Your guide to going it alone

THE FREELANCER'S BIBLE

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Thinking of going freelance?

Whether you've already joined the UK's growing freelance workforce or are considering the pros and cons of ditching the 9-5 in favour of being your own boss, there's a lot to think about.

Being a freelancer can bring with it more freedom, a better work-life balance and, according to recent research, greater financial rewards, but it's also a lot of responsibility. You're your own finance department, marketing team and salesperson.

Throughout this ebook, we'll guide you through the process of becoming your own boss, with handy hints and tips on everything from tax returns to social media marketing.

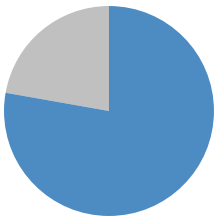
1.88m

freelancers in the UK in 2015

IPSE and Kingston University

3 in 5

businesses agree it would be **difficult to operate without hiring freelancers**



78%

of the UK public think that freelancing and flexible working help **promote a good work/life balance**

PCG

150%

Freelancers typically earn **150 per cent more** than their employed equivalents

IPSE Freelancer Confidence Index 2015

01.

Setting up your business

Making the choice to go it alone is an exciting and liberating step to take – but don't forget the less glamorous stuff.

From tax returns, to VAT and credit control, if you want to blaze your own trail you're going to have to get accustomed to a fair amount of paperwork.

After all, you're the boss now...

Self-employed vs Ltd Company

As a freelancer, one of your earliest decisions falls on the legal nature of your employment. It pays to chat through your options with an accountant, but here's an overview of the pros and cons...

Become a limited company

Pros:

- **Prestige** – Customers tend to see limited companies as more legitimate entities, which could lead to more lucrative assignments. Plus you can form one for less than £100.
- **Tax savings** – The more you earn, the greater these will be.
- **Protect personal assets** – Only the company's assets are liable if things go pear-shaped, not yours.

Cons:

As a limited company:

- Your **accounts are visible** to the public
- Your accountancy **fees will typically rise** by around £500 a year
- You'll be subject to slightly **tighter regulation** and stiffer penalties for missed payments

Going self-employed

Pros:

- **It's free** – Simply inform the HMRC
- **Tax relief** – Can be claimed on certain travel expenses, bits of equipment and more
- **Fewer legal requirements** – Comply with regulation, keep accurate records – but accountants can deal with the trickier stuff

Cons:

- **You're taxed on all annual profits** – through self-assessment
- **National Insurance contributions** – are based on your income, so you may pay a higher rate if your profits reach a certain level
- **Personal liability** – it's with you, the individual, if something goes wrong

According to figures quoted by Freelance UK, if you have annual earnings of up to £30,000, you'll pay £4,800 as a tax total, compared to £7,400 as a sole trader. This is due to the National Insurance burden, and equates to a saving of £2,600 a year – **Freelanceuk.com**

Should I get VAT-registered?

VAT registration isn't essential if your business's taxable income for the last year was under £82,000.

But it can pay to register voluntarily as a small or new business... plus you can cancel at any time.

Why register for VAT?

- You can **charge Value Added Tax** on the services or goods you sell
- Your company can also **claim back the VAT it has paid** on services or goods from other businesses
- It helps your company **look established** and more appealing to some
- Having a VAT number appear on your website and invoices should be **a draw for larger firms** looking to outsource work – some may not even trade with non-registered firms

Are there any downsides?

- Make sure adding VAT to the cost of your services **doesn't make them appear overpriced**. The sight of VAT on an invoice could turn off existing or potential customers
- If your tax incomings exceed your tax outgoings, you'll still have to **make up the difference** to the HMRC
- **Additional admin**. You'll have to keep comprehensive VAT accounting records, together with all invoices, and submit your returns each quarter

Tax returns

The tax year runs from April 6 to April 5. This is the period within which the government classifies the business year, and determines how your taxes are calculated. You must report your income in a tax return to the HMRC.

You need to keep records throughout the year, like receipts and bank statements, so you or your accountant can fill in your tax return correctly. HMRC works out what you owe as a result of these records.

It will take care of awarding you any tax relief privileges you'll receive on certain **expenses**, as a result of running your own business or being self-employed.

