

Case Study: Robyn Kurdek Lands Two Retainer Clients by Following the B2B Biz Launcher Roadmap

"[B2B Biz Launcher] pushed me. It's pushed my business far beyond what I ever could have dreamed."

--Robyn Kurdek

Ed: Hey, Robyn. Thank you for coming on and talking to me today.

Robin: Oh, hey, Ed. Well, thanks so much for having me. I really appreciate it.

Ed: I want to start with a little bit of background. Tell us a little bit about what you do today, what kind of writing you do, what types of clients you write for, just so people can understand the work you do.

Robin: Sure. My niche is the defined contribution retirement plan market. Basically, I write a lot about 401K plans, 403Bs—basically retirement savings vehicles. The kind of clients I work with ... it runs the gamut. My sweet spot is retirement services providers. So, those would be the big names, like Prudential, Vanguard, Fidelity, those guys. I actually write for them through a backdoor channel, which I'll talk about in a minute. Then, I have some other clients that I basically do blog writing for and articles, and that kind of thing.

So, that's what I'm doing today.

Ed: Blogs, articles, what other types of projects have you done, already?

Robin: Sure. I've done some white papers. I've done some newsletters. Those are lot of fun, quarterly newsletters or something like that. The retirement industry lends itself really well to periodic updates and things are always changing in the industry in terms of regulations or different notices, for example, that plan sponsors have to send out to their employees. So, those things get updated on a consistent basis.

One of the things that happens a lot ... There's a lot of repetition, a lot of reminders. These people are very busy. They just don't have time to remember all this stuff. So, the providers or various, I guess, service providers will put out these periodic reminders, which creates an appetite for a large amount of content and consistent repetitive content.

Ed: That's good for us, isn't it?

Robin: Yeah. For sure.

Ed: Well, I'm assuming that you knew this industry because this doesn't seem like the kind of thing that you just pick, say, "Oh, I think this would be kind of interesting to write about." So, where did you come from? What's your background?

Robin: Definitely. I have 20 years of financial industry experience. I started out in corporate communications, actually. My first job was with Prudential. I worked on their ... They had an award-winning employee magazine at the time called "Prudential Leader." That's where I got my start in finance. It was not something that I had planned on doing. I went to school for journalism, and I had this half-baked idea that I was going to graduate college and just go to New York and write for the New York Times, and that was going to be my life.

Then, I got out of school and realized that it doesn't really work that way. My options were I could work for a community newspaper making basically peanuts, or I could get a corporate job. It just so happened that I fell into this. I knew somebody and just fell into this role at Prudential. That's how I got my start in retirement plan marketing, as well, because while I was working on that magazine, I met one of my fellow writers, who went on in Prudential to be ... He was a creative director, a marketing director. He hired me a couple of years later to be a senior writer in his creative group. That's how I got into retirement marketing and how I fell, again, into this niche.

From there ... I mean, that's kind of what I focused on. I've worked for Prudential. I've worked for Transamerica. I've worked for Russell Investments. These are all big names in the retirement services industry. You're right. It's not a field that people go, "Hm. That sounds really interesting. I'd love to do that." It's complicated and it really has its own language. Unless you've been immersed in it, it's one of those things that I don't think you could just pick up and start running with.

Ed: I would think it takes a long time to really understand it well. The fact that it's changing so much, right? So, you have to be committed because you have to stay on top of changes and developments.

Robin: Yeah, absolutely.

Ed: I know you're doing your freelance gig as a side-hustle. So, what are you doing today for your day job, and then how much time are you able to dedicate, roughly, to your side gig? How much of a side gig is it?

Robin: It almost feels like I have two full-time jobs. I should mention I'm a single mom on top of all this.

Ed: Which is a full-time job.

