



# Dream of Travel Writing

## The Secrets of Six-Figure Travel Writers

This week we're going to look at topic that I recently gave a talk about in DC as part of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs conference in collaboration with Hosteling International. And, it is related to my book "The Six Figure Travel Writing Roadmap" but also to a lot of conversations I have had with folks for years and years about travel writing and what makes people able to do this as a full-time job.

When people started asking me to coach them as travel writers, I wasn't sure about it at first. I had a lot of friends I had given advice to over the years and I didn't see that advice working out for them. It wasn't necessarily that they tried my advice and it didn't work, it was often because they didn't try it. So I wanted to go around and talk with some travel writers who were making it, as well as those who weren't doing what they had set out to do, seeing really what works and what separated these two groups of people: the people who called themselves travel writers or travel bloggers but actually made their income another way and the people for whom being a travel writer is just their job.

Today we're going to look at three different things. First of all, we'll look at some real hard numbers on freelance writing and of course travel writing specifically. I think there is a lot of this mentality that with people who have a full-time job who think "Oh you could just never earn a full-time living doing that." or "I could never replace my salary." And then you meet some people who have been doing it for a really long time and it's hard to imagine if you feel you've been trying everything you could, but there's a lot out there. So we're going to look at some numbers.

Then we're going to look at the five things I found to be the most valuable or important or defining traits of high-end travel writers. And we're going to look at some ways we can go off today, this evening or this week or this month and start to replicate those same habits so you can have that same success.

Before we start talking about this, I want to define success in a way that's not just the financial form. I want to talk about what it means to be a sustainable travel writer. To have a sustainable travel writing career. Because you know, I think that a lot of people turn to this job, with the idea of traveling the world full-time, being a nomadic writer, to get away from burn-out in other types of jobs, but this is also a job you can burn-out in. And so when I talk about being a high income travel writer, I want to really couch that. I'm not necessarily saying that you need to be working 16 hour days, every day to earn this money.



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Now I spend most of my time working on this business, but when I was a writer, for 5, 6, 7 years, I was actually working part time pretty much that entire time. So, to me, the idea of a travel writer's day on the road is of course different than when you're at home. You're not in your own time-zone, so you don't wake up to do what you do now. You maybe work on the computer from 10am until lunch and then you go out and explore the city that you're in and then you come back and you work a couple more hours and then you go out for dinner again. That is the schedule I worked for a very long time. And part of the reason that it works, part of the reason you can be a high-earning freelance writer and the reason that you can be a high-end travel writer that works a few hours is that... I'm sure you've all seen the studies about how few hours the the typical 9-5 worker actually works. Usually less than 20 hours of the 40 hour work week that they actually "work". And so the thing about it is, when you do it right, I don't want to say right... when you set up your freelance writing practice in an ideal way, you're able to work. You're be able to spend those 17.5 hours that you actually are working, working. And then doing other things like traveling the rest of the time. And I know for a lot of folks I know I have had health issues and a lot of other people do as well. This is actually really brilliant. Because once you really figure out the right balance for yourself, in terms of the amount of time you need to spend working on other tasks and you get to the point where you're writing very quickly, then this can really be a great type of part-time job as well. So, let's look at some numbers.

Alright, so there's a couple surveys that I drew these numbers from. This first one, is from Contently.com, which we've talked about on other webinars. It is a website that works as a third party between companies and writers to coordinate content marketing engagements. And, I don't want to talk too much about them as a company, but they have two fantastic blogs that are, I think, really game changers (and I don't use that word a lot). And if you are looking for information about how to be a freelancer, or more about what that lifestyle is like, I would really recommend their blog, The Freelancer.

The blog has a lot of people's first-hand stories and tips for writers working in all types of different work, but they do have travel writing. and I think the reason this is really useful, is because they have so many different types of writers contributing, as opposed to a single person blog where they are a business writer or a ghost writer. You get a lot of different perspectives and great tips. And so on The Freelancer, they have been putting out this survey for a couple years where they try to get, (as much as possible, because there is no single association that every single independent writer belongs to), a bird's eye view of the industry.



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I was really heartened to see that in their last survey, the 2016 year-end survey, they found that 8% of respondents were earning over six figures and the thing I found particularly fantastic about this was they didn't separate out people who were full-time writers versus people who were only part-time writers. So of course, I know I was just saying you can earn a really great income working part-time, but I've noticed (and I'll talk about this in the next point), is that the people who are doing it part time on top of another job don't have the same income goals. So a full 41% of the people in that survey did work part-time.

If you look at the overall breakdown of incomes, there's 41% of people who work part time. If you were to take them out, then the 8% of people who are earning six figures are a much larger chunk of the people who are working full-time. And as I said, they have writers of all different stripes. Financial and healthcare, and different things. But I think that that's really encouraging.

I remember, before my book came out, I was sitting with a someone who's been in the industry a really long time, he's been an editor of National Geographic, and we were passing around options for my book cover and he said, "Six-Figure Travel Writing? That's ballsy." He didn't say it was impossible, he just said it's ballsy. And now I find "six-figure travel writing" as a concept coming up on blogs all over the place. So, not only is it possible, people are doing it. And if you read the newsletter or the blog post about about the webinar this week I actually had someone thank me. I was doing a talk in another city and I sent out the invites and this woman said, "I'm already a six-figure travel writer, but I'm super curious to hear what you have to say." These people are out there and it is possible. I would love for all of us to have more role-models in this way. So I look forward to bringing more of their stories to you.

