

THE

FREELANCE

HANDBOOK

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- 2 Win more clients
- 3 Work smarter
- 4 Manage your money
- 5 Be more business savvy
- 6 Promote yourself
- 7 Well-being
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Your definitive guide to
**BEING YOUR
OWN BOSS**

Future

THE

FREELANCE

HANDBOOK





WELCOME

There's never been a better time to go freelance. With more and more employers outsourcing their design work, the option of living the dream and being your own boss has never been more attractive.

But time is money in the world of creative freelancing, and competition is fierce. So how do you make it on your own? You'll need a couple of tricks up your sleeve for winning new work, and one eye on your cash flow at all times. From setting your rates and managing your time to getting your work in front of the right people, avoiding burnout and more, this special issue includes everything you need for solo success.

Julia Sagar

Editor, *Computer Arts Presents*



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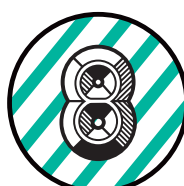
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GO IT ALONE

The road to self-employment success can be long and hard. You have to manage your time efficiently. Pay is irregular and insecure. You work alone and make brews for one.

Get it right, though, and you're free to be as discerning with projects undertaken as you are flexible with your working hours. You can set up office in a coffee shop or another continent – and there's no cap on your potential income.

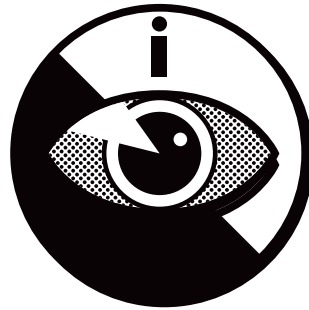
In this chapter, we'll bring you everything you have to consider before going it alone – the risks involved, the benefits on offer and the essential equipment you'll need.

FREELANCING: THE BASICS

If you're thinking about going it alone, it definitely pays to look before you leap. So do you have what it takes? Read on to find out

No office politics; no irritating boss; no more 9-to-5. If that sounds appealing, you're not alone: from new graduates to seasoned designers with years of agency experience, many creatives dream of going it alone. Plenty succeed, which is why you'll find freelancers working in every area of the creative industries.

But what are the benefits and risks of being your own boss? Will you be able to make ends meet? Should you get some experience first? From finding the perfect time to go freelance, to where you should set up shop – you'll find it all on the following pages.



SHOULD I GO FREELANCE?

Freelancing is a tempting prospect if you're ambitious, determined, happy to work independently and keen to make a name for yourself – or if you're lucky, can trade on an existing reputation. You'll find freelance guns for hire working throughout the creative industries, from newly qualified illustrators to ex-agency designers who have had their fill of life in the 9-to-5 lane.

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

You could land work for a huge range of clients: the types of companies that use freelancers range from small-time start-ups to some of the world's biggest brands. You'll need to split your time between creative work and other, more tedious business tasks like accounting and admin, and you'll have to devote plenty of time to pitching and self-promotion.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Going solo gives you complete control over your time and your workload. You'll have the freedom to pursue the projects you want and refuse work that makes your heart sink, and the flexibility to fit your hours around other commitments. No fixed salary means there's no limit on your earning potential, and you can branch out into new creative areas without changing jobs.

WHAT ISSUES WILL I FACE?

It can take a while to make a profit and even established freelancers have cash-flow problems, especially if clients don't pay up on time. As well as an uncertain income, you'll need to generate all your own work, which will often follow a cycle of feast and famine. There's also a lot to be said for being on someone else's payroll: namely, holiday and sickness pay, and colleagues to talk to.

HOW MUCH OF A RISK IS IT?

Becoming your own boss means having no guaranteed work. You won't be able to count on the set income of a salaried design job, or paid holiday. However, selling yourself (rather than a product) makes for limited start-up costs and many people see freelancing as more, not less, secure, because very few jobs are truly permanent. Plan it right, and success will follow.

ANYTHING ELSE TO CONSIDER?

Think about where you're going to work, and whether you intend to do everything yourself or use the services of third parties, such as accountants or agents. If you're leaving a full-time job, don't assume you can poach your employer's clients – your contract may well have a clause that prevents this. Read on for details of everything you need to consider before taking the leap.

PROS AND CONS OF GOING FREELANCE



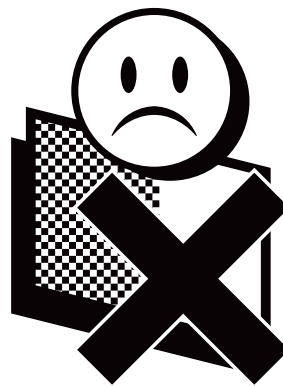
PROS

Freelancing offers a much more flexible lifestyle, letting you choose when and where you work.

You control your own workload, with the freedom to pursue the projects you really want.

There's no limit on your earning potential, so you could make a lot more money.

You can branch out into new creative areas without going through the whole rigmarole of changing jobs.



CONS

Nobody pays for equipment, software or days off, and you won't have any company perks.

Freelancing can be lonely – you might miss the support and camaraderie of working in a team.

There's no guarantee you'll get work or make money, so you could find your cash flow dries up.

Working alone means being responsible for every decision and having to learn from your mistakes.



DARREN MCPHERSON

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NOT HAVING
TO SET AN
ALARM MOST
MORNINGS?
THAT ONE
LITTLE FEATURE
CHANGED
MY LIFE

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

SOLE TRADER

Registering as a sole trader is the most straightforward way to go freelance. You can trade under any name – your own, a brand name or a pseudonym (just don't add 'limited' on the end). Sole traders have simpler accounts and maximum control over their earnings, but might pay higher taxes and are personally liable for any business debts.

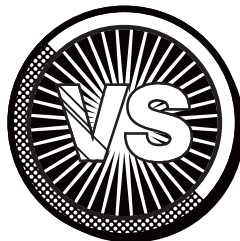


LIMITED COMPANY

Forming a company means you'll potentially pay less tax and limits the amount of money you stand to lose if the business folds – plus, some clients only work with limited companies. However, you'll also need to complete more paperwork, comply with company legislation and pay yourself a salary rather than spending your profits freely.

PART-TIME

Freelancing in your spare time can be a great way to test the water. You'll start building a portfolio and client list, and get a taste of freelance working without losing that safety net. However, you may struggle to prioritise: freelance projects and clients might not always fit neatly into your chosen time slot – and you'll need to make time to sleep, too.



FULL-TIME

Working entirely for yourself gives you the time and freedom to pursue clients and projects without needing an employer's permission. You don't risk falling behind after a late night at the office, or annoying clients by being unavailable during the day. But you'll need to have realistic expectations: you're unlikely to earn a full-time income right away.

STUDIO SPACE

A home office will significantly reduce your start-up costs and could cut out a painful commute, but you'll need to be disciplined and could risk feeling isolated

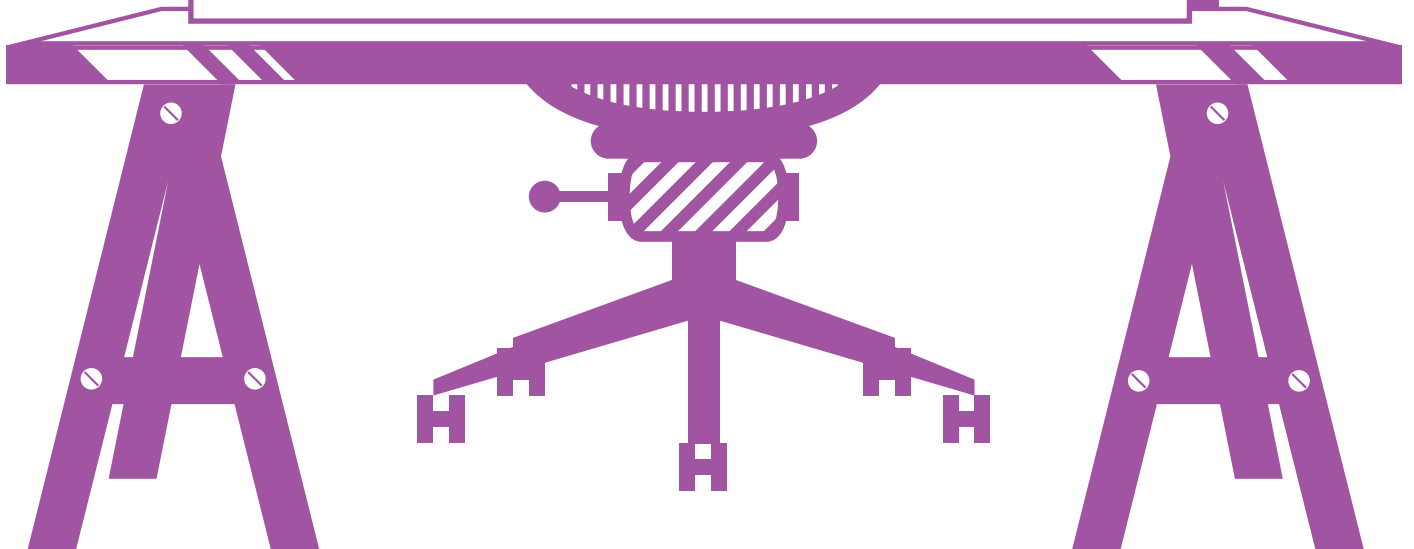
WORKING FROM HOME

Establishing a workspace in your home is the simplest option when you're starting out, as you'll have limited overheads and zero commute. A dedicated room is preferable for the sake of your business and your work/life balance – failing that, you'll need a devoted desk rather than a corner of the kitchen table.

You can claim some of your costs against tax, such as a proportion of your heating, lighting, internet and phone bills (see page 63 for more on this). But working by yourself can be lonely, and you might also be disturbed by housemates or family members. Bear in mind that you'll need to find somewhere to hold client meetings.

RENTING A DESK

If you want to be your own boss without working alone, or simply want to keep a better divide between work and home, renting a desk can be a great alternative. Hot-desking or co-working spaces are springing up all over the world, so chances are you'll be able to find one in your area. Most enable you to rent on an ad hoc basis – the pricing structure might include charges per day, per week and per month, which potentially include internet access and other facilities like meeting rooms. You could pick up new clients this way, but you'll need to make sure the costs are worth it.



■ CANADA

There's a flourishing design scene here, but living costs can be high in comparison to the USA. British citizens can enter Canada without a visa, but will need to apply for a working holiday visa from the International Experience Canada initiative (formerly known as the Canadian Working Holiday Program), which issues a limited number of visas to 18 to 35-year-olds. Over-35s need to apply for a Canadian work permit.

■ UNITED KINGDOM

London isn't the cheapest of places to live, but the design industry is alive and thriving, and despite economic struggles in recent years there's still plenty of freelance work here. EU/EEA citizens can enter the country without needing a work permit. Otherwise, you'll potentially be admitted for a period of two years, at the end of which you'll need to show that you have established yourself professionally in the country.

■ UNITED STATES

Despite some belt-tightening in recent years, there's still plenty of freelance work to be had in the US, with many top-class studios found in big cities. Budgets tend to be bigger, but you'll need to set aside money for extra costs like health insurance. You'll need a temporary working visa initially. America's immigration system is complex, so take proper advice to ensure you apply for the right type of working visa.

■ SPAIN

Times are tough as a result of the country's recent economic problems, but you might yet be tempted by Spain's sunny climate and still-booming design scene. Unemployment is high, but one side effect has been a raft of new start-ups – although not all of these will succeed. European nationals are free to enter the country and work. Anyone else will need to apply for a self-employed work permit, which is initially granted for one year.

■ ARGENTINA

Entering Argentina is relatively easy as the country has something of an open-door policy, without specific skill requirements or country quotas. You'll need to produce various paperwork: for self-employed entrants this includes a letter explaining the reasons for your stay. While application requirements are straightforward, it can take several months and considerable bureaucracy before a permit is issued. Street crime can be a problem and passport theft is a particular concern in Buenos Aires.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Fancy a change of scenery? Here's what you need to consider if you want to relocate...

■ THE NETHERLANDS

Freelance working has become hugely popular in the Netherlands. Amsterdam is crammed full of creative agencies and there's a steady demand for freelancers. EU nationals need to apply for a special residence permit based on self-employment, while entry conditions are tough for anyone wanting to enter as a freelancer from outside Europe. Either way, you'll need to satisfy various administrative requirements and register your business with a number of official bodies.

■ GERMANY

Berlin has an international reputation for great design, while the country as a whole is one of the stronger world economies. EU/EEA citizens don't need a work permit, but you will require a registration certificate proving your residence in Germany. Coming from outside Europe, you'll need to navigate a complex bureaucratic system to apply for a work permit. Designers working in Germany need a decent grasp of the language to have any chance of local success.

■ UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The UAE, particularly Dubai, offers a more relaxed and westernised outlook than some parts of the Middle East, and you'll pay limited or no tax. Anyone travelling here still needs to be vigilant of local laws – including those concerning non-payment of bills, which can result in imprisonment. While business is booming in Dubai, the economy isn't geared towards freelancers. Rates are comparatively low and you'll need to obtain an expensive free zone trade licence.

■ SOUTH AFRICA

Freelance working has been on the rise in South Africa and there are a substantial number of agencies and designers working here, but the country currently faces a number of social and economic problems including high crime rates. The government issues a set number of work permits, and you'll need to apply for one of these as business permits are only available to people with a large amount of capital to invest.

■ CHINA

Creative education in China is weak, but there's a burgeoning design scene – with a growing number of freelance creatives. Head for Shenzhen, the birthplace of China's graphic design industry and home to the majority of its creative agencies, or to Beijing. All work visas require a corporate sponsor so freelancers will struggle to obtain them. Foreign nationals who aren't employed must register a business, so entry to the country could prove impossible.

■ JAPAN

It's traditionally a country of great industry with a stupendous design history, but things are tough in Japan right now: the country went into recession following 2011's tsunami and earthquake. There's a major work ethic here so expect to put in long hours. It's very difficult to enter Japan as a freelancer, as potential entrants need a sponsor and proof of minimum income, although 18 to 30-year-olds can apply for a working holiday visa.

■ AUSTRALIA

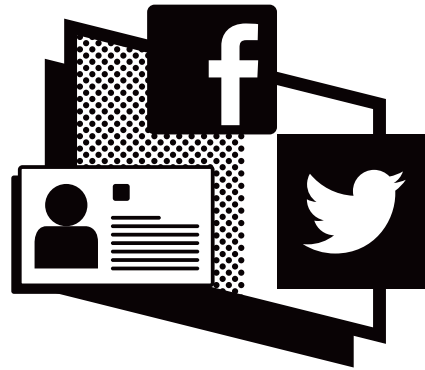
There's a decent amount of freelance work to be had in Australia, although budgets are often lower than in Europe. There's a great crop of creative agencies in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra – not that you're likely to get into the country in the first place right now, as visa requirements are strict and the government only issues a limited number of permits to skilled independent workers who aren't sponsored by an employer.

GET THE BALL ROLLING

If you're thinking about going solo, you're going to need clients and a decent portfolio. Here's how to test the freelance waters while holding down your day job

Some creatives embark on a freelance career straight after graduation. It's a move that makes particular sense for illustrators and for focused graduates who have already built up good contacts, or won a student award or two.

If you're a designer, you might prefer to get some studio time in before going it alone: you'll make contacts, establish a reputation, and gain valuable experience of pitching and dealing with clients. But whether you're about to make the leap or just looking to earn some extra cash on the side, there's no time like the present for testing the freelance waters.



SET GOALS

If you're taking on freelance work with a view to going it alone, set some goals. How much money do you want to save before quitting your full-time job? Do you plan to quit on a pre-decided date, or after you've built up a certain number of clients?

EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

Check that your employment contract allows you to take on any work in your spare time, and look for clauses that stop you working for the same clients. If your boss is approachable, consider discussing your plans: future work could come of it.

WORK FOR FRIENDS

People you know are potentially going to be your most willing customers, so ask around and say yes to designing that gig poster or wedding invitation.

KEEP IT BUSINESS

Even if you're just taking on a few projects in your spare time, treat freelancing like a business right from the start and let clients know you're interested in more work. After all, these clients could provide you with more lucrative jobs down the line, or recommend you to other potential sources of work.

TAP YOUR CONTACTS

Now is the time to reconnect with old clients or former employers who might potentially offer you work. Be subtle but honest about this. Don't get in touch and immediately demand work – ask how they are, mention you're starting to take on freelance projects and ask them to keep you in mind.

ONLINE PORTFOLIOS

You're going to need a strong online presence to catch the attention of browsing art directors, so devote some of your spare time now to setting up portfolios on the relevant showcase sites – Behance, Cargo or Squarespace, for instance – before turning freelance full time. Now is also a good time to start building up more of a presence on the main social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. We've covered all this and more in chapter six.

MAKE NEW WORK

Spend time on self-initiated projects, especially if your employer isn't giving you the opportunities you want. Personal work is a great way to fill gaps in your portfolio – and it can pull in the big-name clients.

USE TWITTER

Not only is Twitter a good way to network with potential clients, it can also be a great source of tangible work opportunities. Ad hoc projects will often be posted and retweeted, so keep an eye out for relevant keywords.

PRIORITISE

Don't check emails from personal clients while you're in the office, or nod off at your desk because you stayed up finishing a freelance project. But don't give clients the brush-off while you're at work either: ensure they know when and how to contact you.

OTHER FREELANCERS

Consider offering to assist other freelancers with their work – ask around to see if anyone needs an extra pair of hands on a project. This can be a great way of taking on small amounts of freelance work without having to devote yourself to the entire creative process.

USE THIS TIME WISELY

If you're lucky enough to be choosing freelance life – rather than having it forced upon you – take advantage of having time on your side and prepare fully. Make sure you have a solid base of practical skills you can offer, and enough money to support yourself until the cash starts coming in.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

You're going to need some kit to make your freelance dream happen, but every penny counts during the early days so streamline your spending and save the designer chair until you're more established. Here's what you need...

- 1 iMAC**
Get an up-to-date iMac so you can produce excellent work and remember to factor in all the peripherals – including an external hard drive. For around £1,200 / \$1,500 you should be able to kit yourself out with a decent basic set-up that you can upgrade as you become more established.
- 2 CREATIVE CLOUD**
It's not cheap, but it is essential. It's a rare freelancer who succeeds without the requisite suite of Adobe software. A subscription to Creative Cloud will cost you £46.88 per month, but you can subscribe to individual apps or save on your subscription if you own a copy of CS3 or later.
- 3 OFFICE CHAIR**
Tempting though it is to balance your laptop on your duvet, your back will thank you for buying a decent swivel chair. Expect to pay around £75–100 for a model that's supportive but won't break the bank.
- 4 NOTEPAD**
Trust us, you're going to need to write stuff down. What did your client say about that thing with the stuff? Exactly.
- 5 WACOM TABLET**
The sort of useful thing you need your boss to provide. You're now your boss, so you'll need to buy this yourself. You can find an Intuous 5 Medium for £275 on Amazon.

