

Content Marketing Strategies that Work



(even for NEW & Small BUSINESSES)

By Julia Granowicz-Johnson

Ready to Learn the Content Marketing Strategies Guaranteed to Grow Your Business Faster?

There's no end to the things you have to track when marketing your small business. It can be exhausting—especially in the digital age of content marketing. But when the right strategies are used effectively, content becomes the most important tool in your digital marketing toolbox.

So... where do you start?

Blog posts? Social media? Do you have to create videos on YouTube and TikTok, or can you skip all that?

That kind of overwhelm leads you down an endless rabbit hole. Should you update your website copy? Is your SEO up to par? What exactly is a lead magnet anyway?

Don't do that to yourself. It'll only stress you out, making it harder to get anything done effectively.

If you're struggling with traditional marketing like TV, radio, or magazine ads and think digital content marketing is the answer—you're probably right.

The good news? You downloaded this eBook, which means you're already looking for answers. By the time you finish reading, I aim to have answered most (hopefully all) of your questions on using content marketing to successfully grow your business.

But first—why should you trust what I say?

I'm a freelance copywriter and SEO/content strategist who's been working in one of the most restrictive industries for almost a decade. I primarily write for cannabis and hemp/CBD brands, where marketing restrictions are everywhere. You must be careful about what you say, how you say it, and what visuals you use.

Social media profiles risk deletion at any moment. Many brands, especially those in recreational or medicinal cannabis, can't rely on paid ads like most companies can.

It's an industry where you really have to get creative just to get the word out about your brand, let alone promote sales, discounts, or new products.

Working with these brands to find creative solutions that drive sales taught me that content marketing is powerful—and when done right, fairly inexpensive compared to paid ads or old-school print marketing.

Success Isn't Always the Best Motivation

My goal with this book is helping small businesses, entrepreneurs, and growing brands achieve success through content marketing while keeping costs low. These are relatively simple strategies you've probably heard before.

But unless they're used together, with compelling copy and a publishing/SEO strategy geared toward driving sales, your efforts will likely fall flat.

You might see some success—but nothing compared to what you could achieve if your content marketing ran like a well-oiled machine. I plan to show you how to make that happen quickly. I can tell you it works because you're reading this book right now.

See, I'm doing an experiment: How quickly can content marketing really be successful? Let me give you a rundown on my situation and the strategy I'm going to teach you. We'll revisit using future success as motivation later—there's more to it than you might think.

From Setbacks to Success: My Freelance Writing Journey

As of December 8th, 2023, what started as a blog post for Medium has become this eBook—downloaded from either the Nightowl Copywriting website or my Buy Me a Coffee page. Both sites are still works in progress, and I've barely posted on Medium since opening my account.

My Starting Point: Nightowl Copy Stats

My social media presence was practically nonexistent. My Facebook page (formerly Julia Granowicz-Johnson journalist page) had 900 followers but only two posts since 2017—hardly an "active" following. My Twitter account disappeared during the rebrand to X, forcing me to start over with zero followers. Both Instagram accounts (@NightowlCopy and @NightowlCreator) were brand new with no followers.

LinkedIn offered the closest thing to an audience—over 1,000 connections, though I hadn't posted in years. Until now, I'd relied entirely on cold pitching and job boards to reach clients.

It always seemed overwhelming—managing my own audience while serving clients too. But the most successful writers aren't just writers for hire. After 10 years of copywriting, shouldn't I call myself an expert? What separated me from them was simple: they were more than just writers. Until recently, that's all I had the focus to be.

Watching It All Slip Away—Twice

I'll be honest here, though it's difficult. I gave up on my freelance writing career completely—twice. Yet here you are, reading a book I wrote. My story proves that no matter what obstacles you face, you can build a successful online business through content marketing.

The First Fall (2018)

From 2015 to 2018, I had a solid gig with The Marijuana Times (MJT), earning \$700-1,000 weekly. One morning, an email changed everything: funding issues meant cutting everyone from two daily articles to two weekly, eliminating my long-form features. My income plummeted to \$100 per week overnight.

I struggled for months, pitching heavily through ProBlogger, FreelanceWritingGigs, and Upwork. Despite creating All Things Cannabis—complete with website, social media, and Patreon—I failed to follow through. By spring 2018, I was back at Five Guys full-time.

