



# Dream of Travel Writing

## Freelance Business Systems: The Fun Stuff on Your List (Research & Development) R&D

This time we're going to be continuing our "Freelance Business System" series with our second to last webinar in the series. We're going way up in the ladder of what goes into your business. We've looked at all of these more whether you wanna call it process, or day-to-day operations or sort of activity level things. We've looked at finance, we've looked at marketing, we've looked at sales, we've looked at HR, we've looked at technology.

And now we're getting into those more, at least, particularly for freelancers nice to have certain things. We're gonna talk about research and development which is future looking. We're gonna talk about management, which also can feel silly when there's just one of you, but it's very, very crucial.

So we're getting into these things that talk about what is the real overarching direction of your freelance business? What are your goals? What is it that you're actually accomplishing, that you're actually doing in the world? It's interesting because I was just talking with somebody I guess earlier today or yesterday on a coaching call kind of about this idea of the work that she's doing and how it impacts the world, and thinking about her own motivation related through that lens. And I think this is something that for a lot of people can translate into what we're talking about today, which is this research and development bit.

You often find that the work that you're doing perhaps just because it's a factor of the clients that you've picked up is not what you set out to do. You might be writing about something that you never thought that you'd be writing about that you maybe didn't feel that you had a particular interest in, or you might just be doing the type of writing that's not the type of writing that you set out to be doing, or your work schedule is not what you set out to be doing. Whatever that is and the way to get out of that is what we're talking about today.

So, particularly we're gonna look at what do I mean when I talk about research and development for travel writers and tie that into what research and development means generally in a corporate context. And we're gonna look at what are sort of the "divisions" of research and development for travel writers. And I want you to look at that...I have a list that includes sort of some larger buckets, there might be some other one that you find for yourselves. But there's three main buckets going on, and I often talk about how I attend a lot of different conferences to stay up on what's going on in these different buckets in terms of, you know, the industry itself, writing and the larger world, you know, of marketing and digital marketing and writing a business and what's going on there.

But I want you guys also to look at these not as we usually do in these calls in the "Freelance Business System" series of sort of a grab bag of some things to think about doing and picking from there. Because as you'll see as we go on, I'm sure you are all already doing research and development, in fact, I'm sure you're spending a significant amount of time on it.

So I want you to look at that list from the vein not of, "Oh, this is a nice thing to add because we're also addicted to learning." That's where we became writers to get paid about the things



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we are learning about. I want you to look at it about being intentional about what you will and won't do. And so then I've also included sort of a little exercise that you can follow at the end to get some clarity on what you are already doing in terms of research and development, and how to be more intentional about that time.

So getting into what we're talking about today, I wanted to start by defining when I talk about research and development for travel writers what does that mean? If you think about research and development, it's funny. Because my husband works in research in the tech world, but I usually think of pharmaceuticals. I don't know if that's the image that pops for you guys.

I'm sure that research and development has wildly different sort of visualizations for many people, for instance, there's a distillery that we go to. Where the distillery has its research and development arm, where they put out interesting seasonal beverages and their kind of one-shot deals, they make as many bottles as they make, and then they're gone. So research and development can certainly mean a lot of things.

I like the distillery example because it relates to a number of the things that we're gonna talk about in this call, which is that this is something that they do and it's seasonal and sort of limited-term, and it's something interesting and fun that they do. But at the same time, they only do it when they have time. They only do it when there's enough space in the production calendar that they're putting out the whiskey that they owe to all of their different distributors and providers.

And so for instance, they've not put out new research and development liquors for a long time, because they've been very popular and I think that is a very important part of where research and development fits into things. But on the flip side, you can see also, like I mentioned something fun, it's something new that the distillers get to develop. And if you don't have that fun, if you're not looking at some different things on the horizon, then you're missing out on A, fostering creativity, but B, also on things that might make great products that might be selling better down the line than what you're already selling now.

So for travel writers, research and development fills those buckets, it's the things that you do and that might be building a new skill, right? They might be working with, you know, in the case of this distillery, they're working with some new ingredients, they're a research and development line. They make them with summer berries, they have one that they make with chocolate. They have one that they make with oranges and different spices which is like a Triple sec.

So in that case, it's a distillery that typically makes unflavored alcohols. They make whiskey, which is aged in barrels but not flavored. They do make some gin which is flavored, but they make a lot of vodka, which is not flavored. And their research and development line allows them to make alcohol, so which is what...their base thing that they do. But to do sort of use a



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new skill which is infusing from different flavors, into that alcohol and also to not have to meet the limitations of what their customers are already expecting for them.

So in this case, they're building on what they already do to develop a new but slightly related skill and to use some ingredients that inspire them that are maybe not something that they use every day. So how does that look for travel writers? It means that let's say you are looking at a different type of writing that you're not doing now, right? Now, in this case that I gave you, the research and development liquors are things that they still sell in their store. So they've developed something that's still close enough to what they're doing that their market will buy it. And this is a pretty common denominator in research and development, okay, is something that's close enough that your market will buy it.