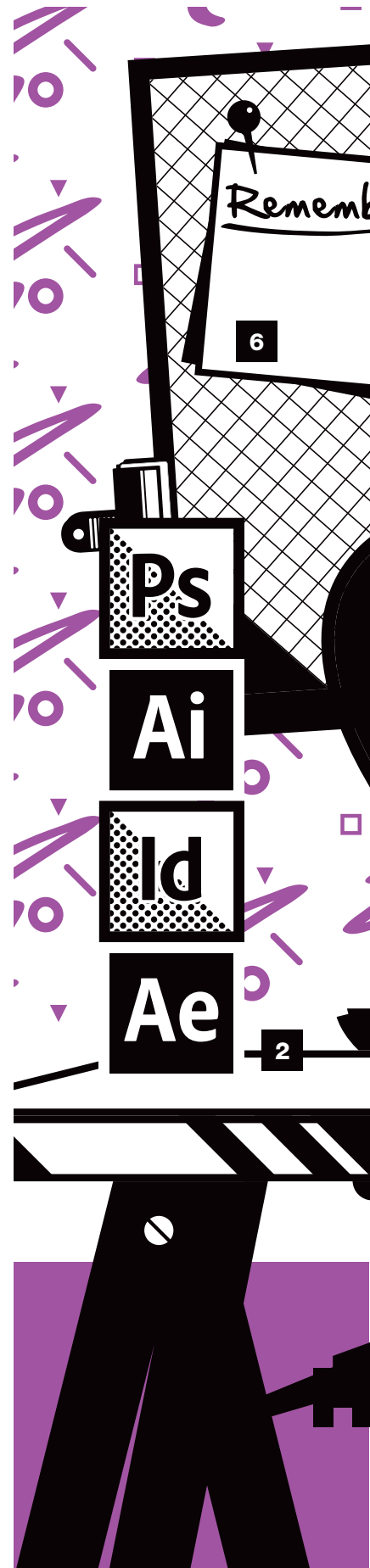
- 6 POST-ITS**
Useful for remembering things, and avoiding them. Because writing 'tax return' on a Post-it is almost the same as doing it.
- 7 SMARTPHONE**
Access all manner of handy apps and let push notifications free you from the worry of missing important emails.
- 8 MEMO BOARD**
Brighten up your workspace with tear sheets and fun stuff. You don't have to stare at the computer the whole time, you know.

RESOURCES

How else will you get your fill of daily inspiration, technique and industry news, if you're working on your own all day?

- Creative Bloq (creativebloq.com)
- D&AD (dandad.org/learning)
- Design Council (designcouncil.org.uk)
- The Fox is Black (thefoxisblack.com)
- FormFiftyFive (formfiftyfive.com)
- It's Nice That (itsnicethat.com)
- September Industry (septemberindustry.co.uk)
- Motionographer (motionographer.com)
- PSDTuts (bit.ly/tuts_plus)

Turn to page 45 for more info on how to keep your design skills sharp.







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THINK IT THROUGH

Freelancing may sound exciting, but think carefully before you make the leap. Do you have the self-confidence and motivation to generate your own work, and the creative knowledge and self-discipline to get it done? Does the prospect of having no guaranteed income sound liberating or terrifying?



START A CLIENT LIST

Sound out potential clients that you hope to work for, from old employers to art directors. Let them know you're going freelance – if possible, try to set up a meeting in person. Make a list of people who already know your work and start gathering contact details for the people who don't.



DRAW UP A BUSINESS PLAN

Writing a business plan might sound like a tedious prospect, but it helps to nail down the basics of how you will approach your new career – what costs you'll need to cover, how much you need to earn in order to stay afloat, and the creative direction you hope to pursue.



BUILD A WEBSITE

Whether you build something from scratch or use a publishing platform like Cargo, you're going to need a portfolio website. It doesn't have to be anything flashy – just make sure you include examples of your work, contact details and any clients you've worked for. (See chapter six for more.)



SAVE AND PROSPER

You might not make a profit right away and you'll have start-up costs to cover, so you're going to need a financial cushion. Ideally, you'll want to have at least three months' salary in the bank before you take the plunge and go freelance, in case of unexpected costs or quiet periods.



PROMO MATERIALS

Consider how you plan on promoting yourself to art directors. If you're going to send tangible materials through the post, you'll need to design and have them printed. Think about your branding, and keep things consistent across your website, business cards and marketing collateral.



TAXING KNOWLEDGE

Take time to get to grips with the more tedious aspects of freelancing, such as tax and accounting, so you're clued up on what records to keep, how much to save and what tax-deductible expenses you can claim (see page 63). Look out for free business courses run by your local government.



HAVE A PLAN B

What will you do if you don't get much work to start with, or a slow-paying client scuppers your cash flow? Think about other potential sources of income before taking the final leap – yes, you don't want to have to use them, but it's a good idea to have a back-up plan in mind.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Freelancing offers a flexible lifestyle: you'll have the freedom to choose what you work on and when you do it. No fixed salary means no limit on earning potential.
- Start-up costs are relatively low, but it can take a while to make a profit so you'll need around three months' wages in the bank.
- Think carefully before taking the freelance plunge: do you have the self-discipline to generate your own work and balance the books?
- Freelancing can be a lonely affair, and working alone means being responsible for every creative and business decision made.
- It's a good idea to test the waters by taking on part-time freelance work around your day job, if you can. This will also help you build a client list and portfolio.
- The most straightforward way to go freelance is to register as a sole trader. However, becoming a limited company means you could pay less tax.



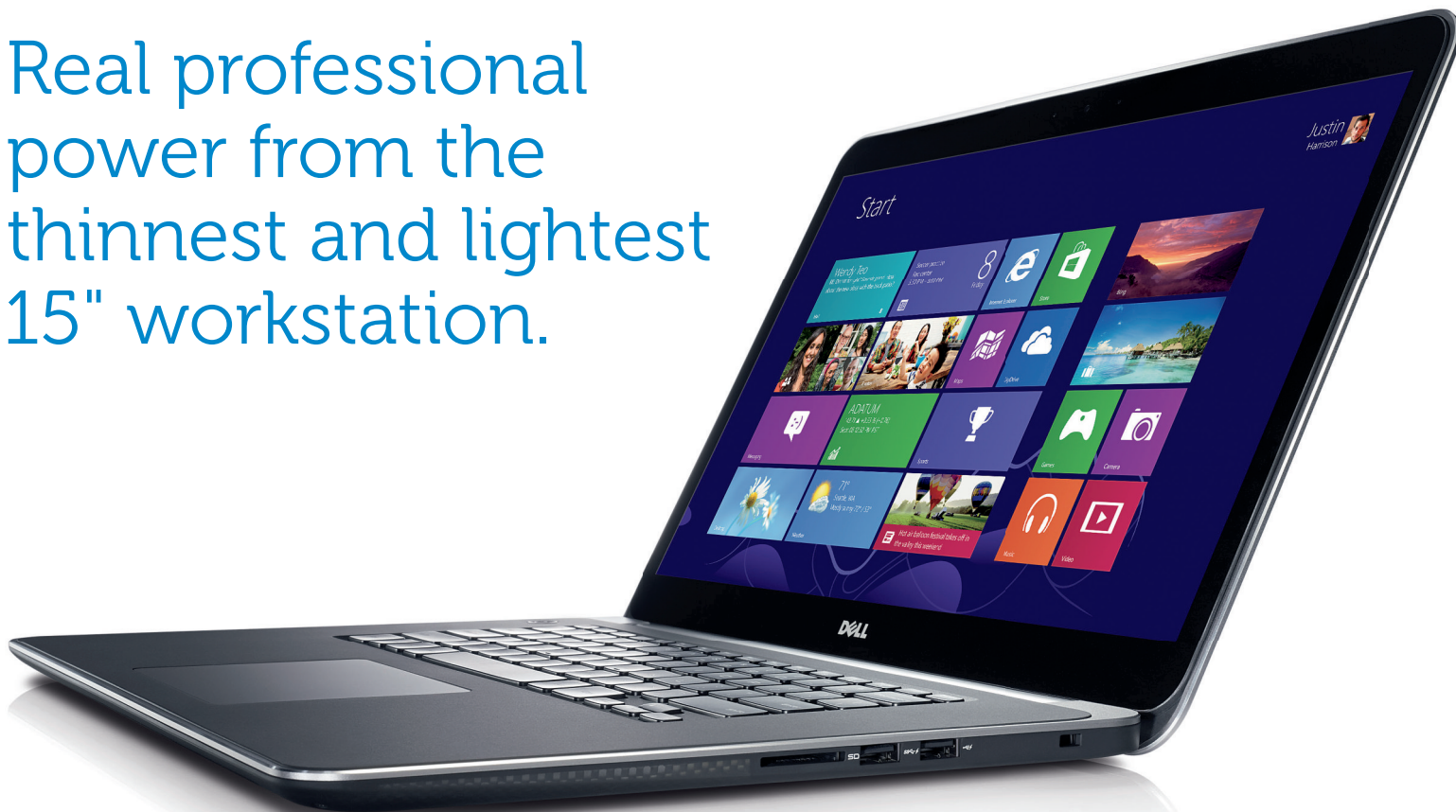
Official Supporter

Dell recommends Windows.

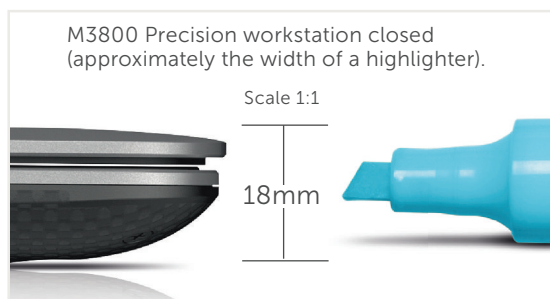


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WIN MORE CLIENTS

It's all very well securing a few clients before making the move into full-time freelance life, but how do you find new job opportunities and keep the work coming in? Solid industry exposure is essential – we've covered this in detail in chapter six – but the rest comes from good ol' hard graft: you need to be able to sell your talents, aesthetic and work ethic to clients that might not even know they need your services yet. And once they're on your books, you need to keep them there.

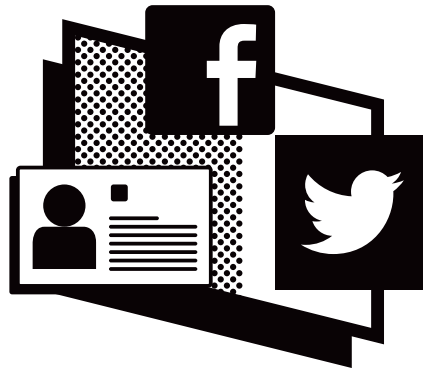
From harnessing the power of word of mouth to approaching new clients and knowing who to pitch ideas to, there are plenty of ways to win more work. Read on to find out how.

GENERATE NEW WORK

Whether you've recently made the leap or you're a seasoned freelance pro, the ability to win new work remains absolutely fundamental for success

As a freelance creative, you need to be able to drum up new business. Yes, you might have started out with a solid base of clients, but don't let yourself be sucked into a false sense of security: freelance life can be notoriously unpredictable, and at some point you're going to have to branch out.

The good news is that new opportunities can pop up anywhere: the key is to let people know what you can do, and when you're available. Here's how to get the word out.



PUT A SPIN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

It goes without saying that social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and Pinterest are huge for promoting your skills and bringing in new work. But don't just post portfolio updates: think of a 'campaign' you can do to increase your exposure. Take illustrator Johanna Basford (johannabasford.com), whose innovative Twitter Picture project put her on the radar for a raft of new clients. If you can harness the power of social media, work will follow.

SPREAD THE NEWS

Word of mouth is a powerful way to generate new work. It comes via recommendations from former colleagues, clients and collaborators, so tell everyone about your services, call in friends and family to pass on the message, and make it obvious when you're available for work: Matt Booth's ismattavailable.com is a great example.

GET YOURSELF OUT THERE

Go to every event in your area. If there isn't one, set one up. Travel to design events as often as possible and, when you're there, chat to people – even offer to speak. Sell yourself and your skills. We've rounded up our top networking tips in chapter six.

WORK YOUR FOLIO HARDER

You have a brilliant portfolio on your site, Behance and so on, so let people know. Email potential clients with a teaser of your work and direct them back to your site for more. Keep the file size low and make sure your email signature includes your contact details. Update your site at any chance you get, post links via social media and send examples of new work to all the major design blogs. Which sites should you be on? Head over to page 84.

DON'T BE DESPERATE

The worst thing for a freelancer to do is appear desperate. Why? Because it devalues your services. Acts of desperation include emailing art directors every other day and clogging up social media channels with your woes. Persistence is one thing, but being annoying won't do you any favours.

MEAN BUSINESS

Clients hire confident specialists, not anxious, timid freelancers, so project a strong and professional image at all times. Starting from your first correspondence with a prospective client, make sure you come across strongly.

PITCH IDEAS

If you have an idea for how your client's website could work harder or a concept for a new campaign, work up a pitch document and take it to your contact in person. You could even create a competitor analysis for them. You'll reap the rewards, even if the particular idea doesn't bear any fruit. We cover the pros and cons of pitching on page 30.

GET PERSONAL

Self-initiated projects are a fantastic way to generate work and showcase your skills (see page 33). If you're an illustrator,

design a calendar or tees. If you're a designer, set up a magazine. If your project picks up interest you could make some cash and gain client work. What's there to lose?

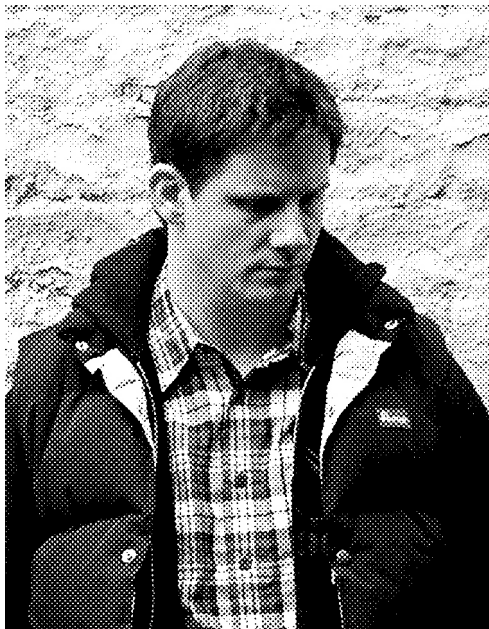
SCAN THE JOB SITES

Authentic Jobs (authenticjobs.com) lets you filter via categories including contracts and freelance positions, and you'll find a huge range of jobs on Behance's JobList site (behance.net/joblist), Guardian Jobs (jobs.guardian.co.uk), It's Nice That (itsnicethatjobsboard.com) and many more. But watch out for crowdsourcing sites. Unless you want to work without knowing whether you'll be paid, the likes of 99Designs or Crowdspring are not recommended.

CASE STUDY :

WHY WORD OF MOUTH IS KING

The best way to gain more work is through the clients you already have, says Steven Bonner



● STEVEN BONNER, DESIGNER,
ILLUSTRATOR AND TYPOGRAPHER
WWW.STEVENBONNER.COM

“A lot of clients find me through Twitter. It’s the new word-of-mouth,” states Steven Bonner, a multi-award-winning Scottish creative whose clients include the likes of Nike, Cadbury, Audi, Renault, The New York Times and Penguin. These days, Bonner’s reputation for excellent design, lettering and illustration keeps him pretty busy, but when he does put time aside for a spot of self-promo he opts for traditional methods like postcards, polite emails and newsletters. “I don’t waste people’s time by sending the same blanket email to a huge list of names. People are busy, so a brief introduction and a portfolio link usually suffices,” he explains.

“One thing I do try to make a point of doing is visiting London every year for a few days so I can set up meetings with potential clients for portfolio showings. These have been invaluable as they give me a chance to meet people face-to-face. Clients like to connect a face and personality to the work.”

Bonner’s favourite piece of work in his portfolio – an illustrated animation and typeface for Ballantines – came through his agent Jelly London. “They provide access to clients and briefs that otherwise I might have trouble getting,” he says.

“For me, the best work comes through the best relationships,” Bonner reflects. “If you work hard at getting to know your client and can build a frank but easygoing relationship, then good work will follow. Sometimes that connection is instant, and other times it’s something you have to cultivate over time. But the best way to gain more work is through the clients you already have – so don’t be a prima donna.”



STEVEN BONNER

Designer and illustrator
www.stevenbonner.com



TREAT EVERY
JOB AS IF IT'S
GOING TO BE
YOUR BEST
PORTFOLIO
PIECE, AND
YOUR CLIENTS
WILL TEND TO
COME BACK

PERFECT PITCHING

Knowing how to pitch is key to winning new work. Avoid the common pitfalls with our top tips for selling your ideas

To make it as a freelancer, you need to be able to sell your skills, which will, at some point, involve pitching to prospective clients. We don't mean delivering a whizz-bang presentation to a room full of chief executives (it's unlikely you'll face this situation as a freelancer – although if you do, pick up a copy of *The Design Studio Handbook*, the fourth in this series, where we'll reveal how to present the perfect pitch). We're talking about contacting potential clients to tell them why they need your stellar skills. Get it wrong and you'll be wasting your time. But get it right and you'll soon see the work rolling in.



RESEARCH THEIR NEEDS

Not only do you need to know your prospective client's business, you need to understand the company's needs: this is the hinge of your entire pitch. So dust off your investigative skills and start researching the client's goals. What is the company's message and who is it aimed at? Take notes from previous projects and campaigns and identify what worked and what didn't. This is where you'll come in.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

You might already have a good working relationship with the client you're going to pitch to. However, if you don't know them you'll need to put aside a good couple of hours to research who they are and what they do.

WHY DO THEY NEED YOU?

Once you've done your research, turn your attention to how you can help them meet their goals. What skills, knowledge or experience can you provide that they don't already have? What are they doing that they could be doing better – with your help? Work this out, and you've nailed the crux of your pitch.

BE DIRECT

Put together your pitch in a short, punchy email – and make sure you send it to the right person. Remember that the recipient is probably busy: a long, sprawling monologue is unlikely to catch their attention. Keep it to the point: what do you propose? Why do they need it? And why are you the best person for the job?

INCLUDE EVIDENCE

Back up your claims with evidence of why you're the perfect person. Have you successfully provided similar services before? Mention this, succinctly, and link to the project so that the client can follow it up if they're interested.

DON'T USE A FORMULA

This is the quickest way for your email to be deleted. Each pitch should be tailored to the client: if you can't be bothered to talk to them directly, why should they care?

DANGLE THE CARROT

Your initial pitch isn't the time to bring up fees and contract demands: it's the first phase of a process in which your main job is to open a dialogue. Don't dilute your message: there will be plenty of time to discuss all these details further down the line – for now you need to whet their appetite.

MAKE A CONNECTION

First impressions count, and clients are more likely to offer a job to someone they think they can work with – so take a moment to make sure you've pitched your personal skills, too. Does your tone communicate professionalism and energy?

LINK IT UP

As with all self-promotional emails, if you haven't already, make sure you include a link to your online portfolio (and your contact details). This will enable the potential client to browse through your work and client list if they choose, and get a feel, firsthand, for the kind of work you do.

LET THEM DIGEST YOUR PITCH

Give it a few days before following up with another email or phone call – although bear in mind clients won't always appreciate a direct call about a pitch. If you still don't get a response, know when to walk away. Think about where you might have gone wrong. Did you pitch at the right time?

SEND MORE THAN ONE

Don't just rely on one pitch being successful. If you have bills to pay, send out multiple pitches to prospective clients.