I just want to start with this: it's increasingly common for people to earn six-figures as a freelance writer. Now here's the crazy number. So ConvertKit, which is a company that does email marketing, so they work on newsletters and things like that. They put together a survey this year of bloggers. I know sometimes we talk about doing content marketing and blogging for companies and writing for magazines because we have the Travel Writing Database, but some of you have your own blogs and that's your main thing and when you write for magazines that's sort of an additional income stream on top of your blog.

I was completely blown away to see in the survey, the average profit (not income or salary) for professional bloggers was \$138,000. So that's profit. After



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expenses, guys. So when I say this is possible, and I show you the secrets of the six-figure travel writer, I really want to make it clear, it is not an unattainable goal or something that's one in a million. You really just have to follow the steps and do the work and you can get there as well.

I have a couple different things on the blog and in the book. It's the same breakdown. Ways of looking at how exactly as a travel writer, you can make six

figures. So, I just want to go over those quickly to show that you can either do it with a lot of little things or a couple large things and hit that six-figure number. So, if you breakdown \$100,000 over the 12 months per year, you end up with \$8333.33. I rounded that off to \$8500 per month and I put together these three breakdowns, depending on what is important to you, of how to earn six figures as a freelance travel writer. Again, depending on what's important to you because that sustainability element is really important.

I'm not going to talk about it when I go to the five things that define freelance travel writers as successful. But having the motivation to keep at it is the single biggest thing that separates people who are making any kind of success or very high income success from those people who are not reaching their goals. So making sure that you're doing work that's a fit for you as a person, interests, geographically, topically, sure, but the type of work you want to be doing is very, very important. So, this first one I have up here is "Travel Writers Who Value Freedom."

These are people who are perhaps nomadic or you have your own blog and you want to work where you don't have a lot of email back and forth with the client or the editor. You are really, essentially doing it like a project where you're managing the whole process and then you just deliver something. You can do that with just one copy writing gig per month where you're doing things for a website, and either you're doing a very, very large website writing project, where you're doing it over the course of several months and it's broken out or you can do one different project each month.

I've had people come to me for something that was going to be a one month project for \$6500. That came to me out of the blue, just came to me through my website. Those are totally out there. Copywriting is one of the higher paying types of travel writing in terms of base rate. You can certainly get more writing for magazines, but the base rates for copy writing are quite high. Then I



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recommend complementing that with where you are writing blog posts for a company or a tourism board or something like that. Perhaps doing the content management so you're doing editorial strategy for a couple different clients.

Here I have three clients at \$1500. And I've planned conservatively on these numbers and these breakdowns are conservative because you can certainly get more for any of these types of work. And you can certainly get less. The thing that we have talked about in the previous webinar on pricing is that, if you're new, not to travel per se, but to writing and you really need to hone your skills. It's perfectly okay to take on lower rates. Don't ever listen to people who say you should never get paid \$25 for a blog post or consulting. If you're new and you need that level of mentorship from the editor, start low until you get confidence and clips. So the numbers in here are all conservative, they are a snapshot of what can be earned.

For travel writers who really want to write for magazines, how do we reach six-figures? I have had a lot of people who do focus on magazines telling me that they think either that it's impossible or they've been doing this for 25 years and they are earning less than before. And that's certainly true, that magazines are paying less, or that rates just aren't going up. I haven't necessarily had any magazines lower the

rates, but they don't raise them very quickly. I guess I have had people say, "Hey, we're just going to bump you up x cents."

If you want to earn all of your income writing for magazines, then you really care about the bylines, having your name on everything. This is really a good strategy for book authors or teachers or career journalists from another field who are switching into travel writing. I've certainly seen people come from other types of writing and get very high income assignments very quickly.

Here's another area where the numbers are pretty conservative. I put in here a feature article for a magazine for \$3000. The thing about magazines is that they do pay \$1.00 per word and they do pay more than \$1.00 per word. I'm not saying we're all going to run out and get these tomorrow, but I'm saying if you have a future assignment for Conde Nast Traveler, you are going to get a large chunk of change for this. So I have in here, to have one of these. In reality it's not necessarily that you're going to have one feature article every single month. Something that we didn't look at there is this idea of feast or famine.



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I know this comes up a lot... some months you have tons of work and other months you don't have very much at all and we're going to look at how to even it out. You've got to keep in mind that this is an idealized breakdown of things that occur at these rates, but you're certainly not going to be able to line up exactly one or two of these things every month, unless it's a recurring contract. So, to go back to these breakdowns. When you are trying to write primarily for magazines, you probably won't get a big, juicy feature every month, but there are also departments.

Departments are also called columns and these are the things that happen in either the back or the front of the book. Before you get to the features and after the short, newsy sort of things that are around 200 words. There are these really nice sections that are getting longer and longer. I've seen them go up 200 words, I've even seen a couple that are 2000 words and these are often \$1.00 per word. And this was actually one of the first glossy magazine items I got myself, was for a niche, for a small publishing house for right around 1000 words, so about \$1000. And then \$1000 for the photos. You can certainly get these as a new writer and then once you have been at it for a while, you have relationships with editors, you can often get the same department in the same magazine, which is how it becomes easier to project if you're going to be able to check each of these boxes every month.

