

## The Freelance Report

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The aim of this report is simple - to give you free information which you can use immediately to improve the results you get from your freelancing. It shows you how it is possible to increase your earnings and find work with better customers and clients.

With more and more freelancers coming into the market - either through choice or redundancy there has never been a greater need for freelancers to more fully understand the marketing options available to them. The best paid freelancers are NOT necessarily the best at their job. Highly paid freelancers are almost without exception better organised, better marketers and better sales people. They have a realistic and workable plan - they simply refuse to accept that they have to muddle through and hope for the best.

Many self-employed people needlessly lead a hand-to-mouth existence:

- the money they earn is less than they deserve,
- the hours are longer than they might choose to work,
- they don't receive any perks such as company pensions, holidays or health insurance.
- they are constantly scrambling around for work and
- some are willing to accept almost any assignment - at almost any fee just so long as they are kept busy.

The following have been identified as the most common mistakes made by most freelancers. Just by avoiding these mistakes you will improve your results as a freelancer.

### ***MISTAKE #1 Assuming past customers will automatically book you again without any help and encouragement from you.***

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A writer/director who attended our seminar wrote shortly afterwards to say that this idea generated "a level of work I've never known before" All he did was get in touch with every previous employer (this must be done systematically for it to have the best effect) who you would want to work with again - assuming you did a competent job - you are practically guaranteed to end up with new work. Why? Because previous happy customers are always the easiest people to sell yourself to. It costs money to attract a new client - sometimes it can cost quite a lot in terms of money and a sizeable investment of time. Working again for past clients is more profitable than constantly spending money and time to find new ones.

Forgetting about clients you have worked with in the past is a costly mistake to any freelancer.

Maintain your relationship with all past clients and customers - if there are past clients you haven't spoken to in a while - get in touch again - reawaken the relationship - assume the responsibility of contacting them - it's known as 'top of the mind' marketing - you will find that a significant amount of repeat business will come your way.

## ***MISTAKE #2 Not Marketing Yourself Proactively***

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If you continue with the same behaviour - you are GUARANTEED to get the same result. Failing to actively market yourself effectively is the most expensive mistake you can make. Many freelancers believe they don't have the time - this is usually an excuse because they don't really understand what they need to do, what it entails and where they start - so they convince themselves that it is better or OK to do nothing.

"WHERE DO I START?" is a common question.

The biggest obstacle to success for many freelancers is that so many look upon themselves as crafts people first and business people last - They mistakenly believe that the high quality of their work should be enough to sell them. It SHOULD be enough - but it isn't - nor will it ever be - and less so in the future. They like to think that a professional doesn't need to resort to the dirty world of marketing or selling.

But you cannot NOT market yourself - if you don't market yourself actively, by definition you market yourself passively - most passive marketing is poor, needlessly costing you money and lost business. An effective personal marketer makes sure that their customers and potential clients perceive them in the best or most appropriate way - rather than allowing them to make up their own minds about you. Look to see precisely who needs your service. Brainstorm with others if possible - preferably people in different industries. Your customers are not always who you think they are.

Think about your business or what you do from the employers perspective. Ask yourself how you can satisfy THEIR needs - for the time being forget about your own. How can you help your clients to make more money or save money?

By really understanding what happens before a freelancer is hired you can dramatically improve your chances of being given the business. They want a result. People hire you because of the result you can provide them-the better the result, or the quicker you can produce that result - the more appealing you will be to any employer. How can you give your prospective clients a better result than your competitors.

The secret is taking a systematic approach - most people don't do this - they look for work in a very adhoc way - failing to go through every resource, skill and option open to them - relying on luck.

This is a simple process for finding new clients - the more potential new clients you have the more choices you have in your life and this will help you become more confident about your freelancing. Prepare 3 separate lists of people: Your first list should include every person and organisation you know who is personally capable of offering work. Include everyone you have ever worked for in the past. This list represents your hottest prospects.

Your second list should comprise everybody you know who might know someone else who might be able to offer you work. There are lots of 'coulds' associated with this list. Dismiss no one - include people you haven't spoken to in months or even years - go through your old address books - don't deselect anyone at this stage.

Your third list should comprise the most detailed list of people or organisations who you do not know personally but you would want to work with or work for- they might include the leading companies in your industry - or if your clients are members of the public - they could be the rich, famous or the most powerful and influential people either in your industry, your locality or your city. This third list is a wish list of possible clients. Go through the telephone book, Yellow Pages, the Thomson directory, and the Business Pages in the localities you are interested in. Go to your local reference library. Treat your visit as though it were a day at the office - it could easily represent the most productive marketing days you spend. You will find a variety of trade and association directories - these can be a goldmine for prospective clients - look for associations which use your products or services - try to think laterally.

Contact clubs and offer a special deal to their members if appropriate - the club is seen to offer extra value to their members while you get new business at little or no cost to you.

