



2020 Freelance Writing Landscape Report

Published October 2020
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Overview

- What is the global average earning of paid online writers?
- What industries hire writers the most?
- What are clients currently looking and hiring for?
- How did COVID-19 affect the industry?
- What does the future hold for freelance-writers?

If you've asked these questions, you're not alone. We had some and have been digging for answers. We analyzed writing salaries and job postings on [Glassdoor](#), [Payscale](#), and [LinkedIn](#) to understand the freelance-writing market in 2020.

We also curated the most requested hard and soft skills for online writers and content marketers in 2020, the most profitable niches and content types, and a summary of details on the impact of COVID-19 on the industry from [Pro writer](#), [Smart Blogger](#), [Upwork](#), [Payoneer](#), [SEMRush](#), and [Writers in Charge](#).

In the end, we have summarized our findings into digestible bytes for you. We also included simple graphs and an infographic to summarize key findings that help you get a quick picture of the freelance-writing landscape in 2020.

Our most significant findings

1. The global annual average earnings of a writer is \$21,000 [1]
2. 48% of online writing jobs are US-based [2]
3. The most popular writing job titles are copywriter, writer, and editor [3]
4. Only 13.80% of writing jobs are technical, but writers with technical writing skills earn more than non-technical writers [4]
5. The industries hire online writers the most include IT, software, finance, recruiting, and marketing [5]
6. 46% of freelance-writers had their work negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic [6]
7. 21.1% of writers experienced an increase in their income during the pandemic [7]
8. Writing accounts for more than half of outsourced content jobs [8]
9. 86% of clients and employers prefer blog posts as their favorite content format [9]
10. Leadership, respect for deadlines, and communication are the essential soft skills required for content jobs [10]
11. Social media, content creation, SEO, email marketing, and content strategy are the top hard skills mentioned in content job listings [11]
12. Video scripting is more critical than ever [12]
13. The highest-paying content types are blog posts, ebooks, case studies, email writing, sales pages, and e-learning courses [13]
14. The highest-paying content topics are finance, cryptocurrency/blockchain, technology, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), and education [14]
15. There is increasingly more integration of freelance-writers into companies' teams and agencies.

Significant findings [Infographic]



2020 Freelance Writing Landscape Report

Our Most Significant Findings

WRITERS AND INCOME



\$21,000 is the global annual average earning of a writer.



48% of online writing jobs are **US-based**.



The **most popular writing job titles** are copywriter, writer and editor.



Only **13.80%** of writing jobs are technical, but writers with technical writing skills **earn more** than non-technical writers.



Industries that **hire writers the most** include: IT, software, finance, recruiting, and marketing.

Click the image to download the complete infographic.