So let's say that you are writing blog posts for a company on a regular basis. And you see that their social media is crap, and you offer to them some suggestions on how their social media could be in order to move over to get paid to learn to do social media. So this is something in a research development area where you might be looking at but what are some best practices? What would you recommend to them if they were gonna allow you to do this for them, but it's related in terms of obviously it's still writing, but it's a client that you're working for that has a need, and you're gonna use that to learn about an area.

Let's say you're somebody who does more freelance work where you're doing sort of one-off articles for different clients, so you don't have that opportunity to say, "Hey, my client has this need with something else that I can research and develop as a potential product to offer them." Let's say you say, "Okay, right now I'm doing a lot of roundups, I would really love to be doing some more sort of narrative type pieces. Maybe I can move into doing some more narrative type pieces that are similar to the roundups that I'm doing, what would that look like?" Okay? So this is how you can kind of as a writer shimmy over and start to develop those skills and research and develop how you would offer those products to the market.

Some other things that could be research development that I see happen a lot are people who are, say, writing their own personal blog, and they want to start writing for new markets. What often happens is that then they sort of, you know, give themselves an MFA in writing for magazines, learning about all of those new things. But that's going to take a really long time to take to market, right?

So something that could be more kind of in the research development arm is, "Hey, I'm already writing these kind of pieces from my blog, what our markets for some similar pieces, what are some ideas for blog post that I had coming up that I can set save, and write up and send around to some essays to some different markets, or that I can pitch to some different magazines to write for them rather than putting it on my blog."

So you notice that there is a lot of different things and I'm gonna mention these later on, and I mentioned them a little bit earlier, there are a lot of different things that can fall under



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research and development. It can be developing a new skill in digital marketing. It can be developing a new skill in terms of how you do your business, whether that's in terms of a type of writing or something like that. It can be learning about a different place where you can be selling your work and how it works or operate in that market. But the things that I've described for you are all very close to the work that you're already doing now.

Now, this is something that we looked at in a sort of traveling series of workshops I did a few years ago, we call it the client replacement plan. But this client replacement plan is something that I work with people on, often who are in a place where they wanna take their income from one spot to a different spot.

And we do that by looking at, you'll see that there's...I hope you can see my mouse moving. Yeah, you can, okay, great. You'll see that there's 10 lines here, there's three in the reach, there's four in the match, and three in the safety. And this is a way that I recommend people delineate their income.

So you think of each line as being 10% of your income or your time, okay? And you want to make sure that, you know, you can break this up, so some clients might take up two or three or even four lines. Some lines you might split up, you might have things that are only 5% of your income. And this you can do by month or you can do it by year.

But the idea is that this is kind of, you know, the way people apply to college, for instance, is the safety match reach approach, but it's a well-balanced approach to planning out your portfolio of work that you have some clients that you know are gonna give you work. It's on contract or something to that effect, you know that work is gonna come all the time. It's okay for the rate to be a little bit last in your ideal to trade for that consistency, but you know that it's absolutely going to come no matter what.

Then your match clients are clients on the type of work that you would like to be doing, work that you're happy doing, work that you're satisfied doing. It might not be something that I'm on contract, that you're on contract for, it might be a magazine where they give you an article every month, but it's not necessarily guaranteed, but it always happens. And it's in the line of your ideal rate, and it's the type of work that you'd like to be doing. And then I have this section up here called reach clients, which are maybe higher pay, but less reliability. Something else that you can put in reach is kind of like bylines that you'd really like to get or even if that's an internal, but something that's high exposure.

And if you're plotting out your income, I recommend people kind of set it up in this 30-40-30 way. And that also has a lot to do with being able to get marketing done while not spending all of your time marketing. If you don't have some base clients that are giving you some reliable work then you're gonna be scrambling for work and you're gonna be stressed out, you're gonna feel like you need to spend a lot of time marketing, and then your other work will suffer.



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If you don't have these match kind of clients, where you feel happy about the work you're doing then you're gonna feel an energy drain of doing work for clients where you feel like you're writing about stuff that you really don't care about. But to the point of this whole R&D webinar, if you don't have this reach work, you're also gonna get bored, okay?

So this way of looking at it and thinking about the R&D as your reach work works when your R&D is very close to things that can be put out in the world to clients. So you see in this setting, I've got 30% of your income can come from this kind of R&D clients. But like I said, that 30% only translates to how you spend your time, if that stuff is really close to where you're actually gonna be able to sell things from the market.

So like I mentioned, I have a slide later on where we're gonna look at some different buckets of R&D really specifically, and what all those things can be for you. But I wanted to kind of show you a few examples of what R&D can be, how that can fit into your income portfolio as well as time. And did you notice something else here? That I talk about this part here at the top being the R&D.

Now, depending on where you are in terms of client work and landing recurring gigs and things like that, for you, this might be the R&D right now, the safety, you might right now not have recurring clients. You might only have some people who give you assignments sometimes that are maybe high level, but if you want to build up a business for yourself, you need to sort of fill in this whole grid. And so if for you right now, the place that's not full is lower down than up here, wherever that is, is your R&D, and so this is really interesting how this translates.

