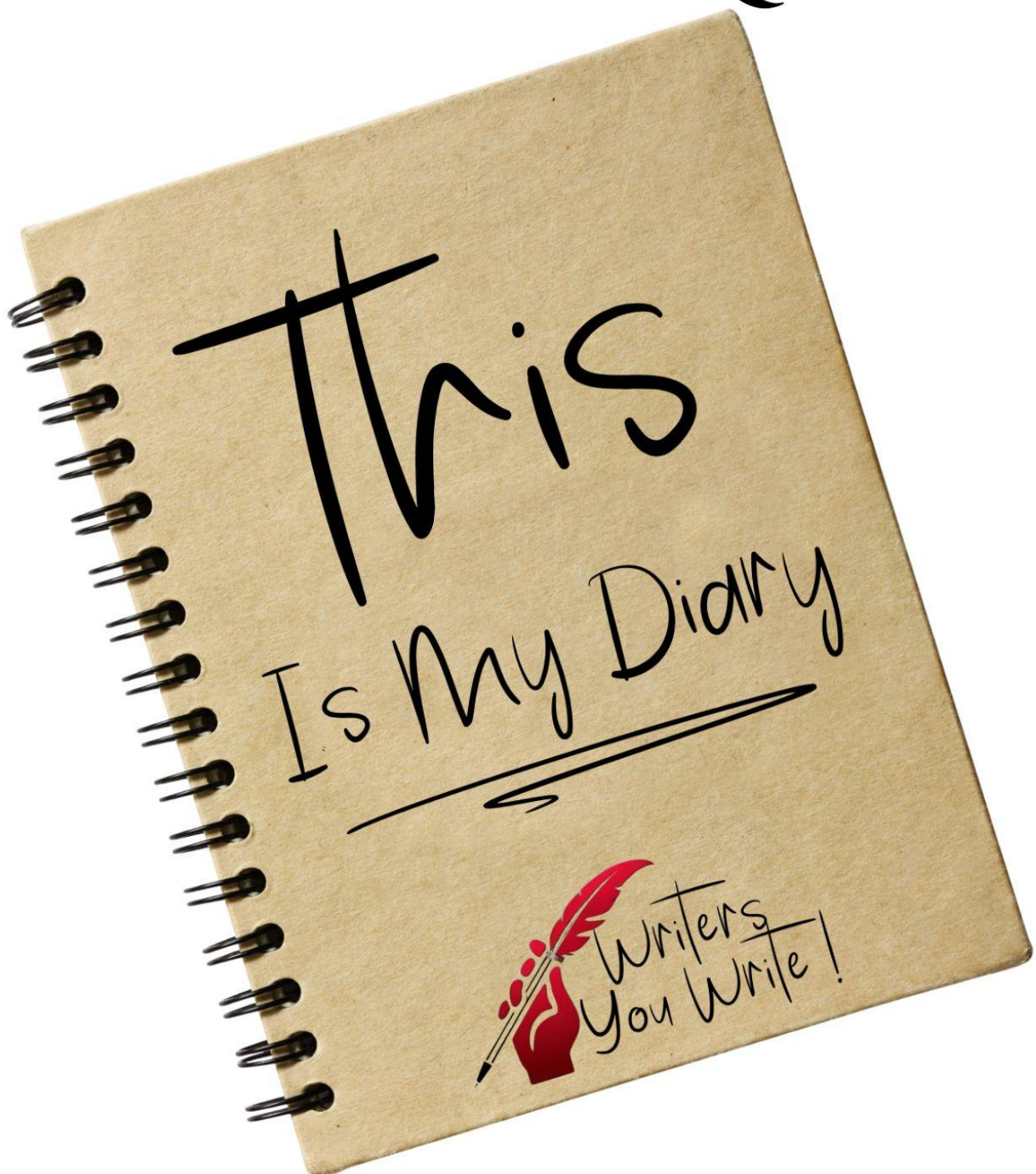


**T'M A
PROFESSIONAL
WRITER, AND...**



I'm a Professional Writer, and this is my diary

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Important Information For You - Do Not Skip

This book should be considered a work of fiction. **A great work of fiction.** A masterful one. Who knows what 'truth' is anyway? I don't.

However, the world of being a pro writer is real, and you're about to take your first steps into it. Therefore, read everything below, internalise it, and proceed to the prologue.

It's fine if you want to use this book as info-tainment. But if you came across this book whilst looking for a lazy way to make money, stop here. You're about to enter the realm of reality, and grifters don't belong here.

There is a secret to being a pro writer: doing the work. The work is often the reward in itself, but if you don't want to write, don't. But if you do, do.

Examples are illustrative.

Some timescales have been expanded to make me seem more human, and the work of a pro writer more manageable. Some timescales have been contracted to make me look better than I am. It's okay though, it's my book, so I'm allowed. Here's what's important - **the points that are illustrated in this diary all count**, and the examples of work, my ideas, and my top tips are all real, and I stand by them.

You should remember that **the vast majority of people earn nothing as a result of consuming educational and training information.** This is true in all sorts of fields – for example, only a fraction of people get healthier after buying a diet plan book.

