

Tales of Everyday Business Folk

Julia Chanteray

14 short episodes from the life of our everyday business hero Katherine. See if you can recognise your own experiences of getting started in business reflected in what happens to Katherine, and learn from her mistakes so you don't have to make them, too.

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www.thejoyofbusiness.co.uk

About Julia Chanteray

I've spent my life setting up and running businesses, and I'm a little bit obsessed with small businesses in particular. I love learning about new marketing techniques, business models and the different approaches people take to business. I firmly believe that running your own business is a great way to have more control over how you live your life, become financially independent and have enormous fun. If you do it right, of course.

I run a small business consultancy called The Joy of Business. The name demonstrates my philosophy about business, plus my love of a cheeky little pun. Running a business can be one of the most exciting, creative things you'll ever do, but it can also be one of the most scary, daunting and challenging endeavours at the same time. At The Joy of Business, I help to make the journey a little less scary by giving people great business ideas that they can actually make money from, by helping people get their marketing and their business model right, and by being their trusted friend while they're getting on with what they need to do to make more money and have more fun.

The stories you'll read about in *Tales of Everyday Business Folk* are based on a mixture of my own experiences, situations that clients and friends have faced, and lots of bits I've taken from my obsessive reading of many business books. Katherine is, of course, completely made up. She's an amalgam of the hundreds of small business owners I've advised over the past 14 years. But she's her own woman, and whether you've been a Joy of Business client or not, you're likely to see something of yourself in Katherine and her business adventures. Here we go.

Introduction

I wrote these little episodes a while ago as a bit of an experiment. Mostly I wanted to have an excuse for writing some fiction as a change from writing blogs and online content, but I also wanted to experiment with a different form of online marketing. I originally wrote them as episodes to be sent out by email – like a TV series, people got an episode each day. There was a great response: my proofreader laughed, I heard my partner laugh out loud when she tested the stories for me, and people got really involved in the stories. Some people saw their own journey in Katherine's experiences, others were rooting for her, and a couple of people even took the trouble to write to me to suggest further plot developments.

If the emails were the TV series, this is the box set. Here you can read Katherine's adventures all in one go, and find out what happens in the end. Unless there's a cliffhanger, of course...

Let me know what you think. If you enjoy Katherine's adventures, you might also want to sign up for my weekly email series showcasing very different business stories, where there's always a little something to learn about business and something to make you think. You can sign up for free at www.thejoyofbusiness.co.uk.

Julia Chanteray

Tales of Everyday Business Folk

Episode 1

Once upon a time, in the strange town of Brighton on Sea, there lived a woman called Katherine. Like many people in Brighton, Katherine actually lived in Hove. Each morning, she crawled out of bed at 6.30am, annoying her three cats, who were not any more ready than Katherine to get up yet, got dressed in the dark and got on a train to London Bridge. Katherine worked for a content marketing agency near London Bridge. She liked her job, secretly thought she was pretty good at it, and hated her commute, which was only just about bearable if she was lucky enough to get a seat and could catch up on nonsense from the @brightonstation Twitter feed while her body adjusted to being awake.

You guessed it: Katherine lost her job. They had to downsize, making almost everyone redundant. One of the company's biggest customers had gone bust, owing tens of thousands of pounds, and the owners couldn't make the payroll that month. Katherine didn't have to commute any more, but she also didn't know if or when she'd get paid. She sat on her settee in Hove and thought about what to do next. She scanned all the job ads, thinking that it would be great to get a job in Brighton for a change, but she noticed that the salaries were about 70% of London rates, and guessed that there was some pretty stiff competition for those jobs. She applied for jobs in Brighton, in London, even places like Ipswich – she had no idea where that was, but she treated this just like having a job. She got some interviews, then got some second interviews.

Katherine was a sensible woman, and liked to know where she stood. She counted up her money, and worked out that she could survive on her savings for two months, on her credit card for another three months, and, if she got her back pay, that would be another month or so before she was broke and couldn't pay the rent. Katherine felt sick. She noticed homeless people more, and scoured articles online about how to save money, cook cheaper meals, and reduce your bills. She switched the radio off one day when a politician was talking about the need for austerity, feeling furious and sick. She applied for more jobs, ones that she wasn't qualified for, ones that she was overqualified for. *"Overqualified", what does that mean?* she thought. *It's when they want to employ someone cheap, and they're worried that I'd leave as soon as I get a better job. Which I would.*

Katherine's friend Claire texted her to confirm that they were going for drinks that night.

"Can't afford it, but am coming. No rounds, okay?" Katherine was thinking about money all the time, but Claire had been very insistent that she come out. Apparently a few drinks would cheer her up.

It turned out that Claire had another agenda. Claire used to work with Katherine in a previous job, but now ran a PR agency in Brighton.

"We need someone to write copy for this new client's website," she said. "I'm good with the press releases, and the events, but they all want online marketing now. It's

all link bait and content, and to be honest, I don't have time to do it. I'm spending all my time in London, talking to clients and on the phone with journalists, and I don't have time to write all this extra copy they want. And I don't understand all this social media – I mean, we're on Twitter, but it's more than just sending out some updates now, there's all this campaign building.”

So Katherine networked her way to her first freelance job for Claire. She spent the rest of the week writing copy for Claire's client's new website, doing keyword research, competitor analysis, suggesting blog posts and telling the client all about a campaign they could do to attract new customers. She felt great, loved it. She charged £100.

A good start. What will Katherine do next? Will she become a freelance copywriter? How will she spend her massive £100 fee?

Episode 2

Monday morning. Katherine gets out of bed at a leisurely 7.30am. The cats are enjoying their lie in – their owner no longer having to get up in the dark and disturb them.

She had cancelled her gym membership in her own personal austerity drive, so she goes out for a run along the seafront. She's back by 8.30 and wonders what to do next. Last week, she'd done the work for her friend Claire's client and enjoyed it. This week, there was nothing much on. She tidies the flat. She checks her email. She catches up on some blogs, all about content marketing. She thinks about going for another run. She tidies the flat again, decluttering a cupboard. Unfortunately, Katherine was already pretty organised and there isn't much to declutter. She checks her bank balance and makes a spreadsheet for how long it would take her to run out of money. She adds in the £100 she'd invoiced Claire and realised that it won't really make much difference to when Day Zero Bank Balance would come.

Katherine still feels despondent, but mostly she realises that she was bored. Being unemployed is BORING. And it's only 11.15. What on earth was she going to do all day?

When the phone rang, Katherine seized it.

"Hi Katherine, that copy you sent through..." It was Claire. Katherine's stomach churned. Maybe it was no good. Maybe Claire had needed to rewrite it. Maybe it was all rubbish. Katherine gritted her teeth.

"Hi Claire, um... what did you think?"

