



ESTABLISHING YOUR FREELANCE BUSINESS 101

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LESSON #3

Marketing Your Business

No matter how good your editing skills are, your business won't succeed if people don't know you're available and understand what you have to offer.

Marketing Strategy

Just as it's important to develop a business strategy (see Lesson 2), it's important to develop a marketing strategy. If you haphazardly throw your information out into the enormous world of cyberspace, you may get clients. But that's not a way to maintain clients or to consistently gain new clients.

Spend time thinking about how you'd like to market and advertise your business. Think about the following questions:

- What is my marketing budget? (You will need to set aside some money to fund your marketing strategy.)
- Who is my ideal client?
- Where does my ideal client hang out (online and physical locations)?
- How much time (and money/resources) can I give to marketing every week?
- What exactly am I marketing?

So that last question may make you say, "Duh ... I'm marketing myself and my services." But what kind of editor are you? *A copyeditor or developmental editor? A book doctor or proofreader?* What are your specialties? *Romance? Nonfiction? Speculative fiction?* What sets you apart from other editors? There are lots of choices to make as you begin to narrow down exactly who you are and what your services are so that you can market yourself. Think about your answers to Assignment #3 from Lesson 1 and Assignment #1 from Lesson 2. These assignments helped jump-start planning your strategy. It's important to articulate exactly what you do and what you have to offer.

Elevator Pitch

Authors are familiar with the term “elevator pitch,” but it’s also relevant to editors. What is an elevator pitch? Imagine you’ve stepped into an elevator with your ideal client, and he says hello and asks you what you do. What do you say? You have about thirty seconds to respond and “sell” yourself to this ideal potential client! Thirty seconds is not much time, but it forces you to be clear and concise in explaining who you are and what you do (what services you provide). Be sure to identify the problem you solve (*Through my book doctoring services, I help aspiring authors organize their story arcs*) and share your “why” (*My desire is to polish authors’ manuscripts so they are better equipped to fulfill their dreams of being published*).

As much as marketing seems to be about you, it isn’t. It’s about what you can do for the client. Think about clients asking, “What can you do for *me*?” Be sure to answer this question in your elevator pitch.

More than anything, practice your pitch so that it sounds natural. The more comfortable you are with yourself and what you are selling (you and your services), the more people will feel comfortable in further engaging in conversation with you—and hiring you.

Rachelle Gardner, literary agent at Books and Such Literary Agency, has an old blog post on creating your pitch. She gives “8 Steps to the Perfect Pitch,” which gives some good tips on recording yourself. If you are interested, check it out at <http://www.rachellegardner.com/crafting-your-elevator-pitch/>.

Ideal Clients

Who are your ideal clients and where do they hang out? Think of one specific person. Imagine him in your mind. What does he do? What is he like? For example: *My client is a pastor who is interested in turning his sermons into transcripts and then into nonfiction books, but he isn’t sure how to tie all the pieces together. He is introverted when he’s not preaching, but he’s active on social media.* If you are an editor who is searching for this type of client, then your elevator pitch will need to address how you can help this type of client (*I transcribe sermons for pastors and organize their information to help them write nonfiction Christian-living books*). Then figure out where this client typically hangs out. In our example, this pastor will probably not be found at a physical location, such as a writers’ conference. Instead, you’ll find him on social media. If your ideal clients are business owners, you’ll likely find them on LinkedIn. If your ideal clients are extroverted fiction writers, look for them at writers’ conferences, chatting with everyone they meet.

Time and Resources

Marketing (effectively) will cost you time, money, and energy. So you’ll need to determine how much of each you want to spend. And you’ll need to determine ways to measure success so you’re not wasting any of those things. Allocate time each day (or each week at the very least) to plan short-term and long-term goals. Work a little bit each day on marketing so that it’s not overwhelming. Create detailed records of what you’ve done, what works, what doesn’t work, etc. Then you can tweak your strategy to do what works best for *you*. There is no “one way” to market your services. You’ll have to figure out what works best for you and your business.

