

## Business For Superheroes Podcast Transcription: Episode One Hundred And Eighty Five: How To Beat Writer's Block



\*In an industry stuffed with marketing bullshit, empty promises and shiny-suited liars, one woman's had enough. She knows what it's like to have the wrong clients, no money and no time for fun, but she also knows how to fix it, and, on the Business For Superheroes Show, she promises to tell the down and dirty truth about business, sales and running away with the circus! Here's your host: Vicky Fraser...\*

**Vicky:** Hello, and welcome to the "Business for Superheroes" show, I'm Vicky Fraser, and this is my husband, Joe.

**Joe:** Hello.

**Vicky:** Hello. This is the second take 'cause Joe just made up a whole load of words that don't exist.

**Joe:** Well, you didn't say anything. You pressed the button, you said nothing. I thought I'd have to rescue the podcast, didn't work.

**Vicky:** So, today we are drinking gin and tonic, cheers!

**Joe:** Cheers.

**Vicky:** Cheers everybody. Ah, it's really nice gin as well.

**Joe:** Mm. It's a good one this one.

**Vicky:** This gin came from Kenda.

**Joe:** Hi Kenda.

**Vicky:** Hi Kenda, thank you, and it is Ungava Canadian Premium Dry Gin and it's absolutely delicious.

**Joe:** If any Canadians would like to send us more, you'd be very welcome.

**Vicky:** Yes, absolutely. I'm gonna drink half of this gin and tonic and then not drink any more because that's what I tend to do now.

**Joe:** And then I will finish it.

**Vicky:** Yes, after you've been to the chippy.

**Joe:** Chippy.

**Vicky:** 'Cause it's chip night.

**Joe:** Yay!

**Vicky:** Right, so, this is Podcast number 185.

**Joe:** 185.

**Vicky:** It's still the Business for Superheroes Show, although by the time you listen to this we may have made a new podcast and I might have re-edited the beginning of this.

**Joe:** Really?

**Vicky:** Yeah, to make it the 1,000 Authors Show.

**Joe:** Crikey!

**Vicky:** Spoiler! So yeah, we are talking about, today, not that.

**Joe:** How to beat writer's block.

**Vicky:** How to beat writer's block and if you're listening to the audio version of this, I just did pretentious air quotes.

**Joe:** Mm hmm.

**Vicky:** Because I don't think writer's block is a thing.

**Joe:** Well?

**Vicky:** I think it's a crutch that um, anyway, that's for a different podcast, we're gonna cover this in a different podcast.

**Joe:** So basically how to beat writer's block but you don't believe it exists.

**Vicky:** Well, writer's block is the key word that people are gonna search for and find this you see.

**Joe:** Right.

**Vicky:** But I don't think it's a thing and we're going to talk a little bit about that in next week's podcast.

**Joe:** Oh, okay.

**Vicky:** Yeah because we're going to talk about mindset and crutches and how we are brainwashed into believing limiting shit like writer's block is a thing. 'Cause I'm just gonna leave this here. Plumbers don't suffer from plumbers block do they? Aha ha! No. Anyway. Right, so.

**Joe:** How do you know? Maybe they do. Maybe when they're confronted with a chunk of house and they just go oh jeez, how am I gonna get from here to there with that?

**Vicky:** A scary u-bend.

**Joe:** Do I go under the floor? Do I go around the walls? Do I channel it out? Do I go, oh no, maybe?

**Vicky:** Right, I'm just gonna reign you in from your plumbing safari.

**Joe:** Maybe they do have problems.

**Vicky:** And we're gonna talk about, well let's just do a quick Dingle update because I need to, I'm having a Bronson problem.

**Joe:** Aw.

**Vicky:** I know, his little wooly face. He has tried to headbutt me several times in the last few days and we can't have that because he's actually quite big and I got a little bit scared earlier.

**Joe:** That's no good.

**Vicky:** That's no good at all because I'm in charge, not him and yeah. So I was googling some stuff and in amongst all the frankly awful advice like if you get an aggressive sheep it has to go to the freezer, it's like that's just not an option, it's not gonna happen, but apparently when they do their first little "Oh, I'm gonna have a go at you", it's quite half arsed because they're not quite sure what's gonna happen.

