

# WorkStyle

The publication for today's contractor  
& freelancer

*In this issue:*

## COWORKING SPACE VS YOUR OWN SPACE

**How to pitch yourself  
and win jobs**

**Balancing 9-5  
as well as freelance**

**Marketing yourself  
and finding your niche**

**parasol**  
*with you all the way*

a word  
from our  
CEO

*In the world of self-employment, it can sometimes be difficult to know if you're on the right lines or not.*

*With this issue of WorkStyle, we wanted to hear from freelancers, contractors and locum professionals themselves. How do they cope with the pressures of being their own boss and the various hurdles they need to overcome throughout their careers.*

*We turned to a number of freelancers to contribute to this issue and help us provide the advice and, hopefully, the support and inspiration you need to continue your journey or take those first steps into a rewarding career.*

*We hope you enjoy this issue.*

*All the best*

*Doug.*

**Doug Crawford**  
CEO of Parasol



# WorkStyle

## A note from the Editor

Contracting is an amazing opportunity to strike out on your own, work in a field you are truly immersed in and inspired by, and enjoy the flexibility that comes with being your own boss.

But while there are a lot of benefits to contracting, it can sometimes be quite a lonely road to travel, and advice and guidance, while useful, might not necessarily fit exactly with what you're trying to personally accomplish.

There's a degree of trial and error involved with finding what works best for you when you make the jump to freelancing. Having the confidence to experiment and find what suits you best, from what you take on to where you work, can all be adapted over time.

If you're going it alone for the first time, you might not be as sure of how to pitch for jobs or decide how much to charge for your time. Not only this, but you also have to think more carefully about how you manage your finances and complete your own tax.

This sounds like a lot to contend with but, thankfully, there is support out there – from incubators to provide office space, networking events and job boards to help drum up clients, to our own services that can help you to handle your taxes effectively.

We wanted this issue of WorkStyle to come from freelancers, helping you to see what others have done to overcome some of the obstacles you might face in embarking on a flexible and rewarding career.

We hope this helps.

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# Stand Out *from the crowd*



By *Gina*  
ginaclarke.media

## How to pitch yourself and win jobs

Freelance journalist and PR Gina Clarke has contributed to Forbes and over the last ten years worked for the BBC, British Forces Broadcasting Service and the Press Association.

It may seem like a cliché but to work for yourself, you need to have self-belief. It's hard when there is no one on hand to validate you, but, whether you're dipping a toe in for the extra cash or you want to be the number one in your field, having confidence in your own ability is absolutely crucial.

### Take effort in your connections

Once you're on board with being awesome (trust me, it's a tough gig, we're all our own worst enemies) you might be thinking, "How do I find myself work?"

The key to this is to break your time down into segments. I find winning work, completing work and invoicing/chasing payments are usually what occupy my time. When I first started freelancing, I gave myself a year where I would do absolutely anything, as long as it put my



name out there and I could potentially go on to bigger and greater things. This has stood me in good stead, but I could only do it from a place of financial security.

Freelancing can often be a catch-22 where you have to spend money to make money – certainly it feels like that when networking. After all, every time you leave your office you're leaving a proportion of your income behind, but you will need to put a bit of effort into making connections. Check out Facebook groups or follow people in your field on Twitter and LinkedIn. Sometimes that conversation over cute pet pictures can lead to a commission!

### Crafting that perfect pitch

Of course, you can't rely on the work coming to your inbox when you freelance, so you'll probably need to craft the perfect pitch. While some might say it doesn't exist, I find that if you have a solid pitch in mind, you can demonstrate that you know the audience and your idea is solid – then you're almost there. A great subject headline is key. If you write the key part of the pitch as a potential headline, that's a sure way to grab attention, and don't be afraid to pitch in bullet points to quickly get your information across.

### Setting a good rate

Once you've got over the complete endorphin rush that is having a pitch accepted, it's time to start thinking about rates. Essentially, you need to be making a profit that means you can squirrel some away for sick days and holidays. Anything else is just a race to the bottom.

What's more, some jobs will simply take a lot longer than others. For instance, there might be additional work to do, like contacts to speak to or research to source, which can take a job from one hour to several days. So make

sure you have your hourly rate and day rate agreed in your head before you start negotiating. That way, whatever the project is, you'll be able to go up or down and always hit your mark.

### Getting paid

The hardest part of freelancing is the endless question – when will I be paid? Sometimes you might feel easier taking a lower figure for a guarantee of payment on time. While you don't want to undersell yourself, essentially, the great part about freelancing is that the ball is absolutely in your court. So, if you're short on cash and the job is simple, then absolutely go for that one-off lower figure. But if you've got an inkling that it could turn into a handful, then don't be afraid to say no and walk away. I've turned down jobs before where the rate was too low and sent a polite message, and had them come back to me next time they had a better paying client. If you're good at what you do, then people will hire you where they can.