Robin: Yes. So, I don't so sleep. No, but for my day job right now, I'm a marketing and content strategist for an investment website called, SeekingAlpha.com. I work on one of their paid products. Basically, my job is to consult with the authors on the platform and help them with their marketing. They're really good investors, but they're not very good at marketing. They don't really understand how it works. They don't understand how to get visibility. They don't understand messaging, any of that.

I guess you could say I've taken a lot of the skills that I've been able to develop over the course of my career. Now I'm able to transfer them. I'm basically a paid full-time consultant for Seeking Alpha and its authors. That's what I do in my day job.

Again, yeah, the freelance thing is a side hustle. It's a lot of hustle. Again, I have two clients right now that I have on monthly retainer. One is a prominent website in the industry. I write 3 articles a week for them or about 12 articles a month. That comes with a nice little retainer income. Then I actually have another client who is not in my ... He's not really in my niche. He's in finance, but he's more of a ... He works for a boutique firm that serves as a consultant to small business owners. I write two articles a month for them in support of their email marketing efforts, and basically those emails go out to ... Their articles, and they go out to the small business owner on their email list that they have.

Ed: Gotcha. Okay.

So, take me a back a little bit to when you first came across B2B Biz Launcher, our training and coaching program. Where were you in your writing business, at that time? What kind of challenges were you facing?

Robin: I obviously have been following you for a really long time, and I think I had come across B2B Biz Launcher a couple of times. I don't recall. I think the first time was probably three or four years ago, actually. It was one of those things that I always wanted to do. I've always had this aspiration to be a full-time freelance writer. I'm in a very great position now. I consider myself very blessed because I have a day job that I love and I'm actually ... I could quit and I could freelance full-time, at this point, but I just love it so much, I don't want to give it up. So, I'm just trying to do it all and we'll see how sustainable that is, but anyway, I digress.

I think actually you and I had talked ... The first time that I really seriously considered it was back in 2016. I don't mind sharing that I was in a tough

spot in my life at that time. I think it was in the spring of 2016. I remember you'd put out an ad about the program and you announced that you were opening the doors again. I emailed you and I remember I said, "Well, I'm separated from my husband. I'm going through this divorce. I've just become a single mom again. I want to do it but I'm not sure that this is a great time in my life to do it." And you were very honest and open with me and you said, "You know, you have to search your heart, but I'd be inclined to agree with you." We had a good back-and-forth about it.

So, I took your advice and I decided to table it. Then, when the opportunity came up again in the spring of 2017, I was just ready. I had set aside the money. Oh, that was the other thing, too. I think the first time we talked, I was going to put it on a credit card, and I was just going to pay it off as time went on. You very wisely advised me not to put myself into debt, which, again, was great advice. Again, when the opportunity came up in spring of 2017, I had the money ready to go. I was in the right mindset. All the pieces just fell into place. That was the perfect time. It's just one of those things, whether it's divine timing or whatever you believe in, but that was just the right time.

Ed: Yeah. When the right time hits, you just know it, right?

Robin: Yeah.

Ed: Everything just checks. Although, I will say, sometimes it's tough because it feels like the right time, but some things aren't quite perfect. I think there's a difference, right? Not every aspect of your life or your business will be perfect, ever. At least for very long, but yeah, I think I do remember corresponding with you. That's frankly just a standard answer that we give people. My team knows, look, if all these things are happening to someone, but they still want to enroll, just tell them not to because the anxiety that creates is not going to help you do your best work. We want everyone to succeed and we know that just puts even more obstacles in your way.

So, I'm glad you waited. When you enrolled, did you already have some clients? What was your business like? How much were you generating, if you don't mind sharing some of that?

Robin: Oh, no. Sure. That's fine. I think I had ... I'm trying to remember the timing, but I think I might've had the website client. I started working with him right at the end of May, beginning of June. I think the program started shortly after that, so that was the only client that I had. I actually, **during the course of the program, I think I picked up, gosh, I want to say three or four more.**

Actually, it's funny, I had to fire two out of four because I found ... It's funny when you start working with people, and I'm glad I'm in the position where I can be picky about it. I started working with these two clients, and it wasn't a good fit. They were all over the place. They didn't really know what they

wanted. I just wasn't comfortable. You know in your gut when something just doesn't feel right, and it just didn't. I was very honest with both of them, and I said, "You know what?" I said, "I don't think this is working on either side. I think we should just cut bait and go our separate ways before we've exchanged any money or before I really started working with you."

