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## IWOC NOVEMBER MEETING

# How much do your writing skills rate?

BY JIM HODL

**F**reelance writing, we are told, is a paying profession. But what should we charge for our work? How can we set—and, if necessary, negotiate—rates that provide a decent living for us and at the same time satisfy prospective clients?

Jane Ranshaw, an independent writer with nearly three decades of experience and owner of the writer's consulting firm Jane Ranshaw & Associates, will provide answers to those and other questions at the next IWOC meeting on Tuesday, November 9.

In her program, "Setting Rates for Your Writing," Ranshaw will explain the different methods that freelance writers can use to set a rate schedule for their work.

"Too many writers undercharge for their work," Ranshaw contends. "This might be acceptable when writers are new to the business and are still trying to determine if they can make a career out of fulfilling clients' needs for professional writing. But a writer who wants to make a living from his or her skills must set rates wisely."

Ranshaw will discuss various methods for setting hourly rates; making flat-rate bids for writing assignments based on expected time and expenses; and working collaboratively with clients to reach a value-added proposition that benefits both the writer and client. In explaining these techniques, Ranshaw will call upon her experience as both a professional writer and as an instructor of a consulting skills course at DePaul University.

"Setting Rates for Your Writing" will be the centerpiece of the IWOC meeting on Tuesday, November 9 at the Feltre School, 22 W. Erie St. Those who arrive at 5 PM can network with other professional freelance writers over coffee and cookies. The program begins at 6 PM. Admission is free for IWOC professional members. Cost is \$5 for associate members and \$15 for nonmembers.

Following the meeting, attendees are invited to retire to a nearby restaurant for dinner (buy your own) to discuss the information presented during the meeting, and to continue networking. ✍



*Setting Rates  
for Your Writing  
with Jane Ranshaw*

**Tuesday  
November 9  
The Feltre School  
22 West Erie  
Networking 5:00 PM  
Program 6:00 PM**

**FREE for  
Professional members  
Associate members \$5  
Nonmembers \$15**

*IWOC meets for a pro-  
gram and networking the  
second Tuesday of  
every month.*

# iWOC

Independent Writers of Chicago

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Out of the blue, I'm into the black!

BY HARRY KARABEL

Let me begin by apologizing to Neil Young. I borrowed my headline from his classic, "My My, Hey Hey," and not just to lure the Young-aphiles in the *Stet* audience into reading the rest of my column. True, there were more nuances to the phrase when he used it. But taken at face value, the phrase aptly describes my recent, full actualization of the benefits of IWOC membership.

I was fortunate enough to be able to start my freelance business eight years ago with a cadre of clients already eager to send work and money my way. Since then, some years have been better than other years, but my business has always been in the black.

## WHO, ME?

Four years ago, I joined IWOC. I had lost a couple of clients and was hoping to rejuvenate my business. I was immediately assailed with the stories about how valuable the networking contacts I was making would turn out to be. But it was hard for me, at first, to see that value. My meeting attendance was, at best, sporadic. I would look at the meeting topic and ask myself, "Is this worth driving downtown for? Is this something I need to know about?" It's easy to talk yourself out of anything. It's easy to say, "No, it sounds too much like work."

There is a reason they call it "networking" and not "netplaying" (a word that, while made up, has entirely different connotations. I also like "netgoofing," but that's not accurate either). It is work—meeting people, learning about what they do, telling them what you do, and making an impression so that hopefully, someday, you might be able to do something for each other. But I believe the IWOC meetings turn that work into fun. I started attending meetings more regularly. I talked about myself (that was easy), and I asked others to talk about themselves.

When I was invited to join the Board, I took the job. In short, I got involved.

## BLUNDERING ALONG THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

For those of you wondering, "Is he ever going to get back to that headline, or is this column just like some loud, meandering guitar solo that goes on and on and on?", I now return to the chorus. This fall, my involvement culminated in work, in money, in satisfaction. From a referral and a job from Writers' Line, I've already billed more than I've ever paid for IWOC dues. Out of the blue, I'm into the black. While I freely admit that I blundered my way through the process, I also realize that I've made some good friends and accumulated a lot of intangible, long-term value that has nothing to do with my bottom line.

So maybe right now you're saying, "Gosh Harry, that was more inspiring than the 17-minute version of 'Down by the River' from the Greendale Tour. How can I become more involved?" I thought you'd never ask.

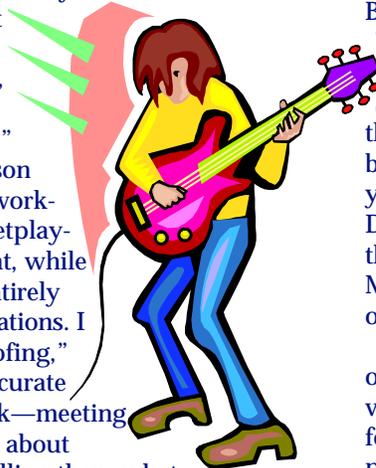
First of all, come to the meetings. Meet people. Join a committee. All our committees would gladly welcome more help. If you are unclear about how to get involved ask any Board member, committee member, or me. We'll point you in the right direction.

Finally, tell other writers about IWOC. Send them to our Web site and be sure to go there yourself. Is your online entry all it can be? Are you doing the best job you can to sell yourself? Are you checking the Writers Line? Do you have questions about your business that we can discuss on the Bulletin Board? Membership does have its advantages, but only if you make them work for you.

When you're into the black, it's not really out of the blue. You got there because you worked hard and one day, it paid off. But it feels like "out of the blue" because the shift in perspective is so sudden, you may even feel like singing.