**Joe:** And that's when you go way over the top.

**Vicky:** And that's when you basically, you don't hurt them, it's very difficult to hurt a sheep anyway 'cause they're, he's quite big and strong.

**Joe:** Pretty sturdy.

**Vicky:** But, yeah, basically tip him over if you can, get him off his feet and just be like: No, I'm in charge, this is not happening. And you've just gotta make him, humiliate him a little bit really and just be like you're not the one who's in charge. And we had him out earlier and he was delightful wasn't he?

**Joe:** Yeah, he was fine.

**Vicky:** So yeah. So hopefully I won't have to wrestle the tiny sheeps but we'll see. If I do, Joe will film it. And I made jam.

**Joe:** Jam!

**Vicky:** I made jam for the first time ever and it's elderberry jam, and who knew that was even a thing? I've decided I've gone a bit mental in my kind of, I'm going to turn all of the hedgerow foods, nature's bounty, into stuff that we can eat. 'cause we've got loads of apples on our apple trees, we've got loads of blackberries.

**Joe:** We've had a couple of pies recently.

**Vicky:** A couple of pies and I don't want the fruit to go to waste. And also with Brexit and the end of the bloody world and don't get me started, I think we ought to stockpile our food so that we can hoard if from the people who voted to leave. Anyway. So, right, this week we are how to beat writer's block and I just wanted to give you a little story about my advanced procrastination this week.

**Joe:** Oh, okay.

**Vicky:** Yeah, so I was supposed to writing a book proposal earlier this week and what I was actually doing was sitting on the floor of my office building a piece of office furniture for an office that I don't have yet. I can't use this piece of office furniture yet but it is now built.

**Joe:** Well, that's good.

**Vicky:** I know, and then I made jam.

**Joe:** Also good. Did the book proposal get written?

**Vicky:** Yes it did.

**Joe:** Well done.

**Vicky:** But it got written in a shorter period of time than I would've liked and it was more stressful than I would've liked because of the whole procrastination thing so we sometimes describe procrastination as writer's block but what it means is that we don't do what we should be doing which is sit down and write and so this week I wanted to talk a little bit about why

that is and give you three ways to beat writer's block. Three ways to beat the blank page of doom.

**Joe:** Okay. So do you think this is specific to books or is it for any piece of writing you might wanna do? Is it sales copy? Is it website words? Is it blog posts?

**Vicky:** Well obviously it's specific to books 'cause that's my jam.

**Joe:** Mm hmm.

**Vicky:** It's a very jammy week. But, yeah, if you have to sit down and write something, and this goes for everybody, professional writers and business owners who need to write something whether it's a sales page or a sales letter or a blog post or an email or whatever, yeah, it applies to anything. If you need to get a message across and you're stuck, this will get you unstuck and it's really cool. 'cause even if you've done a detailed outline and you've got your big idea and you know who you're writing for, why are you writing, all the rest of it, you still end up sometimes getting faced with the blank page of doom and you sit down and you're like; I know what I'm doing, blah, blah, blah and you've got this blank page and you're like; crickets.

**Joe:** Nothing happens.

**Vicky:** Nothing happens and it's really bad and so it's kind of like facing this insurmountable thing like Frodo and Sam at the bottom of Mount Doom, you know when they look up and it's just like uh, how am I gonna get up there?

**Joe:** Right, there's a problem with this.

**Vicky:** What?

**Joe:** 'Cause those big eagles brought them all the way home, right?

**Vicky:** Yes.

**Joe:** Why couldn't the big eagles have just took 'em all the way there in the first place, or even just taken the rings and dropped them in? Why did they have to walk all that way?

**Vicky:** Because it's not about the destination, Joe, it's about the journey. That would've been a really dull story, wouldn't it?

