

Interview With Lindy Alexander

Trudy Rankin: [00:00:00] Have you ever thought about turning your personal stories or your personal opinions into a profitable side hustle? Well, even in a world dominated by AI and shifting economies, if you can string together sentences in a way that gets people wanting to hear more, it is absolutely possible. In this episode, we're diving deep into the secrets of getting started as a freelance writer.

My guest, Lindy Alexander, is an award winning freelance travel writer, and the founder of the popular blog, The Freelancer's Year, and she's mastered the art of writing and has helped countless people turn their writing dreams into reality.

She has a really rich background that includes social work, sign language interpretation, and a Ph. D. And she brings a unique and a holistic approach to freelance writing.

And today, Lindy is going to share how you can break into the freelance writing industry, land paid gigs, even high paying ones, and build a sustainable business around your writing passion.

Welcome to the Online Business [00:01:00] Launchpad podcast. I'm your host, Trudy Rankin, and I bring you stories, tips, and advice from online entrepreneurs who are finding success, because if we've done it, so can you.

Now, I've been running my own online business for nine years now, with more than a few twists and turns, and I've learned a lot as I've made mistakes and learned what to do and what not to do to achieve my goals. And because of what I've learned, I've become passionate about helping busy online business owners like you hit your goals without burning out or having to hire a big team.

I've used my experience and the experience of others to help hundreds of people grow their online business. And one of my greatest joys is working with people who, because of life circumstances, need a flexible work from home or work from anywhere option that helps them pay the bills. My mission is simple.

I want to help you solve the challenges you face as a far too busy online business owner so you can have more time and money for yourself and your family and more choices in how you live your life. So if you're ready to once again get stuck into online business [00:02:00] building and learn how to turn your writing passion into profit, stick around and we'll get cracking.

Trudy Rankin: Welcome to the Online Business Launchpad podcast.

Today I have somebody that I think is really interesting and does something that is really interesting. And it is Lindy Alexander, and I'm just looking at my notes here, who is an award winning freelance travel writer, and the founder of the Freelancers Year, which is a popular blog that I've had a good look at, and it helps fellow freelancers write, earn, and thrive from basically being able to write about the things that they're interested in.

And, I have a deep interest in this because, long story short, when my children were small, I used to write and get paid for it. It was the only way I had to earn money. And fast forward many [00:03:00] years to just late last year, I bought an existing business. that is there to help people get started and thrive in their freelance writing journey.

And as I started to serve those people and help them, cause I come at it from a business perspective. I rediscovered my joy of writing. And so I've started looking at ways to, as a side hustle, start to write and to get paid for it. And I came across Lindy by listening to a podcast and I thought that sounds really interesting.

So I went and looked up her stuff. And actually bought a couple of her courses and they're really good. I'll just say that right up front. They're really good. And so I just thought I have to have Lindy on the podcast just to talk about her journey, because if I was able to make money when I was much younger with young kids from my writing, then you should be able to make money from your writing.

And we'll talk about the fact that there's AI these days and all those sorts of stuff, but it is a possible thing to create a side hustle for [00:04:00] yourself by being able to write.

Lindy, thank you so much for being on the podcast. I really appreciate you being here.

Lindy Alexander: Hi, Trudy. Thanks so much for having me.

Trudy Rankin: Let's just get started, if you would, please, just by maybe just telling our listeners how you got started with what you're doing in terms of the writing side of things.

Lindy Alexander: Yes, so I wasn't always paid to be a writer. I feel like I had this vision of myself from a very young child of being a good writer and being a writer, but it was never anything that I even thought that I could make into a profession or a career.

And in fact, when I was doing my year 12, I didn't consider it. I didn't consider journalism. I didn't really want to be a journalist. And I didn't even think about creative writing. And I went down the path of, I was a sign language interpreter, and then I became a social worker, and I had always written, I'd always kept [00:05:00] diaries.

Once I had written an opinion piece for a paper, but it never really occurred to me until I was pregnant with my son in 2012. And I had that pause of maternity leave that I think offers people this break from reality, in a little way, before you have the baby, before you're super busy. I had a couple of weeks off and I thought, I want to write because I was someone who would, Pick up the weekend papers, or buy magazines, and read these beautiful feature stories, and be swept away by these stories of people achieving incredible feats, or people doing amazing things, or real life stories.