It was one of those things where it was a preliminary ... and we were taking about projects and we were talking about direction and we were talking about budget and we were talking about all these things, and it just wasn't jiving. It just wasn't working out.

But, that said, I picked up ... Like I said, I had the one website client. I picked up the other retainer client, and I've got two other ones that I picked up ... One was during the course of the program, and the other one was at the tail end of the program. I'm in negotiations with them for retainers right now, as well. So, I've really got the best of all possible worlds in terms of work. I think that a lot of freelance writers would kill to have all clients on retainer and I'm headed down that path. So, I'm super excited about it. I feel really blessed.

Ed: Wow. Let me make sure I understand. When you started, you had the website client. During the course of the program, it sounds like ... I heard at least three clients you were able to land.

Robin: Yep.

Ed: Some of them have turned into retainer clients.

Robin: Yes, that's correct.

Ed: That's fantastic. I mean, as of this recording ... I think we just finished working together, when, a month or two ago?

Robin: Yeah.

Ed: That's a lot in a very short period of time. I should say, just to be fair, that is unusual. That is not typical, but man, that's fantastic. I'm so happy for you.

Robin: Thanks. Thanks.

I'm going to say that the secret with quotes is that ... I did this one thing, and, I mean, there were so many things that I took away from the program that I learned, but I did this one thing, and that is that I went on ... We had some lengthy conversations on some of the coaching calls that we had. Just as an aside, **those coaching calls, I think, are worth the cost of the program, itself, because just getting the opportunity to speak ... You're in a group setting, but you make it feel like it's really one-on-one, right? You give the person that you're talking to your undivided attention and your**

unbiased answers. It's just a really good format to get access to you.

Like I said, I think it's worth the cost of the entire program. If people are on the fence about it, that's the thing.

But I think that at least one of the calls and maybe several of the calls, we talked about LinkedIn and how that is a goldmine for prospecting. I think I really took that to heart, and that was the one thing that I did. I went on my LinkedIn profile and I optimized it for my niche, and for freelance writing, and for all those things. I added those key words. I made sure my headline was compelling but also relevant, and added all of my skillsets and what I could bring to the table to the summary thing that they have on the top. I have to tell you, that's really made a world of difference. That's how people are finding me.

Ed: Wow. Those little tweaks, right? I think it speaks to the fact that you know that market you're going after. You know it well. Just leveraging what you know, again, it's so important because you know exactly what the terminology is, what people might be searching for.

Robin: Yeah. Exactly. I think you had done that really great podcast with ... is it Steve Maurer?

Ed: Steve Maurer, yeah.

Robin: Yeah, and he talks about all that. It was funny. When I was listening to that podcast, I was like, "Check. Check. Check." I'd done all the things that he recommended. I think that that's really spot-on.

I wanted to say, too ... I guess it's kind of related but off-topic, is that people think that ... When they think about prospecting or they think about the fundamentals, I'm going to call them, of building a freelance business, that it's going to take hours of work and it's going to be so hard. **I think one of the nice things about B2B Biz Launcher is that it gives you baby steps. It sets you up for success from the very beginning.** The first session is ... and hopefully I'm not disclosing too much, but...

Ed: No. Go for it.

Robin: The first session is figure out your niche. Figure out what you want to do. Figure out what you're good at. I agree with you, too ... It's mind-boggling to me that people, even after going through that exercise ... because I think **it's such a great way ... It's such a pathway and it's such a roadmap to guide people to what they want to do.** Maybe it was easy for me because I already knew coming into the program, but just going through that questionnaire, it just confirmed for me, yes, I'm doing the right thing. Yes, I'm in the right niche.