It is therefore safe to assume “average earnings” relating to this, and to me, are **zero**. This could be for a variety of reasons, including, but certainly not limited to, a failure to implement and follow through with the consistent work that is required.

Even when consistent work is applied, **any venture is inherently risky**. Projects often fail and result in no earnings or even losses.

Since this is the nature of business, if you feel uncomfortable with this risk, then please don't consume any of my free or paid resources.

Prologue. I am a writer.

I am a writer. A professional writer, in fact. I could also describe myself as a 'content creator', or a marketer, because sometimes I create presentations, information videos, and sales copy. Sometimes I'm a 'content executive', because I'm not doing the creation myself; I'm commissioning others to do so.

But it always comes down to the writing. When making a presentation, I fight the same battles and rely upon the same traits, techniques, and skills as I do when I am working on a book. When commissioning something, I still have to express effectively *what it is that's wanted or needed*. And the medium for that, is written communication above all else.

Creatively curating the English language to conjure up desire, or *channelling the muse* to tell a tale, or *receiving inspiration* on how to effectively articulate someone else's idea, whatever it is, the core mechanics of the thing are the same:

Abstract ideas occur in my head,

I turn those ideas into language-based thoughts,

I push some buttons with my fingers to make squiggly lines appear on a screen,

I read the squiggles to make sure they make sense, knowing that those same squiggles will eventually form abstract ideas in another human mind.

Pamphlets, emails, menu item descriptions, PowerPoints, books; it's all about writing. Same battles, same traits, same skills, same techniques.

I don't know how much you already know about writing professionally, or whether the way I see things align with the way you do. But I have been asked questions before, and there are some commonalities. So, here's a bit of an FAQ section, before we get to my diary.

Do you stressfully rush about talking about 'deadlines' and 'sources' and 'interviews'?

Yes, but I don't do journalism. (Sometimes opinion pieces, though!)

Do you sit in coffee shops and calmly tap away on a laptop whilst a stressful world races by?

Yes, but see the following point.

Do you sit on tropical beaches and write whilst sipping from a coconut?

No, and I recommend getting coffee shops and beaches out of your head quickly. Sometimes it's good to do both of these things, but coffee gets cold quickly, a bright beach being reflected in a laptop screen is a migraine waiting to happen, and most importantly, writers need somewhere comfortable to write.

I have held a skydiving licence, climbed mountains, have taken part in a charity boxing match, a mud run, and I boulder. Nothing has injured me nearly as much, and more frequently, than writing in an inappropriate environment. For me, comfort is king.

Do you talk of 'the muse' and 'inspiration'?

Yes! All the time actually.

Is writer's block real?

Yes, but it's 'quietly frustrating' rather than big and depressing. Bear in mind that it's a battle to be fought, and you will overcome it - don't preoccupy yourself with it before it happens. Also, don't overdiagnose it; having difficulty in getting started is normal and it happens every day before getting into 'flow.' Don't confuse 'resistance' and 'procrastination' with 'writer's block'. There's more on this in the Writers You Write resource cache!

Do you lock yourself away for days at a time to get your work done?

No, never. I'd rather miss a deadline - I write so that I can live on my terms, not so I can be a stressed-out recluse. But I am strict with myself, and when I say I'm going to write, I write.

You should do that too. There's no need for any of us to get to the stage where we're shutting ourselves in a log cabin, if we **maintain our professionalism**. Locking oneself away is, in my opinion, the behaviour of a 'tortured artist' rather than that of a professional.

Saying that, one must do what must be done, and I would never rule anything out.

Are you a good writer?

As you can tell, I'm average but willing. Lots of people are better than I am, but they don't get started, let alone finished. And so I do my work.

If you're worried about whether you're good enough, know that it's most important to be willing. Everything else can be learnt. Buy the book about writing called 'Elements of Style', refer to it, and you'll be good enough to get paid. It's short, boring, to the point, and unprecedentedly useful.

Most importantly:

Do you make money from writing?

Yes - I'm a pro dammit. And, by the way, it's entirely possible for you to do so too.

You can probably make a living from writing incredibly quickly indeed, as long as you are happy at first to do the writing that is needed, rather than the writing that you want to do.

Again: At first, do the writing that is needed, rather than the writing that you want to do.

I am only just starting my first novel, one I have dreamed of writing since I was 14. But having done writing that got me paid while I practiced, (rather than what I wanted to do - the novel) for a few years, only now am I actually ready and able.

If your expectations of being a professional writer are that you're going to be getting an advance from a publisher anytime soon, dispense with those immediately. Any aspiring 'advance receivers' have a lot of writing and selling to do before they get even close to that stage.

What I'm saying here is this - if you're reading this because you want to write professionally, congratulations, this is achievable. But you're going to need to spend a lot of time doing the writing that the world needs you to do, before you get to create your magnum opus on another person's time and dime.

Most of my thoughts on being a professional writer will be gleaned from my diary, but I thought it would be best to outline a few things first. Now that I have done so, onto the recordings of my life as a professional writer.

The Diary.

The 22nd of the month

I have been writing things for other people for some time. A wider range of things than I ever imagined at the start of this journey. Court documents, menu descriptors, business listings, social posts, event invites, Google Business Page optimisation posts, pitch decks, and so much more. But now it's time to write for me. I am starting my novel.