In 2019, my cousin at SYNLawn (an AstroTurf branch) needed content quickly. I wrote my first white paper, added press releases to my portfolio, and things picked up again.

When COVID hit, MJT eliminated remaining staff writers. The publication never recovered, losing its Google News front-page status. Though I continued SEO work for SYNLawn, the company had to cut my contract two months after I left food service for good.

The Second Fall (2020-2022)

This time, I didn't run to full-time employment, but fear paralyzed me. When we couldn't pay rent for three months, our landlords issued a 30-day notice. We packed our Chevy Cavalier with essentials, stored what we could, and left the rest curbside.

With nowhere local to go, my husband, our cat Bella, and I drove 3,000 miles from Florida to California to stay with friends. The breathing room allowed me to rebuild my client list, securing contracts with Leafwell, CannaMD, Evergreen Organix, and others. PPP loans helped us upgrade equipment and renew subscriptions.

Then I became pregnant, and both my best-paying clients dropped contracts a month before our son's birth. We were approved for \$15,000 in EIDL grants, but banking issues meant we never received the funds.

After six months of fighting for that money while caring for a newborn, I gave up in March 2022. A friend's recommendations led me to a collections job—good pay, office environment. But the constant phone abuse created anxiety that cost me the few clients I was juggling.

Realizing how much time I was losing with my rapidly growing son, I applied to remote content agencies until someone hired me. I quit the call center and meant it this time.

The Game-Changing Moment

While working in that office, I developed organizational habits from colleagues, especially one who became my mentor. Her single statement changed my world:

"You know, you remind me of me when I'm not on my ADHD meds."

Could I really have ADHD? I'd joked about it my whole life, dismissing it as being a "flake." After researching how ADHD presents in women, I sought psychiatric help.

Realizing I'm the Only One Who Can Make It Happen

Getting diagnosed and medicated was transformative. I finally recognized my roadblocks—procrastination, imposter syndrome, hyperfocus cycles, executive function issues—for what they really were.

But anyone with ADHD knows medication is only part of the solution. It requires constant effort, therapy, coaching, and support from loved ones. I'm extremely fortunate to have access to these resources.

With a great therapist using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), I'm building productive habits and stopping the spiraling feeling many with ADHD experience. Goal-oriented coaching adds another layer of support.

I'll share these stories and many more in depth in another book I'm working on—*Successful Marketing for Freelancers with ADHD*—as well as in regular blog posts on my new Medium publication, the Nightowl Creator Chronicles.

This journey taught me that content marketing isn't just about writing—it's about understanding yourself, your obstacles, and your strengths. Now I'm ready to show you how this strategy can work for you too.

Why I Shared These Stories With You

My journey shows that content marketing works even when everything else falls apart. When traditional client acquisition methods failed me repeatedly, content marketing became my lifeline. It's not just about writing—it's about building relationships, establishing trust, and creating systems that work even when you're not actively pitching.

The strategies I'm about to share aren't just theoretical. They're battle-tested by someone who's failed multiple times and finally figured out what actually works.

What is Content Marketing and Why is it Important?

Maybe you're new to marketing or have a small online business but aren't sure where to start. Someone probably told you that an online presence requires a solid content marketing strategy. Even with that advice, you're still not sure what it means or how to implement it.

You're not alone. Most new business owners aren't marketers—they become marketers to grow their business.

Content marketing, simply put, grows an audience that converts into loyal customers by distributing useful, high-quality content that positions you as a trusted authority in your industry.

What counts as "content marketing"? Pretty much any digital content: blog posts, videos, social media posts, white papers, emails, press releases, and even your website copy.

If there's one piece of marketing advice you should take, it's this: **make sure you have a solid content marketing strategy.** On a smaller budget, great strategy and persuasive copy can provide bigger ROI than traditional marketing like print ads, radio, and TV commercials.

For perspective: **content marketing costs 62% less than traditional marketing and generates three times the leads.**

These days, solid content strategy is essential—everyone turns to the internet when deciding whether a brand is trustworthy. But a well-designed website isn't enough if your copy is weak and your strategy is nonexistent.

What's the Difference Between Digital Marketing and Content Marketing?

I often see "digital marketing" and "content marketing" used interchangeably, but there are distinctive differences.

