

You CAN Attract New Freelance Writing Clients (Even During a Recession)!

By Jennifer Mattern

For more information about becoming a successful freelance writer and attracting new clients, visit the author's [freelance writing blog](#). To learn more about launching a successful freelance writing career online, you can purchase her e-book: [*The Web Writer's Guide to Launching a Successful Freelance Web Writing Career*](#).

Recessions: The Importance of a Positive Outlook

When it comes to being a freelance writer during a recession, things can be confusing. People (traditional employees) are losing their jobs and homes. We hear about it every day. Maybe you even see friends, family, or neighbors dealing with these issues. That means you should expect things to be equally tough for freelancers, right?

Not necessarily.

In fact, recessions can be great times for freelancers, where demand for your services may even *grow*! Why?

Many freelance writers successfully grow their client bases during recessions, because clients need freelancers more. Freelance professionals are usually more cost-effective than full-time staff, so when companies lay off employees, they often turn to freelancers to fill the void. This means more clients are available and looking for YOU!

Not only are there more clients, but even relatively high rates from freelancers can still be cheaper for clients than paying lesser hourly rates to full-time employees. That's because they don't pay taxes, insurance, benefits, or overhead to employ you. That also means there are not only more clients, but more clients able and willing to pay better than rock-bottom rates.

If there are so many chances to advance your freelance career during a recession, why do so many other writers tell you that you need to lower your prices to compete? There are a few reasons:

- Many of these writers don't understand the concept of marketing on value as opposed to price (Hint: Anyone well-versed in marketing will tell you it's not smart to market services on price!).
- Some are new writers who don't yet have a reputation and client base built. Companies looking for freelancers to fill the roles of let-go full-time writers generally look for writers with equal (or similar) credentials. They'd rather pay more for that reputed freelancer with a solid portfolio and years of experience than turn to the penny-per-

word crowd or someone who promotes their primary benefit as being "cheap."

- They look at new freelancers (those getting into freelance writing suddenly because they need extra money or lost their full-time job during the recession) as increased competition to offset most of the increases in demand - in fact, they're usually *not*!

Okay. So there are more people hiring, including prospective clients that may even be willing to pay more than your current clients. But what *about* those new freelance writers? Why should most established freelancers not worry about them too much?

Being "established" is the key. Most new freelancers aren't your competition once you've established yourself. They rarely put a lot of planning into starting a freelancing career (remember, during a recession they're often just jumping in to make some quick money to supplement a job loss or other unexpected budget constraints). They don't have your network (how you get referrals - often for the best available gigs). They also don't likely have your experience in marketing freelance writing services. In other words, you have a significant edge!

As long as you keep your credentials in mind, and don't mistake new freelancers as your immediate competition, you're looking at recessions in the right way - as something you're positioned well to handle.

The fact that you can do very well for yourself as a freelance writer during a recession doesn't mean you won't have *any* downsides.

Yes, you'll probably have some clients who take longer to pay.

Yes, some clients will probably cut back on what they order.

Yes, other clients will try to talk you into lowering your rates.

And yes, you'll very likely lose some clients.

The solution is to do what you should be doing year-round anyway, regardless of current economic situations. You should be aggressively marketing your services to continually **attract new clients!** (Remember, it's

always better to have too much interest in your writing than too little - that allows you to set better rates and be more selective in the jobs you ultimately take.)

No matter what the economy is like, as a freelancer you run the risk of any of the above situations happening at any time. That's why you should never "put all of your eggs in one basket" (or too few). Recessions are no different - you're simply more conscious of those concerns because everyone's telling you that you should worry. Rather than worry, just be proactive. If a client does leave, have others lined up already interested in working with you!

How to Find New Writing Clients During a Recession

It isn't as difficult to find new clients as you might think. Even if you feel as though you've completely tapped your existing client base, it's highly unlikely that you have. Here are several strategies you can choose from when you need to grow your client roster (or find clients who are willing to pay more, year-round).

Change Your Market - This should be obvious, right? If demand within your existing market has died, or at least fizzled, change your market! It happens sometimes. In some markets it happens often! (Think about SEO content writers - when a particular keyword is hot, there's huge demand; when the advertisers aren't paying as much anymore, demand for those articles drops off.)