Like I was saying, there's a lot of these shorter pieces. What's nice about these shorter pieces, is that once you have a relationship with an editor, it's really easy to say, "I just got back from blah and I found this great museum that's opening around this really famous artist that nobody knows was there." And to get these short, front-of-book things be pitches that only took you one sentence to write to editors you already know.

Now the other one that I have in here, that I jumped over for a second, is newspaper article or travel essay for a mainstream publication online. So, again with these, the rates really vary. But what I really want you to know that every time you take a trip, maximize it as much as possible. The people who are really successful are not just going on a trip and writing for their blog or other websites one big feature about it.

In fact, I spoke to somebody in London who told me he takes the trip notes home and tries to write up to 12 different assignments from the same trip. Right away. And he aims to write about every place he travels at least three times. And I think



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that it's a good way to look at it and when we do our workshops we really try to look at breaking out not just 5 or 10, but like 50 – 100 ideas from each trip. Because when you're starting all those out as pitches, if you're getting a 25% acceptance rate, which is pretty middle of the road for people who haven't spent a lot of time polishing their pitches, but they've been at it for a while, they have a great number of assignments from that trip.

Let's look at the last type of motivation: Travel Writers Who Value Free Trips. So, I have this thing here because it's kind of a Catch-22. A lot of people think, when they start out as travel writers, that the travel is its own reward. And I don't just mean the travel writer's themselves, but I also mean the people inviting you on a trip. As I'm sure we've all been told about those sort of trips. I want to note here that you can maximize your travel to be free without just relying on press trips and still make a good amount of money. And the way to do this and a lot of times this goes to what we talked about in the last few weeks, which is content marketing, and you can do a neat little angle on this.

You can go to a tourism board or tour company and say, "Hey. For two or three weeks I'm going to go around and do all this stuff and then I'm going to give you blog posts for a year and social media and this, that and the other thing." And that's what I've got here at the top. You can do this as a project based rate and then break up the payments over a couple of months and that's the kind of thing that is really easy for you to schedule what kind of income you'll have coming in. And then what you do is once you have that anchor, that thing that you know is going to have income and that is going to have you traveling to an interesting place, then you can take that and break that out into places that you're pitching features that you can write on your own very easily, for niche or regional magazines, or things that you're writing essays for websites, if you're somebody who really wants to be working in essays.

With anything, I think we often forget that when we go on these trips, this editorial distinction needs to happen. So, I've had people ask me, "Oh, I was on this trip and this person asked me to do their blog. What should I say?" So if you've gone on a trip or a press-trip or a visit of some sort that was supposed to be editorial and then you're asked to do work for that place, cover that place for money. Do make sure that it's in that order, that it was an editorial trip and then the request. Do make sure that your editorial is completed before you begin doing any paid work. And not just that you've written it, but that it has been published. Do make sure if you're pursuing this path, that's what you do.



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Alright, so let's look at these five factors. What separates the really successful high-end travel writers from everybody else. So, the first one, I touched on a little bit earlier when we were looking at the income breakdowns. And this is that they have recurring income.

And you know, I get a lot of people, especially who focus on journalism, saying oh how do I do that? Or sometimes the editor doesn't need anything from me. Oh, does that mean I should teach? And there's really a lot of fish in the sea both in terms of publications and in terms of things you can write about. And as I was saying if we just hit the 300 magazine in the database, that's just a drop in the bucket! And when I think about the fact that I have a list of 2000 magazines or something like that, that we compiled in the six-figure travel writing book and that we use as a free- giveaway. And I'm always finding more. It really just boggles my mind how many publications are out there. Print publications, forget web publications, that are every single month! Having to fill their pages with content. And then you look at web publications, right. Then there's the web publications associated with print publications. For example, Men's Journal runs 8 to 12 things on it's website every day that are travel related. So there's a lot out there and we'll get into that more in a second.

The second thing is about the numbers. And not just what I was talking about earlier in terms of what numbers are possible, but keeping an eye on yours and I'd love to see a digital show of hands over here. How many of you have an income goal that you track and make sure that you are actually meeting it every month? And if you're not meeting it, trying to do something about it? Let me know right here in the question box before I go into that bullet point further down.

And then the other thing that I see is not just people pitching more, in terms of more often, but taking the time to work on their pitching wording. Whether it's doing some sort of education program or coming to one of our retreats. Or, I didn't see any sessions on this round of the association programs conference, but there's definitely other things out there that are general freelancing things. But people who have a high income aren't just pitching more, they're not just writing more emails. They're making sure that those emails are effective. And that's going back to the point that I had about tracking.

The next thing that I really found is that they're fearless. Not necessarily in terms of reality, but at least in terms of getting things done. And this is related to pitching. I mean if you're going to pitch more even if you haven't heard back





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from any editors at all, then you've got to have some chutzpah. But I think part of this is just being calm with that fact that this is how it is. That you don't hear back. And moving forward. And we'll get more into that in a second.

The last point that I've seen is really always learning. And so I've mentioned this lovely lady I had written to in Boulder and how she was like, "Yes, I already make six-figures, but I'd love to hear what you have to say." That mentality of constant improvement is another thing that is very particular to all the high-end travel writers I've spoken to. So, let's go into these in some more detail.

