



## **How to Get Your Website Done** with Jill Anderson

### **Summary Handout**

#### **Introduction**

Why do so many freelancer writers struggle with their websites? It's a strange but common problem. Many of us can (and do!) write content for client sites all day long. But when it comes to developing our own sites, the process is slow and painful.

Why is that? Well, part of the problem is that we often fail to prioritize our own marketing.

Another part is that we want everything to be 100 percent perfect before launch.

And so, consequently, we get bogged down in endless details, decisions and delays.

In this execution plan, we layout the absolute basics of what you need to know—and where you need to focus—to push past these obstacles and (finally!) get your website done.

#### **Our Guest Instructor: Jill Anderson**

Our guest instructor for this execution plan is Jill Anderson. Jill is a web designer and developer experienced in creating beautiful and innovative WordPress websites that have clear positioning and deliver positive user experiences.

She is also accustomed to working with all kinds of creatives, including designers and writers.

## **Where Do You Start?**

Before you put pen to paper, you need to do two things:

### **1. Define your positioning**

Figure out who you are, what you do and why it matters. Until you get clear on these points, you'll struggle to communicate to prospects how you can help them.

(If you're uncertain about your positioning, check out the execution plan "How to Position Yourself to Attract Better Clients" in the Academy.)

### **2. Know who your competitors are**

Who else are your prospects considering? Are your competitors local, national or international? Keep your competitors in mind as you develop your site. You want to make sure your site stands out from them.

Usually, you won't need to go super deep with competitor research, but you should look at a dozen at least. Identify their unique selling propositions. Look at their different service offerings, styles, approaches, experiences and markets.

Also, ask prospects who else they're considering for their projects. And if you lose a project, ask to whom it was awarded.

Put some relevant search terms into Google and see which competitors show up in the results.

## **Website Pages**

Once you've defined your positioning and identified your competitors, the next step is to figure out what pages you'll need on your site.

At a minimum, you'll need these five:

1. Home
2. Samples/Portfolio
3. About
4. Services
5. Contact

## **Home Page**

Your Home page provides an overview of your business. It orients people. It says something compelling about what you do.

Your Home page can also include snippets about your services with links to your Service page. You can also include a few recent work samples and blog posts.

Don't forget to include a call to action on each page. A call to action tells people what you want them to do when they come to your site (e.g. "call now" and "send me an email").

People sometimes worry about putting too much information on their Home page. But at this stage, focus on what you want to say and don't worry about length. Later, you can use design and layout to break up large chunks of content.

## **Samples/Portfolio Page**

The Samples page shows off your work. For writers, that means a portfolio of writing samples. You have to decide what to include and how to organize them.

If you only have a few samples, you might not need to organize them into categories. But if you have more than a few, it might be useful to divide them into buckets, such as SEO work, case studies, white papers, etc.

In general, twelve samples is a good number to work with. But you can have more or less depending on your focus.

If you only have two or three samples, you don't have to communicate that to your prospects. When you only have a few samples, you can use a case study approach and really dig into each one in detail.

## **About Page**

The About page is where you tell your story. Why do you do what you do? How did you get started? What do you love about what you do?

"*Why* you do what you do" is important. The "why" often gives prospects a reason to choose you. It's what makes you different.

You can also use your About page to talk about your values, such as work-life balance, collaboration, innovation. You can talk about your purpose and what you stand for.

The About page humanizes you. It allows you to connect with the prospect on a personal level—which is important because people want to work with people they can relate to.

## **Services Page**

Your Service page makes clear *what* it is you do. It can be a laundry list of services or you can organize your services into different categories.

However you organize your services, make them easy for people to understand.

You shouldn't need to sell the value of your services or explain what they are. If you have to put in a lot of explanatory detail, you're probably selling to the wrong audience.

## **Contact Page**

The Contact page tells people how to reach you. You can include your phone number and email address or a contact form.

Jill's site has a lengthy contact form for those who want to schedule a free chat. She uses this form to qualify her leads. It also confirms back to the prospect that she's a good fit for them because she's asking the right questions.