"Yeah, the client loves it. But you wrote that his customers could follow him on Twitter, and now he's gone and put it on his website, and four people have followed him on Twitter this morning. And he's going on about a Twitter campaign and engagement metrics and he wants a sign-up box and something called a lead magnet. He's been reading too many marketing books, and he wants us to do all this stuff."

"Well that sounds like a good idea, although he'd have to map out a strategy first, not just jump in."

"That's the problem. I'm up to my ears in this launch event, and I've got five call backs to journalists to do, and I don't know what a bloody lead magnet is."

"It's something you put online to attract people so they engage with you and then you can start marketing to them with their permission – attraction marketing rather than old fashioned push marketing."

"Well, that sounds great, and you can tell me all about it one day, but in the meantime, can you just ring this guy? He's called Ryan. I'll text you his number, but

I've got another call waiting and... just speak to him and do something, will you?"

Claire rings off and Katherine smiles as a text chirped with Ryan's number. At least she had something to do this afternoon.

Any of this sound familiar? Have you been there? Can you see how Katherine might get in trouble? Want to know what a lead magnet really is?

Episode 3

Katherine is bored again. She goes out for a run along the seafront in the rain, and ends up in Marrocco's restaurant eating a plate of pasta she can't really afford. Something is bugging her.

I've really enjoyed doing that work for Ryan, Claire's client, she thinks. And I'm happy to help Claire out, and she was really grateful. The flowers were nice too. But there's something not quite right here.

Claire had sent a huge bouquet of lilies to Katherine's flat on Friday. And although they were beautiful, Katherine couldn't help working out how much the flowers must have cost, and thinking that she would have much rather have had the money. Or a Sainsbury's voucher so she could buy food without feeling that all her money was slipping away. She pictured a big hamper, full of tins of cat food, and maybe a voucher for the vet, and smiled at how much more useful and thoughtful that would have been. She'd taken the flowers round to her mum's at the weekend, so at least that had saved her some money on taking a Mother's Day gift.

Katherine realises that she's going to have to have a difficult conversation with Claire about money. And how Claire needed to actually give her some. Particularly if Ryan, or anyone else, was going to need more content written up. She picked up the phone to ask Claire for a job. As she scrolls down her contact list, her hand pauses.

"Claire isn't going to give me a job. And I don't want to work for Claire – we went to school together, and I know what a nightmare she can be. I love her, but she'd be a nightmare of a boss." Katherine realises that she's talking to herself out loud in an Italian restaurant. She finishes her pasta, her panicked brain whirring with all the possibilities.

What do you think Katherine should do? Has she thought about working for herself? Is she going to be a freelance copywriter? Is she going to work for flowers? Are the cats going to be okay?

Episode 4

We catch up with Katherine enjoying a pint of a strange Burning Sky beer in The Craft Beer Co. in Brighton, paid for by her dad.

"I just don't understand it. You were always moaning about having to get up early and get on the train to London, and now you're moaning about not having to. Why on earth would you want a job?" Katherine's dad, Pete, almost spits out the word "job" in his disgust at the idea.

"To pay the rent, Dad." Katherine takes a long pull at her pint and smiles. "It's alright for you – you've made your money, your mortgage is paid off, and you only have to work a couple of days a week since you got the new manager in. But I haven't even got a mortgage yet, and those cats need to be fed. And I feel rubbish not having a job and not having anything to do."

"Well, if you're looking for something to do, you could rewrite our website for us. And there's that social media to look after – I did what you said, and set up a Twitter account for the business, but none of the guys in the office have really got a clue about how to use it. Tweeting about their favourite sandwich fillings and such like. How's that going to get us more customers?"

Katherine's dad, Pete, runs an engineering company in Uckfield making high-end vacuum pumps for medical equipment. He's had the company for 30 years and is now semi-retired, but he can't resist popping into the office every week. Katherine looks at her phone, wincing slightly when she sees the company's Twitter account.

"Well, I guess it won't matter too much when you've only got 13 followers and there've been no tweets since December." She drinks some more of the Burning Sky, then remembers that it's 7.8% proof and it's only three o'clock in the afternoon. "And your website – what happened to all those changes I recommended? This looks like it was built ten years ago and hasn't been changed since."

"We did build it ten years ago, remember? You said it looked cool."

"Yes, Dad, but you can update websites, you know. Photos of the new lines, maybe a product list, online ordering... that sort of thing."

Pete's eyes glaze over as his daughter talks more about how his website should be working for him, establishing the brand, with different versions for their main export markets.

"Funny you should say that, actually," he interrupts. "We had a woman in the other day and she was saying the same thing. I think it was the same – I'm not sure I caught all of it, to be honest. You know me, I like to look after the finances and talk directly to the customers about what they need."

"Well, that's great Dad, but I bet there are all sorts of customers out there who

would love to buy from you, but they're not going to if they see this piece of crap. There hasn't even been any SEO done on the site. Your title tag says 'Home'". Katherine shudders.

"That's pretty much what she said, too, although she was a bit more polite about it, mind."

"Who's this woman?"

"She came to see me and Dave the other day. Talking about joined-up marketing strategies and realising the full potential of the international market. Julia, she was called. She helps small businesses like ours, specialising in companies with less than 30 employees, helping them grow. Dave got her in. He's the one with the appetite for growth now. I'm too old for that sort of thing."

"Sounds like she was talking sense. Didn't you like her?"

"She was nice enough, and she did talk sense, but I don't know if I've got the fight for it now. I think Dave wants to get her to help us, but he probably wanted me to meet her so I'd accept her ideas when he wants to get going with it all."

"Interesting."

"Anyway, she wants us to redo the website, and we'll need it all rewritten. So, if you're looking for something to do, you could rewrite all the copy, do some of that SEO. I'll pay you in beer." Pete gets up and goes to the bar.

"Cat food. I want to be paid in cat food and beer." Katherine smiles and passes her dad her glass for a refill.

Well, what's going to happen next? Can you guess who Julia is? Will Katherine rewrite her dad's website? Will the cats get fed?

Episode 5

Today, Katherine is going to meet Dave, the manager of the engineering firm her dad owns, along with Julia, his newly-appointed business adviser. Katherine is a bit suspicious about this business adviser. She had a look at her website, and although it was okay, it wasn't much to shout about compared to some of the campaigns Katherine has run in the past. And there were a lot of jokes. But she was president of the Brighton Chamber of Commerce, which must mean something. But Katherine resents someone else coming in to advise her dad when he and Dave didn't seem to have taken notice of any of the suggestions she'd made over the years about how they might improve their online marketing. *We shall see*, she thinks to herself.

After the meeting, Katherine walks to the train station with Julia. The meeting had gone well, and there were a lot of new plans. Katherine found herself admiring the way that Julia managed to stick to her guns about the need to invest in online marketing, while also making sure that the plans were actually achievable. She smiles to herself as she realises that Julia managed to put Katherine's name down to do a lot of the work needed.

"Was that okay today?" Julia asks.

