

Making Money Freelance Writing

From the editors of Writer's Digest Magazine, Writer's Digest Books, Cincinnati, OH. 304 pages. \$19.99.

You don't have to be a writer or editor to find this book useful. It's about the business of writing, not how to write snappy stories. If you're interested in doing almost anything as a freelancer—producing videos, designing web sites, photography or being a technology consultant—you'll find plenty of tips in *Making Money Freelance Writing*. And that goes for anything from making a few extra dollars of second income to going to full-time freelancing.

The book is a compilation of 37 articles organized into three sections: Conducting the Freelance Business, Freelance Opportunities, and The Freelancer's Life-style. Particularly generic to all types of freelance work is the first section on how to conduct a freelance business. There's a good chapter about marketing yourself and your business called "The Service Edge," by Dick Schaaf. He says there's no better competitive edge these days than superior customer service (the customer being the editor or whoever you're working for). "If you're writing to make money, you must become a business too. It isn't hard, but it is work. The rules are the same for freelancers as for Marriott Hotels, FedEx or L.L. Bean: Take care of your customers and they'll take care of you."

He goes on to talk about the importance of long-term relationships for freelancers (it costs five times as much to attract a new customer as to keep one you already have). Some of the other tips may sound like Marketing 101, but they work: listen, understand and respond to the customer; define superior service and establish a service strategy; and set standards and measure performance. Playing "The Contacts Game," per the title of another chapter, can be intimidating. But contacts can include friends and acquaintances. Playing the contacts game is simply relating to people, telling them what you do and asking them what they do.

There are chapters on Stalking the Business Client, Care and Feeding of Clients, How to Set Your Rates, Five Strategies for Beating the Tax Man, and The Art of Negotiation. About negotiating: Everything is negotiable—money, rights, deadlines, expenses, payment schedules and editing. You're probably making a mistake

if you're working for the same rate now as when you started freelancing. Beginners should take whatever terms are offered, but continuing the practice after breaking in is like turning down raises. Have you ever turned down a raise?

John M. (Jack) Sperbeck
University of Minnesota