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About the Author

Graeme Meadows has earned his living as a freelance writer for several years. He has met and interviewed, or worked with, many people that do their particular type of work on a freelance basis.

Graeme said that many people have the dream to have a successful freelance career but they are often basing their dreams on limited or even incorrect information or the experience of a few exceptional people that have had success quickly and with seemingly little effort.

"I know that some people achieve success fairly quickly when they begin freelancing, but others have their dreams and their future shattered because they are not aware of how important some factors can be to their continued success.

Graeme says that his ebook is focused on helping people who are considering setting themselves up as a freelancer in their industry and freelancers who have some experience but are looking for ways to improve their methods and results. Some may find ways of making money as a freelancer or making more from their current projects that they had not even considered.

Graeme said that he was not guaranteeing anyone instant success but he has helped many people to build a better future for themselves.

"My book will answer the questions which people have when they want to move on to have their own freelance business."

It will also help those who want to dabble in freelance work as a sideline to their current job or those who have skills but are unable to find a job in the current economy and want to freelance until more jobs become available.

Introduction

I have written my book to help you, whether you are new to self-employment or have been doing it for a while and may be looking for ways to improve the results you are getting.

Freelancing is attracting a lot of attention because of the reduced security of employment in the current business environment, and also the supposed freedom and potential for greater personal rewards which may be achieved.

These benefits shine so brightly that they may blind some people to the other important aspects of earning a living this way compared to having a regular job.

I will explain the potential, and the personal requirements for success as a freelancer and some strategies which have been used by myself or other freelancers which you might find very useful.

But, I will not put any gloss on the realities of freelancing – it is not suitable for everyone and can actually be a big mistake for some.

You will find suggestions about how to deal with and avoid some of the negative aspects and pitfalls, and how to improve your personal results and be ready to take advantage of the opportunities which you find along the way.

The Appeal of Freelancing



Freelancing is attracting a lot of attention. Some books suggest that it is a way that most of us could increase our income, reduce our working week, work the hours we choose, work wherever in the world we want to and be our own boss.

That would be worthwhile trying, wouldn't it?

Freelancing is also a potential answer to the possibility of being downsized or whatever is the current term for losing their job through no fault of their own.

My book will give you a balanced view of the potential of freelancing based on experience and research.

I won't try to sell you on becoming a freelancer. That's something only you can decide.

I will give you as much information as possible and my suggestions are designed to save you time and stress.

Some will seem very obvious to some readers while others could get you thinking about factors which are important to you but which you had not been considering until now.

The Reality of Freelancing

Freelancing is not always a better way to work – it's a different way.

It is not suitable for people that:

- 8 Need direction about how to do the tasks involved in their work.
- 8 Are disorganized.
- 8 Are easily distracted
- 8 Find working alone de-motivating.
- 8 Are easily stressed.
- 8 Aren't adaptable
- 8 Dislike dealing face-to-face with people
- 8 Cannot keep other people's information private
- 8 Overstate their personal qualities and abilities
- 8 Need external approval or reassurance
- 8 Don't focus on their client's needs above their own.
- 8 Don't finish what they start.

Some successful freelancers had one or more of these factors influencing them when they started and have overcome them, but they can be serious impediments to success for many who want to be freelancers.

Yes, reversing the above statements will give you what I think are valuable qualities for a would-be freelancer, to either have or focus on developing.

The two most important qualities of most successful freelancers are probably their willingness to push beyond their comfort zone to deliver exceptional results for their clients and good management skills which reduce potential risks to a minimum and maximize the benefits of their successes.

However well qualified and motivated, please realize that the first year or so of your new business will have more challenges and will require more effort and dedication than you probably have needed in any job you had.

You will be like the proverbial duck, trying to maintain a calm and

professional appearance in your daily activities while paddling extremely hard!

I have never regretted my decision to become a freelance writer, though there were some periods where the pressure was very great.

I hope that the tips I share in this ebook will make your road to success a bit smoother.

The Downside of Freelancing

If you are used to working in a regular job with an organization of any size, you will realize that being a freelancer is quite different.

My book will show you many of the factors which you will need to consider which will impact your readiness to become a freelancer and some of the adjustments you will need to make.



Some people will see the differences as challenges to be dealt with, but they may be regarded as serious drawbacks by other readers. That doesn't mean that the first group are better workers, but they are probably better suited to working as a freelancer. Many people in the second group can make the transition but it will take a shift in mindset, more effort and more time.

No Parachute: You must have financial resources to keep you going during the initial period when you are finding clients and completing your first freelance jobs, and also during the inevitable slow periods which occur in most types of businesses.