"Yeah, I think they're finally starting to see that the overseas markets are important. I've been banging on to them about reaching out to China for years, but they've only got their heads around the fact that right now most of the medical tech market is in the US and Germany – but in ten years China and South Korea are going to be where it's at. I liked that you got them to sign up to make these changes, and make it happen."

"Well, that's the key, isn't it? Getting people to actually step out of their comfort zone and do some marketing, rather than sit back and just do business with the same people you've already done business with for years. Was it okay that I asked you to do a lot of the writing? That's a pretty big action list for you from today."

"Oh, that's fine. Um, I'm out of work at the moment, so I might as well help my dad out rather than sitting around the flat. I don't want to become that person who watches re-runs of *British Bake Off* during the day."

"How come you're out of work? You seem to be totally up-to-date on content marketing strategy. I thought someone like you would have tons of work on!"

"I got made redundant a couple of months ago, and I've not been able to get anything else since. I'm overqualified, it seems, and the few jobs in Brighton are either taken by freelancers or bright young things who can work for £16K a year. I've done some work for my friend Claire, who runs Pascal PR, but she's all about traditional PR and events, so she doesn't have much to give me." *And she doesn't want to pay real money*, thinks Katherine, keeping that one to herself.

"Well, why don't you send me your CV – I'm always meeting people who want help

with developing content, and I just do strategy, so it would be good to suggest someone who can help out with the creation and creativity bit.”

Next time... will Katherine finally twig that she could be making lots of money if she went self-employed? Will she get her head around the idea of creating a business for herself? And will she ever charge anyone real money?

Episode 6

Katherine is in her flat. Her very tidy flat – apart from those lazy lumps of fur, also known as cats, who insist on lying around making the place untidy and trying to trip Katherine up as she walks around. She looks at her finances online, and she doesn't like what she sees. She recalculates, thinking that she has just enough to live on for another three months before she can't pay the rent. And that's using her credit card. She now officially has zero assets, and is heading into the land of debt. She's written loads of copy for her dad's new website, but of course he hasn't got round to uploading it yet, so she can't get going on the campaigns she's planning. She's already been for a run, she can't afford to go out for a coffee and the flat is looking cleaner than it ever has. She's broke, and she's bored. Yesterday she got another “no thanks” from a content marketing agency job.

Her phone rings and she seizes on it. But it's just another call about reclaiming payment protection insurance.

“I wish I had taken out that stupid insurance. At least I'd be able to claim it back now”, she mutters to the black cat, Zippy, who squirms away.

“Even Zippy doesn't want a cuddle. Even the bloody cats are deserting me.”

The cats are sulking about the move to cheaper, biscuit-based cat food, and have been noticeably less friendly over the last few weeks.

Katherine's phone rings again. It's Julia Chanteray, her dad's business advisor.

“Hi, Katherine. How are you?”

“I'm alright, just wasting time online.”

“I just wanted to say that I was seriously impressed with that copy you wrote. And I have a couple of favours to ask.”

Katherine rolls her eyes. More unpaid work that doesn't even see the light of day online, no doubt.

“Okay, what are you thinking about?”

“Well, the first thing is that I can't get hold of your dad. He didn't show for a meeting yesterday, and he's not answering his phone. I wondered if you knew where he was?”

“Dad's in Spain. Didn't he tell you? That's not like him. He's looking for a property over there – has some mad idea about buying something cheap and doing it up. Didn't Dave show up for the meeting?”

“Ah. That's probably my fault. I arranged it with your dad, so maybe he didn't tell

Dave. I should have copied Dave into the email. No worries, it's just that we're a bit behind with the timeline for getting that new website up and running and I've got the designers phoning me and asking me what to do, but it's not really up to me. I'll speak to Dave and get it sorted."

"My advice would be to just get Dave to approve it all and get it up there. Dad's not really that interested in all this online promotion stuff, and you'll be waiting forever if you want him to approve the designs."

"Okay, that's probably a good way to go. I have another favour to ask, actually. I have a client at the moment who needs some new copy for his website, and the person I was going to use is super busy for the next month. I don't think she can handle it, to be honest. I was wondering if you'd like to have a go. He's got budget."

Katherine's little heart flipped and flopped at Julia's words. She'd assumed this would be another freebie, mate's-rates-for-flowers-and-cat-food type job, and then her former professional self came flooding back to her at the magic phrase "he's got budget". It felt good.

"What kind of budget are we talking about?"

"Well, he's a small company, so it wouldn't be the sort of agency rates your previous company would have charged. And he's got some £25-per-article type copywriters churning out Mickey Mouse stuff for him at the moment, but I don't think it's doing him any good. Why don't I send you the details and you can have a look at it and tell me what you think he needs?" Katherine hears Julia tapping away on the keyboard.

"Okay, I'll have a little look. Thanks."

Katherine smiles, and starts to read what Julia has sent over. Zippy settles in to rest on her feet, as if he knows where his next meal is coming from.

Tomorrow's instalment will see Katherine's adventure truly starting. She might have got her first proper lead, but there's still trouble ahead.

Episode 7

We find our hero Katherine in a tumult. She's been asked to quote for one of Julia's clients, on what looks at first like a straightforward copywriting job. Or is it? She's pacing around her flat, making the cats run into the bedroom for safety.

Katherine has got her mojo back. She's gone from being desolate and depressed, staring at her diminishing funds, to being the person she was three months ago. Three months ago she was an experienced content marketing strategist with a full-on job in London. She was exhausted all the time from commuting and working long hours, but she looked good, exercised regularly, ate healthily and loved her work. The surprise redundancy and period of unemployment had made her confidence levels dip right down, and she would have unravelled completely if she hadn't had those freebie jobs to do for her pal Claire and her father.

The words "he's got budget" had completely changed all of that. Somehow, she's gone back to being Katherine the content marketing expert, and her confidence had come flooding back. It was like she'd put on a new set of clothes, done her hair and makeup and polished her shoes – even though she was pacing around her flat in her running gear, with her hair in a scrunchie.

Now she's lying on the floor drawing a mind map, planning out a new website architecture, calls to action, content sections, lead magnets, and case studies for Julia's client.

Within two hours she's drafted a proposal. All except the pricing. The proposal looks good: Katherine has done dozens of these before, and she has all the templates from her old job in her Dropbox account, which her previous company had forgotten to cancel. But when she applies the pricing matrix she would have used before, she knows it's all wrong. This guy is just not going to have £30K to spend on new content. His company employs three people, is two years old, and although his existing site is pretty poor, she just knows that he's not going to spend that much. She wouldn't advise him to spend that much anyway. She starts to look at how she can trim it down.

Hi Julia,

Good to talk to you earlier. I just wanted to ask what your client is looking to spend here. There's lots we can do, but I don't really know how far to go without some idea of his budget.

K

Hi Katherine,

I haven't got a clear budget from him, but I know he's happy to invest in his online marketing. Where it is working with his current site, which is the stuff aimed at private schools, he's getting leads for jobs of around 4–6k, so it makes sense to get

some more leads to bring in nice little chunks of work like that. But he's not got mega bags of cash to spend.

