

Well-Fed Success Stories: At-Home Moms & Dads

In the pages that follow, you'll hear from At-Home Moms & Dads who've had success as FLCWs. All these originally appeared in the 2010 edition of *TWFW*. As such, given the passage of time, some profiled here may have moved onto other passions. Enjoy!

Michaele Charles - Denver, Colorado

New Mom Parlays Business Experience into FLCW Success

I started freelancing two years ago while working full-time as a recruiter. I'd been writing fiction and decided that, with my business experience (five years in accounting, two in recruiting), commercial writing might be a fit.

I approached my company about doing some internal writing, and I tapped friends and former co-workers for pro bono projects (marketing materials, newsletters, web site copy, etc.).

Aside from my full-time job, the biggest challenge I faced was my newest job: PARENTHOOD. I started this "side" freelancing when my daughter was four months old. I was working full-time with one day at home, and when my day at home was a slow recruiting day, I'd call people about doing some writing for them.

I built up a pretty good little portfolio in those several months and decided to quit my job and pull my baby from daycare. I relied on the grandparents for babysitting, and I worked at night, when my daughter napped, and early mornings until my husband went to work.

I now have several regular clients, and I've hired a nanny for 25 to 30 hours a week. Initially, I quoted \$55 an hour but now quote \$65 with no issue. Being persistent and believing it WILL happen is my formula for success.

Amy M. Dawson - Alpharetta, Georgia

At-Home FLCW Mom Commands \$50K Working Just 15 Hours a Week

Every morning, I walk my kids to the bus stop, come home for another cup of coffee, clock three hours of freelance copywriting at \$75 to \$125 an hour (depending on the project), and still have time to go for a run before I pick up the kids from school.

My trick for having a career and being a stay-at-home mom? Know what your writing is worth and demand it. Many at-home moms think transitioning back into the work world is an impossible mountain to climb. Not so. A mere six weeks after starting my business, I filled my calendar with 15 hours of steady, weekly work.

I'd been out of the work force for almost seven years when I started freelancing, which meant I really needed to jazz up my portfolio with up-to-date clips.

I scooped up any pro bono projects I could: I wrote news releases for my brother's political campaign and volunteered as the vice president of communications for the local Junior League, then filed all the writing samples in my portfolio.

I did work at a reduced rate for other family members and nonprofits, and I pitched my previous experience to executives I knew in the area.

Many talented at-home moms believe no company will work with them if they've been out of the work world for several years. Don't sell yourself short!

Exude professionalism and deliver on-target results, and even the most buttoned-up corporate suits won't care where you are doing the work—just that it gets done right.

Jonelle Foutz –Yakima, Washington

Well-Fed Mom in Small Market Gives Thanks

As a stay-at-home mom in semi-rural Yakima, Washington, I've turned my education and experience into a successful copywriting business by tapping into a basic human need – the need to be appreciated. Simple thank-you notes are at the core of my success.

With solid writing skills, a positive attitude, and a copy of *The Well-Fed Writer* as my guide, I wrote letters, made phone calls, and scheduled meetings all over town. I built a web site. I sent a thank-you note to anyone who talked with me.

I got a few small jobs in the beginning, but nothing steady. I wrote more letters, made more calls, and scheduled more meetings. *And* sent more thank-you notes to the people I'd done work for.

Soon, those people started calling me back. My best marketing strategy turned out to be simple and sincere – taking the time to say “thank you.”

I now have several steady clients (at \$50 per hour). Working part time from home, I have the flexibility I need to accommodate my family's active schedule, and if I get any busier, I'm going to have to give up one of my other jobs...housework. And yes, I'm thankful!

Linda B. Lloyd - Tooele, Utah

At-Home Mom Perseveres to Make Dream Lifestyle a Reality

I am the mother of two young boys, 11 and 13, and within a period of six months, I was widowed and lost my father, whom we were caring for.

This left me in the position of either going to work at a 9-to-5 (I had always been an at-home mom for my boys) or finding something I could do and still be at home with my boys.

Due to the tragedy that had filled our lives at that time, I really felt the need to be home with the boys, for us to be together.

I seriously took a look at copywriting, and after taking a course and coaching program, I am now making good money.

I have five contracts – two in negotiation and three firm. I also have a number of prospects asking me to contact them. All of these are ranging well over the \$125 an hour mark.

I am grateful that I was able to find this field and actually able to make a living. From where I stand, there is more than enough work out there for everyone. Even web sites or letters written today will need to be revised tomorrow.

Melanie R. Negrin - Randolph, New Jersey:

At-Home Mom Focuses on Family-Friendly Nonprofit Niche

I began Merocuné Marketing and Public Relations after the birth of my daughter Kaila. I developed my creative portfolio and business-building skills in the year and a half after my daughter was born.

I identified nonprofit organizations with missions I was passionate about and who needed marketing, writing, or design expertise.

When our family savings fell to uncomfortable levels and I learned I was pregnant with our son Nathaniel, I found a full-time public relations position in real estate. After Nathaniel's arrival, the position was eliminated, and this employer became my first paying freelance client.

Since then, I have established a reputable and consistently growing company with more than 20 paying clients – all repeat customers – located across the United States and in internationally.

My company specializes in developing marketing and development communications that build community awareness, brand equity, and financial sustainability for nonprofit organizations and entrepreneurial businesses.

