

Free Lesson Preview

The No B.S. Course on Freelance Writing

Note: This is a sample lesson from The No B.S. Course on Freelance Writing. Keep in mind that the full course includes access to all of the student discussion, including dozens of comments from students and direct answers to questions from the course instructor. Full membership in Writing Launch includes access to all of the discussions and direct instructor feedback.

Questions? Email support@writinglaunch.com

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Welcome to your first day of the No B.S. Class On Freelance Writing.

During this first week, you'll build a foundation for your future. You'll learn how to position yourself in the market so that you stand to gain the most. You'll figure out exactly who you are as a writer and how to communicate that to prospects.

To get started, I'll discuss a crucial aspect of freelancing that isn't often mentioned: branding.

You are your brand

Most often, we use "brand" as a synonym for "company." Famous brands like Apple, Coke, and Ford have intertwined their company with their branding, and so the company and the brand become one. And that's exactly what you want to accomplish.

Just as large companies build brands, individuals should, too. If you don't have a brand, people probably won't remember you. Most writers fail to understand branding, so if you have a cohesive, compelling brand, you'll blow your competitors out of the water. Developing a brand is one of the strongest advantages you can give yourself, and it's one of the first areas you need to address in your writing career.

As a writer, your brand will look different from a company's brand. Instead of promoting a product, you are promoting a service that you directly provide. In other words, you are promoting and selling yourself. **You are your brand.**

Being your own brand means that you have to form a unique voice that will communicate your value. You don't think of yourself as a person who sells writing—you're a writer. In the same way, your branding should not feature you—it should be you. You have to convince prospective clients of your worth, and while it may seem like a tall order, it can be quite easily accomplished.

The process of branding as a freelance writer is essentially the process of finding out what you want to do. In this module, you'll think critically about the sort of writer you want to become and build a brand around yourself.

Forming your brand

A brand always begins with a vision of what you want to bring to the world. For most companies, having a vision means using a product to impact the global community on some scale. As a writer, you have a product: your writing voice. It's what you want to get out into the world in order to help others.

Developing your voice comes from experimentation and stylistic choices that will narrow your scope until you have decided on becoming a particular type of writer with a particular tone. And after you have solidified your voice, you can build your brand.

Maybe you've already found your voice. You put your own twists on writing and have worked in a specialized niche or two. If so, you can skip over the rest of this lesson. If not, then you need to find your voice before you do anything else.

What makes a voice? How do you form yours? Here are four simple steps to find out:

Step 1: What's your style?

Every writer has a different voice or style. Some are highly conversational and humorous at points. Others prefer a more formal tone. Finding your voice/style is the first step in creating a brand, and **voice** is the first essential element of branding.

Your style will naturally emerge out of your writing, but it may take a while to uncover. You might have a friendly, colloquial style, or a polished, professional approach. Maybe you're somewhere in between. Find where you are on the spectrum, and keep that voice in mind.

You'll also develop some unique traits that you might not even notice. This is where asking others to help comes in handy. Maybe you ask a lot of rhetorical questions as part of your style, or perhaps you have a habit of writing short sentences. All of these factors combine to create your style.

Exercise

Try to define your style in a single sentence. For example, "My style is polished and informational, but I'm not afraid to use humor."

Step 2: Who is your audience?

Naturally, your audience will greatly impact your tone. Writing with lots of random jokes in it won't go over well with an audience of lawyers. Likewise, a strict, formal approach won't work if your audience is young children.

Step 3: What is your niche?

Now that you know your target demographic, ask yourself what your niche is. This step requires serious thought, and we'll cover it in more depth later this week. For now, consider what niches you're interested in.

Your style needs to be appropriate for your ideal niche and its audience. For example, I write for entrepreneurs, startups, and established businesses, and my writing voice (part casual, part formal) is ideal for that niche.

Every niche tends to have a certain tone that is true for that entire niche. For example, most tech websites read similarly to one another. Even more specifically, all tech websites about Apple products tend to read alike. While you don't need to stick to these conventions, they provide benchmarks you can use to adapt more quickly to your chosen niche

Step 4: What do you want to do with your writing?

Writing can be used for several purposes—to inform, to persuade, to discuss, and to share opinions and ideas, to give a few examples. Your **purpose** is the second major element that will inform your career.

If you are writing to share opinions and ideas, you will probably take on a more casual style. But if you're writing to persuade, your style should be influenced by rhetoric and use techniques that will convince the reader of your point.

Step 5: Declare your voice.

This is the most important aspect of building a brand as a writer, and I see so many writers overlook it. This is where you connect the dots from the last four steps. Personal style, audience consideration, niche appropriateness, and purpose all coalesce to form your unique voice. Your voice will take some time to polish and fully identify, but these building blocks will show you the roots of your voice. As you move forward and continue to write, take a look at your answers to these questions and search for those elements in your writing.

Exercise

Look at a piece of your writing and see how you incorporate these four elements. How is your style evident? How do you write for your audience and your niche? Is your purpose clear? What words or phrases could you use to describe your voice?

Write one-sentence answers to each of these questions. If you'd like, you can post your responses to both exercises in the comment section.