So for instance, let's say you are a person who like I said, doesn't have recurring work, maybe you have some sporadic work, you don't have recurring work, and it's stressing you out. Then what your R&D time should be spent on is familiarizing yourself with the industries that are gonna give you that recurring work, familiarizing yourself with whatever skills you need to build to do that recurring work, okay?

So I hope that...I know this is kind of like a larger framework for how to run sort of your business and your pipeline for clients and things like that. But I just wanna show how depending on where you're at, and what you're missing, and what parts of your income need to be filled in, where you might want to think about focusing your research and development work.

And I'm gonna get in now to how some larger companies use this. And I wanted to give that framework for how it looks in travel writing first. Because in order to kind of appropriately understand how larger companies are using this R&D time and also money, you need to kind of look at it from this lens of companies that are investing in R&D to fill in things that will help them to be a better company, aka earn more money down the line. For some companies,



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that's gonna be fixing the means of production, for some companies that's gonna mean creating a super cool new product, okay?

So for instance, when I was talking about, let's say that your pipeline here is all full, okay, I don't know how to fill things here, but to show you but, you know, let's say that you've got all these sections and you've got some bit, like let's say you're working primarily with magazines and websites, okay? So your safety clients are gonna be some websites that you write for regularly, you know, you always have that work.

Your match clients are gonna be some magazines you write for every month or something like every other month, and you're pretty familiar with them, you know, you're gonna get the work from them, you enjoy the writing, it's a good rate. Your reach clients might be one or two magazines that you really wanna break into and, you know, you're getting a piece out, and at least one of them or maybe two of them every month, okay? And you've got maybe a hit list of 20 that you keep pounding away at and every so often one of those comes in.

So in your case, you being this mythical example I just gave, you would have this kind of full slate of work and what you would be looking for is what's next, what's your new "product." It might be to be moving those, you know, hit list, high prestige, high-pay magazines into the match section. And so what you are working on is the relationship-building aspect. You're familiarizing yourself really deeply with those magazines so you can become a regular writer for those places.

But let's say your next step or your new product is actually gonna be something different, maybe, it's gonna be a book. Then for you, your research development time goes into learning about longer narratives, learning about senior work, learning about structure, and learning about how to put together a book proposal, what sort of book ideas are going right now and how to get a book into the marketplace.

So that's how that looks if you're developing sort of the product side. If you're developing the production or the process side, that goes back to what I was talking about for people, for instance, who don't yet have a handle on how to have recurring work, and who it is that they're gonna have recurring work for. So that might be the research and development that you're doing.

So for most companies, this is a very small subset of companies here, okay, and they're largely in the tech side. But I found this great, great information out there about in 2016, the proportion of total budget that went towards research and development for certain companies. And so I wanted to show you this, because obviously, this is budget rather than time, and so you would have to kind of think about that for these companies, know the staff that they're paying for that, might be higher-paid staff in other areas, but maybe those staffs need more materials.



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So it kind of how it shakes out in terms of the number of hours like just man-hours the company is spending is a little hard to say, without having much, much more information about their books. But I found this great report where somebody had gone through the public filings of some different companies and just looked at how the money was spent.

So let's pretend that this information about the percentage of money being spent also relates to time, obviously, that we can't make that exact correlation. But let's just think about that for ourselves. So I think some of these companies you might not know, but a few of these like Intel, Nvidia, AMD, these are places that produce chips.

So what I mean by that is they're doing like visual processing chips or processors for your computer. So this is an area in which they are producing physical hardware, okay? So it's important for them to be doing research because they are creating the thing. They're looking at ways to create it better, they're looking at ways to create it faster, and they're also looking at creating new products so that they can stay ahead of their competition.

So all these four companies here, where they spend on research development, in let's say both time and money, is more than 20% is because if they do not innovate in their space, if they do not learn to make smaller chips that can go in smaller phones with bigger cameras or whatever that is, or faster chips or chips that can take better photos, even though they're smaller in space or that they can run higher-powered video games on your tiny computer or your tablet, whatever that is, they are gonna fail in their marketplace. So these companies that are spending 20+ percentage of their time and money on research and development are doing so because they will fail as companies if they fail to innovate.

So I have to ask you, because I just know from looking at time tracking and talking to some writers, if you are honest with yourself about your time and how your time is being spent, are you spending more than 20% of time learning about something whether it's new market or a new skill or a new something like this. Because, like I said, if you are in this bucket, and I've looked at a lot of things around this is really new companies who are doing new things we're trying to change and disrupt the marketplace. If you are spending that much time on learning about whatever and you are not trying to do something groundbreaking, I have to ask you, what percent of your time is going into producing things that you are able to sell? Okay.

So then you'll see a huge dramatic drop here, okay? Microsoft is less than 15%. Now Microsoft does a lot of different things. They tried to do phones that didn't seem to go very well. They also don't really produce hardware, right? The computers that Microsoft runs on are usually from other people, but they have web browsers, they have phone operating systems, they have desktop or laptop operating systems.