Section 1

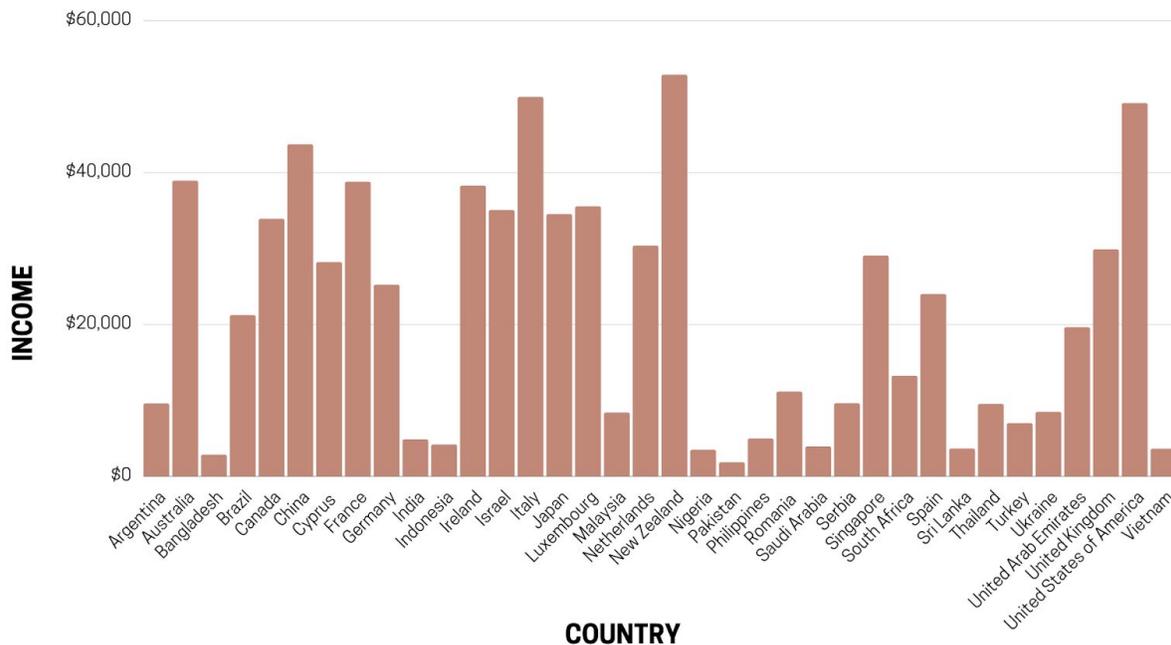
A writer and her income

Global average annual salary of a writer is \$21,000.

We used Glassdoor to find and analyse the average annual earnings for freelance and in-house writing jobs across the world. Only 36 countries had available, credible data. Calculating the mean of these countries' average salaries, we discovered that \$21,332 (rounded up to \$21,000) is the global annual average earning of writers worldwide.

New Zealand has the highest annual average salary at \$52,854, and the United States is second at \$49,114.