**Joe:** Well, the practicalities of it.

**Vicky:** We're going on a story telling safari, just for a moment dear listener and viewer. So this is the thing about telling stories. Yes, okay, maybe that's a point, I don't think actually the eagle I don't think could have just taken the ring because you know how the ring bearers behaved, they were obsessed with it.

**Joe:** Okay, but they could pick Frodo up, take him to Mount Doom, chuck it in, fly home.

**Vicky:** There must have a reason for them not doing that but that would've been a really dull story and we would not have known a lot about Frodo and Sam and how they changed and that's kind of the point is, a story isn't about what happens, it's about how the characters change as the story progresses. That's what the story's really about. So you know Die Hard, classic film.

**Joe:** Yes.

**Vicky:** It's about terrorists.

**Joe:** Fire, guns.

**Vicky:** And Hans Gruber and fire, it's not. It's about a man who's trying to win back his wife.

**Joe:** And Hans Gruber and terrorists and ho, ho, ho.

**Vicky:** No, that's the plot, that's not the story. The plot and the story are two different things. The Matrix. The plot is machines taking over the world and enslaving humanity, the story is about how Neo awakens and changes and

also he wants to get the girl. There's a difference. If the story was just about robots taking over the world and humanity being enslaved it would be boring, we wouldn't care but we care about Neo and who he is and how he changes. Anyway, that's an entirely different podcast for an entirely different day.

**Joe:** Okay.

**Vicky:** So, anyway the point is.

**Joe:** I just think the eagles should've taken it.

**Vicky:** Shush. The point is if you're faced with the blank page of doom, you end up being paralyzed and the key to beating the blank page of doom and actually getting somewhere is taking action. So if you take any action related to your goal, progress will happen, right?

**Joe:** If you take any action related to your goal? Okay, all right, yeah.

**Vicky:** So, I won't say any action because if you're stuck with the blank page of doom and then you drink gin, that's probably not gonna help. Well, it might do, I don't know.

**Joe:** I'd end up with something on the paper.

**Vicky:** Yeah, maybe vomit, I don't know. But what I mean is if you are stuck with the blank page of doom and you need to write something, just flipping write something. But that on it's own is not terribly useful advice so today I have three ways for you to beat the blank page of doom and I am going to share them with you.

**Joe:** Okay.

**Vicky:** They are three fun writing exercises to loosen you up. Mm hmm.

**Joe:** Okay.



**Vicky:** So, think of these writing exercises as your warm up. So the same way that I would never get on a trapeze without warming my shoulders and my back and all the rest of it up because I will get injured, you wouldn't start a workout in the gym without warming up, don't start writing without warming up either.

**Joe:** Okay.

**Vicky:** You can do these exercises at the start of every writing session if you like. You don't have to. I think they're a good one. So, the first one, exercise numero one is the modernist poetry exercise.

**Joe:** Urgh. See that's worse than trying to write the thing I need to write.

**Vicky:** Well, maybe, we'll see. Here's how it works. You open a blank page, either paper or on your computer, and you write the first word that comes into your head.

**Joe:** Spoons.

**Vicky:** Spoons? Yeah, cool, could be anything, spoons. Now write another word, unrelated to the first word.

**Joe:** Jellyfish.

**Vicky:** Spoons and jellyfish, I like it. Must be disconnected from the previous word. Your perfectionist inner dickhead may not like this but, you know, you can ignore him 'cause he's a dick, then write a third word.

**Joe:** Artichoke.

**Vicky:** Spoons, jellyfish, artichoke. And then a fourth word?

**Joe:** Carpet.

**Vicky:** Cool. So there we have, and then you can play with the words as well. Listen to the sounds that they make rather than their meaning, think Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear's nonsense rhymes, so you

can make up new words and you can come up with random nouns and you can turn nouns into verbs and vice versa. You can break all the rules of grammar and don't use any punctuation and don't be embarrassed. So, what have we got? We've got spoons, jellyfish.