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NEW PROJECTS IS
CLASSIC. I MEET
WITH THE CLIENT,
I LISTEN TO WHAT
THEY NEED AND
I MAKE IT. LIKE
A SHOEMAKER

DEALING WITH DOWNTIME

Quiet periods needn't be tricky to handle. Follow our six essential tips for what to do when work is slow



DON'T PANIC

As any seasoned professional will tell you, freelance life often flips between feast and famine. It's easy to panic when the work dries up, but if you've been putting away a little money to get you through the leaner times (see our tips on page 61), then learn to love the quieter times. Instead of freaking out, use the time to your advantage: go for walks, process ideas and be inspired.



PICK UP SOME NEW SKILLS

Don't just learn on the job: use periods of downtime to take a focused approach to developing new skills. Would you like to take your work in a new direction? What skills do you need to get there? Is there anything you'd like to do better or know more about? Once you have identified how you want to improve, research the necessary tools and techniques, and start practicing. You'll find a list of useful training resources on page 45.



SPRING CLEAN YOUR SITE

Updating your website: it's one of those things that's always on the to-do list, but isn't always possible when you're busy juggling multiple deadlines. But your site is one of your most important assets as a freelancer: it's often the first introduction to your skills that a potential client or collaborator might receive – so if you've got a bit of downtime, why not use it wisely and update your folio?



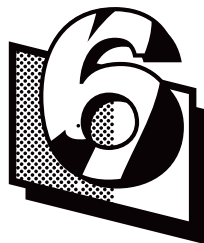
START A SIDELINE PROJECT

If you find yourself with some unexpected time on your hands, why not start that sideline project you've been meaning to explore for ages? Not only could you broaden your skillset and diversify your folio, you might even get some new clients out of it and paid work later down the line. Self-initiated work is also a fantastic way to take your client work in new directions – after all, people commission you on what they see in your portfolio, right?



SELF-PROMO TIME

Quieter periods are a great time to ramp up the self-promo. After all, if you've been consumed by client work recently, it's unlikely you'll have had much free time to devote to boosting your exposure and bringing in new work. Email out samples of your work to potential clients and creative directors, print some posters, and get networking in person and online – more on this in chapter six. The bigger your professional presence, the better.



PITCH AN IDEA

While slower periods can be a fantastic opportunity to recharge your creative batteries, don't become lazy: even if you're lucky enough to have a financial buffer, you're going to need work to come in eventually; and if you can't pay the bills then pitching should be a priority. Research potential new clients, think up some solid concepts, and pitch them coherently and persuasively – by following our tips for perfect pitching on page 30.

NIGHTMARE CLIENTS

Difficult clients are a fact of freelance life. Luckily forewarned is forearmed: here are four hazards to watch out for and how to avoid them

NON-PAYMENT

This happens more often than you'd expect. It isn't enough to agree that you'll get paid at the end of a project. To protect yourself completely, ask for a deposit up front – ideally 50 per cent of the overall fee – then draw up a comprehensive contract that sets out a schedule for payment, and defines the scope and length of the job.

LATE CANCELLATIONS

Don't be blinded by the prospect of an exciting new project. If you keep your schedule clear for work that hasn't actually been confirmed by the client with a written contract, you could end up out of work and hugely out of pocket if the project falls through. Always make sure you have a signed contract before getting carried away.

DIFFERING IDEAS

It's so easy to conduct all your business by phone or email, but that makes it harder to suss out new clients. Set up a face-to-face meeting before you start the work and you'll get a better feel for their expectations and modus operandi, and hear any warning bells much earlier on.

THE TERRIBLE CLIENT

You know them – they're the ones who call at all hours to make endless revisions. Make sure your contract (signed before starting work) states how many revisions you're prepared to make before you'll start charging for extras. And don't be afraid to explain your working hours if you feel a client is taking advantage of your work ethic.

WIN YOUR DREAM CLIENTS

One of the advantages of freelance life is you get to choose who you work with – so aim for the best



DRAW UP A LIST

First, decide who your dream clients are. Draw up a list – specifically, who they are and what you think you could do for them (as when you're pitching for new work). Just being good and wanting to work for bigger clients isn't enough: you might want to work with them, but why do they need you?



LISTEN

Don't lose your hard-won dream client by deviating from the brief because you think your idea is better. Yes, you were hired for your expertise – so by all means bring your creativity, style and attentiveness to a project – but don't ignore the brief. They won't be back for repeat business.



HIT THE RIGHT CONTACTS

For bigger clients, it's often difficult to get to the right person. Emails to generic corporate addresses, more likely than not, won't get you anywhere. So find the art director, product manager or person responsible for the area of the business you want to work for, and contact them.



'NO' RARELY MEANS 'NO'

That said, sometimes clients don't know what they want, so if you've had a stellar idea and it's been stalled, sit down and talk through your ideas. A little empathy goes a long way here. If you can deliver a brilliant idea that your clients were at first sceptical of, they'll be begging you for more.



COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Why would a big client choose you over other freelancers or agencies? Draw up a list of key questions, and build the answers into your message. Be prepared to travel and meet as many clients as you can in person. This will help you build a bond, after which you'll be much more likely to win work.



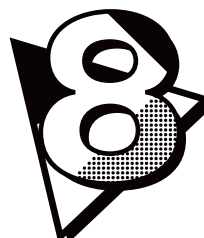
AVOID (BAD) SURPRISES

It might be tempting to pull out all the guns when you're working with a dream client, but don't use this time to experiment with a new style – it will always land you in trouble (OK, there are some exceptions). You've been employed for your style and skill, and big client jobs aren't creative playgrounds.



ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP

Once you've got your dream client, you need to keep them. Aside from continually producing stunning work, the best way to do this is to develop a strong relationship. Be patient, understanding and professional at all times, and involve them in all stages of the creative process – don't cut them out.



REMEMBER YOUR ROOTS

When you have bigger clients, don't forget your smaller ones. Make sure they know what you can do. You've designed a logo for them: did they know you're an app designer as well? Chances are the client will want to stick with you if you're playing with the big boys and can save them time and money.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Word of mouth is an excellent way to boost your client list, so tell everyone about your services.
- Launch an original campaign to catch the eye of new clients and promote it with social media.
- Don't appear desperate: it devalues your services and won't help you win you new work.
- The ability to pitch ideas and sell your skills is key to freelance success.
- Don't panic during quiet periods. Why not use the time to update your website or pick up new skills?
- Nightmare clients are a fact of freelance life – but there are ways to stay in control of the situation.
- Aim high. Identify your dream clients, approach them and concentrate on building a bond.

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WORK SMARTER

Efficiency. It isn't the most exciting skill you need to be a successful freelancer, but it is a crucial one. There's no point in being self-employed if you're too busy to enjoy the freedom that comes with it: it's all about striking that vital balance between work and life.

You're a team of one now – the ability to manage your time and stay on top of your workflow has never been so important. After all, time is money. You're going to need to find some room in your schedule to keep your skills sharp, too.

Good time management isn't just about workflow: it's also about looking after your well-being. We've covered this in detail in chapter seven. In the meantime, turn over to discover the secrets of how to work smarter, not harder.

BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT

It's no good dazzling clients with your design skills if you can't meet a deadline. Manage your time more efficiently with our killer compendium of top tips

As a freelancer, time is one of your most valuable assets. You need to be able to produce the creative while also monitoring to-do lists, tracking invoices, pitching for new work, negotiating fees and more. It can be a juggling act and, without careful management, things can quickly spiral out of control.

With a bit of careful planning and prioritisation, however, it's possible to avoid those caffeine-fuelled all-nighters and achieve freelancing Zen. How? Read on...



TURN OFF ONLINE CHAT

It can be lonely working alone, but don't let online chat programs or social media absorb all your time when you're trying to work: turn them off if you need to work without distractions. And don't check your emails every 10 minutes. Set a fixed schedule for working through and responding to emails – first thing in the morning, say – and let your clients know.

HAVE A SYSTEM

Being able to prioritise is key to staying sane as a freelancer. Assign certain periods to tasks in a calendar and have a daily to-do list that you can tick off. Websites like [Lifehacker \(lifehacker.com\)](http://Lifehacker.com) and [43folders \(43folders.com\)](http://43folders.com) are full of great tips.

EXPLAIN YOUR SCHEDULE

One of the best ways to manage your time (and keep clients happy) is to be up-front about what you're working on, when you'll have time to begin working on a brief, and how much time you'll be able to dedicate to the project. Be clear, realistic and honest with your clients right from the beginning of a project.

STICK TO YOUR STRENGTHS

When it comes to tight budgets and timescales, call on the skills and solutions that you know you can do well. Keep it simple and avoid laborious processes. One of the most time-consuming things you can do is try to find new and pioneering styles and solutions – save that for the well-paid projects.

DON'T ALWAYS SAY YES

Avoid agreeing to jobs if you don't have time to do everything on your plate. Sometimes it's better to say you're too busy, than to say yes and then produce sub-standard work, or have to back out entirely. After all, the more people you let down, the more people there are who won't ask you again.

STOP CLIENTS SUCKING UP YOUR TIME

Clients can be demanding. But if you find yourself spending more time responding to a constant barrage of requests than you are working on the project, then you need to let the client know – politely – that their emails or phone calls are becoming unproductive. As suggested in our 'Turn off online chat' tip, consider implementing a schedule for responding to clients and make this clear from the outset.

MAKE A PLAN

Everyone works differently, but if you want to maximise your efficiency try drawing up both short-term (day) and longer-term (week and month) plans. Setting yourself goals and deadlines will help you stay focused – but don't be too rigid: things will invariably pan out differently, so you'll need to adopt a flexible attitude.

MIX IT UP

Vary the sort of work you do so you're able to jump between projects when you're fed up. If you work on the same thing all day, every day, it gets tiresome and productivity can drop. The more styles and techniques you have under your belt, the better. It keeps you excited about what you're doing.

WEAR YOUR OTHER HATS

Set aside a dedicated chunk of time each month to keeping on top of the other sides of freelance life: business, finance, networking and self-promotion. These don't bring in money directly, but they are all essential aspects of being a successful freelancer and must be factored in.

AUTOMATE YOUR ACCOUNTS

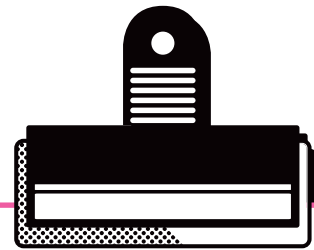
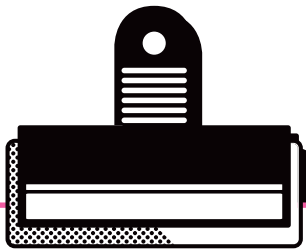
As a freelancer, it's fairly likely that you'll spend a lot of time chasing clients for payment. It might help to set up an automated invoicing and payment system – such as that offered by [Zoho Online Invoicing \(zoho.com/invoice\)](http://Zoho.com/invoice) – that will email regular reminders to clients and include automated payment links.

DON'T LIVE IN A BUBBLE

Separating work life from home life can be challenging as a freelancer. Always schedule in time for a social life – even when your workload is heavy. Factor in regular breaks, know when you're going to start and stop for the day, and stick to your schedule (more on this in chapter seven).

WORK FASTER

It isn't the sexiest side of design, but solid project management facilitates creativity. Here are some key ways to make your workflow more efficient



A TIDY DESK...

Whether or not the old adage is true, a bit of organisation – both physically and digitally – certainly goes a long way. Set up email folders, filing systems and job numbers, and keep on top of them. Add dates to the start of file names in year/month/day format so that different versions are listed in order, and always name and manage your layers. Trying to decipher what's going on retrospectively is just a waste of time, and having to go back to the client to ask for files again because a download's expired can be embarrassing.

MAKE MILESTONES

Mark out some clearly defined milestones for different stages of a project, such as first sketches, presentations, approvals and final layouts, and get them signed off. Map these onto your schedule to make sure they're achievable: this is particularly useful for more complex projects.

CUSTOMISE YOUR WORKSPACE

Organise your workspace to suit you. It should be second nature: if you're constantly looking for a particular function, it'll chip away at your working time. When you're used to the location of everything it'll free up more of your energy to focus on the project at hand. If you have a laptop, set up a separate monitor and use the laptop for all your panels, leaving your monitor completely free for the design work. Of course, when you use the laptop on its own the screen will be covered in panels. To work around this, set up two custom workspaces in your design software.

LEARN YOUR SHORTCUTS

One of the quickest ways to speed up your workflow is to set up shortcuts – and learn them (see page 44). Also, if you repeatedly do certain procedures in Photoshop, why not record them as an action?

START SMALL

If an idea is strong enough, it's easy to build upon later: it's always better to start off small and grow, than to start too big and be unable to scale a project back. Use any downtime to explore exciting new approaches and

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Staying on top of your workload, tracking time and invoices, tending to your to-do lists and updating your clients are all daily activities that need to be fit in. Luckily there are a number of affordable, easy-to-use project management tools out there to help you juggle multiple projects and workflows. Solo (thrive solo.com), Action Method (actionmethod.com) and Basecamp (basecamp.com) are just three available options, all of which are set up to help you make your workflow as efficient and painless as possible. Give them a go.

NAIL THE BRIEF

Always get the brief nailed down at the start, and make sure that you're on the same page as the client. Agreeing deadlines for different stages helps everyone be clear about how long everything will take, and pinning down a beginning, middle and end will stop things rambling out of control. Stay realistic when you're under tight time constraints.

BACK IT UP

It sounds obvious, but hit Save as often as possible: the last thing you want is for your computer to crash and you to lose all your work, hours before a crucial deadline. As your project progresses, create a new folder for each key phase and go to File>Save As, using numbers as your filenames. That way, you aren't just overwriting the file and can shuffle back through versions if you need to double back on yourself later. Invest in a decent hard drive, too. Your sanity will thank you.



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YOU JUST HAVE
TO TURN
THEM OFF**

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Over 30 time-saving shortcuts in Creative Cloud that you might not know about...



PHOTOSHOP

- Add new layer:** Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+N
- Increase/decrease brush size:**][
- Inverse:** Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+I/F7
- Toggle Quick Mask modes:** Q
- Work in CMYK:** View>Proof Setting>Working in CMYK
- Flick through RGB channels:** Cmd/Ctrl+3,4,5
- Flick through CMYK channels:** Cmd/Ctrl+3,4,5,6
- Return to all channels:** Cmd/Ctrl+2
- Fit On Screen:** Cmd/Ctrl+0



ILLUSTRATOR

- Toggle drawing mode:** Shift+D
- Colour Settings:** Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+K
- Gradient tool:** . (full-stop/period)
- Live Paint selection:** Shift+L
- Add Anchor Point:** +
- Edit Contents:** Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+P
- Paste in Front/Back:** Cmd/Ctrl+F/B
- Increase/decrease diameter:**][
- Other Scripts:** Cmd/Ctrl+F12



INDESIGN

- Deselect:** Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+A
- Duplicate and transform selection:**
Transform tool+Opt/Alt+drag
- Toggle Fill and Stroke:** X
- Bring up the Pages panel:** Cmd/Ctrl+F12
- Show Hidden Characters:** Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+I
- Text Frame options:** Cmd/Ctrl+B
- Kerning:** Opt/Alt+arrow keys
- Underline:** Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+U



AFTER EFFECTS

- Project Settings:** Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+K
- Go to specific point on the timeline:** Opt/Alt+Shift+J
- Go to Layer In/Out point:** I/O
- Display preview snapshot in active viewer:** F5
- New null layer:** Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Shift+Y
- New adjustment layer:** Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+Y
- Replace footage:** Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+/
/
- Select all visible keyframes:** Cmd/Ctrl+Opt/Alt+A

SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS

As the boss, you're in charge of your own training and development now. Speed up your workflow and increase client demand by keeping your skills sharp



SUBSCRIPTION-BASED TRAINING

Online video training is by far the most accessible way of boosting your skillset and lets you learn at your desk. Companies like Lynda (lynda.com) provide a vast amount of training on virtually any piece of software you could imagine. You have to pay, of course: most training companies charge by monthly or annual subscription.



ONLINE WEBINARS

This is usually a live video from a presenter. You sign into an online conference room, and then listen and ask questions via chat. Webinars are normally reasonably priced, and the likes of *How* magazine and *Print* do them in the US – one example being the editor of *Wired* magazine, Scott Dadich. Definitely worth a look.



FREE ONLINE VIDEO TRAINING

As well as subscription-based training sites, there are a lot of video tutorials available for free on the web (including those at creativeblog.com). If you want to brush up on CC, Adobe TV (tv.adobe.com) provides a mass of technique videos. And of course there's YouTube – but you'll have to filter through a lot of rubbish.



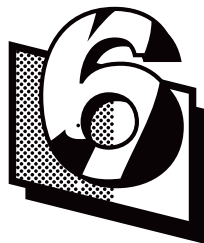
SPECIALIST TRAINING

If it's bespoke training you're after, check out D&AD's Sharp'ner series. These are often aimed at the advertising industry, but you'll gain a lot from the sessions, which are hosted by those at the top of their fields. Sharp'ner can be booked on a place-by-place basis. Sessions certainly aren't cheap, though – expect around £500 for a day.



CLASSROOM-BASED TRAINING

Sometimes one-to-one training is the best way to learn a new skill. Escape Studios (escapestudios.com) offers brilliant courses in the likes of Maya, while Shillington College (shillingtoneducation.com) and, in the US, the Gnomon School (gnomonschool.com) provide a wide range of useful, short courses for designers.



SEMINARS AND LECTURES

If you're after a cheaper solution, look to lectures, seminars and conferences. From established events like OFFF (offf.ws) and TYPO (typotalks.com), to new ones like Point (pointconference.com), these are usually good value, and you'll also get to network with some of the best creative professionals on the planet.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Time is one of your most valuable assets, so use it wisely. Set yourself short-term and longer-term goals, and stick to them.
- It's ok to say no. If you're too busy to take on another project, it's better to be honest with clients than take it on and produce sub-standard work.
- Turn off online chat if you have a lot to do, and set fixed times for replying to emails.
- Project management tools like Solo and Action Method will help you stay on top of your workload.
- Invest in a decent external hard drive and always back your work up. Losing everything hours before a crucial deadline will do you no favours.
- Want to speed up your workflow? Set up shortcuts and learn them, and record actions in Photoshop.
- Clients like freelancers who can work quickly and efficiently, so keep your skills sharp and up-to-date.

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MANAGE YOUR MONEY

How much should you charge? How do you put a value on your skills, anyway? And what's the best way to negotiate the best rates? Money's a dirty word, but it's what separates designers from artists – and ultimately, designers from the breadline.

You're in the design business, so you need to think like a business. For this to happen successfully you need to turn a profit, operate within your budgets and ensure your cash flow is as smooth as your Photoshop cutouts. This involves nothing more than common sense, an understanding of basic business principles and the will to succeed. Read on and we'll show you how to keep the coffers full.

GET YOUR BILLING RIGHT

Every project is different, so what's the best way to calculate your fee? Read on for our comprehensive guide to billing

How do you put a value on your skills and communicate it clearly to your clients? Even seasoned creatives struggle to monetise their skills perfectly. Design, after all, is an inexact service; a straightforward menu design could potentially incur more costs and take longer than a full website overhaul.

Bill too high and you'll earn a reputation for being costly. Pitch too low and you'll struggle to turn a profit. But get your rates right and you'll never worry about balancing the books. From hourly fees to using a formula, we bring you a comprehensive guide to the best methods available for charging your clients.



