



The Ray Edwards Show, Episode 394

How a Beginning Copywriter Goes From Zero to \$75,000 a Year

- Speaker 1: [00:01](#) Ray Edwards Show, Episode 394 "How a Beginning Copywriter Goes From Zero to \$75,000 a Year."
- Speaker 2: [00:15](#) The Ray Edward Show. This is the podcast for prosperity with purpose.
- Speaker 1: [00:25](#) One of the questions I get so often from my students from those who listen to this podcast from those who are in my certified copywriting program, for those who are in the profitable copywriting business course is how do I start from zero and start making some money and I give answers like go to live events, network with people, get to know people in communities like the product launch formula community or Stu McLaren's, try community, things like that. Those things are great and I stand by that advice, but they do cost money. You have to invest to get there and for some people that's not realistic and up until recently I didn't have a great answer for them. A lot of folks would ask me, what about upwork? Can I go in there and make some money? And my advice has always been to those folks. No, don't do that because that's where people are racing to the bottom in terms of how cheaply they can. Right? So you're not going to make money there, you're just going to get taken advantage of. But I know mark this down, I was wrong. And this interview with Judy Micheal proves that I was wrong because she made \$75,000 after starting from zero was upwork with an 87% profit margin, \$75,000 with an 87% margin. That is amazing. And so rather than give it much more buildup, I just want to jump right in and Judy, introduce yourself. Tell us who you are, what you do and how you came to this place where you are now.
- Speaker 3: [01:50](#) Um, I started on upwork about a year and a half ago, 18 months ago. Um, I did actually a little bit out of desperation of I had, I'm a lady in baby boomer. Um, I had left my last job and took some time out, did some business coaching, which ranch or the job market and found out they didn't want me anymore. And so I was in a position that I knew my, one of my core skills was writing because I had done business writing for about 30 years. So I, I jumped on upwork and I just started leveraging

everything I knew about business writing. I did policies and procedures, I did linkedin resumes, I did articles. I just jumped in feet first and got started.

- Speaker 1: [02:38](#) What struck me as remarkable was most people who go on upwork to get jobs in writing don't do very well. They don't make a lot of money or they don't make any money. And you have been different. Could do you mind sharing some numbers about what you've been able to accomplish?
- Speaker 3: [02:52](#) Sure. Um, so I've been on a upwork for 18 months and I was just going through my numbers yesterday. So in revenue I've made a little over almost \$75,000 I paid \$9,000 in fees. So it could cause upwork is gonna take a chunk of that and then I pay like 10 bucks a month for a upgraded membership. So my margin is 87%. So I've kept over 65,000 I've had 55 clients, a 27% of those are repeat clients. My biggest client who uses me on upwork and also off of upwork, I've made over \$20,000 plus another 20 grand offline. And um, I have another one that I'm working with now that's about 7,500. About 50% of my business comes from web content. Uh, so articles, white papers, case studies, uh, webpages, and then another 30% or more business documents like policies and procedures and sales proposals.
- Speaker 4: [03:58](#) That's really amazing. I have so long when people would ask me, even back when it was Elana Elana and I would tell them no, because it's, you're going to have to end up fighting for the lowest fee and it's going to cost you and you're not going to make money. And that's what I told them that I heard about your story and I realized, Oh, there's somebody out there who knows how to make this work. Yes, I wanted to talk to you and now let me just ask a few questions. You can get this business by leveraging an existing email list or by contacts with some big super gurus who connected you with clients. Yeah. You just got on upwork and put up your profile and follow the procedures that you followed in generate a business.
- Speaker 3: [04:37](#) I did you, and from this methodology, you do not need a website. You do not need an email list. You do not need to know anyone. I just really systematically just started getting proposals out there and every single one of my clients is someone I did not know. Wow. The clients I did not know.
- Speaker 4: [04:57](#) Well, I'm going to bow to your greater knowledge about this cause I was wrong about this. And this is a, this strikes me as a great way for new writers, especially people who want to be copywriters, to get a book of business, to get up, to get a portfolio and to make some money while they're doing it. So can you maybe go into a

little more detail about how you did this? If you're starting over from scratch, what would you do? What would be the first thing you do