So, I think that that's really good. Then, some of the subsequent things ... Build your website, and think about prospecting, and thinking about who are you going to go after, and all these different things, I think are just ... Like I said, **it's a really good roadmap and if you follow all the steps, I think unless for some unforeseen reason, I just don't see how you could fail, is really the truth.**

Yeah, so I think that was invaluable. I think one of the best things I got out of it, and really, honestly, **this was the main goal that I wanted to get out of B2B Business Launcher, and I'm happy to say I accomplished it, was getting my website done.** That was my chief resistance point forever.

Ed: It is for most people, so don't feel bad.

Robin: Again, you really broke it down and you simplified it. I know people are terrified of WordPress and the templates or whatever. I think if you just keep it simple and you just ... I sat down, and I just made myself do it. I just sat down ... I think it was over Labor Day weekend, actually. I was one of the delinquents that waited until the end of the program, but I really wanted to get your review, so I made sure I got it done. By the way, that was an impetus, as well, but I sat down and I just made myself do it, and it wasn't hard. You laid out a very easy template to follow and the questions to answer.

It wasn't as hard as I thought it was going to be. I'm really happy that I have it. It makes it so much easier when you're getting introduced to a client, in particular, at least for me. I mean, I remember I would go back and forth with prospects, and they'd ask for samples, right? And it's so annoying because you have to go in your computer, if you don't have a website. It's so annoying because you have to go and get the PDFs, and figure out what you're going to send and all this stuff. And now, it's like, "Oh, yeah. You want to see some samples? Go to my website. Here you go," and everything's there. It's just so much easier.

Ed: That's awesome. And you're right. For a lot of people, that is the one thing that's keeping them up at night is just the whole website thing.

I'm hearing a few things. You've landed some great clients during the program, which is fantastic. Your website is done. That was a huge one. Coaching calls and getting that feedback and mentorship direct from me, the whole LinkedIn thing. You've really come a long way in a very, very short period of time.

I'm curious. What are your plans? I know you're having fun in your day job, but what are you thinking right now?

Robin: I think it's ... Sorry about that. I think it's interesting. I think I'm just going to

keep riding the wave, to be honest with you. I'm honestly at a point right now where if I keep my day job, I'm at capacity. I don't have any more time or hours in my day, I guess, to take on any work right now. Like I said, I've got the two retainer clients, two more in the works. That's going to bring me up to four. Like I said, I work 40 hours a week and I'm filling in the gaps with the freelance. I mean, I work a lot of hours. I work a lot of evenings, a lot of weekends, that kind of thing.

So, I think right now, like I said, I think I'm just going to ride the wave and if it gets to a point where I'm not enjoying my day job as much, or the freelancing just really takes off and I really get to a point where I can't manage both, then I probably will pursue my dream of becoming a full-time freelance writer. That's really what I would love to do.

Ed: But it's cool that you have this ... I look at it as insurance, right?

Robin: Yep.

Ed: So, you have your day job, then you have the side gig. If something were to happen, you're okay. You know you'd make a go of it. Most people don't have that, so I think it's a real blessing just to have that. It's a safety net.

Robin: Yeah, definitely. You mentioned insurance. It's funny. I know that there's a lot of options out there for freelance writers, but one of the best things about having my day job is I do have employer-subsidized health insurance.

Ed: Yes. Win.

Robin: I really do have the best of both worlds, but I wanted to say, too, that I think one of the biggest leaps to my success or, I guess, the challenge that I've overcome is that it's a change in mindset. I said this to Peter earlier, too, Peter Bowerman. I said, "If you believe that you can do it, you can do it." For so long, I don't think that I believed that I could be successful at this. I thought, "Oh, gosh. What if the work doesn't come? Or, what if I'm not good enough?" All these things that I think we all think inside of our heads when we're thinking about starting a business or trying to go out there and prospect.

