

A Plan to Escape from Teaching



Get out while you still can

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Escaping Teaching

Introduction

Teaching is a high-stress occupation and we all know that stress kills. I know it nearly killed me, but at the time I thought it was normal to feel like that; dreading some classes, hearing things thrown at my house and car windows, having names shouted at me in the street. It's NOT normal or acceptable and it's NOT your fault, but you CAN do something about it.

You can escape teaching.

If you start now you will have an alternative income in place in 12-24 months and can say goodbye forever to parents meetings, pointless department and pastoral meetings and Monday mornings.

The answer is in your hands: Start today.

My History

I taught science and chemistry for 28 years in schools in Wigan and St Helens in the Northwest of England. When I started, aged 22, I was full of enthusiasm and ideas; I enjoyed being in the classroom with the students. I wasn't a good teacher then, but my teaching ability improved over the years.

I became an excellent teacher by the time I was 30 years old, one whose students did better than most and who got their highest grades in my subject. I loved teaching for the next 15 years and then I found that the constant changes, endless meetings with no point to them and paperwork pressures were becoming so onerous that the pleasure of teaching was no longer enough to make the job worthwhile.

At age 47 I realised that I needed to get out of teaching, that there was no way I could keep it up until I retired. I looked at my older teaching friends who were just checking off the days until their retirement which was 10 years away and I looked for a way out.

In the end I made a series of decisions including divorce, emigration to Ireland and taking a temporary teaching post that meant I had to leave teaching. I have no regrets; my stress levels are a fraction what they were, my health is better and I have more money in my pocket.

My Escape Story

When my wife was pregnant with our first child in 1985 I realised I was going to need to earn more money. I still loved teaching and had no thoughts of quitting the job, but I decided I would take on extra work.

I started doing home tuition and examining work.

Home Tuition

I realised that there was a gap in the local market for a tutor who was prepared to travel and conduct the tuition in tutees' homes: This suited me because I had no suitable room to work in at home. I put an ad in the local free newspaper and applied to two tuition agencies for work.

I started doing three or four hours a week earning pretty poor money after the tuition agency fees, petrol and tax. It wasn't worth the candle working for the agencies, so I gradually replaced those tutees with ones who had responded to my own ads.

Over the next few years I ramped up my tuition hours to 20 and then 30 hours a week. I was working 3-6 hours five nights a week and sometimes on Sunday afternoons as well. It was a lot of work, but working one-to-one in a private tuition situation is immensely satisfying: It is teaching at its most pure.

Examining Work

I looked for examining work because of the extra money it would bring in, but doing it also improved my teaching because I knew exactly which answers were needed. You might think that any correct answer would be marked correct, but the system is not that simple.

I started marking GCSE Chemistry and moved on to GCSE Coordinated Science. After a few years I became a team leader in the Coordinated Science exam and applied for GCSE Modular Science exam marking as well.

I still needed more money, so I applied for a science coursework moderating vacancy; in the end I was moderating two sets of science coursework from different examination boards each with their own interpretation of the guidelines.

Every summer my bedroom/office was overflowing with parcels of coursework from the two boards, and 5 different sets of exam papers that I was marking over a four-week period.

Yes, you can make extra money from examining, but to earn a significant amount takes a lot of hard work; the hourly rate works out at about 1.5 times the minimum wage.

Emigration

In 2003 I moved to Cork in Ireland because I had applied for and been appointed to a dream teaching job; three months off in summer, only highly-motivated exam classes, an 8 hour work week and a full-time salary.

Unfortunately my contract was not renewed after the first year, so I was looking for a new job.

First Non-Teaching Job

In June 2004 I applied for every job I could find, from driving bread vans to selling laboratory equipment to schools. I was eventually offered a job repairing ATMs throughout Munster which is about the size of Wales.

I had a small van and a mobile phone and was expected to work 24/7 every day of the year, with no weekends off, only statutory sick pay if I was ill and no pension scheme. Some days I would be driving for 16 hours, but I was never ill. My stress levels plummeted even though I was on the road so much and working so hard. I was on-call and would regularly be called at 7pm to go into Cork to sort out an ATM that had stopped working.

The job evolved and after a few years I was doing cash-in-transit and answering bank alarm calls as well as the ATM repairs. I came to dread the Nokia tune on my phone, especially at 2am!

Redundancy

In 2010 the job came to an end and I was made redundant. Aged 57 in post-2008 Ireland I knew I had no chance of being offered a conventional job. I had a big mortgage, no car, no Internet and no job.

I invested €1,000 in a satellite internet system to get online (there is no broadband in Ireland outside the cities and large towns) because I realised that was the only way I could earn any money.

