Work At Home Mom FREELANCER

How Stay At Home Moms Can Earn A New Kind of Living In 2018 & Beyond

CONTENT

Introduction

Whether you are freelancing now or you aspire to become a freelancer, work-at-home moms now have new opportunities to be able to stay home and still earn a wonderful income in 2018 & beyond

Let's take a look at why a freelance business really appeals to you and if your serious about it, why you should manage your business in such a way that you are perceived by your prospective current and prospective customers as more than somebody in their bedroom with a PC.

Chapter 1: Do You Want Really Want To Be A WHAM Freelance Contractor?

Do You Resemble These Remarks?
You love getting up early in the morning just so you can fight rush hour traffic to be at work on time. You like to go to work and see the same people doing the same thing day in and day out. You love your boss and look forward to his or her demands on you and your time everyday. You don't mind that you never see your family or children.

You don't mind that you miss all of their games and events. You like working overtime. You don't mind that you have not received a raise in three years. You don't mind that you are making minimum wage and barely making ends meet. You would hate working at home and spending more time with your family. A million dollars is not something you aspire to ever earn.

If the person described above is you, then don't read any further. If you don't want to be your own boss and don't want to tell others how much your time is worth and don't want to actually get paid for your time, then stop reading.

If you are content living the life you have and don't wish to take your career into your own hands and shape your own future, then put this book down. Just close it. Throw it in the trash. Line the bird cage with the papers that contain the information on how to make freelancing business a cash flow king.

If, however, a million dollar career is something you are interested in, then find a comfortable chair, grab your favorite beverage, and settle down with a pen and paper so you can take some pertinent notes.

Take the time to read this book about freelancing and how it could mean financial freedom and control over your career with customers that look at you as the consummate professional you are, from the very beginning.

Does freelancing mean you will get rich overnight? No, it takes work and dedication. There are a number of obstacles that you will have to overcome but the rewards will be substantial if you are willing to put in the time and effort. The possibilities are endless.

There are opportunities for any person to break into the lucrative career of freelancing or start making a serious increase in their businesses profits starting now. All you need is diligence, patience, and tenacity to pursue it and make it happen by running it like a 'REAL' business starting now. This book will show you how.

On the other hand, if you are the person that was described at the beginning of the chapter, get that beverage and curl up with the latest novel by your favorite author. It might be enjoyable reading and that is fine. Just remember, unless you are doing that for a living, it wont make you a dime.

So You Want To Be Your Own Boss

Freelancing allows you to be your own boss. This means you make your own hours. That does not necessarily mean you will work less hours than you did working as an employee. In fact it may mean working more hours in the beginning stages of your business. As the old adage goes, "I'd rather work 60 hours a week for myself and make the same money as working 40 hours a week for somebody else".

Wear what you want. Does your current job have a dress code? How does sitting in your pajamas all day sound; what about just spending the day wearing your favorite pair of worn out jeans and that T-shirt from that unforgettable 1980's rock concert.

If you are an independent agent, like a freelancer, then you decide the dress code. But if your prospective or current customers also see you in the same way in their 'minds eye', because of the way you have set up and postured your business, those old worn out jeans may end up being all you can afford to wear.

Making your own hours does not mean loafing around all day. And it doesn't mean taking short cuts in your business management could end up being detrimental to your businesses image. It means having the self discipline to set aside a certain amount of hours that you work each day. But, as the boss, you get to decide what those hours are. That way you can pick up the kids from school, have lunch with the spouse, go to the gym during the day when it's not so crowded, and never have to make that horrible rush-hour commute. However, in the beginning setting your schedule like that may

mean you have to work later hours into the evening to maintain necessary cash flow.

Being a freelancer means that you get to set your own prices for what your time is worth. No more waiting years for a raise that may never come. As you become more proficient and widen your client base you can double and triple your earnings as you see fit.

Have you ever considered living somewhere else but your job and family obligations keep you stuck in the same place. Freelancing gives you the freedom to take your family, if that applies to you, or just yourself and live wherever you want.

As long as you have a phone, a computer and a way to receive mail, you can live at the South Pole or Hawaii and still have a lucrative freelancing career. Your home is your office. You can be sitting in a coffee shop and enjoying a scone with a mocha latte at the same time you are making more money than you ever made working for somebody else.

When I was a child my father always told me that "nothing in life is free," and "if it sounds too good to be true then it probably is." In the case of freelancing the price is minimal. As you will see in subsequent chapters you will need some general items such as a computer, a printer and maybe a fax and scanner.

You will also need a way to accept payments from your customers that will allow them to perceive you and your business as professional and established.

After you have the materials needed to be a freelancer your greatest cost will be your time and effort. How much are you worth? The best part is that you get to decide what your time and effort are worth. Obviously it will take some research to see what your market will bare, but all in all you are in charge of what your are worth.

As far as the rule "if it sounds too good to be true it probably is," here is something to consider. You should not quit your day job immediately and hope to make $10,000 next month.

Instead, start slow and work your way to making the money you want. If you are making the equivalent of your full time job and you have too much freelance work to do, then decide to freelance full time and quit your day job. If you work hard this process can happen rather quickly, so don't be discouraged.

The jobs are real. The money is real. Once you have established your company with a business bank account, registered your business with the local county clerk or whatever is necessary in your part of the country, and have a web presence with a way to accept payment on your own, the only additional investment is the amount of time you are willing to invest in marketing your services and fulfilling your contracts.

The market for freelancers is growing by leaps and bounds. The future markets are projected to continue to grow at the same rapid rate. This means more fantastic freelance opportunities and greater potential income.

How You Accept Money Can Improve Your Image

But believe me when I say, as much potential as there is for more freelancers to succeed now, there will be just as many that fall by the way side simply because they did not put the simple things in place that "Traditional" or "Real" businesses do, to make them stand out in the crowd.

Being able to take payment payments through their own billing system versus something like PayPal is a major step in portraying your business with the professional image many prospective customers look for. Let's take a look at Ecommerce.

Chapter 2: Your Online Cash Register

Since the advent of the Internet, the dynamics of business have changed considerably. Today's big companies and small businesses like freelance contractors put forth as much effort to create websites that facilitate business as they do to run the company itself. If your business isn't online, you are at a disadvantage. As a freelancer, if you are only taking jobs through job boards like Elance, you are missing out on potential business you could attract through a web site of your own.

Having a website enables you to reach a wider audience and far more potential customers. You may be familiar with the "rules" for a business website:

- Be professional
- Be accessible
- Look good
- Include sharp, error-free copy
- Don't clutter
- Don't spam
- Offer reasons for repeat visits
- Publish a newsletter or blog

However, there is another unspoken caveat that's becoming more essential than ever: *If you sell online, at eh very least, you must accept credit cards.*

Many of today's Internet consumers are used to the ease and convenience of paying with credit cards online. For these 'net-savvy buyers, the inability to pay with a credit card is a deal-breaker. They don't want to bother writing

out a check or a money order and mailing it to destinations unknown, then waiting six to eight weeks for their services to be rendered.

Instant is in, and the more purchase options you can offer, the more buyers you will get. So being able to accept credit cards is ABSOLUTELY mandatory. However, there are other ways of accepting payment you don't want to overlook. I'll get into those options later.

