will also throw up statistics for related terms like, *content writing tips*, *content writing services*, *SEO content writing*, etc. Here's a screenshot of the page to help you understand how the



keyword tool works:

As a content writer it is your job to study these results, enter various permutations and combinations in the keyword search box to come up with a list of high search volume (at least more than a 1000 global searches per month) and Medium to Low competition search words.

Why you ask? High search volume keywords mean that those words and phrases are among the popular search queries in the said niche. Low and medium competition means that there are fewer sites competing to rank for those keywords. So, your content will have better chances of making it to the top of Google.

- **Long tail keywords vs. single word keyword:** The term 'long tail keyword' simply means a keyword that consists of two or more words. In terms of SEO, it is a better idea to choose long tail keywords, as they are more specific, targeted and easier to rank for. For example, let's say you are writing an article for a designer who specializes in plus size clothing. Now, you would get better results if you targeted a long tail keyword like plus size fashion instead of just fashion.
- **Keyword Density:** This is where a lot of newbie writers stumble. Yes, search engines do like keyword rich articles, however, your content shouldn't be stuffed with them to the extent that it becomes hard to read. Ideally, the keywords should flow naturally within the body text of the article. A density of 1.5-2% is considered to be effective.

How To Write SEO Articles

Once you have your keywords in place, the next step is to understand how to use keywords in the most effective manner. The following pattern is believed to get the best SEO results:

- Keyword as the first word of the title.
- Keyword as the first word of the intro.
- Keyword as the first word of the conclusion.
- Repeat keyword at least 2-3 times in a 500-word article.

The only drawback of using this pattern is that it hampers creativity. In case you do not want to follow this pattern to a T, you can modify it as per the following suggestions to allow for more flexibility in writing:

- Use keyword in the title.
- Use keyword at least once in the intro.
- Use keyword at least once in the conclusions, preferably in the first sentence.
- Repeat the keyword at least 2-3 times in a 500-word article

The latter pattern may not be as effective as the one suggested before it, however, if your client prefers more creative intros, following the second SEO writing style would work better for you.

Another thing that can help you create effective SEO content is the use of secondary keywords. These are popular related and relevant keywords that you


can use in the body text of your article (at least 2-3 times) in addition to the primary keyword you are targeting.

For instance, let's say, as per your keyword research you zero in on 'plus size fashion' as your main keyword, but realize that 'plus size clothing' can be effective too. Now, you may use the latter as your secondary keyword.

SEO Basics Worksheet

Exercise 1: Identifying Keywords

Imagine you have to create content on 'Weight Loss', make a note of the best long tail keywords (medium competition, high search volume-over a 1,000 at least) that you can use for your articles.



Chapter 3

How To Engage The Reader?

With the growing broadband speeds people's attention spans are shortening drastically. So, unless you can engage the reader with your content, they'll hit the back button within seconds of landing on your page.

The question now is how do you create engaging content? The first thing that you must do is to use the small window of opportunity provided by the header and the intro.

Your intro and heading are like the 30-second elevator speech; only here you probably won't get as much time to impress your reader. This means you have to make all out efforts to connect with your reader almost instantly.

How To Write An Eye-Catching Headline?

Any headline that makes you curious, gets you thinking, makes you laugh or teases you fulfills its purpose! In online writing, it must also make use of the targeted keyword to be truly effective. The tips listed below will help you draft such headlines:

- **Raise a Valid Question:** The question here should be the one that your readers are looking for an answer to. A keyword research will help you identify the same. For example, let's say your keyword is *weight loss secrets*, a headline that says "Weight Loss Secrets: How To Stay Motivated to stick to your diet plan?" could help you attract readers.
- **Make it Witty:** Wit and humor work well as headers, but make sure you don't come across as if you are trying too hard. Using the lines of funny song, well-known saying or quote can be the safest bets. For example, an article on the importance of confidence in dating, titled "I am sexy and I know it...Dating Secrets Revealed" (with dating secrets being the keyword) will not only amuse your readers but also encourage them to read more.
- **The Direct Approach:** This is where you simply state what the article is about in a 5-10-word phrase. This may not be the most flamboyant approach, but it works with online writing as it tells readers at a glance whether or not the article will be worth their while. For instance, if you are writing an article on care of olive trees', you can title it: Care Of Olive Trees: Top 10 Tips.

