

7 Steps to Launch Your Freelancing Career Full-Time



The meaning of “freelancer” was originally a mercenary fighter, paid to do jobs most people wouldn’t do.

Times have changed since this term was coined nearly 200 years ago. The original freelancer jobs still exist, but they’re outnumbered by millions of independent contracts in almost every profession. Every year, the number of self-employed workers increases along with the need for contract work.

You may ask why you’d want to freelance when there are secure and stable jobs available. Doing your own thing might seem risky, yes, but working as an independent entity on a project-per-project basis is becoming the norm.

There are even predictions that solopreneurs, freelancers, and independent entrepreneurs will make up the [vast majority of workers](#) in only a few years from now. Getting into the freelancing market now is a good investment in your future. Enjoy the benefits of designing your own work and life systems around your skills.

Let’s take a look at how you can get up and running with your new freelancer status.

Step 1: Focus

The first step is to position your business in the market for potential clients.

Ask yourself why someone would hire you over an agency or more established business. Don't focus on pricing at this stage. You might think you can charge less because you have fewer overheads than an agency. But setting prices too low harms your business. And offering services for free will set you up for burnout. You might not offer a premium service, but make sure it's not a race to the bottom on price- that's a race you can't win.

Pick a narrow focus or an in-demand niche to benefit from the "expert" advantage. It's easier to become an expert in a narrow field. Remember that jacks-of-all-trades do not, in most cases, earn as much as specialists. Prove to clients you are the best guy or gal for the job in your niche and you've got a better chance of securing a deal. If you try to please everyone, you'll please nobody. Stay focused!

Step 2: Showcase Your Work

Let's face it: If you can't show off your work online as a new freelancer, you'll have a hard time convincing clients to hire you. Word of mouth is a fantastic marketing method, but it's also limited. And even word-of-mouth referrals will look for evidence of your skills.

"But I can't show my work visually," I hear you say. It's easier for designers and graphic artists to display their skills online but here are examples of how freelancers with non-visual skills can showcase their work. But it can be done even if you are not in those fields.

Some examples:

SEO expert: Show improvements in traffic on charts, Google analytics graphs, and other traffic measurement tools. Post images of keyword ranking improvements. Detail how this helped the revenues of your client's business.

Writer: Post excerpts of your work and show how it helped your client. Did the blog post improve traffic? Was your article able to generate more revenue for your client? If it's an article on your own website, did it boost your website authority?

Analytics expert: Showcase graphs you created to help your clients understand their web traffic. Give details of how they used this information to grow their business.

Step 3: Find Clients

Finding clients is often the most time-consuming and frustrating part of freelancing. But many people skip the most important part: identifying your ideal client. Casting a wide net will catch you fish you might not want to eat. The same is true when prospecting for clients. The local deli doesn't need your programming skills.

Create a profile of your ideal client. What kind of business do they have? What business problems do they need solving? How much does their business generate and how much could they spend on freelancers?

Once you've found your ideal client, you'll want to impress them with your tech skills.

Show the client how easy it is to work with you by sending them an impressive proposal with software such as open source invoicing solution, [Invoice Ninja](#). Professional proposal software such as Invoice Ninja can make even non-techies look like design and tech whizzes. Stand out from the crowd with a professional proposal.

Step 4: Manage Your Money

Many people fail to understand the impact of irregular income until they are deep in the freelancing trenches. A regular job pays you a fixed wage every month. Freelancing can be a famine or feast experience. Some months you're ready to pop the champagne and other months you've downgraded to ramen and water for dinner.

For the life of a freelancer, you need to have a good grip on your finances and cashflow. This doesn't have to be painful or arduous, however; online money management software such as [Mint](#) can make it relatively easy to track your expenses.

Step 5: Track Your Time

When you are your own boss, it's easier to drop work for other things. Implement a system of time tracking as a way of holding yourself accountable. People work better with systems. A great system for optimizing your output is to monitor and evaluate your time.

Keeping track of your time is a skill you need to master if you want to make it as a small business owner or solopreneur. Use online time tracking software to help you understand which clients take up the most time, which projects generate the most income based on time, and where and when you are wasting time.

Step 6: Build Your Reputation

Besides being a platform for showcasing your work, your website can be a great marketing tool. Want free traffic from Google? Content marketing is the way to go. Generate leads from potential clients by answering their questions in blog posts. Write about what you know. Imagine you're having dinner or a drink with a friend and they ask you about something in your business. Write about this topic (make sure it's relevant to clients) in a friendly, clear way.

Love it or hate it, social media is here to stay (for the next few years anyway). Connect with potential clients or business partners on social media. For some freelancers, connecting online is a vital part of their business strategy. Just like face-to-face networking, communicating via tweets, online chats, and Facebook groups can help build your brand. You can use services such as [Buffer](#) or [Hootsuite](#) to make that social media presence just a little bit easier.

Brand recognition is a big part of many businesses success. The more people hear about you, the more they trust you. Get your message out there and show the world you're available to help. And that leads us to the last step.

Step 7: Give To Receive

Don't just focus on your business. Give value. Help people. Offer advice. Setting yourself up as an expert in a world of experts is difficult. But if you can walk the talk you'll stand out. If someone asks for your advice give them half an hour of your time over coffee to offer your best advice.