- Speaker 3: [05:19](#) from a mindset? You have to understand that upwork is a numbers game. They just came out with a statistic that said there's 10,000 freelancers a day across the globe, across all disciplines who are trying to get on upwork. So the number one thing that you want to do is to make your profile 100% and to stand out. And so, and I think a lot of people fail to do that because you need things like a picture and a description and a two minute video that just says, hey here, here's who I am and what I do. I have a lot of tests that you can take. So all of this is intended to build your credibility.
- Speaker 4: [05:56](#) So when you say it to 100% they
- Speaker 3: [05:58](#) have a system where they score. If you've done all these steps and you reach 100% yeah, completion of your profile, right? And it's things like putting in your payment information, how you know, your bank account information, how frequently do you want to get paid. But the great thing is they have a lot of onboarding videos. So it's not like you're left in the dark about how to do this. So you just, I'm real good at following procedures called their onboarding videos.
- Speaker 4: [06:22](#) So you didn't take anybody's expensive upwork course, how to make a fortune on upwork. You just follow the instructions of upwork itself.
- Speaker 3: [06:29](#) Yes. Clever. Yes. I was very clever and I follow the ropes.
- Speaker 4: [06:34](#) Please, please go on. What would you do after you got your profile to 100%
- Speaker 3: [06:38](#) the next step is to, uh, what I would call pick the right clients. So there's two ways to get clients. One is you can apply for jobs that are out there. Number two, you can have people invite you who see your profile invite you, but I think you need to search for the right clients. So a couple things is, um, I look at good clients on that or are rated well, I look at if they're stale. So some people get really excited post a job and then they don't look at it for three or four weeks. And so I just let those go. Those are not in my pile of things to consider. I also don't typically consider people who don't have their payment method verified because then you can get go and not get paid. So I come up with some criteria of what we're making good client. And so that's part of the second step.
- Speaker 4: [07:30](#) Well this is very similar to what I teach people to do when they're looking for copywriting clients for direct

response copywriting is picking your clients instead of just taking whoever comes along or entertaining any offer you've got criteria that you said that lets you know, this is a good potential client for me and it has all these boxes they have to check off in order to have their payment method verified, etc. Etc.

- Speaker 3: [07:51](#) Right? And you know the first thing that's going to attract you as the job title and so you'll pick out the job. We know titles about. Once I get into it, I look and see, you know, are they in my, um, you know, does it look like they're going to pay? Um, the other thing is I, I get rid of clients who are shopping. So some of them will send out like 50 and bites and that just gives me that. Now you're just looking for the lowest price. So I don't, I stay away from shoppers. Did you take this approach from the beginning? No, I learned a lot of this is just harder and knowledge over the last 18 months, you know? But um, I like to look at details and I would start to pick up things in the profile like, oh, these people haven't been on the site in three weeks. Why would I bother contacting them? I would also get invites from foreign countries that I did not want to deal with it. I was like, thank you very much and I will decline your offer. So can you kind of have to feel your way and use some common sense on what would be a good client.
- Speaker 4: [08:52](#) So wow, we've turned out to be the best for you. The best pain, the best to work with, the best
- Speaker 3: [08:57](#) one was and continues to be because this one has just rolled over and rolled over his last year. Someone was asking for, they wanted their request for proposal database rewritten, and they were in the insurance industry. So I signed up, we talked to him and I spent last August free writing 500 pages in uninsurance proposal database. I know, but it was at a good price per hour. So I made a good chunk of money. But during that I met like five vice presidents, reached out to one of them and then said, oh, by the way, I write articles. She, it was a couple months later, they gave me a six month retainer to write articles off of upwork and they're getting ready to renew, but then they told other divisions of their company about my writing. And so it's gone from a \$7,000 project to about a \$40,000 client. Wow.
- Speaker 3: [10:00](#) Yeah. And, and some of them are the other ones. Um, that was, that was a really good one. There's some nice repeat clients, you know, that if you do a good job on a case study or white paper, that'll hire you again and again. So, um, the, the number one thing I think about is one of my, one of my clients one time said I hate crappy freelancers and I found that to be true of a lot of people. It's like if you find someone who a freelancer actually

shows up and does their job and does great work, they'll hang on to you.

Speaker 4: [10:34](#)

I know. And isn't it sad that that's the bar?

Speaker 3: [10:37](#)

It's very sad.

Speaker 4: [10:39](#)

Just keep a deal.

Speaker 3: [10:41](#)

I know, but it's great for those of you who are professionals and it's also been great from a self confidence stand point because I was competing in a job market that kept telling me I was too old to you know, experience not the right experience and to come on here and have people say we love you is like what happened?

Speaker 4: [11:05](#)

You've encountered something that a lot of people have encountered in the corporate world, which is once we reached a certain age were too expensive, they can hire first out of college people for a third of the price. The work isn't as good, but it's good enough in most corporations estimation. And so what the beauty is, we have something like upwork or the Internet where we can go out and find clients who don't care how old we are.