I attended a waste-of-time security training course as part of my year on unemployment benefit and spent the rest of the year starting off as a writer. Towards the end of the year I was diagnosed with depression so I qualified for sickness benefit for another year.

Pension

I had put off taking early retirement as long as I could in order to maximise my monthly pension, but I had reached the point where I needed an income to pay the mortgage after the redundancy payment from the security job was all gone.

The pension paid my mortgage, but I still needed to earn extra to keep the fridge full and the lights on.

Earning Money Online

I had started writing articles at InfoBarrel.com and these were earning me a few dollars a month. More important than the cash were the friends and contacts I made on the InfoBarrel forum. Some of these people offered me paid writing work after a few months of conversations.

It started off slowly enough, \$100 here, £300 there. It was taking me three hours to write a 1,000 word article that earned me £20, hardly a living wage. I realised that writing that kind of article was never going to earn me enough, so I started to accept more writing contracts than the small ones I could handle myself and outsourcing the writing. I used oDesk to find writers who were up to the task. I was ripped off a few times when I found that those writers were outsourcing the work themselves, but eventually found a few good writers.

The contract grew and grew until I was making £4,000 a month profit.

But all good things come to an end; Google changed its rules and the article contracts dried up overnight. I still write a few articles and have some small contracts which keep the wolf from the door.

Contacts are everything, online. Another contact ran a guest blogging site that introduced writers to bloggers who needed articles. I had offered help and was offered a monthly contract for moderating the quality of articles on the site. The site became larger and my income grew proportionately. I have now had this moderating job for three years.

I did not know how I was going to earn money online, only that I had to do it. I would never have dreamed that there were paid moderating jobs or that I would start my own writing agency. The thing is to jump in and start to grow your knowledge so that you can grow your reputation and contacts over time.

Your Escape Story

Where do you start?

First, believe it is possible – I am the proof of that; I also know hundreds of people who are also earning a good living online.

Second, acknowledge that it will take hard work; it took me two years of daily hard graft before I was earning a full-time income and I still work at least 12 hours every day.

Third, lock your credit cards away; there is no genuine silver bullet solution, but then you knew that anyway didn't you? Get rich quick schemes only make money for the guy who sucks the money out of your wallet.

Fourth, start now because it will take you two or three years to learn the ropes and to make the contacts you need to start earning money.

You should consider the old chestnuts before you start anything new though, namely exam marking and private tuition. Many teachers use these after leaving the profession to provide a backup income: It is always a good idea to have your money coming in from a diverse range of sources.

Exam Marking

There is always a high turnover of exam markers so you can usually find work as soon as you apply. Start with your local exam board or the one that you teach to. You can apply for other boards as well, but make sure that the marking periods do not overlap, at least in your first year. Some exam boards have exams that run outside the main exam period, so apply to every one over time.

You will need to attend an examiner training meeting for each exam, your school is paid for this attendance and few complain because they know that it will improve your teaching.

It is tough fitting the marking around the school day, but you can do an hour or two every morning and evening and have a blast at the weekend.

Private Tuition

There is always a demand for private tuition from parents who want their children to do better. Numerous tuition agencies have sprung up to service this need, apply to all that service your local area.

Be aware that agencies set fees and that their commission takes a large slice out of your income. The only people willing to work for the tuition agencies are teachers who are just starting in the business. Once someone has established a local reputation and referral network there are more clients than you can handle.

It does take a couple of years to establish yourself as the best tutor in town, which is why you need to start before you quit the day job.

Private tuition is seasonal; you will find that demand is concentrated in the last six months before an exam and that it skyrockets in the final two months. Parents fail to realise that 8 weeks before an exam is too late to have more than a minimal effect. It is best to avoid these last-minute tutees because they will do nothing for your reputation and will blame you for their failure.

You can set your own fees if you are not working through an agency. Start by charging at least the highest that local agencies charge in your specialist subject. It is important to appreciate your value and to charge what you are worth, not what people want to pay. As your reputation builds you can increase your fees until you are earning a respectable amount each evening you are working.

What about the Internet?

The Internet is just a big marketplace where people sell their skills, knowledge and time. It works for me and hundreds of people I know. I earn a full-time income from my various ventures and so can you.

The first thing though is to switch off from anyone who asks you for money. Everything is available without paying at a beginner level; you might want to buy better products after a few years, but you will not know how to use them when you start, so save your money.

Information Overload

It is very easy to sign up to receive ten different free training courses and to blow your mind with new and often conflicting free information. Avoid this by thinking long and hard before you sign up for any training; this is the only way to keep your email inbox from overflowing with things you had forgotten you signed up for.