**Joe:** Artichoke.

**Vicky:** Artichoke, carpet. Okay, so we could have spoon the jellyfish with the artichoke, carpet the palanquin.

**Joe:** Right.

**Vicky:** But that was kind of the point, it's ridiculous. So, here's one I made earlier.

**Joe:** Okay.

**Vicky:** This is one that I share in my new book which is available to pre-order now. And it goes socks on trivet, glue stick hides in Earl Gray tea, halo the spatula and bromate the sally, petrichor on the palanquin.

**Joe:** Right.

**Vicky:** Makes no sense at all.

**Joe:** Right.

**Vicky:** Petrichor's a great word.

**Joe:** It is.

**Vicky:** Do you know what it means?

**Joe:** Yes.

**Vicky:** Awesome. Do you know what it means, dear listener and reader? Most people won't.

**Joe:** I was really pleased the other day to be able to slip in the word octothorp into the conversation and you didn't know what it was.

**Vicky:** I know, and I've forgotten what it was.

**Joe:** Yes!

**Vicky:** What is it?

**Joe:** It's the proper name for the pound sign.

**Vicky:** Do you mean the hash sign?

**Joe:** Why yes, but the pound sign, it's the slightly more proper word for the hash sign.

**Vicky:** I know. Why is it called a pound, why is that?

**Joe:** There's a long complicated reason, I can't go into it right now.

**Vicky:** Shall we do a podcast? You don't know do you?

**Joe:** No, I do, it's all to do with erm, it's to do with weights and measures.

**Vicky:** Well let's do a podcast on it one day because it's relevant to writing and stuff and I'm a nerd.

**Joe:** And stuff.

**Vicky:** Okay, so that is, that's the first thing. Come up with words you never knew you knew, make up words, it's a really good game for exercising your creative muscles and letting go of your need to get things right. It's good for loosening you up and have a play with it. Turn weird words into verbs. So the word Google used to be a noun and it's now a verb; you Google things. Hoover used to be a noun and now you Hoover things.

**Joe:** Okay.

**Vicky:** That kinda thing, and you can do that with anything. So haloing spatulas and bromating sallies, I don't know what the hell that means?

**Joe:** I think you can bromate things.

**Vicky:** Can you? Probably not a Sally though.

**Joe:** If she's amenable.

**Vicky:** Well, yeah. So yeah, do a little bit of modernist poetry, just whatever word comes into your head, get them on paper and then see if you can stick them together, and the more you do it, the easier it gets.

**Joe:** And the fewer blank pieces of paper you've got.

**Vicky:** And then you've got rid of that blank piece of paper because that is the mental block. Okay, do you wanna know the second?

**Joe:** The second one.

**Vicky:** The second writing exercise. The second writing exercise is the writer's write exercise. And I learned this from our of my mentors: John McCulloch.

**Joe:** Hi John.

**Vicky:** Hi John. And he tells me that he got it from a chap called Steve Manning.

**Joe:** Hi Steve.

**Vicky:** I don't know who Steve Manning is.

**Joe:** Neither do I.

**Vicky:** Hi Steve. It's a really good activity actually and it works very well. I guess is kind of a variation on the Pomodoro technique, have you heard of that?

**Joe:** I have.

**Vicky:** Yeah, that's where you set a timer and you just do stuff for 25 minutes, or however long you set it for. Okay, so, here is how you do it. You get a timer of some description, and if you haven't got a clock or whatever then you can just go onto Google and type timer in and it'll set a timer for you and then bingle at you when it's done.

**Joe:** Cool.

**Vicky:** Set it for five minutes, grab a piece of paper and a pen or a word processing document and write down these three words: flamingo, cheese, pajamas. Pick one of the three words as the first word you write and it must be the first word of the first sentence you write. So, flamingo.

**Joe:** Right.

**Vicky:** I'm choosing. Start your timer and start writing. Write as fast as you can, don't stop to edit, write anything that comes into your head. The other two words; cheese and pajamas, must appear at least once in your first paragraph and after that just go wild.

**Joe:** Okay.

**Vicky:** And then write for the whole five minutes, don't stop to think, don't stop to edit, just don't stop and you will find by the time the timer stops you'll be pleasantly surprised at how high quality it is. The first paragraph might be nonsense but if you just write then you'll find that your brain puts stuff together and it actually comes out quite well. This is a really good exercise to do if you're stuck, for example, on a chapter of your book and you just can't get started with it, try the exercise with key words from your chapter.

