CLIENTS FROM HELL PRESENTS

THE FREELANCER'S GUIDE 2013

BRYCE BLADON

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MISSION STATEMENT

This document is sponsored by Clients From Hell. Its primary focus is to inform interested readers and help them avoid the stories found on the site in their professional career. This document provides a snapshot of the freelance industry and offers freelance hopefuls easy to understand advice targeted at the most persistent issues in the industry. Dozens of interviews across a variety of freelance fields were conducted by the author, as well as hours of research into news, reports, and blogs pertaining to the industry.

A special thank you to these organizations:

The Freelancers Union [x]
FreelanceSwitch.com [x]
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And these people:

Richard Florida, Author of Rise of the Creative Class
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Sara Horowitz, Founder of the Freelancers Union [x]
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WHAT
IS A
FREELANCER?
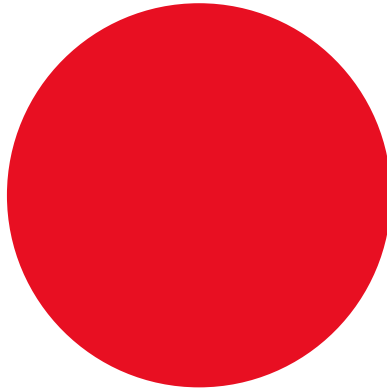
The etymology for freelance comes from free (as in a free person) and lance (as in the long medieval weapon), and was coined by Sir Walter Scott in his historical novel Ivanhoe.

Captain of the Free Companions Maurice de Bracy introduces the word: "I offered Richard the service of my Free Lances, and he refused them... thanks to the bustling times, a man of action will always find employment."

Today, the word's meaning has shifted to include those who handle a brush, a camera, or a mouse with particular finesse. However, the idea of a free person selling their skills for gainful employment remains the resolute definition.

"...thanks to the bustling times, a man of action will always find employment."

THE 3 FREELANCER SKILLS

- ➕ **PROFESSIONALISM**

- ➕ **POLITENESS**

- ➕ **TALENT**

At a commencement speech for The University of the Arts graduating class of 2012, Neil Gaiman revealed what he believed were the three essential skills to survive as a freelancer. The three reasons freelancers get work are "...because their work is good, because they are easy to get along with, and because they deliver the work on time."

To boil that down further, you need to possess:

- Talent
- Politeness
- Professionalism

Gaiman points out you don't even need all three. Two are often enough to scrape by.

TIME + DEDICATION = TALENT

A freelancer is essentially a modern-day craftsman. If you're the haughty type, you can think of yourself as a commissioned artist. Regardless, a freelancer is someone who possesses a skill that is sharp enough to be professional-grade.

If you've ever seen a professional sport, you've probably thought it looks fairly easy. You probably even attempted some act of finesse you weren't fit for, and the attempt probably ended with you hanging upside down from a basketball net holding a hockey stick. In the same way, the right series of clicks in Photoshop seems simple enough. But leave it to an amateur and you will have a pixilated mess put together in Paint.

A common complaint from freelance veterans and newcomers alike is that clients don't always appreciate the time and effort that goes into crafting a piece. There is no better sign of talent than making something difficult look easy. Talent, like grace, comes from time.

That's it. The only shortcut here is other people. Find idols and other dedicated people and surround yourself with them. It will give you different perspectives, constant feedback, and a changing set of lessons. Chase people who are better than you. Support those who aren't. And always lend a hand to a colleague when you can.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that talent comes from a home studio set up, a tablet the size of your torso, or a camera worth more than a university education. That's a rabbit hole with no end.

"There is no better sign of talent than making something difficult look easy."

POLITENESS

INTEREST + HONESTY = POLITENESS

Politeness is what makes you a pleasant person. It is a skill that's harder to learn the older you get. It also starts to degrade if you stop paying attention to it. The good fortune of a mother who taught you basic etiquette pays off here. Please and thank-you will take you miles, but there are plenty of other little habits that will help here. Regardless, the simple rule is this: people respond to positive reinforcement better than negative reinforcement.

There are very few freelance jobs that don't involve interacting with a client on a regular basis. If a client has to choose between two possible freelancers of equal pedigree and pay, the job will go to the more pleasant one. It's not complicated. If someone is nice to you, you are likely to be nice to them.

Politeness shows that you value someone else's time as much as you value your own. It shows you're willing to make the effort to make the interaction a pleasant one, and that this effort will likely find its way into your work. The simplest trick to being polite is to make sure you work for people who you do not mind working for. That's your right as a freelancer.

Beyond that, it's never good policy to burn bridges or to try and get the last laugh. It's pointless. There is not a single compelling reason to be rude in your professional life.

"Politeness shows that you value someone else's time as much as you value your own."

✚ PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism is being as good as your word. It is anticipating problems and overcoming them. A professional meets deadlines because they are experienced enough to understand how long the craft takes. They meet (or exceed) expectations because they learned long ago that both parties need to be clear on the conditions of a project for it to succeed.

If politeness is something you should learn as a child, professionalism is what you should learn as an adult. It is, essentially, a sign of maturity in your respective career. Every action you take should imply purpose. Professionals understand their tools, their craft, and the state of their industry. If talent is your skill, professionalism is how you communicate that skill. It fosters an environment of respect and trust.

