

Interview With a Pro:

Porter Stansberry Reveals How He Got Started As a Copywriter – and the Secret of the Big Idea

Porter Stansberry has been a copywriter for his own financial advisory for 3 years. He's written packages that pulled 600% over break-even on test mailings and his launch package generated sales of more than \$1 million it's first year alone.

TGTE: Before we get into the secrets behind your success, can we ask how you got started as a copywriter?

PS: My first job out of college was working as a writer for an economics/financial research and publishing house. I was putting in 12-14 hour days regularly, six days a week. I had daily deadlines, weekly deadlines, and monthly deadlines. It was the hardest work I'd ever done. And I was making less than \$30,000 a year. It was a totally thankless job.

I noticed that our firm's top copywriter worked one or two hours a day, made a base salary at least twice what I made, and frequently made more than \$100,000 per year after royalties.

After three years as an editorial writer, I was fired from the company and had to sell myself to another publisher by writing a sales letter. I consulted with a half-dozen copywriters I'd met in the business, including Michael Masterson, who mentored my work. Fortunately, the sales letter I wrote turned out to be a big winner, making about \$1.5 million in six months. I didn't have any trouble finding work after that.

TGTE: What gets you motivated to write?

PS: There's something about desperation that has always motivated me effectively and still does. Last December, my newsletter was hurting. The NASDAQ had crashed and our control was dead. So I wrote a brand-new package in two days and we went to the printer in under two weeks. I knew we had to have a big winner – and it worked. I won an award from my publisher – Best Package of the Year – in recognition.

TGTE: Which AWAI secret has helped you the most in your career?

PS: The secret of a "Big Idea" because that's why my copy works. What I write sells because the main idea behind my package is so exciting that people would buy even if I were a terrible writer. The hard part is doing the research required to find a new "Big Idea." You know it when you find it, though. It's huge, it's valuable, and it makes you want to tell other people about it.

TGTE: What's been the best perk you've received as a copywriter so far?

PS: Of course, travel, freedom, etc. are the most valuable, by far. But answering specifically, the best individual perk I have ever received as a copywriter ... that would have to be respect. Copywriting is a business of objective results. Either your copy sells better than the control – or it doesn't. Age, race, sex, education, style – none of it matters. That's not true of many other business endeavors where more subjective factors are typically more important.

TGTE: What's your favorite thing to do when you're not writing?

PS: Read. Reading has always been my favorite thing to do.

Secret: My passion for reading is my No. 1 competitive advantage in life. I could go on for a long time about why this is so, but, essentially, reading grants me the ability to handle stress. As a bonus, reading also gives me the tools I need to succeed as a writer.

TGTE: How so?

PS: I know what good copy "sounds" like, because I have "heard" it a million times before. It's like swimming: You will not find your stroke until you've practiced for years. The only shortcut to great writing is to spend your whole life reading. So it's not really a shortcut. Do you know how to tell a story? If not, spent a lot more time reading great stories.

(Later in this issue of The Golden Thread Online, you'll find out what Porter's favorite book is and what he's reading right now – along with recommendations from six more of AWAI's master copywriters.)

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2 Responses to "Interview With a Pro: Porter Stansberry Reveals How He Got Started As a Copywriter – and the Secret of the Big Idea"

How far Porter has come in the past 10 years! I've been a subscriber of his for awhile now and kind of figured he was a copywriter before launching Stansberry Research.

Good stuff :)

Jeremy Reeves

Jeremy Reeves – over a year ago

Now how does Mr Stansberry know the President? Has he ever talked with him? Oh maybe he thinks he smarter then the President. He makes one remark about never meeting a sales quota. Now what in hell does that have to do with running a country ? Never meeting a pay roll ? Only the largest pay in the world. You call this President names, well what names did you call the last President? He is ten times the man you are Mr. Stansberry. Oh you may be right about another term. I think it best you stay out of politics and stick to your used car lot!!

Guest (touch128) – over a year ago

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