I look at the clock in the corner of my screen. 9:03. I hate being late to work. Slipping standards is one heck of a slippery slope and I'm annoyed with myself. I'm starting a new project today, and I'm starting the day late. Of course I quickly calm down; it's good to be hard on myself as there's no one else here who will be, but I needn't be a bully over 3 minutes.

That's one reason why sticking to good standards is so important - the 'you' that does the work needs to keep the 'you' that plans the work happy. I am my best & closest ally, and today, I'm probably going to have a fight on my hands. I'm probably going to need me.

I aim to do three rounds of 'pomodoro timer' work before lunch, which for me means 25 minutes of undistracted work, followed by a five-minute forced break, repeated six times. All timed using the Pomodoro Chrome Extension on my browser.

I set the timer, move my cursor over to the Chrome logo and open a new window. I type 'd' into the top bar of the browser and hit 'return'. This takes me straight to Google Docs, my starting place for all my work. I use Linux Mint as an operating system - I love how fast Linux gets up and going, and I love how there's none of that new 'Microsofty distraction' going on on my desktop. Less than two minutes ago my laptop was off, and now I am at the 'staging area' of my morning campaign.

What I am about to do is as daunting as it is exciting. I love 'new'. I love 'change', and I really value 'clean slate' situations. But I'm about to see a blank white page; blank white pages are where many dreams die. I know there is a mountain to climb, with battles to be fought upon it as I go. I use the trackpad and hover my cursor over the 'start a new document' panel. I click the '+Blank' option and before I am ready to see it, an empty white abyss stares back at me.

'Prologue' I type, having selected the 'Heading Text 1' option. This is going to be useful for later, when I get the thing to auto-create my contents page.

That was a solid start. Existential angst is prone to wash over a writer at this stage and it's important to get some ink on the white quickly. By my reckoning, 99% of ideas, inspiration, imagination, and ingenuity never even make it this far. And of those that do, many of them are left as a title on an otherwise blank page. It's essential to congratulate myself, but I then must carry straight on.

Rule one of being a professional writer is to turn up, turn up on time, turn up ready.

The page is not blank anymore. I know I am writing my prologue today, and I know I am writing my epilogue too, because I have already decided that the story starts at the end. Controversial, some might think. The epilogue is a repeat of the prologue with an added bit of story, Max Payne 1 style. (If you know, you know. And if you don't, don't worry about the reference)

"Is it really starting at the end, if there's more to the end at the end, than the end at the start?" I wonder to myself. **"No. Focus. Only writing, no judgment - it will come together"**. I am not writing something that must be good, I am writing something which must be finished (first draft) and then made good afterwards. I press return a couple of times and

select 'Heading text 1' again. 'Epilogue' I type. I also put 'Chapter One' in between, so I know what's what.

"Great. My page is no longer blank. I am ready to transmute the muse's ruminations from the ether onto paper, and I have already made it so, so far". I self-aggrandise briefly, before wondering if doing this early formatting was just a form of procrastination, to stop me from writing the epilogue.

Resistance to doing the work is a sneaky bugger, and it will do everything it can to stop you from getting done what you must do. It must be fought, though it can't be fought directly, it must be fought only through doing the work. I began to write again.

[You can learn all about resistance in my 'Writers, You Write' Resource Cache.]

At lunchtime I stopped this new project. I had to get back to the money maker. But first, I took a picture of my screen and sent it to my girlfriend. The first go at a prologue and epilogue was completed, and I wanted some positive reinforcement. She was pleased that I had gotten so far and asked if she could give feedback. A writer should never turn the offer of feedback down, especially a dyslexic one like me. (Unless of course, I am in flow, a time when a writer needs no judgment, only focus and progress.) She also told me that I was absolutely fantastic for having gotten so far (I am) and that she is excited to read the middle, with it being that I have already shown her the very beginning, and the very end.

The rest of the day I spent working on some copy for a local restaurant. I'm working on their menu. I am writing the dining-in menu, takeaway menu, and kids' menu. It's my job to make sure the wording makes passers by become patrons, to make patrons salivate at the thought of what's on offer, and to make sure no one resists a dessert. It's my job to lay it all out too - not classically the role of a writer, but it's honest work, as they say.

I am not writing what I particularly want to be writing, I want to get back to my novel. But, I am getting paid for this, and the more I write, the better I get. I imagine firefighters don't always fight the fires they want to fight, doctors don't always see the patients they want to see, and racing drivers have to do ad reads and press conferences. I know it can't all be novels and book signings and cafés, and so I get on with it.

If you've ever thought about being a professional writer, you should, too - get on with it, that is. This is the key hack, and it really is that simple. The reason there are so many unpaid writers with unwritten masterpieces, is because people felt unready to start, and so they never got around to the only essential part; the getting on with the writing. I think the best way to 'get on with it', is to employ some entrepreneurship, and hone your craft whilst getting paid. **You must understand that you can't just do what you want.** I'm sorry if this is news to you. Add value to the world, and do what is needed. And then, when you use your writing skills, and writer traits to help people get what **they** want, you will be able to write in order to get what **you** want. Give before you take. More about this later.