THE GLOBAL ANNUAL AVERAGE WRITER'S SALARY IS \$21,000

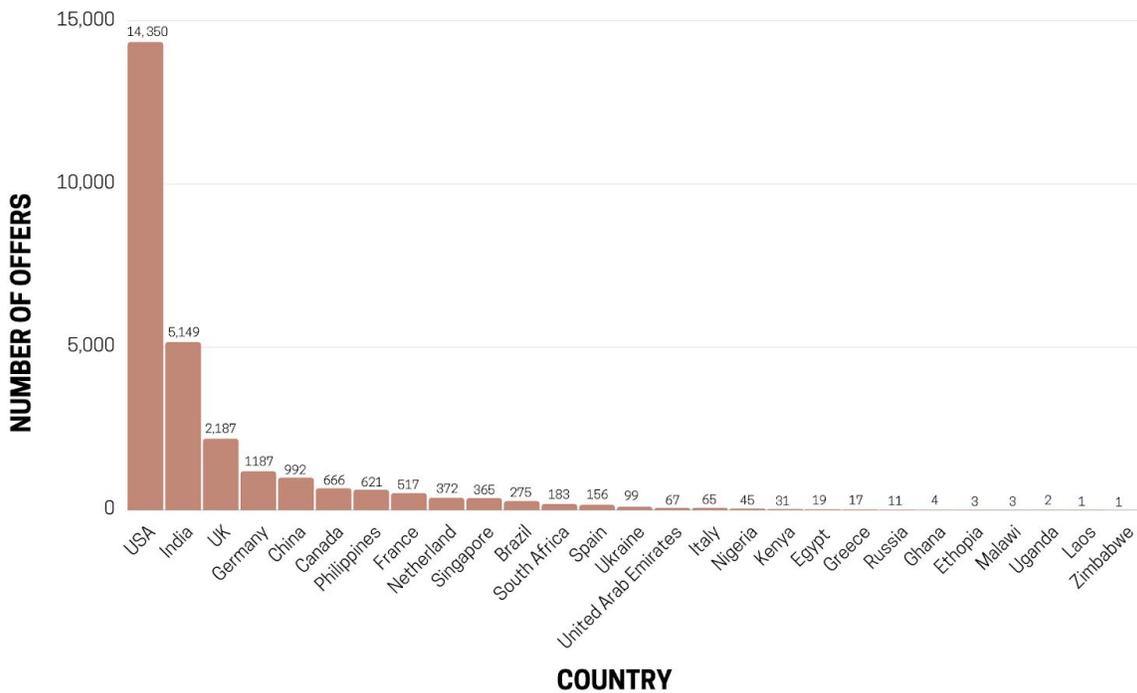


48% of writing jobs posted online are US-based.

The next thing we did was analyze job listings on LinkedIn. We filtered through with the term 'writer' for each country across the globe. Here's what we discovered.

48% of the open writing positions are US-based. Following closely is India, UK, Germany, and China. On the other hand, countries like Mexico, Iraq, and Laos had very few writing job offers.

48% OF ONLINE WRITING JOBS ARE US-BASED

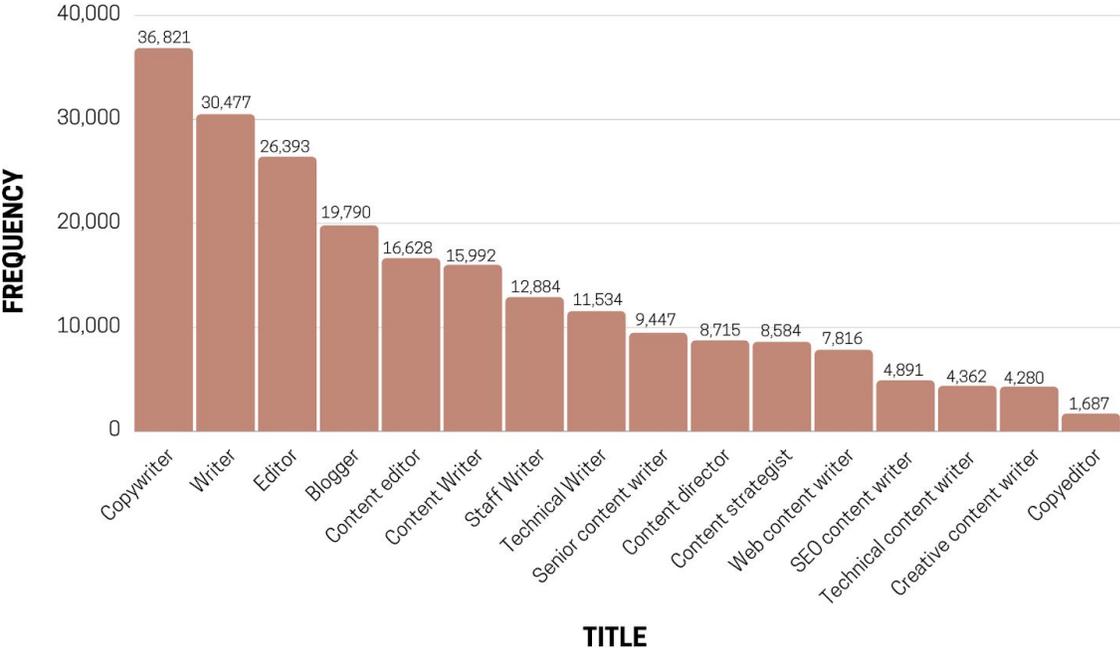


Most popular writer job titles are copywriter, writer and editor.

It's important to know these job titles for two reasons. First, it would help writers on a job hunt optimize their LinkedIn profiles for specific search terms used by recruiters. Doing so will make recruiters more likely to find and consider you as an option for opportunities, especially if your profile matches the job requirement.

Popular job titles also reveal the most in-demand skills, helping writers understand what skills to learn or improve, or what niches or content types to focus on.