**Joe:** Okay.

**Vicky:** So, for example, I might try this exercise if I was writing on dealing with your inner dickhead. So I might have, my three words might be inner dickhead, as one word, perfectionism, fear. They might be my three words

and so I might start my sentence with the word perfectionism and say perfectionism is the tool that my inner dickhead uses to create fear in my head and then I would carry on from there because that's actually quite a good, it's not a good start to use as the final chapter of the book but it's a good start to get your thoughts flowing and it's like okay, what is the problem that I need to write about here? You use those three words. You'll probably need to throw away the first paragraph or two but I bet after that you'll have something that you can use.

**Joe:** Something for your shitty first draft and.

**Vicky:** Yep.

**Joe:** Off you go.

**Vicky:** Exactly.

**Joe:** Cool.

**Vicky:** Fix the typos later because they don't matter. If you are somebody who has to fix typos, either turn off your spell check so it doesn't highlight stuff as you're writing or put a piece of paper over your screen or something.

**Joe:** And just blather it out.

**Vicky:** And just blather it out, yeah. That's a really good one. This is a particularly good one if you don't wanna do a creative exercise like the modernist poetry. This is a really good one if you're like, right, I'm stuck on this specific thing, choose your three key words and start writing about them even if they're nonsense.

**Joe:** Cool.

**Vicky:** Yeah, I like that one. And number three, exercise number three is the mundane story exercise and I use this quite often. If you read my daily emails you will know that I do this quite often. 'Cause a good way to start writing is to find a story, just a story, and then link it to the topic that you're writing about, and this is why I collect stories, this is why I save things that I

hear and read and I've got massive files on my computer full of random stories. So, the example that I'm gonna use is I wanted to write about how, the big problem with most websites is that they're bad and confusing and people don't know what do to with them and I was like well that's a just really dull topic to write about, oh, most websites are boring and bad and blah, blah, blah. So I was like well what analogy can I make? And the analogy that I could make, 'cause this had happened to me earlier in the day, was that I had gone looking for an egg timer in the kitchen and I couldn't find it anywhere and I was like oh my God, I think it might be in dun, dun, dun... The kitchen drawer of doom.

**Joe:** Right.

**Vicky:** 'Cause everybody has a kitchen drawer of doom don't they?

**Joe:** They exist.

**Vicky:** It's a kitchen drawer that is just filled with crap and things that will bite your fingers and just.

**Joe:** Old chopsticks.

**Vicky:** Old chopsticks and mouse droppings probably and just, urgh, all sorts of badness and so you're like urgh, I've gotta go into the kitchen drawer of doom and I used it as an enology because bad websites are kinda like the kitchen drawer of doom. You land on them and you're like I literally have no idea what to do next, if I'm in the right place, or even what this business does and so what you do is, what I did with the egg timer thing, is I don't, I bleurgh, my brain stopped working and I didn't like it and I went to Amazon and I bought a new egg timer and that is what will happen to people if your website is terrible and it resembles a kitchen drawer of doom, people will leave your website and go to Amazon to get what they want. Does that make sense?

**Joe:** Mm.

**Vicky:** So that's a really good way. If you've got a topic that you want to talk about, have a look at all the stories that you've collected, have a think about

conversations that you've had, TV shows you've seen, films you've seen, is there something that you can take and flip into an analogy for the point that you want to make?

**Joe:** Cool.

**Vicky:** Yeah, and that's your three writing exercises, that's three things that you can use, the three techniques you can use to get you over the blank page of doom.

**Joe:** Nice.

**Vicky:** Yeah. So the blank page of doom is never gonna disappear for good. I write for a living, I've written millions of words and I still get stuck but it doesn't have to be insurmountable, it shouldn't stop you from writing, it shouldn't stop you from getting stuff down on paper and finishing your book, or writing your blog post or whatever it is that you want to do because all you have to do is start. That's all you have to do and in this podcast I've given you three ways to get words on paper, which is the most important thing.