The 23rd of the month

Ideas appearing - Inspiration! Sometimes it will come to you when you're ready for it. Oftentimes, especially at the beginning of one's writing career, it doesn't. It's a great idea to train the muse in your way of working, or at least try to. However you choose to label it—the muse, creativity, or simply the product of your own mind, you want to train its mechanism to synchronize with your conscious, working mind as much as you can. However you want to think of the timing of the 'bolts' of ingenuity that strike you, that's how you should think about it. The point is, your ideas and their mechanism of arriving in your mind, will have characteristics of their own, and you do indeed want to train this mechanism's way of working to synchronise with your conscious mind's way of working, as much as you can.

For me, the way to do it is to calenderise everything. Key point: Professionals use calendars, organisers, and diaries. Professionals also use routines. I struggle with routine, as the battle between the 'me' that craves familiarity and the 'me' that craves variety wages on. The compromise is to have some routine, but not base my working week on 'sameness'. But, to base it on appointments with my tasks in my calendar. Nothing fancy - Google calendar does the trick for me.

Some people think they are too artsy for calenderising moments of inspiration ahead of time. But what people think an artist is, and what an artist actually is, are two different things.

You should calenderise when you will write, and you should absolutely stick to your appointments. If you haven't any work, write anyway. See Appendix 1, Play on Demand.

What tends to happen now is that, as I sit down to do a particular piece of writing as directed by my calendar, relevant inspiration arrives at the same time as I need it. Not always, and it didn't happen often in the beginning, but now it is about as reliable as a half-decent friend. Frustrating, because getting the right ideas in my head at the right time is not an exact science, but the muse is someone I can't do without. And so I let the moments of unreliability slide.

Back to me telling you about the 23rd. One of my writing jobs is something I'm doing for free, for now. This is a better idea than it sounds. Without divulging too much, there's a tech company that is really great at developing tech for a certain type of business, but is really bad at selling that tech to this prospective client group. They talk on their website and their socials like a tech startup, which is not the language of their target base. This tech company has a referral program, where they allow accountants for instance, or people who are networked with their target clients, to refer businesses to their platform for a fee.

I don't currently work with their client base in the way an accountant would, and I'm not networked with their client base in any way. But I summon the might of the pen. I'm penning a letter on my laptop to the tech company's ideal clients. An open letter that I will post online, and link to in an email. I understand how this platform can help, and I know how to word it in a way that the client base will understand. Today I'm going to spend the day 'copywriting'.

I'm going to set up a webpage, a skill you too should learn, there are many ways to do it (I use [this](#)). I'm going to fill up that page with a flowing piece of writing that explains to the client base, in words suitable to them, what the tech company has failed to explain in all of their publicity. At the end of it is a 'call to action' to get the reader to head to the platform's sales page and purchase a subscription to their software, if they feel it will help their business.

Sales copywriting can be easy. There are courses online that teach how to write sales copy, the best of which you might like to find in the 'Writers, You Write' Resource Cache. The summary of my method is this:

1. Only try to sell something to someone if that thing will help them, or if it's something they would want.
2. Write the text in a way that explains their problem, and why your proposed solution works. (If you can articulate their problem better than they can, they will trust what you say next - this is a powerful spell, please use it for good)
3. Don't sell, inform. Teach them about their problem and about the proposed solution
4. Work out where you sit on the conversational-formal continuum and stick there so the tone is consistent.
5. Focus on impact, not features
6. Have a call to action.
7. Split test, re-test and see how it goes.

Honestly, that really is all there is to it. As with all writing, the gist is this; **practice makes not perfect but makes results**. If a website has bad sales copy, half-bad sales copy will be a life-changing improvement. Try the half-board content for a month or two, rewrite it a bit better and test again. Repeat this for a year and with a couple of clients and you'll have your honorary copywriting degree by the following Christmas.

I'm going to earn about \$20 US per client per month - no money upfront for me with this opportunity, but I still see this as a great deal. The first rule of being a professional writer is aim to get paid. And to base that aim in the real world - don't think about potential advances now, think about sure-thing money next month.

I do also get paid upfront for writing, but this is how I started as a beginner, and how I fill open writing slots. This isn't something I did 'once upon a time', it's something I do now. It's a great idea as it leads to recurring income, and it means I can work with companies I like.

Anyway, I must get on with the webpage before I sim-race, then sleep.

The 24th of the month

I have dyslexia. Rule one of being a professional writer is to get your work proofread numerous times. And for me, that is especially important. I have a selection of proofreaders,

some who just like to read my work and are adept at catching my mistakes as they go, and some who I pay. Another good thing about having a proofreader to help is that once you have set an appointment with them, you have a deadline to work towards. It's a soft deadline, as you won't get into any real trouble if you haven't finished your work, but it's a deadline nonetheless. You need to have something to show them - something for them to actually proofread, and so you have some external pressure to get what your writing written. Rule number one of being a professional writer is not to mess your inner circle about - if someone is willing to help you, and you say you're going to turn up with a piece of writing at a certain time, you had better turn up, with the writing, on time and in a good mood. Lest you lose an ally.

I spent most of yesterday writing 1,500 words of sales copy for my webpage. By this evening it has to be done, as I'm showing it to someone. Two working days to do 1,500 words of sales copy is good progress. I'm sure it will be littered with mistakes, so fixing that is going to be an additional half a day, and then it's going to take a day to get the thing online. But for now, I will just focus on getting it done and being on time to meet my proofer.