What kind of recurring gigs can you set up? So I would love, to have you share in the chat box, what kind of recurring gigs people have. Let me know. There might be some ways that I haven't even thought of that other people might like to know about. While you guys answer, I'm just going to look at some of the questions here.

Yes, the breakdowns that I provided earlier were per month. And we're going to go over analytics and how to analyze your marketing efforts in a minute.

Okay, so for recurring gigs... we talked over the last month about how to do this with travel content marketing. And one of the things that's nice about that is that when you are reaching out to companies and making your own contracts, you're setting the payment terms. You're telling them that you need to be paid on the first of the

month, before your work has been completed. And they say okay. I've actually never, ever had someone tell me 'no' for that. That's not a point in negotiations that comes up. It's very normal for writers who are doing big projects like copy writing or columns to be paid up front. And so, companies don't really have a problem if having that base in order to pay your bills. If you're not nomadic or you live in the US or Europe in an expensive country and you have rent that is not negligible, that needs to be paid, this bedrock of recurring gigs are very important. And I find that the content marketing stuff like I said is really great because you know you're going to be paid up front.

But what if you've chosen magazines? So this came up when we were doing our talk in DC, that what do you do when the magazine pays on publication? This is somebody who is newer to travel writing who asked this question. And in case



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there's some folks on the call who don't know the difference, there's basically two types of pay when you're writing for magazines: there's pay on acceptance, and pay on publication. What that means, is if you are paid on acceptance, it means the editor gets your article and they give you some edits, you do some edits and they decide it's done, that means it's accepted. At that point, you send them an invoice. And then you get paid some time after, depending on your invoice, sometimes 30 days, sometimes 60 days, sometimes 15 days. It depends on the publication.

And paid on publications means you are paid that single number of days from when the article is printed. And so, another small aside about publication timetables... even if you're working with a very fast trade magazine, articles are accepted no less than one month before they are going to go to print. In extreme, extreme circumstances, maybe two weeks. So that's the minimum. Sometimes they're accepted 6 to 9 months, I've even heard 18 months before they're published. Getting paid for publication is a crappy, crappy, crappy thing that you don't even want to have happen.

What I advised the person in DC was either just don't work with magazines that pay on publication or put it in the 'slush' category of income. So when I say the 'Slush Category' of income, when you figure out what you need to earn, 50 % or 60% to keep you happy and then there's another 20-30% that you think is probably going to come in that month. So that means, you know, maybe there's an editor that you work with often and you think you'll probably get this assignment from them in this time period and you know they pay on acceptance in 30 days. So you can put in your little spreadsheet (and we'll talk about that in a minute) that you will receive \$850 for that article in this timeframe. And then the 'slush' part, this little part on top, 10-30% depending upon your comfort are the sort of things that you just don't know. That's where you stick those things that you don't know when it's going to go to print. Now, the reason that I say this and that I harp a little bit about paid on publication is that there are a lot of magazine with splashy ads that only pay on publication and will push the article out. And when I say they will push your article out, I'm talking perhaps in the timeframe of years here. Okay? I just recommend as a policy that you do not spend a lot of time when you don't have your base income needs met, warring with a publications. For this reason.

You need to know where that money is coming from to have a sustainable income in terms of emotional sustainability, like not fighting with your spouse



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about where the money is coming from, also not stressing out, being able to sleep, being healthy.

Having appropriate stress levels. So, the point of recurring gigs is to allow you the mental freedom to be able to work on bigger and better things. And we're going to talk more maybe next month about being productive and balancing your income in these different ways. So, that's a little bit about magazines.

But, in terms of recurring gigs you can get... online has opened up so many types of great recurring travel writing opportunities. And I think we go on websites and blogs and of course I send out a list of travel writing jobs in my weekly newsletter. And you know the rates of what you can see online are pretty dismal. But I'm often surprised. I want to let you know that if you're not ready to be cold pitching companies about doing their blogs or maybe you don't want to be doing that type of work. You really can still go online and find some decent things.

I mentioned in the newsletter this week that I had one of these companies, like Contently, (it's like a third party content intermediary) come to me with almost \$1.00 per word for some really easy writing for a company. So these things certainly exist. And so do the ones in terms of the particular opportunities online that I recommend to know that you're going to have some recurring income.

Some of the ones that are good are... ghostwriting is a really good one. Ghostwriting is when you don't get a byline (because you don't really care about the byline on some of these pieces) to write something for a company or an individual. And there's a some sort of sneaky ways that people don't really know that ghostwriting exists. So there's a lot of trade magazines, and in travel there are a lot of different trade magazines. Trade magazines for travel agents, there's trade magazines for people who work in all sorts of areas of hospitality, for aviation. These have columns in the front of the magazine that are theoretically written by some big-wig in the industry. And sometimes that person has to write that every couple months, sometimes a different contributor every month. And it might shock you that this is not written by those people, often, but that some writer somewhere is getting paid to ghostwrite that column to make that person look good. So there's some surprising opportunities to ghostwrite things regularly that also allow you to learn about the space.

