Lisa Cumes – How To Get Amazing Clients

Mikhail: Welcome to Health Copywriting Profits. Today, we're talking to Lisa Cumes, who is a freelance copywriter and StoryBrand guide, and she's built a six-figure online copywriting business for the last three years. And in the last year, she shifted and started scaling a business up by bringing on a team of other copywriters. And she's also has a passion for helping freelancers get out of that hustling mood and start building a full-time business. Not to mention she's also a mom of three kids, so she's juggling food businesses and being a mom. So, she's a little bit of a wonder woman.

Welcome, Lisa.

Lisa: Hi, thank you. So glad to be here.

Mikhail: Glad to have you on, but I gave a quick intro. I mean, can you get a little more into how you first started with copywriting?

Lisa: Yes. I never went to school for writing. I never considered myself a copywriter on until probably about one year in when somebody called me a copywriter, and I was like, "Oh, I guess that's what I am." And I've heard that story many times from people that never set out to be a copywriter. They were in marketing, or they were in sales, or they were in some sort of writing and realized that copywriting is a combination of yes, writing, but sales, persuasion, understanding human behavior, psychology. There's so much to copywriting that is just way beyond just writing. So, I fell into it in many ways. I had customers that kept asking me, "Oh, could you help me with the words on my website? Could you help me with the words in my emails? Could you help me?" I was like, "Sure."

And then I realized, wow, this is a definite need for business owners, whether they're starting or refreshing or trying to communicate with their audiences. And so, I follow the framework of StoryBrand, which is a marketing framework that positions your customer as the hero and your brand or yourself as the guide. And there's a huge demand out there for website copywriting using StoryBrand. And as I really niche down, which we're going to talk about a little bit today, as I really niched down in what I offered and how I messaged that, actually the business went through the roof, and that's when I found myself with a waiting list. And I was like, "Oh, this is great. I have a wait-list." And my business coach was like, "No, that's not great. Get yourself a team and keep going. Like, why would you limit yourself?" And then I never really thought that as a solo copywriter, I could consider bringing on a team and other people doing this. And so, I created a very streamlined process, step-by-step and brought on copywriters probably now for about a year and a half -- No, about a year we've added to the team.

Mikhail: Yes. Well, that's great. Now, of course, doing that, you'd have realized you had this talent for growing a business, right?

Lisa: Yes. Copywriting is so much more than just writing, and there's a lot of legwork upfront before you actually get to do the work. And I've heard this over and over again from other freelancers, other copywriters, they say, "I wish I could just do the work. I wish I could just

do the writing," but we know when you run your own business, it's really difficult, and you have to be good at your own sales funnel and bringing in clients and sending proposals and closing the deal, knowing how to price yourself so that you can do the work. And I found in the three years I've been doing this that I'm really good at the front end. I'm really good at the marketing side of the business and helping clients understand why copywriting is important, and sending proposals and closing. And so, then my team actually does the writing now. Of course, still am part of every project and oversee things, but knowing where your sweet spot is and not struggling or resisting the sales process will really help other copywriters be able to do the work they love, work with clients they love, build it around their own schedule, which is something that's really important to me.

Mikhail: Yes. I think that's a big point that you brought up. When you get started with copywriting, a lot of folks would probably think, "Okay, I'm going to be writing," but there's also that front end part of it, like you said, where you can't just be writing. You have to have clients to write for. And I guess that's kind of what you do in terms of you change their mindset from this is just a side business, a side hustle into something that is a real business. It's a business that needs to be run like a business, even if it's just one person.

Lisa: Yes. The first year I had my head down working really hard, didn't really pay attention to the numbers so much, and really was finding most of my clients through an online platform called Upwork. And by the end of that year, 12 months, I'd earned about $125,000 as a copywriter after never being a copywriter. And I thought this is a real thing. You can make a real business out of this. If you enjoy it and you're willing to work with a lot of people and hustle pretty hard. And the second year I streamlined my processes, I got really specific about what I did. I kind of got serious, to be honest. I was like, "Okay, this is a thing. I'm going to treat it like a business." And when I did that, the business doubled.