The 25th of the month

Today I will correct all the mistakes my proofreader highlighted for me. It was a nice evening; we hung out, had a drink and then went through the document on my laptop. Some things we edited on the fly, other things I made good notes of, in order to adapt the document at my own pace. Rule one of being a professional writer is to manage the expectations of your inner circle. When it comes to proofreaders, it's polite to let them know that whilst all feedback is welcomed, some of it may be discarded - maybe they talk about the tonality when you just want them to spot spelling errors, for example. So after last night's session, about half of the recommended edits will make it in for sure, and the other half I need to think about. Then, I'll set about posting it online - that's not something I'm going to go into detail about here, but it will take about double the amount of allocated hours for sure, as these things never go smoothly. I'm going to go and get on with it all.

The 26th of the month

Today, I lost a battle with procrastination. Part of being a professional writer is taking on the battle against procrastination and winning, whilst knowing that you can't win every time. Scheduling, calenderising, and routine are important, but sometimes it just doesn't work.

There are many causes of procrastination, today I put it down to the fact that yesterday was a tough day (website work) and I am tired. Rule number one for being a professional writer is to be ready to fight and beat procrastination when it shows up. Two top tips for this are to be well rested and well hydrated, and I am neither. Tiredness and grogginess never help.

Now that I am at my desk with about 90 minutes of catching up to do, I have started off lightly by writing this, and will now do some more copywriting for the project I have spent the last few days working on. Today I have to write the email that will be sent out in order to tempt people to go to the webpage that I have been working on. It's only one side of A4, but to get it right it will take me a whole day. After dinner I will spend an hour, as usual, working on my novel. I'm building the bit between the 'Prologue' and the 'Epilogue', and let's be honest here, that's the important bit. I'm writing in the 'third-person, limited' style, but I have realised that chapter one is very much a 'third-person, omniscient' piece of text, so I have decisions to make and editing to do. I won't go into fiction writing in this diary, but writing as a pro for other people has prepared me for this challenge in a way I hope you will, at some point, share in too.

The 27th of the month

Some days are neither victories nor defeats, they are just "holding the line" days. Today I didn't conquer a mountain of words, nor did I sink into the swamp of procrastination; I maintained, and that's just fine.

Rule one of being a professional writer is to make sure your baseline is productive. If your worst day still produces something tangible, you're doing well. Here's the thing about us as humans; we don't "*rise to the challenge*" very often at all. We don't tend to "*pull things off*" at the last minute because "*it will be alright on the night*". And if we do manage to, it probably won't be very good.

No.

Rather, we fall to our minimum standard. Most of your days will not be spent reaching high for an honourable goal, they will be spent doing the bare minimum you can do, without feeling awful. There will of course, be days where you feel like you 'smashed it', but don't rely on these, rely only, on you working to your minimum standards.

But then...

Set your minimum standards accordingly. Realise that you must write each workday, and you must attempt to do the best that you can do as you do it. That is what being a professional is all about.

Back to my day.

I worked on some small edits for a restaurant client in the morning: menu typos, a slightly overexcited adjective here and there, and in the afternoon I sketched a structure for my next blog commission. No fanfare, just being there and getting the writing written.

The magic of "just showing up" is that it stacks up over time. A hundred small, unspectacular days will always build something much bigger than a few rare bursts of genius.

Top Tip: If you feel unmotivated, lower the bar. Do a “minimum viable writing session”; 10 minutes, one paragraph, one sentence. Often, starting small leads to finishing big, or at least, a little bigger, which is still a win.

The 28th of the month

Today I got a call from a past client. “We’ve got a product launch, I need content for socials: a friendly intro, then tech specs, then a sales press release. Can you do it?”

This is why it’s good to position yourself as, behave as, and work like ‘a professional writer’. Because people remember you. “I am a professional writer”, say it proudly. That title has magic to it. I’d written an email sequence for them months ago; they liked it, and here I am again. Would they have liked my work if I had labeled myself as an ‘email sales expert’? Yeah, they probably would have, but there are tons of those, and they probably wouldn’t have called me to do this. ‘Professional writer’ has an air of timeless power to it.

Anyway, it was very last minute which was annoying, but it was paid, so I agreed.

There was a lot to do in a short space of time, so I knew that my next few days were going to be a blur. A launch isn’t just “writing about a product”. You have to write for the same audience, in three different ways, which lead the reader to take action.

1. **The Friendly Teaser** – for the social media casual followers. Warm, low-friction. Builds intrigue without overwhelming. It also announces that something is coming, and that they should stay tuned if they are interested.
2. **The Tech Spec Sheet** – for the detail-oriented. Jargon tolerated (sometimes expected), but still human-readable. This gives more detail about what’s coming.
3. **The Press Release / Sales Push** – for maximum reach and urgency. This is where you combine authority with a very polite shove towards the “Buy” button. By this time, it’s what they expect anyway!

Rule one of being a professional writer is to be adaptable. Same product, three voices.