Ask an accountant about the specifics of what you'll be able to claim back on, but common allowances include:

- **Admin costs** – like phone and broadband bills (business use only), advertising fees, bank fees
- **Cost of stock** – includes software used solely for work, laptop, iPad, tools, business flyers, journal or magazine subscriptions
- **Travel expenses** – bus, train or tube tickets, petrol, even buying a car as long as it's business use only
- **Premises costs** – energy bills, insurance, water, hotel stays

Simple Tax, an independent, HMRC-recognised tax service, sets out the rules for claiming tax relief in detail.

05 OCT – Register for self-assessment

31 OCT – Paper tax returns

31 JAN – Online tax returns

31 JAN – Pay the tax you owe

03 MONTHS – If you need to send a tax return and miss the submission deadline, or for paying your bill, you'll be fined £100 up to 3 months late – or more if it's later.

Credit control

With any luck, credit control won't become an issue for you as a freelancer and you'll rely on your customers for prompt payment.

Still, it's worth having a policy in place to guard against late payment – did you know that 1 in 4 small businesses fail as a result of missed payments on their invoices?

Ask for details

Get each new customer you deal with to fill out an application form, giving you as much info as possible. Ask for things like points of contact, planned payment details and tie down specifics of the work they're after.

Chase payments

If a payment doesn't come through on the agreed date, be sure to chase it up as soon as possible. Lingering will give the impression you let this sort of thing slide and may encourage customers to take further liberties.

Be clear

Lay out clear, formal terms and conditions with your customer, eliminating any misunderstanding. Consider setting a credit limit, if necessary, so it's clear when you'll stop providing services if payments haven't been met.

Record everything

If you receive a bounced cheque or payment, be sure to save them to use as evidence. Keep detailed records of each client's payment history.

Important paperwork

There's no getting away from the fact that now you're your own boss, there's a lot more paperwork to deal with. Taking on an accountant is a sensible call, but you'll still have to keep your part of the bargain when organising your admin.

It's up to you to work out whether hiring help is worth the cost. As a freelance designer, you'll probably only need an accountant's services to administrate your self-assessment tax return. Budget online services start from as little as £50. FixedFeeTaxReturn.co.uk and TWD Accountants both offer a self-assessment tax returns service. If you'd prefer the face-to-face treatment, a high street accountant can be secured for anything between £120–£250.

Invoices

Paperwork doesn't come much more important than this. Many creative freelancers choose to employ branded documents for things like invoices, perhaps created using Illustrator or InDesign. This sets an established, professional tone, but ultimately this is your payment outlet and can be knocked up simply on Excel or Word, as long as the crucial bits are present:

- Your name, phone number and email
- Name and address of the company/individual being invoiced
- Invoice number (create a system you're comfortable with: 0001…)
- Client purchase number (PO) if given
- Important dates: when was the work done/invoice sent/payment due
- Breakdown of costs
- Payment terms and options
- If you're VAT-registered, check out HMRC's quick guide on what to include

Expense claims

When you're self-employed several running costs can be deducted as allowable expenses before working out your taxable profit.

Always keep careful records of all business costs, including any mileage accrued on business outings – your accountant can help you claim back a percentage of these. Your expenses total goes on your Self-Assessment tax return.

You won't need to send proof of expenses when you submit the tax return, but always keep proof anyway so you can show HMRC if asked.

For more VAT help, visit www.gov.uk/vat-record-keeping

The legal stuff

Knowing how to draw up a contract that protects you legally and financially is a critical step to freelancing success. If your work isn't under license, companies can do anything they want with it, which may lead to you being unfairly undersold (e.g. if you design a T-shirt which is later sold to retail).

Often the customer will provide a contract, but it's a good idea to have a standard document of your own set up. It doesn't need to be too complicated, just make sure it's clear.

What to include in a contract:

- Both parties' full company names, indicating 'contractor' and 'client'
- Indicate how many rounds of amends your price includes, and how much additional rounds would cost.
- Attach any briefs, examples or supplementary project information
- Is there a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) in place, preventing you from advertising who you're working for?
- Outline a project schedule and clear description of services; who's doing what
- Set out any agreed termination or confidentiality clauses
- Date and sign the document
- Lay out payment terms; how much and when (do you face any upfront costs?)