### Understanding the brief

Finally, make sure to triple check the brief. Are you absolutely crystal clear on what the client wants, as otherwise you may be in for an embarrassing conversation. I find giving myself a shorter deadline helps. That way, there's still a few days for amends before the cut-off date and you haven't messed them around. If there's one thing to remember, it's never ever deliver work late. Journalists, for instance, work with deadlines for a reason and if you run into any difficulties, just be upfront with your client. In this case, they may be able to extend or swap things around, but nobody wants a blank page.

And don't forget, bring your positive attitude, have something dedicated like a website or CV that really shows your best work, and if you don't know your stuff, find a way to learn it – quickly!

**“If you don't know your stuff, find a way to learn it - quickly.”**

# A day in the life of a new freelancer



*By Jo & Leisa*  
joleisa.com

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Twin sisters Jo and Leisa are financial and lifestyle bloggers based in Birmingham, who have contributed to national newspapers and appeared on Channel 5 offering tips on frugal living.

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Oh, so you want to know what a day in my life as a freelancer looks like? Come along, you're here for a fun ride. Most days, anyway.

I do freelance writing/blogging with my identical twin sister. This adds to the fun and makes it less isolating. Also, I get to do a lot of high fives every day.

## The mornings

It's true that I wake up smiling each day between 5:30 and 6. It sets me up for the day and after prayer, meditation or reading, I feel ready to get out of bed.

A shower is next, and I use the time to think about my plans for the day which I usually prepare the night before.

They're written on a notepad on my desk, but also on a large daily planner that we both use.

A quick check of emails/messages on my phone allows me to slot in other important things. The ones that aren't that important, are trashed. A quick tidy up of the common areas in the house, while we catch up on the news on tv, helps us to keep up with current affairs.

We are both ready and out of the house for our 45-minute walk and get back by about 8:30 when we prepare and eat breakfast together. The slow cooker might go on at this time too, depending on the plan for dinner that day.

## Morning tasks:

- ✓ Check / respond to important emails
- ✓ Research and write for clients
- ✓ Engage on social media for myself & clients (Instagram, Facebook etc)
- ✓ Prepare invoices
- ✓ High five! - when a client pays
- ✓ 30-minute break from 'work'

## The afternoon

For some reason, I feel more productive after lunch and I also may change location to suit the mood. Some afternoons find me working at a desk or sofa in the conservatory, in the sofa in the living room (with Judge Judy on low in the background), or even sat in bed.

This is the beauty of freelancing. I can work from anywhere I choose, and this excites me. I've even been known to write a post or two while sitting near the beach on holiday!

Another thing that excites me is that I use most afternoons for 'sourcing work'.

I scour Facebook groups, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Wherever potential clients are, I am too.

When I just started freelancing, having left my secure teaching job, I used to be so happy with one gig and would spend all my time on it.

Now that I am in a little deeper, I realise that I have to be constantly on the lookout for more work. That's how my bills are paid, so I take it seriously.

My time is precious and in fact, I have worked out how much an hour of my time is worth, and I use the Pomodoro method (a time management method, which uses a timer to break down work into intervals) to ensure I am super productive.

Breaks are necessary, but not time-wasting.

If I had to choose between meeting up with a friend for a chat and waiting at home for a client's call to discuss a paid opportunity, my friend loses out. Well, not really. But that meeting has to be on a Sunday when it's 'me time'. My friends understand that I am my own boss. Of course, if a friend or a family member has an emergency that I can assist with, I have the option of dropping everything and going. Basically, prioritising is key.


### Afternoon tasks:

- ✓ Chasing invoices, and sending reminders
- ✓ Updating, scheduling and interacting on social media sites (i.e Facebook)
- ✓ Researching and writing
- ✓ Our own blogging work which may include writing, updating SEO on posts, and engaging with other bloggers
- ✓ Checking and responding to emails

We usually stop for dinner at around 5 or 6 pm. This gives us a chance to unwind and relax with the family, make personal phone calls or interactions, etc.







**“We love it  
and would not  
have it any  
other way.”**

## The evenings

Although we try to ‘log out’ of work in the evenings, we still work most days for another hour or three, usually on my laptop or phone in front of the TV.

But the work is not rushed or stressed. And we quite enjoy that. After all, who likes stress? Not us!

The work at this time is light and easy-going. We make sure to do the following:

### Evening tasks:

- ✓ Check the To-Do list for the day and prepare the one for the following day
- ✓ Pinning on Pinterest (self soothing)
- ✓ Discuss progress
- ✓ Jot down blog post ideas on iPad or phone

Working as freelancers is a far cry from our former job as overstressed teachers. We were concerned (worried, to be honest) about how the bills would be paid but we took a chance and we are extremely grateful that it has paid off. To be honest, we have not yet started to make the salary we once received as teachers, but, we have reduced our stress level a hundredfold by going into freelancing.