Keep a notebook so you can make notes of new ideas—this is when networking and socializing with other editors comes in handy. [PENCON](#) is CEN's (Christian Editor Network) annual editors' conference, and it is a great time to network with other editors and see what they're doing and how you can learn from them (and perhaps encourage them about what *you're* doing right).

Most editors don't have extra funds to devote to marketing (kudos to you for investing money in this course!). But many things don't take money—just time, which can be even more valuable to us. Below is a long list of ideas. As you read, make a mental note for each one for whether it takes your time, money, or both and whether it is something that might work for you.

Ways to Market Your Business

There are numerous ways for you to get the word out. Here are a few to consider.

A. *Word of Mouth*

You've probably heard it said that “word of mouth” is the best advertising. It's true! Encourage everyone you've edited for, whether for pay or for free, to tell their friends that you're in the freelance business (as long as you're pretty confident that they liked your work, of course). People in your writers' critique group, for example, don't pay you for your editing (except in their own time spent working on your manuscripts). But they are well acquainted with your work, and they can tell people outside your group what a great editor you are.

B. *Follow-Up*

Just as good as word-of-mouth referrals is working with repeat clients. One of the best ways to maintain an ongoing relationship with the clients you've already landed is to stay in touch with them.

Develop some kind of “tickler file” that will help you keep track of clients you haven't heard from in a while. If it's been more than a few months, contact them. Ask them how their rewriting/self-editing is coming. Have they been working on their manuscript? Is there anything you can do to help them at this point? Mention something specific about their manuscript or their writing style that you particularly liked. Knowing that you remember their work specifically will be encouraging to your clients and make them feel a personal connection with you. And if they've shared something with you about their family, prayer requests, etc., jot that down so you can ask about it. The personal touch goes a long way!

Keep a list of your clients' addresses (postal/email), and add to the list whenever you get a new client. That way, you can mail (or email) Christmas cards every year. This can be a great way to let your clients know you're still in the editing business and available for more work.

If you have a particularly slow month, you could contact all the clients on your list and offer something special for that month—maybe \$5/hour off (or 10 percent off) all editing done during that month. Even if they don't take you up on the deal, you'll be keeping your name and your services in their minds. You could even offer some kind of “recession-easing deal,” offering a discount on your services to help those who have been affected by an economic downturn.

C. Feedback

A great way to get more work from clients you've already worked with is to ask for their feedback. You may want to come up with a form to send out that your clients can use to evaluate your services. You could have boxes ("yes" and "no" or "satisfied" and "not satisfied" or a combination of the two) or ask for a rating (on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 to 10, etc., specifying what the numbers mean). Be specific about the areas you want them to rate.

Keep it simple, something your clients can fill out quickly and easily. If it looks like too much work, you'll get a lower response, especially from clients who are busy with their writing.

For example, below are the questions I came up with for my feedback form several years ago. Feel free to use these as a starting point to come up with your own questions.

Please rate on a scale of 1–5 (1 being unsatisfied; 5 being extremely satisfied):

How satisfied were you with the quality of my services?

How satisfied were you with the price/value/cost of service?

How satisfied were you with the turnaround time?

Would you use my services again? Yes No

Why or why not?

Would you recommend my services to others? Yes No

Why or why not?

I provided a few blank lines at the bottom of the form for clients to add their own comments.

Ask satisfied clients if you can use them as references. And ask for permission to use any positive comments on your website or other promotional materials. (If they say yes, ask if you can use their names and possibly also their email addresses/websites.)

You may want to send this follow-up form immediately after a job is completed or send forms to all of your clients once a year, maybe around the end of the year or the first of the new year. This is a great way to remind clients that you're around, and it may motivate them to use your services again or recommend you to someone else.

