



## ESTABLISHING YOUR FREELANCE BUSINESS 101

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### LESSON #6

#### Working with Clients

You've got yourself a client or two (theoretically, at least). Now what do you do with them?

Communication is *key*. You can avoid costly mistakes by making sure you and your client are both on the same page, have the same goals, and understand what to expect. Of course, that's easier said than done. Following are a few tips to consider.

#### **I. BEFORE THE JOB BEGINS**

Be sure you understand exactly what the client wants (proofreading, copyediting, overall critique, etc.) and when the client wants the job done. (See Lesson 4 for client communication forms and editing agreements.)

#### **II. DURING THE JOB**

If any questions come up as you're working on a project, stop and ask the client rather than plowing ahead. You don't want to use up all the client's paid time and then find out that you misunderstood something. If that happens, you may have to redo the work without additional pay. (This has happened to me more than once!)

#### **III. WHEN THE JOB IS DONE**

You can save yourself a lot of time by creating letters and emails as templates you can personalize for each job and client.

For letters you send in the mail (which will probably be rare), include the following:

##### **A. Heading**

Put your name, address, phone number, email/website address at the top of the page.

You may wish to play with various fonts, sizes, and formats, possibly even lines/graphics, to make it look like letterhead. Just don't get too cutesy—keep it professional looking. Don't use more than two fonts, and make sure they're easy-to-read fonts.

Or consider designing real letterhead on Vistaprint (or someplace like it).

### **B. Date**

A few lines down from the header, put the date. (Do not use Word's feature that inserts a code to update the date automatically. You may need to know later what date you sent the letter.)

### **C. Client Address**

A few lines down from the date, type the client's name; then street address; then city, state, and zip, flush left. For the template, just put a letter or two, or an asterisk or two, on each line to mark the spot.

### **D. “Regarding” Line**

Two lines down from the address, you may wish to have a “regarding” line with the title of the client's manuscript (or some other reference). For example:

Re: *Twilight of the Disenchanted*

This is optional. But it may be helpful to you if you can't remember the name of the manuscript you worked on for a particular client when he or she comes back to you for more editing later.

If you're sending an email, you could put this in the subject line. Or use something more generic, like “edit of your manuscript.”

### **E. Salutation**

Two lines down from the “regarding” line (or the client's address if there's no “re” line)—or at the top of the body of your email—type a greeting: Dear (client's name). Follow the client's name with a *colon*, not a comma. (Commas are for informal letters to friends; colons are for business letters.)

I always use the client's first name. I would only use *Mr.* or *Ms.* if the letter was addressed to someone I hadn't had much contact with. You may also want to use the more formal address if you were writing a letter to someone in authority or to an older client who may appreciate the respect this confers.

If you prefer to use a more informal salutation, such as “Hi, Linda,” note that there is a comma after the “hi” (or “hello” or “hey”). Also, since this is a complete sentence, it should end with a period or exclamation point, not a comma or colon.

### **F. Opening Paragraph**

Two lines down from the salutation, you'll type your opening paragraph. Give this some serious thought. This is the first thing your clients (or potential clients) will read. Make it positive but professional.

Let's say this is a template for a cover letter you'd send with a finished job. The client has been waiting on pins and needles to see what you'll have to say about his or her work. My first line is "Thank you for the opportunity to critique (or edit) your chapters (or manuscript)." I then say something positive about the work or the writing. After that, I tell them that my edit includes "both corrections of mistakes (such as typos, inconsistencies, and errors in punctuation, usage, grammar, and spelling) as well as my own personal suggestions for ways to improve the manuscript."

### **G. Body**

After your opening paragraph, you can say some specific things about the material you edited. **START WITH THE POSITIVES.** I tend to get so involved in helping a client see how to improve a manuscript, I sometimes forget how important it is to include complimentary things to build a client's confidence. But that is *vital*. Your clients are sharing with you their personal creations in which they've invested a lot of their time, hard work, and hearts. Positive comments from the professional editor they've personally chosen to work with mean *a lot!* Your clients need to know that they did *something right* before they're ready to hear what they need to do differently.

