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Freelance Success

The ultimate resource for established,
professional non-fiction writers.

FLX 6.18.09 McGraw-Hill Professional Hi, *|MMERGE1|*

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MARKET GUIDE: Books on Business Topics

PUBLICATION NAME: McGraw-Hill Professional

FOCUS: management, leadership, human resources, entrepreneurship

CIRCULATION: if a business book sells 20,000 to 25,000 copies in its first year, it's doing well

OWNER: McGraw-Hill Information and Media

PAYMENT RATES: probably sub-six-figures; advances are declining

PAYMENT TERMS: half on signing, half on submitting an acceptable manuscript

CONTRACT: negotiate carefully

QUERIES TO: Senior Editor/Consumer Group Michele R. Wells

ADDRESS: 2 Penn Plaza, 23rd Fl., New York, NY 10121

PHONE: 212.904.5383

E-MAIL: michele_wells@mcgraw-hill.com

WEB SITE: www.mhprofessional.com

McGraw-Hill is looking for business writers, primarily those who are knowledgeable about HR issues, to write book-length works for its business division, says Michele Wells, whom some of you might know from her days as an acquisitions editor for Penguin Group. Wells, who switched jobs about six months ago and is now a senior editor in the consumer group at McGraw-Hill, is also looking for books in the business self-help category – especially manuscripts related to:

- Organizational development
- Performance management (balance scorecard, appraisals, perfect phrases, etc.)

- Teamwork/collaboration
- Recruiting/talent management
- Technology/trends
- Contemporary look at old business concepts
- Topics that benefit from a "tools"/handbook treatment

Here are some [recently published McGraw-Hill books](#) that might give you a clearer view of what she wants.

Keep in mind that the likely reader is an employee rather than an employer.

Many of these books are ghost- or co-written, and Wells says they are more likely to sell well if the expert has a large platform. But you might snag a contract if you, personally, have solid and unique business experience in the area about which you want to write, even if you've never written a book before.

Wells points out that many of the authors from whom she's bought books in the last year have well-read blogs. "Having a blog is a great thing, and it is so easy to do," she says. Her comment points to yet another reason for a writer to start and maintain her own blog.

Wells says that she has been getting a lot of letters of interest that are something along these lines: "This is my background. This is what I do. I'd like to write a book." Generally, that approach doesn't work for her. Instead, send her a brief proposal that includes a summary of the book you want to write, comparative titles ("so we can check sales"), reasons your book will be different, a short bio, and a discussion of your platform. If you're proposing to ghost- or co-write a book, include a bio and information on the platform of the expert.

"Even if I'm not interested in the proposal, this is still a more effective approach, because it may lead me to think that you're suited to write a book about something else," Wells says.

The big, unanswered question is, how much will you make on one of these? Wells says she simply can't generalize about advances. If the expert has a huge platform, the advance will be bigger. If you're a first-time author, and the topic is promising but unproven, expect lots less. The FLX Authors Forum has had considerable discussion recently of the [changing book business](#), including a *New York Times* article about advances, which concludes "\$35,000 is the new \$75,000" — and less than \$10,000 isn't unheard of.

KNOW HOW: Organizing Your Business Life

By Brigitte A. Thompson

President of Datamaster Accounting Services

Bookkeeping is an essential part of the business of writing. Figuring out how to identify and track expenses and keep the Internal Revenue Service happy is an important key to success.

The more legitimate business expenses that you can document, the lower your tax payments will be.

My new book, *Bookkeeping Basics for Freelance Writers*, addresses issues writers face daily, such as how to deduct travel expenses, differentiate between personal and business property, and claim home office deductions. Here are some suggestions for handling record keeping, the foundation of a good business system.

Record-keeping Options

To justify expenses, it is important to establish a system of record keeping that works for you. Some things need to be recorded daily, while others can be done weekly or monthly. It is imperative that you get into the habit of saving and recording everything related to your writing business. All invoices, receipts, credit card slips and bank statements are essential documentation that should be stored for up to 10 years, no matter what record-keeping system you use.

I think the best available system is QuickBooks — a user-friendly accounting program that most accountants are familiar with. If you use QuickBooks, your accountant may even give you a discount on her charges because you make her job so much simpler. (At least, you can ask.)

QuickBooks not only generates financial statements and budgets using the data you input, it also allows you to compile custom reports.

I recommend that users ignore the presets — even those that say they are specific to writers — and set up their own record-keeping categories, or Chart of Accounts, as QuickBooks calls it. There's no point in having an empty category or an account you are not sure how to use. It just makes things more confusing.

Include as much detail as you can. QuickBooks includes two fields that can be particularly useful — the memo field and the project field — and most of my clients who are writers and people in other sorts of small businesses under-utilize them.

The Project Field

QuickBooks can actually be an effective query tracker. Set up a project for every publication that you query — whether you sell anything to them or not. Make a note, including the date, of what you've sent. When you get a response, note that as well, even if it is a rejection.

If the news is better, input information about the assignment, including the kind of assignment, due date, and the agreed length and price. Keep track of expenses. If you use a time tracker, you can include that information in this file. Use the system to generate an invoice, and when you get the check, add that information.