You also need to be able to deal with unexpected major bills like medical, car or equipment repair and other expenses. This is not always easy.

Dealing with Clients: This can be much harder for a sole operator until you start to get repeat customers and referrals from them.

Many people find it hard to promote their services without appearing pushy or even desperate which will put potential clients off completely!

Selling: Some people don't like doing it but every freelancer has to put some time every day into promoting themselves for more work or the money will quickly stop coming in.

Even when current clients are very happy with your work, there will be times when they don't need anything from you. It can be dangerous to depend on

just one or two major clients for this reason.

Happy Ex-freelancer

I was told by someone that chose to get a regular job after they had tried freelancing for while that they were glad they tried it.

That man said, "I think it was a very valuable experience. It gave me a better idea of what people that used my services really needed."



I know better than ever what areas I am best at and what I need to improve on. I discovered the benefits of working in a larger organization and how to become better at dealing with other people inside and outside of it."

"The most important benefit of that period was that I gave it a try so I will

not have any regret about not trying to live my dream in the future."

"If my circumstances or the economy changes sharply in the future, I will be better prepared if I have to go freelance again."

Your Team

Although you are a one-person business, you will need to connect with other professionals who have valuable expertise which you need to make use of so that you can make real progress.

The best way to find the right people and organizations is by asking your friends, colleagues and other business contacts.

You can also contact the associations which people who offer a particular type of service belong to for contact information of their members in your area.

I scan the advertisements in the local newspapers and phone directories to see how the various suppliers of a service present themselves but give much greater weight to personal experience of people I know and trust than any other factor.

It is worthwhile to check if the professionals you are considering to get services from have their own websites or are active on social networking sites (especially linkedin.com which is focused on promoting interaction between businesses).

Timely Tip: Remember that you have to pay for their time as well as their services, so try to keep your discussions, whether in person or by phone, as short and business-focused as possible.

Your Accountant: One of the most common mistakes which people make is to not keep proper accounts and regularly review their financial situation and outlook.

Although you can save some money by doing your accounts yourself, paying for the services of a good accountant will actually be a wise investment.

They know what can be claimed, are aware of changes in regulations and how best to prepare your accounts.

Their biggest contribution can be in saving you time and stress.

If you use a computer for keeping your accounts, ask them how you can produce your data which is most convenient for them? If you can reduce the

amount of manipulation which they have to do to your information, it may significantly lower the cost of their services to you.

Expecting them to transform a jumble of receipts to legible, well-formatted records will cost a lot more than you think, if they are even prepared to take on that sort of task.

You need to maintain at least a basic system yourself and they may suggest a computer program which will save you time and put your data in a form which they can use with their more sophisticated programs.

The main reason you need to keep your records organized is so that you have an understanding of your own current financial situation and prospects, so that you can take action before any problems develop.

Apart from the day-to-day running of your business, you also need to be able to produce up-to-date figures for tax purposes and when you want to get new financing of any kind or if you want to sell your business.

Accountants, like lawyers, are also useful sources of recommendations of other suppliers of useful services (after a while, they may even pass your details to any of their clients who could use your services), the best professional organizations to join and how best to deal with local authorities.

Your Lawyer: It's very likely that everyone will need legal advice at some time in their career. A freelancer will have more need than most because you will be dealing with government at all levels, a variety of employers and possibly agencies and other service providers.

So, it's a good idea to locate a reliable lawyer who has some experience dealing with small businesses. It would be an advantage if they have other freelancers among their clients.

Again, personal recommendations from your colleagues and friends are the best way to start your search.

You will need to arrange a preliminary meeting with the most likely one or two before reaching your decision because you will need to assess;

- how well you will be able to work with them,
- how easy they are for you to understand when they offer their advice, and
- whether they show some grasp of your particular type of work.



Your Bank: A good banking connection is very important for any business person, but it is essential when you work for yourself. One thing that you will need to ensure a good hearing from any bank you approach, even the one that you have been using, is a clear and detailed business plan.

I have some suggestions about what you will need to include in that in a later section.

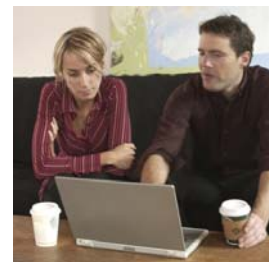
Your Doctor: Having regular checkups is very important for each of us and this becomes more important when we work for ourselves which can be a source of greater pressure than when we have the supposed security of a regular job and its associated benefits.

You need a doctor that you are comfortable with, who has your confidence so you will follow his advice and trust his judgment, and that will be available when required.