And I just, Never even thought about who was writing these stories. And when I was on maternity leave, I picked up a bundle of weekend papers and thought, who are these people writing these amazing stories? And I searched some of them on the internet and thought, They're [00:06:00] freelance writers. That's a thing.

And so I went down this rabbit hole of finding out how to become a feature writer. So writing articles for magazines and newspapers. And a few months after my son was born, I had my first piece published. I was paid 400 for it. And I was like, Oh my goodness, people are going to pay me. for my words, to write articles about things that I'm interested in.

And my whole world opened up, I think, in terms of what was possible.

Trudy Rankin: I think that's fascinating because I think for a lot of people that, that writing or discovering that you can get paper writing does sometimes Happen, does often happen around that time when you suddenly have by, you basically don't have a really a choice.

You're not working. You've got maternity leave or you're looking after young children and you've got your brain's still sharp, but you don't have lots of time

and you don't, you can't commit to working for somebody else, [00:07:00] but you can fit in things like writing basically around your daily schedule.

That's really interesting. So you say you did everything you could to learn how to do it. Did you take courses from other people?

Lindy Alexander: Yeah, I did a short online course. For, I think it was a five week online course. And part of that was connecting with other freelance writers, which I really actually think was one of the key things that kept me going.

I do feel like in some ways my energy, my desire to keep going was really fueled by talking to other writers who were at similar stages to me and who were struggling with similar things like not hearing back from editors or getting rejections to our pictures that we would send out for story ideas and having people celebrate our wins but also commiserate when things didn't go according to plan.

That made me think, oh, there's this really. And I think it's just a really supportive community of people of freelancers out there that I knew nothing about. And that really [00:08:00] propelled me forward. So for a number of years, I was doing social work two days a week. I was finishing off my PhD in social work, and then I was doing some feature writing on the side.

And by the time I'd finished my PhD in 2015, I thought, I don't want to be a social worker anymore. I want to be, I want to be a freelance writer. And so then in 2017, I went full time as a freelance writer.

Trudy Rankin: That's really impressive actually. So I'm just for, out of curiosity sake and for the benefit of the listeners, because I know they're going to be wanting to know the answer to this question, is that when you first did that course and you were working towards getting your first published piece, how long did it take from the time you first came up with the, when you first started pitching?

And so just to be clear, pitching just simply means reaching out and saying to, to magazines, news, basically anybody who publishes content saying, would you please publish my piece, here it is, here's an [00:09:00] idea for you, would you pay me for it? And then obviously hoping that they'll say yes.

So from the time that you started doing that to the time you were first published, how long did it take?

Lindy Alexander: It didn't take long. I do think a little bit of pitching is being in the right place at the right time. I think it was before I finished the course I had my first pitch commission. And I think the key to a pitch is that it's not just an idea like you want to write that you've been on holiday in Paris.

I'd like to write about that. It has to have a very specific angle. It has to have a hook. And so I think one of the first pitches I sent off was this idea around emotional resilience in children, how we really looked at kids in terms of their physical development. And we would never berate a child for saying, I've told you how to walk and now you're stumbling.

And if I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times, just get up and walk. Rather [00:10:00] we encourage and we say, I'm going to talk about how we support and we nurture children when they're learning to walk or do a physical skill, but we don't necessarily have that same approach when children are learning to regulate their emotions, for example.

And so I wanted to write a piece about how we could support children's emotional regulation without feeling, oh, they're having a frustration, they're having a tantrum again, like I've told you once, you can't have a cookie, you can't have a cookie. And recognizing their emotional intelligence in a way and the emotional support they needed with that,

regulating those emotions. And so I think that was one of my very first pieces because it was what I was living at that time, dealing with this little baby and all their big emotions thinking, I don't know, I'm not equipped to deal with this. And the researcher in me thinking, I'd really like to talk to a psychologist about this.

And the legitimate way for me to do that would be to pitch a feature story that gets commissioned, then I get to write the story. So it serves me and it serves the readers of the publication as well.

Trudy Rankin: And so obviously that meant [00:11:00] you had to reach out to somebody who was a psychologist. How, was that hard?

Was it easy? Was it somebody you knew or?

Lindy Alexander: Yeah. So what the great thing about feature writing is that there are a lot of people who are really happy to help you out. So whether that's people who own businesses, who you want to interview as case studies, or. Or

whether that's people from a university who you're talking to their research about.

