



# Dream of Travel Writing

## Annual Review Part 1: What is Standing Between You and Your Travel Writing Goals

This is week one of what's going to be a five-week series on running an annual review. That kind of, especially for those of us who might have a corporate or other sort of organizational background, that sounds like a scary, horrible thing where people judge you and tell you what you're not doing right and your income is based on what comes out of that process and it's basically horrible.

This is not what that is. The annual review that I'm going to kind of walk us through piece by piece in a non-scary way more or less over the next few weeks is really around taking stock of your business, of yourself, of your habits for your business, of the state of your clients. If they're really worth your time anymore, if they're worth you reaching out to get more work from them, and what goals you have for your own business and if you have been working on them in the past year or if you've gotten sidetracked. If you've gotten sidetracked, is it with something better or do you need to get back to where you wanted to be?

In the next couple webinars after this, we're going to have two more that are around looking backward. Today is kind of looking at yourself presently. Then we're going to have two calls around looking forward and making those plans for the year ahead.

I have a couple extra exercises on the Six-Figure Travel Writing Roadmap. For those of you who already have it, you may have already done them. The way that we're going to look at the planning and also the reviewing process for the past year is really around the idea of you checking in with yourself.

Does this feel good for my business right now? Does it feel good for my income? My pocketbook? My bank account right now? What about my family? Is this client so stressful that even though I get a great income from them it would be better for me to drop them because every time I get an email from them I yell at my spouse because I'm so stressed out about the email because this person is crazy.

Those are some of the kind of things that we're going to be looking at because what I've found for my own business, for other freelancers that I know, for other people who run small businesses that have gotten quite large over the years that do this process, first of all: it's important to go through the process. What do I mean by that?

With our coaching students we do a little, let's call it a diagnostic, but it's quite short. We do a form every week before our call where they tell me where they are right now and what's changed. It's really interesting because how much goes into that form in terms of how much



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they say, tells me a lot about where they are completely regardless of what goes on the page. There's the sort of non-verbal communications, right? But that process of them working on that intake form, questionnaire, whatever you want to call it, regardless of what they put there, forces them to think.

Sometimes people might not put too much in their form because they haven't gotten that much done in the last week or the last month. They don't feel good about it. So that comes out in a certain terseness on their form. The whole idea of asking yourself these questions and starting to do this review is not just to make the plans. It's not just to look at what clients you may need to drop or what types of clients you need to add in the year ahead, but also just to get yourself comfortable and in the habit of having these discussions with yourself about where you are.

That's a lot of what we're going to talk about this week. Kind of becoming aware, which is super coach-y language that I don't use often, but really getting an awareness of what is in front of you. With the blog post that I did that accompanied today's webinar I kind of made a big, really photogenic, but I made a big mountain image with it because these issues that I see get in people's way are their mountains. They are their Mount Everest.

The thing about Mount Everest is that not everybody survives the trek. Not everybody makes it to the top. A lot of that is preparation, some of it is luck, some of it is who you're with, but you're very unlikely to make it if you don't even know what mountain you're climbing; if you don't even have an iota of a plan or training or the right gear. So that's what we're going to really talk about today.

On that note, what are we talking about today? We are going to talk about why you got into this in the first place. Remember one of the things that I said, especially for those of you who have popped in a bit late, is that a lot of the reasons that you might run into issues is that, to extend the Everest analogy, you might have prepared to climb one mountain and now the circumstances have changed and you're in front of another one. Even if you are prepared for it or not, you might just not be motivated enough to make that trek.

We're going to look at why you're doing this and if that reason has become misaligned with your day-to-day actions. That in and of itself is something to take a look at. Also whether or not what you're working on now really is the right thing in the long term. It might be. I have a lot of people who come to me saying vehemently that they want to do one things, whether that's they want to work with magazines or they want to do content marketing or they want to



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just want for websites or they want to just write for blogs that they run, that they make money off of for themselves, completely controlling the income.

Then after looking at what the work is really like or the pros and cons of that type of work, they find that it's really not for them and they try a couple other different things. Then they find something that fits them really well. Sometimes it happens in that way.

Other times people are trying too many different things and then they get stuck in the one where they're having success, but it's not necessarily what they actually want to be doing. They go down that path for a couple years, then they find that they feel just like they felt just like the felt before they left their jobs to freelance in the first place. We're going to look at a couple different situations like that that may apply to some of you.

In doing that, I have a list of some questions for you to ask yourself and I'll kind of say them and I'll explain them a little bit, but don't feel compelled to share your answers, because they are, like I said, hard questions that you need to ask yourself. Even though everybody here is supportive and respectful of where other people are on their path, as should be case for all of our live events, you don't have any obligation to shout out your answers here.

Then we're going to look at seven different quite specific things that may be happening one or more to each of you at this moment. There are things that you will encounter at different moments. One of the things about this whole process of putting together an annual review that I really want, and annual review and also a plan for the year ahead, that I really want to hone in on is that you never know what is coming.

For good or for bad, you don't know if there's going to be some sort of catastrophic illness or injury in your future, but you also don't know if your dream client is going to come along out of nowhere and make you dump all of the plans that you have to pitch different markets going forward. If there's one thing that I've learned doing this full-time ore eight years now and part-time for many years before that, is that that is a virtue, not knowing. The real virtue is being prepared for not knowing and that you will figure it out when it comes.

I know that sounds a bit woo-woo, but I've been talking to somebody that has a lot on her plate right now that I couch, and this is kind of the freeing thing, to just know that no matter how much you plan, you don't know what's going to happen.