Another one that I wanted to touch on was hotel reviewing. This is an interesting one. There's a lot of different websites, and I know of course Forbes has a really



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well-known guide, it's kind of like a Michelin guide for hotels. There's a lot of really well established in the business travel community. Websites that focus on hotel reviews and have just a huge database, like we have for magazine database, with reviews that need to be updated every year. It's like a guidebook in that way. And so what happens is if you work for these companies, you get a pool of hotels that you are charged with. You'll get a whole country basically. So you get the country of France and you have 87 hotels that you need to go and check on them all. And so what that means is that the time you'll be spending, or rather the nights, you'll be sleeping in these hotels. And the bill, getting there and the stay, is footed by this company that's paying you to do these hotel reviews. You also get paid for the hotel reviews. So that is sort of your anchor to get you to this place and then if you can also find some other stories and sell them as well. And I know some people who are very well-established now that this was the linchpin of their travel writing when they started out. So if you have any other questions about recurring gigs, drop them in the sidebar.

What is your income goal? And we can say, "I want to earn enough to quit my job." "I want to earn enough that I can hire an assistant." "I want to earn enough that I can get a babysitter so that I have more time to work and can be less stressed out when I'm with my kids." And it's different for everybody, that magic number that you need. The topic of this talk is 'six-figures' and people are like \$100,000 is a nice round number, but as I've shown you, when you break it down per month it's \$8,333. It's not such a round number. People often like to choose numbers that make sense to them on a monthly level or a yearly level. For instance, \$60,000, which breaks down into \$5,000 per month. That's a nice round number. Figure out what the number is for you and here's the real trick. That's just setting the goal. Making sure that you reach it is what keeps it from looking too big. So say you have only, in the previous year, let's create a scenario here...

Let's say you quit your job or your industry was downsized, so you decide you know what, I really like travel. I'm going to sell all my stuff. And I am going to be nomadic and I'm going to choose some countries and I'm going to make a go of this. And your first year, through a lot of different writing gigs and picking up what you could, you manage to get into the high teens or low \$20,000s. This is very common. If you're really starting out from zero knowledge. But then the next year, you're like if that was what I made this year, what can I make next year? Can I only say that I'm going to make \$30,000? I don't like that number, it doesn't sound like a good goal. You can completely say that you're going to jump from \$18000 to \$40000/\$45000/\$48000 and here's why: Now that you have that expertise, you set your monthly number. Let's say \$4000. How does that break



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down? There's 20 work days in the month, so every day you need to be earning \$200.

What that means is that in your calendar, you have that written every day. Did I earn \$200 today? And at first that looks a little scary. \$200, that's like a \$25 blog post or this feature article, but I know this feature is going to take me a while. So at first that number just sits in your calendar and at 7pm or whatever time you finish working, you have this little pop-up: "Did you earn \$200 today?" And I used to do this when I first started freelance writing. When I lived in California, before we moved to New York. I had a little thermometer. One of those little ones that they have at fundraisers and they fill it up every time they reach another level. SO I would sit there everyday and I would cross off a certain part of my thermometer and I would shade it in and this is for this blog post, this is for this blog post... and I found that over time I had to change the scale of my thermometer.

What happens is that every day you look at that bottom line and say, I didn't earn any money today. So for tomorrow, what am I going to do to make sure I earn this money. You have that reminder that pushes you to hustle, that pushes you to complete an assignment. Rather than sitting there, thinking about how you're going to work on the structure of the future. So complete that writing and get it out the door so you can start pitching something else. Over time, those reminders not only stop being necessary, but you find that you're not just trying to meet that \$200 per day, you're starting to say, "Okay, if I have to earn \$1000 this week, what does that mean? That means I have to write one department. "Oh, but I already did that and it's only Tuesday, so what can I do next to be earning \$2000 this week."

Your scale starts to change over time. So, somebody had a question earlier about analytics and marketing efforts. There's the very sort of nitty-gritty, factual tracking of the 'did I earn my \$200?' or not, and why? You know if checking everyday is a little stressful for you, the first step here is to make a reminder on the 15th of the month. On the fifteenth are you on track to meet what you need, in terms of getting assignments coming in or turned in to meet you monthly income goal? And at the beginning of the year it's going to be stressful and it's going to be hard and you're not going to do it. But having that reminder on the 15th, "Am I ready to meet this goal?" That makes you say, "Nope. Let me spend the next two days pitching."



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How do we spend the right marketing efforts for us. How do we track and find out over time, you know, after our check on the 15th. Whether the marketing that you're doing is bringing you the right results, for the least work? And this is really the important thing here. We don't want to just be pitching more. We want to be pitching better. What that means is we want to be spending the least time on the pitches that have the most results. So, in terms of magazines, what does that mean? In terms of magazines, it means that you want to build a relationship with an editor so that you don't need to spend as much time writing the pitch to that editor, but also that the editor will start finding you articles, rather than the other way around. And a lot of bigger magazines, and even smaller, a lot of things are decided in-house in an editorial meeting and then the editor takes those and asks the people he already knows if they want to write them. And that doesn't mean that you can't become one of those people. And you can quite quickly. And what that means when you are in with that editor, there's a lot less time you need to spend pitching because the ideas will come to you instead of vice versa.

