

Write a List – Grab the Cash!

by Laura Orsini

Famous List Makers

Did you happen to read Nick Hornby’s novel, *High Fidelity*, or see the movie by the same name? In the film John Cusack’s character, record store owner Rob Gordon, is a list-making fiend. He has lists of the Top 5 Episodes of “Cheers,” the Top 5 Pop Songs About Death, the Top 5 Elvis Costello songs, and even the trite Top 5 Movies. In fact, his list of the Top 5 Worst Breakups is the central plot point for the story.



And unless you’ve been living under a rock for the last 25-plus years, you know that David Letterman memorialized the [Top 10 List](#). We are a culture that has come to *love* lists. New Year’s resolution lists. To-do lists. Grocery lists. “What I’m looking for in my next mate” lists. Goal lists. “Honey do” lists.

With All This Listmania, How Can a List Benefit You?

Well, let’s go back and examine that Top 10 List again. Do you have one — or could you make one — about your business? If you’re in the printing industry, how about a list of the top 10 things to consider when pricing a large printing job? Let’s say you’re in the mortgage industry. Could you enumerate the 10 biggest mistakes first-time home buyers often make? A chef could easily pen a list of ways to make a kitchen more useful and efficient. A personal trainer could create a list of exercises to do while traveling. A financial advisor could compile a series of money personality types. A photographer could suggest ways to appear more photogenic. The possibilities are endless.

Still don’t know what to put on your list? Think about the questions you repeatedly hear that relate to your business or industry. Or consider for a moment the questions that make you think to yourself, “I thought everyone knew that!” If you’re in business, you’re an expert, and if you’re an expert, you probably have scads of material for lists.

So why are these lists important? Because they’re fodder for articles and books and info products.

Why You Need to Start Writing Lists

If you have a list, you have, at the very least, the outline for some demonstration of your expert knowledge. Chances are that if you thought about it, you could take that list, expand on it, and

develop enough material for an article or a teleclass. Dig deeply enough into your storehouse of intellectual property, and you likely could further enhance the information to form the chapters of a book, an eBook, a workshop, or some sort of information product.

Whatever business you're in — you're in two businesses: the business of your product or service, and the business of marketing and selling your product or service. There's no better way to market and promote yourself than by developing and selling information related to your product or service. Doing so accomplishes two things: (1) it helps promote you as an expert in your field, and (2) it can give you a great passive revenue stream.

List-Writing Exercise

So hurry up — grab a pen or open a new Word document. Set a timer for 10 minutes. Number the paper from 1 to 10. Now, think of a subject around which to build your list. Your subject could be as broad as your industry, or as specific as answers to a particular question related to a niche market within your industry. Choose whichever subject feels appropriate to you, start the timer, and begin writing. Write quickly, fluidly. Do not stop to hesitate or filter. Just put down anything and everything that comes to mind with respect to your subject. If you get to 10 with little effort, continue writing 10 more list items. Don't stop until the timer goes off, or you have completely exhausted your list of ideas. And then, just when you think you've done all you can do . . . reset the timer for an additional three minutes, and add *five more items* to your list. Really. Get as creative as you can. Bust that ol' box wide open! Then, once you've *really* finished your list, be it 10 or 20 or 100 items long, you can start to organize it and shape it into something useful.

Begin by grouping like items together. Chances are — if you really did the exercise without filtering — that you have some repeats and redundancies. The language may be a little different, but the gist of several items is the same. Group similar things together, and delete items that are simply repetitions of previous items. Prioritize your list, putting the most important or most-often addressed issues at the top. Slowly, you will pull together a list that truly represents your depth of knowledge and provides a good overview of your product or service. It might be five items long, or it might contain a dozen things. Remember, there's no right or wrong here — it's your list!

You Have a List — Now Use It!

Now, it's up to you to do something with your list. Use it as a springboard to some further demonstration of your expert knowledge. Begin with one list . . . or article or eBook . . . and expand to another. Soon you will be able to claim the status of a knowledgeable expert in your field. People will begin to think of you *first* when it comes to questions about your industry. When they think of you first, they will call you first. And as [copywriter extraordinaire Michele PW](#) says, “When you're the expert, you can charge more!”

If a simple list can add zeroes to your bank balance, isn't it time you start compiling yours now?

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