If I can blunder my way through making membership work for me, so can you. Just blunder a little faster, and you'll give yourself something to sing about.

*Harry J. Karabel*



# What doesn't kill you makes you richer

BY ELLEN KRUPP

If you can overcome the fear and loathing prompted by the very idea of making cold calls, you can reap big rewards. That's the philosophy espoused by Jim Leman, the speaker at the October IWOC meeting. Jim provided a step-by-step guide to make your freelance business grow by using old technology—the lowly low-tech telephone. By picking up this instrument from the past, we can find people who need our services, identify their writing needs, and position ourselves to meet those needs.

## DON'T FREEZE AT COLD CALLING

Jim started by explaining what a cold call is: making contact with people who want to buy your services and creating opportunities by letting the world know you're in business. Then we learned how to identify people to call. There are a number of resources, but you have to put a little time and effort into mining them.

At the top of the list is networking

with family and friends; the next stop might be the business section of your local library where you'll find a number of guides and directories that provide a lot of information about different companies or manufacturers. And if you're still scrounging for ideas, Jim says he's whiled away many an afternoon driving through industrial parks and noting the businesses there.

Once you've started a database of people to call, you actually have to pick up that phone and start dialing for dollars. Jim recommends that when you're getting started as a freelancer, 75% of your time should be spent making cold calls. Later, you can dial back (pardon the pun) to about 25% of your time.

But you must be disciplined. Set aside a specific day, time, and number of calls



to make at each session. And be organized. Keep track of the person you called, when, and what the result of the call was. After you've done the hard work of making that initial phone call, always follow up. Soon you'll be working your way up to having a first meeting and from there the possibilities are endless.

## EVENTUALLY MAGIC HAPPENS

Even though most of us cringe at the very idea of picking up the phone and calling a stranger to present ourselves and our talents, Jim swears that when you do it, magic actually happens. Business will come to you. You'll feel energized. You'll get referrals from unknown sources. Invisible molecules realign themselves and a switch gets turned on in the world announcing that you are in business.

So if you can get past that initial reluctance and the fear of sounding like an idiot, you will soon be cold calling and swearing by it. Jim promised. ✍

## Is your online Member Profile up to date?

Do you have a new e-mail address? Or have there been other changes you want to make in your contact information? If so, you'll want to change your Member Profile at the IWOC Web site. Please note that IWOC members are responsible for changing and updating their own profiles on the IWOC Web site. Just go to [www.iwoc.org](http://www.iwoc.org) and click on Members Only, log in, and go to Change Profile, which will allow you to easily change your profile.

If you have a problem accessing the IWOC site or logging on as a member, or have questions about the status of your membership, please contact Joen Kinnan at [webmaster@iwoc.org](mailto:webmaster@iwoc.org).

To update your STET e-mail address so you can continue to receive IWOC's e-mail newsletter, contact Elaine Fiedler at [map133@aol.com](mailto:map133@aol.com).

# FYI

## MULTI-MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM “Break The Rules..Close More Sales”

Are you sick and tired of giving away your ideas for free only to see your competitor make money from your efforts? Are your sales cycles getting longer? Are your prospects using your proposals to negotiate better deals elsewhere? Is “price” keeping you from getting or keeping business? If you even suspect the answer could be “yes” to any of the above, then be sure to reserve your seat.

Association for Multi-media Communications  
Wednesday, Nov 10. Speaker: Merit Gest, Vice President  
Total Selling Solutions and Sandler Sales Institute

5:30 - 6:30 PM Registration, networking, light buffet  
6:30 - 7:00 PM Introductions, card swap  
7:00 - 8:30 PM Presentation, Q&A

Harold Washington Library, lower level multi-purpose rooms. 400 South State Street, Chicago (enter on the west side of building, Plymouth Ct.)

Admission: free for AMC members and full-time students with ID; non-members \$10. To register, please send an e-mail to Hilary Marsh, [hilary@contentcompany.biz](mailto:hilary@contentcompany.biz), indicating that you will be attending.

## COPYRIGHT QUESTIONS?

Copyright Clearance Center is unveiling a new version of their site [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com) in November. They call it “the most complete and convenient access to copyright permission” available. At [copyright.com](http://copyright.com), you can check which titles are registered with them, register new titles, and confirm pricing. They have an expanded rights-holders section with information and tools for publishers and authors. Academics, journalists, and other writers should find the site a helpful resource.

# Calendar

November 9 (2nd Tuesday)

**IWOC monthly meeting: “Setting Rates for Your Writing” with Jane Ranshaw.** At The Feltre School, 22 West Erie, Chicago. Networking at 5 PM; program at 6 PM. Professional members free, associates \$5, nonmembers \$15.

December 14 (2nd Tuesday)

**IWOC Holiday Party: Location, cost, and other details to be announced.**

*The monthly food and networking get-togethers listed below meet at the same time and place each month unless otherwise noted. The groups welcome nonmembers.*

November 4 (1st Thursday)

**IWORP monthly breakfast:** Join the Rogers Park IWOC contingent for breakfast at 9 AM at the A&T Grill, 7036 N. Clark St., Chicago. For more information, call Esther Manewith at 773/274-6215.

October 28 (4th Thursday)

**IWOOP monthly lunch:** The West Suburban group meets at noon at Poor Phil’s at 139 So. Marion, Oak Park. Contact Barb Dillard at 312/642-3065. NOTE: The date for IWOOP’s holiday lunch will be decided at the October 28 lunch.

*Check out  
IWOC’s Web site at  
[www.iwoc.org](http://www.iwoc.org)*

**Mark your calendar for IWOC’s  
Holiday Party—December 14, the second  
Tuesday. Details will be announced soon.  
And please note—there is no Stet  
published for December.**