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Then why do we bother planning, right? The thing about the annual reviews and the goals that you set for the next year is that—there’s this analogy that I love to use because it’s travel related—a ship that sets sail for no destination is just going to end up at sea.

In reality that doesn’t make sense because the boat can actually end up somewhere, but I like the metaphoric nature of it. The thing about that is that if you really, really aren’t pursuing what you want to work on, it’s quite unlikely you will get there. It’s quite likely you’ll get somewhere else. In fact, the chances are much higher that you’ll get somewhere else than where you wanted because there’s only one of that place and many other options. So it’s much better to at least set out towards what you want, which requires knowing what you want, in that direction and then understand that other things might happen that are more attractive.

At least if you know where you want to go you can examine these other opportunities through that lens and make sure that you don’t just say yes to things that come across your plate and then find yourself three, four, two, years, even six months down the line somewhere where you may be freelancing, you may be full-time or you may be part-time at a full-time job doing something else and your future doesn’t look like you thought it was going to look like. That’s something we really want to avoid.

In terms of this annual review process that we’re talking about today, this is something that I have done on and off for the various years that I’ve been freelancing. I can definitely tell you that the years that I have done it have been the years where I feel like I’ve kind of made something of myself that year or I get to the end of the year and I look back and I’m like, “Wow! Where I am now is so different than where I was last year.” I love that. It’s so different in a great way.

I’ve talked a couple times on the blog or in webinars or in courses about how one year I had a really bad cycling accident and a concussion and I had really deep, like a centimeter deep hole in one of my hands so I couldn’t work for a few months and basically lost all my clients. That was one of these years where I sat down and I was ruthless about having a plan, both for getting back on my feet after that, but also for the year ahead. That was definitely the single time when my business grew the most as a result of that planning process.

We’re going to look at that, not in the next two weeks, but in the weeks following that. Part of that process and part of what makes it resilient is that we don’t necessarily sit down and block things out on paper that this day I’m going to do this or by this month I need to do this



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many things. It's more about having some guiding principals and some practices that you're going to put in place to make those things happen.

Something I've put on here that I don't often mention is that before I started freelancing I actually quit my job to freelance twice. One time it didn't stick and then one time it did. Go ahead and drop in the chat box if this is something that's happened to you, but I know I'm not the only one out there who has quit their job on more than one occasion to freelance.

I know other writers who have been freelancing with a very obvious level of success for some time and then gone back in house with a magazine and then left to freelance again. It can happen for various reasons. In my case, I did what I think is kind of these days more common to do straight out of college: I quit a job that I had with some saving banked up—this is kind of something that people used to do just a couple years out of college but now tends to happen a little later or you just go from college and make it happen.

I had quit a job with some savings banked up and I was going to Bali. This was around when Eat, Pray, Love came out, so it was not so much of a thing at the time, but I was going to Bali because it's Bali, but also because there was a writing festival going on there and I was going to take a prestigious workshop on travel writing and a prestigious workshop on narrative arc, which is actually what we looked at a couple weeks back, then I was going to start my career as a freelancer.

I had been studying all the freelance blogs that existed at the time, which were not very many, quite honestly. I knew them all back to front, I had them all printed out, I would read them all on the subway on the way home – this was before smartphones. I was totally ready. Then I got offered a job that was really attractive that was with a prestigious, big-name university. They had created just for me to do what I wanted and I wasn't quite sick enough of having a boss at the time that that didn't seem attractive.

I just got an email from somebody else the other day about this. Sometimes when you look at all of the work that freelancing entails, that running your own business entails and the strain that that can put on your relationships and your health and different things like that, it doesn't make sense for you at this moment to take that leap into freelancing. That's one of the things we're going to talk about when we talk about 7 things that can be holding you back right now.



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Let's get into it. For those of you who joined us a bit late—I've seen the number of people on the call kind of fluctuate—I just wanted to reiterate: part of the reason we're doing this annual review process and why we're doing it over so many weeks is that it really is a process. It's not something that you should just sit down in one hour and bang this all out.

The person whose annual review process I kind of model on and look to for a lot of business—advice isn't quite the thing—but I look at how he's built his business over the years is Chris Guillebeau. He's a great example if you really want to dive into this annual review process. He's made his own personal annual reviews, which are quite lengthy, available online for at least as long as I've known him, so probably seven years or so. As long as he's had his blog, I think. That's a really great source. His name is very oddly spelled, so before you ask me, I'm going to write it here in the chat box. Chris Guillebeau and *The Art of Nonconformity*, which is hard to type.

He's got his annual reviews going back many years. He's a good resource for looking at how things can change over the years, not just in terms of your business, in terms of your business growing, but he's had a lot of up and downs as well. This is a public bit of information, but his brother committed suicide a few years ago and that caused him to really take a look at a lot of things. He's had book tours that have been really successful, but there are also a lot of things that have taken a toll on his health.

He's a great – besides doing this process and doing it publicly – he's kind of this backlog on information and how somebody who can have a very successful business can go through those things. If you've had things like that going on with you, and we'll get to some of these things that can hold you back, he's a great place to look at how at least one person has dealt with that and dealt with it publicly and continued to grow his business space while that is happening.

Adrienne has put in the chat box to the answer to the question here on the slide, which I've been talking over for a minute. One of the things in terms of this annual review process is making sure ruthlessly that everything that you do is tied to your goals. This is one of the things, this is why I started talking about Chris, that Chris has really excelled at over the years. Particularly with this course correcting.

One of the reasons I want to have us start with talking about this annual review process with what brought you to travel writing in the first place is that one of the first clicks for people that makes them start scribbling in their notebook when I do these kind of workshops about setting up your business and then run home with plans, great big plans that change their



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freelance business for the better, is sometimes just a simple question: Why are you here? What made you do this in the first place?