So, I think that when you focus -- again, we're going to talk about this. We can dig into it at any time. When you niche down, meaning you get very narrow in what you offer and who your audience is. You create a clear message to them, "Hello, copywriters. This is what we do." So funny how copywriters are really not great about writing about their own business. And so, everything that we apply for our clients, we have to do for ourselves so that we can attract the right customer. And instead of treating this like a creative or you're a designer. If you treat it like a business, then you can bring in a steady flow of leads and always have consistent work. I know copywriters struggle with having consistency. It's like they are always up and down trying to find clients, then they have too many. And what if you could build a consistent pipeline and have a process that you take people through? So that's what's worked for me, and I had enough other copywriters say, "How did you do it? Can you teach me how to do it?" Then the light bulb went off? And I was like, "Oh, I think I could." And so, built out a new business during quarantine, during COVID where I coach and teach freelancers how to build thriving full-time businesses.

Mikhail: Yes. Well, we can get into that. You mentioned narrowing down. Can you get a little more into that?

Lisa: Yes. So, the biggest reason why I believe people don't narrow down is because there is a sense of fear or a scarcity mentality deep down. I don't want to leave anybody out. I don't want to miss anybody. I can write for all different types of industries. I can do everything. And that is true. Most of the people I talk to are amazing, and yes, they could write copy for just about anybody on any subject. The problem with that, as we know, because we are copywriters, we would never do that for our clients. We know we have to have a very simplified and very clear message. And so, we need to apply that for ourselves in our own business and understand who is your ideal customer? Who is the persona or the person that you work with best or the type of organization? And you get to be selfish on this. And this is where we don't say, "Well, I know there's a big hole in the market, or we have a big need over here." Start with saying, "What do you enjoy? What are you good at? Where do you shine?" That's the first one.

And then the second is how do I offer something that is very specific on the front end? And I'll explain this in a second, but then open up my services more on the backend. And for myself, how this really became apparent, as people would say, "Hey, can you help me write words on my website?" And like, "Sure, we can write words on your website." And I got really good at selling people what they think they wanted, what they think they needed. And in the end, yes, we would put words on their website, but then we would also do their marketing and their lead generators and their emails and all the other things. If a customer or client came to me and said, "Can you put words in my website?" I said, "Yes. And we do this, and we do this, and we do this, and we do this. And we can do all of these things." All of a sudden like, "Oh, I don't need all that. You must not be for me." And they were literally walk away, even though I could still deliver what they wanted.

So, where I'm going with this is do not overwhelm people with all the things you can do. They really looking for one thing, help them say yes to that one thing, and then tell them all the other things or do it in an order that they can kind of understand and walkthrough. So that's the first mistake I see people making, is they try to offer all the things up front.

The second benefit from narrowing down your niche or being really specific is that your sales process will go much faster. If you offer four or five or six different types of copywriting for all the different things, you are going to have different types of proposals and different types of pricing. And if you get on a discovery call, it might be about this one time and about this, the next time. When you're very specific and narrow, you can streamline that because you should be saying the same things to just about everybody all the time. Your proposal should be pretty close. Realigned with what you do for most people. So just your time alone and how really, I don't want to say sleek, but how proficient and efficient you can be in the sales process will help you; one, win more business. Two, just save you a lot of time. There's one more.

The third reason why you should get really narrow and specific is because you will build a very deep portfolio of work. You will be considered a thought leader in this particular area. If you've ever seen somebody portfolio and they have two blogs and four emails or one website and this over here, and then you're like, "What do you do really well?" Customers and clients love to pick the best they want the expert. They want the best they can afford. And so, someone who is the best has a deep portfolio in one particular area.

And I know that might feel constricting or like, "Oh my God, but that means I can't do the other things." I disagree. I think it's not true. I think when you can show that you're an expert in an area, they will trust you as an authority. They will still consider you as like, "Wow, if you can do that, I'm sure you can do this." And so, I have people come to me all the time. They look at our websites, and they say, "Wow, I love that website. Do you think you could do a flyer for us? Do you think you could?" I'm like, "Of course we can."

