



How One Writer Earns \$120,000 per year: Emily Omier

Carol Tice: All right, this is amazing, but I want to get over to Emily.

Emily Omier: Okay, I'm here.

Carol Tice: All right, so, you know, let's start at the beginning of how you got into Den 2X. Your story, obviously, doesn't have the kind of straight-line hub trajectory that Laura's did, but we super love how Den 2X has allowed you to get through everything you've been through, and feed your daughter, and provide for your family, and do everything.

Emily Omier: So, in a nutshell, some of you might have read the guest post they just did on Make A Living Ready. I joined, got into Den 2X in 2015; it might have even been the first group. I was making just barely \$2,000 a month, I was a freelance journalist, it had taken me a couple of years to reach \$2,000 a a month; I was always short on cash. The other, next part of the story is literally one week later my husband was diagnosed with cancer, I was pregnant at the time. I stopped working, not immediately but the drop off was fairly rapid. I didn't work at all in 2016. I went back to work in 2015. Also, my mom, so my husband died in 2016 in March and my mom was also diagnosed with cancer and died a year later; she died in 2017. Also, I should mention that I moved a lot of times, my daughter was born. This was relatively a rough period of time.

I went back to work doing something in December of 2016 and by doing something I mean sending maybe working like 1/2 hour after my daughter went to sleep. We're not talking part time, we are talking mini. That's when I really started to think, probably in November or December of 2016 I started reaching back out to clients that I had before. I started sending LOIs; I finally landed a couple of new clients, I started working for new clients. The first month that I made over \$1,000 was March of 2017, 2 years ago.

Carol Tice: So that was sort of the beginning of starting to really rebuild.

Emily Omier: That's when I was making some money but it's also, March of 2017 I had no child care, my mom had just died, she died at the end of February that year, so again I wasn't working 20 hours a week, I was working 5 hours a week, possibly. Then things slowly went, got better, that June I was making \$3,000 a month. That September was the first month I made \$7,000.



Carol Tice: So what happened in there?

Emily Omier: So from \$1,000, \$3,000, to \$7,000 I sent out tons of LOIs, it was not as focused partially because I didn't know what I wanted, I started targeting business writing, but I didn't have a huge amount of industry experience. I started with some of the things I had written about as a journalist which did involve technology and then other things like, my first job out of college was I worked as a paralegal at an immigration law firm so I saw that there was this company that had just gotten a round of funding, they were an early stage startup, they'd gotten a round of funding to provide, they are a tech company, they provide this platform to help people do their immigration forms so I pitched them. They became my first solid client that for 6 months I was doing \$2,000 worth of work for them and we're talking blog posts that I was charging \$200 each for and longer research pages that I was charging \$400 for.

Carol Tice: They just had a lot of work. I love that you went to, blogging for lawyers we all know there's a lot of low pay in that niche and I love that you went to where there would be money within that which would be the technology piece that serves that.

Emily Omier: Well what I did was I actually started trolling lists of recently funded startups, but I saw this company and I was like I have specialized knowledge and it was from 10 years prior but still I have specialized knowledge, I know what these forms are, I know I don't write about immigration anymore, I have no intention to ever do so again but this was a good way to be, and also I wanted to get into tech writing and this was like a bridge, something that I had some really legitimate knowledge about that could then bridge into something else.

Carol Tice: Thanks so much for saying it was 10 years ago but I still considered it something I knew about. I wish I had a dime for everyone that tells me I was in tech but it was 20 years ago so I don't think I can pitch anybody and I don't really know anything anymore and it's like yeah, and you read their web site and you learn what they are doing. You have a background in this kind of thing.

I wish more people would mine their backgrounds that way and understand that. I ended up writing tons of content in insurance and my whole background was my dad sold insurance so I kind of grew up around it. I knew there were two kinds of life insurance, term life and whole life. I've now told you everything I know. I billed \$60,000 to one client alone in insurance off of "oh yeah, I know about insurance, my dad sold insurance, and I know there's two kinds of life



insurance, term life and whole life". Literally that was my entry line and they snapped me up. They were like oh my God, someone who cares, someone who knows anything. These really specialized areas, they just don't get that many people who have any affinity for it.

Emily Omier:

This client actually told me when we started working together that you are the needle in the haystack, we got pitched by so many people but none of them were able to say anything that was relevant to our business. We were going to have to spend all this effort into onboarding them and tell them, this is this immigration category and this is this immigration category... and I was like I know that all ready. I'm not a lawyer, I'm not an expert, but I know what the difference is between XY & Z categories, I know what these forms are, I know what they are for and what they mean.

So that was really, that June was the point where I was saying I'm making it, I can meet all of my financial needs. Then it increased from there. I also tried, I moved to Nicaragua that September so I wasn't obviously doing in person meetings but I did some in person meetings in Portland before that summer and some of them turned into clients later in the fall and later the next year. That actually was I think helpful, I think that some of the clients I met with in person because I was just starting out, I think being able to meet with me in person, I don't know, I got the feeling that that was decisive, but it's possible that is not the case. I don't do that anymore; now I don't need to, but at that point I felt like I had to use all of the tools that were in my.