And so for me, I think I went to the Australian Psychological Society. They have a media unit. I said, this is a story I want to write. Would you have a spokesperson? They put me in touch with the child psychologist and we went from there.

Trudy Rankin: That sounds like it went fairly smoothly. So in terms of, so if somebody was thinking about doing that today, is that a still a typical sort of a process or is it, has the world, and we're going to get into this a little bit, has the world gotten a lot more complicated because of things like artificial intelligence?

Lindy Alexander: I think it's still a good approach. I think a lot of editors [00:12:00] will ask you Where have you been published? Do you have clips of previous articles? And that, for a lot of writers, me included when I was starting, caused a lot of anxiety because you already feel like you're a little bit of an imposter, but then for someone to ask you, where's the proof that you can write, and you not to have any, you really feel like an imposter.

So I think one of the things that I talk to the people who take my courses is that one of the greatest, fastest, easiest ways to get published and paid for it is by writing a personal essay or an opinion piece. And so a personal essay is something where something has happened in your life and it can be funny, unusual, inspiring, poignant, whatever that might be.

And when you look at newspapers, magazines, there are a lot of first person reflective pieces that maybe sit around 600, 800 words. And usually those pieces are written out in full, so you're not pitching the editor, but [00:13:00] you're saying, I wrote this piece about escaping from the bushfires and how and how escaping from the bushfires made me realize this, and this.

I've written this piece with your publication in mind. Would you be interested in it? So you can do that and you've written it out. So you're taking the risk out of it for the editor, or you can write an opinion piece. If something's getting you really hot under the collar, like you, you can't stand that chocolate block sizes are shrinking down and nobody's talking about it.

And that, and it's more than a letter to an editor, but it might be 500 to 800 words where there's some research and you can really channel your strong opinion. You can send that off to a newspaper and there's often email addresses

of editors that you can send that into. And so those are two really quick and easy ish ways to get published.

And then once you've got [00:14:00] that first piece, you can then look at pitching more complicated, more involved feature stories where you might be interviewing someone and you have that personal essay or you have that opinion piece that you can point to and say, yes, I have been published before.

Trudy Rankin: I'm curious because as I, because obviously, like I said I've gone through a couple of your courses and the first thing that sort of hit me was, hang on, when I was doing my writing, it was like, however many years ago, it was paper based.

You can't easily point somebody to something that's online. So if somebody's just starting out and they don't, let's just say they don't have a website. And you've talked about sending maybe an opinion piece to an editor to ask them if they'll publish it. And do they, would they typically ask you for more examples of your writing or would they just accept that straight away, just as it is?

Lindy Alexander: Yes. So if it is strong enough, it is good enough. If you can position yourself as somebody who has an opinion worth publishing, and that doesn't necessarily mean that [00:15:00] you have to be a university expert who has an opinion about nuclear weapons. It might just be that you are a business owner in your local town, and what you're noticing is that the big multinationals are moving in, and this is an indication that it's happening more and more wherever you live, and you want to say something about that.

If you can write that in a compelling, interesting, engaging way, editors will publish that. And it took me I mean, I think my first piece was an opinion piece and this was before I did any course. And it was because my auntie, who has a son with multiple disabilities just after Christmas one year, she was sitting at the kitchen table with my mum in tears, talking about how she was having to, yet again, each and every year, fill out all this cumbersome paperwork about her son to get 400 dollars worth of nappies for him that wouldn't even last, a few months, and I felt [00:16:00] so stung by the injustice of it that I wrote this opinion piece not knowing what I was doing and sent it off and didn't hear back from the editor for a week.

And so I thought, Oh, well, it's it has come to nothing. And then on a Friday afternoon, received a call from the editor saying, we're going to, we're going to publish it. And so I think that was three or four years before I did any sort of

course. So it's absolutely possible that if you can write well and succinctly that you can get your piece published.

Trudy Rankin: That's really good advice, because I'm sure most people have an opinion about something, in their daily lives, and, that, that really resonates, your story really resonates with me, because, you may or may not be aware that I ran a program with the Australian federal government to help carers learn how to set up online businesses.