When e-commerce first took off, there were several security concerns among consumers and businesses alike. Scams and cyber-crime made buyers wary of entrusting their credit cards and bank account numbers to websites. Now, more people are buying online than ever before, and improved security and encryption processes are keeping financial information safe. Today credit card purchases online are literally more secure than off line where a card can be swiped by hand in the case of a crooked employee or literally stolen out of thin air through major stores with payment terminals set up on wireless networks.

If your website does not at least accept credit cards, you could be missing out on a huge amount of business. What are you waiting for? Now let's take a look at who's making money and why.

Having Doubts About Your Marketability?

Are their times you have some apprehension about your marketability? Do you wonder if you have what it takes to do freelance work? Do you wonder if you have what it takes to project the image of a professional business person in the online world?

The best part of freelancing is that there is a niche for almost every skill. If you are good the demands upon your skills will be greater than the supply you can produce. Through the use of this book, you can identify your skills and make the most of them for the greatest profit.

Why is freelancing so lucrative but can be so much more so if you are perceived as a real professional? Companies are outsourcing more and more work every year. Other individual business people like yourself in different markets but that may require your services are growing almost exponentially in the last 5 years primarily due to the Internet.

It is much more cost effective for a company to outsource work to a free agent than to pay and maintain one full time employee. A company can find the right professional for a particular project rather than relying on a few employees who may not have the expertise needed to complete the project.

The people who are making money are those who market themselves and develop working relationships with companies and long term clients.

Who are these freelancers? How do they become rich? How do they find their clients?

In future chapters you will discover how to make contacts and find freelance jobs. The immediate answer is technology. The days of typewriters are all but gone. The days of waiting for a response from a client by postal service are gone. We live in a world of modern technology. Documents can be written, saved, and transmitted over thousands of miles in just a few short seconds. Words can reach thousands of people instantly. And I'm not just talking about email. In fact, you can chat online with clients on a real time basis or literally set up real time video conferences. Information is easy to find, store, and send. That is why you can live anywhere you like as a freelancer. You are not confined to any one geographical address as long as some type of internet access is available. (Preferably high speed.)

Another advantage of modern technology is the ability for freelancers and their clients to find one another. There are many websites where a client can post a job and a freelancer can instantly respond to it. Again, geographical distance is not an issue. A client can be in Japan and the freelancer can be in sunny Florida and they can have a successful contract agreement. The answer to global connections and opportunities is technology. This allows a freelancer to work for clients around the world. This opens a multitude of opportunities to find freelance work.

But this technologically advanced time we live in can be a double edged sword. At the same time technology is allowing customers to find us and hire us, customers look for the freelance contractors to be technologically advanced enough to not only provide top quality service but they want to deal with contractors that are willing and able to work outside the confines of

a job board like Elance or Freelancer and accept payment any way the buyer wants to pay.

Freelance Doing What?

The possibilities are endless. I have listed some of the more common niches. They are:

Writing
Web design
Voice-Over Work
Video and Screen Capture Video
Research
Help Desk Management
Engineering and Architecture
Marketing
Advertising
Legal and Paralegal
Translation
Training and Development
Graphic Design and Art
Software Development and Programming
Management
Finance

This is by no means a complete list. Rather it is a general overview of common areas in which people freelance. Find your own niche and go with it. The advantage of finding yours in the areas mentioned is that there are thousands of jobs posted everyday.

People who have created a full time prosperous career in freelancing did not jump into it blindfolded. They had a plan. They executed the plan and now they are reaping the benefits.

The plan started with research. Reading this book is a good beginning. Next, start looking around. See how many freelance jobs in your area of expertise are on the internet. We are going to take a look at freelance job boards now. But don't make the mistake of just going to job boards for work and think you're in business. Don't overlook the potential for local business. You need a web presence if you are going to be in business as a freelance contractor. But job boards for freelancers are a great place to get started and find new business.

Moving on to online job boards...

Chapter 3:
What Are Job Boards – How Do They Work?

Below are a number of sites you can look into:

(All of the following sites were live when this was printed.)

Aquent.com
Elance.com
Craigslist.org
Freelancer.com
Ifreelance.com
Bullhorn.com
Consultingexchange.com
Ework.com
freelancejobsearch.peredovik.org
Guru.com
Monster.com
Sologig.com

If you already have a freelance business you are undoubtedly familiar with some of the sites listed above. But if you are not set up to take payments through your own payment system, those that are will have an edge over you. And they are already prepared to operate outside the job boards you are using.

Some of these sites charge for access; others are more like bulletin boards. Look around and see if your skills match with any of the jobs posted. Even if you don't see many jobs requiring your skills, don't give up. It could mean that your niche is in an untapped area. If so, Congratulations! This means that you will have a lot less competition.

When you find various jobs that match your skills, look at how much these jobs pay. The amounts will vary. As clients become familiar with your work and you build trust and a reputation, you can begin to demand more money.

Many sites require you to bid on projects. The stipulation is that you have to pay some sort of commission to the company who owns the site. Take some time and look at these sites. You may also use a search engine such as Google and use the key word "freelance" or you may add some specific skills to narrow your search such as "freelance writing".

You will find statements like this in the buyer area of many of these sites that charge for putting buyer and freelancer together and handing the transaction and escrow.

This can be a fast way to contact the coder. However it is potentially dangerous because everything you agree upon is NOT legally binding.

While all of the above may be true in the case of both the buyer and the seller, once you have gained your customers trust, you want to move your dealings outside the 3rd party job board system if you customer is agreeable to that. As well, the job board company wants to keep all your communications in house so they can continue to collect their fees for essentially amounts to providing you a place where you can sell your skills.

Just be sure that all your communications with the customer are amended to your contractual agreement before you proceed with any changes from your original agreement. Outside a job board system you will be able to bill for partial or completed jobs and get your money immediately versus waiting for the escrow process of the job board.

Below I have listed three websites as examples of freelance jobs available on the internet.

The following section on Freelancer is not just for programmers. People that have become adept at graphics work or using video screen capture software to build presentations or tutorials, copy writing, Site design, or technical writing can find plenty of work at most of these sites. And there are other areas your skills may be in demand. You owe it to yourself to look around these sites for potential business.

Freelancer: Providing Jobs to Freelance

Writers Around the World

Customer:
"I had a tricky software problem I couldn't solve [and] I found something online called Freelancer. I found a good programmer in five minutes."

1. Rent A Coder? What's That?

The above quote, which appeared in the Wall Street Journal, June 3, 2002, summarizes what Freelancer is all about. In a nutshell, it is a place where software buyers and software coders meet to do business.

Doing business in Freelancer is sheer simplicity. Buyers simply post their requirements on the site and coders (programmers and writers) make a bid for these requirements. The buyer hires the coder who they feel is best qualified and pays them when the job is completed. It is that simple.

Think of Freelancer as a giant online marketplace where people with software needs find coders to meet those needs. It provides excellent opportunities for software programmers and freelance writers to put their hard-earned skills to use and earn cash. One of the marvelous things about this site is that writers

can actually find work and get paid without ever leaving the comfort of their home. And with Freelancer's "Safe Project Escrow" (see below), coders can work on projects without the stress of worrying about the agreed-on payment time.