I'm going to give you another couple seconds or minutes here to drop in the chat box for those of you that haven't already. I'll share or those of you just listening in to the audio that people have shared already.

We've got "Passion for meeting people in different cultures and hearing their stories." This is a big one and I would almost go so far as to say this is something that unites all travel writers.

I do find there are people who specialize in kind of extreme luxury who are more around, not necessarily meeting people in different cultures in the same way that I really value—and we talk about this on the Dream of Travel Writing webpage—seeing the way people live in other places changes you. I think other people kind of in this extreme luxury world—I was just reading Conde Nast Traveler the other day—are kind of on that acquisition mindset. But I think apart from that subset, I think what Adrienne said is true of most travel writers: passion for meeting people in different cultures and hearing their stories.

Lisa has said something similar: "A huge passion and love for travel, culture and cuisine." Carrie said, "Getting over heart issues and getting grounded." Stephanie said, "Getting variety and inspiration to her current writing work." Nancy has said, "Love of travel, other languages and cultures and writing, LOL." Lynn has said, "I've had a passion for both travel and writing since I was very young and I love the idea of getting paid for it."

I love that you said that, Lynn. Marilyn loves to travel and experience different cultures. Laurie said, "Freedom to work anywhere and a flexible schedule." Janet said, "Encouraging aging Baby Boomers to keep moving and learn about the world."

What I love that all of you guys shared here is what brought you to travel and to sharing your love of travel, but not necessarily to travel writing as a business. Lynn had said earlier, "I love the idea of getting paid for it." This is an interesting one. Kia said, "I've seen other friend's adventures on Facebook and would love to have my own."

That's a great example of why travel, but why travel writing? Some of you have probably heard me talk about this before. If you have my book you've definitely seen it. One of the



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things that came of the about 18-months of research and interviews and then the following six months of working on the book and getting it out was a lot of conversations with a lot of people about why they were doing travel writing. Not just why they were traveling, and not just why they were writing about their travels, but why they were really pursuing travel writing as an income-deriving activity. With freelance or that they started a blog with the idea that someday some gain of some kind that was financial or in kind would be coming from it.

In that vein I notice a lot of what you guys are talking about, a lot of these same similarities: that people love to experience different cultures and meet people in different cultures and be changed by those things or to share those things with other so they can also be changed by those things. This is the things: that motivation is often what gets us to write, perhaps to write on a personal blog or even just write emails home from wherever you are.

I have a friend who's working on a proposal on major publishers on a narrative book, which is all just fake letters home that he's writing for his book, but letters home from his various trips.

As I was working on the Six-Figure Travel Writing Roadmap and I had a lot of conversations with people, I noticed that most travel writers are united by this love of other cultures, of experiencing them, of being changed by them, but of course also sharing that with people. But what that leads to is really more this concept of the sharing aspect. Of putting it in writing, whether that is in a blog or just letters or emails home. Not so much this pursuit of paid travel writing.

What Lynn said earlier, "I love these things and I especially like the idea of getting paid for them" is great. That's starting to get into why are we really here? Why are you really listening to me or reading my blog or talking my workshops? Why are you really trying to make money from your travel writing instead of altruistically doing it for the fun of it and to help other people?

When we get into that, I found that there are really three main reasons that people are doing this. The first one I call Freedom. What I mean by freedom in this case is that you want to travel. You want to travel the world and you want to be able to spend some money on something and maybe not volunteer the entire time and have some money when you come home, whenever that is, and you've decided the way you're going to fund those travels is through travel writing.





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I think Laurie said this earlier, and Laurie has been freelancing for a while and just had a book come out in our newsletter the other day – everybody clap at home for Laurie – but she said freedom to work anywhere and a flexible schedule.

This is interesting because I know that Laurie loves food and traveling and talking to people and finding their stories, but this is what has really driven her to do freelance travel writing and food writing and photography as her *métier*, so to say, as her calling, as her profession, is wanting to have that control over her schedule and what type of work that she is doing.

She really falls into that freedom category whereas some people, and Lynn, you might fall under this category or you may not, some people fall under the bylines category.

What do I mean by that? If your main motivation for pursuing travel writing as a profession is bylines, you may have grown up reading or thumbing through National Geographic and looking at the photos of all of these far away places that you can't even imagine that that's real life and not a movie, and wanting to be the person who gets to go there and spend six months staking out the white Siberian tiger. That's totally stolen from Walter Mitty, but you get the drift.

The people who pursue bylines (Oh there's the other Laurie! Both Lauries are here!) People who pursue bylines, they are in it for, not necessarily the love of the written word in the way novelists might be, but they are in it for the thrill of seeing their name up here in Conde Nast Traveler or Travel and Leisure or National Geographic or in an anthology alongside Jan Morris or Alice Waters or other big names.

It's very easy both with this bylines one and the next one I'm going to talk about, which is free trips, to feel like that's a lesser thing, but it's really important to remember that what motivates you, there's nothing inherently good or bad about it and that any designations of that type that you put on your own motivations only has the by-product of potentially souring you from honestly pursuing what you need to pursue and taking the jobs that are right for you, that you will flourish in because you're appropriately motivated.

The next one is Free Trips. People who are in the travel writing business, again we're talking about business, not just the writing, who are in travel writing as a business for the free trips, they tend to be people who are retired. I know people who are 32 and former bank managers who are retired and just travel to tango dance, so it doesn't necessarily mean you're a Baby Boomer or older, that you are doing this as a post-retirement profession, but they tend to be



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people who want to essentially travel full time, more or less, and have decided, similarly to the freedom people, that the way they are going to fund that is by travel writing.

