

Writer's Connection

Quinte Writer's Guild Newsletter

Article Section

Byline/Exposure/Bio in Lieu of Cash: THE ULTIMATE INSULT TO WRITERS!

By Angela Hoy, WritersWeekly.com

If you don't know exactly how much money you're going to make before you write an article, then, chances are, you're being taken for a ride. Never, ever write an article if you don't know exactly how much you're going to make before you start writing.

You see it all the time!

"We can't afford to pay you now, but we'll publish your bio."

"Payment is in the form of byline."

"Get published here and get exposure!"

Exposure? Exposure to what? These promises of payment that in no way involve money are, by far, the ultimate insult to writers. Been tempted by these in the past? Let's discuss what "exposure" is beneficial to writers, and what is not.

"EXPOSURE" TO PROMOTE YOUR WRITING ABILITIES - GET REAL!

If you get "exposure" to a dozen people who might visit that website or read that ezine, newsletter or magazine, what will that get you? Okay, how about a hundred people? A thousand? Maybe 10,000? How many of those people are editors looking for freelancers? In the vast majority of cases, whether there are 10 readers or 1,000, the answer is zero. Real editors that offer real compensation to writers are just not surfing the Net looking for more writers! They're already inundated with submissions!!

WRITING FOR EQUITY AND/OR STOCK OPTIONS

Oh come on! Ask any five people you know if they've ever had stock options. Then ask them how much CASH they got out of that deal. Chances are all five people will say zero.

WRITING FOR PERCENTAGE OF AD REVENUE OR PAY PER CLICK

If you want to write for two pennies per article or less, this is the way to go. See my article on this bad deal here:

<http://www.writersweekly.com/articles/starvingwriter.html> To read David Walters' experiences with pay-per-click:

<http://www.authorsden.com/visit/ViewArticle.asp?id=3375>

BYLINE/BIO AS PAYMENT

As in writing for exposure above, getting a byline in a small-circulation print magazine or newsletter or even a popular website is usually worth zero dollars and is a gross waste of your time.

"EXPOSURE" TO PROMOTE YOUR PRODUCT

Now, this is different. Are you promoting a book or a business writing service (writing copy for business brochures, letters, etc.)? Then exposure in this capacity might be valuable, provided the audience you're writing for is appropriate for your product or service.

HOW THE INSULT WORKS:

Publications need content. They desire to obtain this content for "free", of course. However, "free" doesn't feed our families, does it? So, they insult us by concocting other creative tactics to get us to write for them for free...like promises of "exposure", the publication of our "byline" or "bio" and the opportunity to be read by "thousands" or more.

Many start-up websites, newsletters and others make a big dog and pony show about how valuable exposure to their readers is. When, in reality, they know that exposure to their readers is going to have absolutely zero monetary value for you, the writer, no matter how many people read your article.

If they're that new, they don't have enough readers to make it financially worth your time!

ADS WE FOUND THAT INSULTED US:

At fanstop.com, their site says, "We're not a corporate gorilla (hello, Sportscenter) but there's equity and profit sharing for feature and Smash Mouth writers. Everyone that works on this network gets compensation, which separates us from the other guys."

Excuse me? You call equity and profit sharing compensation? If you can't afford to pay real money for content, you shouldn't be in business. I'd like to know how much cash your equity and profit sharing have equated to thus far!

(Continued page 4)

Continued from page 3

At TheBabyCorner.com: "If we choose to use your work, it will be featured on the website, along with any links to your site and a brief bio."

Who hoo! But, how is that going to help me buy groceries this week, keep my electricity on and take my child to the doctor? Do you work your job for free? Does your ISP? Your doctor? Your grocer? So, why should I write for you...for FREE?!

At CottageHaven.com: "We offer good exposure to writers. Our magazine is currently seen by over 5000 people per month. Unfortunately, we cannot pay for the articles yet, but we will start paying writers as soon as we are able."

Um, if your traffic is so low that you can't earn any ad revenue, what makes you think a writer will get "good exposure" writing for you? IF YOU CAN'T PAY WRITERS, YOU SHOULDN'T BE IN BUSINESS!

Let's face it. If these firms had respectable traffic to their sites, they'd have paying advertisers and would be able to afford to pay YOU! If they can't even attract advertisers what makes you think you're going to make any money writing for their small audience? If they do have good traffic or any ad revenue at all, they should be PAYING THEIR WRITERS!

WRITING FOR FREE HURTS ALL WRITERS

If you write for free, you are part of the problem. You are hurting the rest of us who refuse to write for nothing. When you write for free, you are telling that publication/website that freelance writing services are not worth paying for. Not only that, but you're also telling that publication/website that your own writing is not worth paying for.

Believe me...when you write for free, other editors who might see your article know you wrote it for free. They won't offer you a paying gig when they know they can get you...for free. Professional writers don't write for free. Amateurs do. Editors know this!

WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

So many writers willingly write for free that freelance writing pay has declined in the past 40 years, not increased with the cost of living. According to the National Writers Union, "We discovered that the situation is even worse than we had thought. In real dollars, freelance rates have declined by more than 50 percent since the 1960s. And while rates have gone down, publishers are getting more for their money." See: <http://www.nwu.org>. Click on journalists and then on: Report on Pay Rates for Freelance Journalists.

What does that tell you?! Every writer who writes for "exposure" is selling out their brothers and sisters! What in the world can YOU do?

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE A CHANGE?

1. Never write for "exposure/bio/byline" unless you're promoting your product or service with the article and, then, only if that publication's audience is your book's/product's target audience. Writing an article on coupons while promoting a book on business taxation will sell zero books. Writing an article on parenting while promoting a book on parenting provides value to the author.

2. Never, ever assume that, by writing for that editor, you're going to be noticed by paying editors and land future writing assignments. If ain't gonna happen!—

3. If you need clips, write for one of the paying magazines that welcome new writers! See:

<http://www.writersweekly.com/markets/markets.html>, page down to the markets, and look for the phrase "welcomes new writers." At the end of that page is a link to more markets, and at the end of that, even more. You'll soon see that, with all the publications willing to PAY new writers, there is no need to write for free to obtain clips!

4. When you see an ad or writer's guidelines offering "exposure" in exchange for articles, email the editor and tell him/her what an atrocity their insult is. Better yet, forward this article to them.

5. When you see an ad or writer's guidelines offering "exposure" in exchange for articles, ask your fellow freelancers to write to him/her as well to voice their outrage!

There are tens of thousands of magazines and websites that PAY writers for their work. If we all refuse to write for nothing, the non-paying ones will be forced to start paying for our valuable services. That, or they'll go out of business...which is where they should be if they can't pay!

Angela Hoy is the co-owner of Writer-sWeekly.com, the largest-circulation freelance writing ezine in the world featuring new freelance jobs and paying markets every Wednesday. It's free!