HOURLY RATE

The most simplistic method of valuing your services as a designer can be equated to an hourly rate. In short, it's the value of your time as a skilled practitioner where charges are based on the amount of hours spent producing the work, inclusive of all calculable expenses. This works for freelancers and clients alike, as an initial quote gives both parties a figure and delivery date to work towards. It also works well for a small studio rate, or for when work has to be outsourced.

A FLEXIBLE WAY TO BILL

Working to an hourly rate can be a burden, though. This method often masks the true amount of hours put into a project and, unless specified in a contract, can omit any expenses that may have been incurred or might mean that you miss out on usage fees.

Many creatives have an hourly rate they use as a basis upon which to bill. This can then be used to quote on before accepting the project, and as a barometer when invoicing. An hourly rate, or even day rate, has the dual advantage of covering sub-contracted costs should you need to outsource elements of the job.

Working to an hourly or daily rate does give a simple, justifiable set fee. Hourly rates also mean that a flat fee can be applied beforehand and any extra costs outside of the time frame can be accounted for. If you're using this method, make sure that you always record your time and expenses immediately and accurately.

PROS

Charging an hourly rate is a flexible and transparent way of billing, covers revisions and updates, and encourages good time management

CONS

It can omit usage fees and undermine billing potential, and mask the true cost of work and planning

It can take a while to figure out the best means to charge as a freelancer. Some prefer to operate a fixed 'all-in' cost that is given as a quote at the beginning of the job. This method makes you more appealing as a freelancer or smaller studio, as your client can budget accordingly, but it can often backfire when projects drag on longer than is planned or budgeted for.

GOOD TIME-MANAGEMENT

To get around this you can quote a 'fixed' fee based on a specific amount of hours or days of work, specifying what the client gets for that – for instance, X amount of

concepts, Y revisions – with the understanding that work outside of the spec will be charged extra.

There are several other advantages to this type of 'hourly rate plus' method – not all of them financial. For instance, an hourly rate encourages strict time management. It also keeps you focused on the project in hand, which in turn helps you deliver on time. You might be tempted to drag out the time in order to bill more, but this is inadvisable; you'll soon garner a reputation for taking longer to do something than your competitors. Conversely, an hourly rate discourages clients from making last-minute changes or delaying sign-off stages.

More importantly, however, billing by the hour encourages a better work/life balance, forcing you to operate in a more productive manner, and letting you plan when to work. This means you can fill the gaps in your existing commitments without sacrificing other projects or opportunities.

CALCULATE AN HOURLY RATE

Work out the following, then apply the equation at the end to calculate your hourly rate

SECTION A: ANNUAL BUSINESS COSTS

- What are your accountancy fees?
- What are your legal fees?
- What are your banking fees?
- How much is your studio rent or mortgage? (If you work from a spare room, include the proportion of the mortgage or rent that covers that room only.)
- What are your annual travel costs?
- What are your hardware, software and furniture costs? (Include things such as your desk, chair, paper, printer cartridges, computer, software, etc.)
- What are the utility fees for your studio? (Include costs like broadband, heating, electricity and telephone – or a suitable proportion of them if working from home.)
- What is your annual insurance cost?
- How much do you spend on advertising and self-promotion?
- How many 'non accountable' costs do you have per year? (This includes things like filing fees for tax forms, association fees and so on.)

Add all of these figures together to give your total business costs per year.

SECTION B: ANNUAL PERSONAL COST

- How much disposable income would you like to earn?
(Give a pre-tax figure.)
- How much are your mortgage or rent payments per year,
plus other (non-business) bills?
- How much in savings and/or pension contributions would
you ideally like to make per year?

Add all of these figures together to give your total personal costs per year.

SECTION C: BILLABLE TIME

Now we need to calculate your annual billable time. To do this, work out each of the following amounts individually, then apply the calculations as you go along.

- How many days a week do you work on average? (Count half days as 0.5, and count working for more than 12 hours a day as 1.5.)
- How many hours do you work a day, on average?

Multiply answer one by answer two, and subtract the following:

- How many days holiday do you require? (include Bank Holidays and Christmas.)
- How many sick and personal days do you want to allow for annually?

HOW MUCH?

To calculate your hourly rate, take figure A, add it to figure B and divide by figure C. This will give a billable day rate based on a profit margin and expected personal income, before tax is applied.



FLAT FEES

Since time immemorial the most basic form of billing has been the flat rate. Ask to quote for a job, give a figure, do the job, get paid. It's as simple as seeing a sticker on a box of biscuits and paying for it and is, at its very heart, the purest form of value equation possible.

Yet the idea of charging a flat fee doesn't have too many fans. For most it's a method to be avoided because of the danger of drastically undercharging for non-billable services.

You'll find there are a few advantages to using a flat-rate system, however. For one, unless the project brief changes considerably, the client doesn't have to worry about going over budget and the designer is guaranteed a set fee on completion of the work.

Most flat fees are loosely based on an hourly rate, calculated for a typical job. So, for instance, if you believe a logo will take eight hours to produce, you calculate a fee based on this period of time, plus any other charges that you feel should be considered.

SMALLER JOBS BENEFIT

For small, shorter turnaround jobs, a fixed fee can be advantageous. For example, a flat fee for web designers to manage or update a site is better than an hourly rate. Similarly, regular work – a standing commission for a monthly magazine illustration, for instance – can often benefit from a flat fee approach.

PROS

Charging a flat fee is an easy solution for repeat business

CONS

It can devalue your work and leave you out of pocket. Beware of your copyright

UNEXPECTED COSTS

However, there are several disadvantages to quoting using a flat fee. For one, if the job ends up taking longer than expected, your hourly rate suddenly drops significantly. Secondly, unexpected costs like supplying work to a printer or stock imagery use will hit your bottom line if they're not quoted for originally.

ADAPTABILITY

The demands of a project can change greatly so it's good to be able to adapt to that – it's a business at the end of the day. If you went to a restaurant to buy a main course, you wouldn't automatically expect a starter or a dessert to come with it, you'd expect to pay more. So it's the same here.

FACTOR IN TIME

And then there's the all-important time factor to consider. Some find that hourly is too subjective. You could do a logo project in two hours, or maybe two weeks. Only charging for two hours isn't reflective of all the hours of work you have put in before that point, just to be able to do it in two hours.

Charging for creative work shouldn't be based on the amount of time you spend in front of your computer. A flat fee suggests that only the manufacturing process, and not the conceptual one upon which your professional reputation hangs, is valued. No matter how hard this is for clients to swallow, by only billing for the time spent producing work, you're devaluing your reputation and creative work in general.

BILLING DOS AND DON'TS



DO

Agree contractual terms and then stick to your side of the bargain.

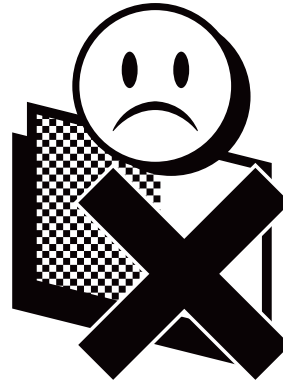
Record your time and expenses immediately and accurately.

Set a payment and delivery date, and stick to it.

Compare your prices to those of your competitors.

Treat your research and business management time as billable.

Give your clients an incentive to pay your fees on time – a deduction for early payments, for instance.



DON'T

Be late in sending your invoices out.

Give your clients any form of excuse for not paying you on time.

Be afraid to ask for a percentage up front to aid cash flow.

Think you can ignore your contractual obligations.

Forget tax, National Insurance and any other pre-tax deductions.

Assume that billing high automatically makes you more profitable.

CASE STUDY :

**THE ART OF
NEGOTIATION**

How much will a client pay? That depends on how much you're worth, says designer Jacob Cass



● JACOB CASS, GRAPHIC DESIGNER
WWW.JUSTCREATIVE.COM

"I work on a project to project basis – never hourly," says New York-based designer Jacob Cass. "Budgets come in all different shapes and sizes. Before you even start talking about price with your client, you need to work out what you're worth and, more importantly, what you can get away with."

If a client hasn't revealed its budget, fee negotiation can be tricky – but there are clues as to what they might be prepared to pay. Do some research: how many employees does the company have? Does it have funding? How many years has it been in business? "I don't have set prices for any of my work," Cass explains. "You have to gauge the client, listen to their needs and then price out accordingly. For certain industries like finance, pharma and luxury, you can often assume higher budgets, or at least more financial backing, and can often get away with upping your rates."

Of course, you'll always have clients that come in low. Don't ever undervalue your skills. "Clients often ask about lowering prices," Cass admits. "More often than not I say: 'Unfortunately, as I can't lower the quality of my work, I can't lower my costs'. If this fails, then we can always look at the scope and pull things back."

No matter what sector your client is in, you need to ask the right questions: "Even direct questions, like 'how much are you willing to invest into the project' can help start a more meaningful conversation."

The secret? Knowing your worth: "Have reasons on why you charge what you charge; outline your awards or testimonials; educate them on your background, process and how you differ from other designers, Cass advises. "Sell them on what makes you unique and how the return on investment will benefit them."



FORMULA

Sometimes an inexact science is exactly what's required when it comes to charging your clients. To this end, one of the most common practices for billing is to calculate a formula and apply it to a quote. Typically a formula works like this: calculate your expected outgoing costs for the year, then divide this figure by the number of hours you expect to work annually. The last bit of this equation is especially important. You shouldn't ignore hidden costs such as corporation taxes, health and social taxes or filing fees for tax returns.

At the same time, you can't bill for every hour in the day – only the hours that are spent on paid-for work. If your freelance career goes through a barren spell, or if you've found you're working every hour of the day, then you're going to need to recalculate your billing rate.

DON'T FORGET COPYRIGHT

This might seem like a very simple method for calculating a basic hourly rate, but it can be augmented with calculations that include copyright usage fees or are flexible for the number of reuses.

For instance, if you're producing a logo for a company, it might appear sensible to work to an hourly rate or simply for a flat fee. However, if that logo goes on to be reused in print advertisements or TV spots, you're entitled to a usage fee. In some cases, the usage fee can be far greater than the original production fee.

PROS

This method of billing involves just a simple, one-off calculation, and it can take into account your usage fees

CONS

A formula can be inflexible and may need recalculating regularly

The AOI's pricing guidelines, which can be found on the association's site (theaoi.com), offer a pretty robust introduction to the idea of usage and production fees, and encourage creatives to price their work sensibly whilst ensuring they protect their copyright interests.

STRIKE A BALANCE

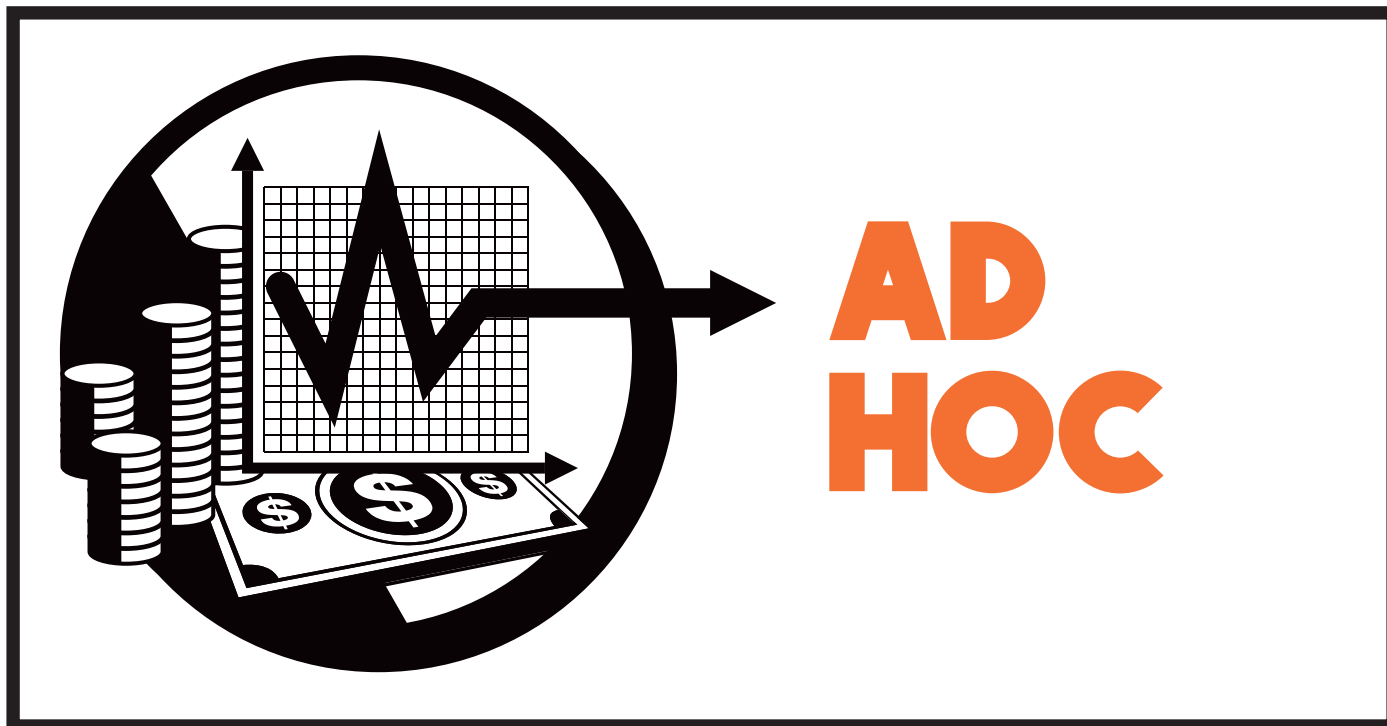
Like any billing mechanism, it's about striking a balance. You need to be able to objectively value your work and time. But be warned: a formula can be inflexible and have a negative effect on your true hourly rate if

your calculations fail to take into account freelance work that you have to turn down. Market demand is billable. And it also builds your reputation and, through that, your billable rate.

DEMAND IS CHARGEABLE

The most basic idea of pricing is to add up your living and working costs, find out how much a week will get you going and even leave you with a bit in your pocket to save. But if you're constantly busy as a freelancer you'll find the fee can be increased, as there will be clients who wish to work with you and will therefore pay for your exclusive time.

The key to clever billing is to be flexible, but also diligent in what you quote, especially if you're relying on a formula. Using a formula essentially makes it impossible to charge a small start-up business £4,000 for a logo, or simply get the price wrong and invoice £200 for an illustration for a multinational brand.



Sometimes as a designer you have to think on your feet, and when you're running a business it's the same. There will be times when charging an hourly rate or a simple flat fee simply won't make sense. For instance, a series of small logos or a redesign of an existing campaign might command a smaller fee as the assets have already been produced.

Alternatively, you might have to be on the set of a prescheduled photoshoot – work, but not necessarily billable time from the perspective of the client, who is already paying the photographer. In these cases, pricing a job on a case-by-case basis makes sense, and there are many creatives working across the industry for whom this approach to pricing really works.

YOU NEED A REP

So an ad hoc approach to billing does have its place. Remember though, this type of billing is only really beneficial once you have established a reputation. Illustrators have a particular style, for instance – so if a client wants to benefit from that style, they have to pay for the right to do so.

And while this can result in horror stories of copycat techniques produced by an illustrator for hire, it's by far the best policy to adopt once clients are prepared to pay for your unique creative style.

PROS

It's a flexible billing system that can result in bigger paying jobs

CONS

An ad hoc approach only works when clients are prepared to pay for your reputation

TRUE FLEXIBILITY

Not having a set fee also gives you a degree of flexibility. In quiet times, you can take on projects at a lower fee to tide your accounts over, or even take on a large corporate job for good money with the intention of doing some personal or charity work afterwards as a reward. If you're using this method, just make sure you negotiate fees by email, take your time in agreeing to anything, and file all of your emails

But don't always think about the dollar. It's about what you can get out of the project as well. Normally the most creative projects are actually the ones that pay the least, but the pay-off is that they allow for more creative freedom.

KNOW THE AVAILABLE BUDGET

There's also a further, less well acknowledged advantage to pricing a job on a case-by-case basis: namely, that you can take advantage of what a client will pay, rather than what the job itself is worth.

If you know a client is working with a sizeable budget and is asking for a project that will increase the amount of product they sell, then take this into account when calculating a fee. It's pretty common practice, and it means that you won't get screwed by the terms of their contract or reuse clauses, which again is pretty common client-side.



PAULA SCHER

*Graphic designer and Pentagram partner
www.paulascher.com*



OCCASIONALLY
SOMEONE ASKS
ME FOR A POSTER
FOR AN EVENT OR
CAUSE. THESE ARE
USUALLY FREEBIES
AND I STILL ENJOY
DESIGNING THEM.
BUT I'D STARVE IF
I TRIED TO DESIGN
POSTERS FOR
A LIVING

CONTROL YOUR CASH FLOW

Wallet-friendly ways to keep on top of your finances

So you've decided to work for yourself. You've been through months of anguish to finally take the plunge and give up the day job. What now?

Starting your own business can be pretty terrifying. At times, there's just too much to consider – everything from employment law and health and safety, to tax returns and contracts. Where do you start and what do you tackle first? The simple answer is cash flow.



BUDGET REALISTICALLY

Before setting your rates, sit down and budget for the coming year. List your outgoings: rent, bills, utilities, equipment, skills expenditures, travel and so on, and use this as a basis to work out how much you're going to need to stay afloat. Make sure you keep track of your budget, and revisit it regularly to make sure you're on track.

CLOCK YOUR CASH FLOW

This is absolutely vital for staying on top of your finances. Get it wrong and your outgoings will dwarf your earnings, meaning you'll be hit by bank charges. Get it right and your balance book will be healthier than a Californian salad, ensuring your business is growing, and the dividend and salary you reward yourself with is bigger than Trump Tower.

REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW

Forecasting your cash flow is one of the most sobering things that you'll have to do, but it's essential to the success of your business. Every month, review your cash flow and forecast for both the next three months and the next six. Make a list of all the invoices that need to be sent in those two time periods, and ensure you're hitting your monthly and quarterly cash-flow targets.

ASK FOR SOME UP-FRONT

If you're providing a service for client on a fixed-cost basis, then ask for a percentage up-front. This helps regulate cash flow and can act as a buffer should the project incur any unexpected costs.

GET IT SIGNED

Another factor that will affect cash flow is to make sure that all contracts are signed and ready to go at the beginning of a project. Don't eat into your allotted project time chasing up admin; get onto it beforehand. Doing so will prove invaluable in kick-starting cash flow.

PRIORITISE PAYMENT

To maximise cash flow it's vital to stay on top of your billing. Project management software can aid with this greatly (see page 42), but ultimately it's up to you to prioritise payment over all else. Don't bill, you don't get paid.

MANAGE CAREFULLY

Ultimately, staying on top of your finances means doing the dull accounting work. What comes in and goes out needs to be managed carefully, and good organisation is essential to achieve this. The options are

endless, but online accounting software is always a good place to start (though you'll also need a good 'human' accountant too).

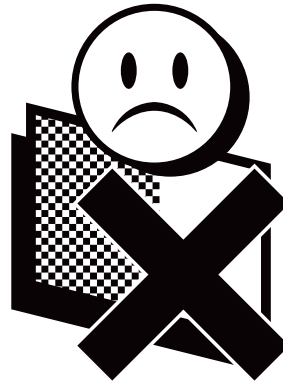
THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

Options like Less Accounting (lessaccounting.com) and Xero (xero.com) are visual and built with creatives in mind (or those of us who shudder at the sight of a spreadsheet). These offer a place to generate invoices and credit notes, and track all money coming into the company, but you can also use them for reporting expenses and import your bank statements.