Speaker 3: [11:26](#)

They just want the job done. Yeah, they love it. And some of them are looking for, you know, I tell them I'm experienced and they can see I've got 25 or 30 years have you experienced? And some of them are like, yes, I know. That's why I'm hiring you.

Speaker 4: [11:40](#)

So what about problems have you run into any problem? Clients are things that you, if you look back, you say, I would avoid this. So

Speaker 3: [11:48](#)

I would say the problem clients, um, one of them has been the not verified thing. So that means they haven't given up work, their credit card, any way of being built. And so you just have to do that like once and not get paid and you won't do it again. So what I'll do is if I see it, I, I will let the client know, your payment method isn't verified. And sometimes they don't know. They're like, well, no one ever told me. And I said, that's why no one's applying for your job because they don't, I think you'll get paid. So that's one hang up. The other one is typically people who want to go out of scope. So I'm pretty clear about setting expectations up front about you're going to get this many words by this time here, I only doing two rounds of edits and here's what's going to happen. And then what they'll do is like, well can we make a two, I mean 3000 words, I mean 4,000 words and can we add references? And I'm like, yeah, no I, I've done that a couple times and it's gone off the rails and then you know, it's just very disconcerting for everyone. And I had

someone do that recently go out of scope and I said no. And I cut the project and I actually gave him a refund and I said, thank you very much. Good luck. I'm done.

- Speaker 4: [13:04](#) That was wise because scope creepers are troublesome.
- Speaker 3: [13:08](#) Yes they are. And so that, that's been the major one.
- Speaker 4: [13:12](#) Knowing what you know now, if you were to start from scratch like tomorrow, how long do you think you would take you to be making money?
- Speaker 3: [13:18](#) Couple of weeks.
- Speaker 4: [13:20](#) And how much money do you think you could make over the first year if you, knowing, having, having the experience that you've just described this, what's a guess?
- Speaker 3: [13:27](#) Well, in the last 12 months alone and made \$60,000 but it does depend on how much you charge. Okay. So, um, I, you know, I started out charging like 57 50 an hour and now I'm up to 90. But there's copywriters on there who charge 150 an hour, you know, or fixed price contracts recharge a thousand or 2000. So it took one week for me to complete my profile. So I would set that expectation is you're not going to get it done like that because, so it takes about a week to get on there. And the goal I set when I first started was to have 20 proposals out there at any one time because it is a numbers game and people get frustrated and say, oh, I applied for one job and I did get it. I was like, that's not going to happen. Especially if you're new, you need to put a chunk of proposals out there knowing that your win rate is going to be, you know, 10%
- Speaker 4: [14:28](#) what I'm hearing is you're very systematic. So you're, you're saying you'd start by completing your profile 100% most people probably don't do that. So that gives you a real advantage and it took you about a week. Then you would get proposals out. Lots of them, not just one. You have criteria for clients like they have to be Heather payment method verified. You probably want to look and see if they have activity with previous writers. And is there a rating system for, for clients?
- Speaker 3: [14:54](#) Yes. Yeah, it's freelancers and clients. There's a five star rating system so you can see both how many stars and you can see reviews that, um, previous freelancers have written
- Speaker 4: [15:08](#) about them. And then you said that a lot of it depends on how much you charge. How, how would you recommend somebody start if they have no history of being a

freelance writer, how would those more they start pricing themselves?

- Speaker 3: [15:19](#) Okay. I have to give you my number one rule that I learned from someone several years ago and it's very simple when I wrote it down and big letters don't charge your resentment, right? Oh, I love that.
- Speaker 4: [15:36](#) That means it means they're paying you just enough to make you resent them for giving you the job.
- Speaker 3: [15:40](#) Yes. It's the rate that you'll do it, but you'll hate every minute of it. It's like you might be worth \$100 an hour, but if you mentally can only stand 25 bucks, go for it.
- Speaker 4: [15:52](#) May I borrow that? If I give you credit?
- Speaker 3: [15:54](#) Yeah, you can get me credit. I learned it from a woman who was an accountant. She was giving a seminar and she wanted to be a higher end accountant and she said, don't charge your, resent my rate. And everybody instinctually knew what that meant without
- Speaker 4: [16:09](#) defining it.
- Speaker 1: [16:12](#) Hi, I want to interrupt this interview for just a moment to remind you that we've produced a worksheet that will help you take the ideas in this episode, solidify them, and take them as key takeaways that you can use to start building your own portfolio of work on upwork if you so desire, get that by going to [inaudible] dot com slash three nine four that's ray edwards.com/three nine four four the worksheet that goes with this episode now right back to it, do you feel
- Speaker 4: [16:41](#) like you're gonna stick with upwork for your main source of clients and leads or is this a, is this a stepping stone or a path to somewhere else?
- Speaker 3: [16:49](#) No, it's definitely a stepping stone. So there, there are people on upwork who use it as their primary source of income and they stay there and there's some people who have made systems and then go on to teach and am memberships. I know my goal is that I've used it to build a clientele and build a portfolio and build experience that I can leverage, um, on my website. And that's one thing I do on every proposal. I give them a link to my website, a link to my linkedin profile, and then I take the ratings that I get on that site and then I go put them on my website.
- Speaker 4: [17:28](#) Nice. Now tell me about your linkedin profile. How extensive is that? So the ones,