And just as we ran the program, learning just how difficult it is for carers. just full stop difficult it is for them. And so anybody who's in a space where they have difficulties or challenges in their [00:17:00] lives, this could be an ideal way of getting started doing something where you can use your frustration and your anger and your hope and excitement to, to write opinion pieces about things and use it as a way of getting started with a writing career or even a writing business.

I think that's really powerful. I want to follow on question with the whole, if you don't have a portfolio and you're just getting started, how do you get around that? What other ways might people, so let's assume that they've done an opinion piece. What other ways might people be able to provide proof that they can write well without necessarily having a website at this stage?

Lindy Alexander: Yeah, and I don't, I think sometimes the first thing is that people feel like, Oh, I need to have a website. And I have people in my programs who are earning six figures as a freelance writer who do not have websites. So you don't need a website. So I would say there are so many free options for you.

So if you have a LinkedIn account, you can write a post, or you can write a [00:18:00] newsletter on LinkedIn. You can go to Medium and you can write things there and you can start to build up a portfolio and also you can practice and you can get other people to read it, you can get feedback, you can have comments, but also that starts to serve as a portfolio to show potential editors the type of writing that you can do and your style and your tone and your voice.

Trudy Rankin: Okay, that's really good. I want to ask a follow up selfish question on my own behalf and that is, is that if you want to start in with travel writing, can you still use that LinkedIn thing? Or would it be better to use Medium or like you were mentioning or some other way of doing that?

Lindy Alexander: Yeah, it's a good question. I think probably Medium would be a great space for that. And then what I would do on LinkedIn, I would write a post that entices or teases people to then go and read your Medium piece.

Trudy Rankin: Yeah. Although I just realized I could probably do it on LinkedIn if it was pitched as being, if you're going to this place as a [00:19:00] business destination, here's some of the things you might want to know.

So you could, you probably could use LinkedIn as well. So that, that might work. So anyway, I just thought I would ask that because that seems to be a barrier or a blocker for people getting started. They think, Oh, I want to pitch something, but I can't they want examples of how I write. How do I don't have anything to show them.

How do I get around that? So that's really helpful.

Lindy Alexander: And can I just add... sorry to interrupt you, Trudy. I've got I've got a woman in one of my programs at the moment who is, had done some writing but then has had a really long break from writing and she pitched an editor a couple of weeks ago for travel and the editor said I'm really interested but can you send me through some examples of your writing and so she messaged me and said, I don't have anything.

And so I think the thing to do in that instance, and this is what I advised her to do, is that you say to the editor, look, I've had a break from writing or you can be honest and say, I'm new to writing. And what you do is you offer to write on spec, which means that you offer to write the full [00:20:00] piece and the editor then can decide whether they're going to accept it and commission it or not.

So the risk is taken out of it for them. And so that's what this writer did. And she messaged me two days ago to say that the editor loved it. So she'd written it on spec. The editor said, yes, we're going to take it. And so she's now being set up in their system as a freelancer. So sometimes doing a little bit of that work for free upfront can really pay off if it's a publication that you want to get into.

Trudy Rankin: That's really useful to know, because obviously if the, if they had said no, you can still take that article and pitch it somewhere else because it already exists. Yeah. No, that's good to know. That's really good to know. And I want to take, take the listeners through the rest of your journey and just get them so that they can understand how you've gone from writing, not just writing, because you still write, you still get stuff published.

It's fascinating reading on your about page, just reading all the different articles, all the different magazines and places that [00:21:00] you've been published. And so you have a really good understanding of the industry, what it's like. the gotchas and all that sort of stuff. What made you decide that you wanted to then add on to what you're doing and start helping other people get started as paid writers as well?

Lindy Alexander: Okay. That's a, it's a big question. So I'll try to keep it short. So 2017, I decided I wanted to go full time as a freelance writer. And I had listened to a couple of podcasts that were so inspiring that where other freelance writers, American freelance writers were talking about earning six figures from their writing.

And that was something that I'd never aspired to. I'd never thought about. I didn't really care about money, but my partner was going to stay at home with our kids for a year. And so I felt the pressure to ... we had a mortgage. We had small children. He wasn't going to be working.

So I really did need to make sure that I could [00:22:00] earn money and suddenly my mindset went from, Oh, I'm getting 300 dollars an article. I'm getting 400 dollars an article to thinking I need to earn some serious money. And this, I need to treat this as a business rather than as a hobby. So what I did was I started my blog, The Freelancer's Year in 2017, with the idea of just documenting my year of going full time freelance.