In more practical terms, professionals invoice clients after agreeing upon the conditions of a contract. They respond to questions in a succinct and timely manner. And, of course, they don't mix their personal lives with their professional ones - a true skill for any freelancer.

The easiest way to be a professional is to simply try and act like one. It won't work right away, but it will get easier and more innate with time.

"If talent is your skill, professionalism is how you communicate that skill."

WHY
FREELANCING IS
(OR ISN'T) FOR YOU

Type "why freelancing is for you" into Google and the first result will give 10 reasons why freelancing isn't for you. The second result gives 10 reasons why freelancers fail. Two things should be apparent: it's not all pants-less parties, and freelance writers like top 10 lists.

The best thing about freelancing is the free part. You are your own boss. You decide when you wake up, when you work, and what you work on. You can spend your day doing whatever you please. It's strange seeing your day shift from the typical nine to five model. It's liberating, and it reveals what you value in your day.

The worst part about freelancing is that you can spend your day doing whatever you please. You might wake up past noon, your work pushed off until the sun sets, and your projects no longer inspiring. What most people enjoy doing with their day, given the option, is nothing.

The cost of freedom is responsibility. As a freelancer, no one will play a bigger role in your eventual success - or failure - than you.

You might have what it takes to be a freelancer if: you value freedom, you possess self-discipline, you can step outside your comfort zone, and/or you can work alone.

However, you should reconsider freelancing if you crave stability, you rely on others, and/or you need to be pushed to learn

There is nothing wrong with checking off one of those last points. They can come with time and success; designers start their own firms, photographers their own studios. Teams are built. Work can start to come in regularly. If you work hard and are lucky, you might find yourself able to pick your projects at your leisure, sleeping late and with nary a pant-leg in sight. But that's comes later.

WHAT
YOU NEED TO BE
A FREELANCER

There are two things you need to get started a freelancer: a skill, and drive. This e-book will educate you as much as it can. It will offer tips, tools, and resources to help you on your way. But there is no substitute for these two points. You can't cheat them - at least, not for long.

You don't need to be a leader in your field. You don't even need to be a particular stand-out. But you need to have an above-average offering. There are a lot of reasons you need sharp skills, but first and foremost is that you are not going to attract a client with a subpar offering. On the off-chance you do con your way into a client, how long will you keep them by meeting the status quo? If they want a service that will simply fill in a blank, they will go to an established agency or firm. It's a lot less hassle than working with a wet-behind-the-ears start-up, and their product is guaranteed, if not particularly unique.

Even more important than the skill you're selling is the drive to sell it. There are a lot of facets to freelancing. At first, they can be daunting. Finances, finding work, establishing a brand, creating a web-presence - it's unusual, if not unreal, that any one person possesses top-notch talent in all of these areas. And that's not even all of them. But overcoming these deficiencies is what takes you places.

The Latin root of passion is 'pati,' which means 'to suffer.' That's what a passion is - something you're willing to suffer for. Are you willing to go through the business stuff for the art stuff? There are a lot of aspects in the industry you will not understand. There are a few you might despise. However, the willingness to address, work through, and ultimately overcome them is what will determine if you succeed or starve as a freelancer. It all gets easier, after a little hard work.

WHO
IS YOUR BUSINESS

One of the first steps freelancers commit to - and get stuck on - is branding themselves and their eventual business. You can simply use your name (e.g. John Smith), create a business name (e.g. Wonder Word Works), or combine the two (e.g. The Word Smith). Whatever you decide on, it should be easy to remember, easily understood, and relevant to your business. As well, you should find out if the domain name for your business is available. Any domain registry service can tell you this. Namecheap.com is a personal favourite.

After you decide on a name, you should start on a logo and a website. If you have little to no experience in this area, you may need to employ your own freelancer to help you out. And it is worth investing; you don't need all the bells and whistles, but if you are going to sell yourself as a professional, your business should be represented as such.

A logo is the culmination of your businesses identity. It should be both concise and relevant. It should be recognizable. And, as mentioned, it should be professional. There are numerous online boutiques and freelancers who can craft one if you lack the skillset.

Your website should include a description of the service(s) you provide, examples of those services, and information to contact you. Think of it as an online business card. It should answer: who you are (a freelancer), what you do (your skills and services), why someone should hire you (examples of your work), and how someone hires you (your contact information). It doesn't hurt to indicate where you are based. Though the internet is turning freelancing into an anywhere job, there are certain crafts that benefit from the local touch. As well, clients may (or may not) have an interest in hiring local freelancers.

Don't over think the website. When in doubt, be brief. You can always do more, but you should at least do the above. Like your logo, hire a professional if you find yourself incapable of creating a professional presence. Asking after quotes is a great way to learn about the client-freelancer relationship too.

WHO
IS YOUR BUSINESS
(CONT'D)

The area most freelancers fumble is selling themselves. You should be able to describe what you do and why it is worth someone's money.

You do not necessarily need to be able to run a social media campaign dedicated to your greatness. You are not a used car salesman and you should avoid acting like one. However, you should be able to convince someone who needs your services that you can provide them. Do not be modest or shy on this point. No one else is going to convince them for you.

