

The Writer's Life

# ASJA MAGAZINE

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WINTER 2023

01

*A Quarterly Publication  
of the American Society of  
Journalists and Authors*

## SETTING GOALS AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES



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# ASJA MAGAZINE

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Journalists and Authors

[www.asja.org](http://www.asja.org)



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*Founded in 1948, the American Society of Journalists and Authors is the nation's professional association of independent and entrepreneurial nonfiction writers. ASJA is a primary voice in representing freelancers' interests, serving as spokesperson for their right to control and profit from the uses of their work wherever it appears. ASJA brings leadership in establishing professional and ethical standards, as well as in recognizing and encouraging the pursuit of excellence in nonfiction writing. Since 2010, the ASJA Educational Foundation has been offering programming that covers all aspects of professional, independent writing for both established and aspiring writers. ASJA headquarters is in New York City.*

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EMILY PAULSEN

Freelance Writer  
and ASJA President



*From the President's Desk*

# ASJA'S ROLE IN CREATING A STRONGER, MORE DIVERSE FREELANCE COMMUNITY

Freelance writing is more than a way to make a living. It's a way to make a life. It's also a route more and more people want to take.

McKinsey's American Opportunity Survey released in September 2022 found that more than a third of the American workers identified themselves as "independent," up from just over one-fourth in 2016. What's more, independent workers—especially those who were full-time freelance—reported higher levels of optimism compared to those with full-time employment.

I see this optimism among ASJA members, too. While we may grumble and complain that the freelance path feels too much like a roller coaster, we have chosen this route for good reasons.

Every freelance writer, and every ASJA member, has their own story of how and why they got on this path. My journey started in my mid-20s when I realized that the work I did after hours and on weekends was actually more interesting than my day job. It also paid better and gave me more flexibility for balancing personal and professional goals. I did the math and realized I could support myself on freelance work alone.

I gave my two-week notice, and I've never looked back.

But access to freelance writing as a career is not equal across the board—something we see in the bylines in publications, bookstores, and brands.

And, frankly, we also see it in the membership of ASJA.

Writers from underrepresented groups—people of color, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities—have at least as many reasons to choose to go the independent route. Many ASJA members have chosen freelancing

in response to unreasonable demands and instability in newsrooms and other workplaces. For writers from marginalized groups, those stresses can be compounded by tokenism, implicit bias, and pressures to champion diversity, equity, and inclusion.

We need these voices in independent journalism, content marketing, and publishing in general.

Choosing the freelance route can be risky. It takes financial resources and a strong support network to power through that start-up phase and keep going through the ebb and flow of assignments.

This is where ASJA comes in. ASJA is one of the largest organizations of professional freelance writers in the country. We provide networking opportunities, resources, support, and community that help freelancers build their businesses, hone their writing skills, and meet their personal and professional goals.

For ASJA to meet its mission to be the voice and career resource for independent, entrepreneurial, professional nonfiction writers, our membership should reflect the demographics of our profession.

Laura Laing has been beating this drum since she became president. As she said in her July 2021 blog post, "While it's difficult to pinpoint the demographics of all freelancers, we know that there are more writers of color, queer writers, economically disadvantaged writers, disabled writers, and young writers who are qualified to join ASJA but don't."

Changing that is not just a matter of opening the doors. It's about creating a welcoming home.

In 2021, ASJA formed a Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) Task Force to look at ways ASJA could increase

opportunity and "create a welcoming community for all freelance writers of all races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, ages, ability, and cultural and religious beliefs." In fact, those words in quotations come directly from our DEAI statement rolled out in Spring 2022.

That statement forms the foundation of our DEAI efforts. But it's by far not the only action we're taking. We are strengthening our relationships with diverse writers' groups. Five writers of color received full scholarships and stipends to attend our spring conference. Additionally, our conference organizers have built themes of diversity and diverse presenters into our educational offerings.

We are far from finished with this work.

In fall of 2022, the ASJA Board approved the hiring of Janet Stovall of Pragmatic Diversity to guide us in this process. Ms. Stovall brings more than 30 years of experience as an independent contractor specializing in DEAI communication, facilitation, workshop development, and consulting for companies and non-profit organizations. She also serves on several non-profit boards. She works with freelance writers, and her first book, *The Conscious Communicator: The Fine Art of Not Saying Stupid Sh\*t*, released in Fall 2022.

As she has pointed out, "My lived experience affords me deep insight into your target audience. Indeed, I am your target audience."

As I step into the role of President of ASJA—something that still amazes that 26-year-old who took a leap—I'm honored to continue the work that Laura has started. Our DEAI efforts will help ASJA support a stronger, more diverse community of professional freelance writers as we all navigate this freelance life.





STEPHANIE VOZZA

Freelance Writer and ASJA Editor

# LOOKING FORWARD AND LOOKING BACK

The fortune cookie said, “You shall soon make a long, overdue personal decision.” Boy was it right. As I write this, it’s September 2022. My dad, sister, and I are in the process of moving my mom to a memory care facility. It’s the hardest thing we’ve ever done, and it’s a decision we’ve put off for a long time. My dad has been my mom’s primary caregiver for years. Now his health is declining, and it’s just too much.

As my sister and I make the arrangements and design her room, I find myself thinking about who my mom used to be and who she is today. She used to be a realtor and a top seller at the agency. She was a feminist and a fierce defender of anyone who was lucky enough to be loved by her. She was sure of herself and mighty. She was smart, witty, and opinionated ... very opinionated. She wasn’t afraid of telling you what she thought.

Many of those traits have faded away. Today she mostly watches television, and she especially enjoys *Columbo*. She likes to talk about Elvis and Gilda Radnor. Then she’ll break the news to you that they both died.

You never know what she’ll say. I recently asked her, “What’s going on?” She replied with, “I don’t know what’s coming off let alone what’s going on.” And she shares “conversations” she’s had with people who “stopped by or called” ... like Vladimir Putin, who apparently recently called just to check-in.

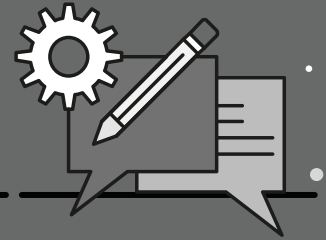
She’s prone to breaking out in song. If you happen to say the word “crazy” during a conversation, you’ll be serenaded with Patsy Cline’s hit. Other favorites are “On the Road Again” and the Mighty Mouse theme song. My niece says talking to her Noni is like having a human jukebox.

I’m looking back a lot these days, but I’m also looking forward. My son Christopher is marrying a wonderful girl named Mackenzie and we’re planning their December nuptials. There’s the bridal shower, rehearsal dinner, and, of course, the wedding. They’re getting married in the most gorgeous barn you could ever imagine, just outside of Nashville.

This part of my life overflows with dreams, hope, and excitement. It’s filled with choices and opportunities. When we went to the design meeting at the wedding venue to select the linens, dinnerware, flowers, and more, I brought my mom, thinking she’d enjoy it. She just ate all the cookies on the tray and declared, “This is boring. When can we leave?”

This issue is about the writer’s life. As I experience these two major points in my life, I’m glad to have the freedom to create a schedule that fits my life. I’m thankful for clients who are understanding. And I’m happy to have a writer’s knack for observation that is helping me find the beauty and meaning in it all.

What do you love most about the writer’s life?



## NEW ASJA MEMBERS!

JANUARY 2023

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- Andrea Anderson  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
- Linda Keslar  
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- Kathleen L. “Kathy” McCoy  
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- Venuri Siriwardane  
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# Are you taking advantage of all ASJA has to read?

**Did you know that ASJA has three membership publications? Each provides a slightly different reading pleasure.**

### ➤ **ASJA Magazine, our official publication**

Members repeatedly tell us that the magazine you're holding is one of their top benefits. It's typically filled with industry news, service articles, market reports, and tools and tricks of the trade to interest journalists, authors, and content marketing writers. The editor is Stephanie Vozza.

### ➤ **ASJA Confidential, the blog**

ASJA Confidential, the blog on our new website, is found after you log in under resources. It contains interesting news, events, and takes from ASJA board members, committee chairs, and others. The editor is Debbie Koenig.

### ➤ **ASJA Weekly, the email newsletter**

ASJA Weekly is our email newsletter distributed to all members and archived on the website under the resources tab in case you miss an issue. Every Tuesday you'll find editor Holly Leber Simmons waxing poetic on some aspect of the freelance writing journey as well as upcoming events, sign-ups and registration information, volunteer opportunities, and member news.



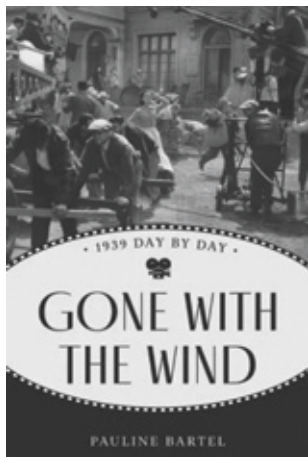
***You're never out of the loop when you read ASJA publications.***





