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Blog

Chris Worth — ProCopywriters Member Spotlight

PRO

Chris Worth

Chris does Content

Why did you choose a career in copywriting and how did you get into it?

In my teens, I wanted what most young people want: a life of action and adventure. So I went backpacking. After time in Europe, Australia and Indonesia I landed in Tokyo, and got hired by a technical writing team, doing manuals for ultra-interesting stuff like washing machines and bicycle parts!

That led me to a trade publisher in Hong Kong ... a big-bad ad agency in Singapore ... and the same big-bad ad agency in Paris. So it wasn't so much a career choice as a process of discovery.

I liked writing stuff, I liked business and I liked technology. I specialise in STEM clients, so copywriting enables me to do basically everything that interested me in life.

As a freelancer I've worked with over a hundred companies, and learn about fascinating science and technology every day – my current obsession is the octonions, a bit of mathematics that may underpin all of physics.

And it leaves enough time to do the stuff that makes life worth living. For example, I'm a trained skydiver and SCUBA diver and took a year off some time back to do an MBA.

(I'm not a workaholic: I try to fit each day into two 3-hour "shifts", and usually finish by 6pm.) Not being a 'corporate' person is also what persuaded my wife I was worth a try – our wedding was at St Paul's Cathedral!

A traditional career path in a corporation? That's fine if it's what you want. But it's not for me.

What work are you most proud of?

Last year I published a textbook, "100 Days, 100 Grand". It's a workbook for effective freelancing, with actual tasks and checklists to complete each day. It's 1,200 full-colour pages and took far longer than expected – three years of evenings and weekends!

But it's come to define me: clients take you seriously when you can thump a 3 kilogram textbook on the table and say it's all your own work.

What piece of copy do you really wish you'd written?

Ayn Rand's [Atlas Shrugged](#). It's a novel, but far more importantly it's the sales copy for the personal philosophy I follow – [Objectivism](#). Rand wrote it to express her ideas about moral philosophy in an easy-to-read form.

Treating reality and reason as absolutes, and happiness as the successful state of living to aim for, has made me very satisfied with life – I'm probably the happiest person I know.

What do you do if you hit a bit of writer's block?

My go-to is my pullup bar. If you're sitting at your desk struggling for inspiration, do something – anything – different, even if it's just for a few minutes!

I qualified as a calisthenics and kettlebells coach a while back, purely out of self-interest: it's too easy to raid the fridge and stay seated too long when you work mostly from home.

It's a virtuous circle: keeping your body strong keeps your mind healthy, too. Paul Wade's "Convict Conditioning", the core text of progressive calisthenics, is probably the second most important book of all to me.

What are your favourite and least favourite writing-related tasks?

a. The start and b) the finish! I love the free-association of ideas at the start of a project, getting my thoughts down on sheets of A3 paper with Sharpies.

And at the end of a project, I really like the finessing of organising and improving, cutting and pasting, trying to make each piece the best I can. It's the middle part I find trying – turning those first ideas into workable content.

Any copywriting pet hates?

Recruiters! If you're "visible" you get calls constantly, without any regard for whether you're suitable, available, or interested. To paraphrase Star Wars, you will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy.

If you're a copywriter, whether employed or self-employed, avoid recruiters at all costs.

What's the best piece of career advice you've been given?

From my old Creative Director, telling me to accept a high-paying job I'd been offered outside the creative department. Because I got sacked from that job in six months, which freed me to do what I'd always really wanted – freelancing!

I'm grateful, though, that before my freelance life I had a solid decade in big companies; it was my training ground.

What advice would you give to people starting out on a copywriting career?

It's in another little book I wrote, "How to do Freelancing": go niche and narrow. The more audience you try to gather in, the more will slip through your fingers.

Make 4 lists – what you really love, what you do best, what the market needs, and what customers will pay for. Then – this is best done on big sheets of paper, with coloured pens – look "across" those lists and see where they connect.

When you know how your unique skills can best add value to a real-world client – “I achieve outcome X for customer Y by doing Z” – you’ve found your offer to the market, and that’s what you should pursue. Know your niche, because that’s what will make you more than a copywriter: it’ll make you an expert.

Why do you find ProCopywriters membership useful?

I’m in contact with many other copywriters and found many of them in your directory. It’s a great, positive community of skilled and resourceful people. It’s the first place I’d look if I needed to buddy up on a project.

Where can people find out more about you?

My website is at chrisdoescontent.com, and the book site for 100 Days, 100 Grand is at 100days100grand.com.

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