Licensing of work

Unless you agree otherwise in writing, when somebody employs you under a contract of service, **the work you create is yours** – whether it's literary, musical or artistic.

Unlike in a full-time job, you retain copyright for the work you produce when a contract has been drawn up specifically for your services.

Contracts differ, but generally you're authorising a license for your customer to use your work once, using one agreed medium. If they betray the rules of your contract and use elsewhere, you can take legal action.

The nitty gritty of licensing law makes it all the more important for you to agree on a clear contract before starting any work, so you're not caught out and taken advantage of.

Insurance

Having all the freedom in the world is one of things that attracts people to freelancing. But when you're out on your own, you've also got to be prepared to bear the brunt when things go wrong.

An insurance policy will help protect you against claims that (God forbid!) the contracted service you provided was incorrect, substandard or faulty.

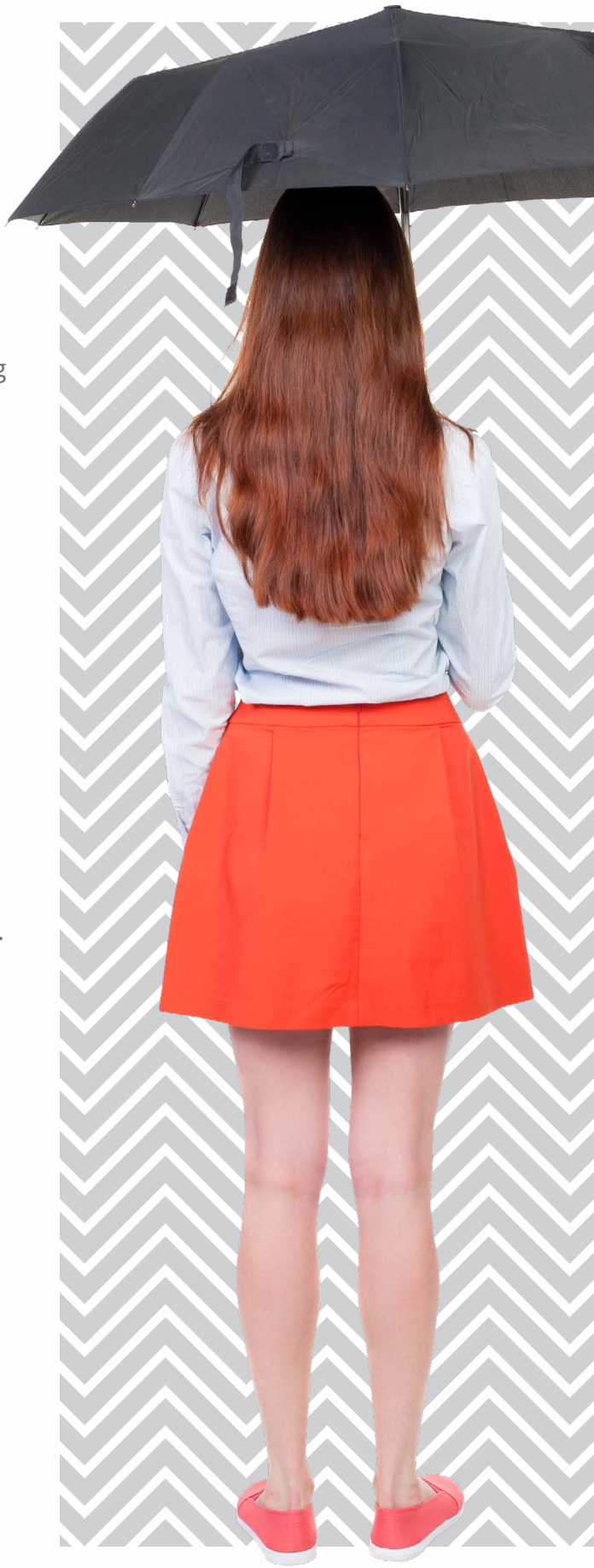
It can also help you out in more bizarre circumstances. Say, for example, a new client logo you design is unwittingly similar to another company's, and gets your client sued for copyright infringement.

If you're covered by insurance, you can at least rest assured your legal fees are covered, and you'll also likely receive full contributions should a settlement be reached.