# MEMBER NEWS

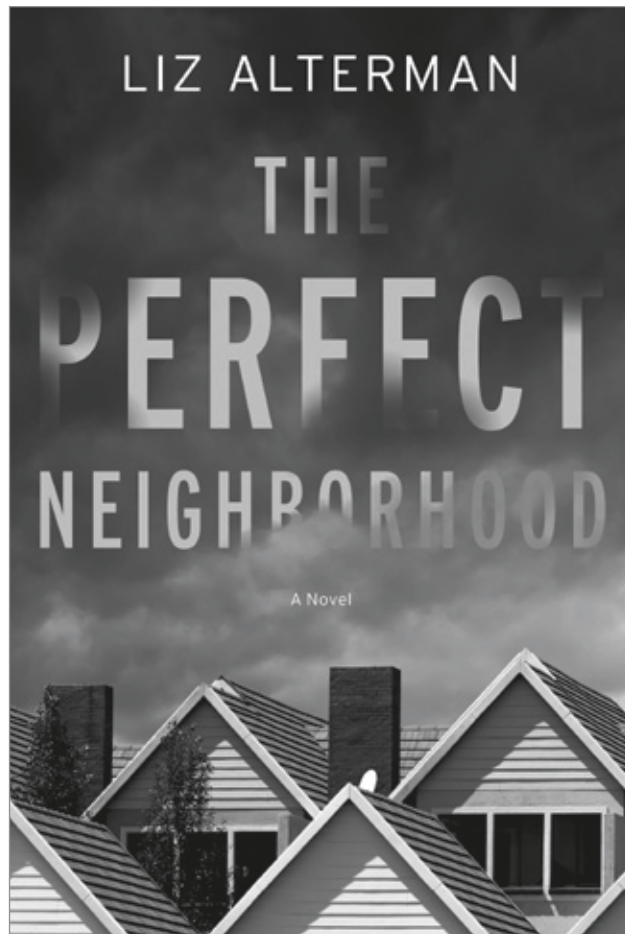
## »»»» Book News



**Pauline Bartel's** ninth book, *Gone with the Wind: 1939 Day by Day*, was published in July 2022 by Lyons Press. The book chronicles the production, premieres, and reception of the iconic film from January 1, 1939 to December 31, 1939. Engaging, daily, behind-the-scenes entries provide a snapshot of what was happening on and off the set along with expert commentary about the cast, the crew, the chaos of filming and more. Fans will enjoy following the drama and intrigue of *Gone with the Wind's* production on each event's exact date, especially in 2023 when the calendar matches the days of the 1939 calendar. This will be the one book that fans will turn to eagerly again and again. After all, when it comes to *Gone with the Wind*, tomorrow is another day.



**Tish Davidson's** 15th book, *Hormones: Your Questions Answered*, was published by ABC-CLIO, an imprint of Bloomsbury. For an adolescent and new adult audience, it answers questions such as, "How does playing video games affect my hormones?" or "What hormones does marijuana affect?"

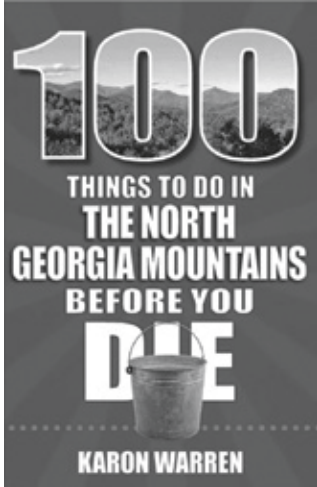


**Liz Alterman's** domestic suspense novel, *The Perfect Neighborhood*, was published by Crooked Lane in the U.S. and Legend Press in the UK on July 12, 2022. May Cobb, author of *The Hunting Wives*, said, "Big Little Lies meets Everything I Never Told You in this wholly propulsive and utterly enthralling neighborhood suspense."

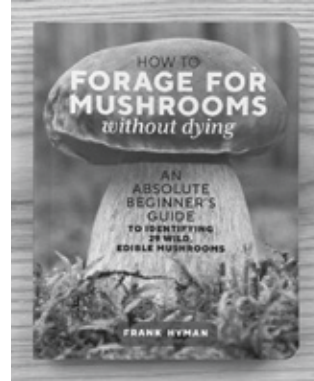


**Wesley C. Davidson's** self-help book, co-authored with psychologist Sanam Hafeez, PsyD, is slated for publication in 2023 by Macmillan (St. Martin's Press). It's an advice book for parents struggling with their children's substance abuse disorders. The working title is *Secrets of Sober Parents: Unhooking Your Addicted Children*.





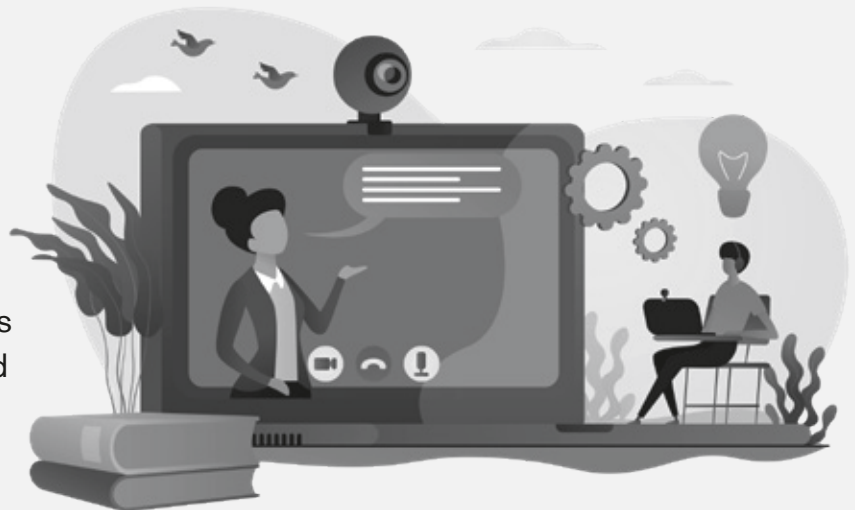
**Karon Warren's** first book, *100 Things to Do in the North Georgia Mountains Before You Die*, was released on September 15, 2022 by Reedy Press. Unlike traditional guidebooks, this book provides travel inspiration featuring “things to do” in five categories: food and drink, music and entertainment, sports and recreation, culture and history, and shopping and fashion.



*How to Forage Mushrooms Without Dying*, by ASJA member and professional mushroom hunter **Frank Hyman**, sold out its first printing of 15,000 copies in just two months.

## Have you heard about the ASJA Virtual Education Committee?

We're a small but very active team passionate about bringing learning opportunities to the ASJA community. To date, we've organized a dozen webinars and masterminds covering topics like how to deliver a cracking TED talk, how to expand your business through coaching and podcasting, and the latest news on the PRO Act and book publishing.

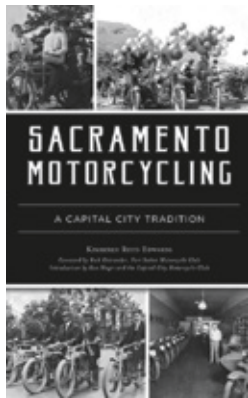


### Some other topics you can expect to learn about:

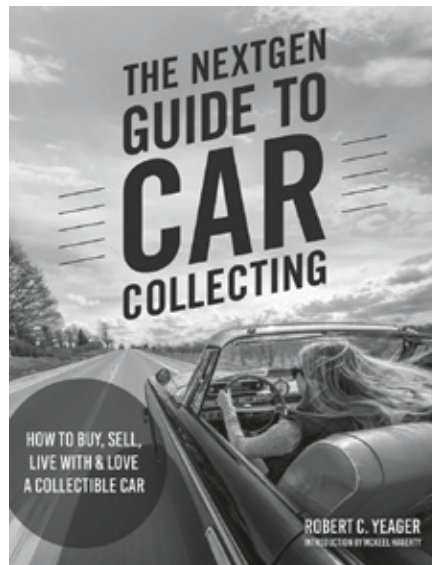
- How to write standout reported essays
- Diversifying your income streams
- Business tools for freelancers
- Negotiating contracts and pay



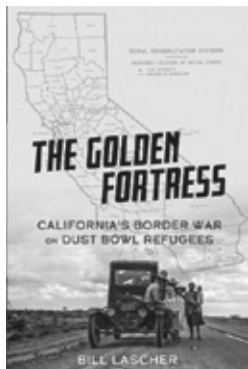
*If any of this sounds like it might interest you or another awesome freelancer you know, please head to our [Webinars page](#) to see upcoming and past events!*



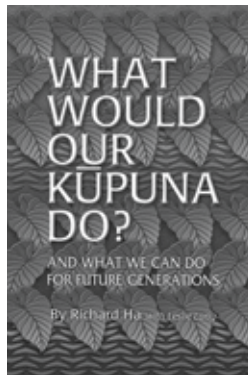
**Kimberly A. Edwards'** book *Sacramento Motorcycling: A Capital City Tradition, 1910-60*, was published by the History Press in July 2021. It was launched at the California Car Museum and won Best Cover and Interior Design awards from the Northern California Book Publishers Association.



**Robert C. Yeager's** latest book, *The NextGen Guide to Car Collecting*, was published in December 2022 by Quarto/Motorbooks. The book is an outgrowth of Yeager's decade-plus reporting on collectible cars for *The New York Times* and a lifelong enthusiasm for automobiles. The handsome volume is stuffed with photographs and includes chapters on history, investing, the growing interest of women in enthusiast cars and motorsports, the Deming quality movement, and buying and selling tips. The final chapter that includes verbatim interviews with two globally prominent father-son teams: Bruce and Spencer Trenery, owners of Fantasy Junction, the Emeryville, Calif. classic car dealership; and Patrick and Tazio Ottis, internationally known restorers of vintage Ferraris, Alfa Romeos, et al. McKeel Hagerty, CEO of the world's largest insurer of classic and specialty vehicles, wrote the introduction.



**Bill Lascher's** new book, *The Golden Fortress: California's Border War on Dust Bowl Refugees* (Chicago Review Press) was published on August 9, 2022. Lascher discussed the book and the LAPD's 1936 deployment of armed officers to California's state lines on KCRW's Greater L.A. and KQED's California Report public radio shows.



**Leslie Lang's** ghostwritten book, *What Would Our Kupuna Do: And What We Can Do for Future Generations*, by Richard Ha, was published in July 2022. One reviewer wrote: "You connected the importance of family and personal accountability to Hawaiian history and culture to energy and macroeconomics to real and practical solutions. And you did it in an easy-to-understand way without talking down to people. It really is an outstanding bit of communication."



**Stacey Freed and Randi Minetor** teamed up to write *Hiking the Catskills: A Guide to the Area's Greatest Hikes for Falcon Guides*.

## »»»» Activities, Awards and Accolades



**Sharon McDonnell** profiled a woman who helped save New Orleans' historic Algiers ferry in *AARP Magazine's* August/September 2022 issue. She also wrote a story for the October/November 2022 issue of *AARP*, profiling a woman who founded a Chinese Opera troupe in California.