D. Website

These days, it's practically impossible to have a successful freelance business without a website. If you don't have one, you may want to take a course in website design, buy a website design software program and teach yourself, or hire someone to create one for you. (The Christian PEN has a few members who do website design. If you're a member and interested in hiring someone, you could post a message to the email loop asking for suggestions. Check out other freelancers'

websites to get ideas for your own. If you find one or more that you like, you could contact the owners and ask who designed their sites.)

Don't forget to include testimonials from satisfied clients on your website. If you haven't done any work for pay yet, ask your friends (or critique partners) to write recommendations for you.

Once you've got a website, be sure to get it listed on the major search engines. (If you're not sure how to do this, post a question to the loop. We have people in the network who can help.) One of the best ways to get your website noticed (and keep people coming back to it) is to have a blog: weekly, monthly, or at least quarterly.

Some people who are both authors and editors combine both services on one website; others have separate sites with links to both. There are advantages and disadvantages to both options. Following are some things to consider:

- Who are you trying to reach with your website(s)?
- Will your target audience for your writing be the same as your target audience for your editing (even some of the time)? If so, consider having just one site.
- Will your target audience for your writing website think more highly of you if they know you also edit (and vice versa)? If so, one site might be a better choice.
- Having multiple website addresses tends to clutter up a business card or email signature. (Another argument in favor of just one website.)
- How many tabs will you have? If you have lots of tabs for writing and lots of tabs for editing, you may want to consider having separate websites to avoid too many choices. If not many tabs, combining will make it look like you have lots to offer.
- Will you have a different name for your editing business? (If so, a separate site might make more sense.)
- Do you anticipate having more editors working with you? (If so, you definitely want a separate website.)
- Do you want to do separate marketing for your writing and your editing? Separate blogs (twice the work)? Pay for two websites (twice the cost)? Will you have separate business cards and other marketing material for your writing and your editing (also twice the cost)?

Kathy Ide has tabs on her website for her writing, editing, and speaking engagements at writers' conferences. Under those tabs she has information about and links to her editor networks, which have their own websites. She also has separate business cards for herself and for each of her editor networks.

E. Social Media

Get a Facebook page (a professional one—used to be called a “fan page”) so people can “follow” you. Follow other professionals in the publishing industry as well as aspiring writers so they can discover and follow you. You could post writing/editing tips or things you learn about the publishing industry here.

Some professionals also have a personal Facebook page that “friends” can “like” and respond to posts on. If you want fellow professionals and aspiring writers to connect with you on a more personal level, you could also get a personal Facebook page. This could be where you post questions you want people to respond to. Find the Facebook pages of authors and editors you like and admire and the pages of other publishing professionals and aspiring writers, and “like” their pages so they can “like” yours back.

If you enjoy keeping up with your family and personal friends on Facebook, set up a separate page for that. Your friends and family may not be interested in your writing and editing tips, and your professional connections won’t want you wasting their time with posts about what you had for dinner or this great park you discovered.

LinkedIn is *the* social media site for professionals of all kinds. Many editors have reported getting good job leads there. But don’t just post your profile and expect aspiring writers to knock down your door. Search for fellow professionals and aspiring writers, and connect with them. Post articles about writing and editing to really get noticed.

Twitter is also popular with writers and editors. But posts are limited to 140 characters (less is better). And that character count includes spaces and punctuation. Again, connect with others, and they will connect with you.

Many other social networking sites are available. Pinterest, Instagram, etc., etc., etc.! After you’ve become successful with Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, you could give a few of these a try. Some people have found success with them, but most editing professionals I’ve heard consider them less important than the “big three.”

If you’re not familiar with these social media sites, spend some time on the internet doing your research. The social media scene is always changing, so pay attention to the date on any online article you find with recommendations for how to use it. Better yet, attend a writers’ conference and get the latest scoop from someone who’s up on the current trends.

One caveat for social networking: It can very easily sap your time, and before you know it, you’ve spent half a day doing nothing else. So plan ahead. Set a specific amount of time you want to spend on your social media, set a timer, and when it goes off, *stop!*

Note from Christi: If you post writing/editing tips on social media, make sure they’re your exclusive material, not copied from someone else ... unless you cite the source and include a link or “tag.” Also, make sure to proofread your posts! An embarrassing typo or misspelled word could cost you jobs.