The difference between the people who are in it for the freedom is that they don't really care about having complete freedom over their schedule or over the types of work that they're doing or over the places that they're going. What they're more concerned is if they can have a luxurious or exclusive or whatever experience without having to pay for it, without having to think about the monetary aspect of it.

What that might mean, and what I see really commonly—and there's a guy who specializes just in teaching this, but I'm not going to tell you what his name is, not because I don't want you to go to him, but because I have opinions of him that other people share and he's not the best teacher—the whole thing about free trips, though, is that you tend to not care so much about the money. You tend to care more about just having the travel paid for, being able to travel. So you'll often write for places just because they'll take the story rather than because they're going to take the story and they're going to pay you for it because you're essentially being paid in kind on the press trip.

That doesn't mean though that if your motivation is free trips, if you just want to have somebody else pay for your travel and just explore the world based on what comes to you in that way that you can't make money.

These slides are pulled from the book, so I'm going to come back in one second. I used them in some other webinars as well, so you may have seen them I'm going to go through in a minute a couple quick ways that you can make six figures doing each of these things. In the meantime, I want to say this.

I mentioned earlier that it's really important to not shy away from whatever is your main motivation. That is because one of the biggest things, not just that I saw when I was doing the research that I was doing for this book or I see on coaching calls or I see trying to employ people doing work for us, but I see all the time when I compare travel writers to the other freelancers that I know—I know a lot of other freelancers.

I used to do graphic design. A lot of the conferences I go to are specifically, not specifically, but are largely geared toward people who do different types of web development or app development or things like that. I hang out with a lot of these types of freelancers. The



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biggest difference that I see with travel writers is that they feel much less compelled to do things.

There's a reason for that. Again, it's not something to shy away from. We have all decided to pursue this thing that everybody has probably told you doesn't exist or that you can't earn money at or just seems like a pipe dream or there's so many people doing it, how could you possibly succeed? We have all decided to box the odds and pursue this elusive thing despite what everybody says, despite all of the things that look hard. That takes a lot of chutzpah and a lot confidence in what you want as well as your ability to figure it out.

But the flip side of that, the downside of that is that we do what we want. So if we don't want to do something it's very hard to get ourselves to do it. I spend, not a ton of time because I try to get this out of the way in the first couple coaching calls, but a fair bit of time talking to people about how to get things done. I don't really position myself as a productivity expert, but if you've ever taken a workshop, particularly a live workshop with me, you'll see that this is a big thing that I talk about. In fact, my time tracker is working right now behind the webinar window as I talk to you guys.

I have been studying productivity for years and years, long before I switched to doing this full-time, and it's indispensable. We're going to talk a little in the slide today but especially in future webinars, why that is. But here's the thing: I have found indisputable by my consistent use over seven-odd years of my time tracker, that doing something that you don't want to do, even if it's an article you want to write but don't feel like writing it right now, my data leads to four to ten times longer.

That's like if it would take me—I'm trying to think of how long it would take me to write a certain type of article—lets say two hours to write a 1,500-word feature that is 100 percent reported and based on a bunch of interviews I have to tie in and fact-checking that I need to do. Say the pure aspect of writing that without the interviews and everything of just getting it down on paper would take me two hours if I was really jamming away at it.

If it was pulling teeth and I was on deadline and I was so unmotivated and I was just staring at my screen and I couldn't get it done, that might take me 20 hours or 8 hours. That's what I mean by 4 to 10 times longer. I hope that all of you at home, as soon as the time delay catches up, are shaking your heads when you hear this because I'm sure you've experienced this without having that tangible number to point to. That yes, this takes me longer.



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I have found that can be, for a lot of people, the number one thing that is holding them back: That they are simply spending way too much time on all of their work because they don't really want to do it and they need other work that they want to do more. This can literally be the number one thing.

In fact, I was interviewed on a really lovely podcast the other day that I linked to from the newsletter; hopefully some of you guys caught it. It was an Australian writer who's been running a podcast for quite a long time. I was saying something about this and she totally didn't want to go down the productivity path. She said, "Oh, you know, as writers it takes us a while."

But what I've found from years of setting this and working on it and tracking myself, is that all of that thinking that you're probably doing when you're sitting there looking at the blinking cursor like a metronome that's just taunting you and it beats. And sometimes the beats look slower and long and you know that time is passing and work is not getting done.

That thinking, that stressing, that should not happen in front of your computer in front of a blank screen. You should do it in a park while taking a walk. You should read something else or listen to music until what you need to get that piece of writing done comes to you. If you don't have enough time, wither you've procrastinated, which is a whole different set of problems, or you've let an editor talk you into an unreasonable deadline, which I'm seeing increasingly. That's another one of the things we're talking about on another slide.

Lynn has chimed in on that. It takes way more time when she's not motivated or not enjoying it for some reason.

This information is available in a lot of different places. I think it's on our blog as well, so I'm not going to dilly-dally over this for too much time, but I want to show you how, depending on what your motivation is, there are different types of work that fit that.

If freedom is more important for you, these unreasonable deadlines that I was talking about? Totally not for you. Working for big, glossy, mainstream newsstand magazines that won't put your article out for a year and will come back to you nine months after you wrote it with a bunch of edits when you don't remember anything about the source? Not for you.



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The stuff that is for you are projects that you can get done without a lot of research or time on the internet or something that keeps you from experiencing the destinations that you are in or that keeps you on the phone at weird hours and that you can finish and work on in your own time with minimal interaction with your client. That's really the best thing for you.

