

Unprofessional Writers Make More Money Than Professional Writers

[Tim Denning](#)

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This story is guaranteed to divide writers.

I'm not here to be your friend. I am here to tell you about the money side of writing. It's not for everyone. I get it.

But if the money side of writing appeals to you, then this article will be helpful. If it doesn't, then no need to read any further.

Professional Writers Don't Make Money Because They Do This:

They worry about their image

Tom Kuegler admitted this. I just realized the same thing as Tom today. I don't care about my image.

I'm preparing to go to hospital in a few days for a life-changing diagnosis. This happens every year and it scares the crap out of me. If I'm gone tomorrow, do you think I give a flying f*ck about my image? Nope. It just doesn't matter. And it sure as hell won't make you a dollar.

Your image doesn't help you pay your bills.

They get bogged down in grammar and spelling

Writer Kris Gage happily bends grammar rules in her favor and admits it. I respect that.

Grammar and spelling are guidelines. They're made to be broken. They're instruments of creativity. Rather than follow literary rules, readers look for writers who are okay to color in the kid's picture and go outside the lines.

Using grammar and spelling any way you want helps set you apart. Readers will pay you for that with their

attention. Attention helps you build an audience. A percentage of that audience will be happy to pay money for your work.

They have to publish a physical book

Publishing a book doesn't make you special.

A physical book is a trophy. The thing is, nobody cares if you wrote a book. Non-hoarding millennials don't have bookshelves in their simple homes. Books equal clutter.

I meet professional writers all the time who worship Penguin Random House and hope to be *the chosen one*. They beg the gatekeepers for the chance to run thousands of pieces of paper through an old school printing press and have them made into a physical book.

The small percentage of professional writers I know who have been lucky enough to get a book published are bitterly disappointed. It's not what they thought it was going to be. They expected a book to make a difference.

The truth is, a physical book is the modern-day door stop. A book stops your door blowing shut in a cold pandemic winter when you need to air out your home from one too many nights staying in watching Netflix.

You are highly unlikely to make any money with a physical book.

They play headline circus

A headline doesn't make a piece of writing quality, or not. It's the contents of a story that makes the difference and determines its quality.

Critiquing headlines is a curious past-time. Some of the best pieces of writing have the most cringe-worthy headlines you've ever read. Like, [How to Lose Weight in 4 Easy Steps](#). That story changed my life. I cried like a blubbering idiot after reading that story. Thank god for its mediocre headline, or I would have never looked at physical exercise the way I do now.

Change people's lives rather than masturbate over headlines.

They obsess over their writer status

I'm a top writer in the category of...

I studied at...

And nobody cares. A reader doesn't read your work because of your status. They read your work because it's helpful or because someone suggested they should, thanks to the gorgeous function of a social media share.

They are shackled to views

I was a former prisoner of views too. And still am on some

days.

Views don't make you money. You can have 50 views of an email you wrote and have it lead to 25 sales, which make you \$5000. The volume of views is a form of vanity metrics. Vanity metrics make you vain, not money.

This month my views across social media are at an all-time low. It's a social media winter with all the doom and gloom of a health crisis and an economy that has been beaten worse than Mike Tyson. Still, it's going to be a good month financially. Why? Because I am making money through multiple different sources — courses, books, investing, 9–5 job — and these relationships are getting deeper.

After you write for a while, you don't have to try as hard to get views. Your back-catalog helps do the work for you.

They publish once in a while

It's all about *hits* for professional writers.

They want the world to bend over for their writing every time, or else they'll stop giving the gift of publishing their work.

I publish something every damn day — even if it's a short tweet that took 3.5 minutes to write while drinking a cheeky coffee for the [benefit of flow](#). Professional writers

are tied to the notion of quality.

The thing about quality is you don't really know what it is. Quality is in the eye of the reader. And nobody, not even me, should dare try and pretend to understand what readers will and won't find helpful.

If you publish once in a while, you're not a writer — you're an enthusiast.

Real writers publish something weekly because they're in love with what they do. Writing is breathing to them.

They take opinions far too seriously

Professional writers get defensive. Their opinion is their ego in disguise. They can't stand being wrong. They go to war with an opinion. They do a Donald.

Other people's opinions don't [make you money](#). Taking a clear stance, knowing there will be lots of readers who disagree with you, will make you more money from an article than you could ever imagine.

Readers hate fence-sitters who try to please everybody. Readers want someone willing to put themselves at risk for what they believe in.

Unprofessional Writers Do This:

It's time to give you some practical tips to make money. I

am an unprofessional writer. Many of the writers around me make a minimum of 6-figures from their work. I don't say that to brag. I say that because I've been able to ask them how they did it. The advice is always the same.

They dare to ask for an email address

An email address is the first step to make money as a writer. Unprofessional writers who didn't study literature are taught this dumb technique right up front: ask for an email address so you can stay in touch with a reader.

A follower is an ego-buffing disaster with zero financial upsides.

An email address is the start of a relationship.

They're not too fussed about themselves

You make money from writing by being unselfish. It's counter-intuitive. Readers don't care about you. They care about how you can help them. Helping someone is just another name for money-making.

When you help, you have the option to make money. It's that simple.

Help for free 80% of the time. Help for money 20% of the time.

You don't need to charge every reader rent. You don't need to be a rent seeker.

I am not too fussed about myself, although I used to be. I fell for the personal brand trash that is hurled at innocent people all over social media. I became paranoid about trolls and negative opinions. Then, for about a year, I stopped reading comments. It healed me. Now I read comments and consider them rather than let them ruin my writing.