- Speaker 3: [17:32](#) the thing that I needed on, I had to transition on linkedin from being more of a business consultant to being a writer. So I had to get clients from upwork to get them to be a linkedin connection so they could give me a, so my, my linkedin profile is complete and I'd like to do more marketing in that area since I'm more of a BTBY, um, person. But absolutely. Also, you know, your methodology of going to events absolutely. As a next step as well.
- Speaker 4: [18:06](#) Oh, I think the beauty of what you've done is, like I said, you started from zero, you made money, you built up a clientele, you've got references, you've got the portfolio of work that you got paid for, you've got credibility, you build up your linkedin profile. It's a beautiful thing that you've done. And I have to stop giving the advice now to tell people to stay off of work. I love this. This gives people a pass who have no connections, no police start from it. It gives them a path to start. And is this something like this has never been available in history before?
- Speaker 3: [18:34](#) Absolutely. And that's why I keep telling people and people are so polarized about upwork because there's a lot of people in upwork really dissing or I'm sorry, on the Internet at the same, oh, they kicked me off. You never get clients, Blah Blah Blah. And you know what? I'm like, stay off upwork. Then I'll take the job,
- Speaker 4: [18:53](#) one of those people. But I have a unique thing about me and that is when I see it, I'm wrong. I admit it and switch.
- Speaker 3: [19:01](#) Yeah. And I, well it took me awhile to get on there because I thought the same thing. I started believing what I was hearing. You know, that, oh, it never works and, but you really need to follow the rules and there's, you know, there's literally millions of freelancers on there. The other thing that people don't realize of what companies are on here is there's Microsoft, I just spoke with a major coach that said this morning that I won't tell you who it is, but I've had other coaches who are on there. I worked for our major, um, consumer products firm. I worked for an international chemical from a global insurance company. So big companies are getting on this site because, um, either they don't have the talent in house tax wise, it's easy because they don't have to issue 10 99 at the end of the year because they're paying upwork and not the individual. So it reduces a lot of administrative headaches. But there's big
- Speaker 4: [20:06](#) and think about what you just said because somebody could go in not having any experiences as a freelance writer, start building up businesses to get some of these clients with bigger names and could legitimately say, I've written for Microsoft, I've written for International

Harvester, I've written for Safeco or whatever the names of the companies are big, big names. Yeah,

Speaker 3: [20:25](#) absolutely. You can do that now. Now one thing I would recommend, I was thinking about that the other day is I started off doing things I knew how to write. Okay. And so I knew how to write, um, a lot of, you know, sales proposals in policies and procedures. And so I built up some credibility then and then I could use my credibility to go into new areas.

Speaker 4: [20:47](#) Yes. And, and you want to be three, you can actually do the job because I think it was David Ogilvy who said nothing destroys a bad product. Fasters and good marketing.

Speaker 3: [20:55](#) Yeah. Well that, that's why I encourage people, it's a great place to experiment because I did not know. You don't know what you don't know. And I got on there and I found industries and people that I, I never knew existed. So I was on there the other day and there's like a golf ball manufacturer who needs content marketing. Yeah. And yeah, there's just all kinds of weird, oh, someone hired me to do blogs for drawer hardware, you know, like really? Yeah. And you know what? I hated it. It taught me I don't do B to c because I'm not your fashion or blog or home improvement kind of gout. I'm, I'm totally corporate, you know, BHP. But yeah, I just, it was painful. I couldn't,

Speaker 4: [21:46](#) where do you see upwork fitting into your life going forward? If you're going to be moving more toward doing higher paying, maybe direct response copywriting, how would you continue with upwork?