Another important factor in maintaining your peace of mind is to make sure that you keep your medical and other insurance at a level that will minimize the effect on yourself and your family if you are unable to work for a time.

Your Family: Your family's support will be vital, especially during the establishment phase when you are probably bringing in less income than you have previously.

You will need understanding and sometimes more, such as acceptance of late hours, missed family occasions and other unavoidable



upsets.

At the same time, you will need to remember that the pressure you are under as you develop your new career may have significant impact on each member of the family as well.

You should try to be as understanding and supportive of them as you can. Try to arrange time to spend with them without any interference by the demands of your business and show them at any possible opportunity how much you appreciate them and their support.

Self-check for Would-be Freelancers

There are plenty of reasons which people will give for thinking about working as a freelancer.

But, sometimes the success which seems so easy is not as easy to reach as they may seem when you are just theorizing.

I believe that anyone who is considering any particular potentially life-changing decision should look for potential negatives to ensure that they consider them with equal care.

Some of the items which I list as possible negatives will not apply to you or you may be able to deal with their potential effects without much trouble.

Here are some of the most important factors which have been mentioned by freelancers that I know, including those I've experienced myself.

Although I list them as having a downside, reading this chapter will help you to be aware of the pluses and possible minuses involved with each one.

Then, you can prepare yourself so it will be easier for you to minimize any negative effects which arise.

Finances

This is just one of the factors which can increase the pressure you feel, but it seems to be one of the most damaging to people's self-confidence and health.

You will need capital to cover setting up your business identity, equipment, stationery, advertising and other costs for at least sixty days.

You should have cash available and avoid, as far as possible, using credit in the early days. That's because the payments you put off through the use of credit will fall due all too soon and you will also have to handle the extra charges as well.

That will add pressure you don't need, causing you stress and also reducing the funds available to you when you may need them in a personal or business emergency.

You need to have sufficient funds available to you from Day One to be able to

support yourself and your family while you are seeking work. Even after you have completed and delivered the work, you can expect to be kept waiting for payment to be made and cleared through your bank. Although thirty day accounts are common, many companies and even individuals can keep you waiting for sixty days or even longer.

If you push for payment, you could lose any future business from that source. If you don't, you may risk defaulting on your own bills.

You also need to be prepared for seasonal dips in your business and to put aside whatever amounts you can when you are doing a lot of business so that the dips do not cause more stress which could affect your health and your ability to produce your best work.

Working Alone

If you are used to working in a group environment, this can be quite a shock. But, most people will be affected by this sort of situation to some extent.

You will find this can impact your mood and enthusiasm, and that is likely to reduce the quality and amount of work which you produce.



Although you may feel a need to work harder and longer during the early days, you should make time to meet with other people for part of every day.

That might include doing some work while at the local coffee shop, joining a business group that meet for breakfast or lunch to conduct their meetings or just walking your dog in the local park (a great way to meet people!).

Your Workspace

One advantage you have with your freelance business is that you can organize your workspace as you see fit. If you feel you will get more done by having a particular color scheme or certain types of music, go for it.

You may want to dress very casually. That can be okay if you are in an type

of business which accepts that sort of thing.

But, my own belief is that maintaining a fairly professional standard of dress is better for my own mindset and also for meeting potential clients, which can happen almost anywhere and at almost any time.

You're Your Own Advertisement: When my brother got his first van sign-painted, his ex-boss congratulated him on the design and then said, "You realize that everywhere you drive this van now, you will be representing your business, even if you're at a baseball game."

Interruptions

The other side of loneliness affecting people who work by themselves is that many, who work from their homes, are often interrupted by friends who think their social visit will not impact the freelancer's work. This can also involve other family members wanting to share part of the extra time you now have at home when you really need to get the work done.

This can become a real problem when deadlines are involved, so you need to find some way to minimize the visits without upsetting your friends and relatives.

A first step is to get an answering machine if you don't already have one and make sure that you have a business-like message on it and not one that refers to your family. If you can arrange a separate phone (mobile or landline) for your business, that will be even better.

Your family will usually be understanding when you explain the reality of the situation and will often volunteer to be unpaid gatekeepers to keep other interruptions to a minimum.

If any of your family members are likely to answer any calls which relate to your business, it's important that they do so in a way that reflects well on it.

Marketing

Many people dislike selling but that is an important factor to being a success in freelancing or any other sort of business activity.

Sometimes, this view is based on a feeling that selling is a less worthy

activity than creative work.

But, the truth is that we all “sell” our views, desires and opinions to each other every day.

You encourage your kids to eat their vegetables and you and your partner got together after one “sold” the other the idea.

I believe that whether the selling we do is good or bad depends on the product. Any freelancer that offers good services is doing them a favor in bringing their offers to the notice of their potential clients.

