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12-08-2009

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Interview with Allison Nazarian, author of Copywriting 101



Allison Nazarian is widely known as one of the most honest, innovative and fresh voices in copywriting and Internet marketing today.

In 2001, Allison founded Get It In Writing, Inc., a company that provides copywriting and marketing services and consulting to businesses throughout the world. Now the principal of Allison Nazarian Unlimited, Allison, as a copywriter and consultant, focuses on: blogs and blog ghostwriting; video scripting, book authoring/ghostwriting; copywriting for social media and one-on-one coaching for other copywriters and Internet marketers.

The author of [Copywriting 101 for Small Businesses, Entrepreneurs, Coaches and Consultants](#), Allison also mentors many up-and-coming copywriters and teaches DIY (Do It Yourself) techniques and tools to business people who choose to or have to write their own copy.

Allison, who holds a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and an M.S. from Columbia University's School of Journalism, has been featured in the Wall Street Journal, INC Magazine, the Christian Science Monitor, Fortune Small Business and WomenEntrepreneur.com. She blogs on copywriting and marketing at [The Copywriting Store](#), [/I] on the humor, craziness and fun of the entrepreneurial life at [AllisonNazarian.com](#) and on just about everything else via [her Twitter account](#).

Originally from the Washington, D.C. area, Allison is a walker, reader and wanna-be full-time author who lives in Boca Raton, Florida, with her two children and one Black Lab.

Thanks so much for lending us a little of your time, Allison. Your achievements and skills are celebrated here on the forums, and we're honored that you're inaugurating this series of conversations with the experts.

So, let's start at the beginning. What led you to a career in copywriting in the first place? Did you always know you wanted to do that as a career?

From birth to somewhere around age 21, I wanted to be either a lawyer or a sports agent. I was planning to go to law school.

My dad was/is a lawyer and I just always assumed I'd always follow in his footsteps. Apparently, I wasn't alone. Out of five of us girls who were roommates in college, four were applying to law school. I spent a semester studying for the LSATs (the test for law school admission) and was miserable.

And once I received my mediocre scores, I was more miserable. I decided to live my dream and move to New York City after college graduation – which is just what I did. I worked for my first year there in a large advertising agency (salary: \$22,000/year). It wasn't my dream job, but I was happy to not be in law school, and to have some breathing room to figure things out.

Over the next six or seven years, I worked as a writer in various capacities for a large non-profit, a newsletter publishing company, and a financial news organization and a multimedia firm. I also managed to get a Master's Degree in Journalism in there, too. I straddled the worlds of journalism (one kind of writing) and marketing writing (copywriting, basically) for some time, all the while knowing someday I would need to make a decision – couldn't have it both ways.

In 2001, just one week before September 11, I was laid off from a job as a Managing Editor for a newsletter

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INTERVIEW

Janine Gregor of,
YOUR VIRTUAL WIZARD

FEATURED VA WEBSITES:

publishing company. I loved that job and thought it was the best I would ever have! So I felt really, really sorry for myself for a few days and then decided I would do it, whatever "it" was, on my own.

And thus my business, then called Get It In Writing, was born.

Please give us a quick overview of how you got from there to here in your professional progress. You were Get It In Writing, Inc., and now your business is Allison Nazarian Unlimited. What have been some key turning points for you?

Very relevant question right now! You are right that my business was Get It In Writing for years, and just recently it has become Allison Nazarian Unlimited. The change came about as a result of many things, much of which I have written about on my blog and elsewhere.

I have had what I consider to be the equivalent of a business stalker for years. This person had the same business name as me and spent a significant amount of time and energy on "getting" the name for himself and making sure I was unable to use it. Without going into detail or being negative, I will just say that I eventually, late last year, decided enough was enough and I was going to just let it go. I learned many valuable lessons along the way – about persistence, about when to pursue something and when to let it go, about what boredom can do to people, about not taking things personally, and of course about business itself. The result was letting go of the fight and finding my own name that represented me and my business and where I am now.