**Kim Kavin's** "Campaign for Our Careers," the first-ever political advocacy series published by *Entrepreneur*, has been named a finalist for a FOLIO: Eddie award. The series is about legislation that threatens the careers of freelance writers, other types of independent contractors and franchise owners.



**Mary Ann Castronovo Fusco's** first full-length play, "Smoke Screen: A Sicilian/American Opera," had a reading at the Madison Community Arts Center in Madison, NJ, on August 19, 2022. It was inspired by real people who've been under-represented in the cultural context of drama.



**Debbie Abrams Kaplan** planned and moderated three webinars on healthcare supply chain issues including DEI, nearshoring/onshoring, and data/technology for *HealthLeaders*. She is the supply chain contributing editor for the online publication, which she discovered through Virtual Client Connections in 2021. She has been working with them for a year.



**Monya De** is completing work on her first short film as a writer/director, *ANOSMIA*. It's the story of an Indian-American woman who becomes obsessed with vaccine chasing to get her elderly Bengali refugee mom a vaccine in the chaotic early days of Pfizer/Moderna availability.



**GOT NEWS  
TO SHARE  
WITH ASJA?**

Submit your items at  
<https://www.asja.org/submit-member-news>

Log-in to the website, click the "Members Only" tab in the menu, and then click "Member News Form" from the pull-down menu.





# MAKE THIS THE YEAR

## *Setting Goals for Your Freelance Business*

**W**hether you relish the holidays (sometimes) or count the days until they end (usually), they signal the approach of a new year, and my absolute favorite day: January 1. Whether it is bright and bitter cold or overcast and snowy in suburban Chicago, the first day of the first month sparkles with promise. It's the beginning of a new year. And I love beginnings.

January 1 also signals the beginning of your freelance year—a time when freelancers set specific ambitions for the coming year. Those may be income goals, project goals like writing or selling a nonfiction book, or goals that incorporate that mythical work/life balance most of us seem to struggle with. Here's a closer look at how creating goals can help you spur your business to greater heights, and how to go about creating goals that work for your business.



KELLY K. JAMES

*Freelance Writer*



To learn more about Damon Brown's show #BringYourWorth, visit [youtube.com/browndamon](https://youtube.com/browndamon).

## Look Back Before You Look Forward

It may seem counterintuitive, but reflecting back on the prior year is the first step of setting goals for the new one. After all, if you don't know where you've been, how can you create a plan to get to your intended destination?

One of the elements to consider is not only how much money you made in the prior year, but what types of work produced it. The more project variety you take on, the more diverse your income is—and the better positioned you may be to adapt to changes in the freelance market. Business coach Damon Brown, author of the new book *Career Remix* and host of the show #BringYourWorth specializes in helping nontraditional entrepreneurs and has dozens of income streams.

Brown uses a spreadsheet to track his income, including what type of work produced it.

"I can look at it and immediately know where my money is coming from and I can automatically put the percentage against the previous year," says Brown. "If I'm going to increase the salary I have, I have to figure out how to make that happen."

"My revenues and my income sources change every year. Last year I made a lot of my money on public speaking, and the year before that I made a lot on passive income, so ... it's important to respect that tension," he says. "Some folks don't have a goal and that is too loose for me, but too specific of a goal is too restrictive for me."

Brown is creative with his goals. For example, this year's goal was to pay for his family's basic bills through passive income alone.

New Orleans-based freelancer Craig Guillot uses specific financial goals to help motivate him. "I've been big and quite anal about my goals for the past six years now. I set my goal income, then break that down on all levels, then figure out what I need to do to reach that in terms of hourly rate, marketing client mix, etc.," says Guillot. "Then I know what I need to do on a daily basis to get that done."

I take a similar approach. At the end of the year, I review my prior year's income/work, determine where my money came from, and decide where I will focus my efforts in the coming year. Using last year's income as a baseline, I also give myself what I call a "daily nut," or the amount of money I need to average a day, five days a week, to make my annual income goal. To crack six figures, it's \$400/day.

## Five Questions to Help you Set Your Freelance Goals

Here are five questions that can help you get clear about your goals:

- How much freelance income do you need to bring in—and how much do you want to bring in? (These figures may differ.)
- What type(s) of work do you want to do more of in the coming year?
- What type(s) of work is the most lucrative for you?
- Do you have a side hustle or passion project you want to prioritize?
- At the end of the year, what do you want to have accomplished?





*The more project variety you take on, the more diverse your income is—and the better positioned you may be to adapt to changes in the freelance market.*





*“It’s important to be ambitious—  
there’s nothing wrong with that.  
But know that it’s going to be one  
step at a time.”* – DAMON BROWN





## *It's Not All About the Money*

**C**reating financial goals is relatively easy as they are simple to measure. But what about other goals? Maybe you've been working on a novel that you want to finish. Or you want to create your own podcast or pursue another side hustle.

"The problem is, while it's easy to quantify and track financial goals, it's difficult to measure the others," says Guillot. "Honestly, I'm not sure yet what I want for 2023. I want to maintain the business I have, but also pursue other things. That includes more face time with people in my work, getting out from behind my desk more, and writing a little bit more about things I'm passionate about. It doesn't have to have seriously deep meaning, but I want my work to be more than 40 hours a week of B2B content."

While Guillot would like to write more adventure travel, a subject he's covered in the past, there is a drawback. "The risk with passion projects is if I take them too seriously, it cannibalizes my bread-and-butter business," he explains. "Then I end up with my whole business at risk, putting me back to square one where I need to focus entirely on the business. I've gone through this cycle several times over the years. I need to find a way to strike a balance of passion and profits with different components of my business."

Guillot makes an important point. When you write for a living, you may not be able to devote too much time to work that doesn't pay well—or not pay at all. If you have a passion project, consider creating a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-oriented) goal for it. So, if you want to finish (or start) a novel this year, you might set a SMART goal of writing (or editing) at least 500 words of fiction, five days a week, every week, until you finish your draft.

## *Think About What You Want*

**W**hat works for one writer may not work for you. Freelancer Julie Sturgeon, owner of Freelance Success, prefers to set a monthly income goal instead of a daily one. "I go for monthly nuts because 30 days seems more reasonable to me to make up lost income if I fall behind," says Sturgeon. "Also, I set an amount I must have to meet my obligations, and an income goal that would be nice to have as a motivation. Once I meet the minimum, I tend to relax a bit and find more fun in chasing the dollars."

Thinking about your financial needs and where you'd like to be career-wise at the end of the year can help you home in on your goals.

Finally, if you're new to setting goals, start small, says Brown. "It's important to be ambitious—there's nothing wrong with that," he says. "But know that it's going to be one step at a time. If you set huge goals and don't meet them, you'll be devastated. Instead, set small goals, which takes the pressure off ... chop them up into actionable stuff so you can see what you're doing. Then you can ratchet it up."

Kelly K. James is a veteran freelancer and author of *Six-Figure Freelancing, Second Edition*, who lives outside Chicago.



*Thinking about your financial needs and where you'd like to be career-wise at the end of the year can help you home in on your goals.*




SANDI SCHWARTZ

*Freelance Writer*

# 3

# LOW BUDGET DIY TACTICS



Sandi Schwartz is an environmental author and freelance journalist published in BobVila.com, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, *Verywell Family*, *Scary Mommy*, *Green Child Magazine*, over 70 regional parenting and women's magazines, and many other publications. Her book, *Finding Ecohappiness: Fun Nature Activities to Help Your Kids Feel Happier and Calmer*, has been featured in *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Good Housekeeping*, *National Geographic*, *Library Journal*, and more. Sandi has been an active member of ASJA since 2019.

# to Market Your Book to Parents



Selling books is not for the faint of heart. If there's one thing I learned as a first-time author this past year, the writing is the easy part, and the marketing is what keeps me up at night. As authors, we are bombarded with tips coming from so many directions and experts trying to sell us their services. From purchasing Amazon ads to hiring a publicist to paying for social media influencers, it can really add up.

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The average self-published book sells about 250 copies total, while the average traditionally published book sells between 1,000-3,000 copies in its lifetime. Couple that with royalties at about \$2 per book, and authors can quickly get in the red by spending too much money on marketing.

This is why I turned to some creative DIY approaches to market my parenting book. Whether you have a parenting book or a book on a topic that parents may find useful—such as home organizing, time management, or stress management—consider these no- to low-cost tactics to grow your audience and boost book sales.



> 1



## Podcast Interviews

Although I dread public speaking (as many authors do), I actually enjoy podcast interviews. It is a way to talk about our book in a relaxed, welcoming environment. Most podcasters are looking for guests, so they need you as much as you need them. Once you do a few interviews, the words will just flow out of your mouth because the conversations are often repetitive, especially if you prepare with a list of key speaking points.

Podcast guesting is one of the easiest ways to market your book to niche audiences for very little cost. Although many podcast hosts are fine with you using AirPods or your computer microphone, you may want to invest in a high-quality microphone and headphones. Other than that, you can continue to record podcast interviews for free.

Keep an open mind and try all types of podcasts with varying audience sizes. Track your success by offering a free giveaway on your website and viewing Amazon rankings. I was recently on *The 1000 Hours Outside Podcast* and saw a bump in my ranking and sales. The host has 443,000 Instagram followers, and when she posted about my episode over 9,900 people liked it and 120 people left comments. Podcast guesting allows you to strategically ride the wave of the host's audience instead of stressing over building your own.

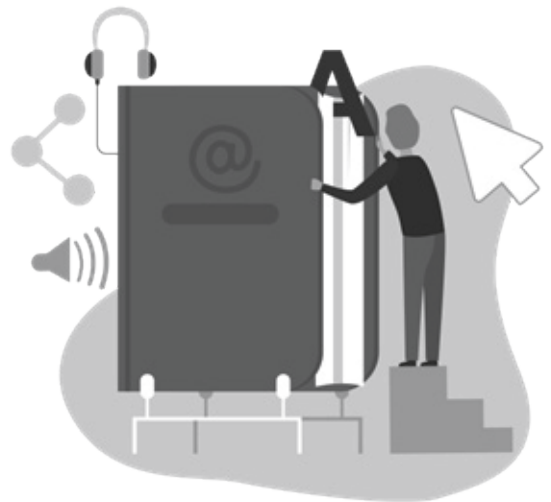


Podcast guesting allows you to strategically ride the wave of the host's audience instead of stressing over building your own.