They won’t get much benefit unless they deliver quality and after-the-sale support. I’ll give you some suggestions about that later in the book.

Red Mottley, who was Editor of Parade magazine and a salesman in the U.S.A. just after World War II, once said, “Nothing happens until someone sells something.” And you’ll find that’s true in both our business and our personal lives.

Responsibility

When you work for a company, you have one or two bosses. When you work for yourself, every client is your boss – that can be dozens!

You are also responsible for the well-being of your family and the successful completion of every part of each job you take on, even when you don’t do all of the pieces yourself.

You also have the primary responsibility for complying with all the rules and regulations at local, State and national level.

That may feel overwhelming sometimes. It is.

But, it is also a great boost for your enthusiasm when you complete a task which is bigger or different to anything you have attempted before.

It makes it more likely that you will be offered bigger projects in the future and also helps build your confidence in your own ability so that you eagerly seek even bigger challenges in the future.

One of the best tips I have for overcoming any doubts which start to develop in your mind at times is to think about the previous successes which you had

with other tasks that were probably just as challenging for you at that time in your career as the new task looks.

The only use for failures (and we all have them) is the lessons which they give us which will help you to avoid similar problems in the future.

Take the lessons, discard the rest and get back to building a more successful future.

Planning Your New Business

If you start freelancing without doing some serious research and drawing up a business plan for your new venture, you will likely get one of three results:

- You'll go broke.

Freelancing may have the potential for more money than you get doing the same work for a boss, but you need sufficient funds to keep you going until you have established yourself and got the money from your first jobs actually in your bank account. That may take up to three months after some of those jobs are completed and delivered to the client.

- You'll work harder than ever but make little progress.

You probably have some areas where you excel but you also need to check for anything which you need to do better. If you let your prospecting slide, you will not get enough new clients to keep going. If you do not improve your current ability in all relevant areas, you will not be able to accept as wide a variety of work as other freelancers and will lose jobs to them.

- You'll grab another job and tell everyone that freelancing doesn't work.

But, the reality is that it didn't work for you. That's no disgrace unless you did not give it and your clients your very best efforts.

At least you will have tried. That will probably give you a better appreciation of having a regular paycheck.

And, if you decide to try freelancing again at some time in the future, you will know how important proper detailed preparation will be.

Making Your Business Plan

This step is vital even if you don't like doing it.



A carefully prepared business plan is necessary for every business from a one-person market stall to a national or international enterprise.

. It helps you to keep up with the current state of your business so that you are not caught up by unexpected problems or distracted and depressed by vague worries due to your lack of accurate knowledge of the current state of your business at any time.

I suggest you do the following steps which will give you a better idea of the most important aspects of your proposed or current business.

It is not designed to produce a formal business plan but will help you to see the sort of benefits that doing one will give you.

Then, you can use the information you put together for this exercise to prepare a formal business plan

You can get free templates off the Internet from sites like score.org.

(Always scan any downloads from any site before opening them.)

Another source could be your local business association or your accountant. If you use a web template, always run it past your local advisor, who may suggest modifications to better align your forms with current practise in your location, before offering it to your bank or other financial institution.

Make sure that you review your plan and update it every few months. That will help to ensure that you are staying flexible and taking account of new developments in your business, in your industry and the business world in general.

Developing Your Plan

The first thing I do is to write a short statement which is an accurate and hopefully interesting answer to the question, "What business are you in?"

Many people call this an “elevator pitch”; it has to be short enough to use when you and the other person are in an elevator traveling between floors, 100% accurate and catch their interest so they want to know more.

But, the exercise also will help you focus on what might set your business apart from other businesses in the same general area.

Then, you need to answer the IRS’s favorite question, “How does your business make money?”

Why will people want to hire you and not the person in the next office?

Do you specialize in particular types of projects?

Write up as much information about your business and its potential. Imagine you are trying to interest a potential investor.

Why do you think your business will succeed? Is there un-met demand, poor competition or even no competition?

What is the state of competition and any other potential alternatives to your offerings in your area?

Do you have easy regular access to the supplies you need from reliable sources and at suitable prices so you can make a sustainable level of profit?

A clear-eyed and thorough report on your finances, including debts, assets (liquid for short-term cash and other fixed assets) so that you know you can weather any slow times or unexpected major bills.

How will you promote your business so that you stand out from other operators who are aiming at the same pool of clients and may be better established?

What business structure will you set up? There are advantages to each but you need to sort that out with your business advisors before opening your door.

Will you operate from your home, on the Internet or from commercial premises? Each of these have their advantages and possible drawbacks, depending on your particular circumstances and resources.