Though absolutely intertwined, **digital marketing is more "in your face"** (think discount emails where the advertisement is the sole value). **Content marketing is more subtle and aims to provide more value than your product or service alone.**

Digital marketing example: Walmart and Target emails saying "We noticed something caught your eye..." followed by recently viewed items. These forgotten cart reminders bring in thousands in sales, but their only value is reminding you about a product you considered buying.

Content marketing example: Emails from copywriters, online entrepreneurs, ADHD coaches, or therapy sites like BetterHelp often provide free value. They share experiences, industry statistics, personal hacks, or productivity insights—always something useful, relevant, or motivating.

I stay subscribed to content marketing emails whether I plan to buy something or not. I've made purchases later because I trusted and valued the advice being shared.

My take: Digital marketing works best for big name brands, while content marketing is for brands wanting to grow their industry presence to become big names. Both can benefit all brands, but if you're a growing small business with limited budget, you'll likely see better returns focusing on content marketing in your early years.

Benefits of Content Marketing for Businesses

Content marketing offers unique advantages, especially for smaller businesses:

Cost-Effectiveness: Content marketing costs significantly less than traditional advertising while generating higher-quality leads who are already interested in what you offer.

Long-Term Value: Unlike paid ads that stop working when you stop paying, quality content continues attracting and converting customers months or years after publication.

Authority Building: Consistent, valuable content establishes you as an industry expert, making customers more likely to choose you over competitors.

SEO Benefits: Search engines love fresh, relevant content. Regular publishing improves your rankings, making you easier to find.

Relationship Building: Content marketing creates genuine connections with your audience, leading to higher customer lifetime value and more referrals.

Measurable Results: Unlike traditional marketing, you can track exactly which content drives traffic, leads, and sales, allowing continuous optimization.

Content Marketing Strategies That Work (Even for Small & New Businesses)

You know content marketing works. You've heard the statistics. But here's what most guides won't tell you: **the difference between content that generates "engagement" and content that generates revenue lies in where you target prospects in their buying journey.**

Most businesses waste months creating top-funnel content for people who aren't ready to buy. Smart businesses focus on bottom-funnel content for prospects who are.

Why Bottom-Funnel Content + Email Marketing Creates Your Sales Machine

While your competitors chase vanity metrics with "awareness" content, you'll be capturing prospects who are actively comparing solutions and ready to make decisions.

Here's the strategic advantage:

Immediate Revenue Impact: Bottom-funnel content targets prospects who already understand their problem and are evaluating solutions. Your content becomes the deciding factor.

Higher Conversion Rates: When someone searches "best [your service] for [specific use case]" or "how to choose [your industry solution]," they're not browsing—they're buying.

Shorter Sales Cycles: Email sequences to bottom-funnel prospects require fewer touchpoints because you're not educating from zero—you're positioning and persuading.

Qualification Automation: Your content prequalifies prospects by addressing specific objections and use cases, so your sales conversations start further down the pipeline.

Competitive Displacement: Prospects comparing you to competitors need specific, persuasive reasons to choose you. Your content provides those reasons at the exact moment they're deciding.

How to Dominate Search Results When Prospects Are Ready to Buy

Stop chasing broad keywords your competitors are already ranking for. Target high-intent, comparison-based searches that capture prospects in decision mode.

Target Decision-Stage Keywords:

- "Best [your service] for [specific industry/use case]"
- "[Your service] vs [competitor] comparison"
- "How to choose [your solution category]"
- "[Your service] pricing and plans"
- "Why [specific technique/approach] works better than [alternative]"

Create Comparison-Focused Content: Write comprehensive guides that position your solution as the obvious choice. Don't just list features—demonstrate superiority through specific use cases, client results, and direct comparisons.

Local Decision Intent: Target prospects searching "[your service] near me," "[your service] in [city]," and "[best local provider] for [specific need]." These searches have immediate buying intent.

Build Authority Through Specificity: Instead of broad topics, create detailed content around specific implementation scenarios: "How [Industry] Companies Implement [Your Solution] to Achieve [Specific Outcome]."

Track Revenue-Generating Keywords: Focus on keywords that correlate with actual customers, not just traffic. Use Google Analytics to identify which search terms lead to conversions, then create more content targeting similar high-intent phrases.

The 5 Bottom-Funnel Content Strategies That Convert Prospects to Customers

These strategies target prospects who've moved past awareness and are actively evaluating solutions:

1. Position Your Blog as the Industry Authority for Buying Decisions

Your blog shouldn't just attract visitors—it should convert prospects who are ready to make purchasing decisions.

