

“Sell Your Work – Not Your Soul”
Business and Marketing Plan Worksheets
Gary Corbin, 2009

These worksheets are designed to assist you in developing your business plan by focusing your attention on two key areas:

- the various **skills** and **areas of expertise** (i.e., your **value**-added) you have to offer to potential clients,
- who your **potential clients** might be, and
- how to reach those clients to sell them your value-added products and services.

How to use these worksheets

Worksheet 1: What business are you in?

This worksheet is designed to help you inventory your skills and areas of expertise. You will use this worksheet later to develop a catalog of goods and services you can provide to potential clients.

In the first column, list the **types** of products or services you can provide. For many writers, products might include advertising copy, research articles, or charts and graphs. Services include writing or editing copy, proofreading, ghostwriting, and so on.

In the second column, list the subject areas you have some expertise in. These could be things you’ve learned in college, on the job, or in pursuit of various hobbies. For example, you could be an expert on financial forecasting, cook a mean buffalo burger, or know everything about the Dallas Cowboys. As these examples show, it’s best to be as inclusive as possible in this list.

In the third column, list the technical skills you’ve developed that could support your writing business. You may be an expert at document layout, photography, Strunk and White’s style manual or Microsoft Powerpoint. Anything that helps you put together a document for a client will help your writing business – and belongs on this list.

Now look over these lists. Do any themes emerge? What stands out as something unique about you? Do you have a unique combination of skills and knowledge? If you can do something or know a lot about something that very few other people do, you may have found your niche.

Take a moment and, in the bottom area of the worksheet, write a sentence or two summarizing your unique knowledge, skills, or combination of the two.

Worksheet 2: Experience Inventory

In this worksheet, copy the skills and areas of subject matter expertise from Worksheet One into the first column of Worksheet Two. Now, for each skill area, list the jobs, projects, or other experiences you’ve had that helped build your expertise in this area.

You may find yourself remembering other skills as you recall those jobs and projects. Great! Write them in, too. You can always expand on your inventory of value-added.

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Worksheet 3: The “Elevator Spiel”

The “Elevator Spiel” is the one-sentence summary of what your business is about, and what sets you apart from any other writer out there. It should convey what you do in a succinct but compelling way. It’s very much like the opening sentence of your pitch to an agent or editor used to sell your book.

To get you started, examine the lists in Table 1 and circle 1-3 items from each list that represent a potential market strength for you, either because of your outstanding skill or experience, or the relative scarcity of that attribute among your potential competitors.

Now look at the items you circled. Construct sentences that combine those items in an interesting but informative way. For example, if you circled “Ad copy,” “firefighting,” and “photography,” you might say something like:

I create compelling advertising copy and visuals for products supporting the emergency services industry.

Worksheet 4: Your Potential “Warm” Market

On Worksheet 4-A, inventory all of your former employers. This should be readily available from your resume. Don’t sweat the details – just write down their names.

In the second column, identify as many former colleagues as you can remember at those places – particularly people you enjoyed working with, but also former supervisors and managers, peers, and anyone else who might remember you favorably.

Now in the first column on Worksheet 4-B, identify as many friends, relatives, neighbors, former colleagues and anyone else you can think of who work in businesses in which you have some expertise or interest. Refer back to Worksheet One if need be.

In the second column of 4-B, write down the companies they work for and a way of reaching them.

The contents of this worksheet constitute your business’s potential “warm” market.

Worksheet 5: Connecting Services, Skills, and Markets

In Worksheet 5, fill in the shaded boxes in Column 1 with your own products and services from Worksheet One, and the shaded boxes in Row 1 with your own areas of skill and subject matter expertise (also from Worksheet One). Make additional copies of this worksheet as needed.

Then fill in the matrix with names from the “warm market” for whom that combination of products and skills/expertise apply. Some names should appear more than once! For example, who do you know in Food Service for whom you could talk to about “Ad copy writing”?

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Now, in Worksheet 5:

1. Circle **any** names that appear multiple times

2. Also,
 - Highlight any **row** for any service/product that:
 - a. You really, really love and want to do all the time, OR
 - b. Are most likely to pay well enough that you are free to do a lot more of (a)
 - Highlight any **column** for any area of skill or expertise that:
 - c. You really, really want to develop or continue doing because you LOVE it, OR
 - d. You already excel at, have a good reputation for, and would still enjoy doing
 - Now, circle any names in any cell in which **both** the row and the column are highlighted.

The names circled in either Step 1 and Step 2 above are your Warm Market. Contact them first!

3. Which of these highlighted row/column combinations in Worksheet 5 are empty or nearly so?
I.e. they constitute work you’d love to do, but for which you have no potential market identified?

For example, in my example, perhaps I highlighted the “Book editing” row and the “Food service” column – but I have no names in that box.

- Brainstorm
 - Identify who in this industry needs the service you want to offer – companies, individuals, etc.
 - This may take some research
- Find out where these people gather:
 - Associations
 - Trade shows
 - Events/sponsorships
 - Service Organizations
- This is your “cold market”
- Go to those places and meet them! Make them part of your “warm market”

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Worksheet 1: What business are you in?		
What Products and Services will you offer?	What are your areas of Subject Matter Expertise outside of writing?	Besides writing and editing, what other Technical Skills do you have to offer to support your writing business, and at what level?
Ad copy writing	Finance	Excel – Advanced
Technical writing / editing	Solar power	InDesign – Capable
Document proofing	Food service	Photography – Journalistic, Studio
Book editing	Urban Design	
Quantitative analysis	Fire fighting	
<p>Now consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What sets you apart? Is it your expertise? Do you provide faster turnaround, a full range of style sheets, the ability to package the entire document, sales assistance, etc.? Write that here: 		

Worksheet 3: The “Elevator Spiel”

Examine the lists in Table 1 and circle 1-3 items from each list that represent a potential market strength for you, either because of your outstanding skill or experience, or the relative scarcity of that attribute among your potential competitors.

In the space below, write a sentence or two summarizing the items you circled and what sets you apart. This is the basis of your “Elevator Spiel”!

Don’t worry if it doesn’t come easily or quickly. Take a few stabs at it, and come back to it later if need be. Practice makes perfect!

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Worksheet 4-A: Your Potential "Warm" Market	
Former employers (companies)	Former colleagues
Worksheet 4-B: Your Potential "Cold" Market	
Former colleagues, friends, acquaintances in businesses you want to penetrate	Target companies

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Worksheet 5: Connecting Services, Skills, and Markets						
	<i>Areas of Skill / Expertise (Columns 2 & 3 from Worksheet 1)</i>					
<i>Products and Services</i>	Finance	Solar Power	Food Service			
Ad copy writing						
Technical writing / editing						
Document proofing						
Book editing						