What assistance and services will you need and what will your costs for them

be?

You also need to make business forecasts which are in line with your current position and show how you will deal with things if your forecasts are not met. You need to produce figures that show how much you need to receive each week or month to meet your overheads, other costs and how much profit you expect to get above that.

You will have to make an inventory of all supplies and equipment, detail what extra equipment you will need and how you will get it (purchase, lease or credit).

Then, you have to forecast the likely useful life of all your equipment and include in your financial forecasts how you will be able to replace it.

You need also to provide some regular amount to put aside for unexpected expenses.

Although this probably seems overwhelming, not planning would mean you were in the fight of your life without any idea of how you expected to win.

Benefits of Your Plan

A written business plan is essential if you want to get any kind of outside finance or to attract a partner.

It is also useful if you have the I.R.S. looking closely into your affairs.

If you start small with just a home office, the business plan can help give you some credibility.

But, its greatest advantage for the new entrepreneur is to help you to stay focused on those activities which are most important for you to produce your best work and make sure that you get paid.

Forecasting the Future.

One of the best tips which I got early in my career as a freelance, was that I should start planning for when I left the business.

I thought this was a bit premature because I was still working on establishing my business and reputation.

But, it is something which makes a lot of sense.

There are a few possibilities to consider.

Selling the Business

A friend was a very successful person that had built a few businesses.

He said that many people started a business and ended up with a job, putting all their time and effort into looking after the business.

His approach was to build a business which would be an asset that he could, if he wanted to at some later time, sell to someone else.

This focus helped him to maintain a balanced approach where he was giving the needed attention to the business but not making it his life's work.

He said that a freelance could build a business that could be sold to someone else, especially if the freelancer did not use his name as the business name.

After all, you might want to retire or change your location at some time in the future.

One thing which can help make the business attractive to a potential new owner is to have everything which you and any staff you might have at that time do well documented so that transition to a new owner would be relatively easy.

How will the Business Keep Going?

If you develop a successful business, you need to think about and prepare for the possibility if you, for whatever reason, cannot keep operating the business for some time.

This is particularly important if the products or services of the business are, at least in part, based on your own talents and abilities.

If you are the only person that can do certain procedures, you need to look at creating some products which others can sell for you.

You must prepare, as far as possible, for times in the future where you are incapacitated, travelling, leaving the business or too sick to continue.

What will you and your family do if you cannot produce anything?

Is there a family member or even an employee that can fill in?

Is there someone who has expressed an interest in buying your business that you feel would be a good fit?

One possibility that might cover a temporary situation is income insurance. This should be looked at carefully. It may be too costly for the benefits which you would get but you should get expert, independent advice.

Can you sub-contract some work? That will require careful checking of the ability and credibility of the other supplier.

If the family would be unwilling or unable to continue the business, you will need to have complete details of the business in a secure location where the family or a trustee can access them quickly.

Who might you use as a trustee? You will have to get their agreement in advance and make sure that your closest family members know about that arrangement.

Insurance

Insurance is very relevant to the previous topic but it is important enough to have its own section.

Every business needs to have insurance of its equipment, intellectual assets, most important employees and third party risk of causing damage to someone else or their property.

You need to get the best you can afford but not pay out more for the cover you get than necessary.

Always ask people in related business who they use for their insurance and what service they get, especially when they have had a claim?

You may be able to get some kinds of insurance at special rates if you belong to a local business group or one that only has members who are involved in your type of business.

There are probably companies offering specialized insurance over the Internet as well.

With any company that I was thinking about placing such trust in, I would expect them to be able to refer me to satisfied clients who I could contact directly.

Before you need to renew a policy, examine your current needs. Most businesses will have some areas which have become more or less important in their operations.

Then, write up a list of the things which you need cover for and get at least a couple of outside quotes before making your choice.

Ask your current insurance representative if they are offering any new policies which might be more suitable for your business? Though, an agent who was truly connected with their clients would not wait until renewal time to let you know about something like that!

Prospecting

A freelancer must always be looking for new clients. The best time to find them is when you are already busy because you are not under as much financial pressure, and at least some of your clients will probably refer people to you or even give you a testimonial.

When you are in that situation, you might feel like easing back on looking for new clients but that could be dangerous.



Your most loyal and valuable client may get a better offer or find that a close friend is offering the same service as you which could leave you with a hole in your income that you need to fill quickly.

Depending on one client for too much of your monthly income is one of the most dangerous things a freelancer can do.

How Do You Find Good Prospects?

Your local business associations can be useful sources of potential clients and leads from other members that know people who could use your services.