## **Other Pages**

You may also choose to include a number of additional pages (or sections), such as:

- Your process
- Testimonials
- Your values
- Blog
- Questionnaires
- Content that doesn't fit anywhere else
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs) page

FAQs can reside on a separate page or on the Service page. (It depends on how many FAQs you have.)

Generally, you shouldn't be too concerned about having long web pages. People are used to scrolling.

## **Writing Your Content**

What comes first: copy or design?

Jill advises that it's always best to write your copy first. Say what you need to say. That's the most important thing. Write it out in a Word document.

If you were to create your design first, you'll have to alter your copy to fit your design.

## **How to Deal With a Blank Screen**

For writers, nothing's worse than staring at a blank screen with no idea where to start. Should that happen, bringing in an outside writer can help.

If you don't want to hire a writer, consider trading services with a colleague.

Most importantly, treat your own website as you would a client project. Assign deadlines. Set aside time to work on it.

But at the same time, don't rush through it. Give your site the time it deserves.

Often, it's useful to start with some previously created content. If you completed the exercises that are part of the Academy execution plan on positioning, you'll have some bullet points to get you started.

## **How Much Copy Do You Need?**

There's no such thing as too much copy. Usually the problem is not having enough.

Aim for at least 300 words per page. (Which is what most SEO folks recommend as a minimum.)

People are used to scrolling, so long pages are fine if needed. You can use design and layout to break up your copy to make it more consumable.

But generally, try to focus on your message. Start with the words. Once you're happy with what you've written, then you can start thinking about design.

## Common Mistakes

Remember, you're using your site to *sell your services*. Therefore, your copy should always speak to the reader. That's even true of the About page, which is all about you. You have to bring the reader into it.

Don't forget to include a *call to action* on every page. You have to tell people what to do.

The simplest call to action is "contact me" with a link to your Contact page.

You can also have a *secondary call to action* for prospects who aren't ready to hire you. A common secondary call to action is to sign up for your newsletter. This allows you to stay in touch with these prospects until they're ready to act.

Offer some free content as incentive for signing up. For example, a report that addresses a common problem your prospects have.

Eighty-five to 95 percent of people visiting your site won't be ready to buy. You don't want to lose those leads.

## Creating and Gathering Other Website Elements

Expect to spend time creating and gathering other elements to complete your website.

### Images

It's important to include pictures of yourself on your website. You can also include pictures of your workspace or office.

People like working with other people. Allowing prospects to see your face gives them more confidence to work with you. It creates a connection. And as an independent professional, you need those connections.

Sometimes, people object to posting their picture because want to lose 20 pounds (or whatever) first. But you need to be okay with how you look now. When you lose those 20 pounds, you can post a new picture.

It's much better to have a picture you don't like than not have a picture at all.

## **Work Samples**

Work samples can be challenging for writers. You don't want to just post a Word doc. You need visuals that can accompany your work, such as magazine covers or spreads.

For samples of web copy, you can take a screenshot of the page that includes your work. You can link to the live website or a larger screenshot. (A screenshot is a good idea in case the site changes.)

You can also create case studies of the work you've done. Describe the challenges, solutions and deliverables. Include complimentary quotes from clients.

If you don't have any work samples, you still need to include something. You can show student work or a volunteer project. Find a bad website and rewrite it. Make up a project for the type of work you want to get. Do something for the business of a family member or friend. You need to show something tangible.

## **Website Design**

The amount of time and money you'll spend on designing and setting up your website can vary greatly, depending on how tech savvy you are and how much you want to spend.

You have several options for web design, including:

1. Do it yourself
2. Custom design by a professional
3. Something in between.

### **Do It Yourself (DIY)**

For true do-it-yourselfers, you can buy a WordPress theme for as little as \$20, get a web host for \$5 a month and then do most of the work yourself.