F. Flyers/Brochures

You’ll need to come up with something you can hand to potential clients when you see them in person. This can be a single 8.5 × 11” piece of paper, a fold-over card, a three-fold brochure, rack card, postcard, whatever you like. It should give some idea of who you are (professionally—don’t include your spouse, kids, pets, etc., unless they’re directly connected to your business), a description of your services, a brief summary of your qualifications, a listing of

your specialties, that sort of thing. Some people like to have a photo of themselves on their advertising material. This can remind people you've met who you are and can give those you haven't met an idea of what you look like.

Although you can print this in black ink on a plain sheet of white paper, a little bit of style, color, and paper thickness can go a long way toward giving potential clients a professional image of you. Most major office supply stores have specialty paper in a wide variety of designs.

[Vistaprint](#) will produce full-color flyers, brochures, rack cards, and postcards on nice glossy paper. They have a variety of templates to choose from, or you can design your own. You can even upload your photo, logo, or other graphics. They constantly have great sales once you're signed up with them. After you've created a piece with them, you can get more for just the cost of postage if you watch for the special offers.

G. Business Cards

You want to be able to hand out your business card to anyone who might be a potential client. Again, check your local office supply store or [Vistaprint.com](#) or other reputable online sites. Many print-at-home business cards are preperforated so you can print an 8.5 × 11" sheet of cards and then separate them. (Get the ones that have "perfect perforation" or "smooth edge" so there won't be ridges.) Or you may want to consider having cards professionally printed by a local print shop.

H. Résumé

If you're looking for a position with a company (perhaps editing for a publishing house), you'll need a résumé that shows why you are qualified for that position. Include publishing credits, formal education, and previous editing experience. No need to include references, but say at the bottom that references are available upon request.

I. Writers' Groups

Become an active and well-known member of one or more writers' groups. Make it known to the group that you are a freelance editor. If the group has a newsletter, see if you can get an ad or a notice in it. Better yet, offer to write a regular column that focuses on your specialty.

J. Online Groups

Join online writers' groups and post to them regularly, especially when a question comes up that you are particularly qualified to answer. (When you're dealing with a question about spelling or punctuation, be SURE you're right by looking it up in the appropriate reference book. If you find the answer in *The Chicago Manual of Style* or *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style*, give the rule number or page number in your post so others will know your answer is correct and will know where to look for more information on the subject.)

[Upwork](#), formerly Elance, allows freelancers from around the world to post profiles on its website and to respond to posted jobs that seem like a good fit for them. Payments go through the Upwork network. The main complaint I've heard about this is that you're bidding against a *lot* of competitors, and the one who gets the job is usually the one who quotes the lowest price.

But if you're looking to get started and don't mind working for a really low rate, this could work well for you.

K. Blogs

A blog is a terrific way to connect with potential clients and colleagues (who may send clients your way). You could talk about all kinds of writing-related topics, including tips for writers, that would entice potential clients to visit your blog regularly. As people who visit your blog realize how much there is to know about writing, they may realize their need for a professional edit.

Ask the writers you know who have blogs if they might consider interviewing you on their blogs. You could include your bio at the end of the interview, with links to your website/email address. And be sure to offer to interview them on your blog.

L. Editing Groups

Do an internet search for editing networks and ask if they're looking for someone new. But read the fine print carefully. Most networks require a finder's fee or referral fee. Find out how much of a cut the network wants and for how long—six months? a year? for as long as you work with a client they refer to you? Consider carefully whether you are willing to give up that much of a percentage for that long a period of time in exchange for getting a little bit more work. Also find out whether you are allowed to self-promote (advertise your services outside of their network, through having your own website, marketing yourself at conferences, handing out your own business cards, flyers, etc.). If the network asks you to sign a confidentiality agreement, or any other kind of contract, make sure you understand all points.