If you don't provide plenty of positive feedback, a client could easily get the impression that you don't believe in her work, her skills, or her potential. In that case, she will probably not want to send you more money for additional editing. She may give up writing entirely if she doesn't get some positive feedback from the editor she has sent her "precious baby" to.

So right up front, I tell the author what I *liked* about the manuscript or the writing.

Then I provide a few overall suggestions for improvement. I mention the industry-standard reference books I used (*The Chicago Manual of Style* and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* for book manuscripts, *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style* for Christian material). If the manuscript had a lot of spelling and grammar mistakes, I may suggest the client consider getting a copy of these reference books along with Kathy Ide's *Proofreading Secrets of Best-Selling Authors*.

I then have some standard paragraphs about how far I got in the edit (if I didn't finish all of the pages a client sent), how much I think the remainder might cost (depending on whether she implements my changes as she sees fit before sending me more). I'll ask if she wants to send more money for me to continue editing what I have or if she wants to self-edit her manuscript and send me revised chapters.

### **H. Closing Paragraph**

I end with a positive statement such as "I believe you have a lot of talent and potential" (if I believe that to be true), "I would love to work with you on the rest of this manuscript (or any other writing you may wish to have edited)," that sort of thing. And then the standard "If you have any questions, please feel free to email me."

Formatting note: The body of your letter may have paragraphs with indented first lines, or you can put a blank space between each one, with all the text flush left. But don't do both in the same letter.

### **I. Complimentary Close**

Two lines down from the last paragraph, type your complimentary close. Choose something that suits you, perhaps something unique to you. Of course, you could use the standard "Sincerely" or "Very truly yours" (note, only the first word is capitalized) or something more Christian, like my personal favorite: "In His service." Don't get too cutesy or personal, like "Your sister/brother in Christ," unless you know the client very well. Better to use a business close for a business letter.

### **J. Your Name**

For a print letter: Three to four lines down from the complimentary close, type your name. After you print the letter, sign above your typed name in ink.

For email: Only one blank line is needed between the complimentary close and your name. You may want to add a few lines of text below your name, such as "Professional Freelance Editor" or your business name (if you have one) and your website address. You may also want to come up with your own unique "tagline." Some time ago, I came up with "Writing is my passion. Helping others improve their writing is my delight." I received several compliments on that, and some clients told me that's what made them choose me as their editor. (Now I have a thumbnail of the cover graphics for my latest books, along with my website addresses.)

Don't put too much stuff after your name. You don't want to seem overbearingly self-promotional.

Save the template as a separate file that always remains a blank form letter. As soon as you open it, immediately save it to the client's folder. I find it helpful to include the date of the letter as part of the file name. (We'll be discussing details like that in Lesson 8.)

I have one template for printed letters and one for emails. (Although I very rarely do hard-copy editing anymore.)

### **K. Attachments**

I used to type longish cover letters with my overall critique comments. But I found that I was using the same paragraphs over and over, and they were getting longer and longer, which was making my cover letter templates unwieldy. So I started developing flyers on the various writing techniques my clients often have problems with. I soon ended up with quite a number of these flyers, on topics like "Formatting Your Manuscript," "Point of View," "Show Don't Tell," "Active vs. Passive Verbs," "Citing Sources," "Pronouns and Antecedents." Now, as I'm doing an edit, I jot down the things that particular client seems to have a problem with, and I include flyers on those topics along with the edit.

It took me a lot of time to develop these flyers. If I put them all together, I'd have a full book on writing techniques. So I don't give them away for free. Since I charge clients by the hour, I usually count the flyers as part of the time they've paid for. For example, if a client pays me for 5

hours of editing time, I may do 4½ hours of actual editing, spend 15 minutes personalizing the cover letter, and then toss in a few technique flyers to cover the remaining 15 minutes.