Decision-Stage Blog Topics:

- Detailed solution comparisons and buying guides
- Case studies showing specific client transformations
- "How to evaluate [your industry]" frameworks that subtly favor your approach
- Industry trend analysis that positions your solution as forward-thinking
- Cost-benefit analyses that demonstrate ROI

Conversion-Focused Blog Strategy:

- Every post should address a specific buying concern or objection
- Include client testimonials and results within educational content
- End each post with a clear next step (consultation, demo, assessment)
- Create content upgrades that qualify leads (ROI calculators, assessment tools)
- Use social proof throughout—don't save it just for sales pages

2. Create Lead Magnets That Qualify and Convert High-Intent Prospects

Stop offering generic "guides" to everyone. Create lead magnets that attract prospects who are already evaluating solutions like yours.

High-Converting Lead Magnets for Decision-Stage Prospects:

- ROI calculators specific to your industry
- "Buyer's checklist" for evaluating [your service category]
- Comparison charts and scorecards

- Free assessments that identify specific problems you solve
- Case study collections showing transformations in their industry

Qualification Through Value: Your lead magnet should require prospects to share information about their specific situation, budget, or timeline. This qualifies leads while providing immediate value.

Strategic Lead Magnet Placement: Promote these on:

- Comparison and buying guide blog posts
- Social media posts targeting competitor audiences
- Google Ads for high-intent keywords
- LinkedIn content aimed at decision-makers
- Guest posts on industry sites where prospects research solutions

3. Design Email Sequences That Move Prospects from Evaluation to Decision

Your email sequences should assume prospects already understand their problem and are comparing solutions. Focus on differentiation and proof.

Bottom-Funnel Email Sequence Structure:

Welcome Email: Immediately provide what they opted in for, then set expectations for how you'll help them make the best decision for their specific situation.

Authority Email: Share a detailed case study or client transformation that mirrors their likely situation.

Differentiation Email: Clearly explain what makes your approach different and more effective than alternatives they're considering.

Social Proof Email: Share multiple client testimonials, results, and third-party validation specific to their industry or use case.

Objection-Handling Email: Address the most common concerns prospects have before making a decision in your category.

Value-First Consultation Email: Offer a strategy session, assessment, or consultation that provides immediate value whether they hire you or not.

4. Choose Social Media Platforms Based on Where Decisions Are Made

Don't spread yourself thin on every platform. Focus on where your prospects research solutions and make purchasing decisions.

Platform-Specific Bottom-Funnel Strategies:

LinkedIn: Share case studies, industry insights, and thought leadership that demonstrates expertise. Connect with and engage prospects who are actively researching solutions.

Industry-Specific Communities: Participate in Facebook groups, Reddit communities, or industry forums where prospects ask for recommendations and compare providers.

Review and Comparison Sites: Maintain strong profiles on industry-specific directories, review sites, and comparison platforms where prospects research options.

YouTube: Create detailed "how-to-choose" videos, case study walkthroughs, and comparison content that prospects find during their research phase.

Success Metrics That Matter:

- Direct messages from prospects ready to discuss their project
- Comments from prospects asking about your services
- Referrals from connections who know prospects looking for solutions
- Shares from satisfied clients who become your advocates

5. Optimize Every Piece of Content to Capture High-Intent Prospects

Your SEO strategy should prioritize capturing prospects in decision mode, not just driving traffic.

Bottom-Funnel SEO Optimization:

Target Buyer Keywords: Focus on terms prospects use when comparing options, not just researching problems.

Create Comparison Landing Pages: Build dedicated pages comparing your solution to major competitors, optimized for "[Your Company] vs [Competitor]" searches.

Optimize for Local Decision Intent: If you serve local markets, dominate searches for "[service] + [location]" and "[best service provider] + [city]."

Use Schema Markup: Implement review schema, service schema, and business schema to stand out in search results with rich snippets.

Internal Linking Strategy: Guide prospects from informational content to decision-focused pages through strategic internal links.

Call-to-Action Optimization: Every page should have a clear next step that moves prospects closer to a purchasing decision—consultation, assessment, demo, or quote.

The Reality Check: Why This Approach Works for Small Businesses

Large companies can afford to play the long game with brand awareness content. You can't. You need content that generates revenue, not just engagement.