We love it and would not have it any other way! We would be the first to admit, freelancing is not for everyone. Weigh up the pros and cons and if it's viable and suitable for your stage in life (all things considered) then we would say go for it if it feels right.

The freelancing world is like a big pie, and there is a slice out there for all who would dare! High five to that.



By *Julia*  
theglassofclass.com

## How to manage yourself while working at home

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Julia is a lifestyle blogger based in London who writes about a variety of topics, from lifestyle and beauty tips to how to live a more economical and sustainable lifestyle.

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Working from home can feel like bliss and a dream come true. However, in many aspects, it's also a lot more difficult than working from an office. It means that you are both a boss and an employee at the same time. There is no one making sure that you are working properly, if at all on some days, which makes it easier to end up binge-watching a TV show on Netflix rather than finishing your projects. This is why it's important to find the little tricks that will keep you focused so you can complete what you have to and still have time to relax.

I've put together a few tips that have worked for me and hopefully, you'll find them useful too!

**"Remember, you're the image of your business, so present yourself how you want to be perceived."**



## Work is work no matter where

If you have just made a move to working from home and you're not used to the idea of it, it becomes very easy to feel like you don't have a job.

Why? Simply because it doesn't feel the same as going out to a designated workplace.

To make the transition easier and ensure that you won't start slacking, try and find a routine that feels right for you. Figure out which days you want to be working and set working hours. That way you won't end up going out for coffee with friends or popping out shopping, because you will know that there are certain times when you're supposed to be working, even though you're sat at home.

## Find your own office space

Having a space in your home that is designated for working will put you in the right frame of mind when you need to do your job. It can be tempting to sit on the sofa all day or take your laptop whilst you run a bath, but not having a working space can really impact your productivity.

Even if you don't have a spare room to turn into an office, any corner in your house will do. Just make sure it's a space far from any distractions and that you do nothing but work there – that way whenever you find yourself in that spot, you'll know it means business and not leisure. And anyone who is at home at that time will know not to disturb you.

## Organisation is the key

Nowadays, people swear by to-do lists. And there really is something about it that just makes the whole day flow better. When you work in an office, there are clear

guidelines as to what is expected of you every day. You know exactly what your role is, and you stick to your duties to make sure everything is done. But when you work from home, the line between work and house responsibilities can become less visible, simply because there is always something to do. Writing a checklist of all the things you wish to accomplish by the end of a day will help you make sure you stay on track throughout. And if you ever need more motivation to tick everything off your to-do list, you can reward yourself afterwards. For me, this could be a relaxing bath, an uninterrupted hour with a book or a trip to the spa, but anything you enjoy that will keep you motivated will work.

## You're your own business card

Working from the comfort of your own home can be exhilarating and exciting for the first couple of months. After all, you can sleep in while everyone else is stuck on the commute, work in your pyjamas and messy hair all day and slouch on the sofa with your laptop and Netflix in the background. But this is not the way you should go about it. Just because you work from home, it doesn't mean you shouldn't make effort in how you present yourself, even if you're the only person who will see it.

Why? Because after a month of living in your pyjamas, you'll look in the mirror and you won't recognise the person you have become. Remember, you're the image of your business, so present yourself how you want to be perceived.

To sum up, working from home can be a blessing and a curse in one. If you approach it from the right angle, it can be the best thing that has happened to you. As long as you find your feet, you'll discover that even though you stay at home, you can switch into work mode easily. And when you do that, no one will be able to stop you.



# *Should you* use a coworking space?

One of the biggest benefits of being self-employed is the freedom to work from home – in a setting that you’re not only comfortable in, but can be made to inspire you to deliver stronger work for your clients.

For some people, working from home represents the best part of freelancing. For others, it can be a distraction that stops them from reaching their full potential. Instead of thinking of working from home, it can be more beneficial to think of the freedom to work anywhere – giving you the freedom and adaptability a lot of workers don’t have.

In these cases, a co-working space can be a fantastic tool in your arsenal. But what other benefits does a co-working space have, and could taking your office out of your home and into a more professional setting be exactly what you need?

*“Coworking is particularly important for freelancers – not only because running your own business can be lonely work.”*

Jordan Rolfe - General Manager  
at Impact Hub Islington





## Dedicated working space

A dedicated working space allows you to still have a 9-5 mindset while working for yourself. While this might not be ideal for everyone, especially if you were drawn to self-employment because of the extra flexibility and choice of hours, it can reap major rewards.