If your home is your office you'll also need to ensure you have **home insurance** in place. This is split into:

- **Buildings insurance** – homeowners will already have this as part of a mortgage agreement. It covers against the worst; fire, flood, storm damage
- **Contents insurance** – varying levels of policy will cover your computer, for example, for everything from theft, up to damage caused by viruses

Your tools are the very essence of your livelihood – make sure you've got all eventualities covered.



Office options

Do you really need an office?

OK, so you may have issues with working from home – maybe your housemate poses too much of a distraction, or perhaps you just can't seem to motivate yourself unless you're up and about, marking a clear distinction between home and work life.

But as a freelancer, it'll pay to get used to home working. Digital technology allows us to be more connected than ever, and you can quite feasibly run your enterprise from a coffee shop or your kitchen table.

Share a space

If working from home just isn't an option, you may wish to look into the possibility of on-demand workspaces – virtual offices, which offer flexible, shared spaces by the hour, day or month.

Renting your space on an 'as-you-need' basis can be a great call. It'll take care of all those things you'd have to worry about with your own space; phone line, desk, broadband connection, PC – some shared spaces even use secretaries, creating the feel of a sophisticated operation.

The likes of **Regus**, **LEO**, **Avanta** and **OfficeFront** are among those spearheading a surge in popularity for virtual office rental, with some packages starting from as little as £50 a month.

Co-working and hot desking aren't just specific to big cities, there are hubs nationwide set up online by like-minded people who enjoy a more connected, collaborative approach to freelancing.

Rent your own office

If things are going well, it could well be time to seek out your own space, but be aware of the extra costs (think commuting, rent, and maintenance).

Impress your growing raft of customers with the professionalism of your set-up and benefit from the luxury of not having to run your business from a cluttered spare bedroom.

The average prime UK office rent is around **£28 per sq ft**, but will be far more expensive in areas like London. Plus it's expected to rise by as much as 19% over the next 3 years, according to experts at Cushman & Wakefield.

Workflow management

Using a set structure when starting new jobs will impress your clients, simplify transactions, save you time and ultimately allow you to earn more money.

You need to make sure **all of your important questions are answered** before you begin.

The better job you do in the earliest stages of a project, the less work you'll create for yourself further down the line.

Your key questions for clients:

- what are your brand objectives?
- do you have any brand guidelines?
- have I received all relevant supporting documents?
- have you provided all relevant fonts, templates, colour schemes?
- are there any live examples of similar projects I can consult?
- when is this project due to go live?
- how will **you measure the success of my work** (ROI)?
- would it benefit both parties for me to produce a small (paid) sample, before starting in full?

Having detailed answers to these job-specific questions will help you immeasurably when kicking off a task, and will help in managing your client's expectations throughout the process. Everybody's been on the same page right from the start.

We should do this again...

How you bring things to an end is often overlooked in freelance workflow management (of course ideally, you don't want this to be the end).

Pro-actively seek out project feedback, take it on board and make sure all ends are tied up. As a freelancer, retained business is a huge part of the game and once you've worked with a client, the next goal is to work with them again.

02.

Managing client relationships

Building strong, long-lasting client relationships is the key to growing your business. We look at ways to manage them effectively.

It costs 5 times more to acquire a new web customer than an existing customer via the web
– Boston Consulting Group

Dos and don'ts of dealing with clients

DON'T neglect them. Once you've worked with a client, it's worth keeping in touch even when the project has closed.

DO schedule a follow-up meeting to see how your work is performing and get in touch on a regular basis moving forwards. You never know when they'll have more work for you.

DON'T provide a number of concepts. Design is subjective and if you provide options the client is more like to find something they like. If they don't like the one concept you come up with they may doubt your ability.

DO make sure you consistently deliver value. If you're always producing high quality work and coming up with great suggestions, clients will start to rely on you and keep coming back for more. It can even be worth throwing in a little extra work which will pay off in the long run.

DO be reliable. Deliver work on time and cost it fairly – with no hidden charges or fees. If there are any issues, keep clients in the loop at all times.

DON'T agree with everything they say. Clients will come to you because you're an expert in your field, so make sure you're giving them the benefit of your expertise, even if it means critiquing their ideas. Being honest, you'll build up trust in the long run.