Over the years, you will develop a sophisticated database of what sells and what doesn't, what you earn hourly for various kinds of work, how long it takes to collect payment, and track the ebbs and flows of the business so you can better manage your schedule and your budget.

The Memo Field

Utilizing the memo field is a good way to keep the IRS happy. Elaborate on every expense you can. For instance, if you have a home office and you buy landscaping items, note that you purchased three hostas and a maple tree. The IRS loves this kind of detail and so will your accountant. It is much easier for all concerned to keep this information here than on the back of the receipt.

If you go to an office supply store and purchase paper and a computer, the memo field comes in handy again. The paper is a supply that gets written off right away. The computer is considered an asset and may need to be depreciated. In QuickBooks, you can split this purchase into two categories or two accounts. One account would be Office Supplies Expense, using the memo to record "paper." The second account would be Office Equipment Asset. In the memo field here, you would record it as a "computer" purchase. When it comes time to do your taxes, your preparer will need to know the date and dollar amount spent on that computer because depreciated items are reported to the IRS differently. This detailed record keeping makes ascertaining that information almost effortless.

Other Good Things About QuickBooks

QuickBooks offers modules that interface with your bank account and your credit card companies. It also has a special download method for sending information to your accountant. And it allows you or your accountant to import information into certain tax programs.

While some people might be concerned about security issues, I think QuickBooks has a good system and reputation. It doesn't mean your file will never be compromised by computer hackers, but I think software designer Intuit has made the program as safe as they can.

You don't have to be an accountant to use QuickBooks. I think it is intuitive enough that most people can teach themselves to use it, although the company offers online assistance. Or you can probably find an instructor where you live to give you private tutoring. I offer QuickBooks classes near my home in Vermont, and I find that most people know everything

they need to know to get started after an hour or so of instruction. More detailed, industry-specific information is available online.

An online version of QuickBooks is available, and it works the same way that software loaded onto your computer does. Personally, I prefer the software version, because I can do the backup and be confident the information won't disappear.

Other Record-keeping Options

If QuickBooks feels too complicated, consider using Microsoft Excel or a similar, simple electronic spreadsheet. I don't think it is nearly as versatile as QuickBooks, but it does have some advantages. One benefit of tracking this information with a computer spreadsheet is its ability to compute. Once you learn the program, you will be able to format columns to add a range of numbers. That will allow you to see exactly where you stand financially at a glance.

If you use an electronic spreadsheet, be sure to create space for explanations. You can and should elaborate on every transaction.

I still have some clients who insist on putting receipts in an envelope and turning them over to me so I can do their accounting. If this is the record-keeping method you prefer, at least keep everything in the same place. A three-ring binder with pockets is ideal. Write the transactions in the notebook and stick the receipt or a copy of the check in the pocket.

The Bottom Line: Keep Those Receipts

Any system that works for you is acceptable to the IRS, as long as the pertinent information is retained. But remember that the IRS wants a paper trail, so even if you keep records online, if you are audited, you'll need to go with a box of receipts. So find a way to back up your online records and store at least 10 years of paper records in a safe place.

Brigitte A. Thompson is the founder and President of Datamaster Accounting Services, LLC in Vermont. She has been active in the field of accounting since 1986 and is a member of the American Institute of Professional Bookkeepers and the Vermont Tax Practitioners Association.

She is the author of several record-keeping books for business owners, as well as a contributing author and freelance writer whose articles have appeared nationally in print and online publications.

*Her newest title, *Bookkeeping Basics for Freelance Writers*, will be available in July of 2009 through [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).*

For more information, check out her [blog](#).

NEWS:**Summer Query Challenge: Week 1 Results**

The Query Challenge participants are off and querying, including the last-minute entry, Team 6, which is making a late go of it with only 10 members instead of 13. Here are Week 1's results:

Team	Week1
1	122
2	152
3	171
4	188
5	116
6	57

Sixty-five people signed up in time to be in FLX's Summer Query Challenge, netting five teams of 13 people each. Eight more raised their hands after the deadline, and they've decided to give it a go as Team 6, even though they're five people short of a full team, and joining late in the game (today!).

The first tip came in even before the challenge started, from Team 2: READ!

FLXers figure prominently in a special report on working smart in the recession published in the July issue of *The Writer*, on newsstands right now.

Bob Bittner's article, "Freelancing Through Tough Times," features nine successful freelancers talking about their strategies to overcome the economic downturn: Janean Mascarella, Gary Wollenhaupt, Kelly Bastone, Pamela Oldham, Charlotte Huff, Teri Cettina, Jill Adams, Caitlin Kelly, and Brian O'Connell.

Other articles in the special report: a piece by Sharon Miller Cindrich features advice from agents; Mridu Khullar offers tips on making an extra \$1,000 a month, featuring an interview with Jane Boursaw; and John Borchart's article describes how to rewrite print articles for the web.