That can mean writing a blog post or articles based on things that you know very well for editors that are easy to work with whether those are publications or websites.

What about bylines? It seems pretty obvious who you should be working for if you're in it for bylines. In the end, actually, it's not. I see a lot of people past the people that I don't even work with who are just slinging their pitches about to publications that pay zero or to pay \$2000 because they found them on a list of "50 travel publications that pay." Like one I saw the other day that was so outdated that three of the publications on there don't even exist anymore even though she had purported it as a brand new post.

This is totally outside, "I'm going to pitch Conde Nast because I want to write for Conde Nast." If you are in this because you value bylines, there is still a way to go about allocating how you spend your time and who you work with as a client to make sure that you are happiest with the investment that you are putting into the work that you're working on.

Nobody likes having written an article and then nine months later get edits because your editor has finally looked at it and has a totally different idea. You need to, if that's what you are interested in, for your own sanity as well as a steady stream of money coming into your bank account, balance different types of things that you work on in order to have a sustainable travel-writing career.

That means mixing it up. Writing sometimes for the airline magazines. Having some editors that you write for regularly, whether that is an official column or just something similar. Writing some for newspaper where you get a bigger word count and still a respectable paycheck at the end of the day and it comes much faster than writing for a newsstand glossy magazine.

The last one—remember I said it seems like free trips you don't really care about money and you just write for outlets that pay for free—you can still make money at that. That's one of the things that if you think that you are kind of a freedom person but you're really attracted to the idea of free trips because you're just not that interested in the physical act of planning your trips, you can still make money doing this.



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Even if it's slightly differently, you look for editors who are easier to pitch and more likely to give you assignments because you need those to get on your press trips. You also work, particularly for tour companies, because you can essentially get them to set you up to go on a series of their tours for free and then have you write about them.

That's just a couple drops in the bucket of eye opening before it gets you into the hard questions that are going to make us all take a deep breath for a moment.

I have the big whammy on the next slide, but these are the questions I said earlier on in the call that—please don't feel like you need to put these in the chat box, in fact it's probably be better if you don't so other people don't feel like their not putting them in and holding back by omission. We can just keep all of these to ourselves as I go through and discuss them.

You can write your answers to yourself on your own screen or you can write them down for later o think about, but this is really the first phase in moving through our travel writing process. Several of the questions that I have on here you will have answered. You will have positive answers. You will have done those plans or you will know the answers to these by the end of the webinars of this series.

If you haven't already done some of these things then you're going to start or you're going to do them in the process of working on the webinars.

Question 1: Can you tell me exactly how much money you have coming in this month?

What I mean by that is right now is the 22nd. Do you reliably, accurately, for sure know both how much work you have on the books that you will actually turn in or file—I like to note the different between filing and receiving—do you know how much work you will actually have billed this month?

What about next month?

I know for a lot of folks that there are no regular clients in your lives or—this is something I'm seeing more and more frequently—you might have regular clients, but you don't have people who are on contract. What I mean by that is that I'm seeing some people working through our content marketing pieces and one of the things happening is that they kind of



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skip the bit about proposals and contracts. What happens then is that they start working with people for a blog post here or a blog post there and the problem with that is two-fold.

First, having a specific process that you set out with your clients shows them that you are a professional, but also having a contract in place helps you get through bumps in the road, figuring out your path together with new clients. If you don't have that contract in place, that security that we are going to continue working together, it can cause some falling out.

One of the things I see sometimes is that you guys have people that you might work with but you're not sure you're going to work with them next month. You kind of never know. There's this idea that one day to the next they might just stop giving you work. You really never know if that next assignment is coming. That's something we're going to talk about how to avoid.

I talked about what stuff you have billed. On my spreadsheet—and we're going to talk all about spreadsheets later is you like spreadsheets. I'm not a big spreadsheet person personally, but I for many years had a spreadsheet where I would simply track what I had that was billed and that I was going to turn in, and then also when those things were being paid for. Because that's the important thing for us in a lot of ways.

There's a great feeling when you file something, but there's also a great feeling when you can pay your bills, especially when you can pay your bills entirely from travel writing. So there's a difference between what you're filing every month and what you have coming in, what you are receiving, which is what is known in accounting terms as accounts receivable.

This next question is always a doozie. I've stolen it from somebody who loves to stump freelancers with this exact question. Stolen isn't quite the right word. I'm going to put Carol Tice from "Make a Living Writing" in the chat box. When she first started working on this, people would come to her with the various problems in their freelance writing lives and she would say, "How much marketing are you doing?" or "When was the last time you sent a pitch?" "How many new clients have you gotten in the last couple months?"

The answer was always more or less "I'm not doing that" or something to that effect. It was a question that always really stumped people, even and especially freelancers who had been at it for many years. I find that this concept of having a regular marketing plan is something that can be more common if you're breaking in, but when you've been at it for a while, it falls off.



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If you have been in your freelance business for some time, whether part-time or full-time or as a hobby or as a full-time profession, you need to really ask yourself, “Am I doing on the regular, even if the regular just means one day a month or every two months, am I doing something to drum up new business?”

Something that we’re going to talk about is that you want to always have the ability to cut what isn’t working and hone your efforts more toward what is. For instance in the case of content marketing clients, say some of the people who’ve been following our content marketing either our live workshop or in coaching with me or on the online version, say that they have signed a bunch of new people.

I’m seeing this happening and I just had a call yesterday with somebody who sent out five emails and she got three responses and she’s already working with two of them and just holding off the third one because she’s not sure she has enough time.