ORGANISATION IS KEY

Ultimately, though, a healthy cash flow is dependent upon organisation. Watch your account like a hawk, and ask for percentage payments on delivery of certain parts of a project. You need to bill promptly and politely, and ensure your invoice reaches the right person to make the payment. Make sure you take your business as seriously as you take your design.

MAKE MORE MONEY



DO

UP-SELL

Clients don't always think about the extra things they might need – so tell them, and suggest your services.

GET AN ONLINE STORE

Got an idea for a cool print? Knock a few up and stick them in your store.

GO PREMIUM

If you're confident in the value you offer your clients, don't be afraid of increasing your fee.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Teach, sell stock imagery, or write blog posts and tutorials for design websites, for example.

DON'T

BIN REJECTED IDEAS

It might not have been right for the client, but that cool concept could make a great side project – so why not develop it in your downtime, and see who bites?

UNDERSELL YOURSELF

Underselling yourself undermines your work and is a disservice to the industry, so know your worth.

STOP THINKING

There are hundreds of ways to make more money. Get thinking.

TAXES

There are two certainties in life – death and taxes. Here are six ways to best tackle the latter. We can't help with the former...



PUT ASIDE MONEY FOR TAX

Depending on where on the planet you're working, you'll pay taxes between once and twice a year to the government directly. And depending on your profits, these can be small, annoying sums, or hefty chunks of your capital. So save a proportion of your profit to make sure you can pay these bills when they come in.



DON'T FORGET VAT

Limited companies are charged corporation tax on profits. The employees of that company are charged income tax on their income. As with sole traders and partnerships, limited companies are only taxed on their profits. In the UK, if your business earns £67k or more in a financial year, you'll also have to register for VAT.



DON'T FOOL YOURSELF

We've all heard the horror stories of businesses who used this money, along with money collected on the government's behalf (business tax or VAT in the UK), to prop up poor cash flow. This is OK for a little while, but if it becomes normal practice you could find yourself with a large bill from the tax man, no money in the bank to pay for it and a wind-down order in the post.



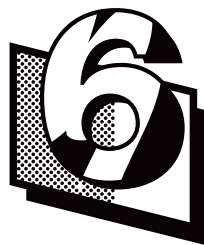
STAY ON THE BALL

If you think you might hit that target during the year, you can voluntarily register beforehand. Being VAT-registered means you have to charge your customers for VAT on top of your services. Currently in the UK, VAT is 20 per cent. You're in effect collecting taxes for your government. Nice, aren't you?



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

There are two types of tax: income tax and corporation tax. Sole traders and partnerships are charged income tax on their profits. Things like equipment costs, rent, phone and other office expenses are deducted from this. Know what you're entitled to and make sure you claim for it.

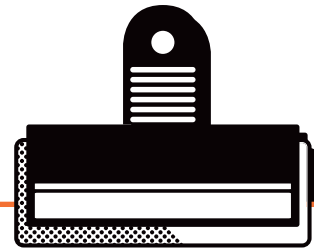
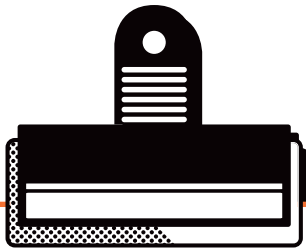


CLAIM IT BACK

One of the advantages of being VAT-registered is that you can claim VAT back for purchases for your business. Say you bought a new computer, you could claim the VAT back from that purchase. All this VAT gets added up and you have to pay the government every quarter.

DO YOU NEED AN ACCOUNTANT?

Penny pinchers or lifesavers? As a freelancer, there are a lot of advantages to hiring an accountant



WORTH IT?

Ask any designer in the industry, from freelancers to CEOs, and they'll all share with you the same nugget of information when it comes to accountants: they are invaluable and will pay for themselves. There's nothing better than getting the foundation of your business set up to be totally rock solid, and this means deciding whether to do things properly.

STAY INFORMED

There's also a significant tax saving – going limited can save thousands in tax. Plus, clients are getting fussy out there, with many asking that every supplier they work with is a limited company. Why? The tax inspectors have a habit of investigating businesses and – if they spot longer-term people who aren't employees working on projects – are likely to suggest they're due the lost tax payments. It's safer for clients engaging creative people to ensure they are limited. This is exactly the kind of thing an accountant will advise you on.

ONE LESS WORRY

There's nothing worse than steaming into freelance life at full pelt, getting clients on board and then making mistakes in your invoicing – or simply finding yourself at year end with a carrier bag full of receipts without a notion of what each expense is for. Get this part set up right from the beginning and you'll feel completely in control and be able to focus on what you do best without worrying about the money side of things.

START OUT RIGHT

If you choose to hire one (and, let's be honest, if you're serious about your design business you should be serious about your accounts and the stability of your business), then an accountant will be able to assist you in setting up and forming the company deeds, filing the necessary paperwork with the relevant governmental departments and setting up the best banking and account filing system for your needs.

LIMIT LIABILITY

One of the biggest considerations for small businesses is going limited (or becoming a corporation in the US, China, Australia and the EU) – is it the right thing to do? For many set-ups the answer is a resounding yes. It's called 'limited' for the fundamental reason that it offers limited liability to you, the studio owner. If you're a sole trader acting in your own name, and things go wrong, clients and even the heavies from the tax office will come directly after you. Going limited provides the perfect 'vehicle' to carry out your business in the most professional way.

AN EASIER LIFE

Your accountant should give you lots of advice on running your accounts properly, tell you how to pay yourself tax efficiently and do your annual accounts and tax returns. In short, none of this should take too much effort if the accountant is good.

■ CHAPTER SUMMARY

- There are four key methods for billing your clients: via an hourly rate, flat fee, formula or an ad hoc approach. Hourly's the most straightforward, but it can mask the true cost of your work.
- Always treat your research and business management time as billable, and record all of your expenses immediately and accurately.
- The ability to negotiate your fees is a vital part of the design process, so approach it with professionalism. Honesty is the best policy.
- Don't forget to save a proportion of your profit so that you can pay the tax bill when it comes in. And make sure you know what you can claim for.
- A healthy cash flow is dependent on organisation. If spreadsheets make you shudder, there is a huge selection of online accounting software out there.
- There are hundreds of methods for making more money, from selling prints to teaching, writing tutorials and more.





BE MORE BUSINESS SAVVY

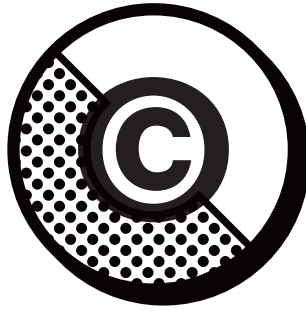
Forget work-life balance, first you need to get your bank balance right – and this means applying a bit of business nous to your daily operations. Sure, your well-being is important (so important, in fact, we've dedicated the whole of the next chapter to it), but let's face it: when you work for yourself, your commercial skills are just as crucial to the breadline as your creative ones.

The most successful freelancers fuse creative experience with business acumen. If you want to make it in the commercial world, you need to be clued up on everything from copyright to cancellation fees. Luckily, that's where we come in. Turn over for how to nail the business side of freelance life, so you can focus on the creative part.

FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS

**Get clued up on the legal issues
for freelance success**

One of the most effective ways to avoid many of the problems faced by freelancers is to know what to watch out for in clients' contracts. It isn't always easy to protect your rights, but if you swot up on a few key legal principles – and send out your own terms and conditions as a matter of course – it's possible to use your work to its full potential and avoid exploitation. From copyright to agency agreements, here's how to negotiate the notoriously tricky ground of rights and still come out smiling.



PROTECT YOUR ASSETS

Copyright is recognised in law for its significant monetary value, and protects the interests of the owner from unauthorised uses. The best way to protect this asset is to assert copyright ownership with a declaration such as 'Copyright of [name] all rights reserved' on your website, promotional material and samples sent to clients.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Copyright is literally the right to copy and reproduce a given work in any way or form whatsoever. For a work to be afforded copyright, it has to be original. The creator is the first owner of copyright from the moment they make their mark, and this lasts until 70 years after their death. Copyright is an intellectual property that can be bought, sold and bequeathed, and is separate from the original work itself. It's possible to own one without the other.

WHO OWNS COPYRIGHT?

Freelancers always own the copyright in their work. If you're on the payroll or work at a client's premises, then the client owns the copyright unless otherwise agreed. In the USA, clients can own the copyright of freelance commissions in any contract that uses the words 'work for hire'. But try to avoid such contracts, or ask for the term to be struck out of the agreement. Work for hire is not legal in the UK.

CLIENTS DON'T NEED TO OWN COPYRIGHT

Generally, clients only need an image for a small fraction of its potential uses. By acquiring the copyright, clients prevent the creator from further exploiting their own work. Only the copyright holder can claim from collective licensing schemes such as DACS Pay Back and DACS Resale Right and Public Lending Right.

WATCH OUT FOR 'ASSIGNMENT'

Should the client wish to fully exploit the image's maximum potential uses, then a licence for these uses can be granted for an appropriate fee. Remember that once copyright has been sold, no further income can be earned from that image, nor can you use it for your own website. Crucial words to

watch out for that represent different ways of acquiring copyright are 'assignment' and 'all rights'. Some clients think a 'buyout' is copyright but it isn't, so always check thoroughly with the client what they want, as a buyout needs to have a very clear definition.

DON'T WAIVE MORAL RIGHTS

Moral rights include the right of paternity (the right to a credit) and the right of integrity (no changes to your work without your permission, or using your image in a derogatory way). Again, you can't claim collective licensing without a credit. Quite often contracts require illustrators to relinquish their moral rights, but ask for a clause where the publisher says that they will endeavour to give you a credit.

If you definitely want to be credited, don't sign such a contract because they're not legally obliged to.

REASSESS OLD CONTRACTS

If you've been working for a client previously, the terms you were under in the first instance are the terms you'll work under until a new agreement is made. Sometimes illustrators sign awful contracts when starting out, then after many years of working for the same client realise that, as no new terms have been agreed since that first job, they're still assigning copyright, even though they haven't signed for each job.

AVOID BEING TIED DOWN

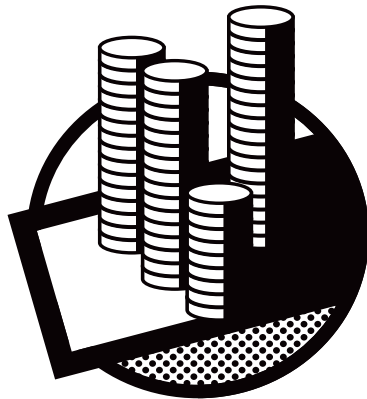
Try to get competing works clauses made as narrow as possible. You don't want to be tied to one publisher, or have to ask permission to work for others. In book publishing, the last advance payment is awarded upon publication, so ensure there's a clause 'to undertake to publish within 12 months' and make sure the advance is non-refundable.

WARRANTIES AND INDEMNITIES

This is like insurance, and guarantees that your work is original and all necessary permissions have been sorted. The client doesn't want to be financially liable for a copyright legal battle with a third party. Check carefully the wording of these clauses, and don't agree to indemnify against any 'claims' or 'alleged breaches'. You should only indemnify against a 'breach'. This is because a client faced with a claim may not bother to defend it, but settle out of court. They may look to you for payment, whether an infringement has occurred or not, and you won't have the opportunity to defend yourself. If the client is providing you with visuals or reference material, make sure they're indemnifying you in the same way.

NEGOTIATION AND BUYOUT

If a client ever asks you for assignment of copyright, always explain to them that you don't sell copyright and ask for a different contract or offer a licence. Some clients aren't sure of all the ways they'll use your work, and ask for assignment to cover future possibilities. A buyout can cover a wide variety of uses for a set period of time at a set price. This suits the client because they have the freedom to use your work in different ways. A typical buyout licence could be 'all print and web media for five years'. When granting a licence for a long period, don't forget to insert a reversion clause.



GET ROYALTIES RIGHT

The usual royalty fee is five to 10 per cent of the retail price. If the client is on a tight budget and unable to offer much of a royalty, request an escalator clause where the royalty increases after a certain number of units have been sold. Make sure there's a reversion clause; this ensures the rights transfer back to you if the item goes out of print. Check you have the right to inspect the accounts. If you think you're not being paid properly, you can instruct an accountant to investigate. This is very important for lengthy licence periods as royalties can be a substantial form of income.

RETROSPECTIVE TERMS

Some clients issue what's known as retrospective terms – you've completed the brief and submitted your invoice, and only then do they present you with a contract to sign declaring that no payment can be made until you've signed and returned the contract. This is very unethical, especially as more often than not it's not a contract you would ever want to sign, simply because it's so bad. You're not obliged to sign any retrospective terms in order to be paid. The client must pay you what had been agreed without you having to assign copyright or any other detrimental terms.

AGENCY AGREEMENTS

Some agencies have great agreements; some poor; and some don't have any at all. You should have some form of terms setting out agency fees and payment terms, promotional costs, inspection of accounts, territory of representation and a termination clause. Some termination clauses include a restrictive covenant stopping you from going to another agency or approaching former clients directly. Try not to agree to these. If the agent isn't getting you much work, you need to be free to get work yourself or with another agent. Also, it's usual to

have a clause granting the agency permission to charge the usual commission rate on work gained through them for six months after you have left – but any longer is unreasonable. Don't sign an agreement with an agent to represent you worldwide if they only have an office in one country.



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Co-founder, Web Design Stag
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CASE STUDY :

**STEP THINGS UP
WITH AN AGENT**

Illustrators Becky Bolton and Louise Chappell went global – with a little help from their agents



● BECKY BOLTON AND LOUISE CHAPPELL, ILLUSTRATORS
[WWW.GOODWIVES
ANDWARRIORS.CO.UK](http://WWW.GOODWIVESANDWARRIORS.CO.UK)

Spend a bit of time finding the right agent, and you could see your freelance career flourish. A decent agent won't just find you new clients and better jobs, they'll also negotiate higher fees, handle usage rights and could even help you break into overseas markets. Illustrators Becky Bolton and Louise Chappell first sought representation when Bolton was living in Melbourne, and haven't looked back since. Today the pair, who work under the moniker Good Wives And Warriors, have four agents: in the UK (CIA), US (Bernstein & Andriulli), Berlin (2 Agenten) and Australia (Jacky Winters).

"We'd advise any up-and-coming illustrator to get an agent," says Bolton, adding that the promotion and exposure is invaluable. "Agents also know the legal side, and the value of your work and time, which is easy to underestimate when you're on your own," explains Chappell. "We recently received a payment for work being reused. It was a considerable sum, which we'd never have seen had it not been for our agent's astute contract negotiations."

Before approaching a potential agent do your research, and read the T&Cs thoroughly before signing. What is their commission percentage? Exactly how will your work be promoted and who will pay for this? Promotion fees should reflect commission rates, so if your agent charges 25 per cent commission, they should pay 25 per cent of your promotion costs.

"Have a strong portfolio ready before you seek representation," Bolton concludes. "Agents are generally oversubscribed and busy, so make it really easy for them."

CONTRACT DOS AND DON'TS



DO

READ THE CONTRACT

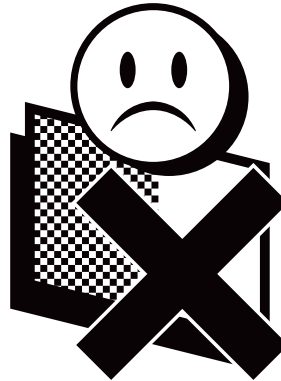
You're liable for any legal wrangles you might get yourself into, so be careful. Read contracts, licences and end-user agreements thoroughly.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTRACT

The legal definition of a contract is an offer, a consideration (how much money, goods or services in lieu of payment) and an acceptance. Once these are in place there's a contract.

SEND OUT YOUR OWN T&CS

This will ensure that the terms under which you work are in your interests. Not all rights are automatic, and have to be asserted to be legally binding.



DON'T

FORGET CRUCIAL CLAUSES

Make sure you have a retention of title clause in your T&Cs. It means no rights are transferred until you've received full payment.

MISS OUT ON CANCELLATION FEES

Include a cancellation and rejection fee clause, too – or check the client's policy. It's usual to have 25 per cent on signing the contract, 50 per cent at roughs with no rights transferring, and 100 per cent at final artwork.

ASSUME SILENCE IS GOLDEN

If you don't provide your own T&Cs, or get them from the client and go ahead with the job, legally you'll be deemed to have accepted whatever terms they usually operate under.

BUSINESS SKILLS

Boost your freelance career with a few sure-fire tricks of the trade

While it's possible – and often advisable – to outsource anything that you're no good at, it's also very important to understand a few basic business principles. Tedious as it might seem, balancing the books, invoicing and insurance are all key areas you need to be on top of if you want to stay afloat.

The good news is that a bit of organisation goes a long way, leaving you free to focus on designing. Follow our pro tips for getting the business side of things bang on...

BE UNDERSTOOD

Accountants, bank managers and financial advisors don't always understand what it is to be a self-employed creative, so shop around for people who 'get you' before you make decisions about who to work with.

GET INSURANCE ADVICE

It's generally a good idea to have insurance against things like property damage, contents insurance, employer's liability, public and product liability, and commercial legal protection. Ask around for recommendations.

VARY YOUR RATES

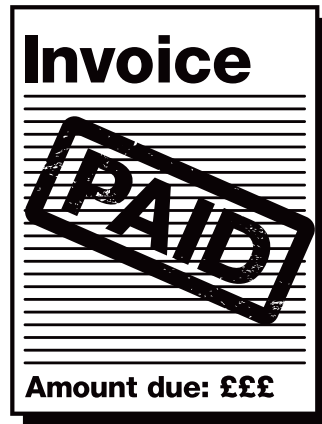
There is a difference between a client using your work as a one-off in print, in perpetuity online, across a range of products and so on. Bear that in mind before you name your fee. If a client's rate is way beneath what you think is professionally decent, politely suggest a better price or decline the job – unless you're doing pro-bono work.

SET OUT YOUR TERMS

When you agree to a job, deliver a document to the client that explains what you're going to do, how long it will take and exactly how you're charging. Be specific when working with new clients, especially as far as revisions or changes are concerned. If the client's requirements grow mid-project, politely inform them of any extra charges.

REQUEST UP-FRONT PAYMENT

Ideally, invoice for half the agreed fee before you begin work. It may not be possible with every client, but it's additional security for you, especially on long jobs or for slow-paying

**KEEP A RECORD OF INVOICES**

Print off and file any invoices you send and keep any emails containing attached invoices for reference. If you find payment is slow, email or call your contact as soon as you can. They may have forgotten to pass the invoice to their financial department, or there's been a simple snag that can easily be corrected. They may even ask you to contact the financial department yourself (no problem as long as you have details for the job and your invoice number handy).

clients. Your invoice should always include: your name and contact details; those of the client; the date; a short description; invoice number; any invoice/reference number the client has given you; and, crucially, somewhere for the client to 'sign off'.

KEEP ON TOP OF INVOICING

Send invoices right after you've finished the job. Keep in mind that a client needs time to make payment funds available – it doesn't hurt to send the invoice before payment is due. And the sooner it's sent, the sooner you can chase it if it's unpaid.