A final note: printed business cards are not a bad idea. There are dozens of places that can have your design printed at minimal cost. However, they are a dying medium. There are few stories of follow-ups as a result of handing someone a card. If and when you do find yourself in a situation where a client needs to get in touch with you, put your information in their phone personally. Or, take their email and get in touch. Business cards are professional confetti. Pretty, but borderline valueless. Making an actual connection is always more worthwhile.

"You should be able to convince someone who needs your services that you can provide them. Do not be modest or shy on this point. No one else is going to convince them for you."

WHERE
TO FIND WORK

The biggest challenge as a freelancer is finding consistent work. The basic ways to get work as a freelancer include networking, recurring clients, bidding, and online job boards. Of those methods, networking and recurring clients are the most fruitful. See Facts and Figures for more information.

Make sure to cultivate the rewarding interactions. Following the advice for networking is a great way to do so. And don't forget - once you find and agree upon work, put a down payment/contract in place to protect yourself. Any worthwhile client will accept this from a professional.

Networking: There are plenty of articles and books that offer suggestions here, but it's best to keep things simple. To begin networking professionally, start with your personal life and ask friends, family, and former colleagues if they know anyone in need of your services. From there:

• stay in touch with those you like and/or respect (either professionally or personally)
• talk to people at social events and in everyday life, e.g. airplanes, hockey games, weddings, parties, etc.
• listen and ask questions
• work on your presentation i.e. know how to answer "what do you do?"
• give people a way to contact you e.g. a phone number, a business card, a website
• join clubs, forums, etc.
• follow up on leads

Networking is essentially politeness in professional practice. Don't seek out people only when you need help, and don't ignore them when they have nothing to offer you. Don't worry about the immediate value of every interaction. And don't treat it as a chore or a way to further yourself. You're missing the point of connecting with people. Either of those mindsets makes you seem (rightfully) insincere.

WHERE
TO FIND WORK
(CONT'D)

Recurring Clients: Check in with clients you enjoyed working with every few months. If you can, ask after something you learned about them during the project. Make sure to keep it semi-professional; that is the nature of your relationship, after all.

Bidding: Bidding sites can be a solid way to build your portfolio or find fast-paying work. Essentially, a client states their budget and freelancers offer their services with a quote. The time-to-price ratio doesn't always match up with other work and the temporary nature of clients can make them less than savoury, but it can be fine in the short term.

Freelancer.com is the largest job-bidding site around, and it covers all kinds of listings.

Online: There are hundreds of online job listings sites. The trick is to discover who the deadbeats and dead-links are. For sheer value of quantity and the quality it collects from, top job listing aggregators are listed below. However, it is strongly recommended that you personally research the best resources in your field and start there. For example, the FreelanceSwitch Job Board (jobs.freelanceswitch.com/), requires you to sign up for $7/month, but it provides high-quality and reasonable offerings. Ask colleagues what resources they tap for work if you're stuck. Chase realistic offerings and focus on one area at a time.

Job Pile [x]
most Hired [x]

"Make sure to cultivate the rewarding interactions."

HOW
TO DECIDE RATES

Most freelancers charge by-the-project, while others charge an hourly rate. Both methods require you to understand how much you need to earn in order to make a sustainable living.

You can find rate calculators by asking Google nicely, but there are links to them included at the bottom of this section. Essentially, you figure out how much you need to earn a year (plus business expenses), and then divide it by how much time you can commit to work a year (workable hours a week x the number of work weeks in a year, having taken time away for vacation, illness, public holidays, and day-to-day business).

Once you figure out your hourly rate, figure out the ratio of hours to words/pages/ projects to help set those rates. It's not as difficult as it sounds, though it's worth noting that money is the area of freelancing most people have trouble with. A persistent piece of advice from veteran freelancers is to hire a bookkeeper or accountant for the tricky stuff. And it never hurts to get in touch with a financial advisor if you have trouble figuring out how much you need to earn.
Remember, just because you can work 20 hours a week at $65/hour doesn't mean your calendar will be filled with work each and every week.

A final piece of advice: two areas freelancers get careless are time management and undercharging. You can find more advice on how to avoid these issues under Common Mistakes Freelancers Make. This is part of the reason most people suggest keeping your day job as you get started. You will start to realize how much time you actually spend working on email and how much you commit to your craft. By easing yourself into freelancing, you can learn and make mistakes while the stakes are low.

RATE CALCULATORS:

All Freelance Writing [x]
Freelance Switch [x]

GETTING STARTED

A **CHECKLIST**

Skill and drive will get you started, but here are a few other things you will likely need.

MONEY: Don't quit your day job - at least, not right away. Six months worth of expenses in an emergency fund is a reasonable amount if you want to go full-time. Even once you have established yourself, three to six months worth of funds should be present in your savings. Work may dry up or unexpected expenses may arise. Regardless, planning for the worst is the best way to prevent it.

CONNECTIONS: Most veteran freelancers recommend working a regular job related to your field prior to starting freelance work for the connections it can provide. Most people meet their first clients at their last job. Still, you can find clients and connections in other parts of your life. Friends and family may know someone, queries and cold calls may get you somewhere, and if you are a part of any sort of social group related to your field - be it an online forum, a weekly meet-up, or passionate colleagues - make yourself available to them and you'll find their leftovers piling onto your plate. Connections take time to build, and they are something that need to be maintained and constantly expanded. See Getting Started: Where to Find Work for more tips.