Say you’re one of these people. What can happen is that if you just stop marketing and you just keep working with the people that you already have, if there’s a hiccup with one of those people. If, for instance, the relationship goes bad, you don’t like the work, they start initiating scope creep when they start expecting more things than you initially agreed they were paying for, you don’t feel like you have other options.

Maybe it’s been a while or it was just one time that you were able to sign new clients and you don’t know if you have that skill anymore. Having a regular marketing plan not only protects you from the relatively likely event that you want to dump one of your clients for one reason or another. It also helps keep that muscle from atrophying. Because you are always confident. Not because you are full of yourself; because you have reliable data to this effect that you can find somebody new to replace them.

Lynn with the golden question: Do you have suggestions on what freelance writers can do to market themselves and drum up new clients.

This is going to be the fodder, particularly of the last webinar in this series, which is going to be all around developing your marketing plan. I’m going to tell you in a bit at the end of this call, but in the ones at the end of this series it’s going to be setting up your annual plan and the last one is going to be setting up your marketing plan specifically, and in a way that is followable no matter what.





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Continuing the questions: Do you review your rejections or non-responses for patterns?

This can be anything. Especially people who don't feel like they're pitching, per se. You're probably in a position where you might see something on Finders or on LinkedIn. I used to get tons of work from LinkedIn, but that has changed quite a bit. That you just sent something out to somebody like, "Hey, I saw this and would you be interested in working with me?"

The rejections or non-responses you're getting might be pitching yourself for a press trip rather than pitching yourself for an article. Or you might be pitching yourself for other bloggers for collaborations, but you need to take whatever mode in the last year you've had of putting yourself out there and see where it's going wrong.

What in your language, your tone, your presentation is keeping people from meeting you where you want to be met? That's the analysis, that's being self-aware and looking at where you are and what's going on and taking stock and making iterative steps to move forward. Of course you are, because you're here, but are you learning around the things you're not currently succeeding at.

I had a call recently that was telling me up and down that she wants to be writing for magazines and that's really what she wants to do, but as she was telling me what she's been working on recently, she's recently done a huge redesign of her blog that she's invested in quite heavily with a designer, and she spent a bunch of her professional development budget on a workshop around social media and various other things about the investment of her time.

So as we're talking about what she's been doing lately, there's this very clear path to her blog, but she's saying up and down that all she wants to do is write for magazines. But she's not pitching, she's not reading the travel magazine database, so she's not actually doing anything to move toward that goal.

This goes back to, I'm going to jump back a couple slides, to what I was talking about over here. Is that if you think you want something, but you really want is something else, whether that's a goal or motivation, it's not going to click. It's not going to work. So one of the big things that I see, especially with people who are sort of early-stage in terms of they've put a bunch of time or money into moving down this path, but they aren't getting the traction that they'd like, that is one of the big stumbling blocks. What they say they want to do and all of their efforts are pointing toward are diametrically opposed.



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This all points to one big thing: Do you feel like you're running a business? You don't have to say yes or no. This is like the other questions in the tough question category, you don't have to blurt it out. But if your goal is to do this full-time or you are currently doing it part-time and putting said part-time work on your taxes or excusing it as part-time work to your spouse or kids, it should feel like you are running a business. You should be out in the world at the ice cream store, the pizza shop, the boutique in town, and see these fellow small business owners and feel like you all have common struggles.

You should feel like accounting is an everyday thought for you, not, "Oh, wow, I need to send some invoices, I didn't do that yet." And they're invoices for something you filed two weeks or months ago and you just haven't heard back. You need to have processes, a business presentation.

That's why one of the other things that we talked about in the exercises in the Freelance Travel Writing Roadmap, one of the very first things is just setting up a very basic website, but that proclaims yourself a freelance writer. For all of you on the call—which hopefully most of you have heard me harp about this by now—If you do not already, get yourself a website, which is [yourname.com](http://yourname.com). If that is taken, use [yournamewrites.com](http://yournamewrites.com) or [yournametravelwriter.com](http://yournametravelwriter.com).

Get it done. In the book or on the website there is a plan for how to set it up in exactly one hour. I go minute by minute just like when I used to do a cooking website and I'd show how to do 30-minute dinners. I go through minute-by-minute and I say, "Write this, write only this. Do not write more than this. Fill in this exact template and just put this."

That is step on to feeling like you're running a business. If you don't have that yet, please, please get it done before the next call or during the course of this series it can be something you check off your list. Even if you are already freelance writing you need that. When you are pitching people they need to Google you and see that you exist. That doesn't mean that you have [yourname.contently.com](http://yourname.contently.com) or whatever. That's not legit, I'm sorry. I know it's a thing and a lot of people use it as their portfolio, but you also need to have your own website that is just for you that is not your blog.

This is another one. People say, "Well I have my blog." But that's not the same for you as a writer. It shouldn't be your blog and it shouldn't be a page on your blog. You need a very basic website that's SEO friendly, as in your name is in the URL, that's the SEO kick right there, that is just about you as a freelance writer and nothing else. It can link to your blog or mention you have a blog, but in the majority of cases that's not really necessary.



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If you don't have that, do it.

Second thing. If you are using a Gmail address, stop it. Use an email address that is connected to a URL that you own. You can still root it through Gmail. I used to do this through various small publications I worked for. You'd be surprised at how many people on a company level are rooting their email addresses through Gmail itself.

You need to have an email that is you as a company. That's part of looking like a company to people. That's the big one.

