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Freelance Copywriters: Double Your Income

By Nick Osborne

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Freelance copywriters are a strange group of people when it comes to running their own businesses.

They are outspoken and enthusiastic while selling their clients' products and services, but are hopelessly shy and reticent about blowing their own horns.

They grumble and gripe about their clients being disorganized and unfocused, but are terminally disorganized and unfocused themselves.

>> Yes, the situation is awash with irony

The thing I hear most from freelance copywriters is that they feel too shy to promote their own services aggressively.

They won't make cold calls.

They won't speak at local business events, at conventions or conferences.

They have never written a direct sales letter to send out to prospective clients.

The result? The result is tens of thousands of dollars in lost revenues.

>> Stranger and stranger...

I would hazard a guess that the majority of freelance copywriters make only a fraction of the money they could.

Their time is spent inefficiently. They work for too long on jobs that pay too little. They fail to replace low-paying clients with high-paying clients. They fail to negotiate higher fees for their work. They never outsource to other writers and make money on the margin. They pay too much tax. They put no money

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aside. Their cash–flow is horrible. Their promotional efforts are zero. And so on and so on...

It's a ridiculous situation. Why ridiculous? Because as copywriters we expect to get paid well for the very set of skills we fail to use on our own behalf.

>> Double your income by getting serious about your business

Yes, if you work as a freelance writer, you are running a business. And as a business, you need to take things seriously.

Can you really double your income? Of course you can. Just use your time more efficiently and get more and better–paying clients.

We all know we have too many days when we don't get as much work done as we should. That's fine if you want to view yourself as a lone 'artiste' struggling with writer's block. But it won't cut the mustard if you view what you do as a serious business. Use your time efficiently. Get the work done.

And promote your services. If you are truly too shy to pick up the phone or speak in front of a crowd, at least use your writing skills and create a promotional sales package you can send out to prospective clients.

And here's the easiest way to double your income: get better clients and negotiate higher fees. In fact, the better the quality of client, the more open they will be to negotiation, and the more they will respect your work.

>> Concluding thoughts...

The first step to doubling your income this year is to change your attitude about your work. Think of yourself as a BUSINESS. You are. And apply all the disciplines that are used when running a business. Aim to make money. Organize your time. Get the job done.

It isn't so very hard. And the result will be that you'll make a great deal more money, and will probably enjoy your work a lot more at the same time.

Nick Usborne is a freelance writer, author and speaker. For more articles and resources on making money as a freelance writer, visit his site,

. To find out more about

doubling your income, read my review of

.

Gut Check: Quitting Your Full–time Job for Your Freelance Career

By Yuwanda Black

It's 6:00 p.m. You're dead tired, but instead of an early night, you go to your "second job" — your freelance business.

Between writing articles, researching new assignments and invoicing for completed work, it will be well past midnight before you can even think of going to bed. How much longer can you keep this up, you wonder? If this sounds familiar, maybe it's time to quit your job and focus on your freelance career full-time.

One of the best ways to ensure success as a freelancer is to start part-time while holding a full-time job. However, when do you know it's time to let go of your job?

The following checklist will help you decide if it's time to make the leap from employee to full-time freelancer.

1. Money: If you started freelancing with the intention of one day quitting your full-time job, then that plan should have included setting income aside for this day.

Do you have six months to one year of expenses set aside? Is your business bringing in steady income? If you were able to devote 15–20 more hours per week to it, could you at least double what it brings in now?

Looking back over one to two years of numbers should give you enough data to do some smart (read, conservative) projections. Don't have at least 12 months of income data to analyze? Then my advice is not to quit — unless the business is exceeding all expectations and you are really raking in the profits.

Bottom line: If you have six to twelve months worth of expenses set aside and won't have to depend on your freelance income to pay you anything during this period, then maybe it's time to consider quitting, or at least switching roles (ie, working your job part-time and freelancing full-time).

2. Time: Do your freelance duties take up more than four hours a day? Do you work six to seven days a week just to stay on top of your workload?

If this is true and you have a steady stream of projects already lined up, then maybe it's time to make the move.

Note: Freelancing is an up and down business. Just because projects are lined up does not mean they will come to fruition. If these are steady clients that almost always come through (ie, they do an annual report every year and you have been doing it for the past two years), then you can "safely" count on the income.

However, be careful that the bulk of your income is not coming from 1–2 clients. Get 6, 7, 8 or more,

steady clients — and constantly market to acquire new ones — before you even consider making the

move.

3. Quality of Life: If the quality of your life is suffering because there are only 24 hours in the day and you need 56, then it's definitely time to consider quitting.

If you're working all the time and not spending time with family and friends, then both streams of income will start to suffer. If your freelance business has been humming along on training wheels for a while, then maybe it's time to make a real go of it.

What exactly does this mean? It means that you get up and put in a solid 8, 9, 10 hours (at least) a day to expand. I'm reminded of the quote, "An entrepreneur [freelancer] works 16 hours for himself, so he won't have to work 8 for someone else."

If you decide to make a go of freelancing full-time, then this is where the gloves come off; where the real work comes in. Here are some general guidelines to observe as you make the transition:

Leave your job on good terms: That means handing in proper notice, offering to train a replacement, be on call for finishing up any special projects — whatever it takes to let your previous employer know that you are a professional and won't leave them in the lurch.

After all, you never know if/when you will need to return or if your company will be able to refer clients or become a client themselves.

Prioritize: Managing yourself is a lot harder than being under someone else's tutelage. Develop the habit of writing a list of things to be accomplished. What works for me is at the end of every day, writing in my day planner what I need to accomplish the following day. It usually doesn't work out that way, but at least I have a plan if I start to stray, or feel like, "Now what do I do?"

Eat right and exercise: After all, if you don't take care of yourself, it jeopardizes all of your income.

Good luck!

May be reprinted with inclusion of the following: Yuwanda Black is an entrepreneur, author, speaker and syndicated small business columnist whose focus is controlling your destiny through small business ownership. Her most recent e-books, *How to Really Make a Living as an Editorial Freelancer* and *Advice from Successful Freelancers: How They Built Their Careers & How You Can Too!* are available for immediate download at

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