You obviously won't push yourself or your services which would have the opposite result to what was hoped for.

It can also be a good place to meet people that operate related businesses which may be competitors in some areas but who may have specialities in which you don't excel. They may be particularly gifted in that area or have costly equipment which makes some tasks much easier for them to do.

A freelance artist friend told me, "I will happily recommend someone who does something specialized which I don't, and that has two benefits which usually are enough to soften the sting of sending work away."

"The other business will usually reciprocate and send you some work at times. Two large operations in my area have been encouraged by my recommending them to refer jobs to me which are smaller than they want to

take on.”

“But, the other benefit has been that the clients who I refer to others often appreciate my professionalism in ensuring that they get what they want when they need it, even if I don’t get that particular assignment. Most return to me for the sort of work I have done for them before and are very happy to give personal recommendations to their friends and colleagues.”

You can also connect with potential clients through local community groups and online forums that focus on the area you are involved with.

I sometimes conduct writing classes at the community center and have had people there ask me without any prompting to do some writing related to their business for them.

Promoting Yourself and Your Business

This is a topic with many parts.

For those readers who have little or no experience in promoting themselves, the need to do this can be the thing which stops them becoming a freelancer.

As I said earlier, we all sell something just about every day.

So, you may as well learn to do it well.

If you keep in mind that selling someone your product or service will improve their lives as well as your bottom line, you will probably start to feel more comfortable about it.

My focus as a seller of quality services is to under-promise and over-deliver. If you follow that line yourself, there is no reason that anyone can object, is there?

It's important to establish yourself as a special freelancer who supplies more than most of your competitors. To do that, you need to build your own brand to the point where more and more of your work comes from referrals rather than advertising.

This means getting your interpersonal skills to the best standard you can.

That takes effort and attention to detail but it is worthwhile. Word of mouth recommendations are the most powerful form of promotion and also the cheapest in money terms.

How do you get those referrals? Start by mixing with people in all the areas related to your business.

Of course, you need to be able to deliver what the referrer promises and more besides. But, you have shown by getting this book you are genuinely focused on improving your abilities.

To conquer any discomfort about contacting people, you need to learn to do it better. Practise is essential.

Join local business groups that have training programs.

A friend said that she found the Toastmasters club in her town extremely

supportive and their program gives all active members experience with various types of speaking and personal interaction. These groups provide a supportive atmosphere to get over any fears you have and build your self-confidence as well as your skills.

If you are still overcoming a long-term shyness problem, you can start with making some of your contacts through the Internet sections of the professional associations and other groups which your clients and competitors are involved in.

Although I usually use the term "competitors", I found it worthwhile to maintain a good relationship with many other writers, including some of those who focus on similar areas to those I write about.

I've had some good jobs referred to me by some of those same writers because they were familiar with my work and standards. And I have done the same for them when a job has come in which I cannot do in the required timeframe or for any other reason. When I recommend someone, I always focusing on the person I believed would be a good choice for that job.

Have I lost work as a result? Probably.

But, I know that a couple of my clients have started sending me more assignments since I referred other very capable writers to them for jobs which I was unavailable for.

Online forums are a good way to connect with potential clients and keep up with the current trends in your field of business too.

You may think that setting up your own web site to promote your business and yourself would be too difficult, time-consuming or expensive?

It can be none of those. If you have any problems doing it yourself, get your teenage child to show you how, or hire a college student to do it.

The main problem you might find is that many kids and students have the skills but no idea about making it work for your business. If that's a problem you encounter, ask the eBookwholesaler member that sold my book to you for their advice.

Top Mistakes Freelancers Make

There's no reason to get upset about making a few mistakes - everyone does!

But you should try to avoid making the same mistake more than once. Just learn the lesson and don't worry about it again.

In this section I will help you to avoid some of the mistakes which catch a lot of freelance operators by listing them here with a few brief details.

Remember that these are just a sampling from the many which I have heard of or done myself.

Learn the Lesson

If you make a mistake or get ripped off on some deal, the most important thing is to avoid wasting even more time on regretting the mistakes. That just increases the damage you do to yourself, lowers your self-esteem and wastes more productive time.

If you believe you can get redress for someone's action which damaged you, give it a try. There is no such thing as a sure thing with our current legal system except that any action is likely to cost more than you expect and take a lot more time that you might believe

Charging a low Rate

This is a common problem for new freelancers. The fee you ask has to be one that will cover your time and other costs as well as giving you a profit that will help your business to survive and thrive into the future. Many people underestimate the total costs which they will have to cover or the time it will take them to complete the project. If you get either of those wrong to a significant degree, you may be well out of pocket on the deal.