2. A Community Of Buyers And Freelancers

Freelancer has a vast international community of buyers and coders spanning virtually every continent in the world. They have over 64,700 buyers registered on the site as well as a pool of over 159,000 registered coders. At any given time, Freelancer has over 2,000 open bid requests awaiting qualified coders.

Freelancer was founded and is owned by Ian Ippolito. He is the Chief Executive Officer and holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of Central Florida. The offices are located in Tampa, Florida, USA.

Open Your Eyes To The Profit Potential Of This Job Board

Freelancer is not just for programmers. Take a look around their site and you'll see what I mean. Http://Freelancer.com

1. How Much Can I Make?

Fees vary depending on the nature and scope of the particular project. The smaller jobs can cost $20 or less while the larger jobs can pay you thousands of dollars. The sky is the limit in Freelancer. You get paid according to your

skill level and your capacity and readiness to work hard and deliver the goods on time.

2. How Does The Money Change Hands

One of the best things about Freelancer is that they take care of the money side of your business transactions with buyers. They have a marvelous instrument called "Safe Project Escrow" which assures coders that they will be paid.

3. It Is A Simple System

Let's say a buyer selects your bid from the dozens of bids received. After approving your bid, the buyer puts the agreed upon amount in escrow, meaning the funds are automatically forwarded to the Freelancer website. Once your work is complete and the buyer approves and accepts it, the funds are released to you.

Obviously there is a built in time lag built in here that you won't want to deal with, but once you have satisfied the customer, it shouldn't take all that much persuasion to get your customer to pay you directly on the next job. Or recommend to their friends that they take advantage of your discounts for direct billing and payment.

Your accumulated earnings on Freelancer can be released to you on the 15th of each month, at the end of each month or both times. Payment is usually sent a few days (two or three – another time lag), after your selected payment period. There are three payment options on Freelancer:

(1) Snail Mail Check

(2) Western Union

(3) Pay Pal

Granted you may want to take a deposit on a job but if it is a larger job and you have negotiated a deal, you need to be taking payments through your own billing system if at all possible. Obviously you want to have a solid contract in place to do that.

The first two are recommended for medium jobs and initial deposits (over $100 during each payment period) while the third one is recommended for small jobs. Any of the options are available to overseas coders depending on the availability of that particular service in their country. In the U.S. Merchant Accounts are available with easy and some with no application fee that are extremely liberal with their approval policies.

However in order for the website to be maintained, Freelancer charges a 15% fee on a coder's income. This is automatically deducted before payment is sent to the coder. This 15% can actually be reduced depending on the auction type (see below) and the payment method that the coder and buyer agree upon.

5. Getting Jobs Is A Simple Process

There are two basic ways to get jobs at Freelancer:

(a) By winning bid requests – Once a bid request is placed on the site, virtually anyone can make a bid on that particular project. From the dozens

or so bids received, the buyer selects one and that winning bidder gets the job.

(b) Private Auctions – These are auctions where you are invited to participate as opposed to the first one where you make a bid on a project that is open to all. In private auctions you either have a satisfied customer who asks you to do a new job or a new customer who is impressed with your rating and decides to invite you to bid on their job.

6. Beating Out The Competition

a) **Put your best foot forward**

When you sign up to Freelancer, there is a portion in the sign-up procedure that asks for your resume. Unfortunately, a lot of newcomers do not give enough attention to their resume. This is a major mistake.

At the beginning and with no track record on the site whatsoever, your resume is one of the few things that buyers can study to assess your capability to do their job. For this reason, it is of paramount importance that you are able to present yourself competently on your resume. For detailed information on how to do your resume see Chapter 3.

When writing your resume, you should remember to be clear and concise. After all, you are a writer and clarity and brevity should be two of your strongest points. Don't simply put down a laundry list of past positions and tasks you have handled in your career. Give brief descriptions to each of them, particularly about the writing aspect of that particular job.

If your resume is too long, chances are it may turn off prospective buyers and limit your chances of landing jobs. The best advice is to include only your past professional experiences that relate to the current position you are seeking in Freelancer.

b) **Prepare an intriguing bid letter**

Every time you make a bid for a project, you will have to write a bid letter. Make sure the first line in the bid letter catches the attention of the buyer. Make it lucrative and interesting. If you are a writer you already know this is called the "hook". It is what can make the difference between a buyer paying attention to you or just passing you by as ordinary. It is an ideal opportunity to show off your skills as a writer. Your letter should tell the buyer one important thing: why you are an excellent candidate, if not the best person, for this particular job.

Remember, the ideal bid letter should discuss your experience and expertise. It should contain references to past jobs or writing assignments that are related to the job you are bidding for. If there is nothing in your work history that is related to the current job then emphasize your ability to handle a wide array of different subjects and your capacity to learn fast.

Another thing that buyers look for is speed and efficiency. Let the buyer know that you can tackle their particular job efficiently and quickly. Give them a firm commitment about meeting the deadline and assure them that you will be communicating with them regularly in the course of the job, if only to give them updates.

c) **Send buyers your best samples**

Although not every buyer requires coders to send samples when they bid for a project, it is always best to send them samples anyway. Your samples will give buyers an idea of how you write and whether your particular style fits their project. For this reason, it is best to provide samples that have the same subject matter or are at least related to the subject matter of the job you are bidding on. This way, you not only exhibit your writing style but impress upon the buyer your familiarity with the subject. This is always a major plus. However, if you have no related previous work, it does not have to mean you will be overlooked for the job. Send your best samples and you may have chance of landing that job anyway.

d) **At the beginning, aim low and sacrifice income**

The most difficult time to get jobs on Freelancer is at the beginning when you are new to the site. That is because you are an unknown entity, with no track record on Freelancer whatsoever. You may have a glowing resume and impressive samples, but many coders want to know how you work given the parameters and conditions of Freelancer. For this reason your first priority should be getting a few jobs under your belt. Don't disregard the small projects (small pay, small deliverables, etc.). You may also bid for the major projects but, as a newbie, your chances of getting the smaller jobs are better.

Initially, your objective will be to establish a track record. Start with some simple projects that you can do easily. Don't make the size of the payment a priority. In fact, you will be much better off if you don't pay any attention to the payment at all. Once you have a number of projects under your belt – and potential buyers will take note of that – they are more likely to regard you favorably because you have a history of delivering the goods.

Of course, if you are a very talented writer with outstanding credentials and excellent samples, then, by all means, go for the higher paying jobs. There are always exceptions to the rule.

e) Deliver quality work

In every job you do always give the buyer your best work. There are two reasons for this. First, you make the buyer happy and increase the likelihood that they will use you again for future projects. Second, the buyer will give you a good rating after completing the job. On Freelancer, a coder's rating is one of the main factors that buyers consider when handing out jobs.

Quality work ensures a satisfied customer. And satisfied customers give coders perfect "10" ratings. That is the highest rating you can get on Freelancer. If you can establish a string of a dozen or so consecutive 10 ratings, then you are sending a clear signal to all potential customers that you can do an excellent job for them. This will greatly enhance your ability to get more jobs.

f) Establish a good reputation

Aside from ratings, buyers also post comments on their coder's work after they have completed the job. These comments are another thing that buyers look at since they convey much more than what a numerical rating can say. For instance, getting a 10 rating will tell prospective clients that you have satisfied your previous customers but the comments portion is where they will learn about your professionalism, attitude and working style.