That means you want to be sending new pitches to get in front of new editors so that you can build new relationships. Because you don't know which relationships will be better than the ones you already have. Because you don't know what the rates or pay terms are. You don't know if this magazine actually pays you 15 days after acceptance and then you write the article and have the check within 15 days. Those are my favorite type of magazines and I try to work only for those. But if you're unhappy with your income or the editors that you're working with, there's always somebody else and it's often not the flashy ones that are going to take care of you.

What if we're not looking at magazines, what if we're looking at blogs? How do we track those. So, if you are doing the type of travel marketing pitching that we have been talking about over the past weeks, it's pretty easy to track those efforts. You're finding people, you're writing cold pitches, they're replying to you. How many requests for phone calls did you get? A lot of people are tracking those and it's pretty easy to see. The thing is, what if you're just applying for things that are just online. How do you tweak them if they're not working? So here's what I recommend: if you are sending the same pitch, and this also applies to a magazine article that is not finding a home. But if you send out the same pitch 5-10 times and you get no responses at all. Then you need to go back and tweak it. And the same thing goes for different marketing efforts. So, if you are pitching. Say you went on a particular trip (I'll use a trip I took to Japan). Say you went on this trip to Japan and you did a lot of once-in-a-lifetime things, and you've been pitching it out and you've pitched 5 or 10 places and you've heard nothing back. Then you have to stop and say, "are these the right pitches



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for this magazine? Did I put enough time into seeing if they had covered Japan recently? Did I put enough time into seeing if the scope of the story was the right thing? I recommend 5 or 10 times if it's the same thing. So if you're pitching companies, or applying for jobs online or if you're pitching the same trip to a couple

different magazines, that's the point where you want to stop and ask yourself, "Is there something I can improve here?"

Now, if you're very diverse and you're pitching for magazines and you have your own blog and your pitching for sponsorship and you also blog for different companies, then you've got a lot of different things. And this is where I find that people become less diversified, often. If you aren't tracking your metrics, then you're going to keep doing these 3 or 4, 5, 7 different hats that you're wearing. But if you're looking at your metrics and saying, okay, I've been spending a lot of time pitching sponsorships for my blog because that's what I want to do, and I'm just not getting anywhere with those. That means it's time to scale back the time you're spending pitching that and just start pitching something more effective. Or, if you're in the position to, because if you have your own blog, that is your own business, you can also look at bringing on someone to help you with those things and give them a 50% cut of those sales.

*Question: Is there a spreadsheet or an app to track?*

*Answer: There was a really great app about pitching a few years ago that reminded you to follow up on your pitches. Which is, sadly, gone. I personally, with magazine pitches, and really with a lot of different pitches that I do, as soon as I send out a pitch, I go to my calendar and I mark when I'm going to follow up on that specific pitch on that day with whatever information it takes for me to remember it. And then that day, I'll circle back on that pitch and I'll set another reminder to follow up on that pitch again. What that means, is that as I go through the week and the month, I'm seeing how many I have to do multiple times. So, I don't have a big, master spreadsheet where I'm tracking exact percentages over time. I do have one I use for other types of pitching, but that's because for me, I see and get a feeling about it. I know people who have really elaborate spreadsheets, but the one thing that I would recommend is that*



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*whatever tracking mechanism you're doing, is accomplishing its job. So if you are spending a lot of time making this beautiful spreadsheet and really looking at the numbers, is that taking away from just re-sending a pitch or sending a new pitch? Make sure whatever type of tracking you're doing is effective but it allows you to get in and out and get the information you need. And I had Alicia let me know that she has designed a freelance planner with a pitch board page with follow up reminders. Which is so fantastic and obviously what we all need. So I just asked her to send me a link. And I'm going to share that with all of you in the chat box. So I'll push that out in a second when I get that from her. So if you have any other questions about setting goals or tracking and assessing them, drop them in the chatbox.*

We're going to move on to pitching.

Pitching more and pitching better, right? I'd love to hear from you guys, how often are you sending out new pitches. Of any kind, whether it's for magazines or content marketing or to do a guest blog post... whatever it is that you personally are into pitching.

Now, for travel writers, they pitch often. They pitch more than most people. When I say more, I mean a factor of 5 or 10. And the thing that I find is not just that they pitch more, but like I said, they are pitching in a more effective way, but more often. So they're not just sending a higher number of pitches. It's not like they sit down on the first of the month and send out 25 new pitches. Although, I've been known to do

that and I know a lot of other people who do as well. But, they typically have it scheduled, regularly in their calendar. And so, it's not uncommon for people to use Friday as their 'admin' day. When they do their invoicing and their pitching. I don't love the idea of having this admin day where you also do your invoicing and your pitching and different things. Because I find that pitching has a certain mentality and it really helps to just get into it and just do that.

What I recommend, no matter what day it is or what time, that you set aside some time on your calendar that is your time to think about new ideas and about new pitches, as a start. So, you know, writing pitches is a writing task and finding





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the fit is more of a brainstorming mental task. So if you are somebody who has a huge email file of ideas to pitch, don't worry about setting aside time for idea generation, set aside time that you're going to pull five things out of that file each week and write them up. So whichever is your roadblock: whether you are not pitching because you feel like you don't have any ideas then set aside time every week to go through trips, to go through the travel database or go through magazines and find what fits to help generate ideas based on what magazines are looking for.