So, you're not going to miss out on business because you got specific or narrow. What the truth is, you should probably miss out on some business. You don't want to take everybody as well. So, I think it's a very hard thing to do. I talk about this with the students, and the people I coach with is that stage one is exploring. It's figuring out like what you like, what people want. It's okay to dabble and to do the things, but there will come a time where you need to draw a line in the sand and say, "This is what I do." And you will find that you will move faster and further because you're more specific.

Mikhail: Yes. Well, of course, this is the Health Copywriting Profits. So, if you're attending this, you probably already have. I'm interested in that sense. You've niched down a bit already. One thing I can't remember where I first did it when it comes to really choosing a niche. It comes down to, like, if you found out you need a brain surgery or something, would you go to a brain surgeon who specializes in that, or would you go to your GP? And that's kind of the thing you have to think about when your clients are coming to you. If they have this specific need are, they going to go to someone who generalizes and does all those things, or are they going to look for someone who specializes in that particular thing that they're looking for?

Lisa: Right. And so even if you already specialize in health, what you want to think about is how can you actually niche down in that area? So, if you're going to be a health [inaudible 00:13:31] copywriter really own that, like, be that. Don't be like, "Oh, I'm a copywriter who does health." Say, "I am a health copywriter. This is my specialty." And again, going back to that scarcity mentality. It's like, "Oh, well, there's just not enough business out there for me. Oh, I won't get enough clients if I only do one thing." And I believe that this is not the truth. I think that there is so much work out there. There is an abundance of work. So instead of just opening up what you do to lots of people, spend that time and energy really finding that audience and where they're living, where they're looking, where they're kind of interacting and go there, and you will have enough.

Mikhail: I guess a question that might pop into someone's mind, can you choose like the wrong niche? Is that something that can happen?

Lisa: I don't think you can choose the wrong niche. I think that you can go down a route and then go like, "This isn't quite working. Let me kind of keep pivoting a little." I don't think it's wrong. The only way it would be wrong is if it doesn't sit well with you if it's not sustainable, if you don't enjoy it. If you pick one just because you're not going to be able to continue on that for very long.

Mikhail: Okay. Yes. I think you kind of covered that really well. Is there anything you kind of wanted to talk about in that niching down?

Lisa: No. Like I said, just the benefits, I think when you have it very clear on your website or your profile page, and it's specific. So, here's the thing we know, again, we're talking to copywriters here. You guys should know this. People want to know that they are in the right place. Say you're doing copywriting for a client, and you're doing your website when a potential visitor or customer lands on your website. The very, very first thing they're asking themselves is, "Am I in the right place? Can this person help me?" And so, if you're going to focus on health copywriting, really, you need on your, again, on your website, your email, your, however, you first introduce yourself is for them to not have the client to connect the dots and go, "Oh, I think maybe they can help me with health. [inaudible 00:15:47].

No. Oh, I'm in the right place. There is nothing more effective than when somebody goes, "Oh my God, where have you been my whole life? You were exactly what I need." There's no way you can do that if you're broad and general. It leaves it up to the customer to try to figure out if you actually can help them. So, again, I know it feels limiting sometimes, but it is much better, I believe, to be niche and narrow and keep that at the highlight at the top. And then down below, say, "We also do this type of writing or in addition, or I'll also have experience in whatever it might be."

Mikhail: Yes. Well, I guess that kind of leads into something that you've also talked about, which is kind of how you position yourself once you start talking to clients. Clients say they're interested. How do you position yourself, not just as a copywriter or someone that can really help them, in more than just copywriting?

Lisa: Such a great question. This is what I think differentiates copywriters. This is where I think if you can sell this upfront in your discovery call or in your proposal, or however you interact. First impression, always do a discovery call. If you're doing projects over $500, you should get on a Zoom call with them. You get them to trust you and like you ask the right questions like solidify. So that's the first one.

The second is having a process. Explaining to a customer or a client how you can help them besides just putting great words in an email or great words on a website for them. Because it's oftentimes customers do not know what they really need. And I'm going to say that again. I want you to really hear this. This, to me, changed everything for me when I finally understood, "I thought the client or the customer always was right. They always knew what they wanted." And then, as I worked with a few over and over and over, I was like, "Oh my gosh, they really don't know what they need, or they want." They think they want words on a website or this or that, but oftentimes businesses will need clarity. They will need simplicity. They will need somebody to help them process through all of their information. And so, when we work with clients, we take them through stages, and stage one is a clarity stage. It's saying, "Hey, who is your customer? What is the problem they have? How do we really describe what you do in a very short and simple way?" Once we get that, the writing is really easy.