Occasionally, someone will ask me for copies of my flyers in a situation where it's not possible to include the cost in the editing payment. For example, I had one client who apparently had never read a book about writing in his life (I'm not sure he'd ever read a *book* in his life). He told me he had really learned a lot from the flyers I had sent him with the edit, and he asked if I had any more like that. I gave him a list of my flyers, and he asked if I'd send him one of each!

I told him I charged \$3 per flyer. I also gave him my list of recommended reading for aspiring writers and told him that he could probably get the same information that was in my flyers from those books, and it would undoubtedly cost less that way. (He never did order any extra flyers!)

#### **IV. COMPLICATIONS ALONG THE WAY**

No matter how well you think you've communicated with a client, problems are bound to come up from time to time. Following are some examples:

##### **A. The Nightmare Job**

The client's writing is worse than you expected. Downright horrible. What do you do? Basically, you have two options: (a) do the job anyway, or (b) send it back (with a refund if you got payment up front).

A lot depends on the client's expectations. Does he think that when he gets his edited manuscript back from you, it's going to be ready to send to Zondervan? Or does he really want to study the craft of writing, improve his skills, and learn from what your edit can teach him?

It also depends on the client's goals. Does she just want to put together a book of stories told by Uncle Gilbert before he passed away, something she can give out to folks at the next family reunion? Maybe all you need to do is a basic proofread for major typos and other errors, and she'll be perfectly happy. But if the client expects a quick once-over from you to get her manuscript publishable, and you know that's not possible, you need to be up front with her from the start.

It also depends on how much money you think the client is willing to spend. Professional writing classes are expensive. Perhaps, for about the cost of a college course in creative writing, you could teach this client everything he needs to know to whip that awful manuscript into shape. Or maybe the client would be open to hiring you to ghostwrite or coauthor the manuscript and is willing to pay whatever it takes to get it done.

One of my early clients turned in a *terrible* manuscript for a novel, full of flat characters, preachy dialogue, and mundane small talk ("Hi, how are you?" "I'm fine, how are you?" "I'd feel a lot better if I hadn't read an article on the internet this morning about the unrest in the Middle East. You know, the Bible says that in the end times ..."). ACH! After a few chapters like this (which I crossed off almost all the text), she got to an interesting plotline. After my first edit, she resubmitted her original chapters, along with a few more. They were much better. Less mundane

stuff, less preachy dialogue, more good conflict and suspense. But it still needed a lot of work. After my second edit, she sent me more chapters. They were crisper and cleaner. This gal rewrote her manuscript multiple times, based on my suggestions. She eventually had a manuscript that was ready to be submitted to an agent or publisher, with a good chance of getting an acceptance. That is *very* rewarding for me!

## **B. The Offensive Job**

The sample edit you did for a client had one mild swear word in it, and you figured that shouldn't keep you from being able to edit the manuscript. But the more you got into it, the more profanity you found. It got so bad there were more offensive words than inoffensive ones. And they became more and more profane as you got into the book.

Then there's a slightly violent scene. Followed by more violence. Or a romantic scene that gets steamy and then provocative and eventually downright obscene.

Again, you have a couple of options: (a) cross off every unnecessary incidence of profanity, violence, and sex, or (b) send the manuscript back to the client and tell him you'll be happy to finish the edit if he removes the offensive bits; otherwise, you'll send a refund.

In my opinion, all profanity is unnecessary. It's a sign of sloppy writing. Lazy writers use profanity to express emotions that could far better be described with more creative word choices. Fortunately, even the secular market is leaning that way (in most genres, anyway).

Same goes for overdone sex and violence. Depending on the subject, some sex/violence may be deemed necessary. But there's no need to get into the nitty-gritty details. Less is more! Writers should trust their readers to "get it" from a few pointed hints. Even the worst atrocities of life (and the highest ecstasies) can be portrayed effectively if the author writes creatively.

