



## So You Want to Freelance?

**“I know how to \_\_\_\_\_, so I’ll just make a business out of that and life will be good!” You have probably said that to yourself right?**

**Well..... There are lots of thoughts on this subject.....**

**In fact, if you ask 5 different people, you will get 6 opinions! Read on.....**

If you’re serious about taking advantage of the “freedom” inherent in freelancing, the only way to make it work is to be realistic, because unrealistic expectations can cause extreme disappointment. So if that’s your aim, go for it! But if you have said some of the following..... then be realistic!

**“I will be a creative professional (a graphic designer, an illustrator or a video editor) running a business “**

Being a successful freelancer starts with the right mindset. You **must** see yourself as an entrepreneur providing services, not a designer, or an illustrator making money from your skill or talent. ***This is a subtle but important distinction.*** Be a problem solver who provides services to meet your clients need and you will succeed!

**“Great! I’ll be free to do whatever I want!”**

Freedom can be a double-edged sword. In theory, it’s true that you are free to do whatever you want! But, some of those things you **MAY NOT** want to do – like paying bills and marketing. If you ignore them, you may singlehandedly undermine your own success.

**“No one will tell me what to do!”**

Your clients won’t tell you what to do the same way a boss would, but it may feel that way sometimes. Clients will try to dictate deadlines, fees, and everything in between, unless you determine and state your own terms and conditions — like how much time you need to do a project and how and when you get paid. Negotiation is a strong skill to have in addition to knowing realistic pricing guides to not just “come out even” but to pay yourself in the process.

**“I’ll have lots of personal time to have fun and relax!”**

Whoa! Whoa! Whoa! There aren’t enough hours in the day so your time management skills really need to be strong. Remember school? Besides the work, you are responsible for finding new work, following up, billing your clients, dealing with customers, and even cleaning the office (which sometimes doubles as your home).

**“If I do good work, clients will flock to my door!”**

There's no flocking involved in freelancing!! Once you build it, then you have to go out and spread the word in a market that has a ton of competition. Learn to communicate what sets you apart from the competition. Develop strong networking skills as the key to increasing your visibility.

**“My work will speak for itself.”**

No way! Logistically impossible! You must toot your own horn, which doesn't mean boasting or bragging. It means getting the attention of the right people — qualified prospects — long enough to make an impression, then educating them about how you can help t hem. It's called realistic marketing.

**“I will only take work I really love.”**

Maybe eventually, but only if you pursue the work you love. It doesn't just magically appear on your doorstep. First you have to identify the work you love, make a plan to get it, and then follow the plan diligently over time. So while you make take work to pay the bills, what is the work you want to market for yourself?

**“I will have great clients I love.”**

You may have a few clients you love..... but no clients are perfect .There will always be miscommunications and misunderstandings, processes to improve and problems to resolve. Make sure you are equipped to handle that.

**Resources to consider**

*I'd Rather Be in the Studio*, The Artist's No- Excuse Guide to Self- Promotion, by Alyson B. Stanfield

COSE Arts Network, Cleveland's Premier Business Resource for Creative Professionals  
[www.cose.org/arts/](http://www.cose.org/arts/)

SCORE, small business mentoring and training, [www.score.org](http://www.score.org)