So I was sharing all the tactics and strategies that I was using, both in terms of writing and pitching magazines and newspapers, but also writing for businesses, organizations, universities. So I was doing content writing and feature writing. And then at the end of each month, what I decided to do was that I shared my income.

So I did a month long And I said, this is how many stories I pitched. This is how many stories got commissioned. This is how many times editors came to me. This is how many content stories I'm writing. And this is my income. This is the revenue that I've [00:23:00] brought in. And suddenly by doing that, my blog just took off.

I think I'd made something that was so opaque and that people didn't talk about. People were like, you're earning what? You're earning 8,000 dollars a month. You're earning 15,000 dollars a month from freelance writing. So then people started coming to me saying, how are you doing this? Can you, can I, we have

coffee. So I did that a few times and then thought actually I should be charging because I'm teaching people my strategies and my techniques.

So I started doing one on one sessions with people, coaching them how to use my strategies to the same results. And then after about a year and a half of doing that, I thought I am saying the same things over and over again. Why don't I just make an online course? So in 2020, I made my first online course, which is called Write and Thrive, which I still run today, which is really around [00:24:00] supporting writers to land high paying content clients.

Trudy Rankin: And then you've, over the years you've added to that. And then you've, because you also now have a community. Just talk us through that process of moving from their first course through to having a thriving community.

Lindy Alexander: Yeah. So I just, I, so I set up Write and Thrive and I have to say I was, racked with doubt and procrastination because I'd been talking about it for about 18 months and I would run into writers who were on my email list at events and they'd say to me, when are you launching your course?

And I just felt sick about it, honestly, because I thought, what if this fails? What if it doesn't work? What if I'm an imposter? What if my strategies don't work for other people? So I had a lot of mindset issues around it. And in fact, what happened was when I opened the doors to that in mid 2020. It was a success.

In fact, it was so much of a success that mid launch, I wanted to close it down because I was thinking, I [00:25:00] can't cope that so many people are buying this program. And so I was prepared for failure, but I wasn't prepared for success. And so that to me was a huge shock because I think it's a, freelance writer, you send off pitches, editors don't reply, you get rejection, you get really used to failure.

And so success is hard one. And so then to have all these people enrolling in my program, I just didn't expect it at all. And then over the years, people have said, well, could you teach us how to do, feature writing for magazines and newspapers. Could you teach us how to write a personal essay? So I created a guide on writing personal essays.

Could you teach us how to do travel writing? So it's just grown and grown. And I have communities that are attached to most of my programs and they are seriously the most delightful online communities that I'm part of. And just people are so supportive, helpful, encouraging, just genuinely lovely people.

They're my favorite places to hang [00:26:00] out. And I don't love social media. I don't love being online, but there's this writers are a special breed, I think.

Trudy Rankin: Yeah. No I've, I listened to quite a few podcasts, writing podcasts, not just because of the writing aspect, because I'm interested in them as a, just as a business angle.

And writers tend to be very sharing and caring and supportive. I've been, it's delightful to see. It's really lovely. And I just, I'm fascinated by the fact that you said that you found you weren't prepared for success. And, it's a lovely problem to have, but it is a real problem because oftentimes we'll self sabotage and we'll go, Oh, maybe I don't deserve the success or why am I being successful when other people, should be more successful than me.

Tell us this a little bit about your journey your mindset journey, as you go from, wow, this is overwhelming to being able to accept it. And then, as you say, expand your horizons.

Lindy Alexander: It's a [00:27:00] good question. And I think it's something that I still come up against. And I say this to the people in my programs, new level, new devil.

Like you think you're ready but you'll hit something that you didn't even know. It's almost like a windscreen in front of you that you don't know that you have a mindset block, a scarcity mindset issue until you hit and you're like, whoa why are all these feelings coming up? And I remember

just after Write and Thrive launched, I was talking, I was interviewing a psychologist for, I used to write a lot of recruitment articles, and I was interviewing this lovely psychologist who I, she was my go to expert, and she knew that I was doing this side hustle of running programs, and she said, how did it go?

