



## IT Consultant Overcomes Fear and Self-Doubt and Finds Freedom on the Open Water

As Chuck Warren motors along on Lake Michigan with the sun on his face and wind in his hair, he can hardly believe the life he leads. It may only be part-time, now, but not for much longer. He's on the way to living his dream. He says, "The experience of crossing the lake out in the open water is just incredible. Being out there away from land and away from people and disconnected from everything — technology, cell phones, everything — is an amazing experience."

That's the life he wants to live full-time. He wants to shed his 20-year career as an IT consultant so that he can focus full time on his passion — boating. "I want to become untethered. I want to be able to travel more. It would be awesome to be able to generate income and be able to travel," he says. "Copywriting is how I'll do it."

But what he says with such certainty today, wasn't the way he felt just a few short years ago.

For 40 years, Chuck has regretted not pursuing his childhood dream of making his living as a writer. But fear and self-doubt held him back. Now, with retirement staring him in the face and his growing dreams of boating and travel, he started thinking again about writing. Could he do it? "Fear and self-doubt are crippling. I did nothing for 40 years because I didn't think I was good enough," he says.

But 2016 proved to be a pivotal year—one that tested his old programming and validated his writing ability.

The first validation came when, to his surprise, a local restaurant prominently displayed one of the fundraising appeals he'd written for a local animal shelter. That same letter quadrupled the shelter's donations. Chuck started thinking,

### CASE STUDY: Chuck Warren

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#### MEMBER:

Chuck Warren

#### LOCATION:

Holland, Michigan

#### OTHER JOBS:

Business owner, IT consultant, boat captain

#### HOW HE GOT HIS FIRST CLIENT:

He published his first article after submitting ideas to several regional magazines.

#### TOP AWAI PROGRAMS:

- *The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*
- *FastTrack to Copywriting Success Bootcamp and Job Fair*
- *Circle of Success*

“Maybe I’m doing something right here. Maybe I should start looking into doing this for real.”

So, he officially revived his childhood dream and decided he’d be a published writer by the end of that year.

### ***Building Self-Confidence by Taking a Chance***

Deciding to become a published writer was the first step. But now what? Chuck was at a loss. Not knowing what else to do, he set his sights on writing magazine articles.

Unsure about how to get started, Chuck attended a writing conference where he sat in on a panel discussion that included a published magazine writer. Thinking this was his chance to get his questions answered, Chuck pushed aside his fear of talking to new people and approached the more experienced writer. He was taken off guard when the speaker handed him a business card instead of answering his questions, but he took the card and walked away. A couple of weeks later, Chuck emailed the speaker to ask advice on how to get published in magazines. The speaker responded with eight short words, “Don’t bother, do something else. It’s too hard.”

Floored, Chuck wasn’t sure what to do next. He’d finally decided to follow his dream only to be told not to do it. He says, “I almost listened. I thought, ‘Well, this guy’s been published, he must be telling the truth. It must be too hard.’ And I almost bailed out and gave up the whole writing thing.”

Fortunately, a second validation happened that kept Chuck focused on his goal. Before contacting the speaker who shook his confidence, Chuck had taken a chance and submitted some article ideas to regional publications. Just as he grew discouraged from the speaker’s advice and once again thought about giving up on his dream, one of those publications accepted one of his ideas. They

wanted Chuck to write for them. He says, “I was going to quit. I really was going to walk away. But this acknowledgment gave me just enough confidence to know that I wanted to go forward.”

Then, surprisingly, one magazine quickly turned into three. Reflecting on the “advice” that the speaker had given him, Chuck wondered what was so “hard” about his chosen path. Confidence growing, Chuck ignored the naysayer and took another step forward in his writing career.

### ***Gaining the Skills to become a Professional Writer***

As his writing portfolio grew, Chuck realized that, while he knew how to run a business, he didn’t know much about running a writing business. He didn’t know how to price projects or have the confidence to approach clients.

Then, Chuck recalled that, over the years, he had started and stopped *The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriters* from American Writers and Artists, Inc. (AWAI). He realized he had a resource at his fingertips to help him gain the skills he needed.

He retook *The Accelerated Program*, this time finishing it, and immediately started taking on more writing projects. He says, “When I first started writing in 2016, I thought it was going to take me ten years to get any traction. I figured I had to build a reputation. But by the end of the second year, I had more work than I could handle.”

### ***Finding Power in Community***

The next year, Chuck decided to attend AWAI’s *FastTrack to Copywriting Success* Bootcamp and Job Fair.

**American  
Writers &  
Artists  
Inc.** SINCE 1997

Unlike at the previous writing conference, Chuck decided to move out of his comfort zone and network with other attendees. He was struck by the warmth and generosity of the AWAI community. He was able to get much-needed advice from more experienced copywriters. And he found immediate value when he learned that he was pricing some blog posts at pennies on the dollar.

Chuck was impressed by the community, the camaraderie, AWAI staff, and the speakers who sincerely wanted to help attendees succeed. Although half of his income still comes from his IT consultant business, it was at *Bootcamp* that he gained the confidence to define himself as a writer. He says, “Before *Bootcamp*, I couldn’t look anyone in the eye and say, ‘I am a writer.’ I couldn’t introduce myself that way. After *Bootcamp*, I’ve been able to say, ‘I’m Chuck Warren. I’m a writer’ and mean it. I actually feel comfortable saying it.”

### *Enjoying the Ride*

It’s hard to imagine, now, but if Chuck had listened to that speaker at his first writing

conference, the naysayer who told him writing for magazines was too hard, he wouldn’t have felt the rush of having nearly 60 articles published since his writing journey started in earnest in 2016.

And he wouldn’t know what it feels like to have clients from many different industries calling *him*.

Chuck now has eight clients that he writes for regularly. And, his dreams of making a retirement income from his writing is feeling more real. “I wanted to do something I would enjoy and be able to do on a boat. Something I could do on my own terms and live the life I wanted, either in retirement or before. And it’s happening fast enough that it’s going to be before I retire.”

After nearly walking away from his lifelong dream of writing for a living, Chuck Warren is grateful he took a chance on himself. His encouragement to other writers is to “Try. Put yourself out there and try. Take the steps forward. Don’t let fear hold you back. The only way to know is to get out there and do it.”

### *Chuck’s Tips for Copywriters*

- **Treat your business like a job** – To gain traction, you have to get serious about your business. Get committed. Your clients are counting on you.
- **Don’t take rejection to heart** – Rejection is just somebody saying, “This doesn’t fit what we have in mind right now.” Learn from whatever advice you got and move on. Try again.
- **Trust in yourself** – People around you may doubt that you can make a living as a writer. It doesn’t matter. The only person who can decide if you’re good enough is **you**. The only person who knows that you can do it is **you**. If you can approach a company and write a letter that makes them happy, then you’re successful. That’s it.

## Ready to sail towards your perfect writer’s life?

Learn more about the program that launched Chuck’s career, [\*The FastTrack to Copywriting Success Bootcamp and Job Fair\*](#).