I'm forgetting many, many other things they do. They have Microsoft Word, Office, you know, PowerPoint. They have OneDrive, they have a web service, you know, like a cloud



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sort of based thing. I'm sure Microsoft produces some other things that I'm forgetting about. So they have a very wide slate of products that they do.

So they are often looking at how to improve their existing products to serve customers better, but also potentially how to create something new to bring into the marketplace, like when they brought in their mobile operating system, right? So you'll find that they're sort of between some different things here. They're not all the way up there in the, we have to innovate constantly to stay afloat, but they're not down here in that we pretty much know what we're doing and we do the same thing, we just need to do some tweaks for our customers.

But I think what you'll also find really interesting here is Tesla. If we think about Tesla, and their, you know, high flying owner Elon Musk, if you think about Tesla and what they do and especially what you hear about Elon Musk doing, it seems like they are just doing research constantly, right? It seems like they're just always trying to do something new, hit some new goal, hit some crazy schedule, right? But in reality, it's just above 10% of their time and money is going to this. Because when you get down to it, even though they're new and fancy, Tesla is a car company and they need to build cars, and they need to get those cars into the hands of customers. So, a lot of their time and money spend is going into production of what they're already selling, and the storefronts and various means of distribution for those products.

Now, when we get down to this 5% of times on research and development section, we're looking at IBM, which even though they do make some physical things is primarily a services company these days, they do business services, they do a lot of sort of strategy in cloud computing and things like this for companies. And then Apple and HP which we kind of know for printers these days and things like that, but Apple is less than 5% of their budget on research and development, okay? And that's kind of shocking to me. That's like one of the biggest shockers in here even Tesla I feel like is low when we think about it.

Because when we think of Apple, we really think about them as doing something new, you know, even if it's a product that we already know that they're making some big leaps from one iPhone to the next or from the weight of one Air laptop to the next. So we have to ask ourselves if Apple is only spending less than 5% of its budget on research and development, and we think of them as one of the most innovative companies out there.

Because remember, for Apple, research and development is also all the time they spend on Apple Music before they launch it, right, trying to figure out if that's feasible or not or Apple TV or whatever new thing that they might be bringing to the market next. Where's their budget going? I mentioned this a little bit with Tesla, it's going to producing products and serving customers. Okay?





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Now, it would be my most fervent wish that more of you would spend less than 5% of your time on research and development. I say this because I talk to people so often who are literally, who maybe are doing this full-time like they do not have another job that they spend their day on. They have another thing that earns them some money, but this is kind of their full-time occupation. And 95% of their time is on research and development for more than a month or two. And it's just not going to build you a company, because you need to create things that people will pay you for, and put them into the hands of those people. That is the prime function of a business of most businesses.

And so I know I warned you about this in the beginning that "This is the webinar on research and development and I am gonna talk about research and development for travel writers." But more of this webinar is about talking to you about getting really honest with yourself, about how much time you're currently spending on that and what it looks like for a normal business versus for most writers. Because according to the IRS, most writers are not businesses, they are hobbies. And, of course, IRS is the Internal Revenue Service here in the States. You're going to have a different name in whatever country that you're in, but the government is quite strict with what they allow you to classify as a business.

And I know a lot of writers who were like, "Oh, you know, it's fine, I don't need to write off my expenses on this." And they choose to not take the financial benefits of being a business, because they are, "I don't wanna say too lazy or unmotivated." But because they see the ability to "freely control" what their time is being spent on as an appropriate exchange for not doing the accounting and actually saving on their taxes for the things that they are doing for their writing. And it doesn't have to be that way. You just need to be more cognizant about what being in business is and how research and developing new things, new areas of potential writing, new areas of potential client work, new skills that you could be building how that fits into a business.

And so for those of you who are full time freelance and/or have been for some time, I also caution you as we're going through this webinar to make sure that you're really upfront with yourself about how much of the research that you're doing is translating directly into products, In case, you do get asked those questions by the government or otherwise. So I wanted to share an interesting example for you of a company that's much smaller than, you know, the IBMs or the Apples of the world where we can actually kind of visualize into the people who work for this company, and how its money is spent on research and development.

So the company that I want to tell you about it has a very weird product. So they are a company that does primarily mussels, okay, also a little bit of clams and oysters but primarily mussels. So this company is based in Washington State in the Sound and they grow, so they have farms, they have a mussel farm. They don't do so much while harvesting. They primarily get these mussels sort of bugs, these baby mussels and sort of plant them in these farms and then they grow and they harvest them. And they've created this incredibly



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innovative business model that allows them to do a huge, huge volume of income off of a mussel farm because they don't harvest mussels and then figure out where to sell them.

They've created this chain, which in and of itself was an innovation and they did research and development on. They created this chain of selling in which in the morning their salespeople get on the phone, and they call stores and restaurants all around, you know, the Seattle, Washington area, but also the country and the globe. They have tons of restaurants in New York that they serve. They sell quite a lot to Japan actually.