DO learn more about your clients. Do your homework. Find out more about what they do and their plans for the future. This will help you identify further opportunities to add value.

DON'T work without a contract. It doesn't have to be anything too complicated, but you should have some form of written agreement outlining what you'll deliver, by when, and how much it will cost. Having a formal agreement will cut down on issues further down the line.

DO be professional at all times. When you're regularly dealing with a client one-to-one, it's easy to slip into a more casual relationship. While it's great to be friendly, remember that you need to maintain a sense of professionalism.

DON'T forget to ask for feedback throughout the process. You can save yourself a lot of time in the long-run by finding out that a client doesn't like something at the draft stage.

DO set realistic expectations. There's no point promising something you know you can't deliver just to win a job. You'll just be left with a disappointed client who's unlikely to use your services again.

DON'T react badly to feedback. You may think that the work you've submitted is brilliant and on brief, but the client is allowed to have their opinion. Explain to them why you've made certain choices, but ultimately, be open to making changes if needed.

DO meet clients face-to-face. It's easy to receive briefs over the phone or email, but every now and again it's good to meet up with your clients in person. You're more likely to talk generally over a coffee, rather than just about the project at hand, which could help you identify opportunities for more work.

DON'T be afraid to end a relationship that's not working out. Maybe it's not profitable for you anymore or you're not comfortable with the type of work being requested? Just remember to be calm, clear and respectful when letting the client know, or it could affect your reputation.

DO outline your working practices. Talk new clients through your usual process, from start to finish, and outline where you need involvement from them, whether it's signing off briefs or giving feedback.

What makes an effective meeting ?

If you've chosen the venue, help your client by reminding them of the details the day before and sending them some directions.

Pick the venue carefully

Chances are you'll either be heading to a client's office or suggesting somewhere neutral to meet. If you get to choose the venue, make sure it's somewhere convenient for both of you. It's also worth picking somewhere with Wi-Fi and that you know won't be too busy. Having to hunt for a new venue because your first choice is full won't get the meeting off to a good start.

Set a clear agenda

It's easy for meetings to spiral out of control – spending hours not really achieving anything – unless you have a clear agenda to keep you on topic. It's fine to take the lead in setting the agenda, but make sure you send it over to the client before the meeting and check if there's anything they'd like to add.

Remember to factor in any meetings when costing a project – especially if you have to travel to meet the client.

Ask lots of questions during the meeting. It'll show you're interested and the more you know about the client the more likely you'll be able to successfully pitch ideas to them.

Do your homework

Make sure you find out as much about the client as possible ahead of the meeting. Check out their website if they've got one and search their name to see what other people are saying about them. It's also worth looking into their competitors to give you a better sense of the landscape they operate in.

Dress for success

One of the perks of freelancing is being able to work in your PJs if you want. But for meetings it's important you dress to impress, particularly if it's your first meeting with a client. Your outfit will help set the tone and it's even been suggested that clients are less likely to quibble over pricing if you look professional.

> Think of what you wear as an extension of your brand. Most clients won't expect to see you dressed as though you work for a bank, but they will want to see that some thought and effort went into your attire. Smart casual can be better than suited and booted if it better reflects your personality and how you run your business.

Be prepared

Make sure you have everything you need to hand – scrabbling around in the bottom of your bag for a pen will bring your organisational skills into question. Always have something to take notes with and have your business cards handy. If you're going to be showcasing examples of your work, have your digital portfolio or website loaded and ready to go on your tablet or laptop.

Watch your body language

A lot of communication is not about what you say but how you say it. You may be used to dealing with clients over email or on the phone, but remember in a meeting they can see you pulling a face at their ideas or glazing over while they talk. You want to seem excited about any new projects so remember to nod and smile. Mirroring the clients body language can suggest you are on the same wavelength.

Follow up

Once the meeting's over, make sure you follow up with a phone call or an email, saying how good it was to get together and confirming any action points from the meeting. If you made any promises during the meeting, i.e. to send some examples or a quote, make sure you act on them promptly.

03.

Your offering

Whether you've set up as a company or not, you *are* a business – with your own unique services, selling points and brand.

Here we look at ways to refine your business package. What do you offer that a client couldn't get elsewhere, and how can you make even more of your early potential?