What's the Query Challenge? The Query Challenge runs eight weeks, from Monday, June 8 to Friday, July 31. Teams have two co-leaders who work to motivate members and offer

weekly challenges when possible. Players earn 1 point for each query sent and 3 points for each assignment they get during the challenge. Look on the FLX Forum for more [detailed rules](#). The team with the most points at the end wins the love and admiration of FLXers (and perhaps a wee bit of jealousy), plus the joy of having made new contacts and scored some assignments they otherwise might not have.

FLX typically hosts Query Challenges in the winter (starting in January or February) and summer (starting in June or July).

Science writing: How to strengthen your writing with science July 8 - August 12, 2009

Fascinated by science, but confused by the sea of scientific studies? Want to use science to add punch to your pieces? Want to know how to make sense of a study quickly and figure out if it's worth covering? You don't need a Ph.D. to write well about science. By learning some basics about how science works and what makes scientific information newsworthy, you can add substance and credibility to your work.

The class covers:

- the best places to look for science news
- how to quickly vet a study
- how to find the right expert, not just the nearest expert
- how to figure out if a study is newsworthy
- the art of explaining science
- finding narratives in science
- markets for science stories

This online class will feature lessons and assignments in a password-protected forum. Students will post their completed assignments to the forum, and the instructor and other students will provide feedback. The forum will also be used to discuss assigned readings and other topics related to science writing. Several assigned readings will be drawn from *A Field Guide for Science Writers*, a how-to book from the National Association of Science Writers that costs about \$18.

Instructor Dan Ferber is an award-winning journalist who has written about science, medicine, the environment and technology for *Reader's Digest*, *Popular Science*, *Women's Health*, *Audubon*, *Seed*, *New Scientist* and many other magazines. He's also a correspondent for *Science* magazine.

The class runs six weeks. The price is \$199 for FLXers, \$249 for nonmembers. Registration is limited to 20 students. To register, just drop Ferber an email at ferber@nasw.org.

We've Added More Berths to Cruising for Profits

In response to FLXers who asked if it was really too late to join us on the Nassau cruise aboard the Carnival Imagination this October, we have secured a handful of additional cabins at the same price of \$240 per person for an interior cabin and \$270 per person for

an ocean view. Like before, it's on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you want your cabin, please fill out the Cruising for Profits form at the FLX site and fax or email it to Julie Sturgeon by June 15. At that time we will charge your credit card for \$175 per person (\$75 deposit and \$100 second payment). As before, \$50 of that is non-refundable. (You also may mail her a check if that suits your financial system better.)

We can't wait to have you join us on the Imagination Oct. 23–26!

NOTE to those who already have signed up: We have to move the final payment up by a few days in order to make sure everything clears before Carnival's drop-dead deadline. The new date is Aug. 15 (instead of the 24th). Please contact Julie if this causes a cash flow problem on your end.

We haven't been able to nail down a hotel for a pre-cruise night in Miami — prices are falling and we think they're going to fall further. To avoid paying more than we have to, we're delaying making these reservations for those who want them until early August, when we're almost certain to get a better deal.

FLX Essay Book – Send Submissions Now

We're ready for you! The essay book committee is ready to accept essays for the book that we are compiling for release in early 2010, just in time for Valentine's Day sales. The book will focus on relationships and will have four to six sections with five to seven essays in each. The competition will be stiff — so if you have that perfect, as-yet-unpublished essay, it's time to get cracking.

We've brainstormed a few broad categories, which may be refined according to the essays that are selected for publication. To get your creative juices flowing, think about these types of relationships:

- Families (parents and kids, siblings, in-laws, grandparents, etc.)
- Friends and Lovers (different kinds of intimate relationships)
- Animals (pets and more)
- Life changers (influential others)

Essays must be between 500 and 1,500 words.

Each person may submit a maximum of two essays for consideration in the book. Submissions will be reviewed by the content committee in a blind read (no identifying info).

All submissions must be original works, not previously published. You must own all rights to the material and be willing to grant FLX first publication rights.

A standard writer-friendly contract will be issued for submissions selected for the book. We're working out the compensation details, but don't expect to get rich. You can safely count on a modest honorarium and a percentage of any profits.

The deadline for submissions is July 15. E-mail them to FLXessays@yahoo.com.

Include a cover sheet with your name, contact info, word count and title of essay (or put this info at the top of your e-mail, so it can be separated from the essay itself). Do not put your name on the essay. Do include the title, which must match exactly the title on your cover sheet, whether sent as an attachment (preferred) or pasted into the e-mail.

Good luck to everyone!

ON THE FORUM: Providing Source Info, Deleting LinkedIn Contacts, Mining a New Niche, More on Self Publishing

Looking for advice on specific publications or editors? Curious to know how other writers handle a particular problem? Just need to vent? The FLX discussion forums – the regular forum, Juggler's forum, Corporate Writing and others – provide the best place for that. You can lurk if you want and get plenty of great information, but those who participate love the supportive, collegial feel of the interactions. Check in on just a few of the most recent conversations among professional writers:

[How Do you Provide Source Info to Editors?](#)

[How to Delete a LinkedIn Contact](#)

[Potentially Lucrative Niche](#)

[Favoring Self-Publishing](#)

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