MOST POPULAR ONLINE WRITER-JOB TITLES



The 2020 Freelance Writing Landscape Report, Week of Saturdays.

Technical writers skills earn more than non-technical writers.

Out of the 31,316 writing jobs on LinkedIn, only 4,362 (14%) included technical terms. The remaining 86% call for creative and management skills like "editor," "manager," "strategist," "director."

However, according to our Payscale analysis of the different writing jobs and their average annual salaries, writers with technical writing skills earn higher on average than non-technical writers.



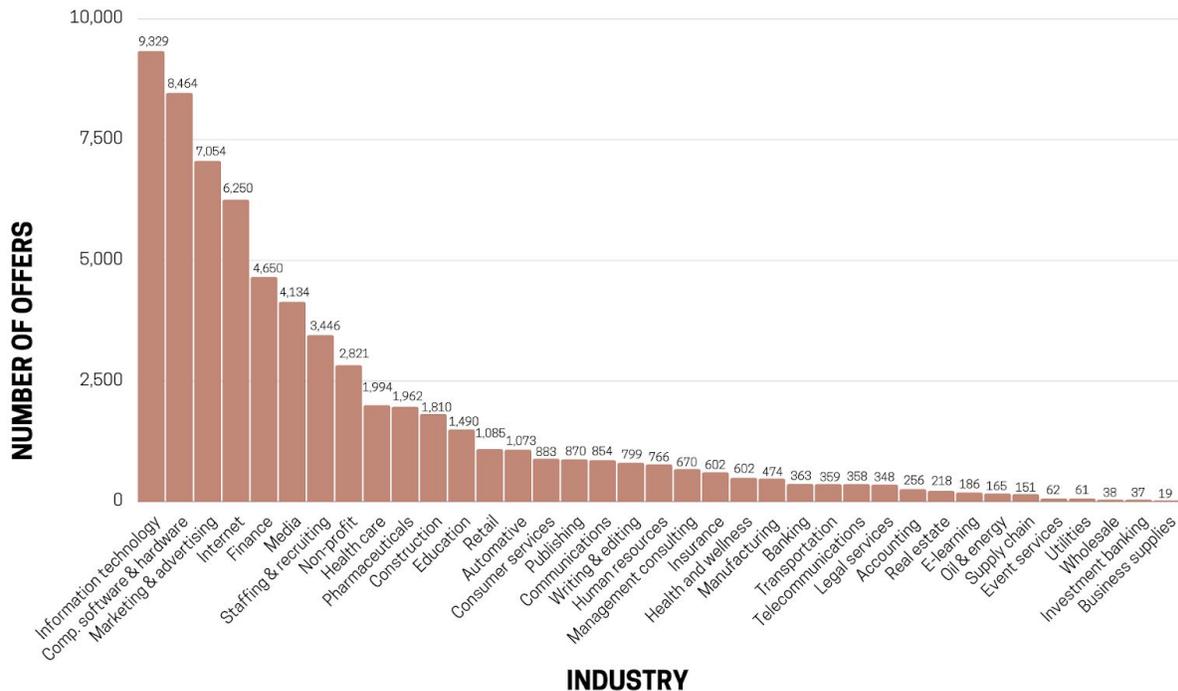
13.80% of writing jobs are technical, but writers with technical writing skills **earn more than** non-technical writers.

Industries that hire writers the most include IT, software, finance, recruiting, and marketing.

To answer the question: Which industries hire the most writers? We again looked at job postings by industry on LinkedIn.

Our findings revealed that the IT industry hires writers the most. Industries like Software & Hardware, Finance, Marketing and, the Internet also lead in hiring writing professionals.

INDUSTRIES THAT HIRE ONLINE WRITERS MOST



Section 2

What do clients want?

Different clients and employers require and look for different skills. Also, they often want different content types e.g. blog posts or sales pages or email newsletters. These differences have a significant impact on the terms they use to hire and the eventual rates you agree on.