How To Write An Effective Intro?

As far as the intro goes, the following approaches usually work well:

- **Empathy:** If your readers feel that you understand their state of mind, they will read on. For instance, let's say you have to write an article on "*How To Get Quick Loans*", you could start the article with the most common questions that a person seeking a quick loan is likely to have. For instance- '*Wondering where to get cash in a hurry from? Looking for companies that*

will give you a loan without bothering about your credit history...'

- **Humor:** Inducing laughter is one of the most effective strategies to connect with your reader. A funny quote or story related to the topic at hand can help you catch your reader's attention. Alternately, you could make up funny fictional scenarios related to the topic. For instance, you could begin an article on acne with a break-up text message to your pimples-*'pimpl ive had enuf, never want 2 c u agn'*. Or, an article on recession with the well known quote, *"I don't find it hard to meet my expenses, they pop up everywhere"*
- **Challenging:** Challenge someone's intellect, ideas or principles, and you have caught their attention. However, you have to be careful when using this approach; so throw a challenging question or idea, but make sure your tone is polite. A strong or a belligerent tone may put off your reader. For instance, the intro of an article on *Investing Options* could start with, *'If you still believe that a penny saved is a penny earned, think again!'*
- **Story Telling:** Everyone loves a good story, so if you start your article by telling one, you can get your reader involved from the first paragraph itself. If are writing about a famous person, for instance, give their story a dramatic setting- *'Five years ago an ordinary day, turned into a life changing moment for a man...'*

These tips should hopefully help you begin your article with a bang!

How To Keep Your Readers Engaged?

As important as the intro and header are, they are not the be all and end all of your article. The body text of your article must be able to keep the readers involved, or all the effort you've put into the intro will go waste.

How do you accomplish this? Other than ensuring that your copy is free of grammatical errors and follows the content writing strategies listed in the previous chapter, you can use following suggestions:

- **Use subheads wherever you can:** One fact that you must accept as an

online content writer is that more often than not you will be writing for an impatient lot. After all, there's so much information available online, that people really don't want to be bothered with something that seems too cumbersome to read.

So, your copy must be written in such a way that your readers get a good idea of what you have to say through a superficial glance. Breaking your article into appropriate subheads will ensure the same.

- **Make use of bullet points instead of long paragraphs:** Bullet points make text easier on the eyes. Try it for yourself, what is easier to read, Sample A or Sample B?

Sample A: *Instead of writing, "Content writing endeavors can bring result in triumph for writers...", write-"To be successful in content writing..." Big words that you don't use as a part of your everyday language are best left for legal documents. Using humor in your articles is a great way to connect with you readers. However, be careful while using this tool, don't even joke on the reader's expense and more importantly keep their sensibilities in mind.*

Sample B: *Instead of writing, "Content writing endeavors can bring result in triumph for writers...", write-"To be successful in content writing..."*

- *Big words that you don't use as a part of your everyday language are best left for legal documents.*
 - *Using humor in your articles is a great way to connect with you readers. However, be careful while using this tool, don't even joke on the reader's expense and more importantly keep their sensibilities in mind.*
- **Use lots of examples to illustrate your point:** Remember how you always learnt more in the show and tell classes? That's because it's easier for us to understand a concept when its practical usage is demonstrated. So, the more examples that you give, the better will it be for readers to understand your point.

- **Provide Sources:** This is important when you are sharing statistics in your article. For one, it's an ethical practice; second it will add credibility to your article.

Creating Engaging Content Worksheet

Exercise 1-Understanding your reader: Example Article on DVD players.

What would be the key questions in your mind? Make a list of the same.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Now put these points in question form and write a paragraph wherein you address these key questions.

Making your reader curious: Example-Article on Internet Marketing

P_____ pick up any successful business that enjoys top ranking on Google for a popular keyword. Tell its success story in the introductory paragraph as if it were a fictional tale.