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### TO FIND TARGETED PODCASTS FOR YOUR BOOK TOPIC:

- Visit similar authors' websites and note which podcasts they have been on.
- Search Google and podcast platforms for shows that cover your topic.
- Join Facebook groups that post podcast guest opportunities, such as "Podcast Guest Collaboration Community—Find a Guest, Be a Guest."



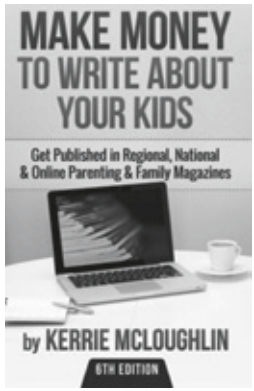


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**I WAS ABLE TO TIME THE FOLLOWING AROUND MY BOOK LAUNCH:**

- Secure paid articles with a bio highlighting and/or linking to my book
- Exchange articles for ad space
- Get my book featured as an Editor's Pick
- See my book press release reprinted on RPM websites
- Have a color image of my book cover alongside my articles

—————



*To learn more, check out Kerrie's book and her Facebook group "Parenting Magazine Writers."*

# > 2



## Regional Parenting Magazines

Another way to market your book to parents is through regional parenting magazines (RPMs), which are publications that cater to parents and families in a specific geographic region. There are hundreds of RPMs in the United States and Canada that welcome content from freelancers, including reprint articles—and many of them pay!

I first learned about this freelance market from Kerrie McLoughlin's book, *Make Money to Write about Your Kids: Get Published in Regional, National & Online Parenting & Family Magazines*, and have been published in over 70 RPMs over the years.

When it was time to market my parenting book, I contacted the RPM editors I had worked with about ways to feature my book in their magazine.

RPMs are a terrific way to reach a large, targeted audience, as many of these magazines are distributed throughout the community in libraries, stores, community centers, etc. and posted online. Whether you have written for an RPM in the past or not, I encourage you to pitch them.



RPMs are a terrific way to reach a large, targeted audience, as many of these magazines are distributed throughout the community.





## > 3

### DIY Media Placement

Why pay thousands of dollars for a publicist when you can get media hits yourself? Although this tactic requires hard work and sometimes a small financial investment to build a media list, with some strategic research, patience, and a bit of luck, you will start to see results. Here are a few tactics for DIY media placement:

#### Distribute Tip Sheets

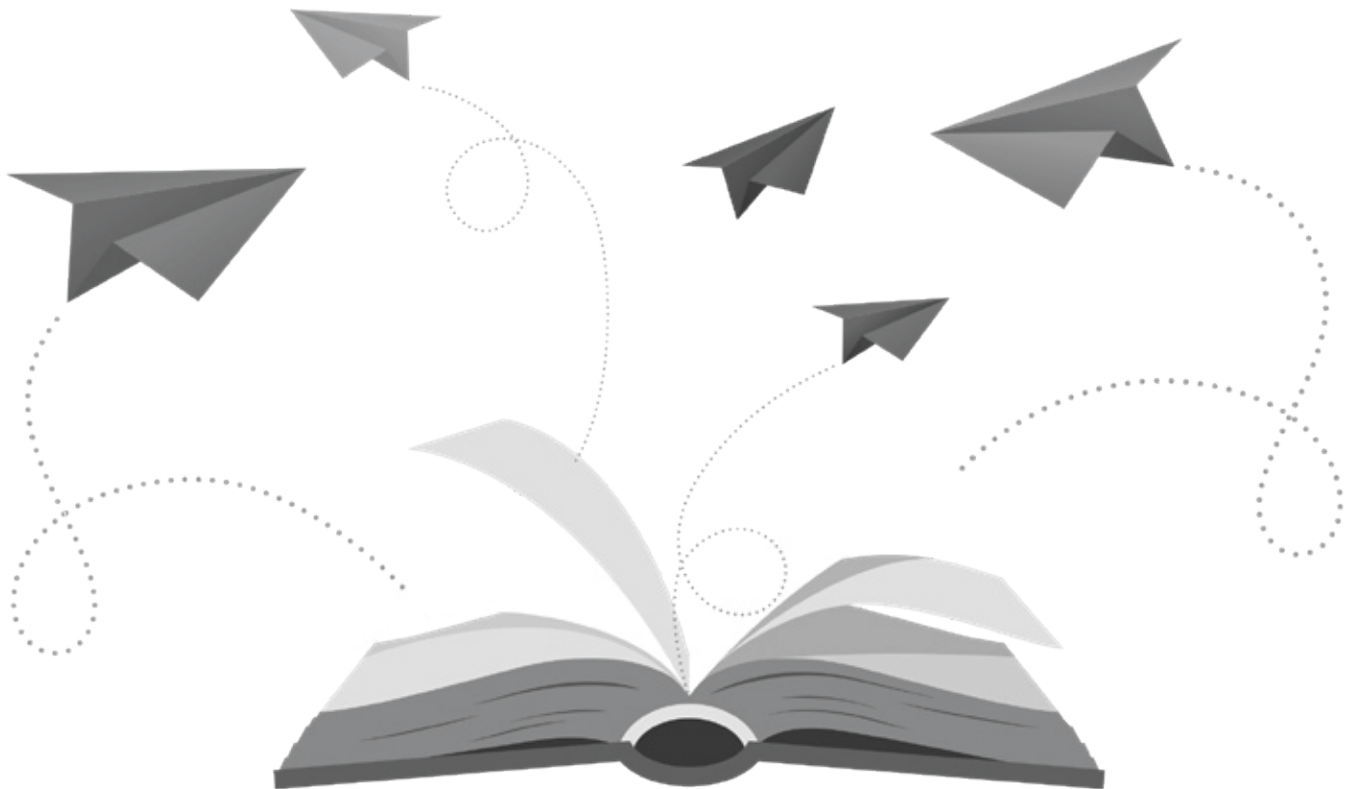
I learned about tip sheets from Sandra Beckwith, an ASJA member, author, and national award-winning former publicist who now teaches authors how to save thousands of dollars by doing their own publicity, promotion, and marketing through her website [buildbookbuzz.com](http://buildbookbuzz.com). “Tip sheets were one of my most successful media relations tools as a publicist,” Sandra explains. “The trick is to write them in a newsy, non-promotional way so they mimic what you would read in a magazine or newspaper.”

Tip sheets can be helpful to magazines, newspapers, television programs, and bloggers since they are always looking for content. “By continually repurposing your content in multiple markets, you’re dramatically expanding your exposure to the parents who will buy your book when you negotiate a writer credit that includes your book title,” said Sandra.



“By continually repurposing your content in multiple markets, you’re dramatically expanding your exposure to the parents who will buy your book when you negotiate a writer credit that includes your book title.”

**SANDRA BECKWITH**







Each month I send out a tip sheet to a media list I generated from a mix of my own online research and contacts provided by my publisher. I typically choose a topic based on a holiday or other key theme of the month, such as “back to school” in September. My tip sheets have resulted in several media hits, including being quoted in *USA Today*.

#### **Network with Editors and Other Writers**

Having lots of writer friends and colleagues can be very helpful when it is time to market your book. By being part of writing groups like ASJA, you can offer yourself up as a source. This is how I was quoted in *The Washington Post*, Yahoo!, *Good Housekeeping*, MSN.com, and *National Geographic*. Don't be shy about posting in writing groups and on LinkedIn about your expertise and book.

These connections can also come in handy when you are pitching your own articles about your book to publications. This is how Lisa L. Lewis, author of *The Sleep-Deprived Teen: Why Our Teenagers Are So Tired, And How Parents and Schools Can Help Them Thrive*, secured media coverage in CNN, *Parents*, *Salon*, and more. She explains, “Because I had a background as a freelance parenting journalist, I was very familiar with the process of pitching. I also built up relationships over the years with editors and other writers.” Her connections plus unique angle with a timely news hook were a recipe for media success.

