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The Well-Fed Writer: Financial Self-Sufficiency As a Freelance Writer in Six Months or Less

Peter Bowerman
Fanove Publishing (August 2000)
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Can a freelance writer actually make enough to pay the bills, find creative fulfillment, and have fun at the same time? Bowerman certainly thinks so, claiming to be living proof that one need not be a “crackerjack writer to make a good living in this business.” He began with no professional writing experience or training, just an interest and inclination to try. With some tenacity, he says his methods are repeatable and guarantee success in direct proportion to one’s effort.

The definition of freelance writing for this text is specifically the commercial sort. Bowerman lists character traits and work habits common to successful commercial copywriters to help determine if this lifestyle would appeal and satisfy. Many are suited to this work, from laid-off corporate employees to stay-at-home moms or experts in other fields looking for a change. He also gives many examples of work expected from a commercial freelance writer including radio spots, public relations materials, technical manuals, and so forth. While many companies may already have full-time staff writers, others are downsizing or eliminating this department which creates enough work in most metropolitan areas to keep a stable full of commercial freelancers busy.

Assuming some of his readers may have come from corporate settings where the details of self-employment are not needed, Bowerman spells out everything one should do to start a commercial freelance business from home. He covers how to develop contacts, what fees to charge, how to organize paperwork, working with a graphic designer, partnering with another writer and more. In the appendices, he offers examples of prospecting and follow-up letters, samples of his own work and testimonials from other commercial freelancers who have found their way in this business.

The book flows with a snappy conversational tone, similar to Bowerman’s ad copy that can be simultaneously effective and annoying. Though it reads like the script for a late-night television info-mercial, Bowerman’s central thesis is not lost: that commercial freelance writing is a “very serious profession that can afford you a healthy income, plenty of creative fulfillment, along with highly enviable lifestyle benefits.” For anyone interested in writing and willing to make a go of self-employment, this book should provide excellent guidelines and inspiration.
MARY SPIRO (June 15, 2000)

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