Comments are usually short one-liners that summarize a coder's performance. They may say things like, "It was a pleasure to work with a real

pro like him" or "She delivered on all her promises and provided excellent results." These are the kinds of comments that can weigh heavily on a buyer's decision making process when looking for the right coder for the job. You want to encourage your buyers to submit those micro-reviews because the more you have, the easier it is to take a customer from inside the job board system to your own contract agreements and direct billing and payment to you.

g) **Exhibit versatility**

Since the projects on Freelancer run the gamut of practically any subject imaginable, it always pays to exhibit versatility to prospective buyers. Show them you can successfully write about a wide range of topics and that you can adapt different writing styles, be it serious, humorous, or provocative.

Among the most popular topics for writers on Freelancer are travel, health, real estate, relationships, romance, technology, the internet, and similar subjects. It pays to have some knowledge about these subjects tucked under your belt.

h) **Meet all your deadlines**

Most of the buyers on Freelancer have deadlines and they expect the coders they hire to deliver the work within the agreed-on deadline. This is a basic requirement for any professional writer. Deadlines have to be regarded as almost sacred. No one wants to hire an undependable writer. If you want to be regarded as a professional and paid like a professional, you have to act like a professional and meeting your deadlines is part of that package.

i) **Give regular updates**

In line with being a professional, freelance writers must also give their clients regular updates about how the work is progressing. Buyers will always want to know where their project stands. Most of the time, they just need to know that the writing is going smoothly and that you, the writer, will have no trouble meeting the deadline. However, they also want to know about any problems you may encounter, especially if these problems will hamper you from meeting the deadline or delivering quality work.

Thankfully, in Freelancer, there is a built-in mechanism that reminds coders that they haven't given an update in three days. Once you receive that notice, you know it is time to give your buyer an update. In addition, for major projects spanning weeks of work and costing hundreds, maybe thousands, of dollars, coders are required to give the buyer an update every Friday. Freelancer moderators can penalize the coder if they fail to do so. This will definitely affect their overall rating.

If you have a customer you have originally obtained as a client from a job board, remember they are used to receiving those updates and you need to implement a system whereby your contact management or task manager software reminds you to update them. Doing so will continue to build trust and confidence with your customer.

j) **Be open to revisions**

Let's say you have just completed a batch of 20 difficult articles and have barely beaten the week-long deadline set by your buyer. You heave a sigh of relief and thank your lucky stars that the work is finished. That, however, is not the case. The work is not officially finished until the buyer formally accepts it. If the buyer is unhappy with the work, they have every right to

request that you make revisions (as long as these are reasonable) and you are obliged to comply.

Unfortunately, many writers resist making revisions by insisting they have met every requirement stated in the buyer's original bid. They may be right and they may even convince the buyer that they are right. But if the buyer is forced to accept the work, the coder may suffer the consequences of refusing to respect the buyers request for a revision. The buyer may "punish" the coder by giving them a poor rating or by posting unflattering, nasty comments that will certainly affect the coder's future prospects of getting jobs with other buyers.

k) **Be honest**

As a professional writer, never assume to know what the buyer wants if you are unsure about it. If you are not clear about something, ask. Don't go ahead and write about something if you are not absolutely sure about what your buyer expects. If you do and you are wrong, the buyer may ask you to rewrite the project all over again. This is something that all writers absolutely hate to do, correct? Hence, make it a rule to never assume. Buyers won't mind if you ask them a lot of questions as long as these questions can help you deliver the kind of high quality work that they demand.

l) **Make suggestions**

Making suggestions tells the buyer that you have given their work some serious thought and they will appreciate the gesture.

m) **Go the extra mile**

This is a general rule for success in virtually every human endeavor. Go the extra mile and deliver more than what is expected. This does not mean

writing more articles than the buyer wants. What it does mean is proofreading your work and putting in the extra time it takes to make necessary revisions. Do everything you can to insure that the work you submit is impeccable and represents your best work.

Example

Do You Have Voice Over Esperience?

Have you ever thought about being a professional voice-over talent? Do you think you have the kind of voice and vocal delivery to be one? (I'm only using voice talent here regarding Elance.com as an example. This job board connects a myriad of types of buyers and freelancers.)

If you answered "yes" to either of these questions, then you will want to know about Elance. Elance.com is one of the most popular sources of voice acting work available for both professionals and amateurs alike, whether you are situated in the United States or anywhere in the world. It is a way to make a lucrative and long-term livelihood with your voice.

Opportunities abound for voice actors – acting professionals who make a living by using their voice in a host of entertainment outlets. One of the earliest venues of voice acting, which has grown even more popular through the years, is that of cartoon characters in animated shorts, film and TV. There are also voice jobs in TV and radio advertising, dramas, foreign film dubbing, and lately, video games and websites.

The list certainly doesn't end here. There are more jobs available in the voice acting profession today than during any other point in the history of this ever growing profession.

The field has become so vast that even amateur voice talents can earn a decent living.

Elance – Sounds Like An Electronic Weapon? May Be!

With over 100,000 projects assigned and completed in 2007, Elance is widely regarded as the largest online marketplace in the world for a host of professional services, especially those involving creativity and technology-based endeavors. It is a popular outsourcing venue for many small and medium-size businesses that wish to make significant savings by bidding out their projects to qualified professionals and service providers all around the world. For highly-skilled and qualified professionals, Elance provides a tremendous opportunity to earn dollars right in the comfort of their own homes.

I. Registering To Bid

Signing-up on Elance is easy. Here is a step-by-step guide to joining Elance.

1. Click the "Join Now" button on the upper left-hand side of the site.

2. In the Select Category page, click the box for Audio, Video & Multimedia. You will note that it lists "voice talent," aside from other projects such as animation, music, streaming media, and post production work. Click "Continue".

3. You have four options at the Choose a Membership Program page:

(a) Select Membership - $149 quarterly

(b) Professional Membership.- $69.00 quarterly

(c) Limited Membership - $22.00 quarterly

(d) Courtesy Listing.-. which is free

(A detailed discussion of each membership level can be found below.)

Pick the one that is right for you. Select Membership is ideal for agencies or businesses. Voice talents will likely choose from either Professional Membership, which is ideal for individual professionals; Limited Membership, which is ideal for those who wish to place limited project bids; and Courtesy Listing, which is ideal for simply posting a provider profile (you wait for clients to contact you and will not be allowed to place bids).

In this page, you must also select a category. If you are exclusively a voice actor then select "Voice Talent." Other options include Animation, Commercials, Embedded Video/Audio, Music, and Others - Multimedia Services, Photography & Editing, Podcasts, Radio Ads & Jingles, Videography & Editing and Viral Videos.

4. Fill-in your contact information and press "continue." Wait for your confirmation then press "Go" to complete the rest of the sign-up process.