Making your readers laugh: Example-Article on dating relationships

Look up quotes and jokes on romantic relationships, put the same in the intro and take off from there.

Using illustrations to explain your point. Example: Article on marketing through Facebook.

You have to explain how creating a Facebook fan page can help businesses gain popularity. So, create a hypothetical situation of a fashion boutique business. Explain how posting pictures of the latest creations and initiating discussions about the same can help the owner create buzz about the designs.

Exercise 2: Learning from examples

L_____ look up articles on the keyword “how to lose weight fast”, pick out the most interesting

one, read it carefully and make a note of all the things you liked about the article

Chapter 4

How to get content writing jobs?

Finally, we come to the subject that the whole ado was about! When you enter '*content writing jobs*' on Google, you may come across several results promising excellent opportunities. How do you choose? Here are some top tips that you'll find useful:

Top 13 Techniques That Can Help You Bag Content Writing Jobs

No matter what your past work experience is, when you enter into the world of online content writing, you might feel overwhelmed by the intensity of competition, low pay rates and the sheer amount of information. However, if you play your cards right, you'll be able to launch your content writing career on a high note.

1. Focus on reputed buyer-contractor platforms

When looking for your first content writing job, focus on well-known platforms like Odesk, Elance, Freelancer, *etc.* The idea is to start your career from a place that offers you some amount of security cover from scammers.

These sites have tools like time tracker software for hourly jobs, so that you get paid as per the amount of time you spend on a job. Buyer feedback features on the sites will help you judge whether or not the buyer is reliable and someone you would like to work for.

2. Create Credible looking and Impressive Profile

Make sure you upload a picture in your profile, it will add to your credibility. If you are an absolute newbie, it also makes sense to take the language and writing proficiency tests to showcase your skill set. Spend some time on your profile description as well. It should be to the point, interesting and completely free of all spelling, grammar and punctuation errors.

3. Be Flexible About Your Pricing

The competition on these sites is of course quite intense. So, as a newbie you will have to take a pay cut and work at lower rates to compete with the more experienced providers. Once you are a few jobs old and have managed to put together a respectable feedback score from your buyers, you can increase your fee.

4. Draft A Killer Cover Letter

Another important thing to remember as far as competition is concerned is that you have to get noticed and noticed fast. This means your cover letter must be impressive. From my personal experience, the best cover letters are those that are:

- **Job specific:** Do not send a generic cover letter; make sure your writing makes it clear that letter has been drafted for the specific job you are applying for.

- **Grammatically and structurally perfect:** If you can't write a cover letter well, you are really not saying much about your skills as a content writer.
- **Professional and Polite:** Do not sound overtly humble in your cover letter; it sets the wrong tone for future interaction. Remember, you are an independent contractor who is willing to do a job for a fair sum of money. Make sure you come across as a polite, courteous but firm provider.

In addition the points stated above you must avoid starting your letter with "Dear Sir/Ma'am", "Respected Sir/Ma'am", etc, it sound archaic. A simple "Hi" or "Hello" sounds better.

5. Make sure you send relevant work samples

When applying for a job you must also make it a point to include a sample of your writing. It could be a link to one of your published articles or an excerpt from a ghostwritten article with the original buyer's permission of course.

6. Show the prospective client that you know your job

Offer relevant and useful advice through your cover letter, this is one of the best ways to get noticed. So, if the buyer has given his/her web address, go through the site, make a few notes about any spelling, grammar, punctuation or even SEO mistakes that you can spot and share the same in your cover letter.

However, make sure that you do not sound pompous while doing the same. A word of caution here, this technique may backfire if the buyer doesn't see any merit in your points.

7. Apply Smartly and Selectively

In order to save time, apply for jobs that have been posted recently and have limited bids. Most buyers choose providers within 3-4 days of posting a job. So, if a job is still open after a week, despite 20 or more bids, chances are that the buyer has either found someone through another source or has changed his/her mind.

Focus on jobs for which you can submit relevant samples. For instance, if someone needs to get fashion blogs written and you have great samples of fashion writing, take your time and draft an impressive cover letter for the same.

