

The that fails to  
capitalise on success.



The freelance cannot afford the time and effort required to send a copy to newspapers and magazines on the chance that it may be accepted. He cannot afford to write for the spike, and must make every contribution acceptable. This presupposes a detailed knowledge of what each newspaper and magazine requires, what length of article is acceptable, and in what style. There is no point in sending a popular newspaper a 2000-word academic thesis on minor metaphysical poets.

2. Building up Contacts: The keys to successful freelancing are a component filing system and address book, constantly kept up to date. The freelance depends on staff journalists buying his work he must discover where the power of decision lies on a newspaper or magazine, and keep his name and interests in the eye of the executive who holds that power. There is a fine line to be drawn between oppressive persistence—the freelance who repeatedly rings up just before edition time with uniform stories will soon find himself brushed off—and a too reticent approach that fails to capitalise on success. How much time the freelance can afford to dedicate to the simple business of maintaining contacts depends on the field in which he operates. He has to apportion out his own time—so much for researching information, so much for writing, so much for maintaining contact with the market. 3.

Putting Forward Ideas: Freelances are more common in magazine than in newspapers. In magazines the man or woman who can be relied on to produce a workmanlike article, readable and accurate and well researched, and delivered on or before the deadline, stands a good chance of success. Some combine this type of journalism with the authorship of books, but it

requires singular determination to slot into one working life two forms of creation with radically different preparation times. 4. Exclusivity: If a story is offered to a newspaper or magazine exclusively, then it must be exclusive and is bought on that understanding.

For a longer piece of work, an author may specifically sell first British serial rights, and then sell second British serial rights elsewhere. But ‘exclusive’ means what it says, and if the word is used, it must be honoured. The successful freelance who builds up a substantial business will, probably, in any case, leave the negotiation of rights to an agent.