5. In the Seller Profile page, select the subcategories where you wish to display your profile. The number of sub-categories you can select varies depending on the type of member you are. For example, Courtesy Members can only choose up to three sub-categories. Bear in mind that you can only bid on projects in those subcategories where your profile is displayed. Once you've made your selections, press "Done."

6. Click on the portion that says, "You must describe the services you offer to complete your profile." Fill in the requested information. Once you're done, click "Update Profile." A preview of how your profile will appear to others is presented to you. Now you have successfully signed in.

II. The Upsides For Members

Elance has four basic membership benefits that are available to all members (including courtesy listings) regardless of level. They are as follows:

1. Your profile is posted on the Elance website and it gives out vital details to prospective clients

2. Your portfolio is also posted and it contains samples of your finest work

3. You get regular notifications on new projects in the categories that you are interested in

4. You may receive invitations from interested buyers who want you to bid on their projects

Additional Benefits For Pros
Professional and Limited members get additional benefits that are not available to Courtesy Members such as the following:

1. Participation in Elance's packaged service program, which is by invitation only

2. A bid allotment of $80 per month

3. A private workspace for easier communication with prospective and present clients

4. Assistance from Elance in billing and payment matters

5. Inclusion in the Elance rating system, which grades various members on the quality of work they deliver and on their qualifications for particular jobs. Customers use these ratings as a gauge for a member's ability to complete the job at hand.

6. In case of disputes with clients, members receive assistance from Elance in mediation and investigation

7. Availability of the Elance escrow service to ensure that all payments are made in a timely manner

III. How You Get Work

Once you have completed your service provider profile, you can start getting projects. There are two basic ways you can land a project:

1. Bid for a project in the project marketplace. If the client finds your particular bid the most appealing, the job will be awarded to you.

2. You are invited to bid on a project. This usually happens when a previous client was happy with your work and wants to work with you again. It also happens when a new client finds your profile and/or samples appealing and wants to give you a chance.

IV. Starting Out On The Right Foot

This section lists several helpful tips to get you started on the right foot. It is critical that you have the right mind-set for the challenges that lay ahead. Bear in mind that the biggest challenge to success on Elance comes at the beginning when you have no track record, rating or reputation. **Do not be discouraged if you fail to get a project right away.** Stick in there and try to follow these pointers as well as you can. Remember that worthwhile things seldom come easy.

Heads Up Tips - Starting Out On The Right Foot:

1. **Emphasize your experience and expertise**
All members are required to sign up at Elance. Putting the right information in your member profile can be a give you the hiring edge over your competition.

Use this as an opportunity to put your best foot forward. List all your major work experience that is significant to the Elance category you have chosen. State the number of years you have been a voice talent and enumerate the most significant projects you have done. Make special note of the most challenging and impressive voice characters you have played.

Try to be clear and concise. Instead of just listing all your professional positions, focus on the depth and breadth of voice characterizations and personalities you have portrayed. Explain why you chose to act them out in a certain way. The more understanding you can give to your potential employer about the why's and how's of doing a project in a particular way, the better chance you will have of getting hired.

Remember, you can never land a job by drowning prospective employers under an avalanche of useless information. In fact, the exact opposite may be true – a long and wordy profile may rub prospective clients the wrong way so much so that they will remove you from their list of candidates.

2. **Submit a powerful proposal**

To land a project, you have to submit a proposal that catches the attention of the project proponent. You can do this by putting the right kind of information in the two main fields that you have to fill in when making a proposal: "Ask the Buyer a Question" and "Describe Your Proposal".

Asking an intelligent question about the requirement can sometimes capture the customer's attention. It can tell him that you understand clearly the nature of the work involved and simply need some clarification. Questions that seek guidance about how to properly execute a script and what tone and personality to utilize (assuming that these are not obvious) are appreciated by clients because such queries reflect the voice talent's concern for meeting the client's needs and expectations. It shows you have enough insight about the requirement to know what to ask.

In the "Describe your Proposal" field, voice talents should impress upon the client that they understand what is needed. If you give information about a similar job that you have accomplished in the past and attach a sample of that to your proposal, then you have just increased your chances of getting that job.

Some projects have a script attached for voice talents to interpret and send as part of their proposal. In such cases, use the "Describe Your Proposal"

field to explain why you read a particular sample script in a certain way and why you chose to project a certain mood or personality.

You should also mention that you will be more than happy to submit additional samples based on any new in-puts or guidelines that the client may have. This is especially effective in cases where the client likes your voice but is having second thoughts about your delivery. Providing additional samples that address those concerns may convince the client that you are the right person for the job.

When it comes to submitting proposals, do not submit a "generic" bid that does not specifically address the job requirement. Savvy customers can detect a generic proposal right away and just as quickly eliminate the guilty party from consideration.

3. **Send only your very best samples**
When uploading voice samples onto your portfolio, you should carefully scrutinize each piece of work. Only include those that you consider to be world class because these samples will be made available to prospective clients from all over the world.

If you are an amateur voice talent with no actual work experience yet, then you can produce your own samples. These voice samples are critical to your success so give them all the attention and time they deserve. Without job samples, any effort you exert to land a job is likely to be a waste of time.

Some projects provide scripts for talents to voice and send to the customer as a sample. These samples should be taken seriously. Tackle these samples the way you would tackle the actual job itself. These samples, more than

anything else in the member's profile or proposal, will be the determining factor in deciding who to hire.

4. **Dazzle them with your range**

If you have the talent to execute scripts using different voices or a wide range of personalities, then do so. The more samples you provide, the greater your chances of landing the project. Of course, all of the samples you submit must be appropriate to the script and the client's particular needs.

5. **Build a track record**

When searching for someone to hire, clients look at the number of jobs a member has already completed on the site and the ratings that member has received for those jobs. These are sign posts that tell clients about the competence and dependability of specific Elance members. They are key indicators of exactly how desirable a member's services can be.

For a member to be competitive on Elance, they must have an impressive track record of jobs completed and a glowing history of high ratings. Neophyte Elance members should concentrate on building a track record and getting good ratings rather than earning the big bucks right away. A sound strategy for newcomers is to bid low for projects and sacrifice some income to ensure a better chance of landing jobs. A string of completed projects and high ratings increases a member's credentials tremendously in the Elance marketplace. It will greatly boost the chances of getting more work.

Naturally, there are exceptions to this rule. If you feel you qualify, then as by all means, go after the most lucrative projects on the site. Just remember that talent is not the whole picture. You also have to be diligent and

disciplined enough to meet deadlines and consistently turn out the kind of quality work that the higher echelon of customer demands.

V. Ways To Get Work Consistantly

Now that you have learned the ropes of Elance and have notched a significant number of projects under your belt, there are two things to bear in mind for the sake of your future success.

1. **Maintain a high standard of performance**
The only sure way a voice talent can earn a regular and continuing income from Elance is to consistently deliver quality work.

Sustained excellence is hard to come by and highly coveted by clients no matter where in the world they are based. If you always deliver high quality work and leave your clients satisfied, then you can almost certainly count on repeat business coming your way.

In addition, a member who constantly delivers work of the highest standards is assured of having excellent reviews and ratings. For an online marketplace that is as active and competitive as this one, a superlative rating is tantamount to winning half the battle.