I love what I do every day, and I am inspired by helping others make their charitable missions come true. Being able to make a difference from home while I enjoy the company of my children, now ages 5 and 3, is a gift.

Edmund R. Schubert - Greensboro, North Carolina

At-Home Dad Builds FLCW Career from Creative Roots

I was a stay-at-home dad looking for a way to generate part-time income from home. I needed to be there for my kids, but after twelve years of running my own business (before the kids were born), I also felt the need to do more.

I had always enjoyed writing and had published several short stories, but wasn't making any money doing that. Then, at a workshop led by Peter Bowerman at the North Carolina Writer's Network fall conference, I learned how I could apply my writing skills to commercial writing.

Here was the best of both worlds: making money doing something I enjoyed and being able to do it from home, on my own schedule.

To make a long story short, within six months of meeting Peter, I started editing a regional business magazine on a freelance basis, and the contacts I made as a result of that work landed me additional projects working with graphic designers, ad agencies, and other businesses in the area.

I write and edit web sites, flyers, handouts for trade shows, executive summaries, newsletter material, etc., charging between \$65 and \$75 per hour depending on the size of the project and the client's turnaround time.

Mary Shaw - Norwalk, Connecticut

At-Home Mom Commands FT Salary Working PT Hours

I was an agency web producer working 70 hours a week when my three-year-old daughter got really sick with viral pneumonia. Then my daycare provider quit.

Bottom line, I had to find a solution fast and thought starting my own copywriting business would work.

Copywriting appealed to me because I had done a lot of writing over the course of my career, and I thought it would be a flexible work-from-home opportunity. I read Peter's books and Steve Slaunwhite's *Start and Run a Copywriting Business* and got busy building my portfolio.

Leveraging industry contacts, I had three paying clients two weeks before I quit my job. My rates are \$65 to \$85 an hour.

I'm on track to make at least \$50,000 this year and haven't worked more than 20 hours a week since quitting my job nearly two years ago.

My goal was to work part-time from home, and I currently have more work than I can handle.

The best part is my incredibly flexible lifestyle: my daughter snuggles up to me and my laptop whenever she wants; it's easy to schedule my work around her activities; my husband loves that I'm home; and I'm much happier in general.

Claire Smith - New Zealand

At-Home Mom in New Zealand Turns Hobby into Thriving Business

Before leaving my full-time sales job within the veterinary industry, my writing experience consisted of a Diploma in Freelance Journalism (done on a part-time basis through a local correspondence school), a few published magazine articles, and an encouraging report from my primary school English teacher.

I'd always enjoyed writing but assumed that a career in writing was reserved for those who'd endured many years of university and had done the hard yards in agencies building up impressive portfolios.

After having three children, I made the inevitable decision that I simply couldn't manage full-time work anymore.

I started researching copywriting as a career after a friend asked me to write her husband's real estate newsletters. The more I learnt about it, the more I knew that it was exactly what I wanted to do.

I made plans to ditch my sales job and set myself up in business. In the first few months, I struggled to find work and thought I'd made a huge mistake, but before long the work began streaming in.

Two years down the track, I'm making considerably more money than I've ever made before, and I'm turning work away on a regular basis. I can't imagine a better way to make a living!

PB Note: In keeping with the at-home-Mom/Dad theme here, I'm including the following piece that appeared in the July 2020 Well-Fed E-PUB, from a WA state FLCW who prefers to remain anonymous. Enjoy!

FREELANCING WITH KIDS UNDERFOOT?

Two-Decade WA FLCW Serves Up Advice for Working in the Time of COVID

I got the smart and clever ideas below from a 20+-year veteran FLCW in Washington State, who prefers to remain anonymous. When she contacted me, she wrote:

"Following your advice and Bob Bly's nuggets of wisdom, I started freelancing full-time back in 1995 and it's been my full-time work ever since. Given the COVID crisis, I have some advice that could help parents going through a rough time. Remember: Be patient with yourself and with your kids!"

How do you maintain a freelance copywriting business when you're homebound and have to care for a baby or young child? It's tough, but it can be done. I had a baby and raised a child while holding down a full-time writing business. Here are some things that helped me:

1) Don't try to multi-task. Trying to work while holding a baby or playing with a young child is a recipe for disaster. Find a way to arrange your time so you can be 100% focused on either parenting or working. Often that means working whenever your baby or child is sleeping.

No, it's not easy, and you will be tired. But, if you can train yourself to drop everything and work the moment your child falls asleep, you can do it and you'll be less stressed.

2) Plan set activities to gain blocks of time. Each morning at breakfast, I'd set out a "surprise bag" for my daughter that she could play with after she ate. It hid a bunch of random things — cotton balls, bits of ribbon, leaves, rocks, tape, whatever I could find — and she could use them to create whatever she wanted. The rule is that she needed to play quietly with it for an hour, when the timer went off.

3) Set boundaries children can understand. When my daughter was around 4, I used a "stoplight" system on my office door. "Green" meant she could come in. "Yellow" meant she *could* come in, but if she didn't need to, that would be better. "Red" meant please don't come in unless it is an emergency. This was super helpful, and I say it taught her how to manage her own wants versus needs.

4) Work in your car. If you have a partner who can watch your child for a few hours while you work, consider working in your parked car versus someplace in your house. When you are in the house, it's easy to get distracted.