By getting over myself, I could focus on the business aspect of writing. This time I bought back, and it allowed me to learn about all the tools a writer has to earn a living. Get over yourself as a writer to make money.

They use these tools rather than write like Hemingway

If Hemingway were still alive, then he'd be learning about Substack. There are many tools unprofessional writers use, and they're not writing tools — they're money-making tools.

Here are a few:

- Email software like ConvertKit to communicate with readers.
- eLearning platforms like Teachable.
- Paid newsletter platforms like Substack that build reader intimacy.

- Old school social media like Twitter to build an audience.
- Landing page tools like Unbounce to convert readers into true fans.
- Payment software like PayPal to be able to accept alternative currencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum, so the value you capture is stored and protected against inflation for digital products you sell.

They launch an online course rather than a book

An online course is a replacement for a book. You can spend years writing a \$20 book and publishing it on Amazon and not make a dollar.

You can spend 30 days building an online course around your most popular article and make 6-figures.

An online course isn't selling out — that's professional broke writers talking.

An online course is a different medium that a percentage of readers are crying out for, so they can become entrenched in everything you know about a topic and have you as their tour guide.

Professional writers also fall for the trap of Patreon-like

platforms. Patreon is like putting a dog bowl in front of your writing, as though you're homeless in the street, and asking for donations. Don't beg readers for money with Patreon — or ask people to give you money for a coffee.

Find ways to be helpful to readers, and they'll gladly pay you for it.

Think education, not money.

Universities are going bankrupt. You can scoop up their students and sell education that actually has a real-world use, rather than the mostly resume fluffing garbage universities have been selling for years and putting people in a lifetime of debt to pay for.

Be an unprofessional writer and launch a course centered around your most-read article.

They say what they think

Unprofessional writers naturally say what they think. They don't think about the ramifications. They don't try and predict ten years into the future. They don't think about writing as a career that involves future job interviews.

Unprofessional writers write because they like writing. When you say what you think, a percentage of the people who see your work will be drawn to you.

You need to build an audience as a writer to make an

income, and saying what you think helps people self-select whether they're part of your tribe or not.

They don't hide behind fancy words or metaphors

Readers don't pay money for orgasmic metaphors.

Readers fall in love with simplicity. Why?

A Chinese reader named Zen once explained it to me:

I read your work because English is my second language. Too many writers I've tried reading don't use words I understand.

The more metaphors and fancy words you use, the more you limit who can consume your writing. If readers feel dumb when they read your work, they won't come back to feel dumb again.

You expand your audience geographically by using simple English. Let more of the world read your work by using English they can understand.

They use research

I learned something incredible about paid newsletters: the secret to a newsletter that people pay lots of money

for is research.

Behind the popular newsletter writers — on platforms like [Substack](#) — are paid researchers. They're often anonymous, and readers would have no idea.

One of my favorite platforms is a financial media company called Nugget's News. At face value, it looks as though it is just Alex Saunders. Behind the scenes, he has 26 employees, most of whom are researchers. As a content creator, he is now earning over 7-figures after being in the Youtube game for less than 5 years.

People happily pay money for a membership that gives them well-researched content. If you want to make more money, add in research to improve the quality of your content.

They say less

Readers love it when you say less. What this really means is you respect the reader by curating things they find helpful. Unprofessional writers are list creators. They add lists to many of their articles so the reader can save time looking for helpful tips, tools, and techniques.

Professional writers hate listicles. They shame listicles. Yet, they make no money because they do this and fall deeply in love with themselves.

Say less and curate ideas and thoughts for readers. A

paid newsletter is careful curation. A paid blog post is careful curation. An online course is the careful curation of lessons to teach and not teach.

High paid digital products involve ruthless curation. The higher the price tag, the better the curation of content. It took me years to understand that.

They don't have huge paragraphs readers get lost in

The content you write leads you to discover the readers who will be okay to pay you for a digital product later on, once they get to know you, of course.

Huge paragraphs cause readers to click away. I have A/B tested this technique to death. Readers hate long paragraphs because they're mostly reading on a tiny phone screen. Let readers have the chance to read your work and perhaps become a customer by giving them shorter paragraphs.

People buy from people they like

The biggest problem with professional writers is very few people like them. Their obsession with being professional isn't understood by a reader, so people just switch off.

The more readers switch off, the more they start to double down on how writing must be professional.

An unprofessional writer who makes money is likable.

Why? Because they focus on the reader and how they can help them, rather than trying to impress people with 'writer status.'

The cold, harsh truth is this: if people don't like you, then they won't buy from you. You don't give money to a person you hate. So why should writing be any different?

People can't resist liking you when you're trying to help them.

Final Thought

Sorry, not sorry if I offended professional writers. We all need a wake-up call once in a while.

Doing writing you enjoy, that is helpful, is how you accidentally get mega-rich as a writer. But don't just make money as a writer and collect vintage Ferraris. Take the money you make as a writer and pay it forward. Back an underdog. Be generous. Tip the waiter a bit more. Use the money to add meaning to your life, not digits to your bank account.

Your bank balance won't make you happy. It will never be enough.

What will be enough is when you find ways to use your skills, experience, and talent to help people who are looking for assistance. Then, you can charge a

reasonable price for it. Everybody wins.

Writing is a way to find the exact people you can center a tiny business around, so you don't need to work a normal job if you choose or stress yourself to death with bills and debt.

Your precious professional writer ego won't make you a dollar.

Become a helpful unprofessional writer to make money.