CHECK YOUR SUBCONTRACTORS

If you're project managing, remember to bill for looking after subcontractors. Know what coders, animators and so on need to be paid beforehand. Don't forget to account for time assembling your team, including hours spent writing emails, refining contract details and making phone calls.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH

Don't avoid making big decisions. Some stress is inevitable; along with ups, downs

and times when you question if it's worth it. But persevere: no one got there in the end by giving up before the start.

FORM A SUPER-TEAM

If you really don't think you have an aptitude for the business side, look for a business partner. Think about where your weaknesses are, and try to find someone who can fill the gap in those areas: but don't enter a partnership lightly.



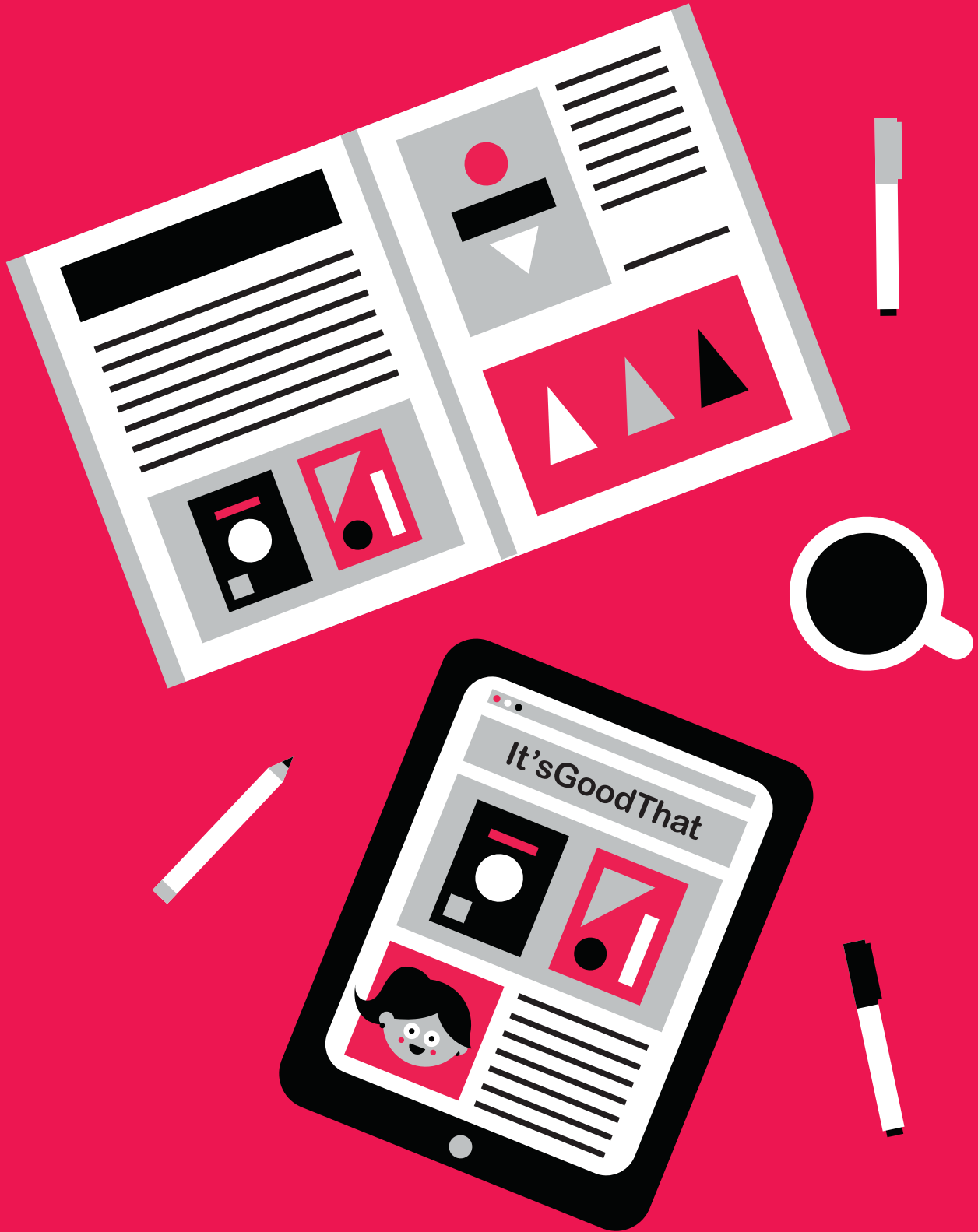
SAM GILBY
Illustrator and artist
www.samgilbey.com



AN IMPORTANT
PART OF MY DAILY
RITUAL IS LEAVING
THE HOUSE, GOING
FOR A WALK AND
GETTING SOME
COFFEE BEFORE I
'COMMUTE' BACK
TO THE OFFICE

■ CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Always read contracts, licences and end-user agreements thoroughly. You're liable for any legal wrangles you get yourself into now, so be careful.
- Send out use your own terms and conditions, and make sure you include a retention of title clause, as well as cancellation and rejection fee clauses.
- Retrospective terms are unethical, and you're not obliged to sign these terms in order to get paid. The client must pay you what has been agreed without you having to assign copyright.
- However, if you carry out a job without providing your own T&Cs or receiving the client's, then legally you'll be deemed to have accepted whatever terms under which the client usually operates.
- Send out an invoice as soon as you've finished the job, and always keep a record of your invoices.
- Consider getting insurance for things like contents; property damage; and public, product and employer's liability.





PROMOTE YOURSELF

You've got a slick portfolio of work, and you've nailed the finance and business sides of things – so what's left to do? A healthy round of self-promo, that's what. Competition is fierce out there, so if you can't draw attention to yourself effectively, you're not going to get far in the freelance world.

You need to be able to get your work in front of the people who count. A considered campaign of self-promo will make sure this happens, as will a spot of targeted networking – and winning the right award could increase your exposure tenfold. We bring you full details of this, and more, in *The Self-Promotion Handbook* – the third in our *Computer Arts Presents* series. In the meantime, here's what you need to know to instantly raise your freelance profile.

MASTER YOUR MARKETING

**Stand out from the crowd with a
concerted self-promotional campaign**

In the same way that bills don't tend to pay themselves, it's a fact of freelance life that work won't just appear in your inbox. Whether you're a designer, illustrator, animator or app specialist, the ability to shout about your skills, make new contacts and raise your professional reputation are all fundamental to getting your name out there and into the books of new clients. So what strategies should you employ to stand out from the crowd? Read on to find out.



BRAND YOURSELF

One way to control how prospective clients initially perceive you is to develop your own brand. Doing so will help communicate your skills and services in a far more direct fashion to a potentially wider audience, encourages client loyalty and also provides an instant showcase for your skills as a designer. So ask yourself what you want to achieve and who your target market is. There's a lot of competition out there, so you need to stand out from the crowd.

SPREAD THE WORD

If you have new work you're proud of, tell people. Emails and newsletters are just as likely to drive potential clients to your site as social media: keep a database and send out regular updates. Keep emails short and snappy, include an image or two and link to your site. Proud of a new piece? Use it as your avatar. It's about drawing as much attention to your work as you can.

GO POSTAL

Prints, postcards, catalogues or even a book sample: well-crafted print promo stands out in today's digital world and will get your designs in front of the people who count. Think quality over quantity, and target potential clients wisely. Who are you trying to reach and what might they enjoy receiving? Sending out a physical mailer gives you a good excuse to phone the person too.

PUT YOUR NAME ON IT

One of the first things people look for once they've clocked a masterpiece is the signature. It's a given for including with direct mail, but what about that poster you designed last week for your mate's band? Be discrete, but by binding your name and your work together, people will get a better idea of what you do and why they might want your services.

BUSINESS CARDS

Bespoke high-quality business cards are essential for promoting yourself when you're out and about (turn to page 88 for our top networking tips). A cleverly thought-out design will not only provide people with your all-important contact details, but advertise your skills as well. Companies like Moo.com and Vistaprint offer cheap, short runs.

MAKE THE NEWS

If you've done something interesting – perhaps you've helped out on a charitable project, have launched a campaign or are offering some free design elements – then tell the design press. Knock up a press release explaining what you did and providing a wider context to the project. Include images (with a link to further images), and follow up with a call.

COLLABORATE

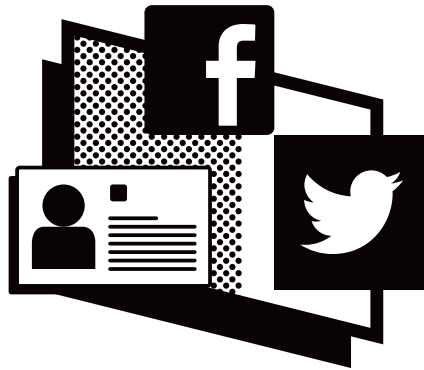
If you work with the best, you'll benefit by mutual association. Collaborative work is often non-commercial, which can lead to more freedom to explore a concept – and result in amazing work that you can really shout about. An added bonus is that there's no need to feel self-conscious about singing the praises of your fellow creatives.

VOICE YOUR OPINION

Don't be afraid to stir things up a bit: get involved in public debate and actively seek critique of your ideas, not just your designs. Of course, this doesn't mean deliberately provoking people for the sake of it. But by voicing relevant opinions it's possible to raise your standing in the design community.

TRY PRO-BONO

Giving up your time, skills and work to charitable causes for free isn't just a vehicle for getting into the news, it's also a fantastically effective way to meet new and influential people. These types of projects can often give you more creative freedom, and they won't harm your reputation or your conscience. They might well bring you to the attention of financially solvent parties in need of some design advice.



LINK IT UP

Your website is the first place many prospective clients will look, but having a stunning digital portfolio site isn't enough: you need as many people as possible to see your work. This means signing up to the major folio and networking sites like Behance, Cargo, Squarespace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Pinterest, and linking back to your site. With hundreds of thousands of visitors passing through these each month, you'd be crazy to miss out.

the right way. You need to understand what people want – even if they don't know themselves – before you can give it to them, and the easiest way to do this is by listening. Once you have this information, you can pitch your concept from the right angle.

ANALYSE YOUR STATS

The visitors to your websites can provide you with valuable information. Add Google Analytics to your pages and keep an eye on your stats, as these will give you a ready source of information on what people are enjoying and what leaves them cold. When the stats peak, make sure you follow that lead. A bit of clever SEO never hurt anyone, either, but optimise for your users first; bots second. It's great to get better rankings, but if your site's no good, people will lose interest straight away.

REGISTER YOUR NAME AS YOUR DOMAIN NAME

Immediate advantages of doing this include the fact that you'll never lose business to the question: 'What did they say their website was called?' Making it easier for yourself to be found can only be a good thing.

THINK LIKE A BRAND

If your promotional efforts are going to pay off, they have to be leading to a consistent point – that is, your brand. Make sure you're consistent in the colour schemes, typography, logo and tone across all your self-promotional material. You're a designer, so treat this as another opportunity to show off your skills.

DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Dream up a new venture and put it into action with characteristic flair. The established lines of communication are all well and good, but originality is what really gets you noticed – and while you need to execute your work well, original thinking is in short supply so, if you have the knack, get out there and flaunt it.

BLOG WELL

Good blogging isn't about telling everyone what you had for breakfast – and boring people is worse than having no effect at all. But if you have a lively blog with interesting content, it can be a real winner. It's fine to show inspiration, to a degree, but your blog is also a great platform from which to offer insight into your creative process. Showing work-in-progress shots can encourage lively discussion around your work, instead of just pushing it in people's faces.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

One of the most effective and cost-efficient methods of self-promotion is social networking. Twitter, Facebook, Google+ et al enable you to show off your work to like-minded people in an instant, and can offer a direct route to commissioning editors and other potential clients.

LISTEN UP

Successful self-promotion comes from framing your message in

BE COMMITTED

Delivering a job on time, on brief and under budget is what really brings in the clients. They want to see what you can do for them, not what you can do for yourself, so make sure you focus fully on providing the best service that you can. Remember: promoting yourself is only half the battle – you must also ensure that your clients come back.

SOCIAL MEDIA DOS AND DON'TS



DO

PROMOTE YOUR PORTFOLIO

Make sure links to your folio are prominent in your About section and you reference it in posts.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

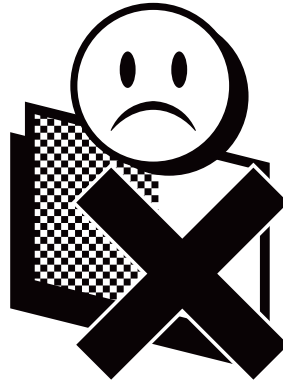
Social media is a great way to connect with fellow designers and develop relationships with your creative peers.

SHOW PERSONALITY

Everyday communication gives an insight into your personality, which is what attracts potential new clients.

BRAND IT

Make sure your background, avatar and so on visually tie in with your logo and site design.



DON'T

SPAM YOUR FOLLOWERS

Don't just repeatedly post links to your folio or latest blog post. Engage in conversation, and offer help when you can.

OVERSHARE

It's ok to post off-topic, but be mindful of how it might be viewed by others.

BAD-MOUTH CLIENTS

The design industry is very close-knit, so if you start to get a reputation for bad-mouthing, it'll be very difficult to shake.

TWEET ONCE IN A BLUE MOON

Your timelines should be busy. Keep it interesting and relevant, though – don't just show off.



■ **CHANGETHETHOUGHT**
changethethought.com

Change The Thought is a US-based design blog that showcases the very best in global creativity.

■ **FORMFIFTYFIVE**
formfiftyfive.com

Strong on eye candy, FormFiftyFive connects creatives and encourages collaboration across its community.

■ **IT'S NICE THAT**
itsnicethat.com

It's Nice That champions creativity across all disciplines from both established and emerging talents. Check out its events section too.

■ **COMPUTER ARTS**
computerarts.creativeblog.com

Computer Arts is one of the UK's leading design sites and magazines, and a great place to show off your latest projects.

■ **MOTIONOGRAPHER**
motionographer.com

This blog community was built to showcase and discuss inspiring digital filmmaking, animation, motion graphics, film, visual effects and experimental moving image.

■ **COLLATE**
thisiscollate.com

A stylish blog showing the very best that the design world has to offer.

■ **DESIGN WORK LIFE**
designworklife.com

A New York-based design blog that focuses on the work of inspiring designers and makers.

■ **BEHANCE**
behance.net

This online resource provides a platform for creatives to share their work with others around the world.

■ **FFFFOUND**
ffffound.com

Ffffound is a great visual bookmarking site that enables users to post and share their favourite images that they find on the web.

■ **SEPTEMBER INDUSTRY**
septemberindustry.co.uk

An online graphic design journal and resource that showcases the very best in international graphic design, communication and photography.

■ **ILLUSTRATION MUNDO**
illustrationmundo.com

Nate Williams' Illustration Mundo is one of the leading illustration blogs, featuring fresh new work from around the world.

■ **THUNDER CHUNKY**
thunderchunky.co.uk

This UK-based blog showcases new design work together with interviews and articles.

■ **BOOM**
boooooooooom.com

A must-visit creative community blog started by Vancouver-based artist Jeff Hamada.

■ **LOST AT E MINOR**
lostateminor.com

Lost At E Minor covers the whole creative spectrum, including art, design, music, photography and pop culture.

■ **DESIGN IS KINKY**
designiskinky.com

This Sydney-based blog brings art and design goodness to a global audience with a heavy illustration focus.



PABLO BERGER

Designer and art director
www.pabloberger.com



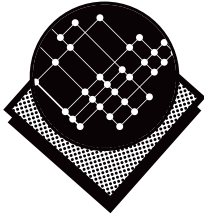
AN 'I'VE MADE IT'
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IMPRESS WITH YOUR PORTFOLIO

Your portfolio is your creative calling card, so craft it with care

The way in which you showcase your past projects can have a direct influence on your ability to land new ones – so it’s important to get it right. Your portfolio should provide a slick introduction to your talent, skills and professionalism, and serve as a visual calling card to help potential clients remember you. We’ll be covering how to do this in detail in *The Portfolios Handbook*; the fifth in this series. For now, here’s a quick masterclass in how to create the perfect portfolio.

PORTFOLIO MASTERCLASS



DIGITAL FOLIO

THINK LIKE A CLIENT

What would a prospective client or collaborator want to see on your folio site? Examples of your work, for sure – but also information like what other specialisms you have, what your availability and experience is, as well as clear contact points and a spot of personality, as well.

USE SIMPLE LANGUAGE

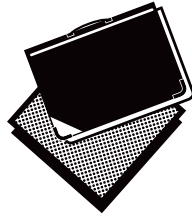
Don't spout gobbledeygook or marketing mumbo jumbo on your website, and refrain from long-winded creative rants. Keep your commentary short, simple, direct and informative, mentioning a project name, a brief description and a link to any further work if applicable.

KEEP THE TYPOGRAPHY SIMPLE

The typography you select for your online portfolio needs to be subtle and in a percentage of black – preferably opt for a default and web-safe font. Use grey type and a light weight so that the text can sit back and let your work do most of the talking.

DON'T FORGET THE NEWS

Give your portfolio site a sense of timeliness and topicality by including dates and news stories. New work coming on a regular basis, clippings from interviews or images of private projects all contribute toward and help boost your reputation as a successful, in-demand creative.



PRINT PORTFOLIO

THINK ABOUT NUMBERS

For a printed portfolio you don't want more than 10 pieces. You can show more with a digital folio, but don't overwhelm your viewers. Be just as judicious in selecting good work, and categorise and group your work as much as possible.

TAKE A PRO'S APPROACH

Invest time in taking good photographs and improving them in Photoshop. Sure, this can be a chore, but you'll reap the rewards when your prints come back looking awesome.

BE CONSISTENT

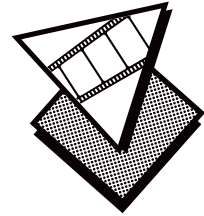
How you shoot your work – what backgrounds you use, the colour, type and formats – should be consistent throughout your portfolio. Show that you understand the importance of a coherent graphic identity to hold a diverse selection of work together.

SHOW YOUR EVOLUTION

It's important to keep your folio up-to-date, but the work should also somehow present your journey so far. It's cool to include some 'old' (but good) projects, especially when they show your evolution as a designer.

EXPRESS YOURSELF

Your portfolio is a tool with which to express yourself, so decide which projects are most important to you (and why) and include them. What work are you most proud of?



SHOWREEL

KEEP IT SHORT

If it's over two minutes, it's too long. You really have to think of a showreel as a pop song or an advert – you've got around 20 seconds to impress, so that means grabbing attention and keeping the quality high.

DON'T FORGET THE DETAILS

It's essential to put your name and contact details at the end of your showreel. It might sound obvious, but people do forget. Accessibility is also crucial: make sure you've created your reel in a format that everyone can view.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Including shot breakdowns and development work in your showreel can be as important as the final result, but be inventive with how the process is animated. This can also be a great way of showing a piece that you don't have the resources to complete.

