



## Building an Organic Business From the Ground Up — a Tortoise Approach to the Rat Race

### Slow and Steady Progress, Not Perfection

Most people wouldn't use the word "tortoise" to describe their career journey, but that's exactly how NC Hawkins characterizes her approach to achieving a successful writer's life.

Like many people switching gears to pursue a new career, it can take a while to emerge from our shells...

After completing graduate school, NC began a robust career in the visual arts, managing art collections and international exhibits for museums and prestigious private collections. She also served as art consultant, handling installations, conservation, and curatorial care for public and private art collections worth millions of dollars.

"The art world," she says, "is a different world. You're working with very wealthy people whose homes are like art galleries..."

"It's really high pressure," she adds. "You're handling a painting or a sculpture that's worth \$60 million. Nobody can make a mistake. You're sweating bullets. I used to escort private acquisitions of a local collector under armed security to and from the airport."

Eventually she left the arts to start a family and pursue a more fulfilling career that focused on her own creative

#### CASE STUDY:

### NC Hawkins

*"It's very empowering that all my previous business and professional skills, and academic training can be used to pivot into a new career, working from home on my laptop — and I can make a difference in the world with my writing."*

#### MEMBER:

NC Hawkins

#### LOCATION:

Seattle, Washington

#### FORMER CAREER:

Curator & Project Manager of art and history collections, and museum exhibitions.

#### HOW SHE GOT HER FIRST CLIENT:

NC pitched an established copywriter who was outsourcing content on his own website, and he hired her.

#### TOP AWAI PROGRAMS:

- *The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*
- *Sales Letter Mastery and Certification Program*
- *Ilise Benun's 21-Day Challenge*

endeavors. She decided it was time to realize a lifelong goal — to become a writer.

### **The Pivot**

Following her daughter's birth, NC loved being a stay-at-home mom and used that time to learn the craft of storytelling.

"I took writing classes and got to know the publishing business," she says. "I made meaningful connections with fellow writers, authors, and industry professionals."

She dipped her foot into the writing world by serving as editor for her community council print newsletter. And she wrote articles and fundraising campaigns as a Garden Educator at her daughter's elementary school. As an avid gardener committed to organic horticulture and educating the public on best practices, she began to merge her personal hobbies with practical writing projects to build a portfolio.

In 2019, she stumbled upon an online promo for American Writers & Artists Institute (AWAI).

"Copywriting had never been on my radar before," she says. "I suddenly realized that you can actually make good money and pay the bills as a writer."

### **The Right Program at the Right Time**

NC explored AWAI and found it provided all the tools and training she needed to learn the art of writing persuasive copy, marketing, and launching her copywriting career.

"AWAI is very professional," she says. "It's simple, step-by-step instruction, with a ton of support along the way. I was impressed with the breadth of programs and AWAI's deep talent base of instructors and mentors. It's also highly collaborative."

She invested in AWAI's *Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting*, but didn't start right away.

"Life intervened for about a year, and then the pandemic hit. So it wasn't until fall of 2020 that I started working the program, and when I got into it, I loved it."

She realized that instead of curating priceless collections of art and artifacts, she could become a content curator. It was a perfect fit.

### **Purpose-Driven Work**

She also signed up for *Sales Letter Mastery and Certification*, which was right up her alley.

"I enjoyed learning the psychology behind persuasive writing," she says, "because I understand its purpose. One of my goals is to write for the nonprofit world, as that's my professional and academic background. Writing for good causes and mission-based campaigns perfectly complements my previous experience."

After she earned her certification in *Sales Letter Mastery*, she dove into Ilise Benun's *21-Day Challenge* and found a masterful marketing mentor.

"I was not on LinkedIn; I'm not a big social media person. So setting up a LinkedIn profile was daunting at first," she says. "It can be hard to put yourself out there when you're starting a new career."

Ilise's program also helped NC in choosing her niche: environmental sustainability. It's an emerging field that she believes in passionately. Under Ilise's guidance, NC spent six months building a global network of like-minded



professionals on LinkedIn — connecting with others committed to a sustainable circular economy and protecting natural resources.

Laser-focused on her niche, she connected with those in ecological conservation, joined online sustainability groups, and followed conservation agencies, nonprofit organizations, and governmental entities.

Beginning with zero connections, she quickly built a thriving professional network, reaching over 500 connections within six months.

NC admits that her approach to building a copywriting business may be unique.

“I am more of a tortoise than a hare. I don’t believe in the hustle culture. I don’t have the energy for it,” she says. Instead, she prefers to work at a pace that suits her long-term goals and overarching mission – to use her writing skills to effect positive change in the world for her daughter’s generation.

### *An Organic Approach to Finding Clients*

When NC heard that an established copywriter (and AWAI instructor) was too busy to keep up with all the content demands of his website, she pitched an article that aligned with his needs.

“He loved it,” she says, “so I started writing content for his website.” Other work soon began to flow in organically...

All of her copywriting projects have come directly from her LinkedIn network, personal connections, and/or referrals. She currently writes on solar energy for a global PR agency, as well as other projects in green design, biodiversity, ecology, and environmental science. She also ghostwrites for several sustainability leaders in the private sector and volunteers her skills with a gardening nonprofit in the Pacific

Northwest, helping with their marketing and communications.

“Opportunities abound in your own community, if you get engaged on the local scene with causes you care about,” she says.

Her advice to fellow writers just starting out: “Authenticity matters. Wear your heart on your sleeve and clients will seek you out — because writing about what you love brings an energy to your work that is powerful and attractive. It’s imperative to follow your passion, or your hobbies and interests, when choosing a niche.”

### *A New Profession — With Creative Purpose*

NC wanted to make a difference with her writing, supporting the most important call to action of our lifetime — protecting planet earth, restoring biodiversity, and battling climate change. Now she does, with the rich resources and support that AWAI continues to provide her.

#### **She now...**

- ...Enjoys creative freedom she never had while working in the art world.
- ...Has more quality time to spend with her family.
- ...Picks and chooses her clients — and can afford to “offload” projects that don’t fulfill her mission.
- ...Gets paid very well.
- ...Is finishing her debut novel — an environmental thriller! “Learning the art of shortform copywriting has really enhanced my creative writing.”
- ...Has the life she has always dreamed of, contributing to causes close to her heart.



“I want to leave the world a better place for our children to inherit,” she says. “Eco-anxiety is very real for all of us with the current climate crisis. But we can each make a difference as individuals, to protect and restore the ecology of our planet and save countless species from

extinction. I want my writing to inspire people of all ages and backgrounds to live more sustainable lives. That is my personal mission — and AWAI has given me the skillset to make a difference in the world.”

### *NC's Tips for Copywriters*

- **Be purposeful** – If you love to learn, you'll get there. But work at a pace you're comfortable with. No matter how long it takes, it will happen if you work the steps and lay the groundwork.
- **Be authentic** – When you're authentic, you're inspiring, and people will want to work with you, especially those who share your passion.
- **Words matter** – Words have so much power and influence in this world. Don't be afraid to go out and do something good with your voice.

## Ready to pursue *the writer's life*?

Learn more about the program that helped launch NC's career,  
[\*The Accelerated Program for Six-Figure Copywriting.\*](#)

