**Creating Your Business Plan**

A business plan is going to keep you focused and help you identify your target group – so use this checklist to compile your own plan and stick it to your wall. Refer back to it as needed.

**1. Identify your services**
What do you feel most comfortable doing? Are you happy with articles, press releases, brochures, blog posts, reports etc? Or would you prefer to do resumes, copywriting, consulting etc? Be specific and clear.

**2. Identify your niche and your prospects:**
What niche do you prefer to work in? Who is your target audience? Health professionals, legal, small businesses, SME’s, agencies? How educated are they? This makes a huge difference in HOW you write and the tone you use, and allows you to establish how you can deliver your services to them.

**3. What is your USP?**
All businesses should have a USP or unique selling point which clearly defines your point of difference in no more than one or two statements to your target prospect. Why should your prospect hire you? What do you offer that an agency or other writer can’t?

**4. Develop a workable budget**

Like any business, you will have overheads. Heating, lighting, workspace, travel, marketing and advertising, software, hardware, physical office equipment, website, resources and tools etc all cost money.  Identify your budget so you know instantly what you have to spend.

Take into account any training courses you may want to do.

**5. Create a working timetable**

All businesses take time to establish. Writing is no exception. How much time do you realistically need to work each week? It may be a case of how much time you have available, so write down the hours you have a week – is it during the day, in the evening, weekend. Be specific. As a general rule, marketing can take around 10-20% of your working time and the same goes for admin, so factor these in when creating a timetable.

**6. Develop a contingency plan**
Always have a backup plan and never put your eggs in one basket because it can go wrong. Common mistakes are to stop marketing when you are busy, sticking to one particular client and then finding you have no work when it fizzles out and when projects go wrong. What else can you do to keep the money coming in and prevent dry patches?

**7. Develop alternative streams of income**

Always develop alternative streams of income in addition to your writing business such as creating your own product, developing a membership etc to help bring in additional forms of income.