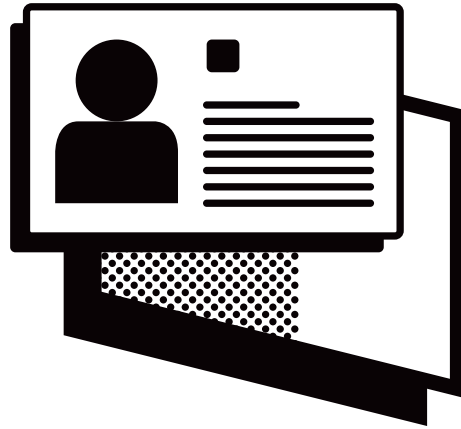
PHYSICAL CALL-OUTS

If you make a physical package and send your DVD out as a promotional piece, be sure the packaging says as much about your work as possible. Provide a decent amount of visual information, but make it easy to take in. Try to sum up your work with sequential thumbnail stills.

THE ART OF NETWORKING

Don't just expect people to notice your inherent brilliance. Press some flesh and get your name out there

Networking is the cornerstone of any successful freelance career. It's one of the best ways to meet like-minded creatives and potential new clients, and start forming those fundamental relationships on which new business is built. So what are the secrets to successful socialising? Read on to discover how to network your way to new opportunities.



BE AT THE RIGHT PLACES

Networking brings new friends, new clients and new work, so you need to get yourself out there, meet people and start generating work for yourself. Going to an industry event or creative meet-up where you don't know anyone might seem daunting at first, but before you know it you'll be on first-name terms with that all-important creative director. Gallery openings, tweetups and so on also represent great opportunities to meet other creatives who work in different fields – and of course their friends and colleagues.

RELAX AND BE YOURSELF

Try not to be too forced in your approach to networking. Think of it as a way of meeting new, interesting, like-minded people and finding out about what they do, as well as telling them about what you do – just as you would in any other social environment. You could always visually explain your work by showing specific folio pieces on your phone or tablet. There's no need to be apprehensive: remember, everyone's there for the same reason.

DO SOME RESEARCH FIRST

One of the best ways to get the most out of a networking event is to find out who else is going beforehand. Do a little research, identify who you might like to speak to, get in touch with them to say you're going and suggest an introduction. Making contact with people before an event can make it easier to approach them on the day.

SEEK OUT CREATIVES IN DIFFERENT FIELDS

It's important not only to meet people who do what you do, but also people in different fields. If you're a graphic designer try to meet photographers, product designers, writers and so on. It allows more opportunities in terms of conversations as well as potential collaborations.

DON'T FORGET YOUR BUSINESS CARD

In this digital day and age people often forget about business cards. They're still relevant though, and important. They easily fit into a wallet or pocket, contain your all-important contact information, and work as an easy reference for a potential client – so always have one with you.

KNOW WHEN TO MOVE ON

You might really, really want to work with someone, but don't pounce on them and hog all their time: it isn't good practice at an event where the majority of people are trying to meet as many other creatives as they can. Introduce yourself and have a chat by all means, but know when to move on and talk to someone else. You can always reconvene later – or after the event – to discuss ideas further.

FOLLOW UP

Don't leave it six months before you get in touch with a new contact. Even if you don't have an immediate project or suggestion in the pipeline, it's

worth keeping in touch with the odd email or social media interaction. You never know what's around the corner.

CONTRACTING IN-HOUSE

Working in-house at creative agencies is also a good way to meet people in the business. Use any time spent doing so wisely and keep in touch with the people you meet.

HELP OTHERS

Networking becomes extremely powerful when you're able to help others connect. If you think two of your contacts could really benefit from being introduced, then put them in touch with each other. Not only will it improve your relationship with them, but by initiating this kind of behaviour you might have it returned. Who knows? It could lead to the project of your life.

HOST YOUR OWN EVENT

No networking events in your area? Then hold your own. Creating and running your own event might sound terrifying, but it's a great way to meet new people and increase your reputation in the industry.

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DESIGN WEEKS AND FESTIVALS

designweeknyc.org and
londondesignfestival.com

It's becoming increasingly popular for cities around the world to host design weeks or festivals. Some of the best know are New York and London, but many other cities now organise them. These events are not only great networking opportunities, but also an opportunity to see the best that a city has to offer in terms of creativity.

PICK ME UP

somersethouse.org.uk/pickmeup

This contemporary graphic art fair is held in London. It showcases the work of creatives from the UK and around the world who also sell work at the event. There are plenty of talks and workshops to attend.

D&AD NEW BLOOD

dandad.org/newblood

London's D&AD New Blood event presents the best emerging talent in the design and art direction world, and presents them to the wider industry.

TYPO

typotalks.com

Held in San Francisco, London and Berlin, the TYPO conferences offer an opportunity to attend talks from designers, professors, artists and even scientists. Attendees can also connect with speakers at the various parties and events held during the conference.

THE ILLUSTRATION CONFERENCE

theillustrationconference.org

Know as ICON, this not-for-profit grassroots organisation serves and promotes the illustration industry. Held yearly across the States, it features a great line-up of speakers from the industry.

REASONS TO BE CREATIVE

reasonstobecreative.com

Held in Brighton, this festival is aimed at creative artists, designers and coders. It offers great networking opportunities as well as the chance to attend talks from industry leaders.

11 GROUNDBREAKING INDUSTRY EVENTS

■ **PICTOPLASMA**

pictoplasma.com

This contemporary character design event is held each year in Berlin and New York. Attended by artists, illustrators, producers and more, it offers plenty of interesting talks and networking opportunities.

■ **SIGGRAPH**

siggraph.org

Held in both LA and Singapore, Siggraph is a massive exhibition and conference covering almost everything related to digital art, with a particularly technical slant. It's great for networking.

■ **OFFF**

offf.ws

An annual art festival in Barcelona, OFFF is hugely popular with creatives from all fields. It also has events around the world by way of its OFFF On Tour events held in cities like Istanbul, Mexico City, Madrid and Lille.

■ **SEMI-PERMANENT**

semipermanent.com

Semi-Permanent is one of the world's leading design conferences annually held in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Auckland. It also has satellite conferences in New York and London.

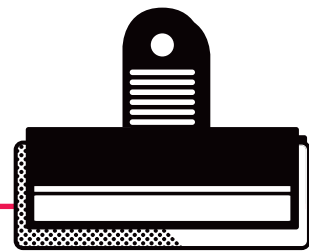
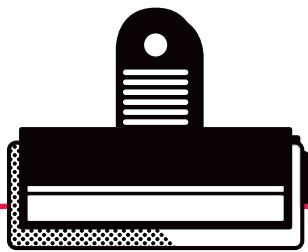
■ **AUSTRALIAN GRAPHIC DESIGN ASSOCIATION**

agda.com.au

As Australia's national graphic design organisation, AGDA manages a wide programme of exhibitions and seminars across the country that are must-visit events for any designer working in Australasia.

AWARD SCHEMES

Winning a prestigious design award or competition will instantly boost your profile. Here's how to secure your moment of glory



TARGET YOUR APPROACH

It might sound obvious, but you need to enter the award schemes and competitions in the first place if you want to win. To maximise your chances of picking up a prize, select wisely: don't waste time entering the print category if you specialise in apps.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Knowing who's going to be judging a particular award scheme can be helpful in deciding whether or not a competition is right for you. If you know that the panel members have a taste for a very different style of design to yours, then you may reconsider your entry.

MAKE SURE YOU KNOW THE RULES

Take the time to read the entry requirements of the award scheme or competition before submitting your work. You're going to be up against hundreds of entrants, so give yourself the best chance of success by knowing the rules.

PRESENTATION IS KEY

This is often overlooked, but presenting your entries clearly and correctly really matters. Invest time in showing your design work in its best light. Don't leave presentation as an afterthought: make it easy for the judges to engage with your work.

WHAT DID PAST WINNERS DO?

It's worth looking back and analysing the work of past winners. What kind of themes and characteristics might have scored them the prize? Was the work commercially brilliant, or unique in some way? What boundaries did the winners push and how? Doing this is a great way to discover the type of work that wins.

KNOW THE DATES

There's nothing worse than giving a competition entry your absolute all – only to discover that the scheme closed the night before. Don't be that person. Know how long you have, when judging will take place and even whether you'll be able to make the awards night.

PAYING FOR ENTRY

Many people don't agree with competitions that ask for an entry fee, as having to pay to enter will automatically exclude some from the competition, therefore not providing an honest representation of the work out there. However, it's a personal choice. Some of the most prestigious awards do charge an entrance fee.

ENTER AN OPEN-BRIEF COMPETITION

Lots of creative magazines and blogs hold open-brief competitions. Make sure you're reading the right ones, follow them on Twitter and look out for the call for entries. These are free to enter and offer great industry exposure.

EIGHT AWARD SCHEMES FOR FREELANCERS



D&AD AWARDS

dandad.org

The legendary D&AD Awards may be London-based, but they're recognised globally as some of the most prestigious creative awards out there. Inclusion in the *Annual* can open up numerous doors into the industry, and winning a Pencil will guarantee international acclaim.



AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF GRAPHIC ARTS

aiga.org

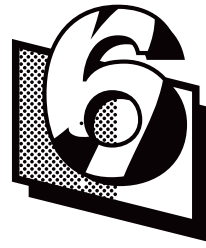
The AIGA is host to a number of design competitions, including its annual case study competition, Justified, and the 50 Books 50 Covers competition. The AIGA also organises a whole host of events that are well worth checking out.



ADC YOUNG GUNS

adcyoungguns.org

If you are under 30 years old and working in graphic design, photography, illustration, motion graphics, interactive design, typography or a number of other creative industries, you can apply for the prestigious Art Directors Club Young Guns awards, which are held in New York each year.



TYPE DIRECTORS CLUB

tdc.org

The Type Directors Club is an esteemed organisation that aims to support excellence in typography. It holds two yearly type competitions: one for the use of type; the other for typeface design. The winners feature in its *Typography Annual*, and are exhibited globally.



UX AWARDS

userexperienceawards.com

The User Experience (UX) Awards scheme aims to raise the stature and understanding of the complexity behind the work of designers and developers who focus on user experience. These US-based awards have only been running for a few years, but are highly regarded within the industry.



THE V&A ILLUSTRATION AWARDS

vam.ac.uk/illustrationawards

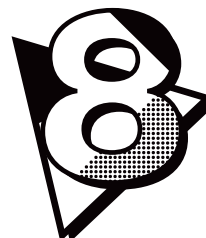
The V&A Illustration Awards celebrate the best illustration published over the year. Categories include artwork from the best illustrated book, plus book cover and editorial illustration of the year. The scheme offers a great platform for illustrators to get their work seen by some of the most respected people in the creative industries.



EUROPEAN DESIGN AWARDS

europeandesign.org

The European Design Awards is an annual scheme awarding European designers for outstanding work in the communication design field. The awards are presented at the end of the three-day European Design Conference, and submissions are featured in the *ED-Awards Catalogue*.



ILLUSTRATORS AUSTRALIA AWARDS

illustratorsaustralia.com

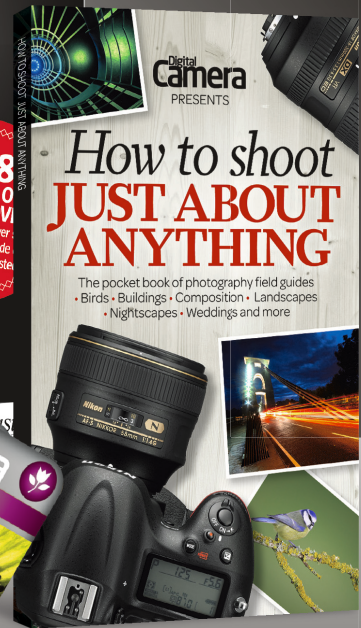
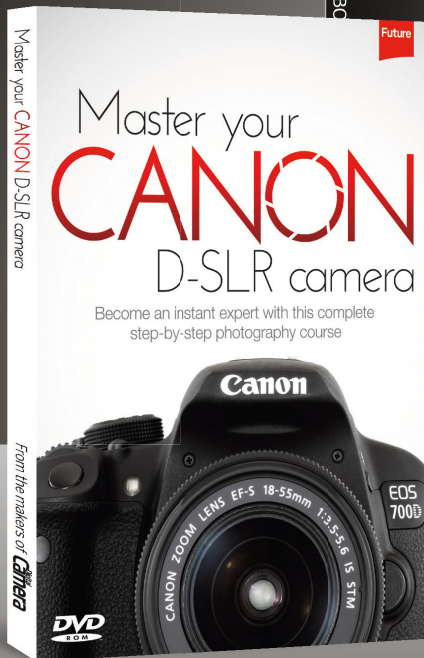
Run in conjunction with *Australian Creative* magazine, the Illustration Australia (IA) Awards are open to practicing illustrators based in Australia and New Zealand and include a range of categories. They're a must-enter for illustrators in Australasia.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Branding yourself is a key way to control how prospective new clients perceive you and will help strengthen your industry presence.
- Hundreds of thousands of visitors pass through the likes of Behance each month, so ensure you're there.
- A bit of crafty SEO and traffic analysis will give you a valuable insight into what people are enjoying. The more traffic to your site, the better your exposure.
- Boost your digital efforts with some beautifully crafted print promo – think quality over quantity, and make sure you send it to the people who count.
- Social media is a brilliantly effective way to build your profile. Use it to develop relationships.
- Got new work? Send it out to the major design blogs – all it takes is for one piece to be picked up and thousands of people will see it.
- Networking is the cornerstone to successful freelancing so make sure you're at the right events.

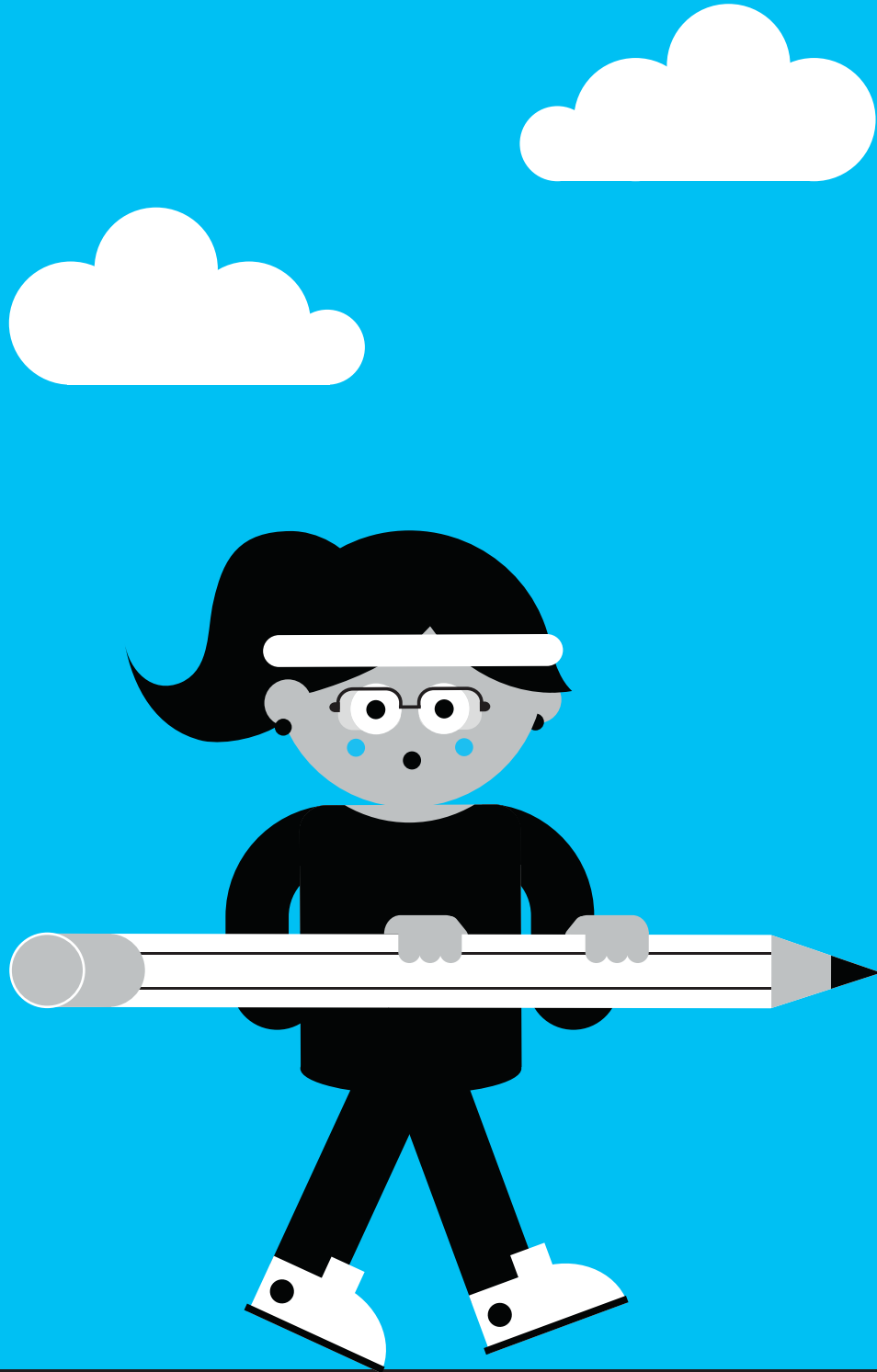
The Complete **CANON** GIFT PACK

The ultimate collection for the Canon photographer



ON SALE NOW

www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/GiftPacks





WELL-BEING

As a freelance creative, you are the number one priority of your business: if you get sick, you don't get paid. Looking after yourself is as important as pitching for new work or managing your money. But freelancing can be a lonely existence – it's easy to lose perspective and take on more than you can handle.

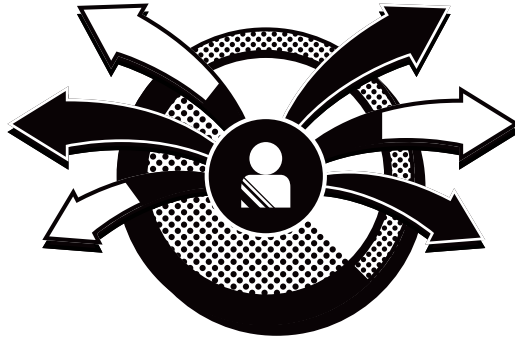
Whether it means turning down work, knowing where to go for objective input or simply taking a break when you need one, you need to make sure your number one asset – you – is firing on all cylinders and capable of producing the best work for your clients. Turn over to discover how to avoid the classic freelancer ailments of alienation and burnout, and strike that balance between work and life.

STAY SANE AS A FREELANCER

Ignoring your general well-being is a shortcut to insolvency, so strike a balance and learn to say no

Surely the best thing for a freelancer to be is busy, right? Not necessarily. The quality of work you output is directly attributable to the state of your general well-being, both physically and mentally. Fail to look after yourself and your work will suffer. Once your work suffers, your clients dry up and your business suffers in turn.

So how do you cope? Well, everyone's different, but there's no bravado in burning out, and even the most robust of characters struggles with more than a few 16-hour days in a row. It's all about finding a balance...



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Don't be afraid to outsource. Spend some time researching your local market to establish a list of fellow designers to whom you can subcontract work. You want to remain in overall control, but if you have a few hundred photos from a shoot that require post work or cutouts made, it often makes sense to farm out this kind of work so you can concentrate on your core activities.

MANAGE YOUR HOURS

Make sure you try and keep as close to a regular eight-hour working day as possible: start and end at a set time. Of course, there will be times when this goes out of the window. But it'll help you maintain a balance if you give yourself a cut-off of 6:30pm, say, each evening.