The 29th of the month

Today I worked almost entirely on the launch content. I started with the “friendly” post because it’s the easiest way to slide into the project, and I like to write in the order that content will be posted. Note that this isn’t always the correct order to do things in. Sometimes you must start at the end, and work backward.

A trick for writing in multiple voices: create three imaginary readers. For the friendly post, my “reader” was a neighbour I bump into at the shop. For the technical one, my “reader” was a keen hobbyist who wants data, not fluff. For the sales piece, my “reader” was an industry journalist with a big audience and a short attention span, with a litany of their own readers, all eager to find out if and how they should buy this product. I drew them out on a post-it note, stuck it next to my desk and wrote as if I was writing to them directly - when you have a mental image of who you’re talking to, the words come out sharper.

Top Tip: When you’re stuck, change your imagined reader. Sometimes a shift from “audience” to “individual” is all it takes to get unstuck. B2C sales copywriters, for instance, often write like they are talking directly to a friend, and corporate brochures often sound like each word is being spoken from a stage to a thousand people. Cold, but authoritative.

The 30th of the month

Today I worked on the technical spec post. Not my favourite kind of writing, as I’m a fun, flowery, ‘metaphor & rhythm type-person’, not a bullet-point engineer. As a pro, that must be set aside though.

Rule one of being a professional writer is to write what’s needed, not what you’re in the mood for. This is similar to what I said in the prologue:

It’s entirely possible to make a living from writing...as you are happy at first, to do the writing that **is needed**, rather than the writing **that you want to do**.

The key to tech writing:

- Accuracy above all else.
- Break the info into digestible sections.
- Assume your reader is intelligent but busy.

The person writing techy stuff should always be made aware of specifics, industry standard phrases, and they should be given a bunch of material to work from. Whilst I call it ‘tech writing’, the product was an everyday item, not some sort of cutting edge rocket engine. If you don’t know the industry or the technology at all, and it’s too much to immerse yourself in, or if it’s anything scientific or involves engineering, then your role turns into that of an ‘explainer’. They then *must* give you all the info, and your job is only to make it relatable and understandable for a layperson.

In the evening, I drafted the press release so I could hit the ground running tomorrow. It’s always a good idea to be kind to tomorrow you - a great habit to get into.

Top Tip: If you're asked to do something too technical, then this is your response; "I'd be happy to take on this work, but you'll have to understand that my role will be that of an explainer. You will need to provide me with the details, and I'll produce the ready-to-consume text. If you want someone to work from an earlier starting point, I would have to suggest that you need someone already in your field".

Whilst we're on this though, if you wanted to become a niche writer, and only write about rocket engines, for instance, then that would indeed be a valid route to go down. Your calling cry would then be: "I am a professional writer who specialises in public consumption of aerospace engineering material." It's a much smaller pond, but it's easier to become the global best in a tightly defined niche.

The 1st of the month

Press release days are ahead of me. This is where you blend story and sales without making it feel like an ad, whilst asking buyers to step up. I opened with a hook, then went on to use imagery around the problem that this project solves, and added a brief bit of scene setting. Then I used quotes from the founders to explain how this product came to be, and why now is the time to buy it.

A press release should read like it *matters*. The reader should feel that something just happened in their industry, and they'd better keep up.

After 15 Pomodoros, everything was reread for the third time and sent to my most appropriate proofreader. I updated the client on progress and told them the information will be with them shortly.

After doing all of this, I was wired, so I decided to do some writing for my novel. Unfortunately, I was too keyed in to the wrong voice, which is why it's good to break up your work schedule. I think the work I have done on my novel and on this diary, has suffered whilst I took on this last-minute commission. I'll see what lessons can be learnt and quickly move on.

A mark of a pro is to sincerely take on board when things haven't gone well, but not dwell, and to come back mentally strong tomorrow, with a little lesson learnt.

A mark of a pro is to sincerely take on board when things haven't gone well, but without dwelling on the failure, and to come back with a professional, ready-to-go mental attitude tomorrow. Albeit with the experience of that small lesson learned kept in the back pocket for when it is needed..

The 2nd of the month

The press release proof came back; I accepted a slew of changes and rejected a few. It's always hard not to feel annoyed with someone tearing apart your work. But a first finished draft must be tear-apart-able. If it's not, you probably spent too long on it and you're overinvested.

Light work will take place for the rest of the day, as it's officially the weekend, and not one I intended on working through. I sent the new draft to the client for them to make their own changes in time for the end of next week. Now I'll just be filing notes from the launch project, because I know I'll reuse the framework. Professionals don't reinvent wheels all that often, and writing is half fresh creation, half recycling past successes for new purposes. Novelty is overrated in both non-fiction and fiction. In fact, sometimes it is derided.

Top Tip: Save every outline you make. A structure that worked once can be adapted dozens of times.

The 4th of the month

I sent out a cold email to 100 businesses today, all about the importance of an optimised Google Business Profile. I wrote it as both a mini sales pitch and a useful standalone piece. I did this because I have a slight lull in work ahead, and it's important to try to get new work in well before the old work dries up. Unless you want to work on your novel full-time, which I do not, not yet at least. 'Lead Gen' is an absolute priority in almost any endeavour.