Now we're two years, I made slightly over \$30,000 last quarter. I'm on track to exceed that this quarter as well I think, fingers crossed, knock on wood hopefully that happens. I think I wanted to talk about some of the things I did last November, December that I think really helped change things around.

Carol Tice:

Sure, go.

Emily Omier:

The first one is I doubled down on my niche which is writing for software development tool companies. So that is even more specific then a tech company, it's the tool that the engineering team uses basically.

Carol Tice:

Pretty niched down



Emily Omier: I got a gig writing one article and then it has turned into several for a trade magazine in this niche that has been. So the articles themselves don't pay super excellent but I consider it, well it doesn't pay nothing, it's \$400 for 1000 words so it's not nothing but the real value is that it's incredible for credibility and it has lead to two clients directly

Carol Tice: So where do the articles appear?

Emily Omier: On this trade magazine, on this website. The trade magazine is a website. It specializes in developer tools, they have massive industry connections and they consider themselves a content marketing platform anyway so they say they are sort of like a journalism platform but not really. For one of the articles I was saying I have this previous client, I have a client that might be appropriate to interview, is that a problem and they said no.

Carol Tice: Yeah, trade magazines are a little bit like the FTC letting Boeing review their own plane's safety. They are a little in with the industry to various degrees in various industries. Some are really pretty journalism, really still pretty hard-hitting, the one I wrote for, we did investigative and exposes and stuff and others are very like the CEOs of our advertiser companies do essays. So this was the Den 2X strategy, "what do they read?" You began appearing in anything that your target audience would be highly likely to read and think of as authority content.

Emily Omier: It's actually even better than that because one of the sources from one of the articles became a client. A second source from one of the articles is, I think they are too disorganized to become a client, but we've had some discussions, but I think they might be too disorganized. Then my editor referred me to another of their advertisers who I had cold pitched and never heard back from, but then obviously getting a referral from this editor is like that's a different ballgame. So I felt like that was a huge, so I did that and I also looked through all of their advertisers and I cold pitched all of them and I also looked at there was a couple of industry conference and I looked up all of the sponsors and cold pitched all of them.

I landed a couple of clients and I also realized as we were talking about retainers, I also have a very big retainer that we've talked about that I'm still very frustrated about that is \$4500 a month and there are things about it that are not perfect such as that it's based on hourly rates and the type of work that I do, it's just not possible to do that as a project; it's mostly editing. But on the other hand, of course, I know that money is coming in, the work is easy, I feel like they need me.



Carol Tice: So Delia was asking, when you cold pitched did you mention that you wrote for the trade. Did you mention that "you may know me from my recent article in X trade magazine".

Emily Omier: Yeah. So when I first restarted my business, I did mostly email LOIs. Now, I use LinkedIn really heavily. Instead of sending LOIs, I don't even send emails anymore, I send connection requests. In my connection request you only get however many characters so I just say, "Hi Bob, I'm a freelance content marketing writer who specializes in writing about,..." I don't even say developer tools, I say the super specific thing that your company does, I thought it would make sense to connect. Usually that's all that I say, sometimes I say we have XYZ connections in common or blah, blah, blah, you can see some of my work on my profile, that's it. I don't actually track my response rate but it's not terrible and that's how I've gotten a lot of clients and it's really sort of soft too so it's not really a cold sell.

Carol Tice: Pretty low key, which is how I believe you need to keep it if you're doing inside like Gen.

Emily Omier: And what I also noticed is you get a lot of responses from people that are "oh my God, I need a writer right now". Anyway, that's what I do now. The advantage of that it allows me to do a lot of volume because it is so fast and I just don't overthink. I barely think at all. You know I will look through a person's profile because sometimes it will be that we went to the same graduate school. Sometimes we have a connection that is very random and in that case I will bring it up. If it is someone in the industry there's nothing weird about that, but if it's someone who is super random I might bring that up.

Carol Tice: I want to unpack some of this because there's a lot of good stuff in here. I think that when you have a portfolio, this works. I think as a newbie it doesn't work. If you don't have any clips to show them then the LOI has to be that writing sample where it's really sharp. But, I also think the more you can say I have your exact area of arcane niche expertise, the less else you have to say. So Leanne said you cold pitched all of the exhibitors, all of the advertisers, even if they seemed like they were smaller companies because she said she hesitates when she thinks they are smaller.

Emily Omier: You know, sponsoring a trade show costs money and so I figure if they have the budget to sponsor a trade show, they have the budget to hire me.

Carol Tice: Types of projects that you typically do maybe?