Why don't you do three options with different levels, and maybe something that spreads the cost for him over time. I usually advise clients to do three different price-points when they do a proposal so they can still get the job if they don't know what their client's budget is.

Let me know how you get on.

J

Katherine ponders. Three price-points. That's three different options. Oh, well, what else am I going to do tonight anyway? She gets typing.

So Katherine has finally been brought into the dark world of self-employment by the wicked witch Julia. She's writing the proposal. Pitching for work. What will happen tomorrow?

Episode 8

Our hero Katherine has sent off her triple price-point proposal to Julia Chanteray, who wants some copy for one of her clients. She's waiting to hear back. But Julia's busy seeing all of her other clients, and who knows how long Julia's client will ponder on the proposal. But doing that has set something off in Katherine. She's done a proposal and priced it up. She might get some work. Of course she woke up at 4.30am, convinced that it was all wrong and giving herself a hell of a time for not including a long-term social media contract. Until she remembered all the times that her old company had sold clients a deal where they outsource their Twitter accounts to them, and Katherine had always thought that it would be much better for the client to do this themselves. Then she could go back to sleep, until 7am when she bounced out of bed. The cats were very annoyed by this – they'd got used to a nice lazy lie in before getting up for breakfast in preparation for another lie in.

Katherine has lots to think about. She calls her friend Claire and they meet up for coffee.

"Claire, I'm thinking about going freelance. I'm getting rejected for these crappy jobs I could do in my sleep, and I'm bored and running out of money", she blurts out.

"Oh." Claire stirs her latte. "I'm not sure that's for you, dear. It's really hard running your own business, and freelancing might be a good way of tiding you over, but being self-employed isn't for everyone. You always have to worry about where the next piece of work is coming from, managing cash flow is a nightmare, and the clients, well, between you and me, the clients can be a nightmare, too."

"But I'm worried about cash flow now, because the cash is just flowing out, and nothing's coming in. And I had to worry about where the next job was coming from in my old job, because we had these targets to meet. And look where that got me. I brought in hundreds of thousands of pounds for those guys and then I'm just out on my ear."

"But you're so risk averse. I'm really surprised to hear you say this. I think you'd be much better off with a regular job." Claire looks sad and changes the subject.

Katherine feels deflated. Claire has her own company; you'd think she'd be all for Katherine joining the ranks of the self-employed. She Skypes her cousin, Gareth, who has his own plumbing business in Ontario, later that evening.

"Hi Gareth. You know how I lost my job a few months ago? Well, I'm thinking about going freelance, and as you're self-employed I thought I'd ask you whether you'd recommend it."

Gareth waves back. He's Skyping while clearing his living room of the hundreds of toys his three children have left lying around.

"Well, I dunno. I'm making good money, which is just as well because these little guys sure know how to spend it, but I'm working all kind of hours to make that money. Do you really think you want to have that sort of lifestyle? You always used to be the party girl, having a good time."

"Gareth, that was when I was 18. I'm 38 now, and life is a lot calmer." *A bit too calm*, she thought, considering how she hadn't been out for weeks.

"Maybe. But some people think that going self-employed is a quick fix when they need a bit of extra money in between jobs. But it took me more than two years to get set up once I left my apprenticeship, and I had some hard times in those years. If it wasn't for Melanie bringing in money from her job, we would have been screwed. I can lend you some money if you're short for the rent, but think about this carefully. You'd need to get a website, do loads of marketing, go to networking events – the work doesn't just flow in, you know."

Katherine and Gareth talk on for ages until Melanie, Gareth's wife, comes in and gets him to go to bed. Katherine's left with a lot to think about. None of her friends and family seem to think this is a good idea or take her seriously. But what else is she going to do? She has to do something, and writing that proposal had felt so good.

Will Katherine's proposal come to anything? Will she take the plunge? Or are her family and friends right, and she should just look for a job?

Episode 9

Katherine is making a list. She's got pros on one side and cons on the other. She's trying to make a rational choice about whether to go freelance. So far, the list is all pros. But everyone else is telling her not to do this. All her friends and family are saying that she shouldn't be self-employed, that she's just not suited to it, that it will be too hard. The cats are no use in decision making; they just keep sitting on the piece of paper she's trying to write on and batting the pens off the desk.

"Should have got a dog. You can talk to dogs. And they don't sit on your paperwork", Katherine mumbles. "Or maybe a horse."

With the picture in her head of a small pony sitting on her desk, she decides to do some research. She googles "freelancer or self-employed" and finds an article that talks about the importance of seeing yourself as running a business from the start, rather than as being self-employed or a freelancer.

It all sounds a bit serious. I just need to earn some decent money and do some work for a change. I'm getting more and more confused. Katherine is just about to give up and give her tired brain a rest by checking out the next episode of *House of Cards* (yes, she's given in to the charms of watching Netflix in the daytime) when her eyes land on the photo on the blog. Like most people reading online, she hadn't actually paid any attention to what website she was on, or whose writing she was reading; Katherine had just been mainlining information. But now she realised that she was on Julia Chanteray's website, the same Chanteray who was advising her dad's company, and who had asked her to do the proposal for another of her clients.

She's everywhere, that woman. Katherine gets up and paces around the flat for a bit. She thinks a bit about the bit on the website where Julia apparently invites people to come and get some initial advice for the price of a coffee and cake.

Must be a trick, she thinks. Katherine reads some more on Julia's website and sees an article about why she offers the coffee and cake deal. Katherine paces some more. And then the phone rings. Of course, it's Julia.

See, she's everywhere! Katherine answers the phone.

"Hi Julia. I was just on your website, so that's a strange coincidence."

"Were you going to call me? I've just been talking about you to Oliver, my client who wants the copy done. Maybe you felt the telepathic waves?" *Oh yes,* thought Katherine.

"Well, I just found your website for some research I've been doing. I didn't realise it was you at first."

"Oh, there's a lot of blog posts on there now. I like blogging, so it comes up sometimes. Anyway, Oliver is keen to get started. He's feeling very frustrated

because he's been trying to write his own content, and he's a visual person, not a word person, so he's well outside his comfort zone with that one. He liked the middle option, where you suggest rewriting the copy, and changing round those categories to make them more granular. But he wants pieces written to accompany his own art work, so there are some extras as well. And he wants to talk to you about you handling social media for him, although I have to say that I'd prefer him to do that himself, maybe with some suggestions from you, if that's okay."

Katherine's mind is still preoccupied with the strange coincidence of Julia calling just then, and she hadn't actually believed that her quote would be accepted, so she doesn't hear what Julia is saying. But the professional part of her responds automatically.

"He'd be much better off handling his own social media, otherwise it comes across as inauthentic, particularly for a smaller company." The news slowly starts to sink in.