To answer the question: What do clients and employers want? We analyzed SEMRush's [Global State of Content Marketing Report 2019](#) and Fractl's [2019 research work on the most desirable Content Marketing job skills](#). Here's what we learned.

Writing accounts for more than half of outsourced content jobs.

86% of respondents, clients and employers, prefer blog posts as their typical content type. Other highly-requested content types include email at 67%, infographics at 45%, customer success stories at 42%, and ebooks at 35%. SEMRush's survey also revealed that writing is the most outsourced work in content marketing at 53%. Second most outsourced work in content is graphic design at 34%.



86%

of respondents, clients and employers, prefer blog posts as their **most requested content type**.

Leadership, respect for deadlines, and communication are top required soft skills.

Analyzing 17,000 content job descriptions, SEMRush's research notes that vital soft skills for online writers include leadership at 19%, respect for deadlines at 16%, and clear written communications at 8%. We, at Week of Saturdays, will like to quip in and share that we consider respect for deadlines most critical of all.



Top **vital soft skills** for online writers are leadership at 19%, respect for deadlines at 16%, and clear written communications at 8%.

SEMRush

Social media, content creation, and SEO are top required hard skills.

Digging into Fractl's study of 1,500 content job listings on Indeed, we found that social media, content creation, SEO, email marketing, and content strategy are the most requested hard skills for content marketing and freelance-writing jobs.

Organizational and planning skills are vital for success.

All experience levels, from intern and junior writing roles, to the most senior roles, require organizational and planning skills for success. As an intern, you need basic organizational skills, and as a junior writer, outlining is a vital part of the writing process. As you move further in your career, you will need to incorporate better project management systems, progress trackers and strategic business planning to achieve better results for your clients.

Video scripting is more critical than ever.

One skill we found recurring increasingly across all reports and surveys is video content creation which calls for video scripting skills. As the demand for educational and entertainment video content increases, video scripting jobs are increasing as well.

As far back as 2018, [HubSpot noted that](#) 54% of consumers would love to see more video content from their favorite brands. This implies that if you improve your script writing skills, you could get more writing jobs as an online writer.



54%

of consumers long to see **more video content** from their favorite brands and businesses.

Section 3

What are the current most profitable writing niches?

Profitable niches are hardly the same for long. Like seasons, they come and go, and the COVID-19 pandemic brought so change in 2020. This led us to ask about the current (and future) profitable niches. Analyzing compilation from various online writing authorities, here is what we discovered.

Highest-paying content jobs are blog posts, ebooks, sales pages, and e-learning courses.

A long-form blog post is a well-detailed article with over 2000 words. Writing this type of posts can get you about \$1,200 for 4 blog posts in one month. Ebooks are second; you can earn \$1,500 to \$5,000 from one ebook project, depending on the industry, client, and depth of research needed.

Unsurprisingly, e-learning courses are a fresh, common content type due to COVID-19 and the sudden move to learning-from-home. If you have a background in education, this is a good time to consider writing e-learning courses for yourself or clients.



The **highest-paying content types** are blog posts, ebooks, sales pages, and e-learning courses.

Highest-paying writing topics are finance, cryptocurrency/blockchain, software-as-a-service (SaaS), and education.

If you can write about financial topics, this is your time! Demand for personal finance content, especially on budgeting, investing and private equity, is increasing steadily. Cryptocurrency writers are also increasing in demand as well. This involves technical writing and a good understanding of blockchain technology.

Software-as-a-Software (SaaS) businesses are always in need of writers; they often need blog posts and tutorials, website copy, email newsletters, sales pages, and other content types. Online educational content-writing is also increasing currently.



The **highest-paying content writing topics** are finance, cryptocurrency/blockchain, software-as-a-service (SaaS), and education.

Section 4

How did COVID-19 affect the freelance-writing industry?