And so every morning, their salespeople hop on the phone until around 11:00, and they take all the orders that are going to be processed that day. And then at 11:00 the people who work on the boats go out, and they harvest everything that's gonna be shipped out that day. So that literally a restaurant in New York can have a mussel on it's plate that was picked 24 hours beforehand, okay?

And, like I said, they do this because they've innovated in their way that they run their business in terms of having these salespeople take all the orders until 11:00, the boats got out at 11:00 but then also what they've done is they own the distribution part. So they have all their own trucks and their own truck drivers, who are taking all these mussels to all the different places they need to go. Whether it's to the airport, directly to different restaurants, different stores, different things like that.

So they have done a lot of innovation in terms of how their business physically operates and interact with its customers in order to be able to fulfill this promise of having the freshest mussels even though they're just this tiny company, they've got about 20, maybe 40 employees, okay?

But what I found super interesting about this was it's not just that they've done this research and development, innovation, and how they run their business but also in their line of production. So I went on a tour to check out this place as part of a farm trip that I was on, as part of a conference that I was on. And when we went out to see the mussel bands and the mussel farm and their boat came around and they were harvesting the mussels, they explained that they've also created this proprietary way of cleaning the mussels and cleaning the barnacles and things off of the mussels.

So they've built this entire sort of floating production facility that goes around which is kind of flat, it looks a bit like a barge. And the guys pick the mussels and they have something that runs through the mussels that someone on their team has engineered and created to clean off the mussels, to separate the mussels, to do all these things that need to be done to the mussels right there on the water.

So, right there on the water, they don't need to keep going back and forth with the boat, because they're getting everything done and into boxes on this little barge, and then that gets



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loaded on to another boat that's running back and forth to the delivery trucks in their main facility.

And then they took us back to their main facility later, and they took us into their shop room where they do all of their machinery production, where they upkeep their trucks, where they upkeep their boats. And they showed us the most random things that they had gotten patents for, all sorts of strange things that they had developed both for farming the mussels, there were so many things they had developed, cleaning the mussels like I talked about, how their boats run, all sorts of different things.

So what I love about this company is that it's not a huge company, okay? You can count really discreetly, they have two people in that shop, they have about six people on a boat, they run two boats. And their salespeople are by far and large one of the biggest sections that they have. So again on the previous slide, we were seeing these proportions, right, of about 5%, and that's about right. The people in this company who are working on direct innovation, it's about one or two people who are working on that, and the rest are running the system that they have already developed.

So I wanted to give you guys this example to sort of position what R&D looks like in a company that's smaller than Apple but not as small as ours. But in terms of as we talk through this Freelance Business System series, about this idea of the different hats that you wear, and the different job descriptions that you have signed, you know, and accepted by creating this company that you run that this is how much realistically in this company you have time for R&D as an up and running business, okay?

Now, as a business that's getting started, it feels like it might be a little bit different, okay, like it could be more it should be more and we'll talk about that in a second. But once your business is up and running, once you have a product that you are able to produce and you can sell, it should be around 5% for you most likely, okay?

So let's take a higher-level step here and look for a second and what is the real purpose of a research and development department sort of in a, you know, a high-level definition sort of setting in different companies? So, one definition here is research and development is a part of the company's operation that seeks knowledge, right? I talked a lot about how we can kind of take learning all the time you're spending learning and dump all of that into research and development, right? That seeks knowledge to develop, design, and enhance its products, services, technologies, or processes along with creating new products and adding features to old ones, right, we talked about this with Microsoft.

Investing in research development connects various parts of the company's strategy and business plan such as marketing and cost reduction. So we looked at that a bit with this example of the mussel company that I gave you, right, about how research and development can also look at ways to move whatever it is that you as the writer are selling to marketing



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more quickly. So this could be creating a new procedure for yourself about how you get pitches out whether that's creating a new schedule for how you run your day to ensure that you're getting pitches out or creating a new way that you organize your pitch ideas that it's easier to get pitches out, or that you organize your market information to get pitches out for instance.

And then that for us relates to cost reduction, right, because for us, the biggest cost is our time, right? And if we can save our time then that's gonna help us in terms of cost so we can allocate other time to other places. Another definition here it's the research and development function that provides a platform for creativity and innovation to flourish in an organization. Innovative breakthroughs have happened only because of painstaking efforts of the research and development function. Perseverant efforts are needed when one is in pursuit of research. Every fail in a research and development effort increases the pressure to perform.

Research and development helps a business to have a competitive edge over its competitors. It is a research and development function that develops plans much ahead of other functions. The research and development function needs to have a clear foresight about future problems that need solutions. And research and development in its development role can act as a catalyst for speeding up the growth of the organization by introducing breakthrough products in the market.

So there was two things here that I wanted to look at. One is perseverant efforts are needed when one is in pursuit of research, and every failure increases the pressure to reform. I think this is something that's really present when you're working for other people. And you're researching a product or a project or how to do something that you need to at some point produce something from that research that you have done, right? Whereas when we work for ourselves, I see a lot of time spent on research.