2. **Cultivate a good reputation**
Clearly, a good reputation is related to the above strategy of constantly delivering high quality work. However, it goes beyond just the actual work itself. A good reputation will assure you of winning the other half of the battle.

Cultivating a good reputation means never missing a deadline, being gracious and professional in all your dealings, and going the extra mile to make revisions or extra voice studies to meet your clients' demands. It means defusing potential disputes and handling every aspect of your job with diplomacy and professionalism.

A good reputation means you are a professional of the highest degree. Like scaling a mountain, it takes time and effort to reach the top. But once there, you will find that excellence is its own reward. If you can successfully maintain high standards, then you will be financially set for life.

Example

Internet Freelancing: How to Subcontract Jobs for a Profit

Freelancing on the internet has become a dependable source of income for many people, especially for skilled professionals from countries where jobs are scarce and salaries are low by international standards.

Internet freelancing first gained popularity in the nineties when small and medium-sized businesses in the United States discovered they could make significant savings by using foreign software developers and programmers. These developers and programmers were well-versed in web design, application and database development, as well as system administration.

Recent studies estimate that at least 20% of all contracted websites, software development, and graphic designs worldwide, are the products of outsourcing to freelancers. Beyond software requirements, internet freelancing now involves such services as design (graphic design, logos, brochures, illustrations, etc.), writing (advertising copywriting, web content,

creative writing and ghostwriting), business consulting (competitive analysis, marketing planning, accounting and bookkeeping, email management and direct marketing) legal services, administrative support, engineering, architecture and a host of audio, video, and multimedia services and applications.

Today there are many online marketplaces where buyers and sellers of such services meet and do business. These websites provide a forum where buyers can post their job requirements and qualified coders can submit proposals for these jobs. Based on these proposals, the buyer chooses who they believe to be the most qualified for the job and awards that job to them. Once the selected coder completes the job the buyer sends payment to the online marketplace. The online market place deducts its fee and sends the rest to the coder.

If the coder lives in a country where jobs are hard to find or where salaries are low, they have the potential benefit of earning US dollars. Perhaps the best thing about earning money in this manner is that they do not have to leave their country or even the comfort of their own home.

The buyer benefits as well. They are able to get the job done in a professional manner at a relatively low cost. With this kind of win-win situation, it is no surprise why the online outsourcing industry has become a flourishing business. And with the presence of escrow services on many of these websites, the element of fraud is taken out of the equation and coders are assured of collecting their fees.

Such is the beauty of online freelancing.

With the success of the freelancing business on the internet, a new type of business opportunity has risen for the more enterprising coders. It is called subcontracting. That means getting freelance jobs on the internet and subcontracting them to other coders at a profit.

Subcontracting is ideal for coders who are not just technical people but who have a keen business sense as well. These are people who can immediately gauge which projects can be easily subcontracted out but still bear them a profit.

To succeed here, you have to be a skilled communicator with good people skills. You also have to be an expert in the type of work which you are subcontracting.

Do you think you may have the skills necessary to contract out these kinds of jobs?

Chapter 4:
Subcontracting To Other Freelancers

There are three basic elements that you, as a coder, must know in order to subcontract out jobs effectively:

1. You Have To Have The Skills

As we mentioned, you have to possess the technical skills needed to do the job yourself. You should not only be well-versed but an expert in your chosen field of endeavor. This is because it is necessary for you, as the person doing the subcontracting, to understand the following:

(a)   Better Than Standard

You have to make sure that the work you receive from subcontractors is the kind of quality that the buyer will accept. Ideally, the quality should be better than the buyers lowest accepted standard.

You cannot get paid on a regular basis if the quality of work your subcontractor coder submits is below standard. While most buyers will understand missing the deadline by a few hours or a day, virtually none of them will tolerate poor quality. Yes, sometimes they are paying rock-bottom rates based on the business standards of developed nations, but it is still a professional transaction between buyers and coders and, as such, they expect professional work.

If the job you are subcontracting involves writing you need to be a good writer too. You will need to have impeccable grammar and the ability to communicate clearly. In addition, you will also need to know how to edit for

clarity and brevity. You will have to possess the talent needed to improve the subcontractors work so that it is worth more in the eyes of your buyers.

(b)   Keeping Yourself Covered

There will be occasions (and hopefully not many of them) when one of your coders will be unable to complete a job that has been awarded to you from a buyer. Or you may have landed a job and can't find any qualified coder to subcontract it to. Given the short notice and the difficulty of finding a good coder, you may have to roll up your sleeves and do the job yourself. It pays to have the talent and technical skills to do so.

Beyond the ability to add to the number of articles and words required, you may also have to redo the writing in terms of the quality required. Let's say one of your coders has impeccable grammar but a style that is dry and long-winded. That may not be what the buyer expects and you, as the main contact, will have to do something to fix that. If you have an elegant sense of style and a way of making words come to life, then you have the skills to put an extra dash of flavor into the work.

In the minds of many, talent is the most important benefit that an online entrepreneur must have if they are going to be successful using subcontractors.

2. You'll Need A Pool Of Skilled Subcontractors

To subcontract jobs, you will naturally need to have access to skilled coders. The key word here is "skilled." It is easy enough to bring together a group of online workers who have technical knowledge in a given area but are their skills adequate in the world market? Once again, having an eye for talent comes into play.

The good news is that it is easy to find skilled coders. Coders who hire subcontractors can often find coder support from the same place where they landed the online job in the first place. These coders, originally providers of services, switch profiles to become buyers of services. They look for coders who have the same skills they do except that these coders are willing to work for less.

Two good sources of this kind of skilled coder can be found at Freelancer.com and Elance.com. which were profiled earlier.

In addition, the internet is not the only place to find your skilled coders either. Perhaps all you may have to do is take a good look around you.

For example, there is a skilled journalist from Manila in the Philippines who has been a successful coder for years. He recently started outsourcing some of the jobs he has landed online and has been rather successful at it. Since he works in a newspaper, he simply passes on some of the work to his colleagues in the press. Since his colleagues are all professional writers who have established their own credibility, he has no problem delivering quality work or meeting deadlines.

However, this kind of approach will not work for everyone. Perhaps the biggest reason why he succeeds is the low wages even highly skilled professionals receive in the Philippines.

Today, through subcontracting jobs instead of doing them himself, he has been able to increase his monthly income three-fold

3. Be A Sharp Business Person

Winning jobs and subcontracting them is an entrepreneurial endeavor and if you want to be a successful online entrepreneur, you have to possess a keen business mind.

In this kind of business the service you perform is the same thing as being a middleperson in the sense that you make a living in that gray area between buyer and seller (and it is a gray area for you because you are both a buyer and seller as well). However, in your case, it is a little different. For most middle people, the key to success is buying low and selling high. In your case, given the particular nature of freelancing on the internet, it is the exact opposite -- you have to sell (your services) high and buy (the services of subcontractors) low.

Do you think you have the key qualities necessary to succeed in outsourcing work to subcontractors? If you think you do, why not try it?

Three Considerations To Subcontracting

The following are a few key considerations that will help you successfully launch your new career:

1. Be Detailed In Your Job Descriptions

Before you even begin to work, the first thing you should do is take a good, long look at yourself and examine your skill base. What are your marketable skills? What are the areas where you feel the most confident about your work? Are you good enough to be able to tell the difference between quality

work and mediocre work? Make your self-appraisal as objective and honest as possible.