A BRAND IDENTITY: Create a logo. Hire someone to do it if you lack the skills. It matters. Know what it is you do and be able to explain it to others. Most clients will hire you because you can do something they cannot.

A **CHECKLIST** (CONT'D)

Likewise, they may not exactly understand what it is you do, or why it is worth their money. Be able to justify why you are worth their time and money. See Getting Started: Who is Your Business for more tips. Take everything you learn there and apply it to -

A WEB PRESENCE: This includes social media links, a personal landing page, a blog - anything you use to represent yourself or your work online. The worst thing you can do in this regard is over-think or over-plan things. It's easier than ever to build a website. Don't worry about creating the all-encompassing web presence. Start with a single page. There are plenty of free or cheap themes for single page sites on a variety of platforms. If you're completely web-inept, it's fairly straight-forward to create an About.me page, though having ads on a personal site is far from becoming.

Regardless, focus on that single page. It should include your name, what you do, and examples of your work. This could be a link to or feed from your Flickr account, your Twitter, your Tumblr - whatever. Get that landing page up so you have something to direct clients to. You can build around that base if you feel it's inadequate.

On a related note, you should con
sistently put work online. Creating and sharing your up-to-date creations will tell your colleagues and clients more about you than anything else. It will help you build your network, refine your skills, and it instills a work-ethic.

A CHECKLIST (CONT'D)

A PORTFOLIO: This is one of the first things a client looks for when hiring someone. It is proof of your talent, and it's something you cannot get far without. If you are considering freelancing, you should have at least a few pieces in your portfolio. If you need to round out your portfolio, create a mock-up, parody or improve upon something that exists, and/or do some free work.

Not everything you create needs to be (or should be) in your portfolio. This is the best of your work. It is what you show clients to convince them to give you money. It should be worth their time to look at it. Prop up your proudest pieces and keep it up to date.

A CONTRACT/INVOICE TEMPLATE: There are plenty of online options for creating a contract template. The Freelancers Union's offering on their site (check it out here) is pretty all-encompassing and the result can be modified in any basic text editor to suit your needs. Any contract you create should include accurate contact information for both parties, an understanding of the scope of work, payment details, conditions to services, a set of guidelines for any potential disputes, and a clearly worded agreement that stipulates the nature of your working relationship. It should also be signed by both parties.

An invoice is a bill-of-sale applied to skill-based work. It includes a list of services or products, charges associated with them, discounts, and tax information. It may also include notes, your logo, and contact information. Check out Top Tools from 2012 for invoicing software suggestions.

Ed Gandia publishes an annual report on the freelance industry in support of International Freelancers Day. The 2012 edition comes in at 70 pages and features data and analysis of freelancer demographics, earnings, and attitudes with from a sample size of nearly 1,500 freelancers across the globe. You can find a link to the full (and free) report at the bottom of this section. For an annotated analysis, read on.

FACTS & FIGURES
FROM THE FREELANCE INDUSTRY

SEX: The majority of participants are female (71%).

LOCATION: Seventy-eight percent of participants are based in North America, 11% in Europe, 5% in Asia and 3% are from South America.

AGE: The largest segment of freelancers are 30-39 years of age (26%), though freelancers in their forties (25%) and fifties (25%) are similarly size. Finally, 12% of participants are over 60-years-old and 12% are in their teens or twenties.

EXPERIENCE AS A FREELANCER: Most freelancers have been working at it for over a decade.

9.8%	Less than 1 year
14.3%	1-2 years
25%	3-5 years
15.7%	6-10 years
34%	10+ years

HAPPINESS: Almost all freelancers (90%) are happier freelancing than they were before becoming self-employed.

MOST COMMON CHALLENGES: Nearly 37% of freelancers struggle with finding consistent work.

20.8%	Finding clients
16.3%	Feast-or-famine cycle of work
10.1%	Maintaining work/life balance
6.8%	Managing time and staying productive
4.5%	Getting better fees
4.4%	Affordable health insurance

CHARGING CLIENTS: The majority of freelancers (60%) charge flat project fees, while the second biggest chunk (35%) bill by the hour. The rest work on retainer (4%) or employ performance-based models (2%).

MOST COMMON PROFESSIONS: Creative-based work that can be done over the web tops out the most common freelance professions.
20.4% Designer
18.0% Writer
10.5% Editor/copyeditor
10,3% Copywriter
7.6% Translator
4.5% Web developer
4.3% Marketing professional

WORK STATUS: The majority of participants are full-time freelancers (66%), while 14% are part-time freelancers with a day job and 15% are part-time freelancers without any other work commitments. The remainder of participants (6%) are full-time freelancers who supplement their income with a part-time job.

WORK SECURITY: Over half of freelancers (58%) feel more secure working for themselves than for someone else. Almost a quarter (22%) do not, while the remaining 20% are undecided on the issue.
Work Outlook: Mirroring the results of the work security survey, the majority of freelancers are optimistic about the growth of their business.
35.6% Extremely optimistic
41.0% Somewhat optimistic
13.3% Neither
8.1% Somewhat pessimistic
2.0% Extremely pessimistic

WORK COMMITMENT: Just over half of freelancers (55%) wouldn't give up their career regardless of the position offered. A mere 2% would take the out, while 36% would consider the offer. The remaining 7% already have a part-time job alongside their freelancing.