Trust the readers' imagination. Often they'll go further than the writer would have. I heard about one author who received a searing letter from a reader, complaining about the horrible language one of her characters used in a particular scene. But what the author actually wrote was something like "The sailor let out a string of curses that made even his captain blush." The words this reader *imagined* were worse than what the author probably would have written!

If the material gets too graphic for you, don't subject yourself to anything you believe may compromise your walk with the Lord.

Perhaps you're a bit more squeamish than most. You like the "sweet romances" and Bible studies and devotionals and don't really want to get into books about sexual abuse, rape, and the like. That's *okay*! Do what you're comfortable with. If you don't think you're the right editor for the piece, suggest the client hire a different editor, and refer him to the [Christian Editor Connection](#)—unless the material is so bad that you can't imagine any Christian wanting anything to do with it.

[Note from Christi: Sometimes the Christian Editor Connection (CEC) receives requests from authors to edit their life stories, which include child abuse, violence, rape, etc. They are true

stories with redeeming endings (usually), and the authors are eager to tell their stories (sometimes it's part of the healing process or to help others in similar situations). However, some of the CEC editors who received these types of leads turned down the opportunity to bid on the jobs because of their own experiences. Perhaps a child-abuse story triggers memories of their own abuse, and they'd rather not accept a project like that. As Kathy Ide has said, that is perfectly fine! You can tell the author (or the CEC director), "I'm not the best editor for this." You don't have to go into the details of why you are declining the job. If you have a check in your spirit about a specific project or client, pray about it and discover what the Lord is telling you.]

### **C. The Underestimated Job**

You quoted a project rate, but once you got started, you realized this piece was going to take a whole lot longer than you anticipated. (This happens a LOT!) Your choices are to (a) do the full job for the price you quoted, and chalk it up to "live and learn," or (b) let the client know (as soon as possible) that the job is more involved than you thought it would be. Offer to send a partial edit, and then quote a more accurate price for the full job.

### **D. The Chatterbox Client**

Some clients will talk your ears off (or your eyes via email) if you let them. Before they decide to hire you, they may ask dozens of questions "just to see if you're the right fit" for them. They may want to call you so they can get a better "feel" for who you are than what they can get from emails. They may even want to meet you in person if the two of you live close enough or if you're going to be traveling to their area (or vice versa).

While you're working on their jobs, some clients may constantly call or email you, asking how it's going, when the job will be done, etc.

If you're doing a hard-copy edit and you tell the client that it's done and in the mail, the client may want to chat by phone or email with you so he can get a heads-up on how you liked it while he's waiting for it to arrive.

After they get their edits, some clients will ask questions about what you meant, what you suggest they do now, etc.

You must decide how much of this extra work you want to do for a client. While chatting may not seem like "work," time is money. If you're on the phone or reading/writing emails, or meeting one-on-one with a client, that's time you could be spending on paid work for another client, marketing your services, or doing something you want to do for yourself, like spending time with your family or working on your own manuscript or cleaning the house.

You must also decide whether you want to charge for some or all of the time you spend communicating with your clients and potential clients.

If a client wishes to have a phone consultation or a one-on-one appointment with you, you could respond that you would be happy to do that (only say this if you really do want to) but that you must charge for your time, with payment up front. Then explain how that can happen. You could

say, for example, that the client should estimate the amount of time she thinks the consultation will take and then send you a payment for that amount. Recommend to the client that she jot down a list of questions she wants to ask to make the best use of the time she's paying for. Then ask her to let you know what day and time would be best, find out what time zone she's in, etc. Most often this response will discourage clients from wasting your time (and their money) with a phone call or one-on-one meeting. And you may lose one or two clients this way. But you will save yourself from spending an inordinate amount of time listening to someone's life story when you could be working.