And for some people, there's gonna be a big pressure on that, which can result in a sunk cost issue where you feel like you've spent so much time on something that you have to figure out something to do with it, whether it's a trip that you're planning on taking, or a conference that you're planning on going to, or more commonly, a pitch that you've been thinking about developing into a story idea that you're really struggling with finding a market for is a very common one.

But on the flip side, I also see a lot of instances in which it's the reverse. Instances in which you are spending a lot of time researching something, whether that's a potential market, a potential story idea, potential type of writing that you want to be doing. And because you don't have external pressure of somebody saying, "Well, I'm paying you for this time, what am I getting from it?" You know, one out of 25 of those things might go to resolution or fewer. And so I encourage you with, like I said, learning just think about research development as synonymous with learning, if you're sort of struggling to place it, in how you spend your time.



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So this can be learning about a specific magazine you might pitch, it can be learning more deeply about a specific article idea that you're thinking about pitching, it can be learning more deeply about a destination in preparation for a trip, it can be learning more deeply about a specific type of marketing that you're looking at doing for your business. It can be looking at a type of marketing you're looking at offering to different clients or something like that.

But give yourself a threshold, as the person who pays the bills for this company, what to you is the moment at which something needs to have come out of it or you need to pull the plug? What's that threshold for you if, you know, these many hours have gone into something or if this is the potential income that can come from that thing, and this percentage of that income has gone into it. That's another good way to look at it. You know, what is the balance of if one out of, you know, let me make it a round number. If one out of five article ideas that you try and develop into a pitch, don't work out, you don't find a home for them, you realize it's not a good article idea something like that.

So one out of five, okay, so that, you know, would be whatever it is 12.5, I think I'm flaking on my math here, 60 divided by 5, whatever that number is. Okay, so 12, so that's like, you know, in an hour you would be spending 12 minutes on that if you in one hour, look at five ideas and you tend to come up with one that's actually worthwhile. Okay, that's a pretty common number that I hear from people, okay?

So, if you know then that each pitch that you send has maybe a 10% chance of landing, and you're primarily pitching things that could be paid \$400, okay? So that means that each pitch, we talked about this with lead scoring in an earlier webinar, right, each pitch is worth about \$40. It's worth 1/10 because you have a 1 in 10th success rate and you're pitching things that are worth \$400. So each pitch is worth \$40, \$40 for one pitch.

If you're currently spending an hour to come up with one pitch it that's viable, out of five that you look at, okay, and then we're not yet talking about writing the piece and writing the pitch and all those things. So, right now you're doing an hour towards maybe a future potential of \$40. If you think about it that way, and you think about you're spending 12 minutes on each pitch that doesn't work out.

So you're spending 48 minutes of that hour on pitches that don't work out. Do you wanna spend less time on that if you think about how precious pitching time is for you or how precious your R&D time is trying to figure out new ideas and figure out new markets? Do you wanna create a threshold for yourself? If in four minutes this idea isn't working out yet, I'm gonna put it on a maybe later, let's move on.

Okay, that's just the kind of thing that you can start to sort of put, like I said, this pressure to perform in pursuit of research. I'm not saying this is the thing for everybody, some people already have too much of this. But if you're somebody who spends a lot of time on learning and feels like you don't have enough pressure to get outputs, you can put some arbitrary rules



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on yourself in this regard. One last definition of research and development here, so oh, sorry, I know I said there were two things on here. So in this definition, there were two things that I wanna look at because the second one here was about introducing breakthrough products to the market.

So this is a weird sounding thing for us as writers, but I just wanna look at what that can mean in reality. So a breakthrough product to the market can be something where you are reporting or becoming a specialist in, for instance, a destination that's under-reported. So I use the example of Montenegro a lot just because I feel like it must be great and I really want to go there and learn about it.

But let's say you are putting a lot of time into learning about finding stories about, for instance, a place that is on the cusp of blowing up as a tourism market. That's a breakthrough product in the market as a travel writer. Becoming somebody who can offer stories about a destination that's an up and coming tourism, you know, attraction or just a place for people to go that's a breakthrough product.

The story about this place that is an up and coming market that not a lot of other writers specialize in, okay, so that's one way to think about what can be a breakthrough product for you. It can also be specializing in a type of writing that other people aren't doing yet.

So for instance, you know, I don't think that it's really taken off as much as people thought it did. But people really thought that sort of these Amazon Alexa, I don't know the right term for them, but there's things that Alexa has that are like apps with every...you can program an Alexa every morning for her to share with you. The weather, the news headlines and like an affirmation from your favorite yoga guru or something like this.

And so, people for a while were really crazy about developing this Alexa content. So that's something that could be a breakthrough product, you could learn to specialize in this very niche, a new area that not a lot of people know about and offer that to clients and offer along with that the strategic work of helping them translate how whatever their company does would play on Alexa. So let's say it's a tour company and this tour company is gonna have an Alexa app that helps you kind of, you know, plan for your camping trip or get your family excited for your camping trip or something like that. So that's something else that can be a breakthrough product for you.