WordPress is a good option for a DIY website. WordPress powers about 25 percent of the web and has a great support community. You have to install it yourself on a web host, select a theme and set it up.

Every WordPress site needs a theme. The theme is a set of files that shows the structure and design of the website. Millions of themes are available for free or to purchase.

To find a theme, Jill recommends the following sites:

- [ThemeTrust.com](http://ThemeTrust.com)
- [iThemes.com](http://iThemes.com)

Generally, the themes on these sites work well and have good support and maintenance.

If you're not familiar with WordPress, you should start by watching some tutorials. Google the terms "WordPress tutorials" and see what comes up. [WordPress.tv](http://WordPress.tv) and [WPBeginner.com](http://WPBeginner.com) are also good places to start. [Lynda.com](http://Lynda.com) also has a lot of WordPress stuff.

WordPress meetups are a good place to get help.

If you're not highly technical, setting up WordPress can be a challenge. You have to be patient and willing to find help when you need it.

Alternatively, you can hire a virtual assistant to get all this done for you for about \$300-\$400.

### **Pros/Cons of Do It Yourself**

#### Pros

- Lower costs
- If you're good with technology, it may be quick to implement

#### Cons

- If you purchase a theme, others website may also have the same theme
- You'll have to try and fit your content into the theme. It might not look as good as the theme demo.
- If you're not tech savvy, you can spend a lot of time trying to figure this out.

### **Custom Design by a Professional Web Designer**

If you choose to hire a designer instead of going the do-it-yourself route, prices can range from a few thousand to tens of thousands. As an example, Jill's design packages are mid-range, priced at \$4,000 to \$5,000 on average.

### **Pros/Cons of Custom Design**

#### Pros

- You don't have to figure out an existing theme
- You get a one-of-a-kind look

- Your content will look good and stand out
- You don't have to be tech savvy. Your web designer will do it all for you
- You'll spend less time trying to figure everything out.

#### Cons

- Can be more expensive than DIY.

### **Another Option: Website Builders**

Website builders fall somewhere between DIY and custom design. Examples are Squarespace, Weebly and Wix. With these builders, you use a drag and drop interface to build your site.

Pros and cons of website builders are similar to doing it yourself.

With website builders, you lose a level of customization when compared to custom designed sites.

To decide which route is best for you, think about your ultimate goal. If paying your rent is a priority, then DIY might be the best place to start.

If you're an established business—you know your positioning and how you want your site to work—then it might be worth investing in a custom site.

Also, consider how much you charge for your projects. If you pay \$4000 for a new site, and that site lands you a couple of \$2000 projects, then your site will quickly pay for itself.

### **Going Live!**

Before you launch your website, go through a website launch checklist. [iThemes has a good checklist](#). We've also included a checklist with this execution plan.

Launch checklists are designed to make sure everything's working before going live. Big picture items include:

- Is everything working?
- Is all content filled in?
- Are all placeholders filled in?
- Do all links work?
- Do all forms work?

Test your site on all modern browsers (including different browser versions), such as:

- Safari
- Firefox
- Chrome
- Internet Explorer
- Microsoft Edge

Test your site on all types of devices, including:

- Phone
- Tablet
- Laptop
- Desktop

Instead of trying to do all this testing on your own devices and browsers, there are sites that will do it for you, such as [CrossBrowserTesting.com](http://CrossBrowserTesting.com).

Make sure you have redirects in place. Optimize page titles, meta description and blog posts for SEO.

Make sure you have a 404 page.

If your site is simple, you won't have a ton of pages to test. It shouldn't take you too long.

## **FAQs**

Images: Aim for large but low quality (i.e. low file size) so your site will load faster.

WordPress limits: WordPress has no limits on style or layout. A good designer can make it do anything you want.

One-page sites: While these may be trendy, Jill isn't a fan. They're not good for SEO, and they feel amateurish. It's also hard to point people to specific sections of your site when everything's on one page.

## **About Jill Anderson**

Learn more about Jill Anderson at [Jillynndesign.com](http://Jillynndesign.com).