Bottom-funnel content marketing levels the playing field because:

- **Smaller volume, higher value:** You're targeting fewer prospects, but they're much more likely to convert
- **Lower competition:** Most businesses target top-funnel keywords, leaving bottom-funnel searches less competitive
- **Faster ROI:** Prospects are closer to purchasing, so your content investment pays off more quickly
- **Easier to measure:** You can directly track which content leads to customers, not just website visits

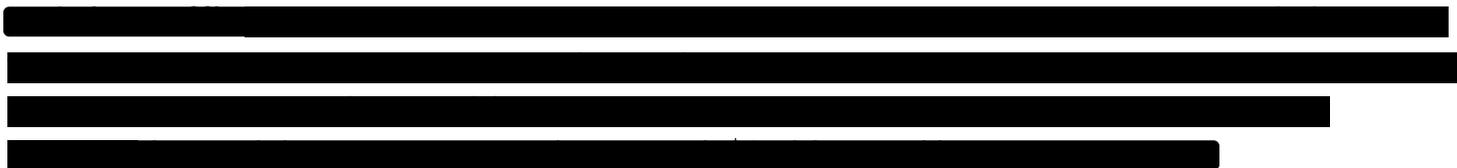
The Bottom Line: Stop trying to educate the entire internet about your industry. Start capturing the prospects who are already educated and ready to buy.

Your content should be the reason prospects choose you over your competitors—not just another voice in the awareness-building noise.

How You Know What I'm Saying Is Legit

Nightowl Copy Stats (Book Launch Update!)

Since implementing these exact strategies starting July of 2025, here's what happened:



This isn't overnight success—it's the result of consistent, strategic content creation combined with the relationship-building power of email marketing.

The experiment continues, and I'll share ongoing results in my Medium publication, Nightowl Creator Chronicles, and my upcoming book *Successful Marketing for Freelancers with ADHD*. Until October 2025, I'm leaving these results redacted.

Alternatives to Doing It All Yourself

Content marketing can feel overwhelming, especially when you're running a business. You don't have to do everything yourself—here are your options:

Pros and Cons of Outsourcing VS Hiring In-House VS DIY

DIY Content Marketing

- *Pros:* Complete control, lowest cost, deep understanding of your business
- *Cons:* Time-intensive, steep learning curve, may lack specialized skills
- *Best for:* Very small businesses, tight budgets, owners who enjoy writing

In-House Content Team

- *Pros:* Dedicated focus, brand consistency, immediate availability
- *Cons:* High ongoing costs, benefits, training requirements
- *Best for:* Established businesses with consistent content needs

Outsourcing Options:

Content Marketing Agency

- *Pros:* Full-service solutions, proven systems, multiple specialists
- *Cons:* Higher costs, less personal attention, potential communication gaps
- *Best for:* Businesses with \$5,000+ monthly marketing budgets

Freelancer (or Team of Freelancers)

- *Pros:* Specialized expertise, flexible arrangements, cost-effective
- *Cons:* Managing multiple relationships, varying quality, availability issues
- *Best for:* Growing businesses needing specific skills

Marketplaces (Fiverr, Upwork, nDash)

- *Pros:* Easy to find talent, competitive pricing, built-in protections
- *Cons:* Quality varies widely, limited relationship building, high turnover
- *Best for:* One-off projects or testing content needs

Choosing the Right Option for Your Business

Consider these factors:

- Monthly marketing budget
- Time availability for content creation
- Existing team skills
- Long-term growth plans
- Industry complexity

My recommendation: Start with DIY to understand what works for your audience, then outsource specific tasks as you grow. This approach builds your content marketing knowledge while freeing time for other business activities.

Ready to Get Started?

Content marketing isn't magic—it's a consistent, strategic effort that compounds over time. The strategies in this book work, but only if you implement them.

Start with one strategy, master it, then add others. Your future self will thank you for the relationships, authority, and sustainable growth you build through content marketing.

Remember: every expert was once a beginner. Every successful content marketer started with zero followers, subscribers, and blog readers. The difference between those who succeed and those who don't isn't talent—it's consistency and strategic thinking.

Nightowl Copy Offers a Lesser-Known Option

So, now that you know what content marketing is and what strategies are most likely to be successful—what's your next step? Do you start blogging immediately? Do you try to go it alone or should you hire a whole new department of creatives for content marketing strategy, SEO, and copywriting?