Once you've identified all these people you need to contact them but DON'T ask for any business! Instead, do the following; ask them for some advice and feedback. There are two reasons - firstly, it takes the pressure off them if they are not in a position to offer any work and secondly, you will be seen as someone who cares about what they think and have to say - everybody likes to be asked for advice.

By talking with a number of existing and potential customers you will get a clear idea of what motivates people to employ freelancers in your industry. Go through your notes and extract the most insightful comments from this research.

Think deeply about the information you have been given and start to write down how you can address those concerns, how you can and will solve their problems. This approach is the opposite way most freelancers operate - the only time they ever make contact with someone is to ask for work - if you think about what you can do to help an employer to solve their problems and allay their fears or anxieties - a letter or brochure which addresses and answers those concerns and is conveyed in a sincere but professional manner will gain you more business.

### ***MISTAKE #3 Asking For Work***

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This is the biggest freelancer sin. A successful freelancer NEVER has to ask for work - instead they make a prospective employer an offer or a series of offers so powerful - they will ask the freelancer to work for them. Don't be one of those freelancers who only ever contacts a client if they want work. Yes, you want work but prospective clients don't care about you - they care about themselves - so help them - develop a habit of offering something to them every time you contact them. This is very important. You can even send a newspaper cutting which you think is relevant to their job/interests. If you can't think what you have to offer - you simply cannot expect a client to.

Inexperienced freelancers say they don't maintain contact because they think they will be seen as a nuisance - they don't want to pester - only freelancers who fail to think of themselves as people who provide solutions to clients' problems think in this way.

### ***Mistake #4 - Believing The Money You Earn Represents 'Take Home' Pay***

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It costs money to earn money. Many freelancers mistakenly think spending money on promoting themselves or attracting new customers comes out of their pay packet - so they tend not to do it. This means that attracting new clients is perceived as being a 'cost' and is therefore probably not worth doing. After all, why spend money you've worked so hard to earn and risk losing it if it doesn't succeed at producing more business? Such an attitude is guaranteed to cost more money than it saves. It is a fact of freelancing that if you are not confident about exactly 'how' to promote yourself - it is most likely that you will not do it. Depending on how much you earn annually it can cost anything from 10-35% of your income to earn your salary. And of course, any freelancer who does not put away up to 25-30% of all their income into a high interest 60 day account for their income tax liability is headed for trouble!

### ***Mistake #5 Not Charging Enough***

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- an obvious mistake perhaps (no one does it unless they feel they have to) but look at why so many freelancers don't charge enough. Fear and lack of self-confidence are almost certainly the biggest culprits, followed closely behind by a lack of information either about their own finances or the industry they are working in. Too many freelancers are afraid that they won't get a job if they charge too much. This fear is very real if they aren't earning enough from the jobs they are doing already. This in turn forces them into accepting more poorly paid work which in turn means they need the money so much they can't afford to risk missing out on future work so they keep their fees low. If you do this - this fear is slowly strangling you. It will never improve unless you do something about it.

## ***Mistake #6 Not invoicing a client on a 'contract for services' basis.***

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This is crucially important for all freelancers in Britain but more so if you have a small number of clients to whom you provide most of your services. The consequences to British freelancers are dire - the Inland Revenue will try to claim that you are 'employed' and 'employers' will insist on deducting tax and National Insurance at source - which means you will not be able to claim legitimate expenses against your tax. There is a big distinction between offering a 'contract for services' and working with a 'contract of employment'. The latter is to be avoided at all costs.

This report has been compiled to provide you with a number of tried and tested ways to increase your freelance earnings. We hope you have found it thought provoking and of practical value.

Visit our website [www.freelancefuture.com](http://www.freelancefuture.com)

Its free to join (you might like to invite any freelancers you know to take a look and quietly review it for you).

And as 50 small businesses are already closing each day, it's safe to assume that there will be a steep increase in those who can't find salaried employment – many of whom will be forced to turn to freelancing. Freelancing can be tough at the best of times. It's about to get much tougher.

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### **About Roy Sheppard**

Roy is a freelance conference moderator.

In July 2008 he moderated the world's largest industry conference for a client in Las Vegas for 53,000 delegates. And In October 2008 he moderated a global summit with the International Olympic Committee when he interviewed the Deputy Mayor of Beijing for the first formal de-brief of the Beijing Olympics. His personal website is [www.RoySpeaks.com](http://www.RoySpeaks.com)

When we was a broadcaster we presented programmes on Radio 2, Radio 4, Radio 5, Radio Wales, BBC 1, BBC Wales, BBC West and BBC South East.

He is the author of "[Meet Greet & Prosper](#)", "[Rapid Result Referrals](#)" and a controversial book on how to protect yourself against VERY nasty women! [www.VenusTheDarkSide.com](http://www.VenusTheDarkSide.com)