Now, a customer, if you're not careful, will think that you'll just magically come up with words that will make more money for them, and it doesn't work that way. And you will

really have a lot of friction and frustration if you don't sell your process upfront. If you don't sell yourself as a clarity coach, I wouldn't call it a business coach. I'd call it a clarity coach. Like, "Listen, before we can really just make great words. I really need to understand what you do and how you do it." And you'd be surprised. I was surprised at how many customers really loved that. They were actually craving somebody to take all of their overwhelm and really simplify it and then write the great words. But if you try to sell yourself as a clarity coach or a business coach, nobody wants that. They want copywriting. So, in many ways, I don't pitch myself or sell myself as a coach, but that is what they get when we work together because I believe that's the best way to create words that influence [inaudible 00:19:32].

Mikhail: Yes. Kind of like, you're copywriters, just kind of the foot in the door. And that's what you use to -- yes, you do the copywriting, but you bring so much more to the table.

Lisa: You become pretty much the authority in this. So, I talk to the freelancers all the time about maintaining the power position. Understanding that you are not just a hired gun, that the client isn't just paying you for words. I know clients that I will not work with when they're like, "Well, how much do you charge per word?" I'm like, "Whoa, Whoa, you do not understand copywriting at all." Because we try to get the least amount of words, which means I wouldn't make any money here. So, if we get clients that don't understand that, that are just going to tell us what to do and how to write, no, we don't do that. I want somebody that says, "I have a great idea. I have a great product. I have a great service. I don't know how to communicate it really well. I'm trusting you as the expert in the communication. We partner together."

We use, obviously, their experience, but we lead the process. We guide the process. We take them through the process, which means we become the authority. And so, when we're done with whatever project we were doing, they will come back to us and say, "Lisa, what do you think we should do next?" Meaning, "How can I give you more money? How can you write more things for us?" So, if you position yourself like that, again, be careful. You cannot do that from the very first call in the beginning. If you try to tell them that, "Oh, I'm going to take you through a full sales marketing funnel and blah, blah, blah." And they're like, "I don't need that." But through the process, if you can continue to demonstrate that you are way more than just a copywriter, that you actually understand what's going on in the industry, that you can show them what their next steps are, number one, they will treat you as a professional with respect and they will come back to you with repeat business.

Mikhail: Yes. I've heard so many horror stories of copywriters working with clients who exactly don't understand the full value of what a copywriter does. And those are the kind of clients you don't really want to take on. What else can you kind of look for in clients that you know will value you, will repeat what you would?

Lisa: I like to say there's five types of clients, which are like, Whoa, five types of clients. When you're a copywriter, we have found there's five types of clients. One of them is the short term, "Hey, we need somebody to fill in for us. So-and-so's out. They're our normal copywriter. Could you jump into our process and fill in?" That's the first one.

The second one is a long-term client that says, "Hey, we want you to join our organization. We want you to be like on call. We want you to help us whenever we need something. We want you to be our go-to person." I'm going to reserve judgment on which of these I like and don't like to the end. I'm just going to describe them.

The third one would be like a project base, meaning, "We're trying to create a campaign or a flyer, or we want to launch something." And so, it's a defined time, meaning when the project's done, we're kind of done. We only need this from you. Could you focus on this project?

Number four is the urgent clients. They need a press release. They need an email written. They need something done today, by the end of the week. They have this long list of deliverables, and everything is just like hyper sensitive and urgent and all the things.

And then the last one, number five, is what I call the clueless clients. They're the client that just basically will post something like, "Need a copywriter, health industry. Need to tell our story." Period. That's it. Like very vague. They don't even know. It feels vague. Like they're withholding information, but the truth is on clueless clients. They really don't know what they need. They just know they need something.

So, me personally, just Lisa, personally I love the clueless clients. They are my absolute favorite. They are the ones that will allow you to step in, guide them, take you through a process. They're pretty much saying, "Wow." Whatever you say is what I need." And we love those clients. I love project-based clients. We do websites for people; we'll turn them around in four or five weeks, and we're done and say goodbye, and off they go.