Cold email gets a bad reputation because people do it badly, but, it's a brilliant training ground. As a writer, you should do it! It's good for:

- **Writing** – You are practising your craft in order to sell your craft - zero hypocrisy here then! And it gives you practice at trying to distil a message into as few words as possible.
- **Copywriting** – You practice the art of hooking attention, creating curiosity, and calling to action. And, based on your responses, you learn how good you are at it!
- **Client acquisition** – If you offer something relevant and useful, it's a direct line to new work.

Rule one of being a professional writer is to use your writing to open doors - sometimes literally in the form of a client walking in and saying, "I got your email...please write one for me"

Top Tip: Never send a cold email without a specific, low-friction next step — "reply with yes," "book a free call," "download this guide." These are called 'call to action' and as you access resources in the Writers You Write resource cache, you'll learn all about them.

The 5th of the month

I spent the morning finishing off my work for the 'misguided' tech company, trying to sell their wares to small businesses. The response has been fair, but I have had a few questions come directly to me from the business owners I have been promoting the tech company to. I will respond and, if appropriate, send them to the sales page.

In the meantime, I got two responses to the Google Business Page offer, so this evening I will start optimising Google Business Profiles for the businesses of the 'replyees'. I won't finish today, though - It's good to start fast, but don't make it look too easy!

I'm not going to go in to how to optimise a Google profile here, but you can learn all about how to offer and fulfil this valuable and in-demand service in the oft mentioned, 'Writers, You Write!' resource cache.

Writing for businesses comes in so many shapes and sizes. You can probably think of writing services that a business might pay you for, that I haven't mentioned anywhere in this diary - maybe that I haven't even thought of! Professional writing often hides in plain sight, as you now know, if you didn't before. You see it all the time. It's not always about articles or novels; it's the little chunks of text that influence how a person sees the world around them. Those words are invisible to most people - but not to us.

Take this moment to decide that from now on, you won't just become a consumer of writing; you will become an analyst of it. Whether that's an ad, an instruction, or a persuasive description, start to notice techniques, patterns, and absences.

The 6th of the month

More Google Business Profile work. It's oddly satisfying; a before-and-after comparison feels like giving a shop a new coat of paint. And the fact that it directly affects how many people find a good, honest, local business? That's a nice bonus. I also have a tool that shows my clients how the work that I do has an almost immediate effect:

Let's say 2% of the traffic that lands on a GBP, calls or visits the business. If I can get that up to 3%, then whilst from my perspective it's only a slight uptick, from the perspective of the business, it's 33% growth!

(The tool i use for this work is in the resource cache! Just where it should be, and it's ready for you to pick up and use with your own paying clients should you wish to).

This is recurring work. Profiles need updating. A savvy writer sees recurring work not as drudgery, but as stability.

Top Tip: When working with small businesses, realises that they often get the priorities wrong when it comes to their business and product descriptions. They often put themselves

first, not the customer. But it's important to put the customer benefit first: "Helping locals get fresh bread daily" will beat "Family bakery since 1992" every time.

The 7th of the month

Back to my novel tonight after a while away from it. Rule one of being a professional writer is not to entirely neglect your own projects, no matter how busy you are with paid work. You need to keep one little corner of your mind for the thing that made you want to write in the first place.

I broke this rule this week, but as you can see, I have been a busy bee. The product launch was unexpected, and I didn't expect to be doing the Google profiles so fast, but the prospecting emails got a response so I struck whilst the iron was hot.

I'm not expecting 'genius' as I write tonight. I'm expecting a few good paragraphs that will keep the embers glowing until I can give it more time.

The 16th of the month

I have been writing this diary as I worked throughout the month, but I haven't mentioned it in any of my entries. That would have been a bit too meta. When it comes to stories, I find anything "*timey-wimey*" like Doctor Who, or "*Inception-ey style*" dimension twists, a bit too abstract to enjoy. I have let that preference for timelines to be linear dictate this diary writing. Until now, I have been writing about what I was writing about, but I wouldn't write about writing about what I am writing about. I trust that makes sense to you.

Until now. At the end of each day I have been spending an extra fifteen minutes at work. 5 minutes to get to the tablet, fire it up and open Reedsy, ten minutes to record what I did that day. It feels like I have done a lot of work, and I am pleased that I have achieved the first draft.

And now the real work starts.

You should understand that the first draft of anything you write is just for you. It's to give you a foundation for your second draft, after which you may get someone in your inner circle to look through it before creating your third.

The elation I feel after finishing the first draft is contrasted with the dread - and yes, it does feel like dread - of having to begin stage two of the project. But here's how I like to think of it: I am so lucky and grateful to myself. To the me who did the first draft. I worship and congratulate the past me, who gave the present me so much to work with. Sure, the second draft will be radically different to the first, which is sad considering how much effort and energy and life went into it. I will not be sad about that though, because the second draft will

be so much better. And that wouldn't have been possible without the heroic attempt of past me, being a hero and doing hero things, and getting that first draft completed.

Anyway, I'm visiting my parents, as I have been helping my Dad with his shed roof. It was fun, and I enjoyed spending the time with him, and my Mum too. And so as I sit alone at the dining room table of my childhood home, with my parents both elsewhere, I realise: It is time to scroll up this page, and see that the way I have written my diary entries is absolute bullshit.

Awful.