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Emily Omier:

Like Laura, I want to move more to doing white papers and paid studies. I do both of those but I also do blogs and contributed articles and stuff. And then I have the big chunk of work that is editing; it includes some writing, it's editing and writing I guess but it includes a lot of editing. Making sure the capitalization is consistent for example on collateral. So again, it's not sexy work but, but, but... I think, I do, like Laura as well, I have income goals that exceed where I'm at now so I intend to continue growing my income and I think that is going to require doing more white papers and case studies because my hourly rate on those is so much higher.

I wanted to mention, we talked about retainers and I was looking over, I was thinking I should get more retainers and then I actually added up my retainers and right now, going into May I have almost \$10,000 a month worth of retainers. I have \$9,800 worth of retainers and I have, in addition to that, I have another client who I'm finishing with this week who I suspect is going to continue and that would be another \$900 a month and I have another client that I did a trial with that I've done one of the two blog posts and they were super happy with the first one so I think the chances of them converting to regular billers is over 50%. That definitely has been something that I think I've done fairly well of setting things up that are consistent. I definitely say I do not do single blog posts and I will do a case study or white paper as an ala carte but otherwise no.

There's one other thing I think I wanted to add and then I think I'm done. In contrast to many people I've started using basically a rate sheet for case studies and white papers. Case studies I charge \$1500 for, white papers I charge \$4500 and unless they have, I have a set of what that means.

Carol Tice:

You need a lot pre-booked because stuff happens, clients drop out, there's chaos, it may not all pan out. You have to shoot really high so that you end up with money. You say, you don't track billable versus non-billable hours, but you work about 30 hours a week is what you are saying. Yeah, \$120K projected, I love it.

Emily Omier:

I have a not very PC thing to say about mindset I often ask myself what would a white man do? This is there's lots of research about the different way that white men, specifically white men because it doesn't apply to men of color nearly as much, think about how perfect they have to be, what happens if something goes wrong, etc. This is what I think, particularly I've been really stretching myself like writing about some really technical content and sometimes it creates a lot of anxiety because I think I screwed it up a lot, that hasn't happened yet but I have a lot of anxiety. The bottom line is that based on the things I've read about the way women often think and the way men often think is that the



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reason that men often make more money is that they don't have these sort of self-sabotaging thoughts and they are not up at night thinking I fucked up that article, they are just moving on...

Carol Tice: They are like whatever.

Emily Omier: Yeah, and they're not thinking if I send this LOI is the person going to think I'm stupid. No, they don't think that, they just send it.

Carol Tice: I love that you brought this up because we all know that in corporate America, the pay gap is real, it's still there. I definitely see a lot of women writers radically under-price themselves, that's for sure. Not that men never do it, but I think that is a great reframe, if you are a woman or a person of color and you are thinking about what to price, imagine what the good looking 6 foot tall white American male would do in this scenario and then do that. I love that.

Emily Omier: Not just for pricing but the sort of overall confidence about is my writing good enough? Is this person going to be annoyed that I reached out to them? Is the fact that I had a bad day yesterday, does that mean my whole business is shit? Everything. Sorry that's not very PC.

Carol Tice: Emily, anything on quickly ramping? You kind of did a quick ramp in there.

Emily Omier: I did quick ramping so I would say LOIs, choosing a niche, making sure you, so go for the money. I started and I think mindset is very important for this, when I rebooted my career, my goal is to make money. I want to make over \$200,000 a year and I don't want to be killing myself doing so. I need to go for the money and that's it. You have to write for an industry where companies are flush basically because that's how you are going to make money. Fake it until you make it. I have taken so many assignments.

Carol Tice: Delia was saying, I think this is the last question I have, what's the key to getting retainer clients? Maybe we talked a little about this already. Starting a small project and wowing them. That has always been my MO is overachieve on the first small project and then on we roll. Do you pitch them certain kind of projects, do you look for clients with a particular type of project?

Emily Omier: My big editing retainer client I was talking to a friend in Portland who is also a freelancer but he designs semi-conductors or something, I don't really understand what he does, but we were talking about our businesses and he mentioned that his experience is that a lot of companies in the Bay area have trouble in general finding enough people. So I pitched a ton, specifically he said companies in San Jose because he said they're not sexy, they're not in San



Francisco, they're in San Jose and they can't hire people. So I looked at a bunch of companies and pitched every company on the Wikipedia list of companies with headquarters in San Jose.

This company, 8 by 8 is what they are called, the person I contacted at 8 by 8 said we really need a freelance copy editor, are you available and I was like sure and she said okay, send me a proposal and I did that. We'd never worked together before and she was like, okay we are on for \$4500 a month for the next 3 months. So I'm just telling you this whole story because, yes, I've had other clients that I've done a trial project for but I don't think that's always how it necessarily works. This is also why I think the volume for LOI is important because it's about hitting somebody when they are desperate.

Carol Tice: Cool Laura, thank you so much for coming on. Thank you, thank you. This has been epic, epic, epic. Thank you so much you guys for sharing your tips and thank you Emily and I will see you all in the 2x bye all.

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