Forget Gurus

Many people have spent thousands of dollars chasing the dream – you and I might think it is stupid but there are thousands of people who still chase the dream, spending \$17 here and \$47 there; it soon mounts up.

It's a supply and demand situation and there will always be 'gurus' willing to take advantage of people's naïveté, to give people what they are willing to pay for. If people want a way to earn a million by clicking buttons on a website then some con-man will offer a 'product' that allegedly does that; what's more he will have totally convincing screenshots and logic to prove that it works!

If you sign up for any guru's course, you will get an endless series of emails that are designed to wear down your resistance until you are ready to buy one of the guy's products. Once you buy the course you find that there is something missing; you put it down to your

own lack of knowledge and blame yourself; you go on to buy the next guru-product in the hope that it will work out better.

What it always comes down to is that these con-men are selling you the opportunity to sell their course to other suckers. The problem is four-fold: you don't have a list of suckers to sell to, you have no affiliates to sell for you, you wouldn't want to be classed as a con-man anyway, and you would need to buy other services such as auto-responders to make the sales.

Forget Blogging

99% of bloggers do not make a profit. Yes you do need a website, but blogging takes an inordinate amount of time. Earning money from blogging is impossible unless you have your own products: you need your own set of products before you start not next year, yet most bloggers have no products of their own. The days of making good money by putting ads on your site are long gone and affiliate products only earn you money once you have a large number of readers who trust your advice.

You need to build up a large body of knowledge about how online commerce works before venturing down the blogging route. You cannot sell to people in an environment where your visitors are only ever one click away from leaving your site; rather you have to allow them to buy from you.

Start Here

One of the most important things I learnt in my first 18 months online was that there are four things more important than money. (Yes you can argue that there are lots more, but please bear with me.)

There are five currencies: Time, Knowledge, Reputation, Contacts and Money.

Each day we have an extra 24 hours of Time to use, just like passing "Go" in Monopoly © and getting £200.

Time cannot be stored or saved; it needs to be converted to one of the other four currencies. In a conventional job there is a direct conversion; employees sell their Time for Money. It is more complicated than that online or even if you work for yourself in the real world.

Convert Time to Knowledge

Learn how things work; learn how to help other people. If you are a teacher you went through this step when you were at college and in your first few years of teaching. To earn money online you must either apply your knowledge in new ways or learn new knowledge that people need; there is a lot to learn before you can start to help other people.

In teaching you need to know much more within and around your subject than you will ever teach to a class; it's the same in your new business venture. It takes time to acquire all the peripheral knowledge and then to tie it all together.

Convert Knowledge to Reputation

As you acquire Knowledge you should use it to help others as generously as you can. Never ask for, nor expect, immediate rewards. You will get your reward as your Reputation grows, but that reward might not be financial.

This is the 'paying it forward' principle; you might be cynical, but believe me it works. I run my own business strictly in accordance with paying it forward; I give and keep giving, never counting the cost; eventually some people give me their custom because they want to. People I have never met except in a forum have given me endless help in all sorts of ways, from emotional support to website design tips.

1. You have to let people get to know you as the first step – This might include letting people know some of your personal circumstances, using a photo as an avatar rather than an anonymous graphic and including some of your day-to-day routine in public discussions.
2. People have to come to like you – You have to interact with people on an emotional level. You have to be interested in their problems and successes. This is the only way to differentiate yourself from the thousands of other contacts that everyone has every day.
3. The third step is that people must trust you – Trust is earned slowly and over long time-scales. People may trust you in small ways that do not include money before they trust you enough to want to buy your services. You earn their trust by always being honest, always carrying through with what you say you are going to do and offering free and helpful advice.

Your Reputation takes a long time to earn and can be lost as a consequence of one poor decision. Think, think and think again before you do anything online. Everything you do has consequences, make sure you have weighed up all the possibilities and considered the risks before you act. Remember that the Internet is written in permanent marker; whatever goes online can NEVER be deleted.

Convert Reputation to Contacts

As your reputation grows you will find that more people want to know you.

As a rule I prefer to deal with people who I know, like and trust. Everyone is the same, people only offer work to people they trust. In the online environment trustworthiness is very difficult to judge because there is no body language to help you to make an assessment of someone, no facial expressions to read and no basis for the sixth sense that we all use to decide whether someone in the real world is trustworthy.

Your Contact list is the key to earning money. Nurture it, keep helping everyone you know and every week you should try to send a dormant contact an email or a direct message on Twitter. Your contacts are hard-earned and easily lost unless you work at keeping them.