You would have a better chance of landing an interview with this one letter, than you would if you were to send 5 mediocre cover letters for random writing jobs.

8. Apply Persistently

You may not land any interview within the first week of applying for jobs, don't worry happens to everyone. The law of averages applies here too. Designate an hour or two to searching and applying for new jobs everyday, you will hopefully get one call for 25-30 jobs you apply for, when you are a rookie. Once you gain some experience, the interview call rate will improve.

9. Be on your guard with new buyers

If you decide to approach content writing companies directly for jobs, remember you are doing so at your own risk. There is no way for you to make sure that you will get paid for your services. A good idea is to encourage them to hire you through the buyer-contractor platform you prefer and switch to direct payment mode only after you have developed a working relationship with the said company.

Websites like (like Elance) offer escrow funding options, *i.e.* the buyer is required to get his/her card charged for the agreed amount and deposit the money with the site. The funds are released to the provider once the job is completed successfully. If you choose to work through such sites, do not start work for any buyers who refuse to fund escrow. There is a strong possibility that he/she may not pay you later.

10. Work on Your Writing Samples

Spend sometime in developing your writing samples. Most buyers will contact you only and only if they like your writing sample. So, if you don't have great samples to share, start creating them now.

Write articles in popular niche areas like, self-help, finance, Internet marketing and health; post the same on free article directories like Ezines, Hubpages, *etc.* This way you'll always have relevant work samples to send across to your prospective buyers.

11. Bid Smartly

Most buyer-contractor platforms follow the policy of asking providers to bid for a job. So, make sure that your bid is a little below the standard market rate, but don't make the mistake of bidding too low either, it may backfire.

12. Don't do free samples for buyers

Do not agree to write free sample articles for anyone. If a buyer asks for the same, chances that he/she will scam you and you will never hear from them again.

13. Apply for a job only if you are comfortable with the Buyer's budget

Don't haggle with the buyer about money. Usually, buyers specify how much they are willing to spend. Apply for a job only if you are comfortable working within the budget, if you are not look elsewhere, instead of wasting your time in trying to convince a buyer to pay you more.

These tips will hopefully help you secure good content writing jobs, while ensuring that you don't get scammed and get paid for a job well done.

Job Hunting Worksheet

Exercise 1: Drafting an impressive cover letter

Use the following template to draft cover letters for your shortlisted jobs:

Hi!

Intro: *Introduce yourself and tell the buyer why he/she should hire you.*

Example: I am enthusiastic and innovative content writer. Though, I am new to professional writing, I have written a few articles in the----(name the niche area for which you are pitching). I am also extremely interested in learning and exploring more about the area, so would love to take up this project.

Body: *List the achievements that are relevant for the job.*

Example: I am a keen and thorough researcher and well versed with SEO writing. I also have a copyscape premium account and follow a policy of running all my content through the software before sending it to the client. So, originality and quality are issues you will not have to worry about.

Sample Details: *Talk about your sample here, what is it about, whether it is a ghostwritten piece of work or a link to an article published in your name.*

Example: Here's a link to my published articles on Ezines.

Closing: *End on a positive note.*

Example: I look forward to hearing from you.

Chapter 5

Client Etiquette-How To Impress Your Clients And Keep Them Coming For More?

In the content writing business, landing a job is not enough. In order to grow, you must be able to impress your client enough, so that not only do they come back to you with more work, but also refer others to you.