Not only does it give you a dedicated space to work, but it also allows you to leave work 'at work' and not bring stress home with you. That clear demarcation between your professional and personal life can get blurred when freelancing. Giving yourself this space can help restore boundaries and also help you to organise your time, based on what you need to get done during office hours. You still have the freedom that comes with being your own boss, but you give yourself an additional option in terms of where you can work.

## Professional appearance

Many shared working offices will have spaces dedicated for meetings and conference calls.

While Skype and video conferencing are incredibly useful to freelancers, and can help you have a meeting from almost anywhere, there are times when getting face to face with a client is much more beneficial.

A big meeting with a client isn't necessarily something you can do at home around the dining room table. And, sometimes, a coffee shop isn't the best place to try and deliver an effective presentation. Keep in mind you're running a business and the view you present to the people you work with matters. So it can help to dip back into that office mindset and create a polished, professional impression.

A shared working space gives you a more professional-looking setting to work in, or at least to hold meetings. Free from the distractions of home and with access to technology and facilities, it allows you to present, plan or even just get through a load of work in a quieter, more focussed environment.

Look for shared office spaces and business incubators – these can be great contacts to have. Even if you don't use all the facilities all the time, being able to book out a meeting room or some presentation space can really help you to wow prospective clients.

*Keep in mind -*  
**you're running a business**

## Company

Working by yourself as a freelancer can, at times, feel incredibly lonely. Working alone can take away that ability to interact and bounce ideas off other people, which you might have enjoyed previously in an office environment.

Working in a co-working space can help reintroduce that interaction and stave off any feelings of loneliness. The other upside is that you're likely to be interacting with more people who have similar goals to you. You might strike up friendships and business partnerships that can be hugely beneficial to both you and your business. For instance, a freelance copywriter meeting and forging a relationship with a videographer.

This gives both sides a contact which could allow them to pitch or offer different work and help the two businesses support each other.



# *There's a fine line -* when weighing up the pros and cons

## Cost

One of the major aspects of a shared working space to keep in mind is the cost. Depending on the work you do and the facilities and the location, you can pay for time in the shared space, or you could pay to rent some desk space.

You might then only want to pay a small fee whenever you need meeting space. Or you might pay a larger monthly fee to get a dedicated desk and other benefits like printing services.

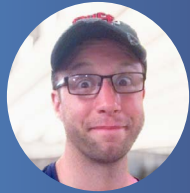
When you're self-employed, you need to consider your budget carefully and, depending on the amount of work you are taking on, you might not necessarily want the additional expense. Think about what you'd need a shared working space for. If it's just for meetings, look at your options. These spaces are flexible enough to help you expand your business and its offering, sometimes, without the cost becoming an issue.

There's a fine line when weighing up the pros and cons of anything you do when you're self-employed. There are definite benefits to a shared working space, although, depending on the reasons behind your choice to work for yourself, you might be less inclined to return to a traditional office environment.

Being self-employed gives you the opportunity to find the settings and working methods that are best suited to you.

Experiment with the options you have and use the various tools at your disposal to perfect your freelancing efforts.

# Balancing freelance and 9-5



By *Jobnathan*  
themoneyshed.co.uk

# 9-5

The Money Shed is a financial blog which aside from money advice has a whole host of informative posts that you can use to kick start your freelancing career.

Freelancing has, for a long time, been seen as the route to freedom, the path away from traditional working and therefore being able to work for yourself. It's often sold as a dream, working at home, or practically anywhere in the world. They call it the laptop lifestyle.

Although freelancing has the potential to change one's life, it's not a certainty that this is going to happen. In reality, many people choose freelancing as a way to earn an additional income on top of their traditional 9-5 role. Modern day freelancing has changed the way many people work, allowing them to use their skills and expertise to make money in the evenings and weekends.

One of the trickiest parts of becoming a freelancer is being able to juggle both your freelancing gig as well as the 9-5 job. It's best to gain an understanding of how careful execution of the two can lead to success.

## Working 9-5

The traditional job. Working full-time, Monday to Friday, 9-5. It's often said that these jobs are stale, boring and well just not exciting at all. However, working a full-time job unlocks the potential to create additional income streams whilst having the financial backing of a salary.

Many businesses fail within the first few months due to lack of funding, so having a full-time job means you're not exactly diving into the deep end of freelancing straight away, giving you time to build up your freelancing businesses before you take the leap of faith.



## Freelancing

We've already spoke about how freelancing has the potential to make you financially successful, but quite often, as in any other business, people fail due to the lack of funding and interest.

Freelancing can be anything you want it to be: writing, web design, social media consultant, if you have a skill or expertise that you can offer, chances are it can be brought into the freelance marketplace. Some areas can be easier to break into and places such as Fiverr and Upwork are great starting places to get your foot into the door.