TAKE SOME 'YOU' TIME

Whether you grab an hour at the gym before settling down to work or take time out in the evening, schedule in some 'you' time: exercise, meet friends or spend time with the family. Do something that you enjoy.

FIND THE RIGHT SPACE

If you're feeling isolated, consider renting a desk space. Not only will this help ensure you divide your work life from your home life by putting a physical distance between your house and your desk, it'll also dramatically improve your networking ability if you share a studio space with like-minded creatives.

TAKE A BREAK

Your posture, focus and eyesight will suffer if you spend more than a few hours in front of your computer in a single sitting. Make sure you take regular screen breaks – at least every 45 minutes – and stretch your legs by making a cup of tea.

GO OUT FOR LUNCH

One of the best breaks in the day you can plan in (and stick to) is lunch. Schedule a 30-minute or hour-long break in the middle of the day and avoid using it for web browsing, phone calls or running errands. Eat your lunch away from your desk, and try and get outside for a 15-minute walk if possible.

LEARN WHEN TO SAY NO

Don't take on too much work. There's nothing detrimental about declining work if you're too busy to take it on. In fact, as long as you politely explain that you're too busy to give a new project your total commitment, turning down work can often boost your professional reputation.

CHECK YOUR RATES

If you find yourself routinely too busy to take on new work, then recalculate your rates – you should never feel as though you're losing out by declining work. Whether you work to a formula, hourly rate or set fee, check you're charging enough and stop yourself worrying you're missing out on extra dollar.

DISAPPEAR ON HOLIDAY

It can be tempting to work all hours, but if you're in it for the long haul, you need time off. Some take a short break at the end of each project. Others give themselves 20 days a year pro rata; while some even take a few months off at the end of the year. Whatever you choose, take a holiday: you'll be better for it – just be sure to tell your clients before you go.

STAY MOTIVATED

Try to make non-paying work as innovative as possible and see what new areas interest you or you're good at. There's no point going over the same old skills – branch out, stay motivated and expand your creative skillset.

KNOW YOURSELF

Make sure that your work environment is set up for you to produce your best work. Do you work better in the morning? Are you inspired by music? Once you know, make it happen.

AVOID BURNOUT

Avoiding burnout in a modern creative environment takes consideration. Even the coolest of cats needs to recognise the telltale signs of stress



SPOT THE WARNING SIGNS

If you're constantly tired, grumpy and unmotivated, you're beginning to experience burnout (or you've just become a parent). In all seriousness though, take a moment to spot the signs of burnout. And be honest with yourself: if you feel stressed and demotivated, don't ignore it. Stress doesn't heal itself like a cut can.



BE ACCOUNTABLE

Taking responsibility for your workload is absolutely critical. You went freelance for a reason. Remember that line manager who was always dumping work on you? Well, that's you now. You regulate your own work. So take responsibility for your workload and only take on what you can manage.



UNDERSTAND STRESS

Everyone deals with it differently, but spotting how you react when stressed and knowing what can be done to compensate is hugely important. No matter what else you have going on, deal with it before it's too late – your freelance business can't operate without its main asset.



GET FIT

You know what? Doing exercise first thing in the morning is actually good for you. And guess what? Without needing to be at a desk by 8:30am, you can actually make time for it. So do so. The benefits are huge and will make your working day (and sleep patterns) feel far more habitual.



IDENTIFY STRESS

You need to be able to understand what factors make you stressed. It can be a client, working late, not seeing your family or too much travel. Keep a diary and write down what you're doing when you feel stressed out. Take a look back over it after a month and see if any triggers emerge.



GET A ROUTINE

Us humans love a routine, but working as a freelancer often means it's tempting to throw order to the wind and embrace work as and when you feel like it. But this isn't a smart way of handling your workload. Set yourself a routine, stick to it, and it'll make even the darkest day feel more manageable.



GAVIN POTENZA

Designer and illustrator

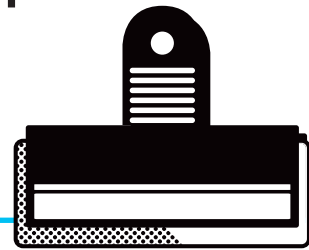
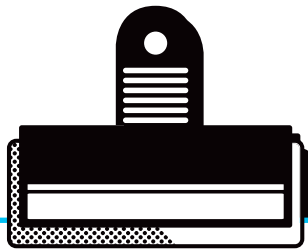
www.gavinpotenza.com



**THE KEY IS
TO MAINTAIN
PERSONAL
WORK WITH
CLIENT WORK.
KEEP YOURSELF
CHALLENGED**

CLASSIC PITFALLS TO AVOID

Freelancing isn't just a job, it's a lifestyle.
Here's how to go get it right and
live the creative dream



DESIGN TO A SYSTEM

When a project first comes in, design the core elements with a system in mind and create something that can easily be reused. If you design each piece from scratch each time, it's going to drag down your hourly rate and isn't going to be as profitable.

PLAN FOR THE WORST

It's all in the planning. Profit is often lost because a brief subtly changes over time. Even seemingly set-in-stone deadlines can slip, and then you're working for another week on the same budget, or twiddling your thumbs waiting for late content from the client. If you think it'll take six weeks, make it seven. Otherwise, if you get the flu, you're in big trouble.

DON'T TRY AND DO EVERYTHING

Always let other people do the bits that confuse you: expenses, invoices, tax, payroll, insurance and legal business can be daunting if you think only in pictures and pixels. Similarly coding, photography and marketing are all specialist areas of the creative industry. If in doubt, take some budget and hire an expert – you get what you pay for.

TRY NOT TO OVERREACH

To quote the great Paul Rand: 'Don't try to be original, just try to be good.' If you need to turn a project around quickly, keep it simple and stick to your strengths. There's nothing more stressful than trying to produce an original solution when you have no time for trial and error.

STAY ON SCHEDULE

If you've read chapter three, you'll be tracking your time throughout a project. At least once a week take an hour or so and evaluate where you're gaining or losing time – it might reveal a quick fix. Plus, you'll always be able to confidently tell clients when they can expect to see things if you're well scheduled.

FOCUS ON THE BUSINESS

It's hard to begin with, but throw as much effort into the business side as you do the creative aspect of freelancing: doing so will pay dividends. If you simply can't do this, then you're just a designer – not a business owner.

HOW TO GET OBJECTIVE INPUT



DO

ASK YOUR PEERS

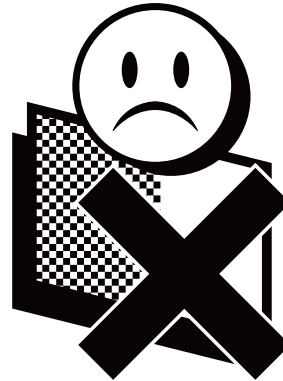
You've built a bustling social network of respected peers, right? So use it. Put your thoughts, queries and work out there, and ask for input.

GET FEEDBACK ON ROUGHS

Post in-progress shots of projects on your blog or via social media channels and encourage (constructive) comments from the wider design community.

BE THICK-SKINNED

Letting work into the wild can be nerve-racking, but learn to shake off any unduly negative comments.



DON'T

ASK YOUR MUM

Or your girlfriend, boyfriend, best mate or nan. They tend to tell you what you want to hear, not what you need to hear.

TAKE IT PERSONALLY

Always treat all feedback objectively, whether it's good or bad. What can you take from it, and how can you improve?

ISOLATE YOURSELF

Many successful design collectives have members spread across the globe. Join one, and you'll have an instant network of creatives to consult.



POMME CHAN
Designer and illustrator
www.pommepomme.com



**LIFE NEEDS A
BALANCE
BETWEEN DOING
SOMETHING THAT
MAKES MONEY
SO YOU CAN LIVE,
AND SOMETHING
THAT MAKES YOU
FEEL ALIVE**

SEVEN WAYS TO SLEEP BETTER

It's often the first thing to be slashed when you struggle to manage your time, but lack of sleep is a real creativity killer. Get a decent night's kip with these essential tips

CUT THE CAFFEINE

In fact, ditch it altogether if it's keeping you awake – caffeine can cause sleeping problems up to 10 hours after drinking it. If that's too extreme, consider limiting your intake to the morning only.

AVOID ALCOHOL

Alcohol's just as bad: you might think a nightcap before bed will help you nod off, but while it might help you fall asleep faster, the quality of your sleep will be drastically reduced.

EAT THE RIGHT FOODS – AT THE RIGHT TIME

It can be tempting to default to ready meals or skip mealtimes altogether when the pressure mounts. But eating healthily, at regular times throughout the day, will pay dividends. Just stay away from big, heavy meals late at night.

EXERCISE REGULARLY

When your mind is over-stimulated, one of the best things you can do is make time for a bit of physical exercise, whether that means digging out your running shoes or simply going for a brisk walk.

TURN IT OFF

Keep electronic devices as far from your bed as possible. Just the sight of them can provide an unwelcome reminder of work, and the last thing you want is to be disturbed when a new email pings into your account.

GET A ROUTINE

Don't expect to be able to move seamlessly from work mode – particularly after you've been staring at a bright screen for hours – to sleep mode, without first having a break. If you think you're going to be able to drop off straight away, think again. Instead, shut down work and wind down a bit before attempting sleep.

MANAGE YOUR TIME

If you're having difficulty sleeping, chances are you're not managing your schedule as well as you could be. Sit down and have a good read through our time management tips on page 40.

GET YOUR CREATIVE JUICES FLOWING

Whiling away days on your own can be dull, so it's important to stay inspired. Here are five simple ways to stay on top of your creative game



MAKE TIME FOR IDEAS

You can't force creativity, so build it into your project time and don't feel guilty for not 'doing' anything. We've all been struck with a great idea while staring out of the window – create that opportunity.



TAKE A BREAK

When you find yourself working from project to project, and there are several projects overlapping at once, you'll find your creativity suffers. If you're feeling burned out, take some time to yourself and turn everything off for a couple of days.



GET OUT AND ABOUT

It's a global village, and working in any corner of that globe has become increasingly plausible. Rather than being cornered in the studio, try and mix up your environment when things get stale. You might be able to work outdoors if you live in sunnier climes, take an afternoon in a local library or café, or even take a trip abroad.



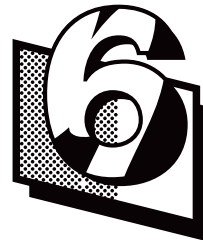
PRUNE THE BRIEF

Sometimes you need as much information from the brief as possible. But less information can sometimes be better to avoid forced influences. Try cutting the brief back to its bare bones if you find yourself stuck for the grain of an idea.



TRY A NEW 'THING'

Shake up your creative juices by trying something outside of your comfort zone without any form of commercial implications. For instance, you might want to learn a bit more about photography or video editing, or even take a crash course in 3D rendering.



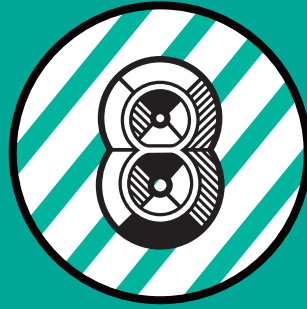
GO AGAINST THE FLOW

If that doesn't work, try approaching a new brief with the opposite of what everyone else would do. It might not be the direction you choose in the end, but it can help you to think outside the box and avoid producing clichéd scenarios.

■ CHAPTER SUMMARY

- You're your number one asset now, so learn to say no (nicely) to new work when you're too busy.
- Take a holiday. Whether it's once a year or a series of mini-breaks, make sure you give yourself time off to recharge your creative batteries.
- It's alright to outsource smaller tasks so you can concentrate on your core activities – just make sure you retain control of the overall project.
- Avoid burnout by balancing your workload with valuable time out. Recognise when you're feeling stressed out and take action.
- You might be working alone, but it's still possible to get valuable, objective feedback on your work. Join a collective or post in-progress shots on your blog and encourage comment.
- Keep the creative juices flowing by making time for ideas. Take a break: change your working environment, try a new thing – shake things up.





RESOURCES

Whether you're about to take the plunge into freelance life or have been playing the game for a number of years, it's essential to stay sharp, connected and, crucially, relevant as a freelancer in an industry that's in a constant state of change. Don't be left behind: clients won't wait for you to catch up.

No matter what your specialism is, or what area of freelance life you might need help with, you'll find it in this final chapter. We've sourced all the invaluable tools and resources you need for freelance success: so turn over, and be inspired.

ADVICE

FREELANCE FOLDER

freelancefolder.com

FREELANCESWITCH

freelanceswitch.com

FREELANCE UK

freelanceuk.com

JUST CREATIVE

justcreative.com

PCG

pcg.org.uk

RED LEMON CLUB

redlemon.club.com

THE AOI

theaoi.com

THE DESIGN CUBICLE

thedesigncubicle.com

ULANCER

ulancer.com

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DESIGN BLOGS

BOOM

booooooom.com

CHANGETHETHOUGHT

changethethought.com

COLLATE

thisiscollate.com

CREATIVE BLOQ

creativebloq.com

DESIGN IS KINKY

designiskinky.com

DESIGN WORK LIFE

designworklife.com

FFFFOUND

ffffound.com

FORMFIFTYFIVE

formfiftyfive.com

ILLUSTRATION MUNDO

illustrationmundo.com

IT'S NICE THAT

itsnicethat.com

LOST AT E MINOR

lostateminor.com

MOTIONOGRAPHER

motionographer.com

SEPTEMBER INDUSTRY

septemberindustry.co.uk

THUNDER CHUNKY

thunderchunky.co.uk

.....

EQUIPMENT

ADOBE CREATIVE SUITE / CLOUD

adobe.com/creativecloud

APPLE

apple.com

WACOM

wacom.com

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EVENTS

AUSTRALIAN GRAPHIC DESIGN ASSOCIATION

agda.com.au

BLAB

meetup.com/northerndigitals

CREATIVE MORNINGS

creativemornings.com

D&AD NEW BLOOD

dandad.org/newblood

GLUG

glugevents.com

OFFF

offf.ws

PICK ME UP

somersethouse.org.uk/pickmeup

PICTOPLASMA

pictoplasma.com

POINT

pointconference.com

REASONS TO BE CREATIVE

reasonstobecreative.com

SEMI-PERMANENT

semipermanent.com

SIGGRAPH

siggraph.org

THE ILLUSTRATION CONFERENCE

theillustrationconference.org

TYPO

typotalks.com

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FILE SHARING

DROPBOX

dropbox.com

WE TRANSFER

wetransfer.com

YOUSENDIT

yousendit.com

.....

FINANCES

HMRC

hmrc.gov.uk/selfemployed

IRS

irs.gov

LESS ACCOUNTING

lessaccounting.com

XERO

xero.com

ZOHO ONLINE INVOICING

zoho.com/invoice

.....

FOLIO SITES

BEHANCE

behance.net

BIG CARTEL

bigcartel.com

CARBONMADE
carbonmade.com

CARGO
cargocollective.com

DRIBBBLE
dribbble.com

SQUARESPACE
squarespace.com

.....

ORGANISATIONS

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF GRAPHIC ARTS
aiga.org

ART DIRECTORS CLUB
adcglobal.org

D&AD
dandad.org

DESIGN COUNCIL
designcouncil.org.uk

TYPE DIRECTORS CLUB
tdc.org

.....

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

43FOLDERS
43folders.com

ACTION METHOD
actionmethod.com

BASECAMP
basecamp.com

FREEAGENT
freeagent.com

GOOGLE DOCS
docs.google.com

LIFEHACKER
lifehacker.com

SOLO
thrivesolo.com

.....

READING

A DESIGNER'S ART
Paul Rand

ANOTHER BOOK...
Stefan Sagmeister

**COMPUTER ARTS
COMPUTER ARTS COLLECTION
COMPUTER ARTS PRESENTS**
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Look out for *The Self-Promo Handbook* – your essential guide to raising your creative profile – on sale from 21 February in the UK.

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- A0**
841x1189mm, 33.11x46.81 inches
- A1**
594x841mm, 23.39x33.11 inches
- A2**
420x594mm, 16.54x23.39 inches
- A3**
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- A4**
210x297mm, 8.27x11.69 inches
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148x210mm, 5.83x8.27 inches
- A6**
105x148mm, 4.13x5.83 inches
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52x74mm, 2.05x2.91 inches
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1000x1414mm, 39.4x55.7 inches
- B1**
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- B2**
500x707mm, 19.7x27.8 inches
- B3**
353x500mm, 13.9x19.7 inches
- B4**
250x353mm, 9.8x13.9 inches
- B5**
176x250mm, 6.9x9.8 inches
- B6**
125x176mm, 4.9x6.9 inches
- B7**
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62x88mm, 2.4x3.5 inches
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917x1296mm, 36.1x51.0 inches
- C1**
648x917mm, 25.5x36.1 inches

- C2**
458x648mm, 18.0x25.5 inches
- C3**
324x458mm, 12.8x18.0 inches
- C4**
229x324mm, 9.0x12.8 inches
- C5**
162x229mm, 6.4x9.0 inches
- C6**
114x162mm, 4.5x6.4 inches
- C7**
81x114mm, 3.2x4.5 inches
- C8**
57x81mm, 2.2x3.2 inches

STANDARD COMPLIMENT SLIPS

- 210x99mm, 8.3x3.9 inches

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BUSINESS CARD SIZES

EUROPEAN BUSINESS CARD

- 55x85mm, 2.12x3.37 inches

US BUSINESS CARD

- 51x89mm, 2x3.5 inches

JAPANESE BUSINESS CARD

- 55x91mm, 2.165x3.583 inches

CHINESE BUSINESS CARD

- 54x90mm, 2.125x3.543 inches

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ENVELOPE SIZE GUIDE

- C0**
917x1297mm, 36.12x51.6 inches
(Will fit a flat A0 sheet inside.)
- C1**
648x917mm, 25.50x36.12 inches
(Will fit a flat A1 sheet inside, or A0 folded in half.)
- C2**
458x648mm, 18x25.50 inches
(Will fit a flat A2 sheet inside, or an A1 sheet folded in half.)

- C3**
324x458mm, 12.8x18.0 inches
(Will fit a flat sheet of A3 paper.)
- C4**
324x229mm, 12.8x9.0 inches
(Will fit a flat sheet of A4 paper or A3 folded in half.)

- C5**
229x162mm, 9.0x6.4 inches
(Will fit a flat sheet of A5 or A4 folded in half.)

- C6**
114x162mm, 4.5x6.4 inches
(Will fit a flat sheet of A6, an A5 sheet folded in half or A4 folded into quarters.)

- C7/6**
81x162mm, 3.19x6.38 inches
(Will fit an A5 sheet folded into thirds.)

- C7**
81x114mm, 3.19x4.5 inches
(Will fit an A5 sheet folded in quarters.)

- DL**
110x220mm, 4.32x8.69 inches.
(This is the most commonly used size in business and will fit an A4 piece of paper folded into thirds, or an A5 piece of paper folded once.)

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CD CASE SIZES

STANDARD CD JEWEL CASE

- Front cover**
120x120mm, 4.72x4.72 inches.
- Back cover**
117.5x151mm, 5.43x5.94 inches
- Main panel**
138x117.5mm
- Spines**
6.5mm each side

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NEXT ISSUE ON SALE 21 February 2014

DISTRIBUTED BY

Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT Tel: 0207 429 4000

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