Top Relationship Building Strategies

While there is no substitute for professional and well-written content, you must also be able to give your clients the following essential extras:

- Prompt communication
- Courtesy
- Respect
- Occasional discounts/leeway
- A hassle-free working environment

The following tips will help you ensure that you are able to give the same to your clients:

- Don't go lax in replying to e-mails and messages, once you get the job. Ideally, you should respond within-24 hours.
- No one appreciates missed deadlines; if you have committed to a day and date, make sure you deliver on time. In case you are not able to do the same, inform your client in advance about the reason for the delay. More importantly, let delays be an aberration and not a matter of regular practice.
- If you have agreed to work for a certain amount and later realize that you grossly miscalculated the time and effort involved, don't blame your client or haggle with them to increase the payment. Finish the work you have taken and then politely tell them that you would not be able to offer the same rate for future projects.
- Be open to editing and re-editing till the client is satisfied with the job. Look at it this way, if you liked an outfit at a boutique, you would only buy if it fit or the owner offered to alter it to your size, right? A buyer too is under no obligation to pay you, unless the content you have written meets their standards and requirements.
- If after repeated edits the buyers keeps returning the sample, you may offer to take a price cut or let go off the payment due to you completely.

- Give your buyers the respect they deserve. Keep your tone polite, even if you have decided that you can no longer work for them. Having said that, make sure that you get the same treatment in return.
- People hire content writers to outsource a task they don't want to bother with themselves. Your job, therefore, is not just to provide good content, but also make sure that the job is truly off your buyer's hands. If they have to chase you repeatedly for delivery, send you repeated instructions about improving your writing style, grammar, etc, you are not doing a good job.
- If, despite, your best efforts you are unable to gel with your buyer, it's best to take a pay cut and bow out gracefully.
- When you give a buyer a little more than they asked or paid for, you create the perception that you truly are better than the others in the market. So, an occasional leeway or discount, such as doing an extra half an hour of research for free, charging less than the agreed amount if you were able to finish work early, etc, are all ways to impress your client and keep them coming back for more.

Other than these tips, take cues from your clients and mould your behavior with them accordingly. As a content writer you will be working with people from all across the globe, so keeping everyone's cultural background in mind may be difficult. Letting your client take the lead in what is considered acceptable behavior is therefore the best strategy to follow.

Client Etiquette Worksheet

Exercise1: Understanding the key job challenges

Choose one of the options for each of the following situations:

1. It's been three days since you sent an article and your client hasn't responded.

A: Send him a polite reminder about the article, saying that you just wanted to follow-up and check if he needed any changes or edits to be made.

B: Send a mail asking the client to pay you since you've done the work and have already waited for three days for their response.

2. You took up a job and realized later that it's too much work for very little money.

A: You tell your client that you can't do the job and ask them to pay you for whatever work you've done.

B: You finish the job you've taken to the best of your ability and if the client offers another project at the same rate, you tell him that the last job turned out to be extremely time consuming, so you'd be happy to work on the new project if the price could be revised.

3. You fell sick and couldn't meet your deadline, when you open your inbox you see scathing mails from your client.

A: Respond to it telling them you had fallen sick and would be sending the completed draft as soon as possible.

B: Apologize for the delay, give them the reason, commit to a time and date (the earlier the better), offer to take a price cut and deliver as per your commitment.

4. You have been shortlisted for an interview and the client tells you that you'll have to do a sample article for them in order to get the job and you'll be paid only if they like the article.

A: Tell them that you'd be happy to share samples of your published work and would be happy to do as many edits as they require, but you would not be able to do a free sample. If the buyer agrees, great! If not, you bow out politely.

B: Agree to it.

Correct Answers:

1-----A

2-----B

3-----B

4-----A

Chapter 6

Best Kept Content Writing Secrets-The Master List Of Valuable Online Resources

With this we come to the end of your content writing class! So, having saved the best for the last, here are the secret lists that you will find extremely useful.

Top Job Hunting Platforms

Elance: Elance is one of the best buyer-contractor platforms out there. Here are the reasons why:

- It has an escrow payment feature, which means that even if you take a fixed price job, you are assured of getting paid.
- The standard pay is reasonable, unlike some of the other platforms where buyers offer peanuts instead of a respectable rate for content writing.
- A very prompt live chat feature.

As far as the downside is concerned, the following are the two main points:

- It's extremely competitive, so you may have a hard time finding your first job.
- Though it does offer free accounts, you are not likely to have much success getting jobs with the limited number of connects (credit) available to you. It is best to opt for the \$10/month membership, if you are serious about content writing.