Forum participation is something you need to make time for. You need to allocate 20-30 minutes a day to helping others, now and forever, because you need to keep growing your contact list as your business grows.

Luck is something that you can make for yourself: You need to cultivate serendipity. You can do this by spending 20 minutes a day helping others. The people you help will remember and will look for ways to pay back the favour you did them.

Do you remember the six degrees of separation principle? If you know 100 people and each of those 100 know another 100, then you have access to 10,000 people. If each of those 10,000 know another 100 each then you have access to 1,000,000; that is one million people who could have recommendations to talk to you because the original 100 thought you were a great guy to deal with. THAT is the power of your reputation. And that is only using three of the six degrees!

Convert Contacts to Money

You need to nurture your Contacts for many reasons; so you can help them and they will help you in turn, so they act as sources of knowledge when you need it and so that your reputation keeps growing.

There is no simple relationship between Contacts and Money. Most of your Contacts will never give you a single earning opportunity, though they will help you in many other ways. You don't ever know which Contacts are going to lead to Money-earning opportunities, so you have to nurture them all. Let people know what your skills are and that you are looking for earning opportunities, but never go out to sell yourself to your contacts.

Every single paying job I have had online has followed this sequence: Every single one.

Every person who has offered me a paying job already knew me because I was active in forums or because I had been helpful to them in various ways.

Your Skills and Knowledge

You have skills and knowledge related to your career; look for new ways to use these skills. As a teacher you might look at online tutoring opportunities, writing courses or ebooks, even at running virtual summer camps for students or teachers.

You also have other knowledge that you can use in your escape plan. I know a lot about gardening and have plans to use that knowledge to earn money online. I know two teachers who are fanatical about paddling dragonboats; they set up a company offering team-building opportunities to companies, a real-world business.

Make a list of your own unique skills and the knowledge you have. Write them out on paper.

My own list includes; body language, ferries to Ireland, driving, Wigan, teaching, reading, writing, WordPress, document layout, MS Publisher, MS Excel, uploading via FTP, all my science teaching-related knowledge, exam marking, private tuition, repairing ATMs, alarm systems, gardening, plant propagation, growing tomatoes, forums, online scams, Facebook, Xara Webstyle 4, Xara Designer Pro, Pinterest, lawnmowers, cutting hedges, using a gym, paddling a dragonboat, reading aloud, using Google Hangouts and mental arithmetic.

Once you start on your own skill/knowledge list you start to realise the possibilities. I could fill a page with my own and so can you.

Once you have your list you can then start to whittle it down to the skills which you are most proficient in already and the ones you could excel at with practice.

The next stage is to work out a way to leverage your skills and knowledge into a product that people will be willing to pay for.

Leveraging Your Knowledge

Leverage is the important concept here. Trying to sell an ebook of my knowledge of plant propagation is a waste of my time because there are already countless ebooks with that content. Better for me, because of my unique knowledge set, would be to offer people a real world course on plant propagation that would allow me to combine my teaching skills with my love of gardening. Alternatively I could set up a membership website and dispense advice to people who subscribe.

Leverage is about exerting a small effort to reach a large number of people. High value products are the way to go, not ebooks that sell for £2.99, of which you only get £2.10, less tax, £1.05 approximately. You would need to sell 30,000 books a year to make a decent income; that is not going to happen.

Courses

As a teacher you are used to standing in front of large groups of people and talking. This is a skill most of the population would die for; public speaking is the top fear for 90% of the population.

You also have knowledge and skills to pass on and you can easily learn more. You are also a skilled communicator, expert in reading your audience and knowing when to explain something in a different way.

Put these three skills together and running seminars and conferences is an obvious niche you should be considering.

You might be wise to build up slowly using podcasts and webinars to cut your teeth and to begin interactions with your clients, partly because these are low-cost low risk ventures and

partly because conference organisation is an extremely complex skill that is every bit as stressful as teaching.

The next step is to consider what part of your vast knowledge could be so useful to people that they would be willing to pay you money to be taught about it; this should be something that can solve a desperate need on the client's part. It might be something that will allow the client to earn money, look gorgeous or find the partner of their dreams, but whatever it is, having it will increase the client's happiness massively.

What's Your Plan?

Are you planning to carry on in a job you hate and that is killing you? Teaching has already damaged your body, but you can start to undo that damage today.

Making a start is the key. There are things you can do before you make the leap out of teaching that can help to reduce your stress levels and to prepare for life afterwards.

I have written the [12 Step Guide to Reclaim Your Life](#) to help you. Most people read it quickly and then go back and concentrate on the steps one step at a time for a week at a time.

It will change your life if you give it a chance.

[CLICK HERE to get your free 12 Step Guide.](#)