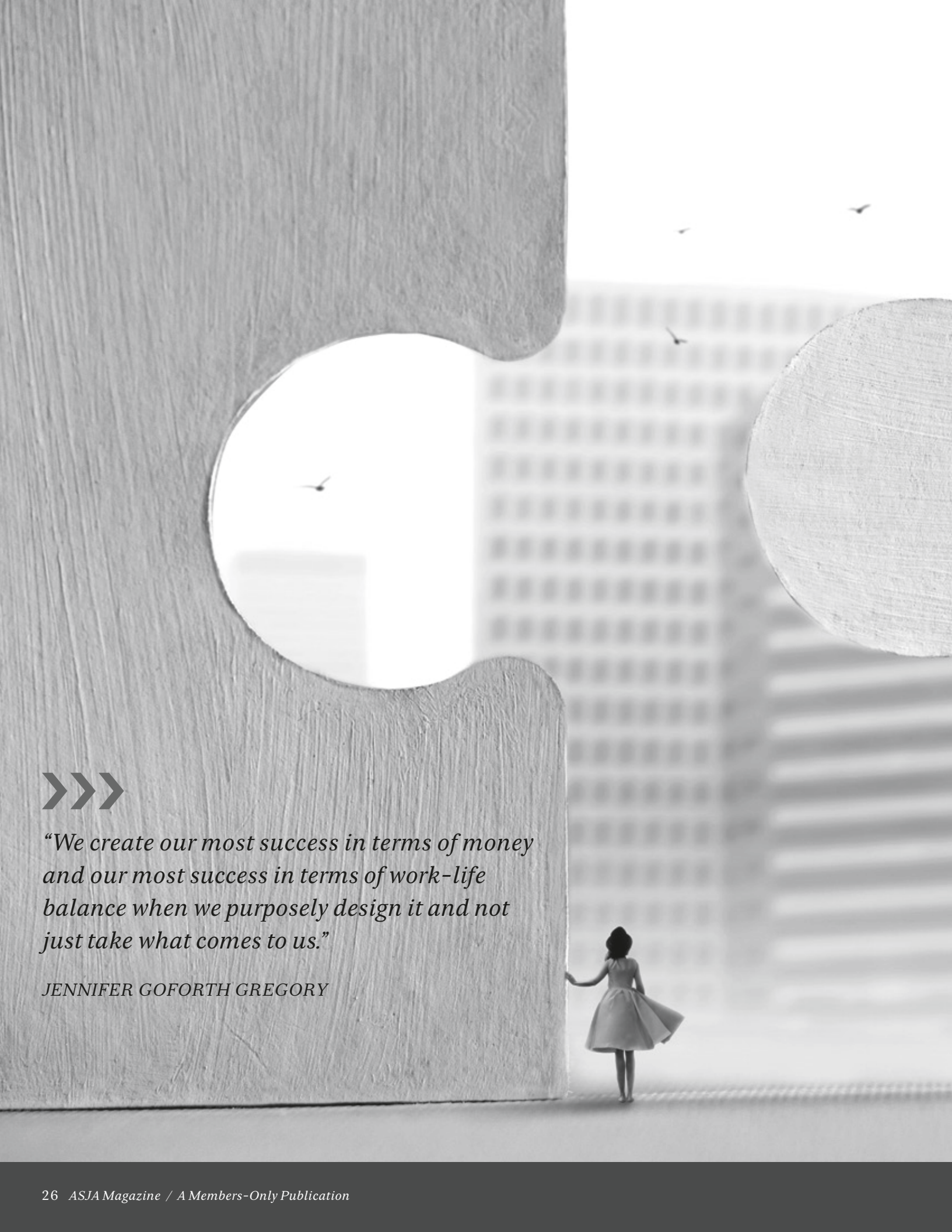
#### **Have an Updated, SEO-friendly Website**

Build it with good SEO and they will come. Another important tool when marketing your book is to have an attractive, useful website that showcases your media coverage so others can find you and call on you as an expert. This approach has been very beneficial to Lisa L. Lewis. “I found that some of the higher visibility interviews I did helped boost my name, and in fact helped lead to additional interviews. In many cases, reporters and producers contacted me through my website, which was terrific. I concentrated on keeping my website up to date and showcasing the coverage I had gotten, and also made sure that the information on how to contact me was easy to find.”

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#### **LEARN MORE:**

- To learn more about how to write tip sheets and build your own media list, visit [buildbookbuzz.com](http://buildbookbuzz.com).
- Connect with writer friends and colleagues through ASJA's Virtual Coffee Chats, weekly informal virtual discussions designed to connect you with other members. Visit [asja.org](http://asja.org) to learn more.
- Creating an SEO-friendly website architecture tutorial: [youtube.com/watch?v=iToaUM9FzMk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=iToaUM9FzMk)



*“We create our most success in terms of money and our most success in terms of work-life balance when we purposely design it and not just take what comes to us.”*

JENNIFER GOFORTH GREGORY





TINA NAZERIAN

---

*Freelance Writer*

WANT TO  
MAKE  
SIX FIGURES  
OR NOT?  
*Either Goal Is OK*





**I**n 2015, Grace Williams got laid off from her full-time newsroom job. As part of her work separation, Williams received career counseling. She told the career counselor that she did not want to send out another resume or have another interview. She wanted more time with her son. Williams had dabbled in freelance writing before the meeting but didn't think a full-fledged career as a freelance writer was possible. The career counselor helped her realize it was.

“We crafted a plan where I have my work that generates income, and then I have my work that doesn't generate income, but it's all considered my job,” says Williams. “If I go to a PTA meeting for my son, I'm still doing my job.”

Hitting a six-figure income as a freelance writer hasn't been a goal for Williams for the past several years. She's been prioritizing taking care of her son, who has special needs, and other activities, like being active in her town's special needs community and practicing yoga. However, she explains, now that her son is a bit older, she's working on a plan to reach the six-figure income mark.



## DEFINING OTHER PRIORITIES

For various reasons, many freelance writers don't have "make a six-figure income" on their list of career goals. For example, Mark Ray, who has been a freelance writer since 1998, hit six figures for nine years of his career but notes it was never a well-defined goal. And for the last few years, he's been directing more of his attention to his grandchildren, helping with their care alongside his wife, who is retired—something Ray has his sights set on.

"I guess my goals, in general, have always been to be making enough to stay above water, and then more recently, like in the last five years especially, making sure we're in a good place for retirement," he says.

Jay Deitcher is a stay-at-home parent who would love to one day reach six figures. But right now, it's not a career goal.

"I've had to focus on important pieces that would push my career forward while being worth my time away from my kids," says Deitcher.

For another freelance writer, Sandi Schwartz, achieving a six-figure income isn't a goal because "it's not a need." She enjoys the "ability to really pick and choose the projects and content" she focuses on. Karon Clark Warren doesn't feel the need to reach that income level either, instead preferring to work on "year-over-year" improvements to her revenue. And Deborah Robson, who edits, teaches, and consults alongside freelance writing, is happy with the life she's cultivated.

"As long as I can pay my bills, that's sufficient," explains Robson.

## SIX FIGURES AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE AREN'T MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

Making six figures might conjure images of back-to-back meetings, thousands upon thousands of words per week, and late nights to generate that revenue. But earning six figures and having a good work-life balance aren't necessarily mutually exclusive. Jodi Helmer believes it's important to "dispel the belief" that making six figures and living a balanced life is an "either-or thing."

"I've got this rich life outside of my work, and I earn six figures," says Helmer, who also runs a nonprofit farm animal sanctuary with her husband.

"We have 58 animals on our property; many of them are senior or special needs animals that require some more comprehensive care, and in order for us to do that, we needed one of us to be here full-time," says Helmer. "And so we made the decision for [my husband] to retire, and now I'm the sole income supporter for our family."

Helmer started freelancing in 2002 when she was in her early 20s, a time when there "wasn't a lot of talk" about the "gig economy," she says. Hitting six figures was more of a "psychological priority"—she wanted to prove to herself she was on a viable career path. As her career has progressed, Helmer notes, that reason has changed.

"I just feel like six figures doesn't get you that far," she says. "When I look at paying a mortgage, and saving for retirement, and buying health insurance, and doing those things, that money gets eaten up fairly quickly."



*Jodi Helmer believes it's important to "dispel the belief" that making six figures and living a balanced life is an "either-or thing."*





For Helmer, a big part of achieving work-life balance has come down to knowing her strengths, her work style, and what types of clients she likes to work with.

Jennifer Goforth Gregory thinks similarly. She stresses that if freelance writers choose the right clients for themselves and turn down opportunities that pay low or just aren't a good fit, they'll be able to work faster and earn more with less stress. She also points out that work-life balance can look different to different freelancers.

"I have thrown out what everybody's told me that you should do or shouldn't do for work-life balance and created what works best for me," says Goforth Gregory, who prefers to work later in the evenings and during the weekends. This schedule has given her time during the day to pursue hiking, kayaking, and volunteering with a dog rescue.

"I think we make possible what's important to us," says Goforth Gregory. "But to have the balance, you have to set the limits yourself. You have to turn off your computer; you have to make an appointment to do something."

#### FIGURE OUT GOALS AND READJUST AS NEEDED

Even if a writer isn't prioritizing a six-figure income at the moment, Goforth Gregory says, they always have the option to do so later, especially as life circumstances (like children growing older) alter.

Consider Rachel Murphy. She's been freelance writing for about 15 years and says earning six figures wasn't really on her radar for some time due to the low cost of living in her area, Kansas City, Missouri. But then she and her husband had kids. While she still didn't feel like she absolutely had to make \$100,000, she did want to earn more.

She decided she wanted to hit six figures two years ago, prioritizing it at the start of 2022. However, she notes that she's "in the trenches of motherhood," and despite she and her husband having flexible work arrangements, working and managing a family is exhausting. She reached a point where she became OK with increasing her year-over-year revenue, even if she didn't reach the six-figure mark.

Holly Leber Simmons is focused on raising her young daughter and building a community with fellow freelance writers but would love to make six figures in the future.

"I will not pretend that I wouldn't love to do that," says Leber Simmons. "But I hope that I don't define my worthiness or my value based on how much money I bring in."

Megan McCoy, Ph.D., who sits on the board of directors for the Financial Therapy Association and is the director of the Financial Therapy Program at Kansas State University, advises freelance writers to consider sitting down with an accredited financial counselor to explore their financial goals and needs further. She points to the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education, which offers pro-bono sessions to the public.



*"I have thrown out what everybody's told me that you should do or shouldn't do for work-life balance and created what works best for me."*

JENNIFER GOFORTH GREGORY

"Be proactive and meet with a financial planner, a financial counselor, or even a financial therapist," she says.

Whether they have a specific earning goal or not, every freelancer should craft their own definition of success, says Goforth Gregory, and build a business that meets that.

"That's the beauty of freelancing, to have the flexibility, not just in time, but also in how much you work, how much you earn, who you work for, and what type of work you do," she says. "We create our most success in terms of money and our most success in terms of work-life balance when we purposely design it and not just take what comes to us."

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Tina Nazerian is a writer based in Houston, Texas. Her byline has appeared in the *Houston Chronicle*, Reuters, EdSurge, *Literacy Today*, and *The Columbus Dispatch*. You can follow her on Twitter at @journalinred.

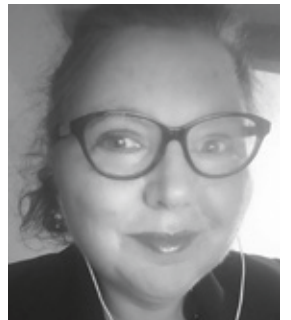
# WHEN LIFE FALLS APART

*How to Keep  
Your Creativity  
and Income Up*

AMI NEIBERGER

*Freelance Writer*

Ami Neiberger owns Maple Avenue PR and is re-inventing her life after closing the long-time business she operated with her husband in February 2022.