If a client emails you during a job, you can deduct the time spent on emails from the time paid for editing (but make it clear to the client up front that you're doing that). After your edit is done, you may choose to answer a few questions at no charge, especially if the reason they're contacting you is that they didn't understand something you should have made clearer in the edit. But if a client is taking up too much of your time, you may want to request payment for your hours spent. Then either you'll get compensated or the client will stop pestering you.

Some no-charge chatting time with clients is inevitable and unavoidable. It's part of the "nonbillable hours" we talked about in an earlier lesson. And maybe you don't mind chatting with clients or potential clients, getting to know who they are and what's going on in their lives. If you're not too busy with other things, you might not want to charge a client up front for this getting-to-know-you time/question-and-answer time after the edit. But as your business grows and you've got deadlines crashing down on you, you may no longer have the luxury of doing this, at least not quite as frequently, and you'll need to come up with a policy (and a way to enforce it).

### **E. The Demanding Client**

Some potential clients may request multiple sample edits. My advice: don't do it. One is enough. The only exception I can think of is if you gave a thorough line edit on the sample and then the client says he only wanted a basic proofread. Or vice versa. But never more than two.

A client may ask you to drop all your other editing jobs (and your personal life) to meet his deadline. Whether you do that or not is up to you. The job may be worth a little inconvenience. But you don't have to do this. If what the client wants is beyond what you want to do or can do, be honest and say so. Tell him what you can reasonably offer. If he doesn't like it, offer to refer him to another editor (through the CEC, or by personal referral if you know other good freelancers).

### **F. Personal Delays**

Something unexpected comes up. Your father-in-law comes into town, and since your husband is at work all day (and you're not), it falls to you to "entertain" him. Your best friend calls in tears and needs you to drop everything and come to her side for support. Little Jimmy wakes up with the flu and is too sick to go to school, so you spend all day cleaning up after him, sitting with him, making him chicken soup, and taking his temperature every half hour instead of getting to that editing project you promised the client you'd have done by three o'clock.

Life happens. Especially to freelancers.

When something interferes with your work schedule, be honest with your client. You don't need to go into *all* the details. (Your client doesn't want to know how many times little Jimmy threw up before ten a.m.) But if you're going to miss a deadline, let the client know as soon as possible and offer whatever you can do to make up for it.

If you've accepted a job and then "life happens" and you can't complete it, you may want to ask the client if he'd like you to help him find another editor to take on the rest of the job. Again, the CEC is a great way for authors to find quality Christian editors, some of whom are available on short notice.

### **G. Overlapping Deadlines**

You're merrily progressing with a client's job that's due by end of the day Friday, and a return client emails you in a panic. She got a response from the publisher she's been *dying* to publish with. They said if she can get a really clean manuscript to them by Friday, they'll take it to the publishing committee. "*Help me, Obi-wan my editor. You're my only hope!*"

Your choices? Cancel that movie date with your husband and that manicure appointment with your girlfriend, make your kids do their own homework, order pizza or Chinese every night for the rest of the week, and let the housework wait till the weekend so you can get both jobs done. Or contact the first client, explain that something has come up and see if next Tuesday would work just as well for him. Tell him that if he absolutely, positively needs to have his job by Friday, you'll do it, because that's what you agreed to first, but if he can wait a few more days, you'd be grateful. (Maybe even offer to throw in an extra hour or two of free editing or something if he says yes.)

### **H. The Needy Client**

"Please, please, please, you've *got* to help me! I know it's last minute, but I *need* this edit done right away. I *promise* I'll send you a payment immediately. The check will be in tomorrow's mail. You can trust me. We're sisters in Christ, after all."

Okay, I hate to be hard-nosed, but if you're a freelancer, this is your *business*. It's not a nonprofit charity. It's how you earn a living, pay your mortgage, put food on the table. Or maybe it's just your way to save up for the next family vacation, or the only way you know of to keep Sally in private school. Whatever your reasons for doing this freelancing thing, your time and effort, work and experience, and knowledge and skills are worth whatever value you place on them.