"So, do you want to give him a timeline, with some milestones as to when you'll be able to produce all of this? I'll send you his details. He's in London, so you'd do best to Skype him."

"Okay." Katherine feels numb all over and realises she can't move her legs. She wonders if she's having a stroke.

Has Katherine's fate been decided for her? Did Julia plan it all along? Was Jung correct in his theory of synchronicity? Actually, you can decide the last of these for yourself, but in the following instalment I'll reveal what happens next to Katherine. She's not having a stroke, by the way.

Episode 10

We left our hero Katherine in a state of shock. She had been wrestling with the conundrum of whether she should become self-employed or not when she got a call which pretty much told her that she was self-employed, since she'd had her proposal accepted.

For months Katherine had been worrying about money, economising and worrying some more. This piece of work would pay her bills for another three months, and it would only take her a few days to complete. What if she got more work like this? *What if...* her head swam in a pleasant fantasy of regular, well-paid work doing interesting things for large chunks of cash. But everyone says this working for yourself business is a nightmare. She was back to worrying again. So she went to the pub.

She was looking forward to a pint of ale, a strong, dark ale, to celebrate her first project. She meets her friend Mark in the pub. Mark is a journalist, and buys her a celebration drink. Which is good, because she's left the house with only £1.53 in her purse. Several hours later, she stumbles out of the pub, having remembered that The Craft Beer Co. place takes cards. She rolls home, feeds the cats, and goes to bed.

The next morning, Katherine is a mess. She can't remember much of last night, but there are vague recollections about boasting about getting her proposal accepted, arguing with some guy at the bar about whether Facebook was a useful tool for B2B promotion, and drinking a lot of strong, dark ale. She feels terrible. And she has a nagging feeling that she was supposed to do something important today. She sits up in bed, which makes her feel faint and sick at the same time. Today was supposed to be the start of my new life. The start of self-employment. The new project. Oh, shit.

She grabs her phone, and sure enough, there's an email from Oliver, Julia's client, wondering if she can do a Skype call at 11.30. She checks the time. It's 10.42.

By 11.30 Katherine is showered, dressed, has fed the cats, and thrown up twice. She has put the cat's food out on the balcony as the stink threatens to make her sick again. She can still smell it though, or is that her? Is it the smell of fear?

Oh, well. You can't smell people over Skype, she mutters. She arranges her laptop so Oliver will just see a blank wall, not the debris of where she fell asleep on the sofa last night. She presses the button.

An hour later, somehow, she's made it through the meeting. She has some notes, and she thinks she's got away with it. She goes back to bed.

It's all happening fast for Katherine, and we can see that she doesn't really know what she's doing. Did you stumble into self-employment, or did you have a grand plan with key milestones from the beginning? Have you ever called a client when

you're still drunk from the night before?

Episode 11

The lovely Katherine is now recovered from her hangover, and is feeling better about the world. She's got some work, she's going to be paid for it, and she and the cats will be fed for another three months on the proceeds. Life is looking up.

We find Katherine puzzling over the content map she's created for her new client, Oliver. She's done about half of the work already, and she's waiting to hear back from him about what she's put together so far. In fact, she's itching to get back to working on it – she's been loving writing, setting up lead magnets, auto responder emails and creating a calendar for him to release various chunks of content. She feels like her old self, and she's dressed in her old work clothes this morning, even though only the cats will actually see her in her smart shirt. She *has* got her slippers on, though.

Katherine adds another blog series to the content map, figuring it will only take her a day to write some more content for Oliver, and reasoning that it will improve his Google footprint if he has a lot more content up there. But she can't do any more until she hears back from Oliver, and she only emailed him the initial batch yesterday. She starts to get twitchy again. Now that she's back in work mode, she remembers that she used to really enjoy juggling several clients at once, and that she used to have a team of people to write the posts for her, not have to do all of this herself. Her right foot begins to tap. Katherine is bored again.

She can't go back to watching *House of Cards* in the day. It doesn't feel right. And everyone she knows will be at work, except for the guys in the pub, and she's not going there mid-afternoon again.

The sun is shining over Hove, so she goes for a walk along the seafront.

She bumps into Julia Chanteray, who is walking very fast along the Hove Lawns row of beach huts. Julia looks lost in thought, in another world completely.

"Hi Julia."

Julia jumps, and stares vaguely at Katherine. "Oh, sorry, I was thinking about, well, I was thinking about acceptable ranges of gross margin for a new client I'm working with. Doing maths in my head while I head to Sugardough for lunch."

Katherine has no idea what Julia is talking about, except that she's going to Sugardough. But she jumps in with what she was going to ask Julia the other day, before Julia told her that Oliver had agreed to the work she had proposed.

"Er, Julia, I was meaning to ask you... on your website it says that you do a consultation for cake. I know you mostly work with proper businesses, but I was wondering if I could come and see you and talk about whether I should be going freelance. Everyone keeps telling me not to, but I don't know what else to do."

"Yes, sure. I'm always happy to talk to people starting up. They often come to me for advice later anyway, so it's a good investment for me. There's a widget on my website where you can book a time to talk – why don't you have a look and book a time that suits you?"

Julia walks off at an astonishing pace and Katherine strolls over to a bench in the sunshine. *A time that suits me, she thinks, that's silly. I have way too much time on my hands these days.*

Well, what do you think Julia is going to say? What would she say if she knew that Katherine was already overservicing her first client? Will Katherine finally commit, or has she already gone over the precipice of self-employment without fully realising it? Will her life ever be the same again?

Episode 12

Our hero Katherine has weathered the storm, and is going for her coffee and cake session with Julia Chanteray, her dad's business advisor and the person who got her the work with Oliver. She's clutching a homemade lemon drizzle cake still warm from the oven. She feels really nervous about seeing Julia, even though she's got a big list of questions.

"So, thanks for getting me that work with Oliver. I've really enjoyed it, and you have no idea how much I needed the money. I've enjoyed doing the other bits and pieces of writing as well, and I'm thinking about going freelance. But I'm a bit confused by all the other advice I've been getting from other people who are self-employed – lots of people have been putting me off, and I don't know whether it's really what I want to do. I might be getting into something I don't understand, and just doing all of this because I haven't found the right job yet..." Katherine runs out of breath as she unloads all of the things she's been worrying about as soon as she gets into Julia's office. She hasn't even taken off her coat... or given Julia the cake.

"Well, okay, there are few things to think about there," smiles Julia, taking the cake from Katherine. "Tell me about your previous job, what you liked about it, and what you didn't."

"What I liked... I liked the people, I liked the team, I was really good at the job, and I miss that so much." Katherine's eyes start to fill up with tears.

"Tell me specifically what you were good at." Julia passes over a box of tissues, as if she's used to people crying in her office all the time.