### It's all a balancing act

The most sensible approach to freelancing is to take your time, and that may be contradictory to everything you may have heard before. You really don't want to be quitting your job whilst trying to build a freelance business that's only bringing in a few pounds a week to begin with.

I would recommend that you balance the two. Your 9-5 job must come first, after all, that brings in the money to pay the bills and keep your freelance gig going.

You need to treat your freelancing like any other normal business, that means marketing and selling your services to anyone and anywhere possible, that's the only way you'll be able to escape the 9-5 and start freelancing full time. This all

means that you'll need to work evenings and weekends to begin with, using your free time to kick start your freelancing gig.

### Tax and finances

It's something that we all dread paying but just like in your 9-5 job, you'll also be required to pay tax whilst freelancing. Now, for many people you may not make enough in your first year or two to need to pay taxes on your freelancing business, however it's important to register as self-employed and getting everything registered as you continue to work for yourself.

As your freelancing business grows you'll need to pay taxes, so it's important to keep a record of everything that you have coming in and going out.

Although you'll be excited to get started in your freelancing career, it's vital that you don't forget to register as self-employed and you need to keep on top of your taxes, it's not something that you want to miss.



**"The most sensible approach to freelancing is to take your time."**





## Take the next steps

Having a full-time job when starting a business helps give you the security to get your business off the ground. However, this isn't something that you would want to do in the long-term. Working a 9-5 job and coming home every day to catch up on your business won't be a sustainable option.

As your freelancing career grows, you'll be relying less and less on your 9-5 job. The ultimate aim is to have your freelance business consistently overtake your income from your 9-5 job, this is when you may want to take the leap and go freelance full-time. It's also important to remember that whilst your freelance business is growing, the level of tax you'll be paying will increase, another reason to quit your full-time job.

Going freelance full-time seems like a daunting thought, but your hard work, dedication and persistence will soon fall into place, meaning that you can let go of your traditional role and find yourself in the world of freelancing.

For some people, freelancing is a side-gig and not everyone will want to take it full-time, rather continuing to work 9-5 and using the freelance work simply as additional income.

**“No matter what choice you make it's vital that you achieve a balance.”**

So, whether you're using your freelance career to become financially free, achieve a life-long dream or simply to supplement your 9-5 job, the options and opportunities are endless. No matter what choice you make it's vital that you achieve a balance, keeping yourself motivated and inspired to reach your targets and goals. There are countless articles, blogs and informative documents that are aimed at freelancers, giving advice, guidance and support on the transition into the freelance world.



**“Freelancing provides the flexibility to manage a career writing while raising a young family.”**



By *Laura*  
onlyteethin.com

## Identifying essential skills and courses as a freelancer

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Blogger Laura used to work in PR before setting up Only Teethin' in 2018. Writing predominantly about lifestyle and family topics shows how freelancing provides the flexibility to manage a career writing while raising a young family.

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The list of a contractor and freelancer's non-billable work can seem never-ending. Accounts, admin, new business... and who doesn't love an unexpected IT headache first thing on a Monday morning?

Usually less urgent, but arguably as important, is the area of training and career development. Yet despite its importance, it's often a low priority on those never-ending to-do lists.

As employees, we might have a HR manager to tell us that a certain training course will be beneficial. It's likely that any course we're sent on will be paid for; we needn't worry too much about its long-term value. As freelancers, we don't have that luxury.

So, where does one even start with identifying skills gaps and undertaking the 'right' training, not to mention paying for it? Unless it's an industry requirement, how do we know it's going to be worthwhile?

### Assess your training needs

In my first year of self-employment, training and career development wasn't high on my own priority list. I'd already built a ten-year career in PR and copywriting, and knew I had the required skillset to go it alone in the industry, yet freelancer self-doubt still surfaced. It reminded me I didn't have an accreditation or some of the costlier tools and resources that a bigger, 'proper' consultancy might have.

In my second year, I invested time and money in a number of industry tools and courses, determined to show that my business was a 'proper' consultancy too. It was only afterwards that I realised that some of my bigger competitors didn't always have the tools either, nor had their staff undertaken the training and received the accreditations I assumed they had.

In hindsight, I'd 'panic-trained' in order to feel as established and accomplished as I believed those bigger businesses were. And although my investment was still worthwhile, it wasn't essential for me to do my job. A much better option would have been to take a step back to think about my long-term goals and the training that would really benefit me, rather than attempting to keep up with what (I assumed) the competition was doing.

Worrying too much about my competition also meant I'd neglected more general, practical areas of my development as a business owner: pitching for new business, finance and so on.

From that point onwards, my approach to my own training requirements became much more considered and less panicked – an approach I'd recommend to all fellow freelancers and contractors.