Okay, one last definition here. Research and development refers to innovative activities undertaken by corporations or governments in developing new services or products, or improving existing services or products, right? We saw this earlier in the other definition and we talked about this with Microsoft. Research and development constitutes the first stage on development of a potential new service or the production process. R&D activities differ from institution to institution with two primary models of an R&D development, either staffed by engineers and tasked with directly developing new products or staffed with industrial



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scientists and tasked with applied research and scientific or technological fields, which may facilitate future product development.

R&D differs from the vast majority of corporate activities and it is not intended to yield immediate profit, and generally carries greater risk and uncertain return on investment. However, R&D is crucial for acquiring larger shares of the market through the marketization of new products. So a couple of things that really stand out here, right, is that R&D can have two models. It can either have people who are directly developing new products or people who are applying sort of more esoteric or vaguer or pure research to maybe development of future products, okay?

Then you'll see two things here that I really want to point out, which is this may facilitate future products and also not intended to yield immediate profit. But what is key here is that a corporation or government doesn't invest in any of these things unless there is a relatively confident chance that something will come out of it eventually, okay? And so this is something that I wanted really to pull you guys into here. When I was talking earlier about some examples of how research and development ties into travel writers, I was really trying to stick with those things that can come into a type of work that you can be paid for in the relatively near future.

And as you'll see here that's really a core of the definition of what research and development work does, okay? And so if you find, and I've given a couple of different examples, right, we talked a lot about an article pitch side or developing some new types of writing that you could monetize or something like that. But if you find that you're learning about something quite a bit and the monetization path is not super clear, there's a couple of things to ask yourself here. Are you learning about this for fun or as a hobby? In which case, please do it outside of your designated work hours if you have them, not everyone does, okay? And don't tell yourself that you're "working" during that time or that you're working on marketing or something like that.

But if it doesn't have a clear monetization path and you're really passionate about it, is one of the important steps to make sure you figure out what the path to market is as part of that research and development to make sure that you're not spending a lot of time developing something either that can't go to market that you think one day will be able to or to make sure that you're investing your business time on the steps that will most closely lead to market as opposed to more general research.

So I've got this big list for you, and I've touched on some of these things here. But I wanted to kind of show the three main areas here of where R&D comes in for a writer. So I've broken them out into travel, skill-building, and industry knowledge. Now in skill-building, you know, we could also add developing new digital marketing skills or whatnot, but that can also go in writing craft. So the two things that I've got here, I've got travel, skill-building, and



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industry knowledge. And with travel what I mean in terms of that, we could also maybe call this destination or specific cultural knowledge, okay?

So we can almost think of this is where we do research on the things that will fill our pages, that will be the basis of our words, that will also be the basis of our trips, right? Because some of this research is, how exactly do I get to this place, and what am I gonna do when I'm there? And this kind of falls into three different buckets, there's destinations you're considering going to in the future, destinations that you have scheduled where you really need to be specifically looking into what stories can you do about that place, and then destinations that you have visited that you're mining for story ideas to get out to the market.

And, you know, another interesting and important thing here is that I find a lot of people do a lot of sort of research about things that could be story ideas, that doesn't come into anything, okay? And this is definitely something where when I was talking about those ratios before, you know, of how much time are you spending, researching idea, and how many ideas to get out of that if you're sitting there. And keeping track of, you know, that you may be are researching 15 different things in an hour and only one comes out.

It's really important to get a sense of that, because if you don't, if you don't track that, if you don't see kind of what is the payoff of your R&D time, it can be really easy to not hone the skills of how you are doing your destination research in a way that provides you better results. And thus feel like you're spending a lot of time spinning your wheels when you are trying to be pitching, and then feel like pitching isn't worth your time, feel like it's not getting you anywhere. But it's not getting you anywhere, because you're not tracking where you've been, you're not looking at that, and you're not looking at how to do it better.

For instance, you know, of course, if you ride a bicycle that just has one speed, right, it's gonna take you forever. But when you first start learning to ride a bike, you don't sit there with the thing that gives you all the different speeds, you just learn how to ride the bike. When you're first thinking about pitching, when you're first thinking about matching magazine ideas, you just learn how to ride that bike. But then once you know how to ride the bike, how to stay upright, how to turn and not fall over all these things, then it gets boring. You need different gears so that you're not just sitting there working, you know, your butt and your hands and your quads off cycling all the time, adjust that single-gear speed, okay?

So when I talked about research and development way back in the beginning, I was saying also that research and development can be improving the processes around how you do these things. And that doesn't just extend to your writing time, it can extend to how you run your business, but it can also particularly extend to how you do the research of a destination. How do you capture that research? What works for you? What have you tried? Have you tried more than one thing? Have you only done it the way that you've always done because you've never considered that there might be other options? Play with that, okay? But a lot of the time





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of our research load I find goes into researching destinations, things in the destination, and what may or may not be good story idea.