“

*From creating routines to factoring in me-time, freelancers must find ways to deal with challenges when life falls apart.*

**K**eeping your creativity pumping and income flowing when your life falls apart is hard for freelancers. Without the safety nets found in traditional jobs, such as sick leave, vacation time or employer-funded counseling or other supports, freelancers can be left scrambling when life wallops us over the heads with tragedy.

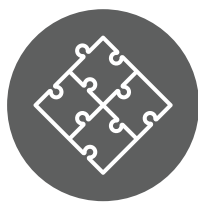


I should know. I've navigated my freelance career through two tragedies. While I was on vacation in 2007, my brother was killed in action in the Iraq war. Some of my clients found out from the news coverage. The day after his funeral, my husband (and business partner) had emergency surgery for a condition that could have killed him.

Projects that had been on hold for vacation dried up. Two weeks after the funeral I walked into my office and wrote a proposal thinking it would be a lovely act of self-therapy—and that I would surely never win the work. Of course, I did.

More recently, I broke up with my spouse and business partner. I rearchitected my business after the website for the company I started in 2003 mysteriously vanished—taking with it the blog I wrote for more than ten years and my portfolio (ouch).

While the Internet Wayback Machine is helping me rescue my deleted content, the emotional labor of recovery when life is horrid is vexing to the spirit. I turned to ASJA members and other freelance writers for advice.



## CREATE A ROUTINE



Sit down to write—even if you don't feel like it. Melanie Padgett Powers told me that writer's block is a luxury she cannot afford to have. "I have to write even when I don't feel like it in order to meet my deadlines and get paid," she said. "I don't let myself get too precious with my words. Get something on paper and then edit later."

For her, the action of starting to write is key. This begins with having a routine that essentially signals to her brain that it is time to write. She notes that someone else's routine or rituals may look differently, but for her it is making a cup of tea, lighting an aromatherapy candle, putting on noise-canceling headphones and playing a designated "startup" song that she only plays when she is ready to dive deep into her work. And she always plays Mozart while writing.



## TAKE TIME OFF



After the deaths of two much-loved pets and a family emergency, Powers knew she needed time off. She got extensions from three clients which gave her an extra week to deal with her immediate grief.

In her situation, having reliable, stable, understanding clients made a huge difference, because she wasn't afraid to ask for the time off, and she knew she had money in the bank to cover her bills.



*Having reliable, stable, understanding clients made a huge difference, because she wasn't afraid to ask for the time off.*





## WRITE SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF



For Joyce Morse Farinella, the peace of mind that comes from writing down a simple grocery list eliminates the mental labor of carrying yet another nugget to remember. That peace of mind helps her get back to writing and focusing.

At times, this morphs into journaling too—but the bottom line is never far from Farinella’s mind. “I also try to remember that I must work to keep getting income regardless of what else is going on. It’s almost like being on autopilot when you write about topics that you have written on a hundred times.”

For part-time freelancer Blair Sharp it’s also all about the to-do list. “I love to-do lists. I constantly have one sitting on my desk in the order that things are due or that I want to complete them,” she said. The list means she can easily see what she should be working on—and when life goes crazy—being able to tick off those items is a lifesaver.

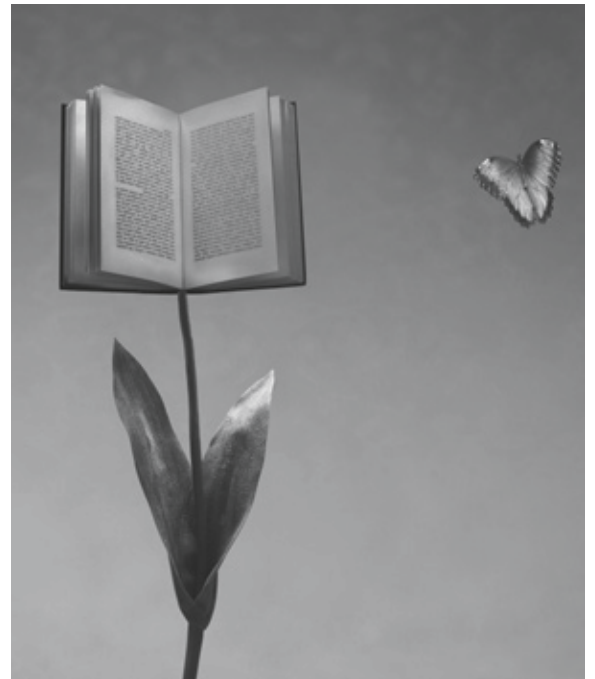


## KEEP YOUR MIND ON WHAT MATTERS



Farinella went through a major personal struggle a couple of years ago and had to move out of her home temporarily with her daughter. She had to figure out a way to complete her work even though she was living with a friend.

It was a struggle because she was in a different place and her schedule was disrupted. “Knowing that my daughter depended on me to keep it together and have an income kept me focused on what I needed to do each day.” Farinella is so focused on her income goals that she maps out a plan each month of what she must earn each day to meet her budget.



## TRY AFFIRMATIONS



Using daily affirmations helped Michelle Cornish find her creative sweet spot for writing again after going through some struggles.

“I started using a number of affirmations I created around creativity to help keep my mindset positive,” said Cornish. “I’ve also started incorporating warm up exercises into both my art and writing practices. This helps me get the “not-so-good” work out of the way and just have fun for a few minutes.”

She was surprised by how much these simple affirmations aided her creativity—and found them so helpful she even created a set of card decks that she sells to creative professionals.





## BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF



But sit down in the chair to write. Because grief can be exhausting, Powers took lots of naps and went to bed early while bereaved. After she came back to her writing and was well rested, Powers found that her mind was still a little off. After about 30 to 60 minutes of writing and mental gymnastics to focus, however, her brain was able to block out grief and other distractions and she could write. The act of giving herself permission to work through the grief was key to getting to the other side of it.



## CHANGE UP YOUR WORK



Writing things out of order can sometimes boost your creativity. As a book author, Cornish's work can leave her feeling zapped for energy. One trick she uses is to start with a chapter near the ending of the book and work her way back toward the beginning.

"For some reason, writing a chapter that may come close to the end, even though I'm not there yet, helps me feel energized about the earlier parts, so I can go back and continue from where I left off," said Cornish.



*Cornish says negative thinking—such as disruptions or fretting over what has gone wrong during the day that hampered her productivity—are truly unhelpful.*



## FOCUS ON WHAT GOES RIGHT



Cornish says negative thinking—such as disruptions or fretting over what has gone wrong during the day that hampered her productivity—are truly unhelpful.

Dwelling on what went wrong can create a vicious (and self-destructive) cycle in our minds. She finds that this negative self talk stagnates her creativity even more. "It's best if I can forget about it and move on as quickly as possible," said Cornish.



## GET HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT



Farinella says she has learned it is important to factor in me-time to help her deal with challenges when life falls apart. And she's also found that it's okay to get support from others when going through tough times.

## Tools of the Trade

# MICROSOFT WORD READ ALOUD

Two years ago, I landed a contract to produce *Shoeing the Modern Horse*, a 60,000-word, highly illustrated book in partnership with a subject matter expert. The day the contract came through, I was ecstatic and terrified. I was confident in my topic knowledge but worried my proofreading skills might not be up for the task.

Reading a piece aloud to myself does not work for me—I still miss minor edits and tweaks. Editing on the physical page helps, but not as well as I like. Plus, I try to limit printing to reduce my environmental impact, and it's faster to edit on screen.

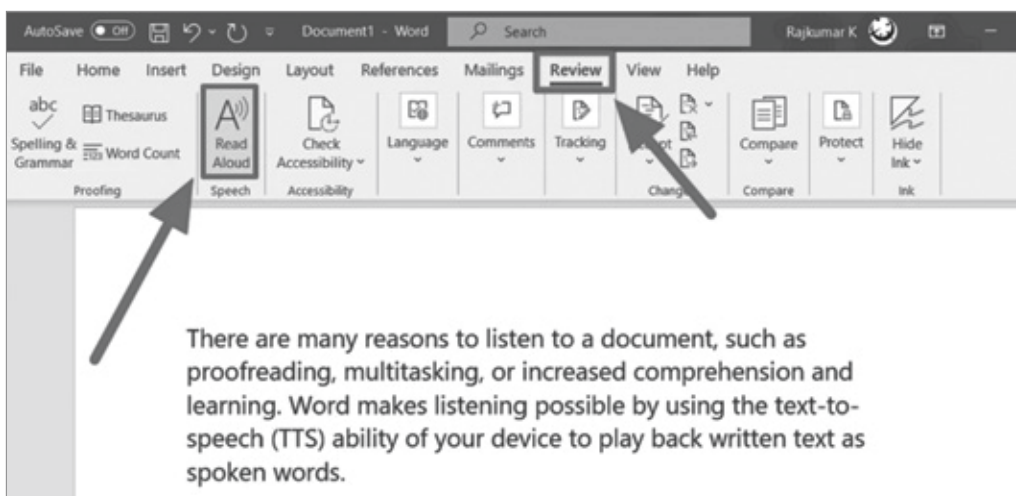
The advance was not large enough for me to hire a proofreader. So instead, I leaned into a powerful tool I learned about through a Poynter copyediting course almost a decade ago.



KATIE NAVARRA

*Freelance Writer*

Katie Navarra is a freelance content marketing writer for HR, leadership, education, and equine clients. She is also a certified business and leadership coach based in Upstate New York. *Shoeing the Modern Horse* was published in November 2022.



### ACCESSING READ ALOUD IN MICROSOFT WORD

First, open the document you want to read aloud in Microsoft Word. Next, place the cursor where you want to start listening from or highlight the text that you want to be read aloud.

Then, go to the 'Review' tab and click the 'Read Aloud' button in the ribbon.