It's been months since the COVID-19 pandemic altered life as we knew it. Mass shutdown of industries affected global unemployment rates and the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that the pandemic has made it difficult for over 1.6 billion people across the world to make ends meet. This led us to wonder about freelance-writers and how they are coping. Here are some answers.

What is the impact of COVID-19 on freelance-writers' work?

At Week of Saturdays, we experienced an increase in freelance-writing requests and noticed new niche communities and agencies springing up to connect writers to clients who are now taking their businesses digital and enhancing their online presence due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, to get answers that cover the experiences of writers from various countries across the world, we analyzed Prowriter's [mid-covid survey results](#), Payoneer's [2020 global freelance data](#), and Writers in Charge's [research on the covid's impact on freelance-writers](#). Here's what we discovered.

46% of freelance-writers had their work negatively affected by the pandemic.

46% of Prowriter's survey respondents reported losing work due to the economic downturn. For many of the freelancers who responded, steady work started drying up at the start of the pandemic spread in March. One agency marketer reported losing 80% of her retainer revenue in 48 hours.



46%

of freelance writers had their work **negatively affected** by the pandemic.

Prowriter's 2020 Survey

Majority of online writers have no alternative income source.

One significant finding from Prowriter's survey is that the majority of freelance-writers have no job security to fall back on if they lose their freelance work. 56% of the interviewed freelancers shared that they do not have full-time employment to lean on, and 64% have neither partner's support nor family assistance either.



Most freelance writers have no partner's support or family **assistance to fall back** on if they lose their freelance work

Prowriter's 2020 Survey

There are more opportunities, globally, for freelance-writers.

As more businesses worldwide adapt to remote work, they are getting more comfortable recruiting and working with freelancers from various parts of the world. More organizations are focusing on and improving their digital presence through content creation, and thus, hiring and integrating more freelance-writers and content creators, to enhance their team's abilities.

Section 5

What can writers do to future-proof their work and lifestyles?

Whether it's due to a global pandemic or continuous innovations in technology, the demand for freelance-writers is prone to changes. Sometimes, the changes might involve market lows which mean budget tightening and more strategic moves.

When the going gets tough, you must become creative and innovate to earn and maintain your writing and freelance business. For some, this may mean restructuring your offerings and the value you offer. For others, it might mean joining more communities like [Week of Saturdays](#) for support, accountability, opportunities, and training.

There are several ways you can future-proof your writing skills and business. Here are our top recommendations.

Think strategically about your future

The world and culture is more dynamic than ever. Hiring managers and agencies are reactive to trends. For this reason, you must be too. Doing so keeps you up to date with the right tools and best practises to improve your skills, odds and opportunities.

When you're better informed, you can think strategically about your career path or business. As a freelance writer, you must not be a follower of trends, but one who stays ahead of the curve. Regardless of the world's economy, there are always opportunities for writers and creatives to tap into. You should stay aware and consistently think about what is best for your work, today and in the future.



As a freelance writer, you must not be a follower of trends, but one who stays ahead of the curve by watching for changes.

Week of Saturdays

Identify your differentiating factor

The increasing number of professionals stepping into the freelance and independent work pool means that you must work harder to differentiate yourself as a skilled and impressive freelance writer.

You create a new market for yourself when you identify your niche-niche and highlight your differentiating factor from other freelance-writers.

How do you measure up against others within your space? What do you do better than others? Identifying and answering these questions is worth the time and can increase your current rates if done right. When you identify your differentiating factor, your value is apparent and spend less time marketing your services.

Here are three tips to guide you.

- **Deep dive into yourself.** Learn as much as possible about yourself, your skills, your interests, your challenges, and the intersection between all of these. When you get clear about what kind of writing makes you happy, makes you the most money, and you can do easily and exceptionally well, you are closer to identifying your differentiating factor that puts you in a space of your own.
- **Get good at your elevator pitch.** Your elevator pitch helps you describe your business in a nutshell. It can be in the form of a conversation, pitch presentation, speech, or a proposal. When you work on improving your elevator pitch, you find that you become better at selling your services. You're more natural as you communicate what you do, and this helps you get the ideal clients you desire.
- **Input results wherever possible.** Clients find it easier to choose you if you show more than just work samples. Potential clients and employers want to see how your writing has helped others accomplish their goals.