Choosing which services to offer

The big secret about freelancing is... there is no big secret.

From the outside looking in, it can seem all successful freelancers have a special formula and offer unique services which can't be found elsewhere.

This isn't strictly true. No matter your profession, the services you offer don't change too much whether you're working as an employee or a freelancer.

The key is to provide the services you know you can get spot on. Your offering can always grow, but first you're looking to **build a reputation**, and hopefully a client list, by providing the best standard of work you can.

Don't just take any work that comes your way. You're not a sub-editor, for example, so leave the copy checking to those that are, rather than confuse your message and alienate potential customers.

Get together a list of all the things you're 100% confident with, maybe from a past job. Be sure to big up these skills when advertising yourself, but never promise something you can't deliver just to appear more comprehensive. A client would far rather think you're an expert at something, than a substandard jack of all trades.

Don't be afraid to freshen up your services every now and again, making sure everything's still relevant and on-message.

Find your USP

One of the (few) drawbacks of freelancing is facing significant competition.

So you need to tell the world why you're the best. Ideally, this needs to be concise. A sentence even. It's not a mission statement (explaining your business goals), it's a focus on your distinguishing features – what do you offer which is worth knowing?

Even just the process of coming up with a unique selling point (USP) can be helpful for you as a freelancer – getting you thinking about branding and marketing, and putting thought into why you stand out. Sometimes all it needs is a solid, tangible reason for a client to hire you over someone else.

- **Analyse the competition** – peruse the websites of other freelancers in your field and pretend you are your ideal client: what's missing?
- **Get active** – you're not a web designer, you design websites! Always talk in terms of what you do, fix and design, it strikes a more favourable tone
- **What sets you apart** – even if you provide similar services to thousands of others, single out a memorable project or testimonial and play off it; make it memorable
- **Use it** – once you've settled on a USP, get it out there! Display it on your website, print it on business cards; it's what makes you you.
- **Relay a backstory** – all companies have a history, something which makes them interesting – maybe yours will make clients warm to you. Familiarity breeds trust which will make it easier to work together, and increase the likelihood of winning new work

How to charge

It's a much-feared question among new freelancers – how much should I be charging for my work?

Overcharge and clients will go elsewhere, undercharge and you might as well have stayed in your old job... this needs to be financially viable.

But when you actually start crunching some figures, you'll soon find out a way to charge that is fair to both you and your client.

How much do you need?

Two main things to consider; **salary expectations and overheads**. If you've got a target salary in mind, stick to it – and don't forget to factor in taxes.

Then calculate outgoings. Start monthly then times by 12 for an annual bill – think postage, supplies, marketing, rent, utilities, phone bills, insurance... they're all things you never had to consider when you were part of a business, but now you are the business.

Plan your time

How many hours are you likely to have available to spend on 'billable' work each year, taking into account holidays and illness. Also take off non-billable time like admin (a further 20%?). Work out an hourly rate by adding together your desired salary (be realistic!) and your overheads, then divide by the number of annual billable hours you hope to work.

But don't forget profit! Factor in a profit margin of 10-30% of your hourly rate, add it, and arrive at your hourly rate.

Example:

Salary target: £22,000.
Annual costs: £3,000
Annual billable hours: 1,110
Hourly rate: £22.50
Add profit margin (20%), so hourly rate: £27.00
(*Average salary taken from PayScale.com)

Never sell yourself short or overlook the value of design. Good design can directly improve a customers' sales, profits, turnover and growth.
http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/report/factfinder-value-design

Easy ways to increase revenue

Before too long, you're going to start wanting to think about how to take things to the next level.

Here are 5 things to think about...

1

Focus on realistic jobs

There's no shame in saying no. Sometimes one of the best ways to accumulate is to not take on risky projects – focus on doing more of what you do best. Rejecting stressful work can be as profitable as taking it.

2

Maintain contacts

Surround yourself with like-minded freelancers – not only will your shared experiences offer a support network, you'll also be able to share work, helping out when one of you is at full capacity. It means the work's not going elsewhere and still keeps you in profit.

3

Grow your online presence

As well as your own website make sure you're highly visible on social media, anywhere that gets your brand out here and offers clients a chance to see you. Post examples of success stories and shout about them.