And I told her, I felt so, so overwhelmed. And she said to me, and now can you, cause it was a couple of weeks later, now can you enjoy the success? And I said, I can't because people haven't had results yet. And then the next day someone posted in our Facebook [00:28:00] community, Oh my gosh, I've just landed my first client.

The course is paid for. And so I messaged the psychologist and she said, so do you feel good? And I said, no, because that's just one person. Like maybe she,

she's a fluke and her success isn't indicative of everyone else's. And the psychologist said to me, can you see what you're doing? That each time you get to a level where you feel like, Oh, I'm going to be able to relax and enjoy this.

Your mind kicks in and it's ah, but there's another no, you can't enjoy it because what if. And so I think just being aware of those thoughts and I can see them very clearly in the writers I work with, I can see their limiting beliefs, but it's much harder to see your own, or at least see your own and combat them.

Trudy Rankin: It's like we all have a blind spot about, everybody else can see it, but we can't, or we can tell other people how to do something, but we just can't do it for ourselves. It's, the shoemakers children sort of problem where the shoemakers children go barefoot. It's, it is a real thing.

It is a [00:29:00] very real thing. I want to follow that up a little bit with another question. One of the things that I've been picking up on a lot Because I, not only do I have my website, Freelance Writers Online, that I'm supporting from a business perspective, helping them become businesses, but I also collaborate with other people who are, basically have online businesses, and one of those is a writer, and they have an in, pretty deep insights into the world of writing as well.

And conversations there and listening to podcasts and reading what people have to say, because I think of artificial intelligence, but also because of how the economy is going, I think, in many respects, a lot of people in the writing industry have been saying that it has been a really tough year.

And it's been harder for people to find paid writing gigs. Can you just, comment on that and just talk about what you've [00:30:00] seen and whether you think that's something that can be overcome or not.

Lindy Alexander: I do think that things are starting to shift. Absolutely. And I think what we're seeing is some of that lower hanging fruit of lower paid work that people were spinning out.

It is being replaced by AI and people are using AI much more readily. But I would say that in my experience, in my communities, there's still a lot of work. I was just talking to one of my students the other day, and she has had so much work since starting my program that she's now set up a content agency.

And we were talking about, well, what does that look like in the face of AI? And she was saying, well, actually what these clients she's working with, and

she's working within the health industry, Human resource sphere. She was saying they want strategy. They want creativity. They want the human element. And so I think for writers who are just looking at writing to a brief. And sticking quite [00:31:00] blinkered to the kind of skills they have. Yes, I think they're going to be in trouble. But those writers who are innovative, creative, can look at the strategy, can look at how their writing sits within a big organization and works for that organization and are creative, which most writers are.

I think there are so many opportunities. And we, in terms of the feature writing side of things, I'm not really seeing much of an impact. I'm as busy as I ever have been in, especially in terms of those human driven experiential narratives. My travel editors are still commissioning as much as ever.

So I do think it is starting to change the landscape, but I think it's going to be something that's gradual. I don't think it's all going to just disappear overnight. I just think people are adapting to AI. And I too like I'm an optimist and I do think that it has its place, but I don't think that we are [00:32:00] at a point where we're like, there is no career in writing because what I'm seeing in my communities is not saying that at all.

Trudy Rankin: That's interesting. That's interesting Because, like I said, I come at it from the, from a business perspective. I have yet to see a business that doesn't need a human touch. Yeah. It's somebody who's able to use their words to convince inform, influence create experiences.

Those words are important, whether you write those words or whether you create scripts that people then speak those words or whatever. That need is. It's still going to be there, and I don't think it's going to go away, even when AI gets a lot smarter than it is because at the moment it's going to do some really dumb stuff.

You have to be really super clear with it, what you want, and then even then you have to, you've got to go back and rewrite and rewrite. But I think, yeah, I think that's good to know and I think people will feel a little bit more confident knowing that the work is there.

It's maybe they just need to adjust their sights to maybe something that's a little bit higher [00:33:00] than they had the confidence to aim for before. Maybe it comes back down to mindset. And go, well, how could I ever write that kind of a, of an article? I don't, whatever. Yeah.

Lindy Alexander: Yeah. And I think in terms of the content piece, I was just talking to one of the students in my programs just about an hour ago.

And she was saying she was just talking to her kids school principal because she saw an opportunity. That the kids are all on it. They have to log their reading on a reading app. And she also gets their alumni magazine from the school. And she was like, there's a real opportunity here for the school to ask those old scholars, maybe for someone to interview them or for them to write a little article about the books that have changed them and put that onto the reading app.