Of course, you will make exceptions and occasionally work for free, as we've discussed in previous lessons. But when you're working for a client who's supposed to pay, get that money up front.

If a client wants you to trust her to pay later, you can say something like this: "I'm *really* sorry, but I've had to make it a strict policy not to do any work without payment up front. I just know too many people who've been stiffed by clients they never would have expected." (Or "*I've* been stiffed by such people in the past.") Then offer the client some options.

I love [PayPal](#). Just about anybody anywhere can log on to it, open an account with their checking, savings, or credit card, and send money almost instantaneously. It is *so* easy! (People can even send money via PayPal without having an account.)

For the rare client who may not be willing or able to use PayPal (or can't figure out how on short notice), there are ways to wire money, like Western Union. And most banks will do transfers from one account to another (even between different banks) by phone or online.

### **I. The Sob Story**

“I have every intention of paying you. Honest. But after I hired you, I had to fly to Wisconsin for my sister's husband's funeral, my pregnant daughter left her husband and decided to move back in with us (along with her three kids), and we had to send all the money in our savings account to my dad to pay for his open-heart surgery. I'll pay you as soon as I can. But I really need that edit so I can send the manuscript to the publisher, and hopefully, I can pay off the hospital bill from the advance.”

So maybe this is just a bit of an exaggeration. But I've had clients tell me about their personal problems as an explanation for why they can't pay me what they promised to. It's tough! You want to be sympathetic. And you do feel bad for these people. So what do you do?

Well, you've got a couple of choices. You can go ahead and send the edit and then send invoices every month, along with encouraging expressions of sympathy and statements about how you hope things are going well with their family. Or you can consider it a lost cause and just be pleasantly surprised if you ever actually get the money. (I've done both.)

### **J. The Deadbeat Client**

You ask a client for half up front and half upon completion. You get the first half of the money, do the job, and notify the client that the job is ready to send as soon as you get the final payment.

But it doesn't come. You notify the client again. No response. You call. You email. Nothing. You really thought this guy was eager to get his work. Apparently, he's not as eager to fork over what he owes you.

First, don't send that edit until you've got payment in hand. Once you do, you've given up almost all leverage.

Second, give the client the benefit of the doubt. What's the best-case scenario you can think of? Maybe the guy won a free trip to Cancún, and he'll get back to you when he returns with a tan and about a thousand photos of beaches and sunsets. What's the worst-case scenario (for him)? Maybe his dad died of a sudden heart attack and your client had to fly to Minneapolis to sit with his mom and his sisters for a few days/weeks/months. The point is, start out assuming that this isn't just an attempt to get out of paying you.

Send nice, friendly emails. More than one, if necessary. “I've got your edit done and ready. As soon as I receive your payment, I'll email it right away.”

If you've made several of these attempts and received no response, then you can insert a couple of polite "warnings." Something like "Attached is the invoice for the final payment on this job. As you can see, the work was completed on October 31. Payment is due within thirty days from that date. After that, interest will begin to accrue at a rate of 1.5 percent per month."

If all else fails, you can take a client to Small Claims Court. But that's such a hassle. If the amount isn't substantial, it may not be worth your time and effort to pursue.

### **K. The Professional "Courtesy"**

You get to know a fellow editor quite well. The two of you become friends as you share your lives, longings, goals, and dreams. You pray for each other and for each other's family members. Then one day, she calls or emails you in a panic. She's taken on a job and can't finish it. She begs you to help her out.

There's nothing wrong with helping someone you trust and care about. You may even offer to do the job for free if you're not too strapped yourself at the time. Or you could arrange with your fellow professional to accept a partial payment after your friend receives payment from her client.

Just keep in mind that if *her* client stiffes her, you may end up having nothing to show for your time either. Or if she charges less than you do, your cut could be less than satisfactory.