Inside Microsoft Word, there is a function called Read Aloud where the computer reads text aloud. As soon as I began using it, missing transition words, confusing sentences, or stray errors from an AI transcription stood out.

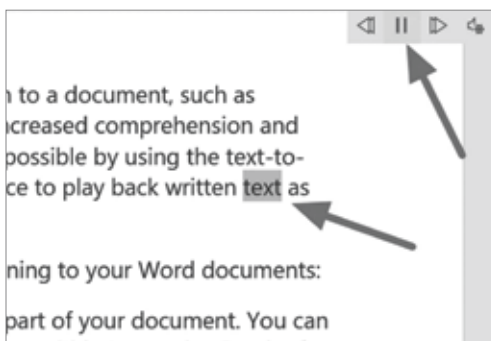
When I first began using Read Aloud, my operating system required manually changing the settings to add an icon called “Speak Selected Text.” The function came preinstalled on the Review tab and labeled as “Read Aloud” on the new computer I purchased last year. Though I don’t use Google Docs, I’ve read this feature is also available when using a Google Chrome extension.

As the deadline for *Shoeing the Modern Horse* approached, I knew this tool would be critical—so crucial that I asked the publisher for an extra week. It took nearly 20 hours to review and make edits to the entire manuscript with Read Aloud.

It was worth the time. I caught numerous minor, but necessary, edits. When the editor’s first review feedback arrived, it confirmed it was the right move. Their note said, “Most of the manuscript has very little edits—you have done a good job!”

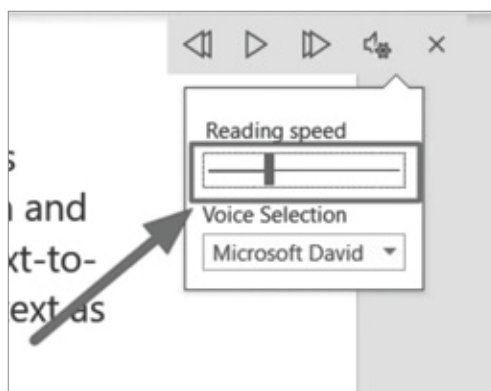
No single tool is going to replace the editing and revisions that are part of the writing process. Nor will it substitute for the invaluable role of copyeditors and editors, but it gives me confidence in finding the small stuff I know I tend to miss.

I use this feature as a final review on every project. On a 1,500-to-2,000-word document, it takes 15 minutes or less to run. It has sped up the last step in my review process, freeing up hours to pursue more work. It has also reduced expenses on paper and ink and allowed



### PAUSE AND RESUME READING CONTROLS

Click the ‘Pause’ or ‘Play’ button in the middle of the panel to pause or resume reading. Each word will be highlighted while reading it aloud as shown below.



### ADJUSTING THE READING SPEED AND VOICE

First, click the ‘Settings’ button (speaker with the gear icon) on the right. Use the reading speed slider to increase or reduce the reading speed. To change reading voice, click the ‘Voice Selection’ drop-down and choose one of the voices.

»»» *Read Aloud has provided confidence in an area of weakness, boosts productivity, and polishes the end product for the client—saving them time and resources in their editing process.*

me to submit cleaner copy to clients. (In full disclosure, I printed *Shoeing the Modern Horse* for editing at least three times—the size of the manuscript and the amount of developmental work needed warranted it).

For me, the time it takes to run Read Aloud is the most critical part of my project process. It has provided confidence in an area of weakness, boosts productivity, and polishes the end product for the client—saving them time and resources in their editing process.

### READING A PDF USING READ ALOUD

If the document you want to read is in PDF format, you can still use Read Aloud.

First, open Microsoft Word. Click on the ‘File’ tab, and select ‘Open’ and select the PDF file from your computer that you want to read aloud.

Microsoft Word will then convert the file to readable text. From here, you can use the same process to use Read Aloud.



# Erin O'Donnell



ASJA MEMBER AND VOLUNTEER SINCE 2017

▶ **What is your writing specialty/focus?**

I write mainly about health and science, but I also write for alumni magazines and end up covering a slew of different topics for those publications.

▶ **In which publications/outlets have you been published?**

At the moment, I'm writing a lot for *Cancer Today*. (Thank you, Client Connections!) Over the years I've been published in *WebMD Magazine*, the *Robb Report*, *Parents*, *Self*, *Dr. Andrew Weil's Self Healing*, *The Boston Globe Magazine*, and *Martha Stewart's Whole Living*. (So many of those publications are now gone! RIP.) I'm currently working on assignments for magazines at Marquette University, Harvard, Babson College, and our local academic medical center.

▶ **Please share a proud writing moment:**

I write and edit on a volunteer basis for an organization called Awake that works to raise awareness around sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and to walk with survivors. I work frequently with victim-survivors of clergy sexual abuse, helping them tell their survivor stories on the blog, focusing on what happened to them and what has helped them heal. Sometimes it's the first time they've told their story publicly. As heavy as it is, the process is rewarding and I'm proud of the work we do together.

▶ **How long have you been an ASJA member?**

I think five years.



*"I work frequently with victim-survivors of clergy sexual abuse, helping them tell their survivor stories on the blog... As heavy as it is, the process is rewarding and I'm proud of the work we do together."*

ERIN O'DONNELL

▶ **How long have you volunteered for ASJA?**  
Five years!

▶ **What kind of volunteer work do you do for ASJA?**

I've been a cochair with my friend Jeanette Hurt of the Client Connections program for multiple years. Jeanette and I also established the Student Volunteer Program, which is now beginning its third year.

▶ **How much time to you spend per month volunteering for ASJA?**

During the academic year, when our students are engaged in the program, it's about 5-10 hours a month.

▶ **Why do you volunteer for ASJA?**

I liked "seeing how the sausage is made" when it came to Client Connections—what goes in to putting it all together. That program is so valuable to our organization, and it felt good to get publications and agents signed up to meet with members.

▶ **How do you fit volunteering in with your work commitments?**

It just goes on my "to do" list each week!

▶ **What are the benefits of volunteering for ASJA?**

Working on Client Connections has introduced me to many of our amazing members. You guys are so creative and productive and it's helpful to be around that energy. Also, working on it gave me access to editors. I've noticed that editors seem receptive when they know you've helped make it happen. It's a good sign that you're motivated and organized.

▶ **What do you like to do when you're not writing?**

I love to read and talk about books—I'm in three book groups! I live with my family near Lake Michigan in Milwaukee and love walking and running in view of the lake with a friend or while listening to music or podcasts.



# We love to give away money to deserving writers in need!

The Writers Emergency Assistance Fund (WEAF) is here to help writers through hard times brought on by illness, natural disaster, or other emergency. Since 1982, WEAF has awarded more than 160 grants totaling approximately \$400,000.

## *You Can Help:*

- If you know a qualified writer who is experiencing an emergency, let them know about WEAF.

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- If you have had a good year, think about making a tax-deductible donation to WEAF.

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- If you want to have a long-term impact, consider naming WEAF as a beneficiary in your estate planning.

To find more information about the WEAF application process and making donations, click the WEAF link on the ASJA website: **ASJA.org**.



# Market Report | COSTCO CONNECTION



TAMI KAMIN MEYER

Freelance Writer

Tami Kamin Meyer has been a practicing Ohio attorney since 1992, and a freelance writer and editor for longer than that. She served as Marketing Chair of ASJA for three of her six years of membership. Her byline has appeared in *U.S. News & World Report*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Bankrate.com*, *Next Avenue*, *Parents.com*, *Legalzoom*, and *Healthcare Services Investment News*, to name a few. She has been the editor of *Write Now Columbus*, a monthly e-newsletter focused on the burgeoning literary scene in Columbus, since 2020. That same year, she was named to her second stint on the Board of Editors of the Columbus Bar Association. Tami is an avid rec kayaker, the happy “dog-ma” to three rescues, and the proud mom to two adult sons, both journalists.

Writers don't have to be among the 92 million people worldwide who belong to COSTCO, but with 60 million of those members being in the U.S., there is a good chance you are. If so, you likely receive *COSTCO Connection*, a monthly publication for members available in both hard copies and on the company's website.

*COSTCO Connection* features trendy, well-balanced articles about business, consumer issues, health, home and garden, travel, arts and entertainment, and technology. Every article relates to COSTCO or its readership in some way.

### SECTIONS OPEN TO FREELANCERS

There are several sections in *COSTCO Connection* open to freelance writers. They include:

- Cover story
- Member profiles
- Supplier profiles
- Some departments

Cover stories feature a person of national prominence who serves as a role model in some way. The person can come from any walk of life, as long as their contributions have been broad-based and enduring. *COSTCO Connection* is more interested in a person's achievements than their bank account.

There is a strong preference for the individual profiled to be a COSTCO member or supplier. Prior covers have featured Paul Newman, Bruce Springsteen, Oprah Winfrey, the Property Brothers, and John Wooden. Worthy organizations with COSTCO memberships have also been highlighted.

Member profiles feature interesting and unusual people or companies who happen to be members. The business may be nonprofit or for-profit, but it must provide a unique product or service to breathe life into the story.



Profiles about suppliers focus on captivating companies that sell products to COSTCO. Most often, these businesses are being led by an identifiable person. Easily recognizable business heads who have been profiled include Disney CEO Bob Iger and Mary Barra, CEO of GM.

Supplier-focused articles generally offer an overview of the company's history, place in its industry, and current activities. However, supplier pieces may also center on a new or unusual program or activity performed by the vendor.

### DEPARTMENTS OPEN TO FREELANCERS

Every issue of *COSTCO Connection* includes several departments. They are open to freelance writers who submit queries first. Those departments include:

**Arts and Entertainment:** This section of the magazine focuses on the book and music industries and includes "Book Picks," "Book Beat," and occasional author and recording-artist interviews. Freelance queries and assignments are considered for writers with relevant portfolios.

Although many pieces in this space are staff-written, the publication is interested in vendor profiles and general interest articles related to books or music, as long as a COSTCO tie-in exists. Topics covered in the past include the adult literacy movement, freedom of the press, and adult contemporary radio.