"I was really good at creating all kinds of content ideas. I think I was good at coming up with new things. And the clients seemed to get really good results, because we had this approach where we could test what they were putting out online and see if it was working. We did a lot of split testing and developing sales funnels, so I think I was good at the techie side of it as well as putting the content together. Most people seem to just bung stuff up online and see what happens, but I liked seeing the results, getting the data in, and refining the approach. I'm pretty organised, so I liked having all the spreadsheets and reports."

Katherine and Julia talked for a good while longer about what Katherine wanted to do longer term, how much money she wanted to earn, how important it was for her to be around other people. Again, Katherine felt like she was coming alive again, being a proper, grown-up professional, rather than a slouchy, unemployed nothing person.

What they came up with was that Katherine definitely shouldn't be a freelancer. She'd get bored really quickly if she was just writing content for people because she needed to be working on the strategy and the analysis as well as the creative side. And Julia pointed out that although you could make a perfectly good living out of being a copywriter, you had to work a lot of hours to ever get above about £35K

profit. Katherine's professional self knew that she didn't want to just sit at her desk typing away all day with just the cats for company, and that she wanted to have enough money to buy a flat, have some holidays, and feel secure. The past few months had contained some hard lessons about financial security.

"So it sounds to me like what you really want is to set up your own agency offering content generation with ROI measurement tools, and build it up to be a reasonable size. Would you like some help with doing that?"

Katherine swallows.

"Well, yes. I would like some help, but I don't think I can afford you. I read about your sliding scale of fees on your website, and I can't afford even your basic package. I need that money from Oliver to live on, and I don't know where the next money is coming from."

"Well, you've survived this long, so I think you'll probably be okay. I might have some other clients who need some content, and I think if you put the word out to your network, you'd probably pick up some initial work quite quickly. That might be enough to buy you some business advice, a simple website and some business cards. That's probably all you need to get started."

They chatted a bit more, and Julia answered all the questions on Katherine's long list, all about VAT, limited companies, keeping records.

Walking back to the flat, Katherine's mood went from elation and excitement to despondency, and back to wanting to jump up and down with glee. And back again. When she got home, she phoned her dad.

Tomorrow. Our last but one instalment. What will Katherine do? Will she be able to afford to work with Julia? Should she? Or will she carry on doing bits and pieces of work for friends? Will the cats ever eat real cat food again? And what will her dad say?

Episode 13

Katherine is back in The Craft Beer Co. with her dad. She's sticking to tonic water this time. She's telling her dad all about doing the work for Oliver, Julia's client, and going to see Julia for some advice about freelancing.

"What do you think I should do? Julia seems to think that I should really go for it, and look at starting up my own content agency. But I've got £2,535 left in the bank now, and that's got to last me and the cats for the foreseeable future. Setting up a business costs money, and I just haven't got anything spare."

Katherine's dad is staring into space. Katherine knows this look from long experience: he's got his thinking face on. When she was little, she and her brothers used to put bits of grass in his hair while he had his thinking face on, because he was so absorbed in his thoughts that he'd never notice. Katherine smiles. Even if she had some bits of grass, he doesn't have much hair left now to put it in.

He gets his iPad out of his bag and squints at the screen, reaching for his reading glasses. Eventually he comes back into the real world and blinks at his daughter.

"I didn't get that place in Spain, you know. I was bidding at the auction, but some other guy beat me to it. And I don't know if it was really the right thing to do. I'd miss the proper beer if I moved to Spain. So here's the plan. I was just waiting for the accountant to get back to me to tell me it was okay. She says it's possible, but we have to be careful."

"What's possible, Dad?" Katherine wonders if he's heard anything she's been saying.

"I think Julia is right. You'd be bored in another job and I think that London company was taking the mickey. They'll regret not offering your job back when they started back up again. So I reckon you need... let me see, twelve months of business advice to get you on the right track, a website built, some videos, and some software. The accountant says that as long as the invoices are in my name, I can write it all off against tax and it will save me a fortune."

"I can't let you pay for all this." Katherine's voice has gone a bit squeaky now.

"I've done it. Dave's on board, says that all that content you wrote for the website has gone live now, and he's had two people from South Korea in while I was in Spain and they're paying for a prototype pump for a baby unit they're building. Should be worth about £200K to us, just for the prototype. Cheers, Katherine." Her dad lifts his glass, clinks it against hers and winks.

Katherine can't feel her legs again. She's also speechless. Part of her feels relieved, like she's floating on air, and part of her is furious. Her dad has just decided what she's going to do with the rest of her life – he's been talking about her to the accountant, arranging things with Julia, setting things up while she's been worrying about all of this. They have a huge row in the pub.

Tomorrow. Our final instalment. Will Katherine go for it? Will she take up her dad's offer? Is his accountant right? What would you do?

Episode 14

Our hero Katherine has been made a very nice offer by her father. He's going to pay most of her start-up costs for her, including twelve months of working with his business advisor, Julia Chanteray, and a new website design. After they argued yesterday in the pub, Katherine agreed to try it for six months and see if she can make a living from working for herself. And in return for all of this, her first client will be her dad, at no cost. It's only the next day that she realises that this was part of his bargaining scheme all along, that he knew she'd only accept his generosity if he accepted something back in return. She starts to get angry at his manipulative scheming all over again, but then realises that she could learn a few influencing techniques from her dad, and that she's been incredibly fortunate to have this offer.

She books her first proper session with Julia and starts doing some research into which companies she'd like to pitch to. She sends Julia a huge chunk of documents: a target clients list, proposed service offering and drafts of website copy, and then does a ridiculously optimistic profit forecast. She interviews the web developer her dad has been using and realises that she's not going to get on with him at all, so she looks for another one. She joins the Brighton Chamber of Commerce, and goes along to her first networking breakfast, her new business cards in her pocket. And that's just her first week.

Of course Katherine is just getting started. She's got everything she needs: a good business idea, a strong track record from her previous job, and the ability to use her marketing skills on her own business. And, of course, probably the best business adviser she could find. But if the last few months have been difficult for her, the next six months are going to be full of trials, mistakes and challenges. That's what makes running your own business the most exciting thing you can possibly do.

Afterword

Thanks for reading the adventures of Katherine, and I hope that it's made you smile and think about your own adventures in business. Here are a few suggestions you might want to put on your own to do list:

- If you've got a business already, think about whether you'd benefit from some advice and mentoring like Katherine. You can see how it works at my website at www.thejoyofbusiness.co.uk.
- If you're thinking about setting up a business, and you want some ideas for the kind of business you want to run, I've written a library of business ideas, all with instructions on how to set them up and what you would make out of each of the ideas. It's called "Recipes for Business Success", and it's a great way of avoiding some of the mistakes Katherine has made. You can get lifetime access to all of the ideas, and all the new ones I regularly add as I think of them, for just £39.
- If you bought this book on Amazon, please take two minutes to post a review. If you've ever bought anything on Amazon, you'll know that people always read the customer reviews first, so this would help me out enormously in getting more people to read Katherine's adventures.
- Sign up to get my weekly business stories by email. Every week I send out a little story about something that's happened to me, a client or someone I know. Like *Tales of Everyday Business Folk* (but shorter), these are full of learning about life, business and the universe.