Would you like to know a secret? **There's another option.**

The Nightowl Copy Approach: Full-Funnel Content Marketing That Actually Converts

At Nightowl Copy, my husband and I have created something different. While he handles content and video editing, voiceover work, and serves as a fellow social media/content strategist, I focus on the copywriting and SEO strategy. When projects require skills outside our expertise or we hit capacity, we tap into our network of reliable fellow freelancers we've worked with for years.

But here's what makes us different: **we don't just create content—we create full-funnel content marketing campaigns.**

Our approach combines bottom-of-funnel SEO (targeting people ready to buy) with persuasive copywriting tactics and the trust-building power of content marketing. The result? More ready-to-buy leads, or at minimum, people curious enough to invest in learning more through strategically designed lead magnets paired with product or service-specific email funnels that nurture long-term prospects.

Three Ways to Work With Nightowl Copy

We understand that every business has different needs, budgets, and comfort levels with outsourcing. That's why we offer three distinct options:

Option 1: DIY Course - "Content Marketing Mastery"

Perfect for: Entrepreneurs who want to maintain complete control and have the time to implement strategies themselves.

This comprehensive course takes everything from this eBook and expands it with additional worksheets, step-by-step modules, and actionable templates. You'll get:

- Detailed content calendar templates
- Email funnel blueprints for different industries
- SEO keyword research worksheets
- Lead magnet creation guides
- Copy templates for blogs, emails, and social media
- Video tutorials walking through each strategy
- Access to our private community for ongoing support

You'll have everything needed to implement a professional content marketing system without paying for ongoing services.

Option 2: Content-Ready Packages - "Done-For-You Deliverables"

Perfect for: Business owners who understand marketing but don't have time to create everything from scratch.

We handle all the strategy, research, and content creation, then deliver everything in a ready-to-publish format. You maintain control over posting schedules and can make adjustments as needed. Each package includes:

- Monthly content calendars with optimized blog posts
- Email sequences tailored to your customer journey
- Social media content adapted from blog posts
- Lead magnet creation and landing page copy
- SEO optimization for all content
- Performance tracking templates

You get professional-grade content marketing materials without the full-service price tag.

Option 3: Full-Service Content Marketing - "Focus on Your Zone of Genius"

Perfect for: Established businesses ready to hand over content marketing to experts while they focus on what they do best.

This is our white-glove service where we integrate with your existing marketing team (or become your marketing team if you don't have one). After initial strategy sessions, we handle everything from start to finish:

- Complete content strategy development
- All content creation and optimization
- Email marketing automation setup and management
- Social media posting and engagement
- Lead magnet creation and funnel optimization
- Monthly performance reporting and strategy adjustments
- Ongoing optimization based on results

You focus on running your business—those reasons you started it in the first place—while we handle the content marketing that brings you qualified leads.

Why This Approach Works Better Than Traditional Agencies

Industry Expertise: Our background in highly regulated industries means we know how to create compelling content that converts, regardless of restrictions or competition.

Proven Results: The strategies we use for clients are the same ones that took Nightowl Copy from zero to consistent inbound leads in under 90 days.

Flexible Partnership: Unlike large agencies with rigid processes, we adapt our approach to your business needs, communication style, and growth goals.

Transparent Process: You'll always know what we're working on, why we're doing it, and how it's performing. No black-box marketing here.

Long-term Focus: We're not interested in quick wins that don't last. Our strategies build sustainable, compound growth that gets stronger over time.

Ready to Stop Spinning Your Wheels?

If you're tired of inconsistent results from your marketing efforts, ready to stop trading time for money, and want to build a content marketing system that works even when you're not actively promoting your business, let's talk.

Content marketing isn't just about creating content—it's about creating the right content for the right people at the right time, then nurturing those relationships until they're ready to buy.

The question isn't whether content marketing works (you're reading proof that it does). The question is: **how quickly do you want to see results?**

Your next ideal client is searching for solutions you provide right now. Will they find you, or your competition?

Ready to explore which Nightowl Copy option fits your business? Visit [NightowlCopywriting.com] to learn more about our services, or follow the Nightowl Creator Chronicles on Medium for ongoing content marketing insights and behind-the-scenes updates on building a successful freelance business with ADHD.