Odesk: Odesk is a great platform; the only problem is that you'll have to search through a lot of riff raff to find jobs with good pay rates. Despite that Odesk still offers the following advantages:

- If you are newbie you'll be able to find jobs here sooner than you probably would on Elance.
- The site is free to use, you only have to pay a 10% commission when you get paid. That too is automatically deducted from the payment your client sends.
- In a lot of countries including India, Odesk offers the direct bank transfer feature. What's more it offers an excellent currency exchange rate as well (better than that offered by Paypal).

So, my advice is that you start with Odesk. Once you have built a decent portfolio and bagged a couple of good writing contracts, buy a paid Elance membership as well and start pitching for jobs aggressively. You may mention that you are new to Elance, but have been working on other buyer contractor platforms and would be happy to share links to your feedback score, if shortlisted.

One thing that you must remember about Odesk is that it does not have any escrow feature. So, I would suggest that you only take up fixed price jobs from buyers with a hiring history. If the buyer is new to Odesk, it's a good idea to take up a small project with them first, if your payment comes through without any hassles, you may continue working with them.

There are other platforms that you may explore too including [Freelancer](#) and [Getacoder.com](#). However, I personally prefer using Elance and Odesk for their user-friendliness and the quality of content writing jobs offered.

Top Article Directories

As a content writer, it is important for you to have the knowledge of the best article directories out there so that you can:

- Advise your clients about where to post their articles.
- Know where to post your own articles for maximum visibility and

credibility.

So, here's your list:

Ezine Articles: This one has rather strict acceptance rules. If you have a couple of articles uploaded here and you send the same as your work samples, your client will see you as someone whose credibility is authenticated.

Hub Pages: This site combines the advantages of social networking site and an article directory. Your articles are published as soon as you upload them. The good part is that if you create great content, you will be able to get followers, which is a good indicator of your credibility.

Idea Marketers: This may not be the most user-friendly directory out there, but it does have a lot of potential. You may advise your clients to post articles here as backlinks on this site tend to get indexed fairly quickly. As a content writer, this is a useful directory, as it can get you good visibility.

SelfGrowth: This is another high-ranking directory that can help you gain both credibility and visibility. The key thing though is that the directory is focused on self-help articles only. So, it can be great for your brand building as a content writer, if self-help is the niche you want to specialize in.

Tools To Cross Check Your Articles Originality

Often even after making 100% effort to write a completely original article, you may end up making a few mistakes. After all your article will be based on research material collected from the internet, so there are chances that you may inadvertently use some information as it is. This usually happens when you are writing travel articles, product information or any other article that involves quoting facts and figures.

Therefore to build an impeccable reputation as a content writer you must make sure that your articles are absolutely clean. So, here are the tools that can help you ensure the same:

Copyscape: This is like the market standard for plagiarism checker tools. In all probability this is the tool that your buyer will be using to check your articles as well. It's not free, but it's quite inexpensive. For \$5, you can buy 100 credits, which means you can run 100 plagiarism checks for \$5.

Plagium: In terms of thoroughness plagium is almost as good as copyscape. The problem though is that it's relatively slower and is not as user friendly. It offers both free and paid data checking options, the paid version is far more thorough. The Good news is that Plagium and Copyscape's paid version cost almost the same amount.

Article Checker: This is a free article checker tool and is quite user friendly. The downside is that sometimes it clears articles, that don't pass copyscape.

Google: Yes it isn't a tool, but you can use Google to check the sentences and paragraphs that you aren't sure about. Here's what you have to do, just copy paste the sentences, put it quotes and run a search.

Chapter 7

In The End...

So, hopefully by now you have understood the essential skills as well as secret tricks that will help you find a footing in the competitive world of content writing.

My only advice to you is, don't get disheartened if you don't land a job within the first 2-3 weeks of applying. More importantly, don't lose your cool or patience when you come across rude buyers. It's all a part of the game.

If you are good at what you do and follow the advice and tips I have shared, you will find online content writing to be a lucrative and rewarding profession.

Finally, if you have any questions about the concepts discussed in the book, please feel free to contact me at- vani@vanionlinemedia.com.

Good Luck!