And she didn't see that as a big deal, but she, that is the way her mind works. And I was saying to her, that is much more than being a writer. That is being a content strategist and a visionary. And I think sometimes it just takes someone else pointing out, Hey, the thing that comes really naturally to you, that is a [00:34:00] skill that you can monetize.

Trudy Rankin: Yeah, it's like when we were, like I said, when running this program for the Australian Federal Government one of the things we quickly noticed was that people would say, here's what I do. I do blah, blah, blah, blah. And everybody around them would gasp and go, how do you know how to do that? And it's like something that comes to you as natural as breathing is something that a lot of other people find really hard to do.

And people don't realize that because they just think it's normal for them, but it's not normal for everybody else.

Lindy Alexander: That's right.

Trudy Rankin: Yeah. Yeah. That's fascinating. We one more quick question, cause we're coming to a close. I could keep talking and I keep listening to you for a long time. But part of what I do is I do experiments and with different business models.

And at the moment there's a, I don't know what you want to call it. There's an emerging trend towards people starting newsletters on particular topics and then monetizing those newsletters in whatever form. It might be [00:35:00] a paid newsletter. It might be ads or sponsors or whatever, or affiliate links and stuff like that.

And I'm fortunate enough to be connected to somebody who's just started a whole course on how to, buy or build a newsletter business from scratch. I'm

curious from your perspective whether you've come across that or whether that's something that, that you're seeing a lot more of in the people that you're working with.

Lindy Alexander: And in two ways, I think that's a really interesting question because A few months ago, I had a woman come in and teach a masterclass to my students who specializes in writing email newsletters. And that is her job as a copywriter to create email newsletters for businesses. And the rates that she is charging are phenomenal.

If someone's listening and they're interested in that is another avenue for it. But in terms of business owners doing that for their business, I think it is such a powerful, impactful thing to do, because the thing is, if you are using Facebook or LinkedIn or Instagram [00:36:00] or TikTok, you don't own that platform.

You don't, you have no way of controlling that algorithm or who sees your content. Whereas when you have an email list, when people have said, yes, we want to hear from you, you have a direct line to those people to give them value, to serve them. And so I do think email newsletters are such a powerful way of communicating specifically with your audience. And there are so many different ways to, like you said, monetize it. And there are so many niches, like I've got a woman in my program at the moment who lives in the U S and she's really interested in aging. And so she has started a sub stack about aging and her thoughts on aging.

And it's this beautifully written thing. And so it doesn't always have to be about monetizing either. Like for her, it's this creative endeavor of just writing down her thoughts in a way that reaches people every single month.

Trudy Rankin: That's a really good point. And there's, because the [00:37:00] number of topics that you could write about are pretty much infinite.

Lindy Alexander: And there'll be people interested in it.

Trudy Rankin: Yeah, just definitely. Had a question, give me two seconds and then we'll come back to me. Oh, I know what it was. One of the things that, that I do, like one of my areas of expertise is in, in building quiz marketing funnels.

So using quizzes as a way of generating leads and then serving people by creating email newsletter sequences, nurture sequences, and I pulled together a course on so like a one on one introduction to what it's like to do copywriting for quiz funnels. In your experience, how many... just based on the people that

you talk with, how many people that get into writing tend to focus on writing as a, hey, I have to pitch somebody a magazine or an online magazine or a print magazine or a newspaper. And that's how they think about it as being freelance writing. And how many people think about paid writing as [00:38:00] being anywhere you use your words to make money? Is there a difference? Is there a split?

Lindy Alexander: Yeah, that, that's such a good question. And I find that my people, if I can call them that, fall into two distinct categories, which is journalists, freelance writers, feature writers who are coming from that world and thinking the, I love this, but this is not sustainable in terms of an income.

So I need to supplement my income with content writing, copywriting, other types of writing, grant writing white paper writing, whatever it might be. And then I have people who have come from a comms background or have always written, but they've been in organizations or corporate world, and they have this, they harbor this desire to do travel writing, or they want to write feature pieces, or they want to write lifestyle or interiors or whatever it might be.