Do you feel like you are running a business? Part of the flip side of that, and I have some slides about this at the end, is that there's a difference between being a service provider and a business. Some of it is actually in terms of taxes and stuff like that, but I really advocate that you try to think of yourself not a a service provider. In part that's because there are a lot of ways that that mindset allows, not allows clients to take advantage of you, but makes you start to lose your footing when clients are bullying you, whether they realize it or not.

I was just chatting with somebody about this that has some new content marketing clients. It's not uncommon for clients, people who are assigning you writing assignments, to say that you need to do this, this and this after you've set the rate. They don't understand that that needed to be clarified before you set the rate. Or they don't understand that there could even potentially be a different rate for having photos with the blog post instead of just the text or for having you set the blog post up in their content management system versus you just email it to them. They don't understand that that takes you more time. They don't even think about it.

Sometimes it's nefarious and sometimes it's not. Having that mindset of a business, rather than a service provider help tune you into the top thing on this slide, which is the economics of your costs and income.

When I was talking before about time tracking on your articles, I say this every single live workshop that I do and I'll say it today: If you don't have a time tracker you should try it for a little while because you need to get a handle on your costs.

Your costs, especially for us because we are, in a way, service providers, our time is one of our biggest costs, but also investments. What might you be investing in to produce a writing



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assignment? Perhaps you have some different tools that you have that help you search better like Lexus-Nexus or something like that? That's a little less common, but what about travel?

We, even I, tend to kind of think: I travel, but it comes from a certain part of my budget, but I don't bill it to every article. Ok, well I'll barely make back what I spent traveling for this article with the pay, but they're not factoring both the travel costs and the time costs. You need to make sure that you take both of them into account on any assignment.

Also on meetings, which are free, this is really important, guys. Somebody was just telling me the other day that they went downtown to have coffee with a client. They didn't tell me how long it took because then I probably would have harped on that too, but she was like, "Yeah, I know it was way out of my way to travel because I live super uptown in the Bronx, but we had this great conversation."

I used to have a client who wanted to meet quite frequently. Like every time I was in town, but every two or three months in reality. She would take me to lunch and all of these things. The reason I let it happen, I made sure that every time we had a meeting I made sure I got new work from her. Like not just a new blog post, but a whole new area of responsibility from her.

So you need to look at the economics and your costs and your time. Not just on assignments you're doing, but also on your marketing.

Related but different in terms of common things that get in the way, rather than just not looking at your costs and your income, if you don't have income goals—we talked about goals generally and how your goals need to be tailored to what you want to do—but if you don't have income goals specifically, then you don't have sales target.

Sales targets: Who that teaches freelance writing ever talks about sales targets? I want all of you to start. Sales targets should become your new favorite words. I'm not even kidding. You need to get comfortable with the word sales. You are in sales. All of you who are freelancers are the head of sales for your personal company, for your personal business, for your freelance empire.



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Salespeople have targets and they need to meet them or they get fired. So you need to set up some sales target for yourself. They can totally be low and meetable to start, but you need to get in the habit of thinking of yourself the chief salesperson for you that has sales targets.

I've talked before and we'll talk in future webinars in the series about how you can break those out. I used to have a little thermometer like fundraisers do in my notebook. Every single day I would draw my little thermometer and as I filed my little pieces of writing I would fill in my thermometer to meet my daily goal. Over the course of that year, the size of my thermometer grew in terms of how many dollars were on my daily goal. And it happened because I would look at it at 3:00 or 5:00 or 7:00, god forbid, and say, "Oh my god, I really haven't gotten that far on this thermometer today. I need to do something that pushes it up because otherwise I'm going to have to do much more tomorrow and the day after that."

Income targets or sales targets, sales goals, need to be a part of your repertoire, both in terms of the practice and the speaking and being comfortable with them.

A couple other common things that get in the way: This is a big one, so I put a whole slide just on this one: Shiny freelance project syndrome. I don't have a good acronym for this, but this is really what I always call it: Shiny freelance project syndrome. This tends to manifest itself in exactly what I've put right ere on the slide. That you are interested in writing book length works, videography, growing your blog, freelancing for other people, writing for publications and working on your content marketing business.

You've gone so far as to buy videography equipment, you have three different books of poetry that you've outlined. You have a blog and you do Facebook live posts on the regular, you're trying to write pitches to magazines and get to know those magazines. You are picking up freelance clients at conferences whenever you can and you've set up an LLC just for your content marketing business.

I'm describing sort of a real person, but also many people with that description. It doesn't work. Categorically it doesn't work. I can tell you point-blank that one of the biggest unifying factors of the people that I have surveyed formally or informally and that I have known, some of them for 10 years who are just not making it income wise or who can't let go of that part-time job or have had to go back to that part-time job or more than a part-time job, it's because of this.



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This is one of the biggest things. You can do all of these different things, but not at the same time. Part of that is that it's not how your brain works best. Say you are working on videography and you're really immersing yourself in it. That gives your brain the opportunity to make connections between disparate pieces of information that you're getting in different places, to really present yourself well when you talk to potential clients. For people to know that's the type of work you're looking for and to send it your way.

Every business that gets big, whatever big means for that business, does it by first becoming good at one thing. I've put Google on here not just because my husband works here. I grew up in Silicon Valley and when I was young both my parents worked on computers. I remember one summer I had a summer job or part-time thing testing a search engine. It wasn't Google it was Fat sure or the Butler one or something and Google didn't even exist at the time. Now Google is everything, right?

Google is computers and phones and I just saw a ridiculous in real like thing that they're doing. They have Google Home, we all use Google Docs, but they didn't start that way.