I know a lot of freelancers love long-term, residual, monthly clients. They write a blog for them every month. They write emails for them every month. Fabulous. If that's the kind of work, you love. I personally get really bored. I don't want to keep writing blog after blog, but the one you definitely want to avoid is the urgent client. Do not work for somebody who has this long list of demands, who has high expectations. I'll tell you how you know that they're really bad is that they will tell you they need it urgently and they'll try to negotiate down your price. And that is a horrible combination because they truly do not respect you.

Anybody knows if you need it urgently, then the price goes up. And I always find that those urgent clients are the ones that are always like niggling on price. And you're like, "Really? If it's that urgent, you would not be worrying about the price." So, they end up demanding more, questioning more. They are just so high maintenance. So, I avoid the urgent clients as much as possible. Clients that want to continue to negotiate on price, I also find that they are going to nickel and dime you throughout the whole process. And so those are the ones I avoid.

If you have a very clear sales process, your discovery call, your proposal, your follow-up has all the information, all the details. You're very clear about it. And then a customer is still trying to negotiate and like, [inaudible 00:25:30] you down, that's a real red flag for

us. And we basically say, no. We may go back one time, and then I will just say, "We've decided to pass on this opportunity." And it's not even over the money. It's over the fact that it's an indication that they are going to be a difficult client throughout the whole process. I hope people are nodding going, "Oh my God, how does she know?" I know because we've gone through them all.

Mikhail: So, you've given us a lot of things to kind of lookout for in terms the negatives. Is there anything that you see in clients that make you want to, "Yes, I want to work with this type of client?"

Lisa: Yes. This is going to be specific to my copywriting and what we do, but I really appreciate clients who have done their homework on me or on my team. I appreciate clients who have looked through the portfolio and said, "Wow, I love what you did on this website." When I send information to potential clients, it includes a video interview with me and a blog I've written, and a bunch of websites. And when somebody comes back and says, "Wow, your video really helped me understand what you did." I'm like, "Oh my God, you are serious. You took the time. You went through the information." That speaks volumes to me because what I say to them is if you like what you saw, that is what you're going to get. We are going to work together really well. We're managing expectations upfront. Because I'm a StoryBrand copywriter, anybody who's looking for StoryBrand is going to be a great fit for us because we're on the same wavelength length. We talk kind of the same language. So that is always really helpful.

And then going back to the clueless client, the one that just says, "I know what I'm good at. I know what you're good at. Let's work together. And I'm going to trust you in the process." We will take them all day long. We will never abuse them or overcharge them or anything like that. We totally respect those. Those have been the best customers. And it's funny I'll get a lot of leads off of Upwork, and the job posting will literally have two sentences that are so vague. And when I teach this to the copywriters, they're always like, "Those are the ones I avoid. It's just too much of the unknown." And I said, "That's why I get them all," because they are usually maybe 50 or 60-year-old men who have no idea what they're doing on Upwork, posting a job and just basically frantically going, "Help!" And people avoid that because it just isn't enough information. I avoid the ones that had the super long list with bullet points and this and this and this and this. We stay away from them because they are going to tell us what to do instead of us telling them what to do.

Mikhail: Yes. Kind of comes back to that positioning yourself as an expert. And that, what you mentioned there about doing -- if the client has done their homework and research in you. It kind of goes both ways. I mean, I've hired folks on Upwork as well. And the folks that take the time to kind of really go through what you're looking for and be relevant to what you're asking in terms of even the samples that they're sending, that makes them stand out so much more because you just get flooded with generic proposals on there. They just copy and paste. So just doing a little bit of homework into what it is they're doing, what they're looking for. That can really help set you apart.

Lisa: Yes. Let me give you another tip that's been working for us this year, and I love -- It's kind of our secret weapon. If you are replying to a request, you're replying to a job posting, or somebody says, "Hey, I hear you're a copywriter. Can you help me?" If you can get just a little bit of information, their website or anything on them. I'm really good at looking at someone's email address and see if I can figure out what their website is in the back of their email address, and then I go and look on their site. It takes me about two or three minutes to do this.