4

A 'friendly upsell'

Nothing wrong with this, as long as you can avoid being pushy. Add to your rate card with an 'extras' section, and you'll soon find the enquiries start rolling in. Do you sell print services, for example? Most clients are keen to find out new ways in which their business could be easily improved.

5

Categorise your clients

Use business sense and prioritise clients according to their prospects. Aim for longer-term relationships where possible; if you can see a client is at the start of a significant journey, you want to be part of it. Channel your energies into becoming a part of that ride – rather than spending valuable hours on one-time-only arrangements.

04.

Marketing

When you work for yourself, there's no marketing or sales team to drum up business for you. You have to go out there and find your own work.

Here's how...

Why is marketing so important?

Marketing yourself effectively is one of the most important things you do as a freelancer.

When working for yourself, there'll be times when you won't know when the next job's coming in, so it's vital you're always thinking about ways to drum up new work.

You may offer some amazing products and services, but if no one knows about them, they can't buy them.

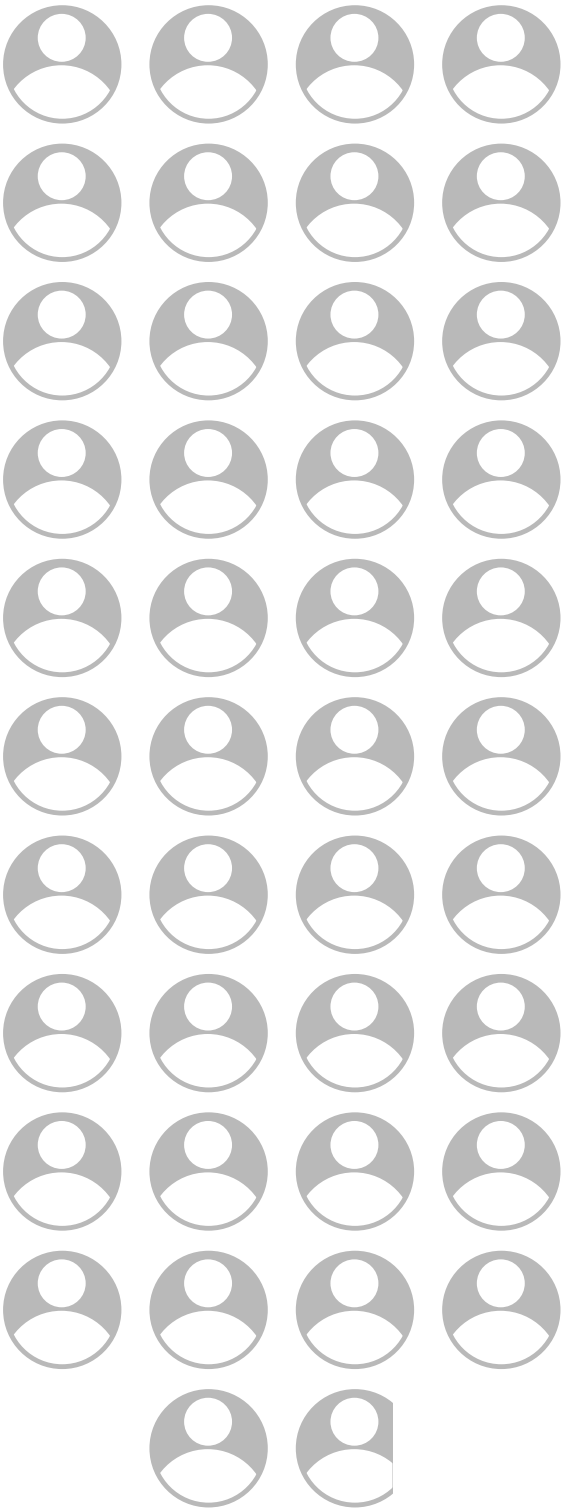
If it's done well, marketing:

- helps establish your brand and lets customers know what they can expect from you
- gives both new customers and existing clients important information about your products and services
- helps you stand out from your competitors, some of whom may not be marketing themselves
- boosts sales

Before you start marketing, there are a few things you need to consider:

- Who are you marketing to?
- How much can you afford to spend on marketing?