### Read industry publications and join membership groups

An easy starting point for sense-checking the skills and qualifications required in a particular field is to sign up to industry publications and membership groups. They can provide a better understanding of trade developments to keep abreast of and may offer information on free or discounted training in more general areas, such as new business and accounting, as well as industry specific courses.

### Build a network of fellow freelancers and /or find a mentor

Another obvious way of avoiding a similar misjudgement to the one I made – of assuming that I lacked skills that my competitors had in abundance - is to actually talk to competitors, or at least to fellow freelancers in a similar field, about their own training and development. Building virtual or real-life networks of people in a similar position has numerous benefits, including combating the loneliness of freelancing. Finding a mentor – someone in the same industry or similar – can be hugely beneficial too; they may be able to help identify any skills gaps and offer valuable career advice.

**"In my second year, I invested time and money in a number of industry tools and courses."**



## Check out free courses

There is a wealth of free training material - from online providers such as Open University and Skillshare, to local libraries.

## Consider investing in coaching

In addition to specific training, career coaching can be a fantastic investment on a personal and professional level. A great coach will provide an outsider's perspective, helping to identify long-term goals, while cheerleading from the side lines.

## Set aside a budget

On a practical level, I found it worthwhile to regularly set aside a portion of income for 'business maintenance', which includes training, to ensure I'm not taking a huge chunk from my earnings at once. It is also worth speaking to an accountant about any business expenses you may be able to claim back tax on.

## Remember that people buy from people – know your existing value (but don't neglect training!)

Finally, it's worth remembering that people buy from people. Often, it is the unique traits and experiences of an individual that bring the most value to others, rather than one specific slip of paper or a set of letters after a name.

Usually, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' method of career development as a freelancer – you already have an array of valuable skills and experience but may benefit from brushing up in one or two areas - which is why training deserves just as much of our attention as those unexpected Monday morning IT headaches.



**“Building virtual or real-life networks of people in a similar position has numerous benefits.”**



By *Lauren*  
fashionpanic.co.uk

## Setting your day rate

Lauren lives in Manchester working in Fashion PR whilst also balancing a career as a freelance writer. Her blog covers a range of topics from lifestyle pieces to fashion and interiors.

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Ahh the “M” word. It sends shivers down many a freelancer’s spine and most of us do our best to avoid the subject completely...yep, money can be a touchy subject when starting out as self-employed.

Trying to decide how much to charge for your time, skills or products can be an absolute minefield.

However, with a bit of self-belief, research and some good old-fashioned negotiating, you’ll get it just right. Here I breakdown some of the best ways to ensure you’re getting the right price for your work and how to remind yourself to constantly evaluate the market to ensure you build and grow.

## Believe in Yourself

First things first; believe in yourself. Now without sounding like a 90s self-help book; if you don't love what you're doing, no one else will! Whether it's selling your own arts and crafts, travelling the country as a freelance business consultant or starting up your own photography studio - you have to believe that you are offering something that people will want and more importantly, something they will pay for.

A positive mindset will help you ride out the 'quiet days' and keep you grounded when you have inevitable setbacks. You are essentially selling your dream and your livelihood, so you have to be in the right frame of mind to really talk yourself up (easier said than done for us Brits I know).

## Work Out Costs - Be practical and work out the real costs of your business

This can be difficult, especially for those of us who have come from a more creative background and aren't used to setting budgets, managing our own work time and having to think about tax self-assessment and rates (an accountant can help with this). Start small, with every day costs; if you're working from home, think about household bills such as Wi-Fi, or increased use of gas and electricity. If you're going to be renting office space, think about not only rent, but travel to get there and any extra business insurance you may need. Then you have to consider your new lifestyle. Gone are paid holidays, sick pay and a regular wage (for a while at least!). This has to be accounted for when you budget for an ideal yearly income.

Freelancers, and small business owners are notoriously hard workers, for the simple fact that our time is our

# "It's important to schedule breaks throughout the year."

money. It can be hard to take time off when you know how much it will cost you, but it's important to schedule breaks throughout the year - you don't want to burn out!

## Research the Market

It sounds simple but do your research. When you have no idea where to start, it's so important that you find out as much as you can about your chosen market. Luckily, we live in the age of the internet, and Google will prove invaluable when finding useful links and articles to help you figure out what other people are charging. Using online tools, can help give you a rough guide to what similar freelancers are charging in your area.

Joining Facebook groups, or Twitter conversations can also help you build connections with peers, opening up conversations about rates and day charges from real people, and real businesses.

Creating these connections will also help you navigate through what can be a pretty lonely career, as it's always nice to have someone to chat to, who knows exactly what it's like to work for yourself.