FACTS & FIGURES

FROM THE FREELANCE INDUSTRY (CONT'D)

WEEKLY WORK HOURS: Over a quarter of free-lancers work more than 40 hours a week.
29%   40+ hours
27.3% 31-40 hours
22.3% 21-30 hours
14.2% 11-20 hours
7.3%   0-10 hours

FINDING CLIENTS: Referrals (27%), word of mouth (24%), and personal/professional networks (17%) are how most freelancers find clients. The 63% coming from the network-centric model dwarfs the rest of the figures, with job boards (6%), local networking (6%), email (5%), and social media (3%) making up most of the other resources freelancers tap to find clients.

KEEPING CLIENTS: Finding consistent work is the most common challenge for freelancers, so maintaining relationships with clients is important to any freelancer.
30.4% 2+ years
15.4% 12-24 months
15,9% 4-11 months
22.8% 1-3 months
15.5% Less than 1 month

HOURLY RATE: Not every freelancer works by-the-hour, but almost all have an idea of how much their time is worth in order to effectively quote clients.
9.3% $0 - $19/hour
34.2% $20 - $49/hour
38.2% $50 - $79/hour
8.2% $80 - $99/hour
10.6% $100 - $150/hour
4% $150+/hour

Find the full report by Ed Gandia in pdf form here. [x] It's free!

DEFINING THE INDUSTRY
WITH STEVEN PEDIGO

Steven Pedigo, the director of research and communications for the Creative Class Group, recently explained how freelancers fit into the growing class of workers dubbed by urban theorist Richard Florida as the 'creative class.'

"We [traditionally] identify people [by] who they work for, not their skillset," Pedigo says. "When we talk about the creative class, we talk about the skillsets people possess."

For freelancers, who identify themselves on these same principles, it's clear they fit within this class.

Pedigo states that "...across the [US], 40-million folks belong to the creative class. Globally, there are 150-million people." He continues: "We've seen the rise of the knowledge and service sector... The service sector is just off the charts, and on a very steep trajectory."

The growing numbers tell a lot. Pertinent to freelancers, it highlights the decline of the traditional 8 to 5 job. "People are taking on more responsibility for more flexibility," Pedigo explains. "It's a mobile workforce. Even during the economic downtime, it was a workforce that never hit 5% [unemployment]."

"[The creative class] make 30% of the work force, 50% of wages and income, and they control 70% of discretion-

"Even during the economic downtime, it was a workforce that never hit 5% [unemployment]."

ary spending," Pedigo offers in explanation for why a growing number cities and towns are interested in attracting this sector of workers. "We've got a group of folks in the creative sector who's wages are growing and who's unemployment numbers are consistently low."

Despite the impressive figures, there are some uncomfortable realities facing freelancers. "What's happened with the service/creative structure is there aren't a lot of support structures," Pedigo says. "There are no benefit, healthcare, or retirement programs."

"In the industrial age, we defined our relationship within the economy with the organization [people] worked with... We've done nothing to provide those [same] protections for the knowledge-based sector."

However, Pedigo continues, "...at the end of the day, the world is still sorting itself."

For these and other issues facing freelancers, check out the Top Stories from 2012.

"[The creative class] make 30% of the work force, 50% of wages and income, and they control 70% of discretionary spending"

CHANGING THE INDUSTRY
WITH SARA HOROWITZ

Sara Horowitz is the founder of the Freelancers Union and author of The Freelancer's Bible. She is a recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship "Genius Grant," is one of Forbes' Top 30 Social Entrepreneurs, and is currently campaigning to give freelancers the same rights and protections as other industries.

Horowitz is a lifelong Brooklyn resident and the premiere force for change in the freelancing industry. "When I got started as a union-side labour lawyer," Horowitz explains, "I was misclassified as an independent contractor so that they didn't have to pay me benefits."

Obviously, Horowitz took the challenges of an independent to heart. She launched the Freelancers Insurance Company in 2008 and opened Freelancers Medical in the heart of her hometown in 2012.

"Freelancers aren't on the radar... [but] we're one-third of the workforce in the US." Touching on the dissonance of working as an independent in the American economy, she continues: "[b]ecause of the way government agencies are set up, they are really [meant] for a manufacturing era."

"I think we're going to start seeing that change."

Horowitz comes from a long line of labor lawyers. "We don't unionize freelancers in the traditional collectivism model..." Horowitz explains, "but instead, we've gone to the core of a union and [have] people coming together to solve their problems."

The idea - or ideals - of the union don't stop there for Horowitz.

"Freelancing is changing how people lead their lives. Suddenly you have choices about how you can spend your day, and that seems to change how you want to live your life, because life is made up of those days."

Inevitably, "[t]his leads to a question of values about what life is for."

LIVING IN THE INDUSTRY
WITH KYLE LORANGER

Kyle Loranger has been in business since 1994. His studio handles logo development and branding as well as publication and web design work. His years of experience have given him impressive insight that any freelancer would benefit from.

"I'll have a break - that's what I originally thought."

Loranger gives this as an explanation for how he got started as a freelancer. A graduate from the University of Alberta's design program, he worked a nine-to-five job for two years prior to going it alone.

