

The Modern Editor Podcast – Episode 2: 3 Tips for Finding Editing Education

Tara Whitaker: [0:03] Welcome to *The Modern Editor Podcast*, where we talk about all things editing and what it's like to run an editorial business in today's world. I'm your host, Tara Whitaker. Let's get to it.

Tara Whitaker: [0:18] Hello, thank you so much for tuning in today. We are going to talk about three tips I have for you for finding education for your business. Now, what I mean by education is editing skills, business skills, coaching, really anything you need to start and grow your editorial business. It is one of the most common questions I get asked as a coach for freelance editors—where do I start? What do I need to learn? How do I elevate my skills? And those are incredibly important questions. And I am a very big proponent of always learning—which we'll get into here in a little bit—but it is also slightly difficult to answer those questions because of a few things which we're also going to get into. So, we're going to talk about that. We're going to talk about how to find quality education. And then we're going to talk about the vetting process. So, when you find those people, those organizations, how do you vet them to see if they're the right fit for you?

Tara Whitaker: [0:18] So first off, before we dive into those tips—like I mentioned, I am a very big proponent of learning. Always be learning. My poor Freelance Editors Club members know I say this constantly—always be learning. It does not matter if you have been in business for a day, a decade, four decades, whatever. We should always be looking to improve our skills, our business skills, our mindset, everything because that's the only way we're going to grow. It's also super important as an editor to know how to research and know where to find the answers. And this is going to be great practice for you—if you're just starting out—finding where to get education by researching. None of us will ever know all of the answers to everything. I have been editing for a long time, and every time I come across lay vs. lie, I have to look it up. And I probably will until the day I die. I just can't grasp it. So, there will always be things that you have to look up. And there's always going to be something new that pops up in a project that you have to research and find. So again, this is a great opportunity for you to get used to how to research and how to do that.

Tara Whitaker: [2:26] So why I say that it's a little difficult to answer the question of “where do I start?” is really mainly one reason: there is no one direct path to freelance editing. There's no certification that certifies us as proofreaders or editors. Now, what I mean by that is there's no governing body in the United States where you can learn, do a course, what have you and in return, you become a “certified editor.” That does not exist. So, if you ever see someone saying they are a certified editor or certified

proofreader in the United States, chances are they're just misspeaking. Now, you can earn a certificate in editing or—you know—take a course. There are many universities that offer editing certificates, and you can earn a certificate, but that does not make you certified.

Tara Whitaker: [3:26] So, there's no one way of becoming a freelance editor. We come from different careers and different backgrounds. You know, it's not like—say—a doctor who has very specific steps they have to take in order to become a doctor—you know—they have to go to a certain school for a certain number of years and do certain amounts of residency and all of that, which, they should. We don't want doctors that don't have any education. But editing is a different field, right? We don't need those specific criteria in order to become a freelance editor. And quite frankly, I think a governing body, rather the lack of a governing body, is good. I used to not think so—to be honest—when I started because I really liked having a clear-cut, this is what you do, do it sort of thing. And after being in business, I've realized that that's honestly a form of gatekeeping within our industry. And it's not applicable to everyone. We all come from different backgrounds, and to have a governing body dictating that for this field, for the editing profession, I don't think is necessary. I think it's good that we don't have one. But on the flip side, that's where finding quality education and knowing how to find quality education comes into play.

Tara Whitaker: [4:45] Now, I will say this—and I kind of mentioned this before—you do not need a college degree, a master's degree, an editing certificate, or any of that to become a freelance editor. You certainly can get those if you'd like. If you can afford it and want to pursue that, rock on! Great, that's awesome. But it's not required. It should not be a barrier for you to start your editing business. And like I said before, it's knowing where to get the knowledge and researching and learning that's more important than saying you have a four-year degree in XYZ. Okay?

Tara Whitaker: [5:24] So, the first place you're going to look is professional organizations. Now, for editing, there are quite a few. And it depends on where you're located, although you can join organizations in other countries depending on their criteria. But there's ACES—and I'm going to list these in the show notes as well, so don't think you have to write them all down. I'll have links to them in the show notes. There's the Editorial Freelancers Association (the EFA), Editors Canada, and the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading (CIEP). And then there are also organizations specific to different niches and editing, like scientific editing. Those are a great bet that they're going to have vetted qualified professionals teaching skills that you would need for your editing business. They have courses; they have webinars; there's usually networking opportunities and job boards—they're great. So that's your first stop. Now, I do realize that membership can be a barrier, the price, but it's a business expense. And I highly encourage you to check them out, see which ones would fit for

you and then make it happen. Because think about it, if you were to join one of those organizations and then got a job, it would more than pay for the membership, just with that one job. So, check those out first.