What tips do you have for people who are just starting up a small business, such as virtual assistance? How about some pointers for those who have been in business for a while and now need to grow and expand?

There are lots of smaller and/or more practical tips I could give. And it is true that so much is in the details.

But the truth is it is not the small stuff that will make your business. There is so much more to business – and what I have found, for me, is that it is your mindset that will make or break you. It is your attitude, especially your attitude about going for things, and about fear. For me, my business has always been a mirror of who I am/was and what my thoughts are/were at any given time. I can always gauge my mindset by where I am in my business, and vice versa. It helps to ask yourself these questions regularly to make sure you are on the track you want to be on in your business:

- Do your thoughts, your plans, your expectations of yourself and your business match and reflect all of the best you envision for yourself?
- *Do you face the fear and do it anyway or do you let the fear win?*
- *Do you let other people tell you what to think (or not think) or what to do (or not do) or how to run your business?*
- *Do you focus on regrets and pitfalls or make everything into an opportunity and shine from it?*

How do you balance the demands of running a business with developing your own skills and personal growth?

It's an interesting question, and here is how I would answer it: To me I am my business and my business is me. Because there is no separation of church and state, so to speak, here, any work I do on myself directly affects my business, the way I conduct business, where I hope to take my business, etc. Whereas in the past, business owners may have focused on "business skills" per se, now there is a real benefit – business and otherwise – to taking a more holistic approach that combines self-discovery, personal development and business growth.

You're a working mom, and involved with [Working Mom Lifeline](#). How do you juggle work and home time?

That is the Million Dollar Question! Balance, juggling, all of that...

I have been a Mom for nearly 12 years, and never stopped working. In fact, I gave birth to both of my kids on Sundays and worked through the Fridays immediately before. We as moms and women have so many expectations of ourselves and it is hard, sometimes, to be the perfect SuperMom and SuperWomen we may have envisioned for ourselves.

I am a total control freak and I have worked hard over the years to figure out what matters, what's important, and what I can and should just let go.

As I give you these answers today, my two kids are at their first day of school. I have been thinking a lot about time management over this past summer. A few years ago, I moved my office from my home to an outside

office because I was working too much and felt an outside office with more "set" working times would help. I learned a lot about boundaries and saying "no" over the years as a business owner and as a woman. As an entrepreneur and business owner, there is never enough time in the day to do everything or explore everything or simply get it all done. If I could develop half of the ideas I have on a daily basis, well... that would be an amazing thing!

So, about a year ago, I made the decision to bring my office back home mostly because I felt my kids were at the ages that they needed to know (even if they didn't want to!) that I was physically around if they needed me. I am also working on the office hours vs home hours thing. Today, as a new school year started, I decided I was going to work within specific hours during the day and no longer burn the candle or the midnight oil on every end as I have been doing for the past 7 or 8 years. Not because I don't love it, but because I think my life and my work will be more effective and efficient and enjoyable if I can better designate times and places for work and family. I am trying to manage time, expectations and myself all in one. We shall see how that goes...

Ghostwriting for social media (blogs, etc.) is a hot topic these days. How do you handle the delicate matter of authenticity vs. expediency when ghostwriting for businesses?

That is a great question. I know there has been a lot of discussion and debate in these areas.

I can tell you from my perspective; I am a blog ghostwriter for hire and work with quite a few clients in this area. To me and for my clients, ghostwriting is about being almost like a journalist in their beat, covering their area of expertise in an informative and often educational way. It is not about writing in anyone else's voice or as anyone else. It is not about pretending in any way. Ghostwriter is actually probably not even the accurate word.

I have turned down work where I was asked to write as someone else or in some other way do something in what I would consider a grey area. So if a small business person or service business or catalog business wants to write about baby products or the television business or something technology-related or the best gifts for Christmas, I can become the expert journalist in that area and write those blogs. If a CEO wants blogs written in his/her voice or name, I am not the writer for them.

What do you love the most about your work?