When I started freelancing, I signed up with a service that took a substantial cut (more than 50 percent for the first job, slightly less if the client continued to send in work after a few years), and the service took their cut for as long as a referred client sent in work. All payments went to the service owner, who took her cut before sending the job on to the editor. I agreed to this arrangement because I needed the work. But after a while, it started to bother me that people I'd worked with for years, on multiple projects, were still sending their money to the service and the service was taking a good-sized chunk of the payment even though the service owner had done nothing more than originally put me together with these people. Some of my clients were bothered by it, too. To make matters worse, the service charged a low hourly rate, so my percentage was quite slim. And the service owner expected me to market *her* service instead of my own at conferences. I finally told the service owner that, although I greatly appreciated the boost she gave me to get my own editing service started, I no longer felt comfortable with the arrangement. We parted on fairly amicable terms, but it was definitely awkward.

Later, I signed up with a different editing network that charged a much smaller percentage, had a one-year time limit on how long I had to pay the referral fee, and allowed me to charge whatever I felt comfortable with. I liked this arrangement much better (which is why I patterned the Christian Editor Connection referral fee details similarly: 15 percent for the first year you work with a referred client). Unfortunately, after I'd been with this network for a few years, they changed their policies. They extended the one-year time limit to three years and then went to

charging the referral fee for as long as an editor had a particular client. They also asked me to sign a noncompete agreement (which specifically stated that I could not advertise my services on my own website) and a pretty vague confidentiality statement (which threatened a multiple-thousand-dollar fine). I chose to part ways with this network rather than sign their agreements. But by then I had plenty of my own clients.

Once you have some experience, check out a sister organization, the [Christian Editor Connection](#). It connects authors, publishers, and agents with established, professional editorial freelancers. Members must have two years of freelance experience and pass screening tests for whatever services they wish to offer through the network. The CEC's referral guideline is 15 percent for the first year you work with a referred client.

You may also want to consider joining the [Evangelical Press Association](#), the [Editorial Freelancers Association](#), and/or the [Freelancers Union](#).

M. Publishers

You could try contacting Christian publishers and asking if they use freelancers. As research for this class, I emailed thirty of the most well-known Christian publishers, asking if they use freelancers and what advice they would have for aspiring editors/proofreaders. Seven of the thirty responded. One said they don't use freelancers. The other six said they aren't looking for more freelancers at this time. Most said they get new freelancers through referrals. (So if you do editing for authors who are published, ask if they would be comfortable recommending you to their publisher.) One publisher said that almost all of their editors were people who wrote for them. A couple of them said that most of their freelancers are former full-time staff members.

N. Ads

Some advertising opportunities cost money; others are free. Those that do cost differ dramatically in price. You may have to try a few avenues to see which ones work best for you.

You could take out an ad in a writers' magazine or two. Or get your business listed in the local Yellow Pages or Business-to-Business Directory.

Once you've established your business, you could get a listing in *The Christian Writers Market Guide* or your local [Christian Business & Professional Directory](#).

Silver and Gold members of [The Christian PEN](#) have the option of putting an ad on the website for a nominal fee.

O. Promotional Items

You may want to personalize promotional items with your name and website address—pens, key rings, mugs, that sort of thing—to hand out. (People love getting free stuff.)

P. Conferences

Writers' conferences, booksellers' conventions (like [Christian Product Expo International](#)), and the like are great places to meet potential clients. Hand out your flyers/brochures and business cards. Put your advertising materials on a freebie table. Talk to representatives from publishing

houses and ask if they use freelancers. If they do, ask for the name and email address of the person to send your résumé or flyer/brochure to.