You need to consider what your competition charges and where you want to set your rates compared to them. You may find some information on their web site or their promotional material and I know a few people that get a friend or relative to phone their main competitors and ask for their rates!

Setting your own rate is best done by working out what you want to earn in a

year and adding that to the expenses you estimate you will have including your potential tax liability and a reasonable amount to sock away for a rainy day or a sunny holiday or two.

These base figures will be affected by many factors that are part of your particular working environment and the economy which you are operating in. Your rates will have to be competitive with those of your competition. This has become harder to calculate for those freelancers that have local competition and also competition from other places courtesy of the Internet. Although those farther away services are a factor to be considered, the main competition is from other suppliers in your area because you are easier to discuss the progress of the project with and can usually provide quicker turnaround and changes if required.

For your first few projects, you need to give weight to your need to establish yourself, get some clients and income.

But, don't bid so low that you don't make any profit.

You will find it hard to immediately raise your rates by a significant amount for other similar work from the same client and so you will not be able to improve your cash flow very quickly.

Underbidding just to get some work will also make it harder to establish a professional connection with other, more established freelancers in your area. I have always found it worthwhile to have good connections with them.

Grabbing every Opportunity

It's tempting to grab as much work as you can when you are just starting to establish your business. But, you need to match your appetite to your ability and the time you have available.

It's better to do two projects extremely well rather than three well enough or four to a lower standard.

You can charge more for the two excellent projects than you will probably get for the four not so good ones and will obviously make a much better impression on your clients with them as well.

Unless you are in a dire financial bind, it's better to knock back work and preserve your reputation than deliver lower quality results or miss your deadline!

The other important aspect of this is that many clients will prefer to use someone that makes a specialty of certain areas in your type of business, while also being better than average in the others. So long as that specialty has enough demand to keep your earning enough profit when you forgo some of the other available work, it can be worthwhile to be the "go-to" person in your area for those procedures.

Build in some "Me Time"

If you don't set aside some time regularly for your family and other personal interests, you will find that your work and your health will suffer.

Don't just ask yourself, "How much work can I do?"

An equally important question is, "Am I getting time to enjoy those things which is why I am working so hard?"

Taking time for your personal interests will have dividends for the quality of your work output as well. A couple of hours taking your child to a sports event or your partner to a movie will be cheaper than consulting your medical professional to deal with your stress related problems later on.

Giving Away Your Expertise

Many freelancers get so used to answering questions about their specialties that they give away too much of their knowledge and lose work as a result.

If you give people the answer to their problems, what do they need to pay you for?

This usually happens when people that really enjoy what they do, get a bit carried away and spend more time sharing their knowledge for free and less on their business and promotion.

I'm not saying that you must always charge everybody for everything. But you need to set boundaries on what you give freely and what you charge for.

If you want to share your knowledge or even some of the special techniques

which you have developed, you might think about putting it in a book like this or teaching a class at your local adult learning center.

That second option is something which several people that I know have used to become better known in their area. Over time, many of them have gained customers from among the students they have taught.

If you want to just do something for your community, you could offer your services to a genuine charity or local group which is focused on some important aspect of improving your own community.

But, approach any such project as if you were taking on a paid assignment. You must fit the time and other resources which you can provide to it into your general work plan. Otherwise, you may find that you are over-committed and unable to give your best to that or your paid projects.

Do What The Client Wants

The most important thing about satisfying the client – any client – is to give them what they asked for.

I know many people that have thought they knew better than their client. So, without discussing their idea with the customer, they produced something based on their own idea, which might have some good points, but which did not fit the specifications of the job.



That will usually cause them to lose a good client forever because they don't deliver what the client wants and also cause expensive delay and frustration to that person.

My first boss said to me on my first week when I worked for him and added some unappreciated flourishes to something he told me to produce, "Always focus on producing exactly what the client asks for. Then, you can't go far wrong." He also deducted the cost of the extra materials which I used for the flourishes from my next pay packet. It was only a few dollars and it was a cheap price for me to learn an important lesson.

It's a good idea to take notes when you discuss the project with the client. Nobody minds you making sure you know exactly what they want.

Don't hold back on relevant questions either. Don't assume you and the client are on the same wavelength unless you check directly with them from time to time.

If you find you're not clear about some details, check rather than guess. It can be a lot less expensive and stressful that way for all concerned.

If it's a large project with a reasonable timeline, check back with the client when you have something they can give you feedback on. But don't keep doing that – it gives the idea you don't have confidence in your own abilities and that you may not be as professional as you seemed.

Some clients get very nervous if they have assigned a large project to someone and then do not hear anything for a considerable time, especially if the freelancer does not have any kind of track record with them.