"Work for someone else first. Make sure you have a few years experience so that you get to know people in the industry, you get to figure out how the industry works, you get to make mistakes on someone else's dime, and you have help."

"When I had enough of that job, I said, 'well, I can do and do this for myself.'"

When asked the best tip for starting out, he mirrors the advice of other freelance veterans and suggests finding help to bridge the dissonance between being a creative and being a businessman. "One of the best things I did early on was hiring an independent bookkeeper. I've had the same bookkeeper for 15 years."

"My first couple years [working freelance] were spent learning how business works... [figuring out] how to get money from people, what do [clients] expect, and how do I deal

with those expectations."

"The business side of it is critical," Loranger admits. "That is a big part of your job that you have to manage every day."

Loranger has learned a lot in his 18 years of running his own business. "You make or lose your money in that half hour where you sit down to quote a client... You have to know what you're doing, you have to define that scope clearly in your head and on paper, you have to make that client understand what it is that you're doing, and you have to make it very clear what they are going to be charged."

"Good clients understand [paid deposits] and they're happy with that," Loranger states. "Having that money conversation upfront is very useful. Throw a ballpark number at the client to find out if it's worth meeting them."

From there, Loranger explains his process. "Successful billing has a lot to do with successful quoting. Successful quoting depends on successful client screening."

For Loranger's client screening techniques, read on.

"Successful billing has a lot to do with successful quoting. Successful quoting depends on successful client screening."

HOW TO SCREEN CLIENTS
WITH KYLE LORANGER

Over the years, Kyle Loranger has developed a system for screening prospective clients.

"FIRST thing: Is this person professional? Will they show up on time, can they answer their email, can they deal with details, are they an organized enough person to be a client?"

"SECOND thing: Do they have any money? Do they have a budget for this?"

"THIRD thing: Are they motivated? Do they want this project done now, or fairly soon? Do they have a compelling reason to get this done? If they're not really motivated, they're not going to devote enough of their time to sit down and help you get the project done. In our industry, we need to have somebody on the inside championing the project to move it along. We need approvals. We need content. We need someone to say yes."

"Finding those things out early on can save you a ton of heart ache," Loranger states. "Generally, we're selling time. You have to be careful to not waste time on a project that isn't going to go anywhere."

"Not everyone is qualified to be your client," Loranger says. "How you choose your clients defines why you do what you do.... When you screen clients, you'll see yourself doing better work, generally making more money, and being more satisfied with the work you do."

"Not everyone is qualified to be your client."

WORKING WITH CLIENTS

Once you find a potential client, you should make sure of a few things before moving forward.

Get to know the client's company. Ask what their business deals in. Find out how big it is. Ask after their mission statement. Knowing all of this will help you establish how you, as a freelancer, fit into their overarching goals - and how you can help reach those goals.

Figure out who you are working for. Who is your main point of contact? Ask when and how is the best way to contact them. Make sure you have the necessary phone numbers, emails, and general information for everyone you'll be working with. Figure out who is going to review your work and tailor it to them.

Figure out the work process. Does the client work with freelancers often? How often do they want to be updated? Do they mind having aspects outsourced? How often are they available for feedback? Make sure you are clear on work expectations, and make sure they match your own.

Be clear on the project specifications. Ask what they expect the final project to look like. Find out why the client wants to complete this project - what is its purpose? If they can't tell you that, they probably don't know what they want. If they can, honestly ask yourself if you get deliver it. Be clear about the expertise they expect from you. The reason you are likely being hired is that the client needs you to do something they themselves can't do. Likewise, they may not know that not all designers can code, or that not all photographers can provide every size of prints. Find out what resources you have at your disposal and where you can get them from. Be clear about any special requirements the client may have. I once spent over 100 collective hours on a project to discover that the client took issue with some of the language and it had to be scrapped. With that in mind, ask the client if they foresee any problems.

Figure out your audience. Ask who the intended audience is for the final project and keep it in mind throughout the project. This is your main justification for almost every creative decision you will make from this point on.

COMMON MISTAKES FREELANCERS MAKE

Freelancing, like any field, comes with easy-to-make mistakes that almost anyone can make. The most persistent ones – as well as their potential solutions – are below.

TIME MANAGEMENT

As a freelancer, you are essentially selling your time. Do not spend five hours at coffee meetings and writing emails for a three-hour contract. Do not take more work than you can reasonably complete. There are only so many work hours in the day, and if you strain too far past them, you will find the work suffering. If you do find yourself overwhelmed, find colleagues who are in need of work.

Budget your time the same way you budget your money; the amount of time you put into a full-length novel should not be the same amount you put into a feature-length article. As well, realize that there are little expenses in there, like moments of procrastination, that need to be accounted for.

After three correspondences with a client, you should have a clear idea of what they are after and whether or not you can offer it. The first correspondence is primarily introductions and an exchange of information. The second correspondence should outline what they are after and what you can do to achieve it. The third correspondence should be clarification and negotiation. There are always exceptions, but it's a good rule of thumb.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Trying to avoid bringing your work home is harder when you work at home. There are a number of tactics to avoid this, but it comes down to two-way discipline. You need to establish a work routine that you stick to. Don't keep videogames at your work station. Likewise, don't reply to client emails on a date. This comes with time, but never forget this is what you do for a living, not necessarily what you live for.