Tara Whitaker: [6:42] The second place to find quality education is other industry professionals. Now, I really didn't think this was a thing. But apparently, there is some chatter in the industry about how this is frowned upon—which, again, surprised me—learning from other editors and proofreaders, which I think is a great idea. I mean, what better people to learn from than the people that are already in the industry and have known and done and learned these things and can help you do it in a quicker, more organized fashion? And not only editors and proofreaders, but other subject matter experts like social media marketing, accounting, or anything related to your business. Those are all incredible places and people to learn from. I personally love learning from other people in the industry—love it—highly recommend. But I will say that it comes with a little caveat, which we're going to talk about in a minute, which is with vetting them. But they are a great place to look for education and training.

Tara Whitaker: [7:55] And then third, shocker of all shocks, we're talking about editing—books! There are so many books out there that cover every topic you can possibly imagine. And I'm also going to link, in the show notes, some of my favorites. And then figure out what type of editing you want to do. If you want to edit books, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, or CMOS for short, is going to be your new best friend. They have a physical copy and an online copy. They have free practice worksheets online; they have a blog; they have a monthly Q&A. I mean, immerse yourself in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and that is your best way to learn how to edit books. And if you're in journalism, or news or PR, then you're probably going to use AP (Associated Press) style. But they, again, have a physical copy, an online version, and they—I think, the last time I checked, they had paid quizzes, but they're a very nominal fee to learn and practice with. But books! Self-teaching through books is such a great way to learn and shouldn't be discounted.

Tara Whitaker: [9:08] Now, it's not usually enough. If you—you know—read a book and you need help, then, of course, you would find some professionals, some industry colleagues that you could ask. And that's again, where the research comes in or having a coach or a group or a mentor that you can turn to for help like that, which is why I created the Freelance Editors Club.

Tara Whitaker: [9:32] So, now when we talk about vetting these people that we find, here's the first thing you're going to do, which is the most obvious thing in the world, but I'm going to say it anyways. You're going to google the shit out of them. We have so much information at our fingertips with the internet. We can look at everything they have online, their social media profiles, their websites, their blogs, their podcasts, and their

YouTube videos. Everything. You're going to check them out online. And this is going to depend on each person and what's important to you, but you might want to consider looking at both their professional online presence as well as their personal online presence. For me, I want to learn from people whose values align with mine. So, I will look them up personally and professionally because some people present themselves differently through their business than they do personally. Which is fine; that's a choice. But I want to make sure that my values are in alignment with theirs. So, if you're the same way, I suggest you just google everything you possibly can about them and read every article, every link you can find, okay?

Tara Whitaker: [10:47] You're also going to—when you're doing this Google stalking—look for their testimonials and for people who have worked with them in the past. And you can also reach out to the people that you want to learn from and ask if you can speak to a client, current client or past client or member or student to get a sense of what they're like. If someone ever came to me—this hasn't happened yet, but if it did—if someone said, *I would love to join the Freelance Editors Club, but I want to talk to a current member to see, you know, like an inside scoop*, I would be thrilled to give them that. Obviously, I would ask a club member for permission. I think that's such a smart way to get to know what a person is about, what a course or a program is about. And honestly, if I approached someone and asked for that and they said no, it would be a slight red flag for me. It could be for a variety of reasons—they might be new and not have any yet, which is totally fine. Or they don't have permission, again, fine. But I would be a little apprehensive if they didn't provide that info. All you can do is ask and see what they say. But that is going to speak volumes when it comes to talking to people who've actually worked with them before.

Tara Whitaker: [12:11] And then something that's—again, this might differ for different people, but I want to know the price right up front. If I'm buying a course, joining a program, or joining a membership, I want to know what the price is. Obviously, with editing it's a little different because it varies per project. But I want an amount, and I don't want it buried 50 pages down the website. I want to know clearly and quickly what something costs. I want that transparency. If there's no transparency, or they only give one button on how to join for a ginormous page, and it's at the very bottom, that ticks me off. That's not transparent; that's making it more difficult. I don't like it. So, for me, that's something that I check on.

Tara Whitaker: [12:56] And those are my main three tips. Just remember, you cannot be certified—in the United States, you cannot be a certified editor. You can earn a certificate, but you cannot be certified. Now you know where to find education and training. And when you find those people, how do you vet them to make sure that they're the right fit for you. And never forget to always be learning. I would love to chat with you more about this. I don't know if you are aware, but I offer free 15-minute calls to

talk about whatever you'd like and to see if I can help you with your business either through coaching or joining the Freelance Editors Club. So, you can schedule a time at any time at tarawhitaker.com, and I would love to talk. So, until next time, keep learning, keep growing, and know that you've got this! Take care.

Tara Whitaker: [13:49] Thank you so much for tuning into today's episode. If you enjoy *The Modern Editor Podcast*, I would be so grateful if you left us a review over on iTunes. And as always, you can head to tarawhitaker.com to connect with me and stay in touch. We'll chat again soon.