**Joe:** Sure.

**Vicky:** If these three things don't work for you, just close your eyes and mash the keyboard with your fingers until actual words, until your fingers feel compelled to start producing words because there's only so long you can do that before you're like I need to type, I need to type things, and then things will fall out of your brain and onto the computer screen.

**Joe:** And then you edit like hell.

**Vicky:** And then you edit like hell, yes. So what's the takeaway this week, Joe?

**Joe:** I guess it's write, write, write things down, just write, even if it's rubbish, write it.

**Vicky:** You said gibberish there.



**Joe:** Even if it's gibberish, sorry, sorry. I'll look at the notes next time. Yes, blank pages are beaten by having things written on them.

**Vicky:** Yes, profound. Joe Fraser, 2019. I love that you're such a philosopher.

**Joe:** I try, I try.

**Vicky:** Yeah?

**Joe:** Yeah.

**Vicky:** Right, next week we're gonna deconstruct my controversial statement that there's no such thing as writer's block and then I'm gonna wait for the haters to roll in.

**Joe:** Well, it's a statement.

**Vicky:** It is a statement. So yeah, next week we're gonna look at what is writer's block, why it's not a thing and the psychology behind it really.

**Joe:** Of things that aren't.

**Vicky:** Of things that aren't, yes.

**Joe:** We can talk about purple.

**Vicky:** We can talk about purple. Oh, we're gonna talk about, I'm gonna, hang on, hang on.

**Joe:** Purple.

**Vicky:** Purple, I've just written that in big capital letters. Purple. So, yeah, tune in next week because then you'll get to hear about the secrets of purple.

**Joe:** Mm.

**Vicky:** Right, what's going on at Superheroes land? So, my book is having some final illustrations done by Julia, hi Julia!

**Joe:** Hi Julia!

**Vicky:** I'm really excited. And then I'll be getting a proof copy sent to me, hopefully in the next week or so, hi Bill! But you can pre-order the book right now at [www.moxiebooks.co.uk/preorderthebook](http://www.moxiebooks.co.uk/preorderthebook), all one word, link is in the show notes. I'm so excited.

**Joe:** Nice.

**Vicky:** I'm so proud of this book.

**Joe:** Cool.

**Vicky:** I'm also terrified that it's a big pile of shit and people will hate it but I'm also really proud of it.

**Joe:** That's just what happens though, isn't it, when you publish a book?

**Vicky:** Yeah, yeah.

**Joe:** Terrifying.

**Vicky:** And if you are thinking I'd quite like to write a book but it's really scary and how do these people who have it all, have their shit together and know what they're doing, how do they do it? I'm terrified. I'm terrified.

**Joe:** But you wrote it all down and it's in a book.

**Vicky:** Yeah, and I'm really proud of it, and also I'm really terrified that it's a big pile of shit. So, yeah. You can do and do that, you can go and order my big pile of shit. You can go and order all of my neuroses neatly packaged in tree based media.

**Joe:** Nice.

**Vicky:** So if you have listened to every episode of this podcast, email me with your postal address and I will send you a little special super fan gift because I think that's bonkers.

**Joe:** You're completely crazy.

**Vicky:** Yeah, but also we really appreciate it, thank you. And if you like this podcast, please go to iTunes and leave us a rating.

**Joe:** Mm, five stars.

**Vicky:** Five stars, and review us as well and go wherever you get your podcasts from and subscribe to us and leave us a review there and share it. If you know somebody who will enjoy this nonsense or if you know somebody who gets stuck writing, send them a link to this episode. Just send them a link. Yeah, I was gonna give the old URL out then but I'm gonna have a new website by the time this is up. My God, I'm so excited. I'm really proud of my website as well. Right, chips, it's time for chips.

**Joe:** Time for chips.

**Vicky:** Thank you so much for listening. We'll be back same time next week talking about purple.

**Joe:** Nice.

**Vicky:** Bye.

**Joe:** Bye.

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