And so I do think there's a crossover between them, but people tend to come from two distinct camps. And when they find out that you can have both and [00:39:00] actually having both is the most perfect balance and the most beautiful way to run a business. Then that is where the magic happens when you're making your money from content writing.

And still you can have great clients, ethical clients that you love writing for. And then you can also be pursuing the pieces that really bring you alive in terms of travel or environment or whatever, business reporting, whatever it is. When you have those balanced, it's really great.

Trudy Rankin: Yeah, no, yeah, it is, it's nice to have, it's nice to have more than one arrow in your quiver if, to just to use an old phrase. I want to swing back really quickly, all the way back to something that you said at the beginning, and you said that you, before you started writing, you had started out as a sign language interpreter.

And one of the things that I found fascinating was with my freelance writers, obviously, online, one of the things I do every week is I go hunting for jobs that I can send to them and say, [00:40:00] Hey, people are asking for help with this sort of a thing. But I'm also doing a collaboration with somebody who's a translator.

And every once in a while I'll come across jobs or gigs or opportunities for people who have the ability to speak and write in another language. And from your experience how often, or is there any crossover between the translation industry and the writing industry? How often do people do both?

Lindy Alexander: Oh, that's such a good question.

I actually don't know. It's not something I'm super familiar with. I've got people in my programs from all over the world, and I do have a few people who are writing and running really successful businesses in their non native language. But in terms of them doing that. Translating as well as writing. I actually don't know.

Trudy Rankin: It's interesting. It's just a really new space for me. And like I said, [00:41:00] with the collaboration, whenever I come across a translator type role, I'll flip it off to him and he'll send it to his email list. And we collaborate that way. And in some other ways as well, but I, it's a new space.

So I was just curious as to where it all lands, because he was telling me that a lot of the people who are translators don't think of themselves as being writers or copywriters or. Their area of speciality is in the translation and not in the creation of the thing, if that makes sense.

Interesting. I'll have to, I have to ask a few more questions and see how that goes.

Lindy, thank you so much for being on the podcast. Before we close down really quickly, if somebody was just getting started and they were thinking about maybe using their words to make some money and they're maybe a little shy and they're not quite sure what to do, basically what piece of advice, what would be the most important thing for them to do just to get themselves over that barrier of, I don't know what to do, and get started?

Lindy Alexander: Yeah, I think to recognize [00:42:00] that it is a scary, like that, that, but you just have to choose your heart. It's hard not doing anything and staying there and feeling and unfulfilled and unsatisfied.

And it's also hard putting yourself out there. So I think you just have to, you have to choose your heart. And I do think, just because something is scary or challenging, it doesn't mean that it's a sign that you shouldn't be doing it. It just means that you're invested and you want to pursue this.

And I, I think when you think back to all the things that you've achieved in life, most of them probably come from moments of discomfort, of challenge, of getting over a fear. And I think sometimes people like to wait until they feel confident, but actually confidence comes from taking action. I would really recommend for people to think about writing a personal essay, think about writing an opinion piece, even start with a letter to the editor of a newspaper.

If something, if you're not quite ready to write a 600 word piece, a 50 word letter to the editor, it can just build your confidence up. [00:43:00] And in terms of getting gigs like content writing gigs Ask around friends, family, colleagues people need content. Like most businesses have an online presence.

All those businesses will have some words on their website. Someone is writing those words. And so why not you?

Trudy Rankin: I think that's really great advice. Once again if people are interested in finding out more about you or how you can help them, where would they go? Yeah, so my website's probably the best place to go to.

Lindy Alexander: So thefreelancersyear.com and then you'll be able to see there's a courses and resources section. I've got lots of freebies and probably maybe for your audience, I've, there's probably two particular freebies that would be useful. One is 10 successful pitches. So you get. 10 examples of pitches for different publications that I have sent off to editors that have been commissioned.

So you can see the pitch and then you can read the finished story. And then also I have a guide around how to [00:44:00] break into feature writing quickly and easily. Like some of those things we talked about, opinion pieces, personal essays, and that goes into more detail.

Trudy Rankin: Okay. No, thank you for that. And I'll make sure that I put the links to that into the show notes.

So that's the thefreelancersyear.Com.

Lindy Alexander: That's it.

Trudy Rankin: And I'll make sure I put that in there. Lindy, thank you so much. It's been great talking with you.

Lindy Alexander: Thanks so much, Trudy.