**Health:** General health issues, offering practical solutions on identifying and avoiding various illnesses.

**For Your Table:** This department focuses on diet, nutrition, and how to use foods in different ways.

**Special sections:** Generally, the *COSTCO Connection* includes a themed special section.

**Canadian editions:** The magazine has two editions for its Canadian members—the *COSTCO Connection* in English (distributed nationally) and *Contact* in French (distributed primarily in Quebec.) Both are published 10 times a year. Much of the Canadian content is similar to its American counterpart. Word counts are the same as in U.S. editions.

**U.K. edition:** The magazine publishes in the United Kingdom nine times per year. Content is often geared toward COSTCO's trade (small business) members.

Before submitting a story pitch, it is important for a freelance writer to be aware of several "nitty gritty" when it comes to writing for *COSTCO Connection*.

Writers should always query first with a brief e-mail. In the pitch, describe why *Connection* readers would be interested or if the profile subject is a COSTCO member. First-time contributors should include samples of pertinent published work. On rare occasions, the magazine may ask to see the article on speculation, meaning there is no commitment to publish or pay for the work.

Telephone queries are discouraged. Once a query has been accepted, the writer will be sent guidelines for angle, word count, deadline, file format, etc.

Articles are submitted via e-mail. Spec articles received on paper will only be published if an electronic version is emailed to the magazine after acceptance.



### COSTCO CONNECTION AT A GLANCE



**Article lengths:** Story lengths run from 350 words or fewer for shorts and up to 1,500 words for cover stories. The typical length for one-page pieces is 500-600 words, including sidebars.

**Pay rate:** Payment depends on varying factors, such as article length, number of interviews, and turnaround time, but averages around \$1.25 U.S. per word. Canadian writers are paid in Canadian dollars and UK writers in British currency. Writers whose articles appear in both magazines receive an additional "pick up fee" of \$100 for a full-page article and \$50 per half-page. The publication does not pay expenses incurred in the writing or research of stories unless specifically approved in advance. The *COSTCO Connection* pays upon acceptance. Terms are net 30 upon approval.

**Rights:** The *COSTCO Connection* buys first-time rights only and retains the right to reprint for promotional purposes.

**Contact:** Email queries to Tod Jones at [tod.jones@costco.com](mailto:tod.jones@costco.com)



# Why You Need a Personal Manifesto



An excerpt from *You Need a Manifesto: How to Craft Your Convictions and Put Them to Work* by Charlotte Burgess-Auburn, Stanford d.school's director of community.

**T**he time is right to redefine the manifesto as personal for the present moment. Manifestos have been a tool for recruiting people to collective causes—political, religious, artistic.

But in this age, where it seems like everyone is being recruited by everyone else every moment of the day, you need a way to recruit yourself to your own cause, a method for considering your own power to create and to make positive change in a world that sorely needs it.

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Creative work—the work of bringing ideas into the world, whatever kind they are—is hugely powerful. It is a particular kind of power: the power to generate, to make something where before there wasn't anything. The power to improve, to build on the work of others, and reach closer to an ideal. The power to influence, to engage people in new beliefs, activities, and behaviors. And the power to change it all. That is the impact of design.

Nearly every object and system you interact with every day has been designed. But that doesn't mean each has been designed well or even with good intentions. Making things better may have always been a part of creative work, but justice is a larger theme of this age.

How can you find the right spot for your individual kind of creative work within a larger context of positive change, in a culture and environment that is constantly changing? To begin, you'll need to be able to envision goals worth pursuing and to cultivate some faith in your ability to achieve them without creating endless collateral damage. The world is as wide open as it ever was. To feel less unmoored, you need to create strong anchors to your values, develop ethical navigation tools, and describe honest destinations.

A modern manifesto is a statement of purpose and a script for action that will allow you, as a citizen of the creative world, to recruit yourself to your own cause, navigate bravely, and share your unique position with others.





**TAKE AN INNER ROAD TRIP**

A practice of self-awareness equips every maker, creator, or problem solver with an essential understanding of their own relationship to the process of getting work done. Know yourself, and everything will work better.

Let's do some internal warmups to become familiar with a few key parts of your system of moral navigation: your goals, values, ethics, and biases. Consider your manifesto a compass; in this landscape, you might think of goals as your destinations, values as the gas you need to get there, ethics as your steering wheel, and biases as well-worn paths and ruts in the roads.



**GET TO KNOW YOUR DESTINATIONS**

Goals are destinations. The journey to them can be more short-term, like "write this book," or more long-term, like "bring up my kids to become healthy, thoughtful, productive adults." They are a conceptualization of a place, a moment,

or a state of being where you want to arrive. In our daily grind, it's not always easy to see what goals we are actively pursuing. You've got to stop the hustle for a minute to get a look at the goals worth reaching.



*A modern manifesto is a statement of purpose and a script for action that will allow you, as a citizen of the creative world, to recruit yourself to your own cause, navigate bravely, and share your unique position with others.*



Goals are a great way to plot a deliberate course through your life and work. However, as with all things set in the future, we need to regularly reexamine that course in relation to the present.

Taking time to consider your goals—the ones you'd like to have as well as the ones that you're actively pursuing—can help orient you toward work that is meaningful to you and that you want to do well. The only way to truly know your goals is to look inward. Get to know yourself. Dig around to see what goals you might already have in your backpack.



### PUT GAS IN THE TANK

Values are simply what you value in your life. They help you determine what is important to you in both the long term and the short. These underlying beliefs influence your behavior and motivate your actions—the ones you take and the ones you don't take. Your values are changeable. What is of value to you today may not be in ten years. (In fact, let's hope not.) Your values are also personal. I can't tell you what values to have—they are yours, not mine. What I can tell you is that you need them. Why? It's gas in the tank. Values motivate you. They push you. Let them. Get good at letting them push you.

Values matter because they are present in everything we do, but

*Taking time to consider your goals can help orient you toward work that is meaningful to you and that you want to do well. The only way to truly know your goals is to look inward. Get to know yourself.*

they also hide in our actions—they are not always self-evident and not often self-examined. By airing your values as part of the work of creating your manifesto, you have the opportunity to examine and evolve your sense of purpose as you gain experience and wisdom. Examine your daily pursuits as a way to discover what you value beyond the obvious. Start with the behaviors, actions, and objects that are important to you and extract your values from them.



**THE RUTS IN THE ROAD**

Biases are the predetermined preferences that we hold; they can be favored routes to travel—or ruts in the road. So often we make choices based on instinct, but it is important to understand and examine the ways in which your preferences have developed. Understanding your preferences can help you see where you need to push through unnecessary or unjust boundaries imposed by convention, negative influences, and systemic or structural prejudice.

Everyone has biases—they are a product of a learning brain. They form because the brain categorizes new experiences based on prior knowledge. Our brain connects new ideas, new people, and new things to categories we've formed from all of our earlier experiences and then responds to them the same way it does to other things in that category. This means that we have all had personal experiences and been exposed to cultural norms that are influencing our decisions and actions based on bias.

While some of these biases are very useful (to keep us from walking into oncoming traffic) and some are harmless (like “sour cream and onion chips are just better than barbecue”), some are incredibly harmful both to others and to ourselves. Stereotypes can predetermine our ideas about ourselves and other people based on race, cultural background, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and so much more. They can make us jump to conclusions about other people's values, beliefs, ethics, and goals.

While it's not possible to live a life with no biases at all, it is critical to know that they exist, to become aware of what yours are, and to bring them into the light so you can spend time and effort to change when you need to. By exposing your implicit biases, you can make more deliberate choices.



**GET ON WITH IT**

All this talk of values and ethics and goals can make writing your own manifesto seem like the stakes are too high. You might be worrying, What if I can't identify my values? What if I don't have the “right” goals? If you are worrying, it's okay. The beauty of the manifesto is in its flexibility. You're not setting anything in stone. Your first manifesto is going to be a prototype, and so is your second and your third. Free yourself from any sense of obligation—you don't owe anyone anything. Trust your intuition. There's only one person your manifesto can and needs to be totally true for, and that is you, right now.



**WHERE'S THE STEERING WHEEL ON THIS THING?**

I love ethics. Especially when it comes to creative work. Especially when that creative work comes with the powder-keg combination of endless human imagination, the tools of design, and the unfathomable scope of emerging technologies.

If values are the accelerator for driving toward your goals, then ethics are more like the brakes, the steering, or the lines on the road. Ethics are the rules and restraints we establish for ourselves to keep from running all over the place, squashing everything that's in our path.

Ethics are your rules, whether they are personal guides to your own behavior or a collective set of laws that keep all of us on paths safely. Built in line with your values and responsive to your experiences, they indicate your boundaries and the ways you get to your destination. They govern the behavior you've decided is okay and the types of actions that you want to avoid. Ethics prevent us from doing and saying things that are contrary to our values, that we know we will regret.

As you are creating your manifesto, use the opportunity to ask yourself if there are any guardrails in there, any brakes, any limits. If you've got your personal ethics in place, you'll be better able to tell when you, your organization, or your field is heading in the wrong direction.



*You Need a Manifesto: How to Craft Your Convictions and Put Them to Work* by Charlotte Burgess-Auburn is an essential how-to for crafting a guiding motto that sets intentions, increases creativity, and helps accomplish your goals, from Stanford University's world-renowned Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, aka the d.school.

## Psst... It's No Secret: ASJA's Blog Keeps You in the Loop

*Visit ASJA Confidential for the scoop on issues that matter most to freelancers.*

As freelancers, we know how important it is to stay up-to-date on the latest happenings. And when it comes to timely information that can grow your business, Confidential helps you stay in the know.

### YOU MIGHT FIND:

- ▶ Valuable tips showing how to make the most of your membership
- ▶ News about legal issues concerning freelancers
- ▶ Insider details on what to expect at upcoming ASJA events
- ▶ Opportunities and calls to action

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*Check regularly for news on ASJA happenings and developments you won't want to miss.*