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## Dare to Be Bold

*Pascale Duguay* / 2017-12-22

For the last couple of months, I've been very bold. I finally managed to shut down the part of my brain that says, "Who do you think you are?" and allowed myself to ask for the work I wanted and the money I deserved.

Here's what I did:

First, I changed the way I communicate with magazine and book editors. Up to now, I had dealt with silence from my pitches by assuming I'd been rejected and moved on. I squashed my fear of appearing bothersome and sent not one but two follow-ups. These are super short messages, simply asking the editor if they've had a chance to read my pitch yet. One editor told me that my first two emails to her had gone unnoticed. She actually thanked me for following-up and ended up buying my short story!



I also sent out 20 letters of introductions to various toy companies in the US and Canada to offer them content writing and translating. I underlined my expertise and strengths then tweaked my letter to match each company's style. After receiving several enthusiastic we'll-keep-your-name-on-file, I finally found a taker. The one major difference between the taker and the maybes? I pinpointed exactly how I could help them. Looking over their website, I noticed flaws in the content and brought it to their attention. Voilà— instant interest!

When asked for my rates, all of my self-doubts resurfaced, cautioning me to ask for less. I knew from past experience that if I asked for my regular rate, I risked being turned down. Then again, did I really want to cheapen myself and my work? I finally chose to keep my regular rate and replied with "For this type of work, I'm usually paid \$X." which I felt opened the door for negotiation. It worked so well that they accepted my price.

While I was busy churning out LOIs and sending out pitches and follow-ups, I unexpectedly received an offer through a former colleague to do content revision and translation for a children's book publisher in France. This time I was offered a flat fee. Although I was extremely flattered and the project really appealed to me, the fee was quite low. After mulling it over, I took my courage in both hands and

sent back a message saying that I'd love to work on the project but the fee seemed a bit on the low side. Would they consider raising it? And they did!

All of this might not have been possible had I not believed deep down that I possessed the qualifications and ability to do the work. In her book, [Making a Living Without a Job: Winning Ways for Creating Work That You Love](#), Barbara J. Winter stresses the importance of working on raising our self-esteem. As she says, "The link between self-esteem and successful self-bossing is so strong that it deserves to be a top priority for anyone who aspires to be joyfully jobless."

Low self-esteem can affect anyone, but perhaps part-time writers even more so, especially if you introduce what you do by saying, "Oh, I just write part-time." The thing we need to remember is that we have more to offer, because we have more experiences to share. Many of us have qualifications in several professional fields: we are parents, we are volunteers, we have interesting hobbies, and on top of all that, we write. What's not to love?

So be bold. Go after the writing you want, keep yourself at the forefront of editors' minds, ask for fair compensation, and see what happens!

Bio: Pascale Duguay is a freelance writer, translator (French/English), high school librarian, and founder of [ThePartTimeWriter.com](#). She lives in the lively bilingual community of the Quebec Eastern Townships.