And if you have a huge file of ideas, like I do, and you're still not pitching, but you're great at coming up with ideas but are not sitting down to write out the pitches and send them, then mark a time in your calendar, every week or even every day (a little bit over the course of the week) that you're going to spend pitching.

One tip here, pro-tip as they say, somebody in a private FB group had this really lovely thing that she mentioned the other day: On the topic of pitching better as well as more often. And what she was saying was that she was one of these 'idea file' people who wasn't getting her ideas out so what she did every day, during the course of the day, she was coming up with her pitch ideas and rather than write them up and store them in a folder, she wrote them on a post-it and stuck them on her desk and before the end of the day, she had to transform it into what I call P2 which is paragraph in your pitch that tells what your article is about and what format and how it fits the magazine that you're pitching. So this isn't the lead, and this isn't the about you paragraph. But she would make sure that while that idea was fresh, she would write the P2. And it had this wonderful result. Once the P2 was written, it would stick around in her head and then while she was in the shower or getting dressed, she might think of a great lead. So then she would write that lead. And then it was just about adding the 'about me' paragraph, which really didn't take that long. And so, she found that even though she was totally swamped with other work, she was able to get more pitches out and get some acceptances out from really great magazines. Just kind of forcing herself to take 5, 10, 15 minutes and then at the end of the day, close the loop and start the process on each of those pitches.

An interesting conundrum here, and I want to talk about this under pitching more and better, I often find that when I talk to travel writers who do make writing their full-time job, who don't necessarily have the income that they like or want, when I ask them why they're not pitching, (and I'm totally guilty of this), the answer is



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because they are too busy. How is that? How can you be too busy, but not earning enough money?

We talked at the very beginning of the webinar about how sustainable travel writing isn't about working a million hours per day. What happens is that you get in this, (I don't want to call it the hamster wheel), but you get in this thing where you have some work, you have some clients, you have some relationships with magazines and they give you a lot of work and the pay is good enough that it sustains you, but it's not necessarily the type of writing that you want to be doing or the outlets you want to be published in, or it's just too much work. And you don't want to be working so many hours. So the solution to all of these problems, even though it puts a little more on your plate in the short-term, is to pitch more.

It's to have that appointment every week where you have to pitch no matter what. And to quote another writer that I love, you don't have to take it. You can say no, I can't do it by that day, can I give it to you later. Just because you are spending time pitching when you have a lot on your plate, doesn't necessarily mean you're going to be adding to your plate now. What you're actually doing is giving yourself options for the future. To say 'no' to the work that is not as great and saying yes to the work that will grow your career and grow your income over time. So I know we've talked a lot about pitching in other webinars, but if you have questions about how to pitch more or better, drop those in the chatbox and we're going to go on.

How are these high-income travel writers so fearless. How do they send pitches in 15 minutes instead of 2 hours? How do they send 25 pitches each month? How do they write 10 pitches per day and send them out? So, I think, like I said in the beginning, when I started talking about these five points, there's this big idea that these people who do big things or who hustle or whatever are different somehow. And I want to use an anecdote about a friend who is very public about these things. So there's this really close friend of mine, Chris Dilabeaux? Who has pretty much built an empire in the last 5-7 years. And he has had numerous NY Times best selling books. And I think that at his last book tour, Warren Buffet was a special guest at one of his book stops. So, he's kind of a big deal. He has a daily podcast right now and he is totally scared of so many thing all the time. About failing his audience, about how he's doing in his friendships, so many things. But he does it anyway and in fact, he does it because he's scared. It's almost like he feels like, "If I'm afraid of this thing, or if I'm afraid people won't like it, I have to get more things out to get more feedback." So that's one way to stand up for yourself.



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If you're afraid of not hearing back, send more pitches. You're more likely to hear back. But there's three reasons in particular that people get stuck. That I don't see these high-end travel writers suffering from. So I want to go over those:

People are afraid of doing it right. When we were doing the DC event, we went over the three things that you need to do when you pitch. But I've already gone over it here: you need the lead where you grab the attention of the editor, that middle paragraph that tells them what you're going to write and why it's good for the publication and that third paragraph where you say why you're the right person to write this for this particular magazine and nothing else. So if you're afraid of pitching correctly, follow those steps and that's all you need to know. The thing is, we get caught up in this fear of doing it right because we think that we're not going to have more chances or we're going to burn ourselves with an editor or something like that. And there is a writer out of Boulder named Jane Moy and she shared all of her pitches from when she was sort of new with this whole conference. And they weren't the end of the world, but they weren't perfect. That's the type of thing you share at a workshop to show people how to finish. And now she's a freelance, frequent

contributor to Men's Journal and wins awards all the time. So nobody started out doing it quite right. A pitch that is sent out is 100% better than a pitch that is never sent out. So if you're afraid of doing it, you need to just do it anyway. I know that's no balm on your fears, but you have to just start doing it anyway.

There's some other things people are afraid of. So if you're afraid of the time, if pitching takes you 2 or 3 hours, how can you send more pitches? Start setting a timer. And make yourself get something done in that time. 10 minutes is a really good timer because if you have to do two 10 minutes you don't feel too bad and 10 minutes isn't too hard to just sprint and just focus on it and not get burnt out. So I recommend starting with a 10 minute timer. Anytime you're writing something that you feel scared about, a pitch or a feature assignment or you don't know how to write the lead, set a timer for 10 minutes and do it.