# “You don’t have to stay at one price point.”

## **Negotiate costs and build experience**

When you’ve carried out all your research and have started to get a feel of what you can charge yourself, then you’re ready to put out some feelers.

You may think you’ve got it sorted only for a client to tell you “other people don’t charge that much”. It can knock your confidence but stay strong. Sometimes the value is creating a trusted client relationship; this is where negotiation can come in. Despite experience, if you’ve not had much paid work before, then it’s worth trying to negotiate the costs. Offer to do the first job for a slightly discounted rate to show that you are confident you can provide the service they are after. From my experience this has led to more work at full price on more than one occasion and I’d definitely recommend giving it a go before turning down a job.

There are also other ways of building up your experience if you’ve not yet had many jobs in your chosen field.

When I started out in freelance writing and PR, I was absolutely clueless when it came to rates. Having come from a primary teaching background, I was acutely aware that I had no qualifications or work experience in that area and lacked the confidence to charge anything at all.

So, I started a blog; an online portfolio of my articles, photography and styling. I contributed to a few online magazines, wrote reviews on ‘gifted’ products and shot styling content in my spare time; I was essentially working for free. That was my college, my work experience, my degree. From there, building up my social media profile helped enormously. Being slightly biased, (I now work in freelance social media PR), there is not one business that won’t benefit from getting social!

From builders, plumbers, and accountants, to actors, yoga teachers or jewellery makers - getting yourself out there and creating a ‘personality’, can help you bond with new clients and stand out in an overcrowded market.

## **Build and grow**

Finally, remember that nothing stays the same. Just because you’re not in a 9-5 job, doesn’t mean you shouldn’t continue your professional development. Read articles, attend courses, go to networking events and meet ups! Make sure you’re on the top of your game and constantly assess your rates.

You don’t have to stay at one price point. If your costs rise due to suppliers, the pitfalls of politics, or just that you’ve gained valuable experience and feel confident to charge more; then remember to evaluate and reassess your rates - you deserve to be paid the right amount for your services, just keep reminding yourself that!

# Marketing yourself and finding your niche



By *Natasha*  
seeninthecity.co.uk

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As well as contributing to sites including the Huffington Post, Natasha Colyer founded and launched Seen In The City in 2014. Covering a huge range of topics Natasha works alongside a team of freelance writers to deliver pieces covering food, fashion, nightlife and lifestyle.

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Working for yourself is both a daunting and exciting decision; you're shunning the regular 9-5 office life for one where you can choose your own hours, your topics and where you work. You can craft your own work-life balance and have the opportunity to see more of your family, work the hours you are most productive and avoid a potentially lengthy commute.

Once the decision has been made however, the reality is you are now solely responsible for your income which, for some, is quite frankly terrifying. The feeling that hits the pit of your stomach as you realise the end of the month is dawning and you won't be handed a payslip, nor have a nice sum transferred to your bank while you sleep is one you'll never forget.

Because of this fear, it can be easy to forget about having a niche and simply say yes to every bit of work that comes your way. After all, you're in no position to be picky right? Wrong. Rather than picking a niche and finding yourself fenced in and shunned for limiting your offering, you're more likely to find a greater volume of work coming your way.

It can be hard at first to turn away from potential clients – and money – but it is certainly the most rewarding.

## Identifying a niche

To help establish your niche, it is vital you take a step back and think of what you are good at and what you love to do. If you have experience working for others, think back to projects you have worked on that have been highly praised, or if there were certain attributes you were always relied on for. Think of what you enjoyed working on too – you're always more likely to excel at something you find interesting. If you haven't got that experience, take time to experiment in different fields and soon you'll realise what you're best at and what to continue to work on.

Once you've worked to establish this, the next challenge is how to market yourself and refine your skillset for potential prospective clients. This is where most people falter, and it can be easy to fall into the trap of "imposter syndrome" or self-doubt.



It can be hard to sell yourself, but you need to remember if you don't believe in yourself, how can you expect potential clients to? Be sure to get yourself a great CV or Portfolio and in this, focus on your core strength and what you're most proud of. While it can seem important to list everything you've ever achieved, it's better to keep it succinct and to the point.

## Marketing your specialism

To market yourself, it can also help to take a moment to step away from yourself and picture yourself from an outsider's point of view. If you were a friend or colleague, what would you say about yourself?

Make a list of your best attributes then imagine how you would sell them to a potential client were it up to you to land them a job. It can help to see your skills as a commodity rather than part of yourself. Be sure to set yourself up on social media, sticking to the main channels you think you'll need (I tend to stick to Facebook and LinkedIn.)