Bonus reading

Here are a handful of articles about some of the business issues Katherine faces, so you too can be fully up to date on exactly what a lead magnet is, how to not overservice your clients, and how to put together a great pitch, using my special three-point pricing process.

Remember that there are lots more of these helpful tips and tricks to running a business available over at my blog, at www.thejoyofbusiness.co.uk. You can get more stories every week delivered to your inbox if you go to <https://www.thejoyofbusiness.co.uk/subscribe/>.

To be self-employed or a freelancer: what's the difference?

People talk a lot about being self-employed or being a freelancer, as if these words mean the same thing, but I think there is a world of difference between the two. I've been self-employed since 2000, but I've never called myself a freelancer. Not that there's anything wrong with being a freelancer – some of my best friends are freelancers – but that's never been the way that I've thought about myself. In fact, I'm more likely to talk about running my own consultancy company, even though my company is just me in my little office.

I do worry that there's something self-limiting about the term "freelancer". To me, it means someone who does pieces of work for other people. I think of myself as someone who employs freelancers, as I've got a lovely army of people who help me with all the bits and pieces involved in running The Joy of Business. Freelancing seems to imply a single person who works on their own, doing different projects for a variety of companies.

It's not about the money

There are lots of freelancers out there who earn more money than me. Freelance IT contractors or software developers get a higher day rate and land jobs where they're working every day for few months, whereas I don't bill every day of the week. And there are lots of people running their own companies, often quite big companies, who don't make any profit at all, and might even be making a loss. Some of the freelancers are probably more financially secure than these folk because if they lose a gig, they can just pick up another one.

It's about what you're building

The problem with calling yourself a freelancer, for me, is that it will always be just you. The freelancers I use to help with my marketing and admin, for example, are people who are selling me a chunk of their time. And although some freelancers will make the transition to running bigger companies, perhaps through a network of other freelancers, or by the more traditional route of taking on staff, this will be the point at which they'll probably stop calling themselves freelancers because they've got out of that mindset.

People who call themselves self-employed, or talking about running a business from the start, tend to make that transition to a bigger business sooner. They're open to the idea of building something. And even if, like me, they choose to stay as one person (albeit with an army of freelancers to help), they've got a mindset of growth right from the beginning.

Let yourself be open to that possibility

If you're quite early on with your business journey, then I'd encourage you to think about the possibilities for growth right now. Even if your business is tiny, think of it as a business – this will save us a lot of time and soul-searching later on when you come to me for help in expanding, because you'll have already got past that freelancer mindset.

If you're already there

If you've been freelancing (or self-employed or running a business, whatever you've been calling it) for a while and you're thinking about getting to the next level, you might want some help to get there faster. That's what I do – help people to leapfrog the learning curve, and get ahead with their business.

My triple price-point pitching process

This is a method I use a lot with clients to help them make sure that they win work and maximise value. Over the years, it's been responsible for putting hundreds of thousands of extra pounds into the pockets of my clients, so you might want to give it a go, too.

Why three price-points

Most of the time when we have to price up a piece of work, we have very little information about what the client is prepared to spend. Sometimes they'll tell us their budget, but often people either don't know, or want to keep it secret because they think that they'll get a better deal. So we have to guess. A lot of work I do with clients is helping them to guess what level to pitch at, and because I've worked with so many businesses and so many of their clients, I can have a good shot at what might be an acceptable price.

Using three price-points means that we can spread the guessing about the budget over a wider area. In particular, if we're way out, the lowest price point means that my client can still pick up the work, even if their prospect's budget is a lot less than we thought.

The three versions

In every proposal you send out, you should include three options for them to choose from. You need:

- **A basic, low cost option.** This is the one that means that they can buy from you even if they don't have a ton of money. You include it in order to make the sale and get the client on board, but don't discount or give the whole shop away. It still has to be profitable for you, and provide value for money for them.
- **A good, solid option.** This is actually the one you want to sell, and about 60–80% of people will buy this one.
- **A fancy option** with everything they could possibly want, just in case they've got more budget than you think and/or they get very excited about the possibilities you're offering. This is the one that you'd like them to buy, because this one would be super cool to do, and very valuable for them.

Sometimes it makes people spend more

Sometimes a prospective client will think that they want X. They want a video made for their website, they want some marketing copy written, or whatever it is that you sell. They're got a rough picture of what they think they want to buy.

It's your job to paint a more enticing picture for them. I don't mean sell them a lot of extras they don't need – that would be unethical and unnecessary. But because you know more about making videos or writing copy than they do, including more creative or effective ways of doing this, you can suggest things which they didn't

know they wanted, but which would be a much better solution for them than what they thought they wanted.

This is usually your top-tier offer. You can tell them about how video marketing works much better if you do a series of videos. You can write about how they'd be better off with a complete rewrite of their website, plus a series of blogs to go out over the next six months.

The top offer makes the others look reasonable

When we see three options, with one a bit more expensive than the others, we then see the others as cheaper. It's a phenomenon known as *anchoring bias*, where your top price anchors the others, and they are judged relative to that price rather than on the client's internal sense of what it should cost.

Good luck

Let me know how you get on with using the triple price-point pitching process. And if you want any more help with pitching, negotiating and getting more money into your business, that's what I help people with every day.

Lead magnets

You might have noticed me talking about a lead magnet, and might be wondering what the hell it is, or if it's the same as a fridge magnet.

A lead magnet is a little freebie you put out there for two purposes. The reason you might want one is to get attention – to draw leads (potential customers) to you. Usually, a lead magnet is something you offer which offers information, tips, a guide or a methodology that your clients will find useful. The classic version is a white paper or report which people can sign up to get, exchanging their email and contact details for the report. But it can be almost anything as long as your clients will find it valuable. And you don't have to make them sign up if that doesn't fit with your brand. The second reason, besides attracting traffic, is that the lead magnet will make people feel that you're a good guy, and that they owe you something because you've given them something useful, therefore invoking the reciprocity principle.

My lead magnet

I've been using a lead magnet for years – before I even knew what one was. Around 2002, I called it a “business health check”. Around 2005, I changed it to an “introductory session”. For the past few years, I've offered potential clients a session to look at their business, and talk about how getting some business advice might be a good idea for them, in return for them buying me a fancy coffee and a nice cake. Note how I phrase this here, how I make it very, very low risk for the potential client, as all they can lose is an hour of their time and the cost of a coffee and cake. But they don't feel obliged to buy anything there and then, because they've bought my time with cake, so it feels better to people.