"How on earth could I have thought wording it like this is a good idea?" moments will abound. But here I go.

The 18th of the month

I did it, and I once again celebrate. Starting on this second draft was hard, but once I had gotten through a few of the entries, I learnt about what voice I would be using for the diary, and how the tone that flows through some of the entries should weave through the whole thing. Amendments were made, and I have arrived at the point where my second draft is complete. Bits were cut, details were added, and on an occasion or two, I used creative licence to better illustrate a point I was trying to make. Now for the proofreading

The 19th of the month

Today I got paid £300 to send a WhatsApp message. Be careful of headlines like this; I had to pay tax on that so the amount that will hit my personal bank account in a few months' time will be much less than this. (Sales tax/VAT, corporation tax, tax on earnings) But it's still pretty cool.

Here's the situation that led to this.

1. Someone whose Google Business Page is optimised by me, has been having trouble with a prospective client.
2. They have been communicating by WhatsApp, trying to strike a deal. They are both small business owners, and so this is normal behaviour. We don't all have boardrooms.
3. They are at an impasse, and whilst they both want to work together, they can't figure out a way forward that both find palatable.
4. I have positioned myself as a professional writer.
5. "What other stuff do you do when it comes to writing? Are you any good at doing sales things?" he asked.
6. "It's something I can look into doing for you yes, what's the problem?"

7. He handed me his phone. "Have a look at this chat; let me know if you can send him my idea in a way that doesn't piss him off"

Would this have worked if I wasn't there in person? It might have, but here's a rule - first dominate your local area, because you have an enormous, and often enormously underestimated, geographical and social advantage there.

Would this have worked if I had called myself a Search Engine Optimiser, or other form of digital marketing buzzwords? Probably not. When I said earlier that there is a massive advantage to positioning yourself as a 'professional writer', I really meant it. It sounds timeless and classy, and so you stand out; not a cliché in sight.

The 21st of the month

I spent today with my proofreader. I'm not going to get my manuscript edited before it gets published. Whilst an editing process would be the norm in the traditional publishing world, this small book is much less formal than that. To be honest, if you're reading this, you're probably reading the proofread third draft, rather than an edited final. I hope that's okay with you. If it's not, you've come an awfully long way, reading something that you consider to be substandard. I trust you have been finding it at least somewhat valuable. More evidence that you don't even need to be a very good writer to make it, in fact!

Anyway, the proofreading. The proofreading was as painful as it should be for someone who has dyslexia, an average grasp of the English language, an averagely fragile ego, and the desire to write and show. It was four hours of note-taking, then a further two hours of corrections. I had done all sorts wrong: spelling, grammar, run-on sentences, and much more. As I said earlier; I'm not a great writer, but I do write, I complete, and I ship. (Learn about 'shipping' by reading 'The War of Art' by Steven Pressfield.)

And so here ends this diary. But this is not the end of our time together, if you don't wish for it to be; I also have a resource cache for aspiring professional writers, which you can access for free if you bought this book, (you will have been emailed your log-in information the moment you paid) I recommend you access this and spend some time perusing the content. I talk you through dozens of useful resources, plus I hold a monthly fireside chat about life as a professional writer, and more!

See you on the inside, and thanks for taking this diary journey with me. I have genuinely enjoyed writing it for you..

What's this 'Resource Cache?'

Well, check it out here: writersyouwrite.pro

Appendix 1 - A quote

A quote by Alan Watts, regarding a talk he was at. Excuse the gendering - it's not just men that can be artists.

I'll never forget—there was a great Zen master I knew once, in New York. He was giving a lecture one evening. And he said, “Fundamental principle in Buddhism is: no purpose. Purposelessness. When you drop fart, you don't say, ‘At nine o'clock, I drop fart.’ It happens of itself.” You know? And all these pious Western devotees, you know, kind of put their handkerchiefs in their mouths and tried not to laugh.

So—but, that's the meaning of “something that happens of itself,” like “drop fart,” or “have hiccups,” or—just—you came into being, you know? It happens in a kind of a plop! way, like that—see? Now, you can't tell that process, “You ought to happen! You must happen!” Because that puts a bind on it in the same way as when you have little child, and all the relatives have come to a party on Thanksgiving, and you put the child in the middle of all the relatives and say, “Now, dear, play!” See? It absolutely bugs the child to do it like that. And so this is the problem for every artist. Because an artist is a man who makes his living by playing—whether he's dancing, or painting, or playing music, or whatever it is—and he has to overcome this problem. He has to know how to play in public at a given time on an appointment, see? And that's not an easy thing to learn. But when you catch on to the trick of it, you can do it—to play on demand. That's the hardest lesson of life: to contrive what is called by my Japanese artist friend Saburo Hasegawa, a ‘controlled accident’.

Appendix 2 - The list of first rules of being a professional writer

- Turn up, turn up on time, turn up ready.
- Aim to get paid.
- Do not mess your inner circle about.
- Be ready to fight and beat procrastination when it shows up.
- Make sure your baseline is productive - know that we fall to our minimum standard rather than ‘rising to the occasion’.
- Be adaptable.
- Write what's needed, not what you're in the mood for.
- Use your writing to open doors.
- Do not neglect your own projects entirely, no matter how busy you are with paid work.