There are a host of Facebook groups out there for freelancers where you can put forward questions and pitch for jobs. Get past colleagues to recommend you on LinkedIn and build new connections with people you want to work with. Explore sites such as The Dots, People Per Hour

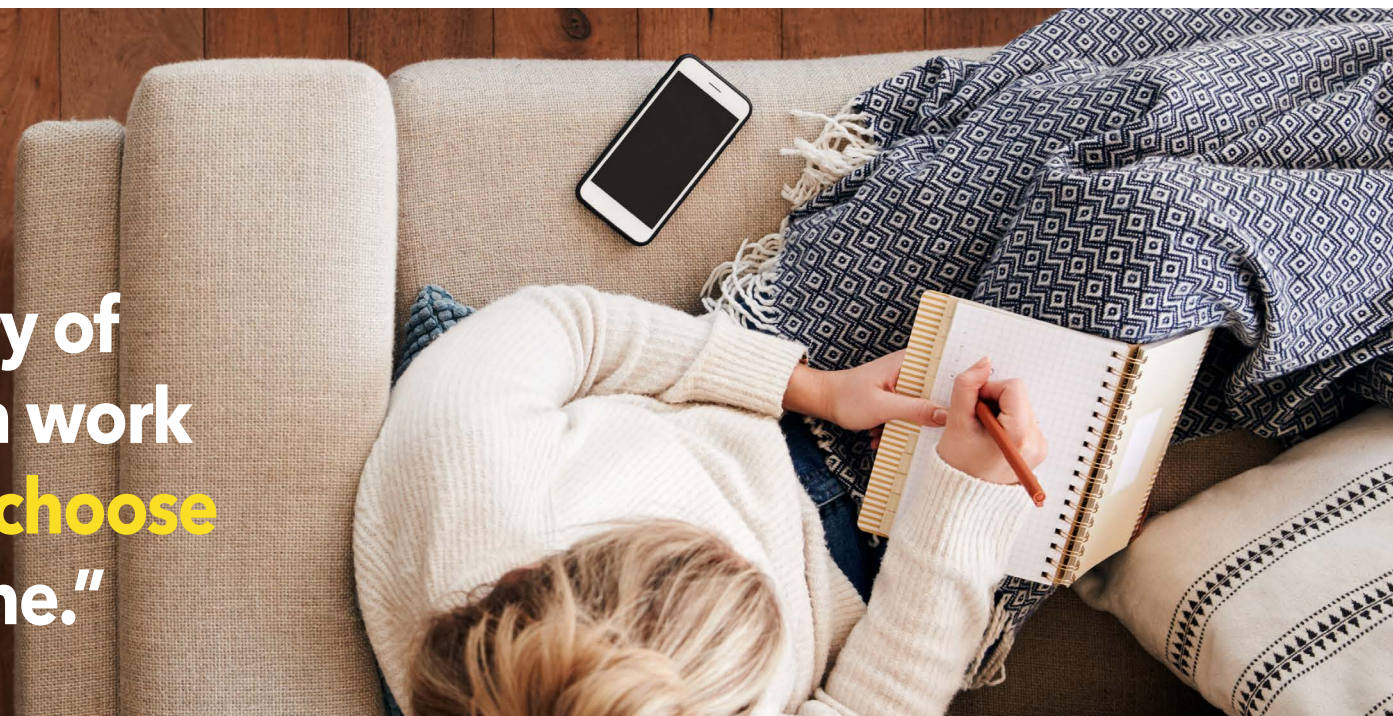
and Freelancer Club which are great for sourcing new projects and displaying your achievements.

It also helps to brush up on skills such as SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) to optimize your digital presence – if you're a total newbie to this, there are many courses you can put yourself on. This will help to market yourself, get your services seen and can be a valuable skill to offer to clients.

Going freelance is one of the best things you will ever do and while it is scary at first, it does get easier. Once you have established your niche and start to get

known as an expert in your field, jobs can come rolling in a lot easier and you will find it easier to market yourself.

Don't expect everything to come at once, it does take time, but remember you have become freelance for a reason and that passion will help drive you to success. There is nothing better than getting paid or completing a job and knowing the only person that made that happen was you and your skills. Put in the hard work, become a master of your trade and you'll never look back.



**"This is the beauty of freelancing - I can work from anywhere I choose and this excites me."**

# WorkStyle

## Final thoughts

Thank you for reading our second issue of WorkStyle.

Choosing to become self-employed can seem nerve-racking however we hope that reading the insights provided by our contributors has filled you with enough confidence to take the leap for yourself.

As one of the UK's leading umbrella companies, we at Parasol can help support you in taking that first step.

We also work with specially selected partners to provide you with everything else you may need to support you during your contracting career such as insurance or mortgage advice.

Thank you to our contributors for sharing their stories and advice and thank you for reading. Good luck.

parasol

*with you all the way*

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