So be cognizant of that, be cognizant of that time. I know a lot of times we do it on our phones and so we're not capturing it. I encourage you, especially if you're somebody who does a lot of articles about different places or different topics in a month to be looking at how are you taking that research and how are you organizing it? Are you using everything that you're finding? Is there a commonality to the things that you use or don't use? How can you streamline that system?

So then on the skill-building side, this is also something else that tends to be a big, I don't want to say a big time suck because obviously, this is if you're building a skill, there's some clear benefit in it. But I see a lot of people doing a lot of time learning without applying, so like reading without applying. And if you were in an actual research and development setting, if you were in a lab, if you were in a pharmaceutical lab, the core of what they do is they run experiments, guys. They don't just learn something and sit on it and hold on to it, they learn it and they put it into practice right away. They try to see how it applies to their settings.

I've been in a lot of wineries, for instance, that have these chemical labs where they're mixing, you know, different little bits of this barrel on that barrel, and how do these things taste if they're together? How do they taste if they've been aged in this kind of barrel and that kind of barrel, if they've been aged in stainless steel instead of a barrel, that's how they figure out what works, okay?

So if you are spending a lot of time doing research and development on the craft of writing or the craft of doing a particular new type of digital marketing like these Alexa skills or whatever, and you are not putting that into practice, it's not real research and development, okay, because scientific research inevitably involves this experimentation, this testing of hypotheses, okay? So want, if that's something that you're doing a lot of learning that's just intake, to also look at how to actually, I called it skill-building here for a reason, how to actually physically build those skills, build those muscle memory, do more whether it's writing prompts or just practice of some kind that you do for yourself to solidify the skills.

Now, the next part of research and development for travel writers is what's going on generally to understand how you fit in the landscape. Now, this is stuff that's a little bit harder to say like, "Oh, you know, I did this research and then I was able to do something to practice it and internalize it, this is something that's naturally gonna be a little bit more reading." But it is something that you can also be kind of flipping around to monetize a little bit more.

So for instance, you know, let's say that you are very interested in a particular sector of the industry, and you're reading about that bone up on it. Can you also be writing for trade magazines that cover that sector of the industry, so you're not only getting paid to interview sort of, you know, ranking members of that sector of the industry and to get their insights, but



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that you're also applying that knowledge by thinking about how to put it together into a feature article.

I always recommend for people that having at least one trade magazine that you're writing for in your portfolio is great because they're gonna give you assignments without having you pitch them. But it also gives you a way to constantly each month be interviewing people in different parts of the industry, and that's gonna give you more ideas.

So as you leave today, I want you think about the question is not what new shiny research and development can I get started on? It's really what is this use of the time to support my future business, and how much time can I really afford to devote here? For some of you, it could be more if you're feeling really stagnant in what you're working on, it couldn't be that you need to spend a little more time on this. I feel like for a number of you, I tend to attract very academic types who love to learn things. So for a number of you, that's not the case, it should probably be less, but here's a good way to find out.

So as you leave this webinar, I recommend sometime in the next month, I know it's back to school time and people have got Labor Day vacations and all sorts of things. So sometime in the next month, take 30 to 60 minutes, be brutally honest with yourself, if you use a time tracker use that, to list all of the research and development work, all of the learning work that you've done in the last week.

If you can, try to do it for the entire month and make sure this is the kicker. Remember, I talked about travel, we spend so much time researching that, that we don't even realize that we're doing it, right? Make sure that you're not only listening kind of general learning like familiarizing yourself with magazines or trying to figure out what idea to pitch by reading some more about that destination, but also maybe places that you're thinking about going.

Have you been looking for airfare, have you been figuring out what's the best time to go there? Or what places you might go when you are there? Have you been reading magazines at the library, whatever that is, okay? Then take your list, highlight the parts that belong to a different "department" that we've looked at in this series, right? So it could be that you were trying to figure out how to use a new app to do your taxes. It could be that you were familiarizing yourself with another magazine in order to send a LOI to that market so became applied because you're actually doing the sales work.

And it couldn't be some things that you went to that were for, you know, a professional app when your business fell in, right? You went to a conference where you went there with the aim of doing some speed dating, for instance, or something like that. But what other sessions did you go to at that conference, and how many of them were for, "Hey, maybe I'll get into doing Instagram stories someday even I'm not doing them now, right?"



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Now, how many things are left on that list after you've highlighted these things that belong to another department? Does that feel like too many or enough, give yourself a gut check. Do you see a hole? Is there something that you know that you keep saying that you wanna be doing, that you wanna be working on that's not in there? Or is there a goal that you know you wanna be working on and you see a lot of things in there, but you've not taken the next steps to actually build that muscle memory and get things out in the market.

Those things need to, you know, be products that are moving into that market? What does it look like for you? So this kind of R&D audit is the next step that I really recommend taking. Because like I said, this is unusual in the webinars that we've done in this Freelance Business System series, and that I know you're all doing this research and development already in one, if not all three of those areas. So the real question is how does it align with your bigger business goals? And we're gonna look at that in a lot more detail next week.

And I look forward to seeing all of you guys next week.