Don't try to be a jack of all trades and a master of none. Sure, you will probably earn more in the short run if you bid on as many projects as you can regardless of your ability to do the job. However, this is a sure way of ruining your reputation in the long run.

Just imagine what it would mean to your reputation if your coders were submitting inferior work to you and you did not know how to tell the difference. You may get away with submitting this kind of work to buyers and they may not raise a howl given that the work meets their bare minimum, but more than likely they will never use your services again. Sooner or later word will spread about your penchant for delivering inferior products and no one may want to hire you.

Defining your scope of work is also practical because it allows you to concentrate your efforts in that area therefore increasing your efficiency.

In business school, professors teach students to avoid working on several small business projects at the same time because chances are a small business project will take almost as much effort and time to become profitable as a large one. Instead students are counseled to take on the largest project available and focus their energies on that alone. Hopefully, you can do the same.

2. Don't Underestimate Yourself Or The Job

If you are a good online entrepreneur you will understand and know how to gage your profit margin. That way you can accurately assess how much you need to bid to land a project and how much it will cost to bid it out.

Before you begin to bid for a project, you should have an idea of how much you will potentially earn from it. Those valuations should become second nature to you. You know that Project X costs $200 and Project Y costs $300 and you know you can find subcontractors who can finish the work for $100 and $150, respectively.

Aside from the quality of the project you also have to understand the importance of meeting the deadline. The best jobs for this kind of set-up are naturally those which have the longest deadlines. It is important to be able to estimate how long the job will actually take

When it comes to meeting deadlines, one way to manage your timetable effectively is to divide the large jobs and farm them out to several coders.

Let's say you've been awarded a writing job to write an e-book on childcare with 10 chapters for $2,000 over a 45 day period of time. Bid out each chapter separately among 10 coders and allocate, say, $100 for each chapter over a 25 day period. This way you don't have to worry about the deadline because you've given yourself a 20-day buffer and you stand to earn $1,000 for your efforts.

If you are going to handle a project in this manner you must be able to rewrite the articles you receive in order to make sure the entire book "flows"

seamlessly and that the same style and tone of voice is consistent throughout.

3.   Building Your Pool Of Subcontractors

In many cases, this is the most important asset needed when subcontracting work to others. Here are a few additional tips to help you out in this regard:

➢ **Know How To Subcontract Good With The Right People**

➢ There are four things you should look at when hiring a subcontractor – their resume, their samples, their rating, and their client testimonials.

The last two are critical because it is easy to prepare a bogus resume and samples, especially on the internet.

If you look at those four things and feel you have found the person you are looking for, hire them.

➢ **Maintaining A Happy Crew**

➢ A happy coder always delivers better work than an unhappy one, given the same skill level. You keep your coders happy by dealing in a polite and professional manner, paying them on time and understanding them when they fall or falter (and believe me, they will miss a deadline now and then). Give them respect and they will give you their best.

4.   Keep Your Customers Coming Back

Here is the main reason why quality counts – it is quality, more than anything else, that will make your customers come running back to you again and again. Always put a premium on quality. First-class work is sometimes hard to find, especially given a limited budget. If you consistently deliver

first-class work, you assure yourself and your coders of a prosperous business well into the future.

There is a popular saying in sales which says that "It is eight times easier to get new business from your current clients than it is from cold calls." In other words, make sure you ask your clients for referrals from people they know or work with who may need the service you provide.

Some coders hesitate when it comes to asking for referrals because they feel it is unprofessional. They feel asking for referrals is like asking for a favor. That is not really the case. If you have faith in your ability to deliver good work you are actually helping your client because of your willingness to provide quality work to their friends or business associates. That will reflect well on them too. It is a two-way street.

Now that we have looked at three on line venues we are ready to look at developing eye catching resumes that will help you land some of those great paying opportunities.

Now you must think about how to present yourself in such a way as to be immediately perceived as a consummate professional. How you run your business is just as important as producing timely quality work.

Once you have gained a job board customers trust, and a customer knows you are capable of excepting payment directly through your own payment system, many will like the idea that they can pay you directly by credit card and cut out the middle man.

So let's talk you accepting credit cards an you accepting payments through your own online payment system.

Chapter 18:
Minimizing All Costs For More Profits

You learned in the last chapter how to increase your profit by increasing you rates and making the most out of your billable hours. Let's review our profit formula once again.

Hourly charge X number of hours you worked + any costs

Cost of doing Business

As you see costs need to be taken into account when making sure that you make the most profit possible. You will learn in this chapter how to minimize your costs.

You have to pay close attention to how you are spending your money, because spending has a direct impact on your profit margin. When you are faced with buying some equipment or services as a freelancer you must look closely at what you are buying. Cost comparison is very important. The time you spend can save you money in the long run. Sometimes you may have to wait until the best possible price on a product or service is available.

Avoid impulse buying

It is easy to see a product and want to buy it immediately. Wait and shop around. After you have shopped around and have found what you think is the best price, sleep on it. Wait a day or two and look at the product or service again. Is it what you really need or is it a want? Then look again for the best price. If you think you have found it, only then should you make a purchase.

Cutting Costs

There are other ways to save. Find out whether any organizations or companies you are associated with offer discounts. There are seasonal times of the year when certain items are cheaper or are on sale. Often, when the next year's model becomes available this year's model goes on discount in order to move it out of stock. Look on Amazon.com and especially eBay for the product. You have to be careful. Just because it is on eBay does not mean a product or service is cheaper. You have to know what the average price of an item is before you should commit to buying on EBay.

Look at those ever present circulars that come in the mail. They often have sales for the items you have been waiting to buy. Be patient and be a good shopper. In the long run, the time you wait can save you money.

Look at your home office. Are you using an excess of energy? Find out where you can save money. Even the light bulbs you use can mean pennies-a-day savings that add up in the long run. If you could save just a dollar a day in energy you could save over $365.00 annually.

It All Adds Up

Look at the services you use: energy, internet, phones. Shop around and compare to see if you have the best deal. A lot of companies such as cable companies can bundle these services for a price lower than the cost of each individual service. Call around and shop.

How are you sending packages? UPS? US mail? FedEx? Shop and find out the most cost effective way to send packages. Give your self time to send

packages where you don't have to pay the extra money for express shipping. If you can fax or email items to a client you will save yourself even more money.

Try to negotiate for prices. You clients often negotiate for your price to provide a service or product. You should do the same when making a purchase. Ask the seller what their rock bottom price is. Ask if there is a discount if you buy in bulk.

What about buying products at warehouse places such as Costco and Sam's? You can save money on products there, but again, you have to know what the product costs at another place. Also, if you have to buy 500 reams of paper to save $5.00 is it really a bargain? And do you really need 500 reams of paper all at once? Think hard before buying. Just because you can save a little money does not mean you need to spend all of your revenue at once.

If you have specific expenses that you will incur in a project, try to add the cost into your final bill. Make sure you have the understanding that they will pay out of pocket expenses. Make sure you itemize the items on the invoice that you send the client.