You can create a whole new market for yourself when you identify your **differentiating factor** from other freelancers.

Set targets for yourself

You cannot future-proof your business without knowing what's next for you. To make progress, you must set real goals for yourself with deadlines and numbers e.g., you can aim to send individualized pitches to ten editors per week or join and engage in three writing communities or agencies in a month. This keeps you focused.



You cannot future-proof your business without knowing **what's next for you.**

Week of Saturdays

Collaborate

Gone are the days when being a freelancer implied being a lone wolf. Today, with many people doing what we do, it makes sense and is easier to collaborate with others within your niche, or others who complement your skills e.g. an illustrator or graphic designer.

Upskill

Like we've noted, there are a lot more professionals dabbling in freelance-writing today. This should encourage you to push yourself within your niche and improve your skills. Examine your strengths and weaknesses – work on your strengths and collaborate with others to cover your weaknesses.

If you are unsure of what skills to focus on? You can scroll up to see the hard and soft skills you lack and work to improve them. Sites like Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, SkillShare, and Udemy offer lots of good and free courses. Upskilling may also mean going further to get certified within your niche e.g. if you write in project management and love it, you can take project management courses to become not just a freelance writer but a freelance writer who is project management-certified.

This would widely increase your value, rates, and even the kind of jobs you take on.

Section 6

Conclusion

Whew! We have come to the end of our deep dive into the freelance writing industry in 2020.

From the US to Nigeria and Vietnam, we tried to include every country and their writers' experiences in this report. So what do we see happening in this space moving forward?

What does the future look like for the freelance writer?

Here's what we think.

More global work opportunities will emerge as companies hire widely for specific needs.

Now that the global workspace is increasingly remote, work opportunities will increase across the world, and employers hire specifically for each need. Diversity and inclusion became a huge subject this year, so many employers are working to do things right by making sure their teams are inclusive, and also that the right people work on the right projects. This is good for freelancers all over the world, and can only get better, especially if you learn to differentiate, collaborate, and upskill continuously.

There will be more integration of freelancers into in-house teams and departments.

Previously, companies and clients simply assigned projects, required a few check-ins, and expected deliverables upon completion. These days, because of the increased reliance on freelancers within in-house teams, more employers are integrating their freelance army into internal teams in simple ways.

Freelancer integration might include adding writers to Slack channels and project management workspaces, inviting them to happy hours, and sending gift cards to

appreciate their commitment to the company. Different clients and companies are taking more creative measures and steps to ensure their talented freelancers are happy and included.

We'd love to hear from you.

We hope this report revealed useful insights that can help you or your freelance writer friends to grow and create more profitable writing careers or businesses.

Have any questions we didn't cover?

Don't hesitate to reach us via [our website](#), join [our community](#) or view [our services](#) and [shop](#).

Appendix

1. [Glassdoor](#). The Week of Saturdays team arrived at a global average writer's salary by calculating the total average annual salaries of every available country on Glassdoor and dividing the answer by 36 (number of the available countries).
2. <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/search/?geoid=92000000&keywords=writer&location=Worldwide>: The Week of Saturdays team analyzed the writing jobs on LinkedIn, filtering the search results with term 'writer' and to each country across the globe.
3. <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/search/?geoid=92000000&keywords=writer&location=Worldwide>. The Week of Saturdays team filtered writing jobs on LinkedIn using the common writing jobs title. Then, we ranked the titles in a descending order.
4. [Payscale](#)
5. <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/search/?geoid=92000000&keywords=writer&location=Worldwide>. The Week of Saturdays team filtered job listings on LinkedIn using different industries.
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15. Ibid