

Retirement-Writing

Choosing Your Niche

Now that you have the confidence that you can begin to write successfully in your retirement, the time has come to select the niche that fits you best. In other words, you now have to think carefully about what it is that you want to write.

As a retiree you can look back on years of career experiences to help you craft a book or articles in your field of specialization. Perhaps you'd be more comfortable or better enjoy writing about a favorite pastime. Or possibly creative writing. Maybe the increased travel you now enjoy in your retirement is your choice.

Your first decision is selecting fiction or nonfiction? If fiction, can your idea sustain a reader's interest for 300 pages? Better yet, can you sustain your own interest through the twists and turns of crafting a full-length novel?

Is your nonfiction idea strong enough to become a string of successive articles or a full-length book? Is the topic timely? How much of an audience can it command? Most important of all, is this a subject that you're completely comfortable with?

Chart Your Course Carefully

It makes little or no difference whether you consider your interest in writing a pastime or a new career to pursue in your retirement. These concerns must be considered objectively as you embark on your new endeavor.

Writing a book is a long and difficult journey, so be sure your comfort level is high enough to last. Writer Robin Fisher Roffer said it so well in *Book Marketing A-Z*,

“Choose wisely the subject matter or genre that you’ll work in. Make sure it resounds with your soul.”

That’s particularly relevant to those of you who have passed the mid-century mark and want to vouchsafe your recollections of those enriching earlier days in a memoir to family members and future generations.

Often the subject matter you choose to write about will dictate the genre in which you present it. Once again, I caution you to weigh your choice carefully and be certain it is something with which you can be completely comfortable because you and your book will be joined in literary wedlock for a long period of time.

Capitalizing on Your Former Career

The market for nonfiction today is far greater than that of fiction, and therefore you’ll find it is easier to obtain publication for these books and articles. In the most recent figures available at the time of this writing, Nielsen Book Scan reported that adult nonfiction sales grew 9.2 percent in 2005, almost doubling the growth of fiction that year.

So let’s concentrate on one of the nonfiction categories most appealing to many retirees, business writing. After years in a challenging career, they find themselves somewhat empty and long to be part of the excitement once again.

With their extensive experience in a given field, retirees have a unique advantage over other writers trying to break into the business or professional categories. Indeed, many editors will sacrifice writing ability for knowledge, giving you, although a newcomer to writing, a substantial edge.

How-to books are among the fastest selling categories in today’s market. Trade journals exist in almost every field, professional and business. Their editors have huge

appetites, and are constantly looking for informative articles to fill their pages each month.

Often general interest magazines will run pieces on specific aspects of a business or profession if the writer is not too technical in his/her approach. Newspapers publish daily business sections that frequently accept freelance articles.

Corporate PR staffs are often overtaxed with preparing house organs, newsletters, promotion brochures and annual reports. They reach out for knowledgeable freelance writers to supplement staff. With the experience most retirees bring to the task, they are a welcome choice for these positions.

Whether you plan to write a book or target trade journals, newspapers or corporate departments, it is imperative that you stay abreast of changes and advances in your field. Progress didn't stop the day you retired. So update yourself regularly.

At times a talented and well informed freelancer will be asked by a corporate executive or professional to ghost write a book. In this case, although you actually do the writing based on the guidelines supplied by the executive, he/she is listed as the author often with no acknowledgement of your participation.

Finding Opportunities

The reference department of your local library undoubtedly contains several directories of periodicals and of corporations. Use these fine tools to discover opportunities. Let's look for a moment at one of the best, *Writer's Market*, considered the bible by many freelancers. Its 1,000-plus pages list 50 types of general interest consumer magazines and 60 classifications of trade journals. (The number of pages and listings varies annually with each new edition. The information here is based upon the 2007

edition.) Consumer publications range from Animal Lovers to Women's Periodicals. Trade listings start with Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations and go through the alphabet to Veterinary Medicine. From those listings, you can learn the preferences of the editors, pay scales, contact persons, indeed all of the basic information needed to place your writing.

But that's not all this bountiful volume offers. Included in each edition of *Writer's Market* is a directory of book publishers and small presses. In addition, listings of literary agents are offered, as well as a variety of articles dealing with different aspects of writing. Check with your reference librarian for other periodical directories.

Corporate Directories

When referencing corporate directories, make certain to double check with the company by phone to ensure that the listed PR Director and other officials have not been replaced. There is a constant turnover of staff in many businesses.

Armed with the information available from these directories and supplemented by your research on the Internet, you should be fully armed to fire very effective cannons as you move into your new future.

Whatever niche you choose to write in, I caution you once again to be certain you are completely comfortable with it, especially if you anticipate writing a full-length book. If you already know the subject of your writing, you're now set to move into the research phase and bring yourself up to date on the changes and advances in the field you have chosen. If you are uncertain about a topic to select, make sure to read the article entitled "Where Do Ideas Come From?" Click on to the next article on the 'About Us' page.