Changing your market doesn't mean you have to change the type of work you do. Here's an example from my own past:

When I first started my former PR firm, I did a lot of press release writing and press kit content for independent musicians. After launching a webzine in that niche and spending time with webmasters (learning how to build a better site and promote it effectively), I realized it was a fresh market for my writing services. Before long, taking on writing and PR work for webmasters far outweighed my work for musicians, and I essentially grew my own demand with a service that was then new to many of them.

In other words, think about the type of writing you do. Now think of a group that may have a need for that service, but that you've never

targeted (it's even better if they don't *know* they need you yet). Maybe you write marketing copy for lawyers' websites, and demand is dropping. Rather than give up on the general work, you might look to other professionals and expand into different verticals (dentists, accountants, etc.). Or instead of only writing for women's magazines, you might contact companies which target women with their products, offering to write content for their blogs, newsletters, or internal publications.

Change How You Present Yourself - If you don't want to change your overall market, it might help if you change your position within it. While marketing plays a role, image can play a bigger one.

Freshen up your portfolio with new samples. Re-design your website or update your Web copy. For example, rather than referring to yourself as something like a "premium" service provider, you might want to change the general pitch - emphasize that, even without rock-bottom rates, your services can be economical.

This could also entail getting out into your local community if you're predominantly a Web writer (you'll know what companies and publications in the area are facing financial problems and laying off staff - the ones that could most benefit from freelance services during a recession).

Change Your Marketing Strategy - This one may also sound obvious, but what exactly does a marketing "strategy" mean? It's not about the specific things you do to get people to hire you. It's about your overall plan.

For example, if you've made that royal uh-oh of marketing your services solely on price, it's time to change that. If you write marketing copy, maybe it's time to start promoting yourself based on past results (such as conversions). Or perhaps you would start marketing yourself based more on your actual credentials, which justify better rates and help to demonstrate true value to buyers.

The trick is finding out what strategy works most effectively in your market (and it may be a combination of several).

Change Your Marketing Tactics - Your tactics are where we finally get into the specifics of your marketing. Perhaps you currently have a website, take part in article marketing (to drive traffic to your professional site), and send cold emails or make cold calls to pitch prospective clients.

You might change things up by leaving behind the article marketing in favor of blogging - or do both. You might drop the cold contacts in favor of directly asking past clients for referrals (you could offer them a free report, savings on a future order, or something else to encourage them to refer others in your market).

The point is to try something new. Not all members of your target market can be reached in any one way. You need to test various marketing tactics over time to find out which give you the best reach. By trying something new, you may be pleasantly surprised to find orders flowing in rather quickly (personally, blogging was the biggest change for me early on, and now my blogs bring in a significant portion of my clients without any direct marketing on my part - I know others have had luck with cold calls and article marketing specifically).

Build Visibility - Here's where the latent PR professional in me comes out. You need to build visibility if you ever want to get to the point where clients are actively seeking *you* out instead of the other way around.

There are numerous ways you can do this. Blogging is one of the easiest things you can do to start building your professional platform. Article marketing can help with this too - as can guest blogging for others.

It's important to go beyond the basics though. For example, if you're targeting local clients, you might want to pitch an op-ed or letter to the editor to your local paper. If you're looking for wider visibility you should do anything you can to make yourself newsworthy - conduct a study or survey, release a research report, etc. Then send out press releases to targeted media outlets and blogs within your niche or industry.

Other things you might consider are seminars, lectures, webinars, online courses, guest lecturing at your local college or university (if appropriate), conducting a virtual publicity tour / blog tour, sending pitch letters to media outlets (offering to be a source for quotes on future pieces within your specialty - it helps to pitch a specific piece at the time), and just generally seeking interview opportunities wherever they might exist in your market. In the end, it's about getting your name out there!

Sure, recessions are scary. But the economy will always have its natural fluctuations. We can't stop them. We *can* refuse to let them determine our professional fate.

If you approach recessions with the right attitude, and the willingness to continue to work hard and make changes when needs be, you too can join the ranks of freelance writers and other freelance professionals who turn recessions into some of the most profitable and growth-oriented times in their careers.

--

About the Author

Jennifer Mattern is a freelance business and PR writer. As both a freelance writer and editor for ten years, and owner of a former small PR firm, she's learned how to successfully adapt to changing economic environments in service-oriented professions. She blogs about freelance writing at www.AllFreelanceWriting.com and is the author of the growing [Web Writer's Guide](#) e-book series, with its second installation on marketing Web writing services due to be released Spring 2009.