Speaker 3: [21:55](#) You know, this is where I think this can help entrepreneurs, is that if you don't have a full book of business, there's nothing to say that you can't have a partial book of business on upwork. And one thing that they've done recently is they allow you to have multiple profiles. So you can be, um, an accountant and a copywriter. You can be an email marketer and policy and procedures. You can be a coder. And I'm a copywriter, so you can have multiple

Speaker 4: [22:27](#) profiles in those. So clients who are looking for that particular skill don't care that you're doing other thing. They just see, not even see it. That's, that's remarkable. Yeah. Well, so any other, as you wrap up, any other advice you'd give people or words of wisdom? I was, I mean, I was writing down my being a systems person. Um, I was writing down, um,

- Speaker 3: [22:51](#) about what I think, you know, you do setting your profile, look for the right clients, experiment, you know, try different industries and projects that you may or may not know, be responsive, get it. Set a goal to get 20 proposals out there, do great work. That's a huge one. Um, I did look up some hot areas to think about. So on upwork that right now, um, a lot of jobs for email copywriters. So who, who need email copywriting, social media, um, people like Facebook and Instagram marketing. And you have to be a little creative cause some people spell out Facebook, others use FB. So you know, when you do this, think about different terminologies. For some reason a top 20 rock was also podcasting help.
- Speaker 4: [23:41](#) Interesting. And that like writing show notes or you know,
- Speaker 3: [23:46](#) I'd have to look at it a little bit more, but it could be show notes. Um, sometimes the technical aspect of IT industries, there's just about every industry on here. And that's why you can try multiple ones. If you want to start though, the one that people might want to consider is cannabis, cannabis, cannabis, and CBD. Because this, here's what's interesting and this is, I experimented and so I worked with a client who has a client in the cannabis area and I actually talked to an insurance guy who their company insures cannabis folks. So what happens is the cannabis and hemp market is expected to double to triple in the next five years. There's different segments of that world if everyone from the growers, so they're small farmers to large companies. There's a company in California building a 2 million square foot indoor growth operation. Wow. For Cannabis. There's resellers who need help. Cause like in Washington and Oregon there's like a five year supply of cannabis. There's legal insurance and legal issues. But I'm trying to think about it and I don't know of that many industries that are brand new.
- Speaker 4: [25:10](#) No. And, and have a growth curve like this one is going to have, has known who's going to continue to have as more states legalize it. And there's talk of federal decriminalization. That's a big deal. So that's,
- Speaker 3: [25:21](#) yeah. And so, yeah. And so I, I just think there's a lot of room, you know, if you have your current industry, you know, then leverage that. And there's probably folks in there, if you have a certain talent, you know, whether it's, you know, mine was corporate writing and then I went into copywriting and I was able to leverage that across, I don't know, like 20 different industries. And then it allows you to find new things that you didn't know were out there and yeah, cause that's a marketplace. So that's why I'm excited about it. And that's why I keep telling people is especially baby boomers and other people who

were being disenfranchised, you know, it's like there's room for Ya. You got to do some work. But there's room.

- Speaker 4: [26:06](#) This is very exciting. I appreciate you sharing all this. So generously get in touch with you if they want to follow what you're doing or see your website or
- Speaker 3: [26:14](#) sure. My website is Judy and michael.com so it's j u d y a n n m, l c h a e l.com. And they can contact me through there. And um, yeah, that's the primary way. And Scott, my website portfolio and you can learn more about me or I'm on LinkedIn just pretty much if you type in Judy on Michael, I think I've, I've got it covered.
- Speaker 4: [26:40](#) Well thank you again. It's been very of you to share like you
- Speaker 3: [26:44](#) have and I really appreciate it. Good. I hope it does someone good and, and I wish I'm best of luck.
- Speaker 1: [26:50](#) Okay. That's it. A very generous sharing moment from Judy where she told us all her secrets about how she got started on upwork, what she would do differently if she started from scratch. This episode you can take and go from zero to making money on upwork. I believe. I can't promise that of course, because I don't know you, your situation, et cetera. But I do know what happened for Judy and what has happened for other people who sort of come out of the shadows now to start telling me their own experiences. This is a good place for a beginner to start making money and building your portfolio. So tell me your biggest takeaway from today's episode. You can do that on Twitter at Ray Edwards, Instagram at Ray Edwards, Facebook, youtube. It's all Ray Edwards everywhere. Today's show was produced by Chris Edwards, show notes and worksheets by Douglas Pew and one Lopez until we meet again. May you prosper in all things, health, wealth, and wisdom. Now go live your most magnificent life. See you next time.
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