A nervous client is not a happy client.

You might want to discuss at your meeting with the client exactly when they can expect a progress report.

Of course, you should send them any important questions as they arise and don't delay them until the contact time you originally arranged.

My Best Tips

I have a confession – many of these tips came from other freelancers who have given them to me or that I have learned from.



Focus on what You are the Best at:

You should capitalize on those things which you are especially good at. Rather than being just another article writer, most will specialize in particular subjects in which they develop deeper knowledge, exclusive contacts and expertise about.

It's the same with artists and any other kind of freelancer.

Always keep your basic skills sharp, but make the most of your particular skill set.

Then, clients will want you when they need something in that area rather than settling for just anyone. And that's when you can start to charge more than others too!

Should You do That? This question can improve your bottom line and increase the satisfaction you get from your business at the same time!

Like my friend who found great satisfaction when he started paying someone to mow his large lawn (and he even provided the mower), as your business grows you should look for anything which takes more of your time and effort than it is worth for you to do.

Sometimes, you can get someone else to do it for less cost than your time would be worth. Sometimes, paying them to do it may be worthwhile just for the feeling it gives you not to have to do it yourself.

Never Stop Learning: Whether or not your particular type of business is modern or traditional, you should put some of your time into improving your knowledge of current and potential future trends and improving your personal methods.

There is no longer any chance that your business can remain in the same position with the same clients and a steadily rising cash flow without focused effort to adapt and improve your skills and services or products.

Watch trends and innovations, including those which occur outside your particular field. Sometimes, you can adapt something which first appears in another area and gain an advantage by making the first adaptation to your field.

Another point to remember, it is not always the innovator that reaps the greatest benefits. Sometimes, the person who can pick up and popularize someone else's work can make a lasting impression which sticks in their customers' minds.

Always Get it in Writing: Not doing this has caused more damage to many freelancers' businesses than just about anything. Remember and learn from Samuel Goldwyn's words, "A verbal contract is not worth the paper it's written on!"

Anyone that is worth doing business with will understand that everyone is entitled to expect them to put their word on paper and sign it.

I have lost business because I insist on written agreements but I've never lost sleep about that business - it would probably have cost me more than I ever would have got from it.

The extension of that is to always do business as if everything you say was in writing.

If you make a mistake or cannot fulfill an agreement for whatever reason, make sure that you let the client know and do whatever it takes to make good on that failure even when there are excuses available.

Buying Time with Money

A friend had a good business which he'd built single-handed over several years.

One day, I noticed his smile was a little brighter than usual. When I asked him, he said, "I stopped mowing the grass!" I knew they had a sizable block with a large area of lawn at the back and front.

He said that he hated mowing it, even with the little tractor which he'd bought a couple of years before. But, it had taken him a long time to realize that it really was worthwhile for him to pay someone to do the hated task.

"I can make more than I am paying to have it mowed in the time I save, but I can choose to have more family time instead when I want."

"That's worth even more to me as my kids are growing fast."

"And, the guy who does it is very reliable and he does it better than I did. He is glad to get the extra cash on a regular basis, so it's a win-win all around!"

"I've learned that working enough to get the money is really only a means to having a better lifestyle. It's never just the money."

I believe we all need to remember that, when we're just working for the money, we're aiming too low.

Resources

United States of America

U.S. small Business Administration

<http://www.sba.gov/>

From their website: SBA offers a variety of programs and support services to help you navigate the issues you face with your initial applications, and resources to help after you open for business.

Score.org

<http://www.score.org/>

From their website: "SCORE is a nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses start, grow, and succeed nationwide. SCORE is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and has been mentoring small business owners for more than forty years."

Australia

<http://business.gov.au> The Australian Government's principal business resource.

United Kingdom

<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/> The United Kingdom Government's online resource for businesses. There are links also to sources of information and support in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Last Words from Graeme Meadows

I hope that my ebook will help to smooth the way ahead for you with your freelance venture.

I have met and learned from many generous freelancers who have flourishing businesses in their widely different fields.

With some experience, you can fit your business to your needs and prevailing circumstances. If you want time for a holiday, you can make your arrangements without having to refer to anybody expect your family and perhaps a few regular clients. That's usually much easier than fitting your plans in with the desires of the numerous employees of a large business and the businesses own demands.

Above all, you can get great satisfaction when you build a business from your own efforts.

Later on, you might want to scale down your business activities but have the knowledge that you can earn some extra money if you need or want to at any time in the future.

Freelancing is not for everybody but it is a wonderful way to earn your income for those who meet its challenges with confidence, energy and enthusiasm.

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