As well, don't be afraid to make a client wait for a response (unless you made a mistake and not rectifying it is costing them). There is very little in your email inbox that needs to be addressed right away. It's a marathon, not a sprint.

NEVER SAYING NO

The feast-famine cycle of freelancing work can sometimes lead to freelancers taking on more than they can handle. It's a dangerous mistake to make and can lead to subpar work, dissatisfied clients, and a lot of stress. Freelancers get most of their work from referrals and recurring clients - both of which are compromised in this scenario. Be realistic about your calendar and your availability. Don't take work simply because you feel obligated.

COMMON MISTAKES FREELANCERS MAKE
(CONT'D)

FAILING TO FOLLOW-UP

Don't be afraid to check in on a query or a client who contacted you. There's no harm with checking to see if anyone's home, but be mindful of coming across as needy. After two unreturned emails chasing someone you don't have an established relationship with, it may be time to let it lie. Unless they owe you money - that is a different matter entirely.

CHARGING TOO LITTLE

Never be coerced into giving a rate or offering a quote without researching and/or understanding the extent of the project. If a client wants a blind quote or a project completed well below your rate, it should be avoided. You have to make a living as a freelancer, and a professional service requires a professional price. Undervaluing yourself leads others to value you less. See Getting Started: How to Set Rates for more tips here.

POOR EMAIL ETIQUETTE

The key to successful client-freelancer interaction comes from clear communication - and in most cases, email is the means of communication. Not every freelancer is a writer, however. Use spell-check. Always re-read emails prior to hitting send. Try to avoid anything unprofessional; these are working relationships, so day to day frustrations and feelings should be kept out. Within your emails, be clear if the client needs to address anything, make sure the client understands everything they have to, and say it all in as few words as possible.

NOT SCREENING CLIENTS

Pick your clients carefully. They are not only choosing you; you are choosing them. Freelance veterans seem to have fewer and fewer complaints regarding their clients the more time they spend working. It is not that they have become used to shabby treatment. Rather, they have learned to effectively pick the clients that are right for them.
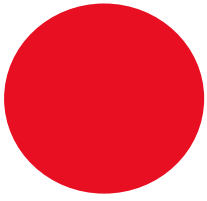
POST PROJECT:
WHAT NOW?

Finding out what did and didn't work with a project is one of the fastest ways a freelancer can better themselves and their work. Don't be afraid to follow-up after completing a project. Besides providing invaluable feedback, it may lead to other work, other clients, or other unexpected benefits.

Here are just a few questions you should ask your client (or yourself) post-project.

- How do you feel about the completed project?
- What would you like done differently next time?
- Do you expect this project will lead to other ones?
- Is there any other work I can do for you?
- If the project needs updating or revisions, how would you like to handle that?
- How often do you need the services I provide?
- Are there any other projects or areas of your business that you need assistance with? (note: this is a great opportunity to provide fellow freelancers with work)
- Can I use this project in my portfolio?
- Would you be willing to give a testimonial regarding the quality of my work?

ADVICE FROM CLIENTS

Prior to writing this book, I went out of my way to employ freelancers across a few creative fields. The cover of this e-book is a result of that. Besides my own experience, I asked clients who regularly employ freelancers what they look for.

Freelancers should:

Communicate effectively. This relates to each point following this one. Make sure you and your client understand each other as much as possible as soon as possible.

Understand the client's needs. Make sure to read and understand the job/project description. Remember, this is something you are creating for the client and not for you - plan accordingly.

Be upfront. In terms of rates, possibilities, and time, a freelancer should always be clear about what they can and can't provide as soon as possible.

Ask questions. Make sure you aren't asking questions that are answered somewhere else. But make absolutely sure that you understand what you are supposed to be doing before you do it.

Keep the client informed. Don't make large project choices without informing or consulting the client. This helps both of you stay on the same page, as well as ensuring there are minimal revisions needed down the road.

Allow revisions. Don't get too attached to any one draft. What you may think is the best may not be what the client needs or wants. When you are using your craft for yourself, go wild. But when you're billing someone else, you should be making it for them.

Stick up for yourself. If an interaction isn't working, the client should be informed. If the client asks for something that isn't practical or is counter-productive, they should offered an explanation as to why it's a bad idea. Though the client determines what the final project should be, your skills and expertise should be tapped when necessary. That doesn't necessarily mean the client will listen, but you should at least try.

Freelancers should not:

Be too stubborn. A client who thinks they know best can be frustrating, but a freelancer who assumes the same about themselves can be equally aggravating. Give your opinion, give your expertise, but save the attitude. You may be right, but that doesn't matter if you're not getting paid and the client isn't getting what they want.

Be a doormat. Allow the client a few revisions, but don't let them abuse your service. Be clear about what you can offer - and what they can expect - before starting work in order to avoid friction. Avoid situations where additional tasks pile on top of the agreed terms, or where work becomes speculative.

A FREELANCE GLOSSARY

Freelancing is a fairly straightforward field and (thankfully) it doesn't boast much jargon. What few terms you are expected to know and understand are below.

Invoice: A bill of sale for a set of services or an eventual product. After a project is agreed upon by both parties, an invoice should be created and understood by both parties. It clarifies where the clients money is going and what is being provided as a result. Invoices are easy to make, and there are even some simple tools in this e-book to help you out (see Top Tools of 2012).