Q. Speaking and Teaching

Speak at local women's clubs, MOPS groups, bookstores (new/used), churches, retreats, writers' groups, etc. If you're speaking to a group that's not specifically for writers, see if you can speak on a writing-related topic, like journaling, and then mention that if anyone is interested in pursuing publication, you can help them. If you're uncomfortable with public speaking, learn how to do it well by reading books on the subject, taking classes, joining Toastmasters, or attending workshops like CLASServices (Christian Leaders, Authors & Speaker Services).

Consider teaching some aspect of writing in your community. Some towns offer classes of interest to residents (a single Saturday workshop or a few consecutive weeknights). If your city doesn't have something like this, you could contact a local bookstore or community center to discuss the possibility.

R. Chamber of Commerce

Become a member of your local chamber of commerce and attend a few meetings. See if any small businesses in your area would be interested in having their promotional materials edited. Be sure to have plenty of business cards and flyers/brochures to hand out.

S. Links

Ask satisfied clients about getting a link from their website to yours. Be prepared to return the favor.

T. Network with Other Editors

Don't be afraid of competition. One of the exciting aspects of Christian publishing is that we actually help one another. Successful authors mentor aspiring writers, teaching them how to improve their craft. Christian editors can help one another too. We all have different specialties, different personalities, and different methods. No one editor will be the perfect choice for every author. And no one editor could handle all the workload. Get to know other editors, find out their specialties, and offer to swap work whenever you get a job you don't have time for or isn't in your field of expertise. That's one of the major advantages of having membership in The Christian PEN. (If you know someone who's looking for a referral for an established, professional editorial freelancer, refer him or her to the [Christian Editor Connection](#). There's an online form for Authors Seeking Editors. We match those requests with the people who are in our screened database.)

IN ALL YOU DO, Proofread *Very Carefully*

Make sure all of your advertising materials (including your website) are absolutely PERFECT. If there's a typo, a misspelled word, even a comma in the wrong place, it will reflect poorly on your editing skills. If you join an online group or write a blog, take the time to proofread all your posts thoroughly.

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LESSON #3 ASSIGNMENTS

To receive a Certificate of Completion, you need to complete at least two assignments from each lesson.

Assignment #1. Word of Mouth

Come up with a strategy for getting the word out that you're doing freelance editing.

Assignment #2. Follow-Up

Decide on one or more ways you can follow up with clients you've worked with.

Assignment #3. Website

Visit other authors' and editors' websites. Make a list of what you like (and don't like) about them. If you don't already have a website, develop some design ideas you'd like to have for your own site. If you do have one, consider how you can improve it. Share with the class which websites you found particularly likable (or unlikable) and why. Or share what you like about your own site (and why).

Assignment #4. Social Media

Share with the class your experiences with the various social networking options in a professional capacity. What have you found "works," and what is mostly a waste of time? How do you avoid spending way more time on social media than you really want to?

Assignment #5. Flyers/Brochures/Business Cards/Résumé

If you don't already have a flyer, brochure, or business card, take this opportunity to come up with one. If you do have one, share it with the group and see if your classmates have any ideas for how you could make it even better.

Assignment #6. Groups

If you're a member of a writers' group or editors' network, or if you've attended any conferences or conventions, share your experiences with the group. Which groups or activities have you found to be the most/least helpful in terms of advertising your freelance services? What did you do to advertise your services in those groups? What strategies worked best/least?

Assignment #7. Publishing Houses

If you'd like to do work for publishing houses, identify which ones you want to target and devise a strategy for contacting them. If you've worked with any houses, feel free to share your experiences with the group.

Assignment #8. Ads

Consider how you might advertise your services. Share your ideas with the group. If you've tried some advertising strategies, share with the class what you've done and how well those plans worked.

Assignment #9. Speaking Engagements

What topics could you speak on? Where would you like to speak? If you've done some public speaking, share with the class what you've spoken on and where, and tell about the experience.

Assignment #10. Other Stuff

Share with the group any ideas you have for advertising your services, either things you've tried or things you've considered trying.

Assignment #11. Elevator Pitch

Develop your elevator pitch and share it with the group (either the written text or a video clip of you giving it—or both).