I just threw Shonda Rhimes at the end because I think we all knew her first for Grey's Anatomy. Grey's Anatomy went for a really long time before Scandal, before it became a thing but before it even started. She really established herself with Grey's Anatomy and became known for a particular type of storytelling.

So shiny freelance project syndrome is the number one reason that people in the category of having been at it and have been banging their head against the wall in terms of moving forward in a substantive way, it's the biggest thing that holds these types of people back.

Here are a few other ones that I want to look at. These are sneaky ones. Not necessarily nefarious, but these are ones that can be hard to realize are negatively impacting your freelance travel writing career prospects.

The first one is because it sucks. You don't want to tell yourself that you can't do this thing that you want to do because of these real life obligations. I've put "real" in quotes here because I wanted to make the distinction between things that physically exist in your day-to-day life.



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For instance, this is a funny example, but a good one. I had somebody cancel a coaching call in advance, respectfully, yesterday. She runs a goat farm, I'm not kidding, in Kentucky. Fantastic super cool woman. When she was here for the Freelance Travel Writing Bootcamp she was in the middle of purchasing goat semen in an auction in order to impregnate her goats so she could have new goat. So now she has the goat babies that she needs to feed and take care of and they're up all night.

So she sent me this email where she sounds like any new mother where she's not getting any sleep because her goats are up all night and they're causing trouble and she has to take care of them so she wanted to reschedule the coaching call because she hadn't gotten much done.

That is a real, actual thing even though it sounds a bit silly. I know a lot of you have more dire situations. There are people who are in the sandwich generation who have aging parents to deal with as well as their own children or people who have spouses with very serious medical issues or they themselves have very serious medical issues. Or you live in a place that has recently been devastated by a hurricane.

There are all sorts of things that come into your life that might cause you to need to take a step back or to shift your goals for your freelance travel writing in a very real way. Rather than feel disappointed in yourself, you need to take those things into account and adjust and be realistic.

A related one is being just plain exhausted, which doesn't allow you to do your best work, get your best clients or move your career forward in the way you need to make it a full-time profession. I've seen this happen with somebody else recently. She just had so much on her plate. She's a mother, she's pursuing certificates in all sorts of different things, she has a very demanding career for the government as well, so it's not super forgiving in terms of hours or rewarding in terms of pay. And she has so much on her plate, but she signed up for a lot of but she's just exhausted right now and she isn't going to be able to make the right decisions for what's right for her until she gets through that to a point where she's rested and back to being herself.

Conversely, you might have a lot of work of the freelance variety, but it all pays so low or it's so far away from what you thought you'd be doing that you hate it and you resent everybody and you're total curmudgeon, whether that's to your clients or laptop or spouse.



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It's kind of like being exhausted, but it's being exhausted with what you're doing right now. You need to recognize if you are in that place because it's definitely spilling over into other things in your life and it's definitely clouding your ability to think creatively and freshly about where else you can go.

Another one that's related to that is that even if you do have a full-time job that's different and you're doing this kind of on the side; this is not a hobby for us. We're here to make money. This is work and if you have another job and this that's work—I had two full-time jobs for several years before I did this—you need to have time not just to rest, not just to relax and sleep and do brain-numbing television watching or whatever, but to have fun. This is incredibly important.

That could be another thing that's keeping you from moving forward. All of the things on this slide are things that keep you from seeing opportunities, from grabbing on to them, from thinking creatively of making plans.

Making plans is something we're going to do in the last two webinars in this series. We've gone super over even though I managed to get the slides in today. Hooray! And we didn't start too late, so I thank you all for joining us today. I've just got a couple more slides that are just in wrap-up and then I'm going to tell you about the other webinars that are coming down the line.

Here's the hard truth: If you say you are doing this full-time or part-time for tax purposes or to your spouse or whatever, you need to get particularly serious about two things: recurring income and having goals.

Recurring income because that is the basis. That is the bedrock upon which an actually business is built. Because I'm not going to go back because it would take too long with too many slides, but remember when I asked how much money do you have coming in this month and next month? If you can't answer that question, if that question causes you anxiety, that's a problem that's going to seep into lots of things you do. It's going to seep into when you sit down to try to write because you'll have this gnawing feeling that there's other stuff you need to do or you need to do this fast but you've paralyzed yourself. You need security. That is the bedrock of a freelance business.

We're going to talk about this in the webinar on goals, but also next week when we look at where your money is coming from. Part of security is having things on contract when people





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have agreed in advance and can't change their mind with a specific amount of notice that you'll be doing a certain amount of work and they will pay you in a specified, agreed upon, mutually beneficial time frame.

The parting words are, this is leading up to what we're going to do in the upcoming weeks—the business plan isn't dead, it's just for people who actually have businesses, as opposed to people who don't look, cover their eyes, and hope that all of it works out. Which is not what any of you are going to do after this.

Next week we're going to look up how to clearly catalogue the work and opportunities you have now to see where you need to go. What I highly recommend if you want to really get the most out of this is to start to do some prep on this front in terms of having at least in a single unified place if it's currently scattered all over the place, who you have been working for and how much money you have from each of them. We're gathering it as one thing but we really want to analyze it.

Then we're going to look at those patterns that I was talking about in your work for the past year and how we can springboard that going forward, both in what tweaks we need to make in improvements as well as what is going well that we want to continue and make more of.

Thank you so much for bearing with me on this long webinar. I know we've got some really serious stuff to go over in the next couple weeks, so I might go over more in the other ones as well. But I've tried to break it down in several segments so we can do it in manageable sized chunks. Thank you guys so much.

Thanks for joining in on this slightly long and earlier in the week webinar and I look forward to chatting about where your business is now and where we're going to take it next week. Bye guys!