Client: Someone who solicits a freelancer's services. Freelancers should choose their clients as carefully as clients choose their freelancers.

Contract: An agreed-upon set of terms and conditions for a project/product. It establishes the objectives of the project and the obligations of both parties. Make sure you and the client both understand and are in agreement regarding the contract. Don't avoid any niggling issues or concerns - they will only grow if left alone.

Freelancer: Someone who sells their skills or services for money.

Down payment: An initial payment subtracted from the total cost of a project or sale of services. Always insist on a down-payment. Some freelancers expect 50% upfront and 50% upon completion. Others go with 30% upfront. If it's a larger project, it may be paid out in portions. Regardless, a down payment demonstrates that a client is serious about employing you. As well, it creates a sense of obligation between both parties. If a client considers a down payment an extravagance, consider it a warning sign.

Outsource: To tap additional resources outside of yourself and/or your skillset. If you find yourself overwhelmed with current work, consider outsourcing it to colleagues. It is a great business strategy, despite the money lost. It keeps your work up to par, your client happy, and your colleague will likely return the favour.

Referral: To recommend or offer the services on the basis of a positive experience. People may be referred to you from past clients or other freelancers. Likewise, you may have a full workload and suggest another freelancer. On that note, mind that any recommendation reflects on you. Only offer someone the work if you believe they are capable of it.

TOP ONLINE TOOLS
OF 2012

There are a lot of different tools of freelancers may or may not need. However, there are quite a few things areas that almost any modern freelancer can use in their digital tool belt. Below are personal favourites, top-rated offerings, and the results from BestVendor.com survey of 100 freelancers. Almost all of these tools require or utilize the internet and almost all are free in some capacity.

Gmail s a the best email service and interface I've ever worked with. Email is the portal of entry for most of my work. You can utilize tags, create folders, and automate your incoming mail to keep everything in order.

Skype and **Google Voice** are the best communication tools available today.

Google Calendar is the only agenda you will ever need. You can set up multiple calendars, share with clients and colleagues, and you can have reminders sent to devices or your inbox.

Hootsuite is a social media manager that works as well as it should. It can accommodate most social media streams and automate a lot of the work that goes with them.

Join.me and **GoToMeeting** are screen-sharing tools that you can use to interact with clients.

Flow and **Basecamp** are both great task management and collaboration tools.

Google Drive, **iCloud,** and **Dropbox** are all simple online storage solutions. All are easy to automate and share with clients or colleagues.

Mint is a great tool for tracking small-scale finances - both personal and business. Create a budget, set goals, and be kept up to date across devices. If you need something more robust, **FreshBooks** and **QuickBooks** will likely meet your needs.

Remember The Milk is rated the best digital to-do list year after year.

Evernote is a popular everything-note-related solution. For typing, doodling, or taking pictures, it can incorporate almost every kind of inspiration across almost every kind of device.

Ballpark and **Harvest** are time-tracking and invoicing solutions that are intuitive, simple and professional-grade.

Focus Booster is a personal favourite and recommendation. It's basically an online egg-timer that follows the pomodoro technique. It keeps you focused for realistic amounts of time, as well as reminding you to take your breaks so your brain doesn't burn out.

Not all your tools need to be digital. Notebooks, a whiteboard, and post-its are strewn about my office. They may lack the shine of their coded counterparts, but the creative process is a complicated one. The mind-body connection is not something that needs to be decoded here, but simply put, using your hands can help you tap into parts of your brain that are left flaccid by the convenience of the cloud.

TOP STORIES
OF 2012

Freelancers are a diverse lot, and as a result, it's difficult for them to be featured by the mainstream media with any regularity or consistency. However, a few stories that affect a variety of freelance professions made headlines this year.

World's Longest Invoice & #GetPaidNot-Played

The Freelancers Union worked with Clients From Hell to gain awareness for their "Get Paid, Not Played" campaign. Freelancers were encouraged to add up any and all unpaid invoices to the World's Longest Invoice, drawing public attention to one of the largest issues facing freelancers today. The invoice topped out at $15.9 million in two weeks of collecting unpaid invoices from freelancers. The campaign attempted to garner support for The Freelancer Payment Protection Act.

Freelancers Medical Launches

In October 2012, the Freelancers Union launched Freelancers Medical, a dedicated 6,000 square foot space medical practice in Brooklyn. Doctors, health coaches, and free Wi-Fi round out the freelancer-centric service. The Freelancers Union plans to launch and sponsor similar plans in Oregon, New Jersey, and New York in 2013.

Freelancer Payment Protection Act

The Freelancer Payment Protection Act (S4129/A6698) aims to make it easier for freelancers to collect overdue and unpaid invoices from clients. The Assembly Bill passed in June 2012. The Senate bill is currently in the labour committee.

7 Days in June

Empowering freelancers to shoot a short film in seven days, 7 Days in June resulted in seven short films covering various aspects of the freelance industry. Developed by Rob Edwards FRSA, all films are now complete and available for viewing online. A final film will air on National Freelancer Day, or as it's more colloquially known, November 21st. The project recognizes the growing force of freelancers in the United Kingdom and encourages it as a potential solution to the sluggish economy.