Your lead magnet

You might want to steal my coffee and cake idea. Feel free – there's plenty enough cake to go around. But that might not be the right thing for you. Here are some ideas for good lead magnets I've stolen from other people:

- **Video explainer:** If you sell gardening products, you might want to show just how easy it is to put that pergola up, or give tips on correct digging technique, or create a “what to do when” calendar that people can print out and put on their fridge.
- **Video instruction:** If you're an SEO expert, maybe you could do a video showing people how to understand their Google Analytics.
- **Resource kit:** If you teach people how to do difficult things like how to manage staff, you could provide a check list for people to use to make sure they're using good management behaviour.
- **Matrix:** If you sell ideas, you could create a PDF version of your matrix on how to understand a situation that people can print out and use themselves.

- **Cash flow forecast:** If you're an accountant, I'm sure you have a templated cash flow forecast you use yourself, so why not put this on your website, with a bit of branding and offer it up for free?

What makes a lead magnet different than free resources

Lots of us put free resources on our websites. That's great, and I try to do a lot of it in this blog, which of course attracts potential clients and gives people a flavour of how I work, as well as the idea that I do, in fact, know what I'm talking about. But a lead magnet needs to be more substantive, especially as your competitors are also writing blogs, giving away free tax calculators, or providing guides on how to plant tomato seeds. Your lead magnet needs to be something that your potential customers can engage with AND that they can notice is from you. This is why video is so useful, because you're likely to get their attention for more than the 45 seconds they might spend on your blog, and they get much more of a feeling for you. And if we're wanting your potential clients to feel that they've received a gift from you, it needs to be of more value than just a quick article.

So you need to put more work into generating a lead magnet, so that it feels like something of value. Don't feel that you have to write a whole book, or compose a full video course, as that can feel like over giving, or might be so big that they don't get round to engaging with it.

As a rule of thumb, I'd say that you need to spend a day creating a lead magnet, and you might need to spend £100 on getting a designer to pretty it up for you. Of course, you might well have something lying around already that you use all the time, and it just needs to be made into a PDF. Have a think about the existing resources you can use – it's amazing what you might just take for granted but could be gold if you just polish it up a little.

Getting people to sign up

The classic version of the lead magnet is that you put it on your site, maybe do some Google ads to send traffic your way, and get people to give you their details in exchange for access to your gold-plated resources. You'll have seen this in a million pop-up ads and websites all around the Internet. And I'm not dissing this approach; it's tried and tested, and it works. You give people something and then you have permission to send them emails, and then they get your emails and then they buy.

But there are two things to consider about this approach:

1. In online marketing, if everyone is doing something, maybe you shouldn't be doing exactly the same as everyone else. People get wise to this very quickly, and if they have to give their details, it will put some people off even if they really want your lead magnet. People are becoming very canny about whom they give their email address to, as we've all been burnt by inbox overload where we get rubbish emails entreating us to buy buy buy. And if your target market is particularly sophisticated – e.g., you want to sell to CEOs and high-level decision makers, or online savvy people in general – then they'll either not bother signing up, or they'll

sign up using a crappy Hotmail email address that they only use to sign up to online offers, rather than their real email address that they give to real people.

2. What are you going to do with all those lovely email addresses you're harvested? If you haven't got your email marketing strategy worked out yet, then you risk doing all this work just to fill up your MailChimp list. Which is not the object of our exercise.

Sometimes it's better to start with the lead magnet and a voluntary sign up, or put some interaction points into the lead magnet by encouraging people to tell you how they've used your growing guide or to ask you questions about Google Analytics. If you don't have huge volumes of traffic at the moment, you can probably handle some enquiries from nice people who are interested in what you sell by sending them a direct email back. Or even just phone them up and talk to them. Don't just add them to a list that you don't know what to do with.

Working on your online strategy

If you'd like some help getting more clients with some of these online tools or some advice on how to approach this in a more joined-up, strategic way, then maybe you would like to buy me some coffee and cake and we can have a chat about how I might be able to help. If you're not in Brighton, then I can eat cake while I'm talking to you on Skype about online marketing, too.

How to avoid overservicing your clients

One of the things I notice about my lovely clients (and myself sometimes) is the tendency to overservice. You might recognise this in yourself, too.

Overservicing is when you do too much for a client – more than they're actually paying you for. Sometimes this is when the client has had a restricted budget so we've offered a smaller job, but we end up doing the bigger job that we wanted the client to pay for but they didn't have the money. If you run a workshop for someone, you might want them to pay for stakeholder interviews first, but they couldn't afford it, so you end up just phoning a couple of people anyway so you can run the workshop well. Or, if you make dresses for a living, you might end up doing two fittings, instead of one, just to make sure that they come out right.

Other times we can find ourselves overservicing because we want to do a good job, or because the work is interesting in itself, so you end up working late, totally involved in your project. Sometimes we justify overservicing by telling ourselves that we're learning a new skill, or doing work that we can reuse with other clients, or we do it just because we really like the client.

And, of course, we sometimes overservice because we don't have enough other work on to keep us busy, so instead of spending that time where it's needed, on marketing to get more work in, we do more than we really have to on the client work we do have.

What can we do about this

Of course taking pride in your work, doing a good job, learning new skills and enjoying your projects are all good things. I don't want to stop you doing that, as these are all hallmarks of a successful business. But it's too easy to spend time on client work that is within our comfort zone rather than on the more difficult tasks of developing online content, chatting up new clients on Twitter, or picking up the phone to nudge the people who might become clients in the future. For many business people, these are much more difficult things to do, and involve real courage, whereas writing a more detailed report is an easier option.

The key to avoiding overservicing is to be really clear with the client what they should expect in the first place, and then planning out what work you'll do for them in detail and scheduling it in. If you've quoted for designing a new website with a particular functionality, and the client has agreed to this, then stick to what you've agreed to do even if it would be a really beneficial for the client if you put in some other features as a freebie extra. If you have some extra ideas of what would be good for the client when you're halfway through the project, then suggest these to the client, with a price. She can decide then if she wants them, and maybe she'll say that she does, or maybe she'll want to pay for them in three months' time when she has some more money to spend. But if you do extra work, without the client agreeing to it, she won't notice or appreciate your extra diligence.

Using my triple price-point pitching process can help as well, because you'll have already identified the extra areas the client might want, and if she can't/won't pay for them then you know that you're not going to include them.

Having clear boundaries

If you have a packaged service like mine, where you include extras (my clients can email me and phone me between meetings), then you need to be clear where the boundaries lie. For me, clients can't expect me to answer the phone or email outside of working hours, and they know that I'll press the red button if they call me at the weekend. And I tell them in advance when I'm going to be on holiday, so I'm not even tempted to check emails when I'm away enjoying myself. If you tell people clearly what they are going to get for their money, then most clients will respect this. And the small minority who don't (there are always a few who will try it on) will either learn from it or won't be clients for much longer.

Invest your time in yourself and your business

If you don't spend all your time overservicing clients, you can spend more time either enjoying yourself or working on your own marketing. Both are important for your business. Doing more marketing means that you'll have more clients, and investing in downtime means that your brain will be fresh for them and the work you need to do.