The truth of the matter is you just have to believe that you can. You have to believe that you are enough. You can do it. You will be successful, and then you just have to go out there and shine. You know you have the writing chops. You know you have the background. You know you have the expertise. Just put it out there and just go out there and do the best you can. I think that's really the takeaway and the major shift in mindset that I've had this year.

Ed: That's a good segue into my last question. I'm going to put you on the spot a

bit. There are a lot of people who listen to this and they're listening to it for a lot of reasons, but one of the biggest ones is they're on the fence, and they're trying to decide, "Is this something that I want to do?"

I'm not going to ask you what you would tell them because that's unfair. You don't know what the other person is like, what they're going through, their circumstances and so forth, but how would you help them make that decision? What would you tell them things that they should maybe ask themselves to make a good decision in terms of whether to enroll in B2B Biz Launcher or not?

Robin: That's a really good question. I think the biggest question you have to ask yourself is, "How bad do you want it?" I know that that sounds probably maybe a little bit trite or a little bit hard to answer when you're on the fence, and maybe you're worried about, "Can I afford this?" Or, "Can I spend the time?"

Just as an aside, I did have a life hiccup come up in the middle of this course. I moved two states. I moved from Washington state to California, and it was a pretty abrupt move. It was not something I was planning on doing this summer, necessary, or actually, the timing, I guess I was going to do it later than I thought I was going to do it.

So, I guess, life happens. Things come up, and again, you just have to say, **"Is this that important to me? Is this what I really want to do?" If the answer is yes, just do it. Just take the plunge. It'll be the best decision you ever made. I think it's pushed me. It's pushed my business far beyond what I ever could have dreamed.**

Just again, **the access to you has been absolutely incredible. It's been so valuable. I think the group, too ... I wanted to mention ... I think that support, that's really one of the keys to succeeding in this whole thing is just having those people. Everybody's in the same place.** Well, we're all in different places, but we're all struggling with very similar things, I think, and I think all of us helping each other and cheering each other on ... I mean, some of my best memories of the time in B2B Biz Launcher was just being on Facebook and sharing a win and having everybody rally and be excited.

So, I think that if you really want it, like I said, just go ahead and do it. Take the plunge. It's worth it.

Ed: I love it. I love it. I think that's sound advice because you're right. The information and mentorship only goes so far. If there's not something inside of you that's going to really drive you through the tough times, the tough days and weeks, then that's something ... You cannot "outsource" that. Nobody else can do that for you, right? That's gotta come from you.

So, I think that's really good advice.

Robin: I wanted to mention one more thing, too, if I could.

Ed: Of course.

Robin: Just for the people who are a little bit on the fence. I think another benefit of being in a program like this is that there's a lot of information out there for freelance writers, and it's so much ... You can spend so much time spinning your wheels and reading all that information and trying to figure out, "Do I do an info product? Do I build my website? Do I cold-call? Do I do all of things?" And never come to a conclusion. I know that I had that struggle myself, and I think one of the nice things about your program is that it synthesizes all that information. Again, it really provides this clear roadmap. So, it takes a lot of the guesswork and a lot of the anxiety out of making those decisions.

Ed: Yeah. You're right because there are a lot of things that could work, but I think what many of us are looking for is a roadmap, right?

Robin: Yep.

Ed: "Can someone help me summarize and distill this into a step-by-step instruction?"

Robin: Yep.

Ed: I'm a student myself. I mean, I'm constantly investing in programs and mentorships and coaching. That's what I'm looking for. In fact, I'm in one right now. I am just very, very busy. I just want to learn things as I need them. I don't want to be dumped on with a ton of information. So, I can appreciate that.

Well, Robin, thank you so much for, again, just sharing all this with us. I just truly appreciate your openness about your experience. It was just so much fun working with you.

Robin: Oh, thanks so much. Same here. It's been a pleasure and an honor. Thank you so much.