But there's an app or a Chrome extension called loom.com. And loom is a way for you to record yourself and your screen and send it to people very quickly. It's like a video email. And so, I will get onto a client site and hit record, and I'd be like, "Hi, I'm Lisa. I see that you're looking for blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. We work with." And I just do a really quick intro. And when I send them the email, or even in the job posting on Upwork, I include that video because it gives you a little link. I have one more client over because of that video, because one, I took the time to do it. Two, I stood out because I'm showing my face.

People want to know when they're looking to hire somebody. They want to know; do I like this person? Could I work with them? Would they understand me? Would they get what I'm working on? And so, anything you can do to lower that barrier to let somebody go, "Wow, they look like a nice normal person. I'm sure they're great to work with." That alone will go so much further than those cut and paste, "Dear, sir, or Madam," whatever you're going to do. So just taking a few extra minutes to personalize, I think, will really help people stand out.

Mikhail: Yes. That's a really good point. So, one of the things you've kind of touched on a couple of times is this idea of discovery calls, and can you get into what they are and what exactly you do on them?

Lisa: Yes. A discovery call, I believe, is where you actually sell yourself and your service. I know that after discovery call, I follow up with a full proposal with details and pricing, and timeline. But it's on the discovery call that, one, I'm introducing myself. I'm selling my authority. I'm helping them understand that I know their business or asking the questions. I ask a series of questions in a very casual way to get the details I need to send a really great proposal. At this point, I still personalize every proposal. Each one is a little bit different based on who I'm talking to or what they need. There are a lot of reasons why discovery calls are important.

The first is if somebody can't like make the time to get on a call or go through the process to get on a call, that's a red flag for me. So again, if they're urgent, like, "Can you just write this for me?" It never really turns out well if I don't have a connection with them. Yes, I can write it, and I send it like, "No, you didn't get my tone." And I'm like, "Because we've never met. I don't understand." So as much as people think copywriting is quick and easy, it isn't. And what you want to do is build a connection that's going to give you like long-term clients. I'm not really interested in doing a one-off blog post for people. In fact, we don't do those at all because there's too much energy that's put up on the front end that I really can't price for that, for what they really want. I want to build a relationship and do

something that's a little bit more significant or long-term. People buy people. So, by seeing somebody, by interacting with them and clients want to be seen. They want to be heard. They want to be understood. So, I believe all of that is important in a discovery call.

It's also a chance for you to interview them. So early on, I got smart and was like, hold up here. I don't work with crazies. I'm not going to work with demanding people. I'm not going to work with weird people. So, by getting on a discovery call, it really helps me quickly filter like, "Whoa, they are not the type of person I want to work with." Or, "Wow, this is an even better connection." So, unless you're horrible on camera or you really don't think that you could improve your chances by getting on camera with somebody, then maybe skip it.

But the other option would be to send a loom video, just like I was talking about. A little bit longer that says, "Hey, this is Lisa. I just thought I'd walk you through our process. We do this with clients and this with clients, here's some examples of our work." You can at least send that as a video. And that will allow them to be like, "Wow, I feel a connection. And I think they understand my business." So, whether it's a Zoom video call, I very rarely will do phone calls. Again, you're missing the point. You're not seeing the person; you can't share your screens. It feels a little impersonal. So almost always do like a Zoom video call.

Mikhail: That's great. I think it's, again, something that most copywriters will not look to do. So just doing that by itself sets you apart. And it does go to show that there's a level of confidence as well. That you're confident in your skills that you want to talk to this person and to see them. I guess all of that kind of plays into why these discovery calls work so well.

Lisa: And it's really good for either your website or your email that says our next step is to hop on a quick discovery call. Like you want to bring people through a process and letting them know -- I mean, I can teach you all about this all day long. Before you even get on a discovery call, they should know what you do and what your basic starting price is. Do not waste your time or their time when your project starts at $5,000, and their budget is $500. So, what you want to do is, before I give anybody the link to get on a discovery call, I will say, "Here is how we work with clients. Here's some samples. Our starting project rate is this. If, after all this, you still want to get on a discovery call, let me know."