Now, the fear of rejection is different. So, the fear of rejection is not quite like fear of failure. When you're afraid of rejection as a writer, you're afraid of getting that email back that tells you 'no'. As in 'no' you're not a good writer, 'no' you're not a good person, 'no' we don't want to work with you. But that's not what those emails are saying. When somebody takes the time to write you back and say no, they're actually saying, you're not that bad. I know it seems kind of backwards,



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but I see this now being the editor of a website and having been an editor in the past. When someone responds to your email, they're opening a door. And sometimes bad things, crazy things can come through that door. Somebody might send a pitch and they seem totally sane and you say, "no, this doesn't really fit." And then some crazy person calls you every day, well, not every day, once a week for the next five years. To tell you about the same article that they pitched you and why you should accept it. This is a story I heard from an actual travel editor, I'm not making this up. So, when an editor writes back to you to say no in whatever way, shape or form, they're actually saying, "You can write me back. You can send me some more pitches." So don't be afraid of rejection because it's actually a great thing.

If you're afraid of doing it right? You've got to do it anyway.

If you're afraid of the time it might take, which is kind of a perfection thing, just set a timer for ten minutes and do your thing.

And if you're afraid of rejection, don't forget that it's actually a good thing.

Alright, we're getting close to our time, so I'm going to quickly cover this last point and then go through some ways you can incorporate them into your life. And if any of you need to go, thank you so much for joining us.

The last point: are you dedicating time to getting better? And you're here, so obviously you are. But the thing is that I have really seen this chasm between the people who just read the same travel blogs. They want to quit their jobs and become a travel writer but they've started a blog and now they just keep reading this same, small circle of travel blogs and they don't go read travel magazines. They don't go sit down and read all of the articles and essays that won the SATW travel writing awards. They don't dedicate themselves to learn, as if they were getting their own personal MFA in travel writing. And the people who really do make a stellar income and a successful and sustainable career, they don't say yes to every opportunity to learn, but they say yes to opportunities to learn that are going to give them even the smallest little thing to grow their income. And this is an interesting thing I have seen people will spend a really big chunk of change on a resource that a lot of it might be something they already know, because they know if they get one or two good tips from that, they'll get more articles and they know what it's worth to them. It's worth another \$2000 per month or something like that. So I really recommend that you look at investing your time and money



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specifically in learning how to be better. Whether that is as a writer, as somebody pitching, in your marketing writing. Whether that's in your pitching or for your own website. But this goes back to what we said in the third point, about analytics, if you are not achieving what you want to be achieving, there's a reason. And you need to figure out which, in the very many factors, is contributing to that. And the only way to do that is to learn what better looks like and then go back and apply it to the metrics you've been tracking to see where you can improve. On that note:

What can you do right now to replicate the success of these high-income travel writers? Alright, so if you do not already have a recurring writing gig, and I know I've heard from some people that they edit books or blogs and they're not really earning as much as they can, if you don't have a recurring writing gig of some kind that pays 50% of your goal income, make that your number one priority. But don't spend time pitching these beautiful essays that you would love to write for this amazing publication. That is less important than having something that pays your bills and allows you to travel. So that should be your number one priority. If you do not have something that is not filing at a legal office. If you do not have a travel writing thing that is at least 50% of your goal, 60-70 if you have kids, but at least 50% of your travel writing goal, make that your number one thing. And if you want to write for travel magazines, I recommend doing this by building relationships with editors. So pick the editors to pitch that you know you'll have a lot of ideas for, that they're in your geographic area or a niche that you know really well and focus on building relationships with those editors. So pitch them once, follow up with them, send them another pitch and follow up on that, and then I guarantee that by the third time, the editor will most certainly have gotten back to you in one way or another. And then you have that opportunity to say, I'm sorry it didn't work, what are you looking for? Is there some other geographic area you've been looking for a story for that you haven't done that I can help you out with?

Make sure you set an income goal, break it down by month and then break it down by day. And either, like I said stick it in your actual physical or virtual calendar as a little reminder at the end of the day, or just the 15th of the month, give yourself a little reminder about your goal. And if you're not going to reach it, drop what you're doing and do some marketing.

Now the third point, if you already have the travel magazine database, and I know some of you do. Use that. Use it specifically to come up with ideas first. Not to plug your ideas into. But just spend 5 minutes each day cruising some entries



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and see what ideas you can come up with based in what the magazines are looking for. Now if you don't have the travel magazine database, you can just do it with real travel magazines. You can go to Barnes and Noble or Borders or your local bookstore and just spend 15 minutes, an hour cruising through some magazines, brainstorming ideas based on the magazine. And then send those pitches. And if you're afraid of doing it right, do it anyway. If you're afraid of how long it will take, set a timer. If you're afraid of rejection, be super excited when you get that rejection and say, "Thanks for getting back to me. Here's another pitch."

And another thing you can put in your calendar and I like to do it in the morning, when I first wake up. Read about freelance writing as a business, or to read about writing. And read good writing. Whether you need to work more on your marketing or the business side of writing, choose one of those two things.

Thank you so much for joining us today! It was really a pleasure, as always, chatting with you guys. Feel free to email me any questions, at [questions@dreamoftravelwriting.com](mailto:questions@dreamoftravelwriting.com).