I helped a fellow editorial professional early in my business. She regularly had more work than she could handle and asked for my assistance. I gladly gave it to her. I hadn't been editing professionally for long enough to have a full schedule anyway. I agreed to accept payment after she received the money from her clients.

Unfortunately, this turned into a fiasco. She didn't get payment up front from her clients, and several of them stiffed her (or so she claimed). The amount she owed me kept growing and growing.

Then one day she told me I needed to figure out how to set up the Track Changes feature so that it showed her name instead of mine on the edits I made. She was passing off my work as her own! That made me even more uncomfortable than the money issue.

When the amount she owed me reached \$1,000, I told her I couldn't do any more work for her until she paid me at least some of it. She gave me several life sob stories. I told her I felt bad for her, but I held my ground. After a few months of promising to pay me, I stopped hearing from her entirely. I never heard a peep from her after that. I later heard about other editors she'd played the same con game with. Turned out she owed several people money, and she just kept finding new people to extort.

Live and learn.

## V. FOLLOW-UP

You may never know whether a client liked your work if you never ask.

### A. Verify Receipt

A few days after sending an edited manuscript by mail, contact the client to verify that your edit was received. (Wait a little longer for foreign mailings.)

### B. Feedback

Either along with the manuscript or sometime later, send an email (or a feedback form), asking the client to let you know what he liked or didn't like about your work.

If your edit was fairly extensive, you may want to wait a bit longer to solicit feedback from a client. It sometimes takes a while for an author to get over the initial shock, especially if she's never worked with an editor before and was expecting you to just say, "Wow! This is perfect! Don't change a thing! I'm sure every agent you send this to will be begging to represent you."

I once sat down at a round table at the Mount Hermon Christian Writers Conference, and the woman across the table looked at my name tag and said, right out loud in front of the other six people at the table, "Kathy Ide! I hated you for three months!"

I just sat there, speechless (a rare condition for me). Fortunately, she explained before anyone left the table. She said she'd sent me her manuscript to edit, and when she opened the envelope and saw all the red marks, she freaked. She tossed the envelope in a drawer and didn't even look at it for about three months. Then she finally built up her courage, pulled the edit out of the drawer, took a deep breath, and read and studied each mark one at a time. She found that she agreed with about 95 percent of my edits, incorporated them into her manuscript, and found that it read far better, was much tighter, and flowed a lot more smoothly.

I was *really* glad she'd given me a chance (and that she explained in front of all those people). But that just goes to show that it takes some people a while to process "constructive criticism." If I'd sent this woman a feedback form right away, her response (if she sent one at all) would not have been positive!

## VI. PROOFREAD CAREFULLY

In *all* correspondence with clients, be sure you proofread everything *very* carefully. If a client catches a mistake in your cover letter, he will be less receptive to your edits and less likely to hire you to do more work for him.

When in doubt, look it up. If you're not 100 percent sure how to spell a word or punctuate a sentence, check the dictionary/style guide appropriate to the type of manuscript you've edited (*Chicago Manual of Style* and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* for books; *Associated Press Stylebook* and *Webster's New World College Dictionary* for articles).

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## **LESSON #6 ASSIGNMENTS**

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

### **Assignment #1. Cover Letter**

Create a template for a cover letter or email that you can send to clients with their edits. Feel free to play with the letterhead design if you anticipate doing hard-copy edits. Come up with a number of paragraphs you can pick and choose from to personalize the letter for each individual client.

### **Assignment #2. Flyers**

Come up with a list of writing techniques you would anticipate your clients to need help with. Then create a few flyers you can send out with future edits. (Feel free to use ideas and concepts from writing books you've read, but don't plagiarize word for word.) Decide how you will charge for these flyers.

### **Assignment #3. Problem Clients**

Create one or more letters/emails you can send if you get a client who fits one of the complicating situations described above (or a different one that may come to mind). If you feel comfortable doing so, share with the class so everyone can benefit.