I don't even give them my link. They have to message me back and say, "Yes, this looks great. I'd like to get on a discovery call." I know that you're like, "What?" I do make them jump through some hoops. One, if you're too accessible to people, they are not going to value you as much. They are not going to understand why your prices are so high. I don't do it like to just cause trouble, but really, I'm filtering people that came from getting to a point where I had a waitlist. And I was like, "I ain't got time for people who aren't going to pay these prices. So how do I," and then I realized I can filter them through telling them what my project rate is or the base project rate starting.

And then two, making them jump through a couple hoops to get on a call with me. So that when they do, I can't tell you how many clients are like, "Thank you for taking the time. I

know you're really busy." And so, it's amazing how you kind of switch the physician to they are lucky if they get to work with us. I mean, I really truly believe that. And so, I give off that vibe, and it changes the mental positioning. And so, people are much quicker to be like, "Wow, I better get her while we can. Like we better work with her while we can." So, it may feel like a little bit of sales or spin. It's actually the truth, but you can, I would say, manufacture that yourself by doing just a couple of these little things. It will, one, sets you apart. You won't seem so needy or desperate. And you make the client do a little bit of work to get to you. They're going to value you more.

Mikhail: Yes. That pre-qualifying sort of process does two things. Like you say, it filters out the folks you don't want to, but that in itself will kind of lend itself to increase in your prices. I mean, you automatically go up in value in their eyes, and you can ask for higher prices. Are there any other things that, in terms of being able to charge higher prices for what you do that you can share in terms of tips for getting to those higher priced ones?

Lisa: We know when you first get started, it is true you do need to price yourself to get some traction. I don't know who's watching that maybe is just starting. If you're just starting. It's kind of like when somebody opens up an Airbnb for the first time, and you're the very first guest. You get a really great deal because they like need a few reviews, and we all understand that. You go stay at a gorgeous place, you're like, "Wow, how did I get this so cheap?" And you're like, "Oh because I was the first one." And so, it makes sense. So, you can explain to customers who were saying, "Well, it's not that I'm new at copywriting. I'm just new at putting out proposals on Upwork or whatever." You never want to tell somebody you're new if you're new, but if you're on a new platform, you may need to lower your price a little bit. That's not your question.

Really, the projects we're doing today are almost exactly the projects I did three years ago. And I charged about $2,500 for them three years ago. And now we're charging $6,000 and $7,000 for the same work. The reason why we've been able to charge more is because we have a deep portfolio. So, every portfolio piece you get, every work that you do allows you to increase your price a little bit more. And that's why, if you have a smattering of a whole bunch of writing, you don't show a deep portfolio. You're just kind of like a Jack of all trades, and you cannot command the prices. So that's one reason.

The second is always be increasing. I always say this. Is always be increasing a little bit instead of like, "Oh, once a year, I'm going to jump my prices 30%, just every proposal that you do bump that upper limit. If people are saying yes to you, pretty easily, you are not priced correctly. You need to raise your prices. If you have a wait-list, you need to raise your prices. I believe that most people are undercharging. I undercharged for years, and that's my own lack of confidence or understanding what's in the market.

The second thing is if you are still charging by the hour, stop that. You are not an hourly person. Copywriting is a value, it's a service, and so they're not paying for your time. They're paying for your thoughts and your insight and your words and your creativity and your perspective. You cannot put an hourly rate on that. It is very difficult because people want to know, like, "What do you charge per hour?" It's a very easy thing to say. So, you

and your own mind have to turn it around. Like, "Well, we work on a project basis. And so, depending on what you need, I'll price it as a project."

You can raise your prices, but not, and I'll just explain what I mean by this. If something that like in the beginning takes you five hours to do, and you charge $1,000, if you can figure out how to get it down to three hours, it's still $1,000, but your kind of hourly rate is more. You're getting more money for your time. And so, by keeping it at a project rate, you're the one who's got to get smart and figuring out how to do it better and faster. The more clients that you have that are similar, that means, "Oh, I've already done this before. I've got a good idea. I'm not starting from scratch."