I am free. I am in control. Over my time, over my life. And in the process, I choose who I want to work with, how, and on what terms. And in that process, I am able to do what I do best to help other people grow and develop their businesses and their ideas so that they can have control over their lives and live on their terms. So while I am not finding a cure to a deadly disease or figuring out how to get healthcare for all Americans (and I say that seriously), I am contributing to the lives of others in a way that I know how and that I am good at.

On a more specific level, I also love that through every client and every business I work with, I am able to learn about a new industry or a new business or a different subject matter. This appeals to the journalist and the trivia buff in me! And it is always new, and different and never predictable. For all of that I am so grateful!

Through your companion websites, you are sharing your knowledge through teaching. How did you come to the decision to teach, and how has the experience been for you?

I think the Internet, social media and the state of marketing in general have all lent themselves to an environment that allows entrepreneurs, small business people, VAs and so many others to take on areas that previously would not have been do-able or accessible to them.

I believe copywriting is something that can be and is learnable by anyone with some skill and some desire. (And there are other copywriters who wouldn't like to hear me say this!) Some people love to write their own copy. Others do not have the budget to write their own copy. Still others don't feel that someone else could ever know their business as well as they do or well enough to write about it. So... teaching these motivated and successful people how to write copy that sells has been gratifying, profitable (for them!) and fun. I love to teach and hope there is more of this in the future for me.

What do you see in your future, say two to five years from now? What is the ideal achievement you are envisioning these days?

Funny you should ask... I currently have two goals/dreams I am working on making realities.

First, I am moving into a more coaching-based business. I believe I can be of most service to others through my business in this way. In fact, I have informally coached and mentored others for years. My two main focuses

in this coaching will be copywriters –those who are up-and coming as well as others, like VAs, who write copy in their own businesses. The other group will be stay-at-home moms looking to learn a skill – like copywriting – that will bring in an extra \$500 or \$1000/month --- which, for a mom at home with kids, can make a significant financial difference.

Second, I want to be an author. As you mentioned earlier, I wrote a book on copywriting for DIY-ers and others looking to learn. What I want to do and will do is write books that combine my personal experiences and insights – complete with mistakes and major mess-ups – lessons on life, business, being a mom and beyond. I also have a book in the works on my grandmother, who was a Holocaust survivor.

Within the next year or two, these are the two professional pursuits (coaching/mentor and author) I will be doing full-time.

Interview graciously conducted by: Mary H. Ruth of [Virtual Writing and Communications: Specializing in writing, editing, and social media marketing](#), Mary has been a virtual assistant, and member of VAF, since 2007. Please visit her blog, [Virtual Assistance and You](#), a journal for VAs and their clients.

QUOTE

12-30-2009

#2 (permalink)

**Tess**

Senior Member

Company name: Codehead, LLP

Latest blog post: [SEO Q&A](#)

Join Date: Apr 2007

Posts: 7,614

Blog Entries: 3

Re: Interview with Allison Nazarian, author of Copywriting 101 [Virtual Leading Edge Series]

Allison is such an interesting woman and has a lot in common with many of us, as a working mom, a small business owner/entrepreneur. This is a very interesting interview with some great insight. Thanks so much for this!

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QUOTE

12-30-2009

#3 (permalink)

**catfive**

Contributing Member

Company name: Virtuality

My latest Twitter: [RT @smexaminer Dealing With Employees Who Are Soci...](#)

Join Date: Aug 2009

Location: United States

Posts: 199

Re: Interview with Allison Nazarian, author of Copywriting 101 [Virtual Leading Edge Series]

I loved this interview - so glad you brought it back to the front, Tess, as I had missed it the first time around! Allison is definately someone I want to follow as I am learning the fine art of copywriting...

QUOTE

04-18-2010

#4 (permalink)

terrinda

New Member

Join Date: Aug 2008

Posts: 7

Re: Interview with Allison Nazarian, author of Copywriting 101

Thanks Allison for clarifying ghostwriting...this article is very interesting & enlightening!

QUOTE

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