Remember in the prior chapter we talked about making sure that billing details were in the contract? If a bill has become overdue then it is like the client is taking money away from you. If the money you are supposed to have is sitting in their bank rather than yours then they are collecting interest on your money. You can reduce the number of problems by making sure you send your invoice to the client right away. Try to have the shortest time possible agreed upon for the bill to be paid. Remember, you would rather have the interest accumulating in your account rather than theirs.

There are times you may have difficulty getting payment. If you cannot resolve the situation any other way you may have to resort to getting a debt collection company involved. They will take a percentage of the payment collected for their service. However, some money is better than no money.

Uncle Sam's cut! Remember you have to be responsible for your own taxes. If you make mistakes, it can cost you thousands. If you do not work for a tax company or are an accountant you should not really try to manage your taxes on your own. There are so many ways that a tax professional can save you money. It is worth the investment of hiring one. You would not trust a car mechanic to do a tooth extraction. They may know mechanics, but not body mechanics.

So if you don't know what you are doing, it is probably better to leave those matters to folks who know what they are doing because they do it everyday. You can relax a little knowing you are being taken care of and worry less that you will have to sell your car in order to pay for taxes this year. There are ways to keep up with your expenses. These will assist you whether or not you decide to use a professional accountant:

- Make sure you write everything down. When it comes to money have a ledger of expenses and income. You can buy software such as Quicken or Microsoft Money.

- Keep all of your receipts. Put them in a file and don't lose them. You want to keep track of your expenses. More important some of those receipts can save you money as a tax write off.

Chapter 20:
Professionalism Gets You More Business

In this last chapter we will summarize how to be the best professional freelancer possible.

People in business can spot a phony a mile off. By being yourself but still acting like a professional you will earn respect and repeat business from the clients you serve.

Build a strong relationship with your clients. This is done be being yourself. Again clients can pinpoint phonies. Be personal and approachable. If you show that you care and enjoy what you do, your clients will be able to see that as well.

Stay On Top Of Your Game

Keep your skills honed. Take opportunities to sharpen them. Keep up on current trends and information in the field you choose to work in. Your clients will be impressed on how up-to-date you are and how much expert knowledge you have.

One of the best ways to become a successful business is to research successful companies in your chosen field.

Ask other professionals what they have done to become successful. You save a lot of time if you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Learn from other people's successes and failures. The information can be invaluable.

Another way to evaluate your services is to send out brief surveys when you complete a job. The feedback can open avenues to areas where you need improvement. Negative feedback is always an opportunity to make change. You can take the positive comments and use them in your advertising.

You can even evaluate your clients. Prioritize them. Which ones are the best clients and which ones take up all your time. Consider increasing your rates to see if those using all of your time meet the challenge. They will either pay you more or make it worth your while or they won't come back. That way you can concentrate on your money makers. Remember, if a customer is wasting your time then they are wasting your money.

Too Much Can Simply Be Too Much

Don't overwork yourself. It may seem noble to try to do as many jobs as possible but not if you risk burn out. To make matters worse the quality of your work may suffer and your clients may notice. In the long term you could loose work by trying to do too much.

Remember in a previous chapter when we talked about taking care of yourself? If you are trying to do too much, you are not taking care of yourself. Besides, what fun would it be to be working all of the time? Didn't you want to become a freelancer so you could make your own schedule and spend more time with family and friends?

If you have made some contacts networking you may want to make deals about sending each other work when you are overloaded. If mutually agreed

upon, it can keep the jobs flowing but will create a stop gap when there is too much.

If it is cost effective, you may want to hire someone who can take on some of your duties such as web site maintenance, answering phones, and taking care of the financial aspects so that you can concentrate on other projects. This can save you time and prevent burnout.

Make This Word Part Of Your Vocabulary

Say the word, "NO!" Go ahead and practice saying it. Say it to yourself in the mirror. Get used to being able to say it without hesitation or over analysis. Just because a client offers you a job does not mean you have to take it. Is the job something you can do? Does the job fit into your overall plan of acquiring a long term client? Think of the job as a step in the road to the million dollars you seek.

Also consider what would happen if you did not take the job. It is not always prudent to take on a job just because it meets the short term goal of a paycheck. If it does not pay well or the client is not likely to be a repeat customer, then politely decline. Again, you have to manage your time and resources wisely. You need to pick your clients and jobs wisely as well.

A way to utilize your marketing time and dollars is to think of unusual ways to attract the attention of potential new clients. You need to set yourself apart. What do your mailings look like? Are you using eye-catching colors, words, and images that will attract a potential client's attention? You don't want your mailings to automatically be thrown in the trash. If you can get a

potential client to spend a minute paying attention to your marketing attempt, you are halfway to winning them over.

Collaborating On A Joint Venture

Another way to make the most of your marketing dollars is to collaborate with other companies. Working together can be an effective way for both of you to get your names out there and known. When you split the price you both win. You are able to send materials out to more people and have greater results working together than you might have just trying to do it on your own.

Try to utilize your marketing ideas for certain occasions or events. If you can coordinate your marketing with ongoing events you may reach a wider range of prospects.

Staying On Top Of Your Website

Look at your website and explore its potential. Look at how you can raise your ranks in search engines as mentioned in a previous chapter. If you can increase your ranking you can definitely get more hits on your site when people are searching for the kind of services you offer.

Pretty Is Nice But Speed Is Better

Have you considered how long it might take for a person to be able to load your webpage? Not everyone has lightning fast internet service. If you have a

lot of graphics and they have a lot of megabytes, you may want to consider choosing other graphics or eliminating them all together.

The longer it takes a potential customer to load your site, the more likely they are to skip it for the next site on their search engine results. Don't have a whole lot of glitz and fanfare. Make your website easy to access and easy to navigate. Make sure it gets to the point and that your contact information is current and easy to access. It may even be one of the questions you add to your survey. You can ask a client whether or not the website was useful and what you could do to improve it.

Make a habit of updating your site. Give your clients something to look at that is different so that they will come back. Post promotions, deals and some new examples of your work. Don't let your site sit and get old and filled with cobwebs. It is your store front and sweeping and the occasional touch up paint should be part of your regular routine.

Get to know your customers. If you know a client's birthday, send them a card or email. You can even offer a discount as a birthday gift.

Always listen to your customers. Be polite and empathetic. Get to know their likes, dislikes and idiosyncrasies. Write them down in a file to help you remember. Paying attention to a client's needs gives you a much better chance of keeping them as a long term customer.

Always make sure your customers have access to you. Give them your phone numbers and let them know the best time to reach you. The trust it builds with customers can mean dollars to you. Customers who trust you will continue give you jobs.

Thank You Follow Ups Are A Professionals Signature Move

Always, ALWAYS, thank your customers. Send them a thank you email or post card thanking them for their business. This encourages them to be a repeat customer. If they feel they have been taken care of than they are more likely to take of you in the future.

Make Cash Flow King In Your Business

Provide every way possible to accept payment from your customers. They will appreciate it as a sign of your professionalism and you wont have to wait for your money.

You are now on your way to cash flow in the millions that you totally control.

Cut out the middle man, (Job Boards), and 3rd Party Payment Systems as soon as possible.

Now get out there and be A Quick Cash Flow Freelancer.