And so, I think every now and then send out a proposal that scares the heck out of you that you think nobody will say yes to, and you will be shocked. My jaw drops sometimes when I do this, just for the fun of it, I will like double a proposal, and I've had people be like, "Sure, when do we get started?" And I have to raise my own belief level because, after a while, you just assume people will only pay a certain price. And so those are some of the games that we play in terms of just raising our own belief level.

Mikhail: Yes. So many great points and tips in terms of finding clients, charging what you would. Is there any, like, one thing that for new copywriter that you think they should kind of focus on or one tip that you can give them when they're just starting out? What would be that one thing we should be trying to do?

Lisa: Yes. I want to share a perspective or a mindset that I think will help people more than a tip or a trick or a tool. You bring to the table so much more than just writing words for people. And when you understand that, and you actually believe that you are a great resource for them to hire, it's -- let me kind of put it this way. I remember in the beginning when I wasn't really that great at copywriting like I was getting my feet. I was like, "Man, I know this could be better." I used to like go back and look at some of the old video or the old websites I built, and I'm embarrassed. I'm like, "Oh my gosh, people pay me for that." Like, I wish I could fix that.

So it wasn't that great. I was still learning, but here's what I know. I showed up for those clients. I listened to them. I over-delivered. I delivered on time. They could not have had a better copywriter, a person to work with than me, because I cared about them. I cared about doing a really great job, and I always showed up. And so, we undervalue ourselves as just professionals and freelancers. And we will only talk about the writing or our experience or portfolio. So, build in the back of your mind the confidence that these clients are lucky. They get to work with you. They are lucky they found you. You are going to do your very best for them. And when you carry that confidence into working with clients, it's hard to sell, "Oh, hey, I'm an awesome person." You can't say that. But when you know that deep inside, it will compensate for your maybe lack of writing skills or lack of portfolio.

And you can shine. That's why discovery call is so important. People really liked me and maybe my copywriting. And so, if you can do that in the beginning, really leverage yourself. And what I mean by that too, is reply quickly, reply professionally. Have really

great writing in your proposals. Like, do all the things that would lead somebody to be like, "Wow, this person's great. I don't know about their copywriting, but I want to work with them." And then you can bring up your copywriting skills as quickly as you can, but just show up as a professional. And that will really put you way above most of the competition.

Mikhail: Yes, that's great. That's a really important point in terms of -- so many of these speakers that I've talked to, a lot of it I'm trying to get them to share tips and tricks in that. And so much of them are saying, "It's not tips and tricks. It's mindset. It's all about changing how you think." So that just kind of falls right in line with everything else.

So, Lisa, thanks so much for taking the time you've shared. I think some really valuable information for new copywriters, even copywriters who are kind of different doing work but may be stuck at one price point or one income level. And they're just trying to find something to take them up to that next level. I think you've given them a lot to work with here. Where can they go to learn some more about you, your copywriting business, your coaching business, where can they learn some more?

Lisa: No, I appreciate that. I have a passion for freelancers and copywriters. I am a single mom with three kids who kind of stumbled her way into this and realized, "Wow, I can build a business, build a team, support my family doing this." And I want that for other people. I have a thriving copywriting business that makes me money. The coaching is just a passion. It's basically saying, "Hey, I'm a couple steps ahead of you. Let me share with you what I've learned. Not only does mindset, but like actual templates and emails and processes, and like all of the things."

So that launched early this year. And I'm really proud of it. We have a really thriving community in our Facebook group. It's called Full Thrive, F-U-L-L-T-H-R-I-V-E, fullthrive.co. And my kind of mantra is that I believe that you can find clients who like do work that you love on your own schedule. And to me, that's working full thrive, whether it's part-time, full-time, or running your own business. And we have everyone in there from newbies all the way to really experience six-figure copywriters. And we work together, helping people understand how to either get started, how to scale and grow a team.

So, yes, I have courses and coaching, but just being in the Facebook group, I think you find your people, you find your community. And I'm in there doing live coaching and teachings all the time. I'm also really active on Instagram. So just my name, Lisa Cumes. At least when it comes to Instagram, I'm always giving away tips and tips on copywriting and just freelancing in general.

Mikhail: All right. Thanks. Thanks, Lisa. This has been a really great call.

Lisa: Thank you. I really appreciate you having me on.