Over the next pages, we take a look at some of the most popular marketing channels.



41.8%

of freelancers have experienced problems finding clients at some point – PolicyBee

Offline marketing

Offline marketing is basically any marketing that doesn't involve the internet, including:

- Newspaper ads
- Direct mail
- Loyalty programmes
- Networking

For freelancers, particularly those with a limited budget, networking and handing out business cards can be two really useful forms of offline marketing.

Networking

Networking is about making lasting connections with people who can help further your career – not just potential clients, but fellow freelancers whose work might be complimentary to your own. Industry conferences, events organised by professional groups and local civic groups like your Chamber of Commerce are all good places to get started.

Eventbrite is a great source of local business and creative-focused events

Business cards

Business cards can be a freelancer's most useful tool. You never know when you'll meet someone who could be a future client and if you have a card to hand, you'll be able to make sure they have all the details they need to commission you in the future. Make sure you include your name, detailed contact info and the address of your website or online portfolio.

Take a look at our range of business cards

Pros and cons of offline marketing

- (+) Great for establishing your business locally, if you only want to work in a limited area
- (+) Helps build credibility for your business
- (−) Some channels can be expensive to use i.e. Newspaper ads
- (−) Can be difficult to measure success

Online marketing

As you'd expect, online or digital marketing is anything which involves web-based channels. This can include:

- Email marketing
- Maintaining a website
- Pay-per-click advertising
- Search engine optimisation (SEO)
- Advertising on freelance marketplaces

For freelancers, blogging and social media marketing can prove particularly helpful in helping to build an online audience.

Blogging

Blogging about your chosen field helps you show off your knowledge and marks you out as an expert. You don't have to write exclusively for potential customers. Think of a blog as somewhere to showcase your skills and knowledge, like another online portfolio. But remember, you should always be writing for your audience rather than just for the sake of it. To be successful, blogs should be updated regularly with quality content. Make sure you include a 'Hire Me' tab with details of how to contact you about freelance work.

It's worth learning a bit about SEO so you can help drive as much traffic to your blog as possible. Take a look at these helpful articles.

Social media

Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube all have millions of users and can help you build a global online following. Again, you do have to commit to updating them regularly. Start off with one or two profiles on the sites you think will work best for you. For example, Instagram is great for design professionals as it's so visual.

Find out more about using social media to attract new clients

Pros and cons of online marketing

+ Some channels, like social media and blogging are free to use
+ Can help you reach a wider audience
− Can be time consuming to update your channels regularly
− There's lots of competition

Building your profile

Advertising your services on freelance marketplaces is a great way to get jobs and build up your client base. But to stand out from the crowd, you'll need a great profile.

Choose a professional photo

Your profile picture will give prospective clients an insight into what you are like, so you should pick something that represents you and your brand. Wear something comfortable and don't feel you have to be posed in front of a blank screen. A shot of you out and about might do a much better job of selling yourself. Just remember to make sure your face is clearly visible and smile!

Choose the best way to describe your role

Job titles can be confusing, especially within the design industry, so think carefully about how you want to describe your role. Are you a graphic designer, a UX designer or a web designer? Remember, your job title will have an impact on what type of work people approach you for. When describing your role, talk in terms of benefits, as you would when describing a product.

Sell yourself

You need to persuade potential clients to hire you over all the other freelancers on the site, so don't be afraid to really sell yourself. Include what you would consider your specialities and any experiences you're particularly proud of.

Showcase your best work

The portfolio section is the single most important part of your profile. It provides prospective clients with evidence to back up all the things you've said about yourself, so make sure to include your best work. As your skills develop, it's worth updating your portfolio to reflect your experience.

Show some personality

Trawling through dozens of designers' profiles, many of who have the same skillsets can be a boring task for prospective clients. Make yours stand out, and give yourself a better chance of being picked for the job by injecting some personality, whether it's a funny picture, amusing personal story or quick joke.

Think about keywords

If you were looking for a freelancer with your skills, what would you search for? Make sure you include these keywords and phrases in your profile.

Some sites, including **Elance**, allow you to have your credentials verified by a 3rd party for a small fee

